

# THE NEPHILIM KINGS OF AN EPIC AGE

BOOK 1  
SECRETS AND ENIGMAS  
OF THE SUMERIANS AND AKKADIANS



WILLEM MCLOUD

# THE NEPHILIM





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and Akkadians By Willem McCloud

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# **THE NEPHILIM**

Kings of an Epic Age

Book 1

Secrets and Enigmas  
of the Sumerians and  
Akkadians

Willem McLoud



“He was the last of the magicians, the last of the Sumerians and Babylonians, the last great mind which looked out on the visible and intellectual world with the same eyes as those who began to build our intellectual world rather less than 10 000 years ago... Why do I call him a magician? Because he looked on the whole universe and all that is in it *as a riddle*, as a secret which could be read by applying pure thought to certain evidence, certain mystic clues which God had laid about the world to allow a sort of philosopher’s treasure hunt to the esoteric brotherhood... He regarded the universe as a cryptogram set by the Almighty... By pure thought, by concentration of mind, the riddle, he believed, would be revealed to the initiate.”

- John Maynard Keynes -[\[1\]](#)



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# **PREFACE**

This is a story that goes back to the very beginning of history, history as we know it, the beginning of time itself. It is a strange and peculiar story, one that dates back to a time where we find our first glimpses of and insights into the thinking and ways of doing of the peoples of the ancient Middle East. Our story delves into a theme, a leitmotif or a golden thread so to say, found in the oldest myths of the ancient shamans who once roamed the northern Zagros Mountains in the northwest of present-day Iran. This unique and fascinating theme is also found in the writings of the first people to have settled on the southern plains of Mesopotamia, the Sumerians, who were also the first people to have invented phonetic writing, writing that enabled them to write down their thoughts and ideas for posterity and others to read. Our story concerns nothing less than the very tradition of those greatest of heroes, the demigods or scions of the gods, also called the Nephilim... the so-called Fallen Ones!

The real story of the Nephilim belongs to the most ancient of traditions, a tradition that harks back to the ancient lands of Sumer and Egypt. It is among the peoples of those ancient lands that we in fact discover the story of these demigods of old who were said to have been descended from the (fallen) gods. We read, among other things, that some of the most illustrious royal families of those times, such as the House of Uruk, who ruled the land of Sumer during the First Dynasty of Uruk, were descended from the gods. We also read about great and mighty heroes, such as the well-known Gilgamesh, who were fathered by spirit beings during sacred marriage rituals.

As it so happens most modern Westerners incidentally already know something about these traditions because of



the way they are presented in the biblical tradition. We read that “the sons of God” fathered such heroes with the “daughters of men”. Although the Nephilim of the biblical tradition are often exclusively seen and regarded as giants, this only concerns one small part of the story and a much more comprehensive convention. I will also show that the biblical tradition only presents one version of a much broader tradition about these families, which continued to live on and develop through the ages.

I take the reader on a journey to distant lands to explore these ancient traditions. I focus on the “speculative theology” of those ancient peoples, discovering their ways of thinking about the cosmos, the gods, the demigods or Nephilim and how they all fit together. Although students of history do not always and in particular concern themselves with it, speculative theology constitutes the main theme and focus of this work as this is exactly the area where we gain access to the ancients’ way of thinking about these matters.

While some may call this work a study of the “secret treasures of darkness”, others, who may be more scholarly inclined, will rather see it as a systematic study of the speculative theology of the ancient Middle Eastern world, focusing on the traditions of the demigods or scions of the gods. The important thing is that I have done something that none other has attempted or done before, namely to explore the ways of thinking of the ancient peoples of Sumer, Egypt, Canaan, Israel and others about the Nephilim.

What is more is that I do not simply study their speculative theology, reflecting on their own ways of thinking about their place in the cosmos, I also found that many things can be much better explained if my new chronological model for the ancient Middle East, which had recently been published in the peer-review journal, *Journal for Semitics*,<sup>[2]</sup> is utilised and applied. This model has since been dramatically confirmed by the recent discovery of a

cuneiform text from the Epic of Gulkišar, a Sealand king from southern Babylonia.<sup>[3]</sup> When the ancient world is viewed from this perspective, using my chronological model in tandem with the focus on the ancient Nephilim traditions, that is, on the speculative theology of the ancients, totally new and unexpected ways of thinking about the past become available. Apparently, the secrets and enigmas associated with the Nephilim tradition could only be unlocked if their stories are assigned to the correct and appropriate periods in history in terms of the important role the celestial skies played in their secret doctrine.

In this book I endeavour to present the story of those ancient traditions and the mighty heroes who form an integral part of them, in a clear and easily understandable way. My research eventually led me to the conclusion that there was a remarkable similarity and consistency in those peoples' thinking about these matters throughout the ancient Middle East, with some traditions even spreading throughout a wide geographical area stretching far beyond the confines of those ancient lands and times.

## **THE GREATEST OF HEROES**

In this study, the focus does not fall on a mere scholarly recreation of the history of those ancient lands nor the details of all the many kings who ruled during that early period. The reason for this is that only a few distinguished and very exceptional dynasties were considered to have belonged to the Nephilim. These particular kings ruled during the greatest heroic ages of ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian tradition. As such, the focus only falls on the greatest of heroic epochs and how the ancients understood those events in the framework of their speculative theology.

Our story of the Nephilim is not a mere attempt at the popularisation of ancient history. Nor is it a repetition of already familiar material found in popular contemporary

sources. In contrast to such populist approaches, this work is an extensive scholarly study, the first of its kind on the topic, written in a popular style so as to make it accessible to the general reader and a wider audience as well. It is unfortunate that these populist approaches have had the negative effect of the topic having become somewhat of a taboo for many a serious scholar, which is actually a shame considering the fact that we can learn so much of the ancient world by making use of this point of entry. With reference to an old expression, we should guard against throwing out the proverbial baby with the bathwater.

I present a story which not only starts at the beginning of history itself but a story which goes much further by exploring the folklore, legends and popular mythology of those ancient peoples. In doing so, I made use of all the ancient sources, including archaeology, iconography and the oldest available texts. As such, the work presented in this book is groundbreaking and original. I, in fact, present the reader with a story that has never been told before. In keeping with the claim that the Nephilim were great and famous heroes of old, I focus on the great epochs when they obtained unparalleled glory, glory recorded in epic tales and stories told by court bards, amongst others, throughout the ages.

The first part of the book tells the story of the great heroic deeds of the kings from the Sumerian House of Uruk, who ruled over large parts of ancient Mesopotamia during the late fourth and early third millennium BC. Their stories were in later centuries compiled in the *Gesta Urukæorum*, the legends of the kings of Uruk. I am, however, not only retelling their stories but also interpreting them within the context of their speculative theology, a theology according to which those kings belonged to a different sphere of existence, a sphere in which they were regarded as Nephilim, descendants of the great gods themselves.



In the second part of the book, the focus falls on the great deeds of the Semitic god-kings from the Akkadian dynasty who ruled over the distant corners of the ancient Middle Eastern world (c. 2370-2190 BC). Their stories belong to the *Gesta Akkadaeorum*, the legends of the kings of Akkad. Their epic tales survived in some of the greatest legends and myths of all times. Again, our primary concern is how the ancients viewed and understood these kings, whom we may for good reason and anachronistically call Emperors, as having been Nephilim. Their story is a continuation of the one about the Urukite rulers. In fact, both form part of one continuous story unfolding through the ages.

It is important to note that the great heroes of the past belonging to this tradition do not only include men. Amongst the greatest of all those who belonged to the epochs of Sumer and Akkad, one finds, for example, the princess, the high priestess and the poetess, Enheduanna, daughter of the founder of the Akkadian empire, Sargon the Great. She wrote three beautiful poems in honour of the goddess, Inanna-Ishtar. One of these poems served as a cult song, a song which enables us to track the cult practice founded by her down to some of the most unlikely of places in later history. Amongst other things, she was the first to place weapons in the hands of the female attendants of the cult and she brought men to castrate themselves during ecstatic frenzies. Her impact on history and the tradition of the Nephilim, and the cult they belonged to, had been spectacularly powerful and enduring throughout the ages.

These are ancient traditions, some of them going back to a distant past, long before alphabetic writing was invented. Although the cuneiform tablets on which these epic tales were later recorded are often damaged, scholars have worked tirelessly to reproduce them into coherent narrations. One may, for example, mention Herman Vanstiphout's *Epics of Sumerian Kings: The Matter of Aratta*

and Joan Westenholz's *Legends of the Kings of Akkade*. These epic traditions of Sumer and Akkad have, however, and sadly, I may add, not been afforded the same attention in Western society as, for instance, the Homeric tales. This is extremely unfortunate as these heroic tales reflect a period of unparalleled and unique greatness and should therefore at least enjoy equal importance.

I also look into the Egyptian traditions, going back to the Predynastic Period, the Early Dynastic Period and the later Old Kingdom Period. I explore and discuss the legend of ancient gods who once came to Egypt from their original homeland in the period after a great deluge and built the very first temples there. In this legend, these gods are presented as divine personages who lived on earth but were descended from the earth-god. They are portrayed as having belonged to a great heroic age some time in the distant past. Later, in the Old Kingdom, the myths of Osiris and his son, Horus, became very popular. These stories also had their origin in a great heroic age and I will show how they are connected with our story.

During these heroic epochs, one finds that it is not only the great deeds of the mighty heroes which are emphasised but also where they fit into the great cosmic design and struggle of higher forces, reaching far beyond mere earthly events. It was exactly during these heroic periods that the strange and peculiar albeit very interesting views those ancient people held about themselves and their place in history, came into focus.

The story told here is primarily concerned with the speculative theology that underlies the great epic tales of those ancient peoples. Also closely related to our story is another deeper layer of tradition, a hidden tradition handed down through the ages in secret and only to the initiated. This is a hidden tradition which, for obvious reasons, is extremely difficult to navigate and explore. The main

purpose of this book then, is to find that which is hidden and to reveal that which is secret.

## **A SECRET TRADITION**

References to the secret nature of this hidden tradition appear in some of the oldest available texts from the earliest times. These were only intended for restricted circulation within closed and initiated communities. We already read in the ancient Sumerian texts that certain secrets were only to be divulged to those who were initiated into the order of sages that had existed since the dawn of history. One of these was Enlil-mubalit, a sage from the ancient Sumerian city of Nippur, who said that “a non-initiated may show it to an initiated but an initiated must not show it to a non-initiated”.<sup>[4]</sup>

Texts that contain such information were marked with the words, “Secret of the Great Gods”.<sup>[5]</sup> In the well-known *Epic of Gilgamesh*, we read how such secrets were revealed to the hero: “I will disclose to you, Gilgamesh, things that are hidden, and I will relate to you the secrets of the gods.”<sup>[6]</sup> The question immediately arises: What were these secrets? I endeavour not only to provide sensible answers to such questions but also an understanding of the wider context in which these secrets were handed down from generation to generation.

In exploring secret traditions, we are obviously faced with enormous challenges. The very nature of such traditions is that they are supposed to be secret! There are, however, ways to negotiate and find a way through such obstacles. One of these is to read the ancient stories and myths in conjunction with the accompanying iconographic traditions. As all secret groups through the ages used certain symbols to express their thinking, we often find that a study of these symbols, especially if they can be tracked down over sustained periods of time, provide us with important

information, which can in turn be considered together with and carefully applied to the texts.

Once a comprehensive insight into the texts and other data relating to this secret tradition is gained, its essential features emerge and become clear to the careful reader. This is when one discovers that this tradition was from the outset deeply influenced by shamanism. The image of the great bird sitting high above in the cosmic tree or on the cosmic pillar (and let's not forget the serpent at the bottom thereof!) is a recurring theme, a theme starting with the story of the initiation of the ancient Sumerian dwarf-king of Uruk, called Lugalbanda, into the shamanistic Order of the Thunderbird. Lugalbanda is said to have somehow been transported into the nest of the Thunderbird high up in the cosmic tree, presented as existing in another kind of realm than our own. After his initiation, Lugalbanda was duly considered having been reborn into the family of the Thunderbird.

We find something similar in Egypt, where the influence of shamanism is again visible in the earliest strata of religious thinking. The Egyptian counterpart of the Sumerian Thunderbird is the Phoenix, that mighty mythological bird that became the paradigmatic and quintessential symbol of rebirth and cyclical return. In the same way the Thunderbird was encountered high up in the cosmic tree, the Phoenix resided on a stone pillar in the temple of Ra at Heliopolis. And both these mighty birds were of course identified with the concept of rebirth.

The Egyptians called the Phoenix the "Bennu" bird and the stone on which it perched the "Benben", names derived from the word "ben" which means "seed" (as it is also found in the Semitic languages where it means "son"). I will show that the Phoenix and its seed belong to the strong and ancient tradition of the seed of the gods. In this way, the Benben stone is a vivid symbol of the "divine seed" or

“children of the Phoenix”, as one might call the supposed descendants of the so-called Nephilim.

### **A GREAT COSMIC DESIGN?**

As a dynamic tradition, our story does not merely involve stories about a long gone mythological era but also about a hidden tradition which has accumulated various elements as it unfolded through the ages. Due to restrictions in available data, I take only one particular branch of this tradition into consideration, namely the one that moved from ancient Sumer through Egypt to ancient Greece and Rome and on to Europe, where we, for instance, encounter it in the medieval Grail romances, amongst other things. This forms the basis of the story I endeavour to tell through the course of the three volumes of this work, with the first volume laying the groundwork for the others. At different times each of those lands provided the fertile earth in which the age-old secret tradition could germinate, sprout and branch out. It is in actual fact an unfolding story even to this very day!

One of the fascinating aspects of this tradition is that its initiates held a view of history not restricted to events in the earthly realm. Through the ages, they believed the history they were part of involved a cosmic order that went far beyond any human involvement in that history. In those secret circles, there has always been a collective awareness that their reality is much bigger and involves much more than mere history, where certain earthly events were taken to be visible manifestations of the progressive nature of the story in which the cosmic and earthly domains became integrated as part of a greater unfolding order in the universe.

What I in fact found is an ancient belief that the celestial skies serve as a “blueprint” for the earthly existence of those families considered to have been divine descendants of the gods. And, somehow, their very existence was

thought to have been related to the celestial skies where the stars were identified with those very same gods. As a result, the “writing of the night sky”, as the Sumerians referred to it, or “heavenly scroll” (an idea which is strangely enough also found in the Bible!<sup>[7]</sup>) was carefully studied and interpreted. Sages then also used and applied this cosmic plan in the physical layout and design of the land, that is Sumer, Egypt and other lands, in the belief that the celestial movement of the stars would also find some kind of equivalent in earthly events.

According to their way of thinking, a rhythm existed in the ever-changing gears of the celestial skies, a rhythm that also determined the rhythm in the occurrence of earthly events, especially as part of the great astronomical cycles of the ages, which the ancients somehow thought was reflected in the great epochs of history. In fact, this way of thinking and understanding of things and events constitutes only a tiny segment of a much broader and more detailed concept pertaining to these families, descendants of the Nephilim, in terms of a principle that popularly became known as “As Above, So Below” (Note, however, that this has nothing to do with the Chaldean astrology of later periods). The hidden knowledge of the ancient interpretation and enigmas of the celestial sky as a “scroll” containing the details of future events about these families, could be described as a “celestial code”, a code presumably only accessible to the initiates of this tradition.

From our modern perspective, the views held by those ancient people may seem outlandish and totally impossible. Once we discard these strange views and try to restructure ancient history on our own terms, we actually end up with a reductive view, a view far removed from the realities of that time. If we harbour any hope of bringing even a small part of the reality of that ancient world into focus, we have no choice but to view and look at them on their own terms, not on our terms, as people who did in fact believe such things,

as I will show in these volumes. Even though we can never obtain more than a partial insight into their way of thinking, we need to take and accept this aspect of their world seriously if we want to obtain any hope of understanding them.

### **NEW AVENUES OF THINKING**

My focus on the ancient Nephilim traditions, on the speculative theology of the ancients, opens up new avenues of thinking and allows for fresh interpretations of that which we popularly call the distant past. In fact, my unique point of departure leads to a dramatic reassessment of many well-established notions about the ancient world, which enabled me to rediscover and shed new light on numerous unexplored gaps in our knowledge about those times. My story explains many things in totally new but remarkably coherent and sensible ways. My goal, however, was not to reconstruct “true history”, which I believe is beyond our means, but to nonetheless rediscover something “true” or “real” about the ancient world, viewed through the eyes of the very people who lived in it.

As this is not meant to be a sterile academic treatise, I do not discuss all the technical detail, possible interpretations and learned opinions, I simply went with those interpretations that made sense to me. An extensive enterprise of this nature is simply not possible within the limited scope and purpose of this book. I do, however, include additional information of a more technical nature, as well as alternative views, in the many notes in the text.

The views and interpretations developed in these volumes do not merely make sense on their own but also within the larger picture unfolding before us, a holistic picture which can account for all the many shades and nuances of the ancient world we are exploring. In doing so, I have taken great care in bringing all the data together in a

sensible, coherent and integrated whole. My challenge was to weave all the many threads together in one grand and beautiful tapestry.

I freely admit that this work is merely an interpretation of an old tradition in light of all that we know about the ancient world. More particularly, it is an interpretation of the speculative theology of a hidden tradition which has existed throughout the ages. An interpretation of the secret tradition of the Nephilim, the supposed descendants of the (fallen) gods. I am only telling a story, albeit a well informed and well-founded one, but nonetheless merely a story.

### **A GRAIL JOURNEY**

Our story concerns not only ancient ideas but also ancient places. Together with a group of close friends I have over a period of years travelled to many places throughout the Middle East and North Africa, the Caucasus and the Black Sea area, all across the Mediterranean Seacoast as well as Europe and the British Isles. When visiting these places one often gets a very different idea and perspective from the typical “armchair” approach of merely reading about them. Not only does one see and experience the remains and ruins one visits as well as the wider context they are situated in firsthand, one so often also finds information and details at these sites not always readily available in books and other publications.

In this way, we were often able to gain a better insight into and a much deeper understanding of the traditions we were studying. In fact, we often found that our own experiences and observations brought the way of thinking, the way of life of those ancient people much better into focus. We made seven such extended journeys, which in time we came to call “Grail journeys”. These took us to many faraway and wonderful places, ancient sites, ruins and spots where initiates from the underground stream of the



hidden tradition, once built palaces and temples where they gathered in secret.

We climbed and clambered over fences and walls (which we would rather not recount here!), we swam in streams and lakes and sailed over many seas, sometimes in bad and stormy weather. We crossed great mountains with staggering heights and dangerous cliffs, sometimes on dirt roads and in pouring rain or dense fog, sometimes thinking that our last day on earth has arrived! We often reached godforsaken places belonging to a distant past, in a certain sense we reached the end of the world itself. In a way, this study, in all its facets, became our very own Grail journey.

I have included short anecdotes of some of these visits to allow the reader to share something of that which we felt and experienced during our travels and visits. My ambition was to write a book that will not only inform but also entertain. At the start of this volume, I provide maps of the ancient Middle Eastern world as well as a timeline of important events related to our story using my recently published new ancient Middle Eastern chronological model to assist readers in understanding an ancient world with which they may well be unfamiliar. At the back, a short glossary is also included.

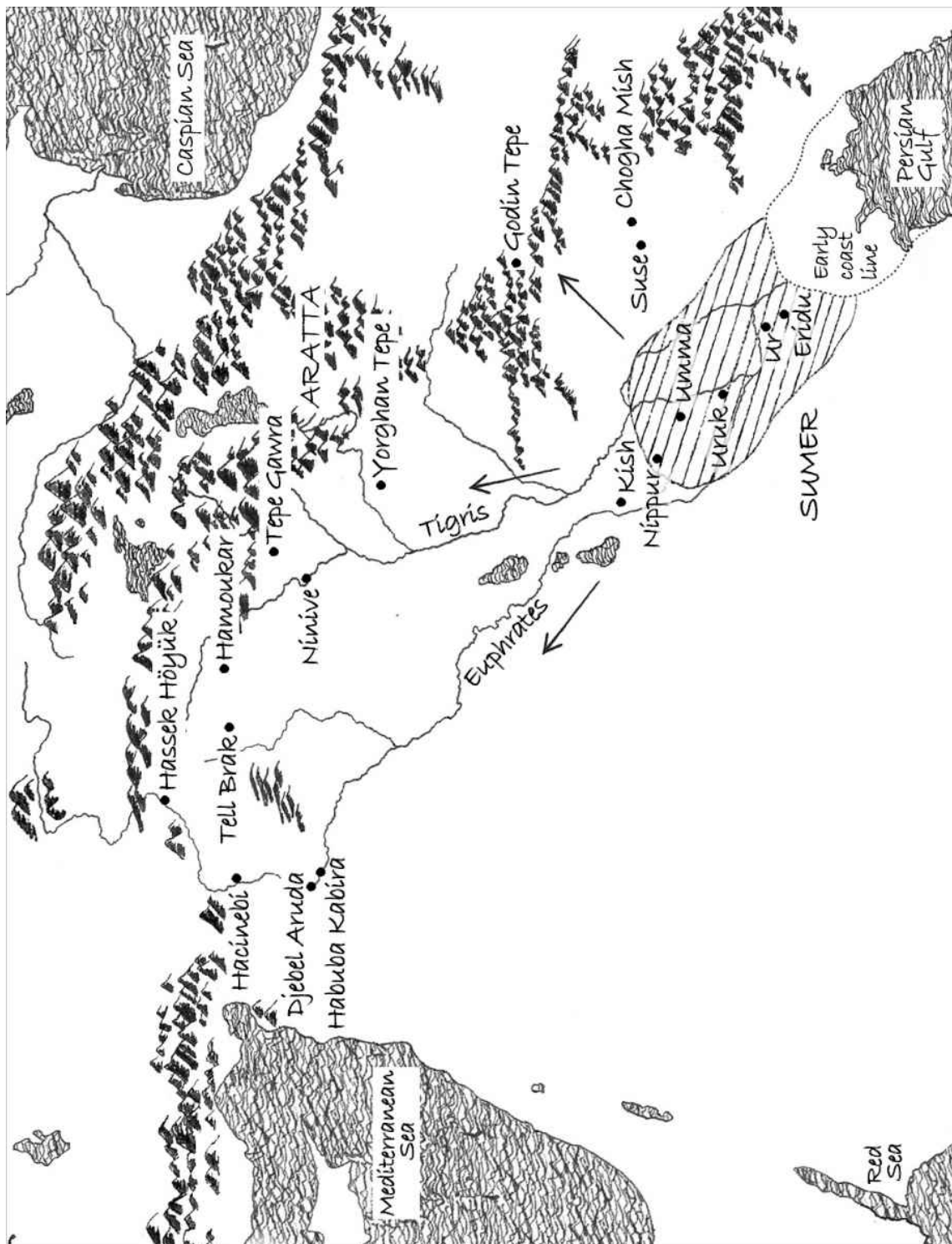
I hope the reader will enjoy my company as guide for the duration of this journey through the past.

Enjoy the ride!

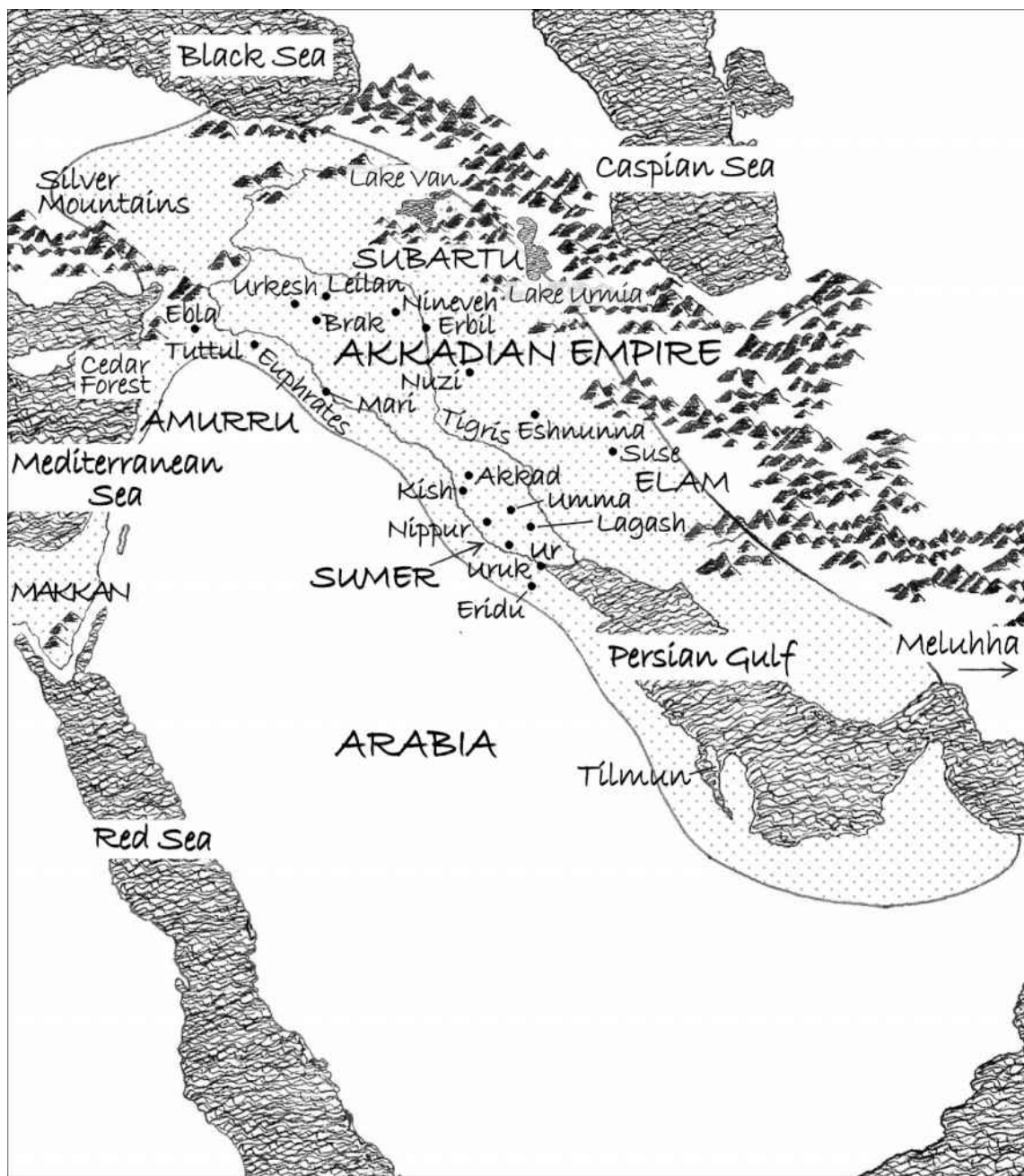
Willem McLoud  
September 2021

Map 1. Sumer during the Uruk Expansion (c. 3000-2850 BC).

[8]



Map 2. The Akkadian Empire (c. 2370-2190 BC).



## **TIMELINE<sup>[9]</sup>**

c. 3400 BC

Meskiagkasher came from the land of Aratta to Sumer and settled in the area of the temple of An in the centre of the land. He was the ancestor of one of the most important Nephilim dynasties of ancient Sumer, namely the House of Uruk. The Uruk Period in Sumerian archaeological history commenced with Meskiagkasher.

c. 3200 BC

Enmerkar, king of Sumer. He was regarded as the son of Meskiagkasher and he was also the builder of the city of Uruk. He corresponds with Nimrod in the biblical tradition.

26 August 2962 BC

Solar eclipse. This eclipse is specifically mentioned in the narrative of the dwarf-king, Lugalbanda, who together with seven other warriors led a military campaign against Aratta in the north. The tradition about Lugalbanda's initiation into the secret Order of the Thunderbird had been told and handed down in Sumer through the ages.

c. 2850 BC

Dumuzi, king of Uruk. He died during a rebellion against the rule of the House of Uruk and was remembered in the fertility cult which bore his name. With his death the Uruk Period came to an end. During the reign of Dumuzi the star, Thuban, in our constellation of Draco, was the polar star, a very rare occurrence due to the slow precession of the poles and the equinoxes.

c. 2830 BC

Enmebaragesi, king of Kish. He ruled over the Sumerian city-states after the fall of Uruk during the early Jemdet Nasr Period.

c. 2800 BC

Gilgamesh, king of Uruk. He was a scion of the House of Uruk, when the dynasty returned to the throne of Uruk. He is one of the best known heroes amongst the Nephilim. In time he, in fact, became the archetypal Nephilim hero. In the ancient Sumerian speculative theology, he was regarded as a great messianic figure.

17 July 2781 BC

The unification of Egypt under King Horus-Aha. This happened on New Year's Day, coinciding with the heliacal rising of Sirius on the exact same day. The early Egyptian kings tracked their descent back to the "Shining Ones, the Followers of Horus". According to the Edfu texts, these followers of Horus came from their original homeland far away from the land of Egypt.

c. 2470 BC

The start of Khufu's reign in Egypt. He was the second king of the Fourth Dynasty and also the builder of the Great Pyramid.

c. 2387 BC

The start of the Fifth Dynasty in Egypt. During the reign of this dynasty the great Akkadian Emperors undertook military campaigns that brought them to the Nile Delta.

c. 2370 BC

Sargon became king in Sumer and established the Akkadian Empire. He was seen as the new incarnation of Dumuzi, who had returned from the netherworld. The Akkadian Emperors had a profound influence on the ancient Middle Eastern world and far beyond. They belonged to one of the greatest Nephilim dynasties of all time.

c. 2368 BC

In the 13th and final year of the rule of King Sahure (fl. c. 2380-2368 BC), the second king of the Fifth Dynasty, Sargon arrived in Egypt. Here he was elevated and deified in the form of the deified warrior-king, Sopdu.

c. 2290 BC

Naram-Sin, son or grandson of Sargon, became ruler of the Akkadian Empire. He was probably the greatest of all ancient Mesopotamian rulers and was worshipped as a god amongst the great gods even during his own lifetime.

c. 2282 BC

Naram-Sin's military campaign against the northern rebels took him to Egypt, then called Makkan, where he killed King Unas (fl. c. 2312-2282 BC), the last king of the Fifth Dynasty. This happened exactly 500 years after the unification of Egypt under Horus-Aha. After his victory in the Great Revolt, Naram-Sin was worshipped as a living god in Sumer and Akkad. The ancient Mesopotamians regarded him as a great god-king and a messiah born from the lineage of the god, Enki. In Egypt he was regarded as the new manifestation of Sopdu.

c. 2268 BC

Pepi I became the third king of the Sixth Dynasty in Egypt.

c. 2260 BC

Naram-Sin conquered Ebla some time after the 23rd year of his reign. An alabaster vase bearing the titles of Pepi I was found in the ruins of the city.

c. 2190 BC

The Akkadian Empire came to an end.

c. 2168 BC

The Ur III Empire was founded by Ur-Nammu in southern Mesopotamia. The Ur III kings believed themselves to have been descended from Gilgamesh and as such having been scions of one of the great Nephilim dynasties of ancient Sumer.

c. 2120 BC

The Sixth (and final) Dynasty of the Old Kingdom in Egypt came to an end.

c. 2060 BC

The Ur III Dynasty in Sumer came to an end. This also marked the end of the rule of the Sumerian kings of more

than a millennium over the land of Sumer, a rule only interrupted by the Akkadian Empire.

c. 1862 BC

Samsi-Adad became king and eventually ruled over Assur, Mari and Akkad. He believed himself to have been a descendant of the Akkadian Emperors and therefore a scion of that great Nephilim dynasty.

c. 1822 BC

The Elamites invaded the northeastern parts of Syria, an event also mentioned in the story of Abraham in the Bible (Genesis 14). This probably happened under the command of Kudu-zulus, who ruled in Eshnunna. He was the brother of Siwe-palar-huppak, king of Elam.

c. 1818 BC

Hammurabi (fl. c. 1848-1806) became overlord of Mesopotamia after his victory over Rim-Sin I of Larsa.





# **PART 1**

## **EARLY ORIGINS IN SUMER**

# **1. AN ANCIENT MYTH**

We start at the very beginning, with the oldest and most primitive layer of our story. The earliest myth about the fallen gods goes back to the earliest strata of human understanding of the cosmos. It goes back to a time before humans settled down in sedentary communities, a time before the first priests and temples appeared.

Our story takes us back to a time when shamans in the northern parts of Eurasia held their rituals outdoors, under large beautiful birches with their dazzling white barks. That was even before the time when people left the Zagros Mountains in the northwestern parts of present-day Iran to settle on the southern plains of Mesopotamia, where we find the first written narratives of the traditions and motifs they brought with them.

## **NORTH ASIATIC SHAMANS**

Although the primaeval era of the shamans of the northern Zagros has long gone, the mountainous landscape with its snowcapped peaks and breathtaking cliffs, where they once roamed, still possesses an exceptional and majestic beauty which transcends time.

In our quest to discover the earliest origins of the tradition of the fallen gods, we visited the area in April 2003, shortly after the outbreak of the Second Gulf War. On our flight from Doha to Shiraz, where our journey started, we already noticed the friendly nature of the Iranian people. During the course of our visit, we forged a bond of friendship with our driver and guide, Reza Hadjizogloo, who, together with an unforgettable trip, is still fondly remembered to this day. Reza did everything possible and went out of his way to enable us to experience Iran and get

to know its wonderful people and, more specifically, to visit and explore unique and wonderful places, faraway places where very few Westerners have ever set foot.

We visited the major sites in and around Shiraz before leaving for the southern plains of the Persian Gulf, via Bandar Imam Khomeini and Ahvaz to the ancient city of Susa, where our journey to the northern Zagros started in all earnestness. We decided to follow the route mentioned in some of the oldest ancient Sumerian texts, a route leading through seven mountain passes to the land of Aratta, as the northern Zagros was once called. In a modest locally manufactured Paykan, the air conditioning of which didn't work, Reza took us on the narrow tarred road which follows the Saidmarreh River, making our way up north along Iran's western border with Iraq, slowly through various traditional towns, plains, ravines and mountain passes.

In the area around Kermanshah, we were amazed (and sometimes terrified!) by all the lorries trying to pass each other in the face of oncoming traffic, time and again managing to miraculously miss each other. Further north, as we went deeper and deeper into the mountains, it became considerably colder and the road quieter. In the last light of every day, the reflection of all kinds of beautiful colours fell against the high mountain peaks with their prehistoric texture and formations, some of which were covered in a blanket of pure, white snow.

On our way from the southern plains towards Tabriz and the northern plateau, we carefully counted and documented the seven mountain passes of old. <sup>[10]</sup> We often encountered beautiful birches with colourful ribbons tied to their branches, having a cultural significance even to this day.

Eventually, we came to a place that made an exceptionally deep impression on the three of us who made the journey. It is called Takht-e Soleyman or Throne of Solomon. As the nearly deserted road leads towards this remarkable site, we saw the ancient round structure at the

centre of a large crater-like valley surrounded by mountains in the distance. Even today, this magnificent place brings one closer to the timeless wonder of that prehistoric mountainous world.

The Paykan gave some trouble and we only reached the Takht late in the afternoon. The site was already closed and there seemed to be no one around. We came this far and fate unfortunately left us no other choice but to do what we had to do! After scaling the three-meter-high stone walls on the high perimeter of the crater in a rather undignified but fearless manner, we arrived at one of the most beautiful and unique spots we have ever visited on all our many journeys to such weird and wonderful places around the world.

What makes this place even more remarkable and beautiful is the large natural pool at its centre, seemingly bottomless with dark cobalt blue water. Its depths shrouded in darkness beneath the mirror flat surface of the water which reflected images from the surrounding mountains as the sun dramatically disappeared amongst fiery pink, purple and orange, swirling storm clouds behind an eerie looking conical hill in the west. After admiring this splendid and dramatic tableau, a deep silence took us in its embrace. We sat quietly on the rim of the water as darkness drew close and the last play of light on the surrounding peaks faded away.

One could imagine that the shamans of old also visited this magical place and sat in contemplation next to this very same magical pool. This is indeed an area steeped in a rich tradition relating to ancient sages and wise men even to this day. To the north, due west of Lake Urmia, lies the town of the same name, where an ancient shrine marks the last resting place of one of the three Magi who visited the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. To the east of Lake Urmia lies Maragheh where the astronomical observatory dating from the 12th century AD serves as a vivid reminder that this area has an

ancient tradition of observing the planets and the stars of the many galaxies in our night sky. One author has even interpreted the name of another town in the area, Malekan, as the village of the “Guardian Angels” and associated these angels with the cherubim who once guarded the Garden of Eden.<sup>[11]</sup> There cannot be any doubt that the Takht-e Soleyman must have played an important role as a sanctuary, a holy place so to say, where sages, wise men and shamans gathered from the earliest of times.

Although the stone wall and other constructions date from later periods, the beauty of the spring is timeless. One would like to think that our experience of this amazing place connected us through the ages with others from a long gone era who once sat on this embankment staring into the deep. As we sat in awful wonder, we experienced a deep silence and tranquillity pregnant with words unspoken, words once spoken by sages around communal fires on the edge of this very same pool.

Eventually the caretaker, who must have stood in the shadows watching us for a long time, approached carefully and respectfully told us that it was time to go. It was with reluctance that we tore ourselves away from this sacred place. As a finale to an experience that stayed with us over the years, an experience we will never forget, Reza took a picture of us together with the smiling caretaker at the entrance gate, which was now open for us to leave with the dignity befitting of men who sat with sages.

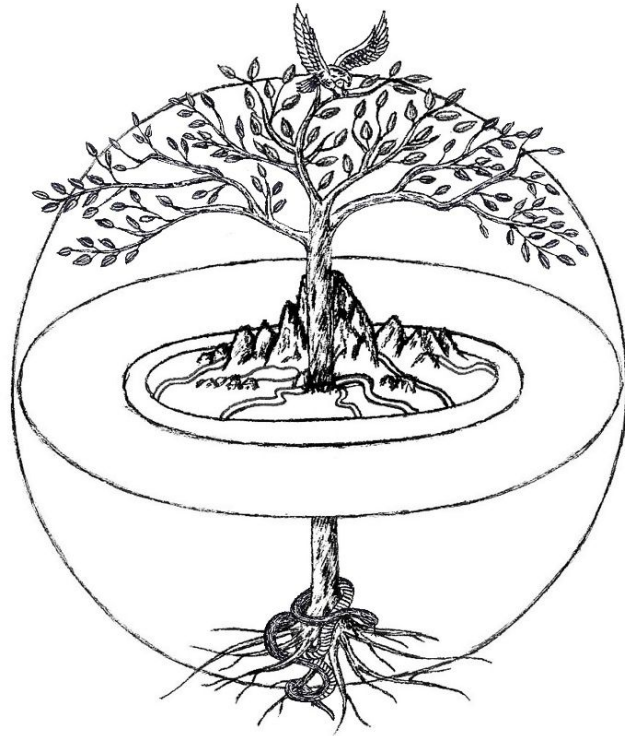
At long last, we could now share the deep, almost spiritual, feeling of that amazing wonder world in a story that goes back through many millennia. The story told in this book begins with an ancient tradition that has all the trademarks of North Asiatic shamanism. This is in fact the oldest version of the story of the fallen gods.

## **SHAMANS AND THEIR MUSHROOMS**

Our story kicks off with the consciousness altering mushrooms used by shamans from the earliest times until this very day in certain parts of northern and northeastern Russia, in the area of the tributaries of the Ob River and east of the Kolyma River in the great Kamchatka Peninsula.

[\[12\]](#) The consumption of these mushrooms are said to bring shamans into contact with the otherworld, that invisible realm which is believed to exist next to our own and which influences and impacts on our material world. This realm is commonly called the “spirit world”. It is particularly relevant to the story of the fallen gods, which clearly relates to events associated with that world. In the ancient world, these gods, daemons or angels were regarded as spiritual beings and the stories about them relate to events that supposedly took place in their realm.

These mushrooms, the so-called fly agaric mushrooms (*Amanita muscaria*), are of central importance to our story and an interesting fact about them is that they grow in symbiosis with birch, pine and fir trees but especially with the birch. These mushrooms are often also associated with flies.



*Figure 1. The world tree shown surrounded by otherworldly cosmic regions.*

The birch is first and foremost revered in these shamanistic circles. With its beautiful straight white trunk, this tree, according to ancient belief, symbolises and represents the *axis mundi*, the cosmic axis, around which the celestial skies turn. From our contemporary point of view, we know it is actually the projection of the “axis” of the earth giving this visual impression. This, however, does not mean that the ancient view was invalid. They had an altogether different way of ordering the heavens in terms of their observations of the celestial skies, which did not serve as some kind of theory about what the cosmos “really” looks like (as we find in science) but rather as a mere visible manifestation, like a picture projected on a screen, of that invisible realm forever beyond and out of our sensible reach.

After partaking of these mushrooms, shamans are said to journey up or down along this cosmic axis to the



otherworldly realms of the cosmos. In shamanistic tradition, such trees are often ceremonially cut to have seven, eight or nine branches, representing the different zones through which shamans supposedly pass on their journey to the otherworld. The birch which typically has a bird, often an eagle, in its top and a serpent at its roots, is the iconic image for these shamans. The birch may even be regarded as the pre-eminent paradigmatic image of shamanism.

### **THE EAGLE AND THE SERPENT**

The two images of the eagle and the serpent represent certain opposing spiritual forces. The eagle, in the top of the tree, is often taken to represent the supreme spirit. Within the shamanistic experience though, it would rather indicate a lower or local sky-spirit or daemon encountered on the shaman's otherworldly journey. The serpent, at the bottom of the tree, represents the serpent-spirit associated with the underworld realm of death, the netherworld. It might also refer to the local "spirit of the tree", encountered as a naked woman appearing from the roots or the trunk of the tree in response to the prayers of her devotees. Strangely enough, she was sometimes portrayed as having the lower body of a serpent.

This lady emerges only visible to the waist, with bare bosom and swelling breasts, her lower parts entwined with the roots of the tree, offering her milk to those who approach her. The milk increases the strength of them who drink it a hundredfold, it is said. As this is also said of the effects of the mushrooms, this may well refer to the remarkable white "breasts" of these mushrooms (that is, before the disintegration of the white cap), growing under these birches.<sup>[13]</sup> It would, however, be a mistake to associate this woman only with the outer appearance of these mushrooms. She clearly refers to a kind of spirit or

daemon associated with them, a spirit in some way represented by the body of the mushroom.

Initiates who partake of this so-called food of the gods, often find themselves in contact with those intriguing inhabitants of the spirit world, namely the little elven or goblin people, depending on how one views them. In fact, this kind of experience is so closely connected to these mushrooms that they are sometimes called “long-nosed goblin” mushrooms, in Japan for instance. The other common and well-known name for these mushrooms, “toadstools”, also refers to these dwarfish people, typically associated with toads in ancient times, possibly because their heads, like those of toads, are larger in relation to their bodies.

There is good reason to assume that these dwarfish people were paired with snake-maidens in this tradition. These dwarfs and snake-maidens were in turn associated with toads and worms (or snakes). We find, for example, that an ancient word for “mushrooms” in India involves an association with worms, which were apparently seen as “female toads”.<sup>[14]</sup> In the Sanskrit lyric, *Meghaduta*, dating from about 400 AD, the word used for “mushrooms” is *silindhra*, an extremely old word, dating back to a pre-Sanskrit language of India, meaning “carrying a worm”. Here “worm” was presumably taken as a female toad.

The reference to worms becomes perfectly clear once we know that such worms are associated with the vomit of those who experience nausea after the consumption of fly agaric mushrooms. It is told that the Korjaks in the far eastern parts of Russia believe that the spirits of the fly agaric can be found as “worms” in the post consumption vomit and these worms then quickly flee underground.<sup>[15]</sup> This seems to be none other than an allusion to the snake-spirits associated with these mushrooms. As so-called female toads these worms or snakes are closely connected to toads themselves.

## **FALLEN SEED**

This then brings us to the ancient story we are actually interested in and which can be found in one or other form, if only in word association, amongst nearly all the descendants of the early Eurasian peoples, from ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome to India, China and Japan, even on islands in the Pacific Ocean and further afield. In all these different cultures, we find a common and close association between mushrooms and thunder. This stems from the ancient belief that thunder fertilises mushrooms on the soft earth. In the earlier mentioned Sanskrit lyric, the title of which means “The Cloud Messenger”, we thus read: “When they eagerly hear thy sweet sounding, fertilising thunder, which can cover the earth with mushrooms...”

The ancients did not only notice that mushrooms always appeared after thunderstorms, they also noticed that they seemingly came out of nowhere and totally germinated by themselves, without having seed or roots. To them, this was a clear suggestion that mushrooms were divinely generated by thunder on the soft, moist earth. They concluded that somehow the thunder impregnated the soft earth in order to produce the mushrooms. This way of understanding events was seen as a suitable image of things involving the spirit world.

At this point, it is important to note that thunder was also associated with the eagle in the top of the cosmic tree. In ancient Sumer, for example, this eagle represented the great thunder clouds above the northern mountains. The eagle in the top of the cosmic tree might also have been associated with the supreme spirit. It follows that those people would have considered the mushroom spirits as the progeny of the supreme spirit.

This means that the spirits encountered during the mushroom experience, both dwarfish people and their female companions, associated with toads and worms, were seen as having originated in heaven. And as such, they would have been the sons and daughters of the supreme spirit who had somehow “fallen” on earth. These fallen beings, who had fallen from heaven, were not necessarily considered as evil. Only those fallen beings that harm humans, like demons of the netherworld, were considered as such.

When the early migrants from the northern Zagros Mountains and its beautiful birches came to settle on the southern plains of Mesopotamia, they naturally brought this tradition with them, as we shall shortly see. Although the early shamans did not leave us any written texts, we find many shamanistic influences in the writings of the Sumerians. In time, the traditions of the North Asiatic shamans became part of the literary writings of the ancient Sumerians and other ancient peoples.

We can now move on and focus a little more on those traditions.

## 2. THE STORY OF THE FALLEN GODS

A similar story of fallen gods, briefly introduced in the previous chapter, was told by the Sumerians, the Hurrians and the Egyptians. It is even found in the biblical tradition. This story is clearly similar to the one originating with North Asiatic shamans but it has its own particularities. When we compare the different versions thereof, we discover another element traditionally associated with fallen angels, a common theme that stands out, namely that of rebellion. It seems that the “fallen seed” had their origin in a rebellion in the spirit realm.

### **ANCIENT SUMER**

In ancient times, the land of Sumer was situated in the southern marches where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers converge and flow into the Persian Gulf. Today the ruins of that civilisation can still be found in the dry landscape of southern Iraq, now some distance from the sea. Luckily, there are still some marshlands to be found that survived ages of settlement, which give us an idea of how the land must have looked like when the Sumerians held sway there. One can still see the descendants of ancient fishing communities navigating their canoes and dugouts through the reeds and casting their nets in the exact same way it was done in ancient times.

According to Sumerian sources, the first settlers found a beautiful deep, crystal clear fountain, similar to the one we visited at the Takht-e Soleyman, in the marshlands near the mouth of the two converging rivers where they flow into the sea. We read that there was a deep “pipe” in which the brilliantly clear water flowed upwards.<sup>[16]</sup> They described it as a “pure place” and the name given to it was “Nun” which means “the Deep”.<sup>[17]</sup> In later tradition it became known as

Eridu, written in cuneiform script as “Nun.ki”, or “the place Nun”.

In time, Nun.ki became a holy place with a sanctuary having been built there. This temple sanctuary was later hailed as the oldest sanctuary in ancient Sumer. It was closely associated with the Sumerian god, Enki, who plays a central role in our story. Other such fountains also existed further south in the Persian Gulf at a place called Dilmun, to which I will return in more detail later. These fountains were described in similar terms as the one at Nun.ki. [\[18\]](#)

Although fishing played an important role, many of the settlers who came to this region from the sixth millennium BC onwards, used the water from the rivers to grow crops in the fertile ground they drained and reclaimed from the marches. The earlier mentioned myth about the seed of the thunder that fell on the soft earth gradually received a new meaning and interpretation. It became the seed of the god, Enki, which fell on the soft ground. Even so, the ancient motif of the fallen seed was certainly still present, indicating that the Sumerian version of the story goes back to the shamans of the northern Zagros Mountains. I propose that the shamans who are to this day to be found further north in the Ob River region of Russia, once roamed all over those northern parts where the birch tree grows.

Various Sumerian scholars have commented on the strong shamanistic influence present in ancient Sumerian tradition. The symbol of the tree with the eagle in its top and the serpent down at the bottom amongst its roots was particularly well-known in ancient Sumer. It features in no less than three ancient Sumerian stories! The Sumerologist, Stephanie Dalley, writes: “Certain themes of shaman narratives are strikingly similar to themes of Sumerian and Akkadian myths. The World Tree, the Cosmic Eagle and a Serpent often feature in the shaman’s attainment of his otherworldly goal, as they also do in the story of Inana and the halub tree, in the myth of Lugalbanda and in the legend

of Etana... One might suppose that shamanism was indigenous in northern Asia and extremely ancient, so that in some way it influenced Mesopotamian myths at their very roots.”<sup>[19]</sup> Note that the Akkadians referred to in this quotation were Semites who lived amongst the Sumerians since the earliest times.

The story about the origins of the so-called fallen gods forms part of the oldest strata of Sumerian thought<sup>[20]</sup> and the Sumerian god closely associated with this story is Enki. His name means “Lord of the Earth/Land” and he was one of the most important Sumerian gods. In the *Lugalbanda Epic* we read that the cosmic tree with the eagle and the serpent in it belongs to him. It follows then that he must in fact have been the god of the shamans.

His female companion was Ninhursag, which means “Lady of the Great (or: Holy) Mountain”, probably referring to her origins in the northern mountains. Ninhursag was the mother goddess who breastfed her children.<sup>[21]</sup> She already appears in the *Kesh Temple Hymn*, the oldest known Sumerian hymn dedicated to a temple, dating back to the same time as the oldest known Sumerian literature at around 2500 BC.

The Kesh temple was closely associated with the northern mountains, especially the area called Aratta,<sup>[22]</sup> a harbinger for the biblical Ararat. It is clear from the hymn that this temple was merely a refined version of the older tree sanctuaries of the northern mountains, which represented the cosmic tree. We find that the temple is described as a “thundercloud”, portrayed as an eagle in ancient Sumer. Such an eagle was placed above the entrance to Ninhursag’s temple, found at Tell al ‘Ubaid in southern Iraq.<sup>[23]</sup>

In another hymn recited or sung in the Kesh temple and included in the corpus of temple hymns collected by Enheduanna, daughter of the first Akkadian Emperor, Sargon the Great, we even find that the “roots” of this

temple are described as an immense sagkal snake.<sup>[24]</sup> This is the very same snake that guards the roots of the cosmic tree in the *Lugalbanda Epic*. This confirms my view that the early temples were images of the cosmic tree or celestial cosmos.

As for Ninhursag, it seems that she represented the “spirit”, if you will, of the Kesh temple. She is described in the *Kesh Temple Hymn* as a serpent which kept in the deepest parts of the temple: “(She) like a great dragon [i.e. serpent], sits (in its) interior.”<sup>[25]</sup> In later Mesopotamian tradition, she is portrayed as having the lower body of a snake:

“She wears a head-ornament, She wears a fly (?).

She wears a veil...

Her breast is open.

In her left arm she holds a babe sucking her breast...

From her head to her loins, the body is that of a naked woman.

From the loins to the sole of the foot, scales like those of a snake are visible...

Her name is Nin-tu [i.e. Ninhursag].”<sup>[26]</sup>

Clearly, there are striking similarities between Ninhursag and the snake-woman shamans encounter at the bottom of the birch. In the same way the snake-woman at the roots of the cosmic tree represents the “spirit” of the tree, Ninhursag seemingly represented the “spirit” of the temple. Ninhursag merely replaced the snake-woman when the temple replaced the tree as the holy place.





*Figure 2. Figurine from the Ubaid Period in Sumer of a woman with serpentine features breastfeeding a baby (National Museum of Iraq, Baghdad).*

Of particular interest to our story, is the description in the *Kesh Temple Hymn* of Ninhursag as the snakelike mother goddess who gave birth to the heroes in the temple. Given this description of her, one is reminded of the figurines discovered by that great archaeologist, Sir Leonard Woolley, in southern Sumer in present-day Iraq. These figurines, dating from c. 4000 BC during the Ubaid Period, are of women with snakelike heads, one of which has a baby on the breast. This is a good example of the literary tradition agreeing with the iconographical tradition.

The distinct and close similarity between the description of the snakelike mother goddess, Ninhursag, and these depictions suggests that this motif goes back to the very distant past in Sumer.<sup>[27]</sup> When taken as different forms of the snake-woman whom shamans encounter during their out-of-body experiences, and more particularly as the mother goddess giving birth to heroes, she in fact portrays

shamanistic rebirth. This may be the oldest, if not the very oldest, way of understanding the shamanistic experience. In later centuries we read in the *Lugalbanda Epic* about such experiences involving a Thunderbird (see the next chapter).

### **ENKI AND THE FALLEN SEED**

There is, intriguingly enough, a strange twist in the Sumerian version of the story about the fallen gods. In Sumer the fallen gods were depicted as Enki's own seed that had fallen on the ground. It was told that Enki wanted to take the girl Uttu as a wife. Her name means "wool", alluding to a woman's pubic hair. To become his wife, she asked for a gift of fruits and vegetables, which he in turn obtained from a "gardener". When he brought the required gift to her house, she invited him in, whereupon he set out to get her drunk on beer and then trying to take her by force. She cried out and Ninhursag, her great-grandmother, came to her aid at once. Ninhursag removed Enki's seed from Uttu and it fell on the ground. Within a while, eight plants came forth from this seed.

When Enki noticed these plants as he walked past them, he realised that he did not recognise them nor knew their species. On advice of his servant, Isimud, he determined their nature and made it known to them in their "hearts". Although this might be taken as a reference to the very first plants of creation, the story is most probably not about that but something rather more subtle as we then read that Enki consumed the plants and fell pregnant with them! As he could obviously not give birth to the plants on his own, Ninhursag helped him by placing him in her vulva, as we read: "Ninhursag laid Enki in her vulva."<sup>[28]</sup>

In due course, Enki and the snake-goddess, Ninhursag, gave birth to eight gods, four male gods and four female goddesses. They were then named after eight parts of Enki's own body, namely his head, hair, nose, mouth, throat, arm, rib and side. In the original Sumerian text the author

used a play-on-words to relate these body parts to the character traits of these gods.

The best known of them were Ninsikila, named after Enki's hair, and Ensag, named after his side. Their names mean "pure virgin lady" and "first lord".<sup>[29]</sup> They were especially revered and worshipped in Dilmun, which originally included a wide area in the Persian Gulf, including the islands of Tarut and Bahrain as well as the east Arabian coastal regions near Abqaiq.<sup>[30]</sup> From the second part of the third millennium BC onwards, Dilmun was identified with the island of Bahrain.

Although there are various strange motifs in this ancient story, the one of particular significance is that of Enki being placed in Ninhursag's vulva! How on earth, one might ask, could that even be possible? Even though it may be argued that he placed his penis inside her, this is not what the text says. It does also not make sense in the context of the story. Reading the text literally, the only way to see or explain this description, is to assume that Enki must have been rather small and the goddess rather huge! This implies that Enki must have been a dwarf or a pygmy god. That Enki's seed ended up on the ground may also suggest an unsuccessful sexual encounter, a possibility consistent with Enki having been small of stature, like a pygmy or a dwarf.

This is the exact same motif as the one we have earlier found in a shamanistic context, that of a dwarf or pygmy god (Enki) together with a serpent-woman (Ninhursag). One can imagine that their progeny would somehow have reflected themselves and their own images. Although not mentioned in the available texts, this implies that the eight gods and goddesses were comprised of four dwarfs/pygmies and four naked snake-maidens.

Depictions from the Old Babylonian Period in the early second millennium BC<sup>[31]</sup> showing dwarfs/pygmies together with large women, the women being portrayed as exceptionally large compared to the pygmies or dwarfs,

make it perfectly understandable that those people could have held such ideas. Although these women are not visibly connected to snakes, other depictions from ancient Sumer showing naked women holding snakes in their hands, do exist.

These naked women may very well represent those spiritual entities encountered in the early shamanistic myth. In the fertility context of cult dances, the ancients might have believed these dwarfish and female spirits to have taken possession of the dancers. One may certainly assume that these dwarfs and naked maidens were early manifestations of the dwarfs and fairies we to this very day associate with the realm of the mushrooms.



*Figure 3. Dwarfs/pygmies and naked maidens shown on an Old Babylonian terracotta disc (National Museum of Iraq, Baghdad).*

## THE HURRIAN TRADITION

The Sumerian account of the fallen gods was subsequently and after a while passed on to the Hurrians. The Hurrians were an ancient people indigenous to Mesopotamia from very early on, at least from 2500 BC onwards. They were later found towards the northwestern parts of Mesopotamia.

The reason the Hurrian version of this story is of special interest is because it throws further light on key aspects of this age-old tale. With the Hurrians, the story is cast in terms of a rebellion, not merely involving the god, Enki, but also the father of the gods known as An, not only in Sumer but throughout ancient Mesopotamia.

The god, An, held a very special place amongst the gods of ancient Sumer. In an ancient text dating from about 2500 BC,<sup>[32]</sup> An is described as having existed before any of the other gods came into existence. The cuneiform symbol used to write his name, namely a star consisting of four wedges, had various meanings, such as “heaven”, “above”, “elevated” and “superior”.<sup>[33]</sup> Accordingly, it was used to refer to “heaven” as well as the gods who reside in heaven. In the latter case, the sign served as the general symbol for divinity and it was joined to the name of each god in order to indicate that a god, and nothing else, was referred to. Such cuneiform symbols are called determinatives.

What is fascinating about the name of An is that it was not combined with the cuneiform symbol indicating that a god was referred to. This is certainly peculiar and very strange as the names of all the other gods were always combined and indicated with this cuneiform symbol for “god”. The question clearly is why. Why would this be? And the reason is actually quite simple: The symbol for the name, An, was exactly this symbol, and it meant “god”, the elevated one.

What is important is that An did not merely represent a “god” on the same level as the other gods. As father of the gods, who stood above them all, he embodied the very essence of the idea of the “superior” or “elevated” one. The meaning of his name may thus be translated as “the highly elevated one”. As the god who embodied the principle of divinity in its most pure and probably original form, there was no need to add a symbol to his name to indicate or show that he was a god as was the case with the other gods, An’s children, and their particular names.<sup>[34]</sup>

As the supreme God above the other gods, An was recognisably different from all the other gods.<sup>[35]</sup> We find something similar among the Semites. In the late third millennium BC texts from Ebla, a predominantly Semitic city, the name of the “father of the gods” is given as *I-li-lu*, which had been read as *il-ili*, “god of all the gods”.<sup>[36]</sup> And this is exactly what we have found about An! What is more, this corresponds exactly with later Semitic tradition (as can be seen in the Ugarit texts), where El is the father of the gods. Here, as in the Hebrew tradition, El is sometimes called El Elyon, God Most High. Clearly, we have a continuous tradition about a supreme God, the father of the gods, ever since the time when the very first cuneiform symbols were written down.

The Semitic supreme god, El, is already attested to in the third millennium BC texts from Ebla. Although some dispute exists among scholars as to whether the ‘*il*’ in personal names from Ebla refers to the head of the pantheon, he is indeed called El in an Eblaite offering list.<sup>[37]</sup> Clearly, the Semitic practice of reading the cuneiform symbol for “god” as ‘*il/El*’, both when it referred to a “god” in general (as we find with the determinative sign referring to a god) as well as when it was used for the god, El, must have gone back to the earliest reading convention in Sumer. Whereas the Sumerians read the cuneiform symbol for the supreme god as An, the Semites would have read it as El. This makes

good sense because as father of the gods, El was the exact equivalent of An.<sup>[38]</sup>

An was “the father of the gods”, especially the great gods of heaven, who were called “Anunna” or “Anunnaki”. Anunna means “seed of a prince (nun)”<sup>[39]</sup> and in the early period this name referred to An as the father of the gods.<sup>[40]</sup> As such, it is the equivalent of the Semitic term “sons of El”, which was confirmed in early Phoenicia in the 14th century BC.<sup>[41]</sup>

We may suspect that the god, An, was originally associated with the symbol of the eagle which inhabited the top of the world tree. Although the Sumerian eagle was in later times associated with An’s son, Enlil,<sup>[42]</sup> and even with Enlil’s son, Ninurta, the name of the eagle, namely Anzu, rather seems to imply an association with An. The name, An-zu,<sup>[43]</sup> literally means “the one who knows An/heaven”. And even though the word, “an”, may in this instance refer to heaven in a more general sense of the word, the fact that the eagle was in early Sumerian tradition associated with the heaven of An as well as the gods closely connected to him, strongly implies that it was originally indeed his symbol. It might thus have represented the spirit of the supreme god.

The Hurrian account of the fallen gods is told in the Theogony from Bogozköy. A theogony describes the origins and genealogies of the gods. It was said that the god, An, had an opponent, called Kumarbi, who rebelled against him. In the ensuing conflict between them, Kumarbi pulled An out of heaven and castrated him. In the process, Kumarbi somehow swallowed his father’s seed. We read: “... (he) bit his knees, (so that) his manhood was absorbed in Kumarbi’s interior.” When Kumarbi, however, fell pregnant with this seed, he spat some out. In total five gods were born, namely the storm god, who broke out from Kumarbi’s skull, the Aranzah River and Tasmisu, both from his body, and two



other gods, apparently from the spat out seed that fell on the ground.<sup>[44]</sup>

The similarity between this account and the Sumerian one is undeniable. That which is told about the Hurrian god, Kumarbi,<sup>[45]</sup> corresponds greatly with what we already know about the Sumerian god, Enki, who also consumed seed and fell pregnant with it. In both versions, the seed fell onto the ground, which is a distinctly important aspect of the myth. And in both cases, we find that certain gods were born from this seed, three from Kumarbi's body and two from the ground in the Hurrian tradition and four pairs of gods and goddesses in the earlier Sumerian tradition.

What the Hurrian version of the story, interestingly enough, shows us, is that the seed of Enki that fell on the ground in the Sumerian version, was in actual fact not his own but that of An. The most important difference between the two versions is that the supreme god, An, does not feature in the Sumerian version, where Enki is the only recognised god in the said context.

The Hurrian version of this tale was later passed on to ancient Greece, where it was told that Uranus (the sky) was castrated by his son, Kronos. Uranus's genitals fell in the Mediterranean Sea near Cyprus, where the Erinyes, Giants and Meliads (a kind of nymph) were born from it. From the white foam that formed in the sea around the genitals, the beautiful goddess, Aphrodite, was born. She is typically portrayed as a naked maiden standing in a scallop shell. She portrays the ancient shamanistic notion that naked female spirits were born from the seed which fell on the ground.

### **THE EGYPTIAN VERSION**

We find the same story in Egypt, where it is inscribed on the walls of the Edfu temple in Upper Egypt in the south. According to these inscriptions on the stone walls of the said temple, this tale belongs to a tradition going back to the



first *primaeval* age, the earliest time recalled by man, a time long before the first Egyptian temples were even built. It is, in fact, said to go back to a time before the original homeland of these *primaeval* people was destroyed by a massive flood.

In those earliest of times, the ancestors of those who would later build and construct the Egyptian temples, were living in a distant land, called the original “homeland” of the gods. The backdrop and situation in that homeland was very primitive and there are clear indications of shamanistic practice. We, for example, read in the inscriptions, the Edfu texts, about a pillar called the *dd*-pillar, probably some kind of reed structure, on top of which a god, called the *Pn*-god, was depicted as a falcon. This is simply the old shamanistic image of the tree with the bird perched in its top. This *dd*-pillar later developed into the well-known Egyptian Djed pillar, with a falcon sitting on its top.

The Egyptian account tells about a nameless “earth-god”, also described as a serpent. In the texts, he is sometimes called Ptah (*pth*), a god well-known in the Egypt of later times. His seed fell on the ground, on the soft ground of the first *primaeval* island, which appeared at the time of creation. Seemingly, we again come across the concept of castration, as we read: “You placed your seed into the *bnnt* [embryo of the earth] which you fertilised with your phallus, which you have plunged in Nun [the *primaeval* waters], being united as one.”<sup>[46]</sup> From this seed, called the “seed of Nun”, was born eight *primaeval* gods, who together took the form of a lotus in the *primaeval* waters. These eight gods comprised of four pairs of gods and goddesses, collectively called the “Ogdoad”. They were also envisioned as four pairs of bulls and cows.

An interesting variation on the theme only found in the Egyptian rendition of the story, is that the eight gods, now called the *primaeval* fathers and mothers, produced another god. They are described as “Fathers who fertilised, Mothers

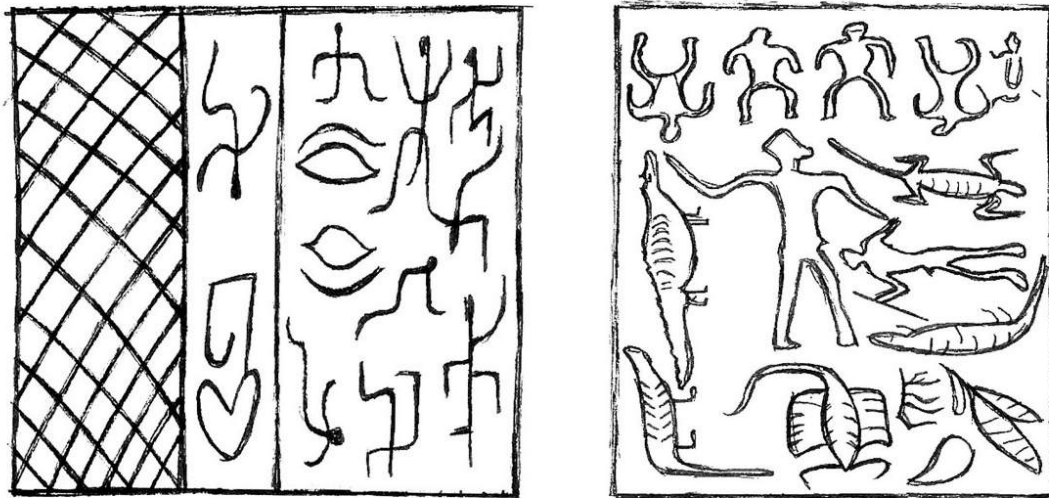
who gave birth”.<sup>[47]</sup> This ninth god appeared as a radiance in the centre of the lotus in the primaeval waters and was called the “August Stripling”. This is the exact same god who appeared as the *Pn*-god on the *dd*-pillar, mentioned earlier. Although this radiance was in later times interpreted as being the sun god appearing in the lotus, it originally referred to a messianic child, with the sun and moon for eyes, said to have been his “flaming eyes”.

The scholar, E. A. E Raymond, well-known for her work on the Edfu texts, proposed that this myth was the original one inspiring similar myths later associated with the various Egyptian temples.<sup>[48]</sup> In Heliopolis in Lower Egypt in the north, for example, the Ogdoad also played a very important role. There the story was told that the god, Atum, embraced his own shadow and consumed his own seed. After spitting it out, the Ogdoad eight were similarly born from it.

In Hermopolis in Middle Egypt, where Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom, had his main sanctuary, they also depicted the Ogdoad as four pairs of gods and goddesses. Here, however, these gods were portrayed with toad heads and the goddesses with snake heads,<sup>[49]</sup> indicating that the Ogdoad was originally viewed as four dwarfs and four snake-maidens. In line with this, we find that they were also portrayed as eight dwarfs.<sup>[50]</sup> In later times, Ptah, the later form of the “earth-god”, who produced the Ogdoad, was also depicted as a dwarf.<sup>[51]</sup>

The earliest portrayal of four and eight dwarfish figures, shown in typical bow-legged fashion, appears in the Predynastic Period in Egypt, showing that the Edfu tradition was already known at that time. What is more is that they are shown together with those very symbols emphasised in the myth. The eight dwarfish figures are, for example, shown on a cylinder seal found at Naqada, north of Edfu,<sup>[52]</sup> with two eyes next to them, the eyes clearly representing the sun and the moon. Another portrayal, on a limestone

cylinder dating from that time and currently in the Cairo Museum (CG 14518), shows four dwarfish figures together with two ithyphallic men (i.e. men with erect phalli), depicting the seed motif.<sup>[53]</sup> These two images are shown below.



*Figure 4. Two cylinder seal impressions with depictions of four and eight dwarfish figures respectively.*

A lot of agreement obviously exists between the Egyptian and earlier Sumerian versions of the story. In both instances, the god whose seed fell on the ground is called “earth-god” or “lord of the earth” (“Enki” literally meaning “lord earth”). In both instances, we have good reason to assume that this god was regarded as a dwarf-god. Both Atum and Enki consumed their own seed. Finally, eight gods were born from the earth-god’s seed that fell on the ground.

In both traditions, the *primaeval* waters were called Nun. In the Sumerian tradition it was also called the Apsu, where, as we have already seen, the word “nun” means both “the deep” and “prince”. In both instances, the earth-god’s seed was called the “seed of Nun”, A-nun-na(ki) in Sumerian. And

in both instances, no mention is made of the supreme god, who has no counterpart in Egypt. Although we do not read that the eight gods in Sumer produced a ninth god, there is, in fact, a god very similar in nature to the “August Stripling” of the Edfu texts, namely the god, Gibil. He was similarly born from the Apsu and he also possessed the brilliance attributed to the “August Stripling”.

Given all these detailed similarities and correspondences between the two versions of the story, one can safely propose that the Egyptian account, even though it presumably goes back to the Sumerian original, presents the oldest version thereof with its primitive features having been better preserved than in the Sumerian one available to us. In the Egyptian version, the shamanistic features are more clearly observable. It is in this version, this shamanistic version so to say, where the dwarfs and the naked (snake-)maidens resurface.

But how, one may ask, did the story end up in Egypt. We find an indisputable and very strong Sumerian presence visible in Egypt during the Predynastic Period. We should interpret this evidence in terms of the so-called “Uruk expansion” of that time, when the Sumerians were active all across the Middle East, even in the most outlying parts of western and northern Mesopotamia. We can, therefore, with good reason assume that it was during this expansion period that the story found its way to Egypt. We will return to the very important Edfu texts in a later chapter.

## THE BIBLICAL TRADITION

Our story is of course and interestingly enough also to be found in the Christian Bible. And although the motif of the fallen angels features in various places throughout the Bible, the story now under discussion appears only once in it. As the biblical version of the myth obviously dates much later than the others, we do not find the same primitive, and somewhat crude, motifs that characterise them, in it. We, for instance, do not read about seed but of “stars” that fell on the ground. There are also other elements belonging to the more evolved form of this unfolding story and we will focus on them in due course.

We find the story in the last book of the Christian Bible, namely the New Testament *Book of Revelation*. Here, a great red dragon, called the “old serpent” or “devil and Satan”, appeared in heaven.<sup>[54]</sup> This dragon pulled along a third of the stars of heaven with its tail and threw them on the earth. These fallen stars refer to the fallen angels who followed Satan in his rebellion against God. According to the biblical tradition, only one-third of God’s angels became fallen creatures. As before, we find that these angels are said to have fallen on earth.

As we have seen, this story about the fallen angels is very old, going back to the very earliest strata of human myth. I did not even endeavour to present all the known versions of this story but it will suffice to say that it was told and recalled in many different cultures all across the ancient world. The basis of this myth is that at some stage there was a rebellion in the otherworld when one of the gods, in time called “Lord of the Earth”, came in direct conflict with the supreme god, called God, An in the Sumerian tradition and El in the Semitic tradition.

The result was that some of the supreme god’s “seed”, sometimes also regarded as the seed of the earth-god, fell on the earth. And although they were fallen gods, they were

still called Anunna(ki), an equivalent for the early Semitic expression, “sons of El”. As fallen gods, they were the gods who followed the earth-god and may as such also be taken as his “seed”. The story told in this book is about the tradition of these fallen gods. Particularly interesting about this tradition, is the fact that these gods are said to have fathered children with the daughters of men. And this fascinating notion forms the subject of the next chapter.

### 3. THE NEPHILIM

One of the most well-known and intriguing stories about the fallen angels is that they had children with the “daughters of men”. We find this account in the sixth chapter of the biblical *Book of Genesis* where it is mentioned against the backdrop of the wickedness of the people in the age before the deluge. In this account, these angels are called “sons of God”, a name that goes back to the very early strata of biblical tradition. Somehow these “sons of God” were able to father offspring with human girls. This, according to the story, happened both before and after the deluge.

We read: “[T]hat the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose... There were giants [Nephilim, fallen or mighty ones, heroes] on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”<sup>[55]</sup>

#### THE NEPHILIM

According to this biblical story, the beings who fathered children with human girls were called “sons of God”. This designation is merely the biblical equivalent of the old Semitic designation of “sons of El”. Here, “sons of God” seemingly refer to angels present on earth, the fallen angels that is. And their earthly descendants were seen as “giants” or heroes.

The Hebrew word translating to “giants” is Nephilim, derived from the word *nâphal*. *Nâphal* means “to fall” and Nephilim has been taken to mean “feller”, “bully”, “tyrant” or “giant” by certain authorities and as “the fallen ones” or

“ones who have fallen” by others. In the second interpretation of the word, Nephilim, the angels who fathered these children with human girls were considered to have been “fallen” creatures, explaining why their descendants were “fallen ones”. Being of non-human descent, they were exceedingly powerful men and became well-known for their mighty deeds.

The word, Nephilim, occurs in only one other place in the Hebrew Bible, namely in the *Book of Numbers*,<sup>[56]</sup> where we read that the Israelite scouts saw them in the land of Canaan before the Israelite conquest. These early inhabitants of the land were viewed as descendants of the early Nephilim and are described as real giants: “There we saw the giants [Nephilim] (the descendants of Anak came from the giants [*gibbôr*]); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.” In this second mentioning of the so-called giants another Hebrew word, *gibbôr*, is used, which means something similar to Nephilim, namely “powerful”, “warrior”, “tyrant”, “champion”.

Biblical scholars have through the ages always been perplexed and puzzled by these beings called Nephilim. Who in fact were they, why were they described in these terms and where did the story about them originate? Although the term Nephilim has often been studied exclusively within the context of biblical tradition, there can be no doubt that their story goes back to a time long before the Bible was written. The author of the *Book of Genesis* merely took it over from a much older tradition that was well-known across the ancient Middle East.

Fascinatingly enough, this story is also found in ancient Sumerian texts, much older than the Bible. When we comb through those texts, we discover this theme in the ancient stories of Lugalbanda. And so, it forms part of the very same tradition discussed in the previous chapter. Here, however, the story is set in the postdiluvian period in Sumerian tradition<sup>[57]</sup> when the first royal House of Uruk ruled over the



land of Sumer, with Lugalbanda being mentioned in the *Sumerian King List* as a king from this royal dynasty.

### **THE STORY OF LUGALBANDA**

The name, Lugalbanda, means “little king”. This description suggests that he must have been of small, midget-like stature, most probably a dwarf or pygmy. Although it was not impossible for a dwarf to become king, it was certainly unusual and one may rightfully ask what the reason could have been for him becoming king. We find that Lugalbanda was also a great shaman. And in the *Lugalbanda Epic*, our hero is portrayed in exactly such terms.

Not only is the paradigmatic shamanistic symbol of the enormous tree with the Anzu eagle in its top and the serpent at its bottom beautifully described in this myth, Lugalbanda is also described as being transported to the otherworldly domain of the Anzu’s nest high up in the tree. One can even go so far as to say that Lugalbanda is classically depicted as the archetype of the pygmy-shaman in this story told about him. As such, he would have been greatly revered not to mention feared.

Lugalbanda’s story is told in two parts, namely *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave* and *Lugalbanda and the Thunderbird*. The first part tells how Enmerkar, Lugalbanda’s predecessor as king of Uruk in Sumer in the *Sumerian King List*, devised a campaign against the land of Aratta in the north. He called on the people to take up arms and placed them under the command of eight warrior leaders, namely Lugalbanda together with seven other young men. On the road to Aratta, Lugalbanda fell ill and his companions left him in a cave high up in a mountain called Sabium, a mountain being associated with the so-called Lulubi people in the story. His companions “made him a bower like a bird’s nest” and left some food to serve as a “funeral meal” in case he died. [\[58\]](#)

When Lugalbanda recovered and left the cave, he noticed the “plant of life” and consumed thereof. He also noticed the “water of life” and drank thereof. We read: “Holy Lugalbanda came out of the mountain cave. There upon the fertile one [the soil], who appeases Enlil’s heart, begot the plant of life. The rolling river, the mother of the hills brought down the water of life. Lugalbanda nibbled at the plant of life, he sipped of the water of life...”<sup>[59]</sup> Lugalbanda then gained new energy, “like a wild ass of Sakkan [the god of wild animals] he races over the hills”. He is described in animalistic terms, roaming in the mountains “with hoofs”. He was then told in a dream to bring an offering to the great gods.

In the next part of the story, Lugalbanda found himself in the Thunderbird or Anzu’s nest, the Anzu already in the first part of the story being said to have kept high up in Enki’s “eagle” tree. With him in the nest was the Thunderbird’s chick. Lugalbanda prepared a meal for the Thunderbird and its family, which might be a reference to the offering he had earlier prepared for the gods. Lugalbanda says: “I shall treat the bird as befits him, I shall embrace his wife. Anzu’s wife and child I shall seat at a banquet... when the bird has drunk beer he will be happy; when Anzu has drunk beer he will be happy.”<sup>[60]</sup>

The Thunderbird was very delighted to find Lugalbanda in its nest and he was now seen as being part of the Thunderbird’s family with the bird becoming his father, its wife his mother and its offspring his siblings. He says: “Yesterday I put my life in your hands, entrusted my being to you. Saying ‘May your wife become my mother.’ And saying ‘May you become my father.’ I shall treat your little ones as my brothers.”<sup>[61]</sup>

The bird then gave him a gift confirming his place in the family. He received speed and endurance. As a consequence, he would in future be able to move to any place of his choice as fast as the Thunderbird itself. Now, he

was a “princeling”, which might indicate that he became a god because the gods were called “Annunaki”, meaning “seed of the prince” or “seed of princes” or simply “princes”.

After this otherworldly experience, the Thunderbird warned Lugalbanda not to tell any of these things to his companions once he returned: “Come, my Lugalbanda, let me advise you, and may you take my advice, let me say a word to you and may you pay heed to it! What I have said to you, the qualities I have decreed for you, you should not mention to your comrades, should not show your brothers! To do a favour, is to call evil into being in hearts.”<sup>[62]</sup> The secret nature of this experience implies that we should view it as a shamanistic initiation which only a select few were allowed to take part in.

When Lugalbanda reunited with his friends, he felt as if he had only been away for three days even though a long period of time had expired. The Sumerian scholar, Herman Vanstiphout, writes the following about our hero’s strange experience: “These regions [where the hero’s wanderings take place] may therefore be regarded as another kind of space... Lugalbanda seems to have stepped out of this world for three otherworldly days before returning to the world we and his companions know.”<sup>[63]</sup>

In the poem, his return is beautifully described “as one back from the dead”.<sup>[64]</sup> We read that he was like a *u*-bird appearing from the reeds, like a *lahmu* (a mythological being) appearing from the Apsu, “like a man set from heaven upon earth”.<sup>[65]</sup> He had clearly returned from an otherworldly realm back to the normal world.

## THE “PLANT OF LIFE”

Strikingly, this rendition of Lugalbanda’s journey is the earliest known description of the otherworldly shamanistic journey. There cannot be any doubt that this story recounts Lugalbanda’s visit to the otherworldly realm in which the nest of the Thunderbird is to be found. All aspects of this story should be viewed in this light. The cave, for example, may be taken as a “concrete symbol of passage into another world”.<sup>[66]</sup> Lugalbanda’s roaming in the northern mountains, recalls the stories of “rustic hermits” who once roamed the northern mountainous areas of ancient India.<sup>[67]</sup> According to the *Rig Veda*, one of the Sanskrit books that forms the oldest and most sacred literature corpus of the Hindus, these early sages walked around naked and with long unkempt hair. They are, intriguingly enough, also said to have become “gods”.

While roaming in the mountains, Lugalbanda, according to the story, found the fountain of life. This may refer to a magical fountain. He, however, also found the “plant of life”, which begs the question as to what this mysterious plant could have been. In order to explore the nature of this plant, one should first consider the effects it had on our hero. After he partook of it, he is described in animalistic terms, having “hoofs” for instance. This clearly suggests a kind of transformation, similar to that found in shamanistic experiences all around the world.<sup>[68]</sup> The remarkable speed he received as a gift from the Thunderbird should also be viewed in this light. And this is also and exactly how one should look at the Thunderbird’s nest to which Lugalbanda was miraculously transported.

All these things suggest that the “plant of life” may be a consciousness-altering drug. The most likely plant found in these parts and used by shamans in the far northern regions to this day, is the fly agaric mushroom (*Amanita muscaria*), growing in symbiotic association with the birch tree. Not

only does this mushroom “confer on him [the shaman]... miraculous powers of mobility”, which transport him to otherworldly places of his choice;<sup>[69]</sup> it also grows in exactly these northern Lulubi Mountains where Lugalbanda roamed.

Such an assumption is supported by the description of the shamanistic tree in cosmic terms in Lugalbanda’s story, with the nest of the “bear” bird in the top apparently referring to the northern constellation of Ursa Major, or the “Big Bear”:

“Now there was a splendid eagle-tree of Enki, On top of the many-hued carnelian hill of Inana, it stood – fixed in the earth like a flower it was...

Its shade covers the highest peak in the highlands like a cloth, spreads over them like a linen sheet, its roots, like *sagkal*-snakes, repose in the Sun’s seven-mouthed river...

In the midst thereof only the *buru-az* [bear] bird built its nest and lays its eggs.

There the bird Anzu had made his nest and settled his young...

The nest was made of juniper and boxhood.

The bird had woven their bright twigs into a shade.

At daybreak, when the bird stretches himself at sunrise, when Anzu cries out, the earth in the Lulubi Mountains shakes at his cry.”<sup>[70]</sup>

This eagle’s nest in the top of the tree where Lugalbanda was miraculously taken to, has an exact parallel in typical shamanistic experiences. In these experiences, shamans see such nests in the cosmic tree. One documented description by a shaman reads as follows: “On the different branches of the tree were large nests with thick twigs and an eagle sitting quietly and peacefully in each one.”<sup>[71]</sup> Here, the soul of the initiate, the future shaman, is typically envisioned as a chick in the eagle’s nest.<sup>[72]</sup> This means that Lugalbanda’s entire experience should be viewed as a

shamanistic “rebirth” as part of an initiation into such circles.

The association of the “plant of life” with the shamanistic experience is also found in the Vedic tradition. In this instance, they associated an “intoxicating drink”, called Soma, with the ancient sages. This drink was made from a plant that grew in the northern mountains and was closely linked with storm clouds. The Soma was a “storm cloud imbued with life”.<sup>[73]</sup> One of its names in the *Avesta*, the most ancient scriptures of Zoroastrianism, is “varesaji”, meaning “plant of life”,<sup>[74]</sup> the exact same name as Lugalbanda’s plant! Those who consumed this brew, either by eating or drinking it, saw the gods and even became immortal themselves.<sup>[75]</sup> This indicates that the Soma was nothing but a drink prepared from the fly agaric mushroom.

One can argue that the sages of the *Rig Veda* belonged to the very same North Asian shamanistic tradition we now associate with Lugalbanda. The “plant of life” might have been a general name for the fly agaric mushroom growing under the birch trees in these northern parts.<sup>[76]</sup>

### **SECRETS OF THE GODS**

Lugalbanda’s story is one of initiation, the so-called *rite de passage*. Various aspects of the story point in this direction: “[Lugalbanda performs] cultic acts and undergoes an ordeal”, “he receives secret information and new powers”, “he rejoins his society with a status of new, though secret, power”.<sup>[77]</sup>

The banquet enjoyed by Lugalbanda and the bird family, is typically associated with such mystery cults. Great emphasis is also placed on secrets, secrets that exclusively belong to the Anzu birds. These secrets seemingly belong to spiritual beings involved in this kind of shamanistic transformation process<sup>[78]</sup> as well as the initiates to whom those secrets are revealed.

In the story, the Anzu bird is portrayed as a species with access to all kinds of otherworldly knowledge. The Anzu is even associated with a secret tablet on which the secrets of the gods were inscribed. We read that the Anzu itself is the very embodiment of such a tablet: “You are a very tablet all inscribed.”<sup>[79]</sup> This refers to the form of the bird’s wings, which, when open, look like an inscribed tablet. It also emphasises the bird’s access to hidden knowledge.

The name of one of the Anzu bird’s ancestors, Dingirhalhala or “god of all secrets”, is in line and agrees with them knowing great secrets.<sup>[80]</sup> It also reminds of another Anzu bird in another very early story, namely that of Etana, where the bird is described as “one exceedingly wise”.<sup>[81]</sup>

As a matter of inevitability, an initiation ritual or ceremony implies the presence of other shamans. This then further means that there must have been other such shamans who roamed the northern mountains from the earliest of times. We can easily imagine that a secret shamanistic Order of the Thunderbird could have existed in these northern regions and that outsiders could from time to time also have been initiated into it. In later times, these shamans were probably taken up and included in the framework of the earliest temples.

As the early Kesh temple, referred to earlier, was one such institution where many of the older themes associated with the cosmic tree, like the Thunderbird and the snake-woman, were included and assimilated into its practice, one can expect such shamans among the early priests involved in this temple practice. And this is precisely what we find! We read that some of these priests were called Annunaki and regarded as gods: “The holy house Kesh, the prolificator of which is the bedroom, the house—its en-priests are Annunaki-gods.”<sup>[82]</sup>

Shamans associated with such temples were involved in fertility rites. Those associated with the Anzu bird were also



involved in warrior rites. The reason is that the Anzu bird, depicted with the face of a lion in order to embody the “roaring” thunder, was a symbol closely associated with warriors. The great Sumerian warrior god, Ninurta,<sup>[83]</sup> and his counterpart, Ningirsu, are, for example, closely associated with the Anzu. In the Lugalbanda story the Anzu says the following to our hero: “May Ninurta, Enlil’s son, cover your crown with the helmet ‘King of Battle’.”<sup>[84]</sup> This also reflects the context of the story, with Lugalbanda having been on his way to do battle against the mighty Aratta.

All of these things suggest that this initiation was undergone in order to have become a warrior-shaman. Such shamans were called upon to provide protection in the struggle against evil forces, fighting off such forces in various situations. In the Lugalbanda story, there is in fact one such instance which suggests the need for such powers, namely when the sun disappeared ostensibly due to a solar eclipse, an event during which those ancients believed that all kinds of evil forces were at work.<sup>[85]</sup> Under those circumstances, Lugalbanda’s role as a warrior-shaman, as one who could control or manipulate cosmic forces, would have been very important.

After his return, Lugalbanda was believed to be a “holy man”, a “herald of heaven”. In the somewhat incomplete text it is written: “[G]ranted to him [Lugalbanda] the great office of herald of heaven. And he added the jurisdiction over all the countries, and the... of the gods.”<sup>[86]</sup> He was privy even to information that the “Anuna, the great gods, do not [even] know”.<sup>[87]</sup>

### **PYGMY-SHAMANS?**

One may well ask if Lugalbanda’s short, midget-like stature could have played a role in him having been chosen to be initiated into this order of warrior-shamans. The reason why this aspect should be taken under consideration is the



fact that the so-called little people were among the spirits encountered in the mushroom induced shamanistic experience. This may imply that dwarfs or pygmies were taken as the embodiment of those spirits, perhaps only after they attained divinity through initiation. Pygmies might have been regarded as the direct progeny of the fallen gods on earth.

Although other people were most likely also initiated into these mysteries, the ancients might have regarded such pygmy-shamans with particular reverence. They obtained not only divinity and became gods, they were also considered as the embodiment of the dwarfish spirits or gods of the mushrooms. In this kind of shamanism, it can certainly be suggested that pygmy-shamans, like Lugalbanda, embodied these spirits or were possessed by them.

There is good reason to believe that pygmies were indigenous to the mountainous areas to the north and east of ancient Sumer. We find, for example, that a certain god called Humba/Hanubani, sometimes shown as a dwarf or pygmy, was worshipped by the Lulubi people, who lived in those northern mountains. One of their rulers was called Anubanini,<sup>[88]</sup> a name clearly derived from the name of this god.

Humba was also worshipped by the Elamites to the east of Sumer, where the road leading through the seven mountain passes to Aratta in the north, began.<sup>[89]</sup> This god was associated with shamanistic practices such as the reading of animal entrails.<sup>[90]</sup> We might even surmise that he was the god of pygmy-shamans.

If these midget-like shamans are the same ones we come across in the Lugalbanda story, they would also have been associated with manipulating the weather, especially thunder. This follows from Lugalbanda's close association with the Thunderbird.

Depictions of dwarfish figures are also found in Sumer itself. Dwarfs or pygmies are, for instance, shown under a large bull-headed lyre with dancing women around them on a cylinder seal of lapis lazuli, found on a woman attendant in the so-called Great Death Pit at Ur, dating from the Ur I period (c. 2700 BC). The dwarfs or pygmies, who may even be naked, are dancing away with great abandon. In the same depiction, a banquet is shown, with men drinking through tubes from a jar.

The dwarfs or pygmies, as dancers or musicians, might have had a close connection to the lyre. The discovery, for instance, of a copper bull headed piece of a lyre at the Barbar tempel (level IIa) on the island of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, attests not only to the widespread use of the lyre<sup>[91]</sup> but probably also to the presence of such dwarfish figures all across the southern Gulf area. In Old Babylonian times, representations of dwarfish figures, often shown as playing the lute, became very popular. Sometimes they appear with naked dancing women.

Although it is certainly possible that these dwarfs were merely entertainers, one should, in keeping with our earlier observation, surely consider the possibility that one of the most important Sumerian gods, Enki, was viewed as dwarfish. The eight gods who came forth from Enki or the earth-god's fallen seed were also described as dwarfs or pygmies in some traditions, for example in Egypt. This strongly suggests that Enki's followers might originally have been pygmies as it can surely be expected that they worshipped such a pigmy god. These pygmies would have lived in the southern marches of Mesopotamia, where Enki's sanctuary at Eridu was located. Enki's worshippers did in fact bring him fish offerings, a product of the marches.<sup>[92]</sup>

It seems plausible that such pygmies were also found in the areas surrounding Sumer, where they might have been associated with the god, Humba. They would indeed have been the elves of the ancient world.

### LUGALBANDA AS A *LILLÛ* DAEMON

Of special interest to our story is that part of the Lugalbanda tradition making him the father of that great and well-known Sumerian hero, Gilgamesh, by the girl Ninsun. We do not find this aspect in the *Lugalbanda Epic* but in other traditions about him. All the Lugalbanda traditions were originally passed down orally and were only written down long after the events they describe had taken place. Lugalbanda is thought to have lived somewhere towards the end of the fourth or early third millennium BC, whereas the first written texts about him only date back to about the middle of the third millennium BC. The tales we have already discussed date from the time of the great Sumerian renaissance during the Ur III period (c. 2168-2060 BC).

The earliest known literary work about our hero is *Lugalbanda and Ninsun*. It is found among the oldest known literary works written in Sumerian and dates back to about 2500 BC. It tells the story of the romantic relationship between Lugalbanda and Ninsun and according to a later literary work, *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, Gilgamesh was their son. Gilgamesh himself says: "By my mother Ninsun who bore me, by my father Lugalbanda (who sired me)."<sup>[93]</sup>

Another tradition, however, exists in the *Sumerian King List* and, as we will see, it does not necessarily stand in conflict with this one. Here, we read that Gilgamesh's father was a so-called *lillû* daemon: "Divine Gilgamesh, his father (was) a *lillû* daemon, a high priest of Kulab."<sup>[94]</sup> The question begs as how to make sense of this very strange reference to a high priest who was a *lillû* daemon. The only occasion when the high priest was ceremonially involved in such an event was during the fertility rites associated with the so-called *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage ritual, consummated between the high priest and high priestess of the goddess, Inana.

During these ceremonies, a girl from the royal house was set aside for this purpose. The high priest would then come from Kulab, the ancient name of the An temple precinct, seemingly on the opposite bank of the Euphrates River from the temple of the goddess Inana, in the city of Uruk.<sup>[95]</sup> Although this ceremony is often only looked at in the context of fertility, the data in the *King List* tells another story. This data implies that those people believed the high priest to have been possessed by a spirit, daemon or god who would then produce a child with the high priestess. This understanding of these things is in full agreement with Herodotus's comment that girls were set aside for a "god" in the ziggurat in Babylonian times.<sup>[96]</sup>

This interpretation may, for example, well explain why the en-priests, the high priests who took part in the fertility rites and sacred marriage rituals, are called Anunnaki in the *Kesh Temple Hymn*. They might have thought these en-priests to have been possessed by certain spirits when practising these rites. The *lillû* daemon<sup>[97]</sup> mentioned in the text might therefore have been such a spirit. Although this kind of spirit was considered to be evil, an evil spirit seeking a mate in later times, this was not necessarily the case in the original tradition, especially where this spirit's offspring, Gilgamesh, was such a great hero. In the *hieros gamos* it then follows that these spirits or gods, through the actions of the high priests, fathered children with the "daughters of men".

If the two traditions about Gilgamesh's parentage are read together, the implication is that Lugalbanda was the high priest through whom Gilgamesh was conceived. And this makes absolute sense: We have already seen that Lugalbanda was the archetypal priest-shaman, which obviously qualified him to have acted as high priest in these ceremonies. If these events took place during the reign of Lugalbanda's predecessor, King Enmerkar, in the time when the story in the *Lugalbanda Epic* is said to have happened,

the high priestess set aside for this ritual would most probably have been Enmerkar's daughter. Ninsun must have been Enmerkar's daughter, which explains why he, as the king, did not perform the ritual himself.

Another version of the story of Gilgamesh's birth exists and although it dates much later, it is clearly based on the authentic Sumerian tradition.<sup>[98]</sup> According to Claudius Aelianus (c. 200 AD) this is how the events unfolded: "An eagle fostered a baby. And I want to tell the whole story... When Senechorus [apparently Enmerkar] was king of Babylon, the Chaldeans foretold that the son born to his daughter would wrest the kingdom from his grandfather. This made him afraid and (if I may be allowed the small jest) he played Acrisius to his daughter: he put the strictest of watchers upon her. For all that, since fate was cleverer than the king of Babylon, the girl became a mother, being pregnant by some obscure man.

"So the guards from fear of the king hurled the infant from the citadel, for that was where the aforesaid girl was imprisoned. Now an eagle which saw with its piercing eyes the child while still falling, before it was dashed to the earth, flew beneath it, flung its back under it, and conveyed it to some garden and set it down with the utmost care. But when the keeper of the place saw the pretty baby he fell in love with it and nursed it, and it was called Gilgamos and became king of Babylon."<sup>[99]</sup>

In this instance, the "obscure man", literally the "invisible man",<sup>[100]</sup> refers to the *lillû* daemon of the *Sumerian King List*. The citadel where the king's daughter was held captive obviously refers to the Inana temple. The reference to the eagle is also an interesting one as it is the same bird that is associated with Lugalbanda. There is another striking correspondence with the early Sumerian tradition about Gilgamesh, namely that he was brought up in secret. According to *Gilgamesh and Akka*, Gilgamesh had as child indeed been taken away for his own safety, to Akka, the son

of Enmebaragesi, the king of the city of Kish, to the north of Sumer.<sup>[101]</sup> Claudis Aelianus's reference to Acrisius relates this story to that of the Greek hero, Perseus, of whom the same things were told in a later tradition.

We now discover that the Gilgamesh story shows astounding resemblance to the story of the fallen angels in the *Book of Genesis*. This is, in fact, the only Sumerian story on which the biblical account could have been based! It explains how the Bible story should be understood when considered in the light of its Sumerian forerunner. It explains not only the "sons of God" but also how the ancients understood them to have fathered children with the "daughters of men", the progeny of the fallen gods among the "sons of God".

But what about the so-called Giants? How should we look at and understand this part of the biblical tradition? According to the Sumerian tradition, Gilgamesh was, in fact, a giant of seven cubits, about three and a half meters, high!<sup>[102]</sup> The various characteristics associated with the Nephilim are obviously visible in the person of Gilgamesh. He was not only a great hero, he is also described as a bully who dominated in competitions the young men and women of Uruk participated in.<sup>[103]</sup> Great and mighty deeds are ascribed to him in *The Gilgamesh Epic*. He was indeed, as we read in the biblical tradition, a "mighty hero, who was famous in antiquity".<sup>[104]</sup>

We do thus find all the most important aspects of the biblical story of the Nephilim in ancient Sumerian stories. In the person of Gilgamesh, we have identified one of these Nephilim, one who was certainly a very famous hero.<sup>[105]</sup> And this is quite an amazing discovery! The biblical tradition is clearly based on a much older tradition originating in ancient Sumer. It can safely be said that we have indeed discovered the origin of the Nephilim tradition!

We can now proceed to explore these tales in more detail within the wider milieu to which they belong.<sup>[106]</sup>

## 4. DESCENDANTS OF THE SUN GOD

The earliest Sumerian story of gods fathering earthly offspring was told about the first royal House of Uruk. For the Sumerians this dynasty was not simply another royal house. For them it, in fact, was one of the greatest dynasties, if not the very greatest, ever to have ruled over Sumer. And on top of it all, this dynasty was said to have descended from the great gods themselves!

According to the *Sumerian King List*, the first House of Uruk, currently called the First Dynasty of Uruk so as to distinguish them from later dynasties who ruled in Uruk and who also tracked their descent back to the early Urukites, descended from the sun god, Utu. This means that the members of this dynasty were not mere human beings but rather the offspring of the gods. For the ancients, this superhuman descent was visible in the great and mighty deeds done by those heroes, mighty men like Enmerkar, Lugalbanda, Dumuzi and Gilgamesh. Deeds reflected in the great monuments attributed to them, to this very day confirming the fact that the House of Uruk yielded one of the most remarkable and outstanding epochs in ancient Mesopotamian history. As such, it makes perfect sense that some of those rulers were in time seen and regarded as gods themselves.

### DESCENT FROM THE GODS

The question arises as to why the House of Uruk was regarded as scions of the sun god, Utu.<sup>[107]</sup> In Sumerian tradition, Utu was the son of the moon god, Nanna, also called Suen, and later Sin by the Semites. This is very important as Nanna was closely associated with the *hieros gamos* or sacred marriage ritual. Participants in these rituals



were described in Nanna terminology and symbolism, with the high priest and high priestess taking on the roles of Nanna and his consort, Ningal, or “great lady”, envisaged as a bull and a cow.

In descriptions of the sacred marriage ceremony, the oldest and most typical image is that of a bull mounting a cow in a “stable”. The high priest wore a headpiece in the form of a crescent moon,<sup>[108]</sup> approaching his “cow” in the “back room” of the temple where even the bed was decorated in a cow like fashion: “[The temple’s] bed, when it had been set up in the bedroom, was (like) a young cow kneeling, in its place where it slept, on its pure back, spread with fresh hay.”<sup>[109]</sup> During the marital act, the temple was like a “roaring” bull, “bellowing like a breed bull, inside the innermost of the house”.<sup>[110]</sup>

Similarly to the participants in the sacred marriage ritual fulfilling the roles of Nanna and Ningal, the fruit of their union was identified with the sun god, son of this divine pair. Accordingly, the Urukite kings were viewed as the “sun” on earth. We, for example, read about King Enmerkar: “The day dawned and unto Utu, who had risen, it made the country’s ‘Utu’ [the king], lift up the head.”<sup>[111]</sup>

This may be seen as referring to those kings as simply performing the cosmic role of the sun god on earth, for example in the dispensing of justice. The fact that they were viewed, and viewed themselves, as scions of the sun god, however, implies far more than this. Those people most probably believed that the sun god was incarnated in the individual kings of this family, in a way like the sun’s heavenly rebirth in the cosmic cycle of the ages.

The sun god’s birth to a bull and cow pair reminds of a similar tradition in Egypt, discussed in the second chapter, namely the one found in the Edfu texts, where the sun god was also born to (four) bull and cow pairs. Given the fact that the tradition of the eight gods, born from the seed of the earth-god that fell on the ground, is shared by both



Egypt and Sumer, one may rightfully ask whether we are not looking at a common motif from the same tradition here. According to the Edfu tradition, the eight gods, envisioned as four bull and cow pairs, gave birth to a messianic child, described as a “radiance” appearing in a lotus in the *primaeval* waters, later reinterpreted as the sun god. In this way, the tradition evolved into the *primaeval* bull and cow pairs giving birth to the sun god.

If we accept that this theme had originally belonged to the Sumerian tradition, it follows that the descent of the Urukite kings from the sun god goes back to their descent from the messianic child, who, with his divine “radiance”, was later understood to have been the sun god. Their descent from the messianic child, born from the bull-cow pair(s), was thus, like in Egypt, reinterpreted as a descent from the sun god. In my view, the Sumerians remembered and revered this shining child as Gibil, who came forth from the Apsu, as we read in the following Sumerian incantation:

“Gibil, the exalted hero whom Ea [Enki] adorned with terrible brilliance, who grew up in the pure Apsu, who in Eridu, the place of (determining) fates, is unfailingly prepared, whose pure light reaches heaven, his bright tongue flashes like lightning; Gibil’s light flares up like the day.”<sup>[112]</sup>

In this instance this hero child is indeed described as the sun god appearing at dawn.

The Sumerians might have believed that the gods were reincarnated in this family through sacred marriage rituals, just like Gilgamesh, who was fathered by a spirit through Lugalbanda.

### **THE HOUSE OF URUK**

The names of the earliest Urukite rulers or the first House of Uruk, appear in the *Sumerian King List*. As most of the kings of this dynasty ruled before phonetic writing was

discovered (as we will see later), there can be no doubt, as far as the written record is concerned, that the *King List* only comprises those kings remembered in the oral tradition.

According to this list, the king who founded this dynasty after the great deluge was Meskiagkasher, the son of Utu. Although one may read this as saying that he was Utu's very first earthly offspring, the same was said about some of his other descendants, such as Enmerkar, who was likewise a "son of Utu". Clearly, this phrase was more readily afforded to kings from this royal dynasty. What made Meskiagkasher unique, however, is that, as the founder of this dynasty, he represents a new beginning, a new dynasty descended from Utu himself.

Although this House of Uruk was very special, they do not appear, as one might expect, at the top of the *Sumerian King List* but lower down on it. This does, however, not reveal much about the exact date and time they ruled over the land of Sumer. The reason for this is that the *King List* was first compiled during a much later period, with the earliest version probably dating from the time of the Akkadian Empire during the second part of the third millennium BC.<sup>[113]</sup> The better known *Sumerian King List* dates even later and had been ascribed to king Utuhegal<sup>[114]</sup> of the fifth dynasty of Uruk (who restored kingship after the Guteans overran the land in the time after the Akkadian Period) but might have been compiled in its present form even later, from votive inscriptions, local king lists and oral traditions originating in the various cities where those kings ruled.<sup>[115]</sup>

The compiler of the *King List* did not know how the reigns of the early dynasties were related to one another and merely wrote them down one beneath the other, leaving the wrong impression that Sumerian history happened like that and in that order, even though many of the mentioned kings were contemporary rulers of the different city-states in Sumer. He also accorded the great rulers reigns of hundreds

of years, something we unfortunately do not know how to interpret or explain.

Fortunately, we can use the mighty deeds attributed to the greatest kings of the House of Uruk to find each one's place in ancient Sumerian history. A remarkably consistent agreement exists between the literary traditions and the archaeological finds made in that ancient land. From this, we can figure out that this family came to Sumer right at the start of the so-called Uruk Period when the great city of Uruk was first built. This is in line with the written tradition in the *King List* according to which Meskiagkasher became king at E-anna, "house" or temple of An, and his son, Enmerkar, built the city of Uruk on this site.

The Uruk Period in Mesopotamia is separated from the older Ubaid Period by a clear change in material culture, a change in cultural remains found in the archaeological record, which coincides with the 2.7 to 3.7 meter flood layer discovered at the ancient city of Ur by the British archaeologist, Sir Leonard Woolley. Various scholars have argued that this is where the "great flood" of Sumerian and ancient Middle Eastern tradition fits into the history of Sumer, <sup>[116]</sup> a deluge remembered as an extraordinary and very drastic event in Sumer's past.

Archaeologists also found evidence of this flood at places like Uruk, Eridu and elsewhere in the area. <sup>[117]</sup> Studies show that this flood was not merely caused by a river overflowing its banks but rather by a sudden rise in the sea level, leading to the southern Sumerian plains being filled up with mud and the "braided river system" coming into existence. <sup>[118]</sup>

Although breaks in settlement are often difficult to detect as successive layers of settlement cannot always be clearly distinguished from one another, <sup>[119]</sup> we do, in fact, see a corresponding fall in population density throughout the region during this time. In the immediate period after the flood many people came as new settlers to the area in the

vicinity of the An temple.<sup>[120]</sup> This agrees with the stories about Meskiagkasher, founder of the first House of Uruk, who is said to have come to that area in the time before the city of Uruk was built there. According to the stories told about this family, they came to Sumer from the mountainous land of Aratta in the north.

## MESKIAGKASHER: “HIGH PRIEST AND KING”

According to the tradition preserved in the *Sumerian King List*, Meskiagkasher was both high priest and king: “In E-anna [temple of An] Mes-kiag-kasher, son of Utu, became high priest (“en”) and king (“lugal”) and reigned 324 years. Mes-kiag-kasher went into the sea and came out (from it) to the mountains.”<sup>[121]</sup> Throughout history, this was the ideal of all great rulers, to be both high priest and king. We also find it hundreds of years later with the great Akkadian Emperors who ruled over Mesopotamia during the second half of the third millennium BC. And we eventually find this idea in biblical tradition where this is said about the Messiah.<sup>[122]</sup>

The roles of high priest (“en”) and king (“lugal”) had a very particular history in ancient Sumer.<sup>[123]</sup> The high priest was primarily concerned with fertility rites, whereas the king was the warrior-leader of his army in battle. The earliest Sumerian rulers mentioned in the *Sumerian King List* ruled in the southernmost Sumerian city of Eridu in the antediluvian period. Although they are retrospectively called “kings” (“lugal” rulers), in the leader-of-his-army sense of the word, they were in actual fact priestly rulers (“en” rulers). Since the earliest of times, Eridu was closely connected with fertility rites and these rulers took a leading role in them.

The first ruler recognised as “king” in the Sumerian tradition is Etana, founder of the dynasty of Kish. We find this in *The Myth of Etana*, which tells about Etana’s ascent to the heaven of An. In the introduction, we read how kingship came down from An’s throne to be bestowed on a human being for the very first time:

“The pale faced people, all of them, had not yet set up a  
king.

At that time no tiara had been worn, nor crown, And no  
scepter had been studded with lapis lazuli...

Scepter, crown, tiara and staff were (still) placed before Anu [An] in heaven, There being no royal direction of her people.  
(Then) kingship descended from heaven..."<sup>[124]</sup>

Another translation of a slightly different version of *The Myth of Etana*, which includes the section where the gods bestowed the very first kingship on Etana, reads as follows:

"No king did they establish, over the teeming peoples, At that time no headdress had been assembled, nor crown, Nor yet scepter had been set with lapis.

No throne daises whatsoever had been constructed, Against the inhabited world they barred the gates...

The Igigi gods<sup>[125]</sup> surrounded the city with ramparts Ishtar came down from heaven to seek a shepherd, And sought for a king everywhere.

Innina came down from heaven to seek a shepherd, And sought for a king everywhere.

Enlil examined the dais of Etana, The man whom Ishtar<sup>[126]</sup> steadfastly...

'She has constantly sought...

'Let kingship be established in the land, Let the heart of Kish be joyful'

Kingship, the radiant crown, throne []

He (?) brought and []

The gods of the lands."<sup>[127]</sup>

In contrast with Eridu in the south, the city of Kish to the north of Sumer, was not associated with a Sumerian royal dynasty but with a Semitic one. And where the House of Uruk was unique for the descent of its kings from the sun god, the House of Kish was unique for producing the first "kings" to rule over the land of Sumer. This acclaim is also reflected in the *Sumerian King List*, where the Kish dynasty is given the prime spot as the first to have ruled over Sumer in the period directly after the great deluge. In fact, the flood is not even mentioned in the oldest known *King List*

(called the *Ur III Sumerian King List*),<sup>[128]</sup> which is not really a “Sumerian” *King List* since the names of the early Sumerian rulers mentioned in the well-known *Sumerian King List*, referred to previously, are missing from the list.<sup>[129]</sup> This list only lists the kings of Kish from the time that kingship was bestowed on them from heaven.<sup>[130]</sup>

Strangely, the listing of the rulers of early Kish in the *Sumerian King List* includes not only one Kish dynasty as may be expected but no less than three lists of supposed Kish rulers, explaining why this list is more than twice the length than that of any other dynasty. These three lists, combined into one, can be distinguished from one another by the author’s use of the expression “X became king”, marking the beginning of all the new dynasties in the *King List*. For Kish, this expression appears three times, namely at the beginning of a list of Akkadian (Semitic) names, secondly when introducing the dynasty to which Etana belonged and thirdly when introducing Enmebaragesi and his son.

The first list of Akkadian names probably refers to ancestors of the Kish dynasty as Etana was, as we have already seen, reckoned to have been the very first king, not only of Kish but all of Sumer. The second list commences with Etana, listing him as the eleventh “ruler” after the earliest ancestor. Interestingly, there are various copies which list Etana as the seventh ruler of Kish (with only six ancestors mentioned before him).<sup>[131]</sup> Although placed seventh, he was the first “real” king, the first ruler to “consolidate the lands”.<sup>[132]</sup> According to the *Sumerian King List*, Enmebaragesi, heading the third list, lived at the same time as Gilgamesh.<sup>[133]</sup>

A difficult question to answer is as to when Etana in fact ruled over the land of Sumer. As he was the very first king, he must have ruled before Meskiagkasher, the founder of the first House of Uruk, who is said to have been “high priest and king”. As Meskiagkasher’s arrival in Sumer fits in

perfectly with the period directly after the deluge when the first new settlements appeared at the temple of An, after which the city of Uruk was, in line with tradition, built there by his son, Enmerkar, it can be argued that the first House of Kish rose to the throne before the deluge despite the fact that the author of the *Sumerian King List* sets their rule after the deluge.

With this background, we can now return to the tradition of Meskiagkasher having been high priest and king. As such, he would have inherited these two roles from the priestly rulers of Eridu and the kings of Kish, respectively. In him these two early traditions (albeit not necessarily the royal lines), namely that of the Sumerian fertility priests and that of the Semitic warrior kings, were said to have merged. Intriguingly, these cities, namely Eridu and Kish, were also closely associated with the symbols of the serpent and the eagle.

### **EAGLES AND SERPENTS**

Etana, king of Kish, is associated with the eagle in the story told in *The Myth of Etana*. The eagle took him to the heaven of An. The great enemy of this eagle, which held in the top of a tree, was the serpent, which held sway in a pit at the bottom of that very same tree. This pit is called “a place of death”, clearly referring to the realm of death and the dead. [\[134\]](#)

It can be argued that the cities of Kish and Eridu were, in this early period, associated with two cults using the eagle and serpent as their respective symbols. Let us first consider the association of Kish with the eagle.

One may surmise that the association of Kish with the eagle stems from Etana’s close relationship with the supreme God, An, who had the eagle as his symbol. The closeness between Etana and An follows from the meaning of his name, “he who went up to heaven/An”, as well as the eagle taking him to An’s heaven in *The Myth of Etana*. Etana



also received his kingship, as the very first king of Kish and the first king among men, from An, the king of the gods at whose throne the ruling sceptre was kept. Such a close relationship with An makes perfect sense when we keep in mind that An was merely the Sumerian version of El, the ancient God of the Semites and the Semite, Etana.

Kish stood in direct contrast with Eridu, associated with the serpent. Not only was the marshlands where the city of Eridu was built called “snake marsh” in the traditions about the Eridu temple,<sup>[135]</sup> various depictions of snakes were also discovered there. Massive clay figures of snakes were found under the paving of the temple (VIII period) as well as snakes in buff clay (VII period) and a bowl decorated with snakes (VI period).<sup>[136]</sup> Those early people probably associated these snakes with the spirits of the dead buried in the large cemetery at Eridu, which served the entire area of about 25 square kilometres.<sup>[137]</sup> The figurines of snake-women with serpentine features found in the nearby area of Ur should also be kept in mind.

We even read that Enki, god of Eridu, was associated with the symbol of the serpent: “O King [of Eridu], who planted the mes-tree planted in the Apsu, who is elevated in all the lands, the great dragon [serpent], who stands in Eridu.”<sup>[138]</sup> Enki’s description as a great serpent stands in opposition to An’s association with the eagle.

The dynasties associated with these two cities were originally Semitic and Sumerian. The cult associated with Kish was a warrior cult with the designation of “king” referring to the leader of such warriors in battle. The cult associated with Eridu, on the other hand, was a fertility cult. It could duly be argued that the symbols of the eagle and the serpent also referred to spirit entities or daemons associated with these cults. Why should this be, one may ask? The answer lies in the fact that the eagle shed its feathers replacing them with new feathers and the serpent its skin replacing its old skin with a new skin, reflecting the

renewal of life on a level not possible for humans. In *The Myth of Etana*, the eagle loses its feathers but grows new ones. In *The Epic of Gilgamesh* the hero meets a serpent in the Dilmun area of the southern Persian Gulf, shedding its skin.

These two distinct traditions were brought together in the person of Meskiagkasher, who according to tradition took the titles belonging to the rulers of these two cities as his own.

### **ENMERKAR: THE GREAT BUILDER KING**

We can now take a closer look at Meskiagkasher's descendants, who were remembered as great rulers, some of them as the greatest rulers the land of Sumer had ever seen. Their stories were told and retold by bards throughout Sumerian history until they were eventually written down in the Ur III period at the end of the third millennium BC. A. R. George writes: "The early rulers of Uruk had a great impact on poets of the third millennium, much as the Trojan War and its aftermath had on Homer. The reigns of Enmerkar, Lugalbanda and Gilgamesh entered legend as the heroic age of Sumer. One can imagine that court minstrels and storytellers began to compose oral 'lays of ancient Uruk' soon after the lifetimes of these heroes."<sup>[139]</sup>

Four Sumerian poems telling about the exploits of the great heroes, Enmerkar and Lugalbanda, do exist. They focus on the conflict between Sumer and Aratta and are called the "Matter of Aratta". Together with the stories about Gilgamesh they form the *Gesta Urukæorum*, the legends of the kings of Uruk.<sup>[140]</sup> These legends provide the basic literary corpus about the lives of those legendary kings.

The *Sumerian King List* lists Enmerkar as the son of Meskiagkasher and according to literary tradition, he was born and raised in the land of Aratta.<sup>[141]</sup> Some markers for the location of this land do fortunately exist. In one of the stories about Enmerkar, *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*,

the land of Aratta was reached through seven mountain passes from Sumer in the south: “Five, six, seven mountain ranges he [Enmerkar’s messenger] crossed. And when he lifted his eyes, he had arrived in Aratta.”<sup>[142]</sup>

These seven mountain passes were well-known in ancient times and many years later the Assyrian king, Sargon II, also travelled through them to battle against Urartu, a later form of the name Aratta. When he arrived at his destination south of Lake Urmia, in the far northwestern parts of present-day Iran, he crossed the “Aratta” River.<sup>[143]</sup> This is the only geographical landmark in later literature pertaining to this land.

Enmerkar is primarily remembered as the one who had built the city of Uruk. To accomplish this task, he asked the ruler of Aratta to send him builders and metalworkers to help not only build this city but also to rebuild the temple of Eridu. In this early period, Sumer did not possess of these skills and all the metals, precious stones and building materials, such as limestone and wood, had to be imported from the north. This request is described at length in *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*:

“My sister [the goddess Inana who resided in Aratta], let  
Aratta for Uruk artfully work gold and silver for my sake!  
[Let them cut for my sake] polished lapis lazuli from its  
block...

[Let them] built [for my sake] the holy mountain in Uruk.  
A temple [descended] from heaven - your place of worship,  
the shrine Eana [temple of An] - let [Aratta] build that! ...

Let the people of Aratta bring down for me the stones of  
their hills and mountains and build for me the great shrine,  
erect for me the great abode...  
the abode of the gods! ...

Let the Abzu flourish like the holy mountain, let Eridu  
scintillate like the hill ranges, for my sake let them make  
shrine Abzu illustrious like silver in the lode!”<sup>[144]</sup>

At the time, a large part of the land consisted of marches that had to be drained for the land to be reclaimed:

“Once upon a time my noble sister, Holy Inana...

Uruk then was a mere marsh, oozing water...

Where these (poplars) was a reed thicket old and young  
reeds grew together.

Enki, king of Eridu, made me [Enmerkar] tear out the old  
reeds and made me drain the water.

Fifty years I was building...

there stands the wall of Uruk, extended across the desert  
like a bird nest.”<sup>[145]</sup>

In time, Uruk became a mighty city, the only such city in Sumer during the Uruk Period, stretching over 250 hectares<sup>[146]</sup> with about 10- to 50 000 inhabitants.<sup>[147]</sup> Great buildings and temples adorned the city.

