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THE GOD NINURTA

*in the Mythology and Royal Ideology
of Ancient Mesopotamia*

THE NEO-ASSYRIAN TEXT CORPUS PROJECT

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THE GOD NINURTA
*in the Mythology and Royal Ideology
of Ancient Mesopotamia*

By

Amar Annus



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The translations of the Sumerian texts in this book are mostly extracted from the home page of the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, maintained by the University of Oxford. It was of great help for me to have easy access to the treasures of Sumerian literature, because there is no Assyriological library near to my work place. It is to be hoped that this project will proceed at a firm pace.

This book is the main achievement of my ten years of studies at the Universities of Tartu and Helsinki. Therefore it seems most appropriate to dedicate the book to all the important and dear people whom I have encountered during my studies. It is not necessary to give here a long list of names, because most of them will probably never read this book. But I think that they all are aware of their relevance to it.

Tallinn, October 2002

Amar Annus

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ABBREVIATIONS

A	Mari collection of the Musée du Louvre
AaTh	A. Aarne and S. Thompson, <i>The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography</i> . Folklore Fellows Communications No. 184. Second Edition. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1961
AfK	Archiv für Keilschriftforschung
AfO	Archiv für Orientforschung
ANET	J. B. Prichard (ed.), <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , 1969 ³
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AoF	Altorientalische Forschungen
ARAB	D. D. Luckenbill, <i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i> (2 vols) Chicago 1926-27.
ARW	Archiv für Religionswissenschaft
AS	Assyriological Studies (University of Chicago)
ASJ	Acta Sumerologica Japoniensa
AuOr	Aula Orientalis
BaF	Baghdader Forschungen
BaM	Baghdader Mitteilungen
BBSt	L. W. King, <i>Babylonian Boundary Stones</i>
BE	Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, Series A: Cuneiform Texts
BiMes	Bibliotheca Mesopotamica
BiOr	Bibliotheca Orientalis
BM	tablets in the collections of the British Museum
BPO	E. Reiner and D. Pingree, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omina 2</i> (Malibu 1981)
BRM	Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
CAD	Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1956-
CANE	J. M. Sasson et al. (eds.), <i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> , 1995
CBS	Catalogue of the Babylonian Section, University Museum, University of Pennsylvania
CDOG	Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
CRRAI	Rencontre assyriologique internationale, comptes rendus

CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum
CTH	E. Laroche, <i>Catalogue des textes hittites</i> , Paris 1971
DAA	Denkmäler antiker Architektur
Dan	Daniel
DDD	K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, P. W. van der Horst (eds.), <i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> , Leiden 1996.
EA	el-Amarna letters
EAH	tablets in the collection of E. A. Hoffmann
EI	Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1960-
EJ	Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem)
EM	K. Ranke (ed.), <i>Enzyklopädie des Märchens</i>
En. el.	<i>Enūma eliš</i>
ErIsr	Eretz-Israel
ETCSL	Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
Ex	Exodus
Ezek	Ezekiel
FAOS	Freiburger altorientalische Studien
Hab	Habakkuk
HED	J. Puhvel, <i>Hittite Etymological Dictionary</i> , 1984-
Hh	lexical series Har.ra = <i>hubullu</i> (MSL 5-11)
HSAO	Heidelberger Studien zum Alten Orient
HSM	tablets in the collections of the Harvard Semitic Museum
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew University College Annual
IM	Iraq Museum, Baghdad
Isa	Isaiah
JAAS	Journal of the Assyrian Academic Society
JANES	Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JEOL	Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap "Ex Oriente Lux"
JHS	Journal of Hellenic Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
Jos	Joshua
JQR	Jewish Quarterly Review
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNL	Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JTS	Journal of Theological Studies
K	Kuyunjik collection, British Museum
KAI	Donner and Röllig, <i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i>
KAR	E. Ebeling, <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts</i> (Leipzig 1919)

KAV	O. Schroeder, <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts</i> (Leipzig 1920)
Kgs	Kings
KTU	Dietrich, Loretz and Sanmartín, <i>Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts</i>
LBAT	Late Babylonian Astronomical and Related Texts, copied by T. G. Pinches and J. N. Strassmaier, prepared for publication by A. J. Sachs, with the cooperation of J. Schaumberger
LF 1	the big god-list of Fara (VAT 12760)
LKA	E. Ebeling and F. Köcher, <i>Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur</i> (Berlin 1953)
LS	the god-list of Abu-Salabikh
MA	Middle Assyrian
MARG	Mitteilungen für Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte
MARI	Mari Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires
MIO	Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung
MSL	Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon; Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon
MVAG	Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatisch-Ägyptischen Gesellschaft
NABU	Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires
NHL	J. M. Robinson (ed.), <i>The Nag Hammadi Library in English</i> , 4 th revised edition, 1996.
OB	Old Babylonian
OECT	Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications (University of Chicago)
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OLZ	Orientalistische Literatur-Zeitung
Or	Orientalia, Nova Series
OrSu	Orientalia Suecana
PBS	Publications of the Babylonian Section, University Museum, University of Pennsylvania
Prov	Proverbs
Ps	Psalms
PSBA	Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology
PSD	The Sumerian Dictionary of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania
R	H. C. Rawlinson, <i>The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia</i> (London, 1861-1884)
RA	Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale
Rev	Revelation
RIMB 2	G. Frame, <i>Rulers of Babylonia. From the Second Dynasty of Isin to the End of Assyrian Domination (1157-612 BC)</i> , Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Babylonian Periods 2 (Toronto 1995)
RIME 2	D. Frayne, <i>Sargonic and Gutian Periods (2334-2113)</i> , Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 2 (Toronto 1993)
RIME 3	D. O. Edzard, <i>Gudea and His Dynasty</i> , Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 3/1 (Toronto 1997)

RIME 4	D. Frayne, <i>Old Babylonian Period (2003-1595)</i> , Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 4 (Toronto 1990)
RIA	Reallexikon der Assyriologie (Berlin 1928-)
Rm	H. Rassam collection, British Museum
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAA 2	S. Parpola and K. Watanabe, <i>Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths</i> (Helsinki 1988)
SAA 3	A. Livingstone, <i>Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea</i> (Helsinki 1989)
SAA 6	T. Kwasman and S. Parpola, <i>Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh</i> , Part I (Helsinki 1991)
SAA 7	F. M. Fales and J. N. Postgate, <i>Imperial Administrative Records, Part I: Palace and Temple Administration</i> (Helsinki 1992)
SAA 8	H. Hunger, <i>Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings</i> (Helsinki 1992)
SAA 9	S. Parpola, <i>Assyrian Prophecies</i> (Helsinki 1997)
SAA 10	S. Parpola, <i>Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars</i> (Helsinki 1993)
SAA 12	L. Kataja and R. Whiting, <i>Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period</i> (Helsinki 1995)
SAA 13	S. W. Cole and P. Machinist, <i>Letters from Priests to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal</i> (Helsinki 1998)
SAA 14	R. Mattila, <i>Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh, Part II: Assurbanipal through Sin-šarru-iškun</i> (Helsinki 2002)
SAA 18*	S. Parpola, <i>Assyrian Royal Rituals and Cultic Texts</i> (forthcoming)
SAA Anzu	A. Annus, <i>The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzu</i> (SAACT 3, Helsinki 2001)
SAA Gilg.	S. Parpola, <i>The Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh</i> (SAACT 1, Helsinki 1997)
SAAB	State Archives of Assyria Bulletin
SAACT	State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts
SAALT	State Archives of Assyria Literary Texts
SAAS 1	S. Herbordt, <i>Neuassyrische Glyptik des 8.-7. Jh. v. Chr. unter besondere Berücksichtigung der Siegelungen auf Tafeln und Tonverschlüsse</i> (Helsinki 1992)
SAAS 10	B. Pongratz-Leisten, <i>Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien: Formen der Kommunikation zwischen Gott und König im 2. und 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.</i> (Helsinki 1999)
SAHG	A. Falkenstein and W. von Soden, <i>Sumerische und akkadische Hymnen und Gebete</i> , Stuttgart 1953
SB	Standard Babylonian
SLTN	S. N. Kramer, <i>Sumerian Literary Texts from Nippur in the Museum of the Ancient Orient at Istanbul</i>
Sm	G. Smith collection, British Museum
SMEA	Studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici
SMSB	Society of Mesopotamian Studies Bulletin
SOR	Serie Orientale Roma

SPAW	Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse
STT	O. R. Gurney, J. J. Finkelstein and P. Hulin, <i>The Sultantepe Tablets I-II 1957/1964</i> .
StP s.m.	Studia Pohl, series maior
STVC	E. Chiera, <i>Sumerian Texts of Varied Contents</i> (= OIP 16)
SVF	H. von Arnim, <i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> , Leipzig 1903-1905
SVT	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
TCL	Textes cunéiformes. Musées du Louvre
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources
TIM	Texts in the Iraq Museum
TUAT	Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments
UAVA	Untersuchungen zur Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie
UET	Ur Excavation, Texts
UF	Ugarit-Forschungen
VAB	Vorderasiatische Bibliothek
VAS	Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der Königlichen Museen zu Berlin
VAT	tablets in the collections of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WdM	H. W. Haussig (ed.), <i>Wörterbuch der Mythologie</i> , Vol. I/1. <i>Götter und Mythen im Vorderen Orient</i> , Stuttgart 1965
WdO	Welt des Orients
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
YBC	Yale Babylonian Collection, Yale University Library
YOS	Yale Oriental Series
YOS 1	A. T. Clay, <i>Miscellaneous Inscriptions in the Yale Babylonian Collection</i> , New Haven 1915
YOS 10	A. Goetze, <i>Old Babylonian Omen Texts</i> , New Haven 1947
ZA	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
ZDMG	Zeitschrift der Deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft

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INTRODUCTION

*dibbī annūti ūmu anniu
ana hasāsi lā ṭāba
ina šīāri ašappara*

SAA 10 61 rev. 8-13

Who Was Ninurta? Definition of the Object of this Study

Previous research. The studies on the god Ninurta now extend over a full century. The first pioneering study was that of B. Hrozný who edited and discussed passages from the canonical Ninurta epics.¹ A variety of Ninurta texts were published and discussed by H. Radau in *Sumerian Hymns and Prayers to God NIN-IB* (BE 29, 1) in 1911. Radau rightly considered *Ninib* to be the son of the Nippur Trinity, and that it was the model for the later Babylonian one. The reading *Ninurta* for the signs ^dNIN.IB was established for the first time by A. T. Clay, who published the "Yale syllabary," and subsequently A. Ungnad argued for the reading *Niurta* > *Nimurta*.² The next comprehensive study was by P. M. Witzel, *Der Drachenkämpfer Ninib* (Fulda, 1920). At that time, Ninurta was often considered to be a sun-god or a moon-god. The writing ^dMAŠ for Ninurta was interpreted as AN.BAR and was believed to refer to the setting sun (Witzel 1920: 128f).

A. Falkenstein had already prepared a manuscript edition of the main Ninurta epic *Lugale* before the Second World War, but no definitive edition was published until 1983 by J. van Dijk.³ In 1945, E. Dhorme offered a serious discussion on Ninurta/Ningirsu under the heading *Le dieu de l'ouragan*, concentrating more on Ningirsu and the earlier periods.⁴ The lack of well-edited texts, a problem which to some extent still exists today, has seriously hampered a systematic study of Ninurta. In 1965 D. O. Edzard offered for the first time a systematic definition of Ninurta (WdM, 114f). In addition to

¹ B. Hrozný, *Sumerisch-babylonische Mythen von dem Gotte Ninrag (Ninib)*, MVAG 8 (1903), 159-286.

² A. T. Clay, *Miscellaneous Inscriptions in the Yale Babylonian Collection* (New Haven, 1915), 97ff; A. Ungnad in *OLZ* 20 (1917), cols. 1-7. The reading *Ninurta* became confirmed by a text from Boghazköy: *Ni-in-nu-ur-[ta]*, see A. Falkenstein, *ZA* 45 (1939), 15:11.

³ See van Dijk 1983: vii-x.

⁴ In his *Les religions de Babylonie et d'Assyrie* (1945), 102-109, 128-31.

claiming Ninurta's identification with Ningirsu, Edzard presents Ninurta as the god of fertility and vegetation as well as the god of war, who subdues rebel countries. A similar definition was offered by J. S. Cooper as well:

Ninurta has two aspects in Sumerian texts: He is the fierce, irresistible warrior, defending Enlil and Sumer against the foreign mountain-lands, and he is a god of agricultural and animal fertility, "the faithful ploughman." The portrayal of Ninurta in Angim incorporates only the former, martial aspect. In Sumerian literature, Ninurta shares many of his martial attributes with his brother Nergal, and in the first millennium, specific manifestations of this nature, such as his trophies, or his weapons ... are appropriated by other gods, notably Marduk and Nabû. Ninurta's relationship to Ningirsu, however, is not of sharing or borrowing, but of virtual identity, and these two gods are considered identical throughout this work. (1978: 10-11.)

The two aspects, that of warrior and the god of fertility seemed to be contradictory, and the first attempt at synthesis was undertaken by Th. Jacobsen in his *Treasures of Darkness* (1976: 127-34). There he maintained that Ninurta/Ningirsu is the god of warlike prowess, manifesting himself in thunderstorms, being both fearsome and beneficial. Ninurta's connection with flood, either fructifying or devastating, the aspect which is amply attested in both Sumerian and Akkadian literature, served as the starting point for Jacobsen's synthesis. While convincing and consistent, Jacobsen's theory fails to take into account the importance of socio-political aspects in the cult of Ninurta. His sensitive and fascinating interpretations of Ninurta mythology are mostly "seasonal" in character, proceeding from the presupposition that world's most ancient preserved myths from Mesopotamia should deal with "basics," mostly with nature and the vegetation cycle.⁵

The biblical description of the figure of Nimrod certainly contributed to understanding Ninurta as the god of hunting.⁶ Indeed, Ninurta appears as the patron of the hunt in the Assyrian royal inscriptions. Because of the circumstances listed above, Ninurta has most usually been described as a warrior god and god of hunting, and his role as the god of agriculture has been emphasized. The recent article *Ninurta/Ningirsu* in *RIA* by M. P. Streck (Vol. 9, pp. 512ff) offers a good overview, but due to the limits of space and format it does not discuss the inner structure of the cult.

The present study strives for a synthesis of these various roles of Ninurta. In my view, the history of the god Ninurta is not a chain of disconnected cults, but involves a mythology, belief in the existence of the divine being and *knowledge* on the part of the believers about the nature of the divine character they worship, "the abstract object" Ninurta.

Previous scholarship has not discussed the role of Ninurta in the Mesopotamian pantheon and in the ideology of kingship to the extent it deserves. Many aspects of Mesopotamian religion have been discussed and clarified

only recently, but a coherent picture of what has been said on the subject by various scholars is difficult to obtain. It seems that an exposition of ideas circulating in the steadily growing mass of scholarly literature is urgently needed. It is my intention here to start filling the gap, and my preliminary attempts at synthesis will await further additions and corrections. There are many ways in which the pieces of evidence can be linked together and continuity in the Mesopotamian religion can be established in a variety of ways. I do not pretend to have been able to find the only possible ways. There are always several solutions which are indicated by the evidence we presently have at hand. Therefore, this work contains new proposals for interpretations rather than definitive solutions.

Sources. It is obvious that the literary form of Mesopotamian combat-myth, as it is known from the sources of the second and first millennia BC, is literally connected to the Sumerian mythology of Ninurta (see Lambert 1986). Ninurta is the most ancient protagonist of the *Chaoskampf* myth in Mesopotamia and his battle against the "mountains" and "rebellious countries" is the cornerstone of his mythology. In the third millennium, the Sea is already attested as the cosmic enemy beaten by the god Tišpak of inland Mesopotamia, as an Old Akkadian school tablet shows.⁷ In the second millennium, the tradition of Ninurta's battle converged with the other Near Eastern traditions in a way that Ninurta's combat with the Sea is sometimes mentioned, a tradition which was otherwise ascribed mainly to Babylonian Marduk and to the Syrian storm god.⁸ In northern Mesopotamia and Syria, the battle against the Sea was associated with the names of the storm-gods as Addu (Iškur), Ugaritic Baal and Hurro-Hittite Tešub. In Mari letter A. 1968, a prophet reports on the battle of the storm god Addu of Halab against the Sea (*têmtum*) in the context of royal ideology and thus is an antecedent of Marduk's battle against Tiamat in *Enûma eliš* (Schwemer 2001: 230). These different traditions are regarded in this study as having a common intellectual background (with Day 1985: 12).

There are four extant Mesopotamian literary compositions which tell of a god's fight with the destructive forces: the Sumerian *Lugale*, the Akkadian *Anzû Epic*, the *Labbu myth*, and *Enûma eliš*.⁹ In the first and second the protagonist is Ninurta, in the third he is probably Tišpak, and in the fourth he is Marduk (Lambert 1986: 55). The antagonists are Asag, Anzû, Labbu (reading uncertain) and Tiamat (and Qingu) correspondingly. All these com-

⁷ A. Westenholz, *Afo* 25 (1974-77), 102; see *Ninurta Mythology and the Myths of Kingship* below (pp. 171-86).

⁸ In the Bulluša-rabi hymn to Gula l. 149 (Lambert 1967: 124) it is said of Ninurta: *ezzu nā'iru šadû rāhiš tâmtim* "the fierce, the killer, the mountain that trampled on the sea." SAA Anzu I 12 attests Ninurta's victorious battle with the demon *kusarikku* in "the midst of the sea" (*nā'ir kusarikki ina qirib tâmtim*). For Sm. 1875, see B. Landsberger, *WZKM* 57 (1961), 10, n. 46. See *Ninurta Mythology and the Myths of Kingship* below (pp. 171-86).

⁹ See the corresponding editions by van Dijk 1983, A. Annus SAACT 3, Wiggermann 1989 and Lambert 1966a.

⁵ See my discussion on the interpretation of the Anzû myth in SAACT 3 (2001), pp. xxxi-xxxiii.

⁶ See C. Uehlinger in DDD, s.v. Nimrod, cols. 1181-86.

positions relate how a young god killed the enemy of the divine world order who had previously affected it adversely and endangered it. After the victory, the hero is elevated to the position of the King of the Gods.¹⁰

Several myths undoubtedly existed in ancient Mesopotamia which complemented these canonical stories of the Captured and Slain Warriors. This can be inferred on the basis of the catalogues of the Slain Monsters which occur in other canonical compositions. There are Mesopotamian texts which are related to the theme of *Chaoskampf* in the form of a commentary or a cultic text, e.g., *The Moon-God and the Demons* from the sixteenth tablet of the Utukku Lemnutu series, *The Judgement of Enmešarra* (Pinches 1908) and some passages in the mystical texts. The catalogues of the monsters defeated by the young champion of the gods occur in the *balag*-compositions as well.¹¹

In addition to these texts, the hymns to gods and to the kings in honour of a god are used as sources. In addition to these basic sources, no limits were set out as to the additional source material. All kinds of other documentation about the cult of Ninurta has been taken into account to the extent it was humanly possible. The amount of the documentation relating to the cult of Ninurta is huge and, needless to say, partly unpublished.

Methodology. The methodology includes philology in the largest sense; the presentation tries to be descriptive and synthetic. There are many problems in dealing with Ninurta because his identity is fluid. I think that the author must look for the divine personality itself and not care about names. Ninurta is actually one name of the deity sharing many attributes with the other Mesopotamian gods: both the moon-god Nanna/Sin and Ninurta/Ningirsu are first-born sons of Enlil endowed with kingship (Wilcke 1993: 37, 59). Ninurta shares with the weather god Iškur/Adad his thunderous weapons, such as storm and flood, and also enemies, including the “rebellious countries.”¹² He is identical with Nabû as the divine scribe and holder of the Tablet of Destinies, with Nergal he shares his strength, with Šamaš his position as the divine judge.

Ninurta mythology has been attached to Marduk (Lambert 1986), to Zababa, to Pabilsag, to Ninazu, and to Tišpak, to mention only the better known. For example, in the laudatory section of the SB Anzû Epic, and in the Gula hymn of Bulluša-rabi (Lambert 1967), several gods are identified with Ninurta. Ninurta is equated with Nisaba (SAA Anzu III 127), Ningirsu (III 128, Bulluša-rabi 34), with the Elamite Hurabtil (III 131), and Inšušinak from Susa (III 132), with Pabilsag (III [137]), Ninazu (III 139, Bulluša-rabi 53), Ištaran (III 141), Zababa (III 142, Bulluša-rabi 100), Lugalbanda (III 147, Bulluša-rabi 158, 177), Lugalmarada (148), with the hero Tišpak (149), Pisangunuk (151), and Utaulu (Bulluša-rabi 138) as far as the texts are readable. This shows that the identification with other gods, both foreign and native, was an essential part of the cult of Ninurta.

¹⁰ As it is said in the prologue of *Lugale*, l. 12: “Ninurta, King, whom Enlil has exalted above himself.”

¹¹ See *Ninurta and the Monsters* below (pp. 109-21).

¹² See Schwemer 2001: 173f, 183ff.

There is another circumstance which makes Ninurta's identity vague – this is the phenomenon W. G. Lambert calls “theological imperialism” and according to this, Ninurta could be viewed as a manifestation of a greater god:

Big gods could swallow up smaller gods by being equated with them. Plurality of names was a common phenomenon with ancient Mesopotamian gods, and this process meant no more than that an originally independent god became yet another name of the one who swallowed him up. An extreme form of this development was the identification of the major gods of the pantheon with Marduk, the head, so that something approaching monotheism resulted. (Lambert 1997a: 159.)

Definition. Ninurta is the defender of the divine world order; he is the god of warfare, agriculture, and wisdom. The connecting point between these seemingly contradictory roles is the institution of kingship. Ninurta personifies and the destiny he decrees for a mortal king. As the son of the symbol of Mesopotamian political leadership Enlil, and his wife Ninlil, he is endowed with eternal kingship by his father after his victorious battles in the mountains against the forces of chaos. Ninurta is the celestial saviour, the heavenly crown prince who, after the victory over envious forces, merges with his father, and becomes the heavenly paragon of the king. He is expected to give his victorious role over to the earthly king who can be seen as his incarnation or “icon.” He is thus the intermediary between gods and men, the high and the low. Ninurta as the king is responsible for the correct and successful operation of several aspects in the political and natural realms. His help is needed when the cosmic order is unbalanced and, among the gods, he is the only one who is able to restore the order. The restoration can simultaneously be viewed as a “new creation,” bringing about a new era. It requires not only physical strength, but also intellectual power and therefore Ninurta is a god of wisdom, who has proverbial speed both in battle and in thinking. Several myths have been preserved where Ninurta defeated the enemies of divine order. Sometimes these enemies are listed as a sequence of eleven monsters. By defeating enemies, Ninurta releases the powers which were imprisoned or taken into captivity by these dangerous forces of chaos. Because of this victory, chaos can prevail in the world only for a limited time. From these victories all-encompassing blessings emerge for the whole country – they bring along fertility in agriculture and in the family, they cure sickness and “resurrect the dead.” Ninurta mythology is widely used in the royal rituals. With the decline of Sumerian royalty and its emblematic city Nippur, the Sumerian traditions became obsolete as to gods' names. Babylon and her god Marduk was raised to the kingship of gods in the second millennium BC in the same manner as Ninurta was elevated to equal rank with his father Enlil in Sumerian Nippur. The cult of Aššur's son Ninurta was important in second and first millennium Assyria until the eighth century BC when his role was given over to Nabû. In quite an expected way, the Late Babylonian Nabû, as the successor of Ninurta, was raised to the kingship of the gods by making him equal with his father Marduk. Although Ninurta's name seems to vanish in this process of identification with the other gods, the configuration of his

cult lingers in royal ideology and rituals until the end of Mesopotamian civilization, and left a legacy for later periods.

Current consensus. It might seem to be against scholarly consensus to claim that Ninurta is the god of kingship, but actually it is not. The Swedish scholar I. Engnell wrote more than half a century ago on the identity of Ninurta and the king:

I think it is no exaggeration to say that the king as the “rescue-god” Nabû stands in the same relation to Marduk as does Horus – the living pharaoh to Osiris – the dead pharaoh. In the same way also Ninurta is associated with Enlil, the latter, too, playing the role of the dying god. And that Ninurta is here identical with the king emerges clearly, it seems to me, from ... [the text is KAR 307 = SAA 3 39 r. 20ff] (Engnell 1943: 36-37.)

This passage to which Engnell refers is also of crucial importance for this study. In this Neo-Assyrian ritual commentary, Ninurta is clearly identified with the king. It reads in A. Livingstone’s edition as follows:

The king who wears on his head a golden tiara from the inside of the temple and sits on a sedan chair, while they carry him and go to the palace, is Ninurta, who avenged his father. The gods his fathers decorated him inside the Ekur, gave him the sceptre, throne and the staff, adorned him with the splendour of kingship, and he went out to the mountain.¹³

If we compare this to a much older Sumerian passage, it becomes clear that Ninurta’s identification with the king in the Neo-Assyrian source quoted above is neither unique nor accidental:¹⁴

The warrior, the lordly son of Enlil, Ninurta, the fierce bull, fit to be a prince, the hero manifest in E-šumeša, the glory of E-kur, the rigorous judge, king, of the gods, the butting bull, placing his foot on the rebel lands, Ninurta, the lord of E-šumeša, has taken his seat on the throne-dais of An. Like the new moon he comes forth over the people. Like Nanna he is in heaven and earth. He holds in his hand a sceptre of shining precious metal, and the true crown of An is placed on his head. Like Utu he comes forth over the cypresses; like Nanna he stands over the high mountains.¹⁵

According to the Sumerian *Lugale* myth, the “power of heaven/An” (usu an-na) and “eternal life” is given to victorious Ninurta by Enlil in a passage which might be addressed both to Ninurta and the king (ll. 695-700):

¹³ A. Livingstone SAA 3 39 rev. 20-23 (p. 102). For treatments of this text, see Livingstone 1986: 146f, Berlejung 1996: 18f, and Maul 1991: 330. The latter considers the possibility that “die Bilder der Mythen von dem Götterhelden Ninurta im Königsritual benutzt werden konnten, um die Kampfkraft und die Herrlichkeit des Königs darzustellen.” (*ibid.*)

¹⁴ Beginning of the Shirgida hymn to Ninurta A 1-14, see Sjöberg 1973: 116ff. The translations of Sumerian sources are taken, if not otherwise indicated, from *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* home page on the Internet, see J. A. Black, *et al.* 1998-.

¹⁵ Ninurta’s kingship is granted to him by a god in STLN 61 i 12-16: “Your kingship, he established in heaven. He established in earth. With Enki in the Apsu, You, he made take it,” see Horowitz 1998: 309.

The mountain that you have handed over shall not be restored. You have caused its cities to be counted as ruin-mounds. Its mighty rulers have lost their breath before you. A celestial mace, a prosperous and unchanging rule, eternal life, the good favour of Enlil, O King, and the strength of An: these shall be your reward.¹⁶

It is slightly nonsensical to give “eternal life” to Ninurta, who is a god, and therefore the blessing formula of Enlil is directed to the earthly king as well. “King” or “my King” are found among Ninurta’s stock epithets (most prominently in *Lugale*) and it is reasonable to think that Ninurta was considered to some extent identical with the terrestrial king who had to fight the “chaotic” forces represented by his geo-political enemies. The passage cited above attests that after the triumph, the warrior king was rewarded by Enlil in a similar manner as Ninurta was in primordial times.

The two terms are often juxtaposed for denoting Ninurta’s mythological enemies. These are kur “mountains/Netherworld,” which is the most common name for the underworld in Sumerian texts, and ki-bal “rebellious countries” (Horowitz 1998: 272). These terms are juxtaposed both in mythological texts (*Angim* 18-19, 119-20, 139, 143) and in the royal praise of the king (see Šulgi D, 151-53; 197-99) which leads Ch. Penglase to think that:

the political aspect appears alongside the mythological in Ninurta’s victorious role, where he brings back the trophies of the mythological monsters from the kur and, at the same time, returns like a victorious king with the booty ‘of plundered cities.’ ... This is the application of the mythology in the city cult, and while it affects the terms used by the mythographers, it does not alter the theme of the young deity’s rise in power which is at the centre of the mythological story itself. (Penglase 1994: 60.)

As can be seen from the mythical text *Creation of man and the king* (Mayer 1987), kingship in the first millennium BC was considered as a part of the primordial world order.¹⁷ According to this text, the creation of the king immediately follows the creation of man. The king is called *māliku-amēlu* ‘(superior) deciding man’ or ‘*homo sapiens sapiens*.’ Various gifts are subsequently donated to him by the gods, which very much recalls a scene of investiture or coronation (cf. Dietrich 1998: 171-81).

This myth may also reflect the conceptual affinity of the king and Ninurta. Gods’ bestowing the royal insignia may be the connecting point of this creation myth and the mythology of Ninurta, and may consciously hint at the “elevation of the Dragon-killer” after his subjugation of the chaotic forces. If this interpretation is correct, it would mean that the god’s description in the myth is a *desideratum* for the terrestrial king, who should personify the warrior god Ninurta, and “do the like on the earth as he did in Heaven” as the

¹⁶ See the discussions by Maul 1999: 209f, Wilcke 1993: 59, van Dijk 1983: 29ff; cf. Parpola 2001: 186.

¹⁷ See Maul 1999: 207, George 1999: xli-xlii. For the primordial nature of Mesopotamian kingship, see M. Dietrich “Zwischen Gott und Volk. A. Zur Stellung des Königtums in Mesopotamien,” in: “*Und Mose schrieb dieses Lied auf*,” Fs. O. Loretz (Münster 1998), 215-23, 232-35.

gods demanded of Marduk in *Enūma eliš* (VI 112), that is to save the world from the forces of chaos through his heroic deeds (Maul 1999: 210).

Thus the identification of Ninurta with the mortal king has been sometimes claimed by ancient and modern scholars alike, but not comprehensively explained. A diachronic study of Ninurta's role in Mesopotamian kingship is needed to establish relations between times and places. It is my intention here to make a diachronic investigation into how these concepts and cultic situations might have emerged and developed. The continuity of Mesopotamian traditions has not been sufficiently studied in many fields of Assyriology. It is the aim of my study to discuss continuities in Mesopotamian religious traditions concerning the god Ninurta from the third until the first millennium BC. The continuity of these traditions in the late Antiquity is examined only briefly.

Manner of Presentation. One will find in this work an unusual quantity of *in extenso* quotations of other scholars. In part, it is a natural result of my non-native command of English, which makes it easier to quote rather than to refer, but otherwise the quotations are meant to exhibit the current consensus in the field and give a full account of previous scholarship. There are quite many specialized fields within Assyriology to be touched upon in order to write a comprehensive study on Ninurta. The quotations from the experts of specialized fields serve then the objective of reducing the number of possible misunderstandings.

It would be ridiculous to claim that everything concerning Ninurta has been studied and discussed in this book. There has been an aim to keep the size of the work to readable proportions, and the present size is not to be expected to cover the full history of the cult of Ninurta, as it were. The study contains rather a contribution to recent discussions in scholarly literature and expositions of ideas circulating there. There are some proposals and ideas of my own in the book which are put forward for discussion.

CHAPTER ONE

Ninurta's Role in Ancient Mesopotamian Kingship

Ninurta in Early Sources

Ninurta as the warrior son of Enlil and Ninlil in Nippur was perhaps originally only a god of local importance. Ninurta was inextricable from Nippur and its ideology. In the Mesopotamian tradition, Nippur was considered to be one of the oldest, even a primordial city. Its name was interpreted pseudo-etymologically as "the city which created itself" (Nibru^{ki} ní-bi-ta dū-a) in the first line of the topographical 'Nippur compendium' (George 1992: 146, 441ff). By this etymology the true, primordial nature of this city was recognized by the ancient scholars (Maul 1997: 118, n. 37). Nippur therefore belonged to the world order already established at the creation. In other words when Heaven was separated from Earth, Nippur and Enlil's temple Ekur were held to be the bond between them. In the second and first millennia BC, similar claims were made for Babylon and Assur, taking Nippur as a model (see Maul 1997).

In the Early Dynastic period Nippur was already called *dur-an-ki* 'bond between heaven and earth' and Enlil had the central position in the pantheon. Among the Zami hymns from Abu Salabikh there is a hymn to Ekur where it is stated of Nippur: *uru an-da mú an-da gú-lá* ^dEN.LÍL.KI *dur-an-ki* ^dEn-líl *kur-gal* "city grown together with Heaven, embracing the Heaven, city of Enlil, bond of Heaven and Earth, Enlil, the great mountain."¹⁸ The most important city and its main temple as the cosmic bond forms a link between the different levels of the universe. The bonds are often described as cables, tying the universe together and providing the means for its control for the most important god(s). Accordingly, the cosmic capital Nippur an-

¹⁸ Emelianov 1994: 255; edition: R. D. Biggs, *Inscriptions from Tell Abu-Salabikh*, OIP 99 (Chicago 1974), 46, ll. 1-5. Ki-en-gi is equated with kur-gal in "Enki and the World Order" 192: ki-en-gi kur-gal ma-da an-ki "Sumer, Great Mountain, land of heaven and earth." Ki-en-gi is also equated with Nippur in lexical texts (see Lieberman 1992: 133, n. 38 and 135f). Thus it seems likely that the words kur-gal, ki-en-gi, é-kur, dur-an-ki and Nibru could be treated as referring to the singular divine power or entity, merging the city, the main temple, the land of Sumer and its god Enlil (cf. Lambert 1992: 120).

chors and controls the ‘bond of heaven and underworld’ by being at the centre of the universe (George 1997: 128f).

The centre of the world or *axis mundi* was sometimes imagined as a cosmic mountain. This mountain is attested in the Sumerian contest poem between Cattle and Grain as ‘the mountain of heaven and earth’ (hur.sag.an.ki.bi.da). Although there is no consistency in the concept of ‘world mountain’ in the Sumerian and Babylonian sources, Nippur is this mountain in a passage of *The Exaltation of Ištar* (ll. 33f): úru.mu hur.sag.ki.in.gi.uri = *ālu šād māti šumēri u akkadi* “My city, the mountain of the land of Sumer and Akkad.”¹⁹

The Sumerian composition “The Song of the Hoe” contains a remarkable story of creation according to the Nippur tradition. Enlil, who wanted the human seed of the Land to come forth from the earth, hastened to separate heaven from earth but, in order to make it possible for humans to grow in ‘Where Flesh Came Forth,’ he first suspended the axis (bulug nam-mi-in-lá) of the world at Dur-an-ki. He did this with the help of the hoe (ll. 1-8). Enlil’s temple Ekur was also created by the hoe. The first primordial event in this temple is related as follows (ll. 36ff):

By day it (= the hoe) was building it, by night it caused the temple to grow. In well-founded Nibru, the hero Ninurta entered into the presence of Enlil in the inner chamber of the *Tummal* – the *Tummal*, the bread basket (?) of mother Ninlil – the innermost chamber of the *Tummal*, with regular food deliveries. Holy Ninisina entered into the presence of Enlil with black kids and fruit offerings for the lord.

The primordial city is the obvious living-place for the “king of the gods,” Enlil. An and Enlil are the only gods who are referred to the pre-Sargonic inscriptions with the epithet “king of all the lands” (lugal-kur-kur-ra). The same epithet is attested in the second millennium with the Babylonian Marduk as *bēl mātāti*. Ningirsu is attested as “the hero of Enlil” (ur-sag-^dEn-líl-la) from the time of Eanatum, and Enlil has the title “king of heaven and earth” (lugal-an-ki-a) in the Stele of Vultures (Selz 1992: 200f). Marduk or Enlil as the supreme god and Ninurta as the “warrior of Enlil” are features of Mesopotamian religion during the millennia of its existence and they are already attested in these early Sumerian sources. Ninurta is equated with Ningirsu at least from Sargonic times on. In the later god-lists, the two gods are simply taken as different names for a single deity (CT 25 13:29).²⁰

The name Ninurta is, despite the difficulties with its meaning and etymology, a clearly Sumerian name.²¹ Ninurta is mentioned in the oldest god-list

of Fara and his name occurs besides that of Ningirsu in the god-list of Abu Salabikh. In these lists, Ninurta’s name is once written as ^dNám-urta (OIP 99 82+).²² Ningirsu’s name is spelled ^dNin-gír-su and ^dNì-gír-su (LF 1 v 19’; OIP 99 82+, Zami 117-119) and ^dNin-urta is also attested.²³

The temple of Ninurta at Nippur is mentioned from the late pre-Sargonic or early Sargonic period onwards. In the *Collection of Sumerian Temple Hymns*, originating in the Sargonic period, Ninurta is for the first time attested as the son of Enlil, bearing the epithet sag-kal pirig kur-gal-e tu-da “the foremost, the lion, whom the Great Mountain (= Enlil) engendered.”²⁴ Ninurta’s shrine was probably situated on the western side of Nippur together with the palace (é-gal), where the governor of the city (énsi) resided. The Ekur temple and the priests of Enlil were assigned to the east bank of Nippur where the assembly of the citizens convened.²⁵

The ensi of Nippur was closely tied to the temple of Ninurta (Westenholz 1987: 93). The ensi is absent from any early text dealing with the administration of Enlil’s temple while he is deeply involved with the affairs of the Ninurta temple (Westenholz 1987: 29). Ninurta himself is called énsi Nibru^{ki} according to a pre-Sargonic tablet (IM 43749).²⁶ On the Sumerian seals Ninurta’s most frequent titles are “great governor of Enlil” (énsi-gal ^dEn-líl-lá) and “governor of Nippur” (énsi Nibru^{ki}). This evidence shows clearly that the (great) ensi of Nippur (or Enlil) was Ninurta, incarnated by the governor (énsi) of Nippur.²⁷ The “great *ensi* of Enlil” is subsequently used as an important royal title. The title PA.TE^{si}-gal-^dEn-líl is used by

(*šamû*), see MSL 14, p. 194, Ea tablet I 337-338c; cf. Horowitz 1998: 231. According to K. van der Toorn, the variant readings *urta* and *uraš* of the same sign point to an underlying form **uraš* (1990: 14). Jacobsen has argued that Ninurta means “Lord Plough,” deriving *urta* from an alleged “cultural loan word” *urta* < **hurta* < **hurt* “plough,” but he does not explain where this cultural word comes from (1976: 127). See also Streck 2001: 513, R. Borger *Or* 30 (1961) 203.

²² See M. Krebernik, *ZA* 76 (1986), 169; LF 1 ii 18 (^dNin-urta, Fara) and LS 8 (Abu Salabikh). See also P. Mander, *Il Pantheon di Abu-Salabikh. Contributo allo studio del pantheon sumerico arcaico* (Napoli 1986), 113; cf. Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 225.

²³ See Streck 2001: 512; cf. Emelianov 1999: 143.

²⁴ Sjöberg 1969: 21; the other “sons of Enlil” figuring in this collection are Ninazu of Ešnunna and Ningirsu of Lagaš, see Klein 2001: 291.

²⁵ J. G. Westenholz (1992: 304): “Apparently, fields belonging to the citizens of the city and reassigned to the en and lagar were not temple property. As a result, religious titles became linked to the political state of Nippur, for example, the nu-eš₃-nibru.ki and the um-mi-a-nibru.ki.” See A. Westenholz 1987: 21-29 (for Ekur) and 97f (for Ešumeša). Cf. George 1999a: 83ff.

²⁶ For the earliest data, see A. Westenholz 1975: nos. 82 and 145, of which 82 is from the time of Lugalzagesi; no. 127 has a personal name Ur-^dšu-me-ša₄. For IM 43749, see Steinkeller 1977: 51, n. 37.

²⁷ See Steinkeller 1989: 241. According to the interpretation of Jacobsen, the term *énsi* means basically “farmer”; *énsi(k)* can be translated as “productive manager of the donkeys” (1991: 119). C. Wilcke has translated *énsi-gal* as ‘Agrarverwalter’ (*Or* 54 [1985], 302f), and Richter explains the title “gleichermassen Stellvertreter und oberster Beamter Enlils in Nippur” (1999: 48, n. 186).

¹⁹ Lambert 1982: 215; see S. Langdon, “A Bilingual Tablet from Erech of the First Century B.C.,” *RA* 12 (1915), 74, ll. 33f. The couplet ends with the words *temen kal dadmē* “the foundation of all the habitations.”

²⁰ See W. W. Hallo, *JAOS* 101 (1981), 255 and Lambert 1975: 193f. Marduk and Aššur merged with Enlil during the second millennium.

²¹ The element *urta* (= IB) has been most frequently interpreted to mean “earth.” D. O. Edzard explains “*urta* Genetiv einer Lautvar. zu *Uraš*” (WdM, 114), thus *Nin-urta* “the Lord (of) Earth.” The word *uraš* may equally mean “secret” (*pirištu*), or “heaven”

Lugalzagesi of Uruk, Sargon of Akkad and by two Mari kings. The title does not denote a city ruler because the domains of these rulers were vastly larger than that of a city ruler, and their cities were not Enlil's city Nippur (Jacobsen 1991: 113). The term *énsi-gal* ⁴En-líl refers here to the economic maintenance of Enlil's temple which was the traditional obligation of the king who as such had the title "farmer of Enlil" (*ibid.*).²⁸

These titles applied to Ninurta can be plausibly interpreted as meaning that Ninurta was considered to be the city-god of Nippur. The name of his wife, Ninnibru, "the queen of Nippur" seems to be in congruence with this role. According to the interpretation of W. Sallaberger, Ninurta is attested as the city-god from Sargonic times onwards.²⁹ While Enlil is and will remain the most important god of the city, Ninurta in his important service under Enlil is the city administrator and in this sense he is the city-god as well. Ninurta's title *énsi-gal* certainly refers to his role as "the landholder of Enlil" translated into Akkadian *bēlum iššakku rabû* in the Babylonian litanies (George 1992: 447). The title 'vice-regent' (*iššakku*) subsequently occurs as the epithet of the Assyrian king (see below, p. 40 and n. 103).

It is also of importance that the *nadiatum*-priestesses of Nippur were dedicated to Ninurta, not to Enlil, as those of Sippar were dedicated to Šamaš and those of Babylon to Marduk.³⁰ It can be inferred from the passage in the *Cursing of Agade* (ll. 66-69), which presents Ninurta as the keeper of royal regalia, that while Enlil is the national deity of Sumer, Ninurta is the tutelary divinity of Nippur (Sigrist 1984: 7). One may add that in the hymn to Ninurta C, l. 61, "Ninurta's city" stands in apposition to "the shrine Nibru."

The most ancient written record witnessing Ninurta's mythological battles is the so-called Barton Cylinder (CBS 8383), which can be dated according to its over-all epigraphic features toward the end of the Early Dynastic period, or perhaps to Early Sargonic times (Alster and Westenholz 1994: 17). Ninurta's mythological roles thus go back to the Early Dynastic period and perhaps even to prehistory (cf. Selz 1992: 189ff). This fragmentarily preserved text associates Ninurta with a kind of creation myth: in the beginning of time, Heaven and Earth began to "talk" to each other in a huge storm. Then one of the offspring of Heaven and Earth has intercourse with Ninursag who becomes pregnant with seven twins. After this, the Earth holds a conver-

sation with the "Scorpion" and Ninursag is instigated to inundate the land which presumably had so far been dry. After the creation of fertility, as a consequence of some disaster, no food is produced in Nippur. Ninurta appears outfitted in a lion's skin and sets out to solve the problem, assisted by the winds (Alster and Westenholz 1994).

It is likely that the Barton Cylinder is an early example of a myth extolling Ninurta's deeds like *Lugale*. The cylinder was probably intended for exhibition in Ninurta's temple Ešumeša and the text seems to be a myth describing the origin of the temple cult (Alster and Westenholz 1994: 39). It thus seems plausible to assume that during the third millennium BC, former mythological stories of oral lore were focused onto Ninurta and his theological mythology was evolving during the third millennium as the mythology of Nippur. Enlil became the head of the Sumerian pantheon no later than the Early Dynastic II period (ca. 2700 BC). It is reflected in the Sumerian composition "History of Tummal" which ascribes the foundation of Enlil's temple in Nippur to Enmebaragesi of Kiš I (Klein 2001: 295). Ninurta's importance in the Sumerian and subsequent Akkadian religion is related to the religious importance of Nippur, where he was the city-god.

It has been argued that the canonical version of the *Lugale*-myth was written shortly after Gudea's dynasty, the king who probably controlled Nippur for a short time (Wilcke 1993: 60). The argument for the dating comes from *Lugale* lines 475-78. In this passage Ninurta addresses diorite (*esi*):

...they shall extract you from the highland countries. They shall bring (?) you from the land of Magan ... When a king who is establishing his renown for perpetuity has had its statues sculpted for all time, you shall be placed in the place of libations – and it shall suit you well – in my temple E-ninnu, the house full of grace.

Comparing the mention of Eninnu, the temple which was rebuilt by Gudea of Lagaš, to the text of Gudea Statue B vii 10-25, Statue A ii 6ff,³¹ and Statue C iii 14ff make it clear that the canonical version of *Lugale* was composed about 2100 BC (van Dijk 1983: 2). But it is certainly an exaggeration to claim that the Ninurta myths were commissioned in their original form at the court of Gudea, as W. Hallo has asserted (1975: 185). If we can date the canonical version of *Lugale* to the time of Gudea, it is not to say that the Epic was *created* at that time. The Ninurta/Ningirsu mythology certainly existed before Gudea, as the Barton Cylinder witnesses. Myths exist without the need of being committed to writing and outside the canonical versions.

The Early History of Mesopotamian Kingship

The kingship in the Sumerian cities on earth was directly dependent on the divine kingship in Heaven. Enlil reigned as the king among the gods and

³¹ kur-má-gán^{ki}-ta na₄-esi im-ta-e₁₁ alan-na-ni-šè mu-dú "From the mountains of Magan Gudea brought down the *esi*-stone, and shaped it into his statue."

²⁸ "In Ur III and later periods the word used for 'farmer' was *engar*, while older texts of the time of Akkade and earlier use *ensî(k)*. The change in terminology may be seen as an early instance of the trend to replace *ensî(k)* with *engar* noted for later times in *CAD* I 33f" (Jacobsen 1991: 114).

²⁹ Sallaberger 1997: 153: "Im Status des Götterherrschers Enlil als königlichem Reichsgott mag sich durchaus die neue Situation der Grossreichsbildung widerspiegeln. Die Suprematie Enlils führte also ab sargonischer Zeit zu einer einzigartigen Differenzierung von Zwei Ebenen in Nippur: da Enlil nun vornehmlich als Reichsgott betrachtet wird, übernimmt Ninurta die Funktion des Stattgottes." Cf. A. Westenholz 1987: 29.

³⁰ D. Charpin, *RA* 84 (1990), 90; for *nadiatum* of Ninurta, see J. Renger, *ZA* 58 (1967), 150ff; cf. A. Westenholz 1987: 98. According to the opinion of Sigrist (1984: 6), the antiquity of Ninurta's cult in Nippur is indirectly confirmed by the fact that there existed *nin-dingir* priestesses of the god.

accordingly, his city Nippur was conceived of as the religious centre of the alluvial plain and received the veneration of its inhabitants, especially of kings:³²

on the basis of impressions found at different sites from seals bearing the symbols or names of various major cities, there has been derived the concept of a southern Mesopotamian amphictyony (league), for economic cooperation between independent states. It is suggested that the symbolic center of this association was at Nippur, a city which held no power within historical times, but housed the Ekur, the temple of Enlil. (Postgate 1995: 399.)

According to the Sumerian tradition preserved in the composition *History of Tummal*, royal patronage of Nippur commenced in 2700 BC and continued for almost a thousand years (Cole 1996: 7). The votive inscriptions were dedicated to Enlil exclusively by ‘Great Kings’ from ED III onwards, which indicates that the tradition of the special status of Enlil’s temple went back at least to Early Dynastic times (Westenholz 1987: 29). Lugalzagesi’s long inscription from the middle of the 24th century testifies to the fact that the right to present offerings to Enlil’s temple Ekur at Nippur was considered to be the acknowledgement of a ruler elected by Enlil as “King of the Land.”³³ At the same time, this right was considered as an obligation as well.

The divine order also reflects the secular when it comes to the domination of one state by another. Enlil is the god of human politics and dispenses kingship. This role is already established in the Early Dynastic period. (Postgate 1995: 399.)

In the Sumerian song of the Hoe, which expresses the Nippur tradition of the creation of the universe, Abzu and Eridu are constructed after Ekur and Duranki. In the Sumerian Temple Hymns from the Old Akkadian period, Nippur comes second after Eridu, but the privilege to determine (universal) destinies is ascribed to Nippur and Enlil.³⁴ No such epithets as “shrine Nippur,” “shrine where destinies are decreed” or the epithet of Enlil as “lord who determines destinies” are attested with Eridu and Enki (Lambert 1992: 120). The honour of being the Oldest City was otherwise claimed by Uruk, Ereš, Sippar and, in the Sumerian King List, by Eridu (George 1997: 129). The central position of Nippur, which was established at the creation of the world, in practice means that all the gods of the land gather in Nippur for taking important decisions in the assembly. Nippur was an all-Sumerian place of assembly for purposes of electing a common ruler.³⁵

Nippur’s primary import once was thus as a place where decisions were made. This led in two directions: on the human level to the development of legal and other instructions, and on the divine level to its being a meeting-place for the gods, where one could get a reading of their common will concerning such issues as change in rulership. As a consequence of this latter aspect, the É-kur benefited

from kings’ gratitude to Enlil, the mouthpiece of this common will; these rulers would send some of the booty from their current campaign. The É-kur thus came to be a kind of museum. (Lieberman 1992: 135.)

In the Early Dynastic period the kingship or sceptre (*gidru*) was traditionally given to mortals by Enlil, Ningirsu or Inanna, according to the Early Dynastic royal inscriptions of Lagaš.³⁶ In most of these inscriptions we read that the king was “called by Enlil” (*mu-pà-da-^dEn-líl-lá*), which implies that the status of the king was undoubtedly reinforced by a ritual enthronement in Nippur (Emelianov 1994: 256). When a ruler was called by a (good) name by a god, it implies that he has been given a royal title or throne name (Hallo 1957: 133f). The verbal construction *mu—pàd* literally means “to name (someone) with a name” which indicates that Enlil has “chosen a (new) name” for the king.³⁷

Investiture for the kings in the third and in the early second millennia thus took place at Nippur, where the kings were legitimized by the priests of Enlil (George 1996: 383). The role of Enlil as the king’s divine ratifier is already demonstrated by an inscription of Enmetena which was found at Nippur. There it is stated (Ent. 32 1:4’-8’): [*gidri*]-*mah-nam-tar-ra ^dEn-líl-le Nibru^{ki}-ta En-te-me-na-ra mu-n[a]-a[n-sum]* “Enlil from Nippur gave the magnificent sceptre of decreeing the destinies to Enmetena.”³⁸

The investiture of the kings was probably concurrent with the “gods’ assembly” in Nippur where the authorities of the land decided the worthiness of a candidate. The decision of this council was thus regarded as the gods’ decision, and no less than the fate of the future king was decreed in that council. The ruler must have been chosen and acknowledged already in his own city by his city-god and council before he went to Nippur where his rulership was warranted by the ritual of “determination of the royal fate.” The ritual was held in Nippur or in Uruk with participation by the Nippur gods. We have no description of this ritual in the Old Sumerian texts, possibly because it was considered a sacred mystery. But the presence of this ritual can be ascertained from the royal hymns of the Ur III and Isin periods which record the fixing of the destiny for kings in the context of investiture.³⁹ By

³⁶ See H. Steible, H. Behrens *Glossar zu den altsumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften* (FAOS 6), 142, s.v. *gidru*; see also Emelianov 1994: 255-56, Sallaberger 1997: 150.

³⁷ See Steinkeller 1989: 75, n. 212. In Assyro-Babylonian mysticism, the act of “calling by name” (*imbû*) was associated with the word “fruit” (*inbu*), and in that way a senior god could bring forth his “fruits” (= the younger gods) just by calling them with a name. This concept is also known from the Babylonian Creation Epic. Cf. Livingstone 1986: 30ff: [“Fruit” is *Sîn*] because Anu called his name” (K 170+Rm 520 l.1). In the Gula Hymn of Bulluša-rabi l. 142, Gula (or Ninurta?) claims: “Anu, my father, called me according to his name (*kîma šumīšuma*)”; see Lambert 1967: 124 and cf. Livingstone 1986: 45.

³⁸ Emelianov 1994: 256; see also Selz 1992: 202f. An inscription on a statue of Enmetena relates the building of Enlil’s temple in Lagaš, named *é-ad-da* “House of the Father” (*ibid.*)

³⁹ The text translated by W. Ph. Römer in *TUAT* II 2, 3, p. 168f might be a later echo of this ritual in OB times. In this text, a ruler is given a sceptre and other insignia by a

³² See Cole 1996: 7, Sallaberger 1997: 147f.

³³ Cole 1996: 7, Sigrist 1984: 7.

³⁴ See J. Klein, *RIA* 9 (1997-2001), 534; Sjöberg 1969: 18, 25 and 35.

³⁵ Jacobsen 1957: 105; cf. Lambert 1992: 119.

virtue of that ritual, the king was on covenant terms with a god as the ruler of his city and administered it in the god's name.⁴⁰

In the period of the first unification of the Sumerian cities under a single city-state, there emerges, in response to the growing imperialistic needs, a new ideological model of kingship, according to which *eternal* kingship is given by Anu and Enlil to a mortal ruler. It seems that, in earlier times, *eternal* kingship could only be handed over by Enlil to his first-born son Ninurta. Now the king (beginning with Lugalzagesi), being the only legitimate one on earth, receives his kingship and insignia from Nippur and Uruk forever and thereby merges with Ninurta/Ningirsu (Emelianov 1994: 273-74). In the ritual formula of “determination of royal fate,” this is expressed either by bestowing “eternal kingship” on the king or by “extending the years of reign.” (*ibid.* 259.)

In the Akkadian period, there emerges a tendency towards deification of the king. Sargonic kings were heroic military leaders and their royal authority was based on their military achievements. But Naram-Sin tried to change old Sumerian royal traditions, and the worst thing that Naram-Sin did, according to the opinion of the priests of Nippur, was to strive for self-deification without the approval of Nippur and its sacred offices. It would have required, in order to be legitimate, the solemn ritual of the “determination of royal fate” in Nippur and official transmission of royal insignia and power from Ninurta to the King. As the result, we read in the *Cursing of Agade 57* that “the statement (= verdict) coming from the Ekur was disquieting [me-gin₇ ba-an-gar].”⁴¹

Naram-Sin speaks in an inscription about a golden statue in honour of his eternal kingship and triumphant battles.⁴² Here we can see how the king takes over Ninurta's attributes: he is the victor, and he claims to have obtained eternal kingship. Naram-Sin neglected his duty to bring offerings to Enlil's temple in Nippur and tried to exterminate the city of Enlil together with its prescriptions (Emelianov 1994: 258). Here for the first time occurs the dramatic replacement of Ninurta with the real king.

We may summarize at this point that, according to the traditional Sumerian concept, kingship devolves along the line of Enlil-Ninurta-King. Ninurta, in his capacity as the first-born son of Enlil, is the Eternal King according to this ideology.⁴³ Human kingship is temporal and changeable. The evolution of this concept occurs during the Ur III period, giving to the king the eternal kingship or lengthening his regnal years – *bala* – the king's status thus

god(dess) in Eanna and a new name is given to him instead of his ordinary (bur-gi₄) name (see Römer 1969: 135-36 and Emelianov 1994: 256).

⁴⁰ Emelianov 1994: 256f. The phrase *inim ka-kéš* in Uruinimgina's inscription 5-6, xii 1-4 can be translated as “to establish a contract” (Emelianov 1994: 257, n.14); cf. the hymn Ninurta C, ll. 52f, where Ninurta says: “I am a hero belonging to Enlil, I am he who controls the affairs of Nibru” (*inim ka-kéš-da Nibru^{ki}-me-en*).

⁴¹ Emelianov 1994: 274, with modifications. For analysis of the iconographic representation of Naram-Sin, see J. Westenholz 2000: 101-108.

⁴² D. Frayne, RIME 2 (1993), 160.

converging with that of gods (Emelianov 1994: 259). It is also interesting to note that in Old Sumerian texts, the term *bala* in the sense of “regnal period” is not used at all; this root is used only as a verb *bal* “to change, to transfer” (*ibid.* 257), i.e., the rulership was considered to be temporary.

The Ur III and Isin-Larsa Periods

The moon-god Nanna-Suen was the tutelary deity of Ur and figures in royal inscriptions from Ur-Namma on, predominately as “the first-born son of Enlil.” A contradictory theology existed simultaneously which claimed that Ninurta/Ningirsu had exactly the same status. Nanna's appellation as the “first-born son of Enlil” resulted from his promotion in the Ur III period to the equality of Ninurta (see Klein 2001). The Sumerian myth “Enlil and Ninlil,” which was probably written under the influence of Ur III royal ideology, attests Nanna as the first-born son of Enlil, and curiously does not relate the birth of Ninurta. The other sons, according to the myth, were Nergal, Ninazu and Enbilulu (Klein 2001: 284). Ninurta's birth is sometimes described in the Sumerian hymns where he is born “in the mountains” or, more precisely, he is called “the king [who was b]orn in the woman's chamber in the mountain.”⁴⁴

Both Nanna and Ninurta bear the epithet “king” in the Ur III sources. Anu and Ea/Enki are also occasionally called “the king,” and in later times Aššur and Marduk had this royal epithet. In addition, Ninurta is called “the first choice (pa₄ šeš) of his father” in a Sumerian hymn (Ninurta C, 72f), an epithet which is not attested with Nanna.⁴⁵ While Nanna was the king of heavenly realms and tightly connected with the sky-god An, whose son he was before the Ur III innovation (Klein 2001: 297ff), Ninurta's role seems to be that of the earthly king in the Ur III period. It was not, then, a contradictory statement that Nanna and Ninurta were both the “first-born son of Enlil.” In the first case, the emphasis lay on the heavenly kingship and the city of Ur and in the second case, on the political realm and the city of Nippur. The coronation of the new king in the Ur III period took place in Nippur, but subsequently also in Uruk and Ur which indicates that the rulers received their kingship primarily, but not exclusively, from Enlil (Sallaberger 1997: 155).

⁴³ It is in the same vein that Gudea of Lagaš sometimes calls Ningirsu “my king” (*lugal-gu₁₀*) in the temple hymn to Eninnu (A viii 15, B ii 16).

⁴⁴ Sjöberg 1973: 118 l. 16; cf. Ninurta C, ll. 55ff: “I am a man after the heart of my father Enlil, and I am the hero beloved by my mother Ninlil. I was born in the mountains; I am strong in the mountains.”

⁴⁵ Cf. MSL 12, p. 131, ll. 76f: [pa₄]-šeš= *ra-bi a-hi* “elder brother”; [pa₄]-šeš= *a-ša-re-du*. It is possible that Akkadian *pašišu(m)* ‘anointed’ was etymologized according to Sumerian pa₄-šeš by the Mesopotamian scholars, see R. Borger, *BiOr* 30 (1973), 174. “The first choice of heaven” (pa₄-šeš-an-na) was an epithet of Ninurta and it was used as a pseudo-ideogram for writing the Akkadian royal title *pašiš Anim*, “the anointed one of heaven,” see Alster 1972: 123, commentary to l. 6.

The earthly king also bears a physical resemblance to Enlil's sons. Among the first kings who were recorded as Enlil's sons are Naram-Sin and his successor Šar-kali-šarri of Akkad.⁴⁶ In the Ur III period, the king Šulgi is the next "Enlil's son" on the throne (X 155, *Bird and Fish* 78) and Šu-Sin after him.⁴⁷ Many kings of Isin and Larsa are attested as Enlil's sons: Išbi-Erra, Šu-ilišu, Išme-Dagan, Lipit-Eštar and possibly also Ur-Ninurta of Isin; as well as Abi-sarê and Rim-Sin of Larsa (Sjöberg 1972: 94f). The kings Iddin-Dagan and Išme-Dagan are also designated as sons of Dagan (Kramer 1974: 166). This shows that the ruling kings were considered to be of equal rank with Ninurta and Nanna. Rim-Sin was also called dumu-mah é-kur-ra "magnificent son of Ekur" (TCL 15 35:10), using the standard epithet of Ninurta.⁴⁸

This evidence shows that in the Ur III period the king was considered to be fully divine. As a result of being a divine being, the eternal kingship is conferred upon the ruler due to his martial exploits and guardianship of temples and shrines.⁴⁹ And, according to Šulgi's twenty-first year name, the king sometimes acted under the command of Ninurta: "year when Ninurta, the great *ensi* of Enlil ordered an audit for the temples of Enlil and Ninlil, and Šulgi, king of Ur, straightened out the fields (forming) the core of the accounting for the temples of Enlil and Ninlil."⁵⁰

Ninurta, along with other divine sons, thus merges with the person of the king. At the investiture, full lordship and the weapons of Enlil's firstborn Ninurta (by himself) are bestowed upon the king – in exactly the same way as Enlil gave them to Ninurta:

Cf. *Lugale* 684-92: His father Enlil blessed him [= Ninurta]: "....., pre-eminent with your great name, you have established your habitation Chest, fittingly King of battle, I presented the storm of heaven to you for use against the

⁴⁶ Sjöberg 1972: 91f; see D. Frayne, RIME 2 (1993) 127, ll. 15-19.