Enmerkar is also remembered for other inventions. According to Sumerian tradition, he was the first to have “smoothed clay with the hand and set down words on it in the manner of a tablet. Right up to then there had been no one setting down words on clay.”<sup>[148]</sup>

Although the author, who wrote this down long after these events took place, says the words looked like “nails”, in keeping with the cuneiform tradition, this merely reflects his idea that writing has always looked like this. The earliest writing from the Uruk Period was, in fact, not done with a stylus as in later times but with a pointed instrument, making pictographic symbols not looking as formal as in later times. At first, they merely used these for accounting purposes and only towards the end of the Uruk Period were these symbols read phonetically for the very first time.

Another of Enmerkar’s feats was that he produced surplus grain to be traded. He also brought the worship of the goddess, Inana, from Aratta to the temple of An, where Uruk was later built.

Although Enmerkar reportedly asked the goddess, Inana, to present him with the “priest-king crown” in order to rule Uruk and Kulab, <sup>[149]</sup> he is described as a typical priestly ruler in Sumerian fashion in these stories, for the most part using “intellect and magic power and knowledge, as well as charisma and divine favor” instead of armed force and violence. <sup>[150]</sup> When he, however, used such force, others led his armies into battle on his behalf.

Accordingly, his roles as the builder of temples and the city of Uruk as well as the one who brought the goddess, Inana, to Uruk, are highlighted. In these stories, he is portrayed as the servant of the god, Enki. Strikingly, he is even described as a “sagkal” snake, the very same snake associated with the roots of the cosmic tree of shamanism:

“My king [Enmerkar] was destined for overlordship since his birth, He is lord of Uruk, the sagkal-snake living in Sumer...

He is the one the true cow bore in the heart of the highlands.

He is Enmerkar, son of the sun.”<sup>[151]</sup>

### **LUGALBANDA... ONCE AGAIN**

According to the *Sumerian King List*, the next king of Uruk was Lugalbanda, who has already been discussed in some detail in the previous chapter. He is portrayed as a warrior-shaman who, with seven other men, led the army of Enmerkar into battle. As such, he would have been a king (“lugal”), typical of the Semitic tradition of Kish, with the word “lugal” even featuring in his name. If he was descended from Meskiagkasher, his midget-like stature might have been due to his family’s descent from a pygmy race of elven people. In his case, the ancient genes of the pygmies became manifest in his person.

One might conclude that Lugalbanda, who was an Urukite king, was associated with the Kishites. Lugalbanda’s close association with the Anzu, for example, suggests a

connection with Kish, where the Anzu eagle was associated with its first king, Etana. Also, according to tradition Lugalbanda's son, Gilgamesh, was cared for and raised by Akka, son of Enmebaragesi, founder of the Second Dynasty of Kish.<sup>[152]</sup> Gilgamesh also had a sister, Enmebassagesi, named after Akka's father, Enmebaragesi.<sup>[153]</sup>

The portrayal of Lugalbanda as a warrior-king indicates that professional armies came into existence in Sumer during this time. This is, in fact, confirmed by history. Not only do we, for the first time during the last phase of the Uruk Period, find fortified structures on the plains as well as the highlands from where garrisons could control large areas, we also find depictions of war in art as well as deposits of weapons, found in Uruk and surrounding areas.<sup>[154]</sup>

Towards the end of the Uruk Period, the Sumerian influence became widespread all across Mesopotamia. Uruk enclaves were established up along the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, all the way to the Taurus Mountains in the northwest and the Zagros Mountains in the northeast.

### **LUGALBANDA VERSUS ENMERKAR**

Enmerkar and Lugalbanda each represent a very different kind of ruler. The first was a typical priestly ruler and the second a warrior-king. Enmerkar is associated with the serpent found among the roots of the shamanistic tree, a symbol typically associated with the netherworld. In contrast, Lugalbanda, who became part of the Anzu bird family through his initiation in the northern mountains, is associated with the eagle found in the top of the shamanistic tree, a symbol associated with the heavenly realms. According to tradition, Lugalbanda played an important role in establishing the Anzu as a cult symbol in ancient Sumer. The first depictions of this lion-headed eagle, do, in fact, date back to the Uruk Period.<sup>[155]</sup>

After Lugalbanda, according to the *Sumerian King List*, came Dumuzi. There are, however, no great epics telling the story of this king and he was remembered more in cultic tradition. He is a tragic figure who died as a young man during the “festival of young men” (war),<sup>[156]</sup> more specifically, during a rebellion when the cities surrounding Uruk seemingly rose up against its rule over them.<sup>[157]</sup> Depictions on seals and other items show prisoners with their hands fastened behind their backs and pushed to the ground with spears and clubs by guards. This evidence indicates that these events took place right at the end of the Uruk Period, or Uruk IV Period.<sup>[158]</sup> The Dumuzi cult became especially widespread and popular among farming communities, where his death was closely related to the harvest when grain and dates were cut and harvested.

After the events involving Dumuzi, the House of Kish became the dominant force in southern Mesopotamia. As already mentioned, Enmebaragesi was the first ruler from this Second Dynasty of Kish.<sup>[159]</sup> He is also the very first Sumerian ruler of whom inscriptions were found. These inscriptions were done in a very early style of writing, where straight lines were used instead of the typical nail type cuneiform that came into use later.<sup>[160]</sup> His son, Akka, sheltered Gilgamesh and later appointed him as governor of Uruk.

At first, Gilgamesh was the typical priestly (“en”) ruler as we read in *Gilgamesh and Akka*: “He goes (about) in the sheepfold of Uruk, lording it like a wild bull, (head) held high.”<sup>[161]</sup> But then the young men of Uruk incited him to rise up against the yoke of Kish and made him the warrior-leader (“lugal”) of the Uruk army.<sup>[162]</sup> During the ensuing battle with Akka, Gilgamesh came out victorious and subsequently became the king of Uruk.

Interestingly, Gilgamesh was considered to be a descendant of both Enmerkar and Lugalbanda, with both these opposing bloodlines coming together in him. Both the



priestly and kingly traditions were unified in him, explaining why he was described and portrayed as both. It might be concluded that Gilgamesh's dual descent was taken as particularly important by the ancients and one of the reasons for him becoming such an exceptionally great hero, described both as enveloped with a "brilliant radiance" (in *Gilgamesh and Akka*<sup>[163]</sup>) and as the sun (in *The Gilgamesh Epic*).

As ruler of Uruk, Gilgamesh was especially remembered as the one who had built the great walls of the city. These walls are beautifully described in *The Gilgamesh Epic*:

"Go up into the wall of Uruk, and walk about, inspect the  
base, examine the brickwork.

Is not its brickwork of burnt brick?

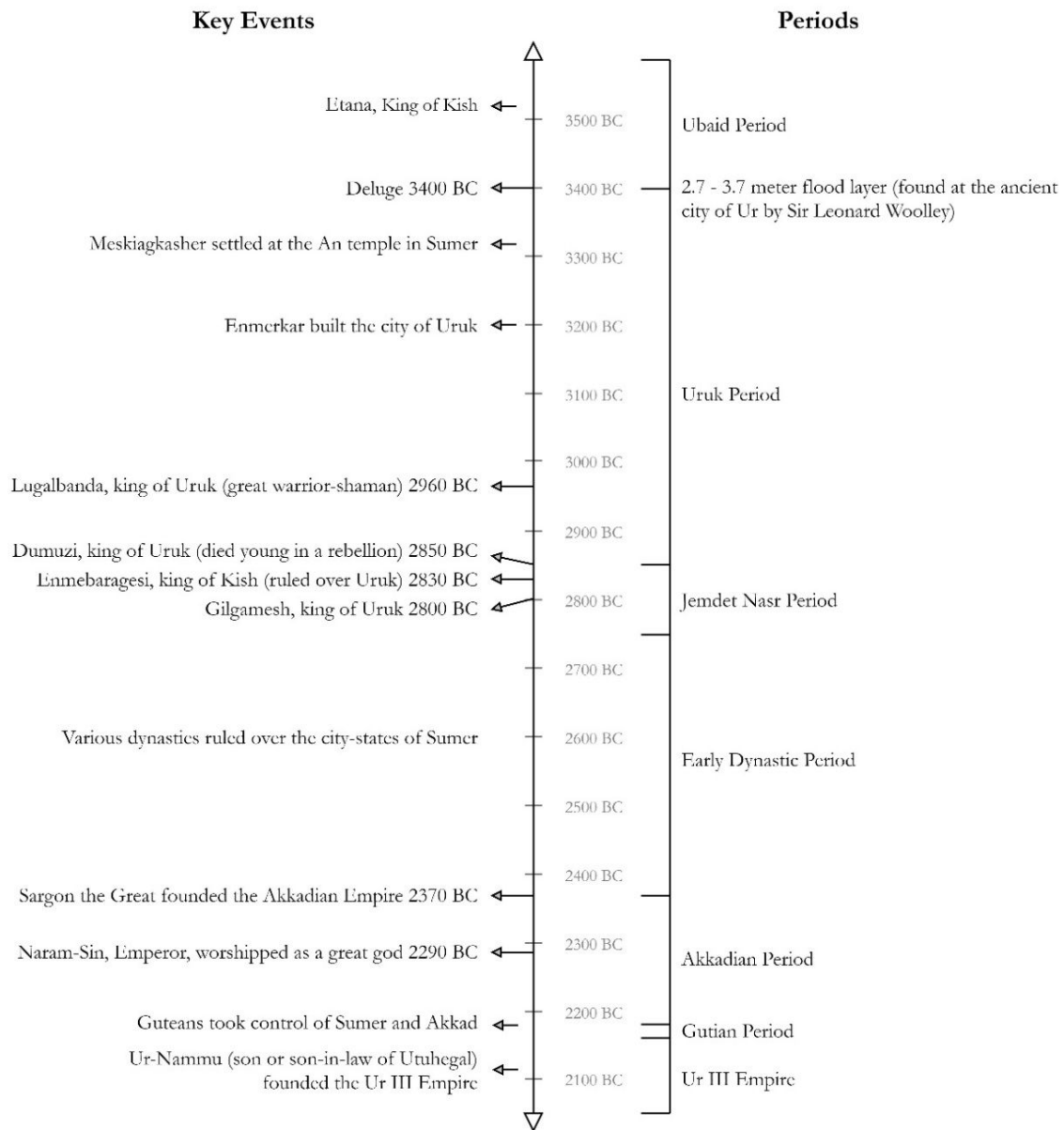
And did not the seven (sages) lay its foundation...

Find the cop(per)... tablet/tablet box, undo the...of its lock,  
which is of bronze, [open] the aperture to its secret  
contents.

[Take out] and read aloud from the lapis-lazuli tablet  
[how/that] Gilgamesh went through all hardships."<sup>[164]</sup>



## Early Mesopotamian History



*Figure 5. Outline of early Mesopotamian history, from the sixth to the end of the third millennium BC, with the focus on the Urukite rulers from the heroic period.*

The foundations of the walls were indeed made from burnt clay brick whereas the walls themselves were constructed from plano-convex bricks. The walls were seven meters high and nine kilometres long and incorporated high towers and strong gates. In keeping with tradition, this dates back to the time directly after the final phase of the Uruk Period (Uruk IV),<sup>[165]</sup> that is from the Jemdet Nasr Period.

The other great deeds of this exceptional hero, as told in *The Gilgamesh Epic*, will be explored in a later chapter.

### **THE SHINING ONES**

These great Sumerian heroes were accompanied by groups of builders and craftsmen, warriors and sages, who were in turn described as or identified with gods or demigods. Enmerkar was accompanied by the builders, Lugalbanda by the warriors and Gilgamesh by the sages.

The builders who helped Enmerkar are, in fact, described as great gods in later tradition: “Uruk, the handiwork of the gods, Eana, the temple descended from heaven, their various parts the great gods made.”<sup>[166]</sup> The seven warriors who accompanied Lugalbanda are not only described as “princes”, probably referring to the Annunaki or “seed of princes”, they are also identified with the “seven gods” in the *Lugalbanda Epic*. The seven sages said to have laid the foundations for the walls of Uruk built by Gilgamesh, were also regarded as demigods in later times.

Similarly to the House of Uruk seemingly having been the scions of a “radiant” hero, later interpreted as the sun god, these three groups, the builders, the warriors and the sages, can be associated with three groups of “Shining Ones”. We find that the very same symbol (U/Ud), signifying “radiant/shining”, is used in connection with three different groups of “shining” beings. Scholars have proposed that it refers to “spirits”,<sup>[167]</sup> “hemi-daemons”<sup>[168]</sup> or deceased forebears.<sup>[169]</sup>

In my view, these were spirits or daemons regarded as divine or semi-divine and who came forth from An's seed that fell on the ground, daemons who were then settled in the three cosmic domains, the heavenly realm, the netherworld and the Apsu. This is why the Hurrian tradition mentions three gods born from Kumarbi's body and the Greek tradition three groups of strange beings born from the seed of Uranus. Here, the number three reflects the three cosmic regions in which An's fallen seed were eventually relocated.

Each of the three accompanying groups, the builders, the warriors and the sages, were in turn associated with one of these cosmic realms or domains and the daemons whom the ancients associated with them.

The symbol "U/Ud" was associated with certain types of radiance and brilliance found in nature, namely light itself, solar days, storm clouds (with lightning bolts) and storm winds.<sup>[170]</sup> The three groups of shining beings were accordingly associated with one of three types of weather conditions each, namely the wind, storm clouds and sunny days. We can also identify each of these three groups of Shining Ones with a symbol associated with the cosmic region they belonged to, namely a serpent, the lion-headed Anzu and the sun rising over the horizon.

Somehow, these groups were all involved in the processes of nature, similar to the belief of those ancient people that these types of weather play in on and respond to each other: The wind in the netherworld was believed to kindle the flame of the sun every day,<sup>[171]</sup> the heat of the sun, for its part, leading to the evaporation of the water of the southern marches, eventually forming storm clouds on the northern mountains. They all, so to say, came together in the cycle of nature.

The first group of Shining Ones, the so-called "u", belonged to the netherworld. The symbol associated with this realm in the earliest epoch in Sumer was the snake or

serpent, especially the one keeping at the bottom of the shamanistic tree and which ruled over the pit, the “place of death”. An early ruler of this realm, was the god, Ninazu, the “king of the snakes”,<sup>[172]</sup> who had the *mushussu*,<sup>[173]</sup> or “furious snake”,<sup>[174]</sup> as a servant.

The ruler from the first House of Uruk associated with the snake as symbol is Enmerkar. One might theorise that the builder gods and smiths who worked for him, especially those who rebuilt and furnished the temple of Eridu, were also closely associated with the snake, having belonged to a cult which took it as their symbol. Those spirit entities associated with such a cult would have been the Shining Ones who belonged to the realm of death. These spirits were in later times typically seen as a group of seven “evil winds” that “howl and roar”.<sup>[175]</sup> The so-called “u.gal” were found among them, indicating that some were huge or giantlike in stature.<sup>[176]</sup>

The second group of Shining Ones were the “u-ka-du-ha”, meaning “roaring storm clouds”. They were great warrior spirits and portrayed as lion-headed eagles in the earliest iconography. Later on, the focus was placed on the lion aspect more often.<sup>[177]</sup> After their first appearance towards the end of the Uruk Period,<sup>[178]</sup> these lion-eagle hybrids became a constant feature of Sumerian art for centuries to come. Since the earliest of times, these beings belonged to the heavenly realm. The so-called “u.gal”, or “huge Shining Ones” (“gal” meaning “huge”), were also found among them.<sup>[179]</sup>

The ruler from the first House of Uruk especially associated with the lion-headed Anzu as a symbol is Lugalbanda. The warriors accompanying him might very well have been associated with the “storm clouds”. This group was the mortal enemy of the first group of “u” entities, the same as the eagle and the serpent having been opponents and eternal enemies of each other.

The third and last group of Shining Ones were the “u.dug.ga”, meaning “good Shining Ones”. They were associated with days of “exceptional splendour and plenty”, especially in the time before the deluge.<sup>[180]</sup> These were sunny days, implying that these beings were originally associated with the sun appearing over the Apsu. This would agree with the pictographic symbol used for “u”, namely the sun rising over the horizon.

These Shining Ones were identified with the sages. The sages of old were called *umu* (from “u”) or *apkallu* in Akkadian. There were a group of seven sages acting together and who were, according to tradition, born from the Apsu: “Where are the seven sages of the Apsu, the pure *puradu*-fish, who, just as their lord Ea [Enki], have been endowed with sublime wisdom.”<sup>[181]</sup> The ruler of Uruk associated with the “seven sages” is Gilgamesh. These sages laid the foundations of the great walls of Uruk built by Gilgamesh.

There were also human sages who played an important role in early Mesopotamian history. The first of these was “u-an”, meaning “heavenly day/spirit”. He was also called Adapa<sup>[182]</sup> and is said to have brought civilisation to Sumer in the time before the deluge. The “an” in “u-an” might reflect an early association with the god, An, as he had visited An’s abode at one time. Other sages were associated with different Mesopotamian rulers throughout the ages.<sup>[183]</sup>

It is certainly very interesting that each of the three groups of spiritual entities or daemons can be associated with rulers of Uruk. The ancient Sumerians probably had a speculative doctrine as to how bloodlines associated with these spirits should have been woven together so as to bring forth a messianic child in line with similar processes found in nature. In combining the bloodlines of Enmerkar and Lugalbanda, the great hero, Gilgamesh, archetype of the biblical Nephilim, was born.

We can now proceed to study the events surrounding the birth of this great hero in more detail.

## 5. THE TOWER OF BABEL

Another well-known story relevant to our current discussion is the one about the Tower of Babel, told in the 11th chapter of the biblical *Book of Genesis*. Although this story is not explicitly linked to the tradition of the fallen angels and the Nephilim, we have good reason to believe that these two stories are closely and intimately related. This becomes perfectly clear once it is realised that the “tower” of Babel refers to an early temple or ziggurat, built in ancient Sumer and on top of which the *hieros gamos* was performed.

It can well be asked whether the story of the so-called Tower of Babel, said to have taken place in ancient Sumer, relates to the ancient Sumerian stories already referred to. How does this story fit into the gradually emerging picture of that ancient world? Surprisingly, we discover not only a remarkable and striking agreement between the biblical Tower of Babel story and similar events in the Sumerian tradition, we also discover how the God of the Bible could be understood in terms of the context of the Sumerian pantheon of gods.

We have now come to the point where it becomes clear how the Sumerian and biblical traditions are related to one another. According to biblical tradition, the early roots of the Israelite nation go back to ancient Sumer! One of the Israelite forefathers, in fact their principal patriarch, Abraham, is said to have lived in Sumer once but that he left his “father’s house” and migrated to Haran and from there to Canaan. [\[184\]](#)

### THE TOWER OF BABEL

According to this well-known saga, many people came to settle on the southern plains of the “land of Shinar” in the

time directly after the deluge. “Shinar” is the name used in the Bible for the southern plains between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in other words, the ancient land of Sumer. The setting and background for this story is therefore found in exactly the same land as well as the same period discussed in the previous two chapters.

In the biblical story, the people who came to settle on these plains erected both a city and a very large “tower”. They built these with burnt clay brick and used slime for mortar. This was a huge undertaking, with these people venturing to establish themselves as a mighty force on earth and making a “name” for themselves. What counted in their favour was that they only had one “language” and spoke with one “speech”. When God saw this, He countered their endeavours and frustrated their project by confusing their language. The name “Babel” is, interestingly enough, said to mean “confusion”, in accordance with these events.

An important question is who the ruler was under whose patronage the Tower of Babel was built. We find some clues in the *Book of Genesis*, in the tenth chapter to be exact, the chapter directly before the one in which the story of the Tower is told. Chapter 10 contains a genealogy of the descendants of the flood hero, Noah. One of the most significant people mentioned in this genealogy is the illustrious and well-known Nimrod, great-grandson of Noah, who hailed from the second generation after the deluge and who was a great ruler of Babel, the very same city associated with the story of the Tower of Babel.

We read that Nimrod “began to be a mighty one on earth”, which might mean that he was a “tyrant” or a man who used force and violence to carry out his plans and accomplish his ideals. He is also called a “mighty hunter”. His kingdom reached from Babel and Uruk on the southern plains of Sumer to the northern parts of Mesopotamia, an extensive territory including various other important cities.



Was Nimrod, in fact, the ruler responsible for the construction of the Tower of Babel? The name “Nimrod” is believed to have been derived from the Hebrew word *mârâd*, meaning “he who rebelled”. This designation indeed associates him with the story of the Tower of Babel, a story clearly portrayed as an act of rebellion against God. It may therefore be concluded that in biblical tradition Nimrod is the one associated with the project to build the city and the temple as related in the story.

### **THE FIRST ROYAL HOUSE OF URUK**

If Nimrod ruled over the land of Sumer, there may well be a possibility to identify him with one of the early rulers mentioned in the *Sumerian King List*. There is, however, one problem and this is that the city of Babylon, referred to in the story as Babel, only became important a very long time after the deluge. In other words, the biblical story is set in the period directly after the deluge, but the city it is set in was not important or significant at the time!

Although this may at first glance seem to be an insurmountable obstacle in any effort to take this story seriously, there is, actually, a very simple explanation for this apparent discrepancy. Babylon was also written in cuneiform as Nin.ki,<sup>[185]</sup> the exact same name the ancient city of Eridu was known by and the location of the oldest and most important holy place in Sumer! Babylon was regarded as a second Eridu and took much of its main temple mythology from the temple of Eridu.

It is not all that strange then that an ancient author such as Berossus, in his *Babylonian History*, written in the third century BC, refers to Eridu as Babylon.<sup>[186]</sup> The writer or an editor of the biblical *Book of Genesis* seems to have done exactly the same. When “Babel” is taken as Eridu, the biblical list of cities ruled by Nimrod, starting with Babel, followed by Erech (Uruk) and then by other cities to the north, also provides a more natural continuity in starting

with the most southern cities and then proceeding to the more northerly ones.

Once this paradigm shift is made, the story fits in quite well with the period after the deluge when both the city of Uruk and the temple of Eridu were built. As ruler of both Uruk and Eridu, extending his power far into the north, the biblical Nimrod corresponds remarkably well with the literary tradition of Enmerkar. Even the names Nimrod and Enmerkar show clear similarities: The basic root of the shortened form of the name, Enmerkar, namely “Nmr”, can be vocalised as “Nimro(d)”. One should not be misled by a difference in vowels because vowels change easily over time. It is the root of a name that remains unchanged over long periods of time. The last part of his name, namely “kar”,<sup>[187]</sup> has various meanings among which “to incite”,<sup>[188]</sup> a meaning very similar to “to rebel”.

Once this connection is made, it is easy to see that the biblical family of Nimrod agrees with the first Sumerian House of Uruk. Further confirmation comes from the name of Nimrod’s father, who, according to the Bible, was called Kush (Cush), a name which corresponds with the shortened form of the name of Enmerkar’s father, Mes-kiag-kash-er, namely Kash.

In the biblical tradition the family came to Sumer from the northern land of Ararat in the period directly after the deluge, which agrees with the Sumerian tradition of the family having had their origins in Aratta in the northern mountains. After the deluge they then settled in the area of An’s temple, where Uruk was later built.

Nimrod’s brothers, according to the Bible, were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabtechah.<sup>[189]</sup> In the biblical tradition the name Seba is associated with the Sabeans, who later settled in the area of present-day Yemen on the southwestern Arabian Peninsula. They are described as “men of stature”,<sup>[190]</sup> suggesting they were extraordinarily big and strong. As such, they would fit in rather well with

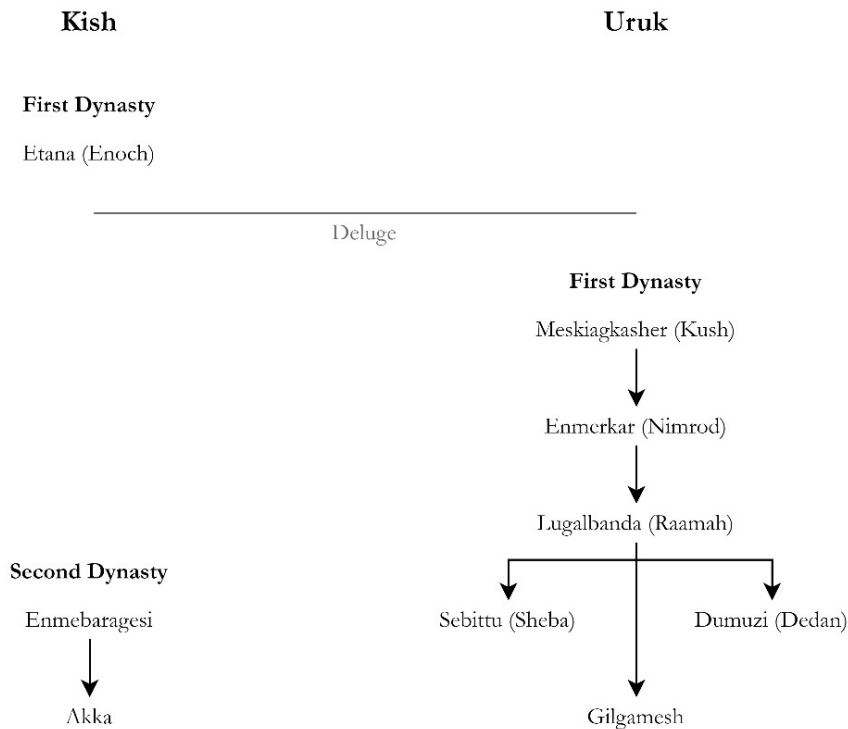
the builders accompanying Enmerkar/Nimrod on his building enterprises. I have earlier associated them with the “u.gal”, the huge or giantlike Shining Ones. Surely, those builders would have included among their numbers such big and strong men.

The other name among Nimrod’s brothers drawing attention is that of Raamah, meaning “Thunder”. Given the close association between Lugalbanda and the Thunderbird, into whose family he was adopted, one may allow for the possibility that Raamah is simply another name for Lugalbanda. In the Sumerian tradition, Lugalbanda not only lived in the time of Enmerkar but was also his successor to the throne of Uruk.

There are even more similarities. Raamah’s sons, Sheba and Dedan, can also be linked to this first House of Uruk. The name, Sheba, means “seven” and may very well refer to the seven young men who accompanied Lugalbanda in the story about their march on Aratta when Lugalbanda was left for dead in a mountain cave. The name Dedan, on the other hand, may be a variation of Daos, a form of the name, Dumuzi,<sup>[191]</sup> the ruler who, according to the *Sumerian King List*, was Lugalbanda’s successor to the throne of Uruk.

The only problem with this hypothesis is the apparent descent of the Sumerian House of Uruk from the sun god, Utu, whereas the family of Nimrod was descended from Ham. Again, there is a logical explanation: Both Utu and Ham can be tracked back to the Sumerian word, Ud, referring to the Shining Ones. The name Utu, in the Sumerian tradition, was originally derived from Ud. And the name Ham, or Chôm in Hebrew, is a homonym of “yôhm”, meaning exactly the same as Ud in Sumerian, namely “shining” (“yôhm” might even have originated from the Akkadian form of that word, *umu*). The name, Ham, therefore corresponds with the name, Ud, and Ham might have been regarded as a “Shining One”.

## Houses of Uruk and Kish



*Figure 6. The dynastic houses of Uruk and Kish and their biblical equivalents.*

In the biblical tradition Ham is one of Noah's sons. A strange episode in the biblical rendition of events directly following the deluge, is the one about Noah's drunken spell, where it is written that Ham despised his father's "nakedness" and was subsequently cursed. The question coming to mind is what this actually means. This may be a subtle reference by the author to Ham's descent, perhaps from another illustrious pre-deluge family belonging to the "Shining Ones". Noah's ancestral lineage is given but that of Ham's mother is not, making it possible that she was looked upon as having belonged to the Nephilim.

What is fascinating is that a detailed analysis of the biblical deluge story reveals that the author used a chiasmic structuring (i.e. using chiasmi, repeating concepts in reverse

order) in which the story of the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” is equalled or paralleled with this one about Noah’s drunkenness (found symmetrically before and after the story of the deluge).<sup>[192]</sup> This means that the story of the sons of God and the curse of Ham’s bloodline, who produced men of renown, men such as “Nimrod”, the first on earth to be a “mighty man”, must be read in tandem. Cleverly and carefully, the author concealed the following piece of information in his story: The progeny of the sons of God should be identified with Ham’s lineage, a lineage who ruled in Uruk after the deluge. This is in keeping with the ancient Sumerian tradition that the first House of Uruk was descended from the gods.

The Sumerian and biblical versions of the story are so similar and correspond in such a great way that it can now quite rightly be accepted that the biblical account of the Tower of Babel refers to events from the time when the first House of Uruk ruled over the land of Sumer. This was the time when a great building project was launched on the southern plains, a time when the great city of Uruk and its temples were constructed. The ancient Sumerian temple of Eridu, called Babel in the biblical rendition, was also rebuilt during that time after the deluge. Although the real ziggurats of Sumerian tradition only appeared later, this must still have been a truly magnificent building.

### **NUDIMMUD’S SPELL**

One outstanding issue, however, remains, namely that of the so-called confusion of language. Is there any mention in the Sumerian tradition of something similar to the confusion of language referred to in the *Book of Genesis*? And again, the answer is yes. We do indeed find a similar account in ancient Sumer, where it is called “Nudimmud’s [Enki’s] spell”. This spell is mentioned in one of the stories about Enmerkar, called *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*: “(In) the (whole) compass of heaven and earth the people entrusted

(to him) could address Enlil, verily, in but a single tongue... (The) lord of Eridu enstrangles the tongues in their mouths as many as were put there. The tongues of men which was one.”<sup>[193]</sup>

There can be little doubt that this is the Sumerian equivalent of the biblical tradition of the confusion of language, as the Sumerologist, Thorkild Jacobsen, rightly observes: “The story (is) in line with the biblical story of the confusion of languages.”<sup>[194]</sup> The question however remains: Where and how did this story originate? The popular explanation given is surprisingly simple, maybe too simple, namely that the story was meant to describe and explain how the various languages of the world came into existence through miraculous and divine intervention. But is this correct?

In the genealogy preceding the story of the Tower of Babel, mention is made of the fact that languages originated when people got dispersed all across the ancient world.<sup>[195]</sup> And this is indeed how languages come into existence and evolve. As this stands in direct contrast with the explanation given for the origin of languages in the story about the Tower of Babel, we should ask ourselves if the typical interpretation thereof is correct. It is possible that the original story was about something altogether different from the regular way in which languages originate.

While searching for an alternative explanation, I discovered that the author of the biblical account made use of different terms 1) when he refers to the tongues/languages (*lâshôwn*) which came into existence when people got dispersed; and 2) when he speaks about the confusion of language/speech (*sâphâh*).

The use of different words implies that two different matters are referred to. The meaning of *lâshôwn* may be obvious but the meaning of *sâphâh* is however not. The Hebrew word, *sâphâh*, literally means “lip” and refers to “speech” as the way in which words and phrases are

pronounced. This way of pronunciation may refer to any particular way or convention in which words are pronounced.

My submission is that the confusion of speech at the Tower of Babel, which I take as referring to the huge temple platform at Eridu, was not about the origin of different languages at all. It was about something entirely different!

At the end of the Uruk Period something happened that shows a striking agreement with the story about the confusion of speech. It so happened that the Sumerians started reading their script phonetically. And as such, the convention of pronunciation changed.

Before the emergence of phonetic writing, Sumerian pictographic symbols merely identified items for accounting purposes but now the arrangement of these symbols developed in accordance with phonetic pronunciation. Before this development there was a uniform convention for the pronunciation of symbols, namely that each symbol only had one specific meaning, each referring to a commonly understood item of which the particular pronunciation was not important. The Sumerians and the Semites obviously had different words for these items, also pronouncing them differently.

The new convention of pronunciation, introduced by the Sumerians, involved combining symbols phonetically in keeping with the way people speak. As a result, and all of a sudden, language speakers other than the Sumerians, namely the Semites, Elamites and even others who might have lived amongst them, would not have been able to understand the different combinations of symbols used in the texts. It would have become totally incomprehensible to them if they did not know Sumerian. One can imagine that this change in convention must have led to enormous confusion.

The sudden change to phonetic reading perfectly explains the confusion of language.<sup>[196]</sup> It would furthermore explain



the apparent upheaval at the end of the Uruk Period. This was also the time when the long and illustrious rule of the first House of Uruk came to an end with the death of Dumuzi.

The new rulers of Sumer hailed from the House of Kish in the north. A “considerable displacement of people” took place with many people abandoning the land.<sup>[197]</sup> In Eridu, the large “limestone terrace” was left deserted overnight.<sup>[198]</sup> This is exactly the same picture given in the Bible according to which the confusion of language led to the dispersion of the people of Sumer all across the ancient world.

### **CONFLICT BETWEEN TWO GODS: THE MYTH OF ETANA**

The biblical tradition and the Sumerian tradition agree on one central issue, namely that the people of that time understood and interpreted these events in a religious context. The Bible portrays these events as a rebellion against God. According to the Sumerian version of these events the god, Enki, “Lord of Eridu”, was the one responsible and the one who caused the language confusion by way of a spell with the sole purpose of disrupting the worship of the god, Enlil, son of An, clearly setting these two gods in direct opposition to each other.

The scholar, Samuel Noah Kramer, observed in his provocatively titled essay, *Enki and his Inferiority Complex*, that the story of the confusion of language reflects a “power-struggle between Enlil and Enki”. He writes: “In the course of their efforts [i.e. of the theologians, priests and poets of Eridu] on behalf of their favorite [i.e. Enki] they came into conflict with the priests and theologians of Nippur.”<sup>[199]</sup>

In the biblical tradition, Nimrod is presented as the main rebel and we already know that Enmerkar, Nimrod’s Sumerian counterpart, was closely associated with the god, Enki. Enmerkar was also the one responsible for the



rebuilding of the sanctuary of this god at Eridu, this sanctuary being the biblical Tower of Babel. He also adopted the serpent or snake, more particularly the one at the bottom of the cosmic tree, as his personal symbol. In Sumerian tradition, this serpent is the direct opponent and enemy of the eagle holding in the top of that same tree.

Originally, these animals in the cosmic tree, the serpent and the eagle, were associated with Enki and An, respectively. We find that Enki was accordingly associated with the bottom and An with the top of the cosmic tree. In a Sumerian incantation from the ancient city of Ebla, the roots of the cosmic tree, now identified as a Tamarisk, are associated with Enki (and his wife Ninki<sup>[200]</sup>), whereas the branches are associated with An.<sup>[201]</sup> In later periods, the eagle became the symbol of An's son, the god, Enlil, portrayed in the Sumerian tradition of the confusion of language as the opponent of the god, Enki.

The conflict between these gods, associated with the snake and eagle as symbols, goes back to the earliest strata of Sumerian tradition. It can already be found in the ancient *Myth of Etana*, in which the serpent and the eagle are opponents and enemies of each other. According to this myth they respectively lived at the bottom and in the top of a large tree. The peace between them was guaranteed by an oath they swore to the sun god, Samas, the Akkadian equivalent of the Sumerian sun god, Utu.

One day, while the snake was away, the eagle, called Anzu in some (later) versions, devoured its little ones. The snake then called for revenge upon which Samas helped him to catch the eagle. The snake did this by hiding in the carcass of a wild bull, waiting for the eagle to come and feed on the dead animal. After the snake managed to catch the eagle, it broke its heel, pulled out its feathers and cast it in a deep pit at the bottom of the tree.<sup>[202]</sup>

In the meantime, Etana, the king of Kish, was pleading with Samas to give him the so-called "plant of birth" (not to

be confused with the “plant of life”) through which he could keep his family lineage intact and save it from becoming extinct. Samas told him about the eagle which could help him find the plant. Etana freed the eagle from its bondage whereupon the bird carried him on its back to the heaven of An. During the first attempt Etana got frightened but they made another attempt. This is also where Etana’s name comes from as it literally means “he who went up to heaven/An”.<sup>[203]</sup> Portrayals of this story go back to the time of the Akkadian Empire during the second half of the third millennium BC, a time when such Semitic stories became part of the fabric of society.

Intriguingly, the *Myth of Etana* also shows certain similarities with the biblical stories found at the beginning of the *Book of Genesis*. In the *Myth of Etana*, the main character, Etana, the one who went to heaven, shows a close similarity to the biblical Enoch and he should in all probability be identified with him. Enoch (not to be confused with Cain’s son of the same name) was a seventh generation descendant of Adam, about whom the biblical Garden of Eden story is told, and great-grandfather of Noah of the great flood. Enoch is said to have been taken away by God and into heaven still physically alive, that is without dying first. Strikingly, in some versions of the *Sumerian King List*, Etana is indeed shown as the seventh ruler of Kish,<sup>[204]</sup> in keeping with Enoch having been the seventh generation from Adam. In the previous chapter, I have shown that Etana probably belonged to the antediluvian period, just like Enoch.

The *Myth of Etana*, astonishingly enough, also shows certain similarities with aspects of the Garden of Eden story in the *Book of Genesis*, especially when it comes to the motif of the conflict between the eagle and the serpent in the cosmic tree. God, associated with eagle beings, is portrayed in the Bible as the opponent of the serpent. Here, the serpent is associated with an exceptional tree growing

in the “middle” of the garden, seemingly a typical cosmic tree, similar to the one in the Etana story. The serpent appeared in the tree and tempted Eve to taste and consume of its fruit, which was emphatically forbidden by God. She succumbed, ate of the fruit and then also gave Adam<sup>[205]</sup> some of it to eat, upon which God banished them from the divine garden.

Although the eagle is not mentioned in so many words as is typically found in descriptions of the cosmic tree, it nevertheless figures albeit in another form. It is represented by the cherubim who guarded the sacred tree in the garden, creatures also portrayed as large eagles somewhere else in the Bible.<sup>[206]</sup> Cherubim were also portrayed as guardians of sacred trees elsewhere in Hebrew iconography.<sup>[207]</sup>

If we accept this tree to be the cosmic tree of shamanistic tradition, its fruit, with which Eve was tempted, may refer to the fruit the serpent-woman offers to shamans (as discussed in Chapter 1). In keeping with this, we read that eating the “fruit” would have “opened” their eyes, allowed them to gain hidden or secret knowledge and to become like “gods”. This would mean the forbidden “fruit”, often taken to be an apple, actually refers to the mushrooms growing under the birch trees in the northern Zagros Mountains. The geographical details given in the *Book of Genesis*<sup>[208]</sup> also put this garden in those northern mountains of present-day Iran.<sup>[209]</sup> This might reflect an ancient tradition of such a holy mountain in those parts.

In the Garden of Eden story, we find that the serpent stands in direct opposition to God, with the cherubim (eagles) serving Him. This corresponds directly with the much older tradition of the serpent and the eagle having been sworn enemies.

### **ETERNAL ENMITY**

In the Nudimmud’s spell story, we find an even closer parallel with the biblical version thereof. In this story they

are not only two symbolic creatures opposing each other but two gods, associated with the same symbols, portrayed as being in direct conflict with each other. In this instance, it is Enki, with the symbol of the serpent, standing in opposition to Enlil, the son of An, the Semitic El, with the eagle as his symbol.

In the biblical version, this conflict is presented as an eternal one between the “seed” of the serpent and the “seed” of the woman, Eve:

“The LORD God said unto the serpent...  
I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her Seed;  
He shall bruise your head,  
And you shall bruise His heel.”[\[210\]](#)

Here, we find that the seed of the serpent is prophesied to bite the “heel” of the seed of the woman, repeating a similar motif in the Etana story of the serpent breaking the “heel” of the eagle.

Somehow, the future “seed” associated with those opposing the serpent, if we accept that Etana belongs to this opposing camp, is particularly significant in both stories. In Judeo-Christian tradition, this is often taken as an early reference to the Messiah. One might conclude that the seed of Etana (Enoch) was in time taken as not merely referring to his son, but to the Messiah who would eventually be born from this lineage. This would mean that this particular bloodline was viewed as central to the hopes and aspirations of those associated in Sumerian tradition with the worship of the god, An (El).

The “seed” of the serpent is of course also referred to and specifically as standing in opposition to the seed of the woman. Although the Bible does not say anything more about the “seed” of the serpent, it is possible, within the broader picture available to us, to conclude that this refers

to a messianic figure or figures born to the opposing family line, in other words the Nephilim or lineage of the serpent-god, Enki. We have already encountered representations in ancient Sumer of a snake-woman breastfeeding a baby. Seemingly, these are very early and vivid depictions of the “seed of the serpent” of later biblical tradition. In this book, we do, in fact, focus on these supposed descendants of Enki and the various messiahs or chosen ones born from those bloodlines over time.

The agreement between these stories and their characters means that they belong to the same Semitic literary corpus in which these motifs appear. This corpus was handed down in two versions, namely in the Akkadian tradition and in the Hebrew tradition. In the ancient Sumerian milieu in which both these stories originated, the Semitic kings, presumably descended from Etana/Enoch, ruled in Kish and they worshipped El, called An in Sumer. On the other hand, their opponents, the Sumerians, had an ancient sanctuary in Eridu, where they worshipped Enki. It clearly goes to show that the conflict between these two groups goes back as far as the dawn of Sumerian history itself.

In accordance and consistent with this picture, the earliest list of gods found in Sumer presents two clearly distinguishable groups with two very different theologies. This list dates back to about 2500 BC and seems to involve an extremely ancient tradition. On the one hand, there were those who worshipped the god, An, his son, Enlil, and various other lesser gods with their theology which can be described as “cosmic” or “heavenly”.<sup>[211]</sup> On the other hand, there were those who worshipped Enki and Ninki, literally “lord earth” and “lady earth”, and various other male-female god pairs.<sup>[212]</sup> Their theology focused on fertility and can be described as “chthonic” or “earthly”.<sup>[213]</sup> These two groups of gods can finally be associated with the cities of

Nippur and Eridu, located in the north and in the south of Sumer.<sup>[214]</sup>

### **SUMERIAN ACCEPTANCE OF AN**

When, according to tradition, Meskiagkasher, founder of the first House of Uruk, came to the temple of An in Sumer in order to reside there, he would have worshipped An. This move probably stemmed from his ambition to become king of Sumer and the fact that kingship was thought to have been a gift that only An could have bestowed. In this way, as we read in the *Sumerian King List*, he would have been able to obtain the coveted dual title of “king” (lugal) and “high priest” (en) so as to become the ruler of all the peoples of ancient Sumer, in other words of both the Sumerian population as well as the Semitic population.

As a result An, worshipped by the Semites as El, became an integral part of Sumerian worship. An, was assigned a wife, Ki, literally meaning “earth”. This might have taken place in the time of Enmerkar, who introduced the goddess, Inana, into the temple of An. At that time, Inana was a fertility goddess who was seen as the embodiment or impersonation of the fertile earth.<sup>[215]</sup> This relationship between An and Ki reflects the age-old myth of An’s seed falling on the earth, with her becoming his wife. This is indeed the myth of the fallen gods closely associated with Meskiagkasher’s family,<sup>[216]</sup> said to have been the offspring of those gods.

During that early period, they worshipped An as king of the gods. One very early text reflecting a tradition from the Uruk Period, more specifically from the time of Dumuzi, confirms this. In line with An’s rule over the gods, his kingship is described in this text as “Anship”. This tradition goes back to the time before An’s son, Enlil, became king of the gods, when the divine “kingship” was accordingly referred to as “Enlilship”. This is a very strange text, mentioning the use of certain “poultices”, soft and moist

masses of material, typically made of plant material like herbs and bran or flour, applied to the body to relieve pain and inflammation and kept in place with cloth. These poultices were prepared by Anenlilda, sage to King Dumuzi. <sup>[217]</sup> Evidently, Enki aspired to “Anship” during Dumuzi’s reign.

As can be expected from such an early origin for the tradition found in this text, there is no sign of the theology of later centuries. Not even Enlil, worshipped as king of the gods from early on in the third millennium BC, is mentioned. <sup>[218]</sup>

This text casts important light on the time of Dumuzi, killed during the insurrection against him and his rule. Of special interest is Enki’s portrayal in this text as the king of the gods, <sup>[219]</sup> as the one who usurped the position of Anship and took it for himself! Of this, the Sumerologist, Wilfred Lambert, wrote: “[In the text] Ea [Enki] holds supreme power, and this is called ‘Anship’, not ‘Enlilship’.” <sup>[220]</sup> This means that the great building project of Enmerkar, who served and worshipped Enki, eventually resulted in the elevation of Enki to An’s position as king of the Sumerian council of gods at the end of the Uruk Period and during the reign of Dumuzi as king. This would surely have been the reason for the uprising and revolt against the rule of Uruk as the Semite population would certainly have rejected such a move very strongly.

When the Sumerians replaced An and elevated Enki to the position of king of the gods in his stead, the Semitic ideal of kingship achieved its highest accomplishment in the Sumerian milieu. Assimilation of the god, An, whom I consider to be the Sumerian version of the Semitic El, into the Enki theology was an early step through which Sumerian kings, such as Meskiagkasher, aspired to the Semitic ideal of kingship, previously identified with the kings of Kish. The Sumerian god, Enki, now achieved this ideal for himself. This would, however and definitely, have been one step too far



for the Semitic population of the land and they soon after moved to overturn what they surely would have seen as a momentous and supreme act of rebellion.

### **THE RISE OF ENLIL**

After the death of Dumuzi, the Second Dynasty of Kish rose to the throne in Sumer. The founder of this Semitic royal house was Enmebaragesi. According to the *Sumerian King List*, he made incursions as far as Elam,<sup>[221]</sup> implying that this Kishite king ruled over the land of Sumer. He is remembered for the building of a temple for and in honour of Enlil, the son of An, in Nippur.<sup>[222]</sup> At this time, Nippur became the religious centre of the land and the god, Enlil, became king of the gods.<sup>[223]</sup> After An lost his position as king of the gods during Dumuzi's reign, the Semites elevated his son, Enlil, to his position.<sup>[224]</sup>

The question that may well be asked at this point is who Enlil actually was. Intriguingly, the meaning or etymology of the name, Enlil, is one of the great enigmas of early Sumer. If it is a Sumerian name, it would mean "Lord Wind". But is it? Many scholars beg to differ, believing there is a prehistory to this name.<sup>[225]</sup> To start off with, he must have been a Semitic god as the House of Kish, to which Enmebaragesi, the builder of his temple, belonged, was a Semitic dynasty.

Some scholars have identified Enlil with the name, *I-li-lu*, in the Eblaite texts, a name we have already encountered earlier. This identification with Enlil is problematic if we take into account that *I-li-lu* was the father of the gods, suggesting the meaning "god of all gods" for this name.<sup>[226]</sup> I have previously shown that this description fits the god, An, father of the gods, very well. Nonetheless, Enlil was not the same as An, he was the son of An.

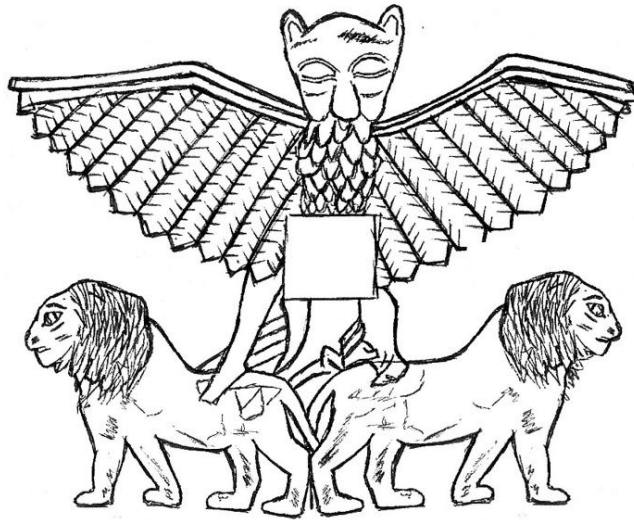
The name, *I-li-lu*, might, however, also be interpreted differently. An interesting proposal put forward by the scholar, Piotr Michalowski, is that Enlil was in actual fact the



god, El, written in the Sumerian language as *'il'il* and that *'il'il* had evolved into "Illilu" (*I-li-lu*), or "Ellil", and eventually "Enlil".<sup>[227]</sup> He notes: "... [that] Illilu must have originated as a duplication of the Semitic word for deity *'il*, and that the writing Enlil represents Sumerianization, through dissimilation, resulting in something that looks Sumerian—with the initial element en—but which was in reality a loan from another language [Semitic]."<sup>[228]</sup>

Although it makes sense that Enlil was originally a Semitic god, the explanation of the name as originally referring to the god, El, does not go without difficulty. The problem is that the god, El, was viewed as the father of the gods in exactly the same way as An was. Enlil was obviously not the father of the gods<sup>[229]</sup> but rather the son of the father of the gods, namely An. Another problem is that *'il'il* would have been understood by the ancient Sumerians as a duplication of "el". In a literal sense this would have meant that the god, El, duplicated himself in order to produce "El.El". This might have reflected their thinking about the essence of this god.

In ancient Sumer, there was a similar expression to the Eblaite *I-li-lu*,<sup>[230]</sup> namely Illil, which was in fact an early form of Enlil going back to time immemorial.<sup>[231]</sup> This name might have evolved from a duplication of *'il* (El) as suggested above.<sup>[232]</sup> In their speculative thinking, the Semites might have held a particular theological view about this, namely that the god, El, father of the gods, worshipped in Sumer as An, duplicated himself by producing another El-god, worshipped in early Sumer as Illil (El.El).<sup>[233]</sup> This El.El, the son of El, becoming Enlil, corresponds perfectly with the Sumerian tradition of Enlil having been the son of An. As such, there would have been a very close relationship between An and Enlil, very different from the relationship between An and the rest of the gods, seen as his children in a more general sense of the word.



*Figure 7. Royal Anzu set above two lions on the votive relief of Ur-Nanshe, king of Lagash (fl. c. 2150 BC) (Louvre Museum, Paris).*

We do find some support for this in the Sumerian tradition. An is, for example, called the “beloved father” of Enlil on a vase inscription of King Lugalzagesi, dating from c. 2400 BC:<sup>[234]</sup> “May Enlil, the king of all lands, by all means pray to An, his beloved father on my behalf.” Elsewhere Enlil is called the “eldest son” of “holy An”.<sup>[235]</sup> Enlil’s close relationship with An is also visible in the fact that they were worshipped together at the great temple of Enlil in Nippur.<sup>[236]</sup> More generally, in the Sumerian theology, An, Enlil and Enki were clearly distinguished from the other great gods, with the cosmos, for example, divided amongst them (see the next chapter).<sup>[237]</sup>

Enlil’s rule over the land was beautifully portrayed in his symbol from the Jemdet Nasr Period<sup>[238]</sup> onwards, namely the Anzu bird shown with outstretched wings, often above two twin animals, one on its left and one on its right.<sup>[239]</sup> These animals varied and any of the animals of the other gods could have been so depicted. Like the bird spreading its

wings, sometimes called “arms”,<sup>[240]</sup> over the land, the temple of Enlil at Nippur is described in its temple hymn as the navel of the land, with the regions of Sumer to the south of it and Uri, later called Akkad, to the north of it, located so to say under its right and left arms: “Your right and your left (hands are?) Sumer and Akkad, House of Enlil.”<sup>[241]</sup> Essentially, the portrayals of the Anzu with its wings spread out over twin animals was a reflection of the ancients’ view of Enlil’s rule over both Sumer and Uri (Akkad). This is yet another striking example of the literary and iconographical traditions coinciding, allowing us to make sense of their way of thinking.

### **A REJECTION OF SHAMANISM**

We have now succeeded in placing the story of the Tower of Babel in the context of the history of ancient Sumer, which goes a long way in helping us to understand the enmity and struggle between the gods in both traditions in a consistent way, namely the conflict between the god of the Semitic people and a Semite like Etana (Enoch) and that of the early Sumerian people and a Sumerian like Enmerkar (Nimrod). On the one hand, we have the god, El (An), and his son, El.El (Enlil), and on the other the god, Enki, the “Lord of the Earth”. The conflict between these two gods seems to have been an eternal one and the story of the Tower of Babel tells how it reached a peak during the time of Dumuzi, the last king of the First Dynasty of Uruk to have lived during the Uruk Period (a dynasty that was continued by Gilgamesh in the next period, the so-called Jemdet Nasr Period).

The conflict between the gods, An/Enlil on the one hand, and Enki on the other, might originally have been a conflict between the Semites and the Sumerians. Although there might have been a connection, this conflict should not be confused with the internal struggle between the two factions within the House of Meskiagkasher. These two

opposing factions were both Sumerian, with both considering themselves to have been descendants of the Nephilim. One of these factions, those who grouped around Lugalbanda, might, however, have aligned themselves with the Semitic population. They were a caste of warriors who, as warriors, had more in common with the Semites than with the early Sumerians, whom they were part of.

Of special interest to our discussion is the different ways in which the Semites and the Sumerians viewed and regarded the Anzu bird. The Anzu, representing not only the “supreme spirit” but also certain sky spirits, seems to have essentially become the symbol of kingship for the Semites and the symbol of shamanistic rebirth for the Sumerians. We find, for instance, in the *Myth of Etana*, that the eagle is not associated with the “plant of life” as in the *Lugalbanda Epic* but with the “plant of birth”, with the first being associated with shamanism and the second with royal descent.

We have seen that the Anzu was closely linked to the Semitic Etana, taken to be the very first king to have ruled in Sumer. This bird, with its outstretched wings, became the paramount royal symbol from the time when Nippur became the geographical centre of the land. On the other hand, we find that the Anzu is presented in the *Lugalbanda Epic* as the spirit that shamans encounter on their otherworldly journey. The Anzu was thus not only identified with Enlil, in the context of kingship, but also with Enki, the god of shamanism, in later periods also shown with the Anzu in his hand.

The differences between the *Myth of Etana* and the *Lugalbanda Epic* are clear. The eagle and the serpent in the cosmic tree associated with the Etana story reflects an ancient view of spiritual “reality” as it existed in the otherworld with An, from whom kingship was bestowed on Etana, and his eagle, standing in direct opposition to Enki and his snake. This picture quite possibly reflects the conflict between the Semites and the Sumerians in the

antediluvian period. The same motif in the Lugalbanda story, however, reflects the shamanistic experience, with the Anzu more particularly presented as a kind of spirit encountered by shamans during such shamanistic otherworldly experiences. This conflict continued when Enlil became king of the gods and inherited An's eagle, which then became the royal Anzu, the symbol of kingship over the gods.

The conflict between Enlil and Enki was not only political in nature but also involved different forms of worship. With Enlil's rise to the throne of the gods, one expects that the new ruling faction would not only have rejected Enki's claim but also that the religious worship of this god, closely associated with shamanism, would gradually have been sidelined. Nippur consequently became the great scribal centre of learning, justice and morality.<sup>[242]</sup>

In official religious terms, shamanism was not commonly associated with the worship of Enlil or with the worship of El outside of Sumer. It seems that shamanism was rejected by the early adherents and worshippers of Enlil as well as in the worship of El. Instead, Enlil was strongly identified with priestly learning and the scribal tradition. Shamanism, however, still formed an integral part of Sumerian worship, especially in the worship of Enki.

In keeping with the story of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, the mushroom induced shamanistic experience is clearly also rejected in the biblical tradition. My suggestion is that the fruit with which the serpent tempted Eve refers to the "fruit" the serpent-woman offers to shamans in that tradition. It, therefore, makes sense and explains an otherwise inexplicable prohibition placed on the fruit of that particular tree. It was not about some apple or similar fruit but by and large about the particular spiritual experience associated and connected with the "fruit" or mushrooms that were off-limits and not allowed. We also find this rejection of practices related to shamanism in the

rest of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.

What about Etana's flights to heaven on the eagle which might originally have described a spiritual experience, one may ask. My proposal is that this refers to a different kind of spiritual experience altogether, in other words different from the shamanistic experience. Perhaps Etana's experience was an early version of the "being carried away by the divine spirit" experience of the biblical prophetic tradition. <sup>[243]</sup> This view is consistent with Enoch/Etana's acceptance as an early prophet in the Biblical Hebrew tradition. <sup>[244]</sup> In the biblical story about Enoch, it is told how he was eventually taken up into heaven still physically alive. According to the Bible, this prophetic tradition was handed down from generation to generation from the earliest of times, from Enoch through Abraham <sup>[245]</sup> to Moses <sup>[246]</sup> and eventually to the Hebrew prophets of the monarchistic period.

What we in actual fact find, are two traditions standing in direct conflict with each other. The one centred on the god, El or Enlil, and the other on the god, Enki. The first may be seen as a precursor to the later biblical tradition and the second as that which became known as the tradition of the Nephilim. According to the Bible and the corresponding early Sumerian tradition, this conflict culminated into a climax when the Tower of Babel was built.

Although we now have a much clearer and better understanding of that period, there are still some questions left unanswered. We can dig even deeper in our quest to learn more about the "real" purpose of the Tower of Babel building project.

In biblical tradition, the Tower of Babel events were presented as an act of religious rebellion. It seems, however, that there was much more to this entire episode than meets the eye. We have good reason to believe that the real purpose for building the Tower was to engender a messianic figure from the House of Uruk in order for him to

establish Enki's "eternal" reign on earth. Although that goal was not realised, a great messianic figure was indeed engendered in the person of Gilgamesh.

## 6. THE GREAT COSMIC DESIGN

It is certainly no easy task trying to find out and establish how the ancient Sumerians thought about matters and things and what their mindset was. There can, however, be no doubt that they thought about and conceptualised their world in cosmic terms. They saw their presence on earth as a cosmic encounter in which the celestial skies and the earthly world came together as one inseparable whole.

The belief that the House of Uruk were descended from the gods must be seen and understood in these terms, with their speculative theology incorporating, among other things, the view that the gods were incarnated on earth. It seems that the entire project that Enmerkar embarked on was solely aimed at achieving such incarnations of the gods, in the hope of ultimately resulting in the birth of a messianic figure.

We are now embarking on our first encounter with the celestial code and the way in which those ancient people saw and understood the close relationship between heaven and earth.

### A COSMIC PROJECT

The Sumerians' basic and primary point of departure with their building project on the southern plains of Mesopotamia, was that the celestial skies in fact provide the cosmic blueprint and plan for all earthly design and endeavour. In keeping with the age-old adage and principle, "As Above, So Below", their sages ventured to reproduce the heavenly landscape on earth. We read that the "seven brilliant *apkallu* [sages]... ensure the correct functioning of the plans of heaven and earth". [\[247\]](#)



The goddess, Nissaba, was the one taking centre stage with her advice in matters of this kind. We find reference as far back as the third millennium BC of a certain tablet in her possession, called “dub.mul.an”, meaning “Tablet (of the) Stars of Heaven”. After placing “the Tablet (of the) Stars of Heaven on the knee, she consulted it”.<sup>[248]</sup> This presumably refers to a real act or event where the priestess of this goddess placed such a tablet, inscribed with the cosmic design, on her knee for consultation.

In another ancient text, we read the following about this goddess: “(She) has brought the mes [cosmic order] from heaven... She consults a tablet of lapis lazuli, she gives advice to all the lands... She measures off the heaven, she places the measuring-cords on earth.”<sup>[249]</sup> This passage shows that the priestess of this goddess used a tablet made of lapis lazuli, a beautiful dark blueish stone reflecting the colour of heaven. This tablet apparently mirrored the heavens, with the priestess giving advice taken from it about the layout not only of temples but even of the land itself. When the builders embarked on their work, they used the prescribed design found in the heavens when setting up the measuring-cords for building projects on earth.

Not only the temples<sup>[250]</sup> but also the entire land of Sumer was designed and laid out in such a way and in order to reproduce the celestial plan. As such, we read in the *Myth of Etana*: “The great ones, the Anunnaki, deciders of fate, sat (in council), the constructors of the (four) directions, the creators of the creation planned a plan for the lands.”<sup>[251]</sup> These “great ones” may refer to those en-priests sometimes described as Anunnaki gods. They designed a “plan for the lands [Sumer]”.

## **THE LAYOUT OF ANCIENT SUMER**

We can easily see how the cosmic design was applied when we compare the layout of the celestial sky with that of

ancient Sumer.

The Sumerians divided the heavens amongst the three main gods, namely An, Enlil and Enki. The celestial region between 17° north and 17° south of the celestial equator (the celestial equator merely being a projection of the earth's equator into the celestial sphere) was assigned to An. This area is marked out and defined by the movement of the sun in the framework of the celestial sky through the course of the year. At that time, midsummer was associated with 17° north of the equator and midwinter with 17° south of it.

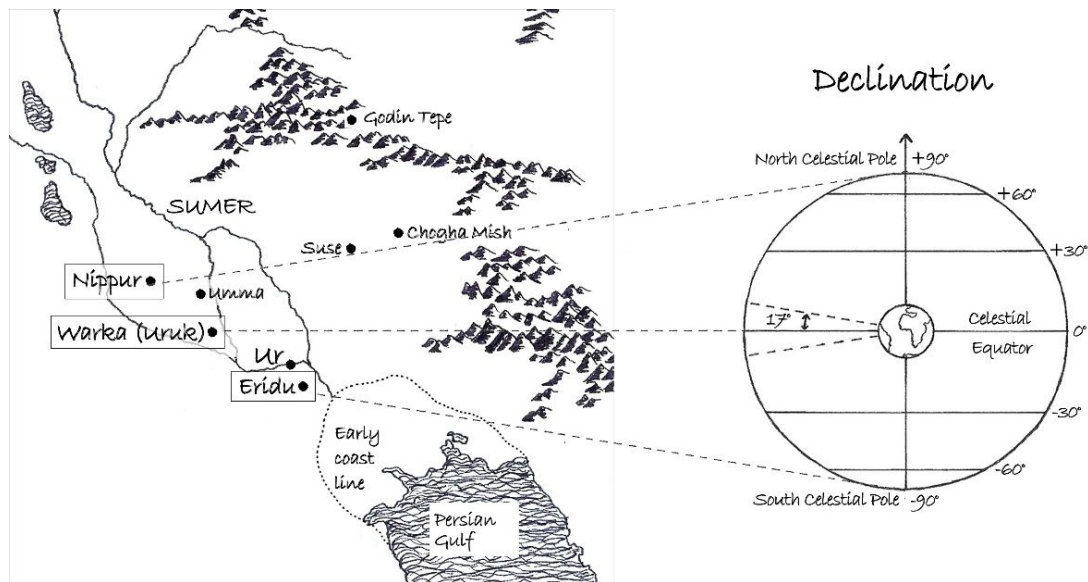
This movement of the sun between 17° north and 17° south of the celestial equator defined the zone within which the earthly world could be aligned with the celestial skies, where heaven (an) and earth (ki) meet. In line with this alignment, this zone was allotted to the god An, whom the Sumerians paired with Ki, the earth. The celestial region to the north of this central zone was the heavenly realm allotted to Enlil and the one to the south of it was the cosmic realm of the netherworld, as well as the Apsu, which belonged to Enki.<sup>[252]</sup> So, in cosmic terms, the heavenly realm was “above” the earth and the netherworld “below” it.

The layout of the land of Sumer, in terms of the location of the sanctuaries belonging to these gods, was done in exact agreement with this celestial model. Accordingly, it is found that the temple belonging to the god, An, was located right in the middle of Sumer. Similarly to the way An was paired with Ki (earth) in the cosmic realm, he was worshipped together with Ki-Inana at this temple. The fact that the great city of Uruk was built around An's temple reflects a celestial truth, namely that the inhabited earth was located in this zone of the cosmos.

The temples of Enlil at Nippur and Enki at Eridu were located on direct opposite sides of An's temple at Uruk, that of Enlil directly to the north of it and that of Enki directly to

the south of it. The temple of An may therefore be viewed as the centre or the “navel” of ancient Sumer, in the same way the celestial region allotted to An was situated between the heavenly realm, allotted to Enlil, and the netherworld realm (including the Apsu), allotted to Enki. This layout was done precisely in accordance with the celestial model. It should be noted that when Enlil became the king of the gods after the Uruk Period, his city, Nippur, became the new navel of the land, replacing Uruk within the context of a different interpretation of the celestial layout or blueprint.

What is immediately obvious, is that the two temples at Nippur and Eridu represented two otherworldly realms, namely that of heaven, where Enlil ruled over the cosmos after becoming king of the gods, and that of the netherworld (including the Apsu) with which Enki was associated in that early period (hence the immense graveyard at Eridu mentioned earlier). More particularly, the temple at Nippur had its celestial counterpart in the constellation of Ursa Major, today also known as the Big Bear or Big Dipper, at that time located near the northern celestial pole.<sup>[253]</sup> The temple of Eridu in turn had its celestial counterpart in the star, Canopus, located deep down in the southern sky, also called Nun.ki, the same as Eridu.<sup>[254]</sup> To this day, the constellation of Eridanus in the southern sky is named after Eridu.



*Figure 8. A comparison between the layout of the land of Sumer and the layout of the celestial skies. Nippur corresponds with the northern polar region whereas Eridu corresponds with the southern polar region. Uruk (Warka) corresponds with the middle region between 17° north and 17° south of the celestial equator.*

Additionally, there is the *axis mundi* which connects the northern and southern extremes of the cosmos, often visualised as a massive cosmic tree. In ancient Sumer, it was also regarded as a rope, called the “great bond of heaven and earth”, keeping the cosmos together. In line with the images or symbols associated with the cosmic tree, the temples of Nippur and Eridu were closely associated with the eagle and the serpent as their respective symbols. What is more is that the Anzu eagle was associated with the colour white<sup>[255]</sup> and the furious snake with the colour red.<sup>[256]</sup>

These Anzu and serpent symbols might have had their counterparts in the celestial skies. When we read in Lugalbanda’s story that the Anzu’s nest is “vast like the cattle pen of Nanna”,<sup>[257]</sup> referring to the stars of heaven, it

implies that certain northern stars, presumably in the polar region, were associated with the eagle's nest. In the south, we find the serpent in the constellation of Hydra. [\[258\]](#)

### **THE "EARTH" RISING FROM THE APSU**

The Apsu was seen as a different region, apart from heaven and the netherworld. The Apsu was a very old concept in ancient Sumer and in cosmological terms it was associated with the *primaeval* waters from which the first dry ground or earth appeared. The Apsu, also called Nun, was in this way also regarded as the partner of An. [\[259\]](#) In this version of events the earth was created when An's seed fell in the Apsu (Nun). This may then be another reason why these gods were called "Anunna(ki)", meaning the "seed of Nun". In time, the Apsu was seen as a distinct cosmic region on its own, apart from heaven and the netherworld, which had its source deep down at the bottom of the cosmos. Accordingly, it formed part of Enki's domain.

The seven sages were very closely associated with the Apsu. They were the ones who laid the foundations of temples and the walls of cities, like Uruk, in the Apsu or groundwater, re-enacting or reproducing the original process of creation. In this way, they "created" the cosmos all over again as they erected the temples as images of the cosmos and with the cosmic realms clearly delineated in them. During the late Uruk Period, we find that the building process started with a reed frame, on top of which the building was constructed, with the reed frame and its texture signifying the *primaeval* earth or first ground that appeared from the Apsu. [\[260\]](#)

The question is, how did the "earth" rose from the Apsu in cosmic terms? The ancient Sumerians understood and viewed the "earth" in terms of the four cardinal or celestial points, defined by the equinoxes and solstices. These points are located at the four "corners" of the earth, which were

extended in cosmic terms into the celestial sky where they were identified with four stars of the zodiac.<sup>[261]</sup> In this way, they form a “square” in the framework of An’s zone in the celestial sky, reflecting the fourfold nature of the original gods, comprising four male-female pairs, who were born after An’s seed fell in the Apsu. The primeval earth thus “rested above” the Apsu or “deep” southern skies, from which it came forth. Within the celestial earthly zone, it seems that the area “above” the celestial equator was associated with dry ground and the area below it with the subterranean freshwaters of the Apsu.

Despite An clearly being portrayed as the father of the eight original gods, whether viewed as born from the Apsu or the soft earth, Ki, they were in later Sumerian tradition regarded as the “seed of Enki” (as discussed earlier). This view might have originated in the time when Enki endeavoured to usurp An’s position as king of the gods. In the tradition found in the poultrices text and dating from this period, discussed previously, Enki is assigned “Anship” and, as such, he is indeed called “father of the gods”.<sup>[262]</sup>

The close association between creation and giving birth in the Eridu mythology might have led to these gods having been regarded as the womb matrix from which the messianic god, Gibil, associated with the rising sun, was born.

## **THE GODS OF HEAVEN AND EARTH**

During the Uruk Period, when An’s temple was viewed as the navel of the land, the gods came from the temples in the north and the south to gather there. In an ancient Sumerian text it is written that the gods came from Nippur and Eridu to gather at the temple of An:

“[He] took his seat on the great throne-dias,  
An, king of the gods...

The Anunnaki gods, the gods in their entirety,  
gathered to him at the place of decision-making,  
all the great offices he caused to appear -  
the gods of heaven stood in attendance before him...  
the gods of earth bowed down before him.”<sup>[263]</sup>

Against the backdrop of the rituals performed at Uruk, the “gods of heaven” refer to the Anunnaki gods from the sky or heavenly realm who came from Nippur. The “gods of earth” on the other hand, refer to the Anunnaki gods of the netherworld, somewhat confusingly called “earth”, who came from Enki’s sanctuary at Eridu. Although it is not exactly clear when Enlil was first worshipped at Nippur, this sanctuary, in the framework of the layout of Sumer, certainly represented the northern celestial region from the time it was first built in the Ubaid period. A cult associated with the sky- or heavenly gods might have been active at Nippur long before the Semites established the worship of the god, Enlil, there.

In the Uruk Period, the gods of heaven were probably associated with a warrior cult from Nippur which might have been active there since the time of Lugalbanda. As these gods were associated with the sky or heavenly realm, they might very well have been those Shining Ones associated with the storm clouds. These Shining Ones were portrayed as lion-headed eagles<sup>[264]</sup> and Lugalbanda himself might have been included amongst them since he was called a “prince” after his initiation into the family of the Anzu, seemingly a reference to the Anunna of the sky or heavenly sphere.

On the other hand, the gods of earth were called Igigi, the gods of the netherworld, portrayed in the *Atrahasis Myth*, the Akkadian version of the great deluge, as the ones who performed manual labour for the Anunnaki. We may link them to the “builder gods”, associated with Enmerkar. They might also have been associated with a fertility cult at Eridu.



As “gods” of the netherworld, they might have included amongst their ranks deified spirits of deceased ancestors of those Urukite kings regarded as the Shining Ones belonging to that realm. They were closely associated with a leader like Enmerkar, who might himself have been included amongst them.

Accordingly, these two groups of “gods” gathered at the temple of An in Uruk, included amongst them the Anunnaki gods of the sky or heavenly sphere for whom the Anzu might have been used as a symbol or emblem, and the Igigi, gods of the netherworld for whom the serpent might have been used as a symbol or emblem. These two groups were associated with the two branches of Meskiagkasher’s dynasty.

### **NIPPUR AND THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN**

After the Uruk Period came to an end, the city of Nippur replaced Uruk as the naval or centre of the land. From that time on, the temple of Enlil at Nippur became the new naval of the land. From here Enlil ruled over Uri to the north and Sumer to the south. After Enlil became king of the gods, presumably during the reign of Enmebaragesi, all the great gods gathered in council at his temple. His temple was called “House (that) is a Mountain”, in accordance with Enlil’s title of “Great Mountain”.<sup>[265]</sup> This clearly signified the cosmic mountain at the “pinnacle of the world”, a mountain which towered over the cosmos,<sup>[266]</sup> with Enlil’s abode at the very top of this cosmic mountain.<sup>[267]</sup> In their cosmological concept, this mountain was identified with the northern polar region, with the throne position presumably being located at the celestial pole.

Whereas Uruk’s location corresponded with the middle region of the cosmos in the layout of the land, Nippur was identified with the northern polar region, a region now understood to have been the cosmic mountain from where the entire cosmos was ruled. Now, the great gods or



Anunna, who formed the council of the gods with Enlil as king, came to be identified with the stars of the northern polar region.<sup>[268]</sup> Amongst the great gods who served Enlil were the seven lawmaking gods, also called “gods of the decrees/destinies”.<sup>[269]</sup> In this role they formulated and recorded the decisions of the council of the gods. They can be identified with the seven bright stars of the constellation of Ursa Major in the northern polar region. These great gods, who gathered in council, stood in direct opposition to the fallen gods, associated with Enki.

It should be emphasised that the great gods, or Anunna, surrounding and serving Enlil and of whom the elite amongst them served in the council of the gods, should not be confused with the various groups of Shining Ones, also called Anunna, who were associated with the cultic practices of the descendants of Meskiagkasher or with the Nephilim in general. Whereas the former Annuna were the “seed of An”, they were not fallen gods like the latter group of Anunna. Although some of these Shining Ones, those associated with the warrior-shamans, were associated with the sky or heavenly realm, they did not belong to or form part of the great gods who served on the council at the top of the great cosmic mountain where Enlil ruled as king over the cosmos.

When Enlil became king of the gods, the Anzu became the symbol of his kingship. The pinnacle of the cosmic mountain was, however, not only associated with the Anzu stretching its wings over the eastern and western parts of the cosmos but also with the sun at its zenith, with sunrise and sunset located on opposite sides of the cosmos. In this case, the eastern and western parts of the cosmos, sunrise and sunset, correspond with Sumer and Uri in the layout of the land.

In time, this new way of viewing and understanding the cosmos and the consequent layout of the land, replaced the earlier Urukite view and perspective. Nonetheless, the

earlier cosmic view was not forgotten and formed the basis of Sumerian shamanism, rooted in the old cosmic view.

## THE FALLEN SEED OF AN

The Sumerians did not only design and lay out their land in accordance with the blueprint provided by the celestial skies, they also carefully and meticulously studied the celestial skies in order to determine when certain stars and constellations would make their appearance at certain positions in the great cycle of the ages. This does not only reflect an acute interest in the celestial skies but also stood central in their speculative theology about the rebirth of certain gods on earth. As we will now see, the gods with whom these stars were associated, were not only closely connected to certain earthly luminaries of that time, the appearance of certain stars at certain positions also signified the time of the incarnation of the gods associated with them in human form. The sages might well have had these anticipated and predicted incarnations in mind when the layout of the land was first planned and designed.

In this way of thinking, the entire building project of the Uruk Period had the sole purpose of preparing the way for the rebirth of the gods on earth. This means that the blueprint they so carefully observed in the night sky, actually formed part of a more comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of the sky as a kind of “heavenly scroll”, the details and intricacies of which were presumably only known by the highest level initiates into these mysteries. Accordingly, this may be seen as a coded script, using a secret celestial code, of which we can for obvious reasons only have a very partial and limited understanding.

The rebirth of the gods on earth was closely connected to the myth of An’s seed which fell onto the earth. When An’s temple was established and the goddess, Inana-Ki, brought there, the groundwork was laid for the gods to be reborn by means of the *hieros gamos* sacred marriage rituals, where the high priest, representing An, ritually impregnated the high priestess, representing An’s consort, Inana-Ki. [\[270\]](#)

In Lugalbanda's time, he and Ninsun performed these roles. Within the *hieros gamos* they personified the "wild bull" that impregnated the "wild cow".<sup>[271]</sup> The name, Ninsun, actually means "lady wild cow", reflecting her role in these rituals. Lugalbanda would have assumed the role of An with Ninsun personifying the fertile earth, Inana-Ki.

As Lugalbanda was also an initiate of the Anzu cult, he and Ninsun, strikingly, also personified another variation of the same motif, namely that of the thunder impregnating the soft earth as portrayed in the ancient shamanistic myth. Lugalbanda represented the thunderclouds, embodied in the Thunderbird or Anzu. Ninsun personified the fertile earth, Inana-Ki, and most probably also the snake-mother. Their progeny would have been associated with the mushroom gods, who were born from the seed of the thunder that fell onto the soft earth.

What is more, is the fact that the seven young men, who accompanied Lugalbanda to the land of Aratta, are portrayed as being consummated and then born in exactly the same way:

“Seven they were, seven they were, seven were the young  
lads born in Kulab.

Uras [i.e. the tith/tillage] had bore these seven; the wild  
cow had suckled them with milk.

They were heroes, the handsomest in Sumer and princely in their prime.

They grew up at An's high table.

These seven were lieutenants of companies, They were captains of regiments...

These served their lord as his élite troops.

Lugalbanda was the eighth of them.”<sup>[272]</sup>

If the “wild cow” refers to Ninsun, “lady wild cow”, these seven young men can in fact be viewed as Lugalbanda’s sons, born to him by way of the *hieros gamos*.

The ancient Sumerians took the seven young men to have been born from An's seed that fell on the soft ground (Uras). They were an earthly manifestation of the "sons of An" who fell on earth. In Lugalbanda's story these seven young men are identified with the so-called seven gods or *sebittu* (*il sibitti*), possibly making it the earliest reference to these seven gods. They were indeed "great gods", belonging to the Anunnaki.<sup>[273]</sup> In the celestial skies, they were visible as the seven stars of the star cluster called the Pleiades.<sup>[274]</sup>

The seven gods were introduced as "Seven they are, seven they are", exactly like the seven young warriors, described as "Seven they were, seven they were". They were sons of one mother, fathered by An on the earth. We read the following: " (Anu begets) the Seven gods on *Ersetu* (the Earth)..."<sup>[275]</sup> and "They are that which was spawned in the creation of Anu, children of the earth they were born, they are that which a woman in travail (had brought forth dead?), which an evil foster-mother [hath]..."<sup>[276]</sup> They were clearly sons of An and in later times they were also portrayed as seven "shoots of wheat", showing their association with fertility rituals.<sup>[277]</sup>

Like the seven young men, the seven gods were portrayed as great warriors in Lugalbanda's story: "They are favoured by Inana's heart, steadfast in battle. They are the seven torches of battle."<sup>[278]</sup> The seven "torches" refer to the light of the seven stars of the Pleiades. They are also called the "starry battle-mace" or "battle-mace of the sky",<sup>[279]</sup> again referring to the seven stars of the Pleiades. In this instance, these seven gods were together envisioned as the mace carried into battle.

A very interesting aspect of the story is the depiction of a great battle during which the sun "withdrew" and then reappeared from its "chamber",<sup>[280]</sup> probably referring to a solar eclipse that occurred during the battle. In *Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave*, we read how the seven gods, the

seven stars of the Pleiades, appeared “in the presence” of the sun god<sup>[281]</sup> in order to participate in a “cosmic” battle.<sup>[282]</sup> When we take the dual nature of the seven stars/young warriors into account, we may conclude that this battle happened both in heaven and on earth. In this passage the seven gods are portrayed as the heavenly version of the seven young men, in the same way as the god, Utu, was present in heaven and on earth in the form of the kings of Uruk.

The identification of the seven young men with the seven gods is also found in a later reference to them in the story called *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*. Here, the story of the seven young men, who accompanied Lugalbanda, is included among the stories told about Gilgamesh. This follows from their association with the journey to the land of Aratta, an inextricable part of the Lugalbanda corpus. We read:

*“They, then, shine in the sky, on earth they know the roads,  
stars blazing in the sky, on earth they know the road to the  
land of Aratta.*

They know to change paths like merchants, like swallows  
they know the cracks of the earth, they would guide him  
through the many mountain passes.”<sup>[283]</sup>

As I have highlighted in italics, they are simultaneously depicted in this description as the seven stars of the Pleiades and the seven young men accompanying the hero on his campaign. In view of this distinct and definite identification of the seven young men with the seven gods, it may be accepted that the reference to them as “princes” not only implies that they were of royal descent but also of divine descent. In fact, this identification provides a good reason to assume that the Sumerians believed the seven gods to have been incarnated in the seven young men through the sacred marriage ritual or *hieros gamos*.

## **DUMUZI, THE EIGHTH SON**

It is not only the seven young men, who accompanied Lugalbanda, who are described in terms of the seed that fell on the soft earth. Dumuzi, the “true son”, who, according to the *Sumerian King List*, succeeded Lugalbanda to the throne of Uruk, is also described in this way. We read the following about him: “The mother who bore him is a goddess, Uras [i.e. the tilth/tillage], that lord is noble! His father is the wild bull of Eridu.”<sup>[284]</sup> Elsewhere it is written that Ninsun was his mother: “I, Ninsuna, mother of the (young) lord [i.e. Dumuzi].”<sup>[285]</sup> This may well imply that Lugalbanda and Ninsun were taken as his father and mother. Given the close agreement with the descriptions of the birth of the seven gods, one may conclude that Dumuzi was regarded as their brother.

The strange thing about Dumuzi though, is that An is not the one mentioned as his father. Apparently, his father was “the wild bull of Eridu”, namely Enki. This agrees with what we have earlier discovered about Dumuzi’s reign, namely that Enki replaced An as the king of the gods during that time. This explains why this king’s origin and birth are presented in these terms. We do, however, find that Dumuzi was also called the “herdsman of An”, which is consistent with what is said about the seven young men, namely that “they ate at the table of An”.<sup>[286]</sup>

In line with the seven young men having been considered as incarnations of the seven gods, King Dumuzi was probably also viewed as the incarnation of a god, namely Dumuzi. There was another earlier Dumuzi, placed in the antediluvian period, before the great deluge that is. Although the use of the same name might be incidental, it can under these circumstances, reasonably be expected that sharing a name implies more. On the celestial level, the constellation of Orion was identified with the god, Dumuzi. And, amazingly enough, Orion is located near the Pleiades in the celestial sky, in line with a connection having existed between Dumuzi and the seven young men!

### **A NEW GROUP OF EIGHT GODS**

According to the *Sumerian King List*, all those born from the first House of Uruk, from the time of Lugalbanda to the time of Gilgamesh, of whom we have so far considered the seven young men and Dumuzi, were described as children of “Uras” or “tilth/tillage”, also described as the “wild cow”. It is possible that they were all in later Sumerian tradition regarded as children of Lugalbanda and Ninsun, all of them apparently viewed as the incarnations of certain gods, who were also associated with stars featuring prominently in the night sky of that time.

We now find something really astonishing. If Dumuzi and the seven gods, considered as “sons” of Lugalbanda, the Thunderbird, and Ninsun, the “soft earth”, were seen as eight brothers and if all of them were regarded as incarnations of certain gods, it may just be possible that, in the theological speculations of those times, these eight were taken to have been new incarnations of the original eight gods born from the divine seed that fell on the earth. The original eight gods had probably also been born from the *hieros gamos* as the incarnations of eight such gods. [\[287\]](#)

If we accept the Egyptian version of this story of the eight gods as a good representation of the original one, the ancient Sumerians would have expected the birth of these eight gods to have been followed by the birth of a ninth god, a messianic figure. In the Uruk Period, this figure could only have been Gilgamesh, who was also viewed as a son of Lugalbanda and Ninsun, as we read in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*: “By my mother Ninsun who bore me, by my father holy Lugalbanda (who sired me).” [\[288\]](#)

Astoundingly, the same mythological theme originally associated with the shamans of the northern Zagros Mountains, is now found in the legends of the first House of Uruk during the final years of the Uruk Period. Not only was Lugalbanda identified with thunder and his wife, Ninsun,



with the soft earth, the gods he supposedly fathered on “earth” also closely correspond with the eight (or nine) gods so conceived and born according to that ancient myth. Shamanism clearly played a central role in the Uruk tradition.

What we have now discovered is that this ancient myth also found a striking and remarkable fulfilment during the time of the great Sumerian heroes, Enmerkar, Lugalbanda and Gilgamesh!

## THE COSMIC DESIGN IN THE CELESTIAL SKIES

Although I have now connected certain notables from the time of the Uruk Period to certain constellations in the stars, it is still not quite clear how all of this fits into a greater cosmic design. Why did those things all happen at that time and not at any other time? Could it not have happened at any other time in history? The answer, amazingly enough, is an emphatic no! It was only during that specific time that the stars in the celestial skies aligned in such a way that these gods could have been incarnated on earth.

An interesting fact about the seven stars of the Pleiades is that they were associated in certain ancient myths with the seven stars of Ursa Major, situated close to the northern celestial pole. In one ancient Hurrian myth, Ursa Major is said to have sired the Pleiades on earth.<sup>[289]</sup> This is merely another version of the myth of the fallen gods, who are—as in our story—identified with the Pleiades. Here, the seven stars of Ursa Major are gods of heaven and the seven stars of the Pleiades gods of the “earth”, or fallen gods, in line with the Pleiades being located within the celestial zone associated with the “earth” (within the four “corners” of the “earth”).

Let us now consider the movement of the Pleiades in the celestial skies during the Uruk Period more carefully. During the early Uruk Period, the Pleiades were located “below” the celestial equator (or waterline) in the Apsu. Towards the end of the Uruk Period, when the building project at Uruk reached its peak, something very strange and peculiar happened. During that time, the seven stars of the Pleiades slowly drifted, in accordance with the great cycle of the ages, from a position below the celestial equator (or waterline) to a position above it, sprouting above “the soft earth”. This was a very observable event, not only because the heliacal rising of the Pleiades at dawn, after a period of invisibility, was carefully observed each year but also

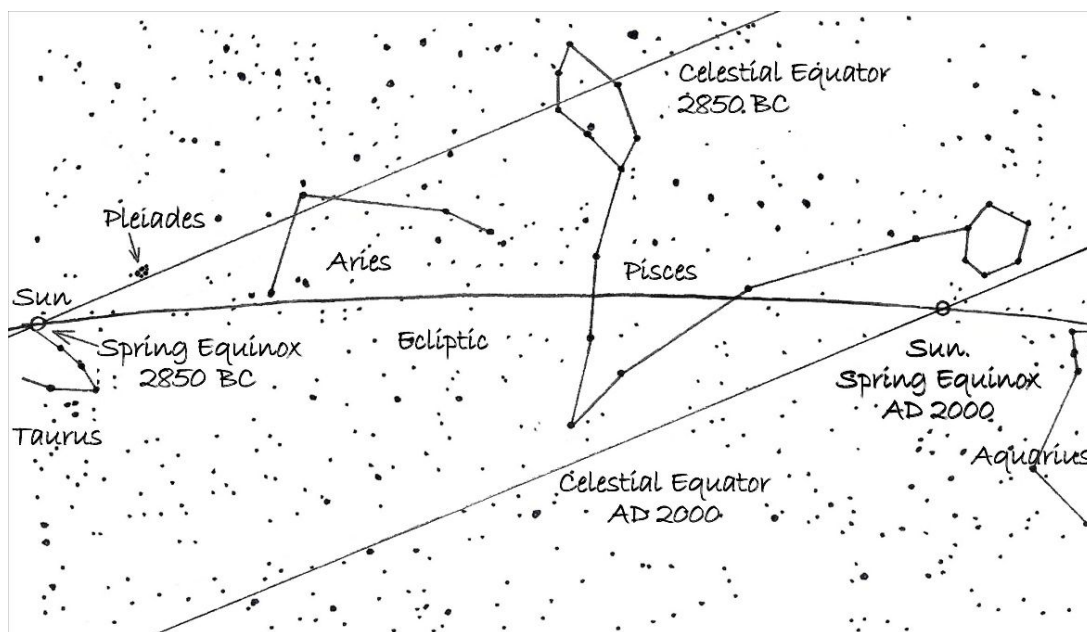
because the celestial equator, as defined by the equinoxes and solstices, served as a stable marker for observing the movement of the stars, especially stars like the Pleiades, which were located in the near vicinity of the celestial equator.

Over a period of more or less a century, from 3000 to 2880 BC, these stars, together about the same size as the moon disk to the naked eye, drifted progressively northwards in the position they occupied on the eastern horizon every year. This means that the Pleiades appeared above “ground”, that is above the celestial equator, sprouting from the soft “earth”, so to say. Their heliacal rising at dawn during spring every year, signalled the time for plowing and sowing. This explains why the stars of the Pleiades were associated with seed that fell on the ground.

It may be concluded that the ancients interpreted these celestial events as the “birth” of the gods, associated with these stars, on earth. In the same way this occurred in the celestial skies, they believed it to have happened on earth when the seven young men were born from the *hieros gamos*. One should also not exclude the possibility that they were septuplets! Fact remains, they were seen as the seven gods incarnated on earth and as such, those ancients might have understood this as something predetermined by the celestial scroll or code, they so carefully observed in the night sky.

Once we accept that this astral myth in actual fact formed the basis for the ancient Sumerians’ view about the divine incarnation of the seven young men accompanying Lugalbanda, we can astronomically determine a date when these events happened. Seeing that Lugalbanda is so very closely related to and associated with the seven young men, he would presumably have lived during that time, namely around 3000 to 2880 BC. We then, unexpectedly but rather stunningly, find that a solar eclipse, in fact, occurred in the northern Zagros Mountains to the south of Lake Urmia in the

land of Aratta at that time, in exact accordance with the corresponding event mentioned in Lugalbanda's story. This happened on the 26th of August 2962 BC.



*Figure 9. The celestial sky in 2850 BC, showing the Pleiades above the celestial equator (also applicable for the year 2000 AD).*

### **DUMUZI: PERSONIFICATION OF THE POLAR STAR**

This then brings us to Dumuzi.

The most important aspect of Dumuzi's life is that he was killed as a young man. As such, he was mourned every year by the cult that developed around his person. In cult context and ritual, he was identified with the seed in the "great bud" of the date palm.<sup>[290]</sup> In this role, he was called Dumuzi-Amaushumgalana, "the power in the single great bud of the date palm".<sup>[291]</sup> This bud, interestingly enough, breaks open with a loud clapping sound, signifying thunder perhaps, whereafter the seed is disseminated by the wind, inseminating the flowers of the date palm. In this case,

cutting the ripe dates might have signified Dumuzi's death. Both Dumuzi's role in the *hieros gamos* as well as his death were incorporated into this cult's practices. <sup>[292]</sup>

Within the Sumerian shamanistic cult of that time, the palm tree was most probably associated with the *axis mundi* as a local presentation of the world tree. Towards the end of the Uruk Period, the *axis mundi*, fascinatingly, pointed directly at the polar star, Thuban! This in itself, was a very rare event and only happened again once since then, when the axis moved on and Polaris (recently) became the polar star. The reason for this is that the cosmic axis is of course not stationary and accordingly did not always point at this star. This axis drifts slowly through the northern, and southern, polar region in accordance with the great cycle of the ages, taking more or less 26 000 years to complete one cycle. In itself, it would have been a very noticeable and observable event when the cosmic axis pointed directly at the polar star, Thuban.

The image of one star, the polar star, remaining stationary and immovable, with all the other northern stars revolving around it, captured the imagination of those people. In ancient tradition, this star was symbolised as a large cosmic pillar or tree. As the northern pole of the *axis mundi* was observed to have drifted slowly through the polar star and eventually away from it, the ancients imagined this as a tree having been cut down. In the case of the palm tree this event might have been associated with the cutting of the ripe dates.

This means Dumuzi's death was not only associated with the cutting of dates but also, on a cosmic level, with the "death" of the polar star, Thuban, when the *axis mundi* drifted away from it. This cosmic event served as a celestial blueprint for interpreting events in local cult context, with the cosmic axis providing the celestial prototype of the cosmic tree and the palm tree as an earthly image thereof. Accordingly, Dumuzi might have been viewed in later

tradition as the personification of the cosmic tree itself, with his death corresponding with the “death” of the polar star. We find this identification in Egypt too, where the Egyptian Dumuzi, namely Osiris, was envisaged as a cosmic pillar and identified with the polar star.

In this image, the polar star corresponds with the cluster of dates hanging in the top of the palm tree. In keeping with the knowledge that the northern pole of the *axis mundi* drifted through the polar star, the “death” of the star would then have signalled the cutting of the dates in the top of the palm tree. In astral myth, the “death” of the polar star was often taken to mean that it subsequently fell down into the netherworld. As such, the image of Dumuzi as the constellation of Orion, which was located in the “netherworld”, perfectly symbolised his presence in that realm.

It seems that the Sumerians viewed and regarded all of this in terms of a celestial code, the basic outlines and principles of which we are only now starting to discover.

In keeping with this view, Dumuzi’s birth from the “earth” (Uras) does not only signify his conception by way of the *hieros gamos* but also that he was the incarnation of a god, like the seven young men, who were considered as such. In Dumuzi’s case, it was the god who embodied nature and its seeding power but also its seasonal “death”. In the theatre of the cosmos, this god was personified by the cosmic tree as well as the constellation of Orion.

The very significant cosmic event when Thuban, through precession and the great cycle of the ages, which will be discussed in more detail later on, became the polar star, occurred around 2850 to 2800 BC. This date fits in well with the date of 2960 BC, previously determined for Lugalbanda, and suggests a date of about 2800 BC for Gilgamesh. These dates for the end of the Uruk Period are later than those calculated by way of dendrochronology, which are nothing

more than approximate dates,<sup>[293]</sup> considering that this field of study is not an exact science.<sup>[294]</sup>

In terms of our current discussion, the dates given above are simply too far apart for Lugalbanda to have fathered all of the seven young men, Dumuzi and Gilgamesh. Although they might all have been conceived by and born to the high priestess in her role as “wild cow”, they were obviously not all born to Ninsun. This purported discrepancy can, however, easily be explained once we recall that the *Sumerian King List* does not include all the historical kings from this early period but only those remembered in the oral tradition, most probably because of their place within the speculative views of the time. When we then read that Lugalbanda and Ninsun were the parents of Gilgamesh, it most probably refers to them as his ancestors. Lugalbanda might have been Gilgamesh’s ancestral god.<sup>[295]</sup>

We have now taken a thorough look at the eight personages who were apparently viewed as incarnations of certain gods, in other words them having been so regarded in the theological speculations of that time. These speculations were not so much concerned with historical detail, not that it was unimportant, but rather with the archetypal images that became visible in the lives of these figures. Accordingly, these eight figures presumably personified the same principle manifest in the original eight gods, and in this way, prepared the way for the birth of the ninth god.

We can now at last proceed to focus on the person identified with this ninth god, namely Gilgamesh.

## 7. A MESSIANIC CHILD

Of all the Sumerian heroes, Gilgamesh must certainly have been the greatest! Sumerian poets and bards composed many a ballad singing his praises. In some of these ballads and stories about Gilgamesh, he is portrayed as being much larger than life itself, almost super human, as a cosmic hero. The literary work about him was written down during the Ur III period and includes titles such as *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, *Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living*, *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*, *The Deluge*, *The Death of Gilgamesh*, *Gilgamesh and Akka* and *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld*. Poems were also written in his honour by the Ur III ruler, king Shulgi. [\[296\]](#)

The well-known *Epic of Gilgamesh* was compiled from these early stories during the early second millennium BC.

Gilgamesh has already been discussed in the chapter about the first House of Uruk to which he belonged. We will now concern ourselves with the theological speculations about Gilgamesh, in other words, how he was viewed and considered in the secret tradition focussing on the descent of the House of Uruk from the great gods and the incarnations of such gods into their family. In this tradition, Gilgamesh was the new manifestation of the messianic child. He was nonetheless not regarded as having obtained full divinity; he was two-thirds god, one-third human. [\[297\]](#)

### THE MEANING OF HIS NAME

The name, Gilgamesh, seems to have originally been written as “Pabilga-mes”. [\[298\]](#) The first part, namely “Pabilga”, means senior, firstborn, offshoot and fruit. This word appears as early as the Jemdet Nasr Period which followed on the Uruk Period. [\[299\]](#) The “mes” part at the end of the name, means hero and man. His name can therefore be



interpreted as “the offspring (is) a hero”<sup>[300]</sup> or “a man who is (a) germ of a new tree”.<sup>[301]</sup>

We may assume that the ancient Sumerians carefully analysed his name for clues regarding his person in order to establish who he “really” was. In this regard, the scholar, A.R. George, writes the following in his book about the *Gilgamesh Epic*: “Babylonian scholars themselves were fond of the speculative interpretation of names in particular. This was not a trivial pursuit but a means to revealing profound truths... it may be that much of it will remain hidden from us because it was passed down orally as secret knowledge.”<sup>[302]</sup>

Our understanding of the Sumerian speculative theology, discussed in previous chapters, allows us to delve a little deeper into this issue. The reference to a so-called new offshoot of a tree is particularly interesting and relevant since the previous Sumerian ruler of Uruk, namely Dumuzi, was associated with the felled cosmic tree. Accordingly, Gilgamesh might not only have been viewed as the “offspring” of the first House of Uruk but also as a new shoot of the felled cosmic tree. If Dumuzi’s death was viewed in a cosmic sense, Gilgamesh’s rise to the throne of Uruk was most probably also considered in this way.

Gilgamesh was not only a hero signifying a “new shoot” of a tree, he was also the heroic personification of the first light appearing from the Apsu, namely Gibil. Fascinatingly enough, the name Gibil, does, in fact, feature in the name Gilgamesh,<sup>[303]</sup> implying the identification of Gilgamesh with the god, Gibil. Gibil means “burning reed” and seemingly refers to the practice of using reeds to produce fire, like we still find in primitive communities to this day. It thus refers to the very first spark of fire that appeared in the Apsu. Strikingly, this idea of the “first spark of fire” clearly compliments that of the “new shoot” of a tree.

## **THE RADIANT HERO**

We can now proceed to explore the association between Gilgamesh and Gibil in more detail.

We have seen that Gibil was the Sumerian equivalent of the messianic child of the Edfu texts. This child appeared as the first “radiance” in the lotus flower in the *primaeval* waters of Nun. In the Egyptian version of the story, this hero was the ninth god born to the eight *primaeval* gods, themselves born from the seed that fell on Nun.

One can now with certainty conclude that this ancient myth found its contemporary expression in the person of Gilgamesh, the ninth god born from the soft earth, personified by the goddess, Ninsun. This is the backdrop against which the Sumerians viewed him as a new manifestation of the “radiance”, which first appeared from the *primaeval* waters, namely the hero, Gibil. This is the reason why Gilgamesh was seen as the “new Gibil”.

The radiant hero, Gibil, who appeared from the *primaeval* waters, was for his part associated with the rising sun. And this is also what we find about Gilgamesh. Several episodes of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, for example, start off with “the first glow of dawn.”<sup>[304]</sup> This seems to have been a subtle way to associate our hero with the rising sun. Gilgamesh, himself a scion of the sun god, Utu, might have been seen as a new incarnation of that god, although not to its fullest extent and realisation as he was, of course, only two-thirds god. He was also identified with Utu in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* where his journey is said to have followed the “path of the sun”. This path leads through the netherworld and brings the sun to its new appearance on the horizon every day. It was called “the hidden road of the sunrise”.<sup>[305]</sup>

Gilgamesh was not only associated with the rising sun; he was also described as one surrounded by divine glory. This divine glory was the most important characteristic of the *primaeval* and original hero who appeared from the Apsu, reflecting his divine descent. In Sumerian tradition, the hero, Gibil, is the one personifying this glory: “The exalted hero

whom Ea [Enki] adorned with terrible brilliance (*melammu*).” The word for “radiance” used here is the Akkadian equivalent of the Sumerian word “me-lam”.

We now find that Gilgamesh is described in exactly the same way, as radiating a terrible “aura” when fighting against and defeating King Akka of Kish in battle.<sup>[306]</sup> We read: “Gilgamesh climbed up the wall, the *terrifying splendour* (me-lam) overwhelmed young and old of Kulaba.”<sup>[307]</sup> This is the exact same glory that surrounded the hero, Gibil. After this victory, Gilgamesh realised that it was his destiny to become the new king of Uruk.

Although Gilgamesh is described as radiating divine glory, he was obviously only a partial realisation of the messianic child. As the Sumerians considered him to have been only part god, two-thirds as already mentioned, they might have viewed his coming as one step in a long and arduous process of producing such messianic figures, or “messiahs”, appearing from Enki’s lineage from time to time, each a more substantial and pure manifestation of the messianic child in all his fullness and greatness.

The archetypal image of the messianic child entailed more than just the image of the rising sun, it also entailed the image of storm clouds (and lightning). As we find in descriptions of Gibil, both these images had to be realised in the messianic child. The question is if Gilgamesh can also be associated with the second image. And the answer is, yes, he can. Gilgamesh was descended from two family lines, coming together or merging in him, one associated with the sun (Enmerkar) and the other with the Anzu (Lugalbanda). Yet, and in spite of this, he did not fully realise the full potential of his combined lineage.

Another Sumerian god who presents a very powerful portrayal of the messianic child is Ningirsu, who may be taken as the anthropomorphic form of the Anzu bird, with his temple at Girsu, for example described in a hymn as a “Flashing Thunderbird”. He was the brother of the goddess,

Nanshe, the daughter of Enki. Although Ningirsu was later merged with Ninurta, the son of Enlil, because they both had the Anzu bird as symbol and were as such both identified with storm clouds, he belonged to the Enki milieu. Accordingly, it may be suggested that the Anzu bird held by Enki in his one hand on early seal impressions, for example, on the well-known seal of Adda, currently on display in the British Museum (BM 89115), is, in fact, that of Ningirsu. <sup>[308]</sup>

Although Ningirsu was especially associated with thunderclouds, he is also associated with the radiant rising sun. Again, we find that these two images come together in his person. Like the god, Gibil, the god, Ningirsu, personified the divine glory, as can be read in the same hymn:

“Ningirsu, coming from Eridu, rose in overwhelming splendour.

In the land it became day; the Eninnu [the temple] rivaled in brilliance the child of Enzu [the moon god].” <sup>[309]</sup>

The hero is described here as the sun god, Utu, the child of the moon god, Enzu (Suen or Sin), who rises and ascends from the netherworld every morning.

The interesting thing about the hero, Ningirsu, and Ninurta for that matter too, is that he had the sun and the moon for eyes, exactly like the “flaming eyes” of the Edfu hero! <sup>[310]</sup> Having had the sun and moon for eyes was a distinct and very important feature of the messianic child. This image might have originated with the fierce eyes of the Anzu eagle. In the *Lugalbanda Epic*, the Anzu chick in the cosmic tree is also described with emphasis being put on its eyes. <sup>[311]</sup> This bird had the head of a lion and consequently also the eyes of this vicious beast. It is perfectly understandable that the eyes became associated with the sun and the moon.

With Lugalbanda’s initiation kept in mind, it is quite imaginable that the image of the messianic child in the Eridu theology originated with the Anzu chick of shamanistic

initiation. In the same way this chick represents the shaman on his journey to “godhood”, it might also have represented a more collective concept, namely that of the messianic child. This implies that the Anzu was embodied in the messianic child. This also explains why Ningirsu, as the anthropomorphic form of the Anzu bird, bore the divine image of the messianic child. Like the individual shaman being reborn as an Anzu, messiahs from the Enki lineage can be viewed in the same terms, as incarnations of the Anzu bird, which now takes on the image of a cosmic spirit.



*Figure 10. Seal with Enki holding the Anzu bird in his hand.*

Although Gilgamesh only partially fulfilled the messianic ideal, he was nevertheless recognised as a form of the messianic god, Ningirsu/Ninurta. As such, he was worshipped in Ninurta’s temple in Nippur.<sup>[312]</sup> As the greatest of all the Sumerian heroes, although not in all of Mesopotamian history, Gilgamesh was revered and worshipped throughout Sumer. Offerings were made to him and his spirit, in the form of his statue in Nippur, Girsu and Uruk.<sup>[313]</sup> This practice was quite widespread in ancient Sumer.

Finally, and in line with the cosmic design unfolding through the great cycle of the ages, another messianic child

arrived on the Mesopotamian stage a few hundred years after Gilgamesh. We will get back to him in due course.

### **GILGAMESH AND THE NEW YEAR'S FESTIVALS**

Gilgamesh was not only associated with the rising sun. He was, in the framework of the yearly cycle of the sun, also remembered as the one who introduced the New Year's festival<sup>[314]</sup> celebrated at the time of the vernal equinox. This festival represents exactly the same image, namely that of a new solar beginning. The sun's journey in the framework of the division of the year into equinoxes and solstices was now celebrated for the very first time.

The founding of this festival would inevitably have led to the introduction of new cultic practices. Accordingly, and as expected, we indeed find that Gilgamesh introduced certain physical contests into the new celebrations. These might have had as purpose the determination and selection of one young man amongst the "gurus" to take part in the *hieros gamos* with one of the young virgins amongst the "ki-sikil", or maidens, during the New Year ceremonies.<sup>[315]</sup>

The "gurus" were brave young warriors. They accompanied Gilgamesh and edged him on to go to war with the king of Kish.<sup>[316]</sup> The "ki-sikil" maidens, on the other hand, were associated with the cult of Inana.<sup>[317]</sup> Given his later association with wrestling and athletics, these might have been among the contests Gilgamesh introduced into the new festival.<sup>[318]</sup> Gilgamesh seems to have dominated in these games, proving victorious and getting to take part in the subsequent *hieros gamos* rituals.

Gilgamesh introduced two new sports items with important symbolic significance into these games. In the Sumerian epic, *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld*, it is told how Gilgamesh cut down Inana's halup tree, which grew in Uruk. The Anzu had its nest in the top of this tree and a snake lived at its bottom. He then used the top of the tree to make the so-called "mikku" and the base to make



the so-called “pukku”. These objects were subsequently used in the new games Gilgamesh introduced for the young men and women to take part in. Although the appearance and exact use of these two objects are unknown, they were most probably typical male and female symbols.

The halup tree that Gilgamesh felled clearly represents the shamanistic cosmic tree. The cutting of the tree in this story does not only re-enact the cosmic event connected with Dumuzi’s reign, it also shows that the cultic order which had previously existed in Uruk, came to an end. The New Year’s festival, introduced by Gilgamesh, belonged to a new cultic order with new symbols taking centre stage in it. The scholar, Benno Landsberger, believed that the two objects cut from the halup tree, namely the mikku and the pukku, were a stick and loop/ball/puck.<sup>[319]</sup> This corresponds with the well-known rod and ring, in various contexts referred to as a rod/peg/staff and a “coiled rope”.<sup>[320]</sup> They were apparently painted white and red, the rod being white and the ring being red.<sup>[321]</sup>

These objects governed the entire cultic order in ancient Sumer. As a rod and a cord, they represented and signified the very basic instruments used in erecting foundations and buildings, namely the basic unit of measurement and the “builder’s cord”. They were the early counterparts of instruments used by later builders’ orders, namely the square and compasses. The pole or stick and the rope, fashioned into an omega loop and fitted over the pole, were items used in the Dumuzi cult.<sup>[322]</sup> In some or other form, these objects were taken down into the netherworld by Inana, namely the so-called “yardstick of one nindan (length)” and “pure (measuring) cord of the iku”.<sup>[323]</sup> As the staff and ring, they became the symbols of good governance.

The strange thing about these sports items introduced by Gilgamesh, is that they somehow ended up in the netherworld. This may signify that Gilgamesh was in the end

not considered to be a good ruler. In turn, this corresponds with his image as a bully in the games he had introduced.

### **GILGAMESH AND THE NETHERWORLD**

In *Death of Gilgamesh*, we read about a dream the hero had of his own death. It is told how the gods had to decide where Gilgamesh should go after his death. He was, as we have already seen, considered to have been two-thirds god, one-third human: “Two-thirds of him is a god, one-third of him is human... his body is the flesh of the gods.”<sup>[324]</sup> The gods then decided that he would become the “Chief of the Shades” in the netherworld.<sup>[325]</sup> He consequently received various titles, such as “Lord of the Netherworld”, “Ruler of the Netherworld” and “King of the Netherworld”. We read: “Bilgamesh [i.e. Gilgamesh], in his form of his ghost, dead in the underworld, shall act as governor of the netherworld, shall be indeed chief of its shades.”<sup>[326]</sup>

Gilgamesh also became a judge in the netherworld.<sup>[327]</sup> As such, his name is mentioned even before that of the Anunnaki: “Samas [the chief judge], Gilgamesh and the Anunnaki.”<sup>[328]</sup> According to the *Death of Gilgamesh*, “the Anuna counted him in their midst”.<sup>[329]</sup> This certainly suggests that Gilgamesh was counted amongst the Anunnaki gods in the netherworld, even though he was only two-thirds god.

The question begs as to what these gods were doing in the netherworld. The assignment of the Anunnaki to the netherworld, instead of the heavenly sphere, was a later development in Sumerian theology. When Marduk became king in Babylon about a thousand years after the time of Gilgamesh, the previous cosmic order was overturned and the Anunnaki ended up in the netherworld.

Although the Anunnaki gods were “great gods”, they were, nonetheless, closely identified with the families who regarded themselves as scions of the gods. I have already mentioned that the term, Anunnaki gods, was not only used



for the great gods who gathered in council on the mountain of the gods under Enlil's authority but also for a certain lower order of gods. This can be seen in *Death of Gilgamesh*, where these lower order gods are mentioned as a generic group lower down on the list of gods to whom the hero presented gifts when he arrived in that realm.

First to receive a gift from our hero was the queen of the netherworld, Ereskigal. After Ereskigal, he presented gifts to various other gods, all of whom are mentioned before a group called "the Anuna of the Holy Mound, the Nungals (Igigi) of the Holy Mound".<sup>[330]</sup> The "Holy Mound" presumably refers to the burial mound.

In this text, the group called Anunna and Igigi, seems to be spirits, daemons or gods associated with the burial mound. They are mentioned directly before the en-priests and the dead lagar-priests, which implies that they were regarded as slightly above them in the divine hierarchy. In the *Kesh Temple Hymn*, the en-priests themselves are called Anunnaki, presumably because they were possessed by such spirits, daemons or gods during cultic rituals and ceremonies. As mentioned earlier, the Igigi to whom the text refers was a subclass of the Anunnaki. In general, the Anunna and the Igigi refer to the gods of heaven and of the netherworld, respectively. Their positions were exchanged in later Babylonian theology.

Gilgamesh was worshipped during the festival of lights in the fifth Babylonian month of Ab. This association with light agrees with his close connection with new fire. In this month, there were nine days of wrestling and athletics in honour of Gilgamesh, as we read: "When before them/him wrestling and athletics are conducted. In the month of Ab, the festival of the spirits(?)."<sup>[331]</sup>

At the end of this festival, which was also a festival for Dumuzi and a time when spirits were "especially prone to return to the land of the living", the people called upon Gilgamesh, as ruler of the spirits of the netherworld, to use

his power to force them back to where they came from, namely the netherworld.<sup>[332]</sup> As such, his spirit was considered to be a very powerful one that could subdue all kinds of evil spirits.

Eventually, Gilgamesh was remembered and revered far beyond Sumer and in time his legacy and tradition spread across a vast geographical area.

We may now take a closer look at some other similar traditions in the hope of obtaining an even better understanding of the speculative theology of that time.

## 8. FELLOWSHIP OF THE SHINING ONES

The story of Gilgamesh was bound to spread far beyond Mesopotamia and became well-known all across the ancient world. In Persia and the Persian tradition he was known and remembered as Jamshed and in India and the Indian tradition as Yama. These two traditions are important in our quest to understand the Sumerian speculative doctrines as they provide us with different perspectives of the same tradition. Other traditions may help us gain insights into aspects of the original we may initially not have thought of as being important or may even have missed altogether.

One motif characterising other relevant traditions but not given so much prominence in the original Sumerian tradition, is the role Gilgamesh played in establishing the caste system. Although not previously discussed, the caste system is in actual fact very important for our understanding of the Mesopotamian Nephilim traditions, also those of later centuries.

As the messianic child symbolised and personified the rising sun, it is perfectly understandable why the four castes, identified with the four constellations at the equinox and solstice positions of the sun, played such an important role in the Nephilim cult. They formed a fellowship, so to say, gathering themselves around the messianic child.

### **JAMSHED: THE PERSIAN GILGAMESH**

It comes as no surprise that Gilgamesh was remembered among the Persians as they were virtually next-door neighbours of the Mesopotamians. The Persian Gilgamesh features prominently in the *Shahnameh*, the Epic of the Persian Kings, written by Ferdowsi, in which he recorded the

ancient oral traditions of the Persians.<sup>[333]</sup> Here, Gilgamesh appears in the oldest strata of legendary history.

As has already been mentioned, the Persian Gilgamesh is called Jamshed and he appears fifth on the list of early Persian rulers. When reading the stories about those rulers, one cannot be but struck by the similarities between them and those of the first five kings of the First Dynasty of Uruk, mentioned in the *Sumerian King List*. As the two texts are quite far removed in time, one does not expect detailed correspondences but the basic elements are, however, unmistakably the same. This may well imply that the *King List* and the associated traditions about those kings served as the original sources for this particular part of the Persian tradition.

The names of these early Persian rulers were Keyumars, Siyamak, Hushang, Tahmuras and the already mentioned Jamshed. Let us first reflect on Keyumars. Keyumars, like Meshkiagkasher, came from the mountains and brought civilisation to the land. There is even some agreement in their names, with the “Kash” in Meskiagkasher seemingly having become “Keyu” in Keyumars. Not much is said about his son, Siyamak, except that he had a mortal enemy. In the list, he corresponds with Enmerkar.

What about the others then? Siyamak’s son, Hushang, commanded the army that battled against his father’s enemy. He also went into the mountains where he discovered fire. Hushang’s story corresponds with that of Lugalbanda, who led Enmerkar’s army against his enemies in Aratta. In the Babylonian tradition, Lugalbanda is indeed also remembered as the one who discovered fire.<sup>[334]</sup> Unfortunately, not much is said of Tahmuras, whose name clearly agrees with Tammuz, the Semitic form of Dumuzi, Lugalbanda’s successor.

The identification of Jamshed with Gilgamesh was made early on by the Arabic author, Ibn Wa’shijja, in his *Nabati Agriculture*.<sup>[335]</sup> Knowing that the “G” in Gilgamesh was later

pronounced as “J”, as can be seen in the form “Jiljamis” as it appears in Islamic magical texts,<sup>[336]</sup> it immediately becomes clear that “Gamesh” had become “Jamshed”. This name was shortened to “Jam (Gam)”, appearing in the *Rig Veda* as Yama and in Zoroastrian literature as Yima.<sup>[337]</sup>

As can be expected, substantial agreement exists between the stories told about Jamshed and Gilgamesh. The most important aspect of Jamshed’s story highlighted in the Persian tradition is his possession of the “farr (hvarnah)”, the divine glory, which he eventually lost. One author describes this glory as the “divine essence, or manifestation, (which) could be transmitted through the rightful family chosen by Ahura Mazda [the supreme Persian god]”.<sup>[338]</sup> This divine right to the throne was symbolised by a ring given to the king by the supreme god, going back to the “rod and ring” held by the kings in the Mesopotamian tradition.<sup>[339]</sup>

The Persian word, “farr”, corresponds with the Sumerian “me-lam”.<sup>[340]</sup> In exactly the same way as Jamshed is said to have possessed the divine farr, Gilgamesh had been surrounded by a “terrifying aura” (me-lam). Once we realise that the Persian farr is associated with the ring of kingship, we can immediately see how the loss of the farr also applies to Gilgamesh, who eventually lost the sports items, which fell into the netherworld. These items had the same cultural significance as the rod and ring of kingship, with the mikku and the pukku finding their equivalents in the rod/peg/staff and the coiled rope/ring.

The identification of Jamshed with Gilgamesh also becomes clear in the details of their persons. Like Gilgamesh, Jamshed was identified with the sun. Also like Gilgamesh, Jamshed introduced the New Year’s festival and had it coincided with the vernal equinox, as we read in the *Shahnameh*: “He [Jamshed] sat upon (his) throne like the sun in the firmament. To celebrate, that day was called a

new day—the festival of Now-Ruz—the first day of the new year.”<sup>[341]</sup>

Jamshed fought with a “dragon king”, possibly reflecting Gilgamesh’s victory over Kish, whose ruler was in later Sumerian tradition depicted as a dragon. During this period, many people left the area, in keeping with the depopulation that occurred at the end of the Uruk Period. We also read that “on every hand new kings sprung up, on every frontier men sought a way to power”. This was typical of the Jemdet Nasr Period that followed on the Uruk Period, when many of Sumer’s different city-states became politically important.

One of the interesting things said about Jamshed, but not immediately obvious about Gilgamesh, is that he brought men together in different crafts. Accordingly, he is remembered as the one who introduced the caste system. One of these skilled groups of craftsmen was the “Ahnukhwashi”, builders of “walls”,<sup>[342]</sup> reminiscent of the great walls of Uruk built in the time of Gilgamesh.

A strange story told about Jamshed is that he gathered animals and plants together in an underground shelter. This reminds one of the story of the deluge, a story which, in fact, appears in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. It may be concluded that the “underground shelter” in this story originated in a fusion between Gilgamesh’s role as ruler of the netherworld and the story of the deluge.

### **YAMA: THE INDIAN GILGAMESH**

In India Gilgamesh was remembered as Yama or Yima. This follows directly from the fact that Jamshed has always been considered the Persian counterpart of the Indian Yama. Although the Indian tradition has its own particularities, the essential themes found in the Gilgamesh stories are still plainly and easily discernible. Of particular relevance and like the House of Uruk to which Gilgamesh belonged, is the close association of Yama’s family with the sun god, in the Indian version, sun gods. In the Indian tradition, there are

even other solar dynasties, tracking their lineages back to this family.

In Yama's case, the family's earliest ancestor is called Kashyapa, who clearly corresponds with Meskiagkasher or Kash for short. Although this tradition holds that Kashyapa had many wives and children, we will for purposes of this discussion only single out a few of them. In the *Mahabharata*, one of the great Hindu epics, it is told that he had two wives who were sisters and who laid eggs. For the one was born a thousand snakes, the so-called *nâgas*, and for the other the Garuda eagle, king of the birds.<sup>[343]</sup> The reader will immediately notice that these are simply the symbols belonging to the cosmic or shamanistic tree, which were, in fact, associated with the two branches of the First Dynasty of Uruk.

In the *Rig Veda*, Kashyapa had two wives, called Diti and Aditi, again two sisters. With them he fathered the Daityas, who were Giants, and the Adityas, who were seven sun gods. The Daityas and Adityas belonged to the two groups of gods in the Vedic tradition who competed for power, namely the Asuras and the Devas. Although the Asuras were generally seen as malevolent beings, such as the clan of Danavas,<sup>[344]</sup> those great opponents of the Devas, the Daityas, were instead taken to be good Asuras.