⁴⁷ Šulgi's birth in Ekur is described in Hymn G 15-20: "Ašimbabbar appeared shining in the E-kur, pleaded to his father Enlil and made him bring a childbearing mother (?); in the E-duga, Nanna, the princely son, asked for the thing to happen. The en priestess gave birth to the trustworthy man from his semen placed in the womb. Enlil, the powerful shepherd, caused a young man to emerge: a royal child, one who is perfectly fitted for the throne-dais, Šulgi the king...." For treatments of this narrative, see Klein 1987, Hallo 1987 and Weinfeld 2001: 283f. In hymn X 157, Šulgi is said to have been enthroned with Uraš (= Ninurta) on a great dais.

⁴⁸ Sjöberg 1972: 96f. The king is the "faithful farmer" (*engar-zi*) of Enlil, exactly as Ninurta in *Farmer's Instructions* 109; see Jacobsen 1991: 114, n. 6; cf. also the hymn to Ur-Namma G, ll. 16-20.

⁴⁹ "Erst in der Ur III-Zeit scheint dann die überragende Rolle Enlils und Nippurs ihre volle Ausprägung erfahren zu haben, wie aus einer Anzahl von Einzelbeobachtungen abgeleitet werden kann" (Richter 1999: 450).

⁵⁰ mu^d Nin-urta ensi-gal^d En-lil-lá-ke₄ é^d En-lil^d Nin-lil-lá-ke₄ bà-bar-kin ba-an-du₁₁-ga^d Šul-gi lugal Ur^{ki}-ma-ke₄ ašag(GÁN) níg-ka₉-šà é.^d En-lil-^d Nin-lil-lá-ke₄ si bí-sá-a; the translation and transcription according to Jacobsen 1991: 115; cf. F. R. Kraus, *Or* 20 (1951), 385; A. Westenholz 1992: 305f. Šulgi built or rebuilt the temple of Ninurta according to his fourth year name (W. W. Hallo, *JAOS* 101 [1981], 254).

rebel lands. O Hero of heaven and earth I presented to you the club, the deluge which sets the Mountains on fire. King, ahead of your storm the way was narrow. But, Ninurta, I had confidence in your march to the Mountains."

After the assignment of attributes, the king is the subduer of mountains and the icon of Ninurta as depicted in the *Lugale* myth. After the enthronement, which may already be reckoned as deification, the king is called "faithful shepherd" (*sipa-zid*) and the guaranty of his absolute perfection is his identity with the god (Emelianov 1994: 265). The king has no equal, he is Enlil's relative (see above) and he may decree the destinies of the land. This concept makes all the king's undertakings justifiable and all his deeds consonant with the wishes of the gods (Emelianov 1994: 254, 274).

This shift is also seen in some curious conceptual differences between the Cursing of Agade and the City Lament of Ur. The intention of the Cursing of Agade is to divest the kings of the Akkadian dynasty of their claim to divinity. In his introduction to the edition of "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur" (*LSUr*), P. Michalowski compares this text to the *Cursing of Agade* (*CA*):

While in *CA* Naram-Sin was a guilty ruler, one whose own impatience and hubris brought about the calamity that afflicted his kingdom, in *LSUr* Ibbi-Sin was a simple victim of fate. ... The switch of accent, from guilty to innocent protagonist, from curse upon the destroyed city to a curse upon those who fulfilled the destiny pronounced by the gods and who took part in the destruction of Sumer, is a fundamental element in the relationship between the two compositions and is the key to the intertextual nature of this type of writing. *LSUr* cannot really be understood without recourse to *CA*, for the relationship between the two is truly dialectical with mutual contradictions bound to similarities. The new order results from a change in perspective but this change can only be grasped against the evidence of the older text. (Michalowski 1989: 9.)

By the time of the first dynasty of Isin, whose kings especially favoured Ninurta, he is one of the gods who is explicitly called "the king" in hymns. Ninurta is "fit to be a prince" in a Širgidda hymn to a king.⁵¹ His "kingship is eminently manifest" in a Širnamšubba to Ninurta (= Ninurta G), where lines 1-16 read as follows:

[Hero, Enlil's gatherer of the numerous functions, consummate hero, your king]ship is [eminently] mani[fest.] Hero [Ninurta], the (braided) crown [hangs loosely about your neck.] Hero Pabilsag, the (braided) crown hangs loosely about your neck. Hero Ningirsu, the (braided) crown hangs loosely about your neck; your kingship is manifest. Your kingship is over the heavens; it is over the earth. You sit with Enki upon the holy dais.

Cf. ll. 58-63: You have taken your place upon the dais of Nippur. With father Enlil you sit. You are the heroic son of father Enlil. In the Ekur you stand.

Cf. ll. 119-22: My king is the pillager of cities for his father; oh his valor! Hero Ninurta is the pillager of cities for his father.⁵²

⁵¹ Ninurta A, Segment A l. 2; see Sjöberg 1973: 116.

⁵² Translation according to Cohen 1975-76: 22ff. This hymn to Ninurta was also popular in the first millennium BC as the surviving copies witness, only the genre of this

In the Sumerian *Lament for Nibru*, which was probably written during the reign of Isin king Išme-Dagan, it is explained how Isin became the dominant city:

ll. 236ff: Isin, the provisioner of the Anuna, awe-inspiring since times of old – An, Enlil, Enki and Ninmah have made its reign long! By their command they have handed it [= dominion] over and expressed their approval! They have entrusted it to Ninurta, the champion, the strong hero!

The decline of the Ur III dynasty led to a religio-political controversy between the cities of Isin and Larsa.⁵³ This expressed itself also in the royal ideology. Among the corollaries of Th. Richter’s study (1999: 448-51), is the fact that the religious capital of the Isin kings was Nippur, and Ninurta was of great concern to these kings. The Isin dynasty built itself on the model of the Third Dynasty of Ur, but the smaller extent of the kingdom did not allow it to lean on the religious authority of other cult centres of the previous empire (Sallaberger 1997: 161). Nippur was in the possession of the Isin kings since probably the sixth year of Išbi-Era while, for the kings of Larsa, the religious centre became Ur with its moon-god Nanna/Sin.⁵⁴ Both gods were sons of Enlil, so the quarrel of the cities was over supremacy between brothers. As pointed out above, Ninurta and Nanna were both occasionally believed to be the “first-born son of Enlil.”

From the reign of the Isin king Lipit-Enlil (1873-69), Nippur was dominated alternately by the two cities.⁵⁵ The number of references of the Isin kings to the cult of Ninurta in the year names and inscriptions thereafter diminishes, and after Enlil-bani (1860-37), there are none in OB documentation.⁵⁶ Rim-Sin I, the king of Larsa, who conquered Isin before Hammurapi, boasted in his inscriptions that the mighty champion Ninurta or his mighty weapon went at his right side during the battle.⁵⁷

song has shifted from *širnamšubba* to *balag*: “it is evident that *balag* literature served as a vehicle for the transmission of Ninurta literature down through the neo-Assyrian period into the Seleucid era” (*ibid.*).

⁵³ The great gods, besides Ninurta, inhabiting Ešumeša in the Isin-Larsa period were Nusku, Suen, Enki, Inanna, Iškur and Utu; see Sigris 1984: 141-43. *The Cursing of Agade* offers a similar list in ll. 210, 222, where Suen, Enki, Inanna, Ninurta, Iškur, Utu, Nuska and Nisaba pray to Enlil to destroy Akkad. Cf. Schwemer 2001: 151, “Ich möchte annehmen, dass die Reihe eben die vor Enlil im Ekur verehrten Gottheiten aufführt”; cf. *ibid.* 363.

⁵⁴ See Richter 1999: 177; cf. *ibid.* 451: “Ist es ein Zufall, dass die Könige von Larsa mit Nanna/Sin sich ebenso tatkräftig dem Kult einer Gottheit verschrieben, die als Sohn des Enlil galt, wie die Könige von Isin, die die Verehrung des Ninurta, des (nachmaligen) Gemahls ihrer Stadtgottheit Ninisina, unterstützten?”

⁵⁵ See Cole 1996: 10 and for more detail R. M. Sigris, “Nippur entre Isin et Larsa de Sin-Iddinam à Rim-Sin,” *Or* 46 (1977), 363-74.

⁵⁶ See Richter 1999: 49f and Sigris 1984: 7f.

⁵⁷ See D. Frayne, *RIME* 4 (1990), 283, ll. 26ff; 285, l. 23.

Evidence for the Ritual of “Determination of Royal Fate” at Nippur

Determination of destinies is a pivotal theme in the Mesopotamian literature. The royal fates were fixed in the assembly of the gods, and the most important decisions were naturally made in the main temple of the religious centre of the land, in Nippur, or Babylon. The gods who determined the destinies in Nippur are referred to as “the fifty great gods and the seven gods who decide destinies” in *Enlil and Ninlil*, ll. 54-64 (cf. En. el. VI 80-81):

Enlil was walking in the Ki-ur. As Enlil was going about in the Ki-ur, the fifty great gods and the seven gods who decide destinies had Enlil arrested in the Ki-ur. Enlil, the ritually impure, left the city. Nunamnir, the ritually impure, left the city. Enlil, in accordance with what had been decided, Nunamnir, in accordance with what had been decided, Enlil went. Ninlil followed. Nunamnir went, the maiden chased him.

It is plausible to assume that the investiture of kings in ancient Mesopotamia was accomplished by an accompanying decision of the gods’ assembly concerning the fate of the king. In the royal hymns of the Ur III and Isin I dynasties, Ninurta and Enlil are recorded as having pronounced the destiny for the kings.⁵⁸ Ninurta determines the destiny for the king Ur-Ninurta:

Ur-Ninurta C, ll. 50-53: Lord, your fixing of destinies cannot be upset, and your holy word is powerful. Ninurta, lord, your fixing of destinies cannot be upset, and your holy word is powerful. Determine a good fate for Ur-Ninurta, with years of life forever unalterable as his destiny.⁵⁹

V. Emelianov has reconstructed the Nippur ritual of “determination of royal fate” on the basis of several royal hymns. His reconstruction is presented below with the textual evidence which may indirectly confirm it:

1) The king goes with trophies and gifts to Enlil’s altar and sacrifices:

cf. *Šulgi D*, 375-82: He [= Šulgi] moored the boat at the temple area of Nibru, the temple area Dur-an-ki, at Enlil’s Kar-geština. He entered before Enlil with the silver and lapis lazuli of the foreign lands loaded into leather pouches and

⁵⁸ Römer (1969: 137) has commented: “Versucht man schliesslich, die kultische Verwurzung der ‘Königshymnen’ der Isinzeit zu bestimmen, liesse sich unter Vorbehalt die Hypothese aufstellen, dass diejenigen Hymnen, welche göttliche Schicksalentscheidungen für den König erhalten, mit dem Anfang der Regierung des in ihnen erwähnten Herrschers zu verbinden sind, wenigstens, soweit darin auch von der doch wohl kaum alljährlich stattfindenden Verleihung der Regalia, Kappe; Szepter; Thron; auch von Hirtenstab und ‘Zügel’ die Rede ist.”

⁵⁹ It was most probably Ninurta who installed Ur-Ninurta on his throne according to the *Instructions of Ur-Ninurta*: “... in order to organize the plans of Šumer, in order to abolish wickedness, to implement righteousness, in order to settle the people in their dwelling places, in order to fasten the foundations of Ur-Ninurta’s shepherd[ship], [(Ninurta?),] the king of Ešumeša, born in Nippur, Suen’s(?) ... so that the house-born slave of Ninurta’s temple could be installed until distant days, from Nippur his beloved city, he established him until distant days, forever.” (Alster 1991: 149f, ll. 8-17.)

leather bags, all their heaped-up treasures, and with the amassed (?) wealth of the foreign lands.

2) Enlil summons the king by oracle and tells him of his election (nam-nir):

cf. *Ur-Namma* B, 1ff: Exalted Enlil, fame, lord who his great pryncedom, Nunamnir, king of heaven and earth, looked around among the people. The Great Mountain, Enlil, chose Ur-Namma the good shepherd from the multitude of people: "Let him be the shepherd of Nunamnir!" He made him emanate (?) fierce awesomeness. The divine plans of brick-built E-kur were drawn up. The Great Mountain, Enlil, made up his mind, filled with pure and useful thoughts, to make them shine like the sun in the E-kur, his august shrine. He instructed the shepherd Ur-Namma to make the E-kur rise high; the king made him the mightiest in the Land, he made him the first among the people.

Cf. also *Šulgi* G, 24ff, which having reported Šulgi's miraculous birth in Ekur, states: Enlil chose Šulgi in his pure heart and entrusted the Land to him. As the shepherd of all the countries, Enlil leant the crook and the staff against his arm, and placed the immutable sceptre of Nanna in his hand; he made him raise his head high, sitting on an unshakeable royal seat.

3) This election is expressed by decreeing a "good fate" for the king. He is given a new (= good) name and the vital forces for the whole land:

Cf. *Šulgi* D, 383ff: Enlil decrees a destiny for Šulgi: "O King, I will decree a destiny for you, I will decree a good destiny for you! O Šulgi, I will decree a destiny for you, I will decree a good destiny for you! I will decree heroism as your destiny! I will decree long-lasting office as ruler and king as your destiny!"

Cf. *Šulgi* G, 21ff: Enlil gave him a good name: "A lion's seed, who provides the E-kur generously, the beloved one of Ninlil; the one granted authority in the E-kur; the king of Urim, the one with shining heart, the shepherd, the protective genius of the Land."

Usually gods never speak to mere mortals in Mesopotamia; they speak only to kings. In Sumerian mythic texts, if there occurs a deity's encounter with a person of unknown status, the god introduces his/her speech with "If you are a god, let me talk with you, if you are human, let me determine your fate!" (see *Inanna's Descent* 261ff; *Lugalbanda* II 105-108). In Enlil's encounter with the kings, he treats them like humans. After the encounter, the mortal is of new, extraordinary status.

4) After the assembly of gods, various aspects of power and insignia are transferred to the king. This is the actual scene of investiture (for a detailed discussion, see Dietrich 1998: 171-81):

Cf. *Šulgi* G, 35-43: May Enlil the trustworthy, whose words are lofty – good fate determined by him takes precedence – who makes sturdy flax and barley grow – may he prolong the life of Šulgi, the provider of the E-kur – hence its flax is indeed fine flax, its barley is indeed fine barley – the property of Nanna, the houseborn-slave of the E-kur, him whom Ninlil named at his birth Šulgi, the shepherd of the Land, the man whom Enlil knows, the steward of the temple.

5) A favourable decision of the "gods' assembly" is pronounced, by which the full power of the king is secured:

Cf. *Ur-Namma* B, 12ff: The good shepherd Ur-Namma, whose trust in Nunamnir is enduring, the knowledgeable judge, the lord of great wisdom, prepared the brick mould. Enlil brought order in his rebellious and hostile lands for the shepherd Ur-Namma, and made Sumer flourish in joy, in days filled with prosperity. The foundations were laid down firmly and the holy foundation pegs were driven in.

Cf. *Šulgi* D, 388ff: May you raise your head in terrifying splendour! May no man stand his ground before your fierce gaze! May your royal crown shine radiantly! May your sceptre be a princely sceptre, and may its shining branches provide shade! May there be joy in your heart, and may you never grow weary! May you be the life-giving king of your assembly! May your life flourish like herbs, may it flourish like grain! May it flourish like a fertile *meš* tree in a broad plot!

6) Enlil (or Ninurta) endows the king with long life and eternal kingship; it means that the gods make the king equal to themselves:

Cf. *Bur-Sin's hymn to Enlil* B, Segment A 4ff: Nunamnir, whose decisions cannot be altered, proud one imbued with terrifying awesomeness, who alone is exalted among the Great Princes, has taken his seat in the shrine of Nibru, in Dur-an-ki, in E-kur, the temple where the fates are determined, in the holy shining temple.

Segment B 3-10: Enlil, what you say is exalted, and there is no god who can interpret it. "I will make the fate I have determined for you even more glorious. I will make your life long-lasting. I will make your days as numerous as those of Utu." You are the god of all the foreign lands! Sa-gara. You are the lord who determines the fates! Bur-Sin's royal trust is in you!

In the Old Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh (see SAA Gilg. II 104), kingship is given to Gilgamesh by Enlil (*šarrūtam ša niši išimkum*^{dEnlil}) and not by Inanna or Anu, which would seem more natural since Gilgamesh was the king of Uruk. This passage probably refers to the decision of the gods' assembly in Nippur.⁶⁰

Emelianov's reconstruction (adapted above with modifications, 1994: 259-64) is convincing and I try to contribute to it with my own discussions below. The theme of fixing destiny for the king is pivotal in the royal rituals, especially in the enthronement ceremonies, throughout Mesopotamian history. Enlil is the main source of royal legitimacy and the blessings the king gets from Enlil are similar to those he receives from Inanna when he performs the sacred marriage. Ninurta certainly belonged to the assembly of gods which determined the royal destiny. After the ritual was carried out, the king's new status as the "great governor of Enlil," raised him to equal rank with Ninurta.

The Babylonian tradition which developed on the basis of the same Sumerian conceptions considered Marduk and Nabû as such whose special task consisted of fixing the destiny of the king and the country during the New Year Festival. It is possible that the fate of the king was personified by the goddess Inanna already in these early periods, as it was personified later by Ištar, who functioned as mediator between the god and the king:

⁶⁰ Cf. J. Renger, *RIA* 5 (1976-80), 132.

Ishtar’s function regarding the king corresponds precisely with that in Greek is called the *Tyche* [“Fate”] of the king, in Latin the *fortuna imperatoris* and in Aramaic *gadda demalka*. The fortune and prestige of the king consequently depend on various divine powers, of which Nebo and Bel on one hand, and Ishtar on the other, are the most important. Nebo fixes his destiny and future in a cosmic framework governed and symbolized by Bel; in this setting Ishtar embodies his *Tyche*. (Drijvers 1980: 69-70.)

One is unlikely to get a definite answer to the question of whether there was a fixed point in the calendar year when the investiture and determination of royal fate took place. But it is a reasonable assumption that it took place at the New Year festival at the beginning of the king’s reign (see Römer 1969: 138-39).

Ninurta’s “Journeys”

Most of the important pieces of Ninurta mythology involve an itinerary – in *Angim* he is returning to Nippur from the battle in the mountains, in his “journey to Eridu” he visits Ea/Enki; in *Lugale* he withdraws from his dwelling to fight Asag and in the Epic of Anzû he meets the eagle on a distant mountain. The original *Sitz im Leben* of these itineraries is probably the military raids of the Sumerian kings against their geo-political enemies.

An exception is *Ninurta’s journey to Eridu*, the background of which is certainly cultic and not concerned with battles (Ninurta B). It describes Ninurta’s acquisition of powers in Abzu, an act which is intimately related to his kingship. This myth is an etiological myth and is likely related to Ninurta’s role as the god of wisdom, like Egyptian Thoth and Greek Hermes. Eridu housed the god of wisdom Ea and his abode Abzu was the mythical source of divine wisdom. Ninurta’s Babylonian successor Nabû lived in Borsippa, where his temple Ezida was called *bît tuppi* “the tablet house.”⁶¹ Ninurta, as the god of wisdom, has a parallel in the nature of the storm god Adad, who was also the god of extispicy and omens.⁶²

This journey of Ninurta to Eridu is probably an etiology explaining how Ninurta obtained his wisdom, among other powers, for the benefit of the land. The purpose of Ninurta’s journey to Eridu was to lay foundations for all Sumerian society. The powers (Sumerian *me*) he received in Eridu were given by Enki himself: “Ninurta, when he enters Eridu, the day is abundance, the night is magnificence, the *me*’s for life (Enki) gave to him, the heroic warrior of An, the eternal *me*’s he restored for him, the lord of all *me*’s.”⁶³ Ninurta

⁶¹ Ninurta was called *apkal ilâni* “sage of the gods” in the royal inscriptions of Assurnasirpal II (Grayson 1991: 194, l. 5 || 229, l. 9.). The same epithet is attested for Nabû, see Pomponio 1978: 184, n. 39.

⁶² See Schwemer 2001: 221-26, 416-19, 683-94.

⁶³ Reisman 1971: 4, col ii (= Segment B), ll. 10-12; translation modified according to Sjöberg 1973: 120.

decrees the destinies for the mortals in Abzu with An and Enlil. This image of Ninurta is that of the king or the crown prince.⁶⁴

Cf. *Journey to Eridu*; Segment C, 7-17: Ninurta, who together with An determines the destiny in the abzu, in Eridug, what you say takes the breath away; the fate you determine is immutable. Just as (?) for your statements, so also for your determining of fates, the heroic gods of the abzu salute you. O king, just as (?) you raise your head in the abzu; so, Ninurta, may you raise your head in Eridug! The Anuna gods speak in praise of your heroism.

Accordingly *Ninurta’s journey to Eridu* was connected with both his wisdom and heroism. In col. iii, l. 30 it is clearly expressed that the purpose of Ninurta’s journey was to extend his kingship over the enemy land: “the awesome glow of your kingship covers the rebellious land” (Reisman 1971: 5). The aim of the myth is to legitimate the king as the icon of Ninurta by giving him “powers” (*me*) in the Abzu (Sigrist 1984: 142):

Segment B (= col. ii) ll. 5-9: When the king arrived at the *abzu*, the day was spent in abundance and the night in celebration; when Ninurta arrived at Eridug, the day was spent in abundance and the night in celebration. The firstborn son of An presented him with divine powers for a lifetime; the lord of all divine powers restored the ancient divine powers to their places for him. The good days of Sumer were to come...

There was a constant threat to the *me*’s of the land from the enemies of civilization. The theme of *Ninurta’s journey to Eridu* is alluded to in *Lugale* 53f where Ninurta’s weapon Šarur says to his master:

Hero, there have been consultations with a view to taking away your kingship. Ninurta, it is confident that it [= Asag] can lay hands on the powers received by you in the *abzu*.

This “journey” text’s genre was labelled by Sumerians *šîr-gîd-da* ‘a long song’ (Reisman 1971: 3) and is identical to the genre of the *Angim*-composition. In the passage of Šulgi E, *šîr-gîd-da* is further qualified by *ár nam-lu-gal-la* “royal praise” (ll. 29, 54). Of the eight other preserved *šîr-gîd-da* compositions, only two do not include mention of the king: these texts do not “praise” the king but rather deal with divine favour expressed toward the ruler (Cooper 1978: 3). Concern for the king might be a unifying feature within the genre (*ibid.* 4). In my opinion, similarities between the two compositions mentioned go farther – Ninurta in these hymns must be considered as the paragon and divine tutor of the king:

As they are described in the myth [*Ninurta’s journey to Eridu*], the powers that Ninurta gains demonstrate his kingship, the power of ruling the land and also foreign lands; and of dispensing destinies, law and order; but, at the same time,

⁶⁴ Sigrist 1984: 142: “... est l’image du roi ou de prince qui en temps de guerre établit la justice. Ainsi l’émergence de Ninurta et l’établissement de sa suprématie ne sont pas seulement matière théologique; ses retentissements sont de nature politique. Ninurta devient le paradigme et donc aussi la caution de évolution du pouvoir royal dont l’autorité dérive non plus des hommes ou des anciens de la cité, mais des dieux.”

he also demonstrates his power for fertility and abundance of vegetation and animal life (i. 7-28). This fertility and creation aspect is another result of victorious encounter in battle; this is displayed with particular clarity in his conflict against Asag and the kur in Lugale (lines 349-67). (Penglase 1994: 63.)⁶⁵

In the final section of *Ninurta’s journey to Eridu*, “his power is limited in relation to Enlil. His deeds and attributes of power are mentioned, but at the same time the author points out that all of these, including his ‘determination of destiny,’ are ‘according to the wish of Enlil’ (iv. 23-8)” (Penglase 1994: 63), as well as “establishment of the throne of kingship,” cf. translation by Reisman (1971: 6-7, D 16-19):

[Oh Ninurta], your [lo]ftiness is according to the wish of Enlil,
Your great instruction [of the foreign land] is according to his wish,
Your [de]termination of destiny is according to his wish,
Your establishment of the [throne of k]ingship is according to his wish.⁶⁶

The *Return of Ninurta to Nippur*, on the other hand, describes Ninurta’s triumphal return to his father Enlil. Already at the outset, Ninurta is called “the king of the lands” (l. 7). This mythical event of Ninurta’s glorious return from his battle against the “mountains” on his shining chariot was used in rituals, as becomes evident if we consider the texts dealing with Enlil’s chariot (Civil 1968) and Marduk’s chariot (Lambert 1973). A chariot for transporting gods’ statues was an important cult object, for example, at the New Year Festival of Babylon where it was Marduk’s vehicle. Marduk’s chariot in this text is called *narkabtu* and also *giri.gub/rukūbu* “vehicle” which appellation is otherwise used of Marduk’s *boat* and symbolizes the vanquished Tiamat (cf. En. el. VII 78).⁶⁷ Tiamat, as the representative of chaos, appears thus as the “vehicle” of Marduk; she is in his employment, his “boat.” A similar relationship exists between Ninurta and Anzū – after Ninurta has vanquished him, the latter becomes his symbol. The name of Marduk’s horse is *Mupparšu* “winged” (En. el. IV 52) which is otherwise the epithet of Anzū (see SAA Anzu I 11, II 5, III 119). The slain adversaries of the gods are seen in depictions on chariots and in gates, alive, with opened eyes, holding gate posts or symbols.⁶⁸ This shows that the mythological

⁶⁵ Compare the translation of the passage from the Journey to Eridu, *Segment A* (= col i) 8ff: “To determine a destiny of abundance, to improve all the, to see that vegetation should grow lushly in the spacious land, to see that the cow-pens and sheepfolds should be heavy with butter and cream to make the shepherds rejoice, the warrior Ninurta went to Eridug. To see that the Tigris and the Euphrates should roar, to see that, to see that the subterranean waters should be terrifying, to see that in the lagoons the carp and the goat-fish,” etc.

⁶⁶ The ETCSL translation of *níg šag₄-ga-na-ka* interprets it as “... pleases to him (Enlil),” but the sense is the same in both cases.

⁶⁷ See Cavigneaux 1981: 141, 79.B.1/30, ll. 6-8, esp. *ti-amat ru-kub-šu-ma* (l. 8); cf. Lambert 1973: 277, l. 2; see the comments by Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 193 and cf. *ibid.*, p. 90.

⁶⁸ Wiggermann 1994: 231. The representations of Anzū-birds were used as apotropaica in Mesopotamian temples, see CAD A/2, 155 s.v. *anzū*; see also Pongratz-Leisten 1996 and *Ninurta and the Monsters* below (pp. 109-21).

enemies of the great gods only accentuate their power – while the god governs the whole field of action, the monster represents the unpredictable. The vanquished enemy enters the service of the god (Wiggermann 1994: 226).

The second important example of the ritual use of Ninurta’s return in *Angim* involves the triumphal *akitu* of Assyrian kings after a military campaign (see *Triumphal akitu of Assyria* [pp. 90-108]). It should be emphasized that all these cultic events, where the king’s glorious returns from victorious military campaigns are celebrated, must have this myth in the background, as is also seen in a cultic commentary from the first millennium (SAA 3 39:24ff):

The Elamite chariot, which has no seat, carries inside it the corpse of Enmešarra. The horses which are harnessed to it are the ghost of Anzū. The king who stands in the chariot is the warrior king, the lord Ninurta.

Thus, there can be little doubt that Ninurta in *Angim* should be considered identical with the victorious king, who has accomplished his task of subduing his enemies, represented by the corpses of monsters hanging on Ninurta’s chariot. Only after his victorious return does the king become fit for kingship. In this way, Ninurta has also fulfilled the wishes of Enlil and can obtain a permanent kingship. On the ceremonial level, the triumphal return of the king or his divine counterpart enables the ritual of enthronement.

The most important obligation of Ninurta after his return to Nippur is the pronouncement of “enduring favour for the king.” The intermediary between Ninurta and the king is Ninurta’s wife Ninnibru (*Angim* 196-203):

Lord Ninurta gazed approvingly at him [= the king]. When he entered E-šumeša, his beloved temple, alone, he told his wife, young lady Ninnibru, what was in his heart, he told her what was on his mind and he made an enduring favourable pronouncement to her for the king. The warrior, whose valor is manifest, Ninurta, son of Enlil, has firmly grounded his greatness in Enlil’s sanctuary (Cooper 1978: 99-101, cf. Emelianov 1994: 252).

Ninurta looks with a “good eye” towards the king, whose hand he directed during the battle, and pronounces the formula of destiny for him. In Sumerian texts a favourable look and a “good word” always designate the transmission of power, in the context of enthronement through sacred choice.⁶⁹ It is of particular importance that Ninurta “went in procession publicly to E-šumeša to manifest his eternal divine powers” (*Angim* 193f). It means that the transmission of power is feasible only if the ruler has observed the order of original ordinances (or “eternal divine powers”) given by the god. Only then can such a fierce force as the deluge also become an ally of the righteous king and bring him to victory. Victory over the “rebellious countries” (*ki-bal*) becomes possible only if the king has not violated the ritual prescriptions of Nippur, especially its sacrificial order, and has not ignored the commandments of higher gods. In the opposite case, his city and his country will be delivered to hostile lands (Emelianov 1994: 250). The political interpretation of this myth is thus perfectly coherent (Sigrist 1984: 142).

⁶⁹ See R. Caplice and W. Heimpel, “Investitur,” *RIA* 5 (1976-80), 141.

In *Lugale*, the plea for the king is put into the mouth of “boatmen” (l. 652 a-igi-lu-e-ne) who transport Ninurta back to his father after the victorious battle (ll. 662-68):

My King: there is a hero [= the king] who is devoted to you and to your offerings, he is as just as his reputation, he walks in your ways; since he has brilliantly accomplished all that is proper for you in your temple, since he has made your shrine rise from the dust for you, let him do everything magnificently for your festival. Let him accomplish perfectly for you your holy rites. He has formulated a vow for his life. May he praise you in the Land.

The same sequence of obligations as in *Angim* is more elaborately drawn up in the *Hymn to Ninurta for Lipit-Eštar* (Lipit-Eštar D). The royal power is first transmitted to Ninurta (ll. 9-15):

Your mother, Nintud, held you by the right wrist as she led you before your father in E-kur, the august shrine. Then she said: “Decide a great fate for the son who is your avenger!” Šagbatuku. Enlil looked at him with joy and decided his fate: “Uta-ulu, may your name be exalted throughout the extent of heaven and earth. Your awesome radiance will make all the great gods tremble with fear.”

In congruence with this event, Ninurta’s spouse Ninnibru is “every day” expected to intercede on behalf of the king (33-37):

Ninurta, hero of Enlil, as you are sitting on your throne-dais, may your spouse, the true lady Ninnibru, who embraces you, step before you daily with friendly words on behalf of Lipit-Eštar! Uta-ulu, may you be his aid when he prays! May he be able to rely on your words, may he be peerless! (cf. van Dijk 1983: 7-8.)

The last passage parallels well Ninurta’s action in *Angim* 196-203 quoted above, and the scene described there might even be considered as the response to Ninnibru’s constant supplications.⁷⁰ A somewhat different version is found in the hymn put into the mouth of Išme-Dagan, where Ninurta is described as the divine helper of the king (A 76-89):

Nuska, Enlil’s minister, placed the royal sceptre in my hand, revealed the powers of E-kur to me, established there for me an awe-inspiring podium, and ensured that Enlil’s heart was in a joyful mood. Ninurta, Enlil’s mighty warrior, approached Nunamnir in speech on my behalf and secured (?) the favourable words of Enlil and Ninlil for me. He has made my reign of kingship excellent, has made me great in lordship, and is indeed my helper. In E-kur he prays continually on my behalf, and is indeed the constable of my kingship. He, who with mighty

⁷⁰ The assisting role of a Nippur goddess in bestowing kingship should not be underestimated, as is also seen in a passage of the *Hymn to the Queen of Nippur* (III 5-6): *nadān šarrūtu enūtu [...] mamman ul ilē’i* “To grant kingship, lordship [...] no one [but she] is able” (Lambert 1982: 196-97). In a *Hymn to Inanna for Ur-Ninurta* (= Ur-Ninurta A), Inanna is depicted as the spouse of the king Ur-Ninurta and she intercedes on behalf of the king (l. 7: “she perfected the divine plans of kingship, so as to re-establish it”) before Anu and Enlil (ll. 11-13): “She made the king whom she took by the hand humbly enter into the where destinies are determined, where the good divine powers are assigned to the great gods – the E-kur, the holy dwelling of An and Enlil that is enbued with terrifying awe.” Cf. Jacobsen 1957: 105, n. 23; Kramer 1974: 169.

weapons makes all the foreign countries bow low, has put great power into my right hand.

In this passage, the royal sceptre is given by Nuska, the vizier of Enlil.⁷¹ Ninurta has somehow ensured the good mood of Enlil and he is boastfully described as “praying on behalf” (šū hu-mu-da-gál-gál) of the king, he is the king’s “helper” (á-tah) and “agent” (maškim) of his kingship. In the epilogue of the SB Anzû Epic (SAA Anzu III 130), Ninurta comparably is named “guardian of the throne of kingship,” with the Akkadian term *rābišu* which equals Sumerian maškim.

According to *Angim*, the right moment for Ninurta’s favourable pronouncement to the king occurs when Ninurta is returning from his successful raid in the “mountains.” On the level of ritual, it implies that a “good pronouncement” is preceded by a cultic procession of the victorious Ninurta. In *Lipit-Eštar Hymn D*, the situation of Ninurta’s decreeing the destiny for the king is formulated as a *desideratum*, the divine favour which has not yet occurred (ll. 38-41):

May he be the king whose fate Ninurta decides, the one endowed with attractiveness! Lipit-Eštar, the prince who is a supporter of yours, the son of Enlil, has established justice in Sumer and Akkad, and made the Land feel content!

The hymn ends with a plea to Ninurta to hand over his weapons, including the flood, to the “prince” (46-49):

Lord, mighty flood which tears out the roots of the enemy! Ninurta, mighty flood which tears out the roots of the enemy, may you put a weapon into the mighty hands of prince Lipit-Eštar which will snap his enemies in two as if they were reeds!⁷²

Very similar cultic practices are also recorded from the first millennium BC. The Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus had, according to the Istanbul stele, undertaken such a sequence of actions on the 4th of Nisannu at the beginning of the New Year Festival:

With the good grace of the goddess Gula assured in a dream, Nabonidus entered before Nabû to receive the “just sceptre.” He then visited Nabû’s consort, Tašmētum, on her seat, whom he expected to intercede for him with her father-in-law, Marduk, in his sanctuary ... the king’s duties next took him before Marduk in Esagil.⁷³

⁷¹ Cf. George 1996: 384. The son of the city god gives a sceptre to the king in royal inscriptions before the rise of Babylon also in Gudea Statue B ii 18-19, where it is given by Igalimma, son of Ningirsu.

⁷² The relationship between Lipit-Eštar and Enlil is further described in a hymn to Ninisina, see W. H. Ph. Römer, *Hymnen und Klagelieder in sumerischer Sprache*, AOAT 276 (Münster, 2001), 91-105.

⁷³ George 1996: 382. See H. Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros’ des Grossen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschriften*, AOAT 256 (Münster: Ugarit 2001), 519ff, cols. vi-ix, esp. vii, 11’ff.

The goddess Gula was a later form of Ninnibru, with whom she was commonly equated (Lambert 1982: 179). The king Nabonidus follows here the ancient mythological patterns of Nippur, as described in the *Angim* myth and Lipit-Eštar Hymn D to Ninurta discussed above. The only difference is that Tašmetu is not the spouse of Marduk, and she is rather expected to intercede on behalf of Nabû, which points out that Nabonidus should here be acting as the earthly counterpart of Nabû.⁷⁴ The temple where Nabonidus received the sceptre was the temple of Nabû *ša harê*, the ceremonial name of which was E-ningidar-kalamma-summa "The house which bestows the sceptre of the land," and also for Nebuchadnezzar II, the god of this temple was Nabû (George 1992: 311). The cultic topography of this temple was a legacy of the Courts of the Sceptre in the Ekur temple of Nippur.⁷⁵

Thus, we can see that from the earliest history of royal rituals in Nippur until the Neo-Babylonian and Persian kingship, a motif of female intercession on behalf of the terrestrial king to Ninurta/Nabû was preserved. It would be incorrect to assume that the situation described in the Lipit-Eštar hymn concerned only the king in question because literary use and preservation of the hymn *Lipit-Eštar D* lasted almost a thousand years. It is interesting to note that a literary catalogue of MA date (*ca.* 1100) still lists this *adab* among other royal hymns of the Isin dynasty (Hallo 1975: 192).⁷⁶

There are further examples of continuity which would bridge the gap between these distant traditions. The idea of female intercession occurs in the love dialogue of Nanaya and Muati from the time of the Babylonian king Abi-ešuh (1711-1684). The goddess Nanaya is invoked: "Let the king live for ever at your (*fem.*) command! Let Abi-ešuh ... live forever [at your command]!" Muati is clearly the same deity as the later Nabû, and the witness of an amatory dialogue during the reign of Abi-ešuh makes it a predecessor for the first millennium Nabû's marriage with Tašmetu, a ritual which took place in the month of Iyyar.

Ištar is found speaking on behalf of Ammiditana to her beloved Anu in an Old Babylonian hymn (Nissinen 2001: 112). The Neo-Assyrian king Assur-

⁷⁴ In the Nabonidus Chronicle there is a formula occurring four times in the preserved portion of the text which puts Nabonidus in overt parallelism with Nabû: "The king did not come to Babylon in the month Nisan, Nabû did not come to Babylon. Bel did not come out, the Akitu festival did not take place." Grayson 1975: 106ff: *šarru ana Nisanni ana Bābili ūl illiku, Nabû ana Bābili ūl illiku Bēl ūl ūšā isinnu akitu baṭil*; Chronicle 7 ii 5-6, 10-11, 19-20, 23-24.

⁷⁵ George 1996: 384; see *Ninurta as the Keeper of Royal Regalia* below (pp. 51-55) for further details.

⁷⁶ KAR 158. Hallo concludes: "Thus, cultic hymns associated with the early kings of Isin were preserved into the second half of the second millennium, even though there is no evidence whatever for any interest in such relatively obscure kings as Shu-ilishu, Lipit-Ishtar or Ur-Ninurta at this late date. But the explanation for this seeming paradox is not far to seek. So far from preserving specific biographical data like the true royal hymns, these cultic hymns allude to the king, when at all, only in the most general terms. The royal name is, in fact, of such secondary importance in these contexts that it is very often abbreviated almost beyond the point of recognition." (1975: 192-93.)

banipal addresses Nabû in a colophon with the words: "[Tašme]tu, the Great Lady, your beloved spouse, who intercedes (for me) [daily] before you in the gentle bed, who [never] ceases demanding you to protect my life. [The one who trusts in] you will not come to shame, O Nabû!"⁷⁷ In the Assyrian hymn SAA 3.11 rev., the goddess Šerua is invoked to intercede for Assurbanipal with her husband Aššur, who was the personal god of the king (Livingstone, SAA 3, p. xxiii).

In the inscriptions of Assurbanipal and Sennacherib, there recur the accounts of the ritual events enacted by the king which certainly are based on *Angim*: the king has made the lofty chariot (*narkabtu šertu*) for Marduk adorned with gemstones and precious metals and presented it to him. In the same breath, the preparation of the bed for the divine bed-chamber is mentioned (Borger 1996: 139-40). Both are placed in the ceremonial bedroom (Nissinen 2001: 103ff). Marduk and his spouse are expected to decree the fates for the king and his enemies during their time in bed, according to an invocation to the gods:

May they bless kingship [by the ut]terance of their pure mouths which is not to be countermanded! May they make me, who looked for their dwellings, attain my heart's desire! May they suppress my enemies, (I) who fulfilled their ardent wish. ... May Marduk, king of kings, weaken his potency and destroy his seed, May Zarpanitu pronounce a bad word about him on the bed of her boudoir! May Mullissu, queen of Ešarra, spouse of Aššur, creatrix of the great gods, pronounce with her lips every day a good word in favour of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, before Aššur, [... rule, long life and plenty of days, establishment of his reign [...] his royal throne. May Aššur and Mullissu pronounce (this) forever and ever.⁷⁸

In these Neo-Assyrian accounts, the ancient ritual pattern described in *Angim* is easily recognizable. The mention of the chariot for Marduk and the subsequent plea for the living king by the spouse of the god connect it with Ninurta's victorious return from the mountains on his lofty chariot and his subsequent encounter with Ninnibru. The new circumstance not explicitly attested in *Angim* and Lipit-Eštar D is the mention of the bed and bed-chamber where the goddess is expected to intercede on behalf of the king.

In my view, the original ritual context of Ninurta's "journeys" to Eridu and Nippur is to be found in the ceremony of "determination of royal fate" and the enthronement of the Sumerian king in Nippur. *Ninurta's journey to Eridu* may parallel Nabû's journey to Babylon on the 4th of Nisannu when he gives a sceptre to the king.⁷⁹ This hypothesis is plausible because Babylon had

⁷⁷ See Lambert 1966, 49:14; Pomponio 1978: 42-44 and Nissinen 2001: 112 for Abi-ešuh and Ammi-ditana. For Assurbanipal, see H. Hunger *AOAT* 2, 338:21-25; the translation here is adapted from Nissinen 1998: 597.

⁷⁸ K 2411 i 18 - ii 15, translation according to Nissinen 2001: 104; cf. Streck 1916: 300.302.

⁷⁹ On the basis of Gudea Cylinder B iii 3-5 (Il. 863-71), the date of Ningirsu's return from Eridu can be exactly established: "The year ended and the month was completed. A new year started, a month began and three days elapsed in that month. As Ningirsu arrived

absorbed the identity of Eridu at the end of the second millennium, becoming a new Eridu. A quarter of the city of Babylon was already called Eridu in the Kassite texts (Clayden 1996: 111). Babylon is equated with Eridu in the topographical compendium *Tintir* I 21. Marduk took the place of Ea (see En. el. VII 14) and *Tintir* V 90-91 eulogizes: “Babylon, the place of creation of the great gods, Eridu, in which Esagil is built.” Esagil correspondingly took the place of E-abzu, being called the ‘replica of Apsû’ (George 1997: 129-30).

Nabû enters twice into Babylon during the New Year Festival – on the 4th of Nisannu he enters Babylon as Eridu, and *Ninurta’s journey to Eridu* was the myth which lay in the background of this cultic event. His subsequent demonstration of valour on the 6th of Nisannu in the Ehursagtila temple at the festival corresponded to Ninurta’s battle in the “mountains” (see pp. 55ff below). On the 11th of Nisannu Nabû entered a second time into Babylon when the gods returned from the *akitu*-chapel in the plain. At this time Nabû entered Babylon as Nippur, because *Ninurta’s return to Nippur* parallels the events of the 11th of Nisannu (“coronation”) in the Babylonian ritual, when Nabû was exalted. The ritual application of *Angim* in later times may have been wider than this:

the first millennium rituals which were perhaps taken over from the second millennium Babylonian rituals by the Assyrian scribes, the dramatic representation of Ninurta’s victory over his enemies is reenacted either by the footrace [see pp. 102ff below] or by his return to the city in a chariot; the latter must have derived from Ninurta’s myth *Angim*. (Watanabe 1998: 444.)

The royal hymns in Sumerian make us believe that determination of the royal fate took place at the ritual enthronement at the beginning of the king’s reign. Beforehand, the king had the obligation to journey to the most important cities where he received gifts and regalia from different gods, e.g., *me*’s from Enki (Eridu), a crown from Suen (Ur), “princely clothing” from Inanna (Uruk) and a throne from Enlil (Nippur).⁸⁰ The theme of gods bestowing gifts on the king occurs in royal hymns throughout the second millennium and into the first, as shown by the *Assurbanipal Coronation Hymn* (SAA 3 11 rev. 5-8.). The only difference seems to be that in later times the king does not make actual journeys in order to obtain his royal insignia.

In *Angim*, Ninurta is depicted as the tutor of the king; he is returning from the battle against the “rebel lands” or “mountains.” He gazes approvingly at the king and utters a favourable pronouncement, i.e., in a sense determines his destiny. *Angim* thus describes the king’s enthronement in conjunction with Ninurta’s return from the “mountains.” By virtue of this royal power which Ninurta transmits to the king, the latter is expected to be able to

from Eridu, beautiful moonlight shone illuminating the land, and the E-ninnu competed with the new-born Suen.” Ningirsu’s entering his temple is described (B v 6-7): “Ningirsu entered his house and it became the shrine of Abzu when there is a festival.” Accordingly, Ningirsu entered his new house on the 4th day of the first month (cf. the discussion by Emelianov 2000).

⁸⁰ Cf. Šulgi X. See J. Renger in *RIA* 5 (1976-80), 129. For the Mesopotamian import in the West, see Dietrich 1998.

perform heroic deeds like those of Ninurta. The ritual setting of *Angim* is probably that of confirmation of the king’s power. Ninurta is the giver and the king the receiver. Since Ninnibru is expected to intercede on behalf of the king, the transmission of power is not unconditional – the king must be acceptable to Ninurta.

The ritual of decreeing the destinies at first millennium coronations is not attested (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 56); but it is attested at the Babylonian New Year festival which served as divine confirmation for the king. Thus we can detect the influence of *Angim* both in first millennium “sacred marriage” and in New Year celebrations. The common feature for all these state rituals is divine confirmation of the king and decreeing his destiny. Ninurta as the protector of the king is often replaced by other divine figures in the second and first millennium mythology of Babylonia and Assyria.

Babylonia in the Second Millennium

In the Old Babylonian period, the role of the dispenser of kingship is consigned to Marduk. The theological programme is explicitly stated in the prologue of ‘Hammurapi’s Code,’ where Enlil “decreed for Marduk the role of Enlil” and “established an eternal kingship for Marduk within Babylon” which means that “Babylon’s worldly success is mirrored in Marduk’s selection by the gods to exercise the former role of Enlil, instead of Enlil conferring the title on the ruler directly at the Ekur in Nippur.” (Postgate 1995: 403.)

On the basis of dispersed evidence from the second millennium, we can observe that the Nippur triad of Enlil-Ninlil-Ninurta is gradually replaced by the Babylonian Marduk-Zarpanitu-Nabû, although the authority of Sumerian tradition retains its hold. The Old Babylonian forerunner of the first millennium god list An=Anum lists Ninurta (TCL 15 10:62) immediately following Enlil, and An=Anum I 205 calls Ninurta “the firstborn son of Enlil.”⁸¹ The city of Babylon and Marduk’s temple Esagil began to assume the function of Nippur and Ekur with the aid of Hammurapi’s tremendous military success and by the decline of Enlil’s city due to natural circumstances in Hammurapi’s time.⁸² This decline probably culminated in the era of Samsuiluna, around 1720 (Gibson 1993: 8). Babylon did not suffer from this economic crisis, and between Hammurapi and the end of the Kassite period the city grew greatly, probably tripling its area (George 1997: 134).

The period shortly before Hammurapi witnessed the first rise of Assyria. In the 18th century, the Amorite conqueror Šamši-Adad postulated the shift

⁸¹ See Streck 2001: 513; Klein 2001: 291, n. 61.

⁸² See Maul 1997: 120. In the *Codex Hammurapi*, reference is made to Tutu and Zababa instead of Nabû and Ninurta. Hammurapi renovated Zababa’s temple in Kiš (D. Frayne, *RIME* 4 [1990], 343f) and built Marduk’s temple in Borsippa (*ibid.* 355). Nabû later replaced Tutu as the city-god of Borsippa, but “Tutu” was still considered to be one of Marduk’s names in *Enūma eliš* VII 9ff.

of the world-axis from Nippur to Assur. The claim to rule was probably derived from the axis-theology of Nippur, and was expressed in Assyria by the new king's title *šar kiššati*, "king of the world."⁸³ The claim to rule did not develop fully at that time in Assyria, as Babylon, under Hammurapi, brought the rise of Assyrian power to an abrupt halt (Maul 1997: 122).

Archaeological and written evidence suggests that the city of Nippur was largely abandoned for three hundred years, from the late eighteenth through the end of the fifteenth century, and was revitalized only under the Kassite kings in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries (Zettler 1997: 149). The "Kassite period" in Nippur lasted approximately from 1360-1225 during which time Nippur was a major political center of Karduniaš (= Babylonia).⁸⁴ The Kassite kings, as evidenced by numerous inscribed lapis lazuli discs, especially favoured Enlil, Ninlil, Ninurta and Nusku.⁸⁵ Ninurta was equated in Kassite-Babylonian bilingual lists with the Kassite god Maruttaš.⁸⁶ Kurigalzu I, who founded the new royal capital Dur-Kurigalzu in the early fourteenth century, built there a temple complex which contained a new temple for Ninurta as well, *é-sag-dingir-re-e-ne* (Clayden 1996: 116).

The Kassites endeavoured to rebuild the old and venerable city in its ancient fashion and did some preparatory archaeological work in order to identify individual buildings:

Only such a procedure can explain how, after hundreds of years of abandonment, the Kassites could have placed their versions of the Inanna Temple, the North Temple, the temple in WA, and other buildings, over their Old Babylonian predecessors. The reconstruction by the Kassites of this holiest of cities on so grand a scale and with such care for detail is consistent with that dynasty's deliberate efforts to revive other aspects of ancient Mesopotamian culture, such as a resurrection of the long-dead Sumerian language and literature. (Gibson 1993: 8-9.)

The Kassite kings are recorded as having frequently spent their New Year celebrations in Nippur. It probably means that they were enthroned there because according to Astrolabe B, the installation of the king occurs in the first month of the year (Cohen 1993: 306). Twenty references, mostly in the year formulae, contain the expressions "coming up" (*elē šarri*) and "going down" (*arād šarri*) of the kings.⁸⁷ Two of the references bear dates of Nazi-Maruttaš (1323-1298), and five date to Kudur-Enlil (1264-1256). The references to "dethronement" (*arād šarri*) cluster in the 11th and 12th months; but those to "enthronement" (*elē šarri*) between the 29th of the 12th month – 2nd of the 1st month. Cohen comments: "perhaps the presence of the king in

⁸³ This title (*šar kiššati*) existed long before in Sumerian tradition as "the king of Kish," see Hallo 1957: 21-29.

⁸⁴ See M. P. Streck, *RIA* 9 (1997-2001), 544.

⁸⁵ Biggs 1965: 100; these discs are published in BE 1/1 and PBS 15.

⁸⁶ See J. A. Brinkman, *RIA* 7, p. 440, s.v. *Maruttaš*.

⁸⁷ J. A. Brinkman, "Materials and Studies for Kassite History," Vol I (Chicago 1976), 411ff.

Nippur was part of a special installation ritual of the king which may be alluded to in the phrase 'installation of the king' in Astrolabe B."⁸⁸

The popular theme on contemporary Kassite seals is "Greifvogel und Beute" (Stiehler-Alegria 1999) which certainly involved a depiction of the "slaying of Anzû" motif. Nine of these seals with that motif contain a prayer, of which five are addressed to Marduk. The fact that four of these seals were found in Nippur is not an argument for the popularity of Marduk in 14th-century Nippur, but implies an ongoing transfer of power in the pantheon (Stiehler-Alegria 1999: 263).

Even if the Kassite kings did rebuilding at Nippur as a religious obligation, they probably took it already as an equivalent to Babylon. Thus, one of the Kurigalzus calls Babylon *a-li ša-a-ti* (Sumerian *uru ul*) "the (most) ancient city," which put it on a level with the ancient cities of Nippur, Uruk, Ereš and Sippar.⁸⁹

After the period 1360-1225, Nippur was again abandoned, probably as a result of a raid by an Elamite king.⁹⁰ By the time of Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104), Enlil was still the paramount god in Nippur, as shown in the introductory section of the *kudurru* from the same city dating from 1110, where Enlil is called "king of the great gods who in heaven and earth/hell has no god to rival him."⁹¹

To summarize, during the Old Babylonian period Marduk took over conjointly the position of the father Enlil and the mythology of his son Ninurta in the pantheon.⁹² W. G. Lambert has frequently defended the position (e.g., 1989: 218) that Marduk displaced Anu and Enlil during the Second Isin Dynasty (1964: 3ff). In the mystical and explanatory texts, this change in the pantheon is understood or explained as the defeat of Anu and Enlil by Marduk (Livingstone 1986: 166). Lambert claims that it is difficult to find evidence for Marduk's promotion before Isin II:

The god list An=Anum in Tablet II gives fifty names of Marduk, following on forty for Ea. Since "fifty" was Enlil's mystical number, this is a discreet way of asserting that Marduk has displaced Enlil, but in Tablet I Enlil still has "Fifty"

⁸⁸ Cohen 1993: 307. In parentheses, Cohen hints at the possibility that the Neo-Babylonian practice of humiliating the king at the New Year festival might originate or have evolved from this possible installation ritual at Nippur during the Kassite period (*ibid.*).

⁸⁹ Lambert 1992: 122; see W. Sommerfeld, "Der Kurigalzu-Text MAH 15922," *Afo* 32 (1985), 1, 1. 4.

⁹⁰ Cole 1996: 12. This Elamite raid is mentioned in Chronicle 22 (P) iv 14-15: "[At the time of] Enlil-nadin-šumi, the king, Kiten-Hutran, king of Elam, attacked. [He went into] action against Nippur (and) scattered its people" (*nišē^{meš} is-pu-uh*), see Grayson 1975: 176.

⁹¹ Lambert 1992: 121f. The *kudurru* is published by W. J. Hincke, *A New Boundary Stone of Nebuchadnezzar I from Nippur* (Philadelphia 1907), 142ff; see also Cole 1996: 46.

⁹² In *Šurpu* IV 1-3 Marduk is mentioned as defeater of Asakku (Reiner 1958: 25). Marduk as a warrior god is probably based on his equation with Ninurta (Livingstone 1986: 154).

as a name. The date at which Tablet II of An=Anum was finalized in its present form is uncertain, though it must be before the time of the Middle Assyrian scribe Kidin-Sîn, to whom we owe two surviving copies. He lived at about the same time as Nebuchadnezzar I of Babylon. (Lambert 1992: 122.)

We do not know whether Nabû was already held to be Marduk's son at the time of the First Babylonian dynasty, but he does become Marduk's son in the Kassite period (Pomponio 1978: 49f). Accordingly, much of the mythology of Ninurta was bestowed on the son of Marduk, Nabû.⁹³ In the Middle Babylonian period, Ninurta is occasionally presented as the supreme god, in the personal name "Ninurta is the Head of the Gods" and in a boundary stone curse: "Ninurta, king of heaven and earth/hell."⁹⁴ In the documents from thirteenth century Nippur, there also occurs a personal name *Marduk-šar-ilī* "Marduk is the king of the Gods" (Sommerfeld 1982: 159, n. 1). Similar claims are made for half a dozen different gods in Old Babylonian times, and it proves only that any of the great gods could be so promoted at the whim of the believer (see Lambert 1992: 122).

The gradual takeover of Ninurta's and Enlil's positions by the Babylonian gods is seen on several levels. For example, the temple of Enlil as *Bēl-mātāti* ("Lord of the Lands"), E-namtila in Babylon, was built at the time of Hammurapi, and from the time of Ammisaduqa at least it was also the site of Ninurta's cult.⁹⁵ Probably he was housed there until his own temple, E-hursag-tilla, was built in Babylon. According to the list of Bel's statues (BM 119282), which highlights the new ideology of Babylon in the twelfth century, the name of Marduk's (*Bēl*) statue in E-namtila was Lugal-dimmer-ankia, "King of the gods of Heaven and Earth/Hell" (George 1997a: 66-67). In *Enūma eliš* VI 139 the assembled gods hail Marduk with the same name. A. R. George comments:

We do not know whether this statue was the principal cultic image in E-namtila but, given Marduk's take-over of the cult-rooms of Ninurta in E-sagil and E-hursag-tilla, it would be no surprise if it was. ... It is significant that in Tintir IV E-nam-tila is ascribed to Bēl-mātāti, rather than simply to Enlil, as it had been by Hammurapi. (George 1997a: 67.)

One can detect a systematic transformation of Babylon into a Nippur. The syncretism of Marduk and Enlil had been imposed on Nippur by the reign of Adad-apla-iddina in the eleventh century, who calls the walls of Nippur *Nēmet(ti)-Marduk*, "Bulwark of Marduk," and those of Babylon *Imgur-Enlil*, "Enlil showed favour," names which are the opposite of what one might

⁹³ Pomponio 1978: 191-95. The two are explicitly equated in *CT* 25 11: 12 and *KAR* 142 I, 22f.

⁹⁴ ^d*nin-urta-rēš-ilāni*^{mes} is found in BE 14 22:12 and 132:10, PBS 2/2 1:16, and ^d*nin-urta šar šamē u eršeti* in BBSt., p. 35:39 (Lambert 1989: 218).

⁹⁵ See George 1993: 130f, no. 848 and 849 for Babylonian Enamtila. A part of Enlil's temple in Nippur was also called Enamtila. This was also a name of the Ur III royal residence. The composition *Winter and Summer* 105 refers to Enamtila as the residence of Enlil, but in line 234, it is a residence of the king Ibbi-Sin also (Michalowski 1989: 81).

expect.⁹⁶ Marduk became Bel, the Lord *par excellence* and the identity of Enlil suffered in this syncretism, which favoured the god of Babylon, until some centuries later the principal god of Nippur was known most popularly as *Bēl*, "Lord."⁹⁷

At Babylon, Marduk appears to have been equated with both Enlil and Ninurta. Three of Marduk's (*Bēl*) statues in Babylon were situated in the cult places of the gods of Nippur, Enlil and Ninurta. In the chapel of *Ninurta of the Courtyard* in Esagil (= Room 12) with immediate access to a courtyard there was:

the statue of Bēl as Asarre, positioned centrally on the Dais of Asarre opposite the gate on to the courtyard, [and it] must have been the principal cultic image in the chapel of Ninurta. In other words, Marduk was not a bystander in this chapel; he was the main object of attention. A similar situation probably obtained in Ninurta's own temple, E-hursag-tilla, where the list locates the fifth statue of Bēl in "the chapel of Ninurta" (George 1997a: 66-67).

In both cases we encounter an image of Marduk instead of the image of Ninurta.⁹⁸ The sanctuaries themselves are still ascribed to Ninurta which would indicate that Marduk has absorbed Ninurta's identity, but not deposed him:

The substitution of Marduk for Ninurta is in agreement with the theological reform that saw the transfer to the god of Babylon of mythology traditionally attached to Enlil's son. ... Locally at least, Ninurta became simply an aspect of Marduk, and his cult became Marduk's cult. In this way, we can assume that an ancient visitor to the temple of Ninurta in Babylon would not have been surprised to find that the chief object of worship there was in fact a statue of Marduk. (George 1997a: 67.)

This new ideology found its fullest expression in *Enūma eliš* where Enlil appears only "where he can contribute to Marduk's greater glory" (Lambert 1992: 120). The date of composition of the Creation Epic has recently been corrected (Dalley 1997). W. G. Lambert (1964) posited the date of Nebuchadnezzar I, linked to the idea of the retrieval of "the" statue of Marduk by that king from Elam. S. Dalley has argued, taking into account the list which enumerates seven statues of Marduk, that it is superfluous to speak of a single statue of Marduk. The statues of Marduk had returned to Babylon on at least three occasions before Nebuchadnezzar – in the reign of Agum-kakrime, in the reign of an anonymous king and in the reign of Itti-Marduk-balaṭu or Ninurta-nadin-šumi. It was not a unique event, and the very frequency of this type of occurrence undermines its supposedly crucial role in inspiring the composition (see Dalley 1997: 167).

⁹⁶ George 1997a: 69; see D. Frame, *RIMB* 2 (1995), 57, l. 5 and 51, l. 3.

⁹⁷ George 1997: 135, Cole 1996: 19.

⁹⁸ The Akkadian word *šalmu* can actually denote almost any type of visual representation; see I. Winter in *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6 (1992), 15. For a possible mythological background of materials used for Marduk's images, see *Ninurta and the Mountain of Stones* below (pp. 162-68).

The evidence from titles in personal names and the god-list An=Anum (see Sommerfeld 1982: 174f) support an earlier date for the Creation Epic. Various theological elements which are found in *Enūma eliš* are in fact already attested in the Old Babylonian period (Dalley 1997: 169). The reinstallation of Marduk's statue in Babylon was not crucial in inspiring the composition, but probably contributed only to redaction and updating of a not yet rigidly canonized text (*ibid.* 167). The top titles of Marduk do not appear only in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, but are even attested from an archive of texts dating before the end of Samsuiluna's reign⁹⁹ and in the Hymn to Abi-Ešuh where Enlil gives to Marduk the kingship over all heaven and earth (*ibid.* 169):

Abi-Ešuh A, ll. 7-10: He (= An) has given you the supervision of great august commands of heaven and earth, he has bound to your hand the shepherd's crook that curbs the foreign lands, he has made you excel among the great gods, and in addition has given you, to control them, the royal sceptre and the ritual ordinances of the gods. Enlil has fixed as your destiny kingship over the totality of heaven and earth and has relieved you of any rivals; he has made you eminent among the Anuna, and has bestowed on you the exercise of domination.

Cf. l. 14: The lordship of the hero standing in all his strength upon this august pedestal is indeed eminent in heaven and earth. The lordship of Marduk standing in all his strength upon this august pedestal, is indeed eminent in heaven and earth.¹⁰⁰

Thus it seems likely that by the time of the Babylonian king Samsuiluna, Anu and Enlil have already given to Marduk lordship over the four quarters of the world and made his name supreme.¹⁰¹ A *Šu-ila* to Marduk, edited by J. S. Cooper (1987), which may go back to the Old Babylonian period, also attests such epithets of Marduk as Enbilulu, Tutu, Šazu and Sirsir which are associated with him in *Enūma eliš*, only in a different order (Dalley 1997: 169). Therefore, when Enlil transfers his most prestigious title *Bēl-mātāti* to Marduk in *Enūma eliš* (VII 136), it can already be seen in the Old Babylonian theological context. An early version of *Enūma eliš* might have existed as a modification of the Old Babylonian version of the Anzū Epic. It is possible that the early version of *Enūma eliš* dates to the celebration of Hammurabi's conquest and was redacted in the time of Nebuchadnezzar I. This might also be an explanation why Nebuchadnezzar's sage takes his genealogy back to the sage of Hammurabi, Asalluhi-mansum (Dalley 1997: 169-70):

The evidence now seems overwhelmingly for an evolution of *Enūma eliš* which took shape in Babylon probably towards the end of Hammurabi's reign, underwent various modifications possibly linked to the retrieval of captured statues, and continued to change in the Late Babylonian period. Different cities would have had different versions of the text, not least with a different god as conqueror,

whether Nabu, Adad, Sin or Nergal/Erra, as we know from passing allusions in various texts. (Dalley 1997: 171.)

The elevation ideology of Ninurta in Nippur probably stood behind the process of the "raising of Marduk" (Maul 1997: 120 n. 42). Even if Marduk was firmly connected to his city Babylon, his promotion was an essential part of his identification with Ninurta. The revised mythology for the cult of Marduk was perfected in the late second millennium (George 1999a: 72). The new rise of Babylon in the twelfth century, the redaction of *Enūma eliš* and the date of Nebuchadnezzar I's new ideology again coincide with a decline of Nippur:

When correctly reassembled, the evidence clearly shows sharp breaks in pottery traditions not only in the Old Babylonian period but also in the post-Kassite period. And in both periods of abandonment, dunes invaded the site, just as they have done in the past hundred years. The abandonment at the end of the 2nd Millennium meant that there was the necessity for a second revival of Nippur, which seems to have taken place in the 8th century B.C., reaching its peak under Assurbanipal in the late 7th Century. (Gibson 1993: 12.)

Ninurta in Assyria

The god Aššur of Assyria was syncretistically called the "Assyrian Enlil" (*Enlil aššurū*).¹⁰² According to this syncretism, which had already emerged in the time of Šamši-Adad I in the eighteenth century, Sumerian Ninurta and Babylonian Nabû gradually became sons of Aššur. The syncretism is explicit in line 186 of the Divine Directory (*Götteradressbuch*) of Assur (SAA 18* 49), where ^dEn-lil appears as a variant for Aššur (George 1992: 185). The syncretism of the gods was a facet of the religious convergence between north and south. The name Assur was originally the name of the mountain and the city which was built around it. The earliest phase of making the god Aššur a *deus persona*:

is reflected in the common use of *ilum* with reference to him in Old Assyrian personal names ... Also, early Assyrian royal inscriptions couple Aššur and Adad without explanation. In these phenomena there is surely a reflection of a pantheon later known from Syria, headed by El and Baal/Hadad. The occurrence of a form of the later Syrian El in Old Akkadian religion, though not in the city gods of Sumer, has long been known. The second attempt to give Aššur theological identity seems to have begun in the second millennium, and modelled him on Enlil. (Lambert 1983: 86.)

The Assyrian king saw himself as the "representative of Enlil" and the "governor of Aššur."¹⁰³ From the Assyrian royal inscriptions, it appears that

⁹⁹ See F. N. al-Rawi, "A New Hymn to Marduk from Sippar," *RA* 86 (1992), 79-83.

¹⁰⁰ Printed edition in: J. van Dijk, "L'hymne à Marduk avec intercession pour le roi Abi-ešuh," *MIO* 12 (1966-67), 57-74.

¹⁰¹ See D. Frayne, *RIME* 4 (1990), 381.

¹⁰² See Borger 1961: 73; K. Tallqvist *Der assyrische Gott*, *Studia Orientalia* 4/3, Helsinki 1932, p. 13.

¹⁰³ Maul 1997: 121, see, e.g., the inscription of Šamši-Adad I (A.0.39.2. Col. i, 4-5) which lists the king's epithets: *ša-ki-in* ^dEn-lil / ENSI ^dA-šur₄ "appointee of the god Enlil,

the Assyrian ideology of Enlil's identity with Aššur as the "king of the gods" was full-fledged – at the latest – in the time of Shalmaneser I (1269-1241). This ideology served the Assyrian kings as the basis of their claims to domination over the "whole world."¹⁰⁴

Namentlich zur Zeit Salmanassar's I. und Tukulti-Ninurta's I., doch auch später, bis zum Untergang des assyrischen Reiches, ist ein gewisser Synkretismus zwischen Assur und Enlil (Nunnamir) feststellbar, wobei beide Götter jedoch nicht vollständig in einander aufgegangen sind, und die Gattin Enlils, Ninlil, auch als Gattin Assurs fungiert ... Dabei hat Enlil an Bedeutung gewonnen.¹⁰⁵

During the regnal period of Shalmaneser I, the first sanctuary of Nabû was built in Assyria (Pomponio 1978: 72). The rise of Ninurta in Assyria was probably reflected in the throne name of the next king, Tukulti-Ninurta I (1240-1205), "my refuge is Ninurta." There were only a couple of earlier kings in Mesopotamian history who were named after Ninurta – Ur-Ninurta of Isin I (1923-1896) and Ur-Ningirsu, the son of Gudea of Lagaš. There is some evidence that the theophoric element Ninurta became more popular in MA onomastics during the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I.¹⁰⁶ Probably in the time of the last named king, Ninurta was given "sonship" of the national god Aššur and the second rank in the Assyrian pantheon (Moortgat-Correns 1988: 117). In the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, the status of the king is that of the son of Enlil, right after Ninurta:

It is he who is the eternal image of Enlil, attentive to the people's voice, the counsel of the land, because the lord of the world appointed him to lead the troops, he praised him with his very lips, Enlil exalted him as if he (Enlil) were his (Tukulti-Ninurta's) own father, right after his firstborn son! Precious is he in (Enlil's) family, for where there is competition, he has of him protection. (Foster 1996: 215.)

In line 14 of the *Psalm to Aššur for Tukulti-Ninurta*, the king is implicitly compared to Ninurta, referring to the god's avenging of his father Enlil (Foster 1996: 231-32). Tukulti-Ninurta called himself "favourite of the god Ninurta, the one who controlled all quarters with his strong might."¹⁰⁷ He deliberately attempted to break Babylon's claim to be the *axis mundi* by abducting a cultic image of Marduk from Esagil to the temple of Aššur, and

vice-regent of Aššur" (Grayson 1986: 52). The similar title (GAR^dBAD ŠID *aš-šur*) reappears in the time of Adad-narari I (1305-1274) and Shalmaneser I, see Grayson 1986: 150, 153 *et passim*.

¹⁰⁴ See Maul 1998: 192, Borger 1961: 53f and 65ff; it coincides with the appearance of the Assyrian tree of life in contemporary art, see Parpola 1993.

¹⁰⁵ Borger 1961: 66; see also Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 229f; F. Nötscher, *Ellil in Sumer und Akkad* (1927), 74ff; W. Schwenzner, *AfO* 8 (1932-33), 116; H. A. Lewy, *HUCA* 19, 471ff.

¹⁰⁶ H. A. Fine, *Studies in Middle Assyrian Chronology and Religion*, *HUCA* 25 (1954), 116ff. Cf. Pomponio 1978: 72ff.

¹⁰⁷ Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 226; Grayson 1986: A.0.78.21:9', A.0.78.23:20-21; see also Schwemer 2001: 576f.

by introducing Babylonian cultic traditions in Assyria, as well as its claim to world domination (Maul 1997: 122). After the victory over the Kassite king Kaštiliaš IV (1232-1225), he removed some significant literary texts from Babylonia, and the scribes copied them at Assur. Among these texts is the bilingual hymn to Ninurta which celebrates a "return of Ninurta to Nippur" (KAR 119) and to the Ešumeša (see Lambert 1960: 118ff). This tablet was found at Assur in the library of a scribal family mostly from the time of Tiglath-pileser I. The interest in older Ninurta texts was sustained in first millennium Assyria, and it was not limited to *Lugale* and *Angim*.¹⁰⁸

The names of the kings following Tukulti-Ninurta witness the rise of Ninurta most explicitly – Ninurta-apil-Ekur ("Ninurta is the scion of Ekur") came from Karduniaš, seized the throne and reigned 1191-1179. In his inscription he tells that he was "chosen of the gods Enlil and Ninurta."¹⁰⁹ Ninurta-tukulti-Aššur ("Ninurta is refuge of Aššur") was a regent towards the end of the reign of his father Aššur-dan I (1178-1133 BC). During his time Marduk's statue captured by Tukulti-Ninurta was brought back to Babylon, according to Chronicle P.¹¹⁰ From the time of Tukulti-apil-Ešarra (Tiglath-pileser I, 1114-1076), the theophoric element *Ninurta* in the kings' names is replaced by a more ambiguous "son of Ešarra" or "son of Ekur" as in the name of Ašared-apil-Ekur "the scion of Ekur is the foremost" (1075-74). The rise of Assyria thus witnesses the rise of Ninurta as well.

In the first Assyrian annals of Tiglath-pileser I, Ninurta is frequently paired with Aššur, and Anu is paired with his son Adad.¹¹¹ Both pairs are called "my lords" by the king. Aššur and Ninurta guided the king to success and gave him his dominion (Grayson 1991: 35). Let me cite two examples from the annals of Tiglath-pileser I which couple Ninurta with Aššur:

Tiglath-Pileser, exalted prince, the one whom the gods Aššur and Ninurta have continually guided wherever he wished (to go) and who pursued each and every one of the enemies of the god Aššur and laid low all the rebellious (Grayson 1991: 27, vii 36-41).

[Tiglath]-Pileser, strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, king of all the four quarters, valiant man who acts with the support (*tukultu*) of the gods Aššur and Ninurta, the great gods, his lords, (and thereby) has felled his foes (*ibid.* 36, ll. 1-4; 41, ll. 4-5).

In the period ca. 1055-935, Assyria was politically eclipsed (Grayson 1991: 113). When the annalistic form of royal inscriptions re-emerged with Adad-narari II (911-891), this king mentions Aššur and Ninurta as his main supporters:

¹⁰⁸ W. W. Hallo, *JAOS* 101 (1981), 254. For KAR 118 and 119, see W. G. Lambert, "Tukulti-Ninurta and the Assyrian King List," *Iraq* 38 (1976), 85-94, n. 4. For the library, see O. Pedersén, *Archives and Libraries in the City of Assur* (Uppsala 1985), Part I, pp. 31ff, esp. p. 37.

¹⁰⁹ *ni-šit* dBAD u dMAŠ, see Grayson 1986: 303.

¹¹⁰ A. K. Grayson, *RIA* 9 (1997-2001), 527; *idem* 1975: 176, 12-13; Dalley 1997: 166

¹¹¹ See Schwemer 2001: 166ff, 264f.

Adad-nārārī, great king, strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, king of all the four quarters, select of Aššur, attentive prince, who acts with the support of Aššur and the god Ninurta, the great gods, his lords, and (thereby) has felled the foes (Grayson 1991: 143, ll. 1-4).

Certainly, it was no coincidence that the new rise of Assyria was announced by the royal names Tukulti-Ninurta II and Assurnasirpal II (890-859 BC). In the throne name of Assurnasirpal II (*Aššur-nāšir-apli*) – “Aššur is the custodian of (his) son” – by the “son of Aššur” Ninurta is probably meant. The scion of Ešarra or Ekur in Assur had different names – both Ninurta and Zababa are rarely mentioned as sons of Aššur (Lambert 1983: 82). In ninth century Assyria, Ninurta became the city-god of the new royal capital Calah, and the tremendous military success of the Assyrian empire in later centuries was certainly associated with Ninurta’s help and protection. By the time of Assurnasirpal II, Ninurta was considered the holder of the bond between heaven and earth/underworld in the newly founded city of Calah, as his epithet *mu-kil mar-kas AN-e u KI-tim* attests.¹¹² As pointed out by U. Moortgat-Correns, there are striking similarities between the room decoration of Assurnasirpal’s Northwest palace and Ninurta’s temple (1988: 120). Assurnasirpal II himself describes his actions as follows:

The city Calah I took in hand for renovation. I cleared away the old ruin hill (and) dug down to water level; I sank (the foundation pit) down to a depth of 120 layers of brick. I found therein the temple of the god Ninurta, my lord. At that time I created with my skill this statue of the god Ninurta which had not existed previously as an icon of his great divinity (^dLAMMA DINGIR-ti-šú GAL-ti) out of the best stone of the mountain and red gold. I regarded it as my great divinity in the city Calah. I appointed his festivals in the months Shebat and Elul. I constructed this temple in its entirety. I laid the dais of the god Ninurta, my lord, therein. When the god Ninurta, the lord (^dMAŠ EN), for eternity sits joyfully on his holy dais in his alluring shrine, may he be truly pleased (and) so command the lengthening of my days, may he proclaim the multiplication of my years, may he love my priesthood, (and) wherever there is battle or wars in which I strive may he cause me to attain my goal.¹¹³

This temple in Calah remained the most important sanctuary of Ninurta in Assyria until the destruction of the Neo-Assyrian empire (Menzel 1981: 94). The ninth century was the acme of Ninurta’s cult in Assyria. No temple archive of Ninurta has been found in Calah, but the evidence indicates that the cult of Ninurta remained important in Calah until the end of the Neo-Assyrian empire (see SAA 12 92-94). This can be said on the basis of the Neo-Assyrian prosopography as well – the clear majority of persons whose names invoke Ninurta reside in Calah. A seal impression studied by U. Moortgat-Correns (1988) might be an important source of the cult of Ninurta in Calah (see Fig. 1). The seal belonged to a priest of Nergal and Adad in

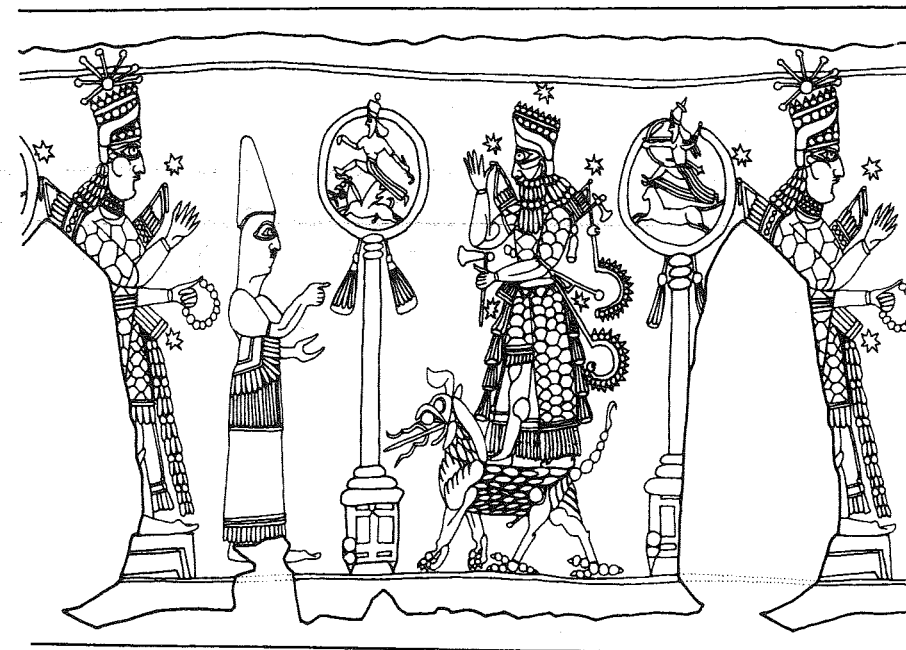


Fig. 1 A Neo-Assyrian seal impression showing Ninurta as a war god on his dragon. [after U. Moortgat-Correns *A/O* 35 (1988) 123, Abb 5b]

Harran, and of Ninurta and Adad in Calah. It depicts two cultic standards, the one of Adad and the other perhaps of Ninurta. The inscription on the seal mentions four gods to which Aššur-šumu-iddina is related as administrator.¹¹⁴ According to Moortgat-Correns’ interpretation, the standard of Ninurta depicted on the seal impression is from his temple in Calah and can be harmonized with Assurnasirpal’s description of this cultic image. If so, this seal impression is a very important iconographic source for the cult of Ninurta.

The next king, Shalmaneser III (858-824), built the ziqqurat for the temple of Ninurta in Calah (Grayson 1996: 136). A royal inscription of this king mentions Aššur and Ninurta as his main supporters:

With the support of Aššur, the great lord, my lord, and the god Ninurta, who loves my priesthood, I always acted (and) they placed firmly in my hands all lands (and) mountains (Grayson 1996: 28).

His successor, Šamši-Adad V (823-811), conquered Babylonia in four expeditions and assumed the title used previously only by Tukulti-Ninurta I, “the king of Sumer and Akkad.” Among the inscriptions of the king, there is one which begins with a lengthy hymn to Ninurta of 25 lines. The inscription is written on an unusual stele depicting the king with the symbolic cross of

¹¹² Grayson 1991: 193, l. 2; into Ninurta’s hands are also entrusted “the circumference (*kip-pat*) of heaven and earth/Netherworld” (*ibid.*: 194, ll. 4-5), cf. George 1986: 142-43.

¹¹³ Grayson 1991: 295, ll. 11b-19, cf. *ibid.*, p. 212. For a description of Ninurta’s temple in Calah, see Moortgat-Correns 1988: 118-22.

¹¹⁴ W. G. Lambert, “A Late Assyrian Seal Inscription,” *NABU* 1991/14. The inscription reads: *šá^m aš-šur-MU-SUM^{na lu} SANGA^d MAŠ.MAŠ^d IM šá KASKAL^{ni 5)} d^d MAŠ^d IM šá^{uru} Kàl-hi EGIR [...]; cf. K. Kessler, *A/O* 35 (1988), 134.*

Nabû/Ninurta (see Fig. 2).¹¹⁵ The inscription is written in archaic script, probably imitating the inscriptions of Šamši-Adad I (Grayson 1996: 180ff).

In Assyria, the cult of Nabû achieved no real significance until the eighth century; the god Nabû first appears in the Assyrian royal inscriptions of Adad-narari III (810-783) and Shalmaneser IV (782-773).¹¹⁶ Adad-narari III built a temple to Nabû on the citadel at Calah and in an inscription on a statue dedicated to him, he exhorted future Assyrian kings not to trust in any other god besides Nabû (Porter 1997: 254). From the middle of the eighth century until the end of the Assyrian empire the cult of Ninurta declined, giving way to the more popular Nabû. In the same time, Ninurta remained the supreme city-god of the city and the province of Calah until the end of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (Zawadzki 1987).

No additional temples were built for Ninurta, while Nabû had a residence in all royal cities of the time, which is “one indication of the continuing role of Nabû as a patron of Assyrian kings.” (Porter 1997: 254.) Nabû came gradually to rival even the god Aššur during the later Neo-Assyrian period, as he also rivalled Marduk in the Neo-Babylonian religious history (Porter 1997: 254, n. 5). Nabû’s elevation in the first millennium is analogous to the raising of Marduk in the second, and in both cases this was the result of being equated with the champion Ninurta. The later Assyrian royal inscriptions typically list the king’s divine patrons with Aššur almost always heading the list; Marduk and Nabû usually appear as well, with Nabû frequently preceding Marduk, which was an expression of Assyrian priorities (Porter 1997: 255).

Adad-narari III sealed one of his important state documents, a large grant of land with the “seal of Aššur and Ninurta” (SAA 12 1:1ff). The preserved document is a copy of the original tablet and bears no seal impression. It is possible that it was the same seal that was later impressed on Esarhaddon’s Succession Treaty in 672 as the royal seal C (SAA 2 6). U. Moortgat-Correns (1995) has argued that the third seal impressed on the Succession Treaty was produced in the time of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727) and the seal depicts the king kneeling between the the gods Ninurta and Adad. It is possible to assume with S. Parpola (SAA 2, p. xxxvi), that the gods depicted are Ninurta and Aššur. In this case, the impression might be from the same seal which is already referred to as the “seal of Aššur and Ninurta” by Adad-narari III in SAA 12 1.

Aššur was the chief divine patron of Tiglath-pileser III (Porter 1997: 255). The divine patrons of Sargon II (721-705) were consistently enumerated in the order Aššur, Nabû and Marduk. Sargon repaired a temple of Nabû in Nineveh and built a new one to him in his royal city Dur-Šarruken (Porter 1997: 256). There survives a prayer of Sargon II to Ninurta for help in battle (Foster 1996: 708). Sennacherib’s early inscription from Nineveh in 702

¹¹⁵ See P. Calmeyer, “Das Zeichen der Herrschaft... ohne Šamaš wird es nicht gegeben,” *Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 17 (1984), 135-53.

¹¹⁶ See Grayson 1996: 227 (104.2002); cf. Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 119, George 1996: 378.

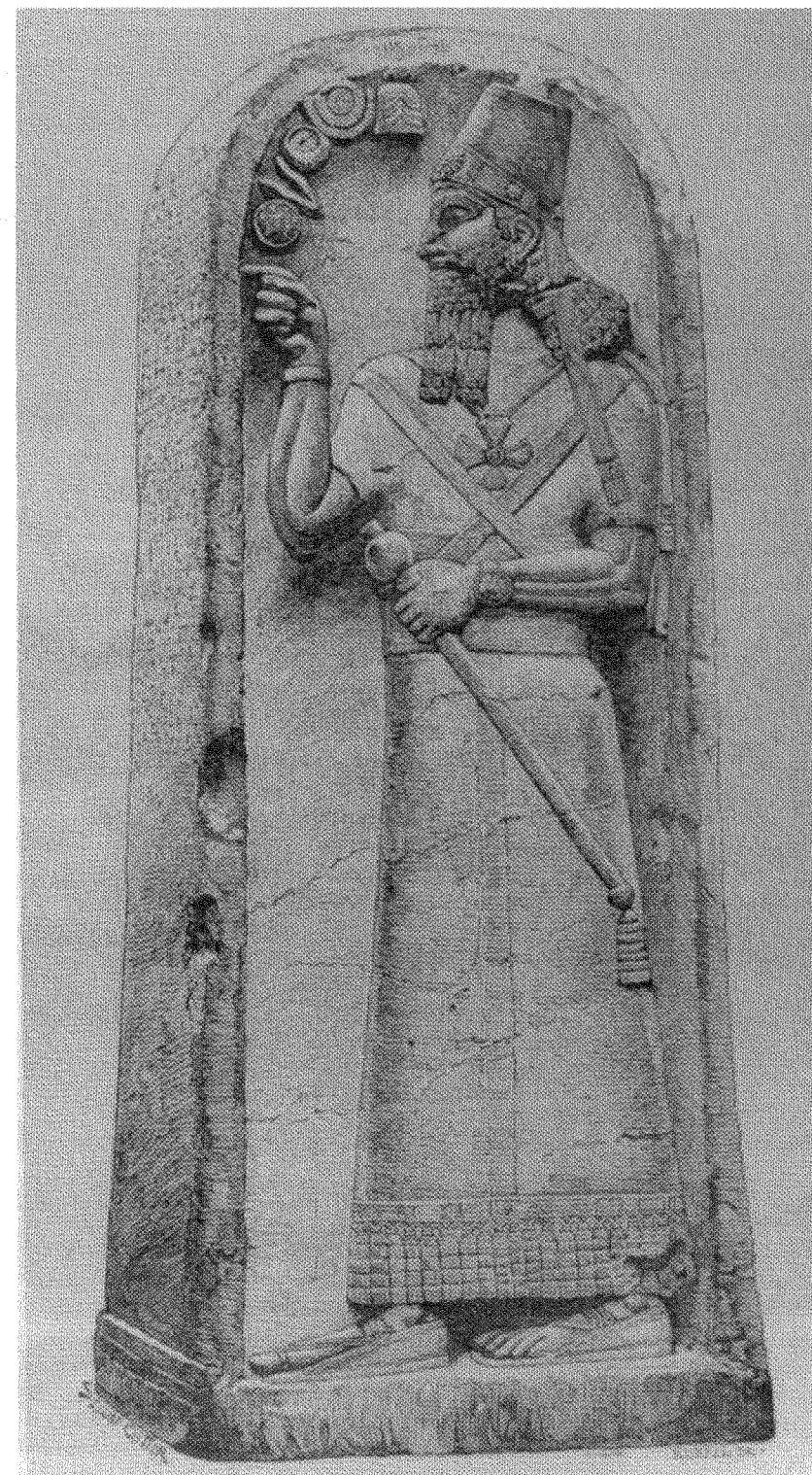


Fig. 2 The Stela of Šamši-Adad V from Calah (Nimrud) [BM 118892]

shows that Babylonian gods, among them Marduk and Nabû, were still held in high esteem (Frahm 1997: 136). Numerous military conflicts between Assyria and Babylonia during Sennacherib's time (704-681) led the king to anti-Babylonian religious propaganda in the last years of his reign (Frahm 1997: 136). This may be the reason why the god Zababa was promoted and officially assimilated to Nabû/Ninurta.¹¹⁷ The god Haja was promoted and identified with Nabû with a new temple in Nineveh.¹¹⁸ According to the religious reforms and rebuilding projects of Sennacherib, Aššur and Ešarra were destined to replace Marduk and Esagil. In the Assyrian editions of the Babylonian Creation Epic, Marduk's name was replaced with the name of Aššur (An-šár) and Babylon with *Bal-til*^{ki}.¹¹⁹

It was probably Sennacherib who got an angry letter from Ninurta (SAA 3 47), and its fragmentary content "may relate to the growing tension against Sennacherib towards the end of his reign."¹²⁰ The letter may be related to the murder of Sennacherib – it is equally possible that the letter antedates the crime and expresses a warning, or was written after the murder and was sent to Esarhaddon.¹²¹

Esarhaddon mentions Ninurta in his inscriptions only a few times.¹²² When the gods are summoned to sanctify his palace, Ninurta is called by Esarhaddon following Aššur.¹²³ Assurbanipal does not pay much attention to Ninurta, but he was interested in promoting the worship of Nabû, and the king was actively involved in the Nabû cult. In spite of that, he regarded Marduk as the most important god of Babylonia (Porter 1997: 259). But he still calls himself in a Babylonian inscription from Nippur: "King of the land of Sumer and Akkad, vice-regent (*šakkanakku*) for the gods Aššur, Enlil and Ninurta."¹²⁴

I conclude, then, that in Neo-Assyrian times Ninurta shared his identity with Adad, Nabû, Nergal and Zababa, largely losing his popularity to Nabû

¹¹⁷ See Deller and Donbaz 1987; Sennacherib received from Šamaš and Adad the announcement "Zababa is the son of Aššur," see SAA 12 87.

¹¹⁸ Frahm 1997: 110; the god Haja, a less known god of writing, is most prominently celebrated by the hymn Rim-Sin B, see H. Steible, *Ein Lied an den Gott Haja mit Bitte für den König Rimsin von Larsa* (Freiburg 1967).

¹¹⁹ See George 1999a: 77ff, Frahm 1997: 282-88, Maul 1997:123.

¹²⁰ C. Uehlinger, DDD, s.v. Nisroch, col. 1189; cf. B. Pongratz-Leisten, SAAS 10 (1999), 230f.

¹²¹ See C. Uehlinger, *ibid.*; Parpola 1980; and W. von Soden, "Gibt es Hinweise auf die Ermordung Sanheribs im Ninurta-Tempel (wohl) in Kalah in Texten aus Assyrien?" *NABU* 1990/22.

¹²² "In his Assyrian inscriptions ... Esarhaddon refers to both Nabû and Marduk as important divine patrons of his reign, in several cases naming Nabû first, and in descriptions of events in Babylonia the gods listed as backing him include for example Aššur, Sin, Shamash, and Nabû in addition to Marduk, but in the Esagila inscriptions, which deal primarily with Babylonia, Marduk is unequivocally the center of attention and the chief god of Babylonia." (Porter 1997: 258.)

¹²³ See Moortgat-Correns 1988: 132f; D. D. Luckenbill, *ARAB*, Vol. II, p. 276.

¹²⁴ G. Frame, RIMB 2 (1995), 220, B.6.32.15, l. 10.

from the 8th century onwards.¹²⁵ But the divine figure behind all these names persevered unchanged, if somewhat modified, for Assyrian purposes.

The Late Babylonian Nabû

The first millennium and especially the Late Babylonian Empire witnessed unprecedented growth of Nabû's importance in Babylonian religion. In the second millennium, Nabû was Marduk's *sukkal* – "vizier" – with a shrine in Esagil. The middle Babylonian boundary stones associate Nabû with Borsippa where his cult apparently began to replace Marduk's. Nabû is called 'scribe of Esagil' and 'king of Ezida' and during the first millennium, Nabû was the god of Ezida in Borsippa.¹²⁶ In the first millennium, Borsippa housed a kind of resistance to the supremacy of Marduk. A Late Babylonian hymn to Borsippa compares Nabû's city to heaven (*šamāmi kī maš[il]*), and calls Ezida as "equal to Ešarra" (*šinnat ša Ešarra*). A tradition developed which saw Nabû as a kind of junior Marduk and Borsippa as a second or alternative Babylon.¹²⁷ A clay cylinder recording building work by Borsippa's governor Nabû-šuma-imbi during the reign of Nabû-šuma-iškun in the first half of the eighth century uses the titles of Enlil/Marduk "Lord of the Lands" and "Lord of the gods" in reference to Nabû.¹²⁸

At the end of the Neo-Babylonian period, Nabû had become so important in Babylonian religion that he rivalled Marduk as chief god and head of the Babylonian pantheon.¹²⁹ Marduk and Nabû can even be regarded as the joint heads of the Late Babylonian pantheon and the co-rulers of the universe. This state of affairs came into being between the fall of the Second Isin Dynasty and the rise of the Late Babylonian Empire.

Toward the end of the 8th century an inscription of Marduk-apla-iddina does allude to the equality of Marduk and Nabû in the phrases describing the king: "worshipper of Nabû and Marduk, worshipper of Esagil and Ezida" (*pālih Nabû u Marduk pālih Esagil u Ezida*: VAS I 37 ii 1-3). (Lambert 1978: 79.)

It is right to see the elevation ideology of Ninurta as the background to Nabû's rise (Beaulieu 1993: 70). Nabû was the holder of the sceptre and gave it to the Neo-Babylonian kings, as Ninurta had given it to the Assyrian king

¹²⁵ "Nergal ist zwar in den Götterinvokationen der Königsinschriften bereits zur Zeit von Adad-nārāri I. [1300-1270] belegt, muss aber unter Tukulti-Ninurta I. anscheinend dem Gott Ninurta weichen, bis in der späten mittellassyrischen Zeit beide Götter zusammen aufgeführt werden. Beide Götter, Ninurta und Nergal, werden dann im Laufe der neuassyrischen Zeit immer mehr an den Schluss der Invokation geschoben, und unter Assurbanipal und Sîn-šar-iškun firmieren sie sogar hinter den weiblichen Gottheiten Ištar von Arbela und Ištar von Ninive." (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 122.)

¹²⁶ A. R. Millard, DDD, col. 1142; Pomponio 1978: 63; cf. Lambert 1966: 44.

¹²⁷ George 1997: 135, n. 33; see F. Köcher, ZA 53 (1959), 236-40; MSL 17, p. 240.

¹²⁸ Lambert 1978: 79; see G. Frame, RIMB 2 (1995), 124, l. 13'.

¹²⁹ See Pomponio 1978: 100-15, Porter 1997: 253f.

in Calah.¹³⁰ Nabû's central role in the ideology of kingship is seen in the theophoric elements of Neo-Babylonian rulers: Nabû-apla-ušur, Nabû-kudur-ri-ušur, Nabû-na'id, which indicate that Nabû was the patron deity of the Chaldean dynasty (Beaulieu 1993: 70). The Babylonian hymns on clay cylinders portray Nabû as the king of the gods, and one of them (BM 34147) lists as his epithets Enlil, Lugaldimmerankia, Imdudu, Hendursagga, Mes, Enzag and Enbilulu (Lambert 1978: 82ff). The first and the second clearly attest to Nabû's superior position in the pantheon, while the remainder are comparable to Marduk's mystical names in the last two tablets of the Creation Epic. The cylinder, as such, is a medium which is otherwise reserved for royal inscriptions, and the hymns written on them display a striking peculiarity: "they all are framed within rows of repeated signs, each row repeating a different sign, and each frame repeating the same combination of signs which read like an acrostich: *mu-sa-ru-ú* 'royal inscription'" (Beaulieu 1993: 69-70). One of the texts is framed with a more elaborate acrostic reconstructed by Lambert as follows: [*mu-sa*]-*ru ša* [^dNA] "[royal inscri]ption of [Nabû]" (*ibid.*). The three manuscripts of the hymn to Ninurta as Helper in Misery are also written on such cylinders, framed with an acrostic *musarû* (Mayer 1992: 19). It seems that we are dealing with a literary genre which can be dubbed "royal inscriptions of the gods." These hymns to Ninurta and Nabû are concerned with kingship – they are praised as kings of the gods and upholders of the cosmic order (Beaulieu 1993: 69). The king was the earthly counterpart of the supreme god:

The fact that supreme rulership of the gods was conceptualized on the model of human kingship could freely apply to divine rulership, and conversely those of divine rulership to the king. That hymns to the king of the gods could be recast as *musarû* "royal inscriptions," even as "royal inscriptions" of the god which they honor (*mušarû ša Nabû*), is but a corollary of that ideology. By using the medium of royal inscriptions, the scribes who, most probably at the turn of 6th century, literally invented this new genre, were in this manner not only praising Nabû as a king, but also their king as an earthly counterpart of Nabû. (Beaulieu 1993: 70-71.)

These texts were presented as being of great antiquity because the acrostic written on the cylinders containing the hymn to Ninurta (Mayer 1992: 19f) can be read as *musarû labīru* "old royal inscription" and Nabonidus claims to have found such an inscription during his excavations of the Egipar at Ur (YOS 1 45 ii 1). The scribes who wrote these cylinders thus legitimized the position of Nabû/ Ninurta as the king(s) of the gods (Beaulieu 1993: 70).¹³¹

¹³⁰ Nabû is called *na-ši giš haṭ-tu* "holder of the sceptre" in EAH 197, see E. Frahm, *NABU* 1995/9; F. Wiggermann *JEOL* 29 (1985-86), 12; and *Ninurta as the Keeper of Royal Regalia* below (pp. 51-55).

¹³¹ E. Frahm has pointed out that "Diese Zylinder wiederum weisen Berührungspunkte mit Schülerkolophonen auf Tontafeln auf, die in spätbabylonischer Zeit dem Nabû *ša harê* in Babylon sowie Nabû von Borsippa geweiht wurden" (1997: 110). He compares an inscription of Sennacherib for the temple of a scribe god Haja to these colophons: "Den Kolophonen ihrerseits ist mit dem vorliegenden ... Sanherib-Text (und den

Nabû kept his prominent position in Persian and Hellenistic times. Cyrus paid homage to Bel and Nabû and the Seleucid king Antioch I Soter restored both gods' temples in Babylon and Borsippa. His foundation cylinder at Borsippa expresses the royal ideology which is completely Babylonian.¹³² Nabû's epithet in Hellenistic documents from southern Mesopotamia is 'lord of the universe.' In the Seleucid era, he is identified with Apollo, who was the tutelary deity of the Seleucid dynasty (Dirven 1997: 113). There is a ritual text dating to the beginning of the Parthian period which implies that the cult of Nabû in Borsippa continued to flourish in that period:¹³³

In 137 BC, at the end of the Seleucid period, a tablet recorded how the daughters of Esagil go from Esagil to Ezida, and the daughters of Ezida go from Ezida to Esagil for the Summer solstice, and return for the Winter solstice. For they are goddesses responsible for lengthening and shortening the days. (Dalley 1995: 147.)

In the Syrian sources, Nabû and Bel are closely connected, but Nabû is mentioned before Bel (Dirven 1997: 113). Nabû was syncretized with Greek Hermes as well. In the first century BC, Strabo wrote (XVI 1.7) that "Borsippa is the sacred city of Artemis and Apollo," by which he referred to Nanaya and Nabû, and his statement mirrors an advanced stage of syncretism (Pomponio 1978: 226f).

In the third century AD, the Jewish Rabbi Rav, who founded the great rabbinical school at Sura in central Mesopotamia, named the temple of Bel in Babylon and the temple of Nabû in Borsippa as the major centres of idolatry where festivals were performed all year round (Dalley 1995: 143).

strukturell ähnlichen Aššur-Texten) gemeinsam, dass das im Tempel hinterlegte Schriftstück direkt angesprochen und darum gebeten wird, beim Gott Fürsprache für den Verfasser einzulegen. Die Haja-Inschrift Sanheribs scheint also, so hoffen wir zumindest angedeutet zu haben, in den komplexen Traditionszusammenhang einer Verehrung Nabûs durch die mesopotamische Schreiberzunft zu gehören." (Frahm 1997: 110-11.)

¹³² See A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White, "Aspects of Seleucid Royal Ideology: The Cylinder of Antiochus I from Borsippa," *JHS* 101 (1991), 71-86.

¹³³ Livingstone 1986: 255, Appendix I (BM 34035).

CHAPTER TWO

Ninurta in the Royal Rituals and Ideology

Ninurta as the Keeper of Royal Regalia

At enthronement, the gods legitimate a king's rule by bestowing on him regalia. These regalia are an important set of the constitutive elements of the cosmos (*me's*) and were regarded as being of primordial quality and as descended from the presence of Anu in heaven.¹³⁴

Cf. *The Eridu Genesis* 36ff: When the royal [sce]ptre was com[ing] down from heaven, the august [cr]own and the royal [th]rone being already down from heaven, he (the king) [regularly] performed to perfection the august divine services and offices, laid [the bricks] of those cities [in pure spots.] They were [n]amed by name and [al]lotted [ha]lf-bushel baskets. (Jacobsen 1987: 146.)

It seems that in mythology Ninurta was most of all responsible for bestowing the throne on the king (of the gods). In Atrahasis and in the Epic of Gilgamesh, Ninurta is called *guzalû* (gu.za.lá) "throne-bearer" of the gods.¹³⁵ This title probably means that Ninurta is the god who is responsible for the institution of kingship among the gods. In *Ninurta's journey to Eridu*, it is he who establishes the throne of kingship.¹³⁶ The epilogue of the Anzu Epic (SAA Anzu III 130) calls Ninurta: "Your name 'Guardian of the Throne' they have given for (the exercise of) kingship" (MU-ka ra-bi-iš^{giš}GU.ZA id-di-na ana LUGAL-ú-ti); this name of Ninurta is also found in CT 25 11:36 (Moran 1988: 28, n. 40). Thus we have two epithets of Ninurta which

¹³⁴ "Die Regalia verkörpern in magischer Weise die Göttliche Kräfte, die die Ausübung der Herrschaft überhaupt erst möglich machen." (J. Renger, *RIA* 5 [1976-80], 129.)

¹³⁵ The term *guzalû* can be variously translated as "steward" or "chamberlain," but the actual connotation of the term remains obscure. The most difficult problem is here the contextual meaning of Sumerian *lá*. The god Ningišzida is attested from OB onwards as (^{giš})gu-za-lá-kur-ra "chair-bearer of the netherworld" (CT 16 13 ii 44), see F. A. M. Wiggermann, *RIA* 9 (1997-2001) 371: "it is probably as such that he guides the laws (á-ág-gá) and traditions (ara₆) of the earth (TCL 15 25:32, OB)." The "throne-bearer of Esagil" in *Šurpu* II 157 is DI.KUD (cf. *Šurpu* VIII 15).

¹³⁶ D 19: [^{giš}gu-za-n]am-lugal-la gi-né-zu níg šag₄-ga-na-ka "your establishment of the throne of kingship is according to his (= Enlil's) wish. The throne of the city of Lagaš is kept firm until Ningirsu comes from Eridu, see Gudea B viii 15f.

associate him with the throne of kingship. The “throne” is one of the royal insignia bestowed upon the king at his coronation. As such, it is one of the holy *me*’s of kingship. Sitting on the throne was symbolically conceived of as conferring supernatural qualities.¹³⁷

In the *Cursing of Agade* (ll. 66-69), there is a passage which suggests that Ninurta keeps the regalia of mortal kingship in his temple Ešumeša in Nippur (George 1992: 311):

Not even five or ten days had passed (after Naram-Sin’s ominous dream) and Ninurta brought the jewels of rulership, the royal crown, the emblem and the royal throne bestowed on Agade, back into his E-šumeša.¹³⁸

This has a parallel in the Babylonian Nabû’s role in bestowing the royal insignia in his temple Nabû *ša harê* on the 4th of Nisannu at the Babylonian New Year Festival (George 1996: 384). In this Babylonian temple, Nabû hands over the sceptre to the king.¹³⁹ On the 4th of Nisannu, a procession from the Ezida temple in Borsippa to the Ezida chapel in Esagil took place and the statue of Nabû entered Babylon. This is described in a ritual text as follows: “The Ezida of Esagil, the chapel of Nabû *ša harê*, whence at New Year’s, at the beginning of the year, for the *akitu* festival, Nabû, the valiant son, proceeds from Borsippa.”¹⁴⁰ The cultic prayers of this day refer to the bestowing of the sceptre and the decision about the king’s destiny (van der Toorn 1991: 332f).

The temple of Nabû *ša harê* at Babylon bore, according to the 11th century Babylonian Religious Chronicle, the ceremonial name E-ningidar-kalammasumma,¹⁴¹ and in Assyria the name of the Nabû *ša harê* temple was E-gidru-kalammasummu “House which bestows the sceptre of the land.”¹⁴² The same ideology was associated with the temple in Assyria of the same name and it was modelled on the practice of Babylon:

¹³⁷ The king sitting on the throne was considered as being closely connected to the gods: “... so dass er dort der irdischen Welt gleichsam enthoben war und mit der Welt der Götter in Kontakt treten konnte. Er nahm dadurch eine Zwischen- oder Mittlerstellung zwischen den Göttern und den Menschen ein. Der Thron ist ein wesentliches Darstellungselement der Königsideologie. In ihm ist die religionspolitische Botschaft kodiert, dass sich der thronende Herrscher in einem zwischenweltlichen Bereich befindet, in dem er mit den Göttern kommuniziert.” (Berlejung 1996: 23.)

¹³⁸ ud nu-5-am₃ ud nu-10-am₃ /sa nam-en-na aga nam-lugal-la / ma-an-si-um ^{giš}gu-za nam-lugal-la šum₂-ma / ^dnin-urta-ke₄ e₂-šu-me-ša₄-na ba-ni-in-kur,

¹³⁹ Even the Persian king Cambyses in his capacity as crown prince (*mār šarri*) participated in his investiture at Babylon on the 4th of Nisannu (George 1992: 311) and, according to the collation of A. R. George, he was accompanied by his father Cyrus during the ritual (1996: 380f).

¹⁴⁰ VAB 4, 152 47-52; translation according to Cohen 1993: 438; for Nabû *ša harê*, see George 1992: 310-12.

¹⁴¹ See Grayson 1975: 135, ii 10.

¹⁴² George 1996: 378f, see also 1992: 310. The name of the Babylonian temple is more elaborately explained as “the temple which, according to its name, bestows the sceptre and throne for kingship,” see Cavigneaux 1981: 49, 79.B.1/58, ll. 5-8.

A quick glance at the names of the ninth-century kings of Babylon confirms the historical priority of the Babylonian cult as one of more than local importance. Even by this time the association of Nabû with the investiture of kings must have had a long history. (George 1996: 379.)

From this evidence it is clear that some kind of investiture ceremony took place in these temples of Nabû from at least the 11th century onwards. This function of Nabû at the king’s investiture should have been modelled on that of Ninurta. The problem is that we do not have any direct evidence of this function of Ninurta at Nippur from earlier times. In Nippur it is usually Enlil who confers power and regalia (George 1996: 384). The circumstantial evidence enables us to observe that, even when the kingmakers had moved from Nippur to Babylon, the legacy of Nippur traditions was behind the practice concerning the bestowal of the sceptre:

the ceremonial names of parts of the E-*kur* temple complex at Nippur still alluded to the old tradition. Thus a middle Babylonian metrological tablet knew of a sanctuary in Nippur called *é.gišgidru* or *bīt haṭṭi*, “the Chapel of the Sceptre”; and according to the Divine Directory embedded in Nippur Compendium, there were in the main temple complex of Nippur two courtyards called the inner and outer Courts of the Sceptre (George 1996: 384).¹⁴³

Among the twenty-one deities inhabiting the Courts of the Sceptre in the Ekur temple complex in Nippur, there also occurs a deified *bīt harê*. This chamber or cultic installation seems to be the prototype of the Babylonian Nabû *ša harê* temple which bestowed the sceptre of the land. The inner and outer Courts of the Sceptre have a prominent position in the Divine Directory of Nippur and it is likely that these courts were part of Ešumeša. If so, the presence of a *bīt harê* in the Courts of the Sceptre in Ešumeša would suggest that the temple of Nabû *ša harê* together with its function in Babylon and in Assyria were borrowings from the cult of Ninurta in Nippur (George 1992: 450-51). Similarity in status between Ninurta and Nabû as the Warrior Son of the chief god leads one to think that:

his rôle in looking after the regalia of the mortal ruler is probably no more a matter of chance than Nabû’s. Indeed, Nabû’s position in this regard may have been consciously modelled on Ninurta. ... In the light of the present discussion it is not hard to speculate that cultic practices assigned at Babylon to Nabû had previously been the prerogative of Ninurta of Nippur. Accordingly I would propose that, in former times at Nippur, the Courts of the Sceptre in or near Ninurta’s temple were the site of the ceremonial bestowal of the sceptre, i.e., the investiture of kings and/or crown-princes; and that this ceremony was the prototype after which the priests of Nabû *ša harê* at Babylon, and later Aššur, modelled their own ritual. (George 1996: 384-85.)

¹⁴³ Cf. George 1992: 450. This metrological tablet is published by I. Bernhardt and S. N. Kramer “Die Tempel und Götterschreine von Nippur,” *Or* 44 (1975), p. 96ff, see p. 98 l. 37.

Sceptres were given by various gods in Mesopotamia, as attested in the sources.¹⁴⁴ The Nippur investiture seems to have been connected to the determination of royal fate by the highest divine institution, the Nippur assembly of gods. Then it might be that the same ceremony was the occasion for Ninurta's giving the sceptre to the king. Some of the cultic events at the Babylonian and Assyrian *akītu* festivals may have their antecedents in the royal procedures of Nippur. The topographical continuity between the Courts of Sceptre and Nabû *ša harê* temple is a facet of the tradition in this investiture ceremony. Although the bond between fixing the destinies at the New Year Festival and the ritual investiture of the king becomes evident only in the Neo-Babylonian period, this custom also may go back to Sumerian times. I have already pointed to the analogy between *Angim* and Nabonidus's deeds on the 4th of Nisannu (see above, pp. 28ff).

There is evidence that the sceptre was occasionally given by Ningirsu in third millennium Lagaš.¹⁴⁵ Ninurta is recorded as being the god who gives the sceptre to the king in 9th century Assyria, in a royal inscription of Assurnasirpal II. There it is a unique epithet of Ninurta in the opening section of the inscription which consists of a royal hymn to the god: "the one who gives the sceptre and (powers of) decision to all cities."¹⁴⁶ It shows that, in the Neo-Assyrian period, the sceptre was previously given by Ninurta when the royal residence was situated in Calah, and only later, when Ninurta's name lost its importance from the eighth century onwards, was it bestowed by Nabû. The letter from Ninurta to an Assyrian king (SAA 3 47), which was probably sent to Sennacherib (see above, pp. 46ff), also presents Ninurta as the bestower of royal regalia (obv. 1-5):

The great lord, the king of the gods, Ninurta, has sent [*me*]: "S[ay] to the prince, [my] outstretched hand, to the one who has received sceptre, throne, and regnal insignia, to the governor (appointed) by my own hand: Thus speaks Ninurta..."¹⁴⁷

In Babylon the investiture of the kings in Nabû's temple did not necessarily take place annually, but more probably only once for each ruler (George 1996: 383). This may conform with the royal practice known as 'promulgation of justice' (*mīšaru*) which usually took place at the beginning, that is, in the first full year of a king's reign.¹⁴⁸ Compare the description of Nebuchadnezzar II:

¹⁴⁴ F. Wiggermann (*JEOL* 29 [1985-86], 13, n. 41) lists Enlil, Inanna/Ištar, Enki, Nuska, Ninšubur, Ningirsu, Igalimma, Nanna, Šamaš, Aššur, Marduk and Nabû.

¹⁴⁵ See H. Steible and H. Behrens *Glossar zu den altsumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften* (FAOS 6), 142, s.v. *gidru* and Gudea Statue D iv 5f.

¹⁴⁶ *na-din* ^{GIŠ}GIDRU u EŠ.BAR ana nap-har DÙ URU.URU; Grayson 1991: 193-94, col. I, l. 4 || 229, ll. 7-8. In a *tigi* to Ninurta for Šulgi (= Šulgi T), Ninurta himself is described as "exalted sceptre rising above the Land" (l. 15: *gidru mah kalam-e zag dib-ba ki [...]*); see also Sjöberg 1976: 418:105'.

¹⁴⁷ Esarhaddon's foundation cylinder of Nabû *ša harê* has exactly the same epithets for Nabû: ^dNÀ IBILA *ši-i-ru na-din* ^{GIŠ}GIDRU ^{GIŠ}GU.ZA BALA-e; see Mutawalli 1999: 193:37.

¹⁴⁸ There is comparable evidence from the Ur III period that various foreigners and functionaries took an oath of allegiance at the accession of the new king in the temple of Ninurta at Nippur (Steinkeller 1989: 74, n. 209). The royal hymns from the third and

when the great lord Marduk exalted my royal person and entrusted me with dominion over all the people, Nabû, director of the entire universe, gave into my grasp (*ušatmih qātū'a*) the just sceptre to permit all populations to flourish and mankind to thrive.¹⁴⁹

It is known that, in connection with the Babylonian New Year Festival, amnesty was granted to political prisoners (van der Toorn 1991: 334). The giving of the 'just sceptre' may thus have been as regular as "remission of debts." In the first millennium, the king re-established *kidinnu* protection to privileged citizens during the New Year Festival.¹⁵⁰

Nabû at the New Year Festival

On the 4th of Nisannu, Nabû presided over the installation of the crown prince because his status as the son of the chief god conformed with that of the crown prince. Nabû was Marduk's vizier (*sukkallu*) and the sceptre was the symbol of the office.¹⁵¹ Nabû's function of the giver of the royal sceptre is also reflected by the logographic spelling of his name ^dPA "the staff god" (Parpola 1983: 55).

On the 5th of Nisannu, Nabû spent the night at the Uraš gate, and on the 6th he entered Babylon. He interrupted his progress at the former temple of Ninurta, E-hursag-tilla, which was now occupied by Marduk. There a butcher ceremonially decapitated two decorated wooden statues of "rival deities," after which the images were bound in fetters and carried to Esagil (van der Toorn 1991: 335). This act probably symbolized Nabû's ability to defeat the monsters of chaos and demonstrated his valour to his father Marduk:

The key to this interpretation is the temple's name E-hursag-tilla, "House that Exterminates the Mountains," which alludes to Ninurta's mythological rôle as the warrior son who in battle achieved victory over the mountains for his father. The ritual took place here because by the late period Nabû, as well as Marduk, was identified with Ninurta, and had acquired his attributes. (George 1997a: 69.)

After the ritual, Nabû moves to Esagil where he presents his defeated enemies to Marduk and then takes his seat on the Dais of Destinies. The king was involved in this ritual, as tablet K 3446+8830(+)Sm 211 shows. It describes this event as follows (see Lambert 1997: 56-62):

When you (= *the king*) pass through the [Gate] Where Nabû enters, Ka-munus-gud-ene, [in] Upšukkinna, the court of the assembly of the gods, where the

second millennia sometimes refer to promulgations of justice in the context of enthronement, see Römer 1969: 146f.

¹⁴⁹ Translation by George 1996: 383; see C. J. Ball, *PSBA* 11 (1889), 160f i 15-17.

¹⁵⁰ See J. Bidmead, *The Akītu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia* (Gorgias Press 2002), 50ff.

¹⁵¹ George 1996: 383. The vizier of Enlil was Nusku, who was also called the "Lord of the sceptre" or the "holder of the sceptre," and closely associated with Ninurta. See M. P. Streck, *RIA* 9 (1997-2001), 631.

judgement [of the land] is decided, [in] Duku, where the fates are decreed, the shrine of destinies, when Nabû sits in front, may Anu, Enlil, Ea, Šamaš, Ninurta (d^{ut}.u₁₈.lu), Nabû and Marduk promote you, extend and magnify your kingship in Upšukinna (Lambert 1997: 60-61, ll. 14-18).

On the evening of the same day, the *hariu*-ritual where offerings are made in a pit or cistern takes place in the temple courtyard, and it is accompanied by a prayer addressed to the planet Mercury, which has its heliacal rising in the month of Nisannu and which was a star of Marduk (Black 1981: 51). Mercury was also Nabû's planet and he was worshipped in the Sargonid period as a "swift god," a property that is related to the swift movement of the planet Mercury.¹⁵²

Ninurta's victory over his enemies was also celebrated in the first millennium with a cultic footrace which celebrated the swiftness of Ninurta/Nabû. In a Neo-Assyrian ritual text, the footrace in Kislimu is explained as a commemoration of Ninurta's triumph over Anzû.¹⁵³ The cultic commentary SAA 3 38:18' mentions that the king, "who opens the *hariu*-vat in the race is Marduk, who [defeat]ed Tiamat with his penis."¹⁵⁴ According to Livingstone, the race might represent Marduk's "on-rush which resulted in her defeat" (1986: 144). This footrace took place in Assur in the month of Nisannu and, according to the opinion of E. Weidner, the *Nabû ša lisme* was a statue of Nabû which functioned as a turning post (corresponding to Latin *meta*) or the finish-line in that footrace or in chariot races.¹⁵⁵

The *hariu* ceremony in the Assyrian cult was a royal ceremony which was, in some special cases, connected to the footrace *lismu* (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 100). There must also be a conceptual connection between the *hariu*-ritual for Nabû and the temple name Nabû *ša harê*. I believe that the ritual and the temple name were related to the decreeing of royal destiny. The *hariu*-ceremony was probably meant to positively influence the decisions of the gods' next assemblies on the 8th and 11th of Nisannu. The cultic implement *harû* "vat" used at the ceremony was called *dug.nam.tar = ha-ru-û* "destiny-

¹⁵² Parpola 1983: 55; cf. *Ninurta as Star* below (pp. 133-38).

¹⁵³ SAA 3 34:57ff (= 35:51); cf. E. Watanabe 1998: 444; Ninurta's epithet is *mu-nâr-bu* (see Grayson 1991: 193, col I, l. 4). His swiftness is emphasized in section v of the hymn edited by Werner Mayer (1992: 22): *munarbi pêtân birki ša lânihu birkāšu / mušim šīmāti / ina da'ummat dunna-ma mahrašu tušētiq* "the fast one, swift runner, whose knees are indefatigable, determiner of destinies, you help the one in extreme weakness (lit. 'in gloomy darkness') to pass by his rival."

¹⁵⁴ The connection of the *hariu*-vat with the cultic footrace, taking place in the month of Kislimu in Babylon, makes it possible to assume that the feast in honour of Nabû *ša harê* on the 17th day of the same month (see Cavigneaux 1999: 386) was a feast probably combining athletic contests with education purposes, like the Pythian games in ancient Greece.

¹⁵⁵ E. Weidner, *AfO* 16 (1952-53), p. 66. He points also to the evidence for similar races at Mari (Dossin *RA* 35 [1938], p. 6 III, 6) and to a Hittite practice (Ehelolf *SPAW* 1925, p. 267-69). See also J. Puhvel, "Hittite Athletics as Prefigurations of Ancient Greek Games," in: W. J. Raschke (ed.), *The Archaeology of the Olympics* (Madison and London: Wisconsin University Press 1988), 26-31.

vessel" in Hh X 215 (see CAD *harû* A, p. 116) which evidently shows the connection.¹⁵⁶ The *hariu*-ritual's "apparent purpose was the celebration of the god as a worthy heir to his father's throne" (van der Toorn 1991: 335). A foundation cylinder of Esarhaddon in the temple of Nabû *ša harê* attests Nabû's role of determining the royal destiny (al-Mutawalli 1999: 192-93, ll. 28-32):

May Nabû, the exalted son, look upon [this work] with joy! May he bless my reign in the steadfastness of his heart! May he let my hand grasp a just sceptre that widens my dominion! For Ashurbanipal, the crown prince of Assyria, and Šamaš-šum-ukin, the crown prince of Babylon, the two brothers sprung from my loins, may he determine as their destiny a good destiny, a favourable destiny entailing the extension of the days of their reigns and the protection of the thrones of their stewardship.

After the arrival from the surroundings of Babylon of the other gods, who came to bring presents to Nabû and to accompany him in the procession, he presided with his father Marduk over the Divine Assembly which fixed the destinies on the 8th of Nisannu in the Ubšu-ukkinna.¹⁵⁷ On the first occasion of determining the fates, Nabû took precedence, and on the second, on the 11th, Marduk (Lambert 1968: 107). It seems plausible to assume that, in the first ritual, the accent was on determining the fate for the crown-prince and in the second for the king.

The cosmic battle itself was ritually re-enacted on the 8th of Nisannu by the gods' joint procession to the *akītu*-house (Fig. 3) which symbolized Marduk's battle and victory over Tiamat (Lambert 1963: 190). The procession demonstrated the king's military achievements:

This was also the opportunity for the king to display his wealth and achievements in war: his troops took part, prisoners of war from campaigns were led in procession, tribute and exotic booty were displayed before the citizens. Some of these items were later presented to the temples as gifts. (Kuhrt 1987: 35.)

Events at the *akītu*-house reenacted Marduk's triumph over Tiamat. The same ideology as in Babylonia was borrowed by Assyria in reference to the god Aššur, as is shown in the ornamentation of Sennacherib's *akītu*-door.¹⁵⁸ The accompanying inscription contains Sumerian ceremonial names of the temple and its cella which dispels any doubt that Aššur's *akītu* temple was considered to be the place where the god achieved victory over the Sea. The gods accompanying Aššur in the procession were not borrowed from Babylonia, but reflected local traditions of the city of Assur.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Lambert 1997: 66, l. 4 translates *Nabû ša harê* "Nabû of the Vat."

¹⁵⁷ George 1997a: 69f, Dirven 1997: 112.

¹⁵⁸ The *akītu*-house was located outside the city walls of Assur on the plain (*šēru*). Sennacherib had ornamented its bronze doors with scenes depicting the defeat of Qingu from the Epic of Creation, but with the god Aššur as victor in place of Marduk (Black 1981: 46); see also Menzel 1981: 56f; W. Andrae and B. Hrouda *Das wiedererstandene Assur* (München 1977), 219ff.

¹⁵⁹ See the edition of Sennacherib's inscription in Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 207ff (No. 2.); cf. George 1996: 376, n. 32; Frahm 1997: 222ff.