The question is whether the Daityas and Adityas have counterparts in Mesopotamian tradition. And the answer is, yes, they do. The seven Adityas remind us of the seven young men who accompanied Lugalbanda to Aratta and who were identified with the seven gods (the *sebittu*). Although the seven gods of the Sumerian tradition were not sun gods, they were closely associated with the royal House of Uruk, said to have been descended from the sun god. As Giants, the Daityas agree with the builder gods who were with Enmerkar and among whom the *u.gal*, the huge Shining Ones, were apparently found.<sup>[345]</sup> Their great stature also corresponds with that of the Sabeans of the Hebrew

tradition, whom I have earlier identified with those very same builder gods. [\[346\]](#)

We can also relate the Asuras and Devas to Mesopotamian tradition. The Asuras and Devas to whom the Adityas and Daityas respectively belonged, correspond with the Anunna and Igigi gods of the Mesopotamian tradition. [\[347\]](#) Consequently and in keeping with the Indian associations, we also find that the seven gods counted among the Anunna, whereas the “builder gods” seem to have belonged to the Igigi, the gods who performed manual labour (for the Anunna) in the *Atrahasis Myth*.

In Sumer, a third group was associated with this family, namely the seven sages. We find exactly the same in the Indian tradition, where the seven sages or rishis also appear as a nameless group of seven in early Vedic texts. In later Vedic tradition, Kashyapa was counted among them. As has already been mentioned, Kashyapa corresponds with Meskiagkasher.

What about the descendants of Kashyapa/Meskiagkasher? In the *Puranas*, sacred Sanskrit poems containing Hindu mythology, Kashyapa is portrayed as the father of Vivasvat, who is identified with the sun god, Surya. Bearing in mind that Meskiagkasher’s son, in the Sumerian tradition, was Enmerkar, it may well be proposed that Vivasvat corresponds with him. And this is indeed where the evidence points to. As in the case of Vivasvat, Enmerkar was identified with none other than the sun god in the Sumerian tradition.

Vivasvat’s son was Yama, [\[348\]](#) the Indian Gilgamesh. In the *Rig Veda*, Yama is portrayed as the first god who chose a human destiny and came to live as a god amongst men. [\[349\]](#) He was closely associated with Agni, the god of fire, who corresponds with the Sumerian Gibil. He is accordingly described as “sunlike” and even as “having the glance of the sun”. [\[350\]](#) These references merely pertain to the divine glory we associate with our hero.



According to this tradition, the lie entered Yama's soul and he subsequently lost the divine glory.<sup>[351]</sup> In both the Indian and Persian traditions, this happened because our hero came to despise the creator. In Jamshed's case, he wanted the people to call him the "creator".<sup>[352]</sup> This may reflect confusion between Gilgamesh and Enmerkar, who was also remembered in such negative terms in the biblical Nimrod tradition.

When Yama died, two-thirds of his seed was purified in the sun.<sup>[353]</sup> He can thus be viewed as having been two-thirds divine, exactly the same as Gilgamesh. After his death, Yama became the ruler of the netherworld, where he reigned as "King of the [blessed] dead",<sup>[354]</sup> again just like Gilgamesh. Interestingly enough, Yama was also closely associated with time (kala) and was, as such, called "Commander of Kala".<sup>[355]</sup> This, for its part, reflects the close link between Gilgamesh and time. He was the one who introduced the New Year's festival at the time of the vernal equinox.

Finally, one of Yama's greatest deeds was the re-enactment of the killing of the cosmic bull.<sup>[356]</sup> This corresponds with the great deed Gilgamesh and his friend, Enkidu, accomplished in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, when they killed the bull of heaven, a theme we will return to later on in this volume.

### **THE FOUR CASTES**

We can now return to the interesting matter of Gilgamesh and the origins of the caste system, found in the Jamshed tradition. The question remains whether the castes and the caste system, found in the Jamshed tradition, does in actual fact go back to Gilgamesh. Was he indeed the one responsible for introducing the four castes?

We already know that Gilgamesh introduced the New Year's festival, an event that for the first time divided the year into four parts in accordance with the two equinoxes

and two solstices and which served as the basis for such a festival. As these four solar dates reflect the fourfold nature of the caste system, the introduction of this festival might have been connected to the founding of such a system.

The new cultic order introduced by Gilgamesh, seems to have involved a total reorganisation of the shamanistic cult of earlier Urukite times. In essence, the sun's rule over the four equinox and solstice points served as the celestial prototype for the king's rule over the world, a world which might already have been ordered in accordance with the caste system at that time. The French scholar, Petr Charvát, has proposed that groups similar to the Indian caste system existed in Sumer at the time.<sup>[357]</sup> A "professions list", showing that such professions existed, even appears towards the end of the Uruk Period.<sup>[358]</sup>

The best evidence for the existence of a caste system in early Sumer during the time of Gilgamesh comes from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, where we read that the city of Uruk, built by Gilgamesh, was divided into four parts, namely the large temple area of Inana, the area where the people lived under the king's rule, the date groves and lastly, the clay pits, where the building bricks were produced.<sup>[359]</sup>

These four sectors of the city correspond exactly with the caste system, comprising of 1. the priests;

2. the king (lugal) together with his warriors; 3. the farmers; and

4. the workers, especially the builders and the smiths.

In the Persian *Shahnameh* these four castes are called: 1. the katuži, who were "charged with the rites of worship, set apart from the common 'herd' of mankind";<sup>[360]</sup>

2. the neysari, who were "lionhearted warriors"; 3. the nasudi, who "kill, sow and reap"; and 4. the ahnukhwashi, who were craftsmen, like builders for instance.<sup>[361]</sup>

In the Indian tradition, these four castes are: 1. the brahmans, an “educated class of priests, philosophers, scholars, and religious leaders”; 2. the kshatriyas, a “warrior caste, politicians, generals, officers and civil authorities”; 3. the vaishyas, “merchants, farmers, also called providers”; and 4. the shudras, “workers and servants”. [\[362\]](#)

One may conclude that these different groups had already been established by the early First Uruk Dynasty rulers and that Gilgamesh merely reorganised them into a caste system for purposes of the cult celebrations. The builder gods and smiths had already been active in the time of Enmerkar, the warrior order was associated with Lugalbanda and the cult of Dumuzi involved all kinds of farmers.

Finally, there are the seven sages, who laid the foundations of the great walls of Uruk for Gilgamesh. They might have been en-priests, who had been active in Sumer since the earliest times, taking the lead in the cult and its activities and rituals. This would agree with the Indian tradition, according to which the seven rishis or sages were the first brahmans (priests).

### **THE SHINING ONES AND THE FOUR CASTES**

Three of these groups later included in the caste system, can be identified with the three groups of “Shining Ones” or spirits, discussed earlier. In keeping with our earlier discussions, one might assume that the early Sumerians associated these spirits with the caste groups in the following way, namely those associated with sunny days with the seven sages, those associated with storm clouds with the warriors and those regarded as “evil winds” with the builders and smiths, where the dangers of working with fire might have suggested the presence of evil beings. The symbols associated with these groups were the rising sun,

the lion-headed eagle and the serpent. The only caste not associated with any of these Shining Ones were the farmers.

These and other related symbols associated with the three groups of Shining Ones are amongst the oldest attested to in ancient Sumer. In primitive Mesopotamian art, all of them appear in the time directly after the Uruk Period with some even going back to the late Uruk Period. The striking thing is that these are the only symbols found in that early period, except for the royal eagle of Enlil.<sup>[363]</sup> We can now look into them in more detail, showing how these symbols were related to the different castes.

The first symbol was the so-called bison-bull, associated with the rising sun.<sup>[364]</sup> It was initially portrayed as a bison and later as a bison-man.<sup>[365]</sup> This bison-man was called gud-alim, with the “gud”-symbol denoting the same as “u”, namely “Shining One” or “spirit”.<sup>[366]</sup> The priests and the priestly caste were closely associated with the bull-cow symbolism in the Sumerian, Persian and Indian traditions. In the Indian tradition, the cow, Kamadhenu, was venerated by the brahmans and had even been regarded as the wife of Kashyapa. She corresponds with the Sumerian Ninsun, “lady wild cow”. Ostensibly, this caste had a close relationship with cattle farming and cattle farming communities.

In line with the association of the bison-man with the rising sun (Utu), these priests would also have been closely connected with fire-making rituals as the rising sun was seen in such terms, its flame thought to have been kindled on the horizon every day.<sup>[367]</sup> These rituals symbolised the act of procreation within the sacred marriage, where the fruit of such a union was identified with the sun god.

The second symbol is the lion-headed eagle and its later version, the lion-dragon, a lion with wings, associated with storm clouds. This symbol eventually became associated with the storm god, Ishkur, or Adad.<sup>[368]</sup> The Shining Ones associated with these symbols of mythological lionlike creatures would have been spirits belonging to the sky or

the heavenly realm. In view of our earlier discussion, where I have argued that Lugalbanda's association with the lion-headed Thunderbird was related to his role as a warrior, these symbols were presumably utilised by the warrior caste.

The third symbol was connected with the "evil winds", or "bad days", in time associated with the god, Nergal-Erra, who became head of the netherworld and whose symbol would, of course, be the serpent or snake. The *mushussu* or furious snake became the beast or symbol associated with Nergal-Erra and presumably also with crafts such as the smiths, especially since this god was closely connected to fire and being the one who provided the hero with weapons in the Akkadian epics.

The question still remains, what about the farmers? The farmers were closely associated with Dumuzi's fertility cult, which was primarily a female cult. We can associate a longhaired figure called the lahmu, meaning "hairy", with this cult. He is closely associated with Enki and is portrayed naked with long curly hair, symbolising the water of the Apsu or the rivers, often also shown with a vase and water flowing from it.

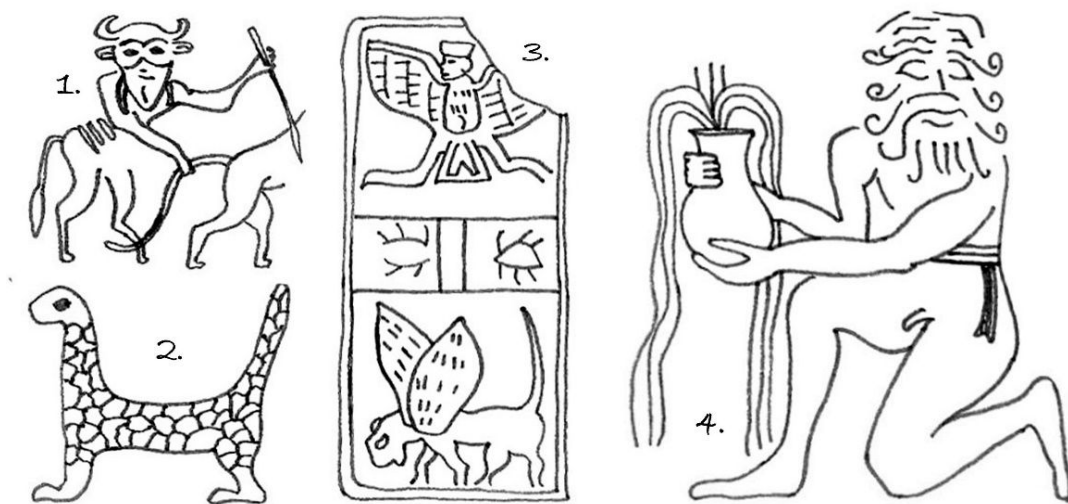
The lahmu is not only one of the oldest symbols to have appeared in Sumer but also the only one that seems to be human as the others are all mythological creatures associated with certain kinds of "spirits" or daemons. The hairies are sometimes shown as a group of four, perhaps representing the earliest group of four gods who came forth from Enki's seed that fell in the waters of the Apsu. The Sumerians, interestingly enough, associated seed and water with each other.

In the *Gilgamesh Epic*, Enkidu, the friend of our hero who accompanied him on his journey to the west, is described in very similar terms as a lahmu: "... all his body is matted with hair, he is adorned with tresses like a woman."<sup>[369]</sup> In keeping with the association of the lahmu/hairies with the

dominantly female Dumuzi cult, Enkidu was indeed closely connected to the female cult, with Ninsun having taken him in as a “foster-child” according to this epic: “[T]he priestesses hereby take in the foundling, and the daughters of An will bring up the foster-child.”<sup>[370]</sup>

There can only be one explanation for Enkidu’s acceptance into a female cult and having been allowed to live amongst women in their living quarters. And this is that he must have been a dwarf or a pygmy, further suggesting that the hairies were also dwarfs or pygmies. Except for the eunuchs of later periods, it is difficult to see how any other male person would have been allowed such privileges. This is also consistent with the hairies having represented the original group of four dwarf/pygmy gods who came forth from Enki’s seed that fell in the Apsu. The association of Enkidu, as a hairy, with the “daughters of An”, agrees with the four dwarf-gods having been paired with four naked goddesses.

The “daughters of An” were associated with water. They drew water from the rivers and the ocean with their pitchers.<sup>[371]</sup> Although they are usually viewed as junior priestesses and other young women involved in the Inana-Dumuzi cult,<sup>[372]</sup> they may also refer to more basic kinds of nymph-spirits or goddesses, portrayed in art as naked women. We, for example, find that a goddess like Inana (Ishtar) of Elam is described as a daughter of An.<sup>[373]</sup>



*Figure 11. The mythological symbols of the four castes: 1. The bison-man; 2. The furious snake (mushussu); 3. The lion-headed eagle and lion-dragon; 4. The lahmu.* [\[374\]](#)

These daughters of An are the exact female counterparts of the sons of An. In the same way the Sumerians associated the sons of An with spirits, daemons or gods and identified them, albeit not exclusively, with the seven young men, the “gurus”, who accompanied Lugalbanda, they also associated the daughters of An with similar spirits linked with female priestesses. Consequently, these female spirits or “nymphs” and goddesses belonged with the other three groups of Shining Ones, probably represented in art by the long-haired figure.

With this background, I then propose that the Sumerians in their speculative thinking, identified these early mythological figures in art with the groups of Shining Ones associated with the cult practices of the four cultic groups. When Gilgamesh arranged these groups into castes in a caste system, these symbolic figures became the heraldic emblems of the castes.

The association of the different kinds of Shining Ones with the different cosmic regions suggests that the four castes were also associated with those regions, and in the following way: The sages/priests with the Apsu, the warriors with the heavenly regions of the sky, the crafts with the netherworld and the farmers with the earth. Together, the castes formed a “Fellowship of Shining Ones”, whose main concern was to serve the messianic child and to establish his rule over the cosmos.



## CONSTELLATIONS OF THE EQUINOXES AND SOLSTICES

Against the backdrop of the New Year's festival introduced by Gilgamesh, these four groups of spirits might also have been associated with the four stars or constellations that defined the equinoxes and solstices. Accordingly, the bison or bull-man, the lion-dragon, the furious serpent and the long-haired man would all have been associated with astral entities. This explains why those constellations have similar images, namely the bull (Taurus), the lion (Leo), the serpent or snake and later taken as a scorpion (Scorpio) and the man-with-an-urn (Aquarius).

Intriguingly enough, the four winds, defining these cosmic directions, were from very early on regarded as three men and one woman (the south wind).<sup>[375]</sup> In the cosmic framework, the south wind corresponds with the winter position where we find its counterpart in the long-haired man with his urn. The four winds agree with the three kinds of male spirits (Shining Ones), associated with three of the castes, and the female kind of spirit, associated with the Dumuzi cult (and the farmers).

In the final instance, it may be concluded that these four groups of spirits or daemons, associated with the caste system, were viewed as a contemporary expression of the four ancient gods who formed the eightfold Ogdoad together with their goddesses and who came forth from the seed of An that fell on the ground.

The Sumerians possibly believed those daemons to have spread from the Apsu to the other cosmic domains associated with the Shining Ones. The caste system might have represented a more permanent institution, based on the eightfold god and goddess pairs. Gilgamesh, as the ninth god born from the soft soil (embodied by Ninsun), was considered worthy of becoming ruler of the world, even the cosmos, with all the daemons represented by this fourfold caste system serving him.

In certain later traditions, like the Hurrian and Greek ones, the fallen seed was associated with three gods or groups of entities. In these instances, the number three merely reflects later developments in the speculative theology of the fallen gods, when these daemons or gods were associated with the three cosmic regions. We will encounter these four/three groups and their symbols time and time again as we explore the secret history of the descendants of the fallen gods.

Some of these motifs withstood the test of time, endured the ages and made their appearance, recycled and repackaged, in folklore and the stories of later poets and writers. We even find these motifs assimilated in modern fairy tales like the Wizard of Oz, with three similar figures, namely the Scarecrow without a brain, the cowardly Lion and the Tin Man in the company of a girl, named Dorothy...

## **9. THE PRIMAEVAL GODS OF EGYPT**

The tales and stories of the great Sumerian rulers of the First Dynasty of Uruk did not remain and were not only remembered in the literary traditions of Mesopotamia, Persia and other regions to the east. In addition, they eventually spread to faraway regions to the west, where they also reached Egypt. A remarkably well-preserved tradition about early god-kings who came from a faraway “homeland” is found in Egypt. We can, with good reason, accept that this faraway “homeland” must have been ancient Sumer and that the Egyptian tales of ancient kings are simply the same tales as those of our Sumerian heroes.

Throughout the ages, Egypt has captured the imagination of explorers, archaeologists and researchers alike. Its marvellous and magnificent pyramids and temples, its beautiful and enormous statues and sculptures and its strange hieroglyphs have brought many a voyager and adventurer to this ancient land. One of the best and most completely preserved of these temples is the great Ptolemaic temple of Horus at Edfu. Although this temple was built relatively late in history, there can be no doubt that the texts and inscriptions decorating its high walls were taken from earlier temples previously occupying this site and also from the ancient site at Tell Edfu nearby, where the ruins of the ancient settlement dating back to predynastic times can still be seen. For the sake of completeness, we cannot discount the possibility of other sources and documents also having been available to them.

The Edfu texts and inscriptions are of great value and importance in our quest to track down and find the descendants of the fallen gods.

**THE WORDS OF THE SEVEN SAGES**

Our journeys in search of the ancient traditions of the Nephilim have taken us on various visits to the fascinating and wonderful land of Egypt. On our second Grail journey in the year 2000 we visited the ancient city of Edfu. As it so happened, we wanted to experience Egypt and its people at grassroots level and decided to take the overnight train from Cairo to Luxor instead of flying there like normal tourists do.

It turned out to be quite some experience. Apparently, it is not a common occurrence for foreigners to travel by train in Egypt and we were only allowed to board after a personal guard was arranged to accompany us all the way to Luxor. The train was jam-packed with people occupying all available seats, many in white robes on the hajj pilgrimage to or from Mecca. Through the night people were walking up and down the passage shaking hands and talking in hushed voices to each other. Warm tea and nuts sold by a vendor from a tray hanging around his neck, went down well with the night getting colder as we journeyed ever further south along the banks of the Nile. We were looking forward to the wonderful archaeological sites awaiting us in Luxor, site of ancient Thebes, with its magnificent temples of Luxor and Karnak, the nearby Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens and the Edfu temple further south as one of the great highlights.

In Luxor, we hired a small minibus with a driver to take us to all the wonderful sights and especially for the sixty or so mile journey to Edfu. For security reasons we were compelled to travel in a convoy together with other minibuses, buses, trucks and cars. On the way we came across many small vans serving as taxis, some of them so crammed with people that daring young men had to stand outside on the crossbars or running boards at the back, holding on for dear life while the drivers sped on and even overtook some of the vehicles in our convoy! The tarred

road stretched far ahead as we travelled past small rag-tag hamlets. The mighty Nile meandering silently but forcefully in the opposite direction towards the Mediterranean in the north with the great Egyptian desert stretching out in all directions, golden sand and coppery cliffs alternated by green reed patches and palm trees on the river banks.

The Edfu temple stands on the eastern bank of the Nile. It is an impressive building with enormous 36-metre-high sandstone walls at its front entrance. Large beautiful pillars and columns line the corridors on the inside of this majestic temple. The walls stand tall in the somewhat dark shadows of the temple structures. Inscriptions and texts decorate the walls from top to bottom. In many places, iconoclastic warriors of old damaged and removed the faces of images of the gods.

As a reminder that this temple was dedicated to the god, Horus, a large stone sculpture of a Horus falcon greets visitors at the entrance to a large courtyard in front of the inner sanctum. The worship of Horus is deeply ingrained in the ancient traditions preserved at this temple. Horus was worshipped in this area ever since the Predynastic Period with another ancient site dedicated to this god a few miles further north at Hierakonpolis (Nekheh).

Of special interest to us and our quest are the inscriptions and texts on the walls of this beautiful and imposing temple. According to the “first” cosmogonist record, that is a record containing a creation story, these texts were copied from an ancient book in which the Egyptian god of wisdom, Thoth, wrote down the words of the “sages of Mehweret”. [\[376\]](#)

These sages must certainly be the “seven sages” mentioned elsewhere in these records, in the texts on the walls of the temple. The mentioning of words spoken by these sages are quite striking as we find no other references to the seven sages anywhere else in Egypt other than in the Edfu texts. The seven sages must have belonged to a very primitive age in Egyptian history as these texts tell us about

an ancient era going back to a time long before the first Egyptian temples were built, a time when the gods came from their original “homeland” and built the first temples in Egypt.

So, where did this tradition actually originate? The Book of Thoth contains and relates the ancient myth of the fallen gods, a myth we have already come across when I first introduced this theme (in Chapter 2) together with the Sumerian, Hurrian and Hebrew versions thereof. As readers will recall, this is the story of the earth-god’s seed that fell into the *primaeval* waters of Nun from which the eight *primaeval* gods then appeared, together taking on the form of a lotus. They were the “fathers and mothers” who produced the messianic child with a face shining with divine glory in keeping with his descent from the earth-god himself. The child was called the “August Stripling” and also the *Pn*-god. He first appeared as a radiance in the lotus and then took on the form of a falcon sitting on the so-called *dd*-pillar in the original homeland of the gods.

In this section, we focus on the next part of this ancient story, namely on how a new generation of gods rebuilt the ancient world, once submerged by a great deluge. We meet the early rulers of that rebuilt and re-established world. This is simply the Egyptian version of the story of the great rulers of ancient Uruk and as to be expected, we find that various gods, amongst whom the sun god, were said to have been incarnated in members of this family.

As seen before, the Egyptian version of the story contains certain primitive features not found in the Sumerian version. The reason for this may be that it had already been brought to ancient Egypt during the time of the “Uruk expansion” at the end of the Uruk Period, when Egypt was strongly influenced by Sumer.<sup>[377]</sup> The Sumerian version reflects the reworking of the story through the many centuries of Sumerian history, while the Egyptian version displays a more archaic and primitive character.

To retain the original character of these stories, I will first discuss the Egyptian version in its entirety before relating it to the Sumerian tradition. The reader should, furthermore, be mindful that the Edfu texts are very difficult to understand and interpret. Despite our best efforts, the stories related in the texts display distinctly archaic characteristics and features. Nonetheless, the discerning reader would easily be able to pick up on the consistency and agreement between the Egyptian stories and the Sumerian ones.

The interesting thing about Egypt is that these stories and traditions were not only brought there in ancient times, they also formed an integral part of a living cult experience which affected the Egyptian religion at its very roots. The Egyptian religion was merely a continuation of the ancient cult in which it was believed that the fallen gods were reincarnated in certain people and that these people were regarded as the descendants of those gods. In this way, the earliest Egyptian kings should be considered as having been part of the Nephilim.

### **RULERS OF THE ORIGINAL HOMELAND OF THE GODS**

The cosmogonist record contained in the Edfu texts tells a story that is apparently extremely old as it entails an account of events that go back in time to the original “homeland” of the family of gods later venerated in the Egyptian tradition as the ones who brought civilisation to the land of Egypt. According to this tradition, water once submerged this homeland, destroying the old civilisation of the gods previously in existence there. We, for instance, read that the “sound eye fell”, in a possible reference to the sun somehow disappearing from the sky.<sup>[378]</sup> The record goes on to tell how that submerged world was re-established in the time after the great deluge.

According to these texts, there was one particular family of gods who resettled in that homeland after the deluge, proceeding with various primitive ritual acts with the aim of reincarnating the ancient gods who lived before the flood. The account of those events in the texts is extremely detailed and very rich in its description albeit quite complex. E.A.E. Reymond, mentioned before as one of the most important authorities on the Edfu texts, writes that the data contained in the texts allows us “to sketch out a coherent picture of the ‘primaeval’ world of the gods... There is every reason for assuming that this narrative reflects a genuine tradition of a remote date”.<sup>[379]</sup>

The story starts off with three personages appearing in the world destroyed by a great flood, namely Ka, Wa and Aa. It is not quite clear who Ka was but he might have been regarded as a great “spirit” in later times as he is said to have been invisible with only his voice having been audible.<sup>[380]</sup> Wa and Aa might have been shamans, searching for certain sacred symbols hidden in time before the deluge flooded the land, presumably in some underground vault beneath an ancient sanctuary.

Wa and Aa found a particular sacred reed, described as “the sole relic of the former domain”, and split it in two. One part, now called the “Djeba perch”, was planted in the waters of “wa-ret”, a name referring to the primaeval waters from which the world originally appeared.<sup>[381]</sup> It is unfortunately not clear what happened to the other piece. Wa and Aa’s primary goal with these rituals was to reincarnate a messianic figure from the old world. He was called the *Pn*-god, the one with the shining face and two flaming eyes. They wanted to bring his spirit back in order to appear as a falcon perching on top of the reed they planted, in the same way he had earlier appeared in the old world and in the same form on top of the so-called *dd*-pillar. This is simply the ancient shamanistic symbol of the cosmic



tree with the bird in its top, here presented in the context of cult ritual.

One of the most important characters in our story is Tanen, presented as a great ruler responsible for a lot of building work in the original “homeland of the gods”, also called the “hinterland of the *wa-ret*” or the land of *Mesen*.<sup>[382]</sup> His great building projects were consistent with the notion that he was “the Creator... (who) appeared in his material form”.<sup>[383]</sup> We read that large swaths of marshlands were drained in order to produce reclaimed dry areas, called “*pāy*-lands”.

One of the most important temples built during this period was the “Great Primaeval Mound”, presumably built on the same place where Wa and Aa had earlier erected the *Djeba* perch. We also read that Tanen, with the help of the “builder gods”, built a city, initially called the “Place of Wa” and later “Place of the throne”, from where he ruled the land. One of the features of this place was a willow tree with a falcon perching in its top.<sup>[384]</sup> Amongst the most important of the so-called *pāy*-lands were the “Island of Re [the sun god]” and the “Blessed Island”, possibly a reference to an island where the dead were buried.

Tanen’s reign was followed by that of the falcon-god. We read that Tanen handed the royal staff, called the “Great White”, as well as other cult symbols to the falcon-god when he succeeded him to the throne.<sup>[385]</sup> The falcon-god was greatly honoured as having been a reincarnation of the falcon from the age before the deluge. He went through some kind of initiatory experience and united through a “mystical deed” with “Him-whose-command-is-unknown”.<sup>[386]</sup> This same falcon-god was later worshipped at the Edfu temple in Egypt.

While Tanen was closely associated with the “builder gods”, the falcon-god was associated with another group of gods, called the “Shebtiw”. They were great warrior-magicians and belonged to one of three such groups

regarded as the “Children of Tanen”. In this instance, the name “Tanen” does probably not refer to the early king of the same name but to the earth-god who was later called Ptah and worshipped as the “creator”. The three groups were the “builder gods”, the “Shebtiw” and the seven sages, all considered to have been “brethren” of each other. [\[387\]](#) They are called “early primaeval ones” and they were born in the area of Nun called *wa-ret*. The Children of Tanen were the postdiluvian version of the eight antediluvian gods who appeared from the earth-god’s seed that fell into Nun. They were “offspring” of the creator, Tanen.

The Shebtiw are described as follows:

“[T]he great gods, the senior ones, the august Shebtiw... Excellent souls... They are (among) the twenty Gods who proclaimed the earth upon its foundation since the time of the primaeval Age of Gods... the heavenly and earthly beings... Children of Tanen, (even) the offspring of the Creator, Glorious Spirits of the Early Primaeval Age of the Gods, Brethren of the Sages and the Builder Gods.” [\[388\]](#)

The names of the Shebtiw are given as:

1. The Far Distant;
2. The Great;
3. The Sailor;
4. The Sanctified of head;
5. The Creator of the Earth-snake;
6. The Lord of the two hearts;
7. The Lord of life and dominion;
8. The Lord, mighty-chested, who made slaughter, the Soul who lives on blood. [\[389\]](#)

The first name may refer to the falcon-god himself, the leader of the Shebtiw, later called “Horus”, which means “the distant one”. [\[390\]](#) The other seven names are those of his followers.

During the reign of Tanen, the falcon-god already commanded his army against the “rebellious one”, denounced by Tanen in a decree. The falcon-god was the leader of the “soldiers of Tanen”, sent to war to the “Place-for-crushing”.<sup>[391]</sup> A reference to the “Crew of the Falcon”<sup>[392]</sup> suggests that the Shebtiw, who were the warrior followers of the falcon-god, were also seafarers. One of them is even called “The Sailor”.

The next ruler of the original homeland of the gods referred to in the texts is a god called *Heter-her*. Although the meaning of this name is unclear, we find that it was also given to Horus’s sacred spear, which came out of Nun.<sup>[393]</sup> This means that it is possible that *Heter-her* was thought to have been an incarnation of a god with the same name who lived before the deluge, as one reappearing from the waters. During *Heter-her*’s rule an enemy attacked the land, and he was left “defenceless” and “hard-pressed”.<sup>[394]</sup> The following description may well apply to him: “... (he) oppressed the head of *Heter-her*, who was defenceless; his feet were pierced and the ground of his domain was split.”<sup>[395]</sup> According to E.A.E. Reymond, these events show some agreement with the Osiris myth. As we will see later on, Osiris was the Egyptian version of the Sumerian Dumuzi.<sup>[396]</sup>

The last ruler of the original homeland of the gods mentioned in the Edfu texts is the sun god, Re. He was a descendant of the king called Tanen, maybe his grandson, and was viewed as an incarnation of Re on earth.<sup>[397]</sup> Somehow, this Re was identified with the falcon. That would make him a new manifestation of the *Pn*-god, the messianic child whom they equated with the sun god.<sup>[398]</sup>

During this time, the soldiers of Tanen were divided into four groups, namely the falcons, the lions, the snakes and the bulls. These groups arranged themselves according to the four cardinal directions, each group comprising of a leader together with 14 subordinates, namely the “Lord of

the Spear” followed by 14 falcons, the “Lord of the Knife” followed by 14 lions, the “Greatly Feared” followed by 14 snakes and the “Great Roarer” followed by 14 bulls. We are told that these groups fought in battle formation against an enemy described as a snake.

There might have been some confusion between the sun god and the falcon-god in this context as we read that the falcon-god led these soldiers in battle.<sup>[399]</sup> This may be the result of the later association in Egyptian theology of the falcon-god with the sun god as Horus-Re. During the battle on earth, another battle was taking place in heaven. One can hardly fail to note the agreement between the four groups of warriors and the four constellations at the equinox and solstice points, especially as they are mentioned against the backdrop of the sun god, Re, and his rule.

After the battle, Re became the “lord of that place”.<sup>[400]</sup> He constructed a temple “as my Great Seat in the First sanctuary”<sup>[401]</sup> and all the early gods were worshipped in this temple. In time, the company of gods, including all those mentioned, are said to have travelled from their original homeland to the land of Egypt, erecting temples for the god, Re, along the way.<sup>[402]</sup>

### **THE SUMERIAN ROOTS OF THE STORY**

As with the story of the fallen gods, which form the prelude to these stories, we again find a detailed and striking correspondence with the stories of the great rulers of Uruk from the postdiluvian period in Sumer. The corpus of stories of Ka, Tanen, the falcon-god, *Heter-her* and Re is clearly only another version of the stories of Meskiagkasher (Kash), Enmerkar, Lugalbanda, Dumuzi and Gilgamesh, stories that spread throughout the ancient world. We find that the ancients remembered and commemorated the great deeds these heroes performed, even in this faraway western region of the world.

Although we know very little about the Egyptian Ka of the Edfu texts, it may certainly be suggested that this name is simply another version of the shortened form of Meskiagkasher, namely Kash, the founder of the postdiluvian dynasty of Uruk. It follows that the great builder-king, Tanen, assisted by the “builder gods”, would then be Enmerkar.

The view that Tanen was an earthly incarnation of the “creator”, the earth-god, is quite fascinating. A similar view is found in the corresponding Persian tradition where it was told that Jamshed wanted the people to call him the “creator”. My suggestion is that this view originated from a confusion between the stories of Enmerkar and Gilgamesh. The difference between the two traditions is that this was frowned upon in the Persian tradition whereas it was accepted as a mere fact in the Egyptian tradition. In general, however, the idea of gods being incarnated in humans belonging to this family is found in all traditions.

The reclamation of the marshlands was remembered in both traditions. The “Great Primaeval Mound”, featuring prominently in the Edfu texts, would be the ancient sanctuary at Eridu. In the Edfu texts, we find that a primitive reed structure was erected in the *wa-ret* at Nun before a large platform was later built at this holy place. This initial structure was later remembered in Egypt as the *Djed* pillar. The iconographic image of this pillar, showing a vertical pillar with a broad base and various crossbars, very much resembles the one used in Sumer as the cuneiform symbol for the name, Nun, referring to Eridu, written as Nun.ki.<sup>[403]</sup> Both symbols seemingly refer to the reed structure erected at the first sanctuary very early on.

One of the building projects specifically attributed to Tanen was the “Place of the throne”. This would be the city of Uruk, with the willow and the falcon in its top representing the Egyptian version of the “halup” tree and the eagle in its top, with the “halup” possibly having been a

willow.<sup>[404]</sup> The Egyptian falcon merely replaced the Mesopotamian eagle in the corresponding iconography. The “Island of Re” and the “Island of the Blessed”, among the reclaimed *pāy*-lands, may refer to the island of Dilmun in the Persian Gulf. The Sumerians believed that the sun rose from this island every morning.<sup>[405]</sup> They might also have regarded it as the island of the blessed dead.

The falcon-god would be Lugalbanda as he was indeed the one who led Enmerkar’s armies into battle against his enemies. The Shebtiw, who accompanied the falcon-god, would be the similarly named sebittu, the “seven gods”, who were incarnated in the seven young men accompanying the hero. The idea that the great earthly battle in which the falcon-god was involved, was at the same time fought in heaven, is also found in the *Lugalbanda Epic*. There might even be an echo of the Edfu tradition of groups of 14 warriors each in the epic, where we read not only of the seven gods but also of a group of 14 warriors.<sup>[406]</sup>

In the same way as the falcon-god was identified with the falcon, Lugalbanda was identified with the Anzu eagle. It may be suggested that the strange comment in the Edfu texts that the falcon-god became aware of his identity when he united in some “mystical deed” with “Him-whose-command-is-unknown”, goes back to the story of Lugalbanda’s otherworldly visit to the nest of the Anzu. Clearly, both versions describe some shamanistic-mystical experience.

*Heter-her*, the next ruler of the original homeland of the gods, would then be Dumuzi, who was killed by his enemies. He was succeeded by Re, who would be Gilgamesh, who, for his part, was closely associated with the sun god. Clearly, all the Egyptian figures of the Edfu texts have counterparts in the early Sumerian Urukite tradition and they follow each other in exactly the correct chronological order. All their particular and distinct details agree.

The fourfold division of the “soldiers of Tanen” during the reign of the earthly Re corresponds with the caste system organised and institutionalised by Gilgamesh (Jamshed). Although the four castes were obviously not four warrior groups, the fusion of the castes and the warriors may well be explained if it is assumed that the battle formation of the falcon-god’s warriors became confused with the four groups associated with the equinoctial and solstice positions of the sun once the falcon-god became identified with the sun god. As we read about Re, Gilgamesh was, in fact, involved in a much-celebrated battle with his enemies from the House of Kish, whom he defeated so as to become the ruler of Uruk.

What about the “Children of Tanen” then? The three groups into which the “Children of Tanen” were divided, agree precisely with corresponding groups in ancient Sumer, namely the “builder gods”, the sebittu or seven gods and the seven sages. In the same way the builder gods were associated with the builder-king, Tanen, they were associated with Enmerkar in Sumer. The same goes for the Shebtiw who were “great gods” associated with the falcon-god and the sebittu who were “great gods” associated with Lugalbanda.<sup>[407]</sup> In both traditions, this last group was remembered as warrior-shamans with suitably vicious names having been assigned to them.<sup>[408]</sup> And the seven sages of the Edfu texts obviously find their exact counterpart in the seven sages of early Mesopotamian tradition.

It is possible that these three groups were associated with the three cosmic regions in Egypt in the same way as in ancient Sumer, where the same cosmic regions were distinguished, as we read: “Hail to thee [Ptah], the ways are opened for thee... opened for thee are the heaven, [the earth], the netherworld and Nun.”<sup>[409]</sup> The Egyptian Nun agrees with the Sumerian Apsu, also called Nun in the early tradition.



A messianic child reincarnated in future generations of the scions of the fallen gods, was important in both the Sumerian and Egyptian versions of this early tradition. In the Egyptian tradition, this child first made his appearance in the antediluvian period in the original homeland of the gods. He was called the “August Stripling” or the *Pn*-god. We have already identified him with the god, Gibil, in the Sumerian tradition.

The sole purpose of the various cultic acts the shamans, Aa and Wa, and other *primaeval* gods, like the seven sages, performed in the postdiluvian period, was to bring about the reincarnation of this god in the new milieu. In the Edfu texts we read that the manifestation of this god as a falcon came about when he took the form of the falcon-god. The messianic child can also be identified with the earthly manifestation of the god, Re, who embodied the concept of shining glory associated with this god, whom I propose to be Gilgamesh. [\[410\]](#)

In Egypt, the messianic child was later remembered by the name, Horus, corresponding with the Sumerian god, Ningirsu (Ninurta). Both these gods embodied clouds and had the eagle/falcon as their symbol, [\[411\]](#) both had the sun and moon for eyes and both were in their glorious aspect identified with the sun god. In the same way the antediluvian falcon returned in the form of the falcon-god, later called Horus, after the deluge, his Sumerian counterpart, Lugalbanda, became identified with Ninurta. [\[412\]](#)

In Egyptian tradition, the early ancestors of the first Egyptian kings were called the “Followers of Horus”. This refers to the groups of gods closely associated with the falcon-god, who later became known as Horus. The Turin Royal Canon, a papyrus manuscript dating from the reign of King Ramesses II, held in the Museo Egizio (Egyptian Museum) in Turin, Italy, tells about the reign of the “Neteru”, the gods who preceded the first dynastic kings. They are called “Akhu, Shemsu Hor”, meaning “Shining Ones,



Followers of Horus” and they are said to have ruled for thousands of years.

Sumerian Tradition	Persian Tradition	Indian Tradition	Edfu Tradition
Meskiagkasher (Kash)	Keyumars	Kashyapa	Ka
Enmerkar with builder gods	Siyamak	Vivasvat Daityas	Tanen with builder gods
Lugalbanda with seven warriors (seven gods/Sebittu)		Adityas (seven sun gods)	Falcon god with Shebtiw
Snake vs Anzu		nagas vs Garuda eagle	
Dumuzi (Tammuz)	Tahmuras		Heter-her
Gilgamesh (sun god)	Jamshed	Yama	Re (on earth)

*Figure 12. Comparing the various traditions about Meskiagkasher’s family.*

We have already encountered the Shining Ones in ancient Sumer. They were indeed associated with the three groups of gods discussed above. The long reigns of those early rulers are also typical of the Sumerian tradition about that early period.

## **TWO PILLARS IN LATER TRADITION**

Before we proceed with our story, we might as well take a short detour to take a look at another fascinating aspect of the Edfu texts mentioned before, namely that a certain

sacred reed was buried before the deluge and that it was later found again (and then cut in two). The tradition preserved at Edfu may be the primary source behind the legend of two such pillars, to become a centrepiece in all secret traditions in later times. According to later tradition, it was Thoth, associated with the Greek god, Hermes, who wrote down certain records on these antediluvian pillars. In time, these two pillars became synonymous with the two pillars the Greek historian, Herodotus (c. 484-425 BC), saw in the temple of Heracles in Tyre in Phoenicia. One of them was made of pure gold and the other of emerald.<sup>[413]</sup>

The earliest record of this tradition outside of Egypt is found in the writings of the well-known philosopher, Plato (c. 429-347 BC). In the story of Atlantis featuring in his *Dialogues of Critias* and *Timaeus*, we not only find the same theme of an ancient submerged land but also of a pillar or pillars on which the rulers of that land left their records. According to Plato, the story originated with the Greek sage, Solon, who heard it three generations before when he visited the temple in the city of Sais in the Nile Delta in Egypt, where one of the priests told it to him. In Plato's story, the submerged land is located beyond the "Pillars of Heracles", the two promontories that flank the Strait of Gibraltar.

As part of the stories about the early inhabitants of this ancient world, Plato tells that a temple for the Greek god of the sea, Poseidon, existed in this land. In it was a pillar made of some strange metal, called "orichalcum". On this pillar the records of the sons of Poseidon, whom he had with a mortal woman and who once inhabited that land, were inscribed. Solon's informant had apparently been privy to the information written on this pillar. A later Greek philosopher, Crantor, who studied under one of Plato's students, wrote in a commentary that Egyptian priests maintained that the story told by Plato was written on pillars preserved in their land.

At this point, it may be suggested that Plato's reference to the two pillars of Heracles originated in a confusion of the two pillars that Herodotus supposedly saw in the temple of Heracles and the geographical landmarks found at the Strait of Gibraltar. We do, in fact, know that such confusion existed as the Greek geographer, Strabo, mentions that the temple of Heracles and the said pillars were not only located by the Phoenicians beyond the promontories that flank the Strait of Gibraltar, but that some merged and integrated these pillars and the landmarks with each other.<sup>[414]</sup> And as found in the work of Herodotus, Plato also says that the pillar, in fact, the entire temple on the inside, was made of some scarce and valuable metal called "orichalcum". This, of course, indicates a borrowing from that work in which such pillars are described as being made of beautiful metals.

As these pillars supposedly found themselves in Egypt in later times, it would be very strange indeed if they existed in an earlier epoch in some faraway land with no connection to Egypt's early history. One should rather assume that the tradition came from a land which had some interaction with early Egypt, such as the original homeland of the gods, mentioned in the Edfu texts.

The "sons" of Poseidon of the Greek tradition would then go back to the "Children of Tanen" of the Egyptian tradition. Both were beings of divine descent, closely associated with a deluge story. The information written on the pillar on the submerged island, namely the deeds of the "sons of Poseidon", would be none other than the story told in the Edfu texts about the deeds of the "Children of Tanen", a story associated with a sacred reed buried before the deluge and later found again. Indeed, a reed was cut in two to produce the *Djeba* perch or pillar used in the construction of the earliest sanctuary in the original homeland of the *primaeval* gods.

The story of pillars on which secrets from before the deluge were preserved, was later also found in other

traditions. The third century BC Babylonian priest, Berossus, for instance, made mention in his *Babyloniaca* of the tradition that certain cuneiform tablets survived the flood. In the first century AD, the Jewish author, Josephus, wrote in his *Antiquities*<sup>[415]</sup> that two pillars, one made of tiles and the other of stone, were erected before the deluge in order to have made sure that the early discoveries in astronomy made by the “sons of Seth” would not be lost. In the Jewish *Book of Jubilees* we read that the “teaching of the watchers [angels]” was handed down in this way. This tradition later developed into the well-known occult and Freemasonic traditions about such pillars.

Instead of searching for Atlantis beyond the “Pillars of Heracles”, we should rather ask ourselves where the Egyptian tradition originated. There is good reason to believe that this was, in fact, in ancient Sumer. It stands to reason then that no submerged Atlantis somewhere beneath the Atlantic Ocean ever existed! The secret tradition that Solon encountered in Egypt is, in fact, the very same one we are discussing in this book. We can now proceed to explore this tradition in more detail in the context of the Egyptian experience.

## **10. RETURN OF THE PHOENIX**

The story told in the Edfu texts and recorded in texts like the Turin Royal Canon reveals not only an ancient tradition brought to Egypt, it also shows that the worship of the gods of this tradition was brought to Egypt in the Predynastic Period. Accordingly, we find that the Egyptian cultic tradition of the Predynastic and Early Dynastic Periods shows a striking agreement with that of ancient Sumer.

Especially two key aspects of the early Sumerian cultic tradition were copied in Egypt. Firstly, a geographical layout of the land and secondly, the cult of the sacred marriage rituals, through which not only the ancient bloodline of the fallen gods was kept alive but through which the eventual appearance of the messianic child in physical form was made possible. We, in fact, find another such messianic figure, this time in Egypt, who lived right at the beginning of the dynastic period.

### **THE COSMIC DESIGN PUT INTO PRACTICE IN EGYPT**

The earliest appearance of the Followers of Horus in Egypt is found at the city of Hierakonpolis, “Hawk City” in Greek, and today known as Kawm Al-Ahmar, only a few kilometres north of Edfu. It was called Nekhen in the time we are focusing on. The fascinating thing about this region is the strong Sumerian and Elamite archaeological footprint found at the temple of Horus in Hierakonpolis and the surrounding area, including the burial site at Naqada (Nubt), somewhat to the north.<sup>[416]</sup> It needs to be pointed out that Elam was located in close proximity to the east of Sumer.

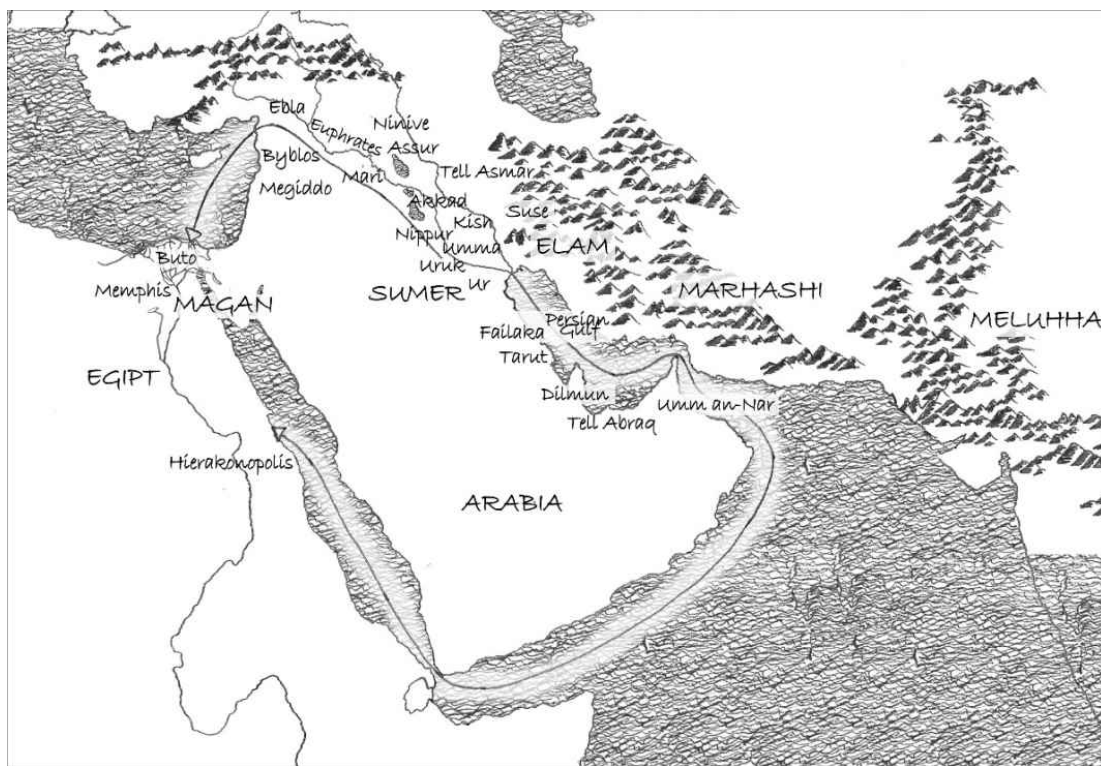
It has been proposed that these settlers in Egypt came with boats from Mesopotamia, passing through the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, sailing around the Arabian

Peninsula through the Gulf of Aden and into the Red Sea, where they eventually arrived at the eastern entrance to the wadis connecting the Red Sea with the Nile.<sup>[417]</sup> Explorers like Hans Winkler, found many images of boats dating from the Predynastic Period in the wadis. These depictions seem to have been made by the Followers of Horus who pulled their dismantled boats through these wadis on their way from the Red Sea to the River Nile.<sup>[418]</sup>

The Sumerian footprint in southern Egypt is complemented by a similar footprint in the northern delta at the city called Buto by the Greeks and Pe by the Egyptians.<sup>[419]</sup> In Buto buildings exactly replicating the Sumerian building styles in Uruk, were built and erected. The settlers to this area would have taken a different route from Mesopotamia, namely the northern route from Sumer. They would have travelled up the Euphrates until the river makes a sharp elbow bend northwards into the upper regions of present-day Syria. From there, they would have taken the shortest route over land from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea. As for the rest of the journey to Egypt, no Sumerian remains or footprint dating from that period were ever found on any possible overland route from northern Syria through Canaan to Egypt,<sup>[420]</sup> suggesting that they did in fact not take an overland route down and along the Mediterranean coast but rather sailed from somewhere on the northeastern coast to the Nile Delta.

In contrast with the temple of Horus at Nekhen, a temple of Neith, the virgin goddess, existed at Pe, suggesting the presence of a female cult there.<sup>[421]</sup> An interesting feature of both Nekhen and Pe is that they were double cities, with Nekhen having had a twin or double city, Nekheb, across the river on the west bank of the Nile. The double or twin city of Pe was Dep, but it is not clear where it was located. In Sumer, Uruk-Kulab also seems to have been a double city, originally built on both sides of the Euphrates River.<sup>[422]</sup>

These two cities in the distant south and north of Egypt, where the earliest Sumerian footprints in the Predynastic Period were found, became ceremonially connected by representing the southern and northern parts of Egypt, called Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. These two regions formed part of a single layout of the land of Egypt with the two parts having come together in the vicinity of Memphis. According to tradition, Menes, the legendary first king of dynastic Egypt, built Memphis and made it his capital. [\[423\]](#)



*Figure 13. The two routes taken by settlers from Sumer to Egypt during the Predynastic Period.*

We may assume that Memphis was built in order to ceremonially represent the “centre” of Egypt. Although Memphis does not precisely lie in the geographical centre of Egypt, it is located on the natural boundary between the southern desert and the northern delta region. Menes is



likewise said to have built a temple for Ptah at Memphis, where the Egyptians worshipped this god as “(binder) of the Upper and Lower land of Egypt”.<sup>[424]</sup> The exact point where the two parts of Egypt came together was at a place called Ayan near Memphis, where Horus and Seth were reconciled by the god Thoth.<sup>[425]</sup>

Nekhen and Pe, representing the south and the north respectively, were associated with two tutelary goddesses to whom the protection of the king was entrusted. The goddess, Nekhebet of Nekheb, was portrayed as a white vulture and the goddess, Wadjet of Pe, as a cobra. They were also portrayed as two women, one wearing the white crown of Upper Egypt in the south and the other the red crown of Lower Egypt in the north. Wadjet wielded great power even in the netherworld. When her cobra symbol was combined with the sun disk it became known as the “uraeus” serpent. It also became the royal emblem on the front of the king’s headpiece.<sup>[426]</sup>

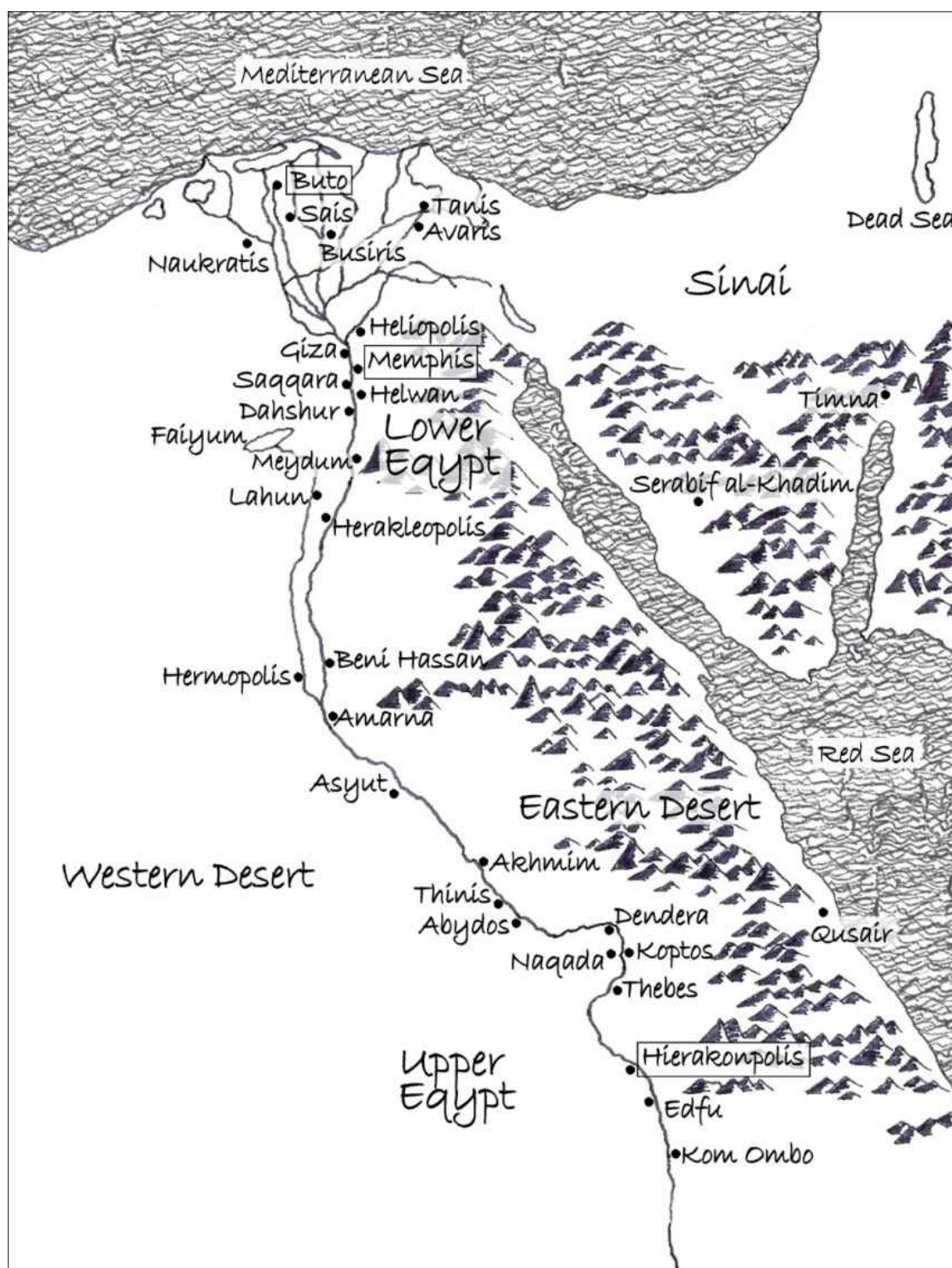
At this point, it is important to note and point out the shamanistic undertones involved in the geographical plan for the layout and design of the land of Egypt. This is the same plan shamans used in the layout and design of ancient Sumer, with Eridu in the southern delta, associated with the symbol of a (red) serpent, and Nippur in the north, associated with the (white) Anzu. The layout of each of these two lands reflected the celestial skies as represented by the shamanistic cosmic tree, featuring the symbols of the bird and the serpent.

Although the Egyptian symbols have their own unique features and peculiarities, the basic design of the land, conforming to the cosmic tree and the celestial cosmos, is evident and quite obvious. In this layout and design, the city of Memphis as the geographical centre of Egypt, agrees with Uruk as the geographical centre of Sumer. Nekhen agrees with Nippur and Pe with Eridu.



The only significant difference between Egypt and Sumer is that the layout in Egypt was an inverse version of the Sumerian one. The delta region in Egypt, corresponding with the southern regions of the celestial sky, was in the north of the land instead of the south like in Sumer. The reason for this is that the Nile flows northwards whereas the Mesopotamian rivers, namely the Euphrates and the Tigris, flow southwards. The Egyptian delta lies in the north whereas the Sumerian one lies in the south. The fact that the Egyptian layout is an inverse of the blueprint in the celestial skies shows that this was a secondary application of the heavenly model, in contrast with ancient Sumer where the layout fits in more naturally with the celestial design. This is in line with traces of Sumerians found at the two ends of the layout of the land of Egypt.

As the map of Egypt reflects the layout of the celestial skies, Ayan near Memphis would correspond with the heavenly equator. In the same way as Ayan divides Egypt into its upper and lower parts, the celestial equator divides the celestial skies into a northern and a southern part. In this instance Upper (southern) Egypt, for which Nekheb's vulture served as symbol, corresponds with the northerly heavens. In ancient Sumer, the Anzu bird, counterpart of the vulture, was also associated with these northerly regions of the heavenly skies. Lower (northern) Egypt, for which Wadjet's cobra served as symbol, corresponds with the southern heavens. The Nile River corresponds with the Milky Way, in a similar way the Euphrates served as a reflection of this heavenly river in Mesopotamia.



*Figure 14. Layout of Egypt, showing the locations of Pe/Buto, Memphis and Hierakonpolis.*



The author, Robert Bauval, developed an interesting theory about the location of the pyramids. He postulates that the ancient Egyptians built the pyramids in accordance with a celestial design, having aligned the pyramids with certain stars in the night sky. According to him, the location and position of the pyramids in the Memphis area, namely those of the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties at Dashour, Abusir and Giza, correspond with the brightest stars in the Hyades, Pleiades and Orion.<sup>[427]</sup> The position of the Fifth Dynasty sun temples at Abu Ghorab, south of Abusir, corresponds with the position of the sun near the Hyades on the vernal equinox at that time.<sup>[428]</sup> He even goes so far as to argue that one degree in the celestial sky equals 133 metres on earth.<sup>[429]</sup> Bauval's theory poses quite a detailed and extensive one regarding the positioning and layout of the Egyptian pyramids.

The question, however, remains whether Bauval is correct with the theory he puts forward. Although the pyramid age comes long after the period under discussion, it may nonetheless be proposed that the Egyptians would in later periods have continued to build in terms of the basic plan used for the design and layout of the land at the very beginning. And this is, in fact, what we find. What makes Bauval's theory compelling is his assumption that the celestial equator ran through Ayan during that time. This forms the basis for his entire pyramid-star correspondence theory and is exactly how I also understand the ancient layout of the land. In assuming that Upper Egypt corresponds with the northern celestial skies, the alignment of the pyramids with the proposed corresponding stars makes for a logical outcome. This, however, does not support Bauval's (flawed) theory that the pyramids were built at some early epoch, long before the generally accepted dates.

## **THE SACRED MARRIAGE IN EGYPT**

The fact that the god, Ptah, was worshipped at Memphis is of particular interest to our story. We already know that this earth-god of the Edfu texts is simply the Egyptian version of the Sumerian earth-god, Enki. We now discover that Ptah was worshipped at Memphis, which agrees in the layout of the land with the Sumerian Uruk, where Enki was, in fact, worshipped as the supreme god during the reign of King Dumuzi.

The close association of Ptah with King Menes might reflect the relationship between Enki and Dumuzi. Menes seems to be none other than an Egyptian version of Dumuzi. The cultic myths about Dumuzi having drowned or having been killed by evil deputies of the underworld,<sup>[430]</sup> is, for example, reflected in Menes having drowned in the Nile near Memphis or having been killed by a hippopotamus.<sup>[431]</sup> These stories about Menes were later adopted in the personage of Osiris, a later Egyptian version of the Sumerian Dumuzi.

Egyptian scholars differ on the identity of the legendary Menes. Some identify him with Narmer, who unified the land, while others identify him with Narmer's son, Horus-Aha.<sup>[432]</sup> The clear association of Menes with the Dumuzi mythology suggests that his name was taken from the god, Min<sup>[433]</sup> or Meni, who, like Dumuzi, personified the "generative force in nature". Min was, for example, portrayed with an erect phallus and stretched out hand.<sup>[434]</sup> The king accordingly took on the role of Min in the sacred marriage rituals,<sup>[435]</sup> like the Sumerian kings who took on the role of Dumuzi in the same rituals.

It is important to distinguish and know that Menes was not Min. In ancient times, it often happened, as we shall shortly see when we return to the Sumerian branch of our story, that the great deeds of the kings were attributed to the gods who enabled those kings to have done such magnificent deeds. The deeds of the kings were attributed

to the gods and in this way we may have a similar situation with Menes, where the deeds of both Narmer and Horus-Aha might have been attributed to the god, Min, resulting in this god having developed a distinct persona as a legendary “king”. The reason for the confusion as to which king should be associated with Menes may reflect the association of both Narmer and Horus-Aha with the god, Min.

The participants in the sacred marriage rituals were envisioned as a bull and a cow, with the bull mounting the cow, in exactly the same way as in Sumer. They even used the same terminology, namely “wild bull” and “wild cow”. During the early Early Dynastic Period, the girl, whom the king married, presumably belonged to the cult of the goddess, Neith, at Pe/Buto. This is evident in the name of Queen Neithhotep from that period, her name meaning “Neith is pleased”.<sup>[436]</sup> And, as in Sumer, they regarded the fruit of this marriage as having been an incarnation of the sun god. This then also explains why those kings were so closely identified with Horus-Re.<sup>[437]</sup>

In the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, we are fortunate to have a beautiful palette celebrating Narmer’s victory over his enemies. Amongst the interesting iconographic motifs on this palette, some of which display distinct Mesopotamian influences (the twin long-neck beasts),<sup>[438]</sup> is one showing the victorious king with four standard bearers walking in front of him, probably representing his rule over the “four corners” of Egypt after his victory. In front of them are two rows of beheaded corpses of his enemies.

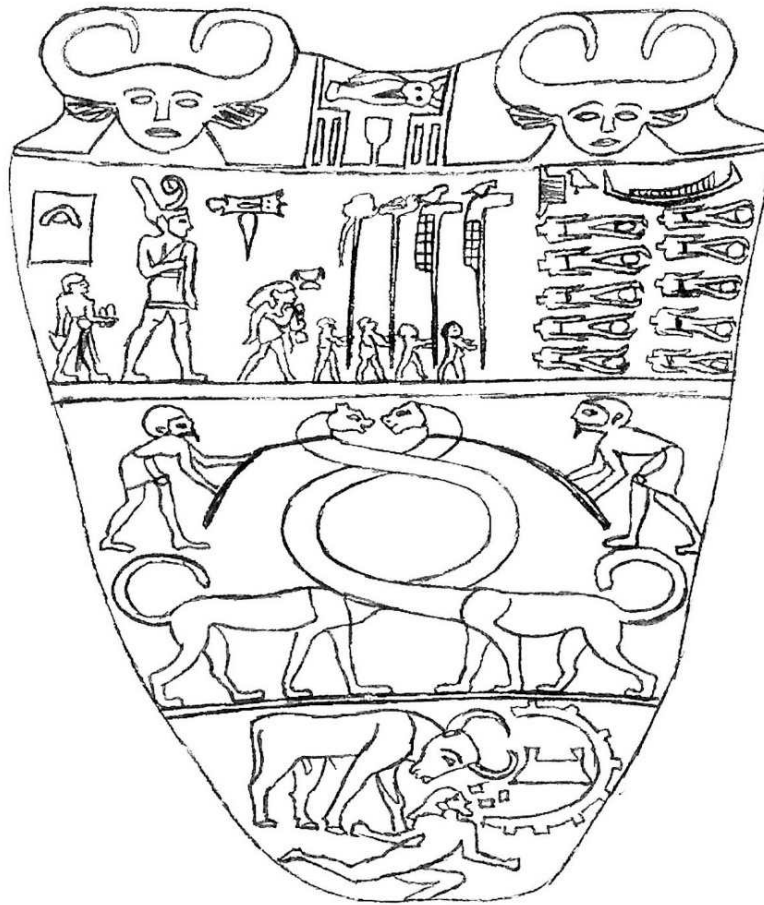
The four standard emblems depicted on the palette include two Horus falcons, the wolf god being a warrior god, Wepwawet, also called Wepwaut or Upuaut, and an emblem interpreted as the “royal placenta”. With two falcon symbols included in these standard emblems, it seems that the groups or tribes so represented include those we earlier encountered amongst the Followers of Horus. The four groups represented here, are probably the Egyptian

equivalents of the four castes created by Gilgamesh, the earthly Re in the ancestor list of the earliest kings of Egypt as remembered and referred to in the Edfu temple texts.

We may assume that two of the four standards, the wolf and one falcon, represented Nekhen in the south and Pe in the north. These emblems were associated with two groups of ancestor kings worshipped at those cities. The Egyptians called them the “Spirits of Nekhen and Pe”. Ever since the First Dynasty, statues of these “spirits”, “souls” in some translations, were brought from the two cities to the centre of the land, in time identified with Heliopolis. This happened on certain ceremonial occasions involving the king. These spirits belonged to the ranks of the Followers of Horus. [\[439\]](#)

We read how these “spirits” were brought forward and presented at royal ceremonies: “There came to you the gods the Souls of Pe, the gods the Souls of Nekhen, the gods who are in the sky, and the gods who are on earth... Pe sails upstream to you, Nekhen sails downstream to you.” [\[440\]](#) We have found something similar in ancient Sumer where the Anunnaki gods, the “gods of heaven” and the “gods of earth”, came from Nippur and Eridu for the royal ceremonies in Uruk. [\[441\]](#) In both traditions, the “gods of the earth” referred to gods or spirits of the netherworld.





*Figure 15. One side of the Narmer Palette (Egyptian Museum, Cairo).*

### **THE HELIACAL RISING OF SIRIUS**

The Egyptians also followed the Sumerian cultic practice in another important way, by relating their earthly existence with the movement of the stars in the framework of the cosmos. The Egyptians used not only the same cosmic design in the layout of their land, they also followed the Sumerian practice of coordinating their cultic events with the movements of the stars.

Following in the footsteps of their Sumerian predecessors, the ancient Egyptians would have studied the celestial skies



meticulously in order to have found and determined the exact moments for performing their cultic acts. One of the most important events of that time was the ceremonial unification of Egypt. It can certainly be assumed that this event would have been carefully planned well in advance and in accordance with their speculative theology.

Scholars, using different methods of calculation, disagree on the exact date for the unification of Egypt under one ruler, proposing various dates between 3100 and 2900 BC. If we use the Sumerian chronology based on astronomical considerations as established in Chapter 6, a slightly later date is arrived at. The common practice, based on archaeological grounds, of dating the First Dynasty in Egypt about one century after the end of the Uruk Period in Sumer, allows us to set this date at about 2750 BC (with the end of the Uruk Period taken at about 2850 BC).

With this approximate date as a guideline, we cannot but notice an amazing coincidence of events. This date for the unification of Egypt falls very closely to one of the great astronomical events of that time, namely when the Egyptian New Year occurred not only on the summer solstice, but also coincided with the heliacal rising of Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky with only the planet Venus being brighter. As the Egyptians must surely have observed the heliacal rising of Sirius during that early period, as attested to by an inscription on an ivory tablet from the time of King Djer, successor of King Horus-Aha, it can be assumed that the Egyptians would have made a big event out of this. We can, in fact, accept that they would have planned the unification of the land so as to have coincided with this remarkable event on 17 July 2781 BC.<sup>[442]</sup> David Rohl,<sup>[443]</sup> working backwards calculating this date like most Egyptian scholars do, also proposes this date for the unification of Egypt.

The occurrence of the New Year on the summer solstice as well as the coinciding of the New Year with the heliacal rising of Sirius were rare events, each of which only having

occurred twice during the entire dynastic period stretching over almost 3 000 years. The reason for this is actually quite simple: The Egyptian civic year involved a “wandering calendar”, moving back one day in relation to the solar year every four years. This happened because the civic year only consisted of 365 days, which is about one quarter of a day shorter than the solar year.

The New Year of 2781 BC was, in fact, an extraordinary and momentous one as this was the only time in Egypt’s entire history when the New Year occurred on the summer solstice and coincided with the heliacal rising of Sirius!<sup>[444]</sup> In contrast with the wandering civic calendar, the date of the summer solstice stayed more or less the same, moving from 16 July in 3000 BC, to 4/5 July in 1500 BC and 24 June in 45 BC (according to the Julian calendar, used here to facilitate the correspondence with the heliacal rising of Sirius).<sup>[445]</sup> The same happened with the heliacal rising of Sirius, the date of which did not change much through the ages, moving from 17 July in 3000 BC to 19 July in 500 BC.<sup>[446]</sup>

The heliacal rising of Sirius annually occurs at dawn after a period of about 70 days of invisibility. It was (like the summer solstice) slightly out of sync with the civic calendar every year, appearing one day later on the eastern horizon after every four years. It follows then that it took four times 365 years (that is 1 460 years) to return to the same position. The astronomical coinciding of the heliacal rising of Sirius with the New Year only happens once every 1 460 years!

The uniqueness of the event of 17 July 2781 BC, when the New Year (with which the wandering civic calendar year commenced) occurred on the summer solstice, as well as coinciding with the heliacal rising of Sirius,<sup>[447]</sup> lends support to the view that this was in fact the date on which the civic calendar of approximating the year with 365 days, was first instituted. One expects that the civic calendar would have commenced on the summer solstice (to expect something

different would be very strange indeed!). Given the close approximation of this date with the unification of the lands, it seems very likely that the civic calendar was instituted on exactly this occasion. The Egyptians started using the civil calendar then when the unified Egypt was founded in 2781 BC.

At this point, it is necessary to mention an important difference between the Egyptian and Sumerian ceremonial calendars. The Sumerians celebrated the New Year on the vernal equinox but in Egypt the time of the summer solstice signalled the season of inundation and the flooding of the Nile. The reason for having given prominence to different dates in the year by the Egyptians and the Sumerians is a rather practical one: The planting seasons in the two regions occurred at different times of the year.

Although the Egyptians and the Sumerians shared similar planting traditions where the rainy seasons in the upper regions at the sources of their different rivers caused flooding when these rivers burst their banks and watered the agricultural areas alongside them before the respective planting seasons, in Egypt this seasonal cycle was signalled by the summer solstice instead of the vernal equinox like in Sumer. For this reason, the Egyptians, in following the Sumerian example of proclaiming such a festival, celebrated it on a different date.

### **HORUS-AHA AS MESSIANIC CHILD**

Although the Egyptians and the Sumerians used the same cosmic plan as presented in the celestial skies for cultic purposes, the different geographical contexts they found themselves in required different ways of applying those principles. Even so, the cyclical movement of the celestial skies produced remarkable alignments re-enacted in the earthly domain in both traditions. It was against this

backdrop that they expected the return of the messianic child.

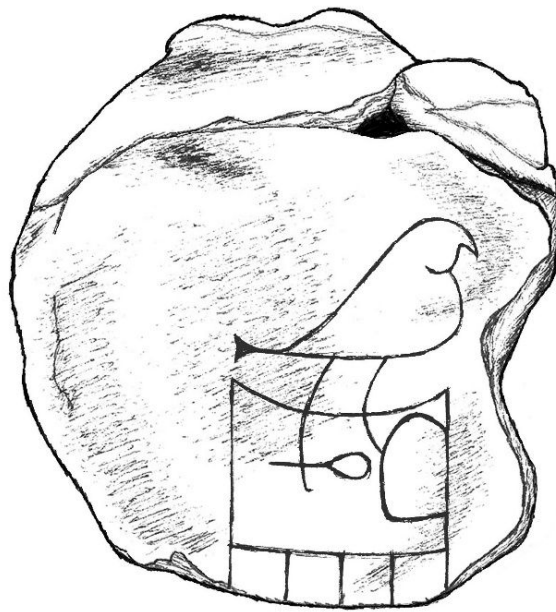
In Sumer, Gilgamesh was such a child, succeeding Dumuzi as king of Uruk. Like Dumuzi, he hailed from the ancient lineage of the First Dynasty of Uruk. Gilgamesh rose to the throne when the cosmic axis started moving away from the polar star, Thuban. He embodied a new sprout germinating from the old cosmic tree, manifested in the person of Dumuzi, after its “death”. Gilgamesh was seen as a new manifestation of the messianic child in whom the divine glory became manifested. He was not only identified with the glory of the rising sun, he was also the one who founded the New Year’s festival, signifying the annual rebirth of the sun.

In Egypt, the persona corresponding with Gilgamesh was Horus-Aha, the son of Narmer, who is often taken by scholars to have been the first king of dynastic Egypt. In the king list of the Egyptian priest, Manetho, who lived in the Ptolemaic Period, Horus-Aha is mentioned as the successor of the legendary King Menes, whom I propose to have been a form of the god, Min. Although this may reflect on Horus-Aha’s birth resulting from the sacred marriage ritual, with Min as his father, it may also indicate that he was in later tradition seen as a new manifestation of one of the great personages from the past, one remembered in the tradition of the Followers of Horus in the Edfu texts, namely the earthly Re, who succeeded *Heter-her*. Horus-Aha succeeded Menes in the same way as the earthly Re succeeded *Heter-her*, with both Menes and *Heter-her* having been Egyptian versions of the Sumerian Dumuzi.

If Horus-Aha was seen as the new manifestation of the messianic child, the ancient Egyptians would have identified him with Horus-Re in a very special way. And this is exactly what we find: Although those ancient kings were generally identified with Horus, the way in which they understood

Horus-Aha to be the new Horus was strikingly different from his predecessors and successors alike.

Although most Egyptian rulers of the Predynastic and Early Dynastic Periods had so-called Horus names, proclaiming their descent from that primeval figure, we now discover that it contains a special and distinguishing feature in the case of Horus-Aha. The falcon in the heraldic crest, called the serekh, normally appeared above and apart from a particular ruler's name, but in the case of Horus-Aha it formed an integral part of the hieroglyphic spelling of his name, with the falcon reaching into the serekh frame. The falcon holds a mace and a shield, spelling the name "Fighter of Horus". In my view this strange presentation or form of the name was meant to indicate the unique way in which the falcon god became manifested in the person of Horus-Aha.



*Figure 16. Faience vessel fragment inscribed with the serekh of Horus-Aha (British Museum, London).*

This view of Horus-Aha would have been closely associated with his role as the first king of a united Egypt. As this event was ceremonially coordinated to coincide with the New Year's festival and also the heliacal rising of Sirius, the Egyptians might have regarded him as the earthly manifestation of this celestial occurrence. They would certainly have identified him not only with the first New Year inaugurating the dynastic period with a united land as a new beginning or birth, but also with the star, Sirius, "born" above the eastern horizon at dawn on this date.

We might assume that the glory of this star, Sirius, the brightest of all the stars in the night sky, was taken as having reflected the divine glory of the king. Of special interest is the fact that this star appeared when the sun reached its peak during the summer solstice, the hottest time of the year. This symbolised the birth of the new Egypt, encapsulated by and embodied in the king, from the flames of the earlier wars waged to unite the two lands into one. We will encounter these same concepts in later Egyptian tradition with the reappearance of the messianic child in the person of Sopdu.

The important difference between Gilgamesh and Horus-Aha is found in the dates of the two different New Year's festivals associated with these two messianic figures. Although both were associated with the dual roles of fertility-priest and fighter-king, the ancient Sumerian "en" and "lugal" titles, it seems as if Gilgamesh could have been closer to the priestly tradition, celebrating fertility rites on the vernal equinox. Being called "Fighter of Horus", Horus-Aha in turn, seems to have been closer to the warrior tradition. All of this means that these two heroes were associated in a special way with the priestly and warrior castes, respectively.

We already know that Gilgamesh was associated with the Sumerian fertility rites and that he introduced certain sports games for this purpose. Horus-Aha on the other hand, was

associated with the warrior caste. He was a descendant of those rulers who were once associated with the temple of Horus at Nekhen, the cult of which was represented by the Wepwawet emblem in front of the king. This wolf god, Wepwawet, was a warrior god, associated with the warrior caste. It may be suggested that the Shebtiw of the Edfu texts, one of the three ancient orders amongst the “Children of Tanen” and closely associated with the falcon-god, was incorporated into this warrior caste, utilising the Wepwawet emblem.

### **RETURN OF THE PHOENIX**

The periodic return of Sirius, called the Sothic cycle, was constantly observed throughout the history of Egypt. Although the Sothic cycle in itself is well-known, it is not generally known that the Egyptians associated this cycle with the return of the mythical Phoenix.<sup>[448]</sup> And it is perfectly understandable why: In the same way Sirius returns to the same position after a long period of time, the Phoenix also returns every so often after a long period of time. And in the same way Sirius is associated with fire or heat and is “born” from the extreme heat of the sun during mid-summer, the Phoenix is not only associated with the sun but is also reborn out of the same flames which burnt it to ashes.

According to another version of the myth of the Phoenix, told by the Greek historian Herodotus, the chick embalmed the dead bird and then brought it to the city of Heliopolis. He writes: “They say that it comes from Arabia to the temple of the sun, bearing the dead body of its parent, enclosed in myrrh, which it buries. It makes a ball of myrrh, shaped like an egg, as large as it is able to carry... This done it excavates the mass, into which it introduces the body of the dead bird; it again closes the aperture with myrrh... it then proceeds to the temple of the sun.”<sup>[449]</sup>

As Herodotus mentions, the Phoenix was closely associated with the city of Iunu, Heliopolis to the Greeks, where it was called the “Bennu” bird, meaning “to shine” or “to rise”.<sup>[450]</sup> This refers to its rising from the fire after its own death once more. The ancient Egyptians depicted the bird as a heron, a particularly fitting symbol as these migrating birds fly north or south over Egypt on their annual cyclical journeys. Although portrayed as a heron, the Phoenix was simply a form of Horus, as we read in the *Book of the Dead*: “I flew up as the Primaeval God and assumed forms... I am Horus.”<sup>[451]</sup>

In the city of Iunu stood a large pillar with the so-called “ben-ben” stone placed on top of it. The Bennu bird presumably sat on top of this pillar and one cannot but notice the close resemblance between this pillar and the ancient *dd*-pillar of the Edfu texts on top of which the falcon perched. What is specifically striking is the fact that the falcon was a form taken on by the so-called *Pn*-god, a name obviously resembling the word “ben” appearing in “Bennu” and “ben-ben”.

Evidently, the ben-ben stone on top of the pillar in Iunu was simply a later version of the ancient tradition of the *Pn*-god sitting on top of such a pillar. Because that early falcon was called Horus in later Egyptian tradition and because the Bennu bird was a form of Horus, there is good reason to believe the Iunu/Heliopolis tradition was based on the ancient tradition recorded and remembered in the Edfu texts.

The *Pn*-god of the Edfu texts was, interestingly enough, also called “August Stripling”. He was remembered as the first manifestation of the messianic child from the time before the deluge, later to return and be reborn in the form of the earthly Re. The association of the names “pn” and “ben” with this child suggests a Semitic origin where “ben” means seed or son. This in turn means that the ben-ben



stone on top of the pillar at lunu represented the messianic child.

The ben-ben stone personified the seed of the earth-god, or the Lord of the Earth in the Sumerian tradition, born on earth in human form. As the “seed” of the Phoenix or “Children of the Phoenix”, rulers from this family lineage would from time to time return to the throne as messianic figures, in accordance with the great cosmic cycle of the ages. This concept is particularly applicable to Horus-Aha, who represents such a messianic rebirth at the beginning of the Sothic cycle.

The idea of periodic return is found in both the Sumerian and Egyptian traditions. As the falcon does not embody the image of periodic return, the heron was chosen to represent this concept in Egypt. In the original Sumerian tradition, on which the Egyptian mythology is based, the Anzu bird embodied the periodic nature of the storm clouds forming part of the rain cycle. In Sumer, the “bird” was also born from “fire”, when the sun heated up the waters of the Gulf in order to evaporate and form clouds, becoming a mighty and powerful “beast” with the face of a vicious lion and mighty body of an eagle.

We have seen that the Thunderbird symbolised rebirth, as found in the Lugalbanda tradition, where the hero underwent a shamanistic rebirth. This concept applied not only to cases of individual rebirth but also to the coming of messianic figures, in other words, to new Ningirsu/Horus figures. In keeping with a certain cosmic rhythm, they would be reborn at predetermined moments in time. This process of periodic rebirth was made possible by certain cultic acts, such as the sacred marriage ritual embedded in the framework of an ancestor cult, where the Anunnaki gods (of Nippur and Eridu) or the ancestral gods, souls or spirits (of Nekhen and Pe) gathered at Uruk or Heliopolis, the so-called navels of each of these lands, for these ceremonies.

As a symbol of messianic rebirth, the Thunderbird also became the pre-eminent royal symbol. Although Gilgamesh and Horus-Aha were both great messianic figures, one expects that the cycle of the Thunderbird/Phoenix would in time have produced even greater kings in whom the mighty bird would have become ever more powerfully embodied, greater kings than all those who came before. Such messianic figures would make their appearance when the cosmological eras belonging to the unfolding cycle of the ages reached certain climactic points. Our investigation and research will indeed lead us to discover and identify more such great messianic figures.<sup>[452]</sup>

### **CYCLES OF TIME**

We can now proceed and endeavour to find out and discover more about the cycles of time represented and personified by the Sumerian Anzu bird and the Egyptian Bennu bird. In both traditions, the messianic child, embodied in Ningirsu/Horus, is portrayed with the sun and the moon for eyes. These eyes may well refer to the cycles of the sun and the moon, respectively. It is difficult to miss the obvious fact that the cycles of the sun and the moon correlate over a period of eight years, explaining the association of the Ogdoad with the appearance of the messianic child, the *Pn*-god.

The solar year comprises of 365 and a 1/4 days and the moon year of 354 days (the average moon cycle of 29 and a 1/2 days x 12 months), which renders it 11 and a 1/4 days out of sync with the solar year. Over a period of eight years, the difference between the solar years and the moon years adds up to 90 days. The sun and the moon cycle can easily be coordinated and aligned if three extra moon months are added every eight years. With 88 and a 1/2 days added, the cycles would be less than two days out of sync. If three extra months are added, the result is a lunar period

comprising of 2920 and a 1/2 days and a corresponding solar period of 2922 days. In Egyptian mythology, the Ogdoad may very well represent this eight-year cycle but we, however, do not know when this cycle was first identified.

Is it possible that a relationship exists between this eight-year cycle and the Sothic cycle? Although we cannot be certain that the ancient Egyptians in fact aligned such an eight-year cycle with the Sothic cycle, it is nonetheless noteworthy to mention that Sirius appears on the horizon one day later on the civic calendar every four years, in other words two days later every eight years. Bearing in mind that this eight-year cycle is made up of two four-year cycles, immediately brings to mind the Ogdoad's composition of four male gods and four female goddesses. Considering these observations, the four-year cycles in actual fact match up beautifully with the Sothic cycle.

An important question at this point would be how this eight-year cycle could be correlated with the other movements of the planets and the stars. This was one of the great challenges that confronted the ancients and the easiest way to have achieved this was through the magical number 9, the exact same number associated with the messianic child as the ninth god. Whereas the number 8 may be seen as chthonic and a mere doubling of the number 4, relating to the four corners of the earth, the number 9 has a distinctly "celestial" nature about it in defining a circle, the circle being the foremost symbol for the celestial skies, skies that are literally spread out in a giant circle. It may be assumed that the association of the circle with the number  $360 = 9 \times 40$  is extremely old.<sup>[453]</sup>

The Ogdoad, as fallen seed, produced the messianic *Pn*-god as the ninth god. Identifying the messianic child with the number 9 shows that he transcends the chthonic nature of the Ogdoad. This may even be seen as a kind of alchemical process through which the fallen nature of the

Nephilim was transmuted and transformed into a celestial nature. Accordingly, the ever longer cycles built on the eight-year cycle, would have allowed for messianic figures of ever more divine nature to have been produced. An integral part of the process of producing such messianic figures would have involved the weaving together of the various bloodlines of the Nephilim within their ancient ancestral cult.

We can then proceed and focus on the next phase in our unfolding story of the descendants of the Nephilim.



# **PART 2**

## **AKKADIAN GOD-MEN**

# 11. KING OF THE UNIVERSE

Although the focus still falls on ancient Mesopotamia, our story now moves on to a new phase and the next epoch in the history of that ancient land, an epoch even greater than that of the heroic Uruk Period. In what is known as the Akkadian Period the Semitic people of the land, commonly referred to as the Akkadians, took control of Sumer during the second half of the third millennium BC. They extended their dominium and rule to the furthest corners of the ancient Middle East.

The Akkadian Emperors established the very first world empire. They were in later times commemorated as the greatest of all those who had ever ruled over ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>[454]</sup> Gwendolyn Leick writes: "Akkad was known as the centre of the most successful empire ever, which reached to the corners of the world."<sup>[455]</sup> Piotr Michalowski, for his part, writes: "The gravity of the traditions concerning 'il primo impure universale' has been particularly impressive, as Akkad and its fate acquired a unique place in Mesopotamian ideology and tradition."<sup>[456]</sup>

Over the centuries, the stories of the great and mighty deeds of the Akkadian Emperors served as a timeless ideal for later generations of kings. Various kings from the Old Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian Periods even bore the names of the Akkadian Emperors. Unfortunately, only a few of the original inscriptions of these Emperors survived the destruction of the ages. Fortunately, however, the scribes of the Old Babylonian Period a few centuries later, copied those inscriptions, thereby having preserved many of them. In notes to the copied texts, called colophons, the scribes even mentioned the Old Akkadian Period monuments they were copied from.<sup>[457]</sup>

Not only did these Akkadian Emperors perform mighty and unequalled deeds, these deeds were also recounted in epic songs performed by court bards. An intimate relationship existed between the palace and the bards, some of whom are even known to us today.<sup>[458]</sup> These bards, in their ballads, painted an impressive picture of those rulers and the heroic age of outstanding greatness to which they belonged. That the stories told in the epic texts had their origin in the oral tradition is evident from the sound patterns and other poetic devices characterising the Akkadian legends.<sup>[459]</sup>

Today, scholars have access to thirteen heroic Akkadian tales compared to the nine Sumerian ones focusing on the Uruk heroes.<sup>[460]</sup> The great epic tradition of the Akkadian Emperors is reflected in the *Gestae Akkadaeorum*, the legends of the Emperors of Akkad. The saga tradition of the founder of the Akkadian dynasty, Sargon, is called the Sargon Epics or *Res Gestae Sargonis*.<sup>[461]</sup>

The Akkadian myths and legends reflect the folkloric motifs that had over time been associated with these mighty god-kings. They provide an insider's view of the popular traditions that arose from the speculative thinking of that time. Accordingly, these legends provide us with a treasure trove of information, giving us a better insight and understanding of the secret mystery tradition we are studying. They even provide us with an effective entry point to the understanding of the secret traditions of later ages which adopted and used many of these Akkadian motifs, both in myth and iconography.

Like the Uruk rulers before them, the Akkadian Emperors were seen as descendants of the gods. The very first ruler in ancient Mesopotamia who was recognised as truly godly and divine during his own lifetime, in fact hailed from this imperial dynasty. Although the Akkadians were Semites from the House of Kish, we have seen that the Kishites had

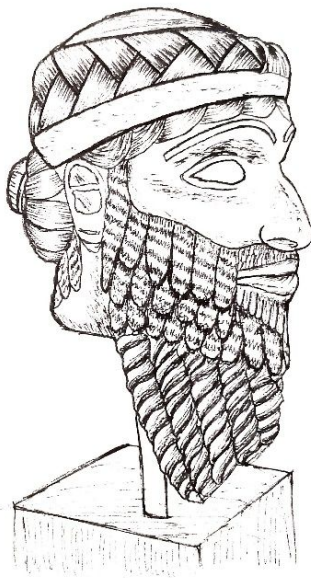


already closely been linked to the House of Uruk in the time of Gilgamesh, probably through marriage.

It is therefore hardly surprising to find that the exact same cultic practices, such as the sacred marriage through which the fallen gods were thought to have been reincarnated amongst the Urukites, were also in use amongst the Kishites and the Akkadians. As was the case with the Urukites, the glorious deeds of the Akkadians matched and lived up to their supposed divine descent.

### **SARGON'S BIRTH LEGEND**

The first great ruler of the Akkadian Empire and founder of the Akkadian imperial dynasty was Sargon the Great. His name was written as “Sarru kenu”, meaning “true, rightful king”.<sup>[462]</sup> A life-size bronze headpiece, believed to be an impression of him, was found at Nineveh. It shows him as a typical Semite with a bearded face which stands in stark contrast with the clean shaven faces of the Sumerian rulers.



*Figure 17. Bronze headpiece of Sargon or another Akkadian king found at Nineveh (National Museum of Iraq, Baghdad).*

A good point to kick off our discussion on Sargon would be the legend of his birth. Although the text to our disposal is, on literary grounds, dated later than c. 2039 BC,<sup>[463]</sup> we have good reason to believe the story was already known in Akkadian times. We find, for example, that the compiler of the *Sumerian King List* must have had knowledge of this story as he recorded some details of it in a note, namely the part telling that Sargon was raised by a “date grower”.<sup>[464]</sup>

The *Sargon birth legend* was written as an autobiography, with the king himself telling the story of his own birth: “Sargon, strong king, king of Agade [Akkad], am I. My mother was a high priestess, my father I do not know... My mother, a high priestess, conceived me, in secret she bore me. She placed me in a reed basket, with bitumen she caulked my hatch. She abandoned me to the river from which I could not escape. The river carried me along; to Aqqi, the water drawer, it brought me. Aqqi, the water drawer, when immersing his bucket lifted me up. Aqqi, the water drawer, raised me as his adopted son. Aqqi, the water drawer, set me to his garden work [that is, cultivation of the date palm]. During my garden work, Ishtar loved me (so that) 55 years I ruled as king.”<sup>[465]</sup>

According to this legend, Sargon’s mother was a high priestess. This means that she, and as a consequence Sargon as well, was of royal descent. As part of her duties the high priestess had to take part in the sacred marriage rituals, making it quite obvious and logical to assume that Sargon was born from such a ritual union. Under normal circumstances, this would mean that his father was a king. The question then begs why his mother would bear him “in secret” and then abandon him into the river.

One sensible explanation would be that there were conflicting claims to the throne, putting his life in danger. If a new king rose to the throne after Sargon’s mother fell pregnant with him, such a king might well have regarded a

male child born from the sacred marriage as a threat to his own claim. This would explain why Sargon was, in accordance with the meaning of his name, seen as the “rightful king”. The story makes perfect sense if a usurper king usurped the throne with Sargon having viewed himself as the rightful heir and the one to whom the throne rightfully belonged.

There is, however, a problem with this interpretation of events. According to the story, Sargon does not seem to have known who his father was, as we read: “... my father I do not know.” If he did not know who his father was, how on earth could he have known that he was the “rightful heir” to the throne? Although not knowing the identity of his father may imply that his mother fell pregnant by some unknown figure outside the sacred marriage ritual, there is another, more likely, explanation, an explanation more in keeping with the entire concept of the sacred marriage.

Sargon’s lack of knowledge about the identity of his “real” father indicates that he, in fact, was of divine descent. This is possibly how ancient readers also understood the text. This explains why another variant of the story reads: “A father I had not.”<sup>[466]</sup> The reason, then, why Sargon did not know his real father’s identity, was because he was not of human descent. He was, in other words, fathered by a god during a sacred marriage ritual. It follows that Sargon was not merely the true and rightful heir to the throne, he was also the divinely appointed heir as a result of his supernatural origin and descent.

### **THE RETURN OF DUMUZI**

There is, however, considerably more to this story than initially meets the eye. Although Sargon’s divine descent by way of the sacred marriage forms an important theme, its full significance can only be understood if the cultic background to the story is examined. The story is cast in terms of the Dumuzi cult with the Semitic goddess, Ishtar,

since the time of the Akkadian Period identified with the Sumerian Inana, playing an important role in it.

We find various distinct motifs belonging to this cult in the story. One of these is the “gardener”, a date grower. Not only was date farming closely associated with the Dumuzi cult, Dumuzi himself had been identified with the seed in the “great bud” of the date palm. The term, “gardener”, might also have referred to the high priest in charge of the cult. We find the word used as part of the sacred marriage ritual: “... (it is) an epithet apparently applied to kings or their substitutes in the ‘sacred marriage’ of the New Year’s ritual.”<sup>[467]</sup>

Sargon’s upbringing by a “gardener”, a high priest, implies that he must have belonged to the Dumuzi cult before he ascended to the throne and became king. As such, he was loved by Ishtar. The love between Sargon and Ishtar resulted in her raising him to become king. This is reminiscent of the love between Inana (Ishtar) and Dumuzi, who was also loved by the goddess and who also rose to the throne to become king.

Sargon is portrayed here as a new Dumuzi. This is also evident from the meaning of Sargon’s name, “true king”, corresponding with Dumuzi, “true son”. If Sargon was seen and recognised as the new Dumuzi, his divine birth should be understood in these terms, namely that he was Dumuzi who returned. He was the new Dumuzi, who returned after having been divinely conceived during the sacred marriage.

That Sargon was seen as Dumuzi who returned after a long absence, from the time of his death at the end of the Uruk Period, is confirmed by another theme in the story, namely that of a child abandoned into a river but drawn from it by a “gardener”, the high priest. This story about the child taken from the water, first told about Sargon, later became a central feature of the Dumuzi cult.

As far as we know, Dumuzi’s return was never celebrated in the cult before the Akkadian Period. Until that time the

basic feature of the Dumuzi myth was that he drowned in the river or that he was taken downstream to the underworld by boat.<sup>[468]</sup> Although the seasonal death and bewailing of Dumuzi was a recurring theme re-enacted in the cult each year, these cultic performances did not include his return from the dead as part of the very same story. Dumuzi only “returned” seasonally when the story of his death was told. Now, in the Akkadian Period, however, his return from the underworld became the climax of the new story. It seems as if the Akkadians first introduced this aspect into the cult as part of Sargon’s birth legend.

In the post-Akkadian Period, this version of the Dumuzi myth with the child (dumu) disappearing into the river but found and pulled from it, became very popular. He was searched for and grieved over but then welcomed back with great joy and jubilation.<sup>[469]</sup> The Sumerian kings of the Ur III Period, rising to the throne a few decades after the Akkadian Period, as well as those of the subsequent Isin Period, were also seen as incarnations of Dumuzi.

During their lives these kings were regarded as Dumuzi’s “ritual avatars” and after their deaths as incarnations of the god, Dumuzi.<sup>[470]</sup> This identification with Dumuzi after death must have been associated with the promise of future rebirth, in the same way Dumuzi returned in the cult myth. As these rulers copied and took over so many Akkadian motifs, we can accept that it happened in this instance too.

We will later see that the Dumuzi cult played a central role in the Akkadian theology. The close association between the Akkadians and the cult of Dumuzi continued to exist for ages. Two ziggurats for Dumuzi are, for instance, listed as having existed in Akkad.<sup>[471]</sup>

What we discover is that during the Akkadian Period, the return of Dumuzi was not only celebrated during the seasonal seeding or planting cycles but also as the actual incarnation of that god in the person of the Emperor. The sacred marriage ritual served not only as a productive

image of a fruitful harvest, it also made the reincarnation of the gods into their midst possible, the same as we have seen with the kings of the Uruk Period. In Sargon we find the first example of a well-known theme which became very popular in later times, namely that of the “once and future king”.

The reader will notice that Sargon’s birth story has certain elements in common with Gilgamesh’s story, both of whom were fathered by a god or daemon during a sacred marriage ritual. Gilgamesh’s life was also in danger after his birth and he was consequently sent away to the House of Kish for protection during or after Dumuzi’s reign. Sargon’s identification with Dumuzi can even be seen in the same terms as Gilgamesh, namely that of a new shoot growing from the old, cut down, tree.

The ancient Sumerians would not have missed the obvious similarities between the birth legend of Sargon and the birth legend of Gilgamesh. The truth is that these similarities, in fact, led them to associate these two figures with each other. Later stories about Gilgamesh, for example, incorporated and included many Sargonic themes (to be discussed in a later chapter). They, however, saw Sargon not only as a new Gilgamesh but also as the embodiment of the return of a new dynasty of glorious and divine rulers to the throne of Sumer and Akkad.

In the same way as the rise of Gilgamesh to the throne of Uruk was seen as the return of the old Urukite family tree of the descendants of the Nephilim, producing a new shoot, Sargon’s rule was seen as the restoration of yet another dynasty of divine descent to the throne of Sumer. And Dumuzi presented the perfect image for this, as the one who had returned. The return of Dumuzi presented a powerful image for the return of the offspring of the gods, or Nephilim, to the throne. Sargon, the new incarnation of Dumuzi, personified the return of such a descendant in order to rule over the land and its people.

### THE SARGON LEGEND

Another legend about Sargon, called the *Sargon legend*, exists. In this legend, Sargon is portrayed as the cupbearer of Ur-Zababa, king of Kish. According to the *Sumerian King List*, Ur-Zababa was the second ruler of the Fourth Dynasty of Kish.<sup>[472]</sup>

The story goes that Sargon saw in a dream how Inana drowned Ur-Zababa in a river of blood. The implication is that Sargon himself would then become king. As could be expected, the king was not at all happy when he heard about his cupbearer's dream and asked a smith by the name of Belis-tikal to kill Sargon in a certain house or temple, where he had to throw him into a mould like a statue. Inana, Sargon's protector-goddess, however, warned him not to enter the place but to meet the smith at the door. This saved his life, consequently escaping death.

When Ur-Zababa heard that Sargon was still alive, he devised another evil plan to get rid of him once and for all. He sent Sargon to another king, Lugal-zagesi of Uruk, with a sealed clay envelope containing a letter with instructions that Sargon had to be killed. Sargon found out about this sinister plan and managed to escape death yet again.<sup>[473]</sup>

In the same way as the *Sargon birth legend*, in which it is told that Sargon was saved after being placed in the river in a reed basket, became a well-known motif throughout the ancient world, this story of the usurper king sending the true heir to another king with a letter ordering his murder, became widespread and well-known. In the Greek tradition this story was, for instance, told about Bellerophon and in the Norse tradition about Hamlet.

In these later versions of the story, the hero was the rightful heir to the throne. This is also the picture we get from this story about Sargon. It indeed portrays him as the rightful king to whom Inana promised the throne once Ur-Zababa died. This is also consistent with what we have seen



in the discussion about the *Sargon birth legend*. It all comes down to Sargon having been the rightful heir to the throne of Kish and Ur-Zababa the usurper. As could be expected, Sargon eventually overthrew Ur-Zababa in order to become the king of Kish.

### **SARGON, KING OF AKKAD**

After becoming king of Kish, Sargon marched against Lugal-zagesi of Uruk, overlord of southern Mesopotamia, whose authority was recognised by the rulers of 50 city-states.<sup>[474]</sup> After gaining the victory Sargon took Lugal-zagesi's wife as his own.<sup>[475]</sup> She was possibly a member of an important Sumerian royal dynasty and taking her as wife would have allowed Sargon to legitimise his own rule over the land. He then went on to conquer the other cities of southern Sumer, afterwards cleaning his weapons ceremonially in the Persian Gulf.<sup>[476]</sup>

After his victory over the Sumerian city-states, Sargon founded Akkad, Agade in Sumerian, as his seat of power. According to the *Sumerian King List*, he built the city: "In Agade, Sarru(m)-kin—his... was a date-grower—cupbearer of Ur-Zababa, king of Agade, the one who built Agade, became king and reigned 56 years."<sup>[477]</sup> The name Akkad means "clan town" or "ancestral town".<sup>[478]</sup> The city was located near the Tigris River in the lower Diyala area of present-day Iraq. Although the city has never been discovered in modern times, some have proposed that it is buried under Tell Muhammad on the southern outskirts of Baghdad.<sup>[479]</sup>

An important feature of the city of Akkad was the temple Sargon built in honour of the goddess, Ishtar. Sargon's rule was attributed to her love for him and he worshipped her above all other gods and goddesses. We have seen this in both the *Sargon birth legend* and the *Sargon legend*, where she promised him the kingship in a dream. There are also other stories telling how she appeared to him in dreams promising him victory in his battles.<sup>[480]</sup>



Sargon was the “favoured of Irnina”,<sup>[481]</sup> Irnina being Ishtar in her form as victory, as Victoria. Sargon called himself “bailiff of the goddess Ishtar”<sup>[482]</sup> and Akkad was the land “the goddess rules and Sargon governs”.<sup>[483]</sup> Ishtar of Akkad had a distinct warlike character and except for Akkad, she also had temples in Babylon and possibly Nineveh.<sup>[484]</sup> She was “the mistress of battle who carries the bow and quiver”,<sup>[485]</sup> indicating that she was also seen as a huntress.

A beautiful description of the city can be found in the partly preserved *Curse of Agade*, dating from the end of the third millennium BC: “After Enlil... had slaughtered the house of the land of Uruk in the dust like a mighty bull, then, to Sargon, king of Agade, Enlil, from south to north, had given sovereignty and kingship—At that time, holy Inana built the sanctuary Agade as her grand woman’s domain. Set up her throne in Ulmas [her temple’s name]. Like a youngster building a house for the first time... The foreigners would cruise about like unusual birds in the sky... That monkeys, mighty elephants, water buffalo, exotic animals, would jostle each other in the public square... At that time, she filled Agade’s... with gold, she filled its shining... with silver. Delivered copper, tin, and blocks of lapis to its granaries. Its harbour, where ships docked, was full of excitement. All foreign lands rested contentedly. Their people experienced happiness.”<sup>[486]</sup>

### **SARGON, THE “CONQUERING HERO”**

Sargon was a great military leader and commander. After his victory over Sumer, he not only went on to conquer neighbouring lands but also more distant lands further to the east and west. His conquests took him on the same trade routes and routes securing mineral rich mining areas used by the Sumerians at the height of the Uruk Period hundreds of years earlier.

As early as the third year of his reign, Sargon marched westwards. Before embarking on the long journey, he visited the shrine of the god, Dagan,<sup>[487]</sup> in the city of Tattul, the present-day Hīt, about 90 miles west of Baghdad on the Euphrates River. There he asked for this god's blessing. Dagan was the weather god, worshipped by the Semitic peoples of the western regions. From here Sargon proceeded along the Euphrates, conquering the greatest cities of northwestern Mesopotamia and visiting the Cedar Mountains (the Amanus Mountains of western Syria) and the Silver Mountains (the Taurus Mountains of southern Turkey).

Sargon commemorated his victorious campaign with an inscription which we today know from two Old Babylonian copies of a Sammeltafel (a panel containing information) from Nippur: "Sargon, the king, bowed down to the god Dagan in Tittul. He [the god Dagan] gave to him [Sargon] the upper land: Mari, Jarmuti and Ebla as far as the Cedar Forest and the Silver Mountains."<sup>[488]</sup> Mari was an important western city halfway on the route to the Mediterranean Sea. The ruins of Ebla were discovered in the 1960s under Tell Mardikh in western Syria, near the Amanus Mountains. The location of Jarmuti, is, however, unclear but may refer to a city with the same name mentioned in the Amarna letters many years later. This city was located south of Byblos on the Mediterranean coast or in the Nile Delta.<sup>[489]</sup>

Sargon's conquest of these far western parts was remembered in the omen tradition. Omens were clay models with short inscriptions on them. These were models of animal intestines, such as livers, from animals sacrificed for purposes of divination. This practice was introduced by Sargon and these omens were used to compile *The Chronicles of the Early Kings*.<sup>[490]</sup>

We read: "He [Sargon] crossed the sea of the West [i.e. the Mediterranean Sea] and in the 3rd year his hand conquered the land of the west to its full extent, he made its mouth to be one [i.e. he made it obedient to him]; he

erected his stelae in the west; their booty he brought over [the sea] in rafts.”<sup>[491]</sup> According to this tradition, Sargon even sailed across the Mediterranean Sea.

Sargon’s conquests of these faraway regions to the west were recounted in the Akkadian heroic tales. In *Sargon, the Conquering Hero*, it is told how he conquered the “land of Uta-rapastim” and other far-off regions to the west and to the north. According to *Sargon in Foreign Lands*, his army crossed the Amanus Mountains, reaching the Cedar Forest.<sup>[492]</sup>

Another popular story is told in the *King of Battle* epic. In this tale the merchants of the Anatolian city of Purushanda, near present-day Aksaray in central Turkey, asked Sargon to protect them against the king of the city, Nur-Dagal. Sargon once again led his army into battle and conquered the city. He is described as the “King of Battle”, an epithet belonging to the god, Ningirsu/Ninurta.<sup>[493]</sup> Sargon and his 55 deputies sat triumphantly on golden thrones in front of the city gates where Nur-Dagal submitted to him. It is written that Sargon was “seated like a god”. In this legend, his title, “king of Kish”, is reinterpreted by way of a play-on-words to mean “King of the Universe”. He was “the lord of thrones, from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun”.

The *Old Assyrian Sargon legend*, discovered at Kültepe in Anatolia, tells a similar story. This legend describes how Sargon liberated the people of Kanis (Kültepe) from the oppression of the Hatti, the early Hittites: “I released (the people of) Kanis of their... As to (the people of) Hatti, I had their heads shaven in the middle.”<sup>[494]</sup> The city of Kanis was situated on the Konya Plain in present-day Turkey, on the route to the great silver mines of Bulgar and Bereketi-Madero.<sup>[495]</sup> The name “Silver Mountains” might even have pertained to these regions as they were located beyond Purushanda according to one Akkadian legend.<sup>[496]</sup>

Strikingly, this legend puts emphasis on the role of Sargon’s warriors. We read how 7000 heroes had eaten rib

steak with him every day.<sup>[497]</sup> It is possible that they sat around the table referred to in the Hittite version of the *King of Battle* epic. In this epic Sargon expresses a wish to make such a banquet table for his heroes from a massive tree to be cut down on his way back from Purushanda.<sup>[498]</sup> This image reminds of King Arthur and his round table in later tradition. The role of Sargon's warrior-heroes is also referred to in other heroic tales, like *Sargon in Foreign Lands*. On one of the omens we read the following: "... omen of Sargon, who with his warriors was the ruler of the world."<sup>[499]</sup>

Such traditions about Sargon's victories in Anatolia were also handed down among the Hittites. In the so-called *Testament of Hattusili I*, dating from around 1700 BC, King Hattusili I (Tabarna) says that only one king before him succeeded in crossing the Mala River (*Purattu* in Akkadian) and conquering the city of Hahha. And this king was of course Sargon. The only difference between them was that Sargon did not burn the city to the ground like Hattusili I did.<sup>[500]</sup>

According to tradition, Sargon exercised control over the "Tin Land" (Anaku), Cyprus (Alysia) and even Crete (Kaptara).<sup>[501]</sup> The Tin Land in all probability refers to the tin mines which had already been mined during that period at Göltepe,<sup>[502]</sup> north of Tarsus in the Taurus Mountains or even to that entire region, in later times called Cilicia. Sargon's rule over Cyprus is mentioned in *The Old Assyrian Sargon legend* where we read: "I covered the heads (of the people of) Alysia [Cyprus]."<sup>[503]</sup>

### **SARGON'S RULE OVER THE EASTERN FRONTIERS**

Sargon did not only conquer territories to the west, he also conquered distant lands to the east of Sumer. In the eleventh year of his reign he crossed the Persian Gulf and conquered Dilmun, the present-day island state of Bahrain, as well as areas which might have included the copper mining areas of present-day Oman. In an inscription taken

up in two Old Babylonian copies of a Sammeltafel from Nippur, he records that boats from Dilmun, Makkan (Magan in Sumerian) and Meluhha brought their goods to the city of Akkad: “Sargon, king of the world, was victorious in 34 battles. He destroyed their city walls as far as the shore of the sea. He moored ships of Meluhha, Magan and Dilmun at the quay of Agade.”<sup>[504]</sup>

Meluhha refers to the pre-Vedic Harappan civilisation that flourished in the great Indus Valley, in parts of modern-day India and Pakistan,<sup>[505]</sup> matching the Sanskrit name, “Mleccha”. Meluhha had already been mentioned in Sumerian texts in pre-Akkadian times. Frequent contact between Akkad and the Indus Valley civilisation existed during the time of the Akkadian Empire. This can be seen from references made to people of that area in Mesopotamian texts as well as archaeological evidence of their presence in each other’s lands.<sup>[506]</sup> A seal cylinder from that time, for instance, belonged to one Su-ilisu, an “interpreter of the Meluhha language”.<sup>[507]</sup> One text mentions a certain *viaticum* on a boat from Meluhha, referring to some kind of escort accompanying the crew on their long journeys.

After the Akkadian conquest, the merchants of Dilmun facilitated the trade between Dilmun and Akkad as well as the trade with regions on the route to Meluhha. The scholar, Gregory Possehl, who studied this period extensively, writes: “In the ancient texts there is talk of Dilmun merchants and, as noted, many references to this place as a commercial centre. One gets a distinct sense that Dilmun was the operational ‘nerve-centre’ for this early Gulf and Arabian Sea Trade.”<sup>[508]</sup>

There was, in fact, a lot of cross-cultural interaction that played a crucial role in the formation and development of the Indus Valley civilisation itself: “In the last half of the third millennium the cultures of Middle Asia, the region between the Euphrates and the Indus and Central Asia and

the Gulf, were participants in a new, unprecedented form of inter-regional economic interaction. The iconography of the so-called Intercultural Style in this same region suggests that a broader set of cultural beliefs and values were part of the new economic configuration... It is clear that the interaction between Mesopotamia and Meluhha may have had an important impact on culture processes in ancient India.”<sup>[509]</sup>

Then, there is Makkan. What do we know about Makkan? Some Sumerologists are of the opinion that Makkan refers to Oman, located on the east and south coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Others, like the late Thorkild Jacobsen, are of the opinion that Makkan in fact refers to Egypt.<sup>[510]</sup> Makkan was primarily known for its copper and was called “the country of mines”,<sup>[511]</sup> which could either have been the copper mines of Oman or those of the Sinai.

Interestingly enough, the Assyrian king, Takulti-Ninurta I, referred to Egypt as Makkan during the 13th century BC.<sup>[512]</sup> The question remains whether this was also the case during the Akkadian Period.

The name, Makkan, was introduced and for the very first time mentioned by Sargon.<sup>[513]</sup> This is quite significant given the fact that the Sumerians got their copper from the mining areas of the present-day Oman ever since the time they first began to use this metal for various purposes. It would, therefore, indeed be quite strange and peculiar if Oman was for the first time mentioned (and the name for the first time used to refer to the land known today as Oman) during the later Akkadian Period.

We find, interestingly enough, that Makkan was only mentioned and referred to by the two most prominent and important Akkadian rulers (although it was again spoken of later during the Ur III Period). Meluhha, on the other hand, was already mentioned in the earlier Sumerian period. Makkan was also not spoken of as often and as frequently as Meluhha was,<sup>[514]</sup> another fact indicating that Makkan was

further away and that the journey there was much longer and much less undertaken. This longer and much more arduous journey was obviously only undertaken during those periods when the Akkadian Empire was at its peak and reached its greatest extent.<sup>[515]</sup> (Map 2 shows and indicates the areas mentioned in Akkadian inscriptions and legends.) If the city of Jarmuti, subjected by Sargon, does, in fact, refer to a city of that name in the Nile Delta, a possibility mentioned earlier, it certainly follows that Makkan would refer to Egypt, and more specifically the Sinai Peninsula.<sup>[516]</sup> We have already seen that Egypt was strongly influenced by the Sumerians towards the end of the Uruk Period and it could very well have happened again during the Akkadian Period.

### **SARGON, KING OF THE WORLD**

Sargon was remembered and memorialised as the one who conquered the far reaches and ends of the known world and the one who ruled over it all. His universal and extensive rule is described in various texts. In the *Sargon Geography*, we read that he was the “King of the Universe”, who ruled over the known regions of both the Upper and Lower Seas: “Anaku [Tin Land] and Kaptara [Crete], lands across the Upper Sea, Dilmun [Bahrain] and Magan [Egypt?], the lands of the Lower Sea, and the lands from sunrise to sunset, the sum total of all the lands which Sargon, the King of the Universe, conquered in totality.”<sup>[517]</sup>

Sargon’s birth legend ends with a synopsis of his great deeds and accomplishments. Here we read: “I did ascend all the high mountains, I did traverse all the foothills, the entire sealands, I did sail around, Dilmun did submit to me... The Great Wall of Heaven and Earth I did ascend.” The statement about the “Great Wall of Heaven and Earth” refers to the cosmic ends of the world, conquered by Sargon.<sup>[518]</sup>



The greatness of Sargon's deeds was seen as a reflection of his own greatness, his own divinity. In the sources available to us, he is described as one in whom the divine glory was embodied.<sup>[519]</sup> One story, in which Sargon is beautifully described as such a superhuman figure, is *Sargon, the Lion*. The description of Sargon as a lion might have had its origin in him wearing a lion skin. In this story he is portrayed as a great messianic priest-king who towered head and shoulders above all other priests and kings and who ultimately radiated the divine glory, similar to Gilgamesh many centuries earlier. He is described as "a raging lion" with a frightening roar: "Among all *en*-priests of the world, you fulfilled the priesthood indeed, verily you are (?) Among all kings of the world, you fulfilled the kingship, indeed, verily (you are) ... Was it not because of his frightening radiance, and his bellowing roar that no one dared approach him? I, Sargon, am your raging lion. No one will approach my sanctuary (?). When there is combat, invoke my name!"<sup>[520]</sup>

The description of Sargon radiating the divine glory, which also appears in the *Chronicle of the Early Kings* as well as the omen collection,<sup>[521]</sup> is consistent with his identification with the warrior god, Ningirsu, where and as he is shown on a victory stele standing before Ishtar on her throne, holding a net with his captured enemies in it. This stele, on display in the Louvre Museum in Paris, is called Sargon's Victory Stele by some. The portrayal of Sargon holding a net, was adopted and taken over from an earlier Early Dynastic stele erected by King Eanatum (fl. c. 2500 BC), showing Ningirsu holding a net with the king's enemies in it.

Sargon, intriguingly enough, does not only hold the net, he is even portrayed in the same posture as the god! This led the scholar, Lorenzo Nigro, to write the following: "Sargon presents himself in the classic position of a city-god."<sup>[522]</sup> Sargon's divinity, as a new embodiment of the god,



Ningirsu, explains why he is described as displaying the frightening “radiance” of the gods.

The portrayal on this victory stele is consistent with the heroic tradition, where Sargon is identified with Ningirsu, for example, in the *King of Battle* epic. Sargon’s representation as a roaring lion, exhibiting a terrible radiance, is also in keeping with the association of Ningirsu/Ninurta with both the lion and the lion-headed Anzu. Sargon encapsulated the divine glory manifested in this bird when it roared. Sargon can be compared with Gilgamesh, who was also described as radiating the divine glory and who was also associated with Ninurta.

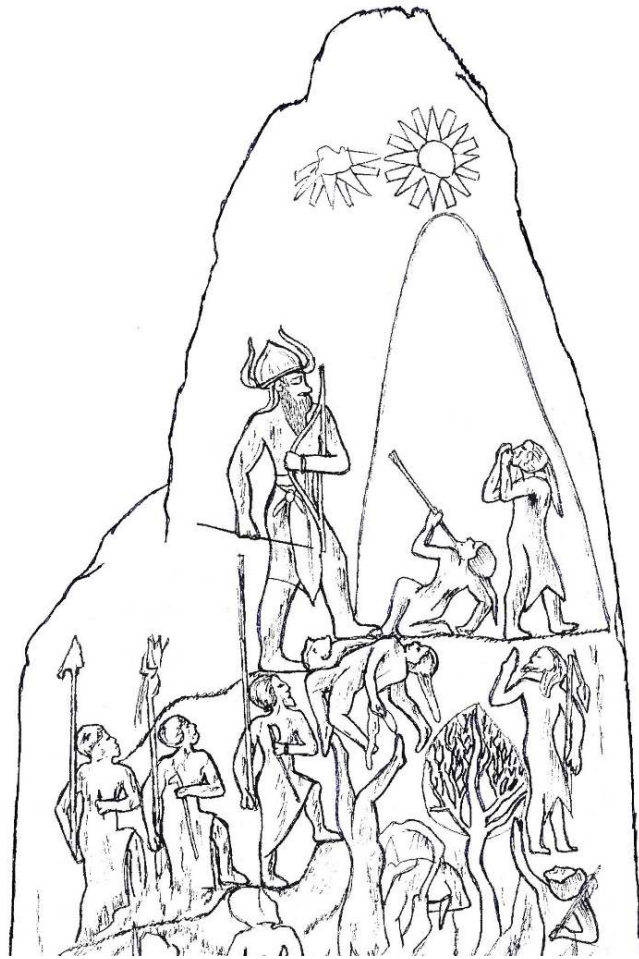
As a new Ningirsu, Sargon personified the return of another messianic figure. He was not only the new Dumuzi who returned, he was also a great and mighty warrior who conquered the entire world. As such, Sargon became the model of the reincarnated king (as a new Dumuzi), in whom Ningirsu, the great warrior god, became manifested. Later kings, like those of the Ur III Period, were also identified with Dumuzi, especially after their deaths, and also with Ninurta.

In Sargon, the divine majesty of the messianic child was realised in an exceptionally powerful way. What made Sargon unique and special was the fact that he was the very first person to have become “King of the World”. In Sargon, the messianic ideal evolved to a whole new level, namely that of the priest-king who rules the entire world. In time, this manifestation became the new criterion for a royal messiah, one who rules the world.

## **12. NARAM-SIN: GOD OF AKKAD**

This brings us to an even greater and more magnificent ruler than Sargon, the Akkadian Emperor, Naram-Sin, the first ruler in ancient Mesopotamia to have been worshipped as a god, among the other great gods, in his own lifetime. The greatness of this god-man is visible in his rule over the four corners of the known world. In my opinion, he was the greatest ruler the ancient world had seen in all the ages leading up to the Roman Empire. [\[523\]](#)

We came across this extraordinary god-king for the first time during a visit to the Louvre Museum in Paris in 1998. This museum houses the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin, which commemorates his victory over the Lulubi people of the Zagros Mountains in the northwestern regions of present-day Iran.



*Figure 18. Victory of Naram-Sin over the Lulubi as shown on the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin (Louvre Museum, Paris).*

This stele simply captivates the imagination and must be one of the most magnificent works of art the ancient world had ever produced. On this stele Naram-Sin is shown as a powerful, omnipotent ruler, wearing a helmet with horns, signifying his divine nature and godhood. No other Mesopotamian king was ever portrayed as a god in this way. He stands in front of a mountain, more or less in the form of a pyramid, representing the Zagros Mountains, with his conquered enemies from these mountains under his feet. When looking at this stele, one does not only see the image of a conquering king, but, in some strange way, one

becomes acutely aware of the greatness and glory of this great and outstanding god-man. This magnificent piece provides us with a powerful entry point into the world of the great god-king, Naram-Sin, who lived, reigned and ruled over four thousand years ago.

Naram-Sin was not only a mighty and powerful king without equal, who ruled over the furthest corners of the then known world, his mighty deeds, like those of Sargon, also gave rise to great legends and myths told and conveyed all over the world for millennia to come. The saga tradition of this great Emperor is reflected in the Naram-Sin epics or the *Gestae Naram-Sinaeorum*. Events of his time provided the origins and raw material for many of the distinct and unique features of the secret and hidden tradition of later ages.

With Naram-Sin, these stories did not only relate to the world of mortal men but also involved the world of the gods. And Naram-Sin was not just another god; he became known as the great adversary and opponent of Enlil, king of the gods. He influenced and shaped the history of religion to a greater extent than anybody else in the pre-Christian world. With him, our story about the apparent descendants of the gods comes to a powerful and impressive climax.

### **NARAM-SIN'S VICTORY IN THE GREAT REVOLT AGAINST HIS RULE**

Naram-Sin was the fourth Akkadian ruler and the third after Sargon. Sargon was succeeded by his sons, Manishtushu and Rimus, who was assassinated by his courtiers.<sup>[524]</sup> They might have been twins and ruled for fifteen and nine years, respectively. According to the *Sumerian King List*, Naram-Sin was the son of Manishtushu but a tradition that he was the son of Sargon himself also exists. If he was in fact Sargon's son, he might have been the son of a widowed mother, born after the death of the great Sargon.<sup>[525]</sup> His name means "beloved of Sin" and like

Sargon he worshipped the goddess, Ishtar, above all other gods.

Shortly after Naram-Sin's rise to the throne of Akkad, the "entire world" rose up in revolt against him. He was still a young man and the rebels might have sensed an opportunity to regain their freedom and independence from the rule of the Akkadian Emperors.<sup>[526]</sup> The insurgents formed a broad coalition which included many local Sumerian rulers as well as rulers from faraway areas. The insurgency enjoyed the support of the priests of Enlil in Nippur.

These events ultimately defined Naram-Sin's kingship. Against all odds, he gained a mighty victory and through this victory he established himself as the greatest god-king the ancient Mesopotamian world had ever seen. In reaction to Enlil's support for the insurgent rebels, he consequently and at the expense of Enlil, went on to support Enki.<sup>[527]</sup> In later tradition he was commemorated as the enemy of Enlil. In the end, Nippur's support for the insurgents seriously eroded and undermined the worship of Enlil.

Recounting those events, Naram-Sin left behind various inscriptions about the revolt. They help and enable us to reconstruct the sequence and flow of events. The initial coalition of rebel forces included many Sumerian city-states like Nippur, Uruk, Ur, Lagas, Umma and Adab as well as the Amorites of northwestern Mesopotamia. They collaborated and acted under the leadership and direction of the city of Apisal, near present-day Aleppo in northern Syria.<sup>[528]</sup> Naram-Sin's campaign against the insurrectionists brought him to these regions where he was triumphant and victorious in various battles against his enemies.

On an inscription, copied and preserved on two Old Babylonian tablets, Naram-Sin recorded that he reached the city of Talhadum in Cilicia. This probably happened during this campaign and Talhadum probably refers to Tell Duluk, north of present-day Gaziantep in Turkey, near the

Mediterranean coast.<sup>[529]</sup> According to this inscription, no other Mesopotamian ruler before him had ever reached this city. Sargon seems to have taken another route through these northwestern parts. When Naram-Sin reached Talhadum, the governors of the “Upper Lands” and regions of the distant north, called Subartum, brought their offerings before him.<sup>[530]</sup>

Naram-Sin also conquered Makkan during the period of this revolt. In another of his inscriptions, copied and preserved on two Old Babylonian tablets from Nippur, he wrote: “(When) all the four quarters together revolted against him and confronted him... Further, he crossed the sea and conquered Magan, in the midst of the sea,<sup>[531]</sup> and washed his weapons in the Lower Sea.”<sup>[532]</sup> We find more or less the same outline of events later in the *Chronicle of the Early Kings*, according to which Naram-Sin’s conquest of Makkan followed directly after his victory over Res-Adad, the king of Apisal in northwestern Mesopotamia.<sup>[533]</sup> He also captured Manium, the king of Makkan, and quarried diorite in the mountains of Makkan for a statue of himself, which he dedicated to the god, Dagan.<sup>[534]</sup>

I have discussed Makkan earlier against the backdrop of the rule and reign of Sargon and proposed that Makkan refers to Egypt. This would imply that Naram-Sin, after his victory over the northern rebels, proceeded to conquer Egypt, whereafter he sailed via the Red Sea, around the Arabian Peninsula to the Persian Gulf, where he “(ceremonially) washed his weapons” before returning to Akkad. This reconstruction of events is in line with the order of events as described in Naram-Sin’s own inscription mentioned above and in the *Chronicle of the Early Kings*.

Although Naram-Sin’s inscription does not provide much detail about the location of Makkan, another inscription, probably also one of his, refers to this land as one of the northern lands conquered by him. We read the following: “Mahazum, Puš... Ebla, Mari, Tuttul... Urkiš, Mukiš...

Abarnum and the land where the cedars are cut down, along with their provinces. The land of Subartum on the shores of the (Up)per Se(a), and Magan [Makkan], along with (its) province(s)... the other side of the se(a)."<sup>[535]</sup> These were all lands located in the northwestern parts of Mesopotamia, suggesting that Makkan was also reached via this route. This text tells that Makkan was a great land with various provinces, located "on the other side" of the Upper Sea, matching the actual geographical location of Egypt, which was reached by sailing from the northern Syrian coast across the Mediterranean Sea to the Nile Delta. This description can surely be taken as confirmation that Makkan refers to and indeed was Egypt.<sup>[536]</sup>

After these victories and in the ninth year of Naram-Sin's reign, the uprising entered another phase. The Sumerian city-states and groups from the northwest as well as the Persian Gulf were now involved. Among the important leaders of this revolt counted Iphur-Kish of Kish, leader of the northern city-states, Amar-girid of Uruk, leader of the southern city-states, and Lugal-anne of Ur. Naram-Sin was victorious in nine battles against his enemies during that year. Naram-Sin was especially disappointed in the Kishites and their participation in the rebellion against him. They were regarded as "of brotherhood" and he consequently destroyed their city as punishment.

One of Naram-Sin's (partly damaged) inscriptions about those events, copied and preserved on two Old Babylonian tablets from Nippur, reads as follows:

"Naram-Sin, the mighty, king of the four quarters. In Kish they elevated Isphur-Kish to kingship and in Uruk they elevated Amar-Girid likewise to kingship. Iphur-Kish, king of Kish, went to war and rallied the cities of Kish, Kutha, Tiwa, Sippur, Kazallu, Kiritab, Apiak... (and) Amorite highlanders. In between the cities of Tiwa and Uruk, in the field of the god Sin, he drew up (battle lines) and awaited battle... Naram-Sin, the mighty... his young men (there) and he held



Agade... By the verdict of the goddess Astar-Annunitum, Naram-Sin, the mighty, was victorious over the Kishite in battle at Tiwa... he filled the Euphrates River with their bodies, conquered the city of Kish and destroyed its wall...

"[Amar-Girid], king of Uruk, went to war and rallied the cities of Uruk, Ur, Lagas, Umma, Adab, Surrupak, Isin, and Nippur and (settlements) from (the province of) the Lower Sea. In between the cities of URUXUD [name uncertain] and Asnak he drew up battle lines and awaited battle. Naram-Sin, the mighty, heard about him and hastened to his side from Kish. The two of them engaged in battle and grappled with each other. By the verdict of the goddess Astar-Annunitum..."<sup>[537]</sup>

### **NARAM-SIN ACKNOWLEDGED AS A GOD**

Naram-Sin was by now the undisputed ruler of the four corners of the ancient world (and everything in between) and received the title, "King of the Four Corners of the Universe". In ancient Mesopotamia, this title referred to his rule over Amurru (the west), Elam (the east), Subartum (the north) and Sumer (the south).<sup>[538]</sup> Naram-Sin was also afforded the title "The Mighty/Strong".<sup>[539]</sup>

Naram-Sin was now declared to be a god. Although other Sumerian kings were viewed as godly and divine after their deaths, Naram-Sin was the very first to have been officially worshipped as a god during his own lifetime. A temple was built for the god, Naram-Sin, in the capital city, Akkad, with its own priestly cast set aside for his worship. An extraordinary inscription found at Bassetki, between Mosul and Dohuk in the Kurdistan region of modern-day Iraq and on display in the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad, tells how the people of Akkad petitioned the other Sumerian gods to acknowledge the divinity of Naram-Sin:

"Naram-Sin, the mighty, king of Agade, when the four quarters together revolted against him, through the love



which the goddess Ishtar showed him, he was victorious in nine battles in one year, and the kings whom they had raised (against him), he captured. In view of the fact that he protected the foundations of his city from danger, (the citizens of) his city requested from Ishtar in Eanna, Enlil in Nippur, Dagan in Tuttul, Ninhursag in Kesh, Ea [Enki] in Eridu, Sin in Ur, Samas [Utu] in Sippar, (and) Nergal in Kutha, that (Naram-Sin) be (made) the god of their city, and they built within Agade a temple (dedicated) to him.”<sup>[540]</sup>

The Sumerologist, Steve Tinney, emphasises the fact that Naram-Sin was now accepted as a god amongst the great gods of Sumer and Akkad:

“The litany of implied support legitimises on a divine level the events realized on a mortal plane by the building of Naram-Sin’s temple. The gods, we can only infer, welcome Naram-Sin into their ranks as one of their own... As is clear from the foregoing, Naram-Sin in his own image is less a passive appointee of than a peer among the gods whose citizens raised him not to kingship but to godhood.”<sup>[541]</sup>

After the recognition of his godhood and divinity, Naram-Sin was called the “god of Akkad” in his inscriptions.<sup>[542]</sup> Other members of his family, such as his son, Shar-kali-sarri, were also worshipped as god-men.<sup>[543]</sup>

A fact we should not overlook is that in this petition to the gods, the goddess, Ishtar, is mentioned first, even before Enlil, the great king of the gods. Naram-Sin obviously continued in the footsteps of Sargon in worshipping her above all the other gods. In one of his first ever inscriptions, Naram-Sin already called himself “spouse of the goddess Astar-Annunitum”, which might refer to his role in the sacred marriage ceremonies.<sup>[544]</sup> The epithet, Annunitum, means “the skirmisher”.<sup>[545]</sup> He took her emblem with him on his military campaigns and she accompanied him as Irnina or Victoria.

## MORE GREAT VICTORIES

Naram-Sin's military campaigns took him to faraway regions to the west, north and east. In the west, he conquered the great cities of Armanum, probably the present-day Aleppo,<sup>[546]</sup> and Ebla (Tell Mardikh) and established his rule over the Amanus Mountains and the Upper Sea (the Mediterranean Sea). In the Amanus, he had cedars cut for a temple dedicated to the goddess, Ishtar. In an inscription he described this conquest as one of his greatest victories, with no other king ever having accomplished this. Although Sargon also mentioned a victory over Ebla,<sup>[547]</sup> he probably only subjected the city without having destroyed it. After these victories Naram-Sin took the title "Smiter of Armanum and Ebla".<sup>[548]</sup> He ordered the erection of a diorite statue of himself with his victory inscribed on it. An Old Babylonian tablet copy of this inscription remains:

"Whereas, for all time since the creation of mankind, no king whosoever had destroyed Armanum and Ebla, the god Nergal, by means of (his) weapons opened the way for Naram-Sin, the mighty, and gave him Armanum and Ebla. Further, he gave to him the Amanus, the Cedar Mountain, and the Upper Sea... he totally (conquered) the Amanus, the Cedar Mountain. When the god Dagan determined the verdict (for) Naram-Sin, the mighty, delivered into his hands, Rid-Adad, king of Armanum, and... (when) he (Naram-Sin) personally captured him in the midst of his (palace) entryway, he (Naram-Sin) fashioned a statue of himself (made) of diorite and dedicated (it) to the god Sin."<sup>[549]</sup>

In the north, another Naram-Sin inscription had been found at Pir Huseyn, near present-day Diyarbakir, southwest of Van Gölü (Lake Van) in the southeast of Turkey. Pir Huseyn is located near the Ergani mining area, high up in the Taurus Mountains.<sup>[550]</sup> Securing control of these faraway mining

areas would certainly have been of the utmost importance to the Akkadian rulers. Naram-Sin also mentioned that he had reached the source of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers at Hazar Gölü (Lake Hazar) in eastern Turkey,<sup>[551]</sup> west of Lake Van. He was subsequently and accordingly called “Guardian of the Sources of the Tigris and Euphrates”.<sup>[552]</sup>

Also in the north, Naram-Sin won a great victory at Azuhinnum over the Hurrian ruler, Tahis-atali.<sup>[553]</sup> Some scholars have postulated a “massive migration of Hurrian speaking peoples” to the northern parts of Mesopotamia during this time.<sup>[554]</sup> They were found in communities all over northern Mesopotamia. Naram-Sin might have erected the massive fort at Naqar, modern-day Tell Brak, in northern Syria in order to have secured the north against these people. This immense fort covered 10 000 square metres and its walls were 10 metres thick! Strikingly, the builders impressed Naram-Sin’s name on the clay bricks used to build this enormous structure.<sup>[555]</sup> During this period and before the domestication of horses, equids or onager-donkey hybrids, were bred for purposes of pulling four-wheeled war chariots.<sup>[556]</sup> They also carried people and goods on the long journey to the Mediterranean coast.

Naram-Sin forged an alliance with one of these Hurrian rulers, Tupkish. Tupkish was allowed to build a palace for himself in Urkesh (Tell Morzan), a city located about 50 kilometres north of Naram-Sin’s massive fort at Tell Brak in northern Syria. Tupkish was married to Uqnitum, possibly an Akkadian princess. Seal impressions which belonged to Naram-Sin’s daughter, Tar’am-Agade, an unknown king of Urkesh as well as an Akkadian high official, were discovered in the ruins of the palace.<sup>[557]</sup> This discovery strongly suggests that Tupkish must have been closely connected to Naram-Sin through marriage. The excavators have proposed that Tar’am-Agade was the wife of the reigning king of Urkesh in the generation after Tupkish, alternatively that she was the queen’s mother.<sup>[558]</sup> An administrative document

from Tell Brak shows that Hurrian soldiers from Urkesh served there in the garrison.<sup>[559]</sup>

## **THE LULUBI**

In the northeast, Naram-Sin conquered the mountains where the Lulubi lived. His victory stele commemorating this event was discovered at Susa in the southeast of modern-day Iran, near that country's western border with Iraq. I have already referred to this conquest at the beginning of this chapter, with the inscription on the stele reading as follows: "Sidar-X and the highlanders of Lulubum assembled together... (I) heaped up a burial mound over them."<sup>[560]</sup> This depiction is similar to one high up on the surface of the rock cliffs of Darband-i-Gawr, south of Sulaimaniyyah in northeastern Iraq. During this campaign, Naram-Sin also conquered Simurru, located at the entrance to other Hurrian areas in the north.<sup>[561]</sup>

One of the great Lulubi kings mentioned in the Naram-Sin legends and traditions is Anubanini. In some legends, he is portrayed as the leader of Naram-Sin's enemies.<sup>[562]</sup> At Sarī-Pūl in the Zahab district of western Iran an inscription by him, commonly known as the Anubanini petroglyph, can be found.<sup>[563]</sup>

We visited this area days after the outbreak of the Second Gulf War in 2003. Our journey took us from the southern plains of Iran to Kermanshah, high on the Iranian plateau in the west of the country, along one of the most important access routes on which ancient armies marched from the southern plains of Mesopotamia to the Persian highlands and the Zagros Mountains. From Kermanshah we travelled westwards to the Iran-Iraq border area where Anubanini's inscription is located. Due to the circumstances and a war breaking out on the other side of the nearing border, we encountered several roadblocks on the way down the mountain passes towards Sarī-Pūl.

The atmosphere was tense, with many four-by-four press vehicles on their way to the war zone, jostling for a position at yet another roadblock near Sarī-Pūl, only a few kilometres from the border. It seemed that we ran out of luck as the officials on duty didn't want to let us through and ordered us to turn back and return from where we came. After long discussions and repeated checking of passports and vehicle documents, our excellent guide and driver, Reza Hadjizogloo, however, managed to eventually persuade and convince the officials to let us through in order to allow us to visit Sarī-Pūl and to view Anubanini's ancient rock relief we had come so far to see.



*Figure 19. The Anubanini rock relief in Sarī-Pūl, present-day Iran.*

After stopping several times to ask locals where the relief was, we felt very lucky when we eventually found this ancient treasure, depicting Anubanini, high on the rockface of a small cliff in the back of a school yard! Although worn and weathered due to exposure to the elements through the ages, it is still possible to distinguish Anubanini as a great victor, standing with one foot on one of his fallen enemies and the goddess, Ishtar, ceremonially handing over the rod and ring of kingship to him. More than a thousand years later, the engravers of Darius the Great used elements from this depiction for his own inscriptions on the Behistun cliffs on the Iranian plateau, not far from Kermanshah. [\[564\]](#)

We can now continue to take a look at and examine the legends and myths that arose from and evolved around the person of Naram-Sin. These legends and myths tell how the court poets and bards saw and revered him after all his great feats and victories. His unequalled power and glory are dramatically recounted and displayed.

## 13. HEROIC TALES OF A GOD-KING

Naram-Sin's great and heroic deeds did not only capture the imagination of his contemporaries but also that of future generations. His great achievements inspired the poets of his time to compose ballads about those events. We even find an instance where a school teacher tasked his students with the writing of compositions about him!

A fragment dating from the time of Naram-Sin, discovered at Eshnunna, located in the same region as Akkad, mentions the names of some of his opponents during the Great Revolt. The scholar, Joan Westenholz, writes the following about this piece:

"This fragment of a student's poor exercise is the only extant proof that literary works were composed on the theme of contemporary historical events. The triumph of Naram-Sin over the rebellious city-states was probably celebrated in pomp and circumstance... In the city of Eshnunna... a teacher made this subject the topic of an assignment of a written composition for a student."<sup>[565]</sup>

Bards included and set the stories about Naram-Sin to music in their songs, which were already composed and sung during his own lifetime. These songs must also have been very popular amongst those who came after him at the Akkadian and other courts. Various compositions about the events that happened during Naram-Sin's lifetime were discovered. Most of these ballads focus on the revolt. The great battles are often integrated into one cataclysmic war in which he was the victor, a mighty and powerful victor in whom the divine glory became manifested. Naram-Sin's glorious and divine radiance is described in more vivid and impressive terms than in any other description of any other Mesopotamian hero.

Nobody else had such a great influence on the speculative thought of later periods in Mesopotamia than Naram-Sin. For our later discussion, when all the threads of our story will be brought together into one coherent whole, it is now important and necessary to explore and look more carefully into the speculative theology surrounding Naram-Sin.

### **NARAM-SIN AS A DIVINE HERO**

One of the heroic tales of special significance to our story is called *Naram-Sin and the Lord of Apisal*. Although the tale focuses on the first part of the revolt, Naram-Sin is already described as “God of the Land”. Like Sargon before him, he is portrayed as a raging lion. And again, like Sargon, this indicates that he wore a lion skin on his military campaigns.

We read: “Naram-Sin proceeds on his way. The God-of-the-land – they go with him. To the fore Ilaba, the pathfinder, to the rear Zababa, the sharp-horned. The emblems of Annunitum and Si-labba, two by two, right and left, horn by horn... Your radiance is fire, your voice is the thunderstorm. You are a raging lion. Your mouth is a venomous viper, your nails are (those of) the Anzu. Irnina walks beside you. You have no equal. Who is like you?”<sup>[566]</sup>

In this story, we find a description of four gods, marching with their insignia to Naram-Sin's left and to his right as well as in front of and behind him. These four gods symbolised not only his rule over the four corners of the world but they also embodied the genii or spirits associated with a god. In contrast, humans were typically associated with only two such genii, one to their left and one to their right. As a great god, Naram-Sin radiated the divine glory: “... your radiance is fire.” He indeed embodied and personified the powerful Anzu bird.

The identification of certain heroes with this powerful lion-headed bird was a familiar theme in ancient Sumer. I



have earlier attributed this view to an ancient shamanistic warrior cult who believed this spirit became incarnated in certain great heroes. I have interpreted the story of Lugalbanda's visit to the bird's nest in these terms, as an initiation into the secret Order of the Thunderbird. The ancient Sumerians, however, did not only think in terms of the shamanistic rebirth of individuals but in terms of a divine bloodline into which messianic figures, incarnations of Ningirsu (Ninurta), were born. The image of Naram-Sin as an Anzu bird portrays him as exactly such a messiah. As a descendant of the House of Kish, this image fits in well with their ancient associations with the Anzu cult.

Intriguingly enough, Naram-Sin is not entirely depicted as the customary Anzu bird. He is described as a combination between the Anzu bird, with its lion- and bird features, and a snake or serpent. We have already seen that the two branches of the ancient House of Uruk were associated with these two symbols, namely the Anzu and the serpent, with Lugalbanda and Enmerkar as their distinct heroes. They were identified with the Anzu and the “sagkal” snake, depicted in the top and at the bottom of the cosmic tree. In Gilgamesh, these two lines came together and merged. The same idea most certainly underlies the symbolism identified with Naram-Sin, who might have been born from a Sumerian mother of royal descent. The fusion of the Anzu and the snake into one symbol had not been found in ancient Mesopotamia before the time of Naram-Sin.

This symbol, however, entails much more. It also represents the totality of Naram-Sin's rule over the cosmos. The Anzu belonged to the heavenly regions whereas the snake was associated with the netherworld. Naram-Sin did not simply rule over Sumer and Akkad, he also ruled over the furthest corners of the known cosmos—hence the designation “King of the Four Corners of the Universe”. He, in fact, ruled over the totality of the cosmos, over “heaven and earth [netherworld]”. Accordingly, both the Anzu and

the snake, symbols of these cosmic realms, were embodied in him. He was also accompanied by four gods, representing his rule over the four corners of the cosmos.

### INVADING DEMONIC HORDES

Naram-Sin's greatness and divinity was closely related to the impossibility of the task he accomplished, when, against overwhelming odds, he defeated his enemies who are quite dramatically described in the epic tales about him as invading hordes, as monstrous and demonic beings. Although some of these stories, like *The Great Revolt against Naram-Sin*, are not all too different from Naram-Sin's own inscriptions, others reflect and recount popular interpretations of the events of that time. One of these is *Gula-AN and the Seventeen Kings against Naram-Sin*, in which the leaders of Naram-Sin's enemies are a ruler from the "Far Territory" (*Nagu*) and one Gula-AN, leader of the Gutium.

The Gutium were a mysterious people of whom we know very little and who are spoken of in royal inscriptions from the time of Naram-Sin's son, Shar-kali-sarri. In the *Curse of Agade*, the Gutium are described as having "human instinct but canine intelligence and monkeys' features".<sup>[567]</sup> Led by a group of 17 rulers from as far away as Kanis in Anatolia, the Lulubi Mountains in the north and Elam in the east, these invaders descended upon Sumer and Akkad. They are described as a demonic horde, not of flesh and blood.<sup>[568]</sup>

In *Gula-AN and the Seventeen Kings against Naram-Sin*, we find this graphic description of events:

"Mengi, king of the Far Territory (*Nagu*), by my strong battle I defeated him and brought him back to the harbor of Akkad. Gula-AN, king of the Gutium... whom I defeated in my strong battle and whom I released to return to his land (but) (he joined), he who is not flesh or blood, verily he is...

In the Amanus, the cedar mountain, his oracles [he consulted]. Before the great divides of the mountains, its gate he captured and stealthily in the night he attacked and my armed forces he did kill, he did decimate and he [trample down]. [He made] a confusing mass of their corpses. The depressions and wadis were (filled) with their blood. Until the sunrise, for six double hours he [made a forced march]. They did not let (me?) rest...

"He pursued me, he [attacked] me frontally furiously, 90 000 of my troops, who were under the command of... He encircled me. For the sake (?) of the life of Sargon..."<sup>[569]</sup>

### ***THE CUTHEAN LEGEND***

A similar description of Naram-Sin's enemies is found in *The Cuthean Legend*, which became the most popular of all the epic tales about him.<sup>[570]</sup> According to this story, the invasion of Mesopotamia by the enemy horde originated in far off Purushanda in Anatolia, continuing through the northern mountains near Lake Van and Lake Urmia. They encircled the entire Mesopotamian world, reaching Dilmun, Makkan en Meluhha.<sup>[571]</sup> Their leaders were the seven sons of the Lulubian ruler, Anubanini, with 17 other kings joining them in their campaign on their way to Mesopotamia.<sup>[572]</sup>

An interesting detail of *The Cuthean Legend* is the inclusion of the Hurrians as part of the enemy: "He summoned against me a mighty foe and raised the Harians (?) (of) Malgium."<sup>[573]</sup> The word "Hurrian" is related to "hurru", meaning "caves". They were regarded as "cavefolk", "warriors with bodies of cave birds, a race with ravens' faces".<sup>[574]</sup> The names of the seven sons who led the invasion are Old Akkadian, the Akkadian language deriving from the time of the empire, showing a distinct Hurrian influence.<sup>[575]</sup> This reference to the Hurrians also occurs in another Naram-Sin composition, called *The Tenth Battle*:

“Banana, the Harian chief... I did fight... I, the divine Naram-Sin.”<sup>[576]</sup>

Different versions of *The Cuthean Legend* exist. In one early version, the invaders are described as “creatures of the gods”. In a later version, dating from the middle of the second millennium BC, they are described as an “army of savages”, created by Enki. The standard Babylonian version, however, describes two distinct opposing groups, each supported by different gods. In this later version it is written that Enlil, Tiamat en Belet-ili “create and guide” the enemy. In this instance, Enki is replaced by Enlil as the creator of the enemy horde and Tiamat, the dragon-monster, who symbolised and personified the sea and who gave birth to them. As can be expected, Tiamat makes her first appearance during the Akkadian Period.<sup>[577]</sup>

The gods supporting and accompanying Naram-Sin, on the other hand, were Ishtar, Ilaba, Zababa, Annunitum, Sullat, Hanis and Samas.

The enemy horde is vividly described in the following terms:

“A people with partridge bodies, a race with raven faces, the great gods created them... Tiamat suckled them. Their progenitress, Belet-ili, made (them) beautiful. In the midst of the mountains, they grew up, reached man’s estate, and attained full status. Seven kings, brothers, resplendent with beauty, 360 000 were their troops, Anubanini was their father, the king, their mother was the queen Melili.”<sup>[578]</sup>

Apparently, Naram-Sin needed to determine whether his enemies actually had real blood in their veins and carried out some tests on them. If real blood didn’t flow through their veins it would have meant that they were “(evil) spirits, messengers of Death, fiends, malevolent demons, creatures of Enlil”. Fortunately, however, as it turned out they were warm-blooded creatures with real blood flowing through their veins!<sup>[579]</sup>

When reports about the invaders reached Naram-Sin, he consulted the gods and asked for an omen. Although the omen he received was negative, Naram-Sin still decided to march against his enemies, with his forces suffering great losses during the three years that followed:

“When the first year arrived, I send out 120 000 troops but none of them returned alive. When the second year arrived, I sent out 90 000 troops but none of them returned alive, when the third year arrived, I sent out 60 700 troops but none of them returned alive... I was bewildered, confused, sunk in gloom, desperate and dejected.”<sup>[580]</sup>

The god, Enki, then counselled Naram-Sin to bring forth his New Year’s offerings and to ask the gods for their advice again. This time round, the answer was positive and he finally came out victorious.

After these events, Naram-Sin inscribed the account of his victory on a tablet which he buried in Nergal’s temple at Kutha:

“I made a tablet-box for you (whosoever you are, be it governor, or prince or anyone else, whom the gods will call to perform kingship), and inscribed a stele for you. In Kutha, in the Emeslam [the temple’s name], in the cella of Nergal, I left (it) for you. Read this stele! Hearken unto the words of this stele.”<sup>[581]</sup>

Naram-Sin was resentful of Enmerkar for not having left such a stele, something which suggests that he regarded Enmerkar as a role model.

The story written on the tablet is surely the very one told in *The Cuthean Legend*, in which the burial of the tablet in the Kutha temple is mentioned. The temple of the god, Nergal, at Kutha, represented the cosmic domain of the netherworld and Naram-Sin’s close association with it is attested to in his own inscriptions. He mentions, for example, that smiths belonging to the cult of Nergal at the Kutha temple made his weapons: “... the god Nergal, by means of (his) weapons opened the way for Naram-Sin.”<sup>[582]</sup>

*The Cuthean Legend* was not only the most popular heroic tale told about Naram-Sin, it was also one of the greatest heroic tales told in ancient times. The theme of a great warrior-king who defeated and prevailed over a demonic king and his monster hordes, who thereafter became a challenged king ruling the world, became one of the greatest epic tales ever told. We will later revisit this story in order to see how it was handed down in other traditions.

Readers of contemporary heroic fiction may even recognise this figure in one of the heroes of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien, namely Isildur. Many centuries ago Isildur opposed and fought against the Dark Lord, Sauron, who wanted to rule the world. <sup>[583]</sup> After winning the victory, Isildur cut the One Ring from Sauron's hand, a ring which had the potential to give him the power to become ruler of all. Although he eventually lost this ring, his arrogance in aspiring to obtain absolute power was not forgotten by later generations.

Like Isildur who discarded and did not heed the advice to destroy the One Ring, Naram-Sin spurned and rejected the omens and was in Sumerian circles remembered not so much for his greatness but more for his arrogance.

The story of Naram-Sin—like that of Isildur—underscores not only the greatness of true heroes who overcome and conquer against all odds, it also portrays the ever-present impulse to obtain absolute power, like these heroes after triumphing over dark lords and demonic hordes. Throughout the ages, many aspired to it but few could really obtain absolute power. Naram-Sin was one such figure who did in fact succeed in obtaining it.

### **NARAM-SIN'S WARRIOR COMPANIONS**

Although Naram-Sin, like Sargon before him, was closely associated with the mace, ceremonially presented to him by

his ancestor god, Ilaba, he also used weapons made for him by the smiths of the Nergal cult. As Nergal, lord of the netherworld, was identified with the fire god, Erra, we can assume that the weapons these smiths made were forged and fashioned from metal. In one composition, called *Erra and Naram-Sin*, a particularly powerful weapon made for him by these smiths is mentioned: “Erra [Nergal], beloved of Duranki, monarch of Meslam, foremost of the Igigi, give the king the mighty weapon, the scimitar.” In the same composition, we also read that “men of Erra” followed him as warriors on his right-hand side. [\[584\]](#)

Of special interest is a remark made by Naram-Sin in an inscription, preserved on an Old Babylonian tablet copy from Ur. He says that he conquered the Amanus region in the distant west with the weapons of Nergal and Dagan. [\[585\]](#) Although these “weapons” might refer to real weapons used by the hero, we can also understand this in a wider sense as referring to two groups of warriors, namely the “men of Erra”, who belonged to the Nergal-Erra cult, and other warriors, who belonged to the cult of Dagan.

Dagan was the western version of the weather god, Ishkur. He was the god whom the Akkadian Emperors took with them as their protector on their military campaigns to the west. As such, the warriors associated with Dagan would have been led and commanded by royal princes, those who stood in the long warrior tradition associated with the weather god.

What is striking about Nergal and Dagan is that they belonged to the netherworld and the sky or heavenly realm, respectively. They represented the opposite poles of the cosmos! Warriors associated with these gods would have marched under the symbols associated with these cosmic regions, namely the *mushussu* snake and Anzu or lion-dragon. As lord of the netherworld, Nergal’s symbol was the *mushussu* snake and in Naram-Sin’s time, two snakes guarded the entrance to this god’s sanctuary at Kutha. [\[586\]](#)



As a weather god, Dagan, can be identified with the Anzu or lion-dragon, the ancient symbol associated with the warrior caste in Mesopotamia.

The symbols of these two warrior groups, namely the serpent and the lion-dragon, would not have been mere heraldic devices, they were also, as we have already seen in an earlier chapter,<sup>[587]</sup> ancient mythological symbols used for certain spiritual entities or daemons from the otherworld. Within the cults of Nergal and Dagan, these warriors would also have been associated with the daemons associated with two of the cosmic regions, namely the Igigi and the Anunnaki gods, daemons of the netherworld<sup>[588]</sup> and daemons of the heavenly realm, respectively. The association of such daemons or gods with warriors was deeply ingrained in ancient Mesopotamian thinking, with the seven young men accompanying Lugalbanda on his campaign to Aratta having been identified with the seven gods, seven Anunnaki gods. The Nergal cult, on the other hand, was closely associated with the Igigi.<sup>[589]</sup>

At this point, it is necessary to recall the description of Naram-Sin's glorious appearance in *Naram-Sin and the lord of Apisal*, where both the Anzu and serpent are included as part of the royal emblem. The picture emanating from this powerful portrayal is not merely that of a mighty warrior who conquered his enemies, but also and rather, of a god who ruled over the cosmos with the help of his warriors. On his military campaigns to conquer the world, the god, Naram-Sin, was then, on a cosmic level, accompanied by two groups of daemons, the Anunnaki gods and the Igigi gods. Spiritual entities or daemons from both these regions, therefore, supported him and his rule over the cosmos.

The amalgamation of the two symbols of Anzu and serpent, opposites in the cosmic tree, in the person of Naram-Sin, portrayed him as a mighty and divine warrior-shaman. Such shamans were often said to have become godly and divine. Shamans were also typically accompanied



by (seven) warrior-spirits. Accordingly, the person of Naram-Sin epitomises the great shaman destroyer of demons. His rule over the cosmos included the power to subdue all demonic forces such as those whom he had subdued in the cataclysmic uprising and subsequent war against him.

### **NARAM-SIN AND TISPAK**

The accounts and stories about Naram-Sin can also be looked at from the point of view of the iconography of his time. Battles between gods was a typical motif in the art of the Akkadian Period. The Sumerologist, F. A. M. Wiggermann, writes: "The art of the Akkad period gives precedence to subjects that were hardly treated before. One of them is the battle scene, depicting fights of gods with gods or of gods with monsters."<sup>[590]</sup>

The iconography found on Akkadian cylinder seals can be used in parallel with the oral tradition, preserved in the heroic tales, in an effort to gain a better understanding of the popular views of that time. The battle scenes depicted on the seals clearly portray the great battles of the Akkadian Period on a cosmic level. We, for example, find that the enemies of the Akkadian gods are often shown as birdmen. Henry Frankfort writes: "The judgment of the Birdman is a very common subject on Akkadian seals."<sup>[591]</sup>



*Figure 20. Judgment of a birdman shown in a neck stock.*

On some seals, the “birdman” is shown in a neck stock. These bird features with which the enemies of the Akkadians are portrayed are in agreement with their description as birdlike in Naram-Sin’s legends. Especially the Hurrian invaders were identified with birds: “... warriors with bodies of cave birds, a race with ravens’ faces.”<sup>[592]</sup> This means the birdmen should be identified with Naram-Sin’s Hurrian enemies.

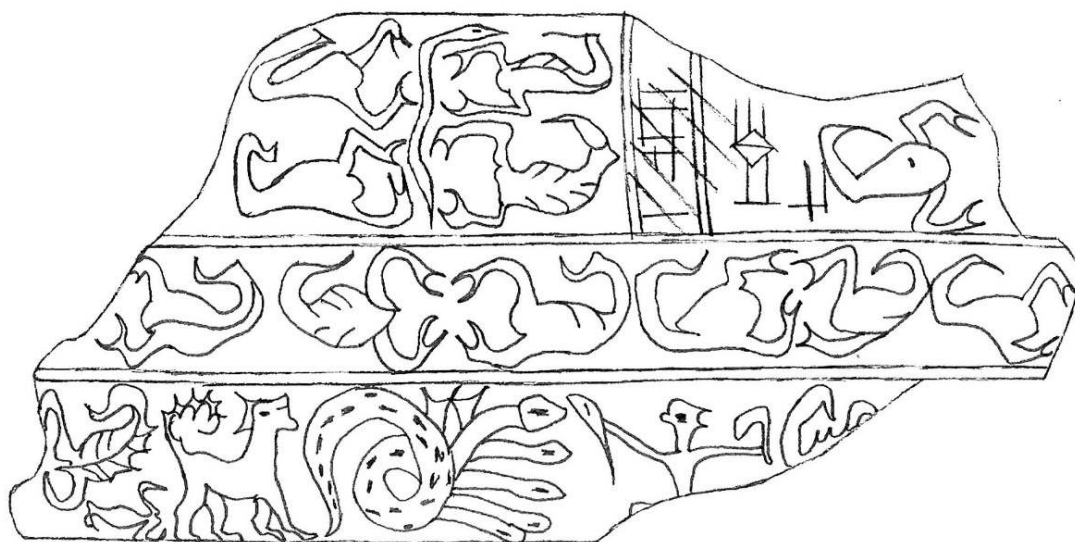
An important god making his first appearance on seals dating from the Akkadian Period is Tispak, worshipped at Ešnunna. He replaced the earlier god of Ešnunna, namely Ninazu, “king of the snakes”.<sup>[593]</sup> Tispak was an adaptation of the Hurrian weather god, Tessub,<sup>[594]</sup> counterpart of the Semitic god, Adad. He evolved as a new god from the particular circumstances of the Akkadian Period.<sup>[595]</sup> He is portrayed as a great warrior. On one Akkadian seal inscription, he is described as “Tispak, warrior of the gods”.

Tispak fought against and subjected the dragon-monster, Labbu, a creation of the Sea.<sup>[596]</sup> Here the Sea might refer to Tiamat, the mother of all monstrous beings and the

embodiment of the Sea. This dragon-monster adopted the lion and snake features of the *mushussu* snake-dragon, the “furious snake”, features which formerly belonged to Ninazu (whom we have already come across earlier), with bird features added to it. As such, it comprised of lion, bird and snake features, possessing the head of a lion or snake, the horns of a horned viper, the front legs of a lion and the hind legs of a bird of prey.

According to the stories told about Tispak in later ages, Enlil created this monster in order to destroy humankind.<sup>[597]</sup> Tispak was believed to be a steward of Tiamat. I understand this to be a reference to the monster, originally being an attendant of Tiamat, the mother of monsters, before the god Tispak subjected it. We have already seen that Tiamat and her suckling monsters also feature in the heroic tales about Naram-Sin.<sup>[598]</sup>

In one text, the monster is described as a snake with seven tongues, meaning it had seven heads.<sup>[599]</sup> An Akkadian Period seal impression from Esnunna clearly shows this monster with its seven heads and two heroes attacking it.<sup>[600]</sup> Here, the text and iconography align with Naram-Sin’s heroic tales—also celebrated at Esnunna—in which the invading hordes are led by the “seven” sons of Anubanini. The iconography of the monster with seven heads, as well as the myth of the Akkadian dragon, was based on earlier themes from Esnunna in which a seven-headed monster features. On a restored Sumerian seal impression, the monster is shown with only five heads. The hero, who overcame and defeated the dragon, is holding the other two heads in his hands.<sup>[601]</sup>



*Figure 21. Copy of a restored Sumerian seal impression from Tell Asmar (Esnunna) showing a seven-headed monster defeated by a hero (at the bottom right).*

Tispak had fought against and subjected the dragon-monster and then became king. He is shown sitting on a throne, holding the rod and ring of kingship, with the defeated and tamed dragon lying at his feet.<sup>[602]</sup> On one seal depiction, Tispak is shown defeating his enemy with the dragon by his side.<sup>[603]</sup>

On both a rock relief from Esnunna as well as a seal, two smaller figures are shown, one on his right and one on his left. These are similar to the two maces in the hands of Ninazu, the earlier god of Esnunna, called “Hero of the Right Hand” and “Hero of the Left Hand”.<sup>[604]</sup> Tispak took the maces over from Ninazu in the same way he did with the monster that was defeated by Ninazu.

After his victory, Tispak acquired the dragon's features. He is depicted as a god with a snake on each shoulder<sup>[605]</sup> or with two snakes appearing from under his robe. They might be referring to the dragon's two snake heads he had previously cut off, as shown in earlier versions of the myth, which now became his weapons. He is also described as a

dragon, green like a snake, with a pest-bearing breath blowing through his nostrils and a flaming mouth from which a forked tongue issues like a thunderbolt.<sup>[606]</sup> In time, the Tispak dragon became the primary symbol associated with kingship in ancient Mesopotamia.

### **NARAM-SIN'S HURRIAN FOLLOWERS**

There cannot be any doubt that this iconography and the story about Tispak reflect the events surrounding the time of Naram-Sin. The Hurrian association with Tispak is especially significant in light of the fact that the Hurrians were not only counted among Naram-Sin's main enemies, as vividly recounted in legends like *The Cuthean Legend*, but also because some of them later became his allies. One of them who became his ally was Tupkish, who ruled in Urkesh and was married to Uqnitum, an Akkadian princess. Tupkish provided soldiers for the garrison serving at Tell Brak.<sup>[607]</sup>

Not only is the dragon-monster against whom Tispak fought described in similar terms as the monsterlike enemies, the demonlike servants of Tiamat, against whom Naram-Sin fought, the tamed monster at Tispak's feet also represents Naram-Sin's Hurrian enemies who turned into allies and supporters after their defeat.

Tispak was a version of Tessub, worshipped by Naram-Sin's Hurrian supporters at Esnunna. He was the Hurrian counterpart of Adad or Dagan, one of the principle gods credited with Naram-Sin's victories. Naram-Sin attributed his victories to the weapons of the weather god and his accomplishments to the support of this god. The legends and popular mythology about Naram-Sin's victories thus became the legends and mythology of the weather god, of whom Tispak was the Hurrian version. One thing that should not be overlooked is that Esnunna, where Tispak had his cult centre, was the one place where Naram-Sin's triumphs and

victories were especially celebrated, already during his own lifetime.

The myth of Tispak's victory over the seven-headed monster reflects popular myths told about Naram-Sin himself. He was, in fact, the real hero, the hero who overcame the monster. We find that Naram-Sin is described in exactly the same way as the dragon-monster subjected by Tispak, namely part lion, part bird and part snake. The only difference is that the bird features attributed to the dragon might originally have indicated its Hurrian origins, whereas in Naram-Sin's case they refer to the features of the mighty Anzu bird, befitting of his royal stature.

We read in *Naram-Sin and the Lord of Apisal*: "Your radiance is fire, your voice is the thunderstorm. You are a raging lion. Your mouth is a venomous viper, your nails are (those of) the Anzu..."<sup>[608]</sup> This description is distinctly similar to that of the monster defeated by Tispak.

This portrayal of Naram-Sin corresponds on the one hand with the god, Tispak, who took on the characteristics of the monster he defeated and tamed. On the other hand, it is a description of Naram-Sin's own divine glory. The description of Naram-Sin in the image of Tispak suggests that our hero was also seen as incarnating the divine essence of this god.

Although this might have been the view of his followers who belonged to the Tispak cult and had a close bond with this god-king, others would have shared this view. As such, Naram-Sin would have been regarded as the incarnation of the weather god, irrespective of the name ascribed to this god, whether it was Tispak, Adad or Ningirsu. This is why he is portrayed in the above quotation as an embodiment of the Anzu bird, the symbolic animal of the weather god.

We found the same about Sargon, who was depicted in the image of Ningirsu and taken as the embodiment of that god. As was the case with Sargon, and in keeping with the ancient Mesopotamian tradition, Naram-Sin, as a messianic figure, was the one in whom the weather god was



incarnated. He was the one in whom the weather god became physically manifested. He was the messiah!

### **SULLAT AND HANIS**

We can now return to the two smaller figures, one on Tispak's right and one on his left. Who were they and how do they relate to the Akkadian cult? As already mentioned, they depict the "Hero of the Right Hand" and the "Hero of the Left Hand" in the Tispak iconography. In the same way Tispak had his origin with the Hurrian weather god, Tessub, they might have incorporated features of Tessub's twin helpers, namely the gods, Seris and Hurris. They, on their part, were twin gods, leading the invading Hurrians on their military campaigns. The name "Hurris" even reminds of the name "Hurrian". In later periods, they were depicted as twin bulls pulling Tessub's war chariot.

Similar twin gods, namely Sullat and Hanis, made their appearance during the Akkadian Period. Although the names are Akkadian, meaning "despoilment" and "submission"<sup>[609]</sup>, they sound vaguely similar to Seris and Hurris. These gods also had the same role as Seris and Hurris. They were helpers in war<sup>[610]</sup> and in *The Cuthean Legend*, they accompany Naram-Sin on his military campaigns. We even read that Naram-Sin used Hanis's lightning as a weapon: "(Naram-Sin) made the lightning of his god Hanis his weapon."<sup>[611]</sup> Here, Naram-Sin is described as the weather god holding the thunderbolt in his hand. Hanis's providing a weapon in Naram-Sin's one hand may well suggest the same role for Sullat.

In the *Gilgamesh Epic*, which, as we shall see, borrowed extensively from the Akkadian legends, Sullat and Hanis went before the storm god, Adad.<sup>[612]</sup> This is exactly how Seris and Hurris prepared the way and went before the Hurrian storm god, Tessub. My suggestion then is that Sullat and Hanis were the Akkadian counterparts of the Hurrian

Seris and Hurris, associated with the cult of Tispak at Ešnunna.

These twins might even have represented the two groups of warriors accompanying Naram-Sin, namely those on his right (southeast) and those on his left (northwest), with the geographical orientation of the land conforming to the perspective of someone looking north. Accordingly, they might have been the warrior groups who defended the eastern borders and western borders of the Akkadian Empire and who marched under the banners of Sullat and Hanis.

More particularly, we may assume that these “weapons”, or at least one of them, referred to Naram-Sin’s Hurrian followers. This would make perfect sense keeping Tispak’s Hurrian origins in mind. As the Hurrians lived towards the northwestern areas of Mesopotamia, they must have been the warriors on the left-hand side. It may well be proposed that some Hurrians, who belonged to a warrior order operating under the insignia of the twin gods, became Naram-Sin’s warriors (after being defeated by him). This is also demonstrated by Tispak’s tamed dragon-monster not only lying at the god’s feet as his servant but also accompanying him and standing by his side in his fight against his enemies.

It may be possible that these warriors were connected to the Erra-Nergal cult at Kutha. The reason for believing so is that the Tispak monster was originally a *mushussu* dragon before obtaining its bird features, symbolising the Hurrians. The *mushussu* was the symbolic animal of Ninazu, husband of Ereskigal, goddess of the netherworld, before Nergal received that honour.<sup>[613]</sup> This dragon therefore belongs to the netherworld ruled by Nergal, who had an important cult centre at Kutha.<sup>[614]</sup>

The close association between the *mushussu* and the Tispak monster implies a connection between the Hurrian warriors, whom I identify with the Tispak monster, and the



Erra-Nergal cult at Kutha. This view finds support in the fact that this monster is sometimes being shown in front of a fire altar during the Akkadian Period.<sup>[615]</sup> This is consistent and in keeping with Erra's character as a fire god. According to *Erra and Naram-Sin*, the smiths from this cult centre made Naram-Sin's weapons. The connection between the Hurrians and the Nergal-Erra cult is supported by an inscription of the Hurrian king, Tishatal, who built a temple for Nergal at Urkesh at about 2250-2100 BC.<sup>[616]</sup> Interestingly, the Sumerian word for a smith, *tibira*, was borrowed from the Hurrians.<sup>[617]</sup>

We may now assume that the "men of Erra", who went with Naram-Sin, as told in *Erra and Naram-Sin*, might have included units of Hurrian warriors with smiths and, perhaps, even diviners. *The Cuthean Legend*, which features the Hurrians, Sullat and Hanis, as well as the Kutha temple, might have been a cult myth associated with these warriors.

### **NARAM-SIN AND THE SUN GOD**

Another god who plays an important role in battle scenes depicted on Akkadian seals is the sun god, Samas (Utu). He is pictured subjecting rebellious mountain gods. Most of these depictions contain mountains<sup>[618]</sup> and he is usually accompanied by the goddess, Ishtar.<sup>[619]</sup>

The scholar, Edith Porada, discusses in detail one such seal, depicting the sun god in this way. In the image she discusses, the god, Samas, standing on a winged lion, is portrayed in the image of the Kishite kings. Both his posture and his attire are identical to the Kish rulers from the pre-Akkadian Period.<sup>[620]</sup> Clearly, the victorious Akkadian Emperor, descended from those kings, is identified with Samas in these depictions. A small god, carrying a mace, is shown next to Samas. This would be Ilaba, the household god of the Kishite royal house, who gave Naram-Sin the mace with which he conquered his enemies.<sup>[621]</sup> A kneeling

god, representing the conquered enemy, is also shown. Ilaba is shown appearing before Enki, pronouncing the Akkadian Emperor's victory to him.

Another iconographic depiction in which the Akkadian Emperor is identified with Samas, is found in the so-called "presentation scene", first attested to in the time of Naram-Sin. Here, the sun god sits as a judge, ritually determining destiny/fate. Richard Zettler writes the following about this scene:

"The combination of divine epithets [i.e. of Naram-Sin] and presentation scene imagery featuring Samas is particularly striking since Mesopotamian kings were routinely amalgamated with the sun god in later (Ur III-Old Babylonian) textual sources and played a pivotal role as both human and divine actors in the ritual determination of destiny/fate at sunrise."<sup>[622]</sup>

This identification of the Akkadian Emperors, especially Naram-Sin, with Samas (Utu) can also be found in the oral traditions about him. In the *Curse of Agade* he is described as rising like the sun god to sit on his throne. The reference here is to the position of the sun at midday: "It's king, the shepherd Naram-Sin, rose like the sun on the throne of Agade."<sup>[623]</sup> In *Elegy on the Death of Naram-Sin* he is also portrayed as the sun of his people.<sup>[624]</sup>

Although the text of *Elegy of the Death of Naram-Sin* is badly damaged, it seems that he is visiting the realm of death, similar to the sun god's journey at night, in this story. The title given to this text by the translators suggests that it was composed after his death but it is also possible that it tells about events during the time of the Great Revolt when Naram-Sin was dramatically overwhelmed by the enemy hordes according to the epic tales. He might even have had a near-death experience, returning back to life like the sun does every morning of each day.

Naram-Sin's identification with the sun god, of which he might also have been considered an incarnation, was typical

of the ancient Sumerian tradition. The heroes from the ancient House of Uruk were similarly identified with the sun god in the oral traditions. Their identification with the sun god arose from the belief that they were descended from him. I have interpreted this as originally referring to a descent from the Shining Ones, the seed of Enki that fell on the ground. Their identification with the sun god displayed their royal glory as priestly rulers who reigned fairly and justly.

The Akkadian Emperor, Naram-Sin, might have regarded himself as a descendant of those early Urukite rulers, either by intermarriage between the Kishites and the Urukites in the distant past, going back to the time of Enmebaragesi, or through Sargon's Sumerian wife who was of such descent.

Something that should not be overlooked is the fact that the conquering Samas is standing on a winged lion, usually identified with the weather god. This may imply that these gods were somehow identified with each other in the context of Naram-Sin's victories, similar to the identification of Ningirsu with the rising sun god, Utu, in the hymn commemorating the building of his temple at Girsu. In their iconography, the merger of these two gods reflects the two roles of warrior-king and priestly ruler united in one figure, namely the great priest-king and god, Naram-Sin.

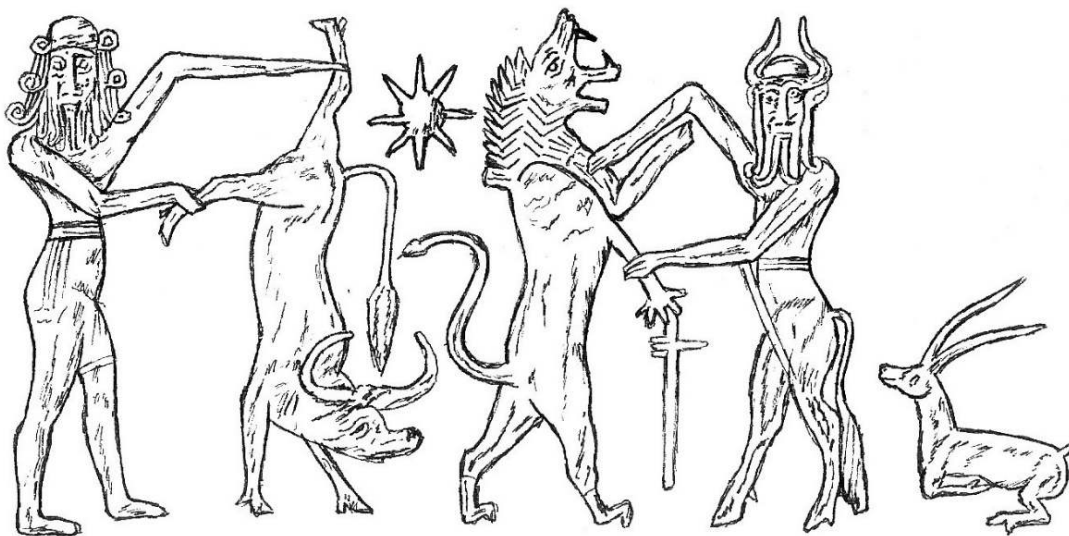
In the same way these two roles coexisted in a messianic figure like Gilgamesh, they also came together and merged in the person of Naram-Sin. He was both a great warrior-king, viewed as an incarnation of the weather god, as well as a righteous ruler meting out justice, like the sun god did.

In the same way as Gilgamesh was a new divine sprout from the ancient House of Uruk, Sargon was viewed as a new sprout, founder of a great new royal and divine dynasty. This sprout grew into the person of Naram-Sin, the first to be recognised as a true god-man, as a god amongst the other great gods of Sumer and Akkad. Naram-Sin became

the paramount image of the divine messiah coming from the seed of the fallen gods from the line of Enki.

### **NARAM-SIN AND THE FOUR CASTES**

As the divine seed, Naram-Sin would have been surrounded during cultic ceremonies by representatives of the four castes, founded by Gilgamesh. Popular depictions from the Akkadian Period showing four figures in heraldic form as two pairs each may refer to the very same caste system. The reason for believing so is that three of the images earlier associated with the caste system, namely the bull-man, the lion-man and the hairy, occur and feature again, now in a more developed form. Like the bull-man, the lion-man is now depicted as a lion with a human posture.



*Figure 22. The four symbols of the crafts in the Akkadian Period depicted on a cylinder seal impression (The Oriental Institute Museum, University of Chicago).<sup>[625]</sup>*

The four figures are now a bull-man, a lion-man, a hairy and a buffalo. They are typically paired with the lion-man

and bull-man standing together and the hairy and buffalo standing together. The reason the buffalo is included and not the *mushussu* snake, may be due to the restructuring of the caste of the crafts when the Hurrians were included. The buffalo reflects the Akkadian contact with the Indus Valley civilization. What is truly remarkable is that these figures appear on seals of members of the imperial dynasty who served in political roles, with their seal inscriptions positioned in the centre, between two symmetrically paired groups.<sup>[626]</sup> This is precisely in line with my view that the Emperor (or his direct family) would have taken this pivotal role among the castes.

Although almost all the rulers since Enmebaragesi recognised Enlil's supreme authority over the land, Naram-Sin shifted his allegiance to Enki. We have seen, on an Akkadian seal, how Samas, shown in the image of Naram-Sin, acknowledged Enki instead of Enlil as the god who granted him victory. In the later traditions about Naram-Sin, he is portrayed as the great opponent of Enlil. Eventually, the faction uniting around Naram-Sin's popular mythology pushed Enlil from the throne as king of the gods in Mesopotamia. We will get back to and focus on this aspect again in a later chapter.

## 14. THE AKKADIAN “CHURCH”

The story of the great Akkadian god-kings is intimately connected and related to the cult that revolved around the worship of their divine personages. The imperial cult they founded was as important as their heroic deeds, the deeds commemorated in the stories and songs of the bards. One of the reasons these stories had such an immense impact, is the fact that they were handed down within the cult worship of these Emperors. As the cult centred around the worship of these divine kings, we may anachronistically see and think about it as the Akkadian “church”. [\[627\]](#)

The person who played a central role in the founding of this cult was Enheduanna, daughter of the Emperor Sargon. The events of the Great Revolt against Naram-Sin not only led to the acknowledgement of his divinity, it also had a major impact on the life of this brilliant and outstanding woman. Her beautiful poems contain innovations she introduced into the ancient Dumuzi cult as a direct result of the Great Revolt. In this new imperial cult, the divine child of the Dumuzi cult became identified with the bloodline of the Akkadian Emperors.

One important change Enheduanna made to the Dumuzi cult was to merge and join the ancient fertility and warrior cults together. The cult of the en-priests and the warrior-shamanistic cult, associated with Lugalbanda, were brought together as two aspects of one cult, revolving around the divine child. The first part focussed on the sacred marriage rituals, the second on shamanistic rebirth. Shaman-magicians played a central role in the new cult. The goddess of fertility rites, Inana, became syncretised with the Semitic warrior goddess, Ishtar. She was the one who watched over the Akkadian dynasty and also the one who would, through the cult, secure their bloodline.

The Akkadian imperial cult stands central to our study of the Nephilim. The survival of the cult that Enheduanna introduced would, in fact, be one of the most important reasons for believing in the continued survival of the Nephilim traditions and even the lineages of the Nephilim families through centuries and even through millennia. Of special relevance, is one of Enheduanna's cult songs. Its purpose was to regulate the new rituals introduced by her and it became the basis of the cult myth accompanying the cult rituals as it spread from Akkad to Canaan, Egypt, Greece and elsewhere.

We will now look into and investigate this cult song in depth.

### **ENHEDUANNA AND THE ELEVATION OF INANA**

Enheduanna is the very first known author in history. She was a princess, priestess and poetess. Sargon appointed her as the high priestess of the moon god, Nanna (Sin), in Ur, a position which for centuries afterwards remained highly respected and occupied by princesses of the highest rank. In one inscription, we read: "Enheduanna, *zirru*-priestess, wife of the god Nanna."<sup>[628]</sup> A picture exists where she is shown pouring a libation on an altar in front of a stepped structure, most probably a ziggurat. Her name appears on three seals or seal impressions.<sup>[629]</sup> In later periods, they believed her to be almost divine with the shortened form of her name, Heduanna, used as an epithet for Dumuzi.<sup>[630]</sup>

Enheduanna compiled a collection of 42 temple hymns dedicated to her father.<sup>[631]</sup> She also wrote a hymn of adoration for the goddess, Nanshe, although the only existing copy shows that Gudea of Lagas reworked it in the post-Akkadian Period.<sup>[632]</sup> Her most important literary contribution, however, is the three poems she wrote in honour of the goddess, Inana. Although her name is only mentioned in two of them, all three poems display the same character and were listed together in ancient times.<sup>[633]</sup> From



her writing style it can be deduced that her mother was Sumerian.<sup>[634]</sup>

The most striking feature of Enheduanna's poems is that the goddess, Inana, is worshipped above all other gods. This was an important innovation originating in the Akkadian Period, starting with Sargon. The scholars, William Hallo and J. J. A. Van Dijk, wrote the following in their important study, *The Exaltation of Inanna*: "The exaltation of the goddess would be reflected by a historical tradition which makes Sargon variously the son, lover or father of a priestess representing the goddess, and the three great hymns of Enheduanna dedicated to Inana would then represent a major contribution by Sargon's brilliant daughter to the propagation of the new theology."<sup>[635]</sup>

Another feature of Enheduanna's poems is that Inana, fertility goddess of the Sumerians, is identified with Ishtar, warrior goddess of the Semites. In identifying these goddesses with each other, the religion of the Sumerians and the religion of the Semites were combined and united. This provided the theological groundwork for the political unification of Sumer and Akkad. Hallo and Van Dijk write: "As a final step in this politico-religious reformation, Sargon equated the Sumerian Inanna with the Akkadian Ishtar to lay the theological foundations of a united Empire of Sumer and Akkad, and thus ushered in what the chronographic tradition regards as the 'dynasty of Ishtar'."<sup>[636]</sup>

Whereas the Sumerian goddess, Inana-Ki, had a terrestrial character, Ishtar had an astral one, she having been identified with the planet, Venus. The new goddess, Inana-Ishtar, was a mighty lady, ruling over heaven and earth. We read the following in one of Enheduanna's poems: "You exercise fully the lady-ship over heaven and earth."<sup>[637]</sup>

The identification of Ishtar with Inana made her the consort of An, father of the gods:

"Lady of all the me's [norms of civilization], resplendent light, Righteous woman clothed in radiance, beloved of



Heaven and Earth, Hierodule [holy woman] of An.”<sup>[638]</sup>

As the consort of An, she was also regarded as the great mother of the Anunnaki.

Her position came to be viewed as the highest one possible amongst the gods. This elevation of Inana-Ishtar became especially significant during Naram-Sin's reign when Enlil, who traditionally assigned kingship, supported his enemies. The Akkadians now regarded Inana as being elevated even above Enlil, as we read in one of her poems written late in her life:

“The exalted in the assembly, sitting on the seat of  
honour... right and left...  
You rival An and Enlil, you sit on their seat...  
Lady, supreme over An.” <sup>[639]</sup>

Inana-Ishtar was now the one who decided who should be king: “To give the crown, the chair and the scepter of kingship (to the king) is yours, Inana.”<sup>[640]</sup> And she supported the Akkadian Emperors’ right to the throne.

In all three poems, Enheduanna depicts Inana-Ishtar as a warrior goddess, actively taking part in the battles against the enemies of Akkad. Both Sargon and Naram-Sin called the goddess Irnina, referring to her as the one who granted and gave victory. Enheduanna dedicated two poems to her under this name. As a warrior goddess, she was portrayed as a lioness clothed in awe-inspiring radiance.<sup>[641]</sup>

We read in the Ulmas temple hymn in honour of her temple in Akkad:

“Ferocious lion, raging against a wild bull...  
Arrayed in battle...  
who handles the *utug*-weapon, who washes the tools in the  
‘blood of battle’, she opens the ‘door of battle.’” <sup>[642]</sup>

In one Inana hymn, she is sitting on two harnessed lions.  
<sup>[643]</sup> She is portrayed as standing on a lion or sitting on a

throne decorated with lions or with lions lying at her feet, with a mace with a lion head at each of its ends in her hands. [\[644\]](#)

Enheduanna's innovations, however, went far beyond the identification of Inana with Ishtar or even the high elevation of the goddess. She also made major changes to the ancient Dumuzi cult, producing an entirely new imperial cult. The poem introducing these changes, clearly the lead cult song in the new cult, is called *Lady of all the me's* (*nin-me-sar-ra*). An exceptionally beautiful and impressive poem, which requires careful analysis and study.

### **A SONG INTRODUCING NEW CULTIC PRACTICES**

The main theme of the poem, *Lady of all the me's*, is the so-called me's. Generally, the me's refer to cultural norms but in this poem it more specifically concerns cultic practices. The poem starts with an emphasis on Inana's power over these practices and it also concludes in this way. Hallo and Van Dijk write: "Since the me's occupy the present poem so prominently both at its beginning and its conclusion, one is inclined to suppose that they also form a, if not the, main concern of the body of the composition."<sup>[645]</sup> Enheduanna uses beautiful parallelism to present her poem as a song about cultic rites or me's:

"Omniscient sage, lady of all the lands.

Sustenance of the multitudes, *I have verily recited your  
sacred song!*

True goddess, fit for the me's, it is exalting to acclaim you.

Merciful one, brilliantly righteous woman, *I have verily  
recited your me's for you!"*

(lines 62-65)<sup>[646]</sup>

The strong emphasis on Inana's power over cultic practice sets the stage for Enheduanna, in her role as Inana's oracle pronouncing the goddess's will, to introduce new cultic practices as demanded by the goddess.<sup>[647]</sup> Accordingly, we read the following in the translation by the scholar, S. N. Kramer: "She (Inana) has changed altogether the rites of holy An..."<sup>[648]</sup> and "Enough, more than enough innovations, great queen, have I made for you."<sup>[649]</sup> After mentioning the new innovations introduced into the cult through this poem, she calls upon the bards and singers to repeat the song, obviously in a cultic context: "That which I recite to you at (mid)night, may the singer repeat it to you at noon." The word she used for "repeat", in the technical sense, means that the poem had to be repeated verbatim by professional singers.<sup>[650]</sup>

The cultic changes introduced by the poem were based on events that occurred during the revolt against Naram-Sin. In the poem, Enheduanna describes the things that happened to her during this time. She mentions one of Naram-Sin's main opponents during the revolt, Lugal-anne, by name. He exalted himself to become king of Ur, where she served as the high priestess. From the poem we can assume that he raped and banished her from the sanctuary. As she was the high priestess of the goddess, those events could not be separated from Inana's own story. They, therefore, also became part of the cult myth about Inana.

In the same way Enheduanna was driven from her position, we read that Inana left her temple and went to the mountainous areas. Hallo and Van Dijk write: "[The poem] recounts the fate of Enheduanna, paralleling that of Inana, in almost autobiographical terms... She [Enheduanna] appears [in the poem] as a kind of Inana, the goddess to whom she was personally devoted. For in the, in part post-Sumerian, 'Inana laments', that deity's exile from her temples is described in a manner wholly reminiscent of Enheduanna's removal from the priesthood in *nin-me-sar-ru* [*Lady of all the me's*]." [\[651\]](#)

In the poem, the time she served as high priestess and the period after she was driven away are beautifully contrasted. They in effect concern the two aspects of the newly introduced cult, namely the usual fertility aspect in which she served as consort of the god, Nanna (Sin), and the new addition to the cult based on the things that happened to her during her exile. In the first aspect Inana is the "life-giving goddess" but in the second she is full of anger and fury, one who removes and takes away all vegetation. [\[652\]](#) The story of Enheduanna's wanderings after she was removed from her position as high priestess served as a prototype for the additions to the cult.

Enheduanna contrasts her time as triumphant high priestess with her time as a weeping woman roaming the

mountains:

“(Me) who once sat triumphant, he has driven out of the  
sanctuary.

Like a swallow, he made me fly from the window, my life is  
consumed.

He made me walk in the bramble of the mountain.

He stripped me of the crown appropriate for the high  
priesthood.”<sup>[653]</sup>

Elsewhere, she contrasts her life in the sanctuary with her  
life in the “lepers’ ward”, where she took shelter during her  
time in the mountains:

“Verily I had entered my holy *giparu* at your behest, I, the  
high priestess, I, Enheduanna!

I carried the ritual basket, I intoned the acclaim.

(But now) I am placed in the lepers’ ward, I, even I, can no  
longer live with you!

They approach the light of day, the light is obscured about  
me, The shadows approach the light of day, it is covered  
with a (sand)storm.

My mellifluous mouth is cast into confusion, My choicest  
features are turned to dust.” <sup>[654]</sup>

Once, when she was still the high priestess, she carried  
the ritual basket (for the dead) but now she sat in the  
“lepers’ ward”, where the sandstorm gave her face a  
“ghost-like” appearance as if she was one amongst the  
dead.<sup>[655]</sup>

The Inana of Enheduanna's period in exile in the  
mountainous areas differs greatly from the Inana of the  
fertility rites. Her role as beloved consort of the supreme  
god, An, is contrasted with her role as a furious goddess:  
“Oh my lady beloved of An, I have verily recounted your  
fury.”<sup>[656]</sup> The reason for Inana's fury was the captivity and  
banishment of Enheduanna, described as a “captive child”.

<sup>[657]</sup>

Instead of being the consort of the moon god in the sacred marriage, Inana is now the terrifying wife of the storm god and as such, she is described as a massive serpent as well as a roaring thunder storm emitting a terrible radiance:

“Like a dragon [snake] you have deposited venom on the land.

When you roar at the earth like Thunder, no vegetation can stand up to you...

In the guise of a charging storm you charge.

With a roaring storm you roar.

With Thunder you continually thunder.

With all the evil winds you snort...

Oh my lady, the Anunna, the great gods, Flattering like bats fly off from before you to the clefts.

They who dare not walk(?) in your terrible glance, Who dare not proceed before your terrible countenance.”<sup>[658]</sup>

### **FOUNDING OF A NEW DUMUZI CULT**

An interesting feature of the poem is the use of Dumuzi motifs. Inana is, for example, called the spouse of Usumgalanna, the name given to Dumuzi when referring to him as the power in the great bud of the date palm.<sup>[659]</sup> In comparing her wanderings with a fluttering swallow she used phraseology taken from the Dumuzi cult myths in which his sister also roamed around the city like a circling bird searching for him.<sup>[660]</sup>

The same goes for the ritual basket mentioned before, which is also associated with the Dumuzi cult. Filled with grain, it was carried during the cult rituals. According to one reference this basket was carried for Dumuzi’s dead spirit.<sup>[661]</sup> Although Enheduanna mentions that she is carrying the basket as part of her high priestly duties, the fertility cult of the moon god was closely related to that of Dumuzi and might have included such shared practices.

Enheduanna tells how she wept. Her poem is a song of lamentation, like the lamentations for Dumuzi's death. She used Dumuzi phraseology when she wrote:

“Oh lady, the (harp) of mourning is placed on the ground.  
One had verily breached your ship of mourning on a hostile  
shore.

At (the sound of) my sacred song they are ready to die.  
[or: There will I die, while singing the holy song].”<sup>[662]</sup>

The image is that of the Dumuzi child taken by boat to the netherworld.<sup>[663]</sup> In her case, the “boat” took her to a “hostile shore”.

We find the same image used for her exile: “(Only) on account of your captive spouse, on account of your captive child, your rage is increased, your heart unassuaged.”<sup>[664]</sup> In the Dumuzi myth, he is both the spouse of Inana and a child (dumu) taken captive and transported to the realm of death.<sup>[665]</sup>

Eventually, Enheduanna was restored to her former glory in the same way Dumuzi had returned from the netherworld. She wrote:

“The first lady, the reliance of the throne room, Has  
accepted her offerings Inanna’s heart has been restored...  
For that her (Enheduanna’s) speaking to the Hierodule was  
exalted, Praise be (to) the devastatrix of the lands, endowed  
with me’s from An, (To) my lady wrapped in beauty, (to)  
Inana!”<sup>[666]</sup>

The Dumuzi phraseology and images show that the additions alluded to in the poem were introduced into the Dumuzi cult. Aspects based on Enheduanna's trials and tribulations were taken up in this cult. One should not overlook the similarities with the *Sargon birth legend*, where his birth story was also cast in Dumuzi cult context. In both instances, the relevant Dumuzi cult is the one revolving around the date palm. In fact, the very same motif of the

child taken by the river and later retrieved from it is relevant here! The exile of Enheduanna to the “lepers’ ward”, the zone of death, and her subsequent return is reminiscent of Dumuzi being carried off to the realm of death only to return again.

### **SHAMANISTIC PRACTICE**

What is evident from our discussion so far is that Enheduanna joined together the fertility rites, involving the en-priests, with the cultic practice associated with the storm god. The question, however, remains as to what changes she made in the Dumuzi cult.

The line in the poem translated in Kramer's version as “innovations” has been rendered differently by Hallo and Van Dijk, who read and interpreted it in terms of giving birth. It may be suggested that a double meaning is alluded to, with the innovations made in the cult to have included a “birth giving” ritual. They translate the strophe as follows:

“One has heaped up the coals (in the censer), prepared the  
lustration [or: have conducted the rites].

The nuptial chamber awaits you, let your heart be  
appeased!

With: 'It is enough for me, it is too much for me!'  
I have given birth, oh exalted lady, for you.”<sup>[667]</sup>

The strange thing about the description of her giving birth is that fire was stoked in the place where she gave birth. Something similar is mentioned earlier in the poem where Enheduanna says she once lay with folded hands on the “ritual couch”, awaiting the oracles of the goddess.<sup>[668]</sup> The word used for ritual couch is “fruitful, shining couch”, suggesting “an incubation technique for eliciting the divine response”.<sup>[669]</sup> It seems that we should see her giving birth in the presence of fire during her exile in contrast with her role as the oracle for the goddess under similar



circumstances. In both instances, fire played a key role in inducing some kind of “productive” experience.

Whereas her experience on the ritual couch took place in the sanctuary, the birth giving took place while she was roaming the mountains, probably while she sat in the “lepers’ ward”. This place refers to a hole in the ground serving as a dwelling or to a temporary hut outside the city. Such places were typically found in the desert, where the sick lived and rituals for the dead were performed.<sup>[670]</sup> These were “abandoned dwelling places swept by winds or haunted by phantoms”.<sup>[671]</sup>

Such a hut is also mentioned in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, where it has the same use as the ritual couch, namely to induce dreams. It is, in fact, even called “house of dream spirits”. Gilgamesh slept in the hut with the expectation of having dreams, which in fact he did.<sup>[672]</sup>

Giving birth, however, goes far beyond merely having a dream. How can giving birth then be related to such experiences?<sup>[673]</sup> The answer is found in descriptions of shamanistic experiences. In these experiences, heat and fire also play an important role in producing “ecstatic states”, not all too different from dream states.<sup>[674]</sup> The remarkable thing, however, is that we find references to birth giving in these experiences! A kind of mystical experience actually exists where the experience revolves around giving birth to an immortal inner child produced by fire.

The reference in the poem to the heaping up of coals and preparing of the rites refers to actual rituals where a fire is stoked, like the ones we find in the Eleusinian cult in Greece much later. In that case, the cultic rites included a mystical experience in which giving birth played a central role. In this instance an immortal child is produced from the flames of the inner experience. Mystics remove themselves from civilization and isolate themselves in such huts and holes in the ground. We may conclude that Enheduanna's experience was a shamanistic-mystical one, altogether

different from the ritual couch experience of customary cult practice.

### **INTRODUCING NEW CULT PARTICIPANTS**

Such shamanistic practice would have been in keeping with the warrior cult alluded to in the poem which formed the basis for the features that Enheduanna brought into the Dumuzi cult. Its shamanistic roots go back to Lugalbanda who was closely associated with it. This is also evident in the kind of participants she introduced into the new cult.

She added to the young men and women taking part in the Dumuzi cult rituals, other cultic groups, all in warrior context. They often carried weapons, like the double axe<sup>[675]</sup> that was so closely associated with the Akkadian Emperors.<sup>[676]</sup> Among these were cross-dressers, eunuchs, men wearing women's clothing and women wearing men's clothing and even carrying weapons. Such cross-dressing practices are also found in shamanistic circles among shamans.<sup>[677]</sup> They visually express the hermaphroditic identity shamans and mystics discover at the end of the road.

We find the earliest reference to such people belonging to the Inana cult in this poem by Enheduanna, where the circumstances of their inception are recounted. She tells how Lugal-anne raped her and how she called out in revenge for his "manhood" to be thrown at her feet.<sup>[678]</sup> Such a practice is consistent with stories about the Akkadians castrating their enemies. We read, for example, in the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend*:

"I (Sargon) covered the heads (of the people of) Alasia  
(Cyprus) like woman.

As to the Amorites, instead of tearing of their nose, I cut off  
their penis."<sup>[679]</sup>

Enheduanna writes:

"What is he to one, Oh Suen [Sin], this Lugalanne!

Say, thus to An: 'May An release me!'  
Say but to An 'Now!' and An will release me.  
This woman will carry off the manhood of Lugalanne.  
Mountain flood lies at her feet.  
That woman is as exalted (as he) – she will make the city  
divorce him.  
Surely, she will assuage her heartfelt rage for me...  
Having entered before you as a partner, he has even  
approached his sister-in-law.  
Oh, my divine impetuous wild cow, drive out this man,  
capture this man!"<sup>[680]</sup>

The reference to a "mountain flood" directly after mentioning Lugal-anne's "manhood" being "carried off", may also refer to his severed phallus because water and seed were closely associated with one another in Sumer.

In keeping with the new cult reflecting Enheduanna's own experiences, we read that eunuchs were assigned to her when she was banished to roam the mountains: "The life-giving tiara of en-ship was taken from me. Eunuchs were assigned to me—'These are becoming to you', it was told me."<sup>[681]</sup> She mentions the daggers and swords these people carried in the rituals where they castrated themselves in ecstatic frenzies.

In one of her later poems, called *The Mistress, the stout-hearted (in-nin-sa-gar-ra)*, written when the new cult had already become well-established, Enheduanna says it is Inana's privilege "to turn a man into a woman and a woman into a man". She also mentions these cult participants in a somewhat broken and incomplete section:

"The ecstatic, the *pilipili* who has been changed, the *kur-garra*, the *sag-ur-sag*...  
Lament and song...  
They exhaust themselves by weeping and grief, they  
perform songs of lamentation."<sup>[682]</sup>

The “pilipili” was an ecstatic woman who carried weapons. We read that Inana gave her a weapon “as if she was a male”. The “kur-garra” were “feminine men”,<sup>[683]</sup> perhaps eunuchs. The name, “sag-ur-sag”, means “strong hero”. The word, “strong”, may refer to their power to perform magic rites, as part of the cult rituals.<sup>[684]</sup> The ancients probably thought of these cult participants as being possessed by certain spirits or daemons during their trance dances. We read in the same poem: “To assign virility, vigor, guardian angels (vitality), good fairies (productivity) and cult-place are yours, Inana.”<sup>[685]</sup>

The sag-ur-sag are also described in a Dumuzi cult hymn dating from the Isin-Larsa Period a few hundred years later:

“The sag-ur-sag comb their hair (?) before her, they walk  
before the pure Inana.

They decorate the napes of their necks with coloured bands  
(?), they walk before the pure Inana.

They place upon their bodies the ‘cloak of divinity’, they  
walk before the pure Inana.”<sup>[686]</sup>

These cult participants each wore a kind of necklace with a “cloak”, perhaps a lion skin. Men dressed in lion skins are shown in later representations of the Inana cult. In these representations the lion skins hang low down between their legs and they also wear lion masks.<sup>[687]</sup>

There might have been a group of male warrior-shamans, the sag-ur-sag, acting with a group of women who “became men”. The new role of the women included in the cult would have reflected Enheduanna’s own actions and conduct, as well as that of the goddess, during her exile. In contrast with the Inana of the fertility cult, this Inana removes all vegetation.<sup>[688]</sup> She “removes her foot from the byre”, resulting in women “no longer speaking of love with her husband, and at night they no longer have intercourse”.<sup>[689]</sup>

Such a group of ascetic women, most likely founded by Enheduanna, is found in post-Akkadian Sumer. They were

called *naditu* in Akkadian and *lukur* in Sumerian, which means “the chaste woman”. The word association is with barren ground, as in the poem. An Akkadian seal exists where Ishtar of war is shown with a group of chastely dressed women, which might possibly be these *naditu*.<sup>[690]</sup> They did not marry and lived in cloisters.<sup>[691]</sup> Males also practised ascetic behaviour, some of whom were eunuchs or “men who became females”.

### THE DUMUZI CHILD

We will now focus on the Dumuzi child who played a central role in the new cult. Although the Dumuzi child personified “seed” growing into fruit, dates, grain and so forth, in the Akkadian legends and myths, this child became embodied in figures from the imperial dynasty. In the *Sargon birth legend*, Sargon is, for example, identified with Dumuzi, portrayed as the new Dumuzi who has returned. In Enheduanna's poem, *Lady of all the me's*, she is identified with the Dumuzi child. In time she was even regarded as a form of this god, going by the name of Heduanna.

Sargon was regarded as the new Dumuzi not only in the sense of Dumuzi returning but also as representing the new sprout from the ancient family tree of the descendants of the “Shining Ones”. In Sargon, a new dynasty from this lineage, worthy of the throne, returned, in the same way Dumuzi's return was celebrated in the cult rituals. As Enheduanna was also portrayed in the same image, the idea must have involved more than only the person of Sargon. It, in fact, applied to the imperial dynasty itself. The Akkadian dynasty was the royal “seed” descended from the gods, the paramount Nephilim dynasty.

In bringing warrior and priestly cults together in one cult, Enheduanna conformed to the messianic ideal now revolving around the Akkadian dynasty. Messianic figures, like Gilgamesh, integrated both the kingly (“lugal”; warrior-king) and priestly (“en”; priestly ruler) functions into their

own persons. As such, he—and presumably all such messiahs from the lineage of Meskiagkasher—was seen as a descendant from both the kingly and priestly lines going back to his forefather, Meskiagkasher. The same applies to the Akkadian Emperors. Both Sargon and Naram-Sin were great priest-kings. When we then find both the warrior cult and the priestly cult united into the new imperial Dumuzi cult, a more permanent bestowal of the messianic ideal on this dynasty is clearly implied.

One may now ask where the child born from the fire fits into this picture. The birth of this child as part of the shamanistic experience was one of Enheduanna's new additions to the Dumuzi cult. But how is this child related to the figure of Dumuzi? These questions can only be answered once we have looked into and considered the mystical experience more carefully.

The shaman or mystic experiences something similar to that which is enacted in the cult. In their inner being, they experience the death of the “natural man” or old ego, similar to the death of Dumuzi, followed by a new person or self-born in its stead. This clearly corresponds with Dumuzi's return. [\[692\]](#)

This does not involve a sudden or quick occurrence. The shaman or mystic does not produce this new person or self in an instance within their inner being. A rather long process is required in order to produce this new person, in the same way a child is produced in natural life. The spiritual, however, differs from the natural in that this inner child is produced from the inner “flames” of the mystic's being. The best way to understand this is analogous to the natural processes of nature, where clouds are formed by water heated by the sun.

In the inner experience, two such watery processes are re-enacted, namely the evaporation of water to form clouds, envisioned as a male bird, and the deep underground water cycle, envisioned as a female snake, the Kundalini of

eastern tradition. These two processes must join and unite in order to produce the so-called “seed pearl” or “elixir of life”. These natural cycles represent different spirit entities involved in this mystical process.

The seed pearl grows into an inner immortal and divine child born from an egg. The child’s birth from an egg goes back to the ancient shamanistic tradition in which initiates were reborn as chicks.<sup>[693]</sup> This image is simply a more detailed image and description than the one we have encountered in the story of Lugalbanda, who was also reborn as such a chick.<sup>[694]</sup>

### **NARAM-SIN, THE CHILD BORN FROM THE FIRE**

Although this is a purely inner experience, within cult practice it would surely have been enacted in role-play. The cult might have had a lower “level” focusing on fertility rites and a higher “level” focusing on shamanistic initiation. Since the Emperor stood at the heart of the imperial cult, these images applied to his person, embodying the Dumuzi spirit or the genius of society as a whole.

These motifs clearly apply to Sargon as well as Enheduanna, both of whom were identified with the Dumuzi child who returned from the netherworld. It may be assumed that they regarded the Akkadian imperial dynasty as the new manifestation of the ancient Nephilim bloodline, a dynasty that sprouted from the genius of Dumuzi and from which a messianic figure or figures would arise.

These motifs also apply to Naram-Sin, acknowledged as a god after his “fire” ordeal during the Great Revolt. In fact, the very same symbols used to illuminate the shamanistic-mystical experience, were applied to Naram-Sin's person! We saw that he was described as a lion-headed Anzu bird as well as a viper, both united into one awe-inspiring divine being, an image reminiscent of the unification of the male bird and the female snake in the shamanistic-mystical



experience. This was the first time in Sumerian history that these two symbols were united into one image.

Readers will recall that these two symbols, namely the Anzu and the snake, were not only identified with certain Shining Ones or daemons, associated with the heavenly and netherworldly realms, respectively (in Chapter 4), but also with certain family bloodlines associated with those daemons in cultic practice, which were later taken up in the caste system (Chapter 8). The ancients apparently believed that these ancient bloodlines were brought together in the person of Naram-Sin. We saw something similar when we discussed Gilgamesh, an earlier messianic figure, in whom the warrior and priestly lineages were also united.

This brings us to the essential point, namely the fact that these two united symbols were used for the divine and immortal child born from the inner mystical experience, which means that their application to the divine Naram-Sin bears great significance—he was viewed and regarded in exactly the same terms! In the same way the inner immortal child is born from the inner fire of the mystic's being, the divine Naram-Sin was born from the “fires” of the Great Revolt (viewing it as a fiery ordeal). Fascinatingly enough, we may therefore conclude that the initiates into these mysteries regarded Naram-Sin as the physical embodiment of the divine child born from the fire. [\[695\]](#)

How was he different from Gilgamesh then? Although Gilgamesh also to some extent agrees with this immortal child, he was not seen as fully divine, he was only two-thirds divine. Gilgamesh agrees with an earlier phase in the long unfolding process of shamanistic rebirth, namely when the fire is first “ignited” within the inner being of the mystic, the same fire in which the “seed pearl” eventually makes its appearance. The image from the shamanistic-mystical experience of two cyclical processes (like two lineages) joining and uniting in order to produce the so-called “seed pearl” or “elixir of life”, was only fully realised in the person



of the divine Naram-Sin. It was only in the person of Naram-Sin that this combined image found its full realisation.

Enheduanna's poem also points in this direction. The poem is not only about her experiences during the rebellion but also about Naram-Sin. Accordingly, Inana is described as fighting wars in the mountainous areas against the enemies of Akkad. As we read:

“That you devastate the rebellious land—be it known!

That you roar at the land—be it known!

That you smite the heads—be it known!

That you devour cadavers like a dog—be it known!

That your glance is terrible—be it known!”<sup>[696]</sup>

Although this description quite generally applies to Naram-Sin's battle against his enemies in the mountains, Enheduanna actually uses language agreeing with the wording of one of Naram-Sin's own inscriptions in another poem, called *Inana and Ebih* (*in-nin-me-hus-a*)<sup>[697]</sup>. We cannot separate Enheduanna's poems from the revolt against Naram-Sin and the victory Inana granted him over his enemies.

We can now conclude that Enheduanna's poem, the cult song regulating the imperial cult founded by her after the Great Revolt, revolved around the image of the child symbolising the imperial dynasty. The particular motif of the child born from the fire reflects and mirrors the birth of the divine Naram-Sin from the fires of the revolt. Both the child motifs used by Enheduanna in her poem, namely the Dumuzi child who was taken away and who returned as well as the child born from the fire, featured in Akkadian cultic practice where they applied to Sargon, Enheduanna and Naram-Sin. We may very well accept that these two images of the child played a central role in the two parts or “levels” of the Akkadian imperial cult.

## 15. THE NAKED LADY

The cult of the Akkadian Ishtar emphasised and focused on two aspects. She was a goddess of fertility as well as a goddess of war. As a fertility goddess, she is often shown completely naked, sometimes with snakes in her hands. As such, she represents the great mother goddess. Interestingly enough, this is how she was coupled with the western storm god as his consort in Enheduanna's poems.

As a naked lady, Inana-Ishtar, in time, became one of the most popular iconographic themes pertaining to the Akkadian imperial cult. In later centuries, she was often shown in this form in presentations of the Akkadian Emperors, called "god/man with the mace". Accordingly, this image of her enables us to track down the Akkadian imperial cult as it spread to foreign shores, especially to the distant west. This iconography was closely linked to these divine Emperors' magical role as protectors against evil spirits. In this form, the Akkadian cult became popular, by far outlasting the survival of the empire itself.

### INANA, THE STORM GOD AND NARAM-SIN

Inana's role as consort of the storm god is particularly fascinating. Her association with the storm god goes back to Enheduanna's poems, especially *Lady of all the me's* but also *The Mistress, the stout-hearted*. She is described as a dragon or a snake; she is also described in the storm god's image: "Like a dragon [snake] you have deposited venom on the land... In the guise of a charging storm, you charge. With a roaring storm you roar. With Thunder you continually thunder."<sup>[698]</sup> These depictions of Inana as a snake and Thunderbird identify her with the ancient Sumerian snake-goddess of shamanism but also with the consort of the storm god.

These two images actually belong together: The consort of the storm god had often been shown with snakes in her hands. On seal impressions, she is depicted as a naked lady with snakes in her hands standing on a winged lion, the Akkadian adaptation of the Thunderbird and emblematic animal of the storm god. In this case, she is simply another version of the ancient snake-goddess appearing naked at the roots of the shamanistic tree.

On one seal impression, Inana is shown standing on a winged dragon pulling the wagon of the weather god, the earliest ever image of dragons pulling chariots. She is naked, with what seems to be three snakes or dragons in each of her hands. This extraordinary portrayal of the naked lady with snakes in her hands served as the model for such images belonging to this cult for centuries to come. We will encounter this image again and again in later history as we carefully track down the Akkadian cult practice, founded by Enheduanna, throughout the ages. It became an iconic symbol outlasting the millennia, inspiring artists and storytellers even in our own time.

Readers familiar with the *Game of Thrones* series would recognise one of their favourite characters in this depiction. The creator of this modern epic drama brought that ancient motif back to life in the person of the Khaleesi, Daenerys Targaryen, also known as “Stormborn”. She is often shown naked, has three dragons and when they are fully grown, she is the one riding them, in scenes strikingly reminiscent of the naked Inana standing on the winged dragon. The Khaleesi’s supporters include the so-called Unsullied, elite warrior-eunuchs similar to the eunuchs of the cult of Inana. Although there is no explicit reference to the Nephilim in this fictional drama, one certainly gets the distinct feeling that this story is exactly about them and those families...



*Figure 23. Cylinder seal impression of Inana in her naked form standing on the winged lion with snakes in her hands.*  
[699]



*Figure 24. The storm god and his wife standing on winged lions, with her holding a snake in each hand.*  
[700]

Seal impressions from the Akkadian Period show the storm god and his consort standing on winged lions next to each other, with her holding snakes in her hands.<sup>[701]</sup> This depiction is significant. The storm god and his consort

unmistakably represent the two opposing symbols associated with the top and bottom of the cosmic tree in shamanistic tradition. Somehow the cult of the storm god included both these aspects of shamanism—at least since the Akkadian Period. This further confirms the close association of the Akkadian imperial cult with shamanism.

Returning to Naram-Sin, one may now suggest that these images, namely the Anzu and the snake, came together and combined in his person, reflecting the union of the characteristics of the storm god and his consort in himself. Enheduanna, in her poem, *Lady of all the me's*, describes Inana, as the wife of the storm god, in the image of roaring storm clouds as well as a massive snake. Both these images were combined in Inana's person, in exactly the same way as in the person of the divine Naram-Sin.

Why then would Inanna and the divine Naram-Sin share these images, both of which were used as part of one single description of their persons? Inana and Naram-Sin sharing these two powerful images suggests that he was regarded as the embodiment of the storm god and Inana's incarnated offspring. He was the divine child born from a terrible and fiery storm. Thus, the storm goddess, Inana, consort of the storm god, the divine mother, gave birth to the divine Naram-Sin.

This role of Inana as the mother goddess is in keeping with the ancient Sumerian tradition associating the snake-goddess with birth giving. Already in the *Kesh Temple Hymn*, is she, in her form as Ninhursag, portrayed as the mother goddess who gave birth to the Anunnaki gods, who performed duties in the temple. This is also how Enheduanna described Inana, namely as the wife of An and therefore mother of the Anunna! Accordingly, it makes sense that she gave birth, on a cosmic level, to the divine Naram-Sin, seen and regarded as one of these great gods.

This image adds something to our earlier discussion. [\[702\]](#)  
In Sumer, there was a long tradition of using the Anzu bird

as a symbol for shamanistic rebirth, also in messianic terms, where such figures were elevated and venerated throughout society as a whole. The Anzu bird's anthropomorphic form, as manifested in the storm god, whether Ningirsu, Adad or Tispak, served as the image for such messianic figures. Accordingly, the divine Naram-Sin was incarnating the essence of this god in his person. He was the new incarnation of the weather or storm god, one in whom the divine became fully manifested. In Naram-Sin's case, we also meet the goddess as the divine mother of this messianic figure.

The picture unfolding before us is that of Inana, the "mother", who on a cosmic level gave birth to the divine child, Naram-Sin. This is why the snake and the Thunderbird, or storm clouds, conjoined in descriptions of them, descriptions not used to describe anyone else from that early period. As a god, Naram-Sin also emanated the same terrible radiance and the same mighty and thunderous roar that Enheduanna ascribes to Inana.

We even find that Enheduanna's language and images in her poems reappear in Naram-Sin's epic tales. Inana's mighty roar and terrible brilliance frightened the Anunnaki gods into flight, forcing them into holes in the ground. In *Naram-Sin and the Lord of Apisal*, recounting events during the first part of the revolt, we read the following of Naram-Sin: "My lord, verily you are a lion. Your enemies - they are foxes... At the... of your roar - may they slink into [their] hallows."<sup>[703]</sup>

This shared imagery indicates that the close relationship between Naram-Sin and Inana goes far beyond her being his protector and granting him victory. In the Akkadian speculative theology, such images present him as the divine "son" of the goddess, born from the fires of the Great Revolt. They were even shown as a divine couple on a large stone mould of unknown provenance. He sits with his horned crown of divinity next to the enthroned goddess,

Ishtar.<sup>[704]</sup> This is most probably a depiction of the divine mother and her son.

Inana giving birth to the god, Naram-Sin, was probably viewed in parallel terms with Enheduanna giving birth to the child in the fire, especially since Enheduanna was viewed in parallel terms with Inana. This would be in line with the conclusion that the child born from the fire, notably in ritual context as part of the imperial cult, represented the divine Naram-Sin.

We cannot separate these aspects from the imperial cult. This divine couple served as the archetypal model for the cultic groups, namely the warrior-shamans and their female counterparts, the *naditu* women. It also tells something about the warrior-shaman attendants. One may conclude that at least some of them came from among participants attached to the cult of the divine Naram-Sin, worshipped at his own temple in Akkad. They in all likelihood attended to the divine child during role-play as part of the cult ceremonies. Some of these cult attendants might have come from among his Hurrian followers. As discussed earlier,<sup>[705]</sup> the archaeological finds, historical texts as well as the myth and the iconography of the god, Tispak, of Esnunna, show that some Hurrians became devout followers of Naram-Sin.

Enheduanna, embodying the goddess, together with Naram-Sin, might have represented the divine pair of mother and son in cult practice, reminiscent of the Madonna and Child of Christian tradition much later. Enheduanna might even have been regarded as one in whom the great goddess was manifested. We already know that she was later venerated as the divine Heduanna in the Dumuzi cult.

### **A POPULAR CULT**

Although the Akkadian imperial cult centred around the safety of the imperial dynasty, divinely protected during their time of severe distress and tribulation, it soon came to



include the well-being and safety of the entire population that fell under the protection of the Emperor. Since Naram-Sin was the archetype of the shaman-slayer of demons, some cult participants might also have played a shamanistic role, using magical rites, for example, in averting and expelling disease. Enheduanna also describes Inana in one of her poems as the one who controls disease.<sup>[706]</sup>

The Akkadian imperial cult myth of a child snatched away by evil forces but who returned and was successfully restored must have been complimented by cultic rituals involving safety during childbirth. The *naditu* women, for example, were associated with such magic rites. We read of “the *naditu*'s who with skill heal the foetus”.<sup>[707]</sup> They must have practised rites related to childbirth and the banning of evil forces from attacking babies.

Shortly after the Akkadian Period, during the Ur III Period, an evil daemon, snatcher of babies, made her appearance in Mesopotamia. She embodied exactly these evil forces alluded to in the Akkadian imperial cult. Called *Lamastu* in Akkadian and Dimme in Sumerian, she was a daughter of An, who was expelled from heaven.

*Lamastu* is the only evil daemon with an iconography, albeit a somewhat variable one. She is shown with heavy breasts, a lion's head and donkey's ears, talons for feet and a dagger in one hand and a snake in the other or with a snake in each hand. She was similarly shown with a dog's head, spotted like a leopard, with the lower legs of a donkey, sometimes winged or with a tail.<sup>[708]</sup> *Lamastu* is shown in the mountains posing like a master of animals. She is mothering pigs and dogs, with a scorpion at her feet. As expected, she was the focus of incantations against evil.<sup>[709]</sup>

Ishtar-Inana also took on such an evil form. Her fury and anger, which caused barrenness, shows this goddess taking on demonic features, like those identified with *Lamastu*. As the mother-protector who wanted to retrieve the stolen child, she herself adopted evil traits, as we read in



Enheduanna's poem: "With all the evil winds you snort..." In fact, the Dumuzi terminology in the poem casts Inana-Ishtar as one possessing even greater powers than the evil one who took the child, resulting in her successfully recovering the child. During that period, victors, such as Inana, often took on the form of demonic creatures subdued by them. Tispak, for example, took on the form of the monster it overcame and Naram-Sin is described in similar terms. The same apparently applied to Inana.

Inana, as an angry goddess, might have been represented in cult rituals with features of this demon in the same way as Naram-Sin is described in such terms. She took on that form to expel the evil forces who wanted to harm the child, especially the *Lamastu* demon, whose speciality was the killing of babies.<sup>[710]</sup> In fact, the *Lamastu* might even have originated as an independent embodiment of Inana's evil form, imitated in role-play in the cult.

### **WORSHIPPING THE GOD-KINGS**

The imperial cult revolved not only around the worship of the living god-king but also around deceased Emperors like Sargon. A beautiful depiction of a "mythical hero" on the seal of the Akkadian scribe, Ili-Eshdar, also significant for being the earliest portrayal of a Hercules figure, can be none other than Sargon, not as a living hero but in the form of a statue of him. Dressed like a typical Akkadian Emperor, he wears a headpiece with chevrons, a lion skin and sandals, carrying a bow and a club. He is shown with the warrior goddess, Ishtar, who presents him with the ring of kingship.<sup>[711]</sup>

Sargon was a "raging lion". As a great warrior he most surely had worn a lion skin, given the fact that the earliest descriptions of warriors wearing lion skins hail from his time.<sup>[712]</sup> The bow and mace were typical weapons of the Akkadian Emperors. Sargon was also closely associated with the warrior goddess, Ishtar, who granted him the throne. No

other hero from that period can be imagined being honoured in such a way.

Rather strange are the spikes of grain sprouting from our hero's shoulders and the goat jumping up against him. How can this be explained? The answer is simple. Such crop plants also emerged from the body of Dumuzi and the goat was the emblematic animal of this god.<sup>[713]</sup> Clearly, our hero shown on the seal was identified with Dumuzi.

This is exactly what we know about Sargon. He was regarded as the new Dumuzi who had returned. The depiction on the seal is in keeping with the popular myth of Sargon being identified with Dumuzi, showing that this image, does in fact, go back to Akkadian times. This depiction probably refers to a statue of Sargon which played a role in the imperial Dumuzi cult.



*Figure 25. Seal impression showing Sargon as the earliest Hercules figure (British Museum, London).*

Such statues of kings appeared at the entrances of temples even before the Akkadian Period. Later, statues of the Akkadian Emperors stood, for example, in the throne room of the palace at Mari in the west.<sup>[714]</sup> These statues

were, like our “mythical hero”, clothed in the typical garb of those Emperors.

Statues of Akkadian Emperors became an important iconographic theme for seals in the post-Akkadian Period, especially during the Old Assyrian Period in the early second millennium BC. They are shown on such seals in battle dress with mace in hand. Although scholars often vaguely refer to this image as the “god/man with the mace”, there cannot be any doubt that these depictions are, in fact, of the Akkadian Emperors.

The “god with the mace” has a “splaying/curling beard, turban, a dress reaching to the knees, and a mace held in the hand immediately below the hump”.<sup>[715]</sup> He is sometimes shown on a plinth, often as the object of worship.<sup>[716]</sup> Living kings of later periods, wearing the typical dress of their time, appear with these figures as part of the same composition.<sup>[717]</sup> This implies that these representations are of statues dressed as Akkadian kings.

The Sumerologist, F. A. M. Wiggermann, confirms this: “The origin of the fixed representations, and the undeniable resemblance of the ‘god with the mace’ with kings of an earlier [that is, Akkadian] period, may be sought in the statues of kings standing full size in buildings.”<sup>[718]</sup> The “god with the mace”, especially popular in the western regions of Mesopotamia, probably depicts statues of these Emperors standing in the throne room at Mari, an important middle-western city.

Such a figure was painted as part of a sequence or scene on a wall in the royal palace at Mari. This scene portrays the king, facing the goddess Ishtar, together with this figure with the mace on the right-hand side thereof. It depicts the throne room of the palace where the statues of the Akkadian Emperors, Naram-Sin and Sargon, stood. One seal depiction of the “god with the mace” is very similar to the scene on the wall painting in the palace at Mari.<sup>[719]</sup>

In the Mari wall painting, this figure is shown with horns, which enables us to identify him.<sup>[720]</sup> The only Mesopotamian king ever to have been depicted with horns is Naram-Sin. This is consistent with the Akkadian dress the figure is wearing.<sup>[721]</sup> The “god with the mace”, depicted on the Old Assyrian and Old Babylonian seals, however, do not have horns. One may accept this to be a depiction of Sargon, the only other Akkadian Emperor honoured with a statue in the Mari throne room during this period. It also fits in well with Sargon’s popularity in the western regions, where stories of his magnificence were told and circulated.

On some seal depictions, the “god with the mace” is shown with the sun god, Samas, who stands with his feet on a mountain or a monster.<sup>[722]</sup> This recalls seals from the Akkadian Period where Samas is shown subduing Naram-Sin’s enemies. The depictions on the Old Assyrian seals recall those events during which this great Emperor obtained victory over the demonic hordes with the help of his gods.

These depictions of the Emperor might revere the power of his spirit or genius (*lamassu*) in the spirit realm. As one who subdued demonic hordes during his lifetime, his spirit might have been called upon to help against such forces even in the afterlife. Accordingly, such seals were probably used as amulets. Although they recall Naram-Sin’s victories, the reason the “god with the mace” on these seals is not shown with horns, is that some of Naram-Sin’s stories gradually and in time became associated with Sargon.

As in the case of the above depiction of Sargon wearing a lion skin, the “god with the mace” is often shown with the Akkadian goddess, either in her naked form or as a war goddess.<sup>[723]</sup> In such compositions her naked image, embodying and emphasising her fertility aspect, was especially popular. The “god with the mace” is also shown with the storm god, Adad, consort of this goddess.<sup>[724]</sup>

On one seal, in the Johns Hopkins Archaeological Museum in Baltimore, the “god with the mace” is shown with a dwarf and an inscription mentioning “Adad and Sala”. Sala was the consort of the storm god, Adad. This suggests that the scene is related to the Akkadian imperial cult in which those Emperors were worshipped in the company of Adad and Ishtar, identified with Sala. Dwarfs also appear in other such scenes together with the “god with the mace”.<sup>[725]</sup>

Although the naked goddess is shown as consort of the storm god, exactly as she is described by Enheduanna in her cult song serving the imperial cult, this depiction has a special bearing on her fertility role in the same cult, a role explaining her naked form. Interestingly enough, a naked female figure is often shown pulling her dress aside to reveal her pubic triangle.<sup>[726]</sup> The bull-men and hairies with her represent the attending cult participants involved in this ritual. Depictions of the naked lady may also represent Ishtar’s attendants or even the nymph spirits associated with them.

The “god with the mace” is frequently accompanied by another female figure, called a *lamassu*. With her raised hands she is a spirit or genius who introduces someone to a god.<sup>[727]</sup> She is also shown on the Mari wall painting, appearing on both sides of the king who is facing Ishtar.<sup>[728]</sup> The “god with the mace” often faces the *lamassu*, who in such representations introduces users of seals, as petitioners with their requests to the god-king. An image of the naked goddess often appears in these scenes, presumably and especially when petitions centred around fertility or protection during childbirth.



*Figure 26. Seal impression showing the “god with the mace” facing a lamassu.* [\[729\]](#)

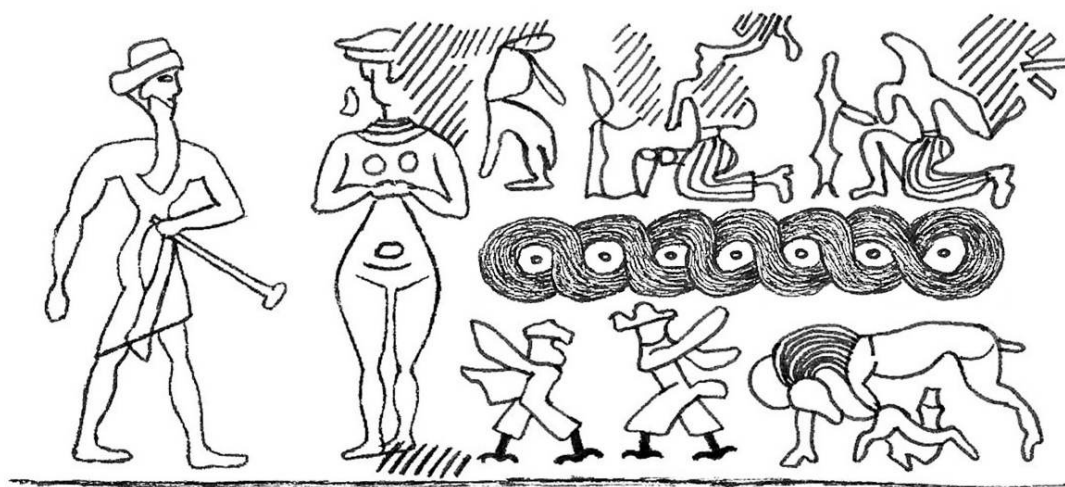
The Akkadian imperial cult clearly contained a popular element which became more highlighted and focused on in later centuries. One can imagine that people prayed to the spirits or genii of these Akkadian heroes in order for them to intercede with the great goddess on their behalf, to protect them during childbirth and in various other circumstances.

### **THE AKKADIAN CULT IN NORTHERN SYRIA**

During the early second millennium BC, the worship of the Akkadian Emperors as part of Inana’s cult became popular in northern Syria. This is attested to by depictions of the “god with the mace” and the naked goddess on Syrian seals. [\[730\]](#) In these northwestern regions, the Akkadian goddess was identified with the Ishtar of Nineveh, whose temple, according to tradition, was built by one of the Akkadian Emperors. This goddess was simply another



version of the Akkadian Ishtar-Inana. She is described in precisely the same way as the Akkadian goddess, namely “Annunitum of battles”. She also had a dual nature uniting her fertility and warlike characteristics, the defining characteristics of the Akkadian Ishtar-Inana.<sup>[731]</sup>



*Figure 27. The “god with the mace” on a Syrian seal.*<sup>[732]</sup>

Ishtar of Nineveh is also shown as naked with wings, the same as the Akkadian Ishtar, described as a bird in Enheduanna's poems.<sup>[733]</sup> This naked goddess is the only version of Ishtar associated with the winged lion, called the “lion-dragon”.<sup>[734]</sup> She is Ishtar, consort of the storm god, whom we have already encountered in Enheduanna's poems.

Ishtar of Nineveh was identified with Sauska or Sawuska, consort of Tessub, the Hurrian storm god,<sup>[735]</sup> and she was worshipped as such, especially in the northwestern regions of Mesopotamia, even as far afield as Anatolia.<sup>[736]</sup> This identification again reflects the inclusion of Hurrians into the Akkadian cult. In Anatolia, where the goddess's special skills in magic were emphasised, incantations were used in her cult with her attendants being led by a “seer”. She was beseeched to cure diseases and asked to lift curses.<sup>[737]</sup> This

goddess was later worshipped in many variant local forms, basically hypostases of one archetype, similar to the Madonna in the Catholic Christian tradition. The Inana cult also mutated over time into many variant forms.

In some texts, Sawuska is associated with both Sargon and Naram-Sin.<sup>[738]</sup> The connection of the Akkadian god-kings with the naked goddess and the storm god, or the Anzu, is also found in the stories told about them. In the *King of Battle* epic, Sargon, for example, visits the Anatolian mountains where the *Kilili* and Anzu kept. The word *Kilili* refers to Ishtar as a naked goddess in her aspect as an owl.<sup>[739]</sup> As she is mentioned together with the Anzu, we may assume this to be a literary version of the depictions of the naked goddess standing on the winged lion.

### **SARGON, THE GREAT SPIRIT-PROTECTOR**

These stories about Sargon reflect the worship of the Akkadian Emperors in those western regions. In the same way they were worshipped in the form of their statues in Mari, a similar popular tradition existed in which they were worshipped in these faraway northwestern regions. A statue of Sargon stood in the Amanus Mountains, where he was worshipped as an exceptionally great hero. This tradition about Sargon's statue appears in the omen tradition<sup>[740]</sup> and the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend*.

As could be expected, the cult worship of these Emperors went hand in hand with stories of their great and mighty deeds.<sup>[741]</sup> In time, these stories became all the more grandiose and bold, only possible for singularly great heroes with superhuman powers. We read in the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend* that Sargon divided the Amanus and erected a statue of himself as an image of his power over that area: "I bound a rod of carnelian and lapis lazuli, and distributed it to the land. I smote the Humanum Mountains in two parts and I set up my statue like a peg between them." Another translation reads: "I (Sargon) smote Mount Amanus in two



and set up a peg of ownership.”<sup>[742]</sup> The Humanum Mountains probably refers to a particular range or peak as part of or associated with the Amanus Mountains.

Offerings were brought to this statue, as we read in this composition: “Let them, oh Adad king, make the regular offering for me abundant.”<sup>[743]</sup> Just like statues of the Akkadian Emperors, depicted as the “god with the mace”, were associated with Ishtar and the storm god in iconographic depictions, this divine couple is constantly referred to throughout this text celebrating Sargon’s great and powerful feats.

Another beautiful story of Sargon in the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend* goes as follows: “I swore by Adad, the lord of strength, and Ishtar, lady of battle: I saw a gazelle and I threw a mud brick into the river but while I was running my belt broke, so I put on a snake, I ran, and so I (both) caught the gazelle and picked up the mud brick from the water!”

Sargon was able to catch the gazelle before the mud brick could dissolve in the water!

We find a striking claim in the opening lines of the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend*: “King Sargon, king of the metropolis Akkad, the mighty king who converses with the gods.” Here, Sargon is portrayed as a great magician with direct access to the gods, as a powerful figure in the afterlife who could intercede with the gods. This suggests the use of omens and magical rituals by shaman-medicine men associated with his cult.<sup>[744]</sup> It is in keeping with depictions of pleas made to the “god with the mace” as well as the role magic played in the Akkadian imperial cult.

Clearly, the Akkadian imperial cult outlasted the actual rule of these great god-kings. Accordingly, they were worshipped long after their deaths as divine spirits, coming to the aid of their worshippers. In the same way the later inhabitants of Mesopotamia called upon the spirit of Gilgamesh, who was only two-thirds divine, to take control of evil spirits, they called upon the divine spirits of the

Akkadian Emperors to do the same. And these Emperors were in fact much more powerful than Gilgamesh!

## 16. GREAT SECRET OF THE GODS

The Akkadian Period had a long-lasting impact on the ancient Middle Eastern world and far beyond in place and time. Akkadian themes were used and reused in some great literary works of later times. Accordingly, these works provide us with another angle from which the Akkadians, the Akkadian imperial cult and their speculative theology can be studied. One of these works is the great *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

On the face of it, when first hearing about or reading this epic, it tells the story of the historical hero, Gilgamesh. Although true in a certain sense given the fact that parts of the story are based on legends told about the historical person behind this great hero, his elevation to a cosmic hero took shape within the backdrop of the great heroic tradition of the Akkadian Emperors. In keeping with the Akkadian (and not Sumerian) language in which this epic was written, we find that the geographical picture of the world underpinning the hero's exploits and the epic tales of his visits to faraway regions, are in fact based on the legends of the Akkadian Emperors.

The *Gilgamesh Epic* introduces a theme of central importance to our study of the supposed descendants of the Nephilim. Upon closer scrutiny, we discover that some of the great stories in this epic are none other than literary accounts of the otherworldly journey that the shaman embark on, taking us to the heart of the shamanistic-mystical experience itself. As pointed out in the previous chapters, such shamanistic motifs were fundamental to and underlay the cult practices of the Akkadian imperial cult.

The stories explored in this chapter encompass and include the great secrets of the hidden tradition. As such, the epic introduces our hero as "the one who saw everything". There is a play-on-words between "everything"

and “the Deep”. Somehow, that which our hero saw when diving into the Apsu near the island of Dilmun concerns the very heart of a great secret. We read: “Secret things he saw, hidden ones revealed. The knowledge brought from the days before the Flood.”<sup>[745]</sup> These secrets might once have been taught in the temple of the god of wisdom on this island.<sup>[746]</sup>

## **VISITING DILMUN**

Readers will recall that our story began with an account of our visit to the Zagros Mountains, to the north of ancient Sumer. Now we move in the opposite direction, to the island of Dilmun, located in the Persian Gulf to the south of Sumer and since the Akkadian Period identified with the modern-day island of Bahrain.

We visited the island in the year 2003, flying from Cairo to Doha and from there on to Manama. When I first saw Bahrain from the air, this island’s beauty enchanted me instantly. The turquoise green-blue colour of the shallow waters surrounding the island contrasts spectacularly with the white colour of the buildings of Manana and the desert bordering the city. With such amazingly clear waters, one can see the bottom of the sea in the shallow areas near the shore, from the air.

Since ancient times the waters around Bahrain have been famous for the sweet water fountains rising from the seabed. The ancients believed the waters of the Apsu flowed in a “water pipe” all the way from the mouth of the Euphrates in the marshlands of southern Sumer to Bahrain. According to one story, the god, Enki, gave the island to Ninsikila, the “pure virgin lady”, as a bridal gift. She complained that the place had no water.<sup>[747]</sup> He then brought fresh water under the sea to the island: “... from the mouth of the water flowing in the Netherworld he made the fresh water flow out from the ground for her.”<sup>[748]</sup>

The island must have been exceptionally beautiful and charming in ancient times when it was hailed as the “pure place”. When visiting, one still gets a feeling and a glimpse of those ancient features and virtues of this paradise-like island. While the aircraft was approaching the island, Gilgamesh, who, according to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, also visited this island so many centuries ago and came here by sea, instantly and clearly came to mind. He came here to visit the flood hero, Uta-napisti, and his wife, who achieved immortality and settled on the island, while we only have the ancient burial fields to remind us of those ancient inhabitants.

Since the earliest times, Dilmun was looked upon as being on the opposite end of the known world, the direct opposite of Aratta in the northern Zagros Mountains. Except for Aratta, Dilmun is the only place outside of Sumer, to be mentioned in the oldest known Sumerian texts. Petr Charvát writes: “[They are] too conspicuously placed not to wake the suspicion of having been chosen as the poles of the world.”<sup>[749]</sup>

In their understanding of the cosmos, Dilmun and its southern location was identified with the lower regions of the cosmos where the netherworld and the deep waters of the Apsu were located. In the *Gilgamesh Epic*, Dilmun is accordingly identified with the island of the blessed dead. As such, the presence of Uta-napisti and his wife on the island should not be seen in any historical context. We should rather see them in a mythological-religious context as inhabitants of the netherworld.

On the island, we were driven around by taxi in order to see and visit all the beautiful and interesting sites. We were especially interested in sites dating back to the period under discussion, such as the ancient harbour at Qala’at Al-Bahrain on the island’s northern shore, the Barbar Temples and the tombs of Sar nearby as well as the Royal Tombs of

A'Ali. We also visited the Bahrain National Museum with its remarkable and extensive collection of artefacts.

One iconic feature of Bahrain is the more than 100 000 tholos tombs on the island, reportedly the largest burial field of the ancient world.<sup>[750]</sup> Scholars have even suggested that many people from elsewhere wanted to be buried on this island.<sup>[751]</sup> It is quite an experience to visit the enormous fields of tombs at A'Ali, uncountable tholos burial tombs of different sizes, stretching into the distance as far as the eye can see. Several of the larger tombs, mounds of several meters high, the so-called Royal Tombs, had previously been excavated.

While sitting on one of the higher tholos tombs, staring into the distance, a strange story in the *Gilgamesh Epic* sprang to mind. Uta-napisti, the “exceedingly wise”, told our hero about a plant growing in the sea near the island, a marvellous and wondrous plant with powers to endow rejuvenation and apparently even immortality. This plant is called “plant of heartbeat” or “the Old Man has Grown Young”.<sup>[752]</sup> Gilgamesh found this plant when he dived down to the Apsu, the sweet water springs in the sea not too far from the shore, with weights attached to his ankles.