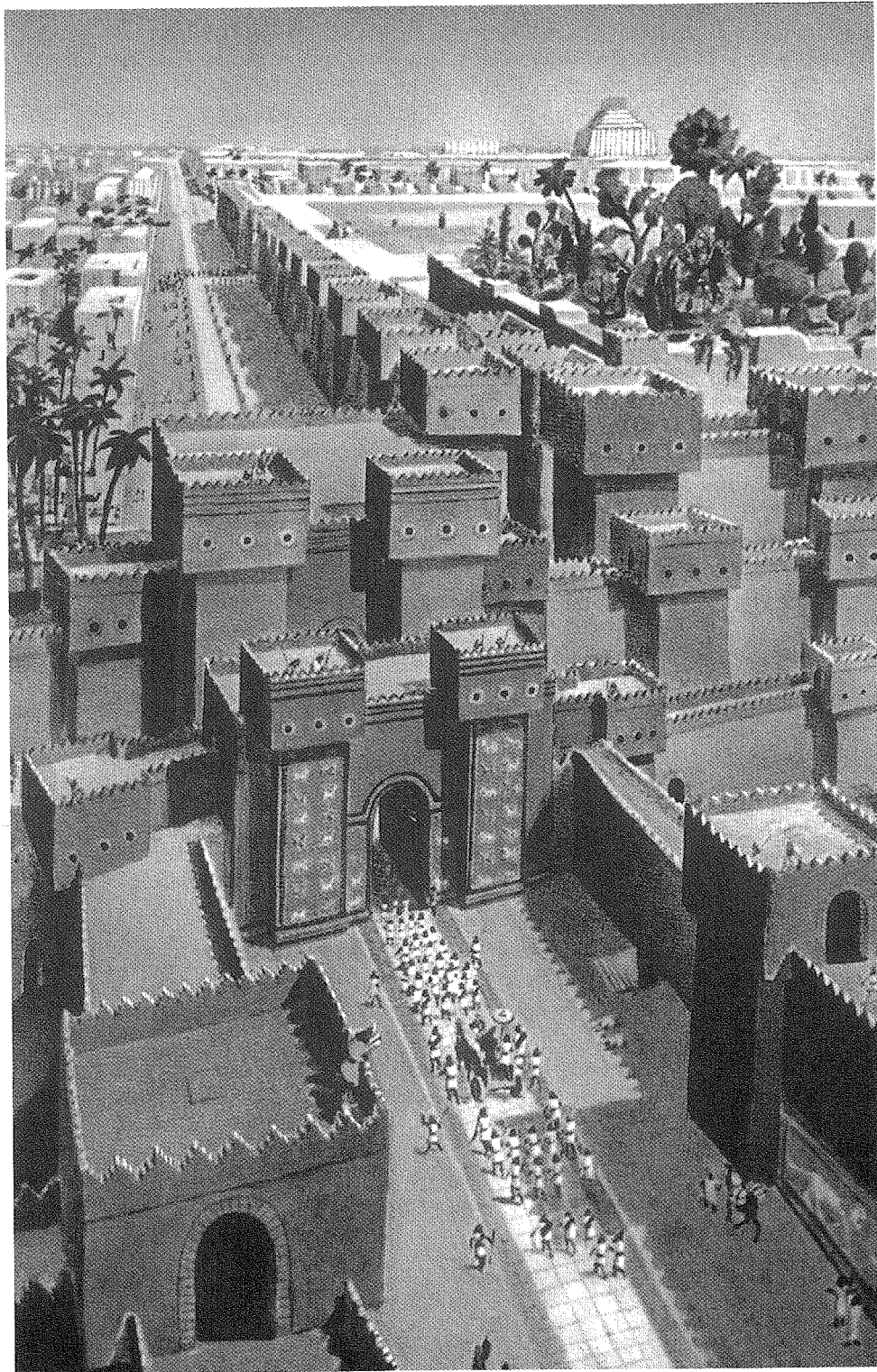


Fig. 3 Unger's reconstruction of the New Year procession in Babylon

In the accession year of Nebuchadnezzar II, according to *Chronicle 5*, obv. 12ff (Grayson 1975: 100), he took in the “month Nisannu the hand of Bel and the son of Bel (and) celebrated Akitu festival.” The mention of conducting the “son of Bel” (= Nabû) in the context of *akitu* is unique.¹⁶⁰ But the same procession seems also to celebrate Nabû's elevation to the rank of his father. A hymn exalting the procession to the *akitu*-house is dedicated to Nabû, and a prayer of Nebuchadnezzar II which refers to it is addressed to Nabû in precedence over Marduk. In this literary narrative, Nabû's exaltation to equality with his father Marduk is described.¹⁶¹ According to this text Nabû went to the *akitu*-house with his father, and insisted on performing the rites that were formerly executed by Marduk and “set his feet on the roiling Tiamat” (rev 11'-13').¹⁶² Late Babylonian Nabû hymns also connect Nabû's bringing the presents to Babylon with his victory over Tiamat (see Lambert 1978: 95). Nabû's exaltation to his father's status thus probably took place during the processional from Esagil to the *bit akiti* (cf. Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 75).

On the evening of the 10th day or on the 11th day at the Babylonian *akitu* festival, Marduk's procession returned to Esagil. Upon his return, Marduk annually announced his establishment of cults in Babylon. The fate of the city was determined and its administration arranged.¹⁶³ The procession and the accompanying cultic events in Babylonia were:

a ritual expression of Marduk's challenge and defeat of Ti'amat and his glorious return to take the sovereignty of the gods in their assembly. His triumphant enthronement [cf. En. el. VI 70] ... is plainly the occasion for the gods of the assembly to pay homage. The business of the assembly after Marduk's enthronement is the decreeing of destinies: in the myth the gods decree absolute sovereignty for Marduk; in cultic practice they decree the destiny of mortal kingship, the essence of which as Nebuchadnezzar observes wishfully [I R 54 ii 54 - iii 3], is a long (and peaceful) reign. (George 1992: 287.)

On the 11th of Nisannu, the concluding cultic event of *akitu* took place at the *parak šimāti* (du₆-kù) of Esagil, where destinies were decreed by Marduk and Nabû wrote them down on his Tablet of Destinies.¹⁶⁴ By the ritual of “decreeing the destinies” Marduk's eternal position as the king of the gods and the reign of the earthly king both found their assurance, their identities melted together.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Sargon's report of participation in the Babylonian *akitu* celebration: “(In) the month *Nisannu*, the month when the Lord-of-the-Gods goes out in procession, I conducted Marduk, the great lord, (and) Nabû”; see Cohen 1993: 441 (cf. CAD B 193), Porter 1997: 257.

¹⁶¹ Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 244ff, text no. 13.

¹⁶² See Dirven 1997: 112f, Pomponio 1978: 123ff.

¹⁶³ See Cooper 1970: 52, Cohen 1993: 440.

¹⁶⁴ See F. Pomponio, *RIA* 9/1 (1998), 22; cf. K. Watanabe 1991: 367 obv. 6.

¹⁶⁵ “Im Kultgeschehen auf dem *parak šimāti*, dem du₆-kù, dem vorweltlichen Ort des Uranfangs, fließen die Identität des Königs der Götter und die des irdischen Königs ineinander.” (Maul 1998: 181.)

The role of Nabû at this festival was that of a tutelary deity of the king. His influential position should be emphasized:

there is a striking correspondence between the ritual trial of Nabû [on 6th of Nisan] and that of the king. Both must prove themselves worthy of their official position; having succeeded, they are publicly confirmed in their role. Nabû as the equal of his father, king of the gods of heaven and earth, and the human ruler as divinely appointed monarch. These annually recurring rites of passage are, in the last resort, rites of confirmation. (van der Toorn 1991: 335-36.)

Several elements of the royal ceremonies of Babylonia and Assyria may have been ultimately taken over from the cult of Enlil and Ninurta at Nippur. We can speak of Nippur's influence even more concretely. S. M. Maul (1998: 193) has compared the celebrations of the Tummal festival of the 7th month at Nippur to those of the 11th of Nisannu at the *akītu* festivals in Assyria and Babylonia.

The Tummal shrine was the scene of the New Year celebration in the first month of the Nippur calendar (Sjöberg 1969: 19). The Tummal feast was celebrated in the seventh month. There is a discernible analogy in the Assyrian New Year festival, which was also celebrated twice a year – in the first and the seventh months (see Parpola 1983: 186). The information about the Tummal feast of Nippur is culled from economic and administrative documents, and it is already attested by the Ur III period. The cultic events of the Tummal feast are remarkably similar to the happenings of the 11th of Nisannu of the Babylonian *akītu* festival.¹⁶⁶ W. Sallaberger has already established that there are striking similarities between this Tummal feast and the contemporary *akītu* feasts of the royal capital Ur. As in the New Year Festivals of later Babylon and Assur, it involves a procession of gods where the chief god with his court moves from his temple in Nippur to the shrine of Tummal outside the city. This was Ninlil's cult-centre downstream from Nippur.¹⁶⁷ After his sojourn there, Enlil returns to his cella in Nippur. It is of importance that the king participated in this feast and its processions. The king's court and the leading officials sojourned in Tummal during the feast (see Sallaberger 1993: 133). Ninlil made her way to Tummal by ship, as did Marduk when going to the *akītu*-house during the Babylonian New Year festival. In the Assyro-Babylonian *akītu* as well as in the Tummal feast, *du₆-kù* ("Holy Mound") or *parak šimāti* had a central role.¹⁶⁸

It should be pointed out here also that the Sumerian composition which relates to the royal patronage of the holy city of Nippur is called "History of Tummal."¹⁶⁹ Several kings, beginning with Enmebaragesi and up to Šulgi, are reported to have "made Tummal flourish and brought Ninlil into Tum-

mal." Whether this statement refers to a royal ritual is unknown. But the connection of the religious building called Tummal with early Sumerian kingship is evident. Šulgi hymn R attests the ritual decreeing of the king's destiny during a banquet at the Tummal shrine:

Šulgi R 65-70: Enlil's ancestors and An the king, the god who determines the fates, greets her. With Ninlil, they take their seats at the banquet, and Šulgi the shepherd brings along his great food-offerings for them. They pass the day in abundance, they give praise throughout night. They decree a fate, a fate to be pre-eminent forever, for the king who fitted out the holy barge.

The history of redaction of a Sumerian *šu-íl-la* prayer is very indicative of the continuity of Mesopotamian *akītu*-ideology. The cultic prayer *mu-lu é(-a) ku₄-ra-zu-ta*, "Lord, when you enter the temple..." was, according to Maul, a cultic song of Enlil in its original form (1998: 193). In later times, it was sung in honour of Marduk and Aššur. According to the colophon of Babylonian manuscript B (VAT 8411), this prayer was recited by the *kalû*-priest in the month Nisannu on the 11th day when Bel entered Esagil after the procession from the *akītu*-house.¹⁷⁰ Taking into account the similarity of the Tummal feast with the Assyro-Babylonian *akītu*, Maul claims, on this evidence, that this prayer was recited in almost identical form at the Tummal feast in Nippur already in the Ur III period and had there its original *Sitz im Leben* in the feast,

...bei dem der Götterkönig auf dem "Heiligen Hügel" gefeiert und der irdische König von den Göttern des Ušukkinna in seiner Königswürde bestätigt wurde. (Maul 1998: 193.)

If we assume such far-reaching influence of Nippur, we should also be able to point out other, more obvious syncretistic elements.

Ninurta's akītu at Nippur

Ninurta's main feast in the Nippur cultic calendar of the Ur III period was named *gu₄-si-su* (Sallaberger 1993: 114ff). It was held on three days of the year's second month (named Iyyar in the Akkadian calendar). The 20th and 21st are firmly attested as the days of the festival and the 22nd was probably the day of Ninurta's *akītu*, while the 24th day is also attested as the culmination of the *gusisu*.¹⁷¹ The *gusisu* feast was a royal feast and it was of great importance for the whole Ur III kingdom, not just for Nippur, as is seen from the documents from Puzriš-Dagan.¹⁷² On the basis of administrative docu-

¹⁶⁶ On the Tummal feast, see Sallaberger 1993: 131ff and Cohen 1993: 78ff.

¹⁶⁷ For É-tummal in Assyria, see George 1993: 151, no. 1114.

¹⁶⁸ See Sallaberger 1993: 139, Cohen: 1993: 106ff.

¹⁶⁹ The Weidner Chronicle is a very similar document where Nippur is replaced by Babylon as the primordial city of kingship; see F. al-Rawi, *Iraq* 52 (1990), 1-13; cf. Schwemer 2001: 230.

¹⁷⁰ "In the month of Nisannu, on the 11th day, Bēl entered Esagil from the *akītu*-house" (rev. 35ff, see Maul 1998: 170).

¹⁷¹ See Sallaberger 1993: 115; cf. JCS 1, 331:5', according to K. Watanabe 1991: 360: UD.22.KĀM *lip-šur* [a]-ki-i[t] ^d[Nin-urta].

¹⁷² Sallaberger 1993: 114. Somewhat later in this month, a ritual of sacred marriage was carried out: an administrative document records a delivery of clothes and linen to

ments it is not possible to tell what it celebrated, but most probably it marked the onset of the agricultural cycle and preparations for sowing: finishing the clearing of the fields, retooling of farming equipment, final checking of the irrigation system, and acquisition of teams of oxen for ploughing (Cohen 1993: 78, 91). In addition, the *gusisu*-feast celebrated the vernal overflow of the rivers and Ninurta's role as the master of the flood. At the *gusisu* festival, calves were sacrificed to Ninlil in her temple Tummal and to Enlil in Ekur during the first two days of the festival and on the third day, a ritual bathing of Ninurta (a-tu₅-a^dNin-urta) took place.¹⁷³

According to the royal hymn of praise "Lipit-Eštar and the Plough" (Lipit-Eštar F), the king assumed the role of the divine farmer Ninurta in this festival (Cohen 1993: 89). His duty was to make the agricultural tools ready for use, to plough the fields and sow the seed. He laid hold of a ritual plough and performed the same functions until Ninurta "took out" the plough at the place where the destinies are fixed. Various gods operated the plough which entailed a blessing from each of them (Cohen 1993: 90). After these ritual activities, Enlil praised Ninurta and the king, and then there is a passage in the text:

[In] the month Gusisu, [at] the place where the fates are determined, Nar, the great singer of Enlil, (sings the song:) "He has a father." The hero ..., has performed (his) divine function. Ningal, the ... of Enlil, let go of the plough and removed the yoke. From that place the gods depart to [perform their routine] duties. Ninurta stands by the Ekurzagin, head rised high, and calls forth to his father, the great mountain Enlil: "My father, the divine functions of the month *gusisu* have been completed; seed has touched the earth."¹⁷⁴

According to Cohen's observations, the same scenario is described in the Sumerian composition "Išme-Dagan and Enlil's Chariot" (Išme-Dagan I). According to both compositions, the king assumed the role of Ninurta and dropped the first seed (Cohen 1993: 90). In this text, Išme-Dagan has made a chariot for Enlil and the chariot is described in very similar, even in identical, terms as is Ninurta's chariot in *Angim*. In the opening section of the hymn, only parts of which survive, the chariot is described at length and in line 70 it states: "the chariot shines like lightning, its bellowing [noise] is a pleasure" (Civil 1968: 5ff). This is comparable to the terminology of *Angim* (l. 83). The king obviously assumed the role of Ninurta as in "Lipit-Eštar and the Plough" and dropped the first seed (ll. 84-89):

... let the hoe and the plough, the implements of field workers, rival each other before you. The king has paid attention to Enlil's instructions: Ninurta has prepared the holy plough, has ploughed the fertile fields and, to see that the silos

the high priestess (nin-dingir) and governor (énsi) on the occasion of the Gusisu feast on the 17th day of the month (Išbi-Erta's year 19), see Richter 1999: 52. Compare the entry in OECT 11 69+70, col. I, § 6 (Gurney 1989: 27).

¹⁷³ Sallaberger 1993: 118, Emelianov 1999a: 64; cf. B. Landsberger, *Der kultische Kalender der Babylonier und Assyrer* (Leipzig 1915), 27-29.

¹⁷⁴ Translation is from Cohen 1993: 90; see also H. Sauren, *CRRAI* 17 (1971), 18; A. Falkenstein, *ZA* 47 (1947), 215 (copy: E. Chiera *STVC* 75).

and granaries of Enlil will be piled up high, he has sown with good seed. The young hero then proudly enters the resplendent E-kur.

Among the Sumerian compositions which were recited at this festival, were *The Song of the Ploughing Oxen* and the debate poem *Plough and Hoe*. The first song was called "the [ululu]mama of Ninurta."¹⁷⁵ The latter possibly contains a reference to this festival (ll. 20ff). One should bear in mind that the plough is the symbol of Ninurta (Cohen 1993: 90):

The Plough addressed the Hoe: "I am the Plough, fashioned by great strength, assembled by great hands, the mighty registrar of father Enlil. I am mankind's faithful farmer. To perform my festival in the fields in the harvest month, the king slaughters cattle and sacrifices sheep, and he pours beer into a bowl. The king offers the libation. The ub and ala drums resound. The king takes hold of my handles, and harnesses my oxen to the yoke. All the great high-ranking persons walk at my side. All the lands gaze at me in great admiration. The people watch me in joy."¹⁷⁶

The month Iyyar was traditionally dedicated to Ninurta under the name Ningirsu, according to Astrolabe B, which explains the *gusisu* feast as the occasion to put oxen under the yoke: "The month Iyyar, the Pleiades, the Seven Great Gods; the opening up of the ground; the oxen are yoked; the land becomes arable; the ploughs are washed; the month of heroic Ningirsu, the great *ensi* of Enlil."¹⁷⁷ In the hymnic passage dedicated to Ningirsu of the Gula Hymn of Bulluša-rabi (ll. 26-34), there occurs a reference which should be also read in the context of the *gusisu*-feast: "(Ninurta) ... who split stones and begot grain, who heaps up the structure of the grain pile, who puts on the great festival for Enlil."¹⁷⁸

On the basis of Sumerian sources, it is not possible to tell whether Ninurta's battle and victory over his mythological enemies was celebrated at this festival. Only the tablet published by O. Gurney (OECT 11 [1989] 69+70, §§ 7-12) explains the cultic events of the second month in Nippur in terms of Ninurta's *akītu*, his glorious return from victorious battles. According to this text, he returns on the 15th day of the month from the "mountains," holds an im.šár.ra and furiously enters Ešumeša (col. I, § 5). On the 19th day, the

¹⁷⁵ See M. Civil, *AOAT* 25 (1976), 85-95; *ETCSL* 5.5.5, line 149.

¹⁷⁶ Sallaberger (1993: 124. 187f) has dated this feast to Nippur iv and Ur vii; Cohen (1993: 90) has proposed Nippur ii or iv. Sallaberger 1999: 383 admits: "Welches der überlieferten 'Pflugfeste' damit gemeint ist, lässt sich nicht sicher entscheiden, wenn eine solche Entscheidung überhaupt nötig ist und die Rezitation (oder Aufführung?) dieses Werkes nicht ohnehin Teil des Ritus bei allen Pflugfesten war." (cf. *ibid.* 383, n. 17.)

¹⁷⁷ KAV 218 A i 12-24. The only edition of KAV 218 A is in E. Reiner *BPO* 2, pp. 81f (without translation), the translation here is by Cohen 1993: 310. The name of the feast in this text occurs as gu₄-si-sá which is explained in Akkadian as *alpī ultēšeru*, see also Reiner 1995: 78f, n. 326; Hunger *SAA* 8 232 rev. 8ff.

¹⁷⁸ Lambert 1967: 167, ll. 30-31; Akkadian: x x pa-ši-du abnī^{meš} mu-al-lid āš-na-an l mu-gar-ri-in bi-nu-ut ka-re-e šá-kin i-sin-ni rabī ana^den-lil. Very similar epithets are attested with Nabû; see Pomponio 1978: 195ff.

cultically impure must leave the city in a procession, and Ninurta re-enters his temple Ešumeša “in his anger” (*ina ezzišu*).¹⁷⁹

Ninurta’s processional entrance to Ešumeša through the Gate and the Square of the Impure (*abul usukki*) is described in the MA preceptive hymn to Ninurta (Lambert 1960: 118ff). Ninurta’s encounter with his beloved is also referred to in this hymn. It is possible that the ceremony there relates to the rites of the second month although the tablet bears no date.¹⁸⁰ In the myth *Enlil and Ninlil*, Enlil left Nippur, probably through the same gate as the “cultically impure” (ll. 59f ú-zug₄), after unlawful intercourse with Ninlil. The same gate was an important scene of action later in the myth where Enlil sired his son Nergal (see Behrens 1978: 170-73).

A translation of OECT 11 69+70 Col. I §§ 5, 7-12 is offered below, taking into account A. R. George’s discussion (in ZA 80 [1990], 158) of the edition and the translation by Gurney (1989: 27f, 31f). In the footnotes the parallel entries in hemerologies are cited:

§ 5’ In the month Ayaru, day 15, when the *imšarra* is held, (and) Ninurta arrived from the mountain, (it is because) Sîn was raised to the kingship and Ennugi to the office of *sukkal*, Ninurta held an *imšarra* and furiously entered Ešumeša.¹⁸¹

§ 7’ In the month Ayaru, day 19, when the cultically impure go out, (it is) because Ninurta entered Ešumeša in his wrath.

§ 8’ In the month Ayaru, day 22, when they had the dais for the inner city enclosed, (it is) because they raised Sîn to the kingship and Ennugi to the office of *sukkal* (and) because Sîn caused the chief *sukkal* Ninš[ubur] to perform [the work of he]raldship.¹⁸²

§ 9’ In the month Ayaru, day 23. [when] the Axe and the Cudgel go out to the Akitu festival, (it is because) Ennugi laid out the net, set down grain, pulled the cord and enclosed them before the gods, the hero Ninurta trampled the neck of the disobedient.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ Col. I, § 7. The 19th day is a “day of wrath” in the hemerologies, a day of Gula, “a sinister day, critical for a sick man” (see CAD s.v. *ibbû*); see also K. Watanabe 1991: 350 19. It is the day when “Marduk the king defeated Anu”; see A. Livingstone, SAA 3 40:6; cf. A. R. George, ZA 80 (1990), 158.

¹⁸⁰ Emelianov 1999: 62. In this context, oxen and [fat] sheep are slaughtered for Ninurta as the king’s offering and athletic games in honour of Ninurta are referred to. The last lines of the fragmentary tablet tell of Ninurta’s actions as follows: “When [you] set your eyes on this place, when [you] enter the Gate of the Impure like a storm, when you tread the square of the Gate of the Impure, which is full of rejoicing, when you enter Ešumeša, the house which stretches to heaven and the underworld, when [you] behold your beloved [...]” (Lambert 1960: 120).

¹⁸¹ The 15th day of Iyyar is called “perfect seed” in the hemerologies SAA 8 162, 164.

¹⁸² In the hemerologies, the 22nd of Iyyar is “at court, favorable; (good for) undertaking of an enterprise,” see Hunger SAA 8 162, 232.

¹⁸³ “Axe and Cudgel”: Akkadian *quddu u gišhašâ* (see Lambert 1997: 56). These weapons are also used by Marduk and similarly called (in K 2892+8397, l. 27) *kak lā māgiri* “weapon against the disobedient,” the weapons used by Marduk against Tiamat’s host. The weapons were exposed in the *akītu*-house in the month of Nisannu (*ibid.*). The

§ 10’ In the month Ayaru, day 24, when the Akitu festival for Ninurta is performed, (it is) because Ninurta haled the evil gods before Enlil, Enlil rejoiced over him and sent a message of well-being to Lugaldukuga in the Middle Heaven.¹⁸⁴

§ 11’ [In] the month Ayaru, day 25 (and) 26, when the ‘tale of the holy harvest’ is celebrated, (it is) because with Ninurta Nuska was crowned (and) Nuska received the tablet of destinies and gave it to Enlil.¹⁸⁵

§ 12’ In the month Ayaru, day 28, when the sieve passes over to Ešumeša, (it is because) Ninurta removed the nose-ropes of the Captive Gods.¹⁸⁶

A very similar feast is reported in the tablet VAT 9947 (SAA 3 40) which is possibly an *akītu* in the middle of Elul, according to A. Livingstone (1986: 126ff); but according to Th. Jacobsen, this text describes the rituals of the second month (1975: 74). M. E. Cohen followed the supposition of Livingstone that the calendar applies to the sixth month (1993: 324f). Because only traces of the month’s name are preserved on the tablet, it is still possible to assume with Jacobsen that the ritual of Marduk’s assuming kingship from Anu, to which this text refers, took place in the second month. There is some additional support for this supposition:

The traces of Ebeling’s copy [LKA 73] fit a reading *iti₄-si-sá*. Moreover, the reference in the Nippur Compendium to “Battlefield on the 15th,” (which we have placed in the first month), might actually apply to the second month instead and refer to the battle between Bēl and Anu which would have occurred in the middle of the month. (Cohen 1993: 324, n. 4.)

According to the Neo-Babylonian source *The Nippur Compendium*, “the battlefield” on the 15th day refers to Ninurta’s *akītu* in Nippur in the second month (see George 1992: 155). There is no preserved entry for the 15th day in SAA 3 40, but the rest of the tablet corresponds in many respects to Iyyar sections of the calendar OECT 11 69+70. The date of Ninurta’s *akītu* in the Nippur Compendium corresponds to his return from the mountains according to OECT 11 69+70, col I, § 5’ (see above).

It is possible to infer, in the light of the evidence presented above, that Ninurta’s *akītu* at Nippur, which was certainly related to the *gusisu* feast, celebrated his return from the “mountains.” Moreover, OECT 11 69+70, col I, § 3’ (Gurney 1989: 27) establishes a period from the 8th of Nisannu to the 24th of Iyyar. The appellation of the period is not preserved, but it marked the

23rd day, according to SAA 3 40:10, is the day of battle (*ta-ha-zu*), when Marduk “calmed his ire.” It is the day of Ninurta’s *akītu*, according to STT 340 obv. 23 (Watanabe 1991: 350 23).

¹⁸⁴ The hemerologies describe the 24th of Iyyar as “joy of heart” in SAA 8 162; and “jo[y of he]art; the beginning of tax is set” in SAA 8 232.

¹⁸⁵ In the hemerologies, the 26th day of Iyyar is called “good news” (*busratu*), see SAA 8 162; and as the time of Bel’s marriage in SAA 8 232 obv. 6f: “Until the marriage (*hašādu*) of Bel passes, the face of Ištar [...] ...”

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *Enūma eliš* V 64; in SAA 8 162, the 28th of Iyyar is called “let him kill a snake.”

time when some deity, presumably Ninurta, “came to E-šumeša.”¹⁸⁷ The beginning of the period is the 8th of Nisannu and thus coincides with the first decreeing of destinies in Marduk's *akītu* in Babylon. The other date, the 24th of Iyyar, is the date of Ninurta's *akītu* in Nippur, according to the text quoted above. Thus the cultic practices of Babylon and Nippur were closely related to each other, as is also seen in an expository text that deals with the *akītu* of Marduk as a festival of Nippur, held in the month Nisannu.

The period from the 8th of Nisannu to the 24th of Iyyar, clearly indicated in the text, seems to be a continuation of the New Year festival. The *akītu* of Marduk continues with the *akītu* of Nabû in Babylon (8th-11th of Nisan) and the *akītu* of Ninurta in Nippur in the month of Iyyar. The *akītu*'s of Marduk and Nabû in Babylon were integrated into a single cultic event. A valuable mythical interpretation of the Babylonian New Year festival has been offered by Cohen (1993: 440-41). According to him, at the *akītu* celebration the god first had to reside in the *akītu*-house, which functioned as his primordial residence, and the triumphal re-entry to his city marked the most important event at the festival. The moment when the god first entered and claimed his city was the background of this mythical triumph. This description of events fits more the activities of Nabû than Marduk at the festival:

Nabû does not arrive at the beginning of the festival, but remains away from the city until the 4th day, (this elapsed time representing his stay in his primordial residence), when he enters Babylon by barge in a grand procession. Two days later he makes his triumphal entrance into the Esagil-complex ... Two days after this the gods assemble to determine the destiny in the Ubšukkina, (Nabû arranges the city's administration). Had the festival concluded during the middle of the 8th day, the schedule of the Babylonian *akītu* would have generally paralleled the order of events at Uruk. And Nabû, not Marduk, would be viewed as the god of the *akītu*! The last three and a half days, days eight to eleven, appear to refer to a second *akītu* festival. (*ibid.* 440.)

This second *akītu* most probably concerned the son of the main god, Nabû/Ninurta. Another text, a commentary on the Assyrian cultic calendar (SAA 3 40) can give more intelligence on the happenings in Nippur's second month. The calendar dating of the tablet is controversial, as noted above. It is probable, according to some scholars, that the text describes the cultic events of Shebat and Addar, and the latest edition by Livingstone expresses the same consensus, although the collation seems to insist on the month of Elul (*iti.kin*¹).¹⁸⁸ Remarkably, both Shebat and Elul are mentioned as the festival times of Ninurta by Assurnasirpal: “I appointed his festivals in the months of Shebat and Elul. The name of his festival in the month Shebat I called

¹⁸⁷ Gurney 1989: 27, ll. 9'-11': DIŠ TA UD 8.KÁM šá^{iti} BĀR EN UD 24.KÁM [šá]^{iti} GUD šá x [x x x] MU⁷ MAŠ.SU^d MAŠKIM-ZU.AB x-nu-x-ma KUR^{meš} šá x x x a-na é-šu-me-ša₄ il-lik.

¹⁸⁸ See Menzel 1981: 30: “auf Grund der Königsrituale mit Angaben von Festdaten kann jedoch die Lesung des Monatsnamen berichtigt werden: LKA 73 behandelt die Zeitspanne vom 16. Šabātu bis 9. Addaru, sozusagen die Höhepunkte des neuassyrischen ‘Kirchenjahres.’” This solution is followed by Maul 2000: 394ff.

‘Splendour’ (*tašrihtu*)” (Grayson 1991: 291). The name of the festival probably refers to the “glorification” of Ninurta's kingship during the Shebat rituals.¹⁸⁹ As the words of Assurnasirpal witness, it was the cultic reform which established Ninurta festivities in the months of Shebat and Elul. This establishment was followed during the whole of the Neo-Assyrian period and it coincides, by and large, with the royal rituals of military *akītu* which were celebrated in the proximity of the Assyrian New Year Festivals (see below, pp. 90ff). The military *akītu* was probably a borrowing from Ninurta's *akītu* in Nippur, celebrated in the second month. The words of Assurnasirpal testify to the cultic reform which modified the Sumero-Babylonian traditions for Assyrian purposes. The explanations of the rituals in Shebat or Elul in the cultic commentary are still remarkably similar to Ninurta's *akītu*. The relevant parts of SAA 3 40 are cited here in the translation by Livingstone:

¹In Shebat, the 16th day when the king goes to [...], is because they vanquished Anu. ²The 17th day, which they call the Entry (*ša tērubti iqabbū*), is when Marduk vanquished his enemies.¹⁹⁰ ³The 18th day, which they call the Silence: they cast Qingu and his forty sons from the roof. ... ⁵The 19th day, which they call the Silence: is when he vanquished Anu and the Pleiades, the sons of Enmešarra.¹⁹¹ ⁶The 19th day (of) Wrath is the day the King defeated Anu, the day King Marduk defeated Anu. ⁷The 21st day he pulled out the eyes of Illils and put them up for ... ⁸The 22nd day, when the god goes to Bet-Dugani: *e* = house; *ab* = smiting; *gaz* = to kill. ⁹The house where he killed Anu. ¹⁰The 23rd day is the battle (*tahāzu*); he calmed his ire. ¹¹The 26th day, when the god goes to the *brewery*, (is) where they dug Anu and which is called a drop (*tik*) of ..., ¹²(meaning) stirring up (*diki*) bat[tle]. ¹³The 24th [day], when the king wears a crown, is (when) Bel slashed and [...] Anu's neck; having assumed kingship, he bathed and donned the royal garb.¹⁹²

In my view, given the unmistakable parallels which exist between this text and the sections concerning Iyyar in OECT 11 69+70 on the one hand, and in the Neo-Assyrian rituals of Shebat-Addar on the other, it is possible to assume that the explanatory text SAA 3 40 should be considered to apply to several months of the cultic year, when the royal rituals occur. The rituals of Elul and Shebat-Addar should be considered to have had a similar structure, at least after the cultic reform of Assurnasirpal, who established the feasts of Ninurta in Elul and Shebat. The royal rituals of Shebat have their roots in

¹⁸⁹ See CAD s.v. *šarāhu*; cf. also *agū tašrihti*, K. Watanabe 1991: 358. “Splendour” might refer to the “splendour of kingship” as in SAA 3 39 rev. 23 (ME.LĀM LUGAL-ū-ti).

¹⁹⁰ This probably refers to the triumphal entry of the king into the city.

¹⁹¹ The text which concerns the Babylonian ritual in Shebat, OECT 11 47, enumerates in ll. 1-3 eight *asakku* demons, summarized as ‘the sons of Enmešarra.’ Normally in such lists they are called “sons of Anu.” Some lists of *asakku* demons further describe them as ‘defeated by Ninurta’ (*ki-šit-ti^d nin-urta*) as in K 2892 40ff and KAR 142 i 39-41 (see W. G. Lambert in Gurney 1989: 26; cf. Livingstone 1986: 186). These lists of *asakku* demons are to be compared with the lists of heroes vanquished by Ninurta (see *Ninurta and the Monsters* [pp. 109-21]).

¹⁹² Cf. Livingstone 1986: 126ff and Jacobsen 1975: 74. The bathing of Ninurta was the concluding event of the *gusisu* festival as well.

those of Iyyar and this is seen with particular clarity in the ritual of sacred marriage which occurs in both.

The mythological events in SAA 3 40 are, though not in detail, remarkably similar to those reported by the expository text OECT 11 69+70 quoted above. The main difference is while the latter deals with Ninurta, SAA 3 40 is concerned with the kingship of Marduk. The connecting motif in both these texts is an elevation of the deity (Ninurta and Marduk) who assumes kingship. It is highly probable that SAA 3 40 deals with the rituals of Shebat and Addar because the reverse of the tablet relates to the events of the next month.

The usurpation of Anu's kingship is also reflected in the text on the ritual of Nabû in the month of Iyyar when he left for Uruk to assume Anu's crown. The relevant section begins with the words: "For the month Iyyar, the month of Ningirsu, the *ensi* of Enlil, the valiant, the month the cattle are driven, the open land is cultivated." This is a Seleucid Babylonian ritual text which describes some details pertaining to the ritual marriage of Nabû and Nanaya. On the second day of the second month, "Nabû in (his) status as bridegroom is dressed in the garment (befitting) his rank as supreme god (*anûtu*)." He goes to the temple of his beloved Nanaya, Ehuršaba in Borsippa and enters the bedroom with her. He leaves it on the 6th day, and on the 7th day Nabû enters Anu's garden near his temple Eanna in Uruk, takes Anu's seat, assumes his kingship and wears Anu's crown.¹⁹³

It seems plausible to infer, on the basis of the evidence presented above, that the agrarian episodes of the *gusisu* festival lived on in the later Babylonian and Assyrian rituals in the form of a 'sacred marriage.' Originally, in the cult of Nippur, the *gusisu* feast was a royal festival celebrating king's role as the "faithful farmer" of Enlil, who was Ninurta. It was also Ninurta's triumph over his enemies which was celebrated at that time. Already in ancient times, an interpretation considered Ninurta's *akîtu* in Nippur an agricultural feast with regard to its position in the calendar year and a celebration of Ninurta's victory over his enemies/other gods, according to the mythological background. In this Nippur festival, kingship was probably given to Ninurta by his father, and the king assumed the role of Ninurta.

W. Sallaberger points to agrarian episodes in *Lugale* as a possible mythological background for the *gusisu*-feast: "da Ninurta durch den Sieg über die Steine die Kontrolle über die Hochflut erlangt, welche hinwiederum Fruchtbarkeit im Lande bewirkt und den Ackerbau ermöglicht" (1993: 122) and adds that it is certainly not a coincidence that the time of the flood was chosen by Gudea (Cyl A i) for his rebuilding of Ningirsu's temple Eninnu (*ibid.*, n.

¹⁹³ Cohen 1993: 311, Pomponio 1978: 132-36, Nissinen 2001: 100f. Nanaya subsequently withdraws from her temple Ehuršaba on the 17th day to the "garden of the mountain." This is comparable to the account in OECT 11 69+70 col I, § 6' where Antum, after the festival in her honour on the 16th of Iyyar, clothes and adorns herself and "with a shout of joy went to the mountain / (to) Ekur"; see Gurney 1989: 31f.

561).¹⁹⁴ One more detail discovered by Sallaberger helps to establish a connection between the *gusisu* feast and Ninurta's triumphal return:

Texte aus dem Inanna-Tempel von Nippur bezeugen eine Schiffahrt Ninurtas im Rahmen des Gusisu-Festes, die sich bisher noch nicht nachweisen liess. Da die entsprechenden Urkunden nicht auf dem Tag datiert sind, lässt sich diese Prozession nicht in den Festesablauf einordnen. Wird hier vielleicht die Ankunft Ninurtas in Nippur ... dargestellt? (Sallaberger 1993: 119.)

Ninurta's processional boat occurs in *Lugale* at his return.¹⁹⁵ A processional boat was also used by Marduk at his *akîtu* in Nisannu in Babylon. Marduk ascended at the "gate of Ištar" to the boat in order to sail to the *akîtu* house (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 75). It seems that Marduk's boat in the Babylonian ritual corresponds to the more ancient boat of Ninurta.¹⁹⁶ His boat is found in *Angim* 175-79 – when Ninurta approaches Enlil's temple, he is greeted by Ninkarnunna "Lord of the princely dock," which name is connected with the name of Ninurta's processional ship má-kar-nun-ta-è-a, attested in *Lugale* 90, 651 and 677 (Cooper 1978: 136):

As Ninurta went out from Enlil's temple, the most bright-faced of warriors, Ninkarnunna, having heard the favourable pronouncement of Ninurta, stepped before lord Ninurta and prayed to him.

The ritual bathing of Ninurta at the end of the *gusisu* feast possibly symbolized the seasonal inundation of the river water; or:

vielleicht ist das entsprechende Ritual hierzu das in den Ur III-Urkunden bezeugte Baden Ninurtas als kultische Reinigung vor seiner "Erhöhung" oder als bildhaft-symbolische Darstellung der alljährlichen Erneuerung des Segens Enlils. (Sallaberger 1993: 122.)

The "bathing" itself was a *royal* ceremony (cf. *Atrahasis* I 206-207 and SAA Gilg. XI 295f). Livingstone has pointed to the Sumerian *lugal*-festivals which consisted of the ritual bathing (a-tu₅-a) of the king (Sallaberger 1993: 65, 256) in accordance with the moon phases (see Livingstone 1999: 132f).¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ King Solomon is also reported to have begun the building of the temple in the second month of the year, see 1 Kgs 6:1ff.

¹⁹⁵ *Lugale* 650 (má-gur₈). The date-formula from the eighth year of Šu-ilišu (reigned 1984-75) records the making of a boat for Ninurta by the king: má-gur₈ mah⁹ Nin-urta mu-na-dím (Richter 1999: 49).

¹⁹⁶ B. Pongratz-Leisten (1994: 24) has written on the symbolism of Marduk's procession on the water as follows: "Die soeben aufgeführten mythologischen Anspielungen sowie die Verbindung von Toren mit bestimmten Mischwesens, die Marduk im Kampf unterliegen, lassen während des Neujahrsfestes einen Bezug zwischen dem Prozessionsweg zu Wasser und mythischem Geschehen annehmen. Es ist zu überlegen, ob für die Neujahrsprozession bewusst ein Teil des Weges zu Wasser zurückgelegt wurde, auf dem an den Kampf gegen die Repräsentantin des Urgewässers Tiāmat und ihre Gefährten auf visueller Ebene oder Rezitationen erinnert."

¹⁹⁷ The detail of Ninurta's ritual bathing as the culminating point of the *gusisu*-feast also recalls the bathing of Enlil in the Akkadian Epic of Anzû which begins the story. Enlil's bathing in the Anzû Epic is a motif corresponding to Gilgamesh's bath, see W. Röllig, *EM* 7 (1987) s.v. Gilgamesch, col 1250.

If the Akkadian Epic of Anzû can be put into the frame of a cultic year, it should have its starting point in the month of Iyyar. A very similar state of affairs obtains in *Lugale*. At the very beginning, we are told of a feast in honour of Ninurta (ll. 17-23).

Inspiring great numinous power, he [= Ninurta] had taken his place on the throne, the august dais, and was sitting gladly at his ease *at the festival celebrated in his honour*, rivalling An and Enlil in drinking his fill, while Bau was pleading petitions in a prayer for the king, and he, Ninurta, Enlil's son, was handing down decisions. At that moment the Lord's battle-mace looked towards the Mountains, the Šar-ur cried out aloud to its master (my emphasis).

It is possible that the reported feast corresponds to the *gusisu*-feast of the vernal flood at harvest time. Thus the poem begins with a ritual which had well-defined historical settings.¹⁹⁸ With the speech of Šarur, the mythical battle of Ninurta begins, which ends up with the second part of the creation following the deluge. After his victorious battle, Ninurta returns in a processional boat, exactly in the same way as he did at the *gusisu* feast (*Lugale* 672ff). Ninurta's activity next engages him in the inundation of the fields. After his victorious battle, Ninurta (= King) irrigates the fields as the patron of agriculture, exactly as the king does at the *gusisu* feast.¹⁹⁹ The threatening waters of the vernal flood are safely dyked and driven into the fields. Mythically, the situation is depicted in the *Lugale* myth as the outcome of Ninurta's battle with Asag (ll. 705-13):

Since the Hero had traced the way of the waters down from above, since he had brought them to the fertile fields, since he had made famous the plough of abundance, since the Lord had established it in regular furrows, since Ninurta son of Enlil had heaped up grain-piles and granaries – Ninurta the son of Enlil entrusted their keeping to the care of the lady who possesses the divine powers which exist of themselves, who is eminently worthy of praise, to Nisaba, good lady, greatly wise, pre-eminent in the lands, her who possesses the principal tablet with the obligations of en and lugal, endowed by Enki on the Holy Mound with a great intelligence.

In other words, Ninurta as the god of ploughing entrusts the flooded fields to the care of Nisaba, who is the patron of the hoe. In the debate poem between *Plough and Hoe* 188ff, Enlil addresses the Hoe: "Is not Nisaba the Hoe's inspector? Is not Nisaba its overseer? The scribe will register your work, he will register your work."²⁰⁰ As Ninurta's plough was the symbol of his

¹⁹⁸ Cf. van Dijk 1983: 8: "Il s'agit évidemment d'une grande fête, bien qu'on ne puisse prouver qu'il s'agisse de la fête du Nouvel An. ... si cette composition commence dans le rituel, l'intention de l'auteur ne peut pas être autre que d'introduire la lecture du texte dans la répétition (annuelle) de ce rituel et de cette prière pour le roi."

¹⁹⁹ The name of the composition *Angimdimma* occurs as a *field name* in the Nippur area (a-šà an-gim-dím-ma), see G. Pettinato, *AnOr* 45 (1969), no 24 (CT 1 42 iv 5); *idem*, "Untersuchungen zur Neusumerischen Landwirtschaft" 1/1: 93 (*Ricerche* 2 1967).

²⁰⁰ Cf. *The Song of the Hoe* 28-32: "The leader of heaven and earth, lord Nunamnir, named the important persons and valued persons. He these persons, and recruited them to provide for the gods. Now Enki praised Enlil's hoe, and the maiden Nisaba was

creative powers, or as Marduk's penis in the Neo-Assyrian ritual commentary (SAA 3 37 obv. 18') was his weapon against Tiamat, Nisaba's hoe here is probably the symbol of a scribe's stylus.

Ninurta's akītu and the Sacred Marriage

These ritual practices of the second month in Sumerian Nippur are comparable to the first millennium Akkadian rituals of divine love. The Neo-Assyrian "sacred marriage" rite of Nabû and Tašmetu and the Babylonian ritual of love between Nabû and Nanaya took place in the month of Iyyar (Nissinen 2001: 97-101). As already discussed above (see pp. 24ff), in these love rituals of the first millennium the god's chariot played an occasional role and the wife of the god interceded on behalf of the king in the bed-chamber, themes which were also present in the Ninurta myth *Angim*. By discussing Ninurta's *akītu* in Nippur, we have found evidence for Enlil's cultic chariot in the hymn of Išme-Dagan. There are two possible references to the sacred marriage in this text: in lines 66-67 Enlil and Ninlil embrace each other and in ll. 93-96 Ninurta offers a prayer to Enlil: "Give to him (= the king), as spouse, Inanna your beloved eldest daughter, let them embrace forever! Delight, sweetness, holy limbs, may last a long time in his abundant life."²⁰¹

It is quite reasonable to assume that the second element in the *gusisu* feast – that of ploughing and "dropping the seed" – corresponds metaphorically to sexual intercourse between the god and the goddess in the same month. The text OECT 11 69+70 col. I § 4' attests that Enlil married and had intercourse with Šuzianna at the regular feast of Ištar on the 10th of Iyyar in Nippur as a preamble to Ninurta's *akītu*:

In the month Iyyar, day 10, when the regular feast of Ištar is held, it is because (of) Šuzianna, the daughter of Enmešarra, whom Enlil married; in (the shrine) Ekur-igigal the god had intercourse with her (*il-mad-si-ma*) and she sat upon her great throne, and he *invested* her (with) the 'seal of the bond' (KIŠIB.DUR-ri *ih-lu-us-si*), placed a *buršasillu* in the gate (and) instituted a procession of the daughters of Nippur. (Gurney 1989: 31.)

Sexual intercourse between Nabû and Tašmetu in first millennium Neo-Assyrian rituals in Calah took place on the 4th of Iyyar (SAA 13 78:9f). The sacrificial meal was served at a royal banquet (*šākussu ša šarri*) on the 5th day after which the gods stayed together until the 10th, and during this period Tašmetu was probably expected to intercede on behalf of the king in their sweet bed. Thereafter Nabû went to a 'garden' (*ambassu*) on a chariot to hunt some bulls on the 11th (Nissinen 2001: 97ff). One ritual text also mentions

made responsible for keeping records of the decisions. And so people took the shining hoes, the holy hoes, into their hands."

²⁰¹ Civil 1968: 7, Emelianov 1999a: 69.

“the footrace of Nabû” in the streets of Assur in this month.²⁰² The Neo-Assyrian ritual had the following parts:

1) the entrance of the gods to the ‘bedroom’ and their erotic encounter there; 2) a procession of both or at least one of the gods and 3) the entrance of Nabû to the ‘garden.’ Each phase of the ritual is accompanied by sacrifices, eventually also by a sacrificial meal, for the prosperity of the king and the royal family. (Nissinen 1998: 595, n. 43.)

This ritual is repeated in a similar manner nine months later in Shebat, thus occurring twice a year. The purpose of this ritual is explained in a Neo-Assyrian letter from the priest Nabû-šumu-iddina to the prince:

The crown prince, my lord, knows that I am the ‘inspector’ of the temple of Nabû, your god (*DINGIR-ka*) ... May Bel and Nabû whose ritual of love is performed in the month of Shebat (XI), protect the life of the crown prince, my lord (SAA 13 78 r. 11-13, 16-19).

This passage attests that Nabû was the god of the Assyrian crown prince, and the aim of the love ritual was to protect the prince. The love ritual (*quršu*) of Mullissu in Assur is reported to have taken place in the month of Shebat, from the 17th to the 22nd day.²⁰³ This was a part of major royal festivities lasting from Shebat to Nisan, and the love ritual of Mullissu coincides with the period when the king sojourned in the Ešarra temple as the central figure of various ceremonies (Nissinen 2001: 96). The *hašādu* of Marduk and Zarpanitu in Babylon and the love ritual of Šamaš and Aya took place in Shebat, and this was also the month of the alleged sacrilege of Nabû-šumu-iškun concerning the sacred marriage.²⁰⁴ Both Iyyar and Shebat are thus attested as witnessing the ritual marriage:

In a Neo-Assyrian tablet that includes hemerological commentary on the month Ayyāru the writer, apparently a court scholar, reports to the king that the 26th day was witness to the marriage rites of Marduk. But confirmation of such rites nine months later, in Šabātu, comes from a calendrical commentary which reports that this is the month of “the sacred marriage rites [*ha-šá-da-nu*] of the gods.” Note also the situation at Sippar, where Šamaš and Ištar as Bēlet/Šarrat-Sippar celebrate marriage rites in Šabātu.²⁰⁵

What is the difference between the rituals in Iyyar and Shebat and what connects them? S. W. Cole (1994: 239-40) has argued that in Shebat the “betrothal” (*hašādu*) of the gods takes place, while in Iyyar the “marriage” occurs (*hadaššūtu*). A different presupposition is taken in the explanation

²⁰² SAA 3 10 rev. 8'-12': “It is the day of the race of Nabû, it is a day [of] Iyyar, a favourable month. On [your] right and on your left, while traversing the streets of his city, while deciding the decisions of the city, wherever we enter, there is abundance and prosperity! The city rejoices at the roads that we pass!”

²⁰³ See Nissinen 2001: 95f; S. Parpola SAA 18* 1, 2; and SAA 7 183-86, 207-209, 215-16, 218.

²⁰⁴ Nissinen 2001: 110, Cole 1994.

²⁰⁵ George 2000: 292. See also Livingstone 1997: 169f; H. Hunger SAA 8 232; E. Reiner, *AfO* 24 (1973), 102:7; cf. Nissinen 2001: 106ff.

which will offered here: the rites of Iyyar and those of Shebat were actualized symmetrically which means that the months were considered to correspond to each other as the months of kingship rituals. M. Nissinen has written on the Akkadian divine love rituals that “whatever role the king may have concretely assumed on each occasion, the royal significance of the ritual is beyond doubt” (2001: 110). The basic idea of it is the intercession of a goddess on behalf of the king, performed by Tašmetu, Zarpanitu or Aya:

the purpose and function of divine love-making was to establish the kingship and support the king and his family. Thanks to the divine intercession, he was worthy of participating in the love of the gods and sharing the favors and blessing caused by this love. ... As the earthly representative of the divine, the king symbolically assumes the role of the beloved of the goddess, acting as the benefactor of the mankind upon the intercession of the goddess. Since he by the same token was the representative of the mankind before the heavenly world, he himself needs the divine intercession, and the blessing bestowed upon him was in fact granted to the whole people. (Nissinen 2001: 111, 112-13.)

The Neo-Assyrian prophets, adhering to the same ideology, transmit the intercession of Ištar/Mullissu to the king, but without reference to a love ritual. The goddess speaks on behalf of the king before the council of the gods, cf. SAA 9 9:20: “I (Ištar/Mullissu) have ordained life for you in the assembly of all the gods” (Nissinen 2001: 111). A similar situation appears in the Epic of Anzû where Belet-ili is summoned before the assembly of gods as the intermediary between the assembly and Ninurta (= king), see SAA Anzu I 169ff. In the religious life of the community, the prophets act as the channel through which the intercession of the goddess is bestowed upon people (Nissinen 2001: 113).

The sacred marriage rituals occurred twice in a cultic year, in Iyyar and Shebat. It seems to indicate that these two months had a similar symbolic meaning. It might be that the other ritual activities of these months were arranged in a similar pattern as well. For example, the cultic commentary SAA 3 40 is, in general terms, applicable to the rituals of both months (see above, pp. 65ff). The circumstance which might connect the rites of divine love in Iyyar and in Shebat might be the time span of nine months – the duration of pregnancy. In the Neo-Assyrian ritual, nine months after the sexual encounter between Nabû and Tašmetu, on the 9th of Addar, it is reported that “Šerua has given birth” (*dše-ru-u-a ta-ta-lad*) in the Assyrian ritual text (SAA 18 9 rev. iii, 22). This is concomitant with the second part of the love ritual which takes place in the eleventh month.

The Neo-Assyrian ritual and cultic texts tell us a lot about the cultic events of the city Assur in Shebat and Addar. Before the 10th of Shebat, a procession of Mullissu probably went to the king's palace and on the 10th day Ninurta rose (*itabbi*) for the procession (Maul 2000: 392, 412f). The most important part of the royal festivities took place from the 16th of Shebat to the 10th of Addar because the king entered the city on the 16th day (cf. SAA 10 190). From the 16th to the 19th day of Shebat, the king visited the temples of Dagan and Anu-Adad. On the 20th day, the first high point occurs in the festival when

the king enters Aššur's temple, sacrifices for Aššur and Mullissu and leads the gods to the Dais of Destinies (Maul 2000: 393):

On the 20th day the king came down to the House of God. He performed the sheep offerings before Aššur and Mullissu. He made Aššur and Mullissu rise and seated them on the Dais of Destinies. He returned, lifted Lord Tiara (*Bēl-agū*) and seated him on the Dais of Destinies (SAA 18* 9 ii 23ff).

The exact symbolic meaning of the ritual cannot be ascertained on the basis of this text, but there is a suspicion that it is related to the coronation and the divine assembly. The assembly of the gods (*puhur ilāni*) is reported to have taken place from the 22nd to the 26th of Shebat. The days dedicated to the cult of Ninurta during these festivities seem to have been the 10th of Shebat and the 6th of Addar because the cultic songs of Ninurta were sung by the *kalû*-priest on these days. The complicated ritual calendar of the Neo-Assyrian period unfortunately does not tell us much about the mythological role of Ninurta in the rituals of Shebat.

The Assyrian rituals of Shebat were continued in Addar, occasionally by the military *akītu* in Arbela, as can be inferred from the words of Assurbani-pal: "thereupon Addar arrived, the month of the festival in the *akītu* temple of the queen of the goddesses, during which time the gods, [her] parents, assemble in front of her in order to consult and make d[ecision(s)]." (Weissert 1997a: 346.) There was an Assyrian ritual (SAA 18* 18) which consisted of the killing of "an enemy" by the king and his subsequent triumphal entry into the camp (l. 54: *madaktu*). This ritual may have been enacted during the military *akītu* of Ištar in Addar, celebrated outside Assur, in Arbela.²⁰⁶ It is equally possible that the ritual took place in Shebat near the Ešarra temple in Assur.²⁰⁷

It is not particularly clear who is meant by the "enemy" (LÚ.KUR) in the ritual. It might have been a prisoner of war. This ritual involves a chariot of the god(s), whose name is written ^dMAŠ.MAŠ. K. Deller has defined the ritual as "für den Einsatz der Götterstreitwagen" and holds *Mašmaš* to be Adad and Nergal (*BaM* 23 [1992], 341ff). After the king has defeated "the enemy," he triumphantly enters the military garrison:

The king strings the bow before Šamaš and puts it on the ground. They lift it from the ground and string it. They take an arrow (*šiltāhu*) from the chariot of *Mašmaš* and wrap its point [with wool]. The knight of the gods places it in the king's hand. The king hangs a lyre on his shoulder, receives the arrow, spins it around thrice and kisses it. He gives it to the knight, (who) puts it into the hands of the 'left-house man' of *Mašmaš*. He mounts it on the bow. ... Seizing the chariots

²⁰⁶ Pongratz-Leisten 1997: 250; see also *Triumphal akītu of Assyria* below (pp. 90-108).

²⁰⁷ Maul 2000: 395 writes: "Am 23. Šabātu wurde vielleicht auch ein Kultdrama inszeniert, in dem der König 'den Feind' tötete und sich so Ninurta gleich den Göttern als 'Rächer seiner Väter' präsentierte und seine Gewalt als oberster Kriegsherr im Auftrage der Götter demonstrierte." Cf. Menzel 1981: 57: "Doch ist auch nicht gänzlich auszuschliessen, dass hier ein 'mobiles' Ritual vorliegt, das nach Bedarf an verschiedenen Örtlichkeiten ausführbar war."

and turning around, the 'left-house-man' of *Mašmaš* says: "(Arrow) of Aššur, go!" [They shoot] the arrow into the enemy, circumambulate it thrice, and pi[ck up] the arrow thrice. ... Having defeated his enemy, he puts on the jewellery and hangs the lyre on his shoulder. He goes before the gods. Sheep offerings are performed. He kisses the ground, does triumphal entry into the camp, enters the *girsū*-enclosure and begins the dinner. The king rejoices. (SAA 18* 18:22-33, 39-43, 48-56)

In this ritual, the king is certainly acting as Ninurta and Ninurta's *akītu* in Nippur should be in the background of this ritual. There are thus some obvious similarities between Ninurta's *akītu* in Iyyar and the Assyrian rituals in Shebat-Addar. The similarity in symbolic content of Iyyar and Shebat is expressed by the occurrence of the ritual of divine love in both months. The *gusisu* festival in Nippur had an aspect of fertility which was probably connected to the spring flood of the two rivers. Ninurta's part in the festival was that of the triumphant king, the master of the flood. The flood is the connecting point between the fertility and military aspects of the festival. As the flood can be dangerous for the growing crops, Ninurta was held to be responsible for blocking of the waters. This task was considered as one of Ninurta's mythological battles.²⁰⁸ In this way, Ninurta is the "saviour of the fields." The fertility aspect of Ninurta is most explicitly stated in a *balbale* song to him (Ninurta F, ll. 22-31):

Through the King (= Ninurta), flax is born; through the King, barley is born. Through him, carp floods are made plentiful in the river. Through him, fine grains are made to grow in the fields. Through him, carp are made plentiful in the lagoons. Through him, dead and fresh reed are made to grow in the reed thickets. Through him, fallow deer and wild sheep are made plentiful in the forests. Through him, *mašgurum* trees are made to grow in the high desert. Through him, syrup and wine are made plentiful in the watered gardens. Through him, life which is long is made to grow in the palace.

V. Emelianov believes that *Angim* is dedicated to the ritual described in OECT 11 69+70: Ninurta has won the battle with "the mountains," delivered his spoils of war to Enlil and come to his future wife the virgin (ki-sikil) Ninnibru and made a favourable pronouncement for the king, probably during their time in bed (1998: 143). There are three motifs in the ritual which *Angim* describes: a) the sacred marriage, b) the battle with a mighty enemy and the victory over him, c) determination of the king's fate in Nippur (*ibid.*). A selection of entries in the Babylonian almanac *iqqur ipuš* (Labat 1965) adduced by Emelianov (1998: 144), seems to confirm the interpretation of the second Nippur month as the period of rivalry, battle and usurpation:

²⁰⁸ Cf. Heimpel 1987: 316: "According to the pattern of mythological etiologies, one simply assumed a stage in which mountains, slope, and channels did not exist. The consequence was scarceness of water in the plains. Enter Ninurta, the protagonist and champion of the valiant farmer of the plains, to provide with the Tigris the desired abundance of water by creating that which made it possible to tap the abundant sources of the Kur, namely, the mountains and valleys."

38, 2: DIŠ *ina* GU₄ (LUGAL) GARZA TI-*qé* DINGIR TUKU “In (the month of) Iyyar the king will pass through the ritual (of enthronement) and receive (the Mercy of his) god.”

44, 2: [DIŠ *ina* G]U₄ NA.BI *ana* EN.DU₁₁-šú IGI-*mar* “In (the month of) Iyyar this man will deal with his adversary.”

71, 2: DIŠ *ina* GU₄ LUGAL ÚŠ-*ma* DUMU.MEŠ LUGAL AŠ.TE AD-šú-*nu* SÁ-SÁ “In (the month of) Iyyar the king will die, and his sons will fight for their father’s throne.”

73, 2: DIŠ *ina* GU₄ ZI-*ut* LUGAL IM.GI *ana* KUR GÁL-š*i* “In (the month of) Iyyar the assault of the usurper-king against the country will take place.”

98,2 : DIŠ *ina* GU₄ ZI-*ut* KUR *ana* KUR [GÁL] “In (the month of) Iyyar the assault of the enemy against the country [will take place].”

I believe that Ninurta’s *akītu* in Nippur and the ritual of “holy marriage” in the first millennium have a common background and traces of it are found even in the arcane cultic calendar of the Neo-Assyrian empire. It is probable that the myths forming mythological frames for these rituals or festivities have a common theme of deluge. This theme is further discussed below in *Ninurta and the Deluge* (pp. 123-33).²⁰⁹

Syncretism in the Cultic Topography

The eastern annex of Esagil, Ubšu-ukkinna, where the two assemblies of the gods convened for making decisions on the 8th and 11th of Nisannu, contained the Dais of Destinies and it was equipped with seats for the seven destiny-decreeing gods. Besides Marduk, there were seats for Anu, Enlil, Ea, Šamaš, Ninurta, Nabû and perhaps Adad (George 1999a: 73-74). The full name of Marduk’s cultic throne was called “Holy Mound/ Mountain” (du₆.kù) and “Dais of Destinies” (*parak šimāti*), where he was hailed by the other gods on the 8th of Nisannu as *Lugaldimmerankia* “The king of the gods in heaven and earth.” The function of the annual ceremony of “decreeing the destinies” was the ratification of the *status quo*, the supreme status of Marduk and his earthly counterpart, the king (George 1999a: 79). Enlil’s Duku in Nippur was probably situated in the Ekur complex and it had the same function: it was the place of decreeing the destinies.²¹⁰ Both Duku and Ubšu-ukkinna are well

²⁰⁹ Emelianov 1998: 142f has made the following interesting comparison: “In Slavonic calendars we meet St. George’s Day (‘Егорьев, Юрьев день’), when cattle herds are turned out to the pasture and St. George opens the Earth and releases the dew. In a Byelorussian St.-George’s Day song ‘Holy George took the Golden Key, went to the Field, released the dew, the warm Dew, the wet Dew’ (*Folklore and Ethnography* [Moscow 1972], 128). In Macedonian villages, young virgins called: ‘Oh holy George! Come and find me married’ ... Compare the St. George of Slavonic songs (Georgios from Gr. *georgos* “farmer”) with Ninurta/Ningirsu, whose main epithet is *engar-zid* ‘true farmer.’” One may add to this comparison that St. George was also a dragon killer; see further Emelianov 1999 and 1999a: 66f.

²¹⁰ Pomponio 1978: 128; R. Borger *JCS* 21 (1967), 3, section 3, see also George 1993: 77, no 179, Richter 1999: 35f.

attested at Nippur as the site of a divine assembly presided over by Enlil (see Cooper 1978: 115f), which honour was later taken over by Marduk as the king of the gods (George 1992: 290). The gods who permanently resided in the Ubšu-ukkinna of Nippur, and probably took part in this assembly, are listed in Nippur Compendium IV 8-13.²¹¹

Marduk, according to the Creation Epic (VII 99-100), was “the son of the Holy Mound,” took his seat on the throne on the 8th and 11th of Nisannu, before and after his procession to the *akītu*-house. The concept of Marduk as the son of Duku is probably related to his birth “in the midst of Apsû” (*Enūma eliš* I 81). Duku and Ubšu-ukkinna are also attested in Uruk,²¹² and in Lagaš at the time of Gudea (Cyl. A viii 14); in a Sumerian temple hymn, *Eninnu* is called “pure mound (where) destinies are decreed.”²¹³ A dais of destinies also existed in Borsippa, Duru, Akkad and Assur. At Kiš there is *é.du₆.kù.ga* in Zababa’s temple (George 1993: 77, No. 186). Enki’s temple in Eridu is described as a Sacred Mound (Sjöberg 1969: 17). There is an association of du₆.kù with the Apsû of Ea because this god has two houses on the holy mound in Esagil.²¹⁴ A holy mound probably also existed at Umma and at Ur. At Ur it was called differently, *du₆.úr* (Cohen 1993: 108).