He later, however, lost the plant when a snake stole it from him whilst swimming in a pool. The association of this region with the snake is not surprising, given the fact that the snake was the primary and most important symbol of the netherworld. Strikingly, the snake shed its skin when it took the plant. This clearly signifies the plant's powers to renew and rejuvenate, powers supposedly belonging to the snake as the owner of the plant. One may accept that this plant was important in the search for eternal life, with those amongst the dead inhabiting the island having had access to it on a spiritual level. According to the story, the true meaning of this plant constitutes nothing less than a “secret of the gods”.

The plant's appearance is "... like box-thorn, its thorn like the dog-rose's".<sup>[753]</sup> There cannot be any doubt that this refers to the rough outer appearance of the oyster shells producing pearls, for which the waters of Bahrain have been renowned since ancient times. The description of Gilgamesh diving with weights around his ankles in order to find this plant is presumably typical of the way the ancient pearl divers went about it. In the same way the island of Bahrain represented the cosmic domain of the netherworld, these beautiful coloured "stones" found nearby at the bottom of the Apsu denoted immortality for the ancients. In order to explain how this all fits into the tradition we are studying, we need to engage in more detail with the *Gilgamesh Epic*.

### **GILGAMESH AS AN AKKADIAN HERO**

The *Gilgamesh Epic* tells about the great journeys our hero undertook to faraway regions, regions beyond the confines of the known world. Two of the stories told in this epic, namely his journeys to the Cedar Mountain and to Dilmun, are especially intriguing. In these stories, Gilgamesh is the archetypal hero, with an image fashioned from the lives of the Akkadian Emperors who lived a few centuries before the epic was written. Gilgamesh's stories include many motifs taken from the legends of those great Emperors. The similarity between Gilgamesh's birth legend and that of Sargon might have played a role in identifying the great Sumerian hero with the Akkadian rulers.

As a superhuman hero, Gilgamesh performed astounding and magnificent deeds. He is described as worthy of all the titles earlier ascribed to the great Akkadian heroes, who travelled to those distant places. Accordingly, he ruled, together with Irnina, not only over the "black-headed people" and subjected the "rebel lands", he also ruled "over all the kings of the world". In fact, he "surpasses all other kings" as "the mighty king, who had no equal".<sup>[754]</sup> As a

cosmic hero who did exceptional deeds, Gilgamesh had no equal.

The first story tells how Gilgamesh and his close friend, Enkidu, travelled to the fabled Cedar Mountain in the distant west. Before the adventure, Enkidu suggested that they ask the sun god, Utu, for help. Utu subsequently provided them with seven warrior companions and the Urukian smiths provided them with powerful weapons. According to one Old Babylonian tablet, they took the route past the city of Ebla. [\[755\]](#)

Except for the fact that Akkad, and not Uruk, was the centre of their world in their time, these things were also said about one or both of the great Akkadian Emperors, who undertook similar expeditions to the west. [\[756\]](#) Sargon, for example, also prayed to the sun god on his way to the Cedar Mountain [\[757\]](#) in *Sargon, the lion*, [\[758\]](#) and smiths from the Nergal cult produced Naram-Sin's weapons for his campaigns into those regions. The Akkadian Emperors also took the route past Ebla.

But let us continue with Gilgamesh's story. When our heroes reached the Cedar Mountain, they could see the mountain of the gods from afar: "They were gazing at the Cedar Mountain, the dwelling of the gods, the throne-dais of the goddesses [or: Irnina]." [\[759\]](#) In the older Sumerian tradition the mountain of the gods was located in the northern Zagros Mountains. [\[760\]](#) The change in location resulted from innovations during the Akkadian Period when the Cedar Mountain in the northwest replaced the Zagros in the north as the cosmic pinnacle of the world.

As the heroes approached, they came upon the "ferocious" Humbaba, guardian of the Cedar Forest. He was a mighty and powerful being, protected by seven *pulhiatum*, or protective auras. Described as a terrible monster, he roared like the storm clouds: "His roar was the flood storm, his mouth fire, his breath death." [\[761\]](#) He was a demonic



creature, “the Evil Thing” that our heroes wanted to annihilate and destroy.<sup>[762]</sup>

The heroes went on to capture Humbaba with the help of Utu, who sent 13 winds against the monster. Against the will of the gods, they killed Humbaba. They cut off his head and then took it to Enlil’s temple at Nippur. They also cut down an exceptionally large and splendid cedar tree on this mountain, one Humbaba had supposedly guarded. As punishment for this misdeed (and for killing the bull of heaven) the gods demanded Enkidu’s death.<sup>[763]</sup>

Again, the story is based on legends about Naram-Sin, who defeated such evil forces on the Cedar Mountain<sup>[764]</sup> in *Gula-AN and the seventeen kings against Naram-Sin*. Like Humbaba, Naram-Sin’s terrifying opponents were depicted as a dreadful monster, the storm god Tispak’s monster. They were also described as demonic hordes. Depictions of Humbaba also show him with the talons of a raptor, in line with the birdlike descriptions of Naram-Sin’s enemies.<sup>[765]</sup> Even the name Humbaba agrees with Anubanini, father of the seven brothers leading the invading enemy hordes. Both names were derived from “Humba”. And like Gilgamesh and Enkidu, who ignored the will of the gods, Naram-Sin discarded the omens of the gods and attacked the invaders.

Other points of agreement include the 13 winds sent against Humbaba and the felling of a magnificent cedar tree in those mountains. These winds appear in the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend* where Sargon says: “I attacked (them) with the thirteen winds of heaven in my hand.”<sup>[766]</sup> We even find a depiction where it is not Gilgamesh but the “god with the mace” who defeated Humbaba,<sup>[767]</sup> a portrayal of the Akkadian Emperors whose statues were presented in this way, recalling their great victories. In this instance Humbaba is, in fact, identified with those demonic enemies!

The description of the fight between Gilgamesh and Humbaba on the Cedar Mountain is also reminiscent of Sargon’s victories on those mountains as told in the *Old*

*Assyrian Sargon Legend.* In the *Gilgamesh Epic*, where the Cedar Mountain became identified with the Lebanon Mountains (in accordance with later tradition), the fight led to the mountain being split in two: “He slew the ogre, the forest’s guardian, at whose yell were split asunder Sirion and Lebanon.”<sup>[768]</sup> The Sargon legend also includes this very same motif: “I smote the Humanum mountain in two parts and set up my statue like a peg between them.”<sup>[769]</sup>

The second story tells how Gilgamesh undertook another epic journey after the death of his friend, Enkidu, this time to the abode of Uta-napisti in search of immortality. Our hero took to the road again after spending time in the desert, roaming around in the skin of a lion he had killed. His quest now took him westwards to Mount Masu, the mountain of “sunset and sunrise”. The top of this mountain reached high into the sky with its base stretching down into the netherworld.<sup>[770]</sup>

The cosmic nature of this journey is revealed by two strange creatures he met on this mountain, namely the Scorpion man and the Scorpion woman. They allude to the constellation of Scorpius, associated with the mountain of sunset during spring time. Once the hero travelled past this place, he journeyed on through darkness along the “path of the sun” to the place of sunrise, crossing the “wide sea of sunrise” on the way.<sup>[771]</sup>

As expected, this story also goes back to legends of the journeys of the great Akkadian Emperors to such distant places, especially the journeys of Sargon. In the Sargon legends, it is told how he reached a mountain similar to Mount Masu, called Mount Simirrya, the top of which reached up into heaven and the base stretching down into the netherworld.<sup>[772]</sup> Like Gilgamesh, Sargon travelled through darkness before arriving at the place of sunrise: “Who went through the darkness and a light came out for him.”<sup>[773]</sup>

Gilgamesh eventually arrived at the abode of Siduri, the “ale-wife”, whom he approached for advice. Despite her warning against undertaking the journey to find Uta-napisti, he convinced the ferryman, Ursanabi, to take him to the dwelling place of this flood hero on Dilmun. On the way, they had to navigate the dangerous waters of death but, finally, he reached his destination. Shortly before departing again, Uta-napistim's wife asked her husband if he would not give their guest a gift before he left. It was then that he told Gilgamesh about the magical plant of rejuvenation.

This part of the story also reminds of stories told about Sargon. Sargon travelled to Dilmun, as Bahrain was called, which he then conquered. He also reached the distant land of Uta-rapastin.<sup>[774]</sup> With the names Uta-rapastin and Uta-napistim being so similar, they were identified with each other in Mesopotamian tradition. We can see this on a Babylonian world map from the sixth century BC, drawn on a clay tablet, showing the extent of Sargon's exploits. Here, the name, Uta-rapastin, is written as Uta-napistim. According to this map, only three people reached the ends of the world, namely Uta-napistim, Sargon and Nur-Dagal. According to the *King of Battle* epic, Nur-Dagal ruled over Purushanda in Anatolia.

Of special significance is the route that Gilgamesh took from Mount Masu, where the sun sets, to Dilmun, where the sun rises again over the Sumerian world.<sup>[775]</sup> According to the story, he travelled around the Mesopotamian world, all the way from the northwestern mountains, and eventually arrived in the Persian Gulf. This is exactly what we read in the *Sargon birth legend*: “I did ascend all the high mountains... The entire sea I went around, Dilmun did submit to me.”<sup>[776]</sup>

The words “the entire sea I went around” show that, according to tradition, Sargon travelled around the known world. The Akkadian word used literally means “surrounded”, which means he went around the entire sea.

[777] The only way to make sense of this—and of Gilgamesh’s journey—is to assume that he travelled from the Mediterranean Sea through the Egyptian Delta region down along the Red Sea and around the Arabian Peninsula to eventually arrive in the Persian Gulf. [778] At that time, it might have been possible to sail from the Nile Delta through Wadi Tumilat and the Eastern Lakes to the Red Sea. [779]

In the ancient Akkadian concept and comprehension of the world, this sea route around the Mesopotamian world was seen and interpreted as sailing along the ocean surrounding the known world. [780] This way of understanding the route taken by Sargon (and by Naram-Sin) is in line with my view that Makkan refers to Egypt. After his northern campaign to the Mediterranean Sea during the Great Revolt, Naram-Sin continued all the way to Makkan (Egypt), which he conquered and then returned via the Persian Gulf back home.

We find this same picture of the known world surrounded by sea in the story of Etana, the great Kishite hero who became so popular during the Akkadian Period. [781] In this story it is told how Etana saw the world from high above, looking down from the back of an eagle. It looked like an “animal enclosure”, surrounded by the ocean. [782] The aforementioned Babylonian world map also shows the world as being surrounded by sea, with so-called “nagu” islands located in the sea. [783] Sargon is said to have crossed the sea and reached those nagu areas. [784]

## **A STRIKING SYMMETRY**

The two stories under consideration about Gilgamesh show a remarkable and beautiful symmetry. There cannot be any doubt that the author’s intention was for them to stand in contrast with each other. In the first story, our heroes visit the northwestern mountains and in the second one, Gilgamesh travels to the island of Dilmun in the

southeast. Not only is the region of the northern mountains strikingly contrasted with the southern island of Dilmun, the stories also complement each other by following the same literary outline. For each event described in the first story, there is a corresponding one in the second.

The contrast does not only exist on a geographical level, between the northern mountain of the gods covered by storm clouds, where Humbaba kept, and the southern netherworldly island, where the serpent kept; it also concerns and pertains to two otherworldly domains beyond the reach of mere mortals, the same ones associated with the opposing poles of the ancient cosmic tree, namely “heaven” (or sky) and the netherworld. Sumer (and Akkad) was located in the centre between these two extreme ends of the cosmos. In the Gilgamesh stories, these domains, geographically located at the northwestern Cedar Mountain and the southeastern mountain of Dilmun, are identified with the mountains of sunset and sunrise.

This geographical picture has its counterpart in the layout of the celestial skies. In this scheme of things and in accordance with the cosmic regions in the celestial skies allotted to them, the northern region of the cosmos belonged to Enlil with the southern region having belonged to Enki. Accordingly, we read that Enlil established Humbaba as guardian of the forest whereas Enki appointed Uta-napistim on Dilmun after the deluge.<sup>[785]</sup> The association of Enlil with the monstrous Humbaba reflects the Babylonian view that Enlil was the one who brought the demonic hordes together in order to attack the land.

The abodes of Humbaba and Utu-napistim were located in realms not physically accessible to humans. That is the reason why Gilgamesh’s journeys to both the Cedar Mountain and to Dilmun only took him three days, journeys which would under normal circumstances each have taken at least one-and-a-half month.<sup>[786]</sup> The same happened during Lugalbanda's visit to the otherworldly abode of the

Anzu bird in the Zagros Mountains, which also only took three days. In his experience, Lugalbanda was away and absent for only three days but in his companions' experience, a long period of time had lapsed.

One may conclude that Gilgamesh travelled to these cosmic realms on another plane of awareness. In the first story about their journey to the Cedar Mountain, we read that Gilgamesh slept in a "house of dream spirits", just like the one in which Enheduanna stayed during her exile in the mountains and where she had her mystical experience. In the second, we read how Gilgamesh roamed in the desert like a shaman with long hair, wearing a lion skin. After Enkidu's death, he suffered from leprosy, reminiscent of the "lepers' ward" in Enheduanna's story, until Uta-napistim healed him. In the same way those with leprosy live in the zone between life and death, the shaman travels between our world and the otherworld. These motifs clearly indicate that these journeys are descriptions of otherworldly shamanistic flights.

Gilgamesh's companions on these journeys were Enkidu, who knew the route to the abode of Humbaba, and Ursanabi, who knew the route to the abode of Uta-napistim. Enkidu is like a shaman accompanying a hero while Ursanabi is a typical ferryman figure who takes the dead to the netherworldly island of the blessed. Uta-napistim and his wife represent the blessed dead on that island.

Both Enkidu and Ursanabi were introduced to Gilgamesh by women. Enkidu was seduced, tamed and brought to Uruk by the prostitute, Samhat. Ursanabi was acquainted to Siduri, a tavern keeper, the "ale-wife", on the edge of the Persian Gulf, but in contrast with Samhat, she was more chaste and even wore a veil.

In both stories, the people whom Gilgamesh set out to meet were furious with his companions for bringing him to them. Humbaba is not only angry with Enkidu, he also curses him, blaming himself for not killing Enkidu when they

previously met.<sup>[787]</sup> Utu-napistim is so furious with Ursanabi that he discharges him from service.<sup>[788]</sup>

Also fascinating is the association of the gods, Adad and Utu, the first being closely linked to the mountain of sunset and the second to the mountain of sunrise, with the personages whom Gilgamesh met in these cosmic realms. Humbaba is associated with Adad. We read that “Adad is the first but he [Humbaba] is the second”.<sup>[789]</sup> Uta-napistim, on the other hand, was associated with the sun god. He is sometimes called the “son” of Shuruppak, the city of the sun god.<sup>[790]</sup>

One may assume that the western mountain of the gods, where Humbaba served as guardian, refers to a mountain where the weather god, Adad, and his wife were worshipped. This fits the description in the epic where the “throne-dais of Irnina”, the Akkadian Ishtar in her form as Victory, is located in this area. We know that she was identified with the consort of the weather god in the Akkadian cult, which later spread to these northwestern regions.<sup>[791]</sup>

Conceivably, this mountain of the gods was a specific peak in the Cedar Mountain, which originally referred to the Amanus Mountains. Although the location of the Cedar Mountain was later moved to the Lebanon Range, the story of Gilgamesh goes back to an older tradition in which Sargon erected a statue of himself there after he, like Gilgamesh, “smote that mountain in two”. In the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend*, in which this story is told, Sargon refers again and again to Adad and Ishtar, in keeping with them having been worshipped in those mountains.

The mountain of sunset where Adad was worshipped stands in contrast with the mountain of sunrise on Dilmun, where Utu was believed to take his first steps before entering the sky above the Mesopotamian world.

Another contrasting image that appears in the two stories is the exceptional tree or plant our hero encounters at the



end of his respective journeys. In the story about their journey to the Cedar Mountain, Gilgamesh and Enkidu found an enormous cedar tree which they consequently felled. This cedar was so high, its “top vies with the heavens”.<sup>[792]</sup> The heroes used this cedar to craft a massive door for Enlil’s temple: “... its pole, its top pivot and its bottom pivot are all of a piece.”<sup>[793]</sup> They also carried Humbaba’s head to this temple. In the other story, Uta-napistim discloses the existence of a marvellous plant, the plant of rejuvenation, growing at the bottom of the Apsu near Dilmun.

Let us consider these contrasting images more carefully for a moment. The cedar is obviously the *axis mundi*. Enlil’s “temple”, with its door made from this cedar, being nothing less than the cosmos itself, ruled over by this god. The cedar is simply another version of the cosmic tree we have earlier come across in the northern Zagros Mountains. There, the birch was the shamanistic tree of choice, with the fly agaric mushroom (*Amanita muscaria*) growing in symbiotic association with it. I have identified the “plant of life” that Lugalbanda consumed while visiting those regions with these mushrooms.

Lugalbanda was initiated into secrets similar to those Gilgamesh was introduced to. In the latter’s case, Uta-napistim says to him: “I will disclose, Gilgamesh, a secret matter, and (I will) tell you a mystery of (the gods.) It is a plant...”<sup>[794]</sup> Lugalbanda’s consuming of the plant of life seemingly brought about the otherworldly experience, whereas Gilgamesh’s plant apparently brought about immortality, like that attained by shamans through their experiences.

The beautiful symmetry between the two stories strongly suggests that the author intended them to be read together as one story. The themes of the two stories also belong together, the theme of the first story being death, with the cosmic tree cut down and the guardian of the forest beheaded, and that of the other being rebirth and



immortality. Together, these motifs form the essence of the shamanistic experience, the same experience underlying cult practice in the Akkadian imperial cult. In that case, the theme of death and rebirth were re-enacted in the role-play about the disappearance of the Dumuzi child into the netherworld and his eventual return.

Our story takes us from the heights of heaven to the depths of the Deep. On the one hand, we have the cosmic mountain of the gods and the cedar representing the northern pole of heaven, splendidly visible in the polar star. On the other, we have the plant of rejuvenation growing at the bottom of the Apsu, deep in the southernmost ends of the cosmos.

From this point of view, the plant of rejuvenation seems to be nothing less than another image of a new shoot growing from the felled tree. The same is true in the mystical shamanistic experience, where the death of the natural or egotistic man is followed by the appearance of the new spiritual man, symbolised by the appearance of a seed pearl which grows into the immortal man. This explains why the oysters were described in the *Gilgamesh Epic* as the secret “plant” of rebirth and immortality. For the ancients, for whom these oysters comprised a great “secret of the gods”, these pearls were reminiscent of the seed pearl of immortality growing in the inner being of the mystic.

And so, we have discovered something that until now seemed inexplicable, namely why this strange plant at the bottom of the Apsu involved such a great secret.

## **ENKIDU**

It is now time to take a look into and explore these themes as they were applied in cult practice. This requires focusing on the other characters in our story, namely Enkidu, Humbaba, Siduri and Utnapishtim.

Enkidu plays a central role in the story about Gilgamesh and his journey to the Cedar Mountain. I have earlier<sup>[795]</sup> identified Enkidu with the hairies (lahmus), found in Sumerian art from very early on. Enkidu is described as naked “with tresses like a woman”,<sup>[796]</sup> in the same way the hairies are depicted. He lived in the female quarters with the “daughters of An”, again in line with the close association of the hairies with these female figures.<sup>[797]</sup>

In the *Gilgamesh Epic*, Gilgamesh had a dream about Enkidu even before he showed up in Uruk, a dream interpreted to him by his mother, Ninsun. In the dream, Enkidu is depicted as both a meteorite that fell from the sky and an axe, in keeping with him becoming the “axe” at Gilgamesh’s side.<sup>[798]</sup> Enkidu was a primitive man tamed by Samhat after copulating with him continuously for six days and seven nights(!) before bringing him to Uruk where Gilgamesh met him.

On the face of it this description may seem far removed from the Sumerian hairies, but it is interestingly enough not. The image of Enkidu as a meteor that fell from the sky is in agreement with my assessment that the hairies represent the divine seed that fell from heaven into the Apsu. The long copulation underscores the association with seed. And the depiction of Enkidu as a primitive man agrees with the hairies being represented as the first and most ancient beings coming forth from the Apsu. As such, we might identify them with the original four gods (coupled and associated with four goddesses) generated from the seed that fell in the Apsu, especially bearing in mind that the hairies were often depicted in groups of four. In keeping with the ancient tradition that those four primaeval gods were dwarfish or pygmy-like beings, the hairies, and Enkidu, who lived among the women in their quarters, might also have been pygmies.

The careful reader may object to this observation, arguing that Enkidu’s long period of copulation with Samhat

contradicts the possibility of him having been a harmless creature such as a dwarf or pygmy. Although it is common knowledge that dwarfs have disproportionately large penises (and heads), explaining this very strange story about copulation, it is also true that their short stature makes it difficult for them to have sexual encounters with large women (a fact especially true for pygmies who have small penises proportional to their overall size). Although the author of the *Gilgamesh Epic* based his Enkidu figure on the hairies, it may be proposed that except for some remnants of loose associations their original origin was lost on him. This could also explain why Enkidu is described as exceptionally strong, a feature he might have taken over from Humbaba.

It needs to be pointed out that although the iconography of the hairies is very old and the association of Gilgamesh with a hairy may have a basis in history,<sup>[799]</sup> Gilgamesh and Enkidu's journey to the Cedar Mountain is most definitely based on the later Akkadian traditions. This raises the suspicion that this friendship theme was also taken from Akkadian tradition. If the hairies belonged to the Dumuzi cult as I have suggested earlier (see Chapter 8), an Akkadian source for the story is quite likely, given the close relationship between the Akkadians and this cult.

A story mentioning Sargon's relationship with such a hairy-like high priest actually exists. This is told in the *Sargon birth legend*. Here, Sargon is associated with Akki, the water-drawer, who raised him as his adopted son and who is mentioned no less than four times in this story! Akki's role as "water-drawer" identifies him with the hairies, closely associated with water and shown in iconographical depictions with vases or pitchers overflowing with water and probably the model or basis for the constellation of Aquarius, the representation of a water-drawer.

Akki's role as a "gardener", a cultivator of the date palm, does not only describe him as the high priest in the Dumuzi

cult; this high priestly role might have stemmed from a tradition about the hairies, whose long hair reminds of shamans and who might have been the primitive shamanistic high-priests of the Dumuzi cult. If Akki stands in the hairy tradition, he might have been a pygmy! But Sargon's association with the hairies goes even further than that. In asserting that he was the rightful king of divine descent, he also claimed descent from the lineage of the divine seed which once fell in the Apsu, divine seed embodied in the hairies. Seemingly, Sargon's mythology and that of the hairies belong to the same corpus.

I therefore propose that the theme of the companionship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu originated in stories told about Sargon, accompanied on his military campaigns by shaman-priests who consulted the gods on his behalf. Sargon's close associate and friend, Akki, might have been one of them, a pygmy-shaman accompanying his master. One can easily imagine Akki and other pygmies or elfish people joining Sargon on his campaigns.

The description of Enkidu as the "axe" at the hero's side suggests a warrior role. He was, in fact, helping and assisting the hero performing his great deeds. Assuming that the figure of Enkidu was based on Akki, implies that Akki's role went beyond performing duties in the Dumuzi cult to one of comradeship with the king. Within the imperial cult, his fertility role might have acquired certain features earlier ascribed to warrior-shamans, such as giving protection during childbirth. Intriguingly, we find that the hairies were also depicted holding snakes in their hands. [\[800\]](#) This indeed implies such a warrior-shamanistic role. It also reminds of the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend* where Sargon himself held a snake in his hands, using it as a girdle.

Akki, as leader or "king" amongst the pygmies or elfish people joining Sargon as fighters on his military campaigns, reminds of another theme from J. R. R. Tolkien's legendarium in *Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*, where the elves

once fought side by side with humans in their wars. In these epic tales the elves are an ancient race from the remote past who joined forces with the men of Middle-earth, for example in the Second Age during the “Last Alliance of Elves and Men”, when Elendil, Isildur’s father and High King of Gondor, led the forces of men alongside Gil-galad, the High King of the Elves of the West, and others against the forces of their common enemy, Sauron. Elendil was the greatest warrior of all the Dúnedain, descendants of the most noble race of men.<sup>[801]</sup> These wars eventually led to the cataclysmic battle against Sauron himself, when Isildur claimed the One Ring for himself following their victory.

## **HUMBABA**

But let us return to our own story. In keeping with the assumption that the comradeship of Gilgamesh and Enkidu stemmed from the relationship between Sargon and Akki, we find that Humbaba is also, like them, associated with Sargon. This follows from Sargon’s starting the practice of using the intestines of animals as omens. These intestines are sometimes described as the “face of Humbaba”. One omen bears the inscription: “The intestines are like Huwawa [Humbaba]. It is the omen of Sargon who became lord of all the land.”<sup>[802]</sup>

Where did the name Humbaba and the strange face come from? The name Humbaba is derived from Humba, sometimes pronounced as Khumba, also known as Hanubani, Hamban, Humma, Umma and Imbi. He was the chief god of the Elamites, worshipped throughout the northern regions of the Zagros Mountains where this name appears, for example, in the name of Anubanini. Humbaba’s identity as Humba is confirmed by an omen reading “the face of Humba” instead of “the face of Humbaba”.<sup>[803]</sup> Textual variations in which Humba or Humma is rendered as Humbaba also exist.<sup>[804]</sup>

The earliest mention of the god Humba, now called Huban, is found in an agreement between Naram-Sin and Mita, the ninth king of the Elamitic land of Awan<sup>[805]</sup>. This goes to show that this god was known to the Akkadian rulers. They probably came across him during their military campaigns into the northern mountains. This god's strange wrinkled face reminded of the entrails of animals, explaining Humbaba's connection with such omens. The association of Sargon with the god, Humbaba/Humba, suggests that followers of this god accompanied this great Emperor on his campaigns, reading the intestines of animals for oracular purposes. Humbaba's face also reminded of an ape or monkey, explaining why he was associated with monkeys in some later traditions.

Peculiarly, Humbaba's face was also linked to the theme of revolt, apparently because such events were foreseen by these omens. We read in a text from the Old Babylonian Period early in the second millennium BC: "Supposed: the intestines are like the god Humbaba. It is an omen of a usurper who will become lord of the land."<sup>[806]</sup>

It stands to reason that the face of the evil Humbaba, seen in and associated with intestines, was the face of none other than the leader of the Great Revolt during Naram-Sin's reign. In some Naram-Sin legends, the invaders are the demonic followers of Anubanini, in others they are called Gutium, also described as possessing "monkeys' features".<sup>[807]</sup> This means that the invaders, and even Anubanini, could easily have been associated with such faces, especially since the name, Anubanini, is related to the name, Humbaba. In conclusion, it is certainly possible that the person, Anubanini, of the Naram-Sin legends could have given rise to the evil Humbaba.

## **HUMBABA, A GREAT SHAMAN?**

Although Humbaba might have evolved from the person, Anubanini, of the Naram-Sin legends, he is cast in a different role in the *Gilgamesh Epic*. In this epic, he is not a ruler but a powerful shaman roaming the northern mountains. Given the association of Humbaba with omens, it is quite possible that he portrays a shaman-priest serving the god, Humba, and consulting intestines in search for the will of the gods. In this guise, he might have been linked to the invading forces of the Great Revolt in Naram-Sin's time.

This fierce Humbaba, the guardian of the Cedar Forest, is an archetype of warrior-shamans roaming the northern mountains with the great cedar he protected, representing a ceremonial tree around which their cult centred. As a great shaman practising divination by using animal intestines, he depicts those followers of the god, Humba, who joined the Akkadian armies of Sargon and performed this role. Others from the ranks of such shamans might have joined the Hurrian camp, explaining Humbaba's bird features. After Naram-Sin's victories over the Hurrians, such shamans would have become attached to the Hurrian units that joined his army. This resonates with an Old Babylonian text containing references to the Gilgamesh cycle and describing Humbaba as a "captured hero". [\[808\]](#)

We have good reason to believe that Humbaba was associated with one of the cultic groups taking part in the Akkadian imperial cult, namely the sag-ur-sag, which means "strong hero". The word used for "hero", referring to Humbaba, is "ur-sag", which appears in the name sag-ur-sag. Another text, depending on the version, also refers to either Humbaba or Humba, as the "strong" servant of Tammuz (Dumuzi). In this instance, the "strong" servant of Dumuzi can only be the sag-ur-sag, the "strong" heroes, taking part in the Akkadian Dumuzi cult.

I have earlier proposed that the sag-ur-sag should be identified with men dressed in lion skins, wearing lion masks and taking part in the Inana cult. This is also how Humbaba



is described in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, namely as having the face of a lion. Masks used by participants in the cult might have been based on this face. The association of Humbaba with the Inana cult is also attested to in the later tradition about Kombabos, a name obviously derived from Humbaba. In the Syrian tradition, Kombabos, who castrated himself, was a devoted follower of the Great Mother.<sup>[809]</sup> He was the “best friend” of king Seleucus, no doubt reminiscent of and going back to the friendship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Here, Humbaba replaces Enkidu in this role. This may at first seem strange but it is in fact not, with Humbaba, in later tradition, being depicted with the six hairlocks of the hairies.<sup>[810]</sup>

Kombabos is also the prototype of the Galli, castrated followers of the Great Mother, who wore female clothing.<sup>[811]</sup> This means that Humbaba can also be associated with this group. The Galli were probably the same caste of priests, called Gala in Sumerian or *kalû* in Akkadian. This follows from the corresponding names as well as the close relationship with a women’s cult. The Gala priests spoke a dialect called eme.sal, spoken by women and goddesses in literary compositions.<sup>[812]</sup> This implies that the Gala belonged to a female cult using this dialect. They were responsible for performing cultic lamentations.<sup>[813]</sup>

The Syrian Galli and the earlier Gala might have originated from entities with a similar sounding name, namely the *ugallu*, who belonged to the Ishtar cult. The *ugallu* wore lion skins and had weapons in their hands, like those the Galli used to castrate themselves with during their trance induced dances. The *ugallu* or u.gal, meaning “big storm cloud spirits”, counted amongst Naram-Sin’s conquered enemies, whom the sun god fought against on the mountains on his behalf. These *ugallu* were afterwards introduced and taken up into the imperial cult. They could have represented the warrior-shamans or “strong heroes”



under discussion, who accompanied the Hurrian armies in those days.

These *ugallu*, or u.gal, belonged to a particular kind of Shining Ones. Although some Shining Ones of the earlier Sumerian tradition are described as big (“gal”), these *ugallu*, or u.gal, a term which only appeared in the Akkadian Period, should be distinguished from those early Shining Ones.<sup>[814]</sup> The *ugallu* are shown with bird talons, identifying them with the Hurrians.<sup>[815]</sup> They were portrayed with the heads and ears of lions and human hands holding weapons.<sup>[816]</sup>

### SECRET ORDERS AND INITIATION

Another intriguing piece of information appears in *Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest*, which belongs to the cycle of poems used to compose the *Gilgamesh Epic*. We read that Gilgamesh offered his younger sister as a “lukur” to Humbaba as part of a ruse to get the better of him.<sup>[817]</sup> As mentioned earlier, the term, lukur, refers to cloistered ascetic woman, also called *naditu* in Akkadian.<sup>[818]</sup> I believe this order was introduced by Enheduanna when she introduced her innovations into the Dumuzi cult during the Akkadian Period. Humbaba and lukur might refer to companion orders associated with the Akkadian imperial cult.

Fascinatingly enough, both the *naditu* women and the Humbaba kind of shamans belonged to secret orders! There is good evidence that *naditu* women were initiated into their order through a ceremony involving the “rope of Samas”,<sup>[819]</sup> symbolising their “marriage” to this god. They were, however, not only associated with Samas. As for Humbaba, we discover in *Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest* that he belonged to some kind of “folk” that Gilgamesh said he wanted to join. Gilgamesh’s wish to join this group suggests an order who applied initiation rites, perhaps a shamanistic

order which existed in the northwestern mountains, in line with Humbaba having been a great shaman. Many years earlier, Lugalbanda was also initiated into a similar order (of the Thunderbird) while roaming the Zagros Mountains.

Shamans who studied and interpreted the intestines of animals in search for the will of the gods, and who might be associated with Humbaba, belonged to a secret order like the one to which the Humbaba “folk” belonged. We know this because we read in these diviners’ texts that the omens were “the secret of divination”, kept from the “unknowing”. One inscription reads: “... the knowing one shall show it to the knowing one; the not knowing one shall not see it; it is an abomination of Sullat and Hanis, of the gods Utu and Adad, the gods of divination.”<sup>[820]</sup>

This secret order took the twin gods and also gods of war, Sullat and Hanis, as their patron gods. This again shows the close association of these diviners with warriors. Shaman-diviners consulting intestines accompanied Mesopotamian armies from the time of Sargon. They might also have accompanied the Hurrian followers of Naram-Sin, marching under the banner of Sullat and Hanis. They would have taken part in the Akkadian imperial cult.

Shaman-diviners associated with Humbaba in a cult context might have been dwarfs or pygmies, with his identification with eunuchs a later development. Old Babylonian depictions of Humbaba show him as a dwarf or pygmy with a wrinkled face. The association of dwarfs or pygmies with this kind of divination might go back to the cult of the god, Humba, in the mountains. Such pygmies apparently roamed the northern Zagros, where the dwarf-king, Lugalbanda, was initiated into their cult. Sargon might have encountered them on his journeys into the mountains. Invading Hurrians might also have employed such diviners.<sup>[821]</sup>



*Figure 28. Clay plaque of a dwarf/pygmy with Humbaba face (Louvre Museum, Paris, AO 12475).*

### **DEATH OF THE “GRAND MASTER”**

We now need to take another look at the story of Gilgamesh and Enkidu's journey to the Cedar Mountain. In my view, both Enkidu and Humbaba represent shamans. Both might be associated with cultic trees representing the cosmic axis: The Sumerian date palm and the enormous and mighty cedar on the Amanus. The first kind of shaman belonged to the early Sumerian cult of Dumuzi, in which water played a central role. The second kind were not only warrior-shamans, associated with storm clouds, they were also powerful diviners. Both kinds of shamans apparently took part in the Akkadian imperial cult.

Both groups of shamans included dwarfs or pygmies amongst their ranks. The presence of dwarfs in the Dumuzi-

Inana cult, even as high priests or shamans, is attested to in various stories and also in the iconography. There is, for example, a story about Ishtar turning her father's "gardener", Isullanu, who brought her a basket of dates, into a frog, the typical symbol for dwarfs. In the story of Enki trying to rape Uttu, he did not only bring her a basket of fruit and vegetables from the "gardener", he was also a dwarf or a pygmy. In depictions of the Akkadian Ishtar, consort of the weather god, as a naked woman, dwarfs and even monkeys appear.<sup>[822]</sup> The Humbaba dwarf with his Humbaba face (Figure 28) testifies to the presence of dwarfs in his cult. I have already suggested that Akki, the "gardener" who raised Sargon, was also a pygmy.

According to our story, Enkidu was the one who convinced Gilgamesh to kill Humbaba.<sup>[823]</sup> This might signify that he was jealous of Humbaba, a more powerful shaman than himself and guardian of a massive cedar symbolising his greatness. Then, Enkidu's taking on the role of warrior-shaman, as the axe on the hero's side, might be explained as follows: Through his victory over Humbaba he obtained Humbaba's power, which he had coveted and desired all along. In this way, he was transformed from an ordinary shaman belonging to a women's cult and practising fertility and purification rituals into a warrior-shaman, holding snakes in his hands.

We may consider this jealousy against the backdrop of the secret orders to which such personages belonged. These orders included crafts in their midst, with their ever-present goal of greater perfection. The association with crafts follows from the heroes using the felled cedar to manufacture an enormous door for the temple of Enlil,<sup>[824]</sup> meaning that they were also great craftsmen and builders. Accordingly, this story might have been recited during initiation ceremonies like the one alluded to in Gilgamesh asking to join the Humbaba folk. Initiation ceremonies using

this story as cult myth would have been practised in the craftsmen's caste.

The story about the murder of the "grand master" at the hands of a group of jealous conspirators from that order became one of the most important stories told during initiation rituals into such orders. We will come across it again and again and to this day it is one of the most important stories told in Freemasonry. This story might originally have been associated with the Akkadians.

Another closely related theme is "death in paradise". In our story, the most beautiful cedar in the garden of the gods, represented by the date palm in the Sumerian cult, symbolises Dumuzi. Cutting down this cedar signifies the death of the Dumuzi child who passed down into the netherworld. In the Akkadian imperial cult, the cedar represented the royal family, descended from Dumuzi, whereas Humbaba, guardian of the cedar, signifies the protecting role of the cultic orders. We will see that some of these orders, especially those associated with the Hurrians, remained aligned to families claiming descent from the Akkadian emperors. They must have been entrusted with the task of guarding the imperial dynasty, securing the continued existence of their lineage.

The cutting down of the cedar symbolised the end of Akkadian rule. It is of great significance that the hero who felled this cedar was Gilgamesh, the archetypal hero of the Sumerians, who resisted Akkadian rule on several occasions and who ruled over the land when these stories were first composed. On the other hand, the Akkadian theme of death and rebirth, suggests that the descendants of those Emperors firmly believed that their bloodline would return to the throne again one day. Central to this belief stood the occult myth of their descent from the gods. We will duly follow the trail of those claiming such descent through the ages.

## SIDURI AND THE ELIXIR OF LIFE

This brings us to Gilgamesh's visit to Dilmun. One of the characters in this part of the story is the ale-wife, Siduri. Our hero approached Siduri, who lived on the edge of the Persian Gulf, for advice. What can be said about her? She shows a close agreement with Nanshe, the daughter of Enki. Nanshe lived on her "mountain" close to the sea where she was born: "Born on the shore of the sea, who (stands) laughing on the foam of the sea."<sup>[825]</sup>

In keeping with Gilgamesh, who asked Siduri for advice, Nanshe was the oracle of the gods. Seafarers consulted her before leaving on their long voyages, in the same way Gilgamesh did with Siduri. Her emblem was the "holy prow".<sup>[826]</sup> Both Siduri and Nanshe were barmaids serving beer<sup>[827]</sup> and both were associated with the ferryman, Ursanabi, the husband of Nanshe,<sup>[828]</sup> whose name means "servant of two-thirds [Enki]". Siduri might have represented the order of the women who belonged to the cult of Nanshe.

In the *Gilgamesh Epic*, Siduri's abode was located near a splendid garden full of trees made of gemstones and filled with jewels instead of fruit.<sup>[829]</sup> This may refer to the coral reefs of the Persian Gulf where the pearl oysters grow. The central motif of this story is precisely those pearls growing at the bottom of the Apsu, pearls associated with rebirth and immortality.

At this point, we should recall that the ancients distinguished between two great watery cycles of nature. These two cycles meet in the waters near Bahrain where the pearls grow. One is the sweet water stream flowing in a "water pipe" deep within the Apsu all the way from the mouth of the Euphrates to Dilmun. The other is the sea water that vaporises in order to form storm clouds over the northern mountains, filling the Mesopotamian rivers with rainwater. These two cycles, symbolised by a snake and an Anzu bird, were both celebrated in the Persian Gulf area

since ancient times. The snake appears in Gilgamesh's story as the one who stole the magic plant somewhere in these southern regions. The Anzu had a cult on the island of Tarut in the Persian Gulf near present-day eastern Saudi Arabia, one of the main centres of the Dilmun culture before it migrated to Bahrain. <sup>[830]</sup>

Pearls grow where these two cycles meet. This held a special significance and fascination for the ancient peoples of that area. In this natural phenomenon, they saw the exact equivalent of things seen and experienced by shamans and mystics. In the shamanistic-mystical experience of later times, these two cycles became two dragons, a winged dragon and a sea-dragon, guarding the seed pearl of immortality. <sup>[831]</sup> This agrees with the snake in the *Gilgamesh Epic* possessing the magical plant of immortality.

These principles were already manifest in cult practice during the Akkadian Period, especially during the reign of Naram-Sin, when the joined images of Anzu and snake became a central feature of the Akkadian cult. These two opposing symbols came together in the person of Naram-Sin, the first man regarded as one of the great gods, even during his own lifetime, in accordance with this pearl symbolism. He embodied the pearl of immortality, the divine essence in human form.

Another pearl feature relevant to our story exists, namely that the waters of the Persian Gulf, where they grow, are warm. The ancient Sumerians believed the fire of the sun is lit each morning beyond the mountain of sunrise on Dilmun, which explained the warm waters of the Gulf. The same idea occurs in mysticism where the seed pearl of immortality is cultivated in waters constantly heated by some kind of inner fire. In Endeduanna's poem, the child is also born from the fire.

Once the significance of the pearl in the *Gilgamesh Epic* becomes apparent, we realise why our hero lost it. This is merely another version of the theme of Gilgamesh losing

the “sports items” into the netherworld. Although he was two-thirds divine, he never reached the goal of true divinity. The one who obtained this divinity was Naram-Sin, the first Mesopotamian king to have achieved it during his own lifetime.





**PART 3**  
**A NEW KING OF THE GODS**

## **17. GREAT LEGENDS, GREAT MYTHS**

The greatness of the Akkadian Empire and its impact on later history goes far beyond the heroic tales and literary works and compilations in which those motifs were used and applied. Once the stories about those kings and the gods who gave them those victories took hold in the popular imagination, they became the stuff that great legends and myths are made of. Some of the greatest Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian, Indian and other legends and myths can be tracked down to stories once told about those rulers.

Of these myths, the Babylonian version provides the best point of departure, giving a valuable backdrop to the Persian and Indian ones. The Egyptian variety of these legends and myths holds dramatic consequences and repercussions for our understanding of the history of that great land and its people. Each of these varieties offers insights which allow us to delve deeper and explore our story on a more profound level.

Of particular interest is the way in which these legends and myths complement each other on the human level and the divine sphere. In time, these legends lost all direct connection with the historical kings involved in them and were taken up and became absorbed into other cultures as part of their own prehistories. On the divine level, similar myths were told about the great gods of those peoples. Like two parallel universes, the great stories once told about the Akkadian Emperors, especially those about Naram-Sin, were reflected in the divine realm where similar stories were told about the gods. This obviously goes back to the time of Naram-Sin when his heroic tales were matched by the mythos ascribed to gods such as Tispak and Samas.

An important outcome of the events of the Akkadian epoch was the rise of Marduk as the new king of the gods in

Babylon. Although the rise of Marduk is often viewed purely in Babylonian terms, I will show that this is not correct. We should rather look at the elevation of Marduk within the context of the preceding events in Mesopotamia and more specifically those of the Akkadian Period. This becomes crystal clear once we discover that the mythology associated with Marduk, the champion of the younger gods against the older ones, originated in the mythos of the divine Naram-Sin. Marduk's glorious feats, in actual fact, go back to the mythos of Naram-Sin himself!

### **THE EXALTATION OF MARDUK**

Our discussion kicks off with the great Babylonian god, Marduk. Although not commonly recognised as such, this god's mythology originated with the mythos associated with Naram-Sin. We do not only find an astounding agreement between the myth told about this god and the stories about Naram-Sin, we can even show how Marduk inherited the Naram-Sin mythos. It happened when King Hammurabi of Babylon conquered Eshnunna, the city of Tispak. After this victory Marduk not only inherited Tispak's dragon,<sup>[832]</sup> he also took over and acquired Tispak's mythology, which was based on the Naram-Sin legends.

The great scholar, Henry Frankfort (1897-1954), had long ago already recognised that the origins of the Marduk mythology go back to the Akkadian Period. He was a Dutch archaeologist, one of the few scholars who was both an Egyptologist and Orientalist. In an article titled *Gods and Myths on Sargonic Seals*,<sup>[833]</sup> published in 1934, he observed that the iconography of the sun god in the Akkadian iconography bears a striking correspondence with the mythology of Marduk.

Based on this similarity, Frankfort proposed that the mythology of Marduk may, at least in part, have had its origins in the Akkadian Period: "These (Akkadian seals) seem to show... that some of the most important beliefs

which underlie the New Year's festival in New Babylonian times, and could therefore be traced back, at most, to the period of Hammurabi, existed already under the dynasty of Sargon of Akkad."<sup>[834]</sup> As far as I know, this idea has not been put forward again—which is why some further investigation on this point may well be in order.

Marduk's mythology is told in the Babylonian creation epic, the *Enuma Elish*, which was re-enacted during the New Year's festivals. According to this myth, the mother of monsters, Tiamat, decided to destroy the younger gods. They turned to Marduk, the son of Enki, for help. He agreed to lead them in war on one condition, namely that they would choose him as king of the gods after obtaining the victory.<sup>[835]</sup> And this was indeed how events unfolded, with Marduk replacing Enlil and becoming the new king of the Babylonian gods.

Marduk's enemies included Tiamat, her monsters and the Anunna gods, described as "rebels".<sup>[836]</sup> The monsters were creations of Apsu<sup>[837]</sup> and Tiamat: "Apsu, the first, their progenitor. Creative Tiamat who bore them all."<sup>[838]</sup> They turned out to be a formidable army: "Mother Hubur [River]—molding everything—added irresistible weapons, bore monster serpents, sharp-toothed, with fang unsparing, fitted their bodies with poison for blood. Fierce dragons she clothed in terrors, crowned them with glories and made them like gods."<sup>[839]</sup>

Tiamat then appointed Kingu, father of seven sons, as the leader of her army.

Although we do not read that Marduk encountered any setbacks in confronting this multitude as described in the *Enuma Elish*, we find that he was confined in a "mountain" during the New Year's festival, which may hint at something along those lines. On the seventh day, his son, Nabu, freed him from his confines.<sup>[840]</sup> He then charged with his "storm chariot", drawn by four horses, against the hordes of Tiamat. In his hands, he held deadly weapons, the "Sar.ur"

en “Sar.gaz”.<sup>[841]</sup> When the enemy saw his glorious appearance, they fled: “(He) caused all the fugitive gods to enter again into their chambers.”<sup>[842]</sup>

Marduk brought about mighty winds, casting them at the enemy. When Tiamat swallowed the storm, he put an arrow through her heart.<sup>[843]</sup> He cut her body in two, creating the vault of heaven from one part and the dry land from the other. On her chest, he piled up the distant mountains and from her eyes, he created the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. Marduk also pardoned the rebel gods, who then built a temple for him in the city of Babylon. He created humans from Kingu’s blood to help the gods in their work.<sup>[844]</sup>

After obtaining the victory, Marduk allocated the different groups of gods to the three cosmic realms. He built his own domain in heaven and the 300 younger gods, the Igigi, previously belonging to the netherworld, joined him there.<sup>[845]</sup> Marduk placed the 600 older gods in the “earth”, or netherworld, and the Apsu (they located both these regions in or below the earth). Among these were the Anunnaki gods, placed in the netherworld where Nergal was the ruler.<sup>[846]</sup> The so-called *gallu* demons also belonged to the netherworld.<sup>[847]</sup> Marduk placed the trophies of the monsters at the entrance to the Apsu where the other gods and monsters were settled.

### **MARDUK AND THE NARAM-SIN LEGACY**

We can now go ahead and compare the Marduk mythology with the Naram-Sin legends. Marduk’s character as a storm god and the monster that became his servant (the winged weather beast with serpentine features) goes back to Tispak. What is more, two central strands in the two stories show a remarkably close correspondence with the Naram-Sin legends, namely Marduk’s role as the champion of the younger gods, commanding them in their fight against the older Anunna gods, as well as the description of the enemy hordes. They form the major part of the Marduk

mythology, sprinkled with elements of ancient Sumerian creation motifs from the Eridu milieu.

I have earlier mentioned that Naram-Sin was depicted as a great opponent of Enlil but I did not elaborate on that. In my view, this is where the motif of Marduk as the great opponent of the older gods, the Anunna, originated and which led to Enlil having been replaced by him as king of the gods. It may therefore be appropriate to return to this theme now.

One composition is especially relevant in this regard, namely *Erra and Naram-Sin*. In this heroic tale, Naram-Sin is not portrayed as an earthly ruler but as a god among the other gods. He is depicted, exactly like Marduk, as the champion of the younger gods who leads them in a battle against the older gods, in this case, against Enlil, king of the gods! The god, Erra (Nergal), asks Naram-Sin to lead the attack and the goddess, Ishtar Annunitum, accompanies them. Although the story is about a war against enemies backed by Enlil, it is cast as a cosmic battle of the younger gods, led by Naram-Sin, against the older gods (Enlil).

Of particular significance is the milieu in which *Erra and Naram-Sin* was composed. It obviously came from the ranks of those serving in the Kutha temple cult where the god, Nergal-Erra, was worshipped. According to this story, Naram-Sin's followers at this temple forged him a mighty and potent weapon, went with him into battle and he, after the victory, built them a new temple. The composer clearly belonged to a tradition, as part of the Kutha cult, which viewed Naram-Sin not only as an opponent of Enlil but also as worthy of doing battle with his protégés and even overcoming and winning them! Here, Enlil is presented as hostile, in accordance with the view which evolved over time, that he was the one who led the enemy hordes against Sumer and Akkad.

One may conclude that the tradition represented in this composition was handed down and lived on among the

Hurrian followers of the god, Naram-Sin, who belonged to this Kutha temple cult. Accordingly, it comes as no surprise that we find a very similar development in the Tispak milieu, given the fact that Tispak evolved from the Hurrian weather god, Tessub, suggesting that this god was associated with Naram-Sin's Hurrian followers. In Tispak's case, he was worshipped as a king among the gods—we have seen how he was depicted as a king sitting on his throne. He was even called “king of the gods”!<sup>[848]</sup> This would obviously have implied a great deal of tension with regards to Enlil's position as king of the gods. When Marduk took over the mythology of Tispak (and Naram-Sin), an essential part of that inheritance was divine kingship. This became realised in Marduk's own kingship over the gods once the Babylonians conquered the land.

This brings us to the description of Marduk's enemies. As expected, the enemy hordes in the two traditions are also depicted in the same way. Tremper Longman writes the following about this: “The language employed [referring to Naram-Sin's enemy troops] is similar to that used to describe the birth and upbringing of the younger generation of deities [the monsters] in Tablet I of *Enuma Elish*.”<sup>[849]</sup> In my opinion, Longman has got it the wrong way round! The language found in the *Enuma Elish* was rather taken from the Naram-Sin epics, where such descriptions appeared much earlier.

In both stories the enemy hordes do (or may) not have blood running in their veins. Even the Tispak monster is counted among Marduk's conquered enemies.<sup>[850]</sup> The term “rebellious gods” goes back to the Great Revolt against Naram-Sin and the depiction of them taking shelter in their holes comes from his heroic tales.<sup>[851]</sup> Kingu and his seven sons merely replaced Anubanini and his seven sons.

Another fascinating aspect is the one about Marduk's confinement, as if dead, in a “mountain” during the New Year's festival. Only after he was freed, he was able to



vanquish his enemy. Something similar happened to Naram-Sin in *The Cuthean Legend*. According to the story, the enemy hordes got the upper hand and he “was bewildered, confused, sunk in gloom, desperate and dejected”.<sup>[852]</sup> Then, after bringing the New Year’s offerings, he marched out victoriously. The reference to the New Year’s festival in *The Cuthean Legend* suggests that the Marduk myth, recited during this festival, goes back to stories about Naram-Sin, first told during the very same New Year’s celebrations (perhaps during autumn, in contrast with the well-known celebrations during spring), after his immense victory during the Great Rebellion.

As for the Sar.ur and Sar.gaz weapons in Marduk’s hands, which also appear earlier in Ningirsu/Ninurta’s hands, they are simply another version of Sullat and Hanis providing the weapons in Naram-Sin’s hands as we have already seen: “(Naram-Sin) made the lightning of his god Hanis his weapon.”<sup>[853]</sup> Sullat and Hanis or the weapons they provided are the Old Akkadian counterpart of the Sumerian Sar.ur and Sar.gaz. And in the same way Marduk pardoned the rebellious gods who then erected a temple for him, Naram-Sin pardoned his enemies, for example, in *Gula-AN and the Seventeen Kings against Naram-Sin*. A temple was also built for him after his great victory.

In retrospect, we should take another look at one of the stories in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, namely the one about the temple built by the heroes after having killed Humbaba. Given Humbaba’s association with the enemy hordes in these tales, this story of the temple erected after the victory might also go back to the temple built for Naram-Sin after his great victory. This means that the story in the *Gilgamesh Epic* is merely another version of the one in the Marduk myth, where the conquered and pardoned gods built a temple for this god.

This suggests that it was Naram-Sin’s conquered and pardoned enemies, most likely Hurrians, who built his

temple. In this case, the story in the *Gilgamesh Epic* might have served as cult myth in the ranks of these Hurrians belonging to the craftsman's caste, especially those associated with the Kutha temple, who handed it down from generation to generation. In time, this cult myth evolved into the well-known one told in the ranks of builders' orders about the murder of the grand master at the hands of two jealous co-conspirators.

An Akkadian seal showing the defeated gods building a temple actually exists!<sup>[854]</sup> It depicts the gods in all kinds of activities related to the building of a temple. They are shown smaller than a larger god who dispatches his kneeling victim with a mace.<sup>[855]</sup> This might be a depiction of Naram-Sin's conquered enemies building his own temple for him after his victory and deification.

In the final instance, we find that the legends and myths of Marduk and Naram-Sin show such a close and detailed similarity on so many points that there can be no doubt that the Marduk myth borrowed from a tradition which can be tracked back to the historical circumstances surrounding Naram-Sin and his elevation to divinity and godhood and the legends and myths arising from it.

### **GODS OF THREE COSMIC DOMAINS**

The reallocation of the gods to the three different cosmic domains after Marduk's victory also goes back to events from the time of Naram-Sin. The younger gods were the gods of the Akkadians, notably those accompanying Naram-Sin. In contrast, the Anunna gods (as a generic group of lower order gods) were traditionally identified with the Sumerians, especially those who were "rebels" as they are called in the *Enuma Elish*. The monsters and other gods belonged to the invading hordes.

Given Naram-Sin's victory over the Sumerian rebels and invading hordes, one can understand why the Anunna, as the gods of the conquered losers, were in time reallocated

to the netherworld, where the great Sumerian hero, Gilgamesh, became the ruler. This probably refers to those Anunna gods who were identified with the caste of en-priests, whom I have associated Gilgamesh with.<sup>[856]</sup> The monsters and the gods of the invaders were allocated to the deep Apsu, which had by now become some kind of prison. Since that time the Apsu became synonymous with the abyss.

The Igigi gods are particularly intriguing and of great interest to our story. In earlier ages, they were allocated to the netherworld. After his triumph, however, these assistant gods joined Marduk in his heavenly domain. Can we also track the reassignment of these gods back to Naram-Sin's mythos? The answer is yes, Naram-Sin was indeed close to the Nergal-Erra cult at Kutha, a sanctuary representing the netherworld to which these gods belonged. According to *Erra and Naram-Sin*, the god Erra, "foremost of the Igigi", accompanied our hero, as did some "men of Erra". Evidently, the Igigi were especially close to Naram-Sin and shared in his great victories.

One suspects the Igigi must have played a special role in Naram-Sin's own cult at his temple in Akkad, where the god, Naram-Sin, was worshipped as one of the great gods of heaven, as we have read in the Bassetki statue inscription. This explains how the Igigi became reassigned to the heavenly realm.

In ancient Mesopotamia, three kinds of spirits or daemons were distinguished, namely the "lama", "udug" and "gidim". Certain kings, especially the greatest of those in the "lugal" (warrior-king ruler) tradition, such as the deceased Naram-Sin (and the other Akkadian Emperors), were primarily identified in terms of their deified spirit or genius, called "lama" in Sumerian or *lamassu* in Akkadian. In contrast, rulers from the "en" (priestly ruler) tradition, such as Gilgamesh and other early Sumerian kings,<sup>[857]</sup> were primarily identified with their semi-divine spirit (regarded as

two-thirds divine), called *udug* in Sumerian and *utukku* or *sedu* in Akkadian. The *lamassu* was sometimes represented as a female sphinx and the *sedu* as a human-faced bull.<sup>[858]</sup>

The *lama* and *udug* (*sedu*) correspond with two kinds of Shining Ones or daemons (Uds). The first were the ones associated with the warrior caste who had the lion-eagle or lion-man as their symbol. The second were the ones associated with the priestly caste, who had the bison or bison-man as their symbol. This agrees with the *lama* (*lamassu*) shown as a female sphinx and the *udug* (*sedu*) as a human-faced bull. They are the two kinds of guardian spirits who accompany humans.<sup>[859]</sup> They belonged to the heavenly sphere or the sky and the netherworld, respectively. Naram-Sin and the other royal *lamassu* spirits belonged to the heavenly sphere and Gilgamesh was the king of the spirits in the netherworld. The third group of spirits were the *gidim* (*etimmu*), who were only one-third divine,<sup>[860]</sup> and they were ancestral spirits.<sup>[861]</sup>

As protective spirits, the *udug* (*sedu*) were assigned to a person's right-hand side and the *lama* to a person's left-hand side.<sup>[862]</sup> Within the geographical layout of the land and the cosmos—which is so beautifully presented in the *Gilgamesh Epic*—the *udug* would have been assigned to the eastern mountains where the sun rises, identified with the right hand as well as the netherworld (lying beyond those mountains), where Gilgamesh ruled. The *lama* would have been assigned to the western mountains, identified with the left hand as well as the cosmic mountain where the gods, especially Adad and Ishtar, had their abode.<sup>[863]</sup> At the navel of the land, between these two outlying areas, was the religious centre of Nippur (representing the cosmic mountain in the polar north), located between Sumer and Akkad, where Enlil was king of the Mesopotamian gods and later, Babylon, where Marduk was king of the Babylonian gods.

There was also a group of spirits called *gallu*, which means “soldiers”. This is the name given to the monsters against which Marduk fought.<sup>[864]</sup> These monsters were allocated to the deep Apsu after their defeat. There was also a tradition which placed them in the netherworld, although this might refer to the underworld in its broadest sense.<sup>[865]</sup> The name, *gallu*, might go back to the enemies whom Naram-Sin, or rather the sun god on his behalf, battled in the mountains, namely the *ugallu* or u.gal, the “big/large storm cloud spirits”. This may be the reason why one of Marduk’s trophies, after his victory, was called by this name.<sup>[866]</sup> The *ugallu* were a particular kind of Shining Ones. Their name indicates that they were large, possibly giantlike, beings.

The three groups of spirits, discussed above, appear in many other traditions. The Arabic people distinguish three groups of “Jinn”, which originated from three kinds of Mangrove leaves, green, black and white, and they were associated with heaven, the forests and the sea.<sup>[867]</sup> According to tradition, the Jinn were born from smokeless fire.

### **ASMODEUS**

Among the Jewish people, the three groups of fallen spirits were called the Ruchin, Lilim and Shêdim. Lilith was the queen of the Lilim and Ashmedai chief of the Shêdim. According to Jewish tradition, Solomon took control of these spirits and Ashmedai or Asmodeus,<sup>[868]</sup> as he is also called, helped him with the building of the temple.<sup>[869]</sup>



Figure 29. The lion-demon called ugallu. [\[870\]](#)

This story reflects the old tradition about the captive gods who built Marduk's temple, and before him, the subdued Hurrians who, as we may conclude, built the temple of the god, Naram-Sin. As a builder of King Solomon's temple, Asmodeus is the Jewish rendition of the Hurrian order of warriors, builders and smiths, who became Naram-Sin's greatest supporters. This implies, at least in Jewish tradition, that the daemons associated with this builders' order had Asmodeus as their leader.

The "Temple of Solomon" tradition of Asmodeus having assisted King Solomon, which goes back to the temple built for Naram-Sin, is very significant for our pursuit of later developments in the tradition we are studying. If one adds that this became the "cosmic" temple to which the head of Humbaba was brought in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, we obtain a fascinating confluence of motifs found in later traditions, such as those associated with the Compagnons du Devoir, fellowships/societies of journeymen which included certain craftsman's guilds, of medieval Europe. In this case, the mentioned cult myth of the killing of the grand master

became associated with the traditions about the building of Solomon's temple. We will return to this tradition, as well as the role of Asmodeus as builder of the temple, in the following volumes of this work.

## 18. EPIC OF THE KINGS

In time the great Akkadian legends and myths spread all across the ancient world. For the moment, we are primarily interested in those stories that spread to the east and the eastern lands. We notice that the stories of the Akkadian Emperors belong to the oldest layer of traditions told about the legendary kings of the Persians and also the Indians. Among the Persians, it was included in the *Shahnameh*, the Epic of the Kings, and among the Indians in the *Ramayana*, the oldest existing Sanskrit epic. [\[871\]](#)

When studying these legends and myths, one discovers not only common motifs going back to a shared original tradition but also, and very importantly, the different ways in which the heroes were remembered in these traditions. These variations often allow us to gain a deeper insight and understanding of stories that would otherwise have been lost forever in the mist of the distant and ancient past. Readers will recall how we were able to associate Gilgamesh, called Jamshed by the Persians, with the founding of the caste system in this way.

Once we decipher the essential elements in these stories, we will be in a much stronger position to track down and follow these traditions as they spread to other parts of the world while also recognising the descendants of the Nephilim in later traditions. We are not only interested in the Nephilim dynasties discussed so far but also in the continuation and preservation of those traditions through the ages and the families associated with them. Without a good understanding of how those early legends and myths as well as the imperial cult were handed down, we cannot do this. Our efforts will only be rewarded once we can bring all the threads together in one beautiful and coherent tapestry.



## **THE PERSIAN TRADITION**

We start off our discussion with the Persian tradition. When we visited Iran in 2003, we included Persepolis, the “City of the Persians” and the greatest of all Persian sites, into our itinerary. In the *Shahnameh*, this city, which served as ceremonial capital during the Achaemenid Empire (c. 550-330 BC), is set in the post-Jamshed period when the evil Zahak usurped the throne.

Although Persepolis did obviously not exist in the early epoch when heroes such as Jamshed (Gilgamesh) lived, the Persian poets later recast those ancient traditions into the local landscape. Accordingly, what we find at Persepolis is not only the magnificent remains of the once mighty empire but also the traditions embraced by those people as part of their very own prehistory.

We started our journey in Shiraz in central Iran, about 60 kilometres southwest of Persepolis. As we drove through the tundra landscape, we observed the scattered tents of nomads tending their flocks on the rugged terrain like their forefathers did for millennia before them.

Our guide, Reza Hadjizogloo, wanted us to experience the ancient lifestyle of these nomadic people and at some point stopped at a cluster of tents pitched not far from the road. The men were outside with their flock and welcomed us with open arms, inviting us inside. The children looked at us inquisitively while the women served tea in small glasses. It was cosy and warm inside and everything smelled of the smoke emanating from the fire in the middle of the tent. We sat on beautiful hand knotted woollen carpets while Reza translated for us and for them. With the help of Reza and his bargaining skills, one of my travel companions even managed to buy the rug he was sitting on, the most exquisite Persian carpet made by the very same women serving tea without ever looking into our eyes.

We visited the beautiful tomb of Cyrus the Great, the king who chose the site for the future Persepolis, built by his successor Darius I, near Pasargadae. The tomb, with its broad base and six levels going up to the tomb proper, stands alone, albeit imposing, in the open landscape. Acknowledging Cyrus as one of the greatest kings of old, the tomb is one of the few Persian structures not destroyed by Alexander the Great.

Our next stop was Naqsh-e Rostam, the ancient necropolis where the tombs of Darius I and three other Archaemenid kings were cut high up in the vertical yellow cliffs of a lone standing mountain. They are clearly marked by their facades in the forms of crosses with arms of equal length. From there we pressed on to the destination we had long been looking forward to visit, namely Persepolis.

Persepolis is an extraordinary place. The grey limestone and marble ruins of this once great city, with its stairways, walls, columns and column bases form an impressive albeit picturesque site nestled against the foot of the Mountain of Mithra. The Greek author, Diodorus, recorded that the city had three walls with ramparts and towers. The first wall was seven meters high, the second 14 meters and the third 27 meters. It must have been an exquisite and exceptional sight to behold before Alexander destroyed it in order to avenge the burning of the Acropolis of Athens by the Persians about 150 years earlier.

We climbed the many stairs and marvelled at the architecture of the structures of this vast complex that are left, the *lamassu's* at the entrances and the beautiful bas-reliefs. Among the latter is one of a lion catching a bull, presumably a symbolic portrayal of the Nowruz, the Persian New Year's day, once celebrated when Taurus was visible on the eastern horizon during the vernal equinox. In later ages, the city was called Takht-e Jamshed, the Throne of Jamshed, after the legendary hero who founded and first celebrated this festival. As we sat on one of the stone structures after

exploring the site, with the sun slowly moving towards the western horizon in the late afternoon, we felt somewhat overwhelmed by the greatness of this magnificent place.

One can understand why the later Persian poets used Persepolis as the setting for one of the great stories of the *Shahnameh*. For them, the greatness of this city echoed the glory of the mighty heroes of past generations. One of these heroes was Faridun, the one who conquered the monstrous Zahak, an incarnation of evil itself. In my view, this is just another version of the story about Naram-Sin's great victory over the invading demonic hordes. Let us proceed and consider it more carefully.

### **THE LEGENDS OF THE AKKADIANS IN THE *SHAHNAMEH***

In the same way the legends of Gilgamesh (Jamshed) and the other kings of the First Dynasty of Uruk were handed down, the stories of the Akkadian Emperors were handed down in Persian tradition. In the *Shahnameh*, the stories of these two heroic dynasties are the oldest ones included in the epic, with the last dynasty having ascended to the throne after the reign of Jamshed. Only the greatest heroic epochs of old were later remembered in oral tradition with all other historical personages and events having disappeared in the mist of the ancient past.

The founder of the second dynasty was Faridun. According to the story, the divine farr lost by Jamshed now emanated from Faridun, who married into Jamshed's family. The identification of Jamshed with Gilgamesh implies that the family of Faridun also belong to Sumerian history. They belong to the next great heroic epoch after the Urukites, namely that of the Akkadians.

The person in Sumerian literary tradition who came after Gilgamesh and who possessed the divine glory or royal farr was Sargon of whom we read the following: "Was it not because of his frightening radiance... that no one dared to approach him."<sup>[872]</sup> Given the similarities between their

stories, I propose that the name, Faridun, was derived from Saridun, with Sargon seemingly also having been pronounced as Sardon in later tradition. The shift from “Sar” to “Far” in “Faridun” can be explained by the latter’s correspondence with the Persian word “farr”, meaning “divine glory”, a glory emanating from Faridun. Insofar as Faridun is depicted as the great dragon-slayer, however, one may conclude that it was rather the Naram-Sin mythology that was ascribed to him.<sup>[873]</sup> The Sargon and Naram-Sin legends fused and became combined in the person of this hero.

According to the story, Faridun’s great adversary was Zahak, who became king in the time after Jamshed. He was an incarnation of Azhi Dahaka, one of the most notorious daevas or devils.<sup>[874]</sup> Azhi Dahaka is described in the Zoroastrian *Yasti* IX as a “fiendish snake, three-jawed and triple-headed, six-eyed, of thousand powers and of mighty strength, a lie-demon of the Daevas, evil for our settlements, and wicked, whom the evil spirit Angra Mainya made.”<sup>[875]</sup> In exchange for him to become “King of the World”, Zahak allowed this evil demon to take control of him. The result was that snakes grew from his shoulders, snakes that fed on human brains.<sup>[876]</sup>

Zahak had a dream that a young hero would depose and kill him. This young hero obviously refers to Faridun. Zahak searched everywhere for him. After he killed the child’s father, his mother and some of their followers fled with the baby to the Alborz Mountains in the north.<sup>[877]</sup> The royal farr shining from the child showed that he was the rightful heir to the throne.

In the meantime, the blacksmith, Kawa, also called Kaveh or Kavag, whose last son, Karna,<sup>[878]</sup> was, like his other seventeen sons, to be fed to the snakes, launched an uprising against Zahak in the name of Faridun.<sup>[879]</sup> Kawa attached a leather apron, the kind that smiths wear to protect themselves from the fire, to a spearhead. It was

decorated with “Greek” brocade and a golden figure outlined with jewels sewn on it. This became known as the “Kaviani Banner”, the banner of Faridun’s family, the Kayanides.

Faridun then marched into battle with Kawa carrying this banner at the front of his army. With him were his two older brothers, his “constant companions”, who were “two mighty warriors, one on either side”. Cunning smiths made him a “heavy mace” to use as a weapon. It looked like a buffalo or bull’s head and was as heavy as a fragment from a mountain.<sup>[880]</sup> Zahak came against him with an army of male demons.

Faridun fell upon Zahak like a storm wind and shattered his helmet with his mace. After taking Zahak prisoner, he took him to a place where “two mountains close together come in sight”.<sup>[881]</sup> There he hanged him on one of those mountains, called Mount Damavand,<sup>[882]</sup> with his blood pouring on the earth.<sup>[883]</sup> Faridun then became king of the world in his stead.

After this great victory, Faridun adopted the form of a dragon: “He raged and fumed as through boiling with fury and out of his mouth he belched flames.”<sup>[884]</sup> He married two of Jamshed’s daughters and together they had three sons, namely Salm, Tur en Iraj. Iraj was murdered by his brothers but Manucher, Iraj’s grandson, who succeeded Faridun, avenged his death.

Among Manucher’s courtiers was the mighty hero, Sam, son of Nariman. From this bloodline—his son, Zal, married a girl from the family of Zahak—Rostam, the greatest warrior in Persian history, was born. He was a giant “with the height of a cypress tree and the strength of an elephant”.<sup>[885]</sup>

According to later tradition, the Medians, who lived in the upper Zagros, were the offspring of Azhi Dahaka.<sup>[886]</sup> This view agrees with the Hebrew tradition about Ashmedai,<sup>[887]</sup> whose name links Azhi with Medai or with the Medians. Ashmedai was the leader of the Shêdim and is said to have

supported King Solomon with the building of the temple in Jerusalem—a story I have tracked down to the captive gods who helped Marduk built his temple. Although Ashmedai shows agreement with Azhi Dahaka as leader of demons, he was a servant of the true king. The association of Ashmedai with the Medai or Medians suggests that the Jews viewed him as the guardian daemon of those people and even regarded them as being of his lineage.

Even though the Persian version of the tradition dates much later, the correspondences with the Akkadian stories are obvious. Not only is the story set in the land of Jamshed/Gilgamesh, which would be Sumer, we also notice that the next great heroic epoch, after Jamshed's reign, involves a great hero defeating a monstrous and demonic invader and his evil demons, in exactly the same way as told in the Naram-Sin legends.

The Persian tradition also shows a striking agreement with the Akkadian heroic tales. In the first instance, there is the flight with the child whom the usurper king wanted to kill, albeit without the motif of the child in the basket.<sup>[888]</sup> This is also how I have reconstructed Sargon's birth legend. Then there is the dream of the young hero deposing the usurper which also agrees with the Sargon legend. Like Faridun, Sargon married a Sumerian princess from the "family" of Jamshed/Gilgamesh. Even the names associated with Faridun show correspondence with those of Sargon's family, especially Manucher (Manistushu) and Nariman (Naram-Sin). The murder of Iraj finds its equivalent in the murder of Sargon's son, Rimus.

The most striking agreement, however, is the similarity with the legends and myths of Naram-Sin. The demonic nature of Zahak and his army is unmistakably similar to descriptions of the invading enemy hordes. The snakes on Zahak's shoulders appear in Akkadian iconography as dragon-features taken over and adopted by Tispak. We even find that the dragonlike nature of the hero, Faridun, after his

victory, reflects the tradition about Tispak and Naram-Sin, who is himself described in such terms.

The role of the blacksmith, Kawa, as Faridun's greatest supporter, reminds of Humba/Huban (Khuban=Kava, with a typical "b" to "v" shift), apparently a pygmy god, whose followers might have accompanied Sargon on his military campaigns. Kawa also has an equivalent in Naram-Sin's Erra-smiths. The heavy mace that the smiths made for Faridun is similar to the mace in the hands of Naram-Sin (and that of Sargon). In Naram-Sin's case, the Erra-smiths were the ones who made the mighty scimitar or mace for him. And the two warriors accompanying Faridun on either side of him reminds of the twin gods, Sullat and Hanis, who accompanied Naram-Sin.

Even the description of the place where Zahak was hanged, described as "two mountains close together", correlates with the myth about the Amanus, split in two during a massive struggle involving an Akkadian Emperor (Sargon). The name of that mountain, Damavand, may go back to Humanum in the Sargon legends. Then there is also Rostam, the descendant of Zahak, who became a mighty hero and who embodies Naram-Sin's Hurrian followers. And, finally, after his victory, Naram-Sin (and Sargon) also became "King of the World".

### **MARDUK AS MITHRA**

The mighty deeds of Faridun were matched in the divine sphere by the great Persian god, Mithra. Although scholars do not normally endeavour to solve such mysteries, it is undoubtedly a strange phenomenon that these two, man and god, share a similar mythology, something also found in the corresponding Indian tradition. How could this then be explained? The answer is simple: Mithra shares Faridun's mythos in the same way Marduk shares that of Naram-Sin. The reason for their names being similar is that Mithra is simply another version of Marduk!

Mithra was a god of war. He obtained the royal farr after Yima (Jamshed) lost it.<sup>[889]</sup> His greatest achievement was his triumph over the demon, Azhi Dahaka, and his distinctive weapon was the mace.

Like Marduk, who rode out with his storm chariot,<sup>[890]</sup> Mithra was a “charioteer, mighty, strong-armed, with good horses”.<sup>[891]</sup> Mithra was accompanied by two allies, Sroasha (obedience) and Rashnu (justice), who rode on fast horses. His principal servant was Verethragna, of daevic descent,<sup>[892]</sup> and described as a dragon-slayer. After his great victory, Mithra was elevated to the highest position among the gods, sharing the throne with the “all-highest Ahura”.<sup>[893]</sup>

Mithra was the principal god of the Persian people. He was “the divine image of the Achaemenian king of kings”<sup>[894]</sup> and as such served as the model for the ideal king.<sup>[895]</sup> His festival, the Mithragan, commemorated his victory over Azhi Dahaka.<sup>[896]</sup> Celebrated on the autumn equinox, this festival was the “companion feast” of the Nowruz, which was held during the vernal equinox. Whereas the Nowruz celebrated the creation of the cosmos, the Mithragan signified its end, when all would reach completeness and even sexual intercourse would come to an end.<sup>[897]</sup>

When we compare Mithra’s feats with those of Faridun, the agreement is undeniable. Mithra does not only share the dragon-slayer motif with Faridun, the demon, Azhi Dahaka, is also the great enemy of both. In Faridun’s story, Azhi Dahaka was incarnated in his opponent, Zahak. Both Mithra and Faridun inherited Jamshed or Yima’s farr, both were accompanied by twin-like “companions”, both used a club as a weapon and both had a powerful servant of daevic descent, Verethragna and Rostam. Mithra, however, was not human but a great god, who shared the position of the supreme god, the same as Marduk, who was elevated to become king of the Babylonian gods.

Especially fascinating is Mithra’s identification with the New Year’s festival. A second New Year’s festival held to



commemorate the great victory over a demonic enemy is already found in the *Gilgamesh Epic*. There the hero promised to celebrate the *akitu*, or New Year's festival, twice a year if he managed to subdue Humbaba. In agreement with our assessment in the previous chapter, this indicates that this festival was first established after Naram-Sin's victory in the Great Revolt. The celebration of two such festivals during the first and seventh months is attested to shortly after the Akkadian Period, in the Ur III period late in the third millennium BC. [\[898\]](#)

The Persian New Year's festivals were associated with Jamshed and Mithra, respectively. Accordingly, they represent the two opposing principles of new beginnings and completeness. They also ruled two opposing cosmic domains, namely the netherworld (of the blessed dead) and the heavenly realm, looked upon as two different kinds of paradise. [\[899\]](#) Mithra was accompanied in his realm by the "ahura" gods in the same way as Marduk was accompanied by the Igigi gods, who had by now become great warriors.

## THE INDIAN TRADITION

The Akkadian tradition spread even further eastwards to India. This might already have taken place during the Akkadian Period when there was a lot of interaction between southern Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley civilization. In the Indian tradition, one can distinguish the mythos of Naram-Sin behind the personage of Rama, even though some elements belong to the Sargon legends as is also the case with Faridun in the Persian tradition. Rama is the hero of the *Ramayana*.<sup>[900]</sup> The god, Vishnu, created him in order to terminate the reign of Ravana, the demon-king of Lanka. Lanka is the island of Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean, formerly known as Ceylon. Ravana, “the embodiment of utter evil”,<sup>[901]</sup> ruled over the *rakshasa*-demons.

This is Rama’s story. Rama was cheated out of his heritage by his half-brother, Bharata, who usurped the throne. He then went into exile. His two half-brothers, the twin *ksatrives* or princes, Lakshmana and Satrughna, supported him.<sup>[902]</sup> The name, Lakshmana, means “he who has the signs of fortune” while Satrughna means “destroyer of enemies”. Lakshmana was an incarnation of Sesha, the multi-headed *nâga* serpent which lay in the primordial ocean. The rishi or sage, Vasvamithra, prepared Rama for his future battle with Ravana and taught him magic spells in order to make himself invincible. His weapon of choice was a bow and arrows.

Ravana abducted Rama’s wife, Sita, and took her to his labyrinthine palace on Lanka, this palace being reminiscent of the netherworld. This resulted in Rama going to war against Ravana with Hanuman, his crafty adviser, whose monkey followers built a bridge to Lanka. Rama tried to slay the demon-king by cutting off his ten heads, but they grew back every time. Eventually, he slew the demon with a magic arrow.<sup>[903]</sup> Rama freed Sita and got his heritage back. Afterwards he was venerated as the god, Vishnu.<sup>[904]</sup> His

victory was commemorated each year during the Dussehra festival, celebrating the victory of good over evil.<sup>[905]</sup>

In Rama's legend, we once again come across a hero robbed of his heritage and going into exile, the same that happened to Faridun. In fact, the name, Rama, might have been derived from Naram (Ram(a)), the shortened form of Naram-Sin. Again, his main supporters are twin "brothers". In this story, his wife, Sita, may represent the royal insignia, like the Persian "Rita"<sup>[906]</sup> or the Sumerian rod and ring. The gods' need for Rama to do battle with Ravana reminds of that said about Naram-Sin in *Erra and Naram-Sin*. And again, Rama is also a great hero who crushed a mighty demonic enemy, with a special festival, similar to the Mithragan, instituted to celebrate this victory.

Intriguingly, Rama was recognised as the incarnation of Vishnu after his victory. This reminds of Naram-Sin who was recognised as a god under similar circumstances. I have argued that Naram-Sin was viewed as the incarnation of the storm god, of which Marduk was the Babylonian version and the one who took over Naram-Sin's mythos. This suggests that Rama might originally have been regarded, not as the incarnation of Vishnu, but of Indra, the Indian Mithra/Marduk. Evidence to support this does exist. Vishnu, for example, only became prominent after the Trimurti, comprising of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, replaced Indra as the supreme god of Hinduism. Rama was indeed called "Raghavendra", "Indra of the clan of Raghu".

The identification of the twin brother, Lakshmana, with the *nâga* serpent, Sesha, also needs some further explanation. Sesha (or his brother, Vasuki) was the king of the *nâgas*, depicted as humans with snakelike lower bodies. In Chapter 8, I have suggested that the Indian *nâgas* go back to traditions about the first House of Uruk, where the snake was identified with one branch of this great dynasty. The invading Hurrian hordes of the Naram-Sin legends, who marched around the Mesopotamian world, might also have

given rise to the notion of the *nâgu* serpent, Vasuki, encircling the world.<sup>[907]</sup> Naram-Sin's enemies were in fact portrayed as snakes.<sup>[908]</sup> This would then mean that the myths and iconography of this semi-human snakelike race might have been influenced by the myths about Naram-Sin's enemies. Accordingly, Lakshmana, Rama's twin helper, might go back to the tradition about the Hurrians who became Naram-Sin's greatest supporters.<sup>[909]</sup>

What about Rama's crafty helper, Hanuman, and his monkey followers? They remind of the Elamite god, Humba, also called Hanubani or Hamban, included in Babylonian tradition as Humbaba. The names are clearly the same, with Hanubani becoming Hanuman when the "b" is changed to an "m". He is also described similarly to Humbaba, with a roar like thunder.<sup>[910]</sup> Given that this god can be associated with both Sargon and Naram-Sin, the crafty Hanuman might go back to the diviner-shamans who accompanied the Akkadian Emperors on their campaigns, studying the intestines of animals in search for omens. Humbaba's face undoubtedly reminds of an ape or a monkey which makes it easy to understand the identification of Hanuman with monkeys.

The identification of Hanuman with Humbaba, as a priestly figure in the cultic tradition, is in keeping with the *Ramayana*: "Their monkey chieftain [Hanuman] is perfect, none is his equal in knowledge of the Shâstras [holy texts], scholarship and interpretation of the texts."<sup>[911]</sup> Both Humbaba and Hanuman are described as particularly "strong". Hanuman was as large as a mountain, a Giant like Rostam and those "big" warriors, called *u.gal* or *ugallu*, against whom the sun god fought on Naram-Sin's behalf before they became included in the Ishtar-Dumuzi cult. Somehow and in some way these conquered heroes or "Giants" became associated with Humbaba and Hanuman in these traditions.

We may also take a closer look at the demon, Ravana, with its ten heads. The story of these heads growing back as fast as Rama could cut them off reminds strongly of Heracles and the Hydra. But where did this image originate? It, in fact, had its origins in Eshnunna, where the great deeds of Naram-Sin were celebrated and incorporated into the mythos of Tishpak. The mythical monster against which Tishpak fought is depicted with seven heads, typical of the Hydra. This became the Tishpak monster, the original mythical being embodying the demonic enemy of the gods.

### **INDRA**

In the Indian tradition, there is another god whose deeds show remarkable agreement with those of Rama. The name of this god is Indra, the king of the gods. It is generally recognised that the pre-Zoroastrian Indra is merely the Indian version of Mithra.<sup>[912]</sup> Although he was a thunder god whose weapon was a club and later a thunderbolt,<sup>[913]</sup> he was also identified with the sun, like Mithra was.<sup>[914]</sup>

Indra was the champion of the gods. He led the Devas or gods against the Asuras just like Marduk, who led the younger gods, the Igigi, against the older gods, the Anunna. His friends and companions were the Maruts, sons of the thunder god, Rudra, the “Howler”. These were storm deities, roaring like lions and driving in chariots, “young, handsome, clothed in gold”. They might refer to the “storm cloud” spirits or daemons of Sumerian tradition associated with the warrior caste.

Indra was accompanied by the Asvins, portrayed as twins on horses.<sup>[915]</sup> They are typical of the twins who accompanied our hero. The craftsman god, Tvashtri, made Indra’s thunderbolt. According to the Shushna myth, the smith, Kavya Usa, made his weapon, which is merely a variation of the smith, Kava, who made Faridun’s weapons. Strangely, Indra drank Soma which gave him his special powers.

Indra was also a great dragon-slayer. He fought the demon, Vitra, an enormous snake stretched out on the mountains. In the *Vedas*, this demon was known as Ahi, meaning snake. Indra killed the monster and split open its head so that the waters it had sucked up could flow to the sea. He restructured the original cosmos, creating sunrise and sunset,<sup>[916]</sup> like Marduk, who created the cosmos from Tiamat's body and formed the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers from her eyes.

After the victory, Indra was called "the Mighty One" like Naram-Sin, who was hailed as "the Mighty/Strong One" after the Great Revolt. Indra was also called "vrtra-han", "he who overcomes resistance". This name corresponds with that of Mithra's helper, Verethraghna.<sup>[917]</sup> In the *Rig Veda*, Indra was recognised as the highest deity after his victory, replacing Varuna as the supreme god of the Vedic pantheon, just like Marduk, who replaced Enlil as king of the Babylonian gods.

According to the *Ramayana*, Indra also battled Ravana, just like Rama. Indra lost this battle after which Indrajit, son of Ravana, carried him off to Lanka. Indra was freed only after Indrajit was promised immortality by the gods.<sup>[918]</sup> In this instance, Indra's captivity on Lanka, an image of the netherworld, reminds of Marduk who was confined in the "mountain", as if dead, and later freed during the New Year's festival. We have tracked this motif down to the Naram-Sin legends.

Akkadian legends/myths		
Gilgamesh	Jamshed	Yama
Sargon/ Naram-Sin	Faridun	Rama
Anubanini (demonic hordes)	Zahak (demon king)	Ravana (embodiment of evil)
Erra-smiths	Kawa (blacksmith)	
Hurrian followers	Rostam (of Zahak descent)	Lakshmana (incarnation of Sesha-snake)
Humba/ Humbaba		Hanuman
Surris & Hurris	two companions	two brothers Lakshmana & Satrugna
Marduk becomes supreme god after victory (replaces Enlil)	Mithra becomes all highest Ahura after victory	Indra becomes highest deity after victory (replaces Varuna)
Tiamat	Azi Dahaka	Vitra (Ahi)
Sharur & Shargaz	Sroasha & Rashna	Asvins
Igigi vs Anunna		devas vs asuras

*Figure 30. A comparison of the various versions of the Naram-Sin legends and myths.*

Indra was also, again just like Rama, associated with Hanuman. It was told that Hanuman was hungry after he was born and jumped up to grab the sun because he thought it was a fruit. Indra intervened by throwing him with his club. Hanuman then fell dead on the mountain. The gods, however, brought him back to life, Indra gave him his club and Brahma promised him invincibility.<sup>[919]</sup> This story clearly reflects the Sumerian myth about Humbaba, killed on a mountain in one story but becoming the servant of Dumuzi in another.

According to a very strange story, the sage, Gautama, caused Indra's testicles to fall off after he bedded Gautama's wife, Alalya! This motif might have been borrowed from another character in the story, presumably Hanuman, since he never had any sexual relations with women. Another story exists about him in which it is told that he entered a cave that stemmed from the opened mouth of Shiva's daughter, who lived as a hermit on a mountain.<sup>[920]</sup> All these things remind of Humbaba as the eunuch, Kombabos, and his association with the Ishtar cult. And Shiva's daughter in the cave, on the other hand, reminds of Enheduanna in the "lepers' ward".

### **KUBERA, DWARF-KING OF THE YAKSAS**

In the *Mahabharata*, together with the *Ramayana* one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, great warriors went to Indra's heaven while the rest of the dead went to Yama's netherworld.<sup>[921]</sup> In an early tradition recorded in the *Ramayana*, Indra, king of the gods, headed the protectors of the three worlds.<sup>[922]</sup> These protectors were later expanded to include a fourth member when they became associated with the four cardinal directions. In Buddhism, they became the four guardian kings who live on the mythical Mount Meru, located at the gates of Indra's paradise.<sup>[923]</sup> Their leader is Vaishravana, guardian of the north, also called Kuvera or Kubera.<sup>[924]</sup>



Kubera was the son of the rishi, Vishrava, by his yaksa wife, Idavida. He was lord of wealth and king of the yaksas, dwarfish beings with short limbs and pot bellies. Their female companions, the yakshinis, are depicted in naked form with exposed breasts and genitalia.<sup>[925]</sup> The yaksas were born to Kashyapa, whom I have identified with the Sumerian Meshkiagkasher. They were guardian spirits identified with fertility.<sup>[926]</sup> As nature spirits, from the earliest times depicted as dwarfs and naked nymphs, they were associated with all three cosmic realms. As such, they were called “sons” of the three worlds, heaven, earth and the ocean.<sup>[927]</sup> They were none other than the three groups of “Shining Ones” or spirits, belonging to the three cosmic realms, associated with Meskiagkasher’s descendants.

Kubera’s father later took a *rakshasa* wife, Kaikesi, by whom he had Ravana, the demon with the ten heads, demon-king of Lanka and great opponent of Rama and Indra. The yaksas under Kubera stood in contrast with the giantlike, evil and bloodthirsty *rakshasas* with Kubera’s half-brother, Ravana, as their leader. Interestingly, some *rakshasas* sided with Kubera with him accordingly also being called “Lord of the *Rakshasas*”. The *rakshasas* might correspond with the Sumerian u.gal or *ugallu*.

Kubera is important to our story and we will again encounter him later on. He reminds of the Humba/Khumba dwarf, the chief god amongst the peoples of the Zagros, who, like Humbaba, was the chief guardian of the forest at the mountain of the gods in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, where he served as the second-in-command of the weather god, Adad.<sup>[928]</sup> Strikingly, the name, Khumba, means “commander”.<sup>[929]</sup> This is exactly the role ascribed to Kubera, chief guardian of the palace of the weather god, Indra. In the same way Khumba was worshipped in the northern Zagros, Kubera was the guardian of the north. Given these close similarities, one may suggest that the

name Kubera was derived from Khumba, where the “m” fell away, as in the form, Khuban (Huban). [\[930\]](#)

Our story has now taken us from ancient Sumer and Akkad to Persia and India. The story of the original group of eight “Shining Ones” born from the seed of An that fell on the earth, also depicted as dwarfs or pygmies and naked nymphs, has now, through many twists and turns and cataclysmic and far-reaching events, evolved into a story involving a complex tapestry of images, a story of cosmic proportions about a struggle for control of the universe itself. There is, however, much more to tell as we will find out in the Egyptian part of our story.

## 19. THE AKKADIANS IN EGYPT

The Akkadians did not only have an impact on the east, they also had an immense impact on the western regions, regions into which those great kings ventured and conducted military campaigns. We will track them down and follow their cult, legends and myths ever further westward. An important land on the route to the west was Egypt and like the Urukites before them, the Akkadians reached Egypt, called “Makkan” in both Sargon and Naram-Sin’s inscriptions, overland as well as via the Persian Gulf.

A distinction was made between “Greater Makkan” and “Makkan”, a difference originating during the Ur III Period<sup>[931]</sup> and presumably referring to Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula, respectively. Like the Urukites during the Uruk Period, the Akkadians’ main interest in these faraway regions revolved around securing a steady supply of strategic resources such as copper.

Akkadian influences in Egypt (from the period of the Akkadian Empire) are not easy to recognise, for the simple reason that they did not leave a distinct footprint like the Urukites. There are, however, reasons to believe that their engagement with Egypt, and especially the Sinai, was quite extensive. Notably, various iconographic depictions found in Egypt are consistent with an Akkadian presence there.

We also find that the Akkadian cults had spread to Egypt very early on, even as early as the period of the Akkadian Empire itself. Informed readers, familiar with Egyptian tradition, might be surprised to learn that the cult of Osiris and Isis, which later became one of the most prominent and enduring Egyptian cults, can be tracked back to the Akkadian imperial cult! Osiris and Isis did not only appear in Egypt precisely during the time of the Akkadian Empire, the cult myth of Osiris and his son, Horus, also shows a close

and distinct agreement with the legends and myths we have been studying in the previous chapters. Accordingly, our story casts well established notions in Egyptology in an entirely different and refreshingly new light.

### **SYNCHRONISING AKKADIAN AND EGYPTIAN HISTORY**<sup>[932]</sup>

In an endeavour to connect the Akkadian Empire with events in Egypt, we first need to determine how they are to be synchronised. Who were the Egyptian kings when Sargon and Naram-Sin ruled over the lands of Sumer and Akkad? This is by no means an easy task and for our purposes, it will suffice to give a broad overview of how they, in my view, are to be synchronised.

Let us first take a look at the dating of the Akkadian Empire within ancient Mesopotamian chronology. Scholars use three possible dates for the dawn of the Akkadian Empire. These dates are derived at from different interpretations of a set of observations of the planet, Venus, during the reign of King Ammisaduga of the First Dynasty of Babylon, dating from the 17th or 16th century BC. These dates are called the “high”, “middle” and “low” chronologies, setting the emergence of Sargon’s reign in 2370 BC (high), 2334 BC (middle) and 2300 BC (low). There is also another view setting this date even later.<sup>[933]</sup>

These dates are arrived at when the astronomical data is used in conjunction with the king lists of the various periods. Dendrochronologically derived at dates are not of much help here, because it is not an absolute dating tool and stands completely apart from dating based on king lists. The recent discovery of an Akkadian cuneiform text, HS 1885, from the Hilprecht collection in Jena, Germany,<sup>[934]</sup> has revealed that the Mesopotamian high chronology is in fact the correct chronology. This text shows that the Sealand king, Gulkišar, and Samsu-ditana, the last king of the Old Babylonian dynasty, which the celebrated Hammurabi belonged to,

were opponents in battle and thus contemporaries. The Synchronistic King List in turn lists Gulkišar as a contemporary of the Old Assyrian king, Sarma-Adad I. The only possible way in which the reigns of these kings could be aligned is by using the Mesopotamian high chronology.

As for the Egyptian dates, I have already shown that we should set the date<sup>[935]</sup> for the beginning of the Dynastic Period, starting with King Horus-Aha's reign, on 17 July 2781 BC. This is consistent with the archaeoastronomical dating of the Great Pyramid built by Khufu, second king of the Fourth Dynasty of Egypt. This dating is based on measurements of the small shafts in the King and Queen's Chambers and the cardinal orientation of the pyramid.<sup>[936]</sup>

Although the Great Pyramid has a special design that blends in with the orientation of those shafts, I do not believe that they should only be treated as an architectonic feature, as has been proposed by some. I rather believe that the alignment of the shafts with certain stars, within the range of error to be expected, is a perfectly legitimate way of dating this unique and beautiful structure.<sup>[937]</sup> Chronological dating based on these alignments gives a date of about 2450 BC.<sup>[938]</sup> This agrees with the dating of the pyramid based on its alignment with the four cardinal points, namely 2480 BC.<sup>[939]</sup> Although these dates are about 150 years later than those commonly used, they are consistent with each other and also fits in very well with the date for the beginning of the Dynastic Period, namely 2781 BC.<sup>[940]</sup>

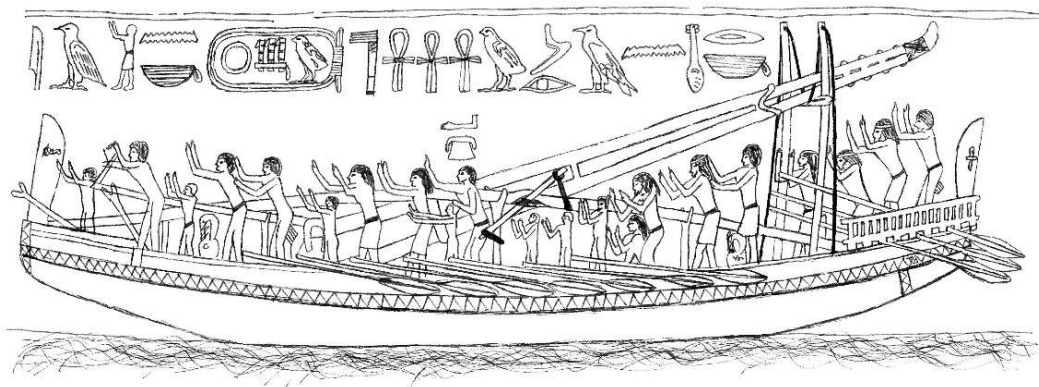
Based on these archaeoastronomical considerations, I set the date for the onset of Khufu's reign at about 2470 BC. This is 100 years before the dawn of the Akkadian Empire according to the Mesopotamian high chronology. The Egyptian dynasty that would have existed simultaneously with the reign of Sargon would therefore have been the Fifth Dynasty. Although in this dating Sargon's reign in Akkad falls earlier in Egyptian history than is commonly assumed, it is

not an untenable position when the evidence is considered. When we then search for Akkadian influences in Egypt, we should as a consequence start at the beginning of the Fifth Dynasty.

### **REMARKABLE BOAT DEPICTIONS FROM THE FIFTH DYNASTY**

Of special significance to our search for such influences are representations of large seafaring boats with “Asiatic” labourers on them. They appear in the funerary temple of Sahure, the second king of the Fifth Dynasty, for the first time and then again in the Causeway of Unas, the last king of that dynasty.<sup>[941]</sup> Here the word, “Asiatics”, refer to Semites from Western Asia (the ancient Middle East). Even more eye-catching is the close connection these boats have with the copper mining activities in the Sinai. Were these the boats of miners from the Akkadian sphere of influence, of miners who mined for and extracted copper in the Sinai and then shipped it back home along the Red Sea route?

Four such boats are shown on the Sahure reliefs. Egyptians and Asiatics are portrayed together on the boats, suggesting that they worked together. The inscriptions above the depictions make mention of translators, implying that the Asiatics were not locally recruited. The hogging-trusses on the boats show that they were seafaring boats able to carry huge and heavy loads.<sup>[942]</sup>



*Figure 31. A depiction of a boat with Asiatics appearing in Sahure's funeral temple.*

These depictions of boats are matched by corresponding inscriptions found in the Sinai, dating back to the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties. Inscriptions from the reign of Djedkare Isesi, the second last king of the Fifth Dynasty, who ruled before Unas (and who might have been his father), make mention of the pilots of the boats, “overseer of interpreters”, “overseer of officials”, “scribe of copper” and “controller of copper”.<sup>[943]</sup> Similar inscriptions date from the reigns of Pepi I and Pepi II, the third and fifth kings of the Sixth Dynasty. The “overseer of translators” agrees with the translators portrayed in the depictions of the boats.

Jaroslav Cerny, a scholar who studied the Sinai inscriptions, writes: “When we come to the titles of subordinate officials the most striking fact is that a large proportion of them are naval.”<sup>[944]</sup> From these inscriptions, it is clear that these boats were used to transport the copper mined in the Sinai. The fact that they moved large quantities of copper is demonstrated by the heavy weight the boats are carrying in the depictions.

Another noteworthy observation is that these activities lasted for about 200 years, from Sahure's reign to that of Pepi II. Amazingly enough, this is exactly how long the Akkadian Empire lasted! When we coordinate and reconcile the Akkadian and Egyptian chronologies,<sup>[945]</sup> we also find that Sargon's campaign to the Mediterranean Sea (in the third year of his reign),<sup>[946]</sup> when he seemingly passed through the Nile Delta on his way home, and Naram-Sin's conquest of Makkan at the end of his campaign against rebels led by the northern city of Apisal (in about the eighth year of his reign), synchronise remarkably well with the end of the reigns of Sahure and Unas, respectively. Sahure and Unas are also the only two Egyptian kings in whose funeral



complexes such boat depictions appear! This strongly suggests that these were Akkadian boats carrying copper from the Sinai via the Red Sea route to Mesopotamia. I have mentioned in a previous chapter that such translators and escorts on boats were also actively involved in Akkadian relations with Meluhha.

The first depictions of these boats coincided with the appearance of an intriguing figure, called Sopdu, also shown in Sahure's funeral temple. He is later in the Fifth Dynasty again depicted in the funerary temple of Neuserre, the sixth ruler of the dynasty,<sup>[947]</sup> as well as in the Sinai (although this depiction only dates from the Twelfth Dynasty). He is mentioned in the Pyramid Texts inscribed in the funeral temples of the kings of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties, from Unas to Pepi II. Sopdu wears an Asiatic garment, with only a girdle, a wig and a long curly beard. His titles are "lord of the *ssmt* land" and "lord of the east".<sup>[948]</sup>

Scholars do not know which land the name, *ssmt*, refers to. Some are of the opinion that it refers to the Sinai but the associations with the Sinai obviously do not necessarily mean that this was in fact the land referred to as the *ssmt* land. The only clue is that it was located to the east. If we assume that Sopdu was the lord of the Sinai boat crews mining for copper in the Sinai, which seems to be a very plausible conclusion, he must have been an important ruler of an advanced economy able to have managed such relations with Egypt.



# Akkadian and Egyptian Chronology

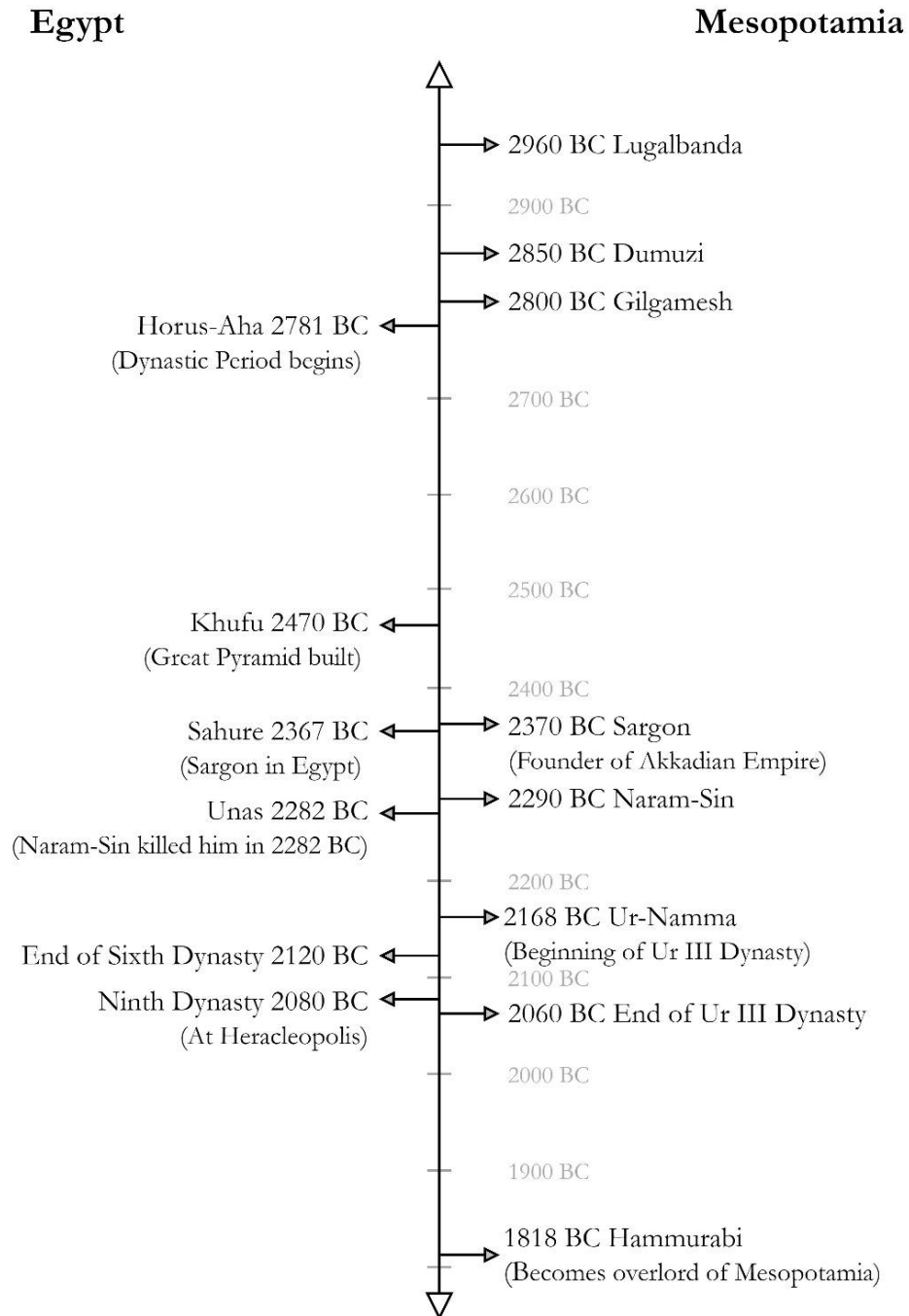


Figure 32. Alignment of Egyptian and Mesopotamian history.  
[949]

The first contact between the Egyptian kings, at least since predynastic times, and the *ssmt* land apparently occurred during Sahure's reign. As Sopdu does not appear in Egypt earlier, we may assume that his land, the *ssmt* land, must have been located some distance from Egypt. The route to the *ssmt* land must have been along and via the Red Sea towards the east as this is the only way boats loaded with copper could have sailed eastward. My suggestion is that the *ssmt* land refers to nothing less than Sumer itself, especially with the names evidently being the same (the feminine t-ending was not pronounced in Egyptian). Accordingly, Sopdu might have been a portrayal of the Akkadian Emperor who ruled over the land of Sumer and Akkad.

A portrayal of an Akkadian Emperor in Egypt reminds of a similar portrayal of an Urukite ruler found in southern Egypt during the time of the Uruk Expansion, as can be seen on the Gebel el-Arak knife-handle, dating from the Naqada II or III period.<sup>[950]</sup> If Sopdu is in fact a depiction of an Akkadian Emperor, these Akkadians would presumably also have used the southern sea route through the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea like the Urukites long before them.

### **THE ISLAND OF PUNT**

During Sahure's reign another land became important for the first time, namely the Land of Punt.<sup>[951]</sup> Punt was only mentioned once before in connection with a Puntite slave, during the reign of King Khufu. Significantly enough, Punt was also reached by the sea route down the Red Sea. This land was probably located within the *ssmt* land's geographical sphere of influence. As Punt appears more often in inscriptions, we may conclude that it was located closer to Egypt than the *ssmt* land.

Other early kings associated with Punt are King Djedkare Isesi of the Fifth Dynasty and King Pepi II of the Sixth

Dynasty. Surprisingly, only kings associated with depictions of the mentioned boats or inscriptions in the Sinai are associated with Punt! Mereruka, a high official of Teti, first king of the Sixth Dynasty, probably also undertook expeditions to Punt. A depiction of a flotilla of more than 20 boats can be seen in his mastaba. Also shown are dwarfs in a metal working context.<sup>[952]</sup> Another official who visited both Punt and Byblos was Khnumhotep, a high official of King Pepi II.<sup>[953]</sup> The inhabitants of Punt are called the “bearded ones”.<sup>[954]</sup> Various rare, mysterious and esoteric products have been associated with Punt, indicating that it was an important trading centre, presumably en route to the *ssmt* land.

A particularly colourful story about Punt from a later period (Middle Kingdom) concerns a “shipwrecked sailor”. According to this story, the sailor was on his way to visit certain mines on behalf of the king when his boat sank during a storm. He washed ashore on an island located about two months sailing from Egypt. The lord of the island was a snakelike figure who afforded him hospitality and foretold that sailors from his homeland would find him in four month’s time. When that day eventually arrived, the lord of the island gave the sailor all kinds of precious gifts including spices, incense, elephants' tusks, greyhounds and baboons.

The only place, and island, fitting this description and with a snake-cult associated with it, is Dilmun, now called Bahrain. Michael Rice, who extensively researched the ancient relations between Egypt and the Gulf, writes: “Dilmun is the only example in the Old World of an island-based society... To anyone familiar with Dilmun’s customary merchandise the gifts [from the serpent-king to the sailor] make interesting reading for they are all products for which the island’s trade was later celebrated.”<sup>[955]</sup> The mines referred to in the story would have been those of Oman, on the Arabian Peninsula, not far from Bahrain.

I accept Michael Rice's identification of Punt with modern-day Bahrain because the island was indeed located at the centre of a node of different trading relations stretching out to distant lands during the Akkadian Period. Instead of postulating a location for Punt at some unknown place not even conforming to the available evidence for this early period, for example that Punt was an island two months sailing from Egypt frequented by Egyptian sailors after long intervals, as is often done, it seems only prudent to identify Punt with the only known location agreeing with this description, namely Dilmun/Bahrain.

### **THE CULT MYTH OF OSIRIS**

This, however, does not provide the only evidence for interaction between the Akkadians and Egypt during the Akkadian epoch. Evidence exists that the Akkadian imperial cult, revolving around the image of the Emperor as the Dumuzi child and appropriately royal like the Egyptian kings, was brought to Egypt during that time. The Dumuzi cult brought to Egypt centuries earlier, with the Egyptian Min replacing the Sumerian Dumuzi (and with the king also taking part in the cult rituals), prepared the fertile ground in which the Akkadian imperial version of that cult could grow and develop many centuries later.

An important piece of evidence for this is the appearance of the cult of the great Egyptian god, Osiris, during this time. Although Osiris has never in past studies been associated with the Akkadians, the chronological outline introduced above makes this interpretation not only feasible but very likely.

Even though aspects of the cult of Osiris go back to predynastic times,<sup>[956]</sup> Osiris appears in Egypt during the Fifth Dynasty for the very first time. Depictions of Osiris first appear in private tombs and the earliest reference to him appears in the Pyramid Texts. This is the same period to

which the presumed Akkadian presence in Egypt dates, especially their presence at the mines in the Sinai but apparently also in the Delta region. Strikingly, Osiris is directly connected to Sopdu, at least during this period, the very same figure associated with the presumed Akkadian activity at the mines in the Sinai!

To evaluate this proposal, the cult and myth of Osiris need to be looked at more carefully. In this, one encounters an unexpected hurdle. Although Osiris was worshipped in Egypt for over two thousand years, not one single Egyptian source has so far been found telling his story in full! The Pyramid Texts only contain scattered references to his mythology. A short version inscribed on a Middle Kingdom stele from Abydos also exists.<sup>[957]</sup> The first author who told Osiris's story in full was the Greek, Plutarch, in his *On Isis and Osiris*. Although a late version, and there were clearly different renditions of the story, it is worthwhile recounting it in some detail. One should see and understand this story as a typical cult myth.

At the time of Osiris's birth, according to Plutarch's account, a voice announced that the "Lord of All" was born. This means "Lord of the Universe", in line with Osiris later becoming a great king whose victorious campaigns took him all over the ancient world. A certain Pamytes, who was drawing water from the river in Thebes, heard the voice and became the one to whom the child was entrusted and who raised him and brought him up. Osiris was a benevolent king who introduced the values and norms of civilisation everywhere. He introduced good laws as well as the cultivation of grain and wine and taught men to worship the gods.

Osiris, however, had an evil brother, called Seth. Seth conspired with 72 of his followers to kill Osiris. They in secret built a coffin corresponding to Osiris's measurements. During a great festival, Seth presented the coffin with the promise to give it to the one whom it fits perfectly in it. When

Osiris's turn came to try it out, it obviously fitted him perfectly. While he was lying in the coffin, the conspirators rushed forward, closed it and sealed the lid off with nails, soldered it with lead and threw it into the River Nile. This event happened when the sun was in the constellation of the Scorpion.

Osiris's companion and consort was Isis. When she heard the news, she cut a lock from her hair, dressed herself in a mourning habit and set out to find his body. She discovered the coffin with the body of Osiris in it, washed ashore at Byblos on the Canaanite coast where the trunk of an Erica tree grew around it. The local king noticed the beautiful tree, cut it down and fashioned a pillar for his house from it.

Isis went to Byblos where she sat alone next to a fountain without speaking to anybody. When the local queen's handmaidens arrived, Isis greeted them in a friendly way. She did their hair, blowing her perfume into it. When the queen smelled this, she at once sent for the unknown woman who then became her child's nurse. Isis let the child suckle on her finger. During the night she held the child in the fire to burn away all which was mortal about him. She also took the form of a swallow, flying around the pillar containing Osiris's coffin while making twittering sounds.

The queen could not stop herself from peeping secretly. When she saw the child in the fire, she called out and grabbed the child. The unfortunate outcome was that the child did not gain immortality. Isis revealed her true identity and said: "O, foolish woman, why did you seize the child? But a few days longer and all that is mortal in him would have been burned away and he would have been like the gods—immortal and forever young!"<sup>[958]</sup>

Isis then asked for the pillar. She removed the coffin, wrapped the trunk in linen, anointed it and gave it to the king and queen to be placed in her temple at Byblos. She then loaded the coffin onto a boat and departed for Egypt. On the way, she opened the coffin, kissed Osiris's body and

wept. Maneros, the king's eldest son who accompanied and sailed with her, watched her doing this which left her furious. He then died, either from her terrible look or because he fell into the sea and drowned. The tragedy was later commemorated by the Egyptians in their lamentation songs. [\[959\]](#)

When Isis returned, she made a mistake and left the coffin alone and unguarded, allowing Seth access to the body of Osiris, cutting it into 14 pieces which he scattered all over the land. Isis sailed up and down the marches in a scallop made of papyrus, searching for Osiris's body parts. She buried the body parts as she found them. Another tradition exists that she buried sculptures of Osiris everywhere, explaining why tombs of Osiris were found all across Egypt. There was, however, one part of Osiris's body that she could not find and this was his phallus, because the lepidotus, phagrus and oxyrhynchus fish ate it. [\[960\]](#) Isis then made an artificial phallus, which was used by the Egyptians during their festivals.

According to one tradition, Osiris's sisters, Isis, who was not only his consort but also his sister, and Nephthys, sat with his body after Isis found all the parts. They wept bitterly, lamenting and saying: "I call after thee and weep, so that my cry is heard in heaven." The gods heard them and allowed Osiris to return back to life after the women clothed his body in linen and performed the rituals for the dead. Osiris then became "Lord of the Underworld, Ruler of the Dead", where he also judged the dead. According to Diodorus, Isis decided never to wed again after the death of Osiris. [\[961\]](#)

Before Osiris descended into the netherworld, Isis took on the form of a falcon, fluttering over his revived body, and so became pregnant with him. Thoth, the god of wisdom, advised her to hide herself in the marches. During this ordeal, seven scorpions assisted her. On the vernal equinox,



she gave birth to Horus.<sup>[962]</sup> Isis then put Horus in the care of the goddess of Pe/Buto, who hid him from Seth.

When Horus, the rightful heir to the throne, came of age, his father, Osiris, appeared to him in a dream and told him to remove Seth from the throne.<sup>[963]</sup> Horus then began preparing for the ensuing conflict with Seth. Among his followers were the Mesniu, smiths who made weapons for him. His followers carried the sun-falcon on their banners. During the battle, Seth took on the form of a black pig, the same form in which he killed Osiris.<sup>[964]</sup>

During a massive struggle, Seth tore out Horus's left eye (which became identified with the moon) with Horus in turn tearing off Seth's testicles. After the war, the council of the gods ruled that Horus was the rightful king and gave the throne to him. He became a wise and powerful ruler, like his father. He placed the eunuch, Seth, in the care of Isis but she allowed him to escape.<sup>[965]</sup>



## OSIRIS, THE EGYPTIAN VERSION OF SARGON?

The attentive reader would immediately notice the correspondence between the Osiris myth and the myth about the Sumerian Dumuzi. Although there are small differences, all the major elements of the myths agree—the untimely death of the king, the 72 or seven servants of Seth or Nergal who killed him, a version of the story in which he drowned (already mentioned in the Pyramid Texts), his two sisters, Isis and Nephthys or Ishtar and Belit-sheri, mourning for him, him becoming a high official in the netherworld, his identification with grain, the cult mourning him when the grain was cut, the impersonation of his life story in the cult and so forth. [\[966\]](#)

An important symbol of this figure in both traditions was the pillar or tree. According to the Pyramid Texts, the top of the tree lay next to the pillar which implies that they cut a tree in this way in order to produce the pillar. [\[967\]](#) The image of the cut-down top of a felled tree also features in another Egyptian story, namely that of Bata, where it symbolised the “heart” of the hero, which may also be applicable in this case. In the same way the top of the tree was cut off in the Osiris rituals, the dates, growing from the great bud or “heart” of the palm, were cut from the date palm in Sumer.

A new aspect in the Egyptian version is the 14 pieces into which Osiris’s body was cut. This may, however, refer to the 14 stars in the constellation of Orion, [\[968\]](#) identified with both Osiris and Dumuzi. The identification of Osiris with Orion might also explain other aspects of the Egyptian story. The three fish that swallowed his phallus correspond with the three stars in the belt of Orion, seen as his phallus in Egypt.

Also interesting is the image of the coffin in which Osiris’s body was enclosed. Although the image of the boat taking Dumuzi down to the netherworld was an old one in Sumer, the graphic description of Osiris being sealed up in a coffin reminds of the child being put in a basket, also carefully

sealed up and taken by the river. This image originated with Sargon's birth legend. Although Osiris is placed in a coffin and in the river as a grown man and Sargon in a basket and in the river as a child, the images are obviously very similar. Does this mean that Osiris is merely another version of Sargon? We already know that Sargon was indeed identified with Dumuzi.

The Osiris story is not only a reworking of the Dumuzi story, it also contains elements which are undoubtedly and distinctly similar to the Sargon story. In the Egyptian story, for example, a man, called Pamytes, heard the voice proclaiming the birth of Osiris while drawing water from the river. He then became the one to whom the child was entrusted and who raised him and brought him up, motifs which strongly suggest that it was this very water-drawer who found the child in the river and brought him up. This is exactly how Sargon was discovered by Akki, the water-drawer, who also raised him and brought him up!

Also, like Osiris, Sargon was a great civiliser whose military campaigns took him all over the world. Particularly striking is the fact that Osiris was called "Lord of All", in the same way Sargon was called "King of the Universe" and "Lord of thrones, from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun". No other figure from that historic period fits this image except the Akkadian Emperor, Sargon, and he fits it remarkably well!

Even the Egyptian name for Osiris, namely Sar,<sup>[969]</sup> Asar and Ausar, with the "sar" in all variations thereof most probably a version of the Semitic "sarru" or king, the shortened form for Sargon: "Sarru kenu", the "true, rightful king". The name of his companion, Isis, "Ast" in Egyptian, also agrees with Ishtar, the close companion of Sargon. Taking Osiris to be a version of Sargon is not only based on the detailed correspondences in their stories and even their names, it is also based on the fact that Osiris made his

appearance in Egypt for the first time together with so many other influences of Akkadian origin.

This, however, does not constitute the full extent of the correspondence between the Osiris myth and the legends of the Akkadian Emperors! The Byblos aspect of the myth reveals even more consistencies and agreement between the two. A striking similarity is shown with the Akkadian cult founded by Enheduanna, for which her poem, *Lady of all the me's*, served as the most important cult song.

In the same way Osiris was taken to a foreign land, we read the following in Enheduanna's poem: "... (you) breached your ship of mourning on a hostile shore." And like Isis, who followed him there, Enheduanna is described in similar terms as following in Dumuzi's "footsteps" during her exile. Isis sat alone next to a fountain, whereas Enheduanna sat alone in the "leper's ward". In both cases, we find the image of a fluttering swallow, describing the goddess as she went to another land or to the mountains. The image of Isis holding the child in the fire in order for him to obtain immortality corresponds with Enheduanna "giving birth" to a child in the fire, an image closely associated with immortality in shamanism and mysticism. Even Isis's anger finds a close parallel in Ishtar's rage.

Of special relevance, is Osiris's enemy, Seth, losing his testicles in the battle with Horus, the son of Osiris, after which he was assigned to the care of Isis. This is an obvious reference to eunuchs in the cult of Isis. The backdrop to the castration of Seth also agrees with the way in which this cult practice was first introduced in Akkad, namely after the victory of Naram-Sin, the son of Sargon, in the Great Revolt. Enheduanna applied these motifs in her reorganising of the Dumuzi-Inana cult. A related practice, of men dressing like women, was found in the cult of Osiris,<sup>[970]</sup> in the same way as in the Akkadian imperial cult. The reference to Isis, who never married again, also reminds of the *naditu* women I have previously associated with the Akkadian imperial cult.

We find in the Egyptian cult of Osiris remarkably much of what we have already found in the Akkadian imperial cult. Not only are there distinct correspondences between the cults, in both instances, they identified the king with Osiris or Dumuzi. Osiris was furthermore not only depicted as a great king, the Egyptian kings were also identified with Osiris in their funeral rites. The underlying motivation for this was the concept of rebirth, precisely as we find in Akkad and later in Sumer when the Ur III kings copied and took over the Akkadian cult.

### **HORUS, SON OF OSIRIS, THE EGYPTIAN VERSION OF NARAM-SIN?**

A distinct feature of the Egyptian cult of Osiris is the role played by Horus, the son of Osiris. This Horus is not the same Horus previously worshipped in Egypt. The association of Osiris with Horus also goes back to the Fifth Dynasty. Scholars differ in their opinions about the date when they first became associated, with some setting it early and others late in the Fifth Dynasty.<sup>[971]</sup>

The question then begs: Where on earth did this Horus figure come from? We obtain the answer when we discover that Horus, the son of Osiris, was actually a form of Sopdu, called Horus-Sopdu in the Pyramid Texts!<sup>[972]</sup> Horus is not only described in precisely the same terms as Sopdu,<sup>[973]</sup> he even bears the title “the one from the *ssmt* land”, no fewer than eight times in the Pyramid Texts! Like Sopdu, who was called “lord of the east”, this Horus was called “Horus of the east”.<sup>[974]</sup> He is even hailed as “lord of foreign countries”, the very title of Sopdu in the Sahure funerary temple.<sup>[975]</sup> It is not at all surprising then that they named him Horus-Sopdu.

We have already identified the *ssmt* land with Sumer and the Sopdu of the Sahure funerary temple with Sargon. Now we discover a Sopdu figure who bears the very same titles and came from the very same land in the east but who is

described as Horus, the son of Osiris. Who is he? If Sargon is to be identified with Osiris, who might this Horus, “Son of Osiris”, be?

Sopdu and the association of the *ssmt* land with the Osiris myth is in line with our assessment that the origins of the Osiris myth goes back to Sumer, called the *ssmt* land in Egypt, and more particularly to the Akkadian imperial cult. We now find Osiris, and his son, Horus, standing firmly in the milieu of the *ssmt* land from where these new influences reached Egypt.

There is good reason to believe that this Sopdu figure must be Naram-Sin. Not only did he rise to the throne during the end of the Fifth Dynasty, he also conquered Egypt (Makkan) at the end of the reign of King Unas (see below). We are accordingly not in the least surprised by all the correspondences between the Osiris-Horus myth and the Naram-Sin legends, still to be discussed. In the same way as Osiris is the Egyptian Sargon, Horus-Sopdu, as he is called in the Pyramid Texts, is the Egyptian Naram-Sin, worshipped in cult context.

According to the Pyramid Texts of King Unas, Sopdu, lord of the *ssmt* land, was the one who killed him! I take this to be a reference to Naram-Sin killing Unas in the eighth or early ninth year of his reign during his Makkan campaign: “Sopdu he (who resides) under his *kesbet*-tree. Has he killed you (the king) after his heart told him that you shall die through him? Lo, you come into being against him as the Bull of the wild bulls, who remained (after the fight). He remains, he remains, the bull who remained, and you will also remain, Unas, at their head, at the head of the spirits forever.”<sup>[976]</sup>

In my view, the name Naram-Sin gave the conquered Egyptian king in his inscriptions, namely Manium, was a form of Maneros, whom we have already come across in the story of Osiris. Maneros was the name by which the Egyptians mourned their kings.<sup>[977]</sup> This name might have

been derived from Menes, who shares some motifs with Osiris, because Maneros was also remembered as the only son of the “first” king of Egypt. The Akkadians seemingly used this cultic name for the Egyptian king, who in this instance would have been King Unas.

There are many resemblances between Horus-Sopdu and Naram-Sin. Just like Horus, who was the son of Osiris, Naram-Sin was occasionally considered to have been the son of Sargon, who was identified with Dumuzi. Just like Horus, who fought the evil Seth, Naram-Sin battled the invading hordes, who were also described as evil. Horus fought against Seth in his form as a black pig, which presents him as especially evil, like Naram-Sin’s enemies, who were so depicted. Although no reference is made to Naram-Sin losing an eye, which might be a mere metaphoric description, Horus’s loss of one eye in his fight with Seth, agrees with Naram-Sin’s setback during the Great Revolt, according to *The Cuthean Legend*.<sup>[978]</sup> As the rightful heir and king, our hero also rose to the throne after his hard won victory.

The Mesniu smiths, who were followers of Horus and who made his weapons, go back to the Erra-priests accompanying Naram-Sin and who also made his weapons. The banners made and carried before Horus by his followers, also appear in the Persian version of the Naram-Sin legend. One can imagine or even propose a banner with a great Anzu, the counterpart of the Egyptian falcon, being carried before Naram-Sin during his military campaigns as he was so closely identified with that bird. In *Erra and Naram-Sin* a banner was, in fact, carried before the king.<sup>[979]</sup>

We may also compare the Egyptian version of the story with the ones from Babylon, Persia and India. As had happened in the eastern traditions, the stories about Sargon and Naram-Sin often got intertwined. One characteristic story we come across again in the Osiris-Horus myth is that of the child, the rightful heir to the throne, sheltered from

the usurper and who dreamt that he would eventually rise to the throne and become king. Although the Akkadian story was about Sargon, in Egypt it was told about Horus who was eventually restored to the throne of his father. [\[980\]](#)

When comparing these traditions, we not only note the correspondences but also detect some differences between the Egyptian tradition and the others. The Egyptian version is much closer to the original Akkadian tradition, featuring both the identification of Sargon with Dumuzi and Naram-Sin's great feat in defeating his demonic enemy. In contrast, the other versions were mostly concerned with the dragon-slayer myth. The reason for this difference might be that the Akkadian imperial cult, which incorporated both myths, was already brought to Egypt during the Akkadian Empire Period, where it survived for millennia in its Egyptian guise.

Another difference between the Egyptian and other traditions is that the earlier discussed pattern, where the legends of those ancient kings (in the human sphere) and the myths of their gods (in the divine realm) complement each other, and where the great deeds of our heroes were projected onto their gods who fought their battles for them, is not found in the Egyptian tradition. Instead, the historical events were recast within the divine sphere, with both Osiris and his son, Horus, having been regarded as gods in Egyptian cultic tradition.

Also, in Egypt, the conflict between the hero and the monster, remembered as the fight between Horus and Seth, did not include the motif of the younger gods fighting a cosmic battle against the older gods, like Marduk afterwards replacing Enlil as the king of the Babylonian gods. The absence of this motif implies a very early spreading of this tradition to Egypt, long before this development took place in Babylon.

## **IDENTIFICATION WITH SIRIUS**



We can now take a look at and explore the identification of Naram-Sin with the god, Horus-Sopdu, in more detail. While focusing on Horus first, we still need to consider the question as to why Naram-Sin would have been identified with the god, Horus, in the first place. Given Naram-Sin's messianic profile, a sensible reason may be that Horus was the counterpart of the Sumerian god, Ningirsu or Ninurta, with both these Egyptian and Sumerian gods embodying the same messianic concept of the time.

One may conclude that the idea of shamanistic rebirth was prevalent in both Sumer and Egypt and that those people saw and understood the great Akkadian Emperors in those terms. Accordingly, they might have viewed these kings as messianic figures in both lands, in Egypt in the image of the god, Horus, and in Sumer and Akkad in Ningirsu. As for Naram-Sin, this might have taken place after his victory over Unas, when Egypt came under his rule.

Intriguingly enough, Horus-Sopdu was identified with the bright and brilliant star, Sirius. We do, however, not know if this identification of the Sopdu figure with Sirius goes back to the time of Sahure, where he, in my view, represents Sargon. One may assume that it in fact does.<sup>[981]</sup> The identification of Horus-Sopdu with Sirius in the Pyramid Texts<sup>[982]</sup> was, however, particularly relevant to the person of Naram-Sin.

Why would this be the case? In the same way the motif of the child born from the fire is found in Enheduanna's poem, written shortly after the Great Revolt and applied to the person of Naram-Sin, it underlies the identification of Horus-Sopdu with Sirius. Horus-Sopdu was born from Sirius, the brightest star in the heavenly sky and associated with extreme heat, which also constitutes a birth from fire.<sup>[983]</sup>

Let us for a moment consult the Pyramid Texts. We read that Horus, the son of Osiris, was born from Isis in her form as Sothis, referring to Sirius: "You (Osiris) have placed her (Isis) on your phallus and your seed issues into her, she



being ready as Sothis, and Horus-Sopdu has come forth from you as Horus who is in Sothis.”<sup>[984]</sup> Here, Isis is identified with the Egyptian goddess, Sothis-Sirius, just like the Akkadian Ishtar, who was identified with Sirius. So, Horus-Sopdu was Horus, son of Osiris, born from Isis in her form as Sirius. The basic theme is that of the birth of Horus-Sopdu from the fire. This follows from the close association of Sirius with fire. This god’s birth from Sothis, Isis as Sirius, was effectively then a birth from fire.

We have come across this same motif earlier in the Osiris myth, where Isis held the child in the fire in order for him to obtain immortality, a story which agrees with Isis giving birth to Horus-Sopdu in the fire, with both these images belonging to the Osiris milieu.

We have also come across this same theme in Sumer, where Naram-Sin was identified with the child born from the fire. As the divine child born from the fires of the Great Revolt, Naram-Sin was the physical embodiment of the child born to Enheduanna from the fire during her shamanistic-mystical experience in the “mountains”. The cultic use of Enheduanna’s poem implies that a big fire was indeed made as part of the cultic rituals, rituals which included the birth of the immortal child from fire, representing the divine Naram-Sin born during a mighty and fiery storm. Whereas Sargon was identified with the Dumuzi child in the accompanying role-play, Naram-Sin was, after the Great Revolt, identified with this immortal child. We even find that the god, Naram-Sin, was seen as having been born from Ishtar, precisely like Horus-Sopdu, who was born from Isis! Ishtar gave birth to the divine Naram-Sin, like Isis, who gave birth to the god, Horus-Sopdu.

These ideas might already have been in circulation at the time when Naram-Sin visited Egypt after his victory over the lord of Apisal during the first part of the revolt. The identification of Naram-Sin with Sirius would have been in line with an ancient tradition in Egypt about the birth of a

messianic figure from the fire. As such, the Egyptians might have viewed him in these terms, like one of their great kings to whom the same archetype was applied, namely Horus-Aha. And Naram-Sin does, in fact, share various motifs with Horus-Aha.

Both were exceptionally great warriors, with Aha in fact meaning “warrior”. Both were identified with Ningirsu/Horus. Naram-Sin was considered to be the son of Sargon, the embodiment of Dumuzi, just like Horus-Aha, who was the son of Menes, a version of Min, the Egyptian Dumuzi. And the identification of Naram-Sin with Horus-Sopdu agrees with the identification of Horus-Aha with Sirius.

### **THE RETURN OF THE PHOENIX**

There is, however, something even more striking and amazing about the identification of Naram-Sin with Horus-Sopdu, when he is viewed as the new Horus-Aha. When considered in terms of shamanistic rebirth, this indicates a cyclical return of such messianic figures, first as Horus-Aha and then as Naram-Sin. In this instance it involves the Sothic cycle, closely associated with the Phoenix.

The image of the child born from the fire, or Horus-Sopdu’s birth from Isis in her form as Sothis-Sirius, is exactly in keeping with the cyclical return of the Phoenix or alternatively, the rebirth of the bird’s chick from the fire. Accordingly, Naram-Sin, as Horus-Sopdu, would have been deemed to have been the seed of the Phoenix which had returned!

In Sumer, Naram-Sin was seen as a child of the Anzu or Thunderbird, as an embodiment of Ningirsu, his anthropomorphic form. He was described in graphic and vivid terms as an Anzu. In the Egyptian version, he was a child of the Phoenix who appeared at the designated time within the Sothic cycle, as part of the great cosmic cycle of the ages in which such messianic figures appear. He was a

great messiah worshipped all across the ancient Middle East where the Akkadian Empire held sway and he was also remembered as such in later tradition.

Certainly fascinating is the fact that the time of Naram-Sin shows some remarkable alignments with the Sothic cycle. The year 2295 BC, when Naram-Sin came of age, for example, represents one-third of the length of the Sothic cycle from its start in 2781 BC, in other words 486 years later. Although Naram-Sin's victory over Unas only happened in 2282 BC, one can imagine this great king presenting himself to the Egyptians in these terms, as the messiah who came in accordance with a preordained cosmic plan. His victory over Unas showed his greatness, his messianic glory, as it was seemingly the first time ever that a foreign king came and killed an Egyptian king. Sargon might have subdued the land but he did not boast of killing the king.

There is, however, even more to unearth! After I have developed my outline and reconciliation of the Akkadian and Egyptian chronologies and finished this chapter, I suddenly discovered something even more astounding! It was there all the time, right there hiding in plain sight, but I had, somehow, totally missed it. This is the fact that the time from the beginning of the Dynastic Period in Egypt with the heliacal rising of Sirius on the first New Year in 2781 BC until the arrival of Naram-Sin in Egypt in 2282 BC, spanned a period of exactly 500 years!

Why is this period so important? According to the Greek historian, Herodotus, this is the period associated with the return of the Phoenix by the Egyptian priests at Heliopolis. He wrote: "He [The Phoenix] rarely appears in Egypt—only once in every 500 years, so they say, in Heliopolis—and he is supposed to come when his father dies."<sup>[985]</sup> According to the Roman historian and senator, Tacitus (56-120 AD), in his *Annals*,<sup>[986]</sup> this was the period most generally associated with the return of the Phoenix. Since the Egyptians

identified the Sothic cycle with the Phoenix, the year 2282 BC represents the year of the return of the Phoenix.

At this point in our discussion, it seems reasonable to suggest that Naram-Sin was identified with the image of the Phoenix, as the divine child born from the fire. But his identification with the image of the Phoenix goes even further with his coming to Egypt also having aligned with the period associated with the return of the Phoenix. Naram-Sin came to Egypt exactly in accordance with the tradition of the arrival of the chick of the Phoenix! In fact, the tradition of the return of the Phoenix after 500 years might even have originated with Naram-Sin. The 500 year anniversary of the first Egyptian New Year coinciding with Naram-Sin's coming to Egypt is indeed a beautiful confirmation of my interpretation of the events of that time.

The Phoenix was the symbol of rebirth. Rebirth was also closely associated with the cult of Osiris and Horus-Sopdu or Horus, the child. The pair, Osiris and Horus, had a singularly great impact on the Egyptian cult of the dead, with the living kings having been identified with Horus and the dead ones with Osiris. The Ur III rulers in Sumer had a similar concept. In their case, the king was identified with Ninurta, the Sumerian Horus, and also with Dumuzi, especially after their death.<sup>[987]</sup> Evidently, the Akkadian cult, which focused on birth and rebirth, had a huge impact on later generations in the ancient Middle East.

There are, however, even more to be said about the Egyptian Sopdu, providing us with yet another important link in the chain of evidence in our exploration of the spreading of the Akkadian traditions to the west.

## 20. A SECRET ORDER OF WARRIORS

We can now proceed to take a closer look at the cult of the Akkadian Emperors in Egypt. Intimately connected to the worship of these Akkadian god-kings was a cult of warriors. We have already come across these mighty warriors: Sargon's warriors played a major role in his legends and in the case of Naram-Sin, we have discovered that a distinct group of Hurrians joined the ranks of his army of warriors.

What happened to the order of warriors founded by these great Emperors? According to all indications, they outlived the Akkadian Empire and in later times played a major role in Egypt and the northwestern regions of Mesopotamia.

In Egypt, I came across a warrior cult closely associated with Sopdu, evidently their patron. This might just be what we are looking for. Our study takes us back to the time of King Sahure when Sopdu was first attested to in Egypt. Once we have explored the imagery of this cult more carefully, we will be able to recognise it as it spread to Canaan and also further to the west. Tracking down this cult as it spread through the ancient world unlocks yet another important door to the world of the supposed descendants of the Nephilim in later centuries.

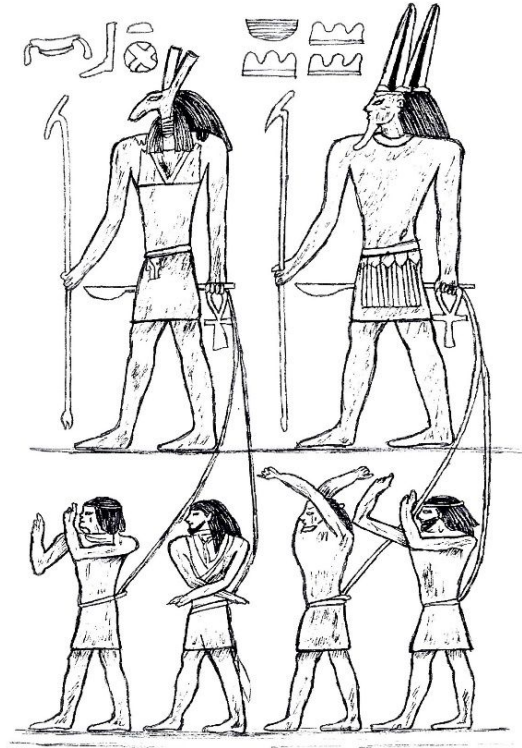
### **SOPDU, THE GOD-KING**<sup>[988]</sup>

Let us look into and consider the depiction of Sopdu from the time of Sahure more thoroughly. On a large relief from Sahure's funerary complex, on display in the Egyptian Museum of Berlin, Sopdu is portrayed as a great conquering warrior god-king. He walks behind Seth and his captives are shown in a panel underneath them. According to this depiction, the god, Seth, led him to victory.<sup>[989]</sup>

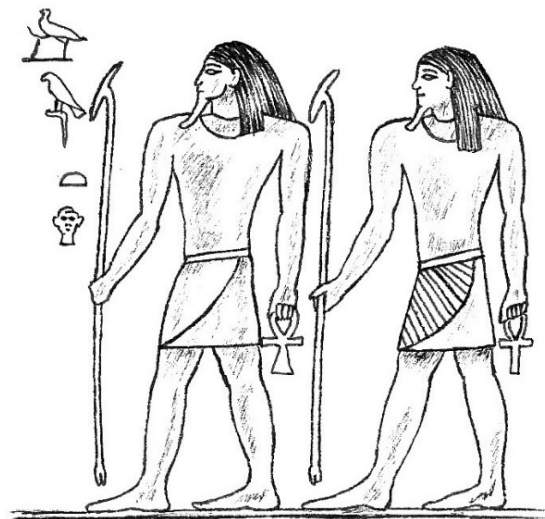
Although the association of Sopdu with Seth might seem somewhat odd in the light of my identifying him with Sargon, this is actually precisely what one should expect! In this instance, Seth is simply the Egyptian counterpart of the north Syrian weather god, Dagan, whom Sargon credited with his victories in the north. This understanding of Seth on the Sopdu relief agrees with the Egyptian tradition of identifying Seth with the western weather god, worshipped by the northern Semites. From the time of the Middle Kingdom, this god was the Canaanite god, Baal.

Sopdu is portrayed with a naked upper body, wearing a wig, a curly beard, a collar, a kilt, holding an ankh in the one hand and a *w3s*-sceptre, symbolising “power” or “dominion”, in the other. On his head are two vertical straight feathers, also shown on the head of Osiris.<sup>[990]</sup> The kilt is fastened with a girdle and tassels can be seen hanging from it. This kilt is called the “*ssmt*-apron”, referring to the *ssmt* land with which it was identified.<sup>[991]</sup>

The posture and style in which Sopdu is portrayed corresponds with images of statues of deified ancestor-kings since the time of Sahure. They wear the same kind of wig, a beard, a collar, a kilt, albeit without the tassels, and carry an ankh in one hand and a *w3s*-sceptre in the other. Two such kings are depicted on the door jambs of Sahure’s funerary temple with the accompanying inscription: “The two spirits [souls] before the house of assignment of provisions.”<sup>[992]</sup> This probably refers to two statues of ancestor-kings.



*Figure 33. Sopdu as a conquering god-king (Egyptian Museum, Berlin).*



*Figure 34. Two deified ancestor-kings shown on the door jambs of Sahure's temple in Abusir.*



We know that the “spirits” of deified kings played a cardinal role in Egyptian cult practice since the Early Dynastic Period when statues of the “Spirits of Nekhen and Pe” were brought from those cities to Heliopolis for the royal ceremonies. Similar ancestor “spirits” appear in ancient Sumer, recalling the “gods” (Anunnaki) brought from Nippur and Eridu to An’s temple in Uruk during the Uruk Period. Dual statues are also attested to in Sumer, where two of them stood in front of the Enlil temple in Nippur in pre-Sargonic times. [\[993\]](#)

The only distinction between the deified kings depicted on the door jambs of Sahure’s temple and the depiction of Sopdu in the relief is the tassels added to his kilt and the two feathers on his head (as well as the leash on which he holds his prisoners).

We may at this point rightly ask the following question: Why would the Egyptians depict Sargon as a deified king? This depiction is actually consistent with how Sargon was portrayed in Sumer and Akkad as can be seen on his Victory Stele on display in the Louvre Museum, where he is shown in Ningirsu’s divine posture casting a net over his enemies. Sargon was also seen as an incarnation of the god, Dumuzi. In popular tradition, he was described as a mighty hero emanating the divine glory. The Egyptians presumably also regarded him as divine, perhaps comparable to Alexander the Great’s deification many centuries later during his visit to Egypt.

Another possibility, consistent with the above, is that Sopdu refers to a statue of Sargon. According to the omen tradition and the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend*, Sargon erected a statue of himself in the Amanus Mountains. The portrayal of Sargon in the form of Sopdu might have been based on a statue or statues of himself which he had erected in the west. If this is correct, Sopdu was the Egyptian version of the “god with the mace” of Mesopotamian tradition. Eventually, Sopdu became the



patron god of the Asiatics who settled in the eastern Delta, where he was called “guardian of the gateway to the east”.  
[\[994\]](#)

Although the image of Sopdu as a deified king makes perfect sense when seen as the portrayal of a statue of Sargon, one would still need to explain the two features distinguishing Sopdu from the typical deified Egyptian ancestor-kings.

The first feature is the two feathers on his head. What did these feathers symbolise? They in fact signified the two divine eyes, the sun and the moon.[\[995\]](#) This is particularly significant in light of the identification of Sargon with Ningirsu on his Victory Stele since this god had these very same heavenly bodies for eyes! This image goes back to the antediluvian tradition of the divine child with the bright radiance and sun and moon for eyes (as found in the Edfu texts). In Egypt, he became embodied in Horus, the Egyptian Ningirsu. In both the Mesopotamian and Egyptian traditions this figure portrayed the messianic child. This supports my view that Sargon was regarded in these terms even as far away as Egypt.

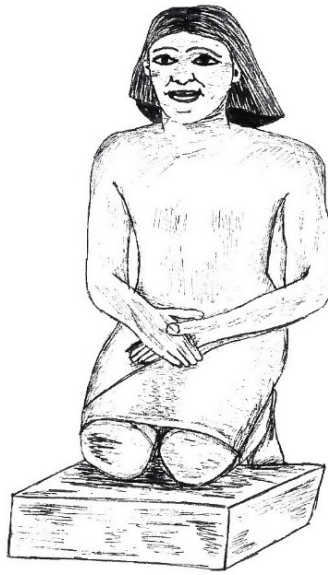
What is more is that this Ningirsu was, like Horus in Egypt, identified with Sirius in Sumer! We find this identification of Ningirsu (Ninurta) with Sirius, for example, in the *Hymn to Ninurta as Sirius* where this god is portrayed as the greatest warrior amongst all the gods, the “indefatigable arrow [*šukūdu*] that [kills] all enemies”. This is exactly how Sopdu is portrayed in Sahure’s funerary complex, as a great and mighty conquering warrior-king. In keeping with the association of Sirius with battle, we read in one Mesopotamian text: “Arrow-star, by name, making battle resound.”[\[996\]](#) One may propose that the identification of Ningirsu with Sirius goes back to Akkadian times and that Sargon was seen as the embodiment of this Ningirsu.

It is even possible that the very name “Sopdu” was an Egyptianised pronunciation of the Akkadian name for

“Sirius”, namely *šukūdu*, meaning “arrow-star”. The name Sopdu is written with the hieroglyph for “sharp” (combined with the third person plural suffix, a quail), depicted as a pointed triangle which may be an arrow-point. The name means “sharp ones” and might refer to arrow-points exactly like in Mesopotamia. Sirius was actually very widely associated with a bow and arrows, especially with the point of the arrow. We should not forget that the bow and arrows was one of the preferred battle weapons used by the Akkadian Emperors. So, to conclude, the reason why the Egyptians would have given Sargon the name “Sopdu-*šukūdu*”, follows from his identification with Ningirsu, or rather, if one accepts my explanation, from his identification with Ningirsu as Sirius.

The final feature distinguishing Sopdu from the deified Egyptian ancestor-kings is the tasselled girdle, called the “*ssmt* apron” with reference to the *ssmt* land.<sup>[997]</sup> Although all the features are consistent with Sargon as deified king, this is the one which might singularly connect Sopdu to Sumer, that is if we can show that this girdle was in fact of Sumerian or Akkadian provenance.

Evidence from Egypt suggesting this does in fact exist. A similar tassel is shown as part of the dress of the funerary priest, Kaemqed, on a statuette of him dating from the Fifth Dynasty. Especially fascinating, is the way in which the priest’s hands are folded and held together. As observed by the French scholar, Pierre Gilbert, this is in accordance with the typical Sumerian convention!<sup>[998]</sup> Gilbert also suggests that this Sumerian influence in Egypt is connected with the boat depictions in Sahure’s temple. This agrees with my view and supports the notion that Sopdu represents a deified king from the land of Sumer.



*Figure 35. Statuette of Kaemqed  
(Egyptian Museum, Cairo).*

The question remains whether the Akkadian Emperors in fact wore such tassels on their garb. If so, this would indeed provide strong evidence that Sopdu was the Egyptian portrayal of the Akkadian Emperor or at least of his statue. Although Sopdu's iconography is common to Egyptian deified kings, he might represent a foreign deified king shown in accordance with Egyptian convention, with only the girdle providing the clue as to his land of origin. The challenge is to show and prove that the tasselled girdle was part of and did, in fact, belong to the Akkadian royal attire. Clearly, the girdle holds the key to confirming Sopdu's identity.

At this stage in my quest, I did not know if girdles with tassels in fact belonged to the Akkadian royal dress or not. It took some time to find the relevant evidence. My first breakthrough came when I discovered the portrayal of such a girdle on an Akkadian seal impression from Ur (c. 2400-2200 BC). In this portrayal, it is worn by hairies, shown as so-called "naked bearded heroes". Such a girdle or belt with

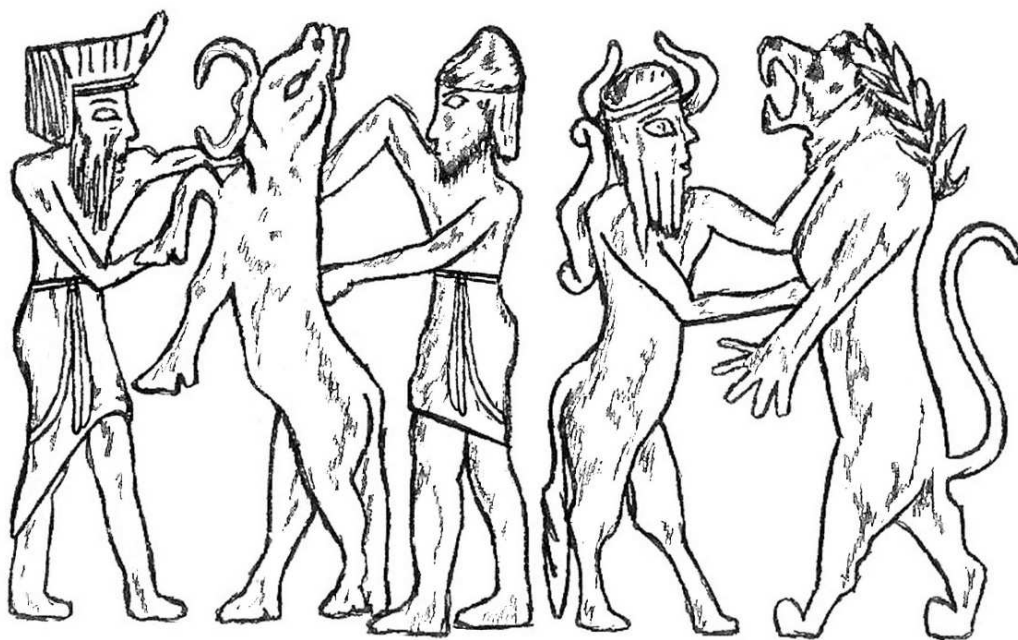
tassels is also worn around the waist by a seated and naked figure, apparently a naked hairy, on Naram-Sin's Bassetki statue on display in the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad. Although the top part of the figure is broken off (making identification difficult), he holds a socket used for bearing standards, just like other hairies holding similar standards shown on seals from the royal tombs of Ur. [\[999\]](#)

I have earlier associated the hairies with the Dumuzi cult. Given that cult's close and intimate connection with the Akkadian imperial dynasty, it is not at all surprising to learn that these figures were depicted wearing the royal dress. This might have reflected the emperor's participation in the cult. As such, the hairy is depicted as a "royal hero", wearing a flat cap, long hair, a beard, a fringed kilt and tasselled rope. [\[1000\]](#) Naram-Sin's portrayal as a half-naked hero on his Victory Stele, on display in the Louvre Museum, might well be connected to the iconography of the naked and bearded hairy or "hero".

The scholar, Anne Porter, [\[1001\]](#) goes one step further by proposing that the figure on the Bassetki piece, inscribed with the request for Naram-Sin to be acknowledged as a god, might be identified with the king himself. Even if we do not accept her interpretation, it is nonetheless clear that the tasselled belt worn by the naked and bearded hero, portrayed as a "royal hero" in the Akkadian Period, reflects royal use. And these elements, the long hair, the beard, the kilt and tasselled rope are all to be found in the depiction of Sopdu as a deified king! In fact, the dress of the "royal hero", with tasselled belt and kilt, looks distinctly similar to that of Sopdu, except for the Egyptian iconographical style and the feathered headpiece typical of Egyptian art.

Although the tasselled belt did appear in Canaan in later centuries, this was certainly not the case during this early period. [\[1002\]](#) We also know that it was not typical of the Egyptian royal dress given its origin and identification with the *ssmt* land. As far as I know, Sumer is the only place

where this belt is found and attested to so early on. Taking all the evidence into account, namely that Sopdu was described and depicted as a great warrior king from the *ssmt* land in the east, his feathers representing the divine eyes of Ningirsu (Horus) in whose image Sargon was depicted, his identification with Sirius agreeing with Ningirsu as Sirius, his iconography showing a remarkable and distinct correspondence with the Akkadian royal dress, his appearance in Egypt at the exact same time the intensive copper mining in the Sinai started and his cult myth (as Horus-Sopdu, son of Osiris) closely agreeing with the Akkadian imperial cult myths, we can safely say and with good reason conclude that Sopdu was an Egyptian portrayal of the great Akkadian Emperors or at least of their statues.



*Figure 36. A cylinder seal impression from Ur presently in the British Museum, showing the “royal hero” (c. 2200 BC).*

*Also shown, is the bull-man, whom I associate with the priestly caste. The bull-man is wearing the horns of divinity, which may reflect Naram-Sin’s priestly role.*

## **THE EGYPTIAN LION-MASKED MEN**

There was, however, yet another surprise waiting to be discovered. This was that a depiction of the Akkadian Emperor, Sargon, actually exists in which he is portrayed with tassels hanging down from a belt around his waist! This could be seen on the seal impression showing the earliest Heracles/Hercules-type hero wearing a lion skin, which dates from the Akkadian Period (Figure 25). This hero is dressed like a typical Akkadian Emperor and is depicted together with the warrior goddess, Ishtar. I have shown that this is a portrayal of Sargon, depicted as a Dumuzi figure. In this instance we do not only find a tasselled belt shown as part of the Akkadian attire (in keeping with what we already know), we also see Sargon himself wearing it! This is in keeping with my thesis that, when Sopdu first appeared in Egypt, he was simply the Egyptian rendition of (a statue of) Sargon of Akkad.

The portrayal of Sargon wearing a lion skin coincided with the earliest literary description and depictions of warriors wearing lion skins in Mesopotamia. It is thus quite significant that men dressed as lions made their appearance in Egypt during the exact same time when Sopdu made his appearance.

Before discussing these figures, it might be noted that the lion became a prominent feature in Egyptian art during the time of Sahure, who is, for example, identified with a winged lion in his temple at Abusir. Although one's first impulse may be to view this as a reworking of the Sphinx motif, this image might in actual fact have been taken from the Akkadian weather god's depiction as a winged lion. This assessment is in keeping with my identification of the Seth figure accompanying Sopdu on the Sahure relief with the weather god, Dagan. If Seth indeed refers to Dagan in this

instance, it makes perfect sense that this god's iconography made its appearance in Egypt at this time.

Also making its appearance in the time of Sahure, is another Egyptian image in Sumerian style, namely that of two lions looking in opposite directions, similar to those in the royal tombs of Ur in pre-Akkadian times.<sup>[1003]</sup> This image shows without any doubt that Egypt was influenced by Sumer during this period. The reason we find Sumerian instead of Akkadian influences is that Sargon had come to Egypt very early on in his reign, before the distinctly Akkadian styles developed.

A related figure associated with Sopdu, appearing for the first time in Egypt during Sahure's reign, is a person dressed like a lion. He wears a wig representing a lion's ears and mane, often with a tail hanging down his back. The first depiction of this figure shows prominent ears and a long mane falling over his shoulders. It might be a priest wearing a mask. Scholars have associated this lion-masked figure with a kind of *rite de passage* during which such masks might have been worn.<sup>[1004]</sup>

Another depiction of this lion-masked figure, this time from the reign of Sahure's son, Nefer-irkare Kakai, supports this theory. In this case the figure, portrayed in the king's pyramid temple on the necropolis of Abusir, is shown naked. His nakedness suggests an initiation rite during which candidates were stripped of their clothes.

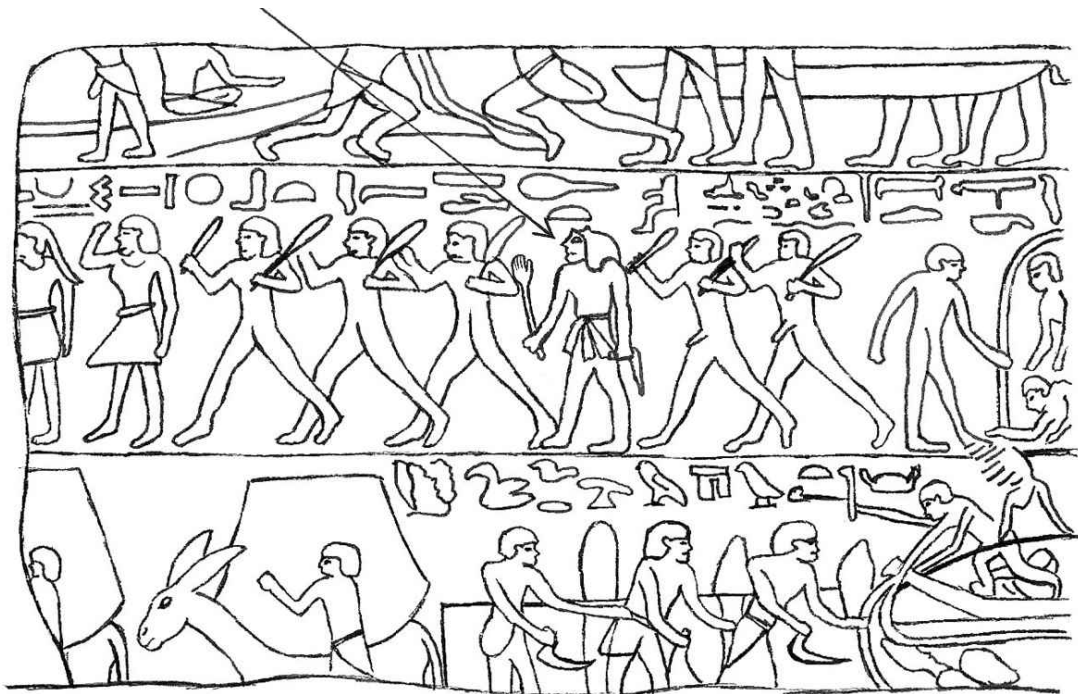
One figure with a lion wig, shown on a painted relief reportedly found at Giza and dated to the Fifth Dynasty, is particularly intriguing and fascinating. The figure, a light-skinned man shown together with seven dark-skinned dancing youths, holds a sceptre in the form of a hand in his one hand and a long kerchief in the other. The accompanying inscription reads, "dancing with youths". The depiction suggests a dance performed during a harvest festival.<sup>[1005]</sup> The lion-masked figure wears a collar as well as a girdle similar to that associated with the Delta region,



where it was worn by sailors and people working in the marches.<sup>[1006]</sup>

The lion-mask suggests that the wearer is a priest or shaman. Scholars have also proposed that a rite of passage is depicted. What is strange about this figure, however, is that he is slightly shorter than the youths, showing him to be dwarfish. This means that he might be a dwarf-shaman.

This opinion is supported by another depiction, the only other such depiction from that time belonging to this iconographic genre. This is an image of a dwarf from a tomb in the cemetery near the village of Qau, dated to the Sixth Dynastic Period or slightly later. The dwarf is shown in typical bow-legged fashion with snakes visible above his shoulders. He presumably holds the snakes in his hands as is shown in later depictions of dwarfish men dressed like lions.<sup>[1007]</sup> The snakes in his hands depict his power over evil forces, confirming that dwarfs or pygmies conducted some kind of priestly-shamanistic function as part of the cultic performance involving rites of passage.





*Figure 37. Lion-masked man dancing with seven youths shown on a painted limestone relief dated to the Fifth Dynasty, found at Giza.* [\[1008\]](#)

Where did these dwarfs or pygmies come from? Seemingly, they came from the land of Punt, which I have identified with the island of Dilmun. There is, for example, the *dng* (pygmy) brought from Punt to Egypt in the time of King Djedkare Isesi of the Fifth Dynasty. Pygmies were especially and highly regarded for their dancing skills. In another reference to a *dng* from that period, he is associated with the island of the blessed dead: "O you who ferry over the righteous boatless as the ferryman of the Field of Rushes. I am deemed righteous in this island of earth, I am deemed righteous in this island of earth to which I have swum and arrived, which is between the thighs of Nut. I am the pygmy (*dng*) of the dances of god, who diverts the god in front of his great throne." [\[1009\]](#)

The correspondence with the ferryman who took Gilgamesh to Dilmun is glaringly obvious. Dilmun was also looked upon as the blessed island of the dead. These agreements support my view that the island of Punt, from where pygmies were imported to Egypt, was in fact Dilmun (the present-day Bahrain). The association of the pygmies with the island of the blessed dead indicates that the rites they practiced were connected with the afterlife.

The dwarfish man or god wearing the lion wig with snakes in his hands was later called Bes. In the Late Period, he was called "Lord of Punt". [\[1010\]](#) He reminds one of the snakelike figure, the lord of Punt, in the tale of the "shipwrecked sailor"! One may rightly ask whether these Egyptian men dressed like lions practised a cult similar to the one that once existed on the island of Punt/Dilmun.

The snake-lord in the story also had divination skills, foreseeing that the shipwrecked sailor would be rescued and picked up by sailors from his land in four month's time.

Dilmun was actually known for divination practices and texts dating from about 2000 BC make mention of diviners.<sup>[1011]</sup> One may then surely conclude that the initiatory cult of the men dressed like lions, which might have included the practice of divination, was brought to Egypt from Sumer (and later Dilmun) early in the Akkadian Period.

### **SOPDU AND THE LION-MASKED MEN**

Of special significance to our story is the connection between the lion-masked men and Sopdu. The man with the lion wig shown with the dancing youths is depicted in very much the same way as the Sopdu figure, especially if we take Sopdu as also wearing a wig made of a lion's mane.<sup>[1012]</sup> Although Sopdu's tasselled *ssmt* apron is of a more sophisticated style (belonging to the royal Akkadian dress) than the girdle worn by the lion-masked man, one may suggest that the latter reflects the popular cultic context of the depiction. The only other difference is that he is of a smaller posture than the Sopdu figure. Both Sopdu and the lion-masked men were also regarded as great warriors. It means that the lion-masked men, associated with an initiatory practice, might have been connected with Sopdu.

In fact, the men with the lion wigs, who became stylised as a dwarf-god with a lion wig, were identified with Sopdu in later periods, so much so that such figures were occasionally even called Sopdu.<sup>[1013]</sup> Given Sopdu's origin in the *ssmt* land, this cult might also have been brought from there by his followers. One may assume that the lion-masked men who appeared in Egypt precisely at the time when Sopdu entered the scene, included pygmy warrior-shamans like those associated with Sargon and the Akkadian imperial cult. We have already discussed their involvement with Sargon and the imperial cult in an earlier chapter.<sup>[1014]</sup>

The association of the man with the lion wig with the seven youths reminds of Lugalbanda, the dwarf-shaman and the seven young men accompanying him. In both cases we find a dwarf-shaman accompanied by seven youths. Can this be a mere coincidence? I do not think so, especially in light of our present discussion. Accordingly, this cult practice with its initiatory rites might go right back to the time of Lugalbanda, later becoming part of the Akkadian warrior-cult and spreading from there to Egypt. We find a similar portrayal in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, where Utu provided the heroes, Gilgamesh and Enkidu, with seven warriors to accompany them to the Cedar Mountain in the west, possibly reminiscent of Akkadian practice. In the same epic, Humbaba, who later became the paramount image of shamanistic participants in the Ishtar cult, was protected by seven *pulhiatum* or protective auras.

The seven youths in our depiction above might represent the seven “servants” often associated with shamans. Those ancient people probably believed that certain ancestral spirits took possession of the youths during cult dances. This agrees with the ancient Sumerian thinking about the seven youths accompanying Lugalbanda, namely that the seven gods (*il sibitti*) were incarnated in and took possession of them.

In Egypt, the lion-masked men might have included various kinds of cult participants among them, such as the dwarf-shamans. These masked men must have been “warrior-shamans” because they were called “Aha”, meaning fighter. This means that they probably belonged to a warrior caste. Viewing the seven young men accompanying the man with the lion wig in terms of a warrior caste is not in conflict with their association with the harvest festival<sup>[1015]</sup> as similar things were said about the seven youths who accompanied Lugalbanda. A warrior character for the cult will be in keeping with the association

of the lion-masked men with Sopdu, who is depicted as a great and mighty warrior in the Pyramid Texts.

### **A SECRET WARRIOR ORDER OF LION-MASKED MEN**

Let us now return to Sargon. Sargon was not merely shown as a hero wearing a lion skin; he was also described as holding a snake in his hands, exactly like the depictions of the Bes figures in Egypt! According to the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend*, it once so happened that Sargon's belt broke, whereupon he replaced it with a snake. Strikingly, Sargon was also depicted in this text as a great magician with direct access to the gods. [\[1016\]](#)

In Sargon, we find a hero who wears a lion skin, who holds a snake in his hands and who is a great warrior-magician. This picture of Sargon was especially celebrated in the western regions, where the legend about the snake belt circulated and where Sargon's statue stood in the Amanus according to the same *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend*.

Sargon is clearly the archetype of the men dressed like lions, presumably even in Egypt, where they were associated with Sopdu, the Egyptian version of the Akkadian "god with the mace". The only difference between the Akkadian and Egyptian traditions is the prominent role assigned to a dwarfish figure in Egypt. But then, I have also identified Sargon with dwarf- or pygmy-shamans and proposed that they actually played an important role in the Akkadian imperial cult. In fact, we find that the hairies (whom I take to be pygmies and whom I have identified with Sargon's companion, Akki), are sometimes shown with snakes in each of their hands, exactly like the Egyptian Bes dwarf! Dwarfs also appear together with the "god with the mace" in various depictions.

One may now infer that these men dressed like lions belonged to a warrior order or caste going back to the time of Lugalbanda, who venerated the seven gods in their cult and who adopted the deified king, Sargon (or Naram-Sin), as

their patron during the Akkadian Period. Accordingly, the secret shamanistic warrior-order, the Order of the Thunderbird, into which Lugalbanda was initiated, might have continued to exist within the warrior caste of Akkadian times. [\[1017\]](#) It is possible that it even had a place in the Akkadian imperial cult.

In summary, the lion-masked figures of Egyptian tradition are for the first time attested to during the reign of Sahure (or at least in his funerary complex) when Sopdu also made his first appearance in that land. This must have been the time when this warrior caste was brought to Egypt. They were not only portrayed similarly to Sopdu, they were even occasionally called by that name. They were often hailed as “fighter”. Our quest for the descendants of the Nephilim might again bring such figures to cross our path, which will be an important pointer in showing the way.

## **21. PORTEURS DES TORQUES**

The Akkadian traditions eventually also spread to Canaan. Although we shall return to the Canaanite traditions in more depth and detail in the next volume of this work, we can at this stage already explore the proliferation of these traditions to the western shores of Mesopotamia. Again, our focus will fall on Sopdu and the warrior order associated with him. Our point of departure will be the Sopdu tradition in order to gain a better understanding of the traditions that were prevalent in Canaan. In doing so, we soon discover that the god-king called Sopdu in Egypt was also venerated at Ugarit in Canaan as part of a triad including Baal and Anat, the Canaanite versions of Adad and Ishtar.

We also encounter the Ḫabiru, a group whose identity has troubled and puzzled scholars for decades. In this chapter, I will show that a strange group of warriors found buried at the temple of Baal in Ugarit on the Canaanite coast might indeed have belonged to the Ḫabiru. Intriguingly, these buried warriors wore distinct metal rings around their necks. The French archaeologist who excavated the site, accordingly called them *porteurs des torques*, meaning “wearers of neck-rings”.

In my view, these people were descendants or heirs of the ancient warrior order founded by Naram-Sin when he reorganised the Akkadian warrior caste in order to include Hurrians in their ranks, Hurrians who also became attached to the Nergal-Erra cult at the Kutha temple. Also interesting, is the connection between the Ḫabiru and Kubera, whom we have already encountered in the Indian tradition, the dwarf guarding the heavenly palace of Indra where great warriors go after they die.

### **SOPDU IN CANAAN**

Sopdu in time became closely associated with the Asiatics not only in the Delta region but also to the north, in Canaan. It has been proposed that the name “land of the god” (*t3 ntr*), first attested to during the Eleventh Dynasty and identified with “the hill-countries of Retenu”, as Phoenicia was then called, replaced the earlier *ssmt* land as the land where Sopdu was worshipped.<sup>[1018]</sup> This suggests that those who worshipped Sopdu was in later times found in Canaan.

Sopdu’s Asiatic connection is evident from his later association with the gods, Baal (Seth) and Anat. Stelae of these three gods were erected together on the caravan routes leading northwards from the Delta. In one instance the three stelae are those of Anta (Anat), Set (Baal) and Sopdu and in another those of Anta (Anat), Baal and Sopdu.<sup>[1019]</sup> These stelae show that these three gods were frequently grouped together. Sopdu is already, in the very first depiction of him on the Sahure relief, accompanied by Seth, whom I take to be the Egyptian version of Dagan, later replaced by Baal as the main weather god worshipped in Canaan. The association of Sopdu with Seth, being Dagan or Baal, is therefore very old and the addition of Anat is simply an inclusion of the consort of the weather god.

At this point one cannot but recall that Sargon, whom I identify with the Sopdu of the Sahure relief, was similarly associated with the western weather god and his consort. In the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend*, he is throughout set in the company of Adad and Ishtar, later called Baal and Anat in Canaan.<sup>[1020]</sup> The association of Sopdu with Baal and Anat simply seems to be a later Canaanite version of Sargon with Adad and Ishtar. This means that the tradition embodied in the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend* in time became widespread in regions to the west such as Canaan, with Sargon having been venerated as Sopdu in the Egyptian version of this tradition.

In the autobiographic style of the *Old Akkadian Sargon Legend*, Sargon says that his statue, to which offerings had to be brought, represented his lordship over the Humanum Mountains, presumably somewhere in or near the Amanus Mountains: "I bound a rod of carnelian and lapis lazuli, and distributed it to the land. I smote the Humanum Mountains in two parts and I set up my statue like a peg between them... let them, oh Adad king, make the regular offering for me abundant."

Sargon's rod consisted of reeds, divided and distributed across the land as symbols of his authority over it.<sup>[1021]</sup> Due to the weather god and Ishtar having given Sargon the victory, his worship in the form of his statue was closely connected with theirs. One gets the distinct impression from this text that Sargon's statue, together with those of Adad and Ishtar, the gods of the land, formed a triad and were meant to be worshipped together. In my view, this triad gave rise to the appearance of the threefold statues of Baal, Anat and Sopdu.

### **AN ASIATIC GOD-KING FROM UGARIT**

The earliest evidence for such threefold statues comes from the temple of the god, Baal, built in the ancient city of Ugarit, nowadays called Ras Shamra, on the northeastern shores of the Mediterranean coast of Syria. The ruins of Ugarit date back to the beginning of the Middle Bronze Period (c. 2000 BC). The Baal worshipped here was Baal Sapan (Baal Zephon), the Baal of Mount Sapan,<sup>[1022]</sup> a celebrated peak in the Amanus, also called Hazzi.<sup>[1023]</sup>

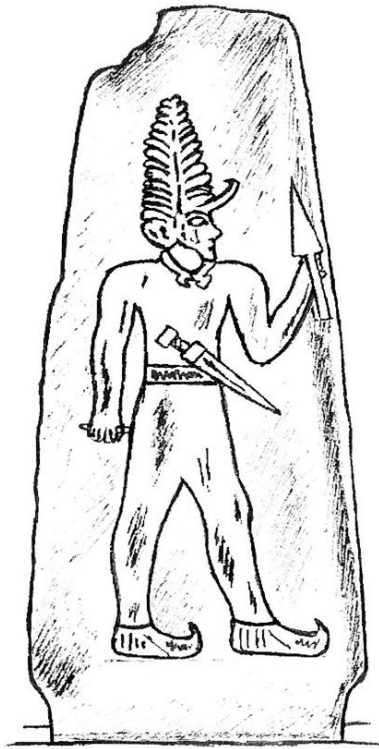
At this Baal temple three stelae, similar to those on the caravan routes from Egypt to Canaan, were discovered. One of them, unfortunately severely damaged, depicts a god only recognisable from the *w3s*-sceptre he carries. This is probably Seth, the Egyptian version of the weather god, worshipped here in northern Canaan where he was closely



identified with this sceptre. Another stele shows a goddess clad in bird feathers, prefiguring the Canaanite Anat. [\[1024\]](#)

On the third stele appears the image of a figure with a bare upper body, wearing an apron and a torc around the neck with sandals on his feet. In his left hand he holds a vertical spear and in his right hand the *hiq* ("head") sceptre, commonly associated with Asiatic kings and princes. In his girdle appears a weapon, seemingly a dagger, and on his head a strange headpiece, perhaps a feather or plume, [\[1025\]](#) with what seems to be a horn (one of a pair) on his forehead. [\[1026\]](#) This headpiece is unique in ancient Canaanite iconography.

Who are depicted on these three stelae? As already mentioned, the first two gods apparently are Seth (Baal) and Anat, shown here in an early local Canaanite style. The inclusion of the third figure together with Baal and Anat shows that those people actively included another divine figure or god in their worship. Who then might this third figure be? In my estimation, this is an early Canaanite version of the god-king venerated by the Egyptians as Sopdu, shown with Baal and Anat in the same way Sopdu was shown with them in the northern Delta, with the feathered/plumed headpiece a local rendition of Sopdu's plumed headpiece. Although he is obviously not depicted exactly like Sopdu, he might be a local version of the same god-king whom the Egyptians venerated as Sopdu. This can be the only meaningful conclusion given the available evidence.



*Figure 38. Asiatic god-king from the Baal temple at Ugarit on display in the Louvre Museum, Paris (AO 13174).*

Pursuant to my identification of Sopdu with the Akkadian Emperors, Sargon and Naram-Sin, my suggestion is that one of them is depicted here as a god-king. As a statue of Sargon was placed somewhere in the Amanus Mountains, or rather in the Humanum Mountains, it is reasonable to assume that the figure on the third stele might be Sargon. His mythos might, however, have adopted and taken over some motifs from the Naram-Sin legends as this region features prominently in them. In *Gula-AN and the Seventeen Kings against Naram-Sin*, the enemy hordes came through the passes in the Amanus Mountains.

This god-king might also well be the god, Naram-Sin. He is the only human king ever to have been depicted with the horns of divinity—shown on the forehead of the Asiatic king in Figure 38. I have earlier argued that Naram-Sin was

regarded as the divine son of the storm god and Ishtar in her form as his consort. Assuming that this part of the Akkadian mythos came to these parts with his worship, the Asiatic god-king on the stele at Baal's temple could have been viewed as the son of Baal and Anat. This would explain their close association with each other.

Although the association of this Asiatic god-king with Baal and Anat might go back to the association of Sargon with Dagan/Adad and Ishtar, it might also reflect Naram-Sin's role as the son of the storm god and goddess. Irrespective of the view taken, this god-king might have been a depiction of the Akkadian Emperor, seen as the divine son of Baal and Anat. In this case, Sargon and Naram-Sin's stories and legends became intertwined and conflated. This means that the Akkadian mythos reached Canaan where those people venerated a god-king who hailed back to the Akkadian Emperor.

The Egyptian influence on the depictions suggests that those who set up these stelae came from the Egyptian Delta to Ras Shamra. These followers of the god-king might have been none other than the men dressed like lions discussed above.

We can now take a closer look into this.

### ***PORTEURS DES TORQUES***

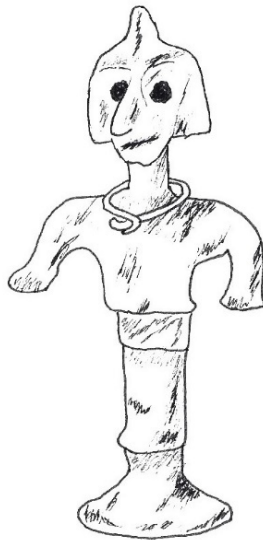
Claude Schaeffer, the French archaeologist who excavated the site, found burial sites at the Baal temple which might be those of the followers of the god-king worshipped there. He called them *porteurs des torques*, wearers of neck-rings, stemming from the remarkable large neck-rings found in deposits and graves associated with these people. They were great metallurgists and warriors and Schaeffer believed they invented a method of producing bronze by using tin. Their arrival in Canaan brought about a new bronze age called the Middle Bronze Period. [\[1027\]](#)

Such neck-rings, or torcs, first appeared in the middle of the third millennium BC along the upper-Euphrates, where it makes a distinct and notable bend, in northern Mesopotamia. Thereafter, they are sporadically found in the same area.<sup>[1028]</sup> In about 2200 BC, such rings and weapons associated with the *porteurs des torques* appear in central Mesopotamia and in Luristan in Iran. Then, suddenly, after 2000 BC, these rings appear in great numbers together with other related items and artefacts, including bronze weapons, along the northern Canaanite coastal areas at Byblos and Ugarit and along the Orontes River at Hama and Tell Sougha, east of Byblos in present-day Lebanon. The largest deposit of neck-rings, together with bracelets, pins and bronze weapons, like axes, daggers and lances (with sockets attached), came from the “Field of Offerings” at Byblos.<sup>[1029]</sup> Figurines with neck-rings were also found.<sup>[1030]</sup>

The sporadic proliferation of the finds at Byblos, Ugarit and Tell Sougha suggests that the neck-rings should be associated with a mobile and marginal people.<sup>[1031]</sup> In Schaeffer’s view, they were not Semites. Their sophisticated weapons attest to the fact that they were warriors, with the bronze metallurgy indicating that they counted smiths among their ranks, especially when they came together, for example in the early Middle Bronze Period (after 2000 BC) in northern Canaan. The Egyptian influence on the iconography of the stelae suggests that these metalworkers might earlier have been involved in the mining activities in the Sinai, where Sopdu was also worshipped.

Claude Schaeffer proposed that these people were associated with the god-king wearing a *torque* or neck-ring shown on the particular stele at the Baal temple in Ugarit. This follows not only from the fact that they venerated him at this temple but also from them wearing the very same *torques* or neck-rings. If Schaeffer is correct, this might shed some light on the purpose of these neck-rings. The correspondence with Sopdu’s collar/necklace, common to

the deified spirits of Egyptian kings, suggests that these neck-rings were associated with deified spirits or daemons venerated by these people. Strikingly, Naram-Sin himself is portrayed wearing a necklace on the rock cliffs of Darband-i-Gawr, south of Sulaimaniyyah in northeastern Iraq!



*Figure 39. Figurine with neck-ring discovered at Ugarit and on display in the Louvre Museum, Paris.*

The association of the *porteurs des torques* with a warrior tradition is indeed fascinating. The weapons associated with them were of outstanding quality, with various kinds of new weapons making their appearance for the first time.<sup>[1032]</sup> If they were followers of the Asiatic god-king, counterpart of the Egyptian warrior god, Sopdu, which seems to be quite a meaningful conclusion, then they might have been descendants of or heirs to the warriors who once followed the great Akkadian Emperors.

Some of Naram-Sin's greatest admirers in later centuries came from the ranks of the Erra-Nergal temple at Kutha. Naram-Sin's most popular legends, such as *The Cuthean Legend* and *Erra and Naram-Sin*, were handed down in these

circles. According to these legends associated with the Kutha temple cult, Erra-smiths made his weapons and provided warriors, “men of Erra”, who accompanied him on his military campaigns. If the followers of the Asiatic god-king that formed part of the *porteurs des torques* indeed hark back to those followers of Naram-Sin, they in actual fact stood squarely in the tradition going back to those smiths and warriors.

The case for this hypothesis becomes even stronger when we recall that Naram-Sin’s Hurrian followers were also associated with the Kutha temple. Why are they important for our present discussion? The point is that neck-rings associated with the *porteurs des torques* and dated to about 2200 BC were also found in the areas of Lake Urmia and Luristan in the Zagros Mountains.<sup>[1033]</sup> This agrees with the invading hordes having taken the northern route according to *The Cuthean Legend*, suggesting that the progenitors of the *porteurs des torques* belonged to those Hurrian invaders, some of whom afterwards became followers of the Semitic god-king, Naram-Sin. The Hurrians were indeed associated with those northern regions.

According to this view, the *porteurs des torques* were descendants of the invading hordes who passed along this northern route through those areas. More specifically, they were descendants of those Hurrians who eventually joined Naram-Sin’s army and whom I have associated with the Erra temple at Kutha. They might have been the ones who built the temple for Naram-Sin after his great victory and who provided people serving the god, Naram-Sin, in his temple.

If I am correct in asserting that the *porteurs des torques*, who appeared from 2000 BC along the Canaanite coast, were descendants of those Hurrians (and others) from the Erra/Nergal cult and who became Naram-Sin’s greatest followers, it follows that the Naram-Sin legends must have been handed down in their ranks from generation to generation. It then also follows that the mythos of Naram-

Sin would have been associated with the god, Baal, just as it was with the Babylonian Marduk, the Persian Mithra and the Indian Indra. Astonishingly enough, this is exactly what we find. The Baal mythology of Ugarit is simply another version of the Marduk mythology! We will go into this in greater detail in the next volume of this work.

What makes this Canaanite tradition so astoundingly interesting is the fact that we encounter not only another version of this cult myth at Ugarit, we even find the burial sites and graves of people who were actively engaged in the cult. If these people played a central role in the very same cult tradition, which now seems very likely, we can reasonably assume that they were remnants of the warrior caste established by Naram-Sin, the same warrior caste who adopted this god-king as their patron.

At last our tracking down of the Akkadian tradition to the far ends of the ancient Middle Eastern world led us to people in whose midst the Akkadian mythical tradition, and most likely the Nephilim tradition, was nurtured and kept alive. These people presumably belonged to one of the castes into which the Nephilim dynasties were divided. They were not only followers of the god-king, they also worshipped the god who became king of the Babylonian gods, or Canaanite gods, where he was known as Baal.

A crucial question is whether there are any references to these *porteurs des torques* in the literary tradition. If so, this evidence may strengthen the conclusions reached so far. However, to link the people buried in these burial sites with corresponding ones spoken of in the literature of that time, is no simple task. I will nonetheless endeavour to do just that.

### **THE SA.GAZ**

When examining the literary traditions of Canaan, we find a group that may, in fact, be none other than the *porteurs des torques* of Schaeffer's archaeological excavations.

These are the so-called Sa.gaz, also called Ḫabiru or Khabiru.<sup>[1034]</sup> The name Sa.gaz, and its variant Sağ.gaz, means “one who smashes sinews/the head”. They were warriors found in the same areas as the *porteurs des torques* and they played a significant role in second millennium BC Canaan.

The Sa.gaz first appear in texts during the Ur III dynasty late in the third millennium BC. According to a text from the Isin-Larsa Period, following the Ur III dynasty, the Sa.gaz were implicated in a dispute about a rented boat. They seemingly accompanied the boat on a journey when it was damaged.<sup>[1035]</sup> This reminds of the escorts accompanying boats on long voyages from Sumer and Akkad to Meluhha and Makkan.

During the Old Assyrian Period, early in the second millennium BC, the Sa.gaz are mentioned in a letter written by an Assyrian merchant from Alishar in Anatolia in present-day Turkey. In the letter they are referred to as Ḫabiru. They were in the service of an as yet unidentified king, Shalahshuwe. Thereafter they often appear as soldiers or mercenaries in the service of various other kings. Sometimes they raided and plundered cities, resulting in them being identified with “robbers”.

The many references to their role as warriors imply that they formed a warrior caste, even though their wives and other members of their families and households were also called Ḫabiru. In one text, they are (together with other groups) referred to as “soldiers of the west”.<sup>[1036]</sup> In accordance with their role as warriors, the planet Mars, or “star of Nergal”, is called the “Sa.gaz star” in one astronomical text. This suggests a direct connection between the Sa.gaz and the cult of the god, Erra-Nergal. In the early second millennium BC, the names of the Ḫabiru are mostly Akkadian and Hurrian in origin. In later times they displayed the composition of the local populations to a



greater extent. In Nuzi, in central Mesopotamia, many Ḫabiru came from Akkad.

In the west, we encounter them as warriors in Alalakh (Alalah), an important city in the north Syrian Amorite land of Yamhad, in the early second millennium BC. Here, many were archers and 80 of them had chariots. They were, however, distinguishable from the “maryannu”, the chariot-owning nobility.<sup>[1037]</sup> Interestingly, a large number of them, 1006 to be precise, were “shananu”, perhaps archers. The Sa.gaz leaders also commanded stone quarrymen,<sup>[1038]</sup> indicating their involvement in building activities. As could be expected, during this period the population of Alalakh was predominantly Hurrian.<sup>[1039]</sup>

During the old Hittite Empire, the Ḫabiru served as warriors in the armies of those kings. In fact, the “gods of the Ḫabiru”, mentioned together with the “gods of the Lulahi” in the treaties of those kings, show just how important their role was. Scholars have proposed that the Ḫabiru soldiers who served the Hittite kings were Hurrians.<sup>[1040]</sup> A document from the time of the Hittite king, Mursilis I, mentions the city of Iyaruwatas, which the “Hurrian king” took (years before?) and gave to the grandfather of Teette, a Sa.gaz man.<sup>[1041]</sup>

According to the El-Amarna texts from 14th century BC Egypt, they were active all over Canaan, again as warriors. The Egyptian governor of Byblos pleads with the Egyptian king about an adversary called Abdi-Ashirta, who had Sa.gaz warriors in his service and who might have been a Sa.gaz warrior himself. We read that the king of Sidon was a “Sa.gaz man”.<sup>[1042]</sup> They were also present in Ugarit.<sup>[1043]</sup>

The Sa.gaz lived in garrisons in many cities in Canaan. One could “become a Sa.gaz/Ḫabiru”, which agrees with the fact that they were a warrior caste, possibly involving and taking part in initiation rites.<sup>[1044]</sup> They raided cities, which they looted and set on fire.<sup>[1045]</sup> Forces associated with the

Sa.gaz took many towns in Canaan from the authority of the Egyptian king.

In Egyptian texts the Ḫabiru<sup>[1046]</sup> are referred to as *‘Apiru*, written as *pr.w*, the “w” signifying the plural.<sup>[1047]</sup> The determinative placed at the end of the name symbolises a “throwstick”, meaning they were warriors.<sup>[1048]</sup> This again agrees with the fact that they were a warrior caste. The name is also a homonym for *‘prw*, meaning “ship’s crew”.<sup>[1049]</sup> Sometimes the name is written as *p.rw*, with *rw* meaning “lion”, consistent with the association of these warriors with lions. The link with lions might even imply a stronger connection, such as dressing as lions, especially in a cult context. As in the case of Alalakh, the Papyrus Leiden 348 and 349 mentions them in connection with quarrying activities.<sup>[1050]</sup>

### **SA.GAZ AND SAR.GAZ**

Who then was the Sa.gaz, also known as Ḫabiru? Readers will recall a similar name, Sar.gaz, from our earlier discussions. This was one of the two weapons, called Sar.ur and Sar.gaz, held by Marduk in his right and left hands when he fought the monster, Tiamat. Sar.ur means “one who mows down multitudes” and Sar.gaz “one who smashes multitudes”. When the names Sar.gaz and Sa.gaz (or Sağ.gaz) are compared, it is clear that they do not only sound similar, they also have very similar meanings. Both names are consistent with victory in war.

One may propose that the warrior group, called Sa.gaz, had some connection with the Sar.gaz weapon in one of Marduk’s hands. In fact, just like the Sar.gaz weapon that was held in Marduk’s left hand, so the Sa.gaz can be associated with the “left hand”. The Sa.gaz were called “soldiers of the west”, apparently in contrast with soldiers of the east and in keeping with the ancient Mesopotamian habit of dividing warriors and tribes into “sons of the left (hand)” and “sons of the right (hand)”.<sup>[1051]</sup> These soldiers

were stationed towards the east/southeast (right hand) and west/northwest (left hand) of Mesopotamia.<sup>[1052]</sup> This corresponds to where the Ḫabiru were found, that is mainly in the northwestern parts of Mesopotamia.

We now find the following: The similarly sounding Sa.gaz (Saĝ.gaz) and Sar.gaz refer to weapons and warriors, both of the left hand or from the west. As warriors were often portrayed metaphorically as weapons in the hands of gods, the Sa.gaz might have taken their name from or even have been the same as the Sar.gaz. In both instances, the Sa.gaz and Sar.gaz stood in contrast with a twin weapon or group belonging to the right hand or the east. In the Marduk myth, this was the Sar.ur, who might also have had a warrior group directly associated with it, in other words a twin group of the Sa.gaz.

### **THE SA.GAZ AND NARAM-SIN**

In our earlier discussion of the twin weapons in Marduk's hands, I have suggested that they were the Sumerian version of the Sullat and Hanis "weapons" in Naram-Sin's hands. In *The Cuthean Legend*, these twin gods are amongst the gods accompanying Naram-Sin on his military campaigns. I have already proposed that they were the Akkadian counterparts of the Hurrian twin gods, Seris and Hurris, and that the Hurrians, who joined his army, marched under the banner of Sullat and Hanis. We came across these twins in the eastern traditions where they became the twin companions of the monster-slaying hero. In the Indian tradition and in the story of the hero, Rama, one of these was Lakshmana, an incarnation of Sesha, the multi-headed *nâga* serpent, which kept in the primordial ocean. I have tracked this mythos back to the stories about the invaders who later became Naram-Sin's companions.

In Naram-Sin's army, these twin gods represented two distinct groups of warriors, namely the royal warrior caste on the one hand and his Hurrian followers on the other.

Furthermore, Naram-Sin's Hurrian warriors were associated with the Erra-Nergal cult just like the Sa.gaz warriors of later centuries were associated with Nergal. It is even possible to explain how the name, Sar.gaz, became Sağ.gaz or Sa.gaz. In the Hurrian language, the r-sound was weakly articulated, [\[1053\]](#) in other words it was not pronounced clearly by the Hurrians involved in this warrior caste, explaining how the Sumerian Sar.gaz evolved into Sağ.gaz or Sa.gaz. [\[1054\]](#)

This means that the Sa.gaz or Ḫabiru were simply the warriors associated with the Sumerian Sar.gaz, the Akkadian Hanis or the Hurrian Hurris, the weapon of the "left hand", who in the time of Naram-Sin comprised of Hurrian soldiers defending the western front of the empire. They were warriors but also builders, standing in the tradition of those who had once built the Naram-Sin temple. As part of their cult rituals they would have been the ones to have kept the dragon-slayer myth alive. The Sa.gaz warriors would have had smiths, associated with this cult, who would have manufactured their weapons in the same way they did for Naram-Sin centuries earlier.

Does evidence connecting the Sa.gaz more directly with Naram-Sin exist? Astoundingly enough, such evidence does in fact exist. From the Hittite capital, Boghazköi, comes the *Old Hittite Naram-Sin Epic* [\[1055\]](#) in which the Sa.gaz are actually mentioned. In the epic, they are described as a garrison of a so-called "guard house". [\[1056\]](#) The text is unfortunately very fragmented but it does suggest that an ancient tradition of them performing such a role existed, presumably at first as guardians of the western frontiers of the empire.

Amazingly enough, the proper noun, Habiram, a form of Ḫabiru, dating from the Akkadian Period, was found at Tell Brak. The fort at Tell Brak is the very same one which guarded the northwestern parts of the Akkadian Empire, where Hurrian soldiers from Urkesh were stationed during Naram-Sin's reign! [\[1057\]](#) The name, Ḫabiru, in this instance is,

in fact, clearly linked to this very fort, which guarded the western frontiers of the Akkadian Empire. Furthermore, many of the Ḫabiru in Nuzi in central Mesopotamia came from Akkad. This provides strong evidence in support of the fact that the Sa.gaz or Ḫabiru was a warrior caste or order dating back to the original warrior order responsible for guarding the northwestern regions of Naram-Sin's empire.

Before continuing, it may be interesting to once again relate these motifs to popular fiction where this ancient tradition is brought back to life in contemporary expression in a strange and peculiar way. The Sar.gaz or Sa.gaz and Sar.ur, for example, find a corresponding echo in the epic drama series, *Game of Thrones*, also referred to earlier. In this epic tale there are also two warrior groups similar to the ones in our story. On the one hand, there are the Night's Watch responsible for guarding and defending the Wall in the north separating the Seven Kingdoms from the dangerous world of the White Walkers beyond. This caste comprised of three departments, namely Rangers (warriors), Builders and Stewards, with many outcasts in society joining their ranks. The Night's Watch agrees closely with what we know about the Sa.gaz as guardians of the northwestern borders who were sometimes regarded as outcasts.

The other warrior order featuring in *Game of Thrones* is the Kingsguard, an elite group of seven knights, supposedly the greatest and most skilled warriors in all of Westeros, who originally serve as the royal bodyguard of the King of the Andals and the First Men, ruler of the Seven Kingdoms, and later the claimants to that throne. Their duty is to protect the king and royal family from harm at all times. This agrees with the ancient Mesopotamian royal warrior caste going back to Lugalbanda and the Akkadian Emperors in which the number seven was also accentuated. In later times, this royal warrior caste was the "maryannu", the chariot-owning nobility of the western regions.

Interestingly enough, both these orders in this fictional drama swore allegiance for life and were forbidden from owning land, taking wives or fathering children. We do not know to what extent the warrior orders in our story adhered to such rules but it does remind, however, of the ascetic practices of groups belonging to the Akkadian imperial cult.

### **THE SA.GAZ AS *PORTEURS DES TORQUES***

We can now with good reason accept that the Sa.gaz originally belonged to the caste of warriors founded by Naram-Sin. The name mainly referred to the Hurrian component of this caste who, in keeping with the association of the Sa.gaz with the northwest, guarded the northwestern parts of Mesopotamia on behalf of the Akkadian Emperor. There were sailors among the ranks of the Sa.gaz because some, as we have already seen, were involved with rented boats, perhaps as escorts accompanying such boats on long voyages from Sumer and Akkad. This is reminiscent of the escorts employed on boats when the Akkadians worked the copper mines of the Sinai. On their voyages, they would have sailed through the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

The question remains, however, as to whether we can identify the Sa.gaz with the *porteurs des torques*. In both cases, they were a group or caste of warriors found in Canaan since the early second millennium BC. And in both cases, they plundered and burned cities. The *porteurs des torques* were among those migrants who sacked and burned Byblos and Ugarit. Seen that the Sa.gaz represent the warrior caste founded by Naram-Sin, with soldiers from the Hurrian invaders included among them, the discovery of neck-rings and other related items associated with the *porteurs des torques* in geographical areas associated with Naram-Sin's invading enemies makes perfect sense. According to Naram-Sin's epics, they passed through northern Syria, through the vicinity of Lakes Van and Urmia

and Luristan to the Persian Gulf from where they sailed to Dilmun (Bahrain), Makkan (Egypt) en Meluhha (Indus Valley).<sup>[1058]</sup> The areas where most of the neck-rings and other related items were discovered, namely in the northern Zagros regions, Canaan and elsewhere, might be related to the presence of smiths associated with the *porteurs des torques*.

Another question is that about the relationship between the *porteurs des torques* and the god, Baal-Adad. This is one of the most important things we know about the *porteurs des torques*. And indeed, the same was true for the Ḫabiru. In a list of gods from Adad's temple in Ashur, the name of a god, called Ḫabiru, appears after Adad, Sala and Dagan. Strikingly, the list also includes Serris and Hurris. This then means that the god, Ḫabiru, belonged to the entourage of the storm god, Adad, identified with Baal at Ugarit in Canaan. Interestingly, Baal's temple in Ugarit was complemented by Dagan's temple, consistent with the association of the god, Ḫabiru, with both Adad and Dagan. If we assume that the god, Ḫabiru, was the patron god of the Ḫabiru warriors, after whom they were named, their association with Baal logically follows.

These facts show a strange but distinct agreement with the Indian tradition. As mentioned earlier, a god with a similar name, called Kubera, guarded the heavenly palace of Indra, where great warriors go when they die. Kubera was a dwarf god. Like the god, Ḫabiru (or Khabiru), who belonged to the household of the weather god, Adad, we find that Kubera belonged to the household of the thunder god, Indra. Whereas the household of Adad, counterpart of the Hurrian Tesub, included the twins, Seris and Hurris, Indra is associated with the twin Asvins, both linked to twin bulls or horses pulling a chariot.<sup>[1059]</sup> These similarities go to show that the god, Ḫabiru, was simply another version of Kubera and therefore also a dwarf god, just like the lion-masked dwarf-warrior, Bes, of the Egyptian tradition.



In Chapter 18, I have shown that Kubera goes back to the dwarf or pygmy god, Humba/Khuban/Huban, who was indeed closely connected with the Akkadian Emperors.<sup>[1060]</sup> Humba was the chief god of the Zagros peoples, who as the lion-faced Humbaba, became the chief guardian of the mountain of the gods in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, where he served as second-in-command to the weather god, Adad.<sup>[1061]</sup> In all these traditions Ḫabiru/Kubera/Khuban serves in the household of the storm god, Adad/Indra. He is, in line with the meaning of the name Khumba, a great “commander”, the chief guardian of the storm god’s palace. Strikingly, we have seen that Humbaba was also associated with a warrior order practicing initiation rites, just like the Ḫabiru. It therefore makes perfect sense that he, as Ḫabiru, was a patron god of a warrior caste called the Ḫabiru.

The close association of the storm god with the warrior caste goes far back in Sumerian history. Lugalbanda was initiated into the Order of the Thunderbird; he and his seven “sons” were portrayed as great warriors. The dwarf-god, Ḫabiru/Kubera/Khuban, obviously reminds of the dwarf-king, Lugalbanda, and as Humbaba (Humba), he even had seven subservient spirits, the same as Lugalbanda. Warriors taking the dwarf-god, Ḫabiru/Kubera/Khuban, as patron might have performed an initiation ritual going back to Lugalbanda.

We encountered a depiction of a lion-masked dwarf and forerunner of the Bes dwarf leading seven young men in a dance.<sup>[1062]</sup> Such an initiation ritual might have re-enacted the reincarnation of the seven gods in their midst.

Let us consider one final aspect concerning the Ḫabiru. The Ḫabiru might be associated with a kind of species of Shining Ones, probably the *ugallu*, those large or giantlike daemons associated with the Hurrians. These daemons may correspond with the giantlike *rakshasas*, those powerful warriors and magicians who sided with Kubera in the Indian tradition. This would be in keeping with the suggestion made above that the neck-rings were associated with



deified spirits or daemons. Interestingly, the *porteurs des torques* warriors buried at Baal's temple remind of the warriors in the Indian tradition going to Indra's paradise when they die.

Finally, there is the close connection between the *porteurs des torques* and the Asiatic god-king wearing a neck-ring, worshipped and venerated together with Baal and Anat at the Baal temple in Ugarit. In my view, this god-king goes back to the Akkadian Emperors. If the *porteurs des torques* were Habiru warriors, their association with this god-king makes perfect sense. One, in fact, expects nothing less. A warrior group or caste founded by Naram-Sin would in later centuries have had a close relationship with this god-king as their patron. Their association with the Nergal-Erra cult in turn agrees with the Naram-Sin epics having been handed down from generation to generation in those circles.

Identifying the *porteurs des torques* with the Sa.gaz and the warrior caste founded by Naram-Sin explains why they venerated the Asiatic god-king, Canaanite counterpart of the Egyptian Sopdu. This god-king goes back to the Akkadian god-kings, Sargon and Naram-Sin. This Canaanite king is indeed shown with the horns of divinity, like Naram-Sin. It also explains how Naram-Sin's mythos, later identified with that of Marduk, came to these shores where it was associated with Baal. One expects that this mythology was kept alive within these circles, associated with the Erra-Nergal cult.

This warrior caste, going back to Akkadian times, would have included in their ranks descendants of the warriors of those kings. Among these warriors might have been people who believed themselves to have been descended from the Akkadian dynasty itself, from the Hurrian king, Tupkish of Urkesh, and his Akkadian princess, Uqnitum, or Naram-Sin's daughter, Tar'am-Agade, who resided there in the palace as the wife of the reigning king or the queen mother, people

who indeed belonged to the ranks of the Nephilim themselves. Families claiming such descent might have been the ruling elite among the Ḥabiru.

## 22. BLOODLINES OF THE NEPHILIM

The story told thus far is about the alleged descendants of the Nephilim, starting from the earliest times until the Akkadian Period and beyond. The families who ascended the throne in ancient Sumer and who considered themselves to have been offspring of the Shining Ones eventually produced some of the greatest epochs, both in history and in terms of oral and literary traditions, the history of our world has ever seen. We should, however, not forget that their story cannot be separated from the larger cosmic picture in which the great gods found themselves in opposing camps and in conflict with one another. The story is, after all, that about the descendants of the “fallen gods”.

From the very beginning our story was cast in terms of the conflict between two groups of gods worshipped in ancient Sumer, at first as the conflict between An and Enki and then as the conflict between An’s son, Enlil, and Enki. In the Akkadian Period, the conflict reached a new climax when Enlil’s priests supported Naram-Sin’s enemies during the Great Revolt, with him afterwards shifting his allegiance and support to and in favour of Enki. At this point in history, the two main bloodlines of the Nephilim found themselves on opposing sides and in opposition to each other. Whereas the Akkadians, from the time of Naram-Sin, supported Enki, [\[1063\]](#) the Sumerians stayed loyal to Enlil, whose position as king of the gods had been well established in Sumer over many centuries.

Eventually, the supporters of Naram-Sin and others from that tradition were able to elevate Enki’s son, Marduk, to the position of king of the Babylonian gods in Enlil’s place. This development led to dramatic changes in the religious landscape of ancient Mesopotamia.

## **BLOODLINES OF THE GODS**

The person who undoubtedly had the greatest impact on the religious history of the ancient Middle East and one might even say, the ancient world, was Naram-Sin. Naram-Sin was the greatest messianic figure the world had seen before the Christian era. He was not simply another messianic figure like Gilgamesh or Horus-Aha. In him, the divine glory became embodied in an extraordinary and unparalleled way. No other person had a greater and more lasting impact on the popular imagination, resulting in extremely powerful legends and myths such as those we have already encountered, proliferating all across the ancient world.

Naram-Sin's rise to divine glory must be seen and understood within the historical context of the unfolding messianic ideal in ancient Sumer. Within the speculative doctrine of the Enki milieu, the messianic ideal was primarily about shamanistic rebirth, not only on an individual level but also in the framework of the wider society where scions of the Shining Ones rose as kings in order to rule over this ancient land. Those ancient people believed that certain families were descended from the divine seed, believed to have been the seed of Enki that plunged into the primaeval Apsu. From Enki's lineage and the ranks of these families, it was believed, that messiahs were born in accordance with and along certain points of the long cycle of the ages. Naram-Sin was the paramount embodiment of this messianic ideal.

When the bloodline of the Nephilim reached a point of extreme greatness during the Akkadian Period, the opportunity to replace Enlil and elevate Enki as king of the gods in his stead, arose during the time of the Great Revolt. Naram-Sin's move to throw his support behind the Enki faction eventually gained such momentum through the cults and traditions he founded and established that Marduk, son of Enki, was in due course elevated to kingship in Babylon in

Enlil's place. This dramatic change in the religious landscape was not confined to Mesopotamia, the popular religion associated with this king of the gods was eventually also carried to and conveyed all across the ancient world where he was worshipped as Mithra, Indra, Baal, Adad, Zeus and others, as we will in due course see.

As for the bloodlines of the Nephilim, the ancient feud between the warrior and priestly branches of these families, going back to the Uruk Period, now became embodied in two opposing bloodlines, namely the Akkadian and Sumerian lineages. In the subsequent period, the Akkadian bloodline continued among the rulers of the Dynasty of Mari in the northwest of Mesopotamia. The Sumerian bloodline returned to the throne of Sumer and Akkad about 50 years after the collapse of the Akkadian Empire when they founded the Ur III dynasty in the southeast. Although the different families were originally closely linked to the warrior and priestly castes, over time all four the castes became associated with each of these opposing family lines.

There can be no doubt that the descendants of the god-king, Naram-Sin, were in time given a special place and status among the offspring of the Shining Ones. During the Akkadian Period, the imperial dynasty of Akkad was aligned through marriage with the Dynasty of Mari, who ruled Mari as *Shakkanakku*, or "military governors", on their behalf. A votive bowl of Me-Ulmas, a daughter of Naram-Sin, discovered in Mari clearly suggests a royal marriage.<sup>[1064]</sup>

This claim of the *Shakkanakku* to a blood relationship is also attested to in their art.<sup>[1065]</sup> The scholar, Melissa Eppihimer, writes in her book about the impact of Akkadian art on Mesopotamian history: "This identity [i.e. a collective identity rooted in the Akkadian past for the entire Mari royal household] may have been founded upon actual blood relations between the Akkadians and the earliest Shakkanakkus."<sup>[1066]</sup>

The House of Mari included statues of Sargon and Naram-Sin among the statues of their ancestors standing in the throne room in Mari. Their rule of Mari continued in a line of unbroken succession for more than three hundred years.<sup>[1067]</sup> During their long reign, other kings, with whom they intermarried, might also have claimed an Akkadian lineage. We find, for example, that some Old Assyrian kings, who followed the same warrior ethos as the Akkadians, took on the names of the greatest Akkadian Emperors, Sargon and Naram-Sin.

The Ur III dynasty (c. 2168-2060 BC) ascended the throne after Utuhegal of Uruk defeated the Guteans, who ruled the land after the Akkadians. The Ur III dynasty descended from Utuhegal's son-in-law, Ur-Nammu, and ruled over the land of their Sumerian forebears for about 100 years, with their influence reaching at times as far as Byblos on the Mediterranean coast. Ur-Nammu is mainly remembered for the oldest known law code, the Code of Ur-Nammu. His son and heir, Sulgi, married the daughter of Apil-ken, the king of Mari, perhaps in an endeavour to legitimise their rule over Sumer and Akkad. She took the name Taram-Uram ("She loves Ur") and became the mother of Amar-Sin,<sup>[1068]</sup> who became king after Sulgi. In Amar-Sin's throne room, offerings were poured for four ancestral kings, including Ur-Nammu, founder of their dynasty, and Apil-ken, his Mariote grandfather.

Strikingly, Amar-Sin's brother, Su-Sin, who became king after him, brought offerings to the statues of Sargon and Naram-Sin in Mari,<sup>[1069]</sup> suggesting that he was also a son of Apil-ken's daughter, Tamar-Uram, and tracking his own descent back to these great kings. Su-Sin's son, Ibbi-Sin, was the last ruler from this dynasty.<sup>[1070]</sup> During Ibbi-Sin's reign, one of his generals or officials, called Ishbi-Erra, a man from Mari, took control of Isin in Sumer (located about 20 miles south of Nippur) and founded the Dynasty of Isin.

[\[1071\]](#) It is not clear if he was descended from the kings of Mari.

As can be expected from great kings from these Nephilim dynasties, the Ur III kings, from Sulgi onwards, also regarded themselves to be divine. [\[1072\]](#) Su-Sin propagated the cult of the living deified king more than any other king. When he ascended the throne, he had statues of himself erected all across the realm and temples were built for him by the governors of Ur, Girsu, Adab and Eshnunna. [\[1073\]](#) One can explain Su-Sin's claim on the basis of his dual descent from both the Sumerian royalty (claiming descent from Gilgamesh) and the Akkadian god-kings.

These two dynasties, namely that of Mari and Ur, claimed descent from the Akkadian Emperors and Gilgamesh, respectively. The Dynasty of Mari held the Akkadian Emperors in the highest esteem whereas the Ur III kings believed they were descended from Gilgamesh, whom they venerated above all other earlier kings. They revered these rulers above all others and brought offerings to their statues in keeping with the general practice of the time. They even took them as archetypal figureheads for their families.

During the Old Assyrian and Old Babylonian Periods in the early second millennium BC, the Amorite tribes of Mesopotamia aligned themselves with these two traditions. These tribes were divided into two lineages descended from twin ancestors, called Adnân and Qahtân. Scions of the first, the Bensimalites or 'Sons of the Left Hand', [\[1074\]](#) were "Northerners" living in the northwestern parts of Mesopotamia. Scions of the latter, the Benjaminites or "Sons of the Right Hand", were "Southerners", living in the southeast. [\[1075\]](#) By dropping the "ben" these Amorites were also called Ishma'elites and Yemenites. [\[1076\]](#)

In Mari, in the west, a tribe of the Bensimalites, the Hanaeans, took control, building a new palace to which the statues of Sargon, Naram-Sin and the previous kings of Mari were transferred. [\[1077\]](#) This—as well as their close

relationship with the Old Akkadian traditions—suggests that they might have intermarried with the previous House of Mari.

As Mari became prosperous during the Hanaean rule during the last part of the Old Assyrian Period,<sup>[1078]</sup> the Akkadian cult became very popular throughout northwestern Mesopotamia. They worshipped Annunitum, ancient goddess of the Akkadians, together with Adad, the storm god. The Mari poets composed great epics, taking those of the mighty Akkadian Emperors as their model, and diviners continued to examine the entrails of animals in the Akkadian tradition.<sup>[1079]</sup> Veneration of the Akkadian Emperors became widespread and well established in the western areas, visible in the popularity of the “god with the mace”. We have already seen that the cult of these Emperors even reached Canaan.

Samsi-Adad I (fl. c. 1862-1830 BC), a Hanaean from Mari,<sup>[1080]</sup> founded a new dynasty in Assur. He became the greatest of the Old Assyrian kings, founding the Old Assyrian Empire and ruling over Assur, Mari and Akkad. He believed that he was descended from the great Akkadian Emperors<sup>[1081]</sup> and brought ancestral offerings to Mari for Sargon and Naram-Sin as well as his Hanaean forebears. He even took the royal title “King of Akkad and King of the Hanaeans”.<sup>[1082]</sup> During his reign the figure with the mace, probably depicting one of the statues of the Akkadian Emperors at Mari, became a popular theme on the seals of his officials.

Samsi-Adad purposefully modelled his reign on that of those Emperors, regarding himself as their successor.<sup>[1083]</sup> He had the same imperialist impulse and even claimed the old title once used by Sargon, namely “King of All (the Universe)”. His dynasty continued with his son, Ishme-Dagan I (fl. c. 1830-1790), his son, Mut-Ashkur (fl. c. 1790-1780) and finally Rimus, named after Sargon of Akkad’s son of the same name (relationship unclear), and Asinum, a



grandson of Samsi-Adad. Mut-Ashkur's name is Hurrian and he was married to a daughter of the Hurrian king, Zaziya of the land of Turukku, located in the Urmia basin and the northern Zagros Mountains. The Old Assyrian Empire was deposed due to the last rulers of the dynasty's Hurrian associations. [\[1084\]](#)

After Samsi-Adad's death, Zimri-Lim (fl. c. 1830-1816 BC) from the Hanaean House of Mari, who was in exile in the Kingdom of Yamhad in northwestern Mesopotamia during the latter part of the reign of Samsi-Adad (who installed his son, Yasmah-Adad, in Mari), rose to the throne in Mari. Like Samsi-Adad before him, he might have believed that he was descended from the Akkadian Emperors. He had at least eight daughters with various wives, several of whom married local rulers. Zimri-Lim disappeared from history when Hammurabi conquered Mari.

In the south, the Benjaminites rose to the throne in Babylon, Uruk and elsewhere. In Uruk, the Awnanum, called Amnanum in Babylon, the most eminent of these Benjaminite tribes, ascended the throne when Sinkasid founded a dynasty there. He took the title "King of Amnanum" together with the customary Mesopotamian titles. It is not clear if his family married into the old Sumerian families in order to legitimise his reign as king of Uruk. Sinkasid also allied himself through marriage with Sumula'el, the son of Sumu-abum, founder of the First Dynasty of Babylon, to which Hammurabi belonged, by taking Sumula'el's daughter as wife. [\[1085\]](#)

When Hammurabi (fl. c. 1848-1806), who is known for his famous code of law, became overlord of Mesopotamia in 1818 BC, beginning the Old Babylonian Period, the Sumerian traditions of the ancient city of Eridu became prominent in Babylon. Marduk, the chief god of Babylon, was the son of Enki, lord of Eridu, whose milieu influenced his cult. In cuneiform the name, Babylon, was even written the same as Eridu. And, as can be expected, Gilgamesh became the

great archetypal hero in these circles, a fact that the popularity of the *Gilgamesh Epic* clearly testifies to.

This strong alignment of the Old Babylonians with the ancient Sumerian tradition might be connected to the Amorite grouping called Tidānum, who had a long history in ancient Mesopotamia and who may be the link between the Ur III dynasty and the First Dynasty of Babylon. They were allies of Ibī-Sin, the last king of the Ur III dynasty. The family of Hammurabi also belonged to them. [\[1086\]](#)

We now find the following. Whereas certain kings of the Old Assyrian Empire in the northwest took the great Akkadian kings as their role models, and even tracked their descent back to them, the kings of the Old Babylonian Empire (and the later Babylonian kings) in the southeast, took Gilgamesh as their role model. [\[1087\]](#) These two Amorite groupings aligned with the Akkadian and Sumerian traditions, respectively. Later, the Gilgamesh tradition was primarily celebrated among the Persians further to the east, where he, as Jamshed, became their archetypal hero. [\[1088\]](#)

### **THE NEPHILIM BLOODLINES IN A COSMIC PERSPECTIVE**

What we discover is that the two opposing Nephilim lineages and traditions we are tracking throughout early Mesopotamian history became associated with the northwestern and the southeastern regions of the land, respectively. This division goes back to an early stage in the history of the land.

Already during the time when the temple of Enlil at Nippur became the acknowledged centre or navel of the land, the regions of Sumer and Uri (Akkad) were located to its “right hand” and “left hand”, or east and west, as we read: “Your right and your left (hands are?) Sumer and Akkad, House of Enlil.” [\[1089\]](#) Akkad, like the city of Kish, was located to the west of Nippur whereas Sumer and Sumerian city-states, such as Eridu and Uruk, were located to the east.

After the Akkadian Period, the lineages and traditions associated with Akkad became located at Mari in the northwest and those of Sumer at Ur on the southeastern shores of the land. Next came the Amorites, who aligned themselves with these two traditions. They were also divided into those of the “right hand” and those of the “left hand”, now associated with the south and north, or Assur in the northwestern and Babylon in the southeastern parts of Mesopotamia. In the geographical layout of Mesopotamia, the north/west or northwest and the south/east or southeast, was indeed the natural way in which to divide the land of the two rivers.

All that said, we can now proceed to consider these two opposing traditions in a cosmic perspective. The reason why these traditions can be arranged in accordance with these geographical opposites, is that they belonged to a larger cosmic picture of the world. Bloodlines representing the two ancient factions of the family, ruling in the northwest and southeast of Mesopotamia, embodied the cosmic opposites associated with the mountains of sunset and sunrise. These mountains were in fact the Amanus Mountains, which were located in the northwest, and the Mountain of Dilmun in the southeast, where the sun was believed to rise.

Readers will recall how beautifully these two cosmic regions were contrasted with each other in the *Gilgamesh Epic*. In this epic, these mountains were identified with the heavenly<sup>[1090]</sup> and netherworldly regions, regions ruled by Adad and Utu,<sup>[1091]</sup> respectively. Naram-Sin was worshipped as one of the great gods belonging to the heavenly sphere. Gilgamesh, believed to only have been two-thirds god, became the ruler of the blessed dead in the netherworld. Their followers might have venerated gods or daemons associated with these two archetypal heroes, gods or daemons belonging to the heavenly sphere and the netherworld. The storm god, for example, was associated with the warrior caste since the earliest of times and we

have encountered various traditions of warriors going to his paradise (seemingly also at Ugarit where warriors were buried in the Baal temple precinct). Accordingly, these two opposing traditions became associated with these two cosmic regions in the iconography.

In keeping with our earlier discussions, one may suggest that the gods associated with these Nephilim families were the Igigi and the Anunnaki, since Old Babylonian times identified with the heavenly and netherworldly realms, respectively. They might have believed these gods to have been incarnated in their own ranks from the earliest of times. These generic divine names initially referred to lesser gods associated with the Nephilim but after Marduk's victory, however, his Igigi followers became honoured as great gods among the Babylonian gods.

From very early on the two Nephilim families under discussion were also associated with two groups of daemons or Shining Ones, namely the lama (*lamassu*)<sup>[1092]</sup> and udug (*utukku; sedu*), respectively seen as divine and two-thirds divine. When depicted as guardian spirits in front of buildings such as palaces, the *lamassu* was represented as a female sphinx and the *sedu* as a human-faced bull (often sculptured as an identical pair).<sup>[1093]</sup> These two kinds of spirits belonged to the left and right hand, or northwest and southeast. Accordingly, they would have been associated with Adad and Utu (Samas) who respectively had the winged lion and bison-bull or bison-man<sup>[1094]</sup> as emblems, as well as the mountains of sunset and sunrise.

### **THE *SARRANI* AND THE *MALIKU***

In cultic context, the western Amorites differentiated between the spirits of the deceased kings venerated on the full moon and on the new moon, such as the Akkadian Emperors, and the spirits of those kings only venerated on the new moon. During the full moon, the “sun and moon stand together” with both being visible at the same time.

During the full moon prayers could be addressed to both these gods at the same time.<sup>[1095]</sup> During the new moon, with the moon appearing on the western horizon shortly after sunset, seeing both the sun and the moon at the same time is not possible. The reason for this is simple. The moon is not visible as long as it finds itself in conjunction with the sun and can only be seen after sunset once the sun and the moon move slightly away from each other (and the sun has entered the netherworld).

At Mari, where the Akkadian Emperors were held in high esteem during the Old Assyrian Period, these two kinds of rulers were called the *sarrani*, who received offerings on the full moon and on the new moon, and the *maliku*, who only received offerings on the new moon.<sup>[1096]</sup> The *maliku* evidently correspond with the old Sumerian “en”-type of rulers.<sup>[1097]</sup> Given that the *sarrani*, derived from *sarru* (king”), agree with the Sumerian “lugal” and the *maliku* with the Sumerian “en” and its priestly associations, they might correspond with the Sumerian lama and udug kind of spirits of these kings.

The Mariote list of *sarrani* commences with the Akkadian Emperors, Sargon and Naram-Sin, who were venerated there.<sup>[1098]</sup> In fact, only Sargon and Naram-Sin (in this order) are mentioned by name—the other kings are only mentioned in general. The *sarrani* correspond with the *šarrena* (kings) of a similar cult ritual from Hattuša in Anatolia.<sup>[1099]</sup> There the list of “wise kings” begins with the deified Naram-Sin, followed by Sargon and other kings mentioned by name.<sup>[1100]</sup> As in Mari, a distinction was made between the *šarrena*, or divine kings, and the *ewri*, the earthly kings.<sup>[1101]</sup> These two kinds of kings agree with the cosmic realms, “heaven and earth”.

The offerings brought to the *sarrani* “when the sun and moon stand together” agree with depictions of the “god with the mace”, showing statues of Sargon and Naram-Sin, with an emblem featuring the sun and the moon. On the

earlier mentioned seal in the John Hopkins Archaeological Museum, the “god with the mace” appears with a dwarf holding a banner showing the sun above a crescent moon, a depiction that can be interpreted as the sun and the moon “standing” together. An inscription on the same seal mentions Adad and Sala, in line with the close association of these gods’ Hurrian counterparts, Tessub and Sawuska, with ancestor kings (including Sargon and Naram-Sin) in the *šarrena* ritual from Hattuša.<sup>[1102]</sup> This is also in keeping with the close association of the *lamassu* with Adad and the mountain of sunset (in contrast with the association of the *sedu* with Utu and the mountain of sunrise).

Intriguingly, but as can be expected in the light of our discussion above, Hammurabi of Babylon did not follow the northern Amorite rulers, such as Samsi-Adad, in taking the Akkadian kings as role models. Instead, he abolished the custom of deification of living and dead rulers. The cultic rituals for the dead in Babylon were a continuation of the old Sumerian tradition<sup>[1103]</sup> (presumably like the *maliku* rituals from Mari). Evidently, Hammurabi saw himself in the image of the “priestly ruler”, as one who would rather be known as a good lawgiver than a military conqueror even though he was that as well. We have seen that the Babylonian kings typically took Gilgamesh, instead of the Akkadian kings, as role model for their reigns.

The Mari rituals remind of the messianic child, embodied in Ningirsu, who had both the sun and the moon for eyes. In my view, one of the goals of these rituals was to produce such messianic figures. The two kinds of rulers, the *sarrani* (lugal) and *maliku* (en), might have based their archetypal expressions on the Akkadian Emperors, whether it was Sargon or Naram-Sin, and the Sumerian Gilgamesh, respectively, and viewed them as the otherworldly kings or leaders of these two distinct groups of daemons or spirits.

## THE MOUNTAINS OF SUNSET AND SUNRISE

According to the *Gilgamesh Epic*, the heroes, on their journey to the west, arrived at the mountain of the gods. This might have been the Mountain of Sunset. Here Irnina, or Victory, a form of Ishtar, closely associated with the Akkadians, was worshipped with other gods. Although this holy mountain is set in the Lebanon ranges in this instance, in earlier Akkadian tradition it was set in the Amanus Mountains.

The relevant holy mountain might be the one where Sargon had erected a statue of himself, where he was venerated together with Ishtar and Adad according to the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend*. This mountain might have been Mount Sapan, where Baal and Anat, the Canaanite versions of Adad and Ishtar, were later worshipped. Nearby was Ugarit, where an Asiatic god-king, whom I have identified with the archetypal Akkadian Emperor, was venerated together with Baal and Anat. I have also identified the *porteurs des torques*, interred and buried at the temple of Baal in Ugarit, with descendants of the warrior order founded by Naram-Sin. On the face of it, this mountain became closely identified with the Akkadians.

In the *Gilgamesh Epic*, this mountain of the gods was identified with the theme of “death in paradise”. The most important symbol associated with this mountain is the massive felled cedar, growing in the paradise forest on the mountain of the gods, which for the Sumerians might have signified the Akkadian loss of power over the land of Sumer and Akkad. The Sumerian cosmic hero, Gilgamesh, was the one who felled this cedar, the same as the historical Gilgamesh who had successfully overthrown the Kishite rule over the land (an event much celebrated in the Ur III Period). Another version of the symbol of the felled cedar comes from the Egyptian adaptation of the Akkadian tradition, where the felled tree was supplemented by the lost phallus.



The ancients associated this theme of death with the autumn equinox, when a second New Year's festival was celebrated, seemingly since the Akkadian Period. I have proposed that Naram-Sin introduced such a festival in order to commemorate his death (near death experience), restoration and victory during the Great Revolt. This was in fact a shamanistic rebirth, after which spiritual completeness or divinity is achieved, when shamans reach an asexual state and identity.<sup>[1104]</sup> In the Persian tradition, this festival accordingly celebrated completeness, the end to all sexual activity.<sup>[1105]</sup> This was also the signature feature of the Akkadian imperial cult, with its male and female ascetic orders.

On the other end of the Mesopotamian world we find the island of Dilmun in the Persian Gulf, closely associated with the Sumerians during the Ur III Period when merchants of Ur were deeply involved in the Dilmun trade.<sup>[1106]</sup> This seafaring tradition is articulated in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, where the Sumerian hero, Gilgamesh, is taken to Dilmun by boat. In the Sumerian tradition, Dilmun was identified with the rising sun or new life, in the same way Gilgamesh was. In ancient Sumer, new life was celebrated on the New Year's festival. Gilgamesh introduced this festival which took place during the vernal equinox. The sacred marriage was also consummated during this festival.

The paramount symbol associated with Dilmun in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, is the great secret of the gods, the pearls found in the sweet waters near the island. In this instance, these pearls serve as a symbol for the seed pearl of immortality. Although Gilgamesh represented a new shoot of the cosmic tree, his was not the family line that obtained divine immortality. As discussed earlier, this goal was eventually obtained by Naram-Sin.

## **GILGAMESH VERSUS NARAM-SIN**



Although death was connected to the mountain of the gods towards sunset in the west, where the cedar was felled and Humbaba beheaded and new life with Dilmun, where the sun rises, the heroes associated with these two otherworldly domains were, in fact, identified with the opposing symbols. Gilgamesh can be identified with Humbaba's severed head while Naram-Sin can be identified with the seed pearl of immortality.<sup>[1107]</sup> These were their greatest achievements.

These literary images transcend the historical personages of Gilgamesh and Naram-Sin. Here, they are moulded into archetypal figures venerated by the Nephilim bloodlines from whom they also claimed descent. But what do these symmetrical counter images from the Nephilim tradition actually mean, with Gilgamesh obtaining the severed head and Naram-Sin the seed pearl of immortality? Taking a closer look at the bigger picture, as recounted in these volumes, one may propose that these archetypal images portray the aims pursued by the Nephilim's two principle bloodlines.

Those of supposed Akkadian descent, such as Samsi-Adad, aspired to set up another imperial dynasty in order to see the immortal seed from which they were born, produce another and even greater messianic figure, replacing the felled cedar of old with a glorious new tree. Apparently, families descending from the great Akkadian Emperors believed that they were destined to achieve even greater imperial glory than before and overcome their loss of power. In the Osirian mythos, this theme centres around Osiris's phallic wound which only truly heals once the rightful heir, Horus, revenges his father and becomes king.

Those of alleged Sumerian descent apparently aspire to obstruct them in their objective and put a wise ruler from their own lineage on the throne instead of an arrogant one striving for absolute power. Those associated with the Sumerian tradition are destined to forever endeavour to

prevent the former from achieving their goal, producing new “Gilgameshes” who would time and again cut down the mighty tree of imperialism.

The post-Akkadian scheme of opposing lineages associated with Naram-Sin and Gilgamesh, as archetypal figures, competing for power, with the one group pursuing the imperialist goal and the other forever obstructing it, goes back to the ancient conflict between the two main bloodlines descended from Meskiagkasher, namely the warrior-kings on the one hand and priestly rulers on the other. This ancient feud continued between the Akkadian tradition and the Sumerian tradition, with the Akkadian tradition striving to produce the ultimate warrior-kings holding power over the known world and the Sumerian tradition producing priestly rulers, just and law-giving kings, to prevent the oppressive rule of dictators.

#### **THE RIGHTFUL KING OF NEPHILIM DESCENT**

Despite the enmity between these opposing Nephilim traditions, they were obviously not totally independent from each other. They were, in fact, closely related and in some symbiotic way linked to and dependant on one another. According to their speculative doctrines these lineages had to be integrated in some way in order to produce the rightful king. This was true for both Gilgamesh and Naram-Sin, with the opposing bloodlines (associated with the Anzu and snake symbols) having been brought together in their persons. One expects that this would also be the case for later embodiments of the messianic ideal. In the attempt to combine and merge these lineages (which they presumably kept track of), each group would endeavour to control the process in an effort to gain the upper hand.

The Akkadian imperial cult brought these opposing themes and even lineages together. The fertility rituals of the lower “level”, such as the sacred marriage, were in keeping with the old Sumerian priestly practice. The warrior-shamanistic rituals of the higher “level” were in keeping

with the ancient warrior practice. The imperial Dumuzi cult brought these two castes, priests and warriors, together for the fertility and warrior-shamanistic rituals. The emperor was of and belonged to both lineages. In later times, the Nephilim presumably believed that another royal child from their combined bloodlines would rise again in order to become an even greater messiah than Naram-Sin.<sup>[1108]</sup>

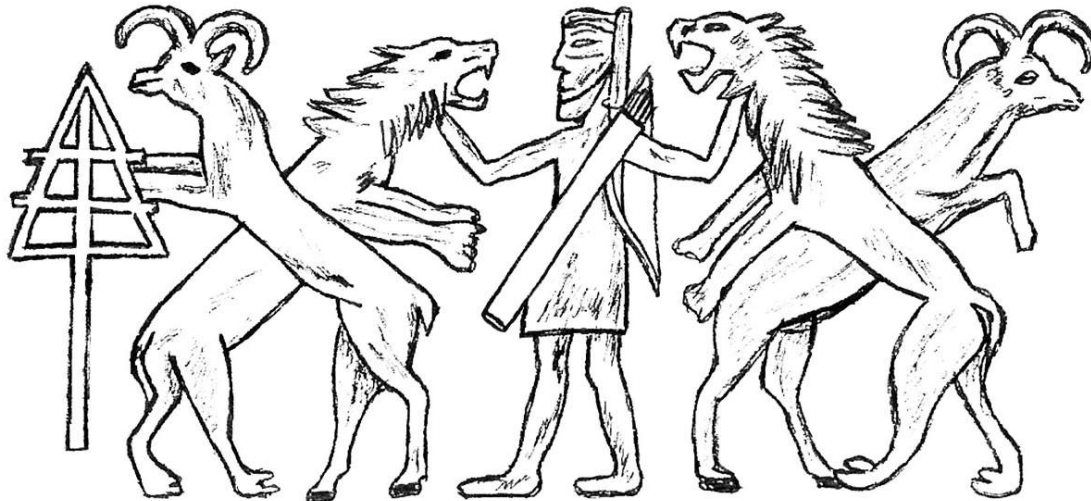
The name “Sumer and Akkad”, the preferred term for the land since the Akkadian Period, signified not only the unity of the land, it also expressed a unity between these two groups of families. Beautiful seal depictions from the Akkadian Period of a lion and an antelope standing symmetrically and diagonally across each other, might have been the heraldic symbol for this unity.<sup>[1109]</sup> In later periods, these symbols were appropriately adapted according to the imagery of the time.

Thus far, we have looked at three groupings among the Nephilim families, namely families who identified with the Akkadians (now replacing the warrior caste), those identifying with the Sumerian tradition (now replacing the priestly caste) and bloodlines in which these two lineages were combined and merged together. The last one might have been the one they expected future messianic figures to be born from.

We may associate these three groupings with three kinds of Shining Ones or daemons belonging to three otherworldly cosmic regions. These are the heavenly region, more particularly, the holy mountain of Adad or Baal, the netherworld and, lastly, the “centre of the world”, located between the first two outer cosmic regions. Here, at the centre of the world, is where the once and future kings ruled.

Whereas the daemons associated with the heavenly region and the netherworld are rather straightforward, those associated with the “centre of the world” are not. In an earlier discussion of the various groups of daemons, we saw

that female or nymph spirits were associated with the earth (as a cosmic region) and they might have been viewed as nurses or caretakers serving and taking care of the divine child. [\[1110\]](#)



*Figure 40. Could this have been the heraldic emblem of the House of Sumer and Akkad? A lion and an antelope standing symmetrically and diagonally across each other.*

One cosmic domain has not yet figured in our discussion. This is the abyss, where Marduk jailed the monsters and gods who followed Tiamat, a notion which goes back to the demonic invaders of the Naram-Sin epics. There were also lineages who tracked their descent back to the evil leader of these invaders, invaders seemingly associated with these daemons of the abyss. The Median kings, for example, believed that they descended from Azhi Dahaka, whom I tracked back to the leader of Naram-Sin's demonic enemies. They were called the "dragon dynasty of Media" and "descendants of the dragon". [\[1111\]](#)

A dynasty like this might have tracked their lineage back to the Hurrian elite who had been among those who joined Naram-Sin's warrior order or caste. In this instance, Turkish

of Urkesh, allied by marriage to Naram-Sin, comes to mind. Evidently, his descendants, and most likely the descendants of Naram-Sin's daughter, Tar'am-Agade, who was apparently married to Tupkish's son, ruled Urkesh for centuries after the fall of the Akkadian Empire. The site shows a continuous occupation until after the Isin-Larsa Period.<sup>[1112]</sup> Remarkably, and in line with my presentation of events, we find in the aforementioned *šarrena* ritual from Hattuša that a king like Atalšen of this Hurrian dynasty, who ruled at Urkesh (fl. c. 2200 BC), is grouped together with the sea god who was defeated by the storm god in the list.<sup>[1113]</sup> This reflects the intimate association of the Hurrians with the defeated enemies of the storm god, even though Tupkish, ancestor of the dynasty, became allied with Naram-Sin.

Such Hurrian lineages might also have taken part in the affairs of the Nephilim bloodlines. Like their ancestors, they might have protected and secured the survival of the bloodline of the Akkadian Emperors. They might have been involved in the ranks of the Sa.gaz or Ḫabiru of later centuries, supporting and protecting dynasties they considered to have been the rightful heirs of the Akkadian Emperors.<sup>[1114]</sup> One should probably associate them with daemons of the abyss.

In total, we can then distinguish four Nephilim lineages, associated with daemons of the four cosmic regions, namely the heavenly region (sky), the netherworld, the earth and the abyss. These families had presumably taken part in castes, cults, crafts and military orders associated with the Nephilim tradition. They shared a common and continuous tradition going back to ancient Sumer, with the castes originally having been part of one organisational structure. This cultic involvement together with the belief in their divine descent (as well as their belief in their descent from certain ancient bloodlines) gave the Nephilim lineages durability and permanence not available to other dynasties.

Clearly, these families, who apparently had a shared consciousness regarding their divine descent, had the supporting structures and motivation to survive through the centuries and presumably even the millennia. Even when they lost positions of supreme power, they might have tried over time to regain them—very much like the Heracleidae of Greek tradition. One may thus conclude and accept that our story entails not only ancient cults and traditions but also real family lineages continuing through the ages, lineages that acted as guardians of their own heritage.

The events from the time of Naram-Sin were interpreted very differently in the Akkadian and Sumerian traditions. Those belonging to these traditions took directly opposing sides insofar as Enlil was concerned. Whereas later Akkadian tradition glorified Naram-Sin as the hero who led the younger gods against Enlil and eventually playing a role in Marduk's rise to kingship of the Babylonian gods, the Sumerian tradition of the Ur III Period took the exact opposite view. They worshipped Enlil as the great king of the gods. They elevated Enlil's son, Ninurta, to the position of defender of the gods.<sup>[1115]</sup> The Sumerian support for Enlil in contrast with the later Akkadian traditions is remarkable because Enlil was originally a Semitic god worshipped by the House of Kish, ancestors of the Akkadians.

For the Sumerians, Naram-Sin was the embodiment of arrogance, especially in the way he ignored the omens. In their view, the Gutian conquest of the land from the Akkadians happened because of sin committed by Naram-Sin against Enlil's temple, which he reportedly desecrated. In the *Curse of Agade*, written during the Ur III Period, the author curses the city of Akkad to a fate of becoming ruins forever, a fate which actually came to pass about 1500 years later, as we read: "May foxes that frequent ruined mounds sweep with their tails! In your city-gate, established for the land, may the sleep bird, the bird of depression, establish its nest... May recurved mountain sheep and *u/-*

snakes allow no one to pass! On your plains, where fine grass grows, may 'lamentation weeds' grow! Agade, may your flowing sweet water flow as brackish water! Whoever says, 'I would dwell in this city!'—may no dwelling place be acceptable to him there!... Agade is destroyed—hail Inanna." [\[1116\]](#)

### **MARDUK AND ENLIL**

After the Nephilim's principal bloodlines, the great Sumerian and Akkadian dynasties, lost control of Mesopotamia, the ancient Nephilim preference for Enki came to fruition. The Babylonian kings who replaced the last Sumerian rulers of the Ur III dynasty, staunch supporters of Enlil, sided with the ancient Enki faction against Enlil. They elevated Enki's son, Marduk, to the position of kingship over the Babylonian gods. This happened after the Amorite king, Hammurabi, conquered Mesopotamia in his 30th year (c. 1818 BC) and proclaimed Marduk as the new king of the gods in Babylon as we read in the preamble to his law codex: "When the lofty Anu, king of the Anunnaki, and Enlil, lord of heaven and earth... committed the rule of all mankind to Marduk, the eldest son of Ea [Enki]; when they made him great among the gods [Igigi]." [\[1117\]](#)

What is strange is that An is called king of the gods in this passage, reverting back to the ancient pre-Enlil age. This is a clear sign that Enlil's role as king of the gods was being rejected in this new ideology. In fact, An now transferred his kingship to Marduk! Surprisingly, according to this Babylonian narrative, Enlil, the previous king of the gods, even gave his consent for this development! The religious centre of the land now moved from Nippur to Babylon, where the gods henceforth gathered under Marduk's kingship. In time, the reign of this new king of the gods became well-established all over Babylon [\[1118\]](#) as we read in the *Enuma Elish*: "We gave you [Marduk] kingship, power



over all and everything. Take your seat in the council (of the gods), and may your word prevail.”

After Marduk’s elevation to kingship of the gods, the negative picture of Enlil in the Naram-Sin traditions became widespread throughout the land. Enlil became identified with the enemies of Babylon. In the Naram-Sin traditions, Nur-Dagal, Sargon’s rival in Anatolia, is a “favorite of Enlil” and Tiamat’s enemy hordes are “creatures of Enlil”.<sup>[1119]</sup> In a later version of the *Gilgamesh Epic*, Humbaba, guardian of the Cedar forest, became Enlil’s appointee.<sup>[1120]</sup> Now, we read that Enlil created the monster, Labbu, with the purpose of destroying humankind.<sup>[1121]</sup> Enlil was even portrayed as the father of demons with Marduk casting a spell on Enlil.<sup>[1122]</sup>

In the *Atrahasis Epic*, the Babylonian account of the deluge, as well as in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, Enlil is blamed for past catastrophic events such as the deluge. This view probably arose from the *Curse of Agade*, where the Guteans were said to have been brought like a deluge upon the land by Enlil on account of the sin committed by Naram-Sin.<sup>[1123]</sup> Although the deluge was attributed to a decision by the council of the gods in earlier versions of the Babylonian story, in later versions the blame for this catastrophe fell solely on Enlil. We read: “How could you [Enlil] lack council and cause the deluge?”<sup>[1124]</sup>

Notably, Enki is now presented as the great friend and benefactor of mankind, in contrast with Enlil, the enemy and foe of mankind. Whereas Enlil wanted to destroy them, Enki tried to save them! Enki is the one who, in conflict with Enlil’s decision, ordered the Sumerian flood hero, Utnapisti, to build a boat so that he could flee to Enki after Enki and Enlil had an argument: “Enki and Enlil are angry with one another.”<sup>[1125]</sup> Enki has now even become the creator of humankind in contrast with the old tradition that Enlil<sup>[1126]</sup> created humankind to serve as his subjects.<sup>[1127]</sup>



The age-old conflict between Enlil and Enki came to a climax with the elevation of Marduk, the eldest son of Enki, to kingship of the gods. The Enki cult replaced the Enlil cult as the cult sanctioned by the monarchy, Babylon became a new Eridu and Marduk's great ziggurat the new Apsu temple.<sup>[1128]</sup> There was no place for Enlil in this new world and he was consequently banished to the west.