The Sacred Mound in Nippur was situated in the Tummal complex of Ekur (Cohen 1993: 107). The seventh month of the Nippur calendar was called *iti.du₆.kù* “Month of the sacred mound,” and *du₆.kù* was also the name of a Nippur feast of the seventh month.²¹⁵ The Akkadian name of the seventh month, *tašrītu*, means “beginning, inauguration,” which indicates that the seventh month was considered to begin the year symmetrically as did the first month (Emelianov 1999: 99).

According to the topographical texts, the Dais of Destinies was located in a courtyard and adjacent chambers adjoining a temple’s east gate, as realized in the great temples of Babylon and Uruk (George 1996: 374). The cosmographical counterpart of the *du₆.kù* lies somewhere in the eastern mountains, from behind which the sun rises each day. The name of Marduk’s throne is thus an allusion to a cosmological *du₆.kù*. This is otherwise principally

²¹¹ See George 1992: 156; *idem* 1999a: 86; Lieberman 1992: 133; Maul 1998: 198, n. 133; cf. *Angim* 87-89: “Do not frighten your father in his residence! Do not frighten Enlil in his residence! Do not panic the Anunna in the residence of Ubšu’ukkina!” (Cooper 1978: 71). The Anunnaki gather for assembly (*šitūltu*) near Enlil, according to a boundary stone inscription from the time of Nebuchadnezzar I (see Lambert 1992: 121f).

²¹² Thureau-Dangin *Rituels accadiens* (1921), 120:5-7.

²¹³ Sjöberg 1969: 31, l. 245 and Gudea Statue B v 48. The economic texts from Lagaš mention *a-šà-du₆.kù* “a field of the Sacred Mound” (Cohen 1993: 108).

²¹⁴ George 1992: 291; cf. *du₆.kù* = *apsû* in CT 18 28:7a. B. Landsberger (*JNES* 8 [1949], 274) has called attention to the entry in Menology B: *du₆.kù.ga*: *bāb apsi ipatti*, an expression which referred to the rains of the 7th month. See also *Malku* I 290 in A. Kilmer, *JAOS* 83 (1963), 429. A first millennium ritual tablet from Uruk mentions the gods of Apsû in conjunction with the gods of the Sacred Mound: *ilāni ša apsi u ilāni ša DU₆.KÙ likrubūka* (Cohen 1993: 108).

²¹⁵ See A. Tsukimoto, *Untersuchungen zur Totenpflege (kispum) im alten Mesopotamien*, AOAT 216 (Neukirchen 1985), 212ff.

known from the Sumerian dispute of *Cattle and Grain* where both were said to have come into being on the Sacred Mound (Cohen 1993: 107). There it is specified as *hur.sag an.ki.bi.da*, “the mountain of (i.e., between?) heaven and the underworld” and as the place where the gods are born and live: “As the home of the gods this cosmological *du₆.kù* might well be the site of divine assembly, and thus the cosmic prototype for the Dais of Destinies” (George 1992: 290).²¹⁶

According to OECT 11 69+70, at Ninurta’s *akītu* festival, Ninurta visited Enlil on the 24th of Iyyar. Ninurta brought the vanquished gods before Enlil, and “Enlil rejoiced over him (Ninurta) and sent a message of well-being (*bussurat šulmi*) for Lugaldukuga to the Middle Heavens” (Horowitz 1998: 13).²¹⁷ The mention of Lugaldukuga, “the king of the Holy Mound,” in the calendar text implies that Ninurta, after having presented his vanquished enemies to Enlil, goes to the *cosmological du₆.kù*, to the “Mt. Olympos” of the gods in the middle heavens which was the place for assembly.²¹⁸ This parallels well Nabû’s behaviour on the 6th of Nisannu, when he presents trophies to Marduk and then moves to the Dais of Destinies in Esagil.

It is an undisputable fact that the cultic topography of Nippur has strongly influenced the topography of both Babylon and Assur. For example, the by-name of the city of Assur, ^{uru}*Libbi-Āli* originally belonged to Nippur, and Ninurta’s temple Ešumeša was found in both Assur and Nippur. It is very probable that this transference brought along many theological and ritual elements of Enlil’s city (Maul 1998: 192). It accounts for Assyrian syncretism of Enlil of Nippur and the god of Assur.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ See also Sjöberg 1969: 51, n. 2; B. Hruška, “Zum ‘Heiligen Hügel’ in der altmesopotamischen Religion,” Fs. H. Hirsch, *ZDMG* 86 (1996), 161-75 and Jacobsen 1970: 118.

²¹⁷ Gurney 1989: 28 I 35-37. In the *Marduk Ordeal* texts SAA 3 35 and 34 (ll. 57ff), Nergal is sent by Aššur to “all the gods” with the same message. The first text states (ll. 52ff): “[When Aššur] s[ent Ninurta to vanquish] Anzû, Qingu and Asakku, [Nergal announced before Aššur]: ‘Anzû, Qingu and Asakku are vanquished.’ [(Aššur) said: ‘Go and] give the good news [to all the gods]!’ He gives the news, and they [rejoice] about it and go.” A ritual commentary (O 175, ll. 1-2.) explaining “presences” (*ašbu*) of the gods, gives Lugaldukuga as the “presence” of Enlil: “Anu [is present] as himself. Enlil is present as Lugaldukuga, (that is) Enmešarra. Enmešarra is Anu. Ea is present as the Apsû. The Apsû is the sea (Tāmtu). The sea is Ereškigal” (Livingstone 1986: 190f).

²¹⁸ Horowitz 1998: 13 comments: “The appearance of Lugaldukuga in the Middle Heavens in this passage is puzzling. Elsewhere, Lugaldukuga is either an ancestor of Enlil who dwells in the underworld, or a name of Ea who is normally to be found in the Apsu,” cf. Lambert in *RIA* 7: 133f. Duku was the dwelling place of Enlil’s ancestors, where they performed a lament by the holy knees of Enlil, see *The Cursing of Agade* 208. In the passage of the Nippur calendar, Lugaldukuga seems to be a variant name of Enlil’s ancestor ^dEn-du₆-kù-ga. The seventh month was considered in the first millennium calendars as the “month of Enlil’s ancestors” and Tummal feast occurred on the seventh month in Nippur (Cohen 1993: 107). According to my view, in the Nippur calendar OECT 11 69+70, Lugaldukuga is introduced by a confluence of the traditions concerning the second (*gusisu*) and the seventh (*duku*) month.

²¹⁹ See A. R. George, *ZA* 80 (1990), 157.

Aššur adopted Enlil’s family (chief among them Enmešarra, Ninlil and Ninurta) and court (the vizier Nuska and gatekeeper Kalkal being two of several). The syncretism further accounts for the introduction into Assyria of many temple and shrine names associated with the gods of Nippur: apart from E-gigir-Enlilla and E-tummal, note also E-kiur of Ninlil and E-šumeša of Ninurta, as well as the names of the temple of Aššur itself, E-šarra and E-kur (George 1992: 185-86).

Numerous names of chapels, gates and localities of the Aššur temple Ešarra remained essentially unchanged from the time of Šamši-Adad I up to Sennacherib. They had adopted the respective names from Ekur in Nippur. Presumably, the theology and the rites of Nippur were taken over with the names (Maul 1997: 121). The Assyrian king Sennacherib, who was responsible for remodelling the temple of Aššur, Ešarra, to current Babylonian standards, equipped the temple with an eastern annex to house a *parak šīmāti* for the divine assembly of the gods, and ultimately he was responsible for the takeover of the cults of Babylon.²²⁰ Similar rebuildings took place contemporarily in Anu’s temple at Uruk and at Ur in the E-kišnugal of Sin. Taking into account that religious and theological statements were consciously adopted, there is

also a suspicion that, rather earlier, the priests of E-sagil borrowed many ceremonial names from Enlil’s E-kur at Nippur, just as the priests of E-šarra at Aššur did. Many of the names given to the gates, courtyards and shrines of the great cult-centres of Babylonia were held in common (George 1996: 374).

The Dais of Destinies in Aššur’s temple was located in the courtyard of Sennacherib’s eastern annex of Ešarra, which bore the name of *kisalli sidir manzāz Igīgī*, “the Court of the Row of Stations of the Igigi.”²²¹ Bearing in mind that processional stations of the *akītu* festival were mythologized according to the Babylonian Creation Epic (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 147) and the ideology of the *akītu* festival was adopted by Assyria, it is likely that the ritual of fixing the destinies was also adopted. According to the suspicion of A. R. George, the name of the courtyard in Aššur’s temple “alludes not only to the Divine Assembly of myth, but also to a ritual in which, as at Babylon, the king of the gods sat in state on the Dais of Destinies, while the lesser gods stood in ranks before him.” (1996: 387.)

The Divine Assembly was also reflected in the structure of the Assyrian royal cabinet, which convened to make important decisions at the New Year. The Assyrian royal council was presided over by the King as Heaven (Anu) and the Scholar as Ocean (Ea/Apsû) who were separated from the human counterparts of other gods who were mobile and called the “heroic Heptad” Igigi (often written logographically 5.1.1).²²²

²²⁰ Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 84; George 1996: 374; see also *idem*, *BSOAS* 52 (1989), 119 and 1999a: 77ff. After Sennacherib’s time, Assyrian scholars construed a father-son relationship between Aššur and Nabû after the model of the relationship between Marduk and Nabû in Babylonia (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 104).

²²¹ Menzel 1981 II: 35 viii 45’; see George 1996: 387.

²²² “All this agrees perfectly with the actual distribution of roles within the cabinet: the scholar, who formed a pair with the king, was never directly involved in military

At the Assyrian New Year Festival, which was celebrated in Tishri and Nisannu, the magnates and vassals convened before the king and re-enacted the scene from *Enūma eliš* V 77ff. After that they were reappointed to their offices by the king (Parpola 1995: 393, n. 45).²²³ The conscious syncretism in religious-cultic matters led Aššur also to come back from the *bīt akīti* to the *parak šīmāti* where he was installed by the great gods as King of the Gods, while the king of Assyria was reaffirmed in his kingly office (Maul 1998: 189).

The continuity of syncretism between Marduk, Aššur and Enlil is especially evident in a cultic *šu-ila* song (Cooper 1970), which probably was originally composed in honour of Enlil (Maul 1998).²²⁴ This cultic song was recited in honour of Marduk during the New Year festival at Babylon, although the Nimrud manuscript is assigned to Nabû (Cooper 1970: 52). Subsequently, the song was assimilated by Assyria where it was recited in honour of Aššur. In Babylonia, the rendition of the song was promoted to exhibit the identity of Enlil and Marduk (Maul 1998: 192).

In the newer Assyrian recension of the song, a conscious assimilation of Aššur with Enlil can also be detected. The reading of the first five lines leaves no doubt that the song is dedicated to Enlil of Nippur, until the god in the fifth line is surprisingly acclaimed as “Lord of Assur.” (Maul 1998: 192.)

This syncretism compels one to seek the original *Sitz im Leben* of this “Assyrian” *šu-ila* in the cults of Nippur, where cultic events similar to the Assyro-Babylonian *akītu* were maintained. The Tummal feast of Nippur seems to be a suitable candidate because the New Year (*zag-mu*) festival of Nippur was held in the Tummal temple complex in the first month and the *du₆.kù* festival in the same temple on the 27th of the seventh month of the year (Cohen 1993: 78). This Nippur calendar custom was also probably the force behind the ancient Assyrian *akītu* celebrations because *akītu* was celebrated twice a year in Assyria – in the first and the seventh month (cf. SAA 8 165).²²⁵ Both in the Nippur and in later calendars, the fates were decreed in the first as well as in the seventh month of the year (Emelianov 1999: 106):

operations, while all the other magnates [numbered 7] had military and/or punitive responsibilities.” (Parpola 1995: 390.) Ninurta belonged occasionally both to the Igigu and the Anunnaku groups of gods. According to a royal inscription of Tukulti-Ninurta II, he was “warrior of the Igigu and Anun[naku] gods” (Grayson 1991: 165).

²²³ See SAA 18* 7 iii 5ff.

²²⁴ The recitation songs in Emesal were sung in both festivals in the cultic processions along with charms and lamentations to affect positively the behaviour of gods and to assure the correct operation of the ritual (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 68).

²²⁵ Comparably, the seventh month in the calendar of Nippur and Adab was called ⁱⁱⁱ*du₆.kù* (Cohen 1993: 108). Taking into account that the New Year celebration of Nippur was observed in the Tummal shrine of Ninlil (Cohen 1993: 81f) and the Sacred Mound was situated in the Tummal complex of Ekur where destinies were determined in the seventh month (= Tishri) at the *du₆.kù* festival, this together adds probability to Maul’s theory (1998: 193) that Assyrian rituals were adopted from the cultic practices of Nippur.

Die Parallelen des Kultgeschehens in Nippur mit dem assyrischen Neujahrsfest, wie wir es aus dem 1. Jt. kennen, sind jedenfalls nicht zu übersehen. Der Name der Zikkurrat des Assur-Enlil schliesslich zeigt, dass die Vorstellung von der Weltenachse mit der Identifizierung Assurs als Enlil auch nach Assur gelangt war. Denn der Name dieses Bauwerkes, É-aratta-ki-šár-ra, “Haus, Berg der gesamten Welt” betont die Vorstellung, dass hier das “Band zwischen Himmel und Erde” liege. (Maul 1997: 121-22; cf. George 1999a.)

Ekur in general and *du₆.kù* in particular are the places which correspond to Olympos in Greek mythology.²²⁶ In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, Apollo returns from his journey for power to the assembly of gods on Olympos, a scene which has been compared to Mesopotamian Ninurta mythology by Ch. Penglase (1994: 96-98):

Ekur is the temple of the supreme god Enlil in Nippur, the temple to which Ninurta returns after performing his great exploits. The name means ‘mountain house’ and it is the Assembly of the gods. Olympos corresponds to Ekur. Like Enlil, the Greek supreme god Zeus dwells on a mountain, Mt Olympos, and, as with the Mesopotamian god, his abode there, the halls of Olympos, is the Assembly of the gods. (*ibid.* 73.)

Ninurta as Scribe and the Royal Investiture

Ninurta’s wisdom and his passion for the scribal arts are attested in his epithets. In *Lugale*, he is called “the very wise” (*gal-zu*, l. 152) and “gifted with broad wisdom” (*gíštu-dagal*, l. 153). When Ninurta blocked the powerful waters threatening the land by means of stones, he is described as having applied his great wisdom and cleverness to the situation (*Lugale* 347ff). The SB Epic of Anzû describes how Ninurta took hold of the Tablet of Destinies in the battle against Anzû who had stolen it. The possession of the Tablet of Destinies was also an important characteristic of Babylonian Nabû in his capacity as the god of scribal arts. We know that the Anzû Epic already existed in an Old Babylonian version which told the same story. Thus it seems to be reasonable to claim that, as the holder of the Tablet of Destinies, Ninurta precedes Nabû.

By overcoming Anzû, Ninurta has returned to humankind and to his father Enlil not only the Tablet of Destinies, but also all divine powers (Sumerian *me*). In this way, he has restored the primordial world order which was established, according to the creation story of Berossus, by another divine scribe, Oannes (or Adapa). Oannes was credited with having composed a wonderful book in which he set forth all the arts of civilization:

The nature of the book suggests the scribes’ conviction that Mesopotamian civilization was the achievement of literate men and that the continuity of civilization depended upon their cultivation of letters. Small wonder then that

²²⁶ The Hittite word *hekur* “rock-sanctuary” most probably was borrowed from Mesopotamian Ekur, see J. Puhvel, *HED* 3 (1991), 287ff.

destiny and the functioning of institutions (me) were thought to be preserved on the tablets, that civilization began with a book, and that Nabu, the patron of Babylonian scribal art, gained such an exalted place in the scholarly view of the pantheon. (Foster 1974: 248.)

In the Standard Babylonian version, after Ninurta's triumph over Anzû, the great gods entrust a divine secret to Ninurta. When seeing the sign of Ninurta's victory, Dagan rejoices, summons all the gods and says to them: "The mighty one has outroared Anzû in his mountain ... Let him stand with the gods his brethren, that he may hear the secret lore, [let him hear] the secret lore of the gods" (SAA Anzu III 26, 30-31). The knowledge of the secret lore (*pirištu*) is an award which was not promised to Ninurta by the mother goddess before he went to battle, but is attested in the other sources. Ninurta was called *šēmi pirišti* "he who has heard the secret" or *bēl pirišti* "the master of the secret lore."²²⁷ Among the mystical names which are given to Ninurta in the epilogue of the Anzû Epic is E-Ibbi-Anu (SAA Anzu III 133) which is explained as "Master of the Secret Lore" (*bēl pirišti* – en ad.hal).

There exists a remarkable inconsistency in the Anzû Epic with regard to who is Ninurta's father: throughout the epic it is Enlil who is called the father of Ninurta (I 208; II 19, 22) until in II 101 it is surprisingly Ea! Marduk or Enlil and Ea/Enki also alternate as fathers of Nabû, the Babylonian god of scribal arts.²²⁸ Thus the Epic of Anzû offers enough evidence that Ninurta was a wise god who controls the Tablet of Destinies and this must be related to his role as the god of the scribal arts. The Babylonian god Nabû took over these roles of which Sumerian Ninurta of Nippur was the ancestor.

Certain kinds of practical documents were associated with the god Ninurta long before the Anzû Epic was written down. Five Nippur sale documents from the Ur III period use an oath invoking the god Ninurta and the king: "They swore by the name of Ninurta and by the name of the king (mu ^dnin-urta mu lugal-bi ... pàd) not to contest one against the other."²²⁹ A similar oath already occurs in a Sargonic tablet from Nippur (Westenholz 1987: no. 74). Some formal similarities between these documents suggest that these documents

may have been products of the same group of scribes, who resided in the same quarter of Nippur. Following this line of reasoning, one could then speculate that the invocation of Ninurta in the oath, rather than of Enlil, is due to the fact that those scribes lived in the quarter dedicated to Ninurta. A more likely explanation of this anomaly is, however, that at Nippur judicial matters were Ninurta's domain. (Steinkeller 1989: 73, n. 209.)

Ninurta is called the "seal-keeper of father Enlil, he who makes the great me's perfect" in the Sumerian collection of temple hymns.²³⁰ The same

²²⁷ See van Dijk 1983: 6. Ninurta's epithet in *Lugale* l. 153, *še-uraš* can be interpreted as *šēmi pirišti*; see MSL 14, p. 194, Ea Tablet I 338. Ninurta as *bēl pirišti* is attested in STT 400 42.

²²⁸ Pomponio 1978: 161-68; for Ningirsu as the son of Enki, see Streck 2001: 514.

²²⁹ Steinkeller 1989, doc. nos. 22, 27, 29, 59, 60.

²³⁰ Sjöberg 1969: 20 text no 5, l. 71: *kišib-gál si-sá a-a ^den.líl-ka*.

epithet occurs in *Angim* 93 where Ninurta is called the "seal-bearer of Enlil" (*kišib-lá ^den-líl-lá*, Cooper 1978: 72, l. 93 and comm.) and *Lugale* 235-36 states as well: *Storm of the rebel lands, who grinds the Mountains like flour, Ninurta, Enlil's seal-bearer, go to it!*²³¹

Thus Ninurta had a legal authority in the Ur III period. The "gate of Ninurta" and the gate of Enlil in Nippur were the centres of legal activity concerning property sales. A similar situation appears in Old Babylonian Kisurra. Even the seal of Ninurta with the inscription "Ninurta, *ensigal* of Enlil" is impressed on a sale document.²³² The Manual of Sumerian Legal Forms indicates that trials were held in the courtyard of the Ekur and

a number of cases are labelled as "of the *puhrum*," but at least one is said to be "of the gate of Ninurta," *di-dab₅-ba ká-digir^rNin-urta(-kam)*. This gate also appears as a site for oaths. At least once, a man took an oath there because he couldn't provide witnesses or show a tablet. (Lieberman 1992: 133.)²³³

Sumerian legal tabus are most often those of Ninurta (Hallo 1985: 24). W. W. Hallo has translated a tabu of Ninurta from the unpublished YBC 7351 as follows: "A judge who perverts justice, a curse which falls on the righteous party, a (first-born) heir who drives the younger (son) out of the patrimony – these are abominations of Ninurta."²³⁴ Ninurta is the god of justice, as the proverb 3.175 also shows: "Coveting and reaching out (in greediness) are abominations to Ninurta" (Alster 1997: 109).²³⁵

From a legal document from year 23 of Samsuiluna (BE 6/2 58:1), it emerges that Ninurta's weapon *urudušíta* was located at the gate of his temple in Nippur, before which one had to bear witness. In another document from Samsuiluna's first year (BE 6/2 62), a culprit has to stand "in the gate of the heroes' garden, before Ninurta" to testify.²³⁶ Another weapon of Ninurta,

²³¹ Cf. Ps 97:5. In a Babylonian ritual text (K 4806, l. 5) a group of seven deities is explained with the phrase "the sons of Enmešarra are heaps of flour" (cf. Livingstone 1986: 201). Lambert (1968: 109) comments: "when the ritual requires the placing of seven heaps of flour on the floor, these were understood to represent the presences of the seven sons of Enmešarra." These heaps can be interpreted as "mountains" ground down by Ninurta. Cf. *Ninurta as Healer and Helper in Misery* below (pp. 138-45).

²³² Steinkeller 1989: 238, doc. 62; see Artzi 1999: 363.

²³³ For the document referring to the oath on the gate of Ninurta from the time of Enlil-bāni (HSM 1384), see D. O. Edzard, *WdO* 8 (1976), 160, l. 21 ("assertorischer Eid").

²³⁴ Hallo 1985: 23; Sumerian: *di-ku₅ níg-gi-na hul-a / áš á-zi-da bal-a / dumu-nitah-tur-ra é-ad-da-na-ka / íb-ta-an-sar-re / níg-gig ^dNin-urta-ke₄*, see B. Alster 1997: Plate 131. A variant of this tabu attests Utu instead of Ninurta (UET 6/2 259, see Alster 1997: 278). *Proverb Collection* 14 attests a further variant: "To seize someone with unauthorized force, to pronounce an unauthorized verdict, to have the younger (son) driven out of the patrimony by the (first-born) heir – these are abominations of Ninurta" (Hallo 1985: 24).

²³⁵ Collection 26 (Section A) attests the following tabus of Ninurta: ⁽⁴⁾Cursing with violence, and the chasing away of a son from the house of his fathers are abominations (*níg-gig*) to Ninurta. ⁽⁶⁾To take revenge is the prerogative (*níg-gig*) of Ninurta. ⁽⁷⁾Not to talk is the prerogative of Ninurta. ⁽⁹⁾To remove something from a place is an abomination to Ninurta." (Alster 1997: 278-79.)

²³⁶ *i-na ká kiri₆ ur-sag-e-ne ma-har ^dnin-urta iz-zi-iz-ma*; see Richter 1999: 54; cf. also W. W. Hallo, "The Slandered Bride" *Studies Oppenheim* (Chicago 1964), 95-105.

Udbanuilla, was installed for trials before *ká du₆ ur-sag-e-ne*, “the gate of the heroes’ mound” in Ninurta’s temple before which oaths could be sworn.²³⁷ Later, in first millennium Babylon, Marduk’s divine weapon *Muš-tēšir-habli* “who does right to the weak” stood in the part of Esagil called *é.di.ku₅.mah*, “the House of the Exalted Judge.”²³⁸ This tradition certainly derives from earlier traditions of Ninurta and Nippur because *Muš-tēšir-habli* is equated, together with *^dgiš.tukul.^dšà.zu*, with weapons of Ninurta, *^dšár.ur₄* and *^dšár.gaz* in the explanatory list V R 46, no. 1:32 (George 1992: 293). We can see how Ninurta’s weapons were used as a means to provide justice and to positively affect legal affairs. It is of importance that both *Muš-tēšir-habli* and *^dgiš.tukul.^dšà.zu* are found as residents of Edubba, “the tablet house” in the Zababa temple of Kiš (George 2000: 293, l. 20).

In first millennium Assyria, Ninurta still punishes the unjust with his merciless weapon (see SAA 12 93:15f). A Neo-Assyrian punitive formula shows Ninurta’s role as the protector of legal contracts – “Whoever in the future, at any time, breaks the contract / lodges a complaint ... shall pay/give 10 minas of silver to Ninurta residing in Calah.”²³⁹

Ninurta as the god of wisdom, in conjunction with his seal, appears in El-Amarna document 358. This literary text was probably written by a visiting Babylonian scholar-teacher in Egypt. This story bears similarities with the story in Daniel 5 and, in my opinion, P. Artzi is quite correct in assuming a southern-Mesopotamian background for the story:

in this anecdotic tale, the King is very anxious to know the explanation of the “bad sign” (*ittu lā-banītu*) in his house. Being unable to find an answer in the relevant but unnamed handbooks studied by an expert, he sends, either the *ittu* or the tablets of the handbook (emendation) in a box sealed with the seal of Ninurta (*kunukku ša ^dNin.urta*), (l. 17), on a long journey (with the aim of receiving a divine answer?). The second part is severely damaged, so we can only surmise – with Knudtzon – that in this faraway place (the Temple of Ninurta or the ‘*bābu*,’ ‘gate,’ of Ninurta?) somebody (the envoy, or ?) opened the box sealed with the seal of Ninurta. The remainder of the tablet with the end of the story is now lost. (Artzi 1999: 364.)²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Richter 1999: 64, cf. Cooper 1978: 124. Cf. also BE 6/2 49:28-29: *dajjānū^{mes} šī-bu-ú-us-su-nu ma-har ^dud-ba-nu-ila qá-ba-am iq-bu-ú-šu-nu-ši* “The judges told them to give testimony before Udbanuilla.” For the list of divine weapons, see *The Weapon Name Exposition Text* in Livingstone 1986: 54ff, 59.

²³⁸ George 1992: 54f, see e.g. W. G. Lambert, *AfO* 19 (1959-60), 115.

²³⁹ This formula occurs, with variations, in SAA 6 6, 11, 32, 131, 185, 220, 284, 298, 299B and in SAA 14 63, 64, 207, 219, 336, 350, 406, 464, 468. Cf. Menzel 1981: 96: “Erstaunlich ist, dass die (lokalisierbare) Ninurta-von-Kalhu-Klausel in relativ viel Urkunden aus Ninua erscheint: ist darin vielleicht doch ein Hinweis auf die Herkunft zumindest *einer* Rechtspartei zu sehen?”

²⁴⁰ See also P. Artzi, “The King and the Evil Portending, Ominous sign in his House,” in H.-J. Nissen and J. Renger (eds.), *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn* (Berlin 1982), 317-20.



Fig. 4 Ninurta’s seal at Emar. [after MARI 6, p. 96, fig. 1]

After a long time span, Ninurta makes a strange reappearance in judicial matters in the city of Emar (thirteenth century).²⁴¹ Ninurta of Emar is genealogically the “son of Dagan” based on the Old Babylonian equivalence of Dagan and Enlil. It appears that the city god Ninurta and his seal have a very important status there. Two cylinder seals which are called the “Dynastic Seal” and “Ninurta’s Seal,” were impressed on the important documents of the city (Fig. 4). These were respectively perceived as the official seals of the royal palace and the city-community (Yamada 1994). Ninurta is the divine owner of the land under whose sealed jurisdiction the actions of state authority are legalized. In conjunction with the king and the elders or “the Great Ones,” the sales of land or other property and gifts or confiscations are carried out: “This entire legal complex around Ninurta constitutes the fundamental Babylonian contribution to the statehood of Emar.” (Artzi 1999: 362.) Ninurta’s seal represented the authority of the city-community and the city elders which was distinguished from that of the royal palace (Yamada 1994: 62). Ninurta of Emar sometimes even protects the actual wording of the tablet in legal transactions. The tablet published by A. Tsukimoto states that “whoever changes the words of this tablet, let Ninurta make his name and seed disappear.”²⁴²

²⁴¹ Among the Kassite administrative documents from Nippur, which are mostly unpublished (see Sommerfeld *CANE* 919), one can certainly find documents which attest Ninurta’s role in judicial matters.

²⁴² A. Tsukimoto, *ASJ* 14 (1992), 311 r. 23ff: *ma-an-nu-me-e a-wa-te-e ša ṭup-pí an-na-am ú-sà-ha-ru ^dnin-urta MU-šu ù NUMUN-šu lu-ú-ha-li-iq*. Ninurta and Nergal

This evidence alone would be sufficient to prove that the Babylonian god Nabû owes something of his role as the divine scribe to Ninurta. Nippur was the city of scribes and literature. In keeping with the fact that more than 80% of all known Sumerian literary compositions have been found at Nippur (Gibson 1993) and Enlil's seal-keeper in Nippur was Ninurta, it is plausible to assume that the same relationship is continued later by Marduk and his scribe Nabû, which is far better attested:

An Iron Age tradition refers to Nabu, god of writing and of wisdom, as controller of the Tablet of Destinies, which was guarded by the Seven Sages and sealed with the Seal of Destinies. What the gods wrote upon that tablet was sometimes divulged to mankind through the marking on the liver and lungs of sacrificial animals, so that a liver upon which omens were read was referred to as 'the tablet of the gods.' In this way holy scripture and divination were very closely linked. (Dalley 1997: 166.)

Ninurta must also have exercised the functions of a scribe in Nippur. Nabû was the scribe of Marduk and his connection with writing is attested from the Old Babylonian period onwards.²⁴³ On the basis of the Epic of Anzû, it is also clear that, as the holder of the Tablet of Destinies, Ninurta precedes Nabû. In the hymn to Ninurta as the helper in misery (Mayer 1992: 26), the god is described in terms of a scribe: *ummânu mudû ša kîma šâri ana mihiltu iziqqa u kullat ūpšarrûtu kîma gurunne ina karšišu kamsu* "the wise scholar, who like a wind blows (= yearns for?) towards cuneiform signs and (who) has all the craft of the scribe packed into his mind (= stomach) like beer" (section xix).

There is a Babylonian ritual text (BM 41239) which concerns the procession of various gods from Babylon to Kiš on the 28th and 29th of the eleventh month, Shebat (edited by George 2000: 289-99). The reason why they went there is not clear. In this text Ninurta is called the "scribe of Ešarra" (*šá-tir é-šár-ra*), as has been read in the edition by B. Pongratz-Leisten (1994: 255, l. 9). A. R. George prefers to read *šá-pàr é-šár-ra*, "the net of Ešarra," but he admits that "an epithet such as this may seem a little out of place in the present text" (2000: 297). In the text, Ninurta is described as spending the night of the 28th of Shebat in the temple of Madanu (l. 9.), who, as Gula's husband in Babylon, was an aspect of Ninurta (George 1992: 304). In the new duplicate of the text (BM 32516), the gods are reported to go to Edubba the next day: "[Bēlet]-Bābili, Malūkatum, Ninurta, the scribe of E-[šarra, and the gods of] Babylon go to E-dubba" (cf. George 2000: 294, ll. 16-17). Edubba is a sanctuary at Kiš which is better known as E-mete-ursag, 'House Fitting for the Warrior.' In a temple list from Kiš, it appears that E-mete-ursag is the cella of Zababa, and Edubba is one name for the whole temple (George 1992: 471). É-dub-ba has been read as É-kišib-ba previously by various editors, but

appear together in some curses (*zērāšu lihalliḫū*) in Emar documents (Artzi 1999: 362). They are also paired in the Assyrian royal inscriptions from late MA times onwards (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 122).

²⁴³ See F. Pomponio, *RIA* 9/1-2 (1998), 21f.

in Neo-Assyrian orthography the name is clearly written É-dub-ba (*ibid.*). E-mete-ursag and E-dubba are thus intimately connected to each other, the first is followed by the second in the standard litany of the names of temples of Ninurta (George 1993: 125). Thus in the Sumerian cultic texts, Ninurta is frequently called "the Lord of the Tablet House" (umun É-dub-ba), the reference being to the E-dubba of Kiš.²⁴⁴

It seems to me that Ninurta is a better candidate to enter Edubba as the scribe than as the "net of Ešarra," but I prefer to assume that both meanings are meant by the ambivalent writing. The fifteen gods of E-dubba are enumerated in the final section of this ritual text (ll. 20-22). It includes an indefinite number of divine weapons of Zababa, the Ninurta of Kiš. The other inhabitants of the temple include Ninurta himself under the guise of Uta-ulu (l. 21), the demon Kubu and the relatives of Ningirsu – Igalimma and Šulšagana (l. 22). Finally there is Luhuša, "the Angry Man," who is otherwise known as "the Nergal of Kiš." This list of residents in the Edubba of Zababa partly parallels the enumeration of Zababa's "seven well-crafted weapons" which are known from a Late Babylonian exercise tablet from the temple of Nabû ša harê at Babylon.²⁴⁵ This text attests divine weapons as residents in an allegedly scriptorial section of the Zababa temple.

The use of the signs for writing Ninurta's epithet in this ritual text were, in my view, deliberately chosen to cause ambiguity: either "the scribe (*šá-tir*) of Ešarra" or "the net (*šá-pàr*) of Ešarra" are both intended in the writing. The sign is written deliberately to connote the double nature of Ninurta as both the scribe and the net of Ešarra.²⁴⁶

The administrative centre of the Assyrian Empire, The City Hall (*bīt āli(m)*) in Assur was intimately connected to Nabû's temple, according to the topographical texts (George 1986: 140f). The City Hall in the Old Assyrian period was sometimes also known as *bīt limmim* "house of the Eponym" and constituted the administrative and commercial centre of Assur, and remained in use into the latter part of the second millennium.²⁴⁷ The Assyrian Temple List further places the City Hall among the various names, or the various shrines of Nabû. According to the Divine Directory, the deified City Hall was

²⁴⁴ An *eršemma* of Ninurta begins with the words: "Warrior, southstorm, verily a flood! Honored one, warrior, southstorm! Nergal, warrior, southstorm! Lord of Kiš, lord (of) the E-dubba! Lord (of) the Emeteursag, lord (of) the Eunikitušmah!" – see Cohen 1981: 143f, ll. 1-5; cf. Maul 1991: 314, ll. 23-24; for the attestations in the *balag*-compositions, see Cohen 1988, *Index*, s.v. *E-kišibba*.

²⁴⁵ George 2000: 298f; see Cavigneaux 1981: 137 iii 3-7. The Babylonian Nabû ša harê temple was a centre of learning, where the junior scribes presented their wishes written on tablets to Nabû, see S. Maul, "tikip santakki mala bašmu," in Fs. Rykle Borger (1998), vii-xvii; Cavigneaux 1999: 389ff. Cf. n. 131 above.

²⁴⁶ For the etymological methods of Babylonian scribes, see S. M. Maul, "Das Wort im Worte. Orthographie und Etymologie als hermeneutische Verfahren babylonischer Gelehrter," in: G. W. Most (Hrsg.), *Commentaries/Kommentare*, Aporemata. Kritische Studien zur Philologiegeschichte, Band 4 (Göttingen 1999), 1-18.

²⁴⁷ George 1986: 141; see M. T. Larsen, *The Old Assyrian City-State and Its Colonies*, Mesopotamia 4 (Copenhagen 1976), 156, 193ff.

a god residing in the temple of Bel-šarri-Nabû.²⁴⁸ This connection indicates that Ninurta's role as the seal-keeper of Enlil in Nippur had a legacy in Assyria. The City Hall (*bīt āli*) in Assur had a ceremonial name in the Assyrian Temple List "House, edifice where the Tablet of Destinies is sealed in secret" (SAA 18* 49:159). The Old Assyrian seal, which was impressed alongside the Seal of Destinies on the vassal treaties bore a short inscription "(Seal) of Aššur, of the City Hall" (*ša da-šūr ša bīt a-lim^{ki}*). Thus there existed a long Assyrian tradition according to which the seals of the god Aššur were kept in the City Hall and not in his main temple Ešarra (George 1986: 140f).

In the same way as Ninurta was the seal-keeper of Enlil in Nippur, the seals of the "Assyrian Enlil," Aššur, were kept in the City Hall, a temple of Nabû. At the same time Ninurta, who was syncretized with Nabû, was probably regarded as both the "scribe of Ešarra" and the "net of Ešarra."

Three seals which were kept in the City Hall were impressed on the *adê*-treaties of Esarhaddon (SAA 2 6). The documents themselves were found in the Throne Room of the Nabû Temple in Calah, in a suite of rooms adjoining the temple (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 97). The temples of Nabû at Calah and Assur were built after a common model and, according to the discussion of George, it may be that the extensive annexes on both temples' north fronts should be considered to have been given over to the writing, sealing and storing of state documents (George 1986: 141). Esarhaddon's vassal treaties as well as other treaties and state documents were probably composed and impressed with the seal of Aššur of the City Hall and the Seal of Destinies in the City Hall (*bīt āli*) of Assyria (*ibid.*).

Such important documents can be seen as the earthly counterparts of the Tablet of Destinies. Under the aegis of Nabû, who in mythology is the scribe of the Tablet of Destinies, the documents of state were drawn up and then ratified with Aššur's seals (George 1986: 142). The seals were kept in the temple of Aššur's "seal-keeper" Nabû. The fixing of destinies annually in the divine assembly was the divine counterpart of the practice, and by sealing the Vassal Treaties, Aššur determined his vassals' destinies. Ninurta, as the seal-bearer of Enlil in Nippur, was probably authorized to act with Enlil's authority and ratified the decrees issued by the divine council. In the canonical *balag* "He who Makes Decisions in the Council," it is Nabû who decrees a good destiny for the cities, including Babylon and Nippur, and calls them by a good name.²⁴⁹

The business of storing important state documents at the temple of Nabû is fitting for the god who, as the successor of Ninurta, is the divine patron of scribal arts and is often invoked as the "Bearer of the Tablet of Destinies of the Gods" (George 1986: 142). The inscription on the Seal of Destinies impressed on Esarhaddon's succession treaty reveals:

²⁴⁸ George 1986: 141; see SAA 18* 49:158-63, 68.

²⁴⁹ Lambert 1971: 345f rev. 6-16; Cohen 1988: 490f, ll. f+177 - f+204. Nabû's epithet is *Mudugasa'a* (Emesal *Muzebbasa*), which means literally "the one named with a 'good' name."

the function of the Seal of Destinies to have been the sealing by Aššur of both human and divine destinies, as irrevocably decreed by him in his position as king of the gods. There can be little doubt that the document ratified by Aššur's sealing is, on the mythological plane, the Tablet of Destinies (George 1986: 141).

B. Pongratz-Leisten identified this complex of rooms in the City Hall of Assur as the appositely named E-gidru-kalamma-summu, the Assyrian Nabû *ša harê* temple. She argues that a similarly planned Throne Room of the Nabû Temple in Calah was the actual place of the ritual in Nisannu, where the crown-prince was invested and the *adê* oaths were taken (1994: 93-105). She proposes a cultic identification of the Throne Room annex of the Nabû Temple in Calah with the Babylonian Nabû *ša harê* temples on the basis of the leading role which both played in the investiture ceremonies (1994: 102). Given the importance which the *adê* oath had in determining the royal succession and in keeping with the fact that this ceremony could not take place in the residence of the ruling king, it is only natural that the Throne Rooms of several Nabû temples in Assur, Dur-Šarruken and Calah have been established to have an 'elaborate design' (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 97).

She has pointed out that, from the time between Assurnasirpal and Assurbanipal, temples of Nabû are attested only in the royal residences of Calah and Nineveh but not in Assur which indicates that the annexes in the City Hall should be regarded as the temple of Nabû *ša harê*:

Die Annahme einer engeren Verbindung zwischen Nabû-Kult und der *adê*-Verordnung des Kronprinzen ist insofern plausibel, als Nabû (= Sohn des Gottes Marduk) und Kronprinz (= Königssohn) eine auffallende Ähnlichkeit in ihrer genealogischen Rangstellung aufweisen.²⁵⁰

The Babylonian temple of Nabû *ša harê* is documented as having the same function in the Neo-Babylonian period. Thus from the evidence of the Neo-Babylonian period, the bond between the New Year Festival and the investiture of the kings in the temple of Nabû *ša harê* becomes evident (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 102).²⁵¹

Esarhaddon's succession treaty has yet a third seal impression, which shows the king kneeling between two gods. The seal impression has been recently treated by U. Moortgat-Correns (1995). According to her interpretation, the gods are Adad and Ninurta, depicted as the helpers of the king, who stand on their symbolic animals. The sealing has been re-dated by her. It is not Middle Assyrian as Wiseman thought²⁵² but it stems from the time of Tiglath-pileser III. According to Moortgat-Correns' interpretation, Adad and Ninurta on this seal are protectors of the king and his power. It is also possible to interpret that Ninurta on this sealing is protecting the succession treaty of Esarhaddon in a similar way as Ninurta's weapons protected the legal cases and oaths.

²⁵⁰ Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 99; cf. Parpola 1983: 330; S. Herbordt, SAAS 1 (1992), 139, n. 55.

²⁵¹ "Zumindest für die neubabylonische Zeit lässt sich eine Entwicklung in der Nutzung des Nabû-Heiligtums von der Kronprinzeninvestitur beobachten, wobei letztere vielleicht alljährlich neu vollzogen wurde." (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 104.)

²⁵² D. J. Wiseman, "The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon," *Iraq* 20 (1958), 19ff.

Thus we can see how important was the role played by the religious institution Nabû ša harê in the Assyro-Babylonian kingship. Being a legacy of the earlier Nippur institution(s), it was a centre of learning, where the scribes worked on the documents of major importance for the state. It was the temple which issued the decrees of fate decided by the divine and the royal assemblies. The crown prince was invested with royal regalia in this temple and his fate as well as the fates of his vassals were written down there. These important state documents were regarded as replicas of the mythological Tablet of Destinies, held by Ninurta/Nabû, or residing in Apsû and guarded by the Seven Sages. One may think of this temple even as the source of justice and the just world order, where competent judges worked. The sceptre given by Nabû ša harê was the just sceptre and the institution which issued it must have been a protector of justice.

Triumphal akītu of Assyria

At least in Assyria, *akītu*'s seem to have been celebrated twice during the calendar year.²⁵³ The celebrations in the *akītu* temple of Assur were possibly held every six months – at the beginning of Nisannu and in Tishri.²⁵⁴ In the Assyrian New Year festival, the assembly of the gods took place. According to S. Parpola (1995: 393), the great divine assembly of Assyrian gods met twice a year at New Year in Nisannu and Tishri. This was publicly carried out as the comprehensive meeting of all the magnates which served as a visual demonstration of royal power and the unity of the empire. It corresponded to the assembly of the gods of the religious texts (En. el. V 125-30; VI 69, 74, 95) and functioned as the supreme judicial and the political tribunal of the empire (Parpola: *ibid.*).

Apart from the *akītu* festival at Assur, which was established by Sennacherib, there have also been “occasional *akītu*'s” commemorating extraordinary military achievements or celebrating the victorious return of the Assyrian king from a military campaign. These were celebrated in other Assyrian cities which served as the military posts of departure and return for the Assyrian armies.²⁵⁵ The “occasional *akītu*'s” were celebrated in honour of Ištar of Arbela in mid-Elul and possibly also six months later in mid-Addar, in

²⁵³ Cf. H. Hunger SAA 8 165 obv. 5 - rev.1: “Adar (XII) and Elul (VI) are beginning of the year, as Nisan (I) and Tishri (VII) are at the beginning of the year.” Cf. Mishna passage (*Rosh Hashanah* 1:1): “There are four new years. On the first of Nisan is the New Year for kings and for festivals. On the first of Elul is the New Year for the tithe and cattle. Rabbi Eleazar and Rabbi Simeon, however, place this on the first of Tishri. On the first of Tishri is the New Year for years [i.e. for determining the validity of documents], for release and jubilee years, for plantation and for [tithe of] vegetables. On the first of Shebat is the New Year for trees, according to the ruling of Beth Shammai; Beth Hillel, however, place it on the fifteenth of that month.” (Feldman 2000: 30-31.)

²⁵⁴ Parpola 1983: 324, Weissert 1997a: 347.

²⁵⁵ See Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 79-83, *idem* 1997, Weissert 1997a: 347.

immediate calendaric proximity to the *akītu* in honour of Aššur (Weissert 1997a: 347).

The military *akītu* in the city of Arbela consisted of an offering ceremony to Ištar at her *akītu*-house in Milqia, which was followed by the triumphal entry (*erāb āli*) of Ištar and the Assyrian king into the city, and was accompanied by the war-ritual and other rites of victory. The re-entrance to Ištar's permanent seat in the temple of Egašankalamma was combined with exhibitions of captives and booty to the cheering public (Weissert 1997a: 348). This complex ritual was directly related to the Assyrian king, who could probably enact the ritual at any appropriate time.²⁵⁶

The beginnings of the *akītu*-house in Nineveh date back to the time of Sargon II. Assurbanipal mentions the procession of Ištar from her temple é.maš.maš in Nineveh to the *akītu*-house on the 16th of Shebat in his hymn to the goddess.²⁵⁷ There are testimonies for the execution of at least five military *akītu*'s during the history of the Neo-Assyrian empire:

the scene of triumphs was not restricted to the city of Arbela and to its neighbouring *akītu* temple in Milqia. Under Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal the triumphal processions started off in Nineveh, where a lengthy parade through the city's streets took place; they then proceeded to Milqia and Arbela, and afterwards continued to the city of Ashur, where the captives and booty were presented before Ashur himself. (Weissert 1997a: 348.)

It is quite probable that “triumphal *akītu*” served as the preliminary for the *akītu* of Aššur some days later. According to the cultic commentary SAA 3 38:12-13, by the ritual at the Ištar temple in Arbela, E-gašan-kalamma, the triumphal entry to the city Assur is transferred to the mythological level and identified with Nabû's victory over Anzû.²⁵⁸ Thus it is highly probable that this cultic event had its background in the cult and mythology of Ninurta. It is even actually stated at the beginning of the text that these rites have a background in the rites of Nippur: “[the rites which] are performed in Egašankalamma are [*enacted*] like those of Nippur” (SAA 3 38:2).

Zu fragen ist, ob speziell für die Nutzung der assyrischen *akītu*-Häuser ausserhalb von Aššur auf den mythologischen Ebene nicht eher eine Analogie zu dem *akītu*-Fest des Ninurta in Nippur gesehen werden sollte als zu Enuma eliš, da sich das Ritual auf den kriegerischen Aspekt – Triumph über den Feind und glorreiche Rückkehr mit Prozession der Waffen – beschränkt. (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 84.)

²⁵⁶ See Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 79-83, esp. 84: “Der Ritualkomplex des *akītu*-Hauses von Milqia bei Arbela wurde als eine Verbindung von Opferzeremonie, Kriegsritual und Triumphzug bestimmt und in direkten Bezug zum assyrischen König gesetzt, der dieses Ritual zu jedem beliebigem Zeitpunkt inszenieren konnte. Dieselbe Funktion hat nach Auskunft der Texte das *akītu*-Haus der Ištar von Ninive”; cf. SAA 10 254.

²⁵⁷ SAA 3 7; Pongratz-Leisten 1997: 249.

²⁵⁸ Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 82. The text states, according to the translation by Jacobsen (1975: 73, cf. nn. 56 and 57): “The chariots that they have come with show of martial prowess from the desert and enter the Inner City (*Libbi-Āli* = Assur): that is Nabû, he has [killed] Anzû.”

The triumphal entry into the city almost certainly had its model in *Angim*, the king being the analogy of Ninurta (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 83). Further, one may wonder if the ideology of this “triumphal *akītu*” can be a direct adoption of cultic events from Ninurta’s *akītu* at Nippur (*ibid.* 84.). A. R. George comments that it is

correct to seek the inspiration for the “triumphal” *akītu* in the *akītu* festival of Ninurta at Nippur, which seems indeed to have been, at least in part, a victory celebration commemorating Ninurta’s avenging of Enlil as the “net of the gods,” i.e. the weapon who achieves their triumph (or triumph over them, as appropriate). (George 1996: 377.)

In the *Nippur Compendium*, which is an expository text dealing with the cult of Nippur, it is said that the *akītu* of Marduk is a Nippur festival in the month of Nisannu, like that of Babylon:

1. In the month Nisan festivals are celebrated:
2. the *akītu* of Marduk: for his supreme divinity;
3. the *akītu* of Ninurta: for his father Enlil;
4. the *akītu* of Ištar: Queen of Nippur (or,) of Ninurta
5. the *akītu* of Sîn: for Ninurta, the net of the gods
6. as many *akītu*’s there are: for Ninurta, the net of the gods
7. Battlefield (15th day) Battle²⁵⁹

This text states that all *akītu* festivals “in the month Nisannu” are “for Ninurta” (l. 6 *á-ki-it ma-la ba-šá-a ana^d Nin-urta*). According to this text, the *akītu* of Marduk in Nisannu was “for his Enlil-ship” (*ana^d en-líl-lu-ti-šú*). The “battlefield” (*tu-šá-ru*) on the 15th day is probably an allusion to Ninurta’s return from the “mountains” on the 15th of Iyyar, according to the explanatory text of the Nippur calendar in OECT 11 69+70. The common role celebrated at *akītu*’s of both Marduk and Ninurta was probably that of the “avenger of his father” (Livingstone 1986: 157f). Thus Marduk’s *akītu* at Babylon may also to some extent be based on the cult of Ninurta at Nippur (George 1996: 377). The ideology of the Assyrian “triumphal *akītu*”

is not so very different from that of Marduk’s festival. Though other business takes place during the course of the Babylonian New Year, notably the assembly of gods, the principal point of the *akītu* festivals of Marduk (and Aššur) is the defeat of the enemy and the triumphal return.²⁶⁰

Transference of the mythological events onto the ritual level can also be seen in the Assyrian coronation ritual on the 11th of Nisannu. In the Middle

²⁵⁹ George 1992: 115, see also Livingstone 1986: 157. “The net of the gods” is written *sa-pār DINGIR.MEŠ*, cf. p. 86f above.

²⁶⁰ George 1996: 376. The 24th of Iyyar was the day of Ninurta’s *akītu* in Nippur. Compare the passage from the *Akitu Chronicle*: “The accession year of Šamaš-šuma-ukin: in the month Iyyar [Bel] and the gods of Akkad (= Babylon) went out from Baltil (= Assur) and on the twenty-fourth day of the month Iyyar they entered Babylon. Nabu and the gods of Borsippa went to Babylon.” (Grayson 1975: 131, ll. 5-8.)

Assyrian ritual text of coronation, the king approaching the temple of Aššur as the Victor is acclaimed by the priest of Aššur with the cultic song: “Aššur is the king!” (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 88.) This is described in the ritual text as follows:

The carrier[s] place [the throne of the king upon their necks] and s[et off] for the House of God. They enter the [House] of God. The priest of Aššur slaps [the king’s face] in their presence and says thus: “Aššur is king, Aššur is king!” He says so [as far as] the Thunderbird (= Anzû) gate. [Having r]eached the Thunderbird gate, the king [en]ters the House of God (SAA 18 7 i 26’-30’).

The *šu-ila* song “You are the Lord” was recited to Aššur on the 11th of Nisannu by the *kalû*-priest, according to the Neo-Assyrian ritual tablet K 2724+.²⁶¹ Both the title of this song and the parallel acclamation by Aššur’s priest in the MA ritual tablet make it possible to argue that the god Aššur was glorified after his return from the *akītu* chapel to his temple Ešarra (Maul 1998: 189).

A central passage concerning the place of *akītu* in Assyrian military triumphs is the following one from the annals of Assurbanipal (I R 10:17-30). It involves a ritual humiliation of the defeated kings who are yoked before the processional state carriage:

As for Tammaritu, Pa’e and Humban-haltaš [III], who had exercised the sovereignty of Elam one after the other but whom I had subjected to my yoke through the might of Aššur and Ištar, and Uwaite’, the king of Arabia, whose defeat I had accomplished by command of Aššur and Ištar and whom I had brought out of his land to Assyria – after I had gone up into E-mašmaš, the seat of their dominion, to make sacrifices, and had performed the rites of the *akītu* house in the presence of Ištar/Ninlil (^dNIN.LÍL), the mother of the great gods, the beloved consort of Aššur, I had them grasp the yoke of the carriage and and they drew it under me as far as the gate of the sanctuary.²⁶²

“To impose the yoke” was an idiom used in the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions to describe the subordination of the enemy (see CAD *s.v.* *nīru*), and in rituals this image was sometimes carried out “literally.” The practice recorded by Assurbanipal was probably not an unusual one and it was established in festivities celebrating victorious military campaigns and at the *akītu* celebrations (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 201f). In these cultic situations, the king used the manpower of the defeated rulers. By doing so, the king certainly acted as Ninurta, who vanquished the forces of chaos and rode in his chariot, pulled by the “ghosts” of the defeated monsters. The passage in the royal inscription can be compared to the mystical text SAA 3 39:24ff which tells about an Elamite chariot whose rider is identified as the warrior king Ninurta and its horses as “the ghost of Anzû.” The corpse in the chariot is that of Enmešarra, probably as the symbol of death and the Netherworld,

²⁶¹ Maul 2000: 406 l. 25; for another cultic song for the same calendar day, see Maul 1998 and p. 61 above.

²⁶² Translation according to George 1996: 376. The last two lines (29f): ^{giš}nīr ^{giš}ša šadādi ušašbitsunūti adi bāb ekurri išduđū ina šaplīa.

as he was called “Holder of the Circle of the Underworld” in incantations.²⁶³ In rev. 13ff of the same text, the parallel passage describes: “The donkey of the sea (ANŠE.A.AB.BA) is the ghost of Tiamat. Bel cut off her horns, clove her [fee]t and docked her tail. Bel vanquished her and displayed her to mankind, lest she be forgotten. Its name is *tamriqātu*, as it is said among the people: *ētamar qātāia* (‘He learned from my example’).”

Elsewhere I have argued (Annus 2001: 14ff), that ANŠE.A.AB.BA in this passage should be translated literally “donkey of the sea” and not in its usual logographic value for “dromedary” (*gammālu* or *ibilu*). It can be seen that Marduk (*Bēl*) in this mystical text has vanquished “the donkey of the sea” and Ninurta rides with the “donkey of the mountains” (ANŠE.KUR.RA), thus personifying the two dark realms of chaotic forces: the sea and the mountains (= the Netherworld). The word “donkey” (ANŠE/ANŠU) here is certainly an allusion to the role of Anzû as the antagonist of Ninurta. Anzû himself was sometimes depicted in the form of a (winged) horse, or donkey.²⁶⁴

Already in Sumerian times, Anzud was imagined as a thunder cloud and the clouds or winds are the traditional vehicles of the thunder-gods.²⁶⁵ If the aspects of the mythology of nature are put aside in the interpretation, one can say that both Marduk and Ninurta in this mystical text are models of the Assyrian king. These gods vanquished at the beginning of time the mountains and the sea, the two realms of the forces of chaos. This primordial connection between the Assyrian king and the deity is actualized in the concrete form of the state ritual of victory by Assurbanipal, as described in his inscription.²⁶⁶

Thus we find a presence of Ninurta and his mythology in the royal rituals during the whole of Mesopotamian history. The rituals themselves are different and the deities involved are named differently, but a basic theologoumenon of Ninurta’s identity with the king as the defeater of chaos is maintained in all these rituals.

‘Cosmic Battle’ in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions

The royal inscriptions of Neo-Assyrian kings are often replete with literary allusions to the mythological texts *Enūma eliš*, the *Anzû Epic* and *Lugale*. It

²⁶³ R. Borger, ZA 61 (1971), 77:48: *šābit kippat kigalli*; see Horowitz 1998: 275:36.

²⁶⁴ Astronomically, the *anzû*-star was identified with the “horse-star,” *mul-anše-kur-ra* = Anzû, see E. Weidner, AfO 19 (1959-60), 107, l. 21. The Anzû-star portends the death of horses: “If a planet comes near the *Anzû*-star: horses will die” (SAA 8 114 r. 1.). The donkey Anzû is a portent of death in Babylonian prognostic and diagnostic omens, as a commentary on the line of the seventh tablet of *Sakikku* reads: “If you hear the patient’s cry, and it is like the braying of a donkey, he will die [within] one day” – as was said, “death is the face of Anzû” (*mu-ú-tu pa-ni* ^dIM.DU[GUD^{mušen}]); Anzû = *anšû* = donkey, see A. R. George RA 85 (1991) 157.

²⁶⁵ For Adad, see Lambert, Millard 1969: 122, rev. l. 5. Ugaritic Baal was ‘Rider of the Clouds’ (*rkb* ‘*rpt*). Cf. also note 338 below.

²⁶⁶ See also *Ninurta and the Monsters* below (pp. 109-21).

would require a separate study to find and enumerate all possible cases of that sort of intertextuality and therefore I confine myself in this section to the most obvious cases. The ideological background for these literary allusions should be clarified:

the *Chaoskampf* motif is simply the standard mythic theme lying behind all military action, as the ultimate sanction of all royal activity. After all, whatever the real motives of a campaign, often undertaken for economic or strategic reasons, the state propaganda machine would always present it, to the point of convincing even the participants, that they were campaigning against the irruption of the forces of barbarism, darkness and chaos. And when the other powers of persuasion fail, the king’s ultimate fall-back position is the threat of force. Not much has changed in the propaganda wars of subsequent military or diplomatic history. (Wyatt 1998: 844-45.)

Some scholars have observed that formulations in the Assyrian royal inscriptions consciously create the image of the Assyrian king as the terrestrial counterpart of the divine hero Ninurta (Maul 1999: 210). His battle against political enemies is conceived as a re-actualization of Ninurta’s mythic battle against Asakku (or Anzû) or Marduk’s battle against Tiamat. This served as a mythologization of the Assyrian claim for expansion. The Assyrian literary production was indebted to Sumerian and Southern Babylonian mythology and its focus was on the contraposition of the Assyrian and the hostile world, the “cosmic centre” and the “chaotic periphery.”²⁶⁷ The theology of the heroic warrior-god Ninurta entered Assyrian royal inscriptions during the Middle Assyrian period, reactivating very old Sumerian traditions (Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 225). The conception of the king as Ninurta *redivivus* or his icon²⁶⁸ had a broader context in Assyrian state ideology:

This Assyrian royal ideology that interpreted politics as acts of creation in the sense of defeating chaos, stimulated the politics of imperial expansion. It postulated war and chaos not war and peace as antithetical. War was therefore a kind of *creatio continua*. Assyrian rule over the world was expected to be the only way for all nations to live in peace, concord and social justice - the paradox of this ideology was that the vassal states’ payment of tribute to the Assyrian state was an expression of their acknowledgement of a just world order. (Otto 1999: 7.)

²⁶⁷ Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 224; cf. M. Liverani, “The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire,” in: M. T. Larsen (ed.), *Power and Propaganda*, Mesopotamia 7 (Copenhagen 1979), 306.

²⁶⁸ Compare the semantic field of the Greek word *eikōn* to Akkadian *šalmu* and *tamšilu* (see CAD s.v.) – all these words can mean “likeness” and also the realization of an image (“form, appearance”). The relationship between images of the king and Ninurta can be discerned from the royal inscriptions of Assurnasirpal II which describe the establishments of seats and images of the god. During the renovation of Calah, the king states: “At that time I created with my skill this statue of the god Ninurta which had not existed previously as an icon of his great divinity (^dLAMMA DINGIR-*ti-šú* GAL-*ti*) out of the best stone of the mountain and red gold.” (Grayson 1991: 295, ll. 13-14). Probably later: “I created my royal monument with a likeness of my countenance of red gold and sparkling stones and stationed it before the god Ninurta, my lord.” (Grayson 1991: 291, ll. 76-78: NU MAN-*ti-ia tam-šil bu-na-ni-ia ina* KÜ.GI.MEŠ *hu-še-e u* NA₄.MEŠ *eb-bi ab-ni ina ma-har* ^dMAŠ EN-*ia ú-še-zi-iz*).

Refusal to pay tribute to the Assyrian state was considered and labelled “sin” (*hiṭtu*) in Assyrian royal inscriptions. Assyrian royal treaties explicitly and apodictically state the obligations of the vassals and conjure it by a solemn oath in the name of the gods. The gods protected these treaties and therefore violation of the pact was considered a “sin.” The king marching against the sinful “rebels” is the icon of Ninurta battling against sin. From the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, which has both stylistic and thematic overlays with the Sumerian city laments, we learn that the *casus belli* against the Babylonian (Kassite) king was the breaking of a solemn oath,

which disqualifies the Kassites from divine support, and entitles the Assyrians to attack and annex ... the poet describes how the gods abandon their cities in Babylonia leaving them open to destruction. This harks back to the Sumerian lamentations over the destruction of cities, with the difference that now the motif is blatant political propaganda, not philosophical speculation, and hence there is no doubt in the poet’s mind about what caused the loss of divine favor for the opposing side. (Postgate 1995: 409.)²⁶⁹

Moreover, as the king was always a likeness of Ninurta, an enemy (*nakru*) of Assyrian kingship was always considered as an embodiment/icon of evil and was modelled on the basis of mythic characters, as pointed out by F. M. Fales:

there is only one Enemy – with a capital letter – appearing in and out of Assyrian royal inscriptions. With this seeming paradox, I mean to state that the many *topoi* as regards antagonists to Assyrian kingship may – to a very large extent – be considered as tassels of a single coherent political ideology of *nakrūtu*, shared among the collective authorship of annalistic texts (1987: 425).