During this period, in about 1775 BC, the great Ekur temple of Enlil in Nippur was destroyed. This might be the reason why Enlil, in one tradition, even became associated with the netherworld and the name of his temple identified with that region.<sup>[1129]</sup> Despite those developments, Enlil still had his abode, called "Esarra", in heaven.<sup>[1130]</sup> Marduk and Enlil's abodes were then situated in different heavenly regions.

Enlil was not only cast in a negative light, some compositions from the Enki milieu actively tried to destroy the good character for which he was known in earlier centuries. According to *Enlil and Ninlil*, Enlil saw the girl Ninlil bathing in a canal and took her by force. After this episode, the Babylonian council of the gods exiled Enlil to the western mountains. Ninlil, however, followed him there. On the way, he slept three more times with her in other guises, namely that of a gatekeeper, a man from a river in the mountains and a ferryman. She eventually gave birth to the gods, Suen (Sin),<sup>[1131]</sup> Nergal, Ninazu and Enbilulu.<sup>[1132]</sup>

The Sumerologist, Piotr Michalowski, who carefully analysed this story, concludes that this is a reworking of another Sumerian story, namely that of *Enki and Ninhursag*, in which Enki impregnated the daughters of Ninhursag one after the other. He writes: "Although the protagonists are different, the thematic and structural relationships between the two compositions are obvious."<sup>[1133]</sup> The scene where Enlil sees the naked Ninlil bathing and then taking her by force, also appears, as expected, in *Enki and Ninhursag*.<sup>[1134]</sup>

Clearly, some author from the Enki milieu composed *Enlil and Ninlil* with the sole purpose of vilifying Enlil, who was in earlier times for instance called “well-respected” in literary texts. [\[1135\]](#) In contrast to this story, there is another version where Enlil in fact won Ninlil’s hand in an honourable manner. [\[1136\]](#)

What then happened to the worship of Enlil? Did it survive the ages? We will now take a closer look into these questions in search for answers.

## **23. ORIGINS OF THE ISRAELITE RELIGION**

The question remains and one may well ask what eventually happened to Enlil and his adherents and supporters. In the quest for an answer to this question, a new player enters the scene and makes its appearance in our story, namely the Hebrews of the Bible. According to the Bible, the Hebrews were descended from Abraham, initially called Abram, who lived in the city of Ur in Sumer before the Hebrew God<sup>[1137]</sup> appeared to him and called him to leave his homeland and migrate to the land of Canaan.

The god whom the Babylonians eventually elevated to kingship was never accepted as such in the biblical Hebrew tradition. On the contrary, they worshipped the God, El Shaddai, later called Yahweh, as king in the council of the gods. This God, as we will see in this chapter, is simply the Semitic counterpart of the Sumerian Enlil! And so, the eternal struggle between Enlil and Enki continued in the form of the conflict between Yahweh and Marduk, called the King of Babylon by the prophet Isaiah.

### **ABRAM, THE HEBREW**

As a consequence, it has now become necessary to involve and include the biblical tradition in our discussion. According to the Bible, there was a Semite, called Abraham, who lived in Ur in the period after the fall of the Ur III dynasty. The Hebrew God called on him to leave the land of his forefathers and journey to the land of Canaan in the west. This man is of special importance to our story as it is my firm belief that it was due to him that the worship of Enlil, although in its Semitic form, not only survived but continued.

According to the Bible, the God of Abraham's forefathers was well-known in ancient Sumer, where he played a role in events such as the Tower of Babel, the language confusion, the deluge and so forth. This goes to show that he might have been identified with a god whom the ancient Sumerians must have worshipped. In my view, this god was Enlil, who had indeed been a major player in all these stories. The Semites in Sumer might have regarded Enlil, or rather Illil as they called him, as a Sumerian version of El<sup>[1138]</sup> even though Enlil, as a Sumerian god, was not identical to the original Semitic god behind Enlil in every aspect. Abraham probably worshipped El as the Semitic counterpart of Enlil. It may even be suggested that Abraham's calling was directly linked to the rise of the anti-Enlil sentiment in the land, which eventually led to the elevation of Marduk as the chief Babylonian god.

Before taking a closer look at Abraham's God, we should first focus on the person of this biblical figure himself. According to the Bible, he was a descendant of Enoch, whom I have identified with Etana, the first king of Kish. This would then make him a scion of a very ancient Semitic family living in Sumer for many centuries.<sup>[1139]</sup> His earliest known male ancestor was Adam, remembered in Sumerian tradition as the first human sage, Adapa.<sup>[1140]</sup>

Interestingly enough, Abraham is called "Abram, the Hebrew".<sup>[1141]</sup> What does this designation actually mean one may rightfully ask. Scholars have been divided in their opinions about this, with some (especially in the early years) assuming that the Ḫabiru, mentioned in the Amarna letters and elsewhere, refers to the biblical Hebrews.<sup>[1142]</sup> According to the Bible, however, the name "Hebrew" came from the name of Abraham's ancestor, Eber.

It is possible that the "Ḫabiru" mentioned in one of the Amarna letters written by a local chieftain, Abdi-Heba of Jerusalem, might refer to the biblical Hebrews.<sup>[1143]</sup> These Ḫabiru should, however, not be confused with the Sa.gaz,

present in Canaan during this period even though this group was also called *'Apiru* by the Egyptians. The reason the Habiru mentioned by Abdi-Heba should be distinguished from the Sa.gaz, is that his reference to this name stands in marked contrast to all the other letters from rulers in Canaan, who referred to the Sa.gaz as Sa.gaz instead. Why this difference one may ask. And the answer may well lie in the fact that different peoples were spoken of—even though both groups were taking land away from the control of the Egyptian king.

Most scholars agree that the characteristics and geographical dispersion of the Hebrews, as described in the biblical tradition, stand miles apart from those of the Sa.gaz. It would thus be unwise to make too much of the few similarities between the name, Hebrew, and the Sa.gaz, also called Habiru or *'Apiru* by the Egyptians.

### **ABRAHAM IN CANAAN**<sup>[1144]</sup>

When we look at the story of Abraham, one event stands out as particularly significant as it clearly sets the biblical story in the wider context of the early second millennium BC. This very important event took place after Abraham had settled in Canaan. It was the raid by the Elamite king, Kedor-Laómer or Chedorlaomer, and his armies into the northeastern regions of Mesopotamia. We read how Abraham and his three Amorite friends, Mamre, Eshcol and Aner, who allied themselves with him, followed and chased after the invading armies after they had taken Abraham's brother's son, Lot, hostage. Abraham and his allies successfully recovered their abducted people and raided goods.

We find ourselves in the fortunate position that we can correctly establish and determine the time when the story of the invading Elamites happened. Although certain scholars question Abraham's historicity and everything that is told

about him, the evidence for this event surrounding Kedor-Laómer, strongly suggests that Abraham's story is also based on facts and real events. In fact, this event with the Elamite king is remarkably consistent with the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible done during the third to second centuries BC, which dates Abraham's arrival in Canaan to 1836 BC,<sup>[1145]</sup> about 18 years before Hammurabi's victory over Rim-Sin of Larsa in Sumer and him becoming overlord of Mesopotamia in 1818 BC.

There was only one occasion when the Elamites invaded Mesopotamia as far north as northern Syria in the early second millennium BC and this happened in 1822 BC. This would then have happened 14 years after Abraham's arrival in Canaan in 1836 BC, during the reign of Siwe-palar-huppak, the king of Elam, whose authority was acknowledged even in southern Mesopotamia. The southern invaders might have marched under the command of Kudu-zulus, the brother of the Elamite king, who ruled in Esnunna.<sup>[1146]</sup> The name "Kedor" in Kedor-Laómer might go back to "Kudu" in Kudu-zulus as these names share the same root form, namely K-d.

There is another episode in Abraham's story that may be confirmed by extra-biblical sources. According to the Bible, Abraham journeyed to Egypt shortly after his arrival in Canaan because of a famine which forced him to continue down to Egypt. According to the dates mentioned in the Septuagint, this happened around 1836 BC and evidence may exist to confirm and support this. A depiction exists at Beni Hassan in Egypt of a group of Asiatics led by a certain Abishai/r, a name of the same Amorite name-type as Abraham,<sup>[1147]</sup> who came with his entourage from Canaan to Egypt during the sixth year of the reign of King Senusret II, the very same year Abraham arrived in Egypt, namely 1836 BC.<sup>[1148]</sup>

This Abishai/r is shown in the tomb of Khnumhotep II, administrator of the Eastern Desert, who had close ties with

the royal court. Abishai/r is shown with his entourage arriving with “greeting gifts” in Egypt in the sixth year of King Senusret II in 1836 BC. He is described as a “ruler of the hill-lands” (Canaan). This corresponds with the biblical description of Abraham as a “mighty prince” from Canaan. [\[1149\]](#)

Although they are not all shown in the depiction, Abishai/r’s entourage included 37 men with their families. [\[1150\]](#) They were Asiatics of Shu, a geographical term which refers to the southern Levant. [\[1151\]](#) Most scholars identify it with the region east of the Jordan River, the same region through which Abraham came from Harran to Canaan. Also relevant to our discussion, is the colourful robe “patterned with stripes and chevrons” worn by Abishai/r, [\[1152\]](#) which strongly reminds of the robe mentioned in the biblical tradition in connection with Joseph, the youngest son of Jacob. [\[1153\]](#)

What can we make of all this? On the one hand, it is possible that these correspondences may be a mere coincidence. It is, on the other hand, however, also possible that a Semitic prince, called Abraham/Abishai/r in the Hebrew and Egyptian traditions respectively, arrived in Egypt from Canaan in the year 1836 BC. The reason for taking this possibility seriously is that the Hebrew tradition does, in fact, include data consistent with evidence from Mesopotamia, such as the Elamite incursion. Also, according to the biblical tradition, Abraham's arrival in Egypt was noticed even at the royal court. This might well and certainly be true considering the beautiful and unique depiction of Abishai/r at Beni Hassan.



## ABRAHAM'S GOD

This brings us to the God whom Abraham worshipped, [\[1154\]](#) especially after his arrival in Canaan. Strangely, Abraham is not associated with one but two forms of the God El, evidently different from each other. On the one hand, there was El Elyon, God Most High and father of the gods, and on the other, El Shaddai, God Almighty. Although both are introduced under the name El, the contexts in which they were worshipped according to the patriarchal narrative in the *Book of Genesis* were very different. The first is presented as the father of the gods worshipped on a holy mountain at Salem, identified in the Hebrew tradition with the Amorite city which later became known as Jerusalem, whereas the other was worshipped as the ancestral god of Abraham's family.

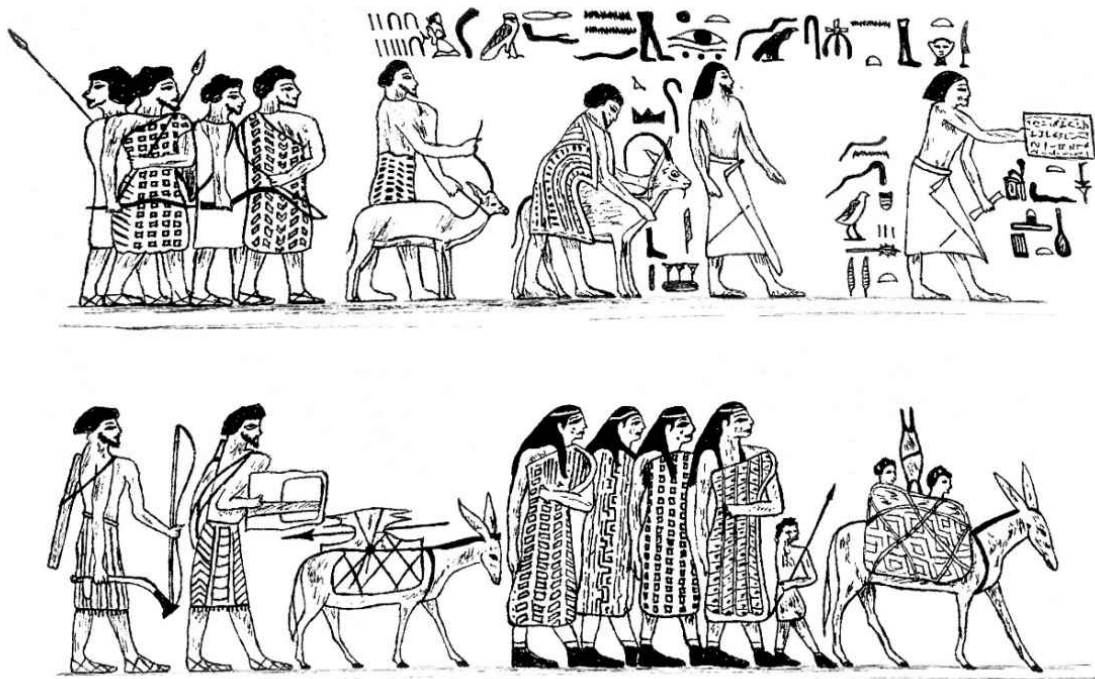


Figure 41. Abishai/r and his entourage arriving in Egypt from Canaan as shown in the tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hassan.



Let us focus on El Elyon first. El Elyon is the God who granted Abraham and his allies victory over the Elamites. According to the biblical story, Melchizedek, this God's priest-king in Salem, celebrated the victory with bread and wine. El Elyon was worshipped on the Holy Mountain at Salem and Abraham seems to have visited this same mountain later in his life when he sacrificed a ram there (instead of his own son, Isaac). When one reads the story of Melchizedek's involvement in the war effort against the Elamites, one gets the distinct impression that Semites from all over Canaan worshipped this God, who had his abode on the Holy Mountain at Salem.

In the biblical tradition, El Elyon is portrayed as the father of the gods who gathered in council on his mountain. After mentioning the "congregation of the mighty" or council of the gods,<sup>[1155]</sup> one of the Hebrew poets says the following: "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High [Elyon]."<sup>[1156]</sup> In this early poem the angels are called "gods", "children of the Most High". Elsewhere they are called "sons of God".<sup>[1157]</sup> These are all old expressions dating from a very ancient epoch when all the gods were regarded as sons or children of the Most High God. Only in later periods did the word "gods" become identified with false gods.<sup>[1158]</sup>

The name El Elyon, God Most High, as well as his role as the father of the gods, agree with the Sumerian An, whose name means "the highly elevated one".<sup>[1159]</sup> El Elyon corresponds not only with the Sumerian god, An, but also with the god, El, worshipped by the Ugarites (at Ras Shamra) and who was called El Elyon.<sup>[1160]</sup> Although the eastern Semites called An *Anum*, they most definitely would have seen him as the equivalent of the western Semitic El, the father of the gods—similar in a way to the French calling "God" "Dieu".

The abode of El, father of the gods, in Canaan was situated on one of the mountain peaks in the Amanus Mountains, which is to be distinguished from the mountain of Baal. El's mountain was called Hursanu, in accordance with the ancient name of the mountain of the gods in Sumer, namely Hursag.<sup>[1161]</sup> The concept of the council of the gods was also attested to in Ugarit, as it was in ancient Sumer, and the gods were even called "sons of El" as in the Hebrew tradition where they are called "sons of God".<sup>[1162]</sup> We may therefore conclude that the biblical El Elyon corresponds with the Semitic god, El Elyon, the father of the gods.

El Shaddai, in turn, was Abraham's ancestral God. In the *Book of Genesis*<sup>[1163]</sup> this name is introduced when the God who called on Abraham in Ur presented himself as such. The name appears no less than six times in the *Book of Genesis*, always as the ancestral God of Abraham, who entered into a covenant with him and his descendants.<sup>[1164]</sup> Later in the book, this God, El Shaddai, is indeed called the "God of thy father".<sup>[1165]</sup>

Later still, in the story of the burning bush, this God repeated that he was the "God of thy father" to Moses when he appeared to him in the burning bush and sent him to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. Now, for the first time, this God revealed that his name was Yahweh. He proclaimed that he had earlier been known as El Shaddai but would henceforth be known as Yahweh: "And God spake to Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD [Yahweh]: And I appeared to Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty [El Shaddai] but by my name Yahweh was I not known to them." <sup>[1166]</sup>

According to the *Book of Exodus*, El Shaddai, God of thy fathers, now became known as "Yahweh, God of your fathers", and "Yahweh, God of Israel", sometimes called "God of the Hebrews". This means that El Shaddai, the ancestral god of Abraham's family, eventually became

Yahweh, the God of Israel. As expected, there was a continuation in the worship of the ancestral God of the Abrahamic family who became the God of the people of Israel, the people who evolved from that family.

Remarkably, this God of the fathers who became Yahweh, the God of Israel, was also the king of the gods who gathered in council with the other gods! This is exactly how the god, Enlil, was perceived in Sumer earlier on in history. In a victory song, sung after Israel's exodus from Egypt, their "fathers' God" is described as the great and mighty king of the gods who reigns for ever and ever.<sup>[1167]</sup> This is how Yahweh is portrayed in Israelite tradition, as the king of the gods in the council of the gods: "For Yahweh is a great God, and a great King above all gods."<sup>[1168]</sup>

We can now safely say that El Elyon and El Shaddai, as portrayed in the *Book of Genesis*, are different forms of the God, El, namely the God who had his abode on the Holy Mountain of Salem and the ancestral God of Abraham, respectively. In Israelite tradition, they had distinct roles as the father of the gods and as king of the gods. Although they were regarded as two manifestations of the God, El, who shared the same name, El, and were therefore one and the same divine Being,<sup>[1169]</sup> there is good reason to believe that they were originally two distinct entities worshipped in different contexts. The fact that El Elyon and El Shaddai—who is said to have taken the name Yahweh—is depicted so very differently in the *Book of Genesis* clearly suggests that they have originally been worshipped separately from each other even though they were later worshipped as one godly Being.

### **EL SHADDAI AND ENLIL**

The distinction between the two roles of father of the gods and king of the gods are common to the ancient world where the Israelites had their origins. The only difference is that the father and the king were not considered as two

separate gods in ancient Israel but as two forms of one and the same God.

The council of the gods, in which these roles were distinguished between ever since the Uruk Period, was a very ancient concept in the Middle East, which eventually spread across a wide geographical area. Accordingly, we can assume that the different peoples of the ancient Middle East, such as the Sumerians and the Semites, did originally<sup>[1170]</sup> not only share the concept of the council of the gods but worshipped the very same gods with the same qualities in this way, even though each of them developed certain localised features. This explains why these same roles were distinguished in Israelite tradition.

The Sumerians and the Semites had the same concept of the father of the gods and the king of the gods in the council of the gods. The gods, An and Enlil, embodied and personified these roles in ancient Sumer. Among the Israelites, however, these roles were taken on by El Elyon and El Shaddai (Yahweh), respectively. Does this mean that not only An and El Elyon, but Enlil and El Shaddai were also viewed as equivalents of each other? Even if we accept this, it does not necessarily mean that the Semites, and especially the Abrahamic family, accepted each and every particular feature of those gods which developed within a certain milieu over time, such as in Sumer. The early Semites had their own and distinct way of understanding these gods.<sup>[1171]</sup>

The consistency of the biblical tradition with the ancient Middle Eastern view of the role of the father and the role of the king of the gods indicates that El Elyon corresponds with An in the Sumerian tradition while El Shaddai might be none other than the Semitic counterpart of Enlil, the great Sumerian king of the gods. Readers will recall that Enlil was originally a Semitic god. The name, Enlil, evolved from Illil, possibly originating from the duplication of the name El, as proposed by the scholar, Piotr Michalowski.<sup>[1172]</sup> I have

suggested that this duplication was interpreted in the speculative theology at the time as having meant that Illil (Enlil), the son of An (El), shared in the Being of El, which was in fact duplicated in him. This would make Illil (Enlil) a form of the god El. Interestingly, Enlil is called *Il-lil* in Akkadian texts of later times,<sup>[1173]</sup> exactly the same as the earliest form of the name, suggesting that the Semites always pronounced the name in this way. In one Old Assyrian name, the name Enlil appears as *i-li-il*.<sup>[1174]</sup>

The view that El Shaddai goes back to the Semitic version of Enlil, namely *Il-lil*, is supported by many unique and close correspondences, the first of which concerns the similar meaning of the two names. Although the original etymology of “shaddai” is unclear, some scholars have proposed that it goes back to the Akkadian word *shadû*, meaning “mountain”. El Shaddai would then originally have been the “God of the (Holy) Mountain”.<sup>[1175]</sup> This agrees with El Shaddai (Yahweh) as well as Enlil’s role as king on the cosmic mountain of the gods and is in keeping with one of Enlil’s titles, namely that of “Great Mountain”.<sup>[1176]</sup>

El Shaddai and Enlil’s qualities and character traits were also similar, with both, for example, having been identified with thunder, both having shared epithets such as “Mighty One”<sup>[1177]</sup> and “Lord” and both having been regarded as king of the gods who had the final say or “word” in the council of the gods.<sup>[1178]</sup> Yahweh, as the ancestral god of Israel, was even described as the eldest son of El Elyon, the father of the gods, like Enlil, who was said to have been the eldest son of An!

In a surprising and astonishing passage in the *Book of Deuteronomy*, we read how El Elyon, the father of the gods, divided the nations as their inheritance among the “sons of God”<sup>[1179]</sup> but set aside the prime portion, namely the nation of Israel, for his first-born son, Yahweh. Here, Yahweh stands apart from the other “sons of God”, who do not share in God’s Being, with the expression “sons of God” simply

referring to heavenly beings in the general sense of the word.

We read: "When the Most High [Elyon] divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the sons of God. For Yahweh's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." [\[1180\]](#)

Scholars have suggested that God had simply set Israel apart for himself but that would not make sense and go against the very idea of an "inheritance". As we know that El Elyon, God Most High, was indeed the "father of the gods", [\[1181\]](#) this passage makes by far the most sense if we understand it as saying that El Elyon gave the people of Israel as a special portion to Yahweh, his "firstborn" son. This agrees with the ancient Sumerian concept that Enlil, the king of the gods, was the eldest son of An, the father of the gods. [\[1182\]](#) The agreement is even more obvious once we recall that the name Enlil, or rather Illil, was most likely derived from El.El, a name which had probably been understood as El having brought forth another El from his own being, another El who then became his son. This very idea seemingly persisted in Israelite circles where the relation between El Elyon and El Shaddai was understood in these terms.

### **YAHWEH AND THE KING OF BABYLON**

The following question now arises: If Israel worshipped Yahweh as king of the gods as a continuation of the ancient Sumerian tradition in which Enlil was considered as such, how did they look upon the competing claim in Babylon that Marduk was in fact king of the gods? We clearly have two opposing claims to kingship of the gods, namely the claim of Yahweh and the claim of Marduk, or Baal in the Canaanite tradition.

We find an answer to this question in the *Book of Isaiah* where the prophet tells how the "King of Babylon" elevated

himself to the position of king of the gods.<sup>[1183]</sup> Clearly, Babylon and its “king” is what the prophet focuses on. Interestingly, this is the only place in the entire Bible where the name, Lucifer, the Shining One, appears as the name for this god, that is in the King James translation of the Bible.

Although a degree of poetic ambivalence exists with no clear distinction between the human king of Babylon, whose reign would come to an end with him descending into the netherworld, and the god of Babylon, who would, according to the prophet, suffer a similar fate, it is clearly this god who is referred to here. The prophet says that this god had improperly placed his “throne” above the “stars” of God, evidently a reference to the sons of God in the divine council, on the “mount of the congregation”, a reference to his elevation of himself to the position of the king in the council of the gods.<sup>[1184]</sup> This god is consequently portrayed here as a rebel god who had no right to elevate himself to the position of king of the gods. According to the prophecy, he would, as a consequence, fall from this elevated position to the lowest or deepest depths in the netherworld. We read:<sup>[1185]</sup>

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the  
morning!  
How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the  
nations!  
For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven,  
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit  
on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of  
the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will  
be like the Most High.’  
Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths  
of the Pit.” <sup>[1186]</sup>

This is certainly an accurate description of the god, Marduk, the “king” of Babylon, who elevated himself in



order to become king of the gods in their council, as we read in the *Enuma Elish*: “We gave you [Marduk] kingship, power over all and everything. Take your seat in the council (of the gods), and may your word prevail.” The Hebrew prophet, Isaiah, however, rejects Marduk’s claim and kingship. In his view Marduk’s rise to kingship over the Babylonian gods was a treacherous act.

As a consequence, and although Marduk might have achieved kingship over some gods in the heavenly sphere, this was not achieved on the true mountain of the gods, where such kingship was sanctioned by El Elyon, the father of the gods. Whereas Marduk had his throne in Babylon or, in another version, Baal his on Mount Sapan, the true king of the gods had his in Jerusalem. These earthly locations merely reflect a greater cosmic reality in which the God of the Israelites stood in direct opposition to another god who claimed kingship over the gods, a god called the King of Babylon, or the “Shining One”, in the biblical tradition.

The biblical perspective is in certain aspects not all too different from the Babylonian one. Although the *Enuma Elish* supports Marduk’s kingship, the way in which he became king in that story could be read in terms of a rebellion of the younger gods against the older ones. Marduk usurps the throne from Enlil, the traditional king of the gods, after his victory over Tiamat. That was, in fact, the original background of the Marduk mythology, namely Naram-Sin’s elevation by the younger gods in opposition to Enlil, king of the gods. Even in the *Enuma Elish* and related traditions, Marduk’s rise to kingship over the Babylonian gods in the stead of Enlil, could thus be understood in terms of a rebellion.

Although it is unlikely that the biblical author knew that the Babylonian mythology about Marduk’s rise to kingship over the gods originated in the Naram-Sin mythology, it is nonetheless interesting that Babylon is afforded the same fate as Akkad. In fact, the curse against Babylon



pronounced by the prophet is merely a reworking of the curse against Akkad mentioned earlier:

“It [Babylon] will never be inhabited, Nor will it be settled  
from generation to generation; Nor will the Arabian pitch  
tents there, Nor will the shepherds make their sheepfolds  
there.

But wild beasts of the desert will lie there, And their houses  
will be full of owls; Ostriches will dwell there,  
And wild goats will caper there.

The hyenas will howl in their citadels, And jackals in their  
pleasant palaces.

Her time is near to come,  
And her days will not be prolonged.” [\[1187\]](#)

### **THE FALLEN CHERUB**

The same theme occurs in another biblical passage, namely in the book of the prophet, Ezekiel, this time as a prophecy against the “King of Tyre”. Again, and the same as in Isaiah 14, where there is some ambivalence between the human king and the god of Babylon, poetic ambivalence does exist in this passage with no clear distinction being made between the human king and the god of Tyre, namely Melqart, who is portrayed in the same way as Isaiah’s description of Marduk, the god of Babylon.

Here, the god who elevated himself on the Mountain of God is described as a “cherub that covered”, either the feet or face of God. [\[1188\]](#) This beautiful creature possessed a magnificent brightness, which was also the reason why “its heart was lifted up”. This was exactly the same as that which had been said about Marduk by the prophet, Isaiah. As a result, he would be driven from the mountain of the gods and thrown on the ground. These events are set in the paradise on the mountain of the gods, as we read:

“You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone  
was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl,  
onyx, and jasper,

Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold.  
The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared  
for you on the day you were created.  
You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you;  
You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and  
forth in the midst of fiery stones.  
You were perfect in your ways from the day you were  
created, Till iniquity was found in you.  
By the abundance of your trading You became filled with  
violence within, And you sinned;  
Therefore, I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain  
of God;  
And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of  
the fiery stones.  
Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You  
corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour; I cast  
you to the ground.” [\[1189\]](#)

As before, this description is very similar to another one from Mesopotamia, which dates from the Ur III Period. In this instance, the story is about an Anzu, a guardian of Enlil’s abode. This creature also raised himself to a position of power by stealing the so-called tablet of destiny that was in Enlil’s possession. This tablet gave its possessor the right to “enlilship” or kingship among the gods.

The Anzu flew with its prize to the mountains, leaving the gods in need of a champion who could win the tablet back. Various gods declined the role. Then Ninurta, the son of Enlil, stepped forward as the “gods’ champion”. He took up his seven battle weapons and left to do battle with the Anzu. After his victory, he retrieved and returned the tablet to Enlil, its rightful owner.[\[1190\]](#) Afterwards, the Anzu was regarded as one of the vanquished enemies of the gods.[\[1191\]](#)

The agreement between the two stories is obvious. The Sumerian Anzu bird is merely the earlier version of the biblical cherubim. In the same way the Anzu birds were

associated with Enlil, as creatures present in his kingly abode, the cherubim are associated with the God of Israel, as creatures present in his heavenly abode,<sup>[1192]</sup> guarding the paradise on the mountain of God. The cherubim possess wings, just like the Anzu eagle, with the Hebrew God riding on a cherub.<sup>[1193]</sup> In both these stories, the Hebrew and Sumerian one, one of these creatures desired kingship over the gods, which in turn led to it becoming a fallen being.

Clearly, both the biblical story and the Sumerian one about the king of Babylon go back to the same original theme. As the story of the fallen cherub goes back as far as the Ur III Period, it must have been an important theme long before Marduk rose to kingship. This story should be understood as a reflection on the previous Akkadian Period, the same as the *Curse of Agade*.

The most meaningful way to understand the Anzu's power grab is probably to set it against the background of Naram-Sin's rise to godhood with the Anzu as his royal standard and symbol. As Naram-Sin's imperial emblem, the Anzu was combined with the serpent in one image (the Hurrian version was the Tispak monster). Eventually, this became the ultimate and most prestigious symbol of kingship in Mesopotamia, Marduk's very own emblem.

The kings of the Ur III Period, however, saw it as a symbol of arrogance. In their eyes, Naram-Sin's use of this image, which belonged to Enlil, represented his own arrogant disregard for Enlil. When the Sumerians regained the throne, their champion, Ninurta, was the one who, in the service of Enlil, restored order in the sphere of the divine. He re-established Enlil's supreme right to kingship in Mesopotamia.

### **ENKI'S ANZU BIRD**

It should be kept in mind that the Anzu was not exclusively associated with Enlil, nor formerly with An in early Sumerian tradition. The bird was also associated with

gods who opposed Enlil's kingship, namely gods from the Enki milieu, since very early on in Sumerian history. Although the Anzu was closely associated with Enlil as the paramount royal symbol, it is also clearly shown in the hand of Enki, seemingly as a symbol of shamanism.

The association of an Anzu bird with the Enki milieu might go back to the ancient myth about the seed that fell on the ground. Although the Anzu is not mentioned in the Sumerian form of this myth, it clearly figures in the Egyptian version of the story, where the Ogdoad produced a messianic child, with this child, in fact, being depicted as a falcon, the Egyptian counterpart of the Sumerian Anzu. I take this bird to be the Anzu of shamanism. [\[1194\]](#)

Over time, the Anzu of shamanism belonging to the Enki milieu, however, also incorporated the royal image into its embrace. One can clearly see this in the Anzu's incarnation through shamanistic rebirth, in messianic figures like Naram-Sin, who were designated to kingship. Since the Akkadian Period this messianic ideal existed, the ideal of becoming "king of the world". And the story of the Anzu, which had stolen the tablet of destiny, beautifully symbolises this power grab from within the Enki milieu.

This struggle for power came to a climax with Marduk's rise to kingship. Readers will recall that this seizure of divine power had an ancient precedent when Enki was raised to kingship over the gods during the reign of King Dumuzi at the end of the Uruk Period. I have shown that this was remembered in the biblical tradition as the rebellious events associated with the Tower of Babel.

We have seen how the Sumerians, who at first only had priestly rulers, embraced the concept of warrior-kings in the time of Meskiagkasher, the biblical Kush, when this forefather of the Nephilim had taken this title when he became the priest-king ruler of Sumer. Earlier, only kings of Kish could hold the position of "king", which originated with their forefather, Etana, a position he had received directly

from An, the first king of the gods. At the peak of the Uruk Period, the Urukites went one step further. They ventured to raise their own god, Enki, to this highest position among the gods. This effort was short lived, as the other city-states under the leadership of Enmebaragesi of Kish, rose up against Uruk and brought their rule to an end. Enmebaragesi then established Enlil, or rather Illil, the son of An, as king (of the gods) over the land of Sumer.

If I am correct in proposing that the biblical Hebrew tradition was a continuation of the ancient Enlil tradition, then the Hebrews were the new torchbearers of the faction opposing the ancient aspiration to messianic kingship and power by the Enki group. Then Abraham, patriarch of the Hebrews who claimed descent from Enoch/Etana, and Meskiagkasher, forefather of the Nephilim dynasties, represent the two ancient traditions standing in direct opposition and conflict with one another.

The antediluvian struggle between the Semites and the Sumerians continued after the deluge, even between the two branches of Meskiagkasher's family, which morphed into a struggle between the supporters of the god, El/Enlil, and those of the god, Enki/Marduk, during the Old Babylonian Period. The Hebrew tradition claimed continuity from Enoch/Etana and his early worship of El/An and stood in direct opposition to the Nephilim and others who worshipped Marduk.

### **CONFLICTING MESSIANIC CONCEPTS**

These two traditions did not only support two different gods as king of the gods, they also had two different messianic concepts. In the Nephilim tradition, the Anzu of shamanism was the Great Spirit incarnated in the messianic figures of Sumerian history. Although there were earlier such figures, like Gilgamesh, it was only in the person of Naram-Sin that this messianic incarnation was fully realised, in a most magnificent and astounding way. Naram-Sin was

viewed as the human incarnation of the storm god, Tispak, who was simply a contemporary version of the older god, Ningirsu, son of Enki.

As the messianic son of Ningirsu (or Tispak), the weather god, Naram-Sin was the one in whom the Anzu spirit was incarnated. In him, the god and the anthropomorphic form of the Anzu bird, Ningirsu/Tispak became physically manifested. In him, the messianic archetype became embodied as a god-man, the first human ever to be worshipped as a great god among the other great gods and, to crown it all, already during his own lifetime.

Naram-Sin was a great messiah who came forth from the lineage of Enki, a messiah who would stand in direct opposition to a messiah from the Enlil or El milieu, who eventually became the long-awaited Messiah of the biblical Hebrew tradition. Although the latter messianic idea was very different and not shamanistic, it presumably also involved the incarnation of a god into human form, but this time and in this case the incarnation of El Shaddai (Yahweh).

With regards to the idea of two opposing messiahs, one may recall the reference in the *Book of Genesis* to the “seed of the snake” standing in perpetual opposition to the “seed of the woman [Eve]”. But what does the “seed of the snake” refer to? It may (in line with the shamanistic theme of the said passage) refer to the shamanistic birth of such messiahs, born on a cosmic level from the snake-woman encountered in shamanism. In early Sumerian tradition she appeared as the mother goddess, Ninhursag, portrayed with the lower body of a snake, breastfeeding a baby.

In the Akkadian Period we come across her as a form of Ishtar, the wife of the storm god, depicted naked with snakes in her hands. In this form she became the mother of the divine Naram-Sin. Although Naram-Sin was an incarnation of the Anzu (or Ningirsu), he was nonetheless born from the serpent mother-goddess. He can indeed be

viewed as the “seed of the snake”, who had even taken the *mushussu* snake as symbol and combined it with the Anzu.

Eventually, the Ningirsu archetype found its fulfilment in the divine sphere in Marduk, who inherited the powerful mythology associated with Naram-Sin. In fact, it may even be possible to see Marduk, the son of Enki, as the Babylonian version of Ningirsu, the Sumerian son of Enki. Marduk was the Babylonian embodiment of the champion of the gods from the Enki milieu. Marduk’s rise to kingship over the gods in Babylon brought the ancient conflict between the gods to a new level. Now the battle for the kingship over the gods was contested more seriously than ever before.

In the biblical tradition, Marduk’s elevation to kingship was seen and regarded as an act of rebellion. Yahweh was the rightful king, whose kingship was sanctioned by El Elyon, the father of the gods. As such, this rebel god, especially in the form of his Canaanite counterpart, Baal of Sapan, was never viewed as more than an adversary in the council of the gods,<sup>[\[1195\]](#)</sup> whose rule on his own mountain did not seriously challenge Yahweh’s kingship. As the adversary and in line with the meaning of the name, he later became known as Satan. In time, the ancient struggle between Enlil and Enki became manifest in the conflict between Jerusalem and Babylon. We will, however, not pursue this latter conflict further at this stage as it falls outside the period under consideration.

## 24. THE CELESTIAL CODE DECIPHERED

One final aspect of the Akkadian tradition that still needs to be explored and put under the magnifying glass before our inquiry can take us to the next level of our unfolding story, entails the strange albeit very interesting connection between the descendants of the Shining Ones and the cycle of the movement of the stars in the celestial skies.

We have already encountered a connection between the Shining Ones and the stars when we looked into the heroic traditions of the Uruk Period. We find exactly the same phenomenon during the Akkadian epoch. Somehow the Nephilim's fortunes unfolded in the earthly sphere in accordance with a certain celestial rhythm. This should in all probability not be surprising as they in fact claimed descent from certain gods identified with certain stars! In their view, these things and their fortunes could be read in the ever-unfolding "writing of the night sky", as they called the arrangement and positioning of the heavenly bodies. [\[1196\]](#)

It may reasonably be assumed and accepted that the relation between the Nephilim families and the celestial skies were part and parcel of the speculative theology associated with them. Strikingly, the myths about the Akkadian epoch also include certain cosmological motifs. In fact, these myths are more closely identified with cosmological themes than any other family of myths in existence. This agrees with the tradition of the Akkadian Emperors having had a keen interest in astronomy. The reference to Sargon in an ancient astrological text, among others, is a clear example of this. [\[1197\]](#) Many of the well-known constellations go back to a period long before the Akkadian Period in ancient Sumer. [\[1198\]](#)

In exploring this theme, it is necessary to revisit the *Gilgamesh Epic*. We are especially interested in our heroes'



greatest deeds, deeds of a cosmic magnitude, namely the felling of the cedar guarded by Humbaba and the killing of the bull of heaven. These are used as entry points in exploring the cosmological significance of the Akkadian traditions. We will also endeavour to decipher the celestial code which will now be looked into in more detail.

### **THE FELLED CEDAR**

I have already discussed the tale of Gilgamesh and Enkidu's journey to the Cedar Mountains, first attested to in the Ur III Period in a story called *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*. According to this tale, our heroes felled a massive cedar somewhere in the western Cedar Mountains. In the *Gilgamesh Epic*, strong emphasis was put on the fact that this was a very special cedar, "whose top vies with the heavens".<sup>[1199]</sup> The heroes used the wood of this cedar to make a large door for the temple of Enlil, "its pole, its top pivot and its bottom pivot are all of a piece".<sup>[1200]</sup>

We have also come across the ancient tradition in ancient Sumer of identifying the *axis mundi* with the cultic tree, typically described with an eagle in its top and a snake at its bottom. Clearly, the author had this exact same axis in mind in his story about the cosmic deeds of our heroes. Not only is the cedar described as so huge and so high that its top reaches into heaven, the image of massive "pivots" on which it turns also beautifully describes the rotating heavens around this axis. In this context, the "temple of Enlil" refers to the cosmos over which this god ruled.

That said, the question beckons as to what the felling of this cosmic tree actually alludes to. This cedar personifies and symbolises the cosmic axis that once pointed at the polar star, Thuban, and its felling signifies the movement of this axis through and eventually away from the polar star in the slow progressive movement of the celestial gears, commonly known as the precession of the equinoxes or

axial precession. The felling of this cedar is a cosmic act, so to say, only achievable by superhuman heroes in a cosmological myth.

As the feller of such a tree, Gilgamesh was also credited with the felling of another tree which also represented the cosmic axis, namely the *halup* tree of Inana, which grew in Uruk. Again, the Anzu had its nest in the top of this tree with a serpent living at its bottom. The cedar is simply a later rendition of the same motif, dating from the Akkadian Period when this tree became identified with the *axis mundi*.

Although the image of the felled cedar beautifully describes the cosmic dimensions of Gilgamesh and Enkidu's deed, this imagery can in no way be separated from its political significance. As such, the cedar also represents the great Akkadian Empire, or rather, the god-kings of the Akkadian dynasty whose rule came to an end. In this interpretation the role of Gilgamesh in the "felling" of this dynasty reflects the Sumerian effort and pride in resisting the rise of Naram-Sin, watching the empire crumble and re-establishing their own rule. Although the Akkadian Empire was the greatest the ancient world had ever seen, with its kings having been recognised and revered as gods on the cosmic plain, it nevertheless came to an end with the Sumerians in time having triumphantly reasserted their own rule over the land.

The identification of the Sumerian kings with the cosmic tree had a long history in Sumer, with the beautiful white Mesu-tree, presumably the birch of the Zagros, their pre-eminent symbol of kingship.<sup>[1201]</sup> The image of the felled cosmic tree as a symbol of the death of a king probably originated with the Dumuzi cult, where it was re-enacted in cult context with the cutting of the dates.

In this instance, the cutting of the dates did not merely represent Dumuzi's death, it also mirrored the "death" of the polar star when the cosmic axis moved through and away from this position. As such, Dumuzi's death had a

specific cosmic significance, clearly displayed and observed in the celestial skies. It may certainly be concluded that the same motif applied to the Akkadian Emperors, with cosmic significance also given to the fall of the Akkadian Empire and the end of the rule of their god-kings.

In later Semitic tradition, which came to pass with the Akkadians, the cedar replaced the northern birch. The cedar was an especially appropriate and befitting symbol for the cosmic axis, with its great height and exceptional beauty reflecting the greatness of the cosmic tree. The felling of the cedar was therefore also a powerful symbol of such pride and presumption coming to an end. In the *Curse of Agade* it is in fact suggested that the Sumerians viewed Naram-Sin's arrogance and impertinence as well as the Akkadian Empire over which he ruled in this light and in such terms.

We find a similar portrayal in later biblical tradition, which probably borrowed from and built upon the image contained in the *Gilgamesh Epic*. The prophet, Ezekiel, uses the felled cosmic tree as a symbol for "the Assyrian". He describes this king as a cedar on the Lebanon, the highest and most beautiful tree in the "garden of God". All the fowls of heaven made their nests in its boughs, all the beasts of the field brought up their young under its branches and all the great nations dwelt in its shadow. However, for its pride it was cut and brought down to the netherworld. [\[1202\]](#)

The same image was used for the beautiful Mesu-tree, that ancient symbol of kings. In the *Erra Epic* we read the following: "Where is the Mesu-tree, the flesh of the gods, the emblem of the King of the Universe, the pure tree, august hero, who is becoming of lordship." [\[1203\]](#) In this, somewhat incomplete, epic the felling of this tree is vividly described as a symbol of the precession of the cosmic axis:

"The sky, lo! it shook: the stations of the stars in the sky were altered, and I did not bring (them) back to their (former) position... I changed the place of the Mesu-tree

(and) of the elmesu. Where is the Mesu-tree... Who carries the golden ax..." [\[1204\]](#)

Before continuing, it may be noted that the big splendorous white tree, that great symbol of kings, has recently also become a popular feature in contemporary epic drama. In *The Lord of the Rings*, for example, it is beautifully demonstrated in the White Tree of Gondor. The first White Tree of Gondor, which symbolises the Gondor royal bloodline, was planted by Isildor, who took it at great personal risk from the White Tree of Númenor, later destroyed on the insistence of the evil Sauron.

At the time the story told in *The Lord of the Rings* takes place, the White Tree of Minos Anor, grown from the third sapling planted by the Kings of Gondor, had long died. When Aragorn, a direct descendent of Isildor, became king, he, with the help of the wizard, Gandalf, discovered a new sapling high in the mountain. He planted this sapling in the place where the old tree at Minos Anor once stood. On the heraldry of Gondor, the tree is shown with a crown and the seven stars of the House of Elendil, of half elven descent and from whom the House of Gondor was descended.

Such a white tree also features in the hugely popular *Game of Thrones* series, in which it is called the Weirwood. It has a white bark with five-pointed, blood-red leaves and blood-red sap. In ancient times, a pygmy-like race, called the Children of the Forest, carved faces on some of these trees, a practice reminiscent of shamanism. Shamanistic practice also revolved around the ancient Sumerian Mesu-tree, if the birch is taken as such. A massive old Weirwood, representing the World Tree, grew in the distant north beyond the Great Wall where the Three-Eyed Raven lived in a cave beneath it.

In the story told in *Game of Thrones*, this tree is destroyed and the Three-Eyed Raven killed by the evil White Walkers. Bran Stark, the new Three-Eyed Raven, often sits under the Weirwood near Winterfell in the north, viewing all

past happenings and events in shamanistic trancelike states.

But let us return to our own story. Like the cedar, the elmesu stone of the *Erra Epic* also had cosmological significance. Just like the cedar of the *Gilgamesh Epic*, which was used to manufacture a door for Enlil's temple, the elmesu stone shone in and illuminated Marduk's cella in heaven, [\[1205\]](#) where this god replaced Enlil as the Babylonian king of the gods. It is possible that the elmesu stone alludes to the polar star which changed position with the movement of the cosmic axis.

## THE EGYPTIAN TRADITION

The same imagery is found in Egypt where Osiris was identified with the cosmic pillar. This god has already been identified with a pillar cut from a tree, called the Djed pillar, in the Pyramid Texts. Mention is even made of its top lying beside it. Such trees were cut for the Egyptian kings in the Amanus and Lebanon Mountains from the earliest of times. A similar description appears in the Osiris myth, in which it is told that an Erica tree grew around the body of Osiris after it washed up at Byblos on the Canaanite coast. The king of Byblos cut and fashioned a pillar out of it, a pillar later erected in the temple of Isis at Byblos.

The identification of Osiris with the world pillar agrees with the Sumerian identification of Dumuzi with the date palm as a symbol of the cosmic tree. We have already seen that the cult of Osiris was simply a reworking of the Dumuzi cult, especially of the Akkadian imperial cult in which Sargon was venerated as the new Dumuzi. Accordingly, the identification of Osiris with the world pillar reflects imagery associated with Sargon. This perfectly agrees with the felled cedar as a reference to the Akkadian Emperors in the *Gilgamesh Epic*.

The Akkadian imperial cult introduced a new form of the ancient Dumuzi cult, namely that of Dumuzi's return. The motif is however not the earlier one of Dumuzi's annual return when the story of his death was re-enacted but the one of his return after being taken by the river, symbolising his return from the netherworld. This myth of Dumuzi's return was first told about Sargon. It took form and built on an old motif from both ancient Sumer and ancient Egypt, namely that of the new shoot growing from and replacing the felled tree.

In Sumer, Gilgamesh was seen as the new shoot that came after Dumuzi. This becomes clear considering the meaning of his name, "a man who is the germ of a new

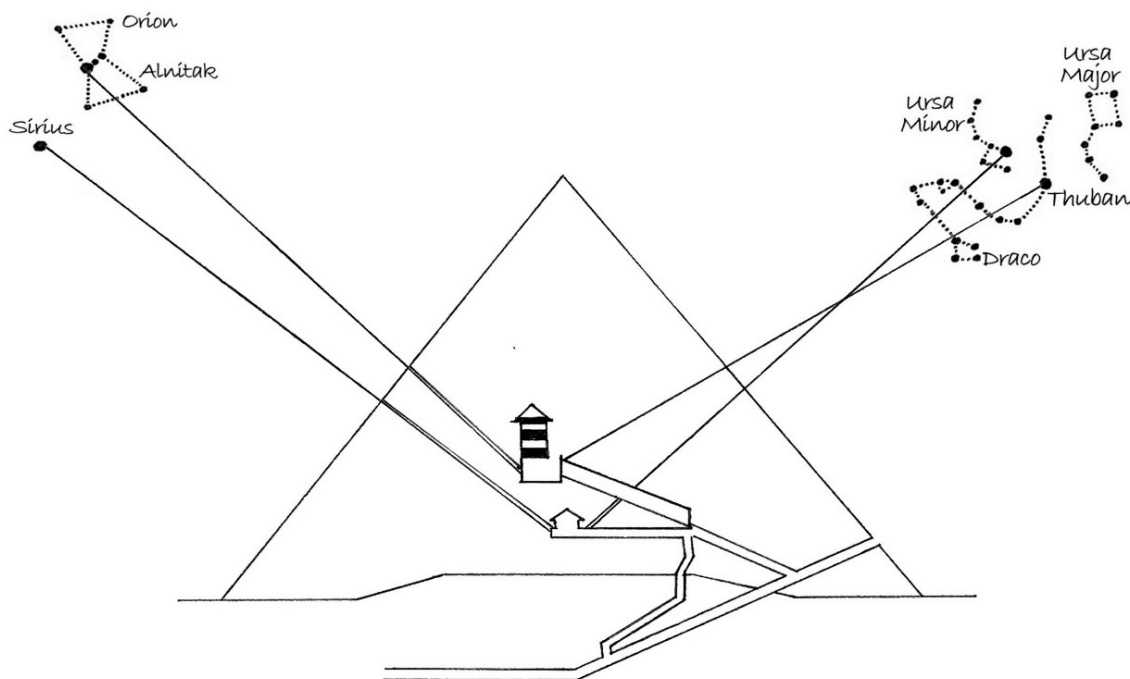
tree”, as well as his association with the first light of the sun at dawn. As such, he was also identified with the Sumerian New Year’s Day. In Egypt, Menes’s son, Horus-Aha, also represented a new shoot. In my view, he was associated with the heliacal rising of Sirius on New Year’s Day, the day on which the dynastic period came into existence.

This myth of the felled cosmic tree replaced by a new shoot is even depicted in the layout of the Great Pyramid! This goes to show that the myth carried serious cultic significance even before the Akkadians came onto the scene. In the Great Pyramid, the small shafts in the King’s and Queen’s Chambers pointed at certain stars which were of great importance in this myth. The progressive movement of the celestial skies is of such a nature that there can only be one date on which this alignment occurred, namely around 2450 BC as I have explained earlier.

The two shafts in the King’s Chamber pointed at the polar star, Thuban, and one of the stars in Orion’s belt, Alnitak. Both these stars were closely linked to our myth. We already know that the cosmic pillar was defined in terms of and with respect to Thuban. When this pillar was cut down, it supposedly fell (according to the myth) towards a position on “earth”, a position identified with the constellation of Orion. In Egypt this constellation, portraying Osiris, was called Sahu and included Orion and other stars such as the Hyades. [\[1206\]](#) The position of this constellation right alongside the Milky Way reflects the story of the drowning of Osiris in the Nile, with the Milky Way representing the celestial Nile.

The shafts in the Queen’s Chamber are also quite significant. Whereas the ones in the King’s Chamber depict the death of the polar star or the felling of the cosmic tree, the ones in the Queen’s Chamber depict the new branch or shoot growing in its place. The shafts in the Queen’s Chamber pointed at Sirius and a star in Ursa Minor, namely Beta.

In Egyptian tradition Horus-Sopdu, the new shoot that replaced Osiris, the old cosmic tree that was cut down, was identified with Sirius. In the cosmological arena, this shoot would grow into a new cosmic tree, an event which would only occur once the cosmic axis was pointing at a polar star again. When the Great Pyramid was built, it would have been very difficult to calculate and predict the exact location of the new polar star although their projections might have pointed, quite correctly, at a star in Ursa Minor. As such, the shaft pointing towards Ursa Minor is not very long (it is cut short by the Grand Gallery).



*Figure 42. The Great Pyramid with its shafts, pointing at certain stars around 2450 BC.*

The myth of Osiris fathering Horus-Sopdu with Isis in her form as Sothis, or Sirius, is told in the Pyramid Texts: “You (Osiris) have placed her (Isis) on your phallus and your seed issues into her, she being ready as Sothis, and Horus-Sopdu has come forth from you as Horus who is in Sothis.”<sup>[1207]</sup>



These mythical events are mirrored in the celestial skies where Osiris's phallus, in the form of the three stars in Orion's belt, directly points at Sirius.

In this celestial image, Osiris (Orion) is shown impregnating Isis (as Sirius) with his son, Horus-Sopdu. Horus-Sopdu is identified with Sirius, depicting the new shoot growing in the place of the old tree, the one cut down in order to produce the pillar representing Osiris in cult rituals. This new shoot grew out of the fire—Sirius is not only the brightest star in the night sky, its heliacal rising on the Egyptian New Year's Day also took place during the intense midsummer heat.

The basic elements of this myth are clearly observable in the layout of the Great Pyramid. In Egypt it was, however, only with the appearance of Osiris and his son, Horus, that this motif became manifested in these personages as part of their story. Although the Egyptians inherited the basic elements of this stellar myth from the Sumerians, the appearance of the Akkadian Emperors as the new incarnation of these old motifs, brought the old myth to new life. The cosmic tree was then manifested in Sargon as the new Dumuzi whereas the new shoot was manifested in Naram-Sin—venerated in Egypt as Osiris and Horus-Sopdu. Naram-Sin's rise to godhood, as the god born from the fires of the Great Rebellion, might have been interpreted as this shoot having bloomed into the new polar star, albeit only as a mythical theme.

Although the Akkadian rulers were viewed in cosmic terms, as god-kings who transcended the human sphere, it is nonetheless also true that the application of the myth to their personages did seemingly not have an exact equivalent in the celestial skies during their reign. The cosmic axis had already moved away from the polar star, Thuban, after the Uruk Period, hundreds of years before the time of the Akkadians. They simply applied an old cosmological theme to themselves. Does this then mean

that their lives did not resonate with celestial events as found in their speculative theology? Or was there a way in which these old myths did, in fact, found a new application in the celestial movement of the stars during their lifetimes?

### **KILLING THE BULL OF HEAVEN**

Another story in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, dating from the Ur III Period, has a particular significance to our inquiry.<sup>[1208]</sup> This is the story of Gilgamesh and Enkidu's killing of the bull of heaven. According to this story, Ishtar asked her father, An, to send the bull of heaven against the heroes because Gilgamesh rejected her advances. They, however, killed the bull and Gilgamesh, or Enkidu in the later version, tore a thigh from the carcass of the bull and threw it up at Ishtar in heaven.<sup>[1209]</sup> Strangely, Gilgamesh, a Sumerian, who is typically shown as clean shaven, is depicted with a beard and hair falling over his shoulders in such imagery and may therefore well reflect Akkadian practice.

Like the cedar the heroes felled in the western mountains, the bull of heaven also carries a cosmological meaning. The story concerns stellar events related to the constellation of Taurus. It is not only the bull's name that puts it in the celestial skies, we also read that the bull "grazed where the sun rises",<sup>[1210]</sup> a reference to the position of the constellation of Taurus during the vernal equinox. For centuries, culminating in the Akkadian Period, the sun rose in this constellation during the vernal equinox each year. The star, Aldebaran, in the constellation of Taurus, was one of the royal stars or "watchers" marking the four equinoctial and solstice points in ancient Mesopotamia.

Again, the question remains as to what the killing of the bull of heaven actually alludes to. The only meaningful explanation to this question is that the killing of the bull of heaven is a metaphorical reference to the end of the celestial era of Taurus. This interpretation is actually

consistent with the era of Taurus having come to an end during that time, explaining why it became a literary motif during the Ur III Period.

In the same way as the felling of the great cedar, the killing of the bull of heaven tells about celestial events brought about by the ever changing celestial gears through precession. These images, both of which appear during the Ur III Period for the first time, tell about the movements of the celestial skies. Both inherently carry the same theme, namely that of the precession of the poles and equinoxes.

One should view and understand the rest of the story, namely Gilgamesh's throwing of the bull's thigh up at Ishtar in heaven, in the same light. The implication is that the bull's thigh should be identified with another constellation. And this is in actual fact the case, with the "thigh" referring to Ursa Major. Although Ursa Major is not directly identified with the bull's thigh in later Mesopotamian tradition, the ancient Egyptians saw and understood it in exactly this way.

[\[1211\]](#)



*Figure 43. Gilgamesh and Enkidu killing the bull of heaven as depicted on an Assyrian cylinder seal (c. 600 BC) (Schøyen Collection).*

Taking into account the direct interaction between Mesopotamia and Egypt during and after the Akkadian Period, there cannot be any doubt that Ursa Major is the “thigh” of the slaughtered bull of heaven. Giorgio De Santillana and Hertha Von Dechend write the following in their classic work, *Hamlet’s Mill*: “(The) conviction that Mesopotamians and Egyptians had not much in common prevents them [scholars] from recognizing the ‘bull’s thigh’ when they see it.”<sup>[1212]</sup>

### **THE FORELEG OF SETH**

In the Egyptian version of the story, Horus cut off the leg of Seth, portrayed as the foreleg of a bull, and put it in the

middle of heaven. He placed the foreleg in the custody of Isis in her form as the great hippopotamus goddess, as we read in a celestial text from the *Book of Day and Night*, dating from the time of Ramesses VI: "... as to this Foreleg of Seth, it is in the northern sky, tied to two mooring posts of flint by a chain of gold. It is entrusted to Isis as a hippopotamus (*rrt*) guarding it."<sup>[1213]</sup> Here, Horus replaces Gilgamesh and Isis replaces Ishtar (As the story concerns celestial events, the name of the hero is not really important).<sup>[1214]</sup>

This text refers to some of the most prominent constellations in the polar region. One is the "foreleg of Seth", which is Ursa Major. The other is Isis in her form as a hippopotamus. Traditionally the hippopotamus was the symbolic animal of Seth. Why then did Isis took on such a form, one may well ask. The answer may lie in the role assigned to her in such texts, namely as guardian of the foreleg of Seth.

This reminds of a similar role played by Isis in the Osiris myth, namely to guard Seth after he lost his testicles in his fight with Horus. I tracked this motif back to the Akkadian imperial cult in which eunuchs played an important role. In this cult, they regarded Ishtar as the wife of the weather god, in Egypt identified with Seth. The hippopotamus form of Isis might of consequence then be related to her association with Seth as the weather god.

The position of this hippopotamus constellation within the framework of all the other constellations as shown in the zodiac of Denderah, for example, indicates that the Egyptians identified it with the stars associated with our present-day constellation of Draco. In ancient Sumer, the weather beast or Anzu, their version of the western weather god, also depicted in the top of the cosmic tree, was probably assigned to this position in the polar area. Allocating the hippopotamus goddess to this celestial position would, therefore, make perfect sense if she was the

companion of the weather god. She is always shown in celestial texts with a “mooring post” in her hand, a reference to the polar star, Thuban. This star also forms part of the current day constellation of Draco.

Particularly strange but very interesting, is the reference to two “mooring posts” in the quoted text: “... this Foreleg of Seth, it is in the northern sky, tied to two mooring posts.” The question is what these celestial items actually refer to? The mooring post shown in the hands of the hippopotamus goddess is presumably the more important one of the two. It may be concluded that it refers to the northern polar star, Thuban, with Thuban defining the cosmic pillar. The image of the cosmic pillar in this depiction is simply replaced by an image of a large mooring post.

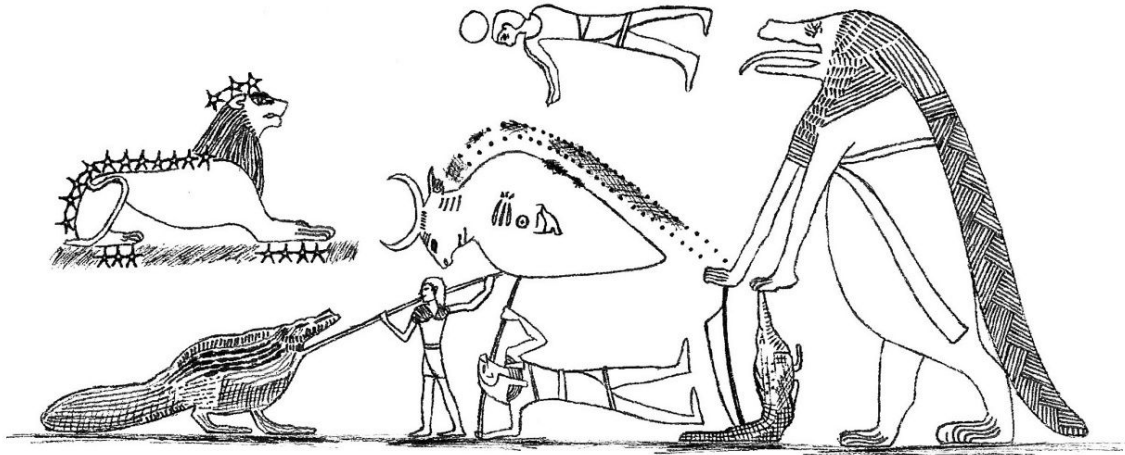
This mooring post, sometimes translated as “flagstaff”, has already been mentioned in the Pyramid Texts, where its location is given to be in the northern polar region: “[Y]ou will give satiety to me at the pole, at that which is the foremost of the flagstaffs.”<sup>[1215]</sup> The idea behind this image is that of boats, boats carrying the gods and the souls of deceased kings travelling through the celestial skies and tied to this celestial mooring post, which provides them with safety in this otherworldly realm. Again, more than one flagstaff are referred to, with the one at the pole being the “foremost” and most important one.

Where would we then find the other “mooring post” that is mentioned? It may be proposed that the Egyptians identified the other post with another polar star, seemingly one of the stars that make up Ursa Minor. These two mooring posts would correspond with the two “trees” we have marked out within the framework of the celestial layout of the Great Pyramid, the old felled tree and the new shoot, with the shafts pointing at the relevant stars, Thuban (pole star) and Sirius (new shoot).<sup>[1216]</sup>

This means that the image of the felled cosmic tree, representing the death of Osiris, and the new shoot



replacing it, representing the birth of Horus-Sopdu, who took his father's crown, were complemented by another image, namely that of two mooring posts. These are simply two celestial images pertaining to the same stars.



*Figure 44. A cosmological depiction from the time of Ramesses VI. The hippopotamus goddess holds the mooring post in her one hand and suppresses a crocodile (evil) with the other. The foreleg of Seth is clearly shown with its upper part in the form of a bull's head with horns. The position of the mooring post in relation to the foreleg of Seth corresponds with that of the polar star, Thuban, in relation to Ursa Major. [\[1217\]](#)*

The identification of these two “mooring posts” with the celestial alignment of the shafts in the Great Pyramid is consistent with the importance of Sirius in both these instances. In celestial texts, Isis, as the hippopotamus goddess, is the one who kept the entire celestial sky together and in place and as such, she is identified with Sothis, or Isis as Sirius. We read that Sothis “tethers the Foreleg in the northern sky, not letting it go upside down into the Duat [netherworld].”[\[1218\]](#) This means that Sirius was

taken to be anchoring the celestial skies, probably because it defined the bottom, or southernmost tip, of one of the “mooring posts”.

Once again, the association with the Osiris cult myth should be clear. Isis, in her role as Sothis, is the mother who gave birth to the Horus-Sopdu child in the fire, or as we find in the cult myth, as the one who held the child of the king of Byblos in the fire. The hippopotamus goddess and Sothis are both forms of Isis, the wife of Osiris. [\[1219\]](#)

Another form of this cosmological myth exists in which the foreleg guarded by the hippopotamus goddess is in fact that of Osiris. [\[1220\]](#) This agreement between the cult myth and the celestial images shows that the story of Osiris was not only enacted in the cult but also observed in the celestial skies. This is consistent with the important role celestial motifs played in the Akkadian myths. [\[1221\]](#)

## **THE PRECESSION OF THE POLES AND THE EQUINOXES**

Let us take a look at the story of the foreleg in its Mesopotamian context. In Mesopotamia Taurus, the slaughtered bull of heaven, was associated with the foreleg, known today as Ursa Major. Somehow the hind part of the bull, the constellation of Taurus, and the foreleg, Ursa Major, together signify the outcome of a theme of death of cosmic proportions, with both these ‘prime cuts’ belonging to the same celestial tale.

But why would Ursa Major have been associated with the theme of death? There can only be one reason namely its proximity to the polar star, Thuban. The ancients probably saw the revolving movement of Ursa Major as having “caused” the “death” of the polar star. This corresponds with the Egyptian version of events where the foreleg was identified with Seth, the one who killed Osiris.

The reason why those people associated Taurus and Ursa Major with each other in this way, is that they must have



believed that the revolving action of Ursa Major was not only responsible for the precession of the poles but that it was also connected to the precession of the equinoxes, through which the astronomical Era of the Bull came to an end.

Especially noteworthy is the association of the precession of the poles with the precession of the equinoxes. These two celestial processes, and especially the astronomical events they caused, also correspond with the two cosmic deeds performed by our heroes, namely the felling of the cosmic cedar and the killing of the heavenly bull. These two heroic deeds should not be viewed in isolation as they together give one picture of the changing gears of the celestial skies (in the same way the two journeys of the hero(es) to the Cedar Mountains and Dilmun belong to symmetric parts of the same story).

The people of that time clearly understood that the precession of the poles and that of the equinoxes are linked. This means that they had a good grasp and understanding of this celestial process long before the Greek, Hipparchus, rediscovered it in about 146 BC. [\[1222\]](#) Although these images appear during the Ur III Period for the first time, it had probably already been discovered during the time of the Akkadian Empire when the boundaries of knowledge were broadened on all levels.

Although the ancient Sumerians could have discovered the precession of the poles as early as the end of the Uruk Period (see Chapter 6), when the cosmic axis pointed at the polar star, Thuban, they would not have understood the full extent and effect of this movement. This can only be understood once it is realised that both the precession of the poles and the precession of the equinoxes belong to one and the same massive movement of the gears of the celestial skies, only becoming observable over an extensive period of time. This was probably only discovered during the Akkadian Period.

The easiest way to envision the process of the precession of the poles and the equinoxes is to compare it with the rotating movement of a spinning top. The earth is like a huge spinning top which does not merely rotate but also wobbles in the same way such tops do when their speed of rotation slows down. The wobbling of the earth is a slow stable movement which involves the projected axis of rotation, called the cosmic axis, as well as the equinoxes.

On the one hand, the two ends or poles of the cosmic axis, point at the northern and southern skies respectively, drifting in a circular course through the northern and southern polar regions over a period of thousands of years, one full cycle taking approximately 26 000 years to complete. The circular courses traced in the northern and southern skies by the precessional drift of the earth's axis, cause the distinct impression of a massive cosmic hourglass, perfectly fitting in with the measuring of time by way of precession. When this axis is pointing at a particular star, it marks that star as a polar star, like in about 2850 BC when Thuban was the polar star. When the cosmic axis moved through and away from this star on its circular course, the ancients saw in this celestial event the image of a massive tree that was cut down.

On the other hand, the equinoxes, defined by the intersection of the ecliptic (the plane of the earth's orbit; the path drawn by the planets, the sun and the moon through the heavens) and the celestial equator, also drift slowly along the ecliptic in a direction opposite to the earth's rotation. This celestial movement results in the vernal and autumnal equinoxes progressing slowly through the constellations of the zodiac, taking about 2200 years on average to move from one constellation to the next. Towards the end of the Akkadian Period, the vernal equinox reached the end of its stay within the constellation of Taurus. [\[1223\]](#) With that, the astronomical Era of Taurus came

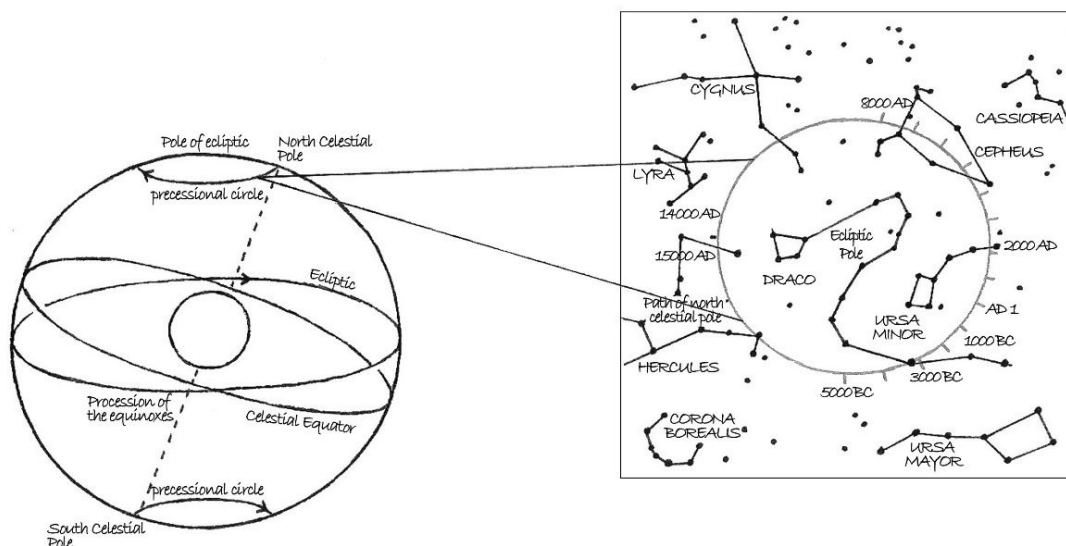
to an end. This event is reflected in the story of the killing of the bull of heaven.

Let us return to the image of the killing of the heavenly bull. Although this image carries a huge cosmological significance one should never lose sight of its evenly significant political meaning, in exactly the same way as we have found with the felled cedar. As such, this image might also have symbolised the end of the Akkadian Empire. We know that the bull was an important iconographic symbol during the Akkadian Period, depicting the identification of the king with the rising sun god. The image of Gilgamesh, that great Sumerian hero, killing the bull, therefore, presents a very appropriate image for the eventual prevailing of the Sumerians after the demise of the Akkadian Empire.

The idea that the killing of the bull reflects the “Sumerian struggle for freedom from Akkadian domination during the Akkadian Period” is a well-established view among Orientalists.<sup>[1224]</sup> Due to the appearance of this myth so shortly after the Akkadian Period and the fall of the Akkadian Empire having been so directly identified with the end of the Age of Taurus, it may be assumed that this cosmic event had indeed been viewed in this way. Evidently, the fall of the Akkadian Empire was regarded as the end of a great epoch or golden age with its celestial equivalent at the peak or climax of the celestial Age of the Bull and its eventual demise.

We have now come to understand the image of the felled cedar in relation to the celestial Age of Taurus. As the tree symbolism pertains to the dynastic bloodline of the Akkadian Emperors, their coming to power during this time signified the new burgeoning of the cosmic tree. The Akkadian imperial dynasty was understood in such terms, with this burgeoning of the cosmic tree coinciding not with the polar star but with the Age of Taurus as it approached its peak. Thus, both the cutting down of that tree and the

killing of the bull symbolised the end of the Akkadian Period, corresponding on a cosmic level with the end of the Age of Taurus as a result of the process of precession. [\[1225\]](#)



*Figure 45. A diagrammatic portrayal of the precession of the poles and equinoxes.*

The return of a Nephilim bloodline to the throne at this significant moment during the long cycle of the ages seems like a strong confirmation of the relation between those bloodlines and the movement of the celestial skies. As the earthly seed of the gods, their history seemingly aligned with the divine plan unfolding within the celestial movement of the stars. When this cycle reached its climax, this family rose to prominence in accordance with their story having been so written in an ever-unfolding heavenly scroll. [\[1226\]](#)

## MASTERS OF TIME

The time has now arrived to take a look at the cosmic tree in a wider cosmological sense. Although this tree represents the *axis mundi*, the depiction with the Anzu in its top and the snake at its roots pertains to a larger cosmological picture. In this picture, it is not only the tree itself that is of significance, the creatures inhabiting it are also important. One may speculate that the Anzu and the snake must also have carried celestial significance, like the trunk of the tree having represented the cosmic axis when it was pointing at Thuban. The Anzu and the snake may have referred to certain constellations in the northern and southern polar regions, which could have been none other than early versions of the modern-day Draco in the north and Hydra in the south.

In keeping with the movements of the celestial skies which resulted in the felling of the cosmic tree, the Anzu was also associated with certain cycles of time. In ancient Sumer, the Anzu represented the weather cycle, with water having evaporated from the southern marshes and wetlands and the consequent formation of thunderclouds over the northern skies. In ancient Egypt, according to the Edfu texts, the Anzu was replaced by a falcon sitting on a perch, with its cyclical nature embodied in the Bennu bird or Phoenix. In this case, the bird was identified with long cycles stretching over many centuries. Accordingly, it should not be surprising that the Anzu constellation, later shown as a serpent that lies coiled up around the northern ecliptic pole, became a symbol for the long cycle of the precession of the poles and equinoxes.

One may well ask how the constellation identified with the weather beast, or Anzu, could have developed into a serpent and there can only be one explanation. When Naram-Sin combined the Anzu and the snake into one symbol, portraying his rule over the totality of the cosmos,

the heavenly Anzu transformed into and became a winged serpent.

Although Naram-Sin's crest or emblem combined the two opposing symbols associated with the cosmic tree, the heavenly Anzu, in time, also gained a distinct serpentine character reflected in the constellation identified with it. When this winged dragon eventually shed its wings, it became the serpent we now know.<sup>[1227]</sup> This means that Naram-Sin had a special connection with the constellation of Draco. Draco was in actual fact the symbol and emblem of his rule! In time it might also have become associated with Sargon (in the same way it became the paradigmatic emblem of kingship). And to this very day this constellation guards the northern polar region.

It may well be suggested that the connection the Akkadian Emperors had with this image and with its corresponding constellation was remembered by those who belonged to the tradition associated with those rulers. Their association with this constellation, as a symbol of the long cycle of the ages, was probably also related to the discovery of the precession of the poles and equinoxes during their reign. As such, these Emperors were considered to have been the masters of time.

We find, for example, in the *Old Assyrian Sargon Legend*, that Sargon is portrayed as such in a passage I have already quoted: "I saw a gazelle and I threw a mud brick into the river but while I was running my belt broke, so I put on a snake, I ran, and so I (both) caught the gazelle and picked up the mud brick from the water!" He is described in this passage as having been so fast that he was able to catch the gazelle before the mud brick could dissolve in the water! This is a beautiful description of this Emperor as a great wizard who commanded power even over time itself.

We also find the association of these Emperors with the theme of precession in the Osiris myth, which originated with the Akkadian imperial cult myth.<sup>[1228]</sup> Intriguingly, this

myth is associated with certain numbers, especially the number 72. According to the story, Osiris was murdered by 72 of Seth's servants. When considering the cosmological significance of Osiris, with his death corresponding with the cosmic pillar having been cut down by way of precession, the question may be asked whether this number has any bearing on this theme. And indeed it has. It takes 72 years for the equinoxes to progress  $1^\circ$  on the horizon. The number 72 is then directly related to the death of Osiris when considered in cosmological terms.

Every 72 years the position of the sun within the constellation in which it rises progresses with one degree in the opposite direction. To complete 30 degrees, which is the time the sun spends on average in one constellation, it would take  $72 \times 30 = 2\,160$  years. To complete the whole cycle and return to the same position, it would take  $12 \times 2\,160 = 25\,920$  years. This period is called the "Great Year" and it is a good approximation for the true length of that period which is in fact 25 772 years.

In time, knowledge of the Great Year had spread all over the ancient world. Typically, numbers like 72, 360, 432, 2 160 and 25 920 demonstrate an acute awareness and knowledge of the Great Year and everything that goes with it. The Babylonians calculated 1 sar as 3 600 and a great sar as  $60 \times 3\,600 = 216\,000$ . This number corresponds with 100 ages of 2 160 years each.<sup>[1229]</sup> The historian, Berossus, proposed 432 000 years for the total period of the antediluvian reign of the Sumerian kings. According to the Bible, the antediluvian period lasted 1 656 years, which translates into  $2 \times 43\,200$  weeks.<sup>[1230]</sup>

According to the *Atharva Veda* the complete cycle, called Mahayuga, lasts 12 826 years (or approximately 12 000 years), which provides another approximation for one-half of the Great Year.<sup>[1231]</sup> Mircea Eliade wrote: "The myth of the eternal return has received its boldest formulations [in the Indian tradition]."<sup>[1232]</sup> Plato also refers to a myth according



to which the number of the cosmos is 12 960 000 and that of humans 216. The number 12 960 corresponds to one-half of the Great Year whereas 2 160 (derived from 216) is the number of years in one cosmological age. [\[1233\]](#)

## **THE AKKADIAN EMPERORS AND ORION**

In the ancient speculative theology of the Sumerians and Akkadians, they viewed the Thunderbird in the top of the world tree as a cosmic spirit which had the Phoenix as its Egyptian counterpart. When we identify the bird with a northern polar constellation, its seed is the polar star, represented by the ben-ben stone on the pillar at Heliopolis. When Osiris made his appearance, he personified the new incarnation of this divine seed. Seen as the constellation of Orion, he represented this seed as having been present on “earth”.

As expected, the constellation of Orion, one of the most recognisable and celebrated constellations in the entire celestial sky, shows a marvellous agreement with a collage of images associated with the Akkadian Emperors. This followed on Sargon’s identification with Dumuzi, in turn identified with Orion in the celestial skies. In my opinion, Orion represents not only Sargon but the archetypal Akkadian Emperor in general.

As I have shown before, the origins of Osiris and Horus-Sopdu, identified with Orion and Sirius, in the Egyptian tradition, go back to the Akkadian Emperors, Sargon and Naram-Sin. And so do many other thematic and iconographic correspondences. Sargon would have been identified with Orion like Dumuzi (or Osiris) was. Those kings were portrayed in the same way as Orion, a great hunter holding a lion skin in his one hand and a club in the other. Like the Heracles figure wearing a lion skin on an Akkadian seal. Their weapon of choice was always a club or a mace.



Then, there is also the question about the three stars in Orion's belt. We have already come across these three stars in Egyptian myth as Orion's phallus, swallowed by three fish. These stars are known today by their Arab names, Mintaka, Alnilam and Alnitak. The close association of the Akkadians with Orion suggests that, for some, these three stars might also have represented Sargon's three "sons", Rimus, Manishtushu and Naram-Sin. They might also represent branches or bloodlines of the Nephilim, especially those taking the Akkadian Emperors as archetypal heroes, probably those associated with the three cosmic regions, heaven, earth and the abyss.

The Nephilim bloodlines associated with heaven and the abyss might have used the flying dragon and sea-dragon as symbols which evolved from the Anzu and the serpent in the cosmic tree. We have come across these two kinds of dragons in the mystical shamanistic traditions where they are male and female, in the same way as the Anzu and snake were associated with male and female cults. In line with the Nephilim tradition being the cultic counterpart of the mystical shamanistic tradition, [\[1234\]](#) these dragons might have been identified in the Nephilim tradition with the male and female branches of their bloodlines.

The bloodlines associated with the earth as a cosmic region would presumably be the ones from which future world rulers would be descended. These messianic bloodlines were probably identified with Alnilam, the brightest star in the middle of Orion's belt, envisioned as a pearl and resulting in the three stars being viewed as a string of pearls. This pearl star, so appropriately named, apparently represents the messianic bloodlines from which great messiahs of Nephilim descent would appear at certain predetermined times.

Orion also has two dogs, Sirius and Procyon, with Sirius being the brightest star in Canis Major, the Great Dog, and Procyon in Canis Minor, the Lesser Dog. Procyon was called

“the strong” and was identified with Humban, the Elamite god from whom Humbaba originated.<sup>[1235]</sup> This clearly reminds of Humba/Humbaba, the “strong” servant of Tammuz or Dumuzi.

If we take the two dogs of Orion as “dogs of war”, they might represent the two groups associated with the warrior cult founded by Naram-Sin, namely the warriors of the “right hand”, from the imperial dynasty, and those of the “left hand”, his Hurrian followers. These two dogs correspond with Marduk’s Sar.ur and Sar.gaz weapons, identified in the celestial skies with two small stars in the constellation of Scorpius, namely Lambda Scorpii (or Shaula) and Epsilon Scorpii (or Larawag). Lastly, Bellatrix, the star in Orion’s left shoulder, is worth a mention. Bellatrix means “female warrior” and corresponds with the first women to carry weapons in cultic practice in the Akkadian imperial cult.

### **A COSMIC HOURGLASS**

Of particular interest to our story, is the position Orion occupies in the larger scheme of the precession of the equinoxes. One of Orion’s most important features is that it looks like an hourglass. Although this might seem like a mere coincidence, there can be no doubt that this constellation is exactly serving the function of an hourglass. Astonishingly enough, the Orion hourglass coincides precisely with the celestial hourglass measuring the passage of time, visible in the slow movement of the celestial equator as a result of the precession of the poles and the equinoxes!

This is how it works: Because of precession, the celestial equator drifts slowly southward through the celestial skies until it reaches Orion’s belt, the neck of the hourglass. Then it turns around and starts its slow movement back in the opposite direction. Orion does not only look like an hourglass, its neck also aligns precisely with the turning

point of the celestial equator in its slow movement downwards and then back upwards in the celestial skies. Orion, then, is actually a true cosmic hourglass measuring precession!

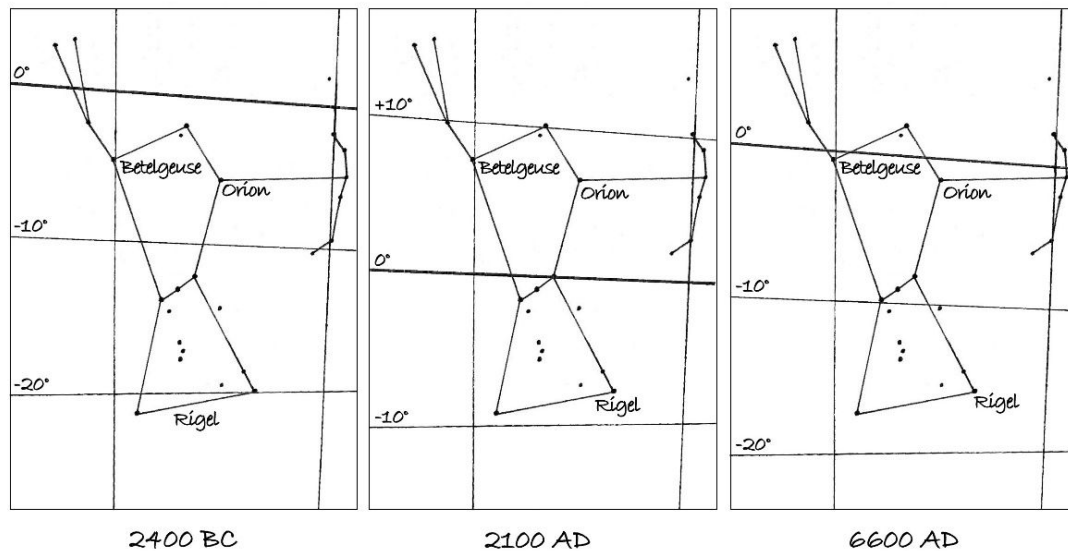
Orion reminds us not only of one of the greatest epochs in world history, it also expresses the powerful idea of “return”. Both Draco and the Orion hourglass might thus have been understood to indicate that one from these families will one day return in order to sit on the throne once again. In the speculative theology associated with those families, who believed they were descended from the Nephilim, there must have been a strong belief that they would again return one day to rule the world in accordance with their destiny, as is written in the heavenly scroll.

They might certainly have believed that the bloodline of the Akkadian Emperors would rise to greatness again when future messianic figures from their lineage would appear. This would presumably happen at the end of each subsequent astronomical era. In our study, we will consider whether these motifs were realised in actual events during the end of the Age of Aries (the Ram). We will also consider the prospects for the end of the Age of Pisces (the Fish) and the beginning of the Age of Aquarius (the Water-bearer).

## **RETURN OF THE KING**

Let’s take a look at the next polar star, in other words, the polar star that follows on Thuban, namely Polaris. Interestingly enough, Polaris is called “Al-jadi” in Arabic. It means “he-goat”<sup>[1236]</sup> and might stem from an ancient Middle Eastern tradition, consistent with depictions of a he-goat found from very early on in the Persian Gulf region. Although we do not know where this image originated, it is nonetheless worth noting that the goat was a symbol of Sargon as the new Dumuzi. We have seen this on the seal

depiction showing him as the first Heracles figure, with the goat jumping up against him.

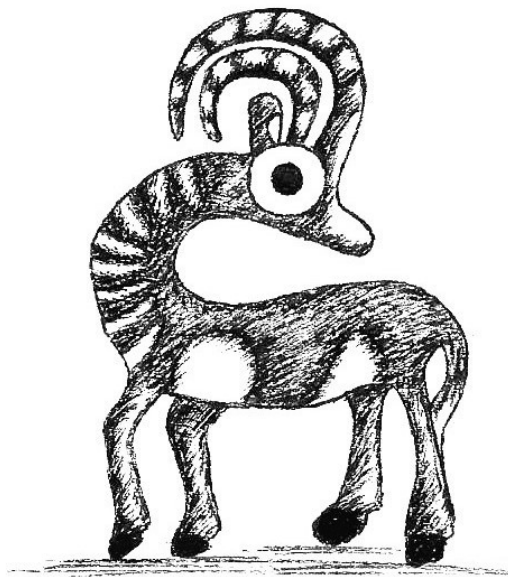


*Figure 46. The position of Orion shown in relation to the celestial equator ( $0^\circ$ ) in its slow precessional movement southwards and northwards through the celestial skies, for three dates, namely 2400 BC, 2100 AD and 6600 AD. It would reach Alnilam in about 2200 AD which is the lowest point in its cyclical movement. Thereafter, the celestial equator would move back in the opposite direction in order to complete one cycle of 25 772 years.*

The Polaris goat may be seen as being in keeping with Dumuzi's return. If we take the Polaris goat as Dumuzi's goat, then this image has cosmological significance. As the new polar star, Polaris signified the return of the cosmic axis to a polar star, with the shoot of the cosmic tree growing back to its full stature. In Nephilim thinking, this image symbolises the return of a shoot from their lineage in order to rule the world, one who returns in the same way Sargon once returned as the new Dumuzi, depicted as a he-goat.

The goat of Polaris might therefore signal the eventual return to power of this family.<sup>[1237]</sup>

One of the stories told about Sargon also hints at this reading and interpretation of the celestial scroll. According to this story, namely the *Sargon birth legend*, Akki, the water-drawer, pulled the baby, Sargon, from the river. It may be assumed that the initiates of the occult tradition understood this story not simply in historical terms but also took it as an ancient oracle based on secret knowledge of the hidden mysteries of the celestial code, as a story with cosmological significance. The reason for believing so is obvious: Akki, the water-drawer, represents the Age of Aquarius (the Water-bearer or Water-drawer), which “drew” from Pisces, the previous age with which it overlaps.



*Figure 47. A depiction of an ibex frequently included in the iconography of the Gulf seals.<sup>[1238]</sup> Is it perhaps possible that this ibex represents the Polaris goat?*

The initiates might have interpreted the story in line with what happened during the Akkadian Period, when the rise of those great god-kings coincided with the climactic years of

the Age of Taurus. Again, it follows, that this story, as an oracle, might signify and foretell that one from Sargon's bloodline would eventually appear as the king of the world during the climactic years of the Age of Pisces, when the water-drawer, Aquarius, will pull that ruler from the underground stream of Pisces.

This heavenly image proves to be quite consistent with the hourglass of Orion. Quite amazing is the fact that the celestial equator, in its downward movement through the heavens, will reach its lowest point on Orion's belt, or phallus, exactly when the Age of Pisces will come to an end. When the celestial equator reaches Orion's phallus, which represents this ancient bloodline, the water-drawer will pull the child from the water! This will be the moment when such a bringing-forth from the deep waters of the Apsu, which has since been recast as the abyss, comes into play!

Clearly, Sargon's birth story may be taken as an ancient oracle about events pertaining to and awaiting in the distant future, when the astronomical Age of Pisces reaches its peak, like the Age of Taurus that once reached its peak during the Akkadian Period. This moment, foretold in the oracle, will also be clearly proclaimed and indicated by Orion, the celestial hourglass, signalling the arrival of the long-awaited epoch. This will be the moment when the messianic bloodline from Enki's lineage, identified with the pearl star in Orion's belt, Alnilam, will be "lifted out" of the water by Aquarius. Lifted out onto the celestial equator, emerging from the abyss and appearing in the physical world.

When this time comes, the pearl seed of immortality growing deep down in the Apsu at the bottom of the sea will be revealed to the world. Although this pearl "grew" deep down in the celestial skies millennia ago, the celestial equator's slow but steady drift downward will eventually reach the lowest point in its cyclical movement, bringing this immortal seed, or rather the immortal child grown from

the pearl, forth into our world, earth as we know it. When this happens, it will signal the appearance of the final and greatest messianic figure from the Nephilim bloodlines, as leader of another great empire who will rule the world. This will be the moment when a new Sargon will be brought forth from the abyss in order to rule as the ultimate Emperor. [\[1239\]](#)

## **THE CELESTIAL CODE**

There is, however, one problem with this reading and understanding of the ever-unfolding celestial scroll. Although these constellations date from long before the Akkadian Period, there is no possible way the people from that time, so long ago, could have known where the celestial equator would eventually reach its turning point. They could not have known that this will happen once the celestial equator reaches Alnilam, the middle star in Orion's belt. They might have discovered precession as I have proposed but this particular detail is far beyond what they could have known or could have foreseen.

How would one then explain this stunningly coherent picture in the celestial skies? Although it may be pure coincidence that the pearl star, Alnilam, corresponds so strikingly with the pearl Gilgamesh found at the bottom of the Apsu, entailing a great "secret of the gods", the fact that all these things correspond and come together so beautifully and exquisitely, strongly suggests that Alnilam had been chosen to be the pearl star for exactly this reason.

How is this at all possible? The only explanation is that the initiates from later times named this star in this way and in doing so, they followed in the footsteps of those ancient astronomers who projected their theological speculations onto the celestial skies. As the finer details about the intricate celestial clockwork gradually became known, they simply continued in the long tradition of including certain stars within their overall picture of the celestial skies. One

might imagine how the process of recording the ever unfolding heavenly scroll or celestial code continued over many millennia, enabling future generations to rediscover and read those ancient secrets held in the night sky.

There is, however, one more problem and the following question may well be asked: If the initiates to those ancient secrets “wrote” or recorded the celestial code, how on earth could they have known if future events would in fact take place in accordance with the code? Would the code not, in this case, contain mere speculations and conjectures about the future? If they really believed, as I propose, that the celestial code does, in fact, foretell about things to come, then they must also have believed that the code goes far beyond their articulation of certain aspects thereof. If this is the case, they simply provided the beautiful and relevant colour and tint for already existing heavenly patterns belonging to the celestial code. It may be concluded that the initiates had discovered the code sometime in the distant past and carefully observed it during the Uruk and Akkadian Periods, periods when astounding coincidences between the celestial movements of heavenly bodies and earthly events occurred.

We are not yet in a position to pass judgment on the “truth” or reality of the celestial code. We will eventually come to that. Thus far, we have discovered many strange and striking coincidences between the Nephilim and the celestial arrangements of the stars. We have looked at the end of the Uruk Period when events from the lives of Lugalbanda, Dumuzi and Gilgamesh were aligned with celestial configurations, when Gilgamesh was seen as the “ninth child”, in keeping with the ancient myth about such a messianic figure.

We have discovered the strange coincidence between the Akkadian Empire and the climactic years of the Age of Taurus, when the greatest god-king of all was born. Does this in fact mean that something similar would eventually



happen during the climactic years of subsequent cosmological ages? The critical reader may consider this to be impossible; it simply does not make sense to our contemporary minds. This should however and perhaps not prevent us from further exploration of this intriguing theme and will therefore be investigated and considered in detail in the next volume of this work.

### **PARADISE LOST?**

As the Nephilim endeavoured to assert their power and spread the worship of their gods throughout the world, they strove to accomplish this in conjunction with the celestial code written in the ever-unfolding celestial scroll. A very early attempt at this was their elevation of Enki to kingship during the reign of Dumuzi in Sumer towards the end of the Uruk Period, remembered in the biblical tradition as the events surrounding the Tower of Babel. Later, during the Great Rebellion against Naram-Sin, another opportunity arose, events triggering the avalanche which led to the replacement of Enlil as king of the gods and the elevation of Marduk/Baal/Zeus to that position. Ultimately their god was worshipped under various names all across the ancient world.

Interestingly enough, opponents of the anti-Enlil faction were those among the Nephilim who identified with Gilgamesh. During the Ur III Period they asserted themselves against and in opposition to the Akkadian ideal. Another important opponent of Enki and the Nephilim bloodlines associated with him, is the biblical God, Yahweh, worshipped by Israel in Canaan. When the Hebrew prophets reflected on the rise of Marduk, the son of Enki, they described his rule in cosmological terms. In their view, he might have been elevated to a position of kingship on his own cosmic mountain but he would certainly fall, just like

the polar star that fell from the elevated position it once held.

In the *Book of Isaiah*, the prophet writes that the “king of Babylon” wanted to raise his throne to a position above the “stars of God”.<sup>[1240]</sup> He wanted to sit as the king on the mount of the congregation, in the council of the gods, on the “sides of the north”, with reference to the position of the polar star as the northern pole of the cosmos. According to the prophet, he would fall from there like the polar star once did, to a position on the horizon, as “the Shining One [Lucifer], son of the morning”. In another version of the myth, Osiris, as the cosmic pillar, wounded up in Orion. In Psalms 82 of the Hebrew Bible the fall of one of the “Shining Ones” is associated with the stumbling “foundations [pillars]” of the earth.<sup>[1241]</sup> When these “pillars” stumbled, the polar star “fell”—and so would this god.

This description by the Hebrew prophet is in keeping with a Babylonian myth that the heavens “shook” (because of precession) and the royal star Jupiter, sign of Marduk, ended up in its position as a morning star. We find this in the *Erra Epic*: “Irkalla [the netherworld] will I shake and the heavens shall tremble. The brilliance of Jupiter will I cause to fall.”<sup>[1242]</sup> The term used for Jupiter is Sulpae, a reference to this planet in the early morning at dawn.

The prophet, Ezekiel, used the same image.<sup>[1243]</sup> He speaks of a cherub that once covered the face or feet of God and says that he was “in Eden, in the garden of God”, referring to the heavenly paradise on top of the cosmic mountain of God. The cherub walked in the midst of the “stones of fire”, a reference to the stars of the polar region. Nine precious stones covered this cherub, presumably a reference to the nine stars in Draco, all brighter than magnitude 3. According to the prophet, he would be driven from that elevated position and he would be burned.

These descriptions correspond precisely with the cosmological portrayal of Draco. Draco does not only guide

and watch over the northern polar region lying outstretched over it, one of the stars in this constellation is also the polar star, Thuban. Draco, the astral image of the cosmic spirit that stands in opposition to Yahweh, ascended the throne as ruler of the cosmos at the time when Thuban was the polar star. What happened in the celestial skies then are now seen and considered in retrospect with this ancient celestial event coinciding with Dumuzi's reign. But when the cosmic axis moved away from this elevated spot in the sky, Draco lost that position. In this regard the message of the prophets is clear: Although Marduk was elevated to kingship, he would eventually also come to a fall.

There is, however, one problem with the Hebrew position. Although Draco does not occupy the position of Polaris, the future polar star, it nonetheless still lies outstretched over the northern polar region signifying his rule over the entire cosmos. This heavenly dragon lies curled up around the ecliptic pole, that timeless position in the centre of the polar region that never changes, not even through precession, that timeless position representing eternity. This reflects the biblical view that all the kingdoms of the world had been given into the power of Satan,<sup>[1244]</sup> the "god of this world".<sup>[1245]</sup>

On the face of it, this cosmological picture does not favour the view that this dragon will eventually fall. We do, however, find a depiction in *The Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle*, the last book in the Christian Bible, where Saint Michael battles against this heavenly dragon,<sup>[1246]</sup> a dragon mentioned as far back in Hebrew tradition as the *Book of Job*.<sup>[1247]</sup> According to this prophecy, this dragon would in fact be driven from heaven, lose its position of power and finally be cast into the abyss.

The proverbial million dollar question remains: What does the celestial code tell us about the eventual outcome of this conflict? For some readers this might seem like a superfluous question, a question concerning nothing more

than astronomical myths. There is an element of truth in this, but it seems to me that we cannot—in the light of all the evidence presented so far—simply reduce the possible existence of the celestial code to mere astronomical myths. This forces us to explore this question further albeit not independent of the historical developments pertaining to events purportedly foreseen by the celestial code.

In the final instance, we have to consider other evidence from later periods that can further confirm the existence of the celestial code, called the “writing of the night sky” by the ancient Mesopotamians and the celestial “scroll” by the Hebrews. Obviously, the whole idea of such a code hinges on further evidence and confirmation. Following from the discussion thus far, taking a closer look at the end of the next astronomical era seems to be the best way to go about it. In the next volume, we will delve deeper into this fascinating subject.

# GLOSSARY

Adad	Western weather god. He was the principal god of the far-western regions of Mesopotamia.
Akka	Second king of the Second Dynasty of Kish. Son of Enmebaragesi. During his rule Gilgamesh became king of Uruk.
Akkad	Seat of the Akkadian Empire. Founded by Sargon the Great.
Akkadian Empire	One of the greatest empires of the ancient world, 2370-2190 BC.
Akki	The water-drawer who pulled the baby Sargon from the river in the Sargon birth legend.
An	The father of the gods in ancient Sumer. The name means "the highly elevated one". He is the Sumerian equivalent of the Semitic god, El.
an	Heaven.
Annunitum	Epithet of the Akkadian Ishtar. The name means "the skirmisher".
Anunna(ki)	A name for the aristocracy among the gods. As a generic

term, it also referred to a lower order of gods who belonged to the heavenly realm (sky) and who were thought to have been incarnated in some early personages associated with the Sumerian cults.

Aratta	An ancient land located in the northern Zagros Mountains. It was later called Urartu or Ararat.
Dagan	Western weather god. During the Old Assyrian and Old Babylonian Periods, this god was considered to be the principle god of the Middle Euphrates region.
Dilmun	An area in the Persian Gulf which originally might have referred to the islands of Tarut and Bahrain as well as the eastern Arabian coastal regions near Abqaiq. Since the Akkadian Period it was identified with the island of Bahrain.
Dumuzi	The last king of the First Dynasty of Uruk (see Uruk, First Dynasty of). Worshipped as a god in the seasonal cult rituals focussing on fertility.
Enheduanna	High priestess and poetess, daughter of Sargon the Great.

	She wrote three poems in honour of the goddess, Ishtar.
Enki	Important Sumerian god. The name means “Lord of the Land/Earth”. Probably a dwarf or pygmy god. Enemy of the god, Enlil.
Enkidu	Companion of Gilgamesh in his heroic tales as told in the Gilgamesh Epic.
Enlil	The king of the gods in ancient Sumer and son of the god, An. This god was of Semitic origin and the name may have been derived from El.El.
Enmebaragesi	Founder of the Second Dynasty of Kish. United the Sumerian city-states under his control after Dumuzi was pushed from the throne of Uruk during the rebellion against his rule.
Enmerkar	Great Sumerian king from the First Dynasty of Uruk. According to the Sumerian King List he was the son of Meskiagkasher and builder of the city of Uruk. Probably the same person who is called Nimrod in the Bible.
Eridu	City in the south of Sumer where Enki had his sanctuary. The oldest city in Sumer.
Erra	Fire god. Identified with Nergal.

Etana	Founder of the First Dynasty of Kish. Hero of the Etana Epic. Probably the same person who is called Enoch in the Bible.
Followers of Horus	An Egyptian family of gods from the primaeval age.
Gilgamesh	King of Uruk (fl. c. 2800 BC). Great cultural hero of the Sumerians. He was said to have been born from a so-called lillû daemon during a sacred marriage ritual. An archetypal Nephilim hero.
Hammurabi	Sixth king of the First Dynasty of Babylon. Rule: 1848-1806 BC. Became overlord of Mesopotamia in 1818 BC.
Horus	Egyptian falcon-god. Corresponds with the Sumerian god, Ningirsu.
Horus, the child	Egyptian god. The son of Osiris and Isis.
Horus-Aha	The Egyptian king who unified the two lands in 1781 BC. Son of King Narmer.
Humbaba	Guardian of the forest on the Cedar Mountains in the far-western regions of Mesopotamia. Killed by Gilgamesh and Enkidu.
Igigi	Lower order gods who belonged to the netherworld. They were



often arranged together with a similar group of gods associated with the heavenly realm, called Anunna(ki). After the Babylonian theological revolution, they were assigned to Marduk in heaven.

Ishtar

Great warrior goddess of the Akkadians. She was identified with Ki, the wife of An, during the Akkadian Period.

Isin-Larsa Period

The period between the fall of the Ur III Dynasty and the victory of Hammurabi in 1818 when he became overlord of Mesopotamia, 2060-1818 BC.

Jamshed

Hero of the Persian tradition given in Shahnameh, the Epic of the Persian kings, as told by Ferdowsi. Corresponds with Gilgamesh.

Ki

The ancient Urukites paired the god An with Ki. In this case, the meaning of An as “heaven” was accentuated, with Ki meaning “earth/ground”.

ki

Earth/Ground/Land.

Khufu

Second king of the Fourth Dynasty in Egypt. Builder of the Great Pyramid. Ruled: 2470-2447 BC.

Kutha

Holy city of the god, Nergal-

	Erra.
Kubera	Dwarf-guardian of the north in Buddhist tradition.
Khumba-Humba	Chief god amongst the peoples of the Zagros.
Lugalbanda	Dwarf-king of Uruk. He became king after Enmerkar. In the Lugalbanda Epic we read about his otherworldly experience in the nest of the Anzu bird.
Makkan/Magan	Ancient Akkadian/Sumerian name for Egypt.
Marduk	Babylonian god. Was elevated to kingship over the Babylonian gods after King Hammurabi became overlord of Mesopotamia in 1818 BC. The great champion of the younger gods in the fight against the monster, Tiamat, and the older gods in the Babylonian creation epic, <i>Enuma Elish</i> .
Meluhha	The pre-Vedic Harappan civilization which flourished in the great Indus Valley, located in parts of modern-day India and Pakistan.
Menes	Legendary first king of a unified Egypt.
Meskiagkasher	Founder of the First Dynasty of Uruk. He was said to have been descended from the sun god.

	Probably the same person who is called Kush in the Bible.
Naram-Sin	Great ruler of the Akkadian Empire. The son or grandson of Sargon the Great. The first Mesopotamian ruler who was worshipped as a god-king during his own lifetime. Ruled: 2290-2254 BC.
Nekhen	Hierakonpolis in Greek. An ancient Egyptian city with a temple of the hawk-god, Horus, a few kilometres north of Edfu. Today called Kawm Al-Ahmar.
Nephilim	The greatest of ancient heroes, sons or scions of the fallen gods (angels).
Nergal	Sumerian god. King of the netherworld. He had a sanctuary at Kutha, near Akkad.
Nieth	Egyptian virgin goddess. Worshipped at Pe (and elsewhere) in the Delta.
Ninazu	Head of the netherworld before Nergal took over that position. The mushussu dragon was his servant.
Ningirsu	Sumerian warrior god. The son of Enki. Sometimes identified with Ninurta.
Ninhursag	Sumerian mother-goddess. Described as having the lower

	body of a snake.
Ninurta	Sumerian warrior god. The son of Enlil.
Nippur	Holy city of the god Enlil—at least since the time of Enmebaragesi.
Old Assyrian Period	The period commencing with Assur's rise to power after the fall of the Ur III dynasty until Hammurabi's rise to overlordship of Mesopotamia, 2016-1818 BC.
Old Babylonian Period	The period commencing with Hammurabi's rise to overlordship of Mesopotamia and coming to an end with the sacking of Babylon by the Hittite king, Mursili I, 1818-1651 BC.
Osiris	Egyptian god of the netherworld. Appears in Egypt for the first time during the Fifth Dynasty. Corresponds with the god Dumuzi in Sumer—insofar as that god was identified with King Sargon of Akkad.
Pe	Buto in Greek. An ancient Egyptian Delta city with the temple of Neith, the virgin-goddess.
Pn-god	Egyptian god. Mentioned in the Edfu texts. Belongs to a tradition which was said to go

	back to the time before the deluge.
Ptah	Egyptian creator-god.
Rakshasas	Giantlike, evil and bloodthirsty beings of Indian myth.
Sahure	Second king of the Fifth Dynasty in Egypt. Ruled: 2380-2368 BC.
Sala	Spouse of the western weather god. Identified with Ishtar. Often depicted as naked.
Sargon the Great	Great and mighty Emperor. Founder of the Akkadian Empire. He was regarded as Dumuzi who had returned. Ruled: 2370-2310 BC.
Seth	Egyptian god. The one who killed Osiris. Identified by the Semites with the Canaanite weather god, Dagan/Baal.
Shebtiw	Shaman-warriors mentioned in the Edfu texts. One of three groups counted among the "Children of Tanen" together with the seven sages and the "builder gods". Corresponds with the sebittu (ilsibitti) of Sumerian-Akkadian tradition.
Sebittu	Seven gods. They were thought to have been incarnated in the seven young men accompanying Lugalbanda on his journey to Aratta.

Siduri	A female character in the Epic of Gilgamesh, who had a tavern on the edge of the Persian Gulf and whom the hero approached for advice about his search for the secret to immortality.
Sopdu	Deified warrior-king of Egyptian tradition. Egyptian version of the great Akkadian Emperors.
Suen/Sin	The Semitic moon god. Identified with the Sumerian moon god, Nanna.
Sumer	First great civilization of the ancient Middle East.
Sumer and Akkad	Heartland of the Akkadian Empire.
Tanen	Builder god of the Edfu tradition. Played an important role in rebuilding the land after the great deluge in the original homeland of the gods.
Tanen/Tatenen	Egyptian god. Identified with Ptah.
Tiamat	Monster-mother of the older generation of gods in the Babylonian creation epic, <i>Enuma Elish</i> . Embodied the primeval salt sea.
Tispak	Akkadian god. A form of Teshub, the Hurrian weather god, who

	shared Naram-Sin's mythology. His sanctuary was at Esnunna.
U/Ud	Shining One. Some kind of spirit being or daemon. The U.gal or "big U" was found among them, indicating that some were huge or giantlike in stature.
U.gal/Ugallu	"Big storm cloud spirits". Not the same as the "big U" among the U/Uds. Appear in iconography since the Akkadian Period when the sun god fought against them on behalf of Naram-Sin. Probably regarded as "giants".
Unas	The last king of the Fifth Dynasty in Egypt. Ruled: 2312-2282 BC.
Ur	Sumerian city, located at the southern end of Sumer. City of the biblical Abraham.
Ur, Third Dynasty of	Ruled in Ur over Mesopotamia, 2168-2060 BC.
Ursanabi	The ferryman in the Gilgamesh Epic who took the hero across the waters of death to visit Utnapishtim on the island of Dilmun.
Uruk	One of the great cities of ancient Sumer. Built by Enmerkar.
Uruk, First	Ruled in Uruk over Sumer

Dynasty of                      during the end of the fourth and beginning of the third millennium BC. One of the most glorious periods in ancient Sumerian history.

Utu                              Sumerian sun god. Identified with the Akkadian god, Samas.

Yaksas                        Nature spirits of Indian tradition. Dwarfish beings with short limbs and pot bellies. Their female companions are called yakshinis.



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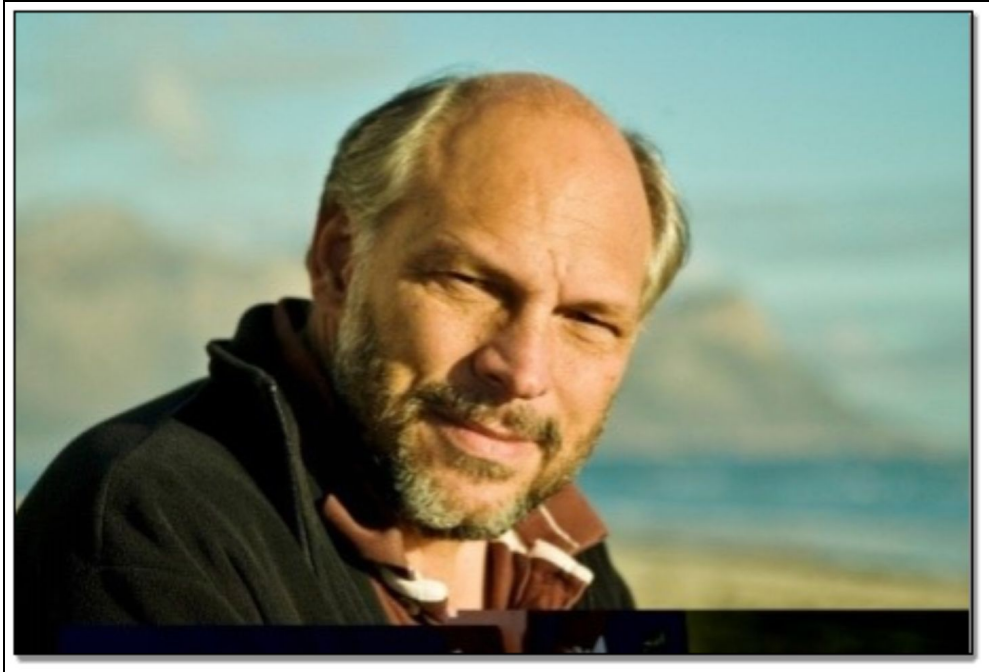
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Willem McLoud is an independent South African scholar whose main interests are ancient Middle Eastern and Mediterranean studies, Kantian philosophy and philosophy of science. He has a PhD in Nuclear Physics (Nuclear Fusion) from the University of Natal, a MA in Philosophy of Science from the University of Cape Town as well as a MBL from UNISA. His work has been published in peer-review journals and he is the author of various books, one focusing on the origins of the Mesopotamian material in the primeval history in the Book of Genesis. His research of and writing about the ancient Middle Eastern world stretch back over more than three decades.

Willem's main areas of study regarding the ancient Middle East are the Sumerian, Akkadian and early Egyptian civilizations, with special focus on the Uruk and Akkadian Periods in Mesopotamian history as well as the Old Kingdom Period in Egyptian history. His love for the Sumerian language was cultivated during his participation for a few years in a Sumerian reading group led by the cuneiform

specialist, Prof Fanie Vermaak. He also has a keen interest in the civilizations which formed in the eastern Mediterranean region during the early second millennium BC. Another passion of his is the legends and myths associated with the great heroic ages of the ancient Middle East.

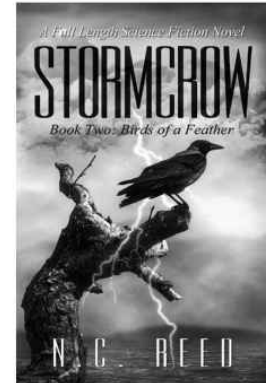
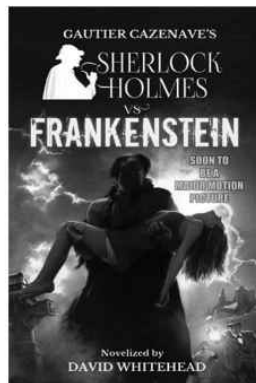
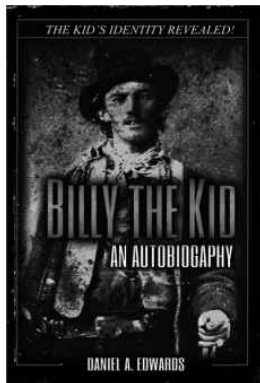
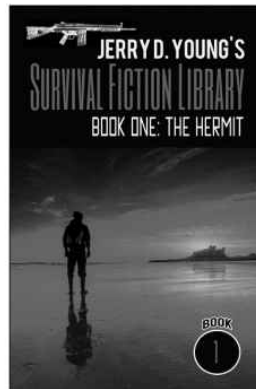
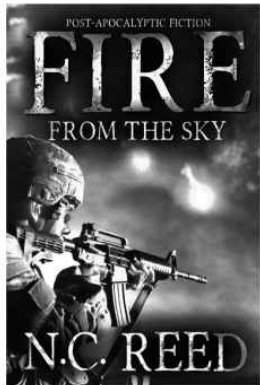
As part of Willem's research and writing projects, he has led many research tours to the Middle East as well as the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions, visiting countries such as Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Bahrain, Iran, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria etc. He has developed a new ancient Middle Eastern chronological model in which the Mesopotamian high chronology is correlated with the Egyptian low chronology, published in the *Journal for Semitic Studies* (2019/2). This model was afterwards dramatically confirmed by the newly published text of the recently discovered Epic of Gulkišar (*Journal for Semitics* 2020/1). Willem has also developed a Sumerian Hypothesis to explain the many Mesopotamian influences in the primeval history in the Book of Genesis (*Journal for Semitics* 2020/2).



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[1] Keynes 1947:29. Newton the Man, in *The Royal Society*, Newton Tercentenary Celebrations.

[2] McLoud 2019

[3] McLoud 2020a

[4] Reiner 1961:10

[5] Horowitz 1998:5

[6] Parpola 1993:169

[7] Isaiah 34:4; Revelation 6:14

[8] Schwartz 1999

[9] In this book I follow my own chronological model as published in the *Journal for Semitics* 28 (2) (McLoud 2019). In this model, K. A. Kitchen's so-called "low" chronology for the Egyptian Twelfth Dynasty is aligned with the Mesopotamian "high" chronology for the third and early second millennium BC. A recently translated epic of the Sealand (in the far south of Mesopotamia) king, Gulkišar, (Zomer 2016; Boivin 2018:241) has dramatically confirmed the validity of my new ancient Middle Eastern chronological model (McLoud 2020a). It allows for the Mesopotamian high chronology and the Egyptian low chronology to be reconciled with each other through the Old Assyrian "middle" chronology (see Chapter 19, note 19).

[10] Also see Rohl 1998:71-128

[11] Rohl 1998:104

[12] Letcher 2007:133

[13] Wasson, 1968:214

[14] Wasson, 1956:606

[15] Wasson 1956:606/612

[16] Leick 2001:1, 30

[17] Soosaar 1999: no. 45; Halloran 1999:38

[18] Horowitz 1998:105, 347

[19] Dalley 1998:173/5

[20] Michalowski 1996a:244

[21] Tigay 1982:154

[22] Sjöberg & Bergmann 1969:22, 70

[23] Levy 1946:101

[24] Lines 494-506 of the corpus.

[25] Sjöberg & Bergmann 1969:172

[26] Thompson 1904:149. In the Middle Babylonian text, the so-called Göttertypentext, Nintu is also described as having “scales like a snake” (Watanabe 2002:31).

[27] It may be suggested that the Egyptian Wadjet goddess, who wore the “uraeus” serpent on her forehead, is an Egyptianised version of this snake goddess. In an early temple hymn of Kulab, a Sumerian high priestess is also described as a snake wearing a snakelike crown: “(She wears) the... *mus* [snake]-crown (lustrous as) lapis lazuli, the great dragon [snake] of the *nigingar*.” (Sjöberg & Bergmann 1969:29)

[28] Jacobsen 1987:202; Katz 2008:336-338

[29] Interestingly, Ensag, the most prominent among the gods born from Enki’s fallen seed, was in later Gulf tradition remembered as a Giant, called Ishnaq ben Inak (Rice 1994:319).

[30] Amiet 1986:267

[31] Collon 2003

[32] Ukg 15 (AO 4153) (Lisman 2013:25). Also NBC 11108 from c. 2000 BC (Lisman 2013:36).

[33] Bottéro 2001:58

[34] The Sumerian script takes us back to the earliest strata of Sumerian thought, long before the first written texts. The earliest writing conventions are extremely important as they reflect the way in which the Sumerians understood their world, something that later generations who inherited these fixed conventions could only do through writing itself. In this context, the earliest convention for writing the name, An, may be taken as reflecting their views about this god, which is consistent with the early theology where he is described as the father of the gods.

[35] In Babylonian king lists, An was given “ancestors”. This is, however, a later development not found in early texts (Lisman 2013:104).

[36] Steinkeller 1999:114

[37] Lambert 2016:221. Also see Roberts 1972:31-33.

[38] Mullen 1980:258

[39] Roberts 1972:156; Bottéro 2001:55

[40] In later times the plural form, “seed of the princes”, appeared more often, referring to the aristocracy amongst the gods (Jacobsen 1987:240). The word, “prince”, was also associated with the god, Enki, (Jacobsen 1992:411) and a tradition existed that the Anunnaki were his children (Lambert 1980:79). This

would refer to the fallen gods, the ones who were considered to have been his seed, that is, the seed that fell onto the ground.

[41] Mullen 1980:191, 195

[42] An is, for example, called the “beloved father” of Enlil on the Lugalzagesi Vase Inscription (Wang 2011:134).

[43] In the transliterated forms of names/words hyphens are placed between the pronunciation of the cuneiform symbols.

[44] Güterbock 1948:125; Van Dongen 2010:63, 141

[45] As the principal god of the Hurrians, Kumarbi was later identified with Dagan, the principal god of northwestern Mesopotamia, as well as with Enlil, the king of the southern Mesopotamian gods (Archi 2004). Although Kumarbi was for this reason sometimes identified with Enlil, our story clearly belongs to the Enki milieu. One may even argue that the identification of one of the gods born from the seed with the weather god, Teshub, goes back to the Mesopotamian tradition in which Ningirsu was the son of Enki.