Thus the king’s identification with Ninurta was part and parcel of Assyrian royal ideology. The title of the Assyrian king, “vice-regent (*iššakku*) of Enlil/Aššur,” was also one of the most important epithets of Ninurta (Maul 1999: 212). As the maintainer of the just world order, the king was under the commission of Anu and Enlil and had to “save” his country from the hands of foreigners and defeat chaos. This is the best way to explain why the destructive power of Assyrian kings in enemy lands is often described with the expression *abūb(ān)iš sapānu* “to annihilate like a flood.”²⁷⁰ The use of this expression is otherwise restricted only to Ninurta or to the gods who are given the characteristics of Ninurta, cf. *Angim* 119 (Maul 1999: 210). The expression occurs in Assyrian royal inscriptions from the time of Shalmaneser III (858-824) onwards. The last-named king refers to his forefather Tukulti-Ninurta as “(he) who slew all his enemies and annihilated (them) like a flood.”²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ See also E. Cancik-Kirschbaum 1997.

²⁷⁰ The gate of Sennacherib *ša* KUR *Hal-zi* in Nineveh was called *sa-pin gi-mir na-ki-ri* “which flattens all the enemies”; see Frahm 1997: 77 170f; par. 93 15’f; cf. Streck 1916: 302 iv 23.

²⁷¹ Grayson 1996: 64, ll. 20-21: *šá kúl-lat za-i-ri-šu i-né-ru-ma iš-pu-nu a-bu-ba-ni-iš*. This expression is also applied to Adad-narari III (*ibid.* 203, 213 *et passim*) and with the

The Assyrian king Aššur-reša-iši (1180-1118) already referred to himself with the epithet of Ninurta, *mu-ter gi-mil* KUR *aš-šur* “avenger of Assyria,” and Assurnasirpal II also used this epithet.²⁷² Shalmaneser III uses the same idiom when he tells of his attack against Marduk-bel-usate: *a-na tu-ur gi-mil-li lu al-lik* “I marched out for vengeance” (Grayson 1996: 37, l. 43). A command to battle by the same king is once expressed in a way that is curiously reminiscent of passages in *Enūma eliš* and Anzū: “Shalmaneser, the vigorous hero, who is supported by the god Ninurta, took the road (and) ordered the march to the land of Akkad,” which was probably meant as a contrast to En. el. II 80, 104 (cf. IV 59); and SAA Anzu I [114], 135, 156, where the gods before Ninurta/Marduk fail to march against the monster.²⁷³

Tiglath-pileser I calls Ninurta “the valiant one, slayer of criminal (*lemnu*) and foe, fulfiller of hearts’ desires.”²⁷⁴ The characteristic *lemnu* ‘evil,’ belongs to Anzū in the Anzū Epic (II 21, 117, 139 *et passim*). It means that the enemies of the king and Ninurta are identical. Tiglath-pileser I is the first Assyrian king who adapts Ninurta’s title *gašru* “the strong one” (Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 226). Other idioms used of both the Assyrian kings and Marduk/Ninurta are “to tread (*kabāsu*) upon the neck of the enemy” (cf. En. el. II 146, 148) and “to trample (*dāšu*) the enemies” (cf. SAA Anzu II 47). Both verbs are very frequent in the royal inscriptions of Assurnasirpal II, but already occur among the epithets of Shalmaneser I: “trampler of the rebellious, subduer of all the mountains.”²⁷⁵

One of the longest Assyrian royal inscriptions we have is that of Assurnasirpal II (883-859).²⁷⁶ The text begins with an introduction which is initially a hymn to Ninurta and then switches immediately to praise of the king. Some of Ninurta’s epithets in the opening section are repeated in praise of the king, sometimes with minor alteration. My lexical analysis, which did not even take into account synonymous expressions, like MAN *tamhāri* “king of battle” (I, 6) and SAG.KAL *tuqmāte* “foremost in battle” (I, 35), leads to the following results:

Epithet	Translation	Ninurta	Assurnasirpal
<i>dandannu</i>	“strong”	I, 1	I, 9 (<i>dannu</i>)
MAH	“almighty”	I, 1	I, 32

later Assyrian kings. The flood was Ninurta’s holy weapon, which he bestowed upon the king at the investiture, see *Ninurta and the Deluge* below (pp. 123-33).

²⁷² See Grayson 1986: 311, l. 8 and 1991: 308, l. 7.

²⁷³ Grayson 1996: 30 (102.5) col. iv, l. 2: ^{md}*šul-ma-nu-MAŠ a-li-lu šam-ru šá tu-kúl-ta-šú* ^d*MAŠ iš-bat ar-hu a-na KUR ak-ka-de-e a-la-ka iq-bi*; cf. F. N. H. al-Rawi and A. R. George, *Iraq* 52 (1990), 153.

²⁷⁴ *qar-du šá-giš lem-ni ù a-a-bi mu-šem-šu-ú mal lib-bi*, see Grayson 1991: 12, *et passim*.

²⁷⁵ Grayson 1986: 192, ll. 9-10: *dā’iš muštarhi mušaknišu nagab huršāni*.

²⁷⁶ Grayson 1991: 193ff. For a comparison of Naram-Sin’s self-depiction with that of Assurnasirpal II, see the illuminating study of J. Westenholz (2000: 101-20).

SAG.KAL	“foremost”	I, 1	I, 32
UR.SAG	“hero”	I, 1	I, 20, 32 (<i>uršānu</i>)
NUN-ú	“prince”	I, 2 (<i>ilāni</i>)	I, 11 (<i>maliku</i>), 18 (NUN)
<i>ekdu</i>	“ferocious”	I, 4	I, 19 (<i>ušumgallu</i>)
<i>lā padū</i>	“merciless”	I, 7	I, 34 (<i>tukul</i>)
<i>mušamqitu</i>	“who lays low”	I, 7	I, 34
EN (<i>bēlu</i>)	“lord”	I, 9	I, 21, 32

There are further literary allusions made in the Assyrian royal inscriptions to the mythology of Ninurta/Marduk. In Sennacherib’s account of the events in the battle of Halule, he calls Babylonians *gallē lemnūti* “wicked demons.” The *gallū*-demon belonged to the host of Tiamat in *Enūma eliš* IV 116-17 (Weissert 1997: 193). Sargon II classifies his enemy Marduk-apla-iddina as “a copy of the evil *gallū*” and this expression is later adopted by Assurbanipal who describes the king Tugdammē of the Cimmerians as the “likeness of *gallū*” (*tamšil gallē*).²⁷⁷ In the same inscription (Streck 1916: 280, l. 17), the king claims – without a proper context – that the aim of his military raid was “to avenge,” thus recalling Ninurta’s epithet *mutīr gimilli abīšu* “avenger of his father” (Maul 1999: 211).

A much more elaborate allusion to *Enūma eliš* in Sennacherib’s description

appears in the sentence recounting the illegitimate enthronement. After enumerating Mušezib-Marduk’s lowly characteristics – an impotent weakling, surrounded by criminal vagabonds – the Babylonians are said to have “seated him on the throne, inappropriately for him,” *Bābilāya ana lā simātišu ina kussī ušēšibūšu*. The key term in this sentence is the rare adverbial phrase *ana lā simātišu*, and since it is here employed for the first time in the genre of Assyrian heroic writings, it serves as an excellent reference-marker. (Weissert 1997: 193.)

We are forcefully reminded of the scene in *Enūma eliš* I 147ff and *passim* where Tiamat appoints from among her offspring the lesser and unworthy Qingu as puppet ruler over the gods and entrusts to him the leadership of the army. This is referred to by Marduk with the same adverbial phrase in En. el. IV 82: “Inappropriately for him, you have installed him in the highest divine office” (Weissert 1997: 194).

Through the adverbial phrase, common to both Sennacherib’s and Marduk’s accusations, the reader is expected to deduce the existence of a striking parallel between the Babylonians and Tiamat, between Mušezib-Marduk and Qingu, and finally, between the earthly royal throne of Babylon and the mythic office of divine sovereignty. (Weissert 1997: 194.)

Fales, in his study (1987) dedicated to the ideological role of Enemy (*nakrūtu*) in Assyrian royal inscriptions, has singled out five separate motifs

²⁷⁷ Fuchs 1994: 158 Ann. 327; 225 Prunk. 122 (*hiriš galli lemni*), Borger 1996: 97 B iv 74 and C v 80; see also Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 228.

on the basis of the phraseological complexes describing the moral attitude of the wicked enemy. The motif “d) The enemy speaks words of suspicion, hostility. He lies; he is false, treacherous” (Fales 1987: 429) and especially an example of it, cited by Fales, finds its parallel in *Enūma eliš*:

In a royal inscription of Assurbanipal (Streck 1916: 28 iii 80-81) one finds the phrase in the description of Enemy: *eliš ina šaptēšu itamma tubbāti/ šaplānu libbašu kāšir nērtu* (Fales 1987: 429). Tiamat’s address in En. el. IV 72 to Marduk is introduced by the author *ina šaptēša lullā ukāl sarrāti* “falsehood, lies she held ready on her lips.” After her speech, Marduk answers Tiamat in lines 77f: *minā tubbāti eliš nasati-ma u kāpid libbaki-ma dēki ananta* “Why outwardly you assume a friendly attitude, while your heart is plotting to open attack?” (Foster 1996: 373f).

The semantic core of this motif is the act of “plotting against Assyria” with the verb *kapādu*, which may result in the exposure of the plot through “speaking.” The object of *kapādu* is often *lemuttu* (sg. or pl.) and the subject *libbu* (Fales 1987: 429). If we consider the semantic field of the verb *kapādu* in *Enūma eliš*, we also find it completely negative there:

Apsū plots against (*limnēti ikpudu*) the gods his children in En. el. I 52; this verb is repeated in line 55 of the same context. The older gods “plotted evil in their hearts” (*iktapdu-ma karšussunu limutta*) and “said (*zakāru*) it to Tiamat their mother” (ll. 111f). In II 10 there is a summary statement “all that Tiamat plotted” (*mimmu Tiāmat ikpudu*); for IV 78 see above. In VII 44 Marduk is called “who thwarted their plots” (*musappih kipdišunu*). Cf. SAA Anzu I 77, *ikpud-ma libbašu tuqunta* “in his heart he (= Anzū) plotted battle.” The expression *lemuttu še’ū* “to prepare evil,” quite frequent in Assurbanipal’s inscriptions, is also found in En. el. IV 83 again in the speech of Marduk against Tiamat: “you attempted evil against Anšar, sovereign of the gods” (*ana anšar šar ilāni limnēti tešē-ma*). For the “wickedness of the Enemy” the key expression in the Assyrian royal inscription is *ēpiš lemnēti* “terrorist,” which is found again in En. el. VII 36 “lest he allow evildoers to escape from him (Marduk)” (*ēpiš limnēti lā ušēšū ittišu*).

Also, weapons of the Assyrian kings are borrowed from Ninurta. Ninurta’s weapons Deluge and whirlwinds (SAA Anzu II 9) are attested as the weapons of Tukulti-Ninurta (Pongratz-Leisten 2001: 226). The Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser calls himself *šuškal lā māgiri* “*šuškal*-net against the disobedient.” This net is mentioned in *Angim* 137 among the weapons of Ninurta: “I bear that from which the ‘mountains’ cannot escape, my *šuškal*-net (of battle)” (Cooper 1978: 80f). Sennacherib’s bow is named *pāri napšāti* “piercer of throats.” The same rare idiom (*napištam parā’u*) is used in reference to Marduk’s killing of Tiamat in En. el. IV 31 (Weissert 1997: 194). When Esarhaddon describes his military raid against Egypt, he mentions *šār-ur₄* and *šār-gaz* (both mean “the slayer of totality”) as his weapons, which go before him.²⁷⁸ In the Sumerian myths these are not real weapons but personified helpers of Ninurta:

²⁷⁸ Maul 1999: 210-11; see Borger 1956: 65, Nin. E, col. ii 6-13. Sennacherib invoked Šarur in the name of one of Nineveh’s five western gates: “Šarur, overthrower of the king’s enemy,” see Frahm 1997: 77 166f, par. 92 13’f.

Eine bewusste Analogie zwischen dem mythischem Kampf Ninurtas und dem realen Kriegsgeschehen unter Asarhaddon ist hier nicht mehr zu leugnen. Wenn sich der kriegsführende assyrische König mit dem Heldengott Ninurta in Analogie setzt, ist folgerichtig, dass er seine reale Feinde in der Rolle der Mächte des Chaos, der Gegenspieler Ninurtas oder Marduks sehen musste. (Maul 1999: 211.)

Esarhaddon's battle against his brothers, the rivals to his royal throne, is couched in terms of this mythical event. The evidence for intertextuality in his inscription has been studied by S. Parpola, who generously placed his unpublished work at my disposal.²⁷⁹ Let me summarize here the results of his study on *Esarhaddon as Saviour King*:

Esarhaddon: "I heard of their evil deeds and said, 'Woe!'" (Borger 1956: 43, l. 56); cf. Lugale 70: "The Lord (heard of Asakku's evil deeds and) said: 'Woe!'" (u₈-a). For a similar phrase in Erra IV, 35, see Weissert 1997: 196.

Esarhaddon: "I beat my fists," (*ar-pi-sa rit-ti-ia*, Borger: *ibid.*, l. 58); cf. Lugale 73: "The Hero beat his thigh with his fist."

Esarhaddon: "The gods sent word to me: Go, do not tarry!" (*alik la kalāta*), (Borger: *ibid.*, l. 61); cf. Lugale 236: "(Enlil sends word to Ninurta): Go, do not tarry!" (*alik la kalāta*).

Esarhaddon: "Like a flying eagle I spread out my wings to defeat my enemies" (Borger 1956: 44, ll. 67-68: *kīma urinni mupparši ana sakāp zā'irīya aptā idāya*); cf. Lugale 246: "The Lord [spr]ead his wings towards the clouds (to attack Asakku)."

Esarhaddon: "In front of me..., their warriors were sharpening their weapons," (Borger: *ibid.*, ll. 70-71); cf. En. el. IV 92: "Meanwhile, the gods of battle were sharpening their weapons"; see also Weissert 1997: 194, n. 18.

Esarhaddon: "When they saw the strength of my onslaught, they went mad" (*mahhūtiš*), (Borger: *ibid.*, l. 73); cf. En. el. IV 88: "When Tiamat heard this, she went mad" (*mahhūtiš*).

One can see on the basis of these correspondences that Esarhaddon's struggle for power against his elder brothers was depicted in terms of Ninurta's battle against his enemies and Marduk's battle against the elder gods. The quotations from *Lugale* and *Enūma eliš* are seamlessly combined in the inscription as if taken from the same myth. This shows that the king is Marduk being Ninurta when playing the role of hero and victor (Parpola 2001: 186, n. 26). As W. G. Lambert has shown (1986), Marduk's battle in *Enūma eliš* was influenced by the Ninurta mythology.

After having presented such rich material, which is still a fraction of the whole, there can be no doubt that the Assyrian king was considered to be identical with Ninurta. This mythological battle of the king/Ninurta was, on the ritual level, connected to the symbolic investiture of the king. It is certain at least for the Neo-Assyrian kings, as the ritual text SAA 3 39 shows (see p. 6 above). A. Livingstone has commented on the passage, stating that in this text the installation of the king is intended to parallel Ninurta's investiture:

²⁷⁹ Published also with comments in Parpola 2001: 185-86, n. 26.

The king leaving the temple on his way to the palace is identified with Ninurta going out to the mountain. Burning cedar incense in front of the gods in the temple is identified with burning the hair of the flesh of the evil gods. This shows that their defeat was conceived of as taking place in the temple or at least corresponding to ritual enacted there. The general significance of the text is that a rite of investiture of the king is being explained in terms of a mythological investiture of Ninurta. (Livingstone 1986: 146-47.)

S. M. Maul (1999: 211) has pointed out that this ritual commentary attests that:

der König vor seiner Investitur symbolisch den Kampf Ninurtas gegen die Kräfte des Chaos 'nachleben' musste, damit er dann – in Analogie zu der Verherrlichung Ninurtas am Ende des Mythos Lugal-e (bzw. Anzû) – von den Göttern zum Königtum erhoben werden konnte.²⁸⁰

Similar concepts also existed among the other nations of the ancient Near East. The metaphor of Yahweh as warrior is 'Host of heaven' – while waging his wars, the god was helped by warriors and army.²⁸¹ The divine helper of Israel in war of later Judaism was believed to be Michael. This figure probably developed from the prince of the host of Yahweh, who appeared to Joshua in Jos 5:13, and of the angel of the Exodus.

We should note that the tendency to substitute this figure for Yahweh met some opposition in Israel. Is. lxiii 9 denies that any 'prince' or angel led Israel – Yahweh himself did so. In the Septuagint of Deut. xxxii 8-9 (now supported by a Hebrew text from Qumran) Yahweh allotted the other nations to the sons of the gods but kept Israel for himself. (Collins 1975: 601, n. 20.)

In the book of Daniel, chapters 10-12, the decisive struggle between the nations is carried out between Michael and Gabriel and against "the angels" of Persia and Greece: "Here we almost find the polytheistic structure of holy war in the ancient Near East. The main difference is that the gods have been reduced to the status of lesser heavenly beings. So Michael, not Yahweh, is the heavenly warrior who fights for Israel" (Collins 1975: 600f):

The nationalistic mythology of holy war, where battles between nations on earth correspond to battles between their patron deities and their hosts, is fused, at least in Israel, with the cosmogonic myth of the victory of the divine warrior over chaos. The various nations who are Israel's enemies take the place of the enemies of Baal in the Canaanite myth. Yahweh's victories may also be expressed directly in terms of the old cosmogonic myth, particularly with reference to the Exodus where the Red Sea prompted an analogy with the Canaanite Yamm. (Collins 1975: 598-99.)

²⁸⁰ Maul 1999: 211. In another ritual, the king has to kill "the enemy" who was probably represented by a prisoner of war on the 23rd of Shebat (see above, p. 74f). Maul 1999: 211 comments: "In dem beschriebenen Ritual musste der König ... sich so – Ninurta gleich – den Göttern als "Rächer seiner Väter" präsentieren und seine Gewalt als oberster Kriegsherr im Auftrag der Götter demonstrieren."

²⁸¹ H. Niehr, DDD, cols. 811ff; see e.g. 2 Kgs 6:17, 7:6; Ps 68:18; Hab 3:8.

The Royal Hunt

In ancient Mesopotamia lion hunting was a privilege of the kings only (Fig. 5). An early attestation of the royal lion hunt comes from Šulgi hymn B 56-76:

I stride forward in majesty, trampling endlessly through the esparto grass and thickets, capturing elephant after elephant, creatures of the plain; and I put an end to the heroic roaring in the plains of the savage lion, dragon of the plains, wherever it approaches from and wherever it is going. I do not go after them with a net, nor do I lie in wait for them in a hide; it comes to a confrontation of strength and weapons. I do not hurl a weapon; when I plunge a bitter-pointed lance in their throats, I do not flinch at their roar. I am not one to retreat to my hiding-place but, as when one warrior kills another warrior, I do everything swiftly on the open plain. In the desert where the paths peter out, I reduce the roar at the lair to silence. In the sheepfold and the cattle-pen, where heads are laid to rest (?), I put the shepherd tribesmen at ease. Let no one ever at any time say about me, "Could he really subdue them all on his own?" The number of lions that I have dispatched with my weapons is limitless; their total is unknown.

In a Mari letter of the Old Babylonian period, the lion hunt is called *asak bēlim* "the duty of the king," *asakku* being the same word as the name of Ninurta's enemy Asag in *Lugale* (cf. Watanabe 1998: 445f). The lion hunt also fell into Ninurta's domain in his capacity as the "god of hunting," a role that is amply attested in the iconography.²⁸²

Already the Uruk period stone relief depicts the "priest-king" hunting a lion. The 'Lion' is an epithet of the king in the Fara period, as shown by the PN Lugal-pirig "the king is a lion," or in the Ur III period Lugal-pirig-bānda "the king is a fierce lion."²⁸³ The king Šulgi compares himself to a lion with wide-open jaws in Šulgi C 1ff. In the Barton cylinder (col. vi 11f), Ninurta appears to be dressed in lions' skins (Alster and Westenholz 1994: 20). In the collection of Sumerian temple hymns V, 1. 73, Ninurta bears the epithet *pirig* – "lion" (Sjöberg 1969: 21). *Pirigbanda* "Fierce Lion" occurs in a Fara god-list (LF 1 vii 22), and is attested in the *Hymn to the Queen of Nippur* IV, 33 where it is said of Ištar of Nippur: "Daughter-in-law of Pirigbanda, mistress of Eridu" and in a variant with prefixed *nin-* (Ninpirigbanda). By Pirigbanda, Ninurta might be meant (cf. Lambert 1982: 216f).

Ninurta mythology is associated with the royal lion hunt.²⁸⁴ Hunting reports begin to appear in Assyrian royal inscriptions with Tiglath-pileser I (Grayson 1991: 99). The next reference comes from the "Broken Obelisk"

²⁸² For example: "Themen der Nippur-Glyptik des 14. und 13. Jh. belegen, dass die Nippur seinen Göttern trotz des allgemein erstarkenden Mardukkultes huldigte. Eine Szene, die an die Heldentaten Ninurtas anknüpfen, bildet z.B. die Jagd mit dem Wagen auf einen grossen Vogel." (Stiehler-Alegria 1999: 262.)

²⁸³ Watanabe 1998: 446, cf. Cooper 1978: 119.

²⁸⁴ W. Röllig has written on the subject (1981: 123): "Die Jagden, die der König durchführt und über die er in den Bauinschriften der Tempel (!) berichtet, sind natürlich auch Demonstration königlicher Kraft und Tüchtigkeit, sind sicher auch Lustbarkeiten gewesen. In erster Linie aber sind sie ritueller Natur, der König wird am Ende der Jagd als Opferer dargestellt; das oben bereits angesprochene Motiv der Fürsorge für sein Volk, des



Fig. 5 Uruk period stone relief showing a royal lion hunt. [Iraq Museum, Baghdad]

(*ibid.* 103 col. iv) from the time of Aššur-bel-kala (1073-1056). In line 12 an unusual weapon ^{giš}*nar'antu* is mentioned as the implement used for the royal lion hunt.²⁸⁵ This weapon is very rarely mentioned elsewhere (see CAD *s.v.*), but the same root as a verb (*ru'umu* “to chop off”) is used in the Anzû myth, where Ninurta cuts off Anzû's wings.²⁸⁶

It was Ninurta's command that drove his beloved Tiglath-pileser I to go hunting bulls, elephants, lions and birds.²⁸⁷ The weapons used by him include “my strong bow, iron arrowheads (*šukud* AN.BAR) and sharp arrows (*mulmul-liya zaqtute*)” (Grayson 1991: 25 vi 65-67). The arrow (*šukūdu*), mentioned by Tiglath-pileser I is astronomically Ninurta's star Sirius (see CAD *s.v.*), and the Arrow might be a metaphor for Ninurta himself.²⁸⁸ In SAA Anzu III 10-11, both the same word for “arrow” and the verbal root *ru'umu* appear in the same sentence: *ilqê-ma bēlum ina arkat šukdīšu unakkis abrēšu imna u šumēla ura'im* “the Lord took his arrow in the manner of a spear, he lopped off his wings, he chopped them to right and left.” This Anzû Epic passage is most probably an “etymon” for the royal lion hunt. The terrible arrow of Marduk is compared to a merciless lion in KAR 25 ii 11 (see CAD *s.v. šiltāhu* 5').

In discussing the Assurbanipal prism fragment (82-5-22,2), which belonged to the earliest edition of this king's prism inscriptions, Elnathan Weissert has observed that it contains two themes:

a full report on a lion hunt by chariot, which portrays the king as restoring peaceful existence in the plain, and an account of *akītu* celebrations in honour of Ishtar of Arbela, which are, in effect, the ritual aspect of a military triumph, and which serve, so it now appears, as preliminaries to the New Year festival held in Ashur at the beginning of Nisan. The hunting and *akītu* episodes appear on this fragment in unexpected proximity, and no line is drawn in between them. (Weissert 1997a: 348.)

According to Weissert's reconstruction of the prism fragment, it described the departure of the king to the plain, where he confronted a “serious prob-

Schutzes von Kultur und Zivilisation vor der Chaosmacht, findet hier sinnfälligen Ausdruck.”

²⁸⁵ “He killed from his ... chariot (and) on foot with the spear 120 lions with his wildly vigorous assault. He felled ... lions with the *mace*. In the high mountains they (the gods Ninurta and Nergal) commanded him to do their hunt (*e-pe-eš₁₅ bu-u-ri-šu-nu*). At the time of cold, frost, (and) ice, at the time of the ascension of Sirius when it is red like molten copper, he arranged (and) formed herds of ... gazelles (and) ibex...” etc. (Grayson 1991: 103). Thus the activities of a hunter are followed directly with those of a “faithful shepherd” in the account of Aššur-bel-kala.

²⁸⁶ Ch. E. Watanabe 1998: 442, see SAA Anzu II 108, 130; III 11. One should also mention that Anzû has a lion's head in some iconographical representations.

²⁸⁷ Van der Toorn 1990: 11, see Grayson 1991: 25f: vi 61-87: vi 84. The gods Ninurta and Nergal are the formulaic commanders of the king to the hunting (for example: *ibid.* 103, col. iv, l. 1).

²⁸⁸ *šukud* AN.BAR can equally well be read *šukud* ^dMAŠ “the arrow of Ninurta,” and this ambiguity seems to be intentional.

lem” – the lions were attacking the cattle in the plain.²⁸⁹ The sentence is introduced by the adverb [*ellam*]ū'a “[befo]re my arrival.” The same expression is found in the Assyrian royal inscriptions where it may begin a sentence describing the “sins” of the Enemy to be punished by the advancing king. Thus the king is here acting as the “faithful shepherd” by protecting the cattle and people (like Enkidu in SAA Gilg. II 50-52). Next we read that the king conducted the lion hunt with a single team of horses harnessed to the royal chariot (Weissert 1997a: 342-43).

The chariot used for the lion hunt was of a particular type: an “open chariot” (^{giš}GIGIR *pattūte*), an Assyrian “Porsche.”²⁹⁰ The chariot also plays an eminent role in *Angim* and very probably it was the important theological element in the king's subsequent entrance to the city at the military *akītu* (cf. Watanabe 1998: 443).

The alternative to hunting from the chariot was “hunting on foot” (*ina šēpī*), which is frequently described in Assyrian royal inscriptions, and the motif is used on the Assyrian royal seal. The hunting of lions on foot is further qualified by the adjective *lasmu/lassamātu* “running, swift” by Aššur-dan II (934-912) and Adad-narari II (911-891).²⁹¹ The use of the word *lassamātu* in the context of the royal hunt suggests its association with the cultic footrace *lismu*, performed in all cult-centres in the month of Kislimu.²⁹²

Leider entgehen uns Ablauf und Sinn dieses *lismu* bisher völlig. Vorstellbar wäre, dass der König vergleichbar mit dem Pharao anlässlich des ägyptischen Sedfestes seine physische Kraft unter Beweis stellen muss, die ihm eine weitere Regierungszeit erlaubt. (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 101.)

According to my interpretation, by the *lismu*-footrace, the “swiftness” of Ninurta/Nabû was celebrated, in connection with one of Ninurta's stars Mercury, cf. ^dAG *ša lisme* and *ūmu lismu ša* ^dAG (Parpola 1983: 55, n. 94). In Assyrian iconography, Ninurta is often depicted in running position.²⁹³ There

²⁸⁹ The theme of Ninurta's protection of the animals is elaborated in the hymn edited in Mayer 1992; see sections xi-xiii, pp. 24f (text), 30 (translation) and 36-37 (comments, see esp. n. 14). Animals said to be protected by Ninurta are a bird (xi, *iššuru lēhu*), gazelle (xii, *šabītu*) and wild donkey (xiii, *serrēmu*).

²⁹⁰ See J. N. Postgate, *SAAB* 4 (1990), 35-38.

²⁹¹ For the hunting account of Aššur-dan, see Grayson 1991: 135 (A.0.98.1), ll. 68-72 and for that of Adad-narari II, *ibid.* 154 (A.0.99.2), ll. 122-27; Assurnasirpal II: *ibid.* 291 (A.0.101.30), ll. 84b-101.

²⁹² Ch. E. Watanabe 1998: 443-44. The ritual text SAA 3 34:57f associates the footrace in Kislimu “in all the cult cities” with Ninurta's slaying of Anzû. A calendar text from Seleucid Uruk, which assigns an ointment to each month, prescribes the head, feather and blood of the Anzû-bird for the month Kislimu (IX). The zodiacal sign Sagittarius, which corresponds to the ninth month, is there designated by the name of the god Pabilsag (Reiner 1995: 116).

²⁹³ Ch. E. Watanabe 1998: 444. Išme-Dagan boasts that he himself is a swift runner in hymn S, ll. 9ff: “Then Išme-Dagan the youthful, the mightiest hero among swift athletes, the fearsome runner, who serving night and day never ceases caring for Nibru” Cf. also Šulgi V 13ff; see D. Frayne, “Šulgi the Runner,” *JAOS* 103 (1983), 739-48.

are also some references to athletic games in honour of Ninurta at his feast in Nippur according to a hymn from a Middle Assyrian bilingual tablet.²⁹⁴ Swiftness as an abstract quality is also connected with the wisdom of the god. Ninurta as the god of scribal arts must be swift in understanding – the best computer is the swiftest, as everybody working with them knows. This quality of Ninurta is emphasized in the introductory hymn to Ninurta in a royal inscription of Šamši-Adad V: “wide in understanding and clever in conception.”²⁹⁵ Speed is an essential quality of the king as well (see Šulgi A 18, 39), and not merely for the hunt, but also, as many of the Sumerian royal hymns testify, for conducting campaigns against the enemy (Kramer 1974: 173).

The hymn in praise of Shalmaneser III or Assurnasirpal II (SAA 3 19) mentions in the damaged lines of rev. 27-30 the lion hunt which was performed in Assur in the context of the king’s return from a military campaign,

following the *akītu* festival in honour of Ishtar of Arbela, and preceding the king’s triumphal entrance (together with the tribute received during the campaign) into the presence of Ashur. Were it not for its poor state of preservation, this passage could have been used as a clear-cut indication that since early Neo-Assyrian times lion hunts were integrated into triumphal processions and the New Year celebrations. (Weissert 1997a: 348-49.)

The departure of god to the *akītu* temple in the plain marked the beginning of the battle between Good and Evil. The Saviour King, assuming the guise of a hunter and following the footsteps of his divine patrons, moves to the plain and subdues the incarnate hosts of chaos, “the kings of the animals,” the lions. In this aspect, the king acts as Ninurta:

The method of the royal lion hunt in Assyria, hunting from the “chariot” or “on swift foot” corresponds to the two major means of representing Ninurta’s victory that were enacted in the state ritual. Thus it is likely that the Assyrian royal lion hunt has the same structure as the rite of Ninurta in which the king establishes and reinforces his kingship by killing lions in the same manner that Ninurta achieves his divine kingship by slaying monsters. Thus, the lions killed by the Assyrian king are likely to have been perceived as surrogates for monsters slain by Ninurta.²⁹⁶

The same concept is found in the background of the biblical Book of Daniel, chapter 6. The god of Israel is depicted as contending with the Babylonian/Persian king (6:13). Daniel is cast into the pit of lions, where he is said to have been “saved” by his God through an angel. The lions “do no harm” to Daniel (6:24). The word “to save” used in the Aramaic Book of Daniel for describing God’s act is a loanword from Akkadian *ezēbu* Š, Aramaic *šēzib* (see Daniel 6:17 and elsewhere). The god of Israel saves Daniel exactly in

²⁹⁴ Lambert 1960: 120 6: “Young men of strength compete with each other in wrestling and athletic games [in your honor]”; translation by Foster 1996: 616.

²⁹⁵ Grayson 1996: 182, l. 22: *šur-ru šum-du-lu ka-raš nik-la-a-ti*.

²⁹⁶ Ch. E. Watanabe 1998: 444-45. For royal hunt in Ancient Egypt and its echoes in the Hebrew Bible, see e.g. E. Ruprecht, “Das Nilpferd im Hiobbuch. Beobachtungen zu der sogenannten Gottesrede,” *VT* 21 (1971), 209-31.

the same way as the Assyrian king saves his people and cattle during the royal lion hunt in his capacity as the “faithful shepherd.”²⁹⁷

A connection between Ninurta and the biblical Nimrod, “the mighty hunter in the eyes of Yahweh” (Gen 10:9) has sometimes been expressed. Probably the name is a corruption of Ninurta.²⁹⁸ A less credible statement has been proposed that Nimrod is a popular memory of the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I.²⁹⁹ In any case, it is clear that Nimrod here is a symbol of Mesopotamian political leadership (van der Toorn 1990: 8). This biblical account combines in Nimrod a divine hunter, a king and Mesopotamian political leadership which makes it very probable that the god Ninurta is the model behind the biblical Nimrod.

In Jewish and Christian legends, Nimrod was the giant who founded Babylon. He was, like the Watchers, the inventor of astronomy; it is said that idolatry began with him. In Jewish and then in Muslim legends Nimrod is typified as the evil tyrant: he is said to have tried to burn Abraham, and even to kill God by throwing arrows into the sky.³⁰⁰ In Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* chapter 6, we find the story of the direct confrontation of Nimrod with Abraham:

the leaders of the three tribes of Shem, Ham and Japeth planned to build the great tower in babel, but twelve men, including Abraham, refuse to join the project because they were worshippers of the Lord. Joktan, the chief of the leaders, puts these men in jail, though he does so reluctantly, being himself a secret worshipper of the Lord. When he offers them the chance to escape, only Abraham declines the offer. Nimrod, however, wants the men to be punished severely. He finds out that only Abraham is left in jail, and demands that he be thrown alive into a fiery furnace. The sentence is executed, but God sees to it that Abraham does not suffer the least injury in the flames.³⁰¹

This story is almost certainly modelled on the literary basis of Daniel. Syncellus preserved a tradition according to which Nimrod was considered to be the father of giants. Nimrod was called *gibbōr*, like the sons of the “sons

²⁹⁷ The “pit of lions” is found in the Assyrian letter SAA 10 294 r. 39. Daniel cast into the pit of lions is interpreted less plausibly as a metaphor by K. van der Toorn, “Scholars at the Oriental Court: The Figure of Daniel against its Mesopotamian Background,” *SVT* 83 (2001), 37-54.

²⁹⁸ See C. Uehlinger, *DDD s.v. Nimrod*, cols. 1181-86.

²⁹⁹ Dalley 1998: 67: “Nimrod is a corruption of the Sumerian god-name Ninurta, patron of the hunt, whose exploits in the Epic of Anzu placed him in charge of the Tablet of Destinies – he ‘won complete dominion.’ His role in this respect was taken over by the Babylonian god Marduk and the Assyrian god Ashur. He was patron god of the Assyrian royal city Kalhu, which is also known as Nimrud. The biblical statement about his empire may refer to the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244-1208) who was the first Assyrian king to conquer Babylon, for the name may have been abbreviated.” The connection was first proposed by E. A. Speiser “In Search of Nimrod” *ErIsr* 5 (1958), 32-36.

³⁰⁰ Stroumsa 1984: 160, n. 79; see also *EI s.v. Namrūd*.

³⁰¹ Van der Horst 1990: 19; in some Muslim legends, Nimrod wants to fight with the God of Abraham, ascending to heaven on the eagle’s back, the motif being a contamination of the Mesopotamian Etana myth (see Aro 1976: 26).

of the god(s)" and the daughters of men in Gen 6:4b. It is probable that the Gnostic evil Nabroel evolved from legends built around the biblical figure of Nimrod (Stroumsa 1984: 160, n. 79). On the other hand, in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Gen 10:11 Nimrod is immortalized as the outstandingly righteous individual of his generation (van der Horst 1990: 21). According to the Targumic tradition, Nimrod founded the Syrian city of Edessa which was identified with biblical Erech.³⁰² Nimrod and Edessa were probably connected because Edessa was an important cult centre of Bel and Nabû in Syria in late Antiquity, and there the tradition of Babylonian New Year Festival continued.

³⁰² Targum Palest. on Gen 10:10; see EJ s.v. Edessa, Vol. 6, pp. 366f.

CHAPTER THREE

Ninurta in Mythology

Ninurta and the Monsters

Ninurta's vanquished enemies were used as his attributes and apotropaica. In the literary texts praising Ninurta or describing his mythological combats, there occur lists of (eleven) monsters defeated by him. In the Sumerian myths, the victor who subdued the enemies is exclusively Ninurta or Ningirsu while in the Assyrian and Babylonian sources such deeds are sometimes ascribed to Marduk or Nabû as well.³⁰³ The heroes slain by Ninurta have been the subject of numerous studies and therefore the inventory of monsters will be examined in this work only briefly.³⁰⁴

Demons are different from the gods, but they are related to the gods: they form a cast of demonic personages supporting the gods (Black 1988: 19f). While the gods tend to have human forms at least in the later stages of Mesopotamian religion, the monsters' "bodies were made up of irrational combinations, often hideously exaggerated, of elements, including human, occurring separately in the natural world." (*ibid.* 20.) The demonic creatures or monsters incarnated human fears and dangers, represented the real world gone wrong (*ibid.*). Some monsters had gods as their masters:

Whether or not the monsters are the original forms of the anthropomorphic gods, they must have been in some way associated with the gods that in the next period

³⁰³ For an overview of lists, see Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 23f, with the comments by George 1996: 388f.

³⁰⁴ The other important warrior, besides Ninurta, among the gods in third millennium Mesopotamia was the sun-god Utu and his Semitic equivalent Šamaš, who occurs as a warrior in the most ancient Semitic literature of Ebla (Lambert 1989a). Utu controlled seven monstrous 'warriors,' according to the epic *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* 37ff, and he was the supervisor of distant mountain regions where some of the monstrous creatures were thought to live. The epithet "warrior" is important both with Utu/Šamaš and Ninurta. In royal ideology, one finds that both Ninurta and Utu (Šamaš) personified different aspects of the king's activity. The god Šamaš personifies the perfect justice which emanates from the king. It seems that Utu or Šamaš is a warrior of a different type from Ninurta. Utu/Šamaš is head of the warriors and even might be considered as their father. In this way, the Sun seems to be closer to the rank of Enlil, and he is not subjected to a higher god as is Ninurta.

became their masters. Apparently each monster is associated with a god that operates in the same field of action, a part of nature; but while the god covers the whole of his realm, the monster covers only a slice, and while the god is responsible for a stable and lasting background, the monster's responsibilities are limited, it accentuates, emphasizes. (Wiggermann 1994: 226.)

As has been pointed out by W. G. Lambert (1986), the lists of enemies vanquished by Ninurta or Ningirsu in the Cylinders of Gudea, in *Angim* and in *Lugale* bear remarkable similarities, each consisting of a set of eleven monsters:

<i>Gudea Cyl. A xxv-xxvi</i>	<i>Lugale 128-134</i>	<i>Angim 51-63</i>
šeg ₉ -sag-àš	ku-li-an-na	am-dab ₅ -dab ₅
sag-ar	ušum	áb-dab ₅
ur-sag-imin-àm	nì-bar ₆ -bar ₆ -ra	šeg ₉ -sag-àš
ušum	urud-nì-kala-ga	ušum
gišimmar	šeg ₉ -sag-àš	má-gi ₄ -lum
sag-alim-ma	má-gi ₄ -lum	gud-alim
ur-mah	^d saman-an-na	ku-li-an-na
ku-li-an-na	gud-alim	nì-bar ₆ -bar ₆ -ra
urud	lugal- ^d gišimmar	urud-nì-kala-ga
má-gi ₄ -lum	^d im-dugud ^{mušen}	^d im-dugud ^{mušen}
gud-alim	muš-sag-imin	muš-sag-imin

It is possible that a combat story of Ninurta/Ningirsu against each of these “monsters” was also known. According to F. A. M. Wiggermann (1992), a majority of monsters in lists are placed there just in order to expand the list and no (combat) story actually existed. This statement is probably not correct because we have iconographic depictions of Ninurta's combats, for example, with the seven-headed snake and with the *bašmu*-snake.³⁰⁵ The Sumerian *balag* compositions present the lists of defeated enemies in two recensions: the first is attested in the lamentations *The Honoured One of Heaven* and in *He who Makes Decisions in the Council* where Nabû is exalted:

His (word) which cut down the oak in the road! His (word) which snared the *anzu*-bird with a net! His (word) which (enabled) the ruler to pile high the enemy in battle! His (word) which killed seven-headed snake (muš-sag-imin-na)! His (word) which trampled upon the gypsum (im-babbar) in the mountain! His (word) which tred upon the crab (kúšû) in the standing water!³⁰⁶

The “oak in the road” can be compared to *Angim* 39, where Anzud is brought forth by Ninurta from the HalubHARRan-tree.³⁰⁷ The *halub*-tree

³⁰⁵ See A. Green in *RIA* 8, 575f; *idem* 1997: 141f.

³⁰⁶ See Cohen 1988: 214, ll. c+148-153; *ibid.* 488, ll. d+148-153.

³⁰⁷ Sumerian and Akkadian versions of the l. +148 in *balags*: ^{giš}ha-lu-úb har-ra-na nam-mi-ni-in-ku₅-da-a-ni / hu-lu-up-pa ina har-ra-nu ik-ki-su: dup-ra-nu iz-zu-ru; see Cooper 1978: 147, n. 4.

occurs as the nesting place of Anzud and its young in *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Nether World* (ll. 27-46). Gilgamesh subsequently uprooted the tree, Anzud took up its young and went into the mountains. Consequently, this tree belonged to the cycles of the ancient heroes.³⁰⁸

The second version concerning the trophies of Ninurta in the *balag*-compositions is attested in the Ninurta-lamentations *The Elevated Ox of the Land/ Ekur* and in *Instilling Terror like a Serpent*:

You killed the six-headed wild sheep (šeg₉-sag-àš) in the mountain. You trampled upon the gypsum (im-babbar) in the mountain. You slipped by the crab (kúšû) in the standing water.³⁰⁹

When the passage in the Creation Epic I 133ff and parallels are carefully read, it becomes clear that Tiamat's army also consisted of eleven monsters (Lambert 1986: 57). A composite list of the monsters is presented below along with a short discussion.

áb-dab₅ “captured cows,” probably a group of female monsters, occurs only in *Angim*.

am-dab₅-dab₅ “captured bulls,” probably a group of male monsters. Their images are on the gates of Esagil (Lambert 1997a: 76 23ff). If “the bulls” are related to the previous **áb-dab₅**, it may be put beside the cattle of Geryon in the Greek Heracles cycle (West 1997: 469).

Anzud/Anzû “the monster Anzû” One form of Anzû was a bird with a lion's head. The second form of Anzû is the winged horse, probably resulting from imperfect homophony with Sumerian anšû or anše, “donkey.” **Anzud** might be originally distinct from the Imdugud-bird (**dim-dugud^{mušen}**). According to B. Hruška (1975: 85, 127), in Sumerian mythology Anzû was beneficent, but came to be viewed as malevolent from the OB texts onwards, and the Epic of Etana provides the historical link between these two natures. Cf. Cooper 1978: 153f and E. A. Braun-Holzinger, *RIA* 7, s.v. *Löwenadler*, p. 94ff. According to West 1997: 469, Anzû could “at a pinch be put beside the Stymphalian Birds” in the Heracles cycle.

bašmu “snake,” probably a horned serpent, created in the sea (KAR 6:1ff), belongs to Tiamat's host, En. el. I 141 *et passim*, cf. **ušum**.

gallû “demon,” according to SAA Anzu I 8, they are afraid of Ninurta's attack, according to En. el. IV 116 it was a generic term (among several) for Tiamat's creatures.

girtablullû “scorpion-man,” belongs to Tiamat's host En. el. I 142 *et passim* (see Wiggermann 1992: 180f). The images of “scorpion-men” guard the gate Ka-udi-[babbara] of Esagil (Lambert 1997a: 76 28).

gud-alim, Akk. *kusarikku* “bison-man,” a purely mythical creature; belongs to the host of Tiamat, En. el. I 143 *et passim*. In iconography, the lower part is bovine and the upper part human, with horns. According to SAA Anzu I 12, Ninurta battled with *kusarikku* in the sea; in *Angim* 35 he brought it out “from the dust of battle,” which would not associate the monster with the sea (cf. Black 1988: 22;

³⁰⁸ See *The Quest of Gilgamesh and the Heroic Deeds of Ninurta* below (pp. 168-71).

³⁰⁹ See Cohen 1988: 442, ll. [44-46]; *ibid.* 460, ll. 44-46.

Maul 2000a: 28ff). The monster was associated with the Sun, probably as the son of the Sun, and with the West Semitic tribe *ditānu* (see Wiggermann 1992: 174ff). For a possible connection of this monster with Greek Titans, see Annus 1999 (West 1997: 469 compared it to the Cretan Bull).

ku-li-an-na, Gudea places kulianna in the temple of Baba which may indicate that the kulianna was female. It is once called in Akkadian *kuliltu*, possibly a female counterpart of *kulullû*, the fish-man, thus she may be “mermaid” (Black 1988: 22, cf. Cooper 1978: 149). If she is a mermaid, she is comparable to Greek Eurynome, the daughter of Ocean, against whose husband Ophion (‘the serpent’) Kronos battled. She was represented iconographically in an Arcadian sanctuary in the form of a mermaid (Paus. 8.41.6) (Mondi 1990: 182).³¹⁰

kulullû “fish-man,” the merman, among Tiamat’s monsters (En. el. I 143 *et passim*). Marduk probably inherited the power over them from Ea (see W. G. Lambert *RIA* 6, p. 324; cf. Wiggermann 1992: 182f). Their images guard the gate of abundance (ká-hegal) in Esagil (Lambert 1997a: 76:27).

kusarikku “bison-man,” see **gud-alim**

lahamu “hairy hero,” belongs to Tiamat’s host, En. el. I 141, it has a double role in the Babylonian cosmology, see the studies by W. G. Lambert, *Or.* 54 (1985), 189ff and R. S. Ellis, *Iraq* 57 (1995), 159ff.

lugal-dgišimmar “King Date-Palm” (**gišimmar** “date palm”), occurs in a list of gods from Abu Salabikh; later the Palmtree King was identified with the underworld god Nergal (Black 1988: 22; see A. Livingstone 1986: 106).

má-gi₄-lum “Magilum-boat” from Abzu, mentioned in *Enki and the World Order* as the boats from Meluhha (Black 1988: 22; cf. Cooper 1978: 148, van Dijk 1983: 16).

muš-huš, “savage snake” is described as living in the sea in an incantation from the Ur III period (Schwemer 2001: 174, n. 1233). Akkadian *mušhuššu* is later the symbolic animal of Marduk, taken over from Tišpak; it is created by Enlil, brought forth by the sea and river, and belongs to Tiamat’s host in En. el. I 141 *et passim* (see Wiggermann 1989: 118f and 1992: 168f and *RIA* 8 s.v.). The images of *mušhuššu* guard the gates of Esagil (Lambert 1997a: 76:23ff).

mušmahhu “big serpent” serves as a generic term for Tiamat’s monsters, En. el. I 134 *et passim*.

muš-sag-imin “seven-headed serpent” has a long history in Mesopotamian heraldic art. This beast is comparable to the nine-headed Hydra of classical mythology against which Heracles fought (Black 1988: 21; see also Cooper 1978: 154).

nì-bar₆-bar₆-ra, also **im-babbar**, Akkadian *gaššu* “gypsum” or “White Substance” (see Cooper 1978: 149f and cf. *Ninurta as Healer* below [pp. 138-45]).

sag-alim-ma “the bison’s head,” a unique “monster” in Gudea A xxvi 4, probably only a trophy gained from the battle with **alim** (see **gud-alim**).

³¹⁰ “Apollonius Rhodius (I.496ff) makes Orpheus sing a theogony for the Argonauts in which earth, heaven, and sea, originally united, are separated by strife. Ophion and Eurynome rule over the gods until they are overthrown by Kronos and Rhea and fall into Oceanus. Zeus is reared in the Dictaeon cave, and comes to power after the Cyclopes arm him with the thunderbolt.” (West 1983: 127.)

sag-ar occurs only in Gudea A xxv 25; according to Wiggermann (1994: 227) it equates to Mt. Sinjar; the mountain name would represent its game (D. O. Edzard, *RIME* 3, p. 85).

dsaman-an-na, Th. Jacobsen translates “the lord Heaven’s Hobble” (1987: 243), a minor god whose worship is attested in Lagaš continuously for at least 200 years before the time of Gudea (Black 1988: 24).

šād abnī “mountain of stones” (SAA Anzu I 10) probably refers to Ninurta’s battle with Asag and his army of stones in *Lugale*. Zababa is mentioned thrice as the crusher of stones, see Lambert 1967: 122, l. 100 (*dā’iš abnī^{meš}*); Cavigneaux 1981: 137, 79.B.1/19 iii 2 (EN GAL-ú mu-lat-tu-u / *šad ab-nu*) and Livingstone 1986: 64, l. 3 ([*d*]a-a-a-iš NA₄.MEŠ ^dZa-ba₄-[ba₄]).

šeg₉-sag-aš “six-headed wild ram,” brought out from the “shining, lofty house” in *Angim* 32. An interlinear translation offers *šu-ma* as the Akkadian match (Cohen 1988: 460 44). The zoological prototype of this monster is probably the ram of the wild sheep *Ovis orientalis* or *Ovis ammon* (Black 1988: 21). Th. Jacobsen takes it as ‘buck’ (1987: 243), and it might be matched up with the Cerynean Hind in the Heracles cycle (West 1997: 469; see Cooper 1978: 147f).

ugallu “big weather-beast,” belongs to Tiamat’s host, En. el. I 142 *et passim* (see Wiggermann 1992: 169ff).

ūmu dabrūtu “mighty demons” belong to Tiamat’s host, En. el. I 143 *et passim*.

uridimmu “savage dog,” belongs to Tiamat’s host, En. el. I 142 *et passim* (see Wiggermann 1992: 172ff).

ur-mah “lion,” cf. Akkadian *urmahlullû* ‘lion-man,’ comparable to the Nemean Lion in the Heracles cycle (see Wiggermann 1992: 181f, cf. *Royal Hunt* above [pp. 102-108]).

ur-sag-imin-àm, “the seven-headed hero,” in *Angim* it occurs as **ur-sag**, see Cooper 1978: 148.

urud, or: **urud-nì-kala-ga** “(strong) copper-monster,” according to an Old Babylonian incantation, it produces terrifying noise. It may thus be a metallic instrument used to drive away demons (Black 1988: 22, cf. Cooper 1978: 150ff, van Dijk 1983: 15). In the ritual for curing a sick man, these items (= cymbals?) are placed at the head of the sick person and are explained as representing Enlil (Livingstone 1986: 172 5). Copper also acts as a person in the Sumerian debate poem “Silver and Copper.” Strong Copper insulted Silver, being full of hatred for him (Segment D 47ff).

ušum, Akk. *bašmu*, “venomous snake,” *Lugale* 129; in *Angim* 33 it lives in “the great fortress of the ‘highlands’”; Gudea Cyl A xxvi 29 (see Wiggermann 1992: 166ff).

ušumgallu, “big serpent,” serves as a generic term for Tiamat’s monsters, En. el. I 137 *et passim*.

These monsters vanquished by Ninurta and Marduk are personifications of the king’s enemies. They are often believed to inhabit mountains and the sea, the world of disorder. Like the geo-political enemies of the king, their rebellion against the established cosmos is feared. They are possible sources of subversion and terrorism which should be firmly put under the control of the gods and the kings. The scene of the king having vanquished his adver-

saries in war is publicly displayed in the ritual of triumph.³¹¹ It is described eloquently in the royal writings of Assurbanipal. After his punitive operations against the Arab kings, the former allies of Šamaš-šumu-ukin, the king's triumph is made visible to the citizens of Nineveh in the ritual at the gate:

For the lifting my hands (in prayer), constantly turning to Aššur and Mullissu, which I (perform) in order to defeat my enemies, I pierced his (= the Arab king Uwaite') jawbone with *hutne* of a *māširu*-chariot which my hands had captured. To his gums I fastened a leading rope. I fastened on him a dog's leash and let him guard the door of the gate of Sunrise in the centre of the city Nineveh whose name is called Entrance of the World's Inspection.³¹²

The same gate is mentioned in the context of another Arab king:

In order to display the praise of Aššur and of the great gods, my lords, I imposed on him (the Arab king Jaute') a severe punishment. I put him in a neck-stock and bound him together with a bear and a dog, and let him guard the gate of Sunrise, Entrance of the World's Inspection, in the centre of the city Nineveh.³¹³

After the kings have been publicly ridiculed by the Assyrian citizens, their former arrogance against Assyria is used as a power which guards a city-gate of Nineveh for the benefit of the state. Afterwards they are directed to work on the king's buildings, on the construction of the crown prince's palace (Maul 2000a: 22). This procedure is not an expression of the personal wickedness of Assurbanipal, but a part of the royal ritual which had an important role to play in the state ideology (Maul 2000a: 23). The name of the gate, "Entrance of the World's Inspection" (*nēreb masnaqti adnāti*) hints at the possibility that the gate was used for the public scenes of judgement over the offenders of various sorts, the place where the evil-doers were brought to justice (*ibid.*). This name, along with its recorded function, brings to mind a probable connection with the main gate in the city of Assur, already known from the ninth century, which had the ceremonial name *sāniqat malkē*, "which keeps control over the kings" (see George 1992: 456). This gate in Assur might have had a similar function for the rituals of triumph over vanquished kings, as is indicated by the use of the West Semitic word (*malku*) for "king" in it (Maul 2000a: 23). Thus one may be right in assuming that the public display and humiliation of the subdued Arab kings and their temporary guardianship of the city-gate were parts of a well-established ritual of victory and had a history in the Assyrian tradition (*ibid.*).

In the light of the evidence for the Assyrian state rituals of the triumphal *akītu* and royal hunt presented above, it should be logical to assume an interconnection of this public display of the foreign kings with hunting accounts of the earlier Assyrian kings. Tiglath-pileser I (1115-1077) records a similar display of his vanquished antagonists at the gate of his palace in Assur (Maul 2000a: 24):

³¹¹ See *Triumphal Akitu of Assyria* above (pp. 90-108).

³¹² Borger 1996: 68, ll. 103-111, cited by Maul 2000a: 22.

³¹³ Borger 1996: 62, ll. 8-14, cited by Maul 2000a: 22.

I made replicas in Basalt of a *nāhiru*, which is called a sea-horse (and) which by the command of the gods Ninurta and Nergal, the great gods, my lords, I had killed with a *harpoon* of my own making in the [(Great)] Sea [of the land] Amurru, (and) of a live *burhiš* which was brought from the mountain/land Lumaš [...] on the other side of the land Habhu. I stationed (them) on the right and left at my [royal entrance]. (Grayson 1991: 44, ll. 67-71.)

It is interesting that the king makes replicas of the wild animals which he slew during his hunt in the mountains and on the sea. These beasts, which were probably never seen before by the Assyrians, were stationed at the gate of the royal palace as the symbols of the subjugated wilderness and the physical strength of the king. In this way, they can be easily be compared with the mythological monsters vanquished by Ninurta and can be paralleled with the exposure of the Arab kings in Assurbanipal's royal inscriptions (Maul 2000a: 24). The rebellious kings and the lions as the objects of the Assyrian royal hunt were once juxtaposed by Assurbanipal himself: "Among the men kings and among the beasts lions cannot be great (*lā iših*) before my bow" (Borger 1996: 16, ll. 29f). From this quotation, it becomes clear that the exposition of the foreign kings and the wild beasts (or replicas of them) to the general public had the same intent: to show the might of the victorious king (Maul 2000a: 25).

The building account of Tiglath-pileser I shows that the wild animals *nāhiru* and *burhiš* flanked the entrance of the palace, like the famous winged human-headed bulls and lions at the Assyrian kings' palaces in Nineveh, Calah and Dur-Šarruken. They are widely believed to represent *aladlammū* (or *lamassu* and *šēdu*), the protective or apotropaic genies who ward off evil influences. These images are normally not interpreted as "vanquished enemies."³¹⁴ According to S. Maul, there is a hermeneutical connection among the triumph ritual at the gate, the images of the wild beasts at the entrance of the palace and the "apotropaic figures" at the gates of the Mesopotamian temples and palaces (2000a: 25ff). The animals mentioned by Tiglath-pileser belong to two basic domains of Mesopotamian "wildlife": the distant mountains (*burhiš*) and the sea (*nāhiru*).³¹⁵ The sea and the mountains are the hypostases of the dark powers of chaos in Mesopotamian mythology: the dragon "sea" (Tiamat) as the enemy of Marduk and the "mountains" as the dark domain combatted by Ninurta. As the hero Ninurta (or Marduk) destroyed the sea and the mountains in primordial times, thus are the two beasts, representing the same realms, publicly exposed at the entrance of king's palace (Maul 2000a: 26).

³¹⁴ Maul 2000a: 25, see A. Green, s.v. *Mischwesen* B, *RIA* 8, p. 255.

³¹⁵ The Akkadian word *nāhiru* is probably cognate with Ugaritic *anhr*. This word appears in the speech of Mōtu threatening Baal in the Baal Epic (KTU 1.5 I 14ff): "My throat is the throat of the lion in the wasteland, and the gullet of the 'snorter' (*anhr*) in the sea; and it craves the pool (as do) the wild bulls, (craves) springs as (do) the herds of deer..." (Pardee 1997: 265, cf. 264, n. 204). As the personification of death and chaos, Mōtu's organs are here associated with wild animals.

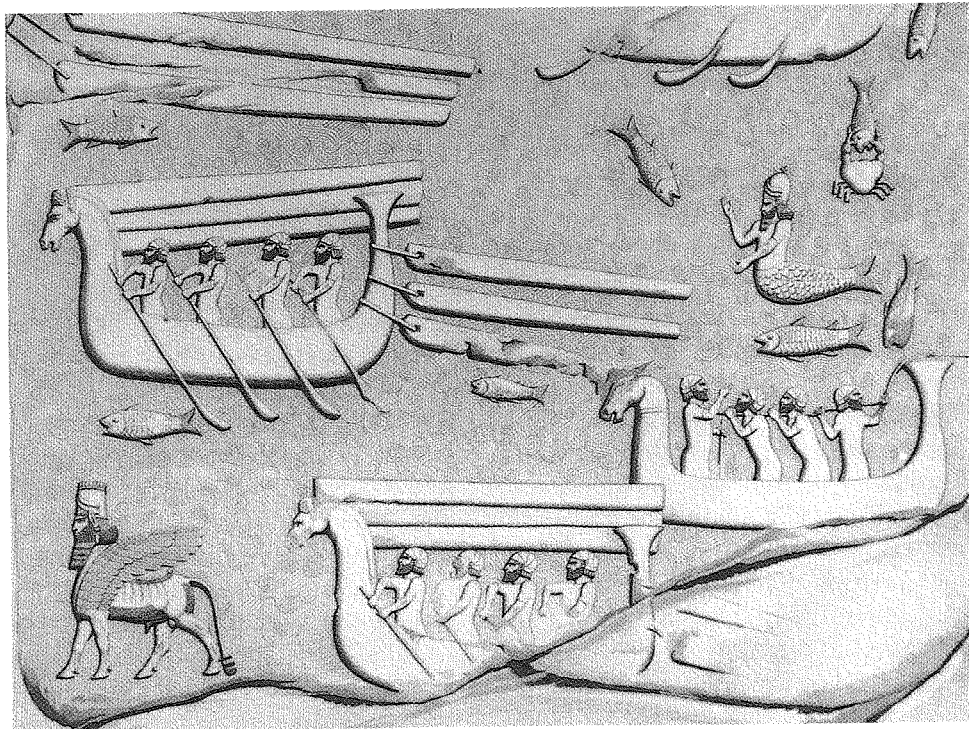


Fig. 6 Relief showing a swimming *lamassu* from the palace of Sargon II. [Botta and Flandin, *Monument de Ninive I*, pl. 35]

The same message of victory is also manifested in the other gate sculpture arrangements of the royal residences. While constructing his palace in Dur-Šarruken, Sargon II speaks of eight statues of lions “in twin pairs from 138 tons of bright bronze” and of four cedar pillars from the Amanus, each about seven meters in length which he erected on these same lions. These became the gateposts of his palace. He made horizontal crossbeams as the crowns or crenellation equipment for these posts. He ingeniously fashioned “sheep of the mountains” and “splendid protective spirits” (*lamassu*) from the solid slabs of the mountains’ stones and stationed them at the gates according to the four winds (*ana erbetti šāri ušašbita*) and let doorposts hold bolts of the thresholds.³¹⁶

The materials used for these installations, like the cedar beams from the Amanus and the “bright bronze,” originated from the west, and the “mountains’ stones” were the booty from the military raids to the east, and the sheep as well were from the eastern mountains. These materials can be seen as representing *pars pro toto* the two directions of the universe, which are subjugated to the commitment of order in the structures built by the king (Maul 2000a: 27). Thus the triumph ritual of Assurbanipal and the gate architecture of Tiglath-pileser I and Sargon II refer ultimately to the van-

quished status of the enemy (Maul 2000a: 28). The protective force of human-headed bulls and lions at the gates is well attested in an inscription of Esarhaddon:

I stationed (the images of) *šēdu* and *lamassu* from (different) stones which through their appearance turn back the breast of the evil one, and guard the ways and safe-guard the paths of the king, their producer, to the right and left to hold the doorbolts (Borger 1956: 62f, ll. 41-47).