[46] Reymond 1969:63

[47] Reymond 1969:77

[48] Reymond 1969:71

[49] Blacker & Loewe 1975:27

[50] Geddes & Grosset 1997:86

[51] Dasen 1993:91, 92

[52] Grenfell 1902:25

[53] Dasen 1993:105

[54] Revelation 12:9

[55] Genesis 6:2, 4

[56] Numbers 13:33

[57] Scholars hold widely divergent views on the value of tradition in historical studies (Frayne 2010:40). Those scholars using a post-structuralist approach, in general reject tradition as a valuable source of history (see, for example, Michalowski 2003; 2010). In doing so, they take hands with the positivist remnants in archaeological thinking, believing that no evidence for something amounts to proof that it did not happen or occur. Others, like myself, accept and take the hermeneutical philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer (and Paul Ricoeur) as point of departure and to a great extent value the role of tradition in our reconstruction of history (McLoud 2020b). In my view, efforts to develop

strategies to explain Sumerian tradition in other ways, like “ideological and theological programs” ascribed to rulers of the Ur III Period, could never be proven to be factually correct and will never amount to anything more than the subscribing scholar’s own preconceived views and ideas. A detailed discussion of these fundamentally opposing philosophical frameworks and their impact on historical studies, however, falls beyond the scope and ambit of this book.

[58] Vanstiphout 2003:109

[59] Vanstiphout 2003:119

[60] Vanstiphout 2003:137

[61] Vanstiphout 2003:143

[62] Jacobsen 1987:334

[63] Vanstiphout 2003:5, 6

[64] Falkowitz 1983:105

[65] Jacobsen 1987:335

[66] Hancock 2005:277

[67] Tigay 1982:204

[68] Eliade 1964:93, 98

[69] Wasson 1956:608

[70] Vanstiphout 2003:139

[71] Hancock 2005:349

[72] Eliade 1964:70, 282

[73] Wasson 1968:29

[74] Wasson 1968:21

[75] Chakraborti 1973:6

[76] Such a shared tradition, however, does not explain why another myth from a later period, namely that of the Anzu which stole the tablets of destiny and later became the story of the Simurgh (Saena) bird which stole the Soma, is also shared between these two traditions. In both traditions, the birds are depicted in similar terms, namely as part-eagle part-lion. As for the stolen Soma, one may have to assume later borrowing.

[77] Falkowitz 1983:105

[78] Wilson 1979:57

[79] Jacobsen 1987:329

[80] Jacobsen 1987:328

[81] Langdon 1932:19

[82] Jacobsen 1987:384

- [83] The references to Enlil and Ninurta in this story reflect the theology of the Ur III period when it was first written down at the end of the third millennium BC. As the story concerns shamanistic initiation we should rather associate the Anzu in this story with Enki, the god of shamanism, and with his son, Ningirsu.
- [84] Jacobsen 1987:330
- [85] Vanstiphout 2003:127-131; Alster 2005:65
- [86] Vanstiphout 2003:127
- [87] Vanstiphout 2003:127
- [88] Edwards 1971:443
- [89] Hansman 1976:33
- [90] George 2003:146
- [91] Mortensen 1986:184; Parpola 1996:230
- [92] Lisman 2013:134
- [93] George 2003:107
- [94] Jacobsen 1939:91
- [95] Nissen 2002:8
- [96] Crawford 1991:85
- [97] Such *lillû* daemons might have been viewed as “male vampires” (Jacobsen 1939:90).
- [98] George 2003:61
- [99] Tigay 1982:230
- [100] Tigay 1982:255
- [101] Katz 1993:9; Jacobsen 1987:345
- [102] Tigay 1982:153
- [103] George 2003:178-179
- [104] Genesis 6:2, 4
- [105] Gilgamesh is one of the few personages from ancient history who had been identified as a Nephilim Giant in later Hebrew tradition, namely in the *Book of Giants*, found among the scrolls discovered at Qumran near the Dead Sea.
- [106] The idea that the Nephilim were aliens who came to earth as proposed by Erich von Däniken, among others, is simply a modern reworking of the old tradition. What is, however, true is that those associated with the Nephilim tradition were indeed closely associated with remarkably high levels of civilisational development.
- [107] The descent of the First Dynasty of Uruk from the sun god is not easily explained (Woods 2012).

- [108] Jacobsen 1987:379
- [109] Jacobsen 1987:440
- [110] Jacobsen 1987:379
- [111] Jacobsen 1987:300
- [112] Albright 1919:165
- [113] Steinkeller 2003
- [114] Jacobsen 1939:138
- [115] Steinkeller 2003; Jacobsen 1939:141
- [116] Howard-Carter 1981:222
- [117] Larsen 1975:57; Algaze 1986:6
- [118] Nützel 1979:292
- [119] Gut 2002:22; Shennan 2000:828
- [120] Akkermans 1989:347; Algaze 1986:16
- [121] Jacobsen 1939:87
- [122] Psalms 110
- [123] Another title already attested to in archaic Ur, namely “énsi”, also existed and referred to the “mayor” who carried out the administration of the city on behalf of the king (Charvát 2015:59).
- [124] Jacobsen 1939:152
- [125] In the *Atrahasis Epic* the Igigi gods are portrayed as the manual labourers for the Anunna gods. It also includes a description of their rebellion against their servitude to and control by these gods. Seemingly, this is the tradition referred to at this point in *The Myth of Etana*. In *The Erra and Naram-Sin Epic*, the Igigi, belonging to the netherworld, are the followers of the god, Erra-Nergal. According to this epic this god made weapons for Naram-Sin. It can be concluded that the Igigi were originally gods of the netherworld associated with the crafts and craftsmanship.
- [126] The reference to Ishtar clearly reflects the Akkadian context in which this ancient tradition became popular. Although Enlil is also mentioned here, it is interesting that Ishtar is the one involved in the bestowment of kingship. This was a typical Akkadian development. See Chapter 14.
- [127] Foster 1995
- [128] The earliest predecessor to the well-known *Sumerian King List (SKL)*, called the *Ur III Sumerian King List (USKL)*, has been ascribed to one of the Akkadian Emperors (Naram-Sin?) and accentuates the reigns of the earlier rulers of Kish, giving little or no attention to the rulers of Uruk and Ur (Steinkeller 2003:282).

Steinkeller proposes that the *SKL* was produced after the Ur III Period from the earlier *USKL*, which dates back to the reign of King Sulgi (Steinkeller 2003:285). Perhaps one should not too easily discard Jacobsen's arguments that an early version of the better known *SKL* was composed as early as the reign of King Utuhegal (Jacobsen 1939:138). This allows for the possibility that the *SKL* was not directly derived from the *USKL* but represents a parallel tradition. It is possible that various mother texts might have existed early on.

[129] Marchesi 2010:232

[130] Steinkeller 2003:269

[131] Sanders 2017:56. Although the *Sumerian King List* mentions that Etana's rule was followed by that of his son, Balih, the next ruler, Enmenunna, is credited with his own dynasty. It is unclear where Enmenunna fits into Sumerian history.

[132] Sanders 2017:30

[133] According to the *King List*, Gilgamesh took booty and loot from the hands of Enmebaragesi (Marchesi 2010:242).

[134] Langdon 1932:31

[135] Horowitz 1998:347

[136] Vertesalji 1989:191

[137] Leick 2001:13

[138] Bottéro 2001:31

[139] George 2003:6

[140] Vanstiphout 2003:1

[141] Vanstiphout 2003:67; Woods 2012:83

[142] Vanstiphout 2003:67

[143] Potts 2000:278; Rohl 1998:102

[144] Vanstiphout 2003:59

[145] Vanstiphout 2003:153

[146] Nissen 2002:7

[147] Stein 1999:86

[148] Jacobsen 1987:312

[149] Jacobsen 1987:283,284

[150] Westenholz 1983:335

[151] Vanstiphout 2003:67

[152] As discussed earlier, this dynasty is listed in the *Sumerian King List* as part of the "first" dynasty of Kish.



[153] George 2003:10; Shaffer 1983:310

[154] Charvát 1993:192

[155] Green 1994:256

[156] Jacobsen 1987:46

[157] Wilson 1979:66

[158] Leick 2001:55

[159] In his inscriptions, this king, calling himself “Lugal (king) of Kish”, writes his name as Mebaragesi. The “En” (“Lord”) in front of his name was a later Sumerian addition. Dating his reign is not easy as a gap exists in the available cuneiform data between the Jemdet Nasr Period and the ED III Period (Sallaberger & Schrakamp 2015:56-61). Although one of his inscriptions was found in ED II context (from the Sin temple, level VIII, at Khafajah and which is nowadays regarded as belonging to ED I (Frayne 2010:40)), this obviously does not imply that he in actual fact lived during this time. This simply places a lower time limit on his reign. In my view, Mebaragesi ruled (like Gilgamesh) earlier during the Jemdet Nasr Period, when this onomastic name type was quite common (Michalowski 2003:201).

A small plaque of black stone bearing a bas-relief and dating from the Uruk-Jemdet Nasr Period, was found at Kish. It shows a portrayal of what had been interpreted by Petr Charvát as a royal anointing, a portrayal which might be a depiction of Mebaragesi being anointed as king of Kish (Charvát 2010).

[160] Crawford 1977:11

[161] George 2003:543

[162] Katz 1993:10

[163] Katz 1993:45

[164] Tigay 1982:141

[165] Leick 2001:38. The tradition that Gilgamesh had built these walls is consistent with my new ancient Middle Eastern chronological model (McLoud 2019), dating these walls to c. 2800 BC during the Jemdet Nasr Period, a date which falls within the range of dates historically associated with the reign of Gilgamesh (somewhere between 2800 BC and 2600 BC). In the currently popular chronological model, based on dendrochronology, the Jemdet Nasr Period is dated to 3100-2900 BC, too early for Gilgamesh to have been the builder of these walls.

[166] Jacobsen 1970:145

[167] Roberts 1972:117

- [168] Wiggermann 1992:76
- [169] Hallo 1992:390
- [170] Wilson 1979:45; Lewy & Lewy 1968:5; Wiggermann 1992:74
- [171] Vanstiphout 2003:121; George 2003:814; Heimpel 1986:142
- [172] Wiggerman 1994:226
- [173] Akkadian or Semitic words are usually written in italics whereas normal fonts are used for Sumerian ones.
- [174] Wiggermann 1992:169
- [175] Thompson 1908:49; Wiggermann: 1992:171
- [176] Wiggermann 1992:169-171
- [177] Wiggermann 1992:185/7; Wiggerman 1994:225
- [178] Matthews 1993:21
- [179] Wiggermann 1992:169-171
- [180] Wiggermann 1992:171
- [181] Reiner 1961:10
- [182] In later tradition, Adapa was closely associated with the god, Enki.
- [183] Reiner 1961:7
- [184] Richard Averbeck (2002:93) writes: “[Sumer] for all practical purposes lies within and, in fact, chronologically and literary, at the beginning of the historical stream of biblical Israel.” One explanation for the close agreement between the Sumerian and biblical tradition, presented in the Mesopotamian material in the first part of the *Book of Genesis*, is that they were delivered in parallel among the two peoples, especially since this material shows no influence whatsoever from the Old Babylonian period or later periods in Mesopotamia (McLoud 2020b).
- [185] Rohl 1998:223
- [186] Jacobsen 1939:60
- [187] David Rohl has suggested that the word “kar”, which figures at the end of the name En-mer-kar, means “hunter”, in agreement with the biblical description of Nimrod having been a great hunter (Rohl 1998:215). In correspondence with the author, Rohl mentions that the Akkadian word for hunter or trapper is *habilum* (*habalu*; *khabbilu*) (see De Lafayette 2014:245), which can be written with the Sumerian logogram, KAR.
- [188] De Lafayette 2014
- [189] Genesis 10:7-8
- [190] Isaiah 45:14
- [191] Jacobsen 1939:73

[192] Kikawada & Quinn 1985:103

[193] Jacobsen 1987:290; also Kramer 1970:109. In Vanstiphout's translation (2003), the text is given exactly the opposite meaning, namely that all people would be able to speak to Enlil in one single language in their debates in such a way that "the speech of mankind shall be truly one". It is difficult to see how this translation of the text, where everybody would be able to understand one another in one "international language", namely Sumerian, could be realistically called a "spell" in the true sense of the word, i.e. "Nudimmud's [Enki's] spell". It would either be an illusion of epic proportions, which seems to be an extremely unlikely expectation, or it would be a mere fact of life once everyone had learnt the new language. In my view, this translation reflects a contemporary perspective forced onto the text, a perspective found in the present-day European Union where everyone is able to understand one another.

[194] Jacobsen 1987:289

[195] Genesis 10:5, 31

[196] The close connection between Nudimmud's spell and the invention of phonetic language is supported by the fact that both are mentioned in the very same epic, *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, as part of the first and last challenges put to the Lord of Aratta by the messenger of King Enmerkar.

[197] Crawford 1991:182; Algaze 1986:16

[198] Leick 2001:17, 18

[199] Kramer 1970:103, 107. Some scholars, such as Peeter Espak, are very critical of Kramer's view. He nonetheless allows for the possibility that such a conflict could have had its origins in Enlil replacing Enki as head of the pantheon after the Uruk Period: "The possibility that Enlil was the later head of the pantheon and that he replaced Enki and Inanna (or another mother-goddesses) seems probable, although never provable due to a lack of written sources." (Espak 2010:231)

[200] I do not make a distinction between Enki of Eridu and Enki the partner of Ninkī. In my view, the latter is merely a more primitive version of the first.

[201] Espak 2011:53. "Tamarisk, unique tree, tree of heaven / its roots (are) in the earth / (they are?) Enki and Ninkī / from its branches / An, the priest (?) / to the holy quay stretches out (leads?)."

[202] Langdon 1932:16/7

[203] Horowitz 1998:43

[204] Sanders 2017:56. In one very late text from Seleucid Uruk it is said that Utuabzu, the sage of the seventh antediluvian ruler, Enmeduranki, ascended to heaven, which gave rise to the view that the figure of the biblical Enoch originated with either Utuabzu or Enmeduranki, a view criticised by Sanders (in this case, this motif was probably borrowed from the story of Adapa).

[205] My proposal is that the biblical Adam and the Sumerian Adapa, the first Sumerian sage, refer to one and the same character/person, remembered in “two branches of Near Eastern Civilization” (Andreasen 1981:194). This view is based on their corresponding names, which can both be interpreted as meaning “man” (Andreasen 1981:181-2), their particular place in history as the first known human, their portrayal as the “model of man” (Adapa; Ibid. 1981:188), their relationship with An/Enki as well as similar stories told about them, such as them not partaking of the “food of life”, amongst others. Enki, also portrayed as a serpent, misled Adapa regarding the “food of life”, which he declined when An offered it to him as he was under the wrong impression that it was actually the “food of death”. In the same way, Eve was misled by the snake with regards to the food of the so-called tree of knowledge of good and evil. The Adapa myth is consistent with my view on the conflict between An and Enki, although the antagonism between them takes on a more subtle form in this instance.

[206] Psalms 18:10-11

[207] 1 Kings 6:29-35, Ezekiel 41:18-25; Mettinger 1999, 190

[208] Genesis 2: 8-14

[209] In the Genesis account, we find interesting details about the location of the Garden of Eden. The “heads”, in other words headwaters, of four rivers, namely the Gihon, the Pishon, the Hiddekel (Tigris) and the Euphrates, are all located in the area of the Garden. This, by implication, means that the Garden must have been located in a mountainous region where these rivers originate and have their sources. As the headwaters of both the Tigris and the Euphrates are located in the areas of Lake Van and Lake Urmia, it can safely be surmised that the location of the Garden must also have been in that exact same area.

But what about the Gihon and the Pishon, the two remaining rivers mentioned in the *Book of Genesis*? It has been argued that the Gihon is in actual fact the Gaihun, the name of which had been changed to the Araxes after the Islamic invasion of the Caucasus. Lastly, the Pishon is the Uizhum.

The name Gaihun clearly corresponds with Gihon and the correspondence between the names Pishon and Uizhum can be explained as a typical P to U

change (Rohl 1998:54). The tributaries of the Gaihun rise in the mountains to the north of Lakes Van and Urmia and flow eastward into the Caspian Sea. The Uizhum originates from several springs and rises near Mount Sahand, east of Lake Urmia, as well as in parts of the Zagros Mountains near the present-day city of Sanandaj. It also flows eastward into the Caspian Sea (Rohl 1998).

Further correspondences also exist among other details given in the *Book of Genesis* and the geographical areas through which these rivers flow. The Gaihun, for example, flows through the Kusheh Dagh (Mountain of Kush), in agreement with the biblical reference to the “land of Kush”. It needs to be pointed out that the reference to “Ethiopia” in the King James Bible does not appear in the original text and merely constitutes an interpretation. Lastly, the Uizhum is also called the Kezel Uzun, meaning “dark red” or “gold”, which corresponds with the biblical land of Havilah, meaning “where there is gold” (Rohl 1998).

[210] Genesis 3:15

[211] See the god list SF 1 from Fara, OIP 99; 82, 1-9 from Abu Salabikh (Espak 2011:48). This list agrees with later Neo-Sumerian listings. There are also lists headed by Enlil, namely SF 5-6, SF 7 & SF 39 VII-VIII (Espak 2011:49).

[212] See the god list SF 23:1-22 from Fara, OIP 99:82, v.i. 1-24 from Abu Salabikh (Espak 2011:48). The pair, Enlil and Ninlil, appears directly under the pair, Enki and Ninki, in this list, which might reflect the Eridu clan’s claim about the superiority of Enki. This view gave rise to the idea that Enlil had Enki-Ninki and other similar En-Nin pairs as “ancestors”, which stands in conflict with the other tradition that Enlil was the son of An.

[213] Van Dijk 1976. Whereas Van Dijk postulates a contrast between nomads from Nippur and agricultural communities from Eridu, I would rather say that the contrast was between the northern Semites (with whom the worship of El/An and Enlil originated) and the southern Sumerians.

[214] Van Dijk 1976:12

[215] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:61

[216] The incorporation or assimilation of the worship of An into the Sumerian theology and religion during the time of Meskiagkasher can be compared to a similar development much later in Christian times when the worship of the Judeo-Christian God was sometimes incorporated and assimilated into the context of the religions of indigenous peoples with hybrid kinds of worship as a

result, where elements of ancestor worship were, for example, combined with the Christian faith.

[217] Lambert 1980:82

[218] Lambert 1980:83

[219] I understand the head of the Sumerian pantheon in terms of kingship (Bottéro 2001:47-53).

[220] Lambert 1980:83

[221] Jacobsen 1939:85

[222] George 2003:104

[223] In this reconstruction of events, Nippur became the religious and political centre of the land during the Jemdet Nasr Period, when various Sumerian city-states were united through the so-called Kengir League (Jacobsen 1970:139; Charvát 1993:284). In my view, it was sometime during this period that Enmebaragesi, who is credited with the building of Enlil's temple at Nippur, became overlord of Sumer. This is supported by the fact that Kish features prominently during this period (Nissen 1986:332, Matthews 1993:48). Enlil's royal Anzu, with its outstretched wings, is attested to from this time onwards (Matthews 1993:21).

[224] It is unclear when Enlil was first worshipped in ancient Sumer. He might have been worshipped by Semites long before the time of the Semite, Enmebaragesi. It may be argued that Enmebaragesi would not have been able to raise Enlil to the position of kingship over the gods (see below) if Enlil had not already been a well-known god, already worshipped for centuries in that ancient land, at the time. The scholar, Xianhua Wang (2011:59, 200, 223), suggests that Enlil became associated with Nippur sometime between the Late Uruk and Early Dynastic Periods, during the Jemdet Nasr Period. During the Fara Period (providing us with our very first longer texts), Enlil is associated with "kingship" (Wang 2011:245) and also as the god granting the king his scepter (Espak 2010:33).

[225] For an overview, see Feliu 2006; Wang 2011:12-22; Lisman 2013:121.

[226] Steinkeller 1999:114

[227] Jacobsen 1977:115; Michalowski 1996a:242

[228] Michalowski 1996a:242

[229] An Old Babylonian text, namely *The Death of Gilgamesh*, exists, in which Enlil is called "the Great Mountain, the father of gods" (the Nibru version,

segment E, line 12) but this should obviously not be taken in a comprehensive sense as in the case of An.

[230] In Edzard's analysis of the etymology of the name, the god, *I-li-lu*, does not seem to be the same as Enlil (Edzard 2003; Wang 2011:12-22).

[231] Englund 1998:75-76; Wang 2011:57-59. Wang has proposed that the earliest attested form of the name, Enlil, namely EN.KID, was at first used during the Jemdet Nasr Period with reference to the city of Nippur and not the god of Nippur (Enlil). The logogram, EN.KID (which was at first just an indivisible compound and only later reinterpreted as two signs), only obtained the reading, Illil, when it became identified with Illil, the god of Nippur. He writes: "I hypothesize that ENa+KIDa or ENx+KIDx was primarily the name of the site Niffar [the ruins of Nippur] and was close to /nibru/ [Nippur] in pronunciation, while later it obtained the reading /ellil/ or /illil/ when the same written form was taken to write the name of ENLIL as a deity." (Wang 2011:219) This means that in writing the name of the god, En.lil, the "En" in EN.KID was kept ('il, god, was now replaced by "en", lord), whereas KID was read as "lil" later in the third millennium BC. Originally, Illil might merely have been a pronunciation of 'il'il. In time, the name, Enlil, came into use for a god who was at first called Illil, which might have originated from 'il'il.

[232] I accept Michalowski's view about the formation of the name, Enlil, from Illil, as a duplication of 'il, without necessarily identifying this name with the Eblaite *i-li-lu*.

[233] Illil might have been viewed as a form of El by the Semites, sharing his essence, which will explain the Eblaite equation, Enlil=*I-li-lu* (see Chapter 23 for a similar view in Hebrew thinking).

[234] Wang 2011:134

[235] Ishme-Dagan E, Segment A, lines 10-19

[236] Ur-Ninurta B, lines 30-33

[237] In the *zà-mì* hymns from Abu Salabih, Enlil is the one allocating the domains to the Anunna (Lisman 2013:122).

[238] Matthews 1993:21; Wiggermann 1994a:225

[239] Wiggermann 1992:161

[240] Langdon 1932:45

[241] Sjöberg & Bergmann 1969:18

[242] Leick 2001:154

[243] Ezekiel 3:14 and so forth

- [244] Jude 14
- [245] Genesis 20:7
- [246] Deuteronomy 18:15; 34:10
- [247] Reiner 1961:4
- [248] Horowitz 1998:166
- [249] Sjöberg & Bergmann 1969:49
- [250] Burrows 1935:45, 62; Lambert 1985:199
- [251] Lewy & Lewy 1968:46
- [252] Horowitz 1998:144, 165; Van der Waerden 1949:16 and De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:234. See, for example, the Old Babylonian text, *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld* (line 16).
- [253] Burrows 1935:62
- [254] Van Der Waerden 1949:14
- [255] Romer 2010, Gudea statue, 15
- [256] Sjöberg & Bergmann 1969:100
- [257] Vanstiphout 2003:139, 163
- [258] Falkowitz 1983:105
- [259] Jacobsen 1976:95
- [260] One may conclude that the black-and-white checkered pattern which appears in the early iconography of the region, especially Susa, refers to this reed frame (Charvát 1993:206). Originally, the pattern had a round form, but it soon became a square (Hartner 1965:13). The round form might have represented the *primaeval* earth. The square reflects a progressive development in their thinking according to which the equinoxes and solstices, defining the four celestial or cardinal points located in the four cardinal directions, were regarded as the four “corners” of the earth. The two equinoxes and two solstices are easily observable as they correspond with the two days of the year when day and night are of equal length as well as with the (one) shortest and (one) longest day of the year. In the celestial sky the checkered square we today know as the Pegasus Square, was distinguished and marked out as the “1 Iku” constellation, which represented the Eridu (Apsu) temple (Hartner 1965:13; Horowitz 1998:345; De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:434/5).
- [261] The “four corners of the cosmos” are already mentioned in the *Kesh Temple Hymn*, in which the land ruled by Enlil is described in these terms (lines 1-7). In biblical tradition, these “four corners” are referred to as the “pillars of the earth” (Job 9:6) or the “pillars of heaven” (Job 26:11). In keeping with that which



“pillars” are and represent, these “corners” are very stable points, remaining within the same astronomical era for about 2200 years at a time.

[262] Lambert 1980:79

[263] Jacobsen 1976:98

[264] Wiggermann 1992:187

[265] Leick 2001:152

[266] Landsberger 1974:5

[267] Horowitz 1998:233-241; an.pa or *elât šamê*, the top of heaven.

[268] Mullen 1980:149

[269] Jacobsen 1970:138, 140; Jacobsen 1976:86; Lambert & Millard 1970:146

[270] Although the high priest took on the role of An in the sacred marriage rituals in accordance with the Sumerian theological concept of things, this was simply a re-enactment of the original myth according to which the seed of An fell on the earth. For that reason, the spirits, who were supposedly involved, were regarded as Anunnaki gods or sons of “An”. In the corresponding biblical tradition of the Nephilim, they were regarded as the “sons of God”.

[271] Jacobsen 1970:26

[272] Vanstiphout 2003:109; Alster 2005:66

[273] Wilson 1979:39

[274] Reiner 1995:86; Anthony 1995

[275] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:451

[276] Thompson 1908:20. The earliest mention of these seven demons is found in the Old Babylonian exorcistic incantations (Lisman 2013:152).

[277] Thompson 1903:71

[278] Vanstiphout 2003:129

[279] Vanstiphout 2003:131

[280] Vanstiphout 2003:127; Alster 2005:65

[281] Line 445

[282] Vanstiphout 2003:129

[283] Shaffer 1983:308; my accentuation.

[284] Jacobsen 1976:71

[285] Jacobsen 1976:26, 54

[286] Jacobsen 1976:35

[287] It is possible that this eightfold group, the “sons” of Lugalbanda, consisting of the seven young men and Dumuzi, survived in Phoenician tradition as the eight sons of Sydek, namely the seven Kabiri and Eshmun. In both cases, the

eight sons include a group of seven and another, the eighth, who corresponds with Dumuzi (in my view, the name Eshmun is derived from Isimud, the servant of Enki, remembered in Egypt as Min, a Dumuzi-like figure).

[288] George 2003:107

[289] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:451

[290] Jacobsen 1970:27

[291] Jacobsen 1976:26; Jacobsen 1970:27

[292] Jacobsen 1970:27

[293] Tappy 2001:215

[294] In his book, *A Slice of Time*, the dendrochronologist, M.G.L. Baillie, acknowledges that the master chronologies “are not 100% matches” and that the application of the technique is based on subjective judgement: “The practiced dendrochronologist is looking for matches that he/she is willing to accept, based on experience, as correct matches between long ring patterns.” In his review of this book, Ron Tappy wrote: “This subjective intuitive aspect of dendrochronology might easily fail to satisfy the tolerances and significance levels expected by statisticians... Recognition of this subjective human element and the inconclusiveness of many of the case studies introduced in the course of the book dampen somewhat one’s appreciation for the purportedly absolute precision of the science. Various factors, such as the loss of the outermost layers of unconsolidated sapwood from a collective sample, seem to compromise the accuracy of the overall method.” (Tappy 2001:215) Clearly, dendrochronology is not as “scientific” as is often assumed and as can be seen in practice. Sometimes the dendrochronologically derived at dates for samples from the same archaeological layer differ substantially. For example, the grain and charcoal samples taken under well controlled circumstances from the destruction signifying the end of layer 6 at Tell Brak (this is the period directly before the Naram-Sin palace) provided dates of 2030 BC and 2662 BC respectively (Oates 1985: 144). Archaeologists normally assign the reign of the Akkadian ruler, Naram-Sin, somewhere between these two dates.

Another good example is the dendrochronologically derived at date for samples from Uruk IVa. At first this archaeological layer was dated to 2815 BC but later “corrected” to 3450 BC. One possible explanation put forward for this massive difference, is that the first date was “uncalibrated” (Sallaberger & Schrakamp 2015:55). This, however, does not make sense since calibration is fundamental to all these calculations. Mention is also made of “re-evaluations” of samples

(Sallaberger & Schrakamp 2015:55). There can obviously be no question of “objective” dating when referring to dendrochronologically derived dates, where calibration is always dependant on subjective considerations.

This is the very same problem that plagues Egyptian New Kingdom chronology, where the chronology based on dendrochronological data from the Thera eruption stands in stark contrast to chronologies using standard archaeological techniques, astronomical data and king lists (Bietak 1996:76; Wiener 2007). In my view, chronological reconstructions that are too heavily dependent on dendrochronology do not sufficiently recognise this basic fact (see, for example, Sallaberger & Schrakamp 2015:6-7). Sallaberger and Schrakamp’s dendrochronologically based chronology, which contradicts the Mesopotamian high chronology, has, in fact, been proven wrong recently by the discovery of a cuneiform text from the Gulkišar Epic (McLoud 2020a).

[295] George 2003:106

[296] Tigay 1982:23

[297] Tigay 1982:153

[298] George 2003:71

[299] Charvát 1993:277; George 2003:71

[300] George 2003:74

[301] Jacobsen 1939:189

[302] George 2003:87

[303] The symbols, (d).GIS.BIL, that appear in the name Gilgamesh, as GIS:BIL:PAP, agree with the name, Gibil (George 2003:80). Expressions like GIS or BIL refer to logograms, i.e. words or phrases in the Sumerian language written with cuneiform symbols. A detailed discussion on this point is beyond the scope and purpose of this book.

[304] Tigay 1982:230

[305] George 2003:494, 275

[306] Katz 1993:10

[307] Katz 1993:45

[308] Jacobsen 1976:95

[309] Albright 1919:166

[310] Jacobsen 1976:235

[311] Vanstiphout 2003:141,143

[312] George 2003:125

[313] George 2003:125

- [314] George 2003:457
- [315] Tigay 1982:190
- [316] Katz 1993:21; Leick 2001:77
- [317] Leick 1994:65
- [318] George 2003:15, 53, 126
- [319] George 2003:898
- [320] Slansky 2007:53
- [321] Slanski 2007:44
- [322] Levy 1946:99, plate 9 e, f, g
- [323] Slanski 2007:44
- [324] Tigay 1982:153
- [325] George 2003:15
- [326] George 2003:128
- [327] George 2003:127
- [328] George 2003:134
- [329] Veldhuis 2001:142
- [330] Veldhuis 2001:146
- [331] Tigay 1982:187; George 2003:15, 53, 126
- [332] George 2003:133
- [333] Levy 1967:viii
- [334] Collins 1997:228
- [335] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:283
- [336] George 2003:61
- [337] Zaehner 1961:131/2
- [338] Collins 1997:119
- [339] Slanski 2007:41
- [340] Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:265
- [341] Lewy 1967:6
- [342] Lewy 1967:6
- [343] Storm 1999:131
- [344] Those Asuras, called Danavas, the sons of Danu (waters), who were led against the Devas by the serpent, Vritra, belong to a later layer of Hindu tradition than the Adityas. They correspond with the Anunna, followers of Tiamat, in the *Enuma Elish*. Vritra, the Ahi of the *Vedas*, was slain by Indra, like Tiamat was killed by Marduk. See the discussion in Chapter 18.

[345] The earliest epoch in which such “giants”, or u.gal, thus occur, according to tradition, is the Uruk Period. It is therefore quite interesting that J. R. R. Tolkien calls the strongest giantlike Orcs in his fictional epic tales, Uruk-hai or Uruks for short.

[346] See the relevant discussion in Chapter 5.

[347] In my view, the Devas and the Asuras are the Vedic equivalents of the Anunna and Igigi gods; not the Anunna who gathered in council on the cosmic mountain of the gods but those who belonged to a lower order of gods associated with the spirits of the dead Sumerian kings. In the pre-Old Babylonian Period, the Anunna and Igigi were gods of the heavenly sphere and the netherworld, respectively.

[348] Schuhmacher & Woerner 1999:410

[349] Zaehner 1961:132

[350] Zaehner 1961:136

[351] Zaehner 1961:136

[352] Lewy 1967:6

[353] Zaehner 1961:136

[354] Zaehner 1961:132

[355] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:373

[356] Zaehner 1961:125

[357] Charvát 1993:194

[358] Nissen 1986:329

[359] George 2003:527

[360] Lewy 1967:5

[361] Lewy 1967:6

[362] Schuhmacher & Woerner 1999:400

[363] Wiggermann 1994a:225. And the lahmu (see below).

[364] Woods 2009:189

[365] Wiggermann 1992:174

[366] Roberts 1972:117; George 2003:453

[367] Vanstiphout 2003:121; George 2003:814; Heimpel 1986:142

[368] Wiggerman 1992:185

[369] George 2003:545

[370] George 2003:146

[371] Horowitz 1998:304

[372] George 2003:462, 581

- [373] Horowitz 1998:124
- [374] Wiggermann 1992:188
- [375] Wiggermann 1994a:240
- [376] Reymond 1969:9
- [377] The various traditions about the first House of Uruk include all the main personages, from Meskiagkasher down to Gilgamesh. The same is true for the Egyptian version. Given that Gilgamesh had lived in the Jemdet Nasr Period (see Chapters 4 & 5), we have to assume that the influx of Sumerian influences into Egypt did not stop at the end of the Uruk Period but continued into the Jemdet Nasr Period, when many people left the land of Sumer for other destinations.
- [378] Reymond 1969:108
- [379] Reymond 1969:44, 46
- [380] Reymond 1969:116
- [381] Reymond 1969:122
- [382] Jelinkova 1962:42; Reymond 1969:25, 33
- [383] Reymond 1969:284
- [384] Reymond 1969:167
- [385] Reymond 1969:149
- [386] Reymond 1969:136
- [387] Jelinkova 1962:41/5
- [388] Jelinkova 1962:41
- [389] Jelinkova 1962:51
- [390] Rice 1990:51
- [391] Reymond 1969:34
- [392] Reymond 1969:27
- [393] Reymond 1969:94, 218
- [394] Reymond 1969:23
- [395] Reymond 1969:113
- [396] Although *Heter-her* is sometimes mentioned as the father of the falcon-god, it seems to be a later addition based on the mythology of Horus, son of Osiris, dating from later on during the Old Kingdom Period. This is also in conflict with the order in which these gods are presented in the Edfu texts, namely the falcon-god who succeeded Tanen first and then *Heter-her*.
- [397] Reymond 1969:41,42
- [398] Jelinkova 1962:46
- [399] Reymond 1969:243

- [400] Reymond 1969:36
- [401] Reymond 1969:39
- [402] Reymond 1969:207
- [403] Rohl 1998:347
- [404] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:439
- [405] Epic of Ziusudra, Segment E 11
- [406] Vanstiphout 2003:129
- [407] The name, Shebtiw, reminds of the names of the “brothers” of Raamah (Lugalbanda), namely Sabtah and Sabtechah (apparently twin names, linked with Seba, meaning “seven”), in biblical tradition (Genesis 10:7).
- [408] Finkel & Geller 1997:37
- [409] Holmberg 1946:118
- [410] In my view, the Horus falcon originally referred to the *Pn*-god in his spirit form, whereas the shining glory of that god was later identified with the sun god, Re. In the same way the Horus-falcon and the sun god, Re, came to be identified in the Egyptian tradition as Horus-Re, we find in ancient Sumer that both the god, Ninurta, and the sun god, Utu, were identified with Gilgamesh as he was regarded as an incarnation of the messianic child (George 2003:125).
- [411] For Horus, see Frankfort 1948:37.
- [412] George 2003:810
- [413] *The Histories* II, 44
- [414] Strabo, *Geography* 3.5.5-7. Strabo says: “[T]he men who were sent at a later period went on outside the strait [of Gibraltar], about fifteen hundred stadia, to an island sacred to Heracles... some are of the opinion that the capes at the strait are the Pillars; others, Gades; and others that they lie on ahead still farther outside the strait than Gades... Others say that it is the bronze pillars of eight cubits in the temple of Heracles in Gades, whereon is inscribed the expense incurred in the construction of the temple, that are called the Pillars... (and) that this is the end of both land and sea.” As Strabo also tells about tidal waves washing over the land at the Heracleium at the Phoenician city of Gades in great and intricate detail, it is fairly easy to see how the myth of a submerged land beyond the Pillars of Heracles could have taken hold and evolved.
- [415] *Antiquities* I:69-71
- [416] Frankfort 1951
- [417] Frankfort 1951:101; Kantor 1952:249; Rice 1994:169
- [418] Stieglitz 1984:135; Zarins 1996:97; Rohl 1998:266

- [419] O'Connor & Silverman 1995:103; Philip 2002:221
- [420] Philip 2002:215
- [421] Rohl 1998:324
- [422] Nissen 2002:8
- [423] Rohl 1998:323
- [424] Holmberg 1946:69
- [425] Te Velde 1967:45; 62
- [426] Nekhebet and Wadjet were goddesses and the female equivalents of the gods, Horus and Seth. In my view, Horus and Seth were originally the Egyptian counterparts of Ningirsu and Nergal. Since he had a cult centre at the Naqada necropolis, Seth might originally have been associated with the netherworld, like Nergal. Nergal became lord of the netherworld after marrying the snake-goddess, Ereskigal.
- [427] Bauval 1994:146, 298; Bauval & Hancock 1996:72
- [428] Bauval 2006:149
- [429] Bauval 2006:135
- [430] Jacobsen 1976:51
- [431] Geddes & Grosset 1997:58
- [432] Rohl 1998:323
- [433] My suggestion is that the name, Min, may have had its origin in the last part of the name of the Sumerian god, Isi-mud, servant of Enki. The name of his later Phoenician counterpart was Eshmun.
- [434] Frankfort 1948:188, 369
- [435] Frankfort 1948:189
- [436] Geddes & Grosset 1997:408
- [437] For the identification of Horus with the sun god during this period, see depictions of boats on Nakada II buffware, where the falcon replaces the sun disk on the crescent standard (Rohl 1998:328).
- [438] Rohl 1998:357
- [439] Frankfort 1948:95
- [440] Faulkner 1969:94, 135
- [441] Jacobsen 1976:98
- [442] This date is based on the New Year coinciding with the heliacal rising of Sirius.
- [443] Rohl 1998



[444] When taken in precise terms, the summer solstice of 2781 BC, in actual fact, only nearly coincided with the heliacal rising of Sirius (there was about a one day difference), but the Egyptians most probably took it as actually having coincided.

[445] O'Neil 1976:70

[446] At Memphis. The heliacal rising of Sirius every  $365 \frac{1}{4}$  days agrees with the Julian calendar which is why the date of its rising stays the same in this calendar when projected backwards.

[447] O'Neil 1976

[448] O'Mara 2003:21

[449] Armour 1986:62

[450] Armour 1986:61

[451] Armour 1986:61

[452] It may be suggested that the Phoenix perching on the pillar also has a celestial meaning. It would then correspond with the Sumerian Thunderbird (Draco) constellation "perching" above the northern polar star (the cosmic pillar). In such a case, the relevant polar stars, which correspond with the ben-ben stone, would represent the "seed" of the Phoenix.

[453] When the numbers 8 and 9 are combined and multiplied with each other, the result is the number 72. The number 72 is the most important number in precession.

[454] Leick 2001:96; Westenholz 1997:1; Michalowski 1993:69

[455] Leick 2001:85

[456] Michalowski 1993:69

[457] Leick 2001:86

[458] Westenholz 1978:110

[459] Izre'el 1996:85

[460] Westenholz 1983:327/8

[461] Westenholz 1997:57-8

[462] Leick 2001:93

[463] Lewis 1980:273. Some scholars regard this as a late composition, dating from the first millennium BC (Foster 2016). In contrast, I am of the opinion that it goes back to Akkadian times. I will argue (see Chapters 14 & 15) that the identification of the imperial dynasty with Dumuzi was an authentic motif used during the Akkadian Period, also found in one of the poems of Sargon's daughter, Enheduanna.

- [464] Jacobsen 1939:145
- [465] Lewis 1980:25
- [466] Lewis 1980:42
- [467] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:6
- [468] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:84
- [469] Jacobsen 1970:24
- [470] Jacobsen 1976:71
- [471] McEwan 1980:10
- [472] Jacobsen 1939:160
- [473] Alster 1987:171
- [474] Frayne 1993:7
- [475] Hallo & Simpson 1971:57
- [476] Edwards 1971:422
- [477] Jacobsen 1939:111
- [478] Jacobsen 1978/9:1
- [479] Wall-Romana 1990:205, 243
- [480] Lewis 1980:139, 141
- [481] Westenholz 1997:78
- [482] Frayne 1993:11
- [483] Westenholz 1997:143
- [484] Frayne 1993:139
- [485] Roberts 1972:147
- [486] Cooper 1983:53
- [487] Scholars have proposed that Dagan's name had been derived from the Semitic root "dgn", meaning "to be cloudy, rainy". This is consistent with his spouse having been called Salas, in later tradition the spouse of the storm god, Adad (Roberts 1972:19). During the Old Assyrian and Old Babylonian Periods, Dagan was the principal god of the Middle Euphrates region whereas Adad was the principal god of the regions further to the west (Archi 2004:323). Although the name, Dagan, was a homophone of the word for grain ("spn") and having been reflected in writing as such, it does not mean that he was an agrarian god (Archi 2004:331). In fact, as "Lord of the land" (northwestern Mesopotamia) he was sometimes equated with Enlil, king of the gods in southern Mesopotamia, who also possessed the characteristics of a weather god (Archi 2004:331).
- [488] Frayne 1993:29
- [489] Astour 2002:70

[490] Horowitz 1998:92

[491] Malamat 1975:366; Edwards 1971:425. Some scholars call the value of this omen tradition into question (Foster 2016). I have, however, shown that this date in the omen tradition allows for a remarkable alignment between Akkadian and Egyptian history (McLoud 2019).

[492] Westenholz 1997:75, 83

[493] Jacobsen 1987:330

[494] Alster & Oshima 2007:11

[495] Orlin 1970:226

[496] Westenholz 1997:313, 314

[497] Alster & Oshima 2007:10

[498] Westenholz 2007:23

[499] Lewis 1980:138

[500] Bryce 1982:55, 99

[501] It needs to be pointed out that I do not focus on archaeology in this book. The problem with archaeology is that it is not an empirical science in the true sense of the word (see below). Scholars always interpret archaeological data differently.

It is also worth mentioning that disputes almost always arise as to whether the evidence supports the presence or not of foreigners in distant regions. The reason for this is that the presence even of large communities of foreigners—such as the Old Assyrian merchant communities in Anatolia—is not always “visible” in the material culture (Wiener 1984:17, 26). Although claims only appearing in later and more recent traditions are not generally taken seriously by scholars, some have argued that the evidence supports the basic thrust of these Sargonic legends (Özgüç 1986:43-45; Malamat 1975:366).

On a more technical note, one may ask why archaeology is not an empirical science. Although archaeologists work with empirical data, the context in which data is found merely constitutes the “excavated reality”, not the *historical* reality. Although the artefacts found in excavations belong to the historical world where they originated and in which they were produced, the context of their appearance only reflects the excavated situation. Whereas all empirical sciences work with an existing reality to which theoretical models are applied, the existing reality that archaeologists encounter in their excavations is not the historical reality they are trying to reconstruct. The process of time has destroyed the historical reality that once existed. Even in cases where a city was

suddenly destroyed and the artefacts are well preserved (as in the case of Pompey), the archaeological record is incomplete.

All archaeological records are statistically *incomplete* (under-represented) due to the fact that there is an indeterminable gap between the excavated reality and the historical reality. Even when a certain hypothesis (theoretical model) agrees with the “excavated reality”, there is absolutely no basis on which it can be taken to also conform to the historical reality. The problem is not only that our representations of reality always fall short of reality itself, which may result in various interpretations about the nature of reality (as we find in the empirical sciences), the problem is also that the representations that archaeologists work with are that of “excavated” reality, which is forever disconnected from historical reality (despite the fact that the excavated artefacts obviously belong to the historical reality). Even though we find a distantly similar situation in quantum physics, where the representative outcomes stand removed from the pre-measurement quantum states (existing reality), we do, in that case, find that the statistics of outcomes can be accurately determined.

Regardless of how carefully archaeologists prepare their digs, using all kinds of techniques to establish a good definition of the excavation, the data can never be considered as “evidence” in the same way and in the same sense as experiments done in the natural sciences or controlled studies in the social sciences. The reason is that there is absolutely no way in which archaeologists can determine to what extent their data is representative of the historical reality. One can never know if the accessible data is a statistically representative sample or not. In most cases, it is obviously not. This is the reason why a lack of archaeological evidence can, *ex silentio*, never be taken as proof that there is no evidence when compared with information in historical texts.

[502] Yener 2000:116

[503] Alster & Oshima 2007:10

[504] Frayne 1993:29

[505] Potts 1982:280

[506] Possehl 1996:138

[507] Glassner 1996:235/6

[508] Possehl 1996:147

[509] Possehl 1996:133, 187

[510] Jacobsen 1960:184

[511] Oppenheim 1954:15

[512] Albright 1965:85

[513] Cleuziou 1986:148

[514] Possehl 1996:145

[515] Makkan was also known for its diorite, used to make statues of the Akkadian Emperor, Naram-Sin. This in itself poses a problem for the view that Makkan refers to Oman as the Oman diorite deposits could not have provided large enough blocks for the carving of statues. For this reason, it has been suggested that Makkan included the Makuran coast (the southern parts of present-day Iran and Pakistan), across the Strait of Hormuz (Possehl 1996:136). The problem with this extended view is the fact that another Akkadian Emperor, Manishtushu, who obtained his diorite from the Makuran coast, never referred to this area as Makkan (Frayne 1993:76). In one of his inscriptions this area is, in fact, associated with Meluhha (Possehl 1996:141), which corresponds with the fact that archaeological evidence shows that the Makuran coast belonged to the Meluhha cultural sphere (as did Oman) (Dales 1962:5; Vogt 1996:110, 119).

[516] McCloud 2019; Michaux-Colombot 2019

[517] Horowitz 1998:73

[518] Westenholz 1997:43

[519] Westenholz 1997:99

[520] Westenholz 1997:97

[521] Westenholz 1997:99

[522] Nigro 1998:87

[523] Although other kings, such as Alexander the Great, conquered much larger areas and geographical regions, it must be remembered that the ancient world was much less integrated and much less accessible in the time of the Akkadian rulers than in later periods.

[524] According to the *Ur III Sumerian King List* (Steinkeller 2003:278). The well-known *Sumerian King List* places Rimus's rule before that of Manishtushu's.

[525] Westenholz 1983:331

[526] Although the title "Emperor" originated with the Romans, the Akkadian priest-kings possessed all the characteristics of the great Roman Emperors, allowing for the retrospective use of this title for them.

[527] Frayne 1993:128

[528] Westenholz 1997:244

[529] Frayne 1993:130

[530] Frayne 1993:131

[531] The ancient Mesopotamians held the view that a world ocean surrounded the world (see Chapter 16). This explains how Naram-Sin, after his victory over Apisal in the north of Mesopotamia, continued to Makkan located in the “midst” of the Sea before arriving in the Lower Sea. Here the “midst” of the Sea refers to Egypt’s location between the Upper and Lower Seas (the Mediterranean Sea and Persian Gulf) on a sea voyage around the Mesopotamian world.

[532] Frayne 1993:97. A similarly worded inscription, not mentioned by Frayne (1993), is ascribed to Sargon by Wilcke (1997): “(Sargon) crossed and defeated Makkan in the middle of the Lower Sea.” The close agreement in the wording suggests that this is merely a distorted version of Naram-Sin’s Makkan inscription.

[533] Potts 1986:278

[534] Frayne 1993:117

[535] Frayne 1993:163

[536] King Su-Sin of the Ur III dynasty also refers to Magan in a list of vassal states, where it is mentioned last in the list after various lands in northern Mesopotamia (Astour 2002:101).

[537] Frayne 1993:108

[538] Hallo & Simpson 1971:23

[539] Hallo & Simpson 1971:61. Although this title is also given to Sargon in his birth legend, it seems that this was done retrospectively.

[540] Frayne 1993:114

[541] Tinney 1995:7

[542] Lewis 1980:36

[543] Frayne 1993:206

[544] Frayne 1993:88; Roberts 1972:147

[545] Roberts 1972:147

[546] Horowitz 1998:82

[547] There has been much debate surrounding the dating of the destruction of Ebla during the Akkadian Period. Does the archaeological evidence support the destruction of Ebla during the reign of Sargon or during the reign of Naram-Sin? Paolo Matthiae, the archaeologist who excavated the ruins, dated the palace on stylistic grounds to the time of Naram-Sin (Matthiae 1977:92, 159). The excavated Ebla archives, however, belong to an earlier period, leading some scholars to argue that the destruction took place earlier and was done by the people of Mari (Archi and Biga 2003:13). Sargon also claimed to have subdued

Ebla (see the quote in the main text; E2.1.1.11 in Frayne 1993). Here, it should be taken into account that archaeological remains only provide an incomplete picture of the time and the events they originate from. As such, the Ebla archive might not represent the royal library (Michalowski 1985:293-302). In my view, Naram-Sin would not have boasted of such a great and outstanding victory nor would he have taken the title “Smiter of Armanum and Ebla” if he was not in fact the one responsible for the destruction of Ebla.

[548] Frayne 1993:136

[549] Frayne 1993:134

[550] Michalowski 1993:83

[551] Frayne 1993:131

[552] Jacobsen 1978/9:13; Westenholz 1997:241

[553] Westenholz 2004:10

[554] Westenholz 2004:10

[555] Mallowan 1947:63; Oates et al 2007a:586

[556] Oates et al 2007b:391

[557] Lawler 2008:49

[558] Buccellati & Kelly-Buccellati 2002:13

[559] Sallaberger 2007:427

[560] Frayne 1993:143

[561] Frayne 1993:87; Westenholz 1997:443

[562] Anubanini might be from a later period than Naram-Sin. Based on the inscription on the Anubanini rock relief, Douglas Frayne (1993:704) suggests that he lived later, during the early Isin-Larsa Period, after the fall of the Ur III Empire.

[563] Edwards 1971:443

[564] Baker 2001:85

[565] Westenholz 1997:223

[566] Westenholz 1997:183

[567] Cooper 1983:59

[568] Westenholz 1997:222, 248

[569] Westenholz 1997:255

[570] Westenholz 1997:330

[571] Westenholz 1997:294

[572] Archaeological evidence of large-scale destruction in the Anatolian heartland during the 23rd century BC, consistent with such an invading horde,

does, in fact, exist (Orlin 1970:231).

[573] Westenholz 1997:265

[574] Westenholz 1997:265

[575] Westenholz 1997:310

[576] Westenholz 1997:261

[577] Wiggermann 1992:155

[578] Westenholz 1997:311

[579] Westenholz 1997:315

[580] Westenholz 1997:319

[581] Westenholz 1997:327

[582] Frayne 1993:133

[583] Interestingly enough, the name, Isildur, means “devoted to the moon”, whereas the name, Naram-Sin, means “beloved of Sin”, with Sin being the moon god.

[584] Westenholz 1997:199

[585] Frayne 1993:133

[586] Westenholz 1997:199

[587] Chapter 8

[588] The Igigi were daemons of the netherworld at that time.

[589] In later times, the seven gods became associated with Nergal (see Chapter 20, note 31).

[590] Wiggermann 1992:152

[591] Frankfort 1939:133

[592] Westenholz 1997:265

[593] Wiggermann 1997:35

[594] Jacobsen 1934:23

[595] Wiggermann 1992:159

[596] Wiggermann 1994a:229

[597] Wiggermann 1994a:228; Wiggermann 1994b:456

[598] Westenholz 1978:102

[599] Van Dijk 1969:543

[600] Boehmer 1965: no. 292

[601] Levy 1934:40

[602] Green 1994:458

[603] See Boehmer 1965: no. 351

[604] Wiggermann 1997:38, 36



[605] Genii were depicted in this way.

[606] Van Dijk 1969:540

[607] Sallaberger 2007:427

[608] Westenholz 1997:183

[609] Gelb 1950:196

[610] Gelb 1950:194

[611] Roberts 1972:30

[612] Roberts 1972:30

[613] Wiggermann 1997:35

[614] The ruler of the Arallu netherworld, Nergal-Erra, was also a dual god (at least since the post-Akkadian Period) for whom the names Meslam-taèa (Nergal) and Lugal-irra (Erra?) were used. They were twins, with Meslam-taèa belonging to the right-hand side (east) and Lugal-irra to the left-hand side (west). They were also depicted as a white raven (Meslam-taèa) and as a black raven (Lugal-irra). These ravens were regarded as protective spirits such as the udug and lama (Wiggermann 1992:143). In fact, the two snakes guarding the temple of Nergal at Kutha in *Erra and Naram-Sin* seem to represent these two protective spirits.

[615] Wiggermann 1997:39

[616] Buccellati & Kelly-Buccellati 2009:41, 62

[617] Kassian 2014

[618] Wiggermann 1994a:227; Collon 1982:68

[619] Collon 1982:68

[620] Porada 1960:119

[621] Frayne 1993:13, 94

[622] Zettler 2007:29

[623] Cooper 1983:27

[624] Westenholz 1997:203

[625] Boehmer 1965: no. 230

[626] Buccellati and Kelly-Buccellati 2002:15

[627] The use of the word “church” is not intended to suggest some connection with the later Christian church, but merely to stress the remarkable and striking similarities between them, similarities which go beyond those found in other cultic institutions. These include a messianic figure, regarded as divine during his own lifetime, as an incarnation of the divine in human form, who founded (in Naram-Sin’s case, with the help of his sister, Enheduanna) a cultic institution of

devote followers set aside for his own worship. Both had a massive impact on later religious history. In my view, these two institutions served opposing groups of divinities in the divine realm.

[628] Frayne 1993:35

[629] Frayne 1993:35, 38

[630] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:5

[631] Sjöberg & Bergmann 1969:5. Some scholars are sceptical about Enheduanna's authorship of these hymns (Black 2002).

[632] Jacobsen 1987:126

[633] Frayne 1981:47

[634] Hallo & Simpson 1971:59

[635] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:7

[636] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:10

[637] Sjöberg 1975:199

[638] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:15

[639] Sjöberg 1975:183, 187, 209

[640] Sjöberg 1975:193

[641] Sjöberg 1975:181

[642] Sjöberg & Bergmann 1969:47

[643] Sjöberg 1975:181

[644] Porada 1950:225; Frankfort 1939:130, 170

[645] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:49

[646] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:23. I have put emphasis on the parallelism.

[647] Hallo and Van Dijk assume that Enheduanna's enemy, Lugal-anne, introduced the changes to the rites. I agree that his action in banishing her led to the changes in the cult but in my view these changes, in light of the events that had a direct bearing on her cult, were in the final instance regarded as having been introduced by the goddess herself.

[648] Line 85

[649] Pritchard 1969:581, line 138

[650] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:62

[651] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:4, 5

[652] Line 10

[653] Lines 104-107

[654] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:23, lines 66-73

[655] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:82

- [656] Line 135
- [657] Line 141
- [658] Lines 9-10; 28-31; 34-37
- [659] Jacobsen 1970:27
- [660] Jacobsen 1976:61
- [661] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:54, 55
- [662] Lines 97-99. Kramer's translation given in brackets.
- [663] Jacobsen 1976:67
- [664] Line 141
- [665] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:330
- [666] Lines 143-5; 151-3
- [667] Lines 136-8
- [668] Lines 118-9
- [669] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:59
- [670] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:82
- [671] George 2003:463
- [672] George 2003:463
- [673] Hallo & Van Dijk are of the opinion that the birth giving refers to Enheduanna giving "birth" to the hymn.
- [674] Eliade 1964:363, 335, 34
- [675] Reisman 1973:187
- [676] Cooper 1983:55
- [677] Winstedt 1925:104; Aldhouse-Green 2005:13; Eliade 1964:351
- [678] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:57
- [679] Alster & Oshima 2007:10
- [680] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:25, 27, lines 74-80, 90-91
- [681] Kramer's translation, lines 107-8
- [682] Sjöberg 1975:187, 191
- [683] Leick 1994:160
- [684] Leick 1994:229
- [685] Sjöberg 1975:187, 191
- [686] Reisman 1973:187
- [687] Ellis 1977:75
- [688] Line 10
- [689] Lines 54-6
- [690] Boehmer 1965: no. 375

- [691] Sharlach 2007:69
- [692] Wilhelm 1962:42; Eliade 1964:34
- [693] Rouselle 1960:68, 99; Wilhelm 1962:30
- [694] The shamanistic experience of giving birth in the fire must have been widespread in the ancient Middle East because we have earlier also found it in the Egyptian tradition (see Chapter 10). We may assume that it formed an essential part of that experience.
- [695] In later Chinese tradition, the mystic cult also found an exact counterpart in the imperial cult (Rouselle 1960:70).
- [696] Lines 125-8
- [697] Frayne 1993:87
- [698] Lines 9-10; 28-31 in *Lady of all the me's*.
- [699] Boehmer 1965: no. 373
- [700] Boehmer 1965: no. 367
- [701] Boehmer 1965: plate 367
- [702] In Chapter 13.
- [703] Westenholz 1997:185
- [704] Ornan 2014:579
- [705] In Chapter 13.
- [706] Sjöberg 1975:193; Harris 1964:136
- [707] Harris 1964:115, 135
- [708] Wiggermann 2000:232
- [709] In some way, *Lamastu* reminds of the *Ugallu*, Big Weather-Beast, the head of which she is sometimes shown with (Wiggermann 2000:232). In iconographic depictions the *Ugallu* counted amongst Naram-Sin's defeated enemies. It was depicted with the head and ears of a lion, the claws of a bird and weapons in its hands (Wiggermann 1992:170). The talons of a bird it shares with *Lamastu* originated in the Akkadian Period. The difference is that the *Ugallu* was brought into cult context as a protector whereas *Lamastu* stayed outside as a demonic creature (Wiggermann 2000:246).
- [710] Wiggermann 2000:224
- [711] Frankfort 1939:115; Collon 1982:29, seal 213, plate xxxi; Boehner 1965: no. 381
- [712] Alster & Westenholz 1994:28
- [713] Frankfort 1934:13-14
- [714] Wiggermann 1987:23, 27

- [715] Wiggermann 1987:5
- [716] Moorey & Gurney 1973:75
- [717] Wiggermann 1987:23
- [718] Wiggermann 1987:27
- [719] Moorey & Gurney 1973:75
- [720] Wiggermann 1973:23
- [721] Ornan 2014:573
- [722] Moorey & Gurney 1973:76
- [723] Moorey 1995:74
- [724] Moorey & Gurney 1973:77
- [725] Frankfort 1939, plate XXIXm
- [726] Marinatos 2000:1
- [727] Wiggermann 1987:18
- [728] Wiggermann 1987:23
- [729] Von der Osten 1934
- [730] Frankfort 1939:254, figure 82
- [731] Lambert 2005:38
- [732] Frankfort 1939, figure 82
- [733] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:51
- [734] Wiggermann 1994a:237-9
- [735] In the eastern Hurrian tradition, Sauska was the consort of Tessub but in Alalakh and Hatti, where Hebat was his consort, she was his sister (Astour 1987:51).
- [736] In the Old Assyrian and Old Babylonian Periods, the storm god's symbolic animal changed from the winged lion to the bull. During that time, the naked lady was often associated with the bull or the storm god standing on a bull.
- [737] Beckman 1998:6
- [738] Beckman 1998:5
- [739] Westenholz 1997:119; Scarfi 1990:103; Green 1994:246
- [740] Malamat 1975:366
- [741] As a version of *The Great Revolt against Naram-Sin* was found there, scholars have proposed that the *kispum* ritual at Mari, during which offerings were brought to the statues of the Akkadian kings, included recitations of their great deeds (Bachvarova 2013:40).
- [742] George 2003:468
- [743] Alster & Oshima 2007:11

- [744] Alster & Oshima 2007:11
- [745] Part 1:5-6
- [746] Andersen 1986:177
- [747] Leick 1994:31
- [748] George 2003:520; Jacobsen 1987:183
- [749] Charvát 1993:208
- [750] Frifelt 1986:25; Bibby 1986:193
- [751] Lamberg-Karlovsky 1986:157
- [752] George 2003:525
- [753] George 2003:721
- [754] George 2003:4, 112, 119, 581
- [755] George 2003:94
- [756] Westenholz 1997:101
- [757] In *Sargon, the lion*, his opponent is accompanied by seven “strongmen”.
- [758] Westenholz 1997:101
- [759] George 2003:603; Westenholz 1997:78
- [760] *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, lines 227-235
- [761] Wilson 1979:80
- [762] George 2003:577
- [763] George 2003:478
- [764] The Amanus Mountains.
- [765] Lambert 1987:43
- [766] Westenholz 2007:25
- [767] Wiggermann 1987:26
- [768] George 2003:263
- [769] Alster & Oshima 2007:10; George 2003:468
- [770] Horowitz 1998:98
- [771] Horowitz 1998:100; George 2003:495
- [772] Horowitz 1998:98
- [773] Horowitz 1998:33
- [774] Westenholz 1997:69
- [775] Rice 1994:170
- [776] Westenholz 1997:43
- [777] Lewis 1980:64
- [778] Michaux-Colomot 2019:134
- [779] Nibbi 1975:18

- [780] Woods 2009:195
- [781] Horowitz 1998:60; Frankfort 1939:137
- [782] Wiggermann 1996:209.
- [783] Horowitz 1998:21, 27
- [784] In the legends about the Great Revolt against Naram-Sin, the enemy hordes are described as moving around the entire Mesopotamian world. They set about in Purushanda, with some of their leaders coming from the distant Naga areas (see Westenholz 1997:255). They then journeyed past Lake Van and Lake Urmia and around the Mesopotamian world to eventually reach Dilmun, Makkan and Meluhha. On the one hand, these enemy hordes were strongly associated with the sea as Tiamat (Sea) was their mother. On the other hand, we find that they were—insofar as they were associated with the Guteans—described as “snakes from the mountains” (Cooper 1983:31). It may be proposed that the ancient concept of a sea-serpent encircling the world (Horowitz 1998:23) had its origin in these myths. In Indian myths, this snake is the “nâga” serpent, Vasuki (Storm 1999:144).
- [785] George 2003:510, 705
- [786] George 2003:589, 689
- [787] George 2003:468
- [788] George 2003:522
- [789] George 2003:599, 567
- [790] Jacobsen 1939:76
- [791] George 2003:603; Westenholz 1997:78
- [792] George 2003:271
- [793] George 2003:613
- [794] George 2003:721
- [795] Chapter 8
- [796] George 2003:545
- [797] The hairy figure is often shown with a vase from which water flows, in the same way the daughters of An are portrayed with pitchers drawing water from the rivers or the ocean.
- [798] Tigay 1982:89
- [799] Iconographical depictions of a hairy shown with a bison-man do exist, the latter representing the priestly caste to which Gilgamesh as priestly (“en”) ruler belonged.
- [800] Wiggermann 1992:165

[801] In J. R. R. Tolkien's legendarium, the Dúnedain are descended from both elves and humans. They are descended from Elros, the son of Eärendil and Elwin, both of half elven descent. Eärendil is descended from Tuor (a mortal man) and Idril (an elven princess), whereas Elwin is the granddaughter of Beren (a mortal man) and Lúthien (an elven princess). What is quite fascinating is that Lúthien is not only of elven descent, she is also descended from the lesser gods, called the Maia. Her father is the elven king, Thingol of Doriath, and her mother is Melian, a Maia. This means that this most noble lineage are scions of the gods, and therefore Nephilim. In this case, however, Melian is not a fallen god/angel. Tolkien's noblest of dynasties are therefore descended from angels but angels not considered to be fallen.

[802] Hansman 1976:34

[803] George 2003:146

[804] Hansman 1969:34

[805] Hansman 1976:33

[806] Hansman 1969:34

[807] Cooper 1983:59

[808] Wiggermann 1992:146

[809] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:404

[810] Lambert 1987:45

[811] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:404

[812] Michalowski 1996b:2288

[813] Delnero 2016:10

[814] Wiggermann 1992:169

[815] Wiggermann 1992:188

[816] Wiggermann 1992:170

[817] Shaffer 1983:310

[818] It seems that the role of the lukur women was different during the Ur III period when they are said to have entered into marriage. Although the story might have been written within this context, I would rather suggest that the idea of marriage between Humbaba and the lukur maiden had its origin in companion orders established during the Akkadian Period.

[819] Harris 1964:115

[820] Gelb 1950:194

[821] One may suggest that the twin gods, Sullat and Hanis, as the gods of divination, represented two kinds of shamans in such contexts, namely eunuchs



(the *ugallu*) and pygmy warrior-shamans. The *ugallu* were originally associated with the Hurrians (when they joined the Akkadian cult they did so as eunuchs), whereas the pygmy warrior-shamans may have been associated with the warrior Order of the Thunderbird (which was joined by Lugalbanda). Both were warrior-shamans and they stand in contrast with the hairy-shamans associated with the female Dumuzi cult since early Sumerian times.

[822] Van der Osten 1934, figure 261

[823] Another underlying motif is the conflict between Enkidu, the servant of Enki, and Humbaba, the servant of Enlil. The conflict between Enki and Enlil, with the former coveting the position of the latter, constitutes a continuous theme throughout ancient Mesopotamian history.

[824] The mountain of the gods in the distant west, where Adad and Ishtar were worshipped, should be distinguished from the cosmic mountain of Enlil. The heroes returned from the western mountain of the gods to build a temple for Enlil (i.e. his holy mountain) in Sumer. In the *Gilgamesh Epic*, this western mountain is the mountain of sunset and stands in contrast with the mountain of sunrise. In contrast, the cosmic mountain of Enlil was identified with the zenith (*elât šamê*) of heaven (Horowitz 1998:239, 241; see Chapter 6). The depiction of Humbaba as a servant of Adad on his mountain might have been borrowed from an older tradition in which such figures, which would have been Anzu-beings, guarded the garden on the holy mountain where Enlil ruled. Sumerian tradition does, in fact, mention the role of the Anzu as guardian in the abode of Enlil. We find some correspondence in the biblical tradition of later times according to which the cherubim guarded the Garden of Eden.

[825] Sjöberg & Bergmann 1969:33

[826] Jacobsen 1987:406

[827] Jacobsen 1987:136

[828] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:136

[829] George 2003:497

[830] Rice 1990:87

[831] Rousselle 1968. In Chinese mysticism the “flying dragon” is distinguished from the “dragon in the abyss”. The first is identified with thunderstorms. Their association with the pearl, “the living germ of eternal life” (Roussell 1968:113), is a well-known motif.

[832] Wiggermann 1994b:460

[833] *Iraq I*: 1-29

- [834] Frankfort 1934:21
- [835] Horowitz 1998:111
- [836] Wilson 1979:34/6
- [837] In this instance, Apsu is the personification of the (sweet water) Deep.
- [838] Horowitz 1998:109
- [839] Jacobsen 1976:174
- [840] Frankfort 1934:22
- [841] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:444
- [842] Wilson 1979:37
- [843] Comte 1991:129
- [844] Jacobsen 1976:181
- [845] Horowitz 1998:8
- [846] Horowitz 1998:18, 272
- [847] Horowitz 1998:343
- [848] Durand 1993:43
- [849] Longman 1991:107
- [850] Wiggermann 1994b:461
- [851] This image also occurs in Endeduanna's writings, clearly showing its Akkadian origins.
- [852] Westenholz 1997:319
- [853] Roberts 1972:30
- [854] One may suggest that the temple mentioned in *Erra and Naram-Sin* was actually built for Naram-Sin and not for Nergal (in the way the text has been translated). This would correspond with the tradition that a temple was built for Naram-Sin after his victory in the Great Revolt. During the revolt, Nippur (the city of Enlil) joined the ranks of his opponents in accordance with this epic tale.
- [855] Frankfort 1939:131
- [856] In the Middle Babylonian Göttertypentext the logogram, GUD (bull), is associated with gods related to death or the netherworld (Watanabe 2002:31). The bull was also used as emblem by the priestly caste.
- [857] Hallo 1992:390; Hallo 1988:65
- [858] Wiggermann 1994a:243
- [859] Edzard 1980-83:447
- [860] Hallo 1992:389
- [861] Wiggermann 2000:235; Bayliss 1973:116
- [862] Edzard 1980-83:449; Thompson 1908:45

[863] The gods, Adad and Utu (Samas), were presented as a pair in the Old Babylonian Period. The dual god, Sullat and Hanis, is, for example, in this period identified with them (Gelb 1950:194). This stands in contrast with the way in which Sullat and Hanis appear in the Naram-Sin legends and even in the *Gilgamesh Epic*, where they are a divine pair who went before Adad—similar to Seris and Hurris in the Hurrian tradition (Roberts 1972:30).

[864] Wiggermann 1992:145

[865] Horowitz 1998:343

[866] Wiggermann 1992:171

[867] Winstedt 1925:8

[868] In the *Testament of Solomon*, Asmodeus is presented as a Nephilim: “I was born of angel’s seed by a daughter of man.” (xxi)

[869] Langton 1949:18, 31

[870] See Wiggermann 1994a:245

[871] Schuhmacher & Woerner 1999:285

[872] Westenholz 1997:99

[873] In the Persian tradition, the story of Faridun’s clash with Zahak was applied to the clash between Cyrus the Great, and Astyages, the last king of the Median Empire, who was identified with Zahak (Herodotus, *The Histories* 1.107-128; Zahak is called Azhdahak in Movses Khorenatsi’s *History of Armenia*). In line with my assessment that the story goes back to Sargon, we find that so many features belonging to King Sargon of Akkad had been applied to Cyrus that Robert Drews (1974:390) writes the following in an article: “[I]n Mesopotamian folk tradition the entire story of Sargon was transferred to Cyrus by the late fifth century [BC].” Correspondences between the stories of Sargon and Cyrus include them being abandoned by their parents, brought up as gardeners, becoming cup bearers to the reigning king and eventually becoming great kings themselves.

[874] Collins 1997:190

[875] Ingersoll 1928:36

[876] Levy 1967:9

[877] Levy 1967:9

[878] The story about the child in the basket was told about another Karna in the Sanskrit epic, *Mahabhdrata*. In this case, his mother was the princess, Pritha, beloved of the sun god, Surya. She bore Surya a child in secret and placed him in a trunk in the River Ganges, which took him to the land of Anga where a

woman, wife of a charioteer, saved him from the water. Karna became a great warrior and was later crowned king of Anga by the Kaurava warriors. One may suggest that this is a later version of the *Sargon birth legend*, with Anga being a reference to Agade (instead of Bengal). The context is the conflict between two clans, namely the Kauravas and Pandavas, which might have had its origin with the Akkadians and the Sumerians.

[879] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:372

[880] Levy 1967:11

[881] Levy 1967:13

[882] Mount Damavand, the highest peak in Iran, forms part of the Alborz mountain range.

[883] Levy 1967:13

[884] Levy 1967:14

[885] Collins 1997:115

[886] Collins 1997:190

[887] Some scholars have proposed that Ashmedai goes back to the Persian archdemon, *Æshma-daeva*. Some support for this proposal does exist. In *Shayast ha-Shayast* (xviii.), *Æshma* is described as the “chief agent of the evil spirit [Ahriman]”, which agrees with Zahhak (Azhi Dahaka), the “son” of Angra Mainyu (the Middle Persian equivalent of Ahriman). *Æshma* is also, like Ashmedai, associated with building work. We read in the *Bundehish* (xxviii. 15-18): “There, wherever *Æshma* lays a foundation, many creatures perish.”

[888] The motif of the child in the basket is, surely not coincidentally, associated with one of the namesakes from our story, namely Karna (see note 8 above).

[889] Zaehner 1961:136

[890] It might seem strange that Mithra, who was a sun god, corresponds with Marduk, a storm god. This is easily explained by the fact that the great deeds of Naram-Sin were originally ascribed to both the storm god, Tispak, and the sun god, Samas.

[891] Zaehner 1961:103

[892] Descended from the Devas.

[893] That was in the pre-Zoroastrian period.

[894] Zaehner 1961:109

[895] Comte 1991:132

[896] Zaehner 1961:139

[897] Eliade 2005:66

- [898] George 2003:457
- [899] Zaehner 1961:134
- [900] Schuhmacher & Woerner 1999:285
- [901] Schuhmacher & Woerner 1999:285/8
- [902] Comte 1991:175
- [903] Storm 1999:152
- [904] Schuhmacher & Woerner 1999:288
- [905] Storm 1999:153
- [906] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:265
- [907] See Chapter 16, note 40.
- [908] This portrayal of Naram-Sin's enemies is found in the Tispak myths. In some of the Naram-Sin legends, the Gutium belong to the invading hordes; they were also described as "snakes" (Cooper 1983:31).
- [909] Rama used a weapon called Garudrastra, a name which combines the words for weapon (astra) and Garuda, the mighty bird and enemy of all snakes. Garuda is simply another version of the Sumerian Anzu. As such, this weapon corresponds with the Sar.ur weapon in Marduk's (and Ninurta's) hand, the "flood storm [depicted as an Anzu] of battle" (Jacobsen 1987:237). The name Sar.ur means "the one who lays low multitudes".
- [910] Storm 2007:127
- [911] Schuhmacher & Woerner 1999:126
- [912] Zaehner 1961:103
- [913] Schuhmacher & Woerner 1999:154
- [914] Storm 2007:128
- [915] Comte 1991:110
- [916] Comte 1991:110
- [917] Zaehner 1961:103
- [918] Schuhmacher & Woerner 1999:154
- [919] Comte 1991:93
- [920] Winstedt 1925:11
- [921] Blacker & Loewe 1975:130
- [922] Hopkins 1969:150; *Ramayana* 2, 91, 13. Indra was later included into the list of protectors.
- [923] Storm 1999:126, 118.
- [924] Schuhmacher & Woerner 1999:422
- [925] Storm 1999:170

[926] Storm 1999:170

[927] Schuhmacher & Woerner 1999:222

[928] George 2003:599, 567. Interestingly, Humbaba was in later times depicted as a hairy (Lambert 1987:45), the hairies often being shown in groups of four, sometimes in a cosmic role guarding the four corners of the earth (Wiggermann 1996:209)—in the same way Kubera is shown as one of the four or eight guardians of the cardinal points.

[929] Leick 1991:84

[930] In what seems to have been a parallel tradition, we read in the Hindi epic, *Ramayana*, that the name, Kumbha, appears in the name of one of Ravana's brothers, namely Kumbhakarna, and that he also had a son, called Kumbha.

[931] Oppenheim 1954:15

[932] McLoud 2019

[933] Rohl 1998

[934] Zomer 2016, 2019; Boivin 2018:241

[935] McLoud 2020a

[936] See Chapter 6, note 48.

[937] Although I admit that the shafts are not perfectly straight and their alignments with the relevant stars are not precise, it is perfectly logical that we cannot expect modern precision for a monument of about 4500 years old! Realistically, we know that all ancient archaeoastronomical alignments involve a degree of error due to 1) the restricted measurement and building tools available at that time and 2) imperfections due to ageing. The point is that the agreement is good enough to assume an archaeoastronomical basis, especially taking into account that the relevant stars also play an important role in the Pyramid Texts. This is the reason why scholars, like I. E. S. Edwards (1981), had no problem accepting the utilisation of these shafts for archaeoastronomical dating. One may even assume that they have historically been used in establishing the traditional chronology as they are perfectly consistent with previous calculations of the orientation of the shafts, giving a date of about 150 years earlier than 2450 BC.

[938] Bauval 1994:107

[939] Spence 2000:320

[940] These dates can also be reconciled with the rest of Egyptian chronology through an observation of the heliacal rising of the star, Sirius, made in the seventh year of King Senusret III of the Twelfth Dynasty, which can be set at

1830 BC (this is based on the work of Rolf Krauss who assumed the observation was made at Elephantine). Using this date as the basis for an Egyptian chronology, K. A. Kitchen developed a so-called “low” chronology for the Twelfth Dynasty which commences in 1937 BC and ends in 1759 BC (Kitchen 1991:206; Ward 1992:63).

Using Kitchen’s low chronology as basis, we may proceed as follows to obtain the dates used in this book: The Eleventh Dynasty lasted for 143 years according to the Turin Royal Canon, which brings us to a date of c. 2080 BC for the beginning of that dynasty. The Tenth and Ninth Dynasties, located at Heracleopolis, co-existed with the Eleventh Dynasty based at Thebes (both the Heracleopolitan and Theban dynasties commenced in 2080 BC, but the first ended earlier). One may assume that the Eighth Dynasty lasted only for about 21 years. The Seventh and Sixth Dynasties together lasted for 181 years according to the Royal Canon. This provides a date of c. 2282 BC for the beginning of the Sixth Dynasty.

For the Fifth Dynasty, the Royal Canon lists nine kings of whom seven's reign lengths are preserved, giving 103 years (given consecutively as 7, 12, x, 7, x, 11, 8, 28, 30 years). The reign length of the sixth king, Nyuserre Ini, is only partially preserved and may be reconstructed as having been 11 years. Although a *Sed*-festival (held every thirty years) is represented in his sun-temple, this should (without additional evidence) not be taken seriously as there are indications that the kings of the Old Dynasty with shorter reigns also celebrated *Sed*-festivals (Smith 1971:185). Since the fourth and fifth kings of the dynasty, namely Shepseskare and Neferefre Isi, are currently thought to have ruled not much longer than 2–3 years in total, it is possible that the 7 year reign was mistakenly ascribed to Shepseskare (who only ruled for a mere few months) instead of Neferirkare Kakai who ruled directly before him. (Five cattle counts are ascribed to Neferirkare Kakai, which probably took place every year. Although the Palermo stone says that it was done every second year, this is in dispute, for example, in the case of Khufu. It was performed yearly by the time of Pepi I of the Sixth Dynasty.) This reconstruction gives a total of about 105 years for the Fifth Dynasty which then commenced at c. 2387 BC and which allows for a sensible correlation with the Akkadian chronology. Khufu’s reign started about 83 years earlier, c. 2470 BC.

The decision to apply the Turin Royal Canon in order to extend Kitchen’s chronology backwards, was based on the following considerations: simplicity,

consistency (using the same set of data) as well as the fact that it provides the most extensive list of kings compiled by the ancient Egyptians available to us and which forms the basis for most chronological reconstructions before Ramesses II, especially for the period under consideration (the validity of the Manethonian tradition is currently in serious dispute; Ward 1992:54, 62).

[941] Nibbi 1975:16

[942] Nibbi 1975:131

[943] Cerny 1955:61

[944] Cerny 1955:14

[945] In my view and in accordance with the high chronology, Sargon rose to the throne c. 2370 BC. I also assume that Sargon conquered Egypt during his campaign to the Mediterranean Sea in the third year of his reign, namely c. 2368 BC. In my version of the Egyptian chronology given in another note above, this would have coincided with the end of the reign of Sahure (fl. c. 2380-2368 BC), the second king of the Fifth Dynasty, who ascended to the throne 7 years after the onset of the dynasty.

According to the *Sumerian King List*, Naram-Sin ascended the throne 80 years after the emergence of the Akkadian Empire, that is, in 2290 BC. In my view, Naram-Sin's victory over "Manium" of Egypt, which might have been a generic name for Egyptian rulers derived from "Meni", was in fact over Unas, the last king of the Fifth Dynasty (c. 2282 BC), in the eighth or early ninth year of his reign (if Sargon's reign is shortened to 40 years, in line with the older *King List* (*USKL*) from the Ur III Period, then this event fell later in Naram-Sin's reign; see Chapter 4, note 22).

This date is consistent with archaeological data from the destruction of the northern Syrian city of Ebla by Naram-Sin. The earliest date for this destruction would be during the reign of Pepi I, the third king of the Sixth Dynasty, in accordance with an alabaster vase bearing his titles found in the ruins. If we allow that Pepi I's two predecessors as kings of that dynasty ruled for about 14 years in total, then Naram-Sin would have conquered Ebla sometime after the 23rd year of his reign. This is consistent with the reconstruction of the events during his reign done by the scholar, Douglas Frayne. Although scholars often ascribe a reign of 37 years to Naram-Sin, the *Sumerian King List* accords him 56 years (or 54½ years in the older *King List* (*USKL*) from the Ur III Period; Steinkeller 2003:279).



[946] In Sallaberger & Schrakamp's reconstruction of events, they argue that Sargon defeated Lugalzagesi so as to become overlord of Mesopotamia sometime after his 18th regal year (2015:93). This would make it very unlikely that Sargon had travelled north to the Mediterranean as early as his third regal year. The problem with Sallaberger & Schrakamp's reconstruction, however, is that they make assumptions that seem very unlikely. They, for example, assume that an inscription from Nippur referring to the defeat of Akkad by King Enshakushana, an event that can be dated earlier than the rise of Lugalzagesi as overlord of Mesopotamia in his seventh regal year, happened while Sargon was king of the city. The problem is that the king of Akkad who was defeated is not named in the inscription. As it is reasonable to assume that Akkad existed even before Sargon made it his capital city and commenced with large scale building work, giving him the reputation as the builder of the city, it does not necessarily follow that Sargon was the defeated king referred to in the inscription. In fact, it seems extremely unlikely that such a defeat and slow progress and advance to become overlord of Mesopotamia (and a reign of no more than 22 years as overlord of Mesopotamia, in line with the *USKL* according him a reign of 40 years in total), could have led to Sargon being remembered as one of the greatest kings in Mesopotamian history, as the first living king to be depicted on a stele as a city god (see Chapter 11).

[947] Nibbi 1981:35

[948] Cerny 1955:42

[949] An important question is as to how these two chronologies, the Mesopotamian high chronology and the Egyptian low chronology, are to be reconciled for purposes of later centuries. The Old Babylonian Period (for purposes of which I use the high chronology) came to an end with the destruction of Babylon by the Hittite king, Mursili I, with Samsu-ditana (fl. c. 1681-1651 BC) as its last ruler. Significantly, the reign of this ruler can be correlated with other kings from that period. An epic in honour of the Sealand king, Gulkišar, tells how he did battle with Samsu-ditana (Zomer 2016), an aspect which would of consequence have made them contemporaries. According to the *Synchronistic King List*, Gulkišar was also a contemporary of the Old Assyrian king, Sarma-Adad I.

What is remarkable is the fact that Sarma-Adad's rule is indeed given as c. 1663-1652 BC in the Old Assyrian middle chronology (using the Nassouhi version of the Assyrian king list for Puzur-Assur III), which could be correlated

with the reigns of Samsu-ditana and Gulkišar according to the Old Babylonian high chronology. This results in a perfect match between the Old Babylonian high chronology and the Old Assyrian middle chronology! (McLoud 2020a) (We can use the Old Assyrian middle chronology together with the Old Babylonian high chronology due to a break of unknown length before the advent of the Adaside dynasty (c. 1700-745 BC), to which Sarma-Adad I belonged. This break allows us to use the high chronology for the earlier Old Assyrian dynasty of Samsi-Adad I, in line with us using it for the Old Babylonian dynasty of Hammurabi, ending with Samsu-ditana.) In the Egyptian low chronology, with the rule of Ahmose I, the first king of the New Kingdom, starting c. 1539 BC, we, furthermore, find that the eighth year of the rule of his descendant, Amenhotep II (fl. c. 1414-1388 BC), namely 1406 BC, coincided with the first year of the Babylonian king, Kara-Indas (Gautschy 2014), a contemporary of the Assyrian king, Aššūr-bēl-nīšēšu (fl. c. 1406-1399 BC in the Old Assyrian middle chronology). This provides a perfect match between the Old Assyrian middle chronology and the Egyptian low chronology for the New Kingdom Period (McLoud 2020a).

[950] Frankfort 1951:102

[951] Kitchen 1982:1198

[952] Anchor stones in front of the mastaba of Mereruka show a remarkable correspondence to similar ones from the same period at the Barbar temple (level II) on Bahrain (Mortensen 1986:184).

[953] Kitchen 1982:1199

[954] Nibbi 1981:51

[955] Rice 1986:204, 123

[956] Reymond 1969:113

[957] Nagel 1955:124

[958] Armour 1986:76

[959] At Afqa, a few kilometres inland from Byblos, the Greek goddess, Demeter, in time replaced Isis as the mother goddess of the cult.

[960] Armour 1986:83

[961] Armour 1986:84

[962] Armour 1986:78

[963] Geddes & Grosset 1997:47

[964] Armour 1986:102; Geddes & Grosset 1997:78

[965] Armour 1986:102

[966] The Heliopolis theology included Osiris as part of the Ogdoad, together with Isis, Seth and Nephthys, all of whom were considered to have been children of Geb and Nut (heaven and earth). This corresponds with the inclusion of Dumuzi as part of the eight gods born to Lugalbanda and Ninsun.

[967] Armour 1986:85

[968] The Egyptian constellation was called Sahu and included both Orion and the Hyades.

[969] Budge 2004:200

[970] Armour 1986:57

[971] L'Heureux 1979:92

[972] Gardiner 1918:222

[973] Gardiner 1918:222

[974] Nibbi 1981:34

[975] Cerny 1955:42/3

[976] Utterance 306. Archaeological evidence exists that bears witness to contact between Egypt and Sumer during the Akkadian Period (Porada 1960:121; Gilbert 1960:101). Not only is the alabaster vase that Naram-Sin inscribed with the words "booty of Makkan" distinctly similar to vases from the late Fifth and Sixth Dynasties (Edwards 1971:445), alabaster vases of Egyptian origin (from the Fifth and Sixth Dynastic Period) were also found at the Barbar temple in Bahrain (level IIa), which suggests that this contact came about by way of the sea route (Mortensen 1986:184).

[977] Herodotus, *Histories* 2.79; Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* 1.17

[978] Westenholz 1997:319

[979] Westenholz 1997:195. The poem does not mention which emblem or crest was depicted on the banner but we can assume that Naram-Sin's emblem must have been the Anzu.

[980] In the Egyptian version of our story, Horus was conceived and born to his widow mother, Isis, after the death of his father, Osiris. This would agree with Naram-Sin, the son of Sargon, being born to his widow mother after Sargon's death. The "son of the widow mother" became an important theme in later occult tradition.

[981] See Chapter 20.

[982] In the Pyramid Texts, Sopdu was identified with Sirius, the brightest star in the celestial skies, as we read that he is "Horus who is in Sothis (Sirius)". The

name, Sopdu, is simply the masculine form of Sopdet, the Egyptian name of the Greek Sothis (Sirius).

[983] In my view, Sopdu depicts the identification of the Akkadian Emperors, Sargon and Naram-Sin, with Ningirsu as Sirius. Only Horus-Sopdu, the son of Osiris, whom I identify with Naram-Sin, was, however, born from Sothis-Sirius. The birth from fire then only applies to Naram-Sin.

[984] Faulkner 1969:120, utt 366; Leick 1994:120, 244

[985] *The Histories* 2.73

[986] *Annals* VI, 28

[987] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:67

[988] McCloud 2019

[989] Nibbi 1981:30

[990] Sellers 1992:137

[991] Nibbi 1981:34

[992] Frankfort 1948:97; Baines 1985:35, 38

[993] Hallo 1992:390

[994] Nibbi 1981:105

[995] Richter 2012:108

[996] Reiner 1995:19

[997] Nibbi 1981:34

[998] Gilbert 1960:101

[999] See Boehmer 1965: no. 525

[1000] Costello 2010

[1001] Porter 2014:606

[1002] Although Egyptian fertility figures also wear tassels on girdles (as shown in Sahure's mortuary complex (Nibbi 1975:39)), these are different from the *ssmt* girdle worn by Sopdu, which was obviously not the typical Egyptian habit since it was identified with the *ssmt* land. Even though the tassels worn by the Egyptian fertility figures may be related to those worn by the Sumerian hairies (as they seem to be similar figures associated with the *primaeva* waters in both traditions), the tasselled girdle of Sopdu corresponds more particularly with the one worn by the Akkadian “royal hero”. This girdle might have been a variation of the one worn by the hairies, which originated in Akkadian times.

[1003] Gilbert 1960:95; Frankfort 1939:98

[1004] Romano 1989b:6

[1005] Raven 1987:9

[1006] Romano 1989a Vol 1:28

[1007] Romano 1989a Vol 1:26

[1008] Romano 1989b Vol 2:14

[1009] Dasen 1993:28

[1010] Romano 1980:41

[1011] Zarins 1986:234

[1012] Nibbi 1981: figure 14; Romano 1989b: figure 3

[1013] Wilson 1975:81

[1014] See Chapter 16.

[1015] Raven 1987:9

[1016] Alster & Oshima 2007:11

[1017] In later Mesopotamian tradition, the seven gods associated with the seven young men accompanying Lugalbanda, were regarded as twin groups of seven gods each who were associated with sunset and sunrise. We read: "These seven were born in the mountain of sunset, those seven grew in the mountain of sunrise... Warriors twice seven are they." (Lewy & Lewy 1968:18; Thompson 1908:56, 49) How would one explain this? We identified the seven gods with the star cluster of the Pleiades which was located towards sunrise during the vernal equinox in the Uruk Period. Somehow the seven gods also became associated with the mountain of sunset.

As we find the constellation of Scorpius at sunset when the star cluster of the Pleiades is found at sunrise (they were associated with the autumnal and vernal equinoxes), one may suggest that the twin groups of seven gods were identified with the twin stars, lambda and epsilon Scorpis. They were identified with Marduk's Sar.ur and Sar.gaz weapons (those of the "right hand"/sunrise and those of the "left hand"/sunset, respectively). As the seven gods were indeed described as a battle weapon this makes perfect sense. One may suggest that these twin groups of seven gods had their origin in the two groups of warriors accompanying Naram-Sin, namely those from the traditional warrior cult (identified with the seven gods) and those from the Erra cult (which might have been viewed as twins of the seven gods). In later tradition, we often read that the seven gods accompany the god, Nergal-Erra.

[1018] Nibbi 1981:33, 42

[1019] Schaeffer 1949:103

[1020] Schaeffer 1949:97; Bordreuil & Pardee 1993:70

[1021] Alster & Oshima 2007:15

- [1022] Kapelrud 1952:57
- [1023] Houwink ten Cate 1965:210
- [1024] Schaeffer 1949:89
- [1025] Cornelius 1994:144. If the horn is one of a pair, the same can be assumed about the plume, i.e. that the figure actually has two feathers on his head, just like Sopdu.
- [1026] Although Schaeffer identified this figure with Baal-Aleyn, other scholars who have made a careful study of the iconography of Baal identified it as a representation of royalty (Cornelius 1994:144).
- [1027] Schaeffer 1949:49, 55, 106/7
- [1028] Gernez 2012:119
- [1029] Schaeffer 1949:67; Gernez 2012:101
- [1030] Similar neck rings dating from the Bronze and Iron Periods were also found in central Europe, suggesting that there could be a connection. Presumably, some of these *porteurs des torques* were involved in mining activities and metallurgy in central Europe.
- [1031] Gernez 2012:121
- [1032] Schaeffer 1949:55
- [1033] Schaeffer 1949:109
- [1034] Ḫabiru could be anglicised as Khabiru.
- [1035] Greenberg 1955:16
- [1036] Cazelles 1991:275
- [1037] Greenberg 1955:65
- [1038] Cazelles 1991:276
- [1039] Mussell 1983:109
- [1040] Cazelles 1991:176
- [1041] Greenberg 1955:52
- [1042] Greenberg 1955:71, 72
- [1043] Astour 1959
- [1044] Greenberg 1955:87
- [1045] Greenberg 1955:42
- [1046] In my view, the Sa.gaz mentioned in the El-Amarna texts should not be confused with the Ḫabiru mentioned in these texts by Abdi-Heba of Jerusalem (the name Abdi-Heba means “Servant of Hebat”, the Hurrian goddess). His using of the name Ḫabiru stands in marked contrast with the reference to Sa.gaz in all the other letters—even though both groups are said to have been taking land

from the control of the Egyptian king (Waterhouse 2001:37). Although a person called Labaya, associated with the Sa.gaz, is mentioned in connection with the Ḫabiru in Abdi-Heba's letters (Greenberg 1955:74), this, in my view, does not necessarily mean that the Sa.gaz were identical to the Ḫabiru mentioned in Abdi-Heba's letters. Although Labaya, with the help of Sa.gaz mercenaries, captured a number of cities, we merely read that he (and his sons) gave land near Shechem to the Ḫabiru.

The Ḫabiru who, according to Abdi-Heba's letters, also "take the cities of the king" in central Canaan, might rather be the Hebrew people since these events follow about 40 to 60 years after their exodus from Egypt (c. 1406 BC) in the eighth year of King Amenhotep II (fl. c. 1414-1388 BC; using the Septuagint date for the exodus; McLoud 2020a; Gautschy 2014:154). In fact, a letter of Labaya in which he defends his actions before the Egyptian king, could be dated to the 32nd year of Amenhotep III (Waterhouse 2001:38), which would have been in 1346 BC (Gautschy 2014:154), sixty years after the exodus. The description in Abdi-Heba's letters is reminiscent of the biblical tradition according to which the king of Jerusalem was the leader of a coalition of kings who fought against the Hebrews after they entered the land of Canaan (Joshua 10). It is possible that the land near Šakmu (Shechem), which Labaya (and his sons) gave to the Ḫabiru (EA 289 & 287), might relate to Mount Gerizim, right above Shechem (Judges 9:6-7), where the Hebrews established their first sanctuary in the land of Canaan (Joshua 8:30-35).

The scholar, Joseph Blenkinsopp, has proposed that the alliance between Labaya and the Ḫabiru was similar to that of the Gibeonites and Israel (1972:32). Interestingly, the Septuagint preserves a tradition of Hurrians (whom I associate the Sa.gaz with) living at both Shechem (Genesis 34:2) and Gibeon (Joshua 9:7). Here, the name, Hivite, is replaced by Hurrian (Horite), suggesting that the use of Hivite in the Hebrew text of the Bible was due to a spelling error. Hurrian names are attested to at Shechem, Gezer, Hazor and Hebron during the 17th to the 16th centuries BC (Anbar & Na'aman 1986-7:10-11).

[\[1047\]](#) The Egyptian *pr.w* corresponds with the Ugaritic *'prm*, given as the equivalent of Sa.gaz (Greenberg 1955:53) and which clearly refers to the Ḫabiru of Akkadian and Hittite texts.

[\[1048\]](#) Greenberg 1955:56

[\[1049\]](#) Greenberg 1955:55

[\[1050\]](#) Greenberg 1955:57

[1051] Albright 1965:79

[1052] When speaking of the warriors of the right and left hands, the terms “right” and “left” have no cosmic significance; they were those warriors who guarded the eastern and western borders of the land, respectively. The weapons in Marduk’s right and left hands, namely the Sar.ur and Sar.gaz weapons, were identified in the celestial skies with two small stars in the constellation of Scorpius, namely lambda and epsilon Scorpii. They are therefore both associated with the mountain of sunset.

[1053] Speiser 1941:57

[1054] The Sumerian logograms in Sa.gaz were read phonetically (Greenberg 1955:89). One way to account for the change from the /r/ sound to the /g/ sound in Sa.ğ.gaz is to propose that the /r/ was pronounced (in some Hurrian or other dialects) as a voiced uvular /r/ sound, written as 𒊕 and corresponding with the /ğ/ sound (not to be confused with the Sumerian ĝ, where the acute grave is merely a notational convention). This proposal explains why, once the name, Sar.gaz, evolved into Sa.ğ.gaz or Sa.gaz, their unlawful activities such as raiding and plundering resulted in their name becoming synonymous with “highway robber”.

[1055] Sa.gaz appears in text KBo 3.20, a fragment of CTH 311 (Catalogue of the Hittites no. 311).

[1056] Greenberg 1955:76

[1057] Cazelles 1991:275; Sallaberger 2007:427

[1058] Schaeffer 1949:109

[1059] Albright 1941:20

[1060] See the discussion in Chapter 16.

[1061] George 2003:599, 567

[1062] Bes was also taken as patron by warriors. Depictions of Bes dwarfs had been found in the graves of Medjay warriors from Nubia during the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period (Romano 1989b: catalogue nos. 55, 59). This demonstrates a close connection between this dwarf god, also called “The Fighter”, and this warrior caste.

[1063] In the *Curse of Akkad*, dating from the Ur III Period, Enlil is depicted as the enemy of the Akkadians, at least from Naram-Sin’s time.

[1064] Gelb 1992:151

[1065] Eppihimer 2019:121-2

[1066] Eppihimer 2019:122



[1067] Durand 1985:147

[1068] Stol 2016:479.

[1069] Jonker 1995:52

[1070] Su-Sin was married to Tiamat-Basti, the daughter of the Hurrian king, Tishatal of Nineveh (Urkesh?) (Pongratz-Leisten 2015:67), who might also have claimed Akkadian descent (if he was also king of Urkesh). Su-Sin's daughter married a prince or king of Anshan, who might have been Girnamme, the first king of the Shimashki Dynasty in Elam, seeing that his ambassador had escorted her to Anshan (Leick 1988:62). If she was Girnamme's wife, then this dynasty, who ruled over Elam for about 300 years, might also have been of Sumerian descent.

Ibbi-Sin's daughter, Tukin-hatti-migr-isha, married the governor (king) of Zabshali, an extensive territory in the Zagros region, stretching from Anshan in the south to the Caspian Sea in the north, including part of the Shimashki Kingdom. The Shimashkis deposed Ibbi-Sin and took control of Ur (their descent from Su-Sin might have prompted a claim to the city). The Shimashki Dynasty was later replaced by the Sukkalmah Dynasty, descended from Shilhaha, a son of Ebarat, probably the ninth king of the Shimashki Dynasty, who ruled over Elam for another 400 years.

[1071] Some Isin-Larsa kings were also deified.

[1072] Sulgi was deified and regarded as divine from about his 20th regnal year.

[1073] Suter 2010:321

[1074] The Sumerians and Akkadians associated the "right hand" and "left hand" with east and west, respectively (with the orientation being that of a person looking north). The Amorites associated these expressions with south and north (with the orientation being that of a person looking east).

[1075] Durand 1993:47

[1076] Finkelstein 1966:117

[1077] Jonker 1995:53

[1078] The rich resources from the archives of Mari date from the beginning of the reign of Yasmah-Adad, son of Samsi-Adad I.

[1079] Charpin & Durand 1985:327-8

[1080] Jonker 1995:53

[1081] Durand 1998:107-9

[1082] Jonker 1995:53

[1083] Van Koppen 1997:425

- [1084] Lewy 1966:23. One of Mut-Ashkur's sons was Talmu-Sharri, also a Hurrian name.
- [1085] Finkelstein 1966:102; Albright 1968:79
- [1086] Schmidt 1991:128-130. The name, Tidanum, is also attested to at Ur.
- [1087] Dalley 2013:22
- [1088] See Chapter 8.
- [1089] Sjöberg & Bergmann 1969:18
- [1090] Adad was at first only associated with the sky. Only after Baal-Adad became king of the gods, did he reign in the heavenly sphere.
- [1091] George 2003:134
- [1092] Some scholars associate the name, *lamassu*, with the statues of deceased deified kings, such as those of Sargon and Naram-Sin (Schmidt 1991:51), but I believe that it refers to the genii of these kings as embodied in their statues.
- [1093] Wiggermann 1994a:243
- [1094] Wiggermann 1992:174
- [1095] Hallo 1992:398
- [1096] Schmidt 1994:31; Hallo 1992:395
- [1097] Schmidt 1991:21, 77. In this view the Semitic *maliku* corresponds with the Sumerian en.en.né.ne.
- [1098] Schmidt 1991:51, Text *Mari 12803*
- [1099] Bachvarova 2013:42
- [1100] Pongrads-Leisten 2015:70
- [1101] Archi 2013:6
- [1102] Bachvarova 2013:42
- [1103] Schmidt 1991:79-80
- [1104] The immortal inner man, in contrast with the natural man, is asexual.
- [1105] Eliade 2005:66
- [1106] Oppenheim 1954
- [1107] The pearl of immortality is nothing less than a very early version of the Holy Grail.
- [1108] The moon god, Sin, and sun god, Utu (Samas), as a pair, might have represented a similar idea to that of Adad and Utu. The moon and the sun were closely associated with the Semites and the Sumerians, respectively, both being associated with the two branches of Meskiagkasher's family. The symbol of the sun disk on top of the moon crescent appears in Sumer and in Egypt from the earliest times and might have reflected the idea of divine rebirth.

During the Ur III period, the great festivals held during the equinoxes were also celebrated on days when the moon's appearance in the sky were aligned in relation to that of the sun (Fischer 2002:129). This meant that the relation of the moon to the sun determined the calculation of the calendar—most probably also by aligning the moon calendar and the solar calendar in such a way that they were synchronised with each other.

[1109] Boehmer 1965: no. 718

[1110] Although these speculative ideas are not confirmed in ancient Mesopotamia, we do later find them in Greek tradition.

[1111] Collins 1997:190. What do we know about the early origins of the Medes? One theory, not widely accepted though, is that the Mitanni were “early Medes”. The Kingdom of Mitanni flourished in northwestern Mesopotamia from c. 1500 to 1240 BC. What may support this theory is the fact that the Mitanni were Hurrians, the very same people who were identified with the demonic invaders in the Naram-Sin epics! This may explain why the term, *Ummān-manda*, used for those invaders in *The Cuthean Legend*, was later applied to the Medes (Adali 2013:175). The elite among the Mitanni included Indo-Aryans similar to the Persians, who were closely associated with the Medes.

[1112] Buccellati & Kelly-Buccellati 2009:41

[1113] Bachvarova 2012:108

[1114] An interesting case concerns Alakhtum, later called Alalakh (Alalah), a town sold by Sumu-Epuh, the king of Aleppo in the land of Yamhad, to his son-in-law, Zimri-Lim of Mari (Sasson 2008:100), who most likely resided here while living in exile under the patronage of this king (As seen above, Zimri-Lim might have viewed himself as a scion of the Akkadian Emperors). After Zimri-Lim was restored to the kingship of Mari, the city, however, fell to Hammurabi. This outcome might have resulted in some of the descendants of Zimri-Lim again taking refuge in Alalakh, which belonged to their family (Even though we do not have proof of this, it seems like a reasonable assumption). In this case, these descendants of Zimri-Lim would in all likelihood have been reintegrated into the House of Yamhad, especially if their claim to Akkadian descent held true and they were thus regarded in elevated terms. A further speculation may be that a later descendant of the House of Yamhad, namely Yarim-Lim, who received Alalakh from his brother, Abba-El I, might have been regarded as having continued the lineage of Zimri-Lim of Mari.

What is interesting is that the Ḫabiru did not only play an important role in the Alalakh of later centuries, but also re-established a later descendant of the House of Yamhad, namely Idrimi, son of the last king of Yamhad (before it fell to the Hittite king, Hattusili I), to kingship in Alalakh. If this dynasty did in fact regard themselves as scions of the Akkadians, their close connection to the Ḫabiru might be explained in terms of the ancient traditions discussed above.

[1115] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:66

[1116] Cooper 1983:63

[1117] Bottéro 2001:54

[1118] Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:67

[1119] Westenholz 1997:125, 294

[1120] George 2003:468

[1121] Wiggermann 1994a:228

[1122] Westenholz 1997:315; Horowitz 1998:343

[1123] Interestingly, this sentiment found in the *Curse of Agade* is similar to that found in the biblical tradition, in the *Book of Genesis*, where the cause of the deluge is ascribed to the wickedness of mankind (which is closely related to the depravity of the Nephilim (Genesis 6:1-6)). Here, Enlil (or the God of the Israelites) is good, whereas Naram-Sin (humankind) is evil. This stands in marked contrast to the Babylonian tradition of the deluge, according to which Enlil is evil (and humankind, represented by Enki in the council of the gods, is good) (Kikawada & Quinn 1985: 43, 98).

[1124] George 2003:705, 715

[1125] George 2003:510, 705; Lambert & Millard 1970:91

[1126] Due to the fact that the rejection of Enlil in Sumerian literature was an Old Babylonian development, one may assume that the close relationship between the flood hero and Enki was probably also a later invention.

[1127] Jacobsen 1976:103; Horowitz 1998:126

[1128] Horowitz 1998:123

[1129] Horowitz 1998:294

[1130] Horowitz 1998:113

[1131] In my opinion, the god, Suen, was not originally the son of Enlil but rather that of Enki. The reason for this is that Suen was closely identified with the sacred marriage rituals, of which Enki was the patron and not Enlil.

[1132] Jacobsen 1987:168

[1133] Michalowski 1996a:243

- [1134] See especially the TCL version, lines 88-107; Katz 2008:324-326.
- [1135] *An Adab to Enlil for Šulgi*, line 2
- [1136] Michalowski 1996a:243
- [1137] I use the term “Hebrew God” for the God of Abraham, in keeping with Abraham having been a Hebrew.
- [1138] The god, El, referred to here, is El.El. See below for a more detailed discussion.
- [1139] I could not find any evidence of this family having been descendants of the Nephilim.
- [1140] See note 22, Chapter 5.
- [1141] Genesis 14:13
- [1142] Albright 1965:73
- [1143] See Chapter 21, note 29.
- [1144] McLoud 2019
- [1145] According to the Septuagint, Abraham’s journey from Harran in upper-Syria to Canaan took place 430 years before the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 12:40), which in turn took place 439 years before Solomon embarked on his building of the temple in 967 BC (1 Kings 6:1), i.e. in the 440th year after the exodus. This results in and gives a date of 1836 BC for Abraham’s arrival in Canaan. According to the Masoretic text, the 430 years commenced much later in Israel’s history, namely with Israel’s migration to Egypt (giving a much earlier date for Abraham). The text reads (the differences with the Septuagint are shown in italics): “And the sojourning of the children of Israel, *and of their fathers, while they sojourned in the land of Canaan* and in the land of Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years”. Saint Paul also uses the Septuagint reading (Galatians 3:17).
- [1146] Van de Mierop 2005:17
- [1147] Hoffmeier 2008:42
- [1148] According to K. A. Kitchen’s low chronology, which I utilise and apply in this book. As mentioned previously, this chronological model has recently been confirmed by the discovery of a cuneiform text from the Epic of Gulkišar (McLoud 2020a).
- [1149] Genesis 28:6
- [1150] Kamrin 2009:24
- [1151] Kamrin 2009:25
- [1152] Kamrin 2009:25

[1153] Genesis 37:3

[1154] McLoud 2020b.

[1155] The council of the gods is also mentioned in Isaiah 14:13; Psalms 89:7-8; 1 Kings 22:19-22 and Matthew 5:22.

[1156] Psalms 82:6

[1157] See Genesis 6:2; Job 1: 6; 2: 1; 38: 7; also in the Septuagint in Psalms 29:1 & 89:6 as well as Deuteronomy 32:8, 43.

[1158] Psalms 96:4-5

[1159] Mullen 1980:258

[1160] Heiser 2001:54

[1161] Mullen 1980:130; George 2003:466

[1162] Mullen 1980:195

[1163] Genesis 17:1

[1164] Genesis 17: 1; 28: 3; 35: 11; 43: 14; 48: 3; Ex. 6: 3 and so forth

[1165] Genesis 49:25

[1166] Exodus 6:2-3

[1167] Exodus 15:18

[1168] Psalms 95:6; see also 1 Kings 22:19; Psalms 82:1; 89:7-8.

[1169] As these two forms of El share one Being, they were worshipped as Elohim (which implies a plurality) while also sharing the name, Yahweh.

[1170] The motif of a contested kingship in the council was a later development.

[1171] While the Sumerians and a great number of Semites, for example, paired these gods with consorts, the biblical Yahweh tradition did not accept this practice. (The Urukites paired An with Ki-Inana, who was later, in the Akkadian Period, identified with Ishtar, the wife of An and worshipped by the western Semites as El's wife, Asherah). Although we do not know how persistent the latter tradition was throughout history, it is nonetheless consistent with the very first appearance of these gods in history in the third millennium BC, when the "cosmic" gods, An, Enlil and other lesser gods, were presented without consorts while the "chthonic" (earthly) ones, Enki and other lesser gods, were presented with consorts (Van Dijk, J. 1976). The first may have been the original Semitic position in the time before these gods were paired with consorts during the Uruk Period.

[1172] Jacobsen 1977:115; Michalowski 1996a:242

[1173] In Middle Babylonian times (in the *An=d.Anum*), the Akkadian form of Enlil was *Il-lil* (Wang 2011:15).

- [1174] Michalowski 1996a:241
- [1175] Harris 1985
- [1176] Leick 2001:152
- [1177] Genesis 49:24; Deuteronomy 10:17; Jacobsen 1976:101
- [1178] Mullen 1980:226; Jacobsen 1976:102
- [1179] Although the Masoretic text refers in Deuteronomy 32:8-9 to the “children of Israel” and not the “sons of God”, an old fragment found among the Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed that the Septuagint reading referring to the “sons of God”, is correct.
- [1180] Deuteronomy 32:8-9
- [1181] Psalms 82:6
- [1182] A tradition existed in Sumer that Enki was also a son of An but this was most likely due to religious syncretism (see IAS 114, II.i.11-13; *Enki and the World Order* I.68). Two groups of gods headed by An and Enki, respectively (making them the heads of these pantheons), are already attested to in the earliest texts from c. 2500 BC (see Chapter 5; Van Dijk 1976:12).
- [1183] Isaiah 14:1-23
- [1184] Mullen 1980:238
- [1185] In this passage the prophet describes the “dead, all the chief ones of the earth” (Isaiah 14:9) as rising from their thrones when this king entered the netherworld, where he was assigned to the deepest region called the “pit”, corresponding with the abyss. The word used for “dead” is “rapha”, a variant form of “rephaim”. These leading spirits of the underworld correspond with the Shining Ones of Sumerian tradition. In the biblical tradition they are often portrayed as Giants.
- [1186] Isaiah 14:12-15
- [1187] Isaiah 13:20-22
- [1188] See Isaiah 6:1-2.
- [1189] Ezekiel 28:13-17
- [1190] This Anzu myth also spread to other regions. In Hindu mythology it was the Garuda bird that had stolen the ambrosia/amrita (Collins 1997:126; Schuhmacher & Woerner 1999:116).
- [1191] Wilson 1979:23, 26
- [1192] 2 Samuel 6:2; Ezekiel 9:3
- [1193] Psalms 18:10, 11

[1194] The Anzu associated with the Enki tradition should not be confused with the Anzu as symbol of An or Enlil, which might be seen as an early version of the biblical “Spirit of God”.

[1195] We will engage in more detail with this motif in the second volume of this work.

[1196] Horowitz 1998:226

[1197] Lewis 1980:138

[1198] Frankfort 1934:18; Wiggermann 1994a:230

[1199] George 2003:271

[1200] George 2003:613

[1201] Vanstiphout 2003:87

[1202] Ezekiel 31

[1203] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:324; Cagni 1977:32

[1204] Cagni 1977:32

[1205] Horowitz 1998:12

[1206] Bauval 1994:160

[1207] Faulkner 1969:120, utt 366; Leick 1994:120, 244

[1208] George 2003:7

[1209] George 2003:12, 475

[1210] George 2003:475

[1211] Neugebauer & Parker 1969:51

[1212] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:404

[1213] Neugebauer & Parker 1969:190

[1214] Neugebauer & Parker 1969:191

[1215] Faulkner 1969:193, utterance 519

[1216] The small shafts in the King’s Chamber are consistent with the myth of Osiris’s death and him winding up as Orion. Thuban identifies with the top of the cosmic pillar and another bright star in the southern skies, namely Canopus, with its bottom. Canopus may be the “lord of the night skies” mentioned in the Pyramid Texts (Faulkner1969:102). In itself, Canopus would be the southern equivalent of the polar star, Thuban, in such a way that these two stars together define the cosmic tree.

This was the case in ancient Sumer, where the northern polar region (Ursa Major) was identified with Nippur in the north and Canopus with Eridu, the southernmost city in the layout of the land. Correspondingly, there was a city called Canopus in the Nile Delta (with the Delta corresponding to the southern



skies). The association of Canopus with the cosmic pillar is also consistent with the identification of Canopus with the “mooring post” or “flagstaff” in the Greek myth in which Menouthis (probably derived from the Egyptian word for “mooring post, namely *mnj.t*), wife of Canopus in Arab lore, is the helmsman for Menelaus (De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:416).

[1217] Neugebauer & Parker 1969: figure 29

[1218] Neugebauer & Parker 1969:191

[1219] Neugebauer & Parker 1969:191

[1220] Neugebauer & Parker 1969:191

[1221] In biblical Hebrew tradition, the two cosmic “trees” make their appearance in the Garden of Eden story. In the *Book of Genesis*, these trees are respectively referred to as the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” and the “tree of life”.

[1222] Giorgio De Santillana and Hertha Von Dechend write in their book *Hamlet's Mill*, that many ancient myths clearly testify to the fact that the ancients were well aware of and possessed knowledge of precession: “There is good reason to assume that he [Hipparchus] actually rediscovered this [precession].” (1969:66)

[1223] The end of an astronomical era is obviously not clearly defined. I use the story of the killing of the heavenly bull in an effort to determine when the ancient Akkadians or Sumerians regarded this era as having come to an end.

[1224] Tigay 1982:35

[1225] In the *Curse of Agade*, the Guteans were said to have overrun the land like a deluge during the post-Akkadian Period. It is possible that this image of a deluge submerging the land was intimately linked to the cosmological picture of the Age of Taurus, which culminated in the Akkadian Golden Age, coming to an end.

[1226] One should not confuse this “heavenly scroll” with Chaldean astrology. Chaldean astrology was developed much later and concerns individuals in a way not at all related to this greater “design” found in the celestial skies.

[1227] McDonald 1996:74

[1228] The link between the Akkadian Emperors and Time might have resulted in celestial or astronomical stories told about them, stories which eventually spread all over the ancient world. Take the story of Hamlet, for example. The earliest evidence for the motif of a usurper king sending his young adversary off with a sealed letter to another king requesting that he be put to death, as we find in Hamlet's tale, appears in *The Sargon Legend*. Strikingly, Hamlet was also associated with the “cosmic mill”, also called Hamlet's Mill, a motif which gives

a vivid description of the process of precession (see De Santillana and Von Dechend 1968). May it just be possible that Hamlet's association with this distinctive cosmic feature is related to the Akkadian Emperors' association with precession?

[1229] Sellers 1992:205

[1230] Sellers 1992:196, 207

[1231] Eliade 2005:113

[1232] Eliade 2005:112

[1233] Plato 1974:225

[1234] I accept that the mystic cult in ancient Mesopotamia had an exact equivalent in the imperial cult, the same as we find in later Chinese tradition (Rouselle 1960:70).

[1235] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:289

[1236] De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:289

[1237] As the god, Marduk, was also identified with a polar star in Babylon, Ursa Minor may be taken in cosmological terms as depicting the cosmic mountain peak where he sat and ruled as king. He was associated with the polar star described as a "shining elmesu-stone". This stone shone in Marduk's heavenly abode (Horowitz 1998:12). Although it is not clear which star the Babylonians took as such, it is quite possible that it might have been one of the stars in Ursa Minor. If so, the polar star, Polaris (the he-goat), signifies the throne position associated with this tradition. This also signifies the time when a new Dumuzi, originating from the seed of the Nephilim, is expected to rise to rule the world.

It may be suggested that Ursa Minor and Ursa Major were regarded as the two peaks of the cosmic mountain in the north. Accordingly, Ursa Minor stood in contrast to Ursa Major, with its seven bright stars, which had always been identified with Enlil's rule. Marduk may therefore be associated with Ursa Minor and Enlil with Ursa Major. Insofar as Enlil, or rather Illil, prefigures the biblical Yahweh, it explains the great importance the number seven enjoys in the Israelite tradition.

[1238] Rice 1994: figure 9.1

[1239] These astral alignments should be considered within the margin of error applicable to and certainly allowable for those ancient astronomers. With good vision, the naked eye observation which the ancients were restricted to, cannot achieve a resolution of better than 1°0'. This means that we may accept all celestial observations within this margin of error as satisfying the requirements

for naked eye observation. Through the precession of the poles, Polaris became the polar star in c.1945 (when it crossed the threshold for naked eye observation of  $1^\circ$  from the celestial pole). Ever since, Polaris has been the polar star and will reach its closest position to the celestial north pole in 2100 AD ( $+89^\circ 32' 50.62''$  with the northern pole at  $+90^\circ$ ).

The same obviously applies to the southern stars which in their slow northward movement will eventually reach the celestial equator. It will become a southward movement once again once the movement of the celestial equator changes direction after it has reached its southernmost position. In terms of the ancient view, it can be said that when stars previously unseen and “below” the celestial equator, reach this “waterline” or the “surface” in the precessional motion of the celestial skies, they appear to be breaking through the “ground”, becoming visible in our world.

The northernmost star in Orion’s belt, Mintaka, reached this threshold some time ago (i.e. came within  $1^\circ$  of the celestial equator) and is currently very close to the celestial equator where it will stay for the next few hundred years. In 2100 to 2200 AD this star will appear at about  $-0^\circ 10'$  (virtually on the equator). The middle star in Orion’s belt, Alnilam, will come very close to  $1^\circ$  of the celestial equator over the next few hundred years and it will appear at a position of  $-1^\circ 05'$  below the celestial equator in 2200 AD. Although it will not reach the  $1^\circ$  limit, it will be close enough to be regarded as, in fact, having reached it (taking into account that the  $1^\circ$  limit is merely a guideline). The years 2100 to 2250 AD are particularly interesting as this will be the period when all these stars, taken together, will effectively reach their closest points to those ancient markers. This will coincide with the end of the cosmological Age of Pisces and the arrival of the Age of Aquarius, the water-drawer.

[\[1240\]](#) Isaiah 14:12-15

[\[1241\]](#) Psalms 82:5, 7

[\[1242\]](#) De Santillana & Von Dechend 1969:444; Cagni 1977:56, lines 123-4

[\[1243\]](#) Ezekiel 28:11-19

[\[1244\]](#) Luke 4:5-8

[\[1245\]](#) 2 Corinthians 4:4

[\[1246\]](#) This depiction is simply a reworking of the story of Ninurta battling with the Anzu that stole the tablet of destiny.

[\[1247\]](#) Revelation 12; Job 26:13; also see Isaiah 14:29 where reference is made of the flying dragon (which is a symbol for the Assyrian king, like that of Naram-Sin

long before him).