What was the source of the protective and evil-averting powers of these genies at the gates of the palaces? The question can be answered with the words of Assurnasirpal II, who claims that they originated in distant areas and were defeated: “All the animals of the mountains and the sea I made from the white harsh (?) and from alabaster and put them on the gate (of the palace)” (Grayson 1991: 302, ll. 9-10).

According to Sargon II, the gate sculptures are images of creatures of the mountains and the sea (Fuchs 1994: 58, 22). These statements are comparable to Tiglath-pileser’s announcement cited above, where he speaks of *nāhiru* and *burhiš*. Despite the good archaeological preservation of Assurnasirpal’s palace in Calah, we encounter no sea-animals in the gate architecture, but exclusively winged human-headed bulls and lions. Can these beings then be counted as the “sea-animals”? This assertion finds a surprising confirmation in a palace relief of Sargon II. It shows, besides a swimming merman and a winged bull, the winged human-headed bull (*lamassu*), who is otherwise familiar from the gate installations of the Assyrian palaces (Fig. 6). He is depicted swimming in the water like a fish, guiding the royal ship loaded with timber for the palace of the king (Maul 2000a: 29f).

The gate sculptures of Assurnasirpal’s palace offer some evidence that the winged bulls were thought to inhabit the sea. The main entrance to the throne room was guarded by three pairs of winged genies. The entrance was flanked on the right and left by winged human-headed bulls depicted on the verge of stepping outside. The motion of the winged human-headed lions, who were depicted on the outer front of the gate, is seemingly directed toward the entrance. The third pair of winged bulls is also directed, perhaps aggressively, towards the outside world, giving the impression of guarding and protecting the palace-gate. This pair of winged bulls is different from the first, as it has fish scales on the lower abdomen, continuing to the breast. The head and ears also give an impression of a fish. These six composite beings summarize “all the animals of the mountains and the sea” which Assurnasirpal put at the gate of his palace according to his own words (Maul 2000a: 32f). The winged bull-fish at the gate of Assurnasirpal can be thus connected with *kusarikku* in SAA Anzu I 12, who was killed by Ninurta “in the midst of the sea.” The apotropaic figures at the entrance of the palace represent then the hostile and evil beings who are exposed in a state of defeat, in their bound service as the guardians of the gate (*ibid.* 34). These figures symbolically comprise *all* the enemies vanquished by Ninurta and present the king, the builder of these structures, as establisher of the new creation and the vanquisher of enemies in all directions of the world (*ibid.*).

³¹⁶ Fuchs 1994: 69f and 305f, cited by Maul 2000a: 27.



Fig. 7 The god Marduk on his pedestal. [after MDOG 5 1900, 14, Abb. 3]

In Mesopotamian iconographic representations of the gods, the vanquished monsters occur as pedestals (Fig. 7). The god is depicted standing on his symbolic animal or a composite monster, sometimes with a lead rope in his hand as a token of his mastership (cf. En. el. I 72, IV 117). This means that the powers of the monster are in the service of the god and the emblematic animal symbolizes the strength of its master (Maul 2000a: 37f). The *mušhuššu*-dragon is the symbolic animal of Marduk. The monsters created by Tiamat are endowed with powers, which will serve only Marduk after his triumph. Tiamat declares the following concerning these dragons (En. el. I 139-40):

Whoever sees them shall collapse from weakness!
Wherever their bodies make onslaught, they shall not turn back!
(Foster 1996: 358.)

The powers of these dragons are similar to those of *lamassu* figures at the gate of the palace, “which through their appearance turn back the breast of the evil ones,” as described by Esarhaddon (see above). After his triumph over Tiamat, Marduk is recorded as having trampled the eleven monsters “under him” (*šapalšu ikbus* IV 118) and later “he tied them to his feet” (*isir šēpūšu* V 74):

[And] her eleven creatures which Tiamat created as the beas[ts],
their [wea]pons he broke, he tied them to his feet,

he made then [their] images, stationed them at the gate of Apsû:
“Let them not be forgotten, be this a sign!”³¹⁷

The monster as the pedestal of the god is certainly related to Marduk’s act of tying Tiamat’s eleven creatures to his feet. Furthermore, they are set up at the gate “as the sign” which indicates that the usual guardians of Mesopotamian doors, the human-headed winged bulls, might have been considered former enemies of Marduk. The *lamassu*-bulls are to be counted with the creatures of the sea (= Tiamat) and as such they are the monsters of *Urchaos*, now defeated and put on display. The scene of a god fighting a human-headed winged bull is attested in Neo-Assyrian glyptic (see Maul 2000a: 38f). The list of Marduk’s statues also attests the monsters vanquished by him standing at the gates of Esagil (Lambert 1997a: 76, ll. 23ff). The monsters of Marduk then form an analogy with the Arab kings in the Assyrian ritual of triumph, who are similarly put on display and act as “guardians” of the gate. The analogy between the gate architecture and the ritual of triumph seems thus to be established (see Maul 2000a: 39f).

The monsters are “outsiders” to Mesopotamian society, living in the distant and marginal areas of the cosmos. Therefore, they can be captured only by making a journey. Most of the Sumerian myths which involve a god’s journey tell of important things which were gained from the journey, sometimes in the form of a catalogue. A prominent example is the myth “Inanna and Enki” where there occurs a long list of “powers” (*me*’s) gained by Inanna. Ninurta’s vanquished enemies may have had a similar interpretation. The overpowered monsters are now in the service of mankind and stand as protectors at the gates of temples and private houses. Sometimes clay models of these monsters were buried in the foundations of buildings to ward off evil from their occupants (Black 1988: 25). Inanna’s descent to the Netherworld may also have had an interpretation of saving something important for mankind. As Ninurta returns from the battle in Kur (= mountain/Netherworld), Inanna ascends from Kur, gaining back what was lost for a time. Ninurta’s shining chariot is adorned with the trophies of his victories over the *kur*, which are part of his claims to power. It is comparable to the ‘dressing motif’ which is found with Inanna/Ištar on her ascent (Penglase 1994: 58-59).

Heracles might be an heir of Ninurta in the classical world. The formula used of Heracles, ‘the valiant son of Zeus’ (Greek: *Dios alkimos huios*), has parallels with Ninurta’s epithets such as ‘the strong son of Enlil.’³¹⁸ The connection is strengthened by the fact that, in most cases, Heracles takes the object of his quest back to Eurystheus at Tiryns, just as Ninurta brings his trophies to his father in Nippur (West 1997: 469).

³¹⁷ En. el. V 73-76, the restoration at the end of l. 73. *u-ma-mi[š]* is according to Maul 2000a: 45, n. 70.

³¹⁸ *aplū dannu ša Enlil* (KAR 76:9), West 1997: 467.

There have been attempts to account for the number twelve in Heracles' labours by giving the myth an astronomical interpretation.³¹⁹ The enemies vanquished by Ninurta and Marduk are consistently numbered eleven. In *Lugale* and the Creation Epic, a catalogue of the slain monsters occurs, before the last battle of the hero is described. Asakku or Tiamat could then be interpreted as the twelfth and the last monster to be vanquished. W. G. Lambert (1986: 58) has suggested that the victor Ningirsu/Ninurta himself should be counted as the twelfth and the number of monsters plus Ninurta had astrological relevance, one for each month of the year. The astrological approach seems thus to be plausible. A similar situation also appears in the SB Epic of Gilgamesh, where the twelfth tablet seems to be "adduced" to the original eleven-tablet story. The thesis of the astrological relevance of the twelve tablets of the Gilgamesh Epic was put forward for the first time by F. Lenormant and has been recently tested by V. Emelianov on the basis of the Nippur calendar with some positive results (1999: 199-235).³²⁰

According to Seneca (*De Beneficiis* 4.8.1.; *SVF* ii. 306.3.), the god, the creator of the world, may be equated with Hercules, "because his force is invincible, and when it is wearied by the promulgation of works, it will retire into fire."³²¹ Maul concludes his discussion with the following interesting remark (2000a: 40):

Die uralte Idee des besiegten Götterfeindes, der das Schöpfungswerk in seinem Bestand bedroht und später zur Strafe mit allen seinen Kräften die von ihm bekämpfte Ordnung zu tragen und zu stabilisieren hatte, lebt in der klassischen Antike in der Gestalt des Atlas fort. Seine Bilder mussten, ebenso wie die mesopotamischen Skulpturen der Flügelstiere und Chaosdrachen, als 'Atlanten' die geordneten Gefüge der Baukunst tragen und wohl auch schützen.

Such an ambivalent role between good and evil can be found with the Hurrian Atlas, Upelluri, who carries Heaven, Earth and Sea on his shoulder. In the myth which has survived in the Hittite version, the monster Ullikummi was created by the god Kumarbi to challenge the kingship of the storm-god Tešub. In order to hide his son lest the gods harm his stony progeny, Kumarbi orders the Irširra-gods to carry his child to the earth and deposit it on the

³¹⁹ West 1997: 469. Some allegorical interpreters saw in Heracles' legendary cycle of twelve labours "the victorious march of the sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac. Time is measured by the sun and the solar year. It is thus that Herakles-Helios can be addressed by the author of the Orphic *Hymns* as 'father of Time' (12.3), and by Nonnus as 'thou who revolveth the son of Time, the twelve month year' (*D[ionysiaca]* 40.372). By the same token, it may be argued, the Orphic Chronos, Time itself, might be identified with Heracles, the indomitable animal-tamer of the zodiac." (West 1983: 192-93.)

³²⁰ F. Lenormant, *Les premières civilisations*, T. I-II (Paris 1874), Vol. II, pp. 3-146.

³²¹ "The allusion is on the one hand to the Stoic *ecpyrosis*, on the other to the pyre on the summit of Mount Oeta in which Heracles was cremated and achieved apotheosis after completing his labours. In this Stoic allegorization of the Heracles myth, then, the cycle of labours corresponds to the totality of divine activity in the course of the Great Year. Since divine activity is coextensive with the cosmos, that means that Heracles' labours represent everything that happens in cosmic time." (West 1983: 193-94.)

shoulder of Upelluri. Ullikummi grows with tremendous speed until he reaches the sky.³²² This story serves as a prologue to the battle of the gods for supremacy. Upelluri, in his ambiguous role as both the maintainer of the world and the hotbed of danger, is a good bridge for the gap between the Greek Atlas and the human-headed winged bulls in Assyrian architecture.

Ninurta's Mission and Return

In all literary compositions, Ninurta's mission and return is described in terms of a military expedition. In *Lugale*, the starting point is the usurpation of power by Asag. Ninurta's people, the people of the land are upset and terrified (ll. 42-51):

Ninurta, Lord, it (= Asag) actually decides the Land's lawsuits, just as you do. Who can compass the Asag's dread glory? Who can counteract the severity of its frown? People are terrified, fear makes the flesh creep; their eyes are fixed upon it. My master, the Mountains have taken their offerings to it. Hero! They have appealed to you, because of your father; son of Enlil, Lord, because of your superior strength they are looking to you here; since you are strong, my master, they are calling for your help, saying, Ninurta, that not a single warrior counts except for you!

Ninurta's mission in the Anzû Epic is presented in the form of repeated speeches, addressed to Ninurta. Ninurta is only the *last* among the possible champions in the Anzû Epic, as is Marduk in the Creation Epic. It takes a long time before he is selected. When Ninurta and Anzû finally come together in combat they are potentially equivalent (Vogelzang 1988: 141). Only through Ea's intervention are matters put right: Ea causes Anzû's appointment, Ninurta's selection and his ultimate victory (*ibid.*). But it is actually Mami who orders Ninurta into battle which shows how important the family and its honour becomes in this myth after the crime of Anzû:

Political authority is gone, and there is no political power of command. Hence the ease with which the several gods refuse to venture out against Anzu. But the family is intact, and it is with the authority of family that Mami orders Ninurta, and he obeys without discussion. ... Ninurta sets out against Anzu, not so much champion of the gods, as the loyal and obedient son who is to avenge his parents. He is, above all, as he would be revered, *mutēr gimil abīšu*. (Moran 1988: 24.)

It is thus the god's word, deriving from the authority of the divine family, which is here able to alter destinies. The god's word is an independent and fixed entity, expressing his/her irrevocable decision. The god's word is also a weapon, comparable to an arrow or deluge. Once released from the bow, it travels inexorably to its designated target. The divine word in all its potency is recorded on the Tablet of Destinies (Lawson 2001: 82). While Ninurta is the Victor, he is unable to vanquish Anzû without the advice of Ea, and

³²² H. G. Güterbock, "The Song of Ullikummi," *JCS* 5 (1951), 138.

Ninurta is called “his son” at the moment when the advice is given (II 101). Ea’s advice to Ninurta in the Anzû Epic (II 105-23) is divided into two sections – the description of battle and the consequences of the victory. It reflects a turn in the poem as a whole, and the second part marks a movement from chaos to order. In the first subsection (II 113-17), Anzû’s throat is to be cut and his wings are to be carried by the wind as “good news”:

“Flood and confusion” are mentioned, appropriate to the chaos Anzu has caused in the universe. The “flood and confusion” are sent into the very midst of the mountains. In the second subsection (118-23), chaos and punishment give way to order. Kingship, one of the divine *me*, and the divine decrees themselves (*paršu*) are restored to their rightful place. Sanctuaries and cult sites are brought into existence, built, located. The cult sites will appear in the four quarters of the world and will “enter” the Ekur, the temple of Enlil. The command of Ea ends, appropriately, with the stepping-up of the hero’s “mighty name” before the gods. The universe is renewed; state and temple returned; and the hero is exalted.³²³

The different version of the Anzû story, known on the basis of two Sultan-tepe tablets (STT 23 and 25), confirms the interpretation suggested above concerning the happenings after Ninurta’s return. He is reported to have fastened the parts (wings?) of Anzû to the front of the Ekur.³²⁴ After that, he is said to have entered his temple and greeted/blessed his wife.³²⁵ With his victory, Ninurta “appeased the mind of the wife of the father of the gods. When he heard (it) in the Ekur, it caused rejoicing. Enlil and Ninlil were happy!” (ll. 43’-45’).

After Ninurta returned from the battle as the avenger of his father, Enlil exalts him above himself. This is said explicitly in the prologue of *Lugale*, l. 12: “Ninurta, King, whom Enlil has exalted above himself.”³²⁶ The same terminology is common in royal inscriptions, where a god elevates the king. The exaltation of Ninurta at his return is also clearly seen in *Angim* 7, where Ninurta is given the title of Enlil, “king of all the lands” (*lugal kur-kur-ra*). In 106f, the other gods are submissive to Ninurta – “Enlil the Great Mountain made obeisance to him, and Ašimbabbar prayed to him” (Streck 2001: 514). The Ninurta narratives *Angim* and *Lugale* were undoubtedly used in the royal ceremonies celebrating the change in the status of the crown prince. In the ritual text concerning the exaltation of Nabû, this is described as follows:

[... Enlil] of the gods (= Nabû), important and great, towards Esagil, whom he loves, set [his] face. [...] in his splendid chamber on the roiling Tiamat he set permanently [his] feet. [(divine speech begins) ...] “... the strong one, Enlil of the gods, elevated (*šaqû*) one, who engenders ingenuities!” [To] the great mis-

³²³ S. N. Kramer and J. Maier, *Myths of Enki, The Crafty God* (New York 1989), 142

³²⁴ 55’-56’: *ša napišti anzû itbalu / rēš Ekur ušašbitšunu*; Vogelzang 1988: 123. See *Ninurta and the Monsters* above (pp. 24-33).

³²⁵ 62’-63’: [... .. ^dNin]-urta i-ta-rab [É-s]u / [... .. i]k-ta-rab hir-[ta-šu]; M. Vogelzang 1988: 123. See *Ninurta’s “Journeys”* above (pp. 24-33).

³²⁶ ^dnin-urta lugal ^den-líl-le (var. lugal dumu ^den-líl-lá) ní-te-na diri-ga; Akk: ^dII šar-ri ma-ri šá ^dEn-líl ina ra-ma-ni-šu ú-šá-ti-ru-šu.

tress, the Queen, his Mother went [his] prayers, [...] he mixed up their minds, he ignited their moods, [...] they both blessed the son, beloved of their hearts, [...] and adorned him greatly. They heaped upon [him] terrifying appearance, [...] they magnified his kingship, they exalted his lordship! [...] he turned himself towards the seat of shepherdship, to the place of ...³²⁷

The cultic use of Ninurta’s mythological battle and return in the royal rituals explains the extreme longevity of these Sumerian literary compositions:

Angim and Lugale are the only main dialect Sumerian texts known from the Old Babylonian period, other than certain incantations and proverbs, to enter the first millennium canon. The reasons for their selection are a mystery. On the one hand, they may have been chosen precisely because they played an important role in the cult; dramatic interpretations of first millennium rituals involving returning battle chariots refer to the slain or captured Anzu bird, and to Ninurta or Nabû as the returning hero. (Cooper 1978: 9.)

Ninurta and the Deluge

Ninurta/Ningirsu is called the “flood of Enlil” (Gudea Cyl. A x 2, xxiii 14; *Angim* 160, 207). Deluge is a weapon of Ninurta with which he vanquishes his enemies such as Asakku: “the angry and merciless whose attack is a deluge, the one who overwhelms enemy lands and fells the wicked,” as it is expressed in the inscription of Assurnasirpal II (Grayson 1991: 194, l. 7). Ninurta is the lord of deluge in Sumerian mythology and he is called “storm” (*ud*) in the hymns, as in Ninurta G, 27f: “A king, a storm beating down from above, You are a lord, unexcelled!”³²⁸ Storm is Ninurta’s “word” in *Angim* 17 (Cooper 1978: 60). Ninurta is himself a flood (a-ma-ru) and the flood is his weapon, or the epithet of his weapons.³²⁹ In the Sumerian *balag* compositions, Ninurta is called “sweeping flood” ([a]-ma-ru ùr-ra), and Nabû’s “word” is comparably “the rising flood which destroys the mountain.”³³⁰ Ninurta as a flood is most prominently celebrated in some of the Eršemma cultic songs.³³¹

Deluge is prominently Ninurta’s weapon in *Angim* also, see ll. 73-75: “As the sovereign swept on like the deluge, as Ninurta, storm of the rebellious land, swept on like the deluge, he rumbled like a storm on the horizon.” In *Angim* 119-20, Ninurta declares: “My battle, like an onrushing flood, over-

³²⁷ Pongratz-Leisten 1994: Text Nr. 13, rev. 12’-20’; cf. l. 18’ *šar-ru-ta-šú ú-šar-bu-ú ú-šá-ti-ru be-lu-us-[su]*.

³²⁸ Cohen 1975-76: 25, l. 27f: *lugal u₄ an-ta ra-ra en gaba-ri nu-tuk-me-en; Ninurta is muzā’ir abūbu* “who spins the flood” (Lambert 1967: 122, l. 112).

³²⁹ E.g. *Lugale 3 et passim*, Gudea Cyl. A viii 23ff (= ll. 217ff); see PSD A/I 110b-111a.

³³⁰ See respectively *The Elevated Ox of the Land/Ekur*, l. 66 (Cohen 1988: 444) and *He who Makes Decisions in the Council*, ll. c+62ff (*ibid.* 484); cf. PSD A/I 111-12.

³³¹ See Maul 1991, Cohen 1981: 143f (No. 45) and 121ff (No. 163); cf. Sjöberg 1976: 412f.

flowed in the mountains. With a lion's body and lion's muscles, it rose up in the rebellious land." The flood of Ninurta is described here in identical terms as Inanna is in a hymn: "With a lion's body and a lion's muscles you (= Inanna) rise up."³³² Ištar/Inanna is the female embodiment of the flood and her ascension from the Netherworld was laden with associations of fertility, as was Ninurta's flood. The only difference is that Inanna, in the hymn, probably returns from the Netherworld, but Ninurta from his victorious battle in the "mountains." Ištar may thus sometimes be similar to the "flood of Ninurta."

The deluge which Marduk uses against Tiamat in *Enūma eliš* (IV 49, 75) also derives from Ninurta mythology.³³³ Like Tiamat, the bow of Marduk was of the female sex, as is seen in the blessing of Anu in *Enūma eliš* (VI 82-92). S. Parpola has pointed out that the female sex of Marduk's bow corresponded to the destructive aspect of Ištar (see CAD s.v. *qaštu*). The weapon is elsewhere in *Enūma eliš* called "Deluge" (IV 49, 75). This destructive aspect of Marduk's bow, Ištar, reflected her well-known role in bringing about the Deluge in the Gilgamesh Epic, Tablet XI (Parpola 2000: 200). Thus, while Marduk's battle was modelled on that of Ninurta (Lambert 1986), the items of his weaponry in *Enūma eliš*, such as the deluge and possibly also the arrow (see *Ninurta as Star and Arrow* [pp. 133-38]), were manifestations of different deities, Ištar and Ninurta:

The "deluge bow," which already occurs in Sumerian mythology as the weapon of Ninurta, is of course nothing but the *rainbow*, which is given as a name of Ištar in god lists; in addition, both "Bow Star" and "Rainbow Star" occur as names of Venus and are equated with Virgo in astrological texts. Broken into its components, the logogram for 'rainbow,' ^dTIR.AN.NA, signifies "bow of Anu" or "bow of heaven." With his "deluge bow," God destroys the wicked but saves the just. (Parpola 2000: 200.)

In the Anzū Epic I 7, Ninurta is called the "wave of battles" (*agê tuqmāti*), an epithet which recalls more conventional *abūb tuqummātim*, *abūb tamhāri* or *abūb tāhāzi*, "the flood of battles."³³⁴ Ninurta the waterer and Ninurta the flood/wave are reflected later in the epic (SAA Anzu II 20, 116, 138), where the god is commanded to: "Flood and bring mayhem to the mountain meadows." In III 18-20 the inundation of the land is directly attributed to Ninurta's killing Anzū:

Ninurta killed the mountains, he flooded and brought mayhem to the mountain meadows, he flooded the vast earth in his fury, he flooded the midst of the mountains, he killed wicked Anzū! (cf. Foster 1996: 477.)

³³² CBS 8530 col. ii, after blank space: su pirig sa pirig-gá ní im-ma-zi-zi-dè-en, see Sjöberg 1977: 39; the kings Išme-Dagān and Šulgi are described with a similar phrase, see Cooper 1978: 119f.

³³³ Cf. En. el. VI 125-26: *ša ina tukultišu abūbi ikmū šapūti / ilāni abēšu iṭīru ina šapšāqi*: "Who by his Deluge weapon subdued the stealthy ones, who saved the gods his forefathers from danger" (Foster 1996: 388).

³³⁴ See W. Hallo and W. Moran, *JCS* 31 (1979), 72; CAD B 78b-80b.

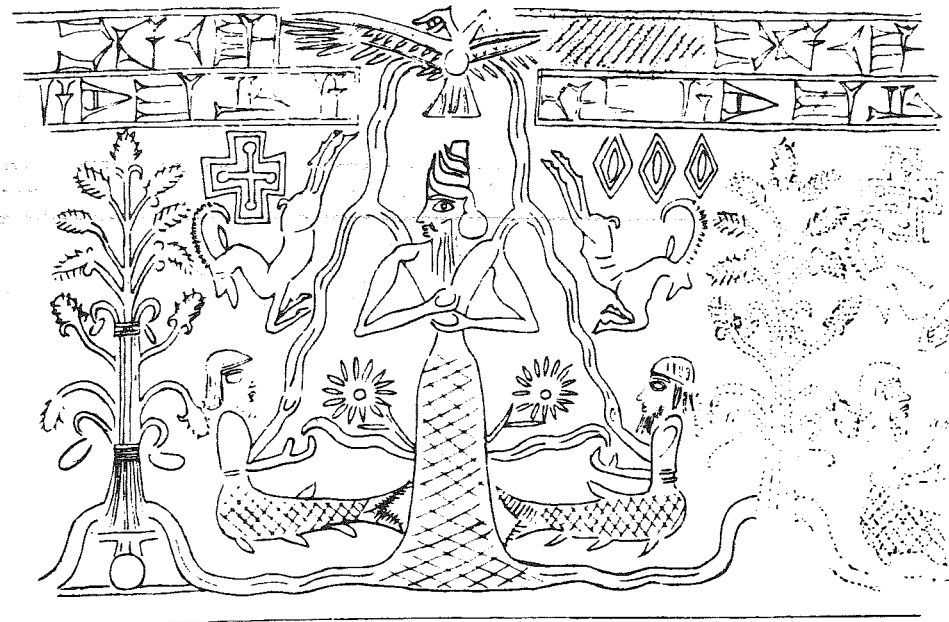


Fig. 8 Anzū as the source of waters on a Kassite cylinder seal. [after E. Porada, *AFO* 28 (1981-82), 53]

The birth of Anzū in his mountain is accompanied by dust storms, winds and masses of water (I 36-39). This evidence is corroborated by iconography: Anzū is depicted as the source of rivers on late second millennium Kassite seals (Fig. 8).³³⁵ In SAA Anzu I 56, Ea advises Enlil to take Anzū into his service with the words: "Let him always block the way to the cella [seat]." Anzū as the doorkeeper of Enlil's throne room is paralleled in the Sumerian *Lugalbanda Epic* 101-102, where Anzud says to Lugalbanda on the Zabū mountain: "My father Enlil brought me here. He let me bar the entrance to the mountains as if with a great door (^{gi}šig gal-gin₇)." Anzū, as the source of the waters, was probably also able to block the evil waters like a great door. By stealing the attributes of Enlil, Anzū becomes a traitor, the source of evil and chaos which is to be blocked in turn. Later in the epic, the Mistress of the gods similarly advises Ninurta to block Anzū: "may whirlwinds totally block him" (II 9: *liptarrikušū gummurta ašamšatu*). Ninurta, as the god of agriculture and the waterer, blocks the dangerous waters (= flood) personified by Anzū.

A similar idiom is found in *Enūma eliš* I 69-70 in the binding of Mummu: Ea bound Apsū and killed him, bound Mummu and "blocked from above" (*elišu iptarka*). In the "Converse tablet," Ninurta's *alter ego* Nabū flooded the crops for or with Ea (*itti Ea ebūru uṭabbū*, obv. 12) and one line before

³³⁵ E. Porada, *AFO* 28 (1981-82), 52f, no. 27; 53, Fig. o; see Wiggermann 1992: 157 and cf. also En. el. V 55.

Nabû “held back the flood upstream” (*eliš mīla iprusu*).³³⁶ The Sumerian version of this verse reads an-ra a mu-ni-ib-gi₄-a-ni which recalls the epithet of Ningirsu in the Cylinders of Gudea (A viii 15, B ii 17) en a-huš gi₄-a, “the lord who has turned back the fierce waters.”³³⁷ That the flood might be dangerous for the crops, is clearly said in *Lugale* 124, where Šarur addresses Ninurta: “vigorous one, tempest which rages against the rebel lands, wave which submerges the harvest” (buru₁₄ su-su, corresponding to Akkadian *ebūru uṭabbu*). Accordingly, it lay within Ninurta’s capacity to block the dangerous waters of the yearly flood and he was certainly beseeched to do so (cf. Mayer 1992: 27 xxii). In *Lugale* 347-52, Ninurta made a heap of stones in the mountains and “with a great wall (bād-mah) he barred the front of the Land” (l. 351). Finally he “blocked (?) the powerful waters by means of stones” (l. 354). Ninurta himself was occasionally called “the great wall (of protection),” see “*Ninurta is My Shelter*” below (pp. 145-48).

We saw that, according to a tradition reflected in OECT 11 69+70, Ninurta arrived at Nippur on the 15th of Iyyar. It is interesting to note in this context that in Berossus’ account of the great Deluge the exact date for the beginning of the flood is given, which coincides with the 15th of Iyyar. According to this account, Kronos revealed to Sisithros (Ziusudra) that there would be a deluge on the “15th day of Daisios,” which is a Macedonian month name corresponding to the Babylonian Iyyar (Lambert and Millard 1969: 136-37):

It is not clear if this datum is part of a precise chronology of the flood, like that in Genesis [cf. Gen 7:11], or if it was a solitary item with some other, perhaps cultic, significance. (*ibid.* 137.)

In the light of the evidence presented above, the second option seems more plausible. Thus the date of the flood as given by Berossus coincides exactly with Ninurta’s victorious return from the mountains in the cultic calendar of Nippur (OECT 11 69+70). Ninurta’s coming simultaneously with the vernal flood and/or great deluge brings to mind his epithet *rākib abūbi* “the rider on the flood.”³³⁸

³³⁶ Lambert 1971: 344. This is a passage from the *balag He Who Makes Decisions in the Council* d+146-47 with a parallel passage in *The Honoured One of Heaven*, ll. c+146-47; see Cohen 1988: 488 and 214.

³³⁷ The interpretation of this passage by Th. Jacobsen as “lord, semen reddened in the deflowering” (1987: 427) is fanciful, but if the text is deliberately equivocal, it may refer to the “sacred marriage” ritual, connected to the vernal flood in the month of Iyyar. Accordingly, Enlil’s semen Ningirsu was mythopoetically seen as “emitted from the highland and flowing into a virginal Ninursaga, the near ranges, deflowering her, thus becoming reddened from the blood, i.e., the reddish and brownish clay carried in the floodwaters,” see Jacobsen 1987: 398, n. 42.

³³⁸ The epithet is attested in the royal inscription of Šamši-Adad V, see Grayson 1996: 182 i 10; cf. also Ninurta’s epithet *ra-kib me-h[e-e]* “the rider of the tornado” (Lambert 1964: 12 27). Ninurta’s manifestation as the rider of the flood in both cases is called Uta-ulu (identified with Ninurta in An=Anum I 205, see also Lambert 1967: 124, l. 138). In the syncretic hymn (see Text 1, l. 28 [p. 205f below]), Uta-ulu is identified with “the right side” of Ninurta.

W. G. Lambert has twice discussed (1965: 296 and 1988: 138f) Ninurta’s role of pushing back the cosmic waters in wider religio-historical perspective. In the Elohist stratum of the creation account of the Hebrew Bible (Gen 1), God is reported to have gathered the waters into one place on the third day, thus enabling agriculture. This is similar to Ninurta’s action in *Lugale* and comparable to his care for the fields during the vernal flood.³³⁹ In *Lugale* it is not said that no water was previously in the rivers, just that the water did not reach into the fields:

Cf. *Lugale* 334-41: At that time, the good water coming forth from the earth did not pour down over the fields. The cold water (?) was piled up everywhere, and the day when it began to it brought destruction in the Mountains, since the gods of the Land were subject to servitude, and had to carry the hoe and the basket – this was their corvée work – people called on a household for the recruitment of workers. The Tigris did not bring up its flood in its fullness. Its mouth did not finish in the sea, it did not carry fresh water.

In *Lugale*, Ninurta is depicted as the saviour of the land from the threatening deluge and as the inventor of agriculture. A huge mass of water threatened the land, and Ninurta heaped up a great wall of stones in order to block the waters off from the fields, allowing only the right amount through and thus enabling arable farming. This is described as follows (ll. 347-59):

The Lord applied his great wisdom to it. Ninurta, the son of Enlil, set about it in a grand way. He made a pile of stones in the Mountains. Like a floating cloud he stretched out his arms over it. With a great wall he barred the front of the Land. He installed a sluice (?) on the horizon. The Hero acted cleverly, he dammed in the cities together. He blocked (?) the powerful waters by means of stones. Now the waters will never again go down from the Mountains into the earth. That which was dispersed he gathered together. Where in the Mountains scattered lakes had formed, he joined them all together and led them down to the Tigris. He poured carp-floods of water over the fields.

In the Hebrew Bible, the same service is attributed to Yahweh: the conflict and God’s pushing back the cosmic waters from the land are interconnected in Ps 104:6-9, Prov 8:29 and Job 38:8-11. The last passage is the most explicit and occurs in a cosmological setting (Lambert 1965: 196):

8)Or who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth from the womb; 9)when I made clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, 10)and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, 11)and said, ‘Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stayed?’ (RSV)

By his act of separating the waters from the land, Ninurta becomes the patron of agriculture (see *Ninurta as Farmer* [pp. 152-56]). While there existed no threat of flooding rivers for the agriculture of the Hebrews, one still finds in their mythology the motif of the deluge and God’s role in pushing back the dangerous waters. These myths in both lands were of common intellectual heritage. One can assume that these myths concerning the

³³⁹ See *Ninurta’s akītu in Nippur* above (pp. 61-71).

blocking of waters were also of cosmological import. The *Lugale* story of the flood:

reads very much like an account of the annual flood projected on to the mythological plane. ... It is true that the water is conceived somewhat differently in the Old Testament: there it is sea, a term not used of Ninurta's exploit. But if the account were of Mesopotamian origin and had been borrowed in Syria and Palestine, where there is no annual flood, it would be very natural for such a change to take place. Since it is a traditional Sumerian myth, it is quite possible that this is the correct explanation of the facts. (Lambert 1965: 296.)

The mythology of the flood was, accordingly, much more elaborate in Mesopotamia than in Palestine, and that involved the king – Ninurta as the lord of the flood could delegate this very power to the living king. Ninurta's might entailed the flood and this flood was therefore used as a metaphor for the military prowess of the king. The survivors in the Mesopotamian flood stories were kings like Ziusudra, Utnapishtim or Atrahasis. The persons who "mastered" the flood by surviving it were demigods and thus close to Ninurta in rank. They were carriers of the antediluvian wisdom on immortality. Other flood survivors in the Near Eastern tradition were humans of extraordinary status like the biblical Noah or Enoch, who both had an intimate relationship with God and were portrayed as sages and visionaries.³⁴⁰ The Hebrew patriarch Enoch is sometimes also presented as the flood survivor because he was removed from the earth and was not found there when the flood swept over. In the Book of Jubilees (4:17-26), the sage Enoch is removed and conducted into the garden of Eden where he wrote down the condemnation and judgement of the world, and all the wickedness of men.³⁴¹ The Enoch figure is modelled on the Mesopotamian antediluvian king of Sippar, Enmeduranki – they both are listed in the seventh position in the list of antediluvian kings/patriarchs. Enoch is said to have lived 365 years which is related to the number of days in the solar year. Sippar, correspondingly, was the site of the most important temple of the sun god (Kvanvig 1988: 227). Enmeduranki's counterpart in the seventh position in the *apkallu* lists is Utuabzu/Adapa, who was also in heaven according to *Bit Mēseri* and the Adapa myth (Kvanvig 1988: 232).³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Kvanvig 1988: 93. The biblical patriarchs correspond to Mesopotamian (antediluvian) kings in regard to their position in the corresponding historiographies. The biblical Noah as the hero of the flood story corresponds to Ziusudra. Both have the tenth position in the lists of antediluvian patriarchs and kings correspondingly (Kvanvig 1988: 232).

³⁴¹ Kvanvig 1988: 128. The description of Enoch in *1 Enoch* 106-107 is similar to that of the Mesopotamian flood hero, see VanderKam 1984: 175ff.

³⁴² Adapa is "a short form of the name of the first primary sage with the full name Uanadapa. U-An is another short form of the name. The figure equals Oannes in Berossos' account. But, as we have seen, Utuabzu/Utuaabba/Adapa also occurs at the seventh place in the list of Bit Mēseri. The seventh figure of the Apkallu List is in W 20 030,7 and Berossos parallel to the seventh king Enmeduranki. As we have seen, Enmeduranki also went to heaven and distinguished himself with divine wisdom. The similarities between Adapa and Enmeduranki may have caused the appearance of Adapa at the seventh place in the list of Bit Mēseri." (Kvanvig 1988: 204.) Cf. *ibid.* 227: "there was a broad tradition

In Genesis, the flood story is connected to the story of the Watchers, from whom evil originated in the world, according to some later interpretations. The names of Utnapishtim, Humbaba and Gilgamesh are found in the Jewish "Book of Giants" among the fallen angels. As the anti-heroes, they taught wicked things to mankind. We can see that the Mesopotamian traditions of the antediluvian sages are partly inverted by the Jewish writers. Some quotations of Pseudo-Eupolemus in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* show that the tradition of fallen angels or giants (= Watchers) who inhabited the land before the flood, might have existed in Mesopotamia as well (Reeves 1993: 112):

Eupolemus in his work *On the Jews* says that the Assyrian city of Babylon was first founded by those who were rescued from the Flood. They were giants (and) built the recorded Tower. When it collapsed due to the action of God, the giants dispersed over the whole Earth. (9.17.2-3)

In some anonymous writings we discover that Abraham traced his lineage to the giants. When these (giants) were living in Babylonia, they were slain by God on account of their impiety. One of them, Belos, escaped death (and) settled in Babylon, and after building a tower lived in it. It was called Belos after its builder Belos. (9.18.2)

These descriptions are similar to the accounts in both Gen 6:1-4 and Gen 10:8ff. The first passage was interpreted as being related to the birth of the Watchers, and the second describes the post-diluvian era with the descendants of Noah. Most prominently, the career of the giant Nimrod is described. He can be interpreted as the builder of the tower, and his model was most probably Ninurta.³⁴³ It is significant that in the Pseudo-Eupolemus fragment he is called Belos, which is the epithet of the most important gods, among them Ninurta.

V. Emelianov has claimed that Ziusudra/Utnapishtim, who obtained the divine secret of immortality by surviving the flood, personifies eternal kingship (1994). In the Akkadian Gilgamesh Epic, he is presented as the source of wisdom and immortality, which makes the assumption quite plausible. Emelianov also explains the development of the concept of the flood from a diachronic perspective. In the early texts of Fara, he shows, the deluge is in the possession of Enlil. On the 'Stele of Vultures,' the battle of the king is directed by Ningirsu (Fig. 9). By that time Enlil has delegated the Deluge to his son Ningirsu, who is closer in rank to the king and can, in turn, hand it over to the king as a weapon, Eanatum 1 vi-ix (Emelianov 1994: 241). The Ur III shift in the conception of the king's status is also seen in respect to the Deluge – all the symbolism which bound the flood to the wish of the gods is

in Babylonian scribal milieu that the figure associated with the number seven went to heaven and received insights into divine wisdom. Semantically there is also a correspondence between P's interpretation of Enoch's name as 'dedicated, trained,' and the Akkadian designation *apkallu* which means 'sage, expert.'"

³⁴³ See Kvanvig 1988: 113, 254ff; and *Royal Hunt* above (pp. 102-108).



Fig. 9 Ningirsu's net in the stele of vultures. [Musée du Louvre]

transferred to the king. The king and his acts in Sumerian royal hymns are compared to the flood, as Ninurta is compared to the flood:

Cf. Šulgi D 344-53: After the king had destroyed the cities and ruined the city walls, had terrified the foreign lands like a flood, had scattered the seed of Gutium like seed-grain, had his heart, then he loaded the pure lapis lazuli of the foreign lands into leather pouches and leather bags. He heaped up all their treasures and amassed (?) all the wealth of the foreign lands. He invoked the name of Enlil and invoked the name of Ninlil on their fattened cattle and fattened sheep.

Deluge was also a metaphor for the enemy's undoing. When Enlil appoints Išme-Dagan to the throne of Isin, he orders the king to restore Enlil's temple and cult in Nippur "after the flood had swept over." The flood is here clearly a metaphor for the Gutian invasion and their expulsion.³⁴⁴ In the *Lamentation over Sumer and Ur* (ll. 75f), Enlil brought the Gutians from the mountains, and "their coming was (like) a flood (sent) by Enlil; it had no opposition." (PSD A/I 110.) Accordingly, the Isin kings saw themselves as the first rulers after the great deluge.

The historiographic paradigm concerning the flood can be summarized as follows: a) The warrior god Ninurta is a personification of the flood and seems to be something like a protective genius of the Sumerian king, who is in every respect subservient to Enlil. b) The deluge helps the righteous king uphold the divine order (Enlil makes Ninurta his firstborn son after he has offered his trophies to him in the Ekur), which means a regular subjugation of the mountain people. c) The deluge takes revenge on an unjust king for his violation of the divine order in the holy city of Nippur (cf. Naram-Sin); in this case the Gutians are seen as the flood, according to the wish of Enlil. d) The basic measure of righteousness is the support which the king gives to cultic matters (of Nippur), but also his willingness to observe forthwith all the god's ordinances. In any case, the destiny decreed by Enlil to the king and transmitted by an oracle or by a dream is decisive.

Cf. *The Cursing of Agade* 83ff: Naram-Suen saw in a nocturnal vision that Enlil would not let the kingdom of Agade occupy a pleasant, lasting residence, that he would make its future altogether unfavourable, that he would make its temples shake and would scatter its treasures.

The Sumerian concept of the deluge is thus intimately tied to ritual enthronement, Ninurta's mythological kingship and the "determination of royal fate" in Nippur (Emelianov 1994: 253-54). The Sumerian flood story, which reformulated the concept of kingship and deluge by the time of the first Isin dynasty, connected the figure of Ziusudra with the notion of eternal kingship. As the person who mastered the flood, he became, like Ninurta, the eternal source of kingship and wisdom. Emelianov claims that the ritual of enthronement

³⁴⁴ See Römer 1965: 70, n. 348 and Th. Jacobsen, *JBL* 100 (1981), 526f; PSD A/I 109-110. As Emelianov has established (1994: 253), only an external aggressor was compared to a deluge, this term was not used for denoting, e.g., the armies of the neighbouring city.

ment was associated with the rescue from the flood, and the king was perceived, after the enthronement, as an incarnation of Ziusudra who was a symbol of eternal kingship (*ibid.* 246-47).

At the world-view level of a simple peasant, the yearly flood was considered a replication of the cosmic deluge and the king/Ninurta was held to be responsible for the floodwater. It was the task of the king, or Ninurta as the “god of fertility” (see Black, al-Rawi 2000), to gather the waters in one spot during the flood and to raise vegetation after the flood. Vegetation was a direct outcome of Ninurta’s battle with monsters like Asakku who hampered it. The agricultural symbolism of seeding and ploughing could easily be transferred to divine love and human sexuality and be reflected in the ritual of sacred marriage.³⁴⁵ This ritual marriage is attested in first millennium sources, e.g., an Assyrian royal ritual of sexual intercourse between Nabû and Tašmetu which took place in the harvest month of Iyyar. Many details in these “sacred marriage” rituals have connections to Ninurta mythology in *Lugale* and *Angim*.³⁴⁶ At the mythological level, this ritual probably reflected the recreation of mankind after the deluge.

As Emelianov (1997: 267-68) has pointed out, it seems to be attested in the Sumerian myth of the deluge that Enlil gave Ziusudra a wife after the flood.³⁴⁷ The famous flood survivor Utnapištim also had a wife who interceded on behalf of Gilgamesh on the return journey of the hero. Similarly, Noah had a wife, and the Greek flood survivor Deukalion had a wife, Pyrrha. Utnapištim is made to live at the mouth of the rivers (*pī narāti*), and Ziusudra on the island of Dilmun, the Sumerian Paradise. This has a parallel in the destiny of the patriarch Enoch in the Book of Jubilees (4:23ff): he is conducted into the Garden of Eden, where the waters of the flood did not come on account of him: “for there he was set as a sign and that he should testify against all the children of men, that he should recount all the deeds of the generations until the day of condemnation.” (See VanderKam 1984: 10.)

Dilmun was sometimes regarded as a place where humankind was created before the flood and recreated after the flood (Emelianov 1997: 271-72). According to the Sumerian myth *Enki and Ninsikila*, some gods were born in

³⁴⁵ Cf. the Akkadian proverb *eqliya aššata ša lā muta mašil aššum bali erēšim* “My field, for lack of ploughing, is like a woman without a husband,” see D. Marcus “A Famous Analogy of Rib-Haddi,” *JANES* 5 (1973), Fs. Gaster, 281-86. Sumerian *a-šà uru₄* “to plough a field” is an euphemism for sexual intercourse (= *gal₄-la uru₄*). In a Sumerian love dialogue (CBS 8540) a “sister” says to her “brother”: “Do not plough a field, let me be your field! Farmer search not for a wet place (*ki-duru₅*), let me be your wet place!” (see Sjöberg 1977: 24.) The description of the month Iyyar in Astrolabe B involves the phrase *ki-duru₅ gal-tak₄-tak₄* “to open the flooded/wet ground” (= Akkadian *ruḫubtu uptatā*), which can be interpreted in terms of human sexuality; cf. Emelianov 1998.

³⁴⁶ For the intercession of the goddess on behalf of the king in the bedchamber and the presence of the divine chariot, see *Ninurta’s “Journeys”* (pp. 24-33).

³⁴⁷ See M. Civil’s translation (in Lambert and Millard 1969: 172), l. 255a where Enlil “[provided] Ziusudra with a wife,” ^dEn-lil Zi-u₄-sud-rá mí-e u[n x x x]; cf. S. N. Kramer, *ANET*, pp. 42-44, n. 57.

Dilmun in primeval times (see Jacobsen 1987: 181f). The flood hero, who was given the wisdom of the gods, is, together with his wife, the source of the new creation of humankind, until the destruction of their offspring will be repeated.

According to Emelianov, the eleventh month of the Nippur calendar celebrated the new birth of mankind after the deluge (1997: 275-76). This was ritualized by the lamentation liturgy and a new marriage of Nabû and Tašmetu. The lamentation liturgy is current in the eleventh month, both in Nippur and in Assyria. In Nippur during the eleventh month in the Ur III period, Enlil and Ninlil were celebrated with lamentations sung by the *gala*-priest and offerings (Sallaberger 1993: 149f). The destruction of Nippur was also lamented also in the temple of Dagan in Assur on the 25th day of Shebat with the lamentation *a-ab-ba hu-luh-ha* (SAA 18 12 obv. 22’).

There is also evidence in the Sumerian material that the New Year festival was sometimes connected to the *hieros gamos* ritual. Thus Ningirsu of Lagaš gives wedding gifts to his wife Baba (*níg-munus^{ús}-sa*) at the New Year Festival.³⁴⁸ Thus the birth of the crown prince/mankind, the New Year festival and the yearly flood were probably considered to constitute a single cosmic event, and the festival celebrating the chain of these events in the mythological world corresponded to the course of recurring phenomena in nature.

Ninurta as Star and Arrow

In an inscription of Šamši-Adad V, Ninurta is given the epithet “victorious son whose position is resplendent in the bright starry heaven.”³⁴⁹ Ninurta was associated with several stars, among them the star called “arrow” – Sumerian *kak.si.sá*, Akkadian *šukūdu* or *šiltāhu* (see CAD *s.v.*).³⁵⁰ This star is the principal star of *Canis Maior*, Sirius.³⁵¹ Ninurta is the Arrow (= Sirius), the great warrior, who slit the throats of the enemies of Assurbanipal with his pointed arrowhead.³⁵² Ninurta protects Esarhaddon’s succession treaty with his arrow: “May Ninurta, the foremost among the gods, fell the violator with his fierce arrow; may he fill the plain with your blood and feed your flesh to

³⁴⁸ Selz 1992: 194; *Inventaire des tablettes de Tello* 1 (1910) no. 1225; see also E. Dhorme *Les religions de Babylonie et d’Assyrie*, (1945), 105f.

³⁴⁹ Grayson 1996: 182, ll. 16-18: *IBILA šit-lu-tu šá ina bu-ru-mi KÙ.MEŠ šur-ru-hu giš-gal-lum*. For other epithets of Ninurta as star and lightgiver, see Tallquist 1938: 424.

³⁵⁰ Cf. *MUL.KAK.SI.SÁ šil-ta-hu* = ^d*Ninurta* (CT 25 13 iv 9) and *MUL.KAK.SI.SÁ šil-ta-hu qarrādu rabū* ^d*Ninurta* (Mul-Apin I ii 6); see K. Watanabe 1991: 365.

³⁵¹ This arrow (Sirius) is frequently depicted on Kassite kudurrus, see J. Black and A. Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (1992), *s.v.* Arrow.

³⁵² *Ninurta šiltāhu qarrādu rabū... ina uššišu zaqti uparri? napišti nakrūtija* (Streck 1916: 78 ix 84, see CAD *s.v.* *šiltāhu*, 450.) Ninurta is already the “Arrow that breaks up the rebellious land” in the Sumerian hymn *Ninurta E*, see S. N. Kramer, *ANET*, p. 577.

the eagle and the vulture.”³⁵³ In his form of the arrow, Ninurta was the vanquisher of enemies and averted evil:

The hymnic invocation “Arrow-star by name, making battle resound?, ... paths, making everything perfect” is part of a collection of incantations, some in Sumerian and others in Akkadian, known under the title HUL.BA.ZI.ZI ‘Begone, Evil!’, literally “Evil (HUL) Be gone (BA.ZI.ZI). (Reiner 1995: 19-20.)

As becomes clear from the entry *šukūdu* in CAD (Š/3, 229), this Akkadian word may stand for both Sirius and Mercury. In the astronomical compendium *Mul-Apin* (II i 5), Ninurta is a name of the planet Mercury which is otherwise mostly identified with Nabû as the star of the crown prince.³⁵⁴ One noteworthy parallel clearly exemplifies the replacement of Mercury with Ninurta. The Assyrian letter SAA 8 154 from Nabû-mušeši to the king states:

If the sun stands in the halo of the moon: there will be truth in the land, and the son will speak truth with his father; universal peace. If the moon is surrounded by a halo, and Ninurta stands in it: my troops will set foot in the enemy land.

The “sun” in the halo of the moon probably refers to Saturn, which was known as the night sun, the star of the sun. There was a kind of duality of Šamaš and Ninurta in the sky because, in an astronomical commentary, Venus is identified as Šamaš at sunrise and as Ninurta at sunset.³⁵⁵ Ninurta is Mercury in the second part of the prediction quoted above.³⁵⁶ This scholar has probably used some kind of omen series in composing the letter, and has obviously replaced “Mercury” with “Ninurta.” Compare, for example, TCL 6 17 r. 33 (see CAD *s.v.* *šukūdu*, p. 229):

if (the moon) is surrounded by a halo and the Arrow (= Mercury) stands within it, (explanation): the arrow (*šiltāhu*) of Sagittarius (PA.BIL.SAG) stands within the halo of the moon.

Cf. also: “if the moon rises [...] and the Arrow stands within it, the Arrow (is) Mercury” in: LBA 1553 r. 22f; cf. CAD, *ibid.*

Both Sirius and Mercury are thus “arrows” of Ninurta and also his manifestations. In the hymn to Ninurta as Sirius (see Text 2 [pp. 207-208]), Ninurta is called “[un]swering arrow that [kills] all enemies.”³⁵⁷ Thus Ninurta himself is an “arrow.” Ninurta as Sirius is reflected, according to A. Schott, in a passage from an Assurnasirpal II royal inscription:

I adorned the room of the shrine of the god Ninurta, my lord, with gold (and) lapis lazuli, I stationed bronze IM.MEŠ-*ni* on his right and left, (and) installed wild

³⁵³ S. Parpola and K. Watanabe SAA 2 6, § 41, p. 46.; see also K. Watanabe 1991: 362 6.

³⁵⁴ See Horowitz 1998: 171f, Koch-Westenholz 1995: 127f.

³⁵⁵ Ch. Virolleaud, *L'astrologie chaldéenne*, Hymn to Ištar 8, 10-11; cf. Koch-Westenholz 1995: 123. Šamaš is called “bright day” and Ninurta “long day” in the mystical texts, see Livingstone 1986: 77f.

³⁵⁶ Koch-Westenholz (1995: 124) comments: “Mercury evidently had some connection with Saturn.”

³⁵⁷ Translation according to Foster 1996: 621, l. 8.

ferocious dragons (*ušumgalli šamrūte*) of gold at his throne. I appointed his festivals in the months of Shebat and Elul. The name of his festival in the month Shebat I called ‘Splendour’ (*tašrihtu*). I established for them (= gods) food and incense offerings. I created my royal monument with a likeness of my countenance of red gold and sparkling stones and stationed it before the god Ninurta, my lord. (Grayson 1991: 291, ll. 69-78.)

In the eleventh month Sirius stands exactly in the south at sunset and in the sixth month it stands there at sunrise. This recalls Ninurta’s epithet *sāniq mithurti* “maintainer of symmetry” which is also attested for Nabû and Nergal.³⁵⁸ In the prayers to Ninurta as Sirius, his roles of healing and judging are particularly emphasized (see Text 2207, ll. 1ff):

O greatest Ninurta, warrior god, vanguard of the Anunna-gods, commander of the Igigi-gods, judge of the universe, who oversees (its) equilibrium, who makes bright darkness and illumines gloom, who renders verdicts for teeming mankind! (Foster 1996: 621, ll. 1ff.)

Another word for “arrow” (*mulmullu*) was used for the one with which Marduk vanquished Tiamat. Sumerian *mul.mul*, which is the etymon for the Akkadian *mulmullu*, corresponds to Akkadian *Zappu* and refers to the Pleiades, the constellation of seven stars. The Pleiades were thought to bring war and destruction – “the warlike gods, who carry bow and arrow, whose rising means war.”³⁵⁹ It is worth noting that the month of Ningirsu in Astrolabe B, Iyyar, is also referred to as “the month of the Pleiades, the Seven Great Gods” (KAV 218 A i 12f and 19).

In *Enūma eliš* (VI 82-92), after Marduk’s battle Anu called his bow “my daughter” and raised it to the sky as the Bow-star which is part of *Canis Maior* (MUL.BAN/*qaštu*) and was equated with Ištar in Assyrian texts. Marduk’s bow (= Ištar) thus belonged to the same constellation of stars as the Arrow Sirius (*šukūdu*).

There existed a connection between *mulmullu* and *šukūdu*. The month with prominent Netherworld connotations, Abu, is described in Astrolabe B (A ii 1-5, 8-12) as follows: “the Arrow (*šukūdu*) of Ninurta, braziers are kindled, a torch is raised to the Anunna-gods, Girra comes down from the sky and rivals the sun ...” (see Cohen 1993: 319). One might compare the description to a Neo-Assyrian text, SAA 3 37:11ff, where Marduk’s arrows (*mulmullu*) are represented as torches in the royal ritual and are said to “rain down on the mountains” (*i-sal-la-hu* KUR.MEŠ, l. 14). All the gods, good and evil, are vanquished by these arrows. Thus both *mulmullu* and *šukūdu* referred to the god’s arrow which killed his enemy, despite their different astral identities.

Some literary passages referring to Ninurta as Sirius have been preserved. Ninurta’s identity with the star is explicit in a *šu-ila* prayer which begins with the words *atta Kaksisa Ninurta ašarēd ilī rabūti* “you are Sirius, (that is) Ninurta, the first among the great gods” (Mayer 1990: 467ff). A hymn

³⁵⁸ A. Schott ZDMG 88 (1934) 323: “Der Astronom würde sagen: in diese zwei Monate fielen damals die beiden Quadraturen des Sirius mit der Sonne.”

³⁵⁹ Koch-Westenholz 1995: 133f; see Borger 1956: 79 12.

devoted to Ninurta as Sirius is edited in Appendix A.³⁶⁰ Incantations to Sirius were published by Erich Ebeling (1953: 403ff), and some other *šu-ila* prayers by Werner Mayer (1990: 466-74).

There are some parallels between the ritual arrangements for the restoration of a damaged statue of a god and the curing of a man's sickness. Some sicknesses were believed to originate from magic rituals accomplished "before the stars." The affliction of "cutting the breath" (*zikurudû*) was thought to originate from magic performed before Sirius. Accordingly, the abatement of the disease was sought from an elaborate ritual before Sirius:

Most frequently mentioned among the magic afflictions diagnosed as inflicted with the connivance of the stars is the one called 'cutting the breath.' Since according to the rubric of one such ritual "cutting the breath" has been practiced against the man in front of Sirius," the cure is sought from Sirius too. It takes the form of a complex ritual with alternating libations and prayers to (literally: before) Sirius. The rites are performed in a curtained-off enclosure prescribed in other rituals too [see CAD s.v. *šiddu*] and the prayer is recited three times with the appropriate "lifting of the hand."³⁶¹

Sirius here is a mask of Ninurta the healer. It should be especially noted that the curing takes place in a separated area behind curtains. "The gods of the curtain" are mentioned in the ritual prescriptions for "curing" the broken statue of the god, a ritual of the mouth opening (*mīs pī*, A.418 rev. 25-32). The ritual arrangements for this purpose within the *bīt mummi* are interesting because the "seven gods of the curtain" enumerated there are elsewhere called "seven Ninurtas" (Walker and Dick 2001: 240). There are also some parallels in the ritual.³⁶²

3 curtains which hang in the temple which are of red wool, brick, 2 curtains, which are on the gate. The brick on which the scatter offering was scattered. Narudi, Bēlit-ilī, Urash, Ninurta, Zababa, Nabû, Nergal, Mandānu, and Pabilsag, these are the gods of the curtains. (Walker and Dick 2001: 239-40.)

In an identical list of seven deities in KAR 142, a list for an *akītu*-procession, the deities are summarized differently – "seven Ninurtas."³⁶³ From this

³⁶⁰ See Text 2 (pp. 207-208). *Editio princeps*: Burrows 1924.

³⁶¹ Reiner 1995: 102-103; F. Köcher, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen* (Berlin) 461 iii 4'-13'.

³⁶² "Facing Sirius ... you strew juniper on a censer (aglow) with acacia-embers, you libate fine beer, you prostrate yourself, you draw the curtains, you set out heaps of flour, you purify that man with censer, torch, and holy-water basin, you have him stand inside the curtains on garden herbs?, ..., and then the wrath of (his) god and goddess will be loosed, the sorcery and machinations will be loosed." (Reiner 1995: 103.) Cf. A.418, rev. 12-14: "Behind the curtain sprinkle juniper on 11 censers. Best beer which is on [...] you libate. Behind the censers you stretch out 7 curtains; before the gate of the passageaway you stretch out one curtain." (Walker, Dick 2001: 237-38). Ninurta was probably present in similar rituals as *be-[el nig-n]ak-ku* "lo[rd] of the [cens]er," an epithet attested in *Šurpu* III 72.

³⁶³ See Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 221, 225; cf. S. M. Maul, 'Herzberuhigungsklagen': *Die sumerisch-akkadischen Eršahunga-Gebete* (Wiesbaden, 1988), 188.

parallel one can see that the injured god is treated similarly to the man magically afflicted by the "astral magic." Both rituals were to be performed at night, before the stars (see Reiner 1995: 139-43).

Ninurta had other astral identities as well. In two prayers to *Ursa Maior*, which are intended to help obtain a favourable omen in a dream, Ninurta is called "yoke of the Wagon star":

O Wagon star, heavenly Wagon! Whose yoke is Ninurta, whose pole is Marduk, whose side-pieces are the two heavenly daughters of Anu. She rises toward Assur, she turns toward Babylon. Let a dream bring me a sign whether so-and-so, son of so-and-so, will become healthy and well! (Reiner 1995: 71.)

Ninurta has sometimes been identified as an astral divinity Sakkud: ^d*sak-kud* = ^d*nin-urta*.³⁶⁴ Sakkud is otherwise a son of Enmešarra, an ancestor of Enlil (Richter 1999: 439). In An=Anum I 83, Sakkud is called "bronze-holder of heaven" (*zabar-dab an-na-ke₄*) and in the mystical *List of Identifications* Sakkud is explained as a *pappardilû* stone (18) and *abašmû* "jasper" (20). The latter is described in the *abnu šikinšu* manual of stones as "the stone of sunset" (Reiner 1995: 121). Sakkud is attested in a famous biblical passage in the book of Amos 5:26 where the prophet criticizes his people: "You carried *skwt*, your king and *kywn*, your star, images which you have made for yourselves." It is possible, according to some scholars, that *skwt* originates from SAG.KUD and the deity Sakkuth was worshipped in Samaria during Amos' time (cf. 2 Kgs 17:30). What is curious in the biblical passage is the attribute "your king" (*mlkkm*) to *skwt* which fits Ninurta as the god of kingship. One might suggest that the Amos passage reflects peripheral Mesopotamian traditions diffused into Samaria. The second divine element, *kywn*, almost certainly corresponds to Akkadian *kajjamānu* (SAG.UŠ) "Saturn." These two names, ^dSAG.KUD and ^dSAG.UŠ, occur side by side in *Šurpu* II 180 (Reiner 1958: 18). Thus it seems that the Mesopotamian tradition represented in *Šurpu* II 180 was current in Samaria. A deity Sakkuth was called "your king" in Israel as Sakkud in Mesopotamia was associated with Ninurta.³⁶⁵ For the court scholars of the Neo-Assyrian empire, the conjunction of Mercury, that is the star of Ninurta/Nabû, and Saturn, the star of the king, constituted the "sign of kingship."³⁶⁶ If the deity Sakkuth in the Amos

³⁶⁴ CT 25 11:34. In the trilingual Ugaritic god-list, Sakkud is identified with the goddess Anat, see J. Nougayrol, *Ugaritica* 5, p. 248-49, with the correction by Artzi 1999: 364f.

³⁶⁵ Th. G. Pinches has made the following interesting observation on *The Judgement of Enmešarra* which he edited: "Column D, however, is in a fairly satisfactory state, referring, as it does, to the gods of various cities of Babylonia going to Babylon to take the hands of Kayanu [= Saturn] and Merodach [= Marduk] ... The curious thing is, however, that Kayanu should be placed before Merodach." He compares this to Saturn in Amos 5:26: "Perhaps, therefore, the words 'his image,' *tamšil-šu*, which occurs twice in the defective column 'B,' refers to the representations of this deity, which were carried in procession, and Jewish worship of Kayawan or Saturn may have been due to Babylonian influence, which as we know, was for many centuries strong in the Mediterranean tract." (1908: 78-79).

³⁶⁶ See Parpola 1980: 179f, 182; cf. SAA 8 95: 3-4, 7: "Saturn is the star of the sun... sun is the star of the king." Cf. also SAA 10 109 obv. 13'ff; Koch-Westenholz 1995: 124.

passage can be interpreted as Mercury and *kywn* is Saturn, the juxtaposition of these two can be regarded as a “royal constellation.” The religious movement behind Amos’ criticism might have been about expectations concerning kingship.

S. Dalley, who believes that Sakkud in the Amos passage refers to Ninurta, has commented as follows:

His [= Ninurta] name may be found as Sakkuth in Amos 5:26 together with Kaiwan (Kiyyun), which seems to be a form of the Babylonian name Kayyamān for the planet ‘Saturn.’ Amos specifies that this form of apostasy was a reason for god’s punishment, which consisted of allowing the Exile to take place. Sakkut and Kiyyun are found at Qumran in the Damascus Document, although their pagan name there is not overt. (Dalley 1998: 78.)

Ninurta as Sirius is comparable to the Greek giant and hunter Orion, who had a dog (like Ninurta’s wife Gula) which was identified with Sirius. The Avestan god Tištrya was Sirius, and it was compared with the star shot by the best archer of the Arians. Thus the cult of Sirius in Iran might have a Mesopotamian background.³⁶⁷ In Egypt the star Sirius was associated with the god of the crown prince, Horus. The heliacal rising of Sirius was preceded by that of the constellation Orion, associated with the deceased king Osiris. This was interpreted in terms of the royal succession in Egypt.³⁶⁸ In Mesopotamian astrology, Orion was comparably the celestial image of the dying king Dumuzi/Tammuz (called Sipazianna, “faithful shepherd of heaven”). According to K. van der Toorn, it is even possible that a conflation of traditions could have resulted in the idea that, to the Greeks, the constellation Orion instead of Sirius was the heavenly counterpart of the hunter Orion. In this connection it might be interesting to note that in Syriac Orion is called *gabbār*, “hero” (1990: 11).

Ninurta as Healer and Helper in Misery

According to the holistic world view of the ancient Mesopotamians, responsibility for the sicknesses of the body was assigned to various malevolent demons. These were also Ninurta’s mythological enemies, among whom *Asakku* (Asag) was most closely connected with diseases (see CAD *s.v.*). The nature of the diseases which *á-zág/asakku* denotes is revealed by incantations and medical texts, in which it is usually paired with *nam-tar*, a “decided” disease (see CAD *s.v. namtaru*). F. A. M. Wiggermann comments:

³⁶⁷ See A. Panaino, *Tištrya*. Vol. II. *The Iranian Myth of the Star Sirius*, SOR 68/2 (Roma 1995).

³⁶⁸ See N. Beaux, “Sirius étoile et jeune Horus” in: *Hommages à Jean Leclant*, BdE 106/1 (1993), 61-72. Probably also in Mesopotamia because, according to Astrolabe B, section A I 44.50, in the fourth month Tammuz “was bound” (to the Netherworld) which immediately precedes the rising of Sirius (= Ninurta) in the fifth month (cf. Emelianov 1999: 77-91).

From the observation that *á-zág* and *nam-tar* fill a semantic field, it follows that *á-zág* denotes diseases that are not decided by the gods, “disorders.” That the *á-zág* combatted by Ninurta in Lugal-e is the same demon “Disorder” on a cosmic level is born out by the myth, which is concerned exactly with Ninurta deciding the fates, and *á-zág* hindering him at it. In view of the artificial, abstract nature of the cosmic demon “Disorder,” it is not surprising that we do not find him represented in art.³⁶⁹

By slaying *Asakku*, Ninurta eliminated evil from the world and accordingly he was considered the god of healing as well. The relief of the believer from personal misery was thus a natural result of Ninurta’s victorious battles. Ninurta as healer and helper of the weak is most prominently celebrated in the hymn written on clay cylinders (Mayer 1992). Ninurta’s attributes are transferred to Marduk in the beginning of the 4th tablet of *Šurpu* which is devoted to the curing of sicknesses: “Incantation. It rests with you, Marduk, to keep safe and sound, the committing of assault and violence, (you) who defeated the *Asakku*.”³⁷⁰ Defeating *Asakku* appears here as the precondition for curing and safekeeping. Compare the passage from a *šu-ila* to Ninurta as Sirius (Mayer 1990: 471, ll. 21-28):

<i>usuh mimma lemnu ša zumriya</i>	“Tear out any evil of my body
<i>hulliq ayyāba abuk asakka</i>	destroy the enemy, turn over <i>Asakku</i> ,
<i>ukkiš ūpiš lemutti ša amelūti</i>	set aside ‘terrorists’ of mankind,
<i>ina širiya ṭurrud namtaru lemnu</i>	drive away the evil <i>Namtaru</i> from my flesh,
<i>ša ana nakās napištīya izzazzu</i>	who stands there about to kill myself,
<i>kīma mē nāri eššūti iṭrudu labirūti</i>	like new water of the river drives away the old,
<i>bulliṭanni-ma dalilika ludlul</i>	revive me, so that I can sing your praises
<i>ana niši rapšāti</i>	to the mass of people!”

Among the Akkadian verbs used frequently to denote “healing” was *bulluṭu*, (*balātu* D) “to revive.” Since the verb literally means “to make live; to revive,” the healing by the god could be considered in the sense of “resurrecting.” And since “death” was also a metaphor for psycho-physical misfortune (Baudissin 1911: 312), “resurrection from death” could be understood as help in misery as well (see Text 2, l. 6). The ancient oriental king, like the god Ninurta, was a source of physical and mental wellbeing, as is clearly expressed, for example, in an inscription of Adad-narari III, where the god Aššur made the king’s “shepherdship pleasing like a medicine of life to the people of Assyria.”³⁷¹ In a royal inscription of Assurnasirpal, Ninurta is

³⁶⁹ Wiggermann 1994: 224. Comparably the name of the Indian Vedic demon(ess) *Nirrti* means ‘Dis-array,’ Latin *Lua* ‘Dissolution’ and an Avestan demon was called *Astō-Vidātu* ‘Bodily Disintegration’ (Puhvel 1987: 154).

³⁷⁰ ÉN *e-peš ri-is-bi ū ri-sib-ti* / *bul-lu-ṭu šul-lu-mu* ^dAMAR.UD *it-ti-ka-ma* / GAR *ki-šit-te a-sak-ki* (Reiner 1958: 25).

³⁷¹ Grayson 1996: 212: GIM Ú TI UGU UN.MEŠ KUR *aš-šur*. For Jesus as “medicine of life” and “great healer” (Syriac *asyā rabbā*), see e.g. A. Shemunkasho, *Healing in the Theology of Saint Ephrem* (Gorgias Press 2002).

called “bestower of life, the compassionate god to whom it is good to pray.”³⁷²

“Ninurta’s aromatic” (ŠIM.^dNIN.URTA or ŠIM.^dMAŠ) was spurge (*Euphorbia*), a herb which was used for recipes of medicine and magic. This shrub had male and female flowers, associated with their different colours.³⁷³ The spurge flower resembles a crown or a star which might have contributed to the identification of herb as the “drug of Ninurta.”

A snake is a frequent symbol of the healing gods. For religious-historical reasons, Ninurta became equated with the “Transtigridian snake god” as Tišpak, Ninazu and Elamite Inšušinak in the second millennium and later theological texts.³⁷⁴ Among the gods mentioned, Ninazu is clearly the “lord of healing” according to the etymology of his name. In company with these identifications, Ninurta certainly assumed some features of a chthonic healer god. These features were already inherently present in his form of the victorious hero because the beneficial character of the chthonic healer god could express itself in iconography in the motif of victory over a lion, dragon, griffin or other real or fantastic monster (see Astour 1965: 238).

Bulluša-rabi’s hymn to Gula, the composition which praises Ninurta and Gula respectively in alternating segments, cannot be precisely dated (1400-700 BC). It mentions Ninazu as one hypostasis of Ninurta (Lambert 1967: 109 l. 53). The cult of Ninazu and his brother Ninmada had agricultural aspects as well. According to the myth *How grain came to Sumer*, Ninazu and Ninmada brought grain and flax to the Sumerians (Wiggermann 1997: 39). Ninazu’s successor from Old Akkadian times onward was Tišpak, who developed into a war god in Ešnunna, and, by way of identification with Ninurta, adopted Enlil and Ninlil as his parents.³⁷⁵ Tišpak’s cult still had agricultural aspects because there was a bronze plough among the cultic objects in his temple, as is shown by an OB year name from Ešnunna (*ibid.* 39). Ninazu’s successor Tišpak is credited with heroic deeds very similar to those of Ninurta. A mythological piece records his slaying of the monster Labbu:

His [= Tišpak] introduction in Ešnunna is covered by a myth that explains his relation with Ninazu’s dragon, and justifies his ascent to kingship. The traits that circumscribe his character seem to derive mainly from his predecessor Ninazu; like him he is “warrior of the gods” depicted holding one or two maces and later identified with Ninurta (Wiggermann 1997: 37).

³⁷² Grayson 1991: 194, l. 9: *qa-a-iš* TIL.LA DINGIR RÉM-ú šá si-pu-šú DÙG.GA. Cf. also Text 2, ll. 5-6: “The critically ill recovers, merciful one, who spares life, reviver of the d[ea]d” (Foster 1996: 621).

³⁷³ Reiner 1995: 35. Cf. CAD N/2 222 s.v. *nikiptu*: “the male *n.* is like the bark of the tamarisk, compact and red, the female *n.* is like the bark of the tamarisk, thin and yellow” (a medical commentary BRM 4 32: 11).

³⁷⁴ Wiggermann 1997: 45. In *Šurpu* IV 64, Ninurta appears in the fifth group of rescuing (*lip-tu-ru*) gods together with Adad, Zabāba, Tišpak and Ningirsu. The Elamite Inšušinak is called *Ninurta ša qūlti*, “N. of silence” in CT 25 12: 3 (*ibid.*).

³⁷⁵ Wiggermann 1997: 35; Tišpak is regularly called “king” in early OB royal inscriptions, see D. Frayne, RIME 4 (1990), 490, 501, 506-507, 510.

Ninurta was a god of healing also on the basis of his marital relations with the goddess Gula.³⁷⁶ She had the theriomorphic form of a dog and was called *azugallatu* “the great physician” (e.g., in *Šurpu* IV: 107), her celestial manifestation was the Goat star (Vega) and the constellation Lyra (Reiner 1995: 52f). Other important epithets of Gula were *nādinat balāti amelūti* “giver of life to mankind” and *muballītat mīti* (*Šurpu* VII 74) “reviver of the dead.”³⁷⁷ Ninurta’s status as the god of healing was corroborated with the emergence of the first dynasty of Isin whose kings married Ninurta to their city-goddess Ninisina, thus merging their city-god Pabilsag with Ninurta and promoting their city-goddess. There was no previous cult of Ninurta in OB Isin, according to the documents, which suggests that the impetus for identifying Pabilsag with Ninurta came from Nippur.³⁷⁸ Post OB evidence shows that Pabilsag has fully lost his importance in Isin (Richter 1999: 450). Subsequently, Ninurta and not Pabilsag stood at the side of the healing goddess in Isin, as is seen from the comparison of several Middle Babylonian inscriptions of one of the Kurigalzus and of Kadašman-Enlil. Kurigalzu restored the former temple of Ninisina/Gula, *é-gal-mah*, according to his own words, “for Ninurta.”³⁷⁹

Section IV 89ff in the incantation series *Šurpu* invokes all Mesopotamian great gods and goddesses to heal sickness. After invoking Anu (Antu), Enlil, Ea, Sin and Šamaš, the text continues (IV 94-97):

May Adad stand by, lord of oracles, may he drive away sickness, may stand by Tišpak, lord of troops, may he dislodge headache, may stand by Ninurta, lord of the mace, may he remove trouble (PAP.HAL), may stand by Papsukkal, lord of the staff, may he keep far sickness (Reiner 1958: 28).

Marduk is invoked next (l. 98), and to Asalluhi is ascribed the power to resurrect the dead, after which Nergal is mentioned. The text continues (ll. 101-106):

May Ningirsu stand by, lord of agriculture (*mērištu*), may he cause sickness to take flight, may stand by Zababa, lord of the high throne (*parakku*), may he expel plague, may stand by Ennugi, lord of bank and canal, may he bind the Asakku, may stand by Nusku, vizier of Ekur, who speaks in favor, may he heal the sick, may stand by Girru, conciliator of the angry god and goddess, may he remove the weariness of his body, may stand by Ištar, Lady of all lands, may she intercede for him...; etc. (Reiner 1958: 29).

Mesopotamian incantations from the OB period onwards attest Ninurta among the deities of healing and Asakku as a prominent demon of diseases.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁶ Cf. Richter 1999: 178, n. 730: “Die Entwicklung, die Ninisina/Gula und Ninurta zusammenführt, mag sich bereits in der Ur III-Zeit andeuten, wenn die Göttin Memešaga – nach TCL 15, 10 VIII 36 eine Gestalt der Ninisina ... – im Verlauf des Ninurta-Festes *gu₄-si-su* beopfert wird” (see Sallaberger 1993: 119).

³⁷⁷ See Baudissin 1911: 312. On the parallel between the Bulluša-rabi hymn, ll. 79-87 (Lambert 1967: 120) and Hosea 6:1-2, see Michael L. Barré, *Or* 50 (1981), 241-45.

³⁷⁸ Richter 1999: 178, n. 730; see also Lambert 1968: 110.

³⁷⁹ Richter 1999: 178; see Clayden 1996: 117 and, for *é-gal-mah*, George 1993: 88f.

³⁸⁰ See G. Cunningham, *‘Deliver Me from Evil’: Mesopotamian incantations 2500-1500*, StP s.m. 17 (Rome 1997), 98ff.

Šurpu incantations were probably created in the Middle Babylonian period (Reiner 1958: 2). The Neo-Assyrian letters from physicians to the kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal invoke Ninurta and Gula in the greeting section of the letters. The letters SAA 10 254, 315-25, 329, 333, and 334 contain the formula *lū šulmu adanniš adanniš ana šarri bēliya Inūrta u Gula tūb libbi tūb širi ana šarri bēliya liddinu* “Let Ninurta and Gula give exceedingly to the king my lord wellbeing of heart and physical wellbeing!” In letter 334, the blessing of the two gods is asked for (*likrubu* instead of *liddinu*). SAA 10 297 mentions Aššur, Sin and Šamaš along with Ninurta and Gula. Ninurta’s position as the healing god was thus a stable one during the millennia.

Iconography of the healer gods is amply discussed in the classic work of Baudissin (1911: 289-310). Baudissin’s discussion also involves much of the Greek material. He has shown that the healing figures such as Heracles, Iolaos or West Semitic Ešmun and “Carthagian Heracles” Melqart have much in common (*ibid.* 282). Baal Zebub, who in 2 Kgs 1 is the healing deity, derives from Canaanite *Bʿl zbl* “Baal the Prince” by an intentional misspelling. The epithet “Prince, lord of the underworld” in Ugaritic texts (*zbl bʿl arš*) refers to Baal as a chthonic healer god, who helps in illnesses. In some Ugaritic incantations, Baal is invoked to drive away the demon of disease.³⁸¹ The healing aspect is, accordingly, common to Ninurta and Baal. One of the most popular healing gods in late Antiquity was the Greek Asklepios, who took over many attributes of Semitic healer gods. One might mention *Asklēpios Leontouchos Askalonitēs* “Asklepios of Ascalon fighting with the lion” who was invoked by the Greek Neo-Platonist Proclus in the fifth century AD, according to Marinus’ *Vita Procli* 19 (Baudissin 1911: 223). Ninurta’s defeat of a lion was the subject of the section *Royal Hunt* above.

Ninurta’s role as healer is seen in rituals. The scenes of some curing rites were cast in terms of the mythological battle of Ninurta against Asakku. In the Babylonian ritual which concerned the curing of a sick man (BM 34035 ll. 13-23), the door of the sick man’s house was smeared with gypsum and bitumen which are explained as representing Ninurta and Asakku respectively:

a magic circle of flour was laid around his bed, and three heaps of flour were placed on the floor. A second magic circle was drawn in front of the bed, a drum (?) and cymbal (?) were placed by the sick man’s head, and so on. In the commentary each of these items is identified with a divine being. The gypsum is the god Ninurta; the bitumen is the Asakku demon; the circle of flour is the gods Lugalgirra and Meslamtaea; the other magic circle is the mythological Net, the drum and cymbal are Anu and Enlil; and so on. One important phrase is added to these otherwise jejune identifications: “Ninurta will pursue (or, pursues) Asakku.” (Lambert 1968: 110.)³⁸²

³⁸¹ W. Herrmann, DDD, cols. 293ff; see also M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, *UF* 12 (1980), 391ff.

³⁸² L. 1: ^d*nin-urta a-na a-sak-ku i-rad-da-ad* (Livingstone 1986: 172). The third tablet of *Bit Mēseri* contains an incantation for “sieben Statuen (d.h. Darstellungen?) der *purādu*-Fisch-Weisen (?), die mit Gips und schwarzer Paste bestichen sind, die an der

Gypsum (im.babbar, Akkadian *gašsu*) is otherwise found among the “heroes” vanquished by Ninurta.³⁸³ A topographical tablet of Babylon (*Tintir* II, 5) mentions a personified gypsum which “sits” on the seat of Anunnaki in Esagil.³⁸⁴ Thus it seems likely that gypsum in this curing ritual is the enemy Gypsum which has already been vanquished by and assimilated with Ninurta and is here used apotropaically. Another important point is that white gypsum constitutes a contrasting pair with black bitumen.³⁸⁵ This certainly accords with other Mesopotamian divinatory practices like extispicy where a light colour of the ominous organ conveyed favourable significance and dark colour an unfavourable one (Starr 1983: 18-19). Dark colour was essentially connected with the left side, and a light hue with the right side of the sacrificial animal’s parts under examination. If the state of affairs was the opposite, the omen was unfavourable. This paradigm was of universal application (*ibid.*). So being “dark and light” (*nawāru* or *tarāku*), like gypsum and bitumen, entailed meaningful opposition. Some Old Babylonian omens can be of special interest here:³⁸⁶

(9) *šumma*(DIŠ) SI MUŠEN ZI *ta-ri-ik mar-šum i-ma-at lu-mu-un* ŠÀ, “if the horn of the ‘bird’ is dark on the right: the sick man will die; grief.”

(10) *šumma* SI MUŠEN GÜB *ta-ri-ik mar-šum i-ba-lu-uṭ a-na* GIŠ.TUKUL *ki-ši-it qá-ti*, “if the horn of the ‘bird’ is dark on the left: the sick man will recover; as for warfare: conquest.”

Thus warfare and the curing of sickness were connected in such a way that conquest equaled curing and defeat corresponded to death.³⁸⁷ In the instances below, this connection is even more explicit (YOS 10 53:20-21 and 24-25):

(20) *šumma*(DIŠ) *ku-ta-al-li* MUŠEN ZI *na-wi-ir mar-šum i-ba-lu-uṭ a-na* KASKAL LÚ KÜR *ta-da-ak*, “if the back of the ‘bird’ is light on the right: the sick man will recover; as for the campaign: you will defeat the enemy.”

(21) *šumma* *ku-ta-al-li* MUŠEN GÜB *na-wi-ir mar-šum i-ma-at ana* GIŠ.TUKUL *ar-bu-tum*, “if the back of the ‘bird’ is light on the left: the sick man will die; as for warfare: rout.”

Seite des Gemachs an die Wand gezeichnet sind” (Borger 1974: 192). Gypsum and bitumen have a major role in the ritual text in Wiggermann 1992: 120ff.

³⁸³ See van Dijk 1983: 16; cf. the curse from the treaty of Aššur-narari with the king of Arpad: “may he, together with the people of his land, be cru[shed] like gypsum” (SAA 2 2 i 9’).

³⁸⁴ George 1992: 46f. Ninurta was the mightiest of the Anunna-gods according to the Lipit-Eštar Hymn to Ninurta D, ll. 1-3: “Hero, mightiest of the Anuna gods, who comes forth from the E-kur! Ninurta, lord Nunamnir created you like a great storm, he commanded you to achieve triumphs for him.”

³⁸⁵ Bitumen was used in antiquity for medicinal purposes, particularly for closing bleeding wounds; see Galen, *De Simplicium Medicamentorum Temperamentis ac Facultatibus* 11.2.10. (Feldman 2000: 34).

³⁸⁶ A. Goetze, YOS 10 53:9-10, cited by Starr 1983: 19.

³⁸⁷ Cf. Text 2 (p. 207f), ll. 20-21 in this context: “On the one who, in the thick of battle, seems destined to die and calls your name, on him you have mercy, O lord, you rescue him from disaster.” (Foster 1996: 621f).

(24) *šumma ku-ta-al-li* MUŠEN ZI *na-wi-ir* GÜB *ta-ri-ik ku-uš-ši-id la ta-ka-al-la*, “if the back of the ‘bird’ is light on the right; dark on the left: defeat (the enemy); do not tarry.” (cf. *Lugale* 236.)

(25) *šumma ku-ta* [sic] GÜB *na-wi-ir* ZI *ta-ri-ik ar-bu-ut um-ma-ni-ka*, “if the rear part is light on the left; dark on the right: flight of your army.” (Starr 1983: 19.)

Returning to gypsum and bitumen, one has to mention that stones and minerals are of paramount importance in *Lugale*. Asag is clearly turned to stone by Ninurta after the battle (327-30) and his address to it is the only reference to the building of the underworld (here: *urugal/qabru*) in Mesopotamian literature (Horowitz 1998: 348f):

From today forward, do not say Asag: its name shall be Stone. Its name shall be zalag stone, its name shall be Stone. This, its entrails, shall be the underworld. Its valour shall belong to the Lord.

In the mystical *List of Identifications*, which details 67 objects and substances commonly used in rituals with the gods and their associates, the material relevant to Ninurta is:³⁸⁸

6. <i>qān-šalāli</i> (gi.šul.hi)	^d ninurta	The slippery reed
13. ^{na4} [a]baru (a.bár)	^d MAŠ	Lead
18. ^{na4} ba[bbar-dillu(dili)]	^d sak-kud	<i>Pappardilû</i> stone ³⁸⁹
21. ^{na4} [e]n.gi.ša ₆	^d sak-kud	Engiša stone ³⁹⁰
27. murub ₄ .gag.zabar <i>ri-kis-su-nu</i>	^d MAŠ	The bronze pegs, their binding
39. <i>rik-su</i>	^d nin.urta	Rite
46. im.babbar	^d ut.u ₁₈ .lu	Gypsum ³⁹¹
47. esir	^d id (<i>nāru</i>)	Bitumen (= River)

Bitumen's identification with River recalls the Mesopotamian Labbu-myth, where Tišpak's antagonist was “the progeny of the River.” It resembles the Ugaritic myth of Ba'lu and Yammu, where Baal's enemy Yammu is called *tp̄t nhr* “Judge River.” The riverine aspect was also inherent in Tiamat as Mother Hubur, the stream of the Netherworld (*Enūma eliš* I 132), and comparable also to the Pythian serpent slain by Apollo in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*.³⁹²

The Greek word for gypsum is *tītānos* which is nearly homophonic with the word *tītān* “Titan.” In some parts of Greek Orphic tradition, Dionysos is

³⁸⁸ Edited in Livingstone 1986: 176ff; cf. the comments by Lambert 1968: 111.

³⁸⁹ On *pappardilû*, see most recently Frahm 1997: 147f.

³⁹⁰ *Sak-kud* is identified with Ninurta in CT 25 11:34.

³⁹¹ Ut-u₁₈-lu is identified with Ninurta in CT 25 12:6.

³⁹² “This aspect is found with the Pythian serpent in the hymn: she appears to be connected with the river beside which the battle occurs, while she is certainly closely connected with the river in Callimachus' *Hymn to Delos* (line 92), specifically the river Pleistos at Delphi.” (Penglas 1994: 103.)

attacked and killed by Titans, who smeared their faces with gypsum before the attack in order to be unrecognized:

Dionysos is born in Crete to Zeus and Kore. He is guarded by the dancing Kouretes as Zeus was. This probably lasts for five years. Zeus installs him on his own throne and tells the gods that this is their new king. But the Titans, whitening their faces with gypsum, lure him away with a mirror, apples, a bull-roarer and other articles. They kill him and cut him into seven pieces, which they first boil, then roast and proceed to eat. (West 1983: 140.)

The kingship of Dionysos is comparable to that of Tammuz in the Mesopotamian tradition. The Titans' use of gypsum partly resembles Ninurta's enemy called ‘Gypsum’ which is used in rituals to represent Ninurta. The effigies of the subdued enemies could be used apotropaically in the ritual, as exemplified above. The Orphic story continues: only the heart of Dionysos survives the assault. Dionysos is subsequently revived by Zeus who places the heart within an effigy:

Firmicus says that Zeus made an image of Dionysos out of gypsum and placed the heart in it. The choice of gypsum as a material is intriguing in view of its use by the Titans to disguise themselves and the evidence for the use of such disguise in Dionysiac mysteries. Here, surely is another genuine reflection of ritual.³⁹³

M. West rightly notes that the homophony between the words *tītānos* “gypsum” and *tītān* is unlikely to have contributed to the emergence of the story because the first word is not used in the Orphic sources (1983: 155, n. 49). The same relationship as between Dionysos and the Titans/Gypsum in the Orphic myth can be seen between Ninurta and Gypsum. I have elsewhere argued for the identification of the Greek *Tītānes* with the Mesopotamian demonic “Bison-man” *kusarikku* who is also found among Ninurta's defeated enemies (Annus 1999). It is possible that the Orphic tradition has preserved some motifs of an Oriental mythology.

“Ninurta Is My Shelter”

The most famous name of a Mesopotamian king invoking Ninurta is undoubtedly Tukulti-Ninurta “My protection is Ninurta.” Ninurta is the protector of the king, as is already seen in a passage of Uruinimgina's inscription, where Ningirsu shelters the king with his arms like Anzud with its wings.³⁹⁴

³⁹³ West 1983: 163. Gypsum as the purifying substance used in mystery cults is frequently mentioned in Nonnos' *Dionysiaca*, 27.204, 228; 29.274; 30.122; 34.144; 47.733.

³⁹⁴ ^dNin-gir-su-ke₄ Uru-inim-gi-na-ra Anzud^{mušen}-gim á-bad mu-ni-du, “Ningirsu hat für Uruinimgina die Arme ausgebreitet wie der Anzu-Adler (die Schwingen)”; see G. Selz, *Untersuchungen zur Götterwelt des altsumerischen Stadtstaates von Lagaš* (Philadelphia 1995), 24, Tonolive Ukg 40.

Cf. also the hymn to Šu-Suen D 24-25: Ninurta, may you be his great wall, may you look on him favourably; may you be Šu-Suen's great wall (bād gal-a-ni hé-me-en), may you look on him favourably (Sjöberg 1976: 412).

According to *Angim* 174, the refugees from other cities refresh themselves in the shade of Ninurta in Nippur. In certain historical periods of ancient Mesopotamia, there seems to have been a kind of "house of refuge" whose divine patron was Ninurta. This is mentioned in the *širnamšubba* from the time of the first Isin dynasty. The Sumerian spelling of that house is é-šeš-a, but the name should probably be read é-urù-a "the protected house," the Akkadian equivalent of *urù* being *našāru* "to guard" (see CAD s.v.). This house also has a name, é-dagal-lama, read é-ama-lama in the ETCSL translation which has been modified below:

Ninurta G, ll. 76-110: The hero is most precious; his word is august. He is the sun of the Land; the discloser of great counsel in E-ama-lama. Ninurta is most precious. Pabilsag is most precious. Ningirsu is most precious; his word is august. He is the sun of the Land; the discloser of great counsel in E-ama-lama. Hero, on the battlefield the cities of the foreign lands have dedicated (?) a house to you: E-ama-lama, a house of protection, Ninurta, a house of protection, Pabilsag, a house of protection, Ningirsu, on the battlefield the cities of the foreign lands have dedicated (?) a house to you: E-ama-lama, a house of protection. It is a most distant forest whose edges are widespread (?). Its extent is indeed with the king, E-ama-lama. It is a forest, a most distant boat moored on the mountains. If someone diminishes its borders, that man cuts off the house of his father at its borders, E-ama-lama. If someone, though a stranger to his father, diminishes its borders, that man cuts off the house of his father at its borders, E-ama-lama.

In any case, it is clear that Ninurta possessed a house, "a house of protection." It is possible to render é.šeš.a or é.urù.a in Akkadian as *bīt napṭari*, based on the MSL 12 141 entry šeš-e-ne = *nap-ṭa-ru*. The meaning of the term *napṭaru*, which occurs twice in the Code of Ešnunna (§§ 36, 41), has been explained by R. Westbrook (1994: 43) as follows: "*napṭaru* simply means 'visitor' in all the Old Babylonian sources, the *bīt napṭarim* being no more than the house or quarters in which a visitor happens to lodge. It is derived from the word *paṭāru*, not in the usual sense of 'to redeem, loosen,' but in the less frequent but sufficiently well attested sense of 'to depart.'"³⁹⁵

There should have been various kinds of "houses of redemption," some of them really comparable to hostels. In the *širnamšubba* passage quoted above, e-urù-a refers to an institution, not to any kind of 'hostel.' Most probably it is a kind of temple. Both renderings, "the redeemed house" and "the guarded house," indicate that the house in question encompasses a safe area for its visitor. It seems that this Sumerian term very generally corresponds to the Akkadian *bīt napṭari*. M. E. Cohen comments:

³⁹⁵ "To leave" is actually only the intransitive meaning of the verb *paṭāru*, see CAD s.v. In lexical texts the term *napṭaru* is explained as 'one who guards' (ga-an-urì), 'one who redeems' (ga-an-duš), and is surrounded by terms such as *ubāru* "(resident) alien" and *waššābu* "tenant, resident." The term *ubāru* denotes a resident alien, whose status was entirely dependent upon the local sovereign's pleasure. A proverb states: "an *ubāru* in another city is a slave" (Westbrook 1994: 45).

It appears that the cities of the land have jointly agreed to the setting aside presumably of a forest which was to serve as a sanctuary or refuge, wherein no battle could be fought. The name Edagallama, "the wide house of the Lama," is a most appropriate title, for the Lama is a protective genie and would thus shelter all who seek refuge in the Edagallama. This area has been dedicated to Ninurta who perhaps is envisioned as the *napṭaru* who is granting refuge. It is also possible that lines 53-55 refer to this wooded sanctuary, wherein Ninurta's donkey-foal roams freely amidst *mēsu*-trees. (Cohen 1975-76: 34.)

Cohen's statement might be speculative, but is essentially right in my opinion. One can assume that Ninurta owned a kind of *bīt napṭari*, this Akkadian term being remotely related to é-urù-a, and this "house of redemption" housed people under the protection of the god. Perhaps it is not far-fetched to claim that Ninurta protected some individuals in his temples, a role which fits the god who helps those in misery and ensures safety.³⁹⁶

As was already discussed above, Ninurta protected legal authority; his seal was impressed on important state documents in Assyria and on documents recording property sales in Nippur and in Emar. Thus it becomes clear that Ninurta symbolized legitimate ownership of land.³⁹⁷ This role is seen also in El-Amarna letter 74. Apart from the personal names, Ninurta occurs twice in the El-Amarna correspondence. An unidentified city belonging to Jerusalem is named URUBīt-^dNIN.URTA in the El-Amarna correspondence, which might refer to Beth-Horon.³⁹⁸ N. Na'aman has argued that by the logographic writing ^dNIN.URTA in the Amarna letters, the goddess Anat might be meant (1990: 252-54). There is no logographic writing attested for this goddess in spite of her importance in the West Semitic pantheon during the second millennium BC (*ibid.* 254). In any case, it seems important that the logographic writing ^dNIN.URTA was chosen to write the god's name, which shows that the Mesopotamian cults were already associated with the Syro-Palestinian ones in the fourteenth century. In EA 74, the ruler of Byblos (Gubla), Rib-Hadda reports on the Hapiru's war against him and gives an account of his enemy Abdi-Aširta's successes in advancing his subversive aims:

After taking Šigata for himself, 'Abdi-Aširta said to men of Ammiya: "Kill your leader and then you will be like us and at peace." They were won over, following

³⁹⁶ Cf. a Babylonian hemerological text for agriculturists (K 2279+ // TIM 9 55), ll. 42-45: "May Sin, the king, guard you. May the hero Ninurta be the one who gives you safety. May the one who upholds your life be Marduk. May the one who strengthens your father's house be Baba." (Livingstone 1999: 376).

³⁹⁷ Ninurta's epithet is "the lord of border and boundary," *bēl mišri u kudurri*, see Tallqvist 1938: 425, Streck 2001: 517.

³⁹⁸ Artzi 1999: 365; cf. DDD, s.v. Horon. In EA 290:5-21, Abdi-Heba writes to the Egyptian pharaoh: "Here is the deed against the land that Milkilu and Šuardatu did: against the land of the king, my lord, they ordered troops from Gazru, troops from Gimtu, and troops from Qiltu. They seized Rubutu. The land of the king deserted to Hapiru. And now, besides this, a town belonging to Jerusalem, Bit-Ninurta by name, a city of the king, has gone over to the side of the men of Qiltu. May the king give heed to 'Abdi-Heba, your servant, and send archers to restore the land of the king to the king." W. Moran, *The el-Amarna Letters* (Baltimore 1992), 334.

his message, and they are like Hapiru. So now 'Abdi-Aširta has written to the troops: "Assemble in the temple of Ninurta, and let us fall upon Gubla. Look, there is no one that will save it from u[s]. Then let us drive out the mayors from the country that the entire country be joined to the Hapiru, and let an alliance <be made> to the entire country. Then will (our) sons and daughters be at peace forever. Should even so the king come out, the entire country will be against him and what will he do to us?"³⁹⁹

The step taken by Abdi-Aširta virtually leads to the establishment of the state of Amurru. His extremist programme is the complete overthrow (*nudab-bir*; l. 34) of the Pharaonic system in 'all the lands' under the ruler of Gubla (Artzi 1999: 366). The mention of the temple of Ninurta in this context, as the place for the assembly of the Canaanite population for national war, presupposes knowledge of Ninurta's war-like and peaceful characteristics. For Abdi-Aširta, this *bīt Ninurta* is the place for formulating alliance (*kittu*) or covenant which involved an oath (EA 74:36, 42). P. Artzi argues that the syncretistic identity of Canaanite Anat and Ninurta provides a background for the two-faced message of Abdi-Aširta (1999: 366): the "Sanctuary of Ninurta" housed both aspects of Ninurta – that of military power (Anat) "as an answer to the expectations of the oppressed, rebel *habīrū*, fighting for freedom and for a stable, secure ownership of their land" (*ibid.* 367) – and the other aspect of this double divinity:

represents just (!) defensive war and legality of ownership of the land which is the primary basis of the expected safety and peace. True, warlike 'Anat also expresses (after much imploring!) her inclination to happiness and peace. But this is really insignificant in comparison with the general characterisation of Ninurta, the defender of oppressed poor [Lambert 1960: 119] ... We can envisage that this sanctuary of 'Anat-Ninurta was a fitting place for the establishment of the "habīru-state" of the oppressed population of Egyptian-ruled (northern) Canaan and Amurru, now in revolution (Artzi 1999: 366-67).

Tablet of Destinies

The Tablet of Destinies was one of the cosmic "bonds" which chained together the various parts of the Mesopotamian cosmos, like some of the Mesopotamian temples and cities. It is called "the bond of supreme power" (l. 1) and "the link of the Canopy of Anu and Ganšir" (l. 5) in the Neo-Assyrian descriptive text (George 1986: 133). Holding of the cosmic bonds (*markasu*) was a privilege which conferred absolute control over the universe on its keeper (*ibid.* 139). The Tablet of Destinies bore a seal impression (see En. el. IV 121f) and by that sealing, human and divine destinies were irrevocably decreed (George 1986: 140f).

In *Enūma eliš*, the Tablet of Destinies is associated with the powers of Anu (I 159 *anūtu*); in the Epic of Anzū, it personifies or holds within, the powers

³⁹⁹ W. Moran, *The el-Amarna Letters* (Baltimore 1992), 143.

of Enlil (*ellilūtu*).⁴⁰⁰ The Tablet of Destinies is owned by Tiamat in *Enūma eliš*, then by Qingu (I 157), from whom Marduk takes it back (IV 121), and returns it to Ea (V 65) as a *rēš tāmarti*. The god's name in V 65 is written as ^d60, which refers to Ea, not to Anu (see Parpola 1993: 182, n. 89). As a precious object of the gods, the Tablet of Destinies belonged to the same category of concepts as *me* "powers" and *giš-hur* "patterns." In the mythic fragment "Ninurta and the Turtle," the terms *me*, *giš-hur* and the Tablet of Destinies (*dub-nam-tar-ra*) are treated as synonymous (Kramer 1984: 232, n. 9). There is an explanation of why the Tablet of Destinies was bound to the "powers of Anu" in the Creation Epic:

Marduk's role as the god who set the celestial bodies in the sky and regulated astronomical movements required the authority of the sky god Anu, and so he took the power of Anu, *anūtu*, from Qingu, and formed the sky and its heavenly bodies from the slain opponents, many of which have names which are also given to stars or parts of constellations. (Dalley 1997: 170.)

In the Epic of Anzū, the tablet is in the possession of Enlil. Anzū steals it, and then it is rescued by Ninurta who probably returns it to Enlil. However, in the Creation Epic it is not described how the opponent (Tiamat) took possession of the Tablet of Destinies, which implies that the whole story concerning the Tablet of Destinies in the Creation Epic has been taken over from the Anzū Epic without much modification. When the Tablet first appears in the Creation Epic (I 157), it is already in the possession of Tiamat, who hands it over to her new husband Qingu. As the story demands, the Tablet must be in the possession of an enemy in order to enable Marduk to establish justice in the world by retrieving it. If we are still inclined to ask how Tiamat took the Tablet into her possession, a speculation might be offered that by killing Apsū and Mummu, Ea obtained the Tablet of Destinies, but it "returned to Tiamat."⁴⁰¹ A similar situation occurs in the Sumerian "Ninurta and the Turtle" story where Anzud has carried the tablet away from Enki; Ninurta subsequently defeats Anzud, but the tablet then "returns to Abzu" (l. 4: abzu-šè ba-an-gi₄).⁴⁰² Abzu, as the source of wisdom, is a natural place for

⁴⁰⁰ The terms *belūtu* and *ellilūtu* "lordship" are quasi-synonymous, according to the observations of van Dijk 1976: 133. According to the prologues to the "law-codes" of Lipit-Eštar and Hammurapi, *ellilūtu* was particularly fitting for lawgiving (see Dalley 1997: 170).

⁴⁰¹ According to the ritual commentary, Ea could be considered identical to Apsū or Tiamat: "Ea is present as the Apsū. The Apsū is the sea (Tāmtu). The sea is Ereškigal" (Livingstone 1986: 190f, 201).

⁴⁰² Alster 1972: 120. One may compare in this context the ritual text VAT 10099 where it is said that "Bēl pushed Ea away from his breast and sent [him] down to the Apsū" – ^dé-a ša ina tu-li-šu ^bēl i-dar-su-ma a-na apsū ú-še-rid-[su], see Livingstone 1986: 116f. The Tablet of Destinies was always fastened to the chest of the gods and when Marduk retrieves it from Qingu, his action is described as *irtuš itmuh*. Enlil's bath in the Anzū Epic can also, in a sense, be regarded as "returning to Apsū" in the course of which he is "defeated" – when he "divests himself of his garments for his regular wash, the Tablet of Destinies is one of the insignia of kingship that he must remove" (George 1986: 139).

the Tablet of Destinies to reside at the beginning of time. Tiamat got it from her dead husband Apsû as a rightful inheritance. According to Berossus, wisdom came from the sea in the person of Oannes, which can be seen as parallel to Tiamat's primordial ownership of the Tablet of Destinies.

There are several similarities between the Sumerian "Ninurta and the Turtle" and the Babylonian myth of the twenty-one "poultices" (LKA 146). In the latter myth, the seven *apkallû* of Eridu are depicted as keepers of the Tablet of Destinies (Lambert 1980). It relates how Nabû went furiously before Ea in Apsû, which might be compared to *Ninurta's journey to Eridu*. The reason for his exasperation is not given. If we are allowed to combine this myth with "Ninurta and the Turtle," then it seems reasonable to assume that the reason for Nabû's fury is the loss of the Tablet of Destinies which probably "has returned to Apsû." Then Ea shouted aloud for the seven *apkallû* of Eridu and ordered them to bring forth the Tablet of Destinies: "Bring the writing of my Anu-ship, that it may be read before me, that I may decree the destiny for Muati (= Nabû), the son who makes me happy, that he may achieve his triumph (*irnitšašu lūšakšidu*)." The Tablet of Destinies of the great gods is duly brought, Ea decrees the destiny for Nabû and, by a special dispensation, grants him something indicated by the obscure term *a-gu-gu-ta* (obv. 10), which meaning is probably related to the *agû* – "crown" (Pomponio 1978: 167, n. 51). The following lines explain that the sage Anelilda (sixth of the seven sages of Eridu) made and gave to Nabû twenty-one "poultices" (a. ugu = *mêlu*) to take to the upper world: "Twenty-one poultices composed by Ea, which Nabû brought up from the 'House of Peace' where the *mušhuš*-monster gathers eggs/gemstones from the Abzu" (Lambert 1980: 78-80). Twenty-one lines list them – they are combinations of vegetable and mineral substances mostly well known for their medicinal use. The purpose of the myth is probably to explain the divine origin of priestly prescriptions.⁴⁰³

Ninurta is, in other ways, also connected with the tablets of extraordinary appearance. The authorship of *Lugale* and *Angim* is ascribed to the god Ea in the late library catalogue.⁴⁰⁴ In this context, it may be relevant to mention that copies of *Lugale* and *Angim* in Assurbanipal's library were inscribed on tablets of a unique appearance. The majority of the Nineveh manuscripts of these works "are written in fine script on tablets with rulings at all four margins – double ruled on the left – and very sharp and precise rulings between lines. Firing holes are always present on these tablets, and the edges, where the side meets the inscribed surface, are sharp." (Cooper 1978: 35.) This circumstance does not prove that the manuscripts of *Lugale* and *Angim* were considered to be related to the Tablet of Destinies, but it definitely shows the extreme value which was assigned to these writings.

The name of Ninurta's temple in Nippur, *é-šu-me-ša₄*, was interpreted as *É gi-mir par-ši ha-am-mu*, "the temple which gathers all divine powers." The epithet is probably related to Ninurta's function of "gathering what was

dispersed" (*Lugale* 356). The gathering presupposes record-keeping. According to the *adab* to *Ninurta*, Ur-Ninurta C 31f, Enlil has given the great divine powers to Ninurta for safekeeping:

Your father who engendered you, the shepherd of the gods, lord Nunamnir, has placed the great divine powers of heaven and earth in your hands for safe keeping [me gal-gal an-ki-a sag-KÉŠ-bi šu-za ma-ra-ni-in-ge-en].

'Giving for safekeeping' (Akkadian *ana maššarūtīm nadānum*) is a legal expression. According to the Code of Hammurapi (CH) §122:

If a man intends to give silver, gold, or anything else to another man for safekeeping, he shall exhibit before witnesses anything which he intends to give, he shall draw up a written contract, and (in this manner) he shall give goods for safekeeping. (Roth 1995: 104.)

Divine order here reflects the terrestrial order. If Enlil had given the *me*'s for safekeeping to Ninurta, he would have certainly drawn up a written contract (*riksātum* in CH) on them. An Assyrian descriptive text calls the Tablet of Destinies *rikis Enlilūti* "the bond of Enlilship" (George 1986: 133-34). This phrase may be interpreted as "the agreement by which supreme rule is given." Ninurta is thus the legitimate possessor of the supreme divine powers on the basis of a contract or a "holy script." It is only natural to suppose that this contract is recorded on the Tablet of Destinies which Enlil holds. Consider also CH §7:

If a man should purchase silver, gold, a slave, a slave woman, an ox, a sheep, a donkey, or anything else whatsoever, from a son of a man or from a slave of a man without witness or a contract – or if he accepts the goods for safekeeping – that man is thief, he shall be killed. (Roth 1995: 82.)

This is exactly what Anzû did in the Epic of Anzû (I 81-82) – *tupšimāte ikšuda qātušu ellilūta ilteqē nadû paršī* "his hand reached out to the Tablet of Destinies, he took away powers of Enlil, the powers were hurled!" Anzû acquires the powers of Enlil and the *me*'s "for safekeeping without witness or a contract" and he is to be killed as an unlawful owner of the power. After retrieving the Tablet of Destinies from Anzû, Ninurta has to return the tablet to his father Enlil (II 23 *ana abi ālidika litūru paršī*), and only then is he granted "full possession of lordship, the totality of *me*'s" (*belūta tagdamar kullat gimri paršī*, see SAA Anzu III 124). It means that although the *me*'s lawfully return to his father, the powers are given to him "for safekeeping." By his act of killing Anzû, Ninurta has created an established order in the "mountains" – "who has like you created order of mountains" (*paraš šadī*, III 125). Our understanding of the fate of the Tablet of Destinies in the Epic of Anzû is hindered by the lack of textual evidence for lines 77-112 of the third tablet.

The holy scripture and divine powers were closely linked in Jewish traditions as well, where Moses "received the Torah direct from God in the form of two tablets of stone containing laws and commandments, inscribed with the finger of God on both sides" (Dalley 1998: 166). The tablets which Moses obtains on Mount Sinai are used by him according to the same legal for-

⁴⁰³ W. G. Lambert, *BiOr* 13 (1956), 144.

⁴⁰⁴ W. G. Lambert, *JCS* 16 (1962), 46.

malities as in Mesopotamia. When Moses descended from the mountain and perceived that his people had made the idol of the golden calf, he is recorded as having broken the tablets given by God (Ex 32:19). This recalls the Mesopotamian legal expression *tuppa hepû* “to break the tablet” which means the nullification or interruption of a contract. The consequences are also recorded in the Hebrew Bible – Moses had to revisit God to renew the Covenant (Ex 34).

Ninurta as Farmer

As Th. Jacobsen has pointed out, the term *énsi* originally meant “farmer” and the same title as the epithet of king denoted the king’s charge with the economic maintenance of Enlil’s temple (1991: 113f). Ninurta’s title “great *énsi* of Enlil” thus referred to the agricultural obligations of the king, in concordance with those of Ninurta. In the myth of *Ninurta’s journey to Eridu*, Ninurta is depicted as empowered with *me*’s of kingship and ruling of the land. But his powers obtained in the victorious battle also demonstrate his concern for fertility and agriculture. Ch. Penglase has rightly pointed out that “this fertility and creation aspect is another result of victorious encounter in battle” (1994:63).

Consider the passage from iii, 30-33: The awesome glow of your kingship covers the rebellious land, the hero harrows, he establishes his people, shining silver, the treasure of the mountain, you [bring it down] to your father Enlil from the heart of the mountain.⁴⁰⁵

In this passage, harrowing and the battle in the mountains are mentioned in the same breath. It has already been discussed above (see *Ninurta’s akîtu in Nippur* [pp. 61-71]) that the cultic calendar of Nippur presented Ninurta at the *gusisu* feast as the Farmer and that his mythology was employed in the agricultural cycle. It should be pointed out that Ninurta’s stock epithet is *engar (zi) En-líl-lá*, “Enlil’s (faithful) farmer,” and one of his names is *uru₄* “the (divine) Tiller” in the god list An=Anum I 237.⁴⁰⁶ A typical name for a Sumerian peasant is *Ur-dNin-gír-su* “Servant of Ningirsu.”⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ *nam-lugal-zu ni-me-lám-bi ki-bala ì-dul-e / ur-sag-e giš mi-ni-ib-ùr-ùr ukù mi-ni-ib-ge-en-e / kù-za-gìn ni-ga-hur-sag-gá / a-a-zu^den-líl-ra kur-šà-ta mu-na-[ta-e₁₁-dè-en]* (Reisman 1971: 5-6).

⁴⁰⁶ Civil 1994: 98; see also Sigrist 1984: 142; J. Klein, *ASJ* 11, p. 38:86. For Nabû as the god of agriculture, see Pomponio 1978: 195ff, esp. 197, n. 59: Ninurta and Nabû had a common appellation *Ab.ba₆* “father of vegetation” in CT 25:13, 27. Ninurta is “the farmer of Enlil who ploughs the fields” in an *eršemma*, see Cohen 1981: 123, l. 25.

⁴⁰⁷ “... est devenu le nom typique du paysan sumérien, comme l’indiquent les gloses *lú-engar* en sumérien et *ikkaru* en accadien ‘paysan, cultivateur’; c’est une sorte de sobriquet, comme Jacques, ou mieux Jacques Bonhomme, qui désigne, depuis le XVII^e siècle, le paysan français.” See H. Limet, *L’anthroponymie sumérienne dans les documents de la 3^e dynastie d’Ur* (Paris 1968), 124.

Ninurta’s role as the Farmer-god is reflected in the literature. *The Fields of Ninurta*, an unpublished composition going back to the Ur III period, depicts Ninurta in charge of all fields in the Nippur area (Civil 1994: 98). In the Sumerian composition *The Rulers of Lagaš* (see Sollberger 1967), Ningirsu is credited with the invention of agricultural implements (ll. 1-16):

After the flood had swept over and brought about the destruction of the countries; when mankind was made to endure, and the seed of mankind was preserved and the black-headed people all rose; when An and Enlil called the name of mankind and established rulership, but kingship and the crown of the city had not yet come out from heaven, and Ningirsu had not yet established for the multitude of well-guarded (?) people the pickaxe, the spade, the earth basket and the plough, which mean life for the Land – in those days, the carefree youth of man lasted for 100 years and, following his upbringing, he lasted for another 100 years.

The Sumerian composition *The Farmer’s Instructions*, which is dedicated to Ninurta, advises on matters of agriculture, and these are called “the advice of Ninurta.” This Sumerian “Georgics” belongs to the same genre of agricultural instructions as in the *Works and Days* of Hesiod (ll. 465-603) or the *Georgics* of Virgil.⁴⁰⁸

The astronomical compendium *Mul.apin* associates Ninurta with Mercury, as the star which brings rain and flood if it appears in winter (II i 54-57). Mercury is otherwise a harbinger of water in whatever month it was visible, either as a morning or an evening star.⁴⁰⁹ Rising in Nisan, its appearance announced the beginning of the agricultural cycle. On the other hand, the incantation prayer to Ninurta as Sirius calls him “true farmer who heaps up the piles of grain.”⁴¹⁰

The direct result of Ninurta’s victorious battle against Asag is the emergence of agriculture. W. G. Lambert has commented on the connection between the tradition of Ninurta blocking the primordial waters and the subsequent emergence of agriculture with Gen 1:9-12, where God moves the waters to one spot, after which the plants can grow:

One difference is due to each writer’s world view. To the Sumerians irrigation canals were as much created by the gods as rivers, and agriculture was a divine ordinance. So in this myth cultivated plants grow as soon as conditions allow. To the Israelites nature was created by God, so plants generally grew as part of creation. Agriculture was a human invention, though the skills of those responsible were god-given. ... Thus the knowledge that the monster-slayer in each case was also the founder of arable farming encourages us to assume that the biblical version derives from Baal mythology and should be considered as based on the same tradition as lies behind the Sumerian myth ... Further, the reinterpretation of the drying up of the (cosmic) sea in Isa. li 9-10 as a figure of the Exodus, and the reference to the drying up of perennial streams in Ps lxxiv 15 in the same

⁴⁰⁸ The Sumerian and Greek works are compared by P. Walcot in *Hesiod and the Near East* (Cardiff 1966), 93ff; see also West 1997: 306ff.

⁴⁰⁹ Koch-Westenholz 1995: 128; see SAA 8 157, 503; SAA 10 224.

⁴¹⁰ *ikkaru kēnu muššappik karê ašnan mugarrin nissabi* (Mayer 1990: 470, ll. 5f); see Streck 2001: 515f.

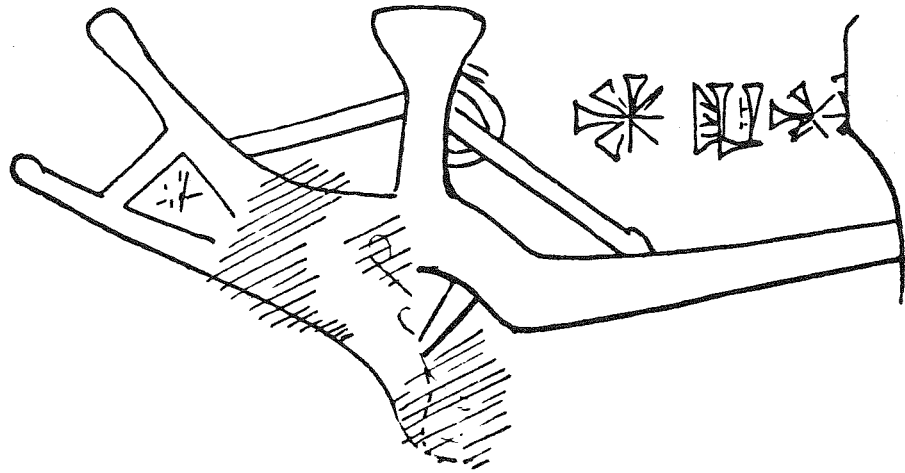


Fig. 10 Ningirsu's Plough. [after V. Scheil, *RA* 34 (1937), 42]

context as the slaying of Rahab, Tannin and Leviathan, surely supports a derivation of all these mythologems from Baal traditions. (Lambert 1988: 139.)⁴¹¹

The plough was a symbol of Ninurta/Ningirsu (Fig. 10).⁴¹² It was probably also his symbolic weapon, with which he subdued his enemies, as becomes clear from the epithet of Nabû in the clay cylinder BM 34147, B 5 – “plough, who extinguishes the enemy” (*epinnu muballû ayyābi*).⁴¹³ The hoe is attested as Ninurta's weapon in the Sumerian *Song of the Hoe* (ll. 59-70), and this passage curiously mentions Šara and the god of fire (Gibil) as the associates of Ninurta. Exactly the same gods are summoned to battle against Anzû before Ningirsu in the OB version of the Anzû Epic (SAA Anzu, p. 32):

Song of the Hoe (ll. 59-70): The king who measured up the hoe and who passes his time in its tracks, the hero Ninurta, has introduced working with the hoe into the rebel lands. He subdues any city that does not obey its lord. Towards heaven he roars like a storm, earthwards he strikes like a dragon. Šara sat down on Enlil's knees, and Enlil gave him what he had desired: he had mentioned the mace, the club, arrows and quiver, and the hoe. Dumuzid is the one who makes the upper land fertile. Gibil made his hoe raise its head towards the heavens – he caused the hoe, sacred indeed, to be refined with fire. The Anuna were rejoicing.

⁴¹¹ On the comparison of Ninurta to WS Baal, see *Ninurta Mythology and the Myths of Kingship* (pp. 171-86).

⁴¹² See V. Scheil, *RA* 34 (1937), 42 and J. Black and A. Green *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (1992), 149.

⁴¹³ See Lambert 1978: 84; in the commentary on this line, p. 94f, he refers to *epinnu* as the epithet of Ištar (e.g., *epinnu ezzu* “the furious plough”) in unpublished duplicates to the Ištar hymn (K 5122 and K 10887) which is certainly related, in my view, to Ninurta's plough. It might be attested as a weapon also in SAA 2 6:587, if one reads ^dMAŠ instead of AN.BAR.

There were other gods depicted with the symbolic plough. Among them is the snake god Ninazu/Tišpak from the Diyala region, a god iconographically seated on the dragon *mušhuššu* and with whom Ninurta was later identified. Some iconographic representations show Ninazu with snakes rising from his feet and holding a plough (Wiggermann 1997: 38).

Ninurta's battles and other mythological events could be interpreted in terms of an “agrarian mysticism.” For example, in the *Song of the Hoe* the hoe and its owner are depicted in terms that are unmistakably reminiscent of royal ideology, the farmer being “the king,” and the hoe subdues the “rebel weed” and extends the land for its owner (ll. 100ff):

It is you, hoe, that extend (*dagal*) the good agricultural land! The hoe (*al*) subdues for its owner (*lugal*) any agricultural lands that have been recalcitrant (*bal*) against their owner (*lugal*), any agricultural lands that have not submitted to their owner (*lugal*). It chops the heads off the vile esparto grasses, yanks them out at their roots, and tears at their stalks. The hoe (*al*) also subdues (*algaga*) the *hirin* weeds.

During the Neo-Assyrian ritual of the substitute king, the real king in hiding is consistently referred to as “the farmer” in the letters of the scholars. There are other numerous examples of agricultural allegory in the scholarly mystical works and in the mythological texts where various gods, who in other explanatory texts appear to have been “defeated,” are linked with some types of grain. For example, in BM 34035 corn is equated with the “eyes of Tiamat,” ox fodder with Enlil, wheat with Antu and barley with Anu (Livingstone 1986: 163). The lord of the underworld, Enmešarra, who determines the destinies in the dark realm behind the surface of the earth, is called in an incantation “great lord without whom Ningirsu cannot direct dike and canal or create a furrow” (Livingstone 1986: 164; K 48 rev. 4-5).

Very possibly the agrarian kind of mysticism was used in rituals. When, in the Assyrian royal ritual, the king opens the *harû-vat* in the race, he is explained as representing “Marduk who [defeat]ed Tiamat with his penis” (SAA 3 38:18'). A. Livingstone comments on the passage that it involves:

superimposition of one metaphor on another. These are: 1. The equation of various deities, in these texts conceived of as defeated and sent to the underworld, with specific types of grain. ... 2. The metaphor of the male organ as a seeder plough.⁴¹⁴

Various mythological events were interpreted in terms of farming and agriculture:

It is possible that the idea of the death of Dumuzi as a mythical metaphor for the death of vegetation was extended to apply to the ripening of corn, when the grains fall from the husk, the vanishing of the grains into the earth as seed, and other uses of them. Moreover, VAT 10099 and dupls. par. 12 clearly equates the seed going into the furrows with Marduk's defeated enemies, and there is other

⁴¹⁴ Livingstone 1991: 5f; Cf. W. G. Lambert *RA* 76 (1982), 94 and Parpola 1997: xci-xcii, n. 114.

evidence that it was not Dumuzi in particular, but being a defeated, dead, or dying god which was significant. (Livingstone 1986: 162-63.)

The same symbolism also occurs in other Near Eastern cultures. Baal's loss of kingship is described in the Ugaritic myth as dessication of the furrows of the fields (KTU 1.6 iii 22-iv 5). We can learn from the passage cited below that Baal's obligations involved the caretaking of the furrows of the ploughland. Baal is called "master of the earth" (*b'l arš*), which is also a probable etymology of Sumerian Nin-urta(k):

'Ilu calls aloud to Girl 'Anatu: Listen, Girl 'Anatu: (Go) say to Šapšu, luminary of the gods: Dried up are the furrows of the fields, O Šapšu, dried up are the furrows of 'Ilu's fields, Ba'lu is neglecting the furrows of the plowland. Where is Mighty Ba'lu? Where is the Prince, master of the earth? (Pardee 1997: 271.)

Another passage in the Ugaritic Baal cycle (KTU 1.6. ii 30-37) describes Anat's treatment of Môtû fully in terms of grain processing. Môtû is treated as corn, threshed (?), winnowed, burned, ground, but not with any direct positive purpose with regard to fertility (Healey 1983: 250):

She seizes Môtû, son of 'Ilu: with a knife she splits him, with a winnowing-fork she winnows him, with fire she burns him, with grindstones she pulverizes him, in the field she sows him; the birds eat his flesh, the fowl finish off his body parts, flesh(-eaters) grow fat on flesh. (Pardee 1997: 270.)

The positive values of fertility are ruled out by the sterility consequent upon burning and by scattering. Môtû is destroyed by being eaten by birds (Healey 1983: 250). When Ba'lu sits on his royal throne, Môtû comes to describe his fate as being "scattered/sowed in the sea" (KTU 1.6.v 11-19):

On account of you, Ba'lu, I experienced abasement, on account of you I experienced winnowing with <the winnowing-fork, on account of you I experienced splitting with> the knife, on account of you I experienced burning in fire, on account of you [I experienced] pulverization with grindstones, on account of [you] I experienced [being strained] with a sieve, on account of you I experienced [scattering] in the fields, on account of you I experienced sowing in the sea. (Pardee 1997: 272.)

Ninurta as Tree

There are numerous Sumerian passages where Ninurta or the king is compared to a tree. We know that the tree of life in Sumerian mythology is the seat of the gods destined for the king, whose roots are in Abzu (van Dijk 1983: 13). At the same time the king *is* the tree, or an image of the tree (Kramer 1974: 171f).

Cf. Šulgi D 32-35: You (= Šulgi) are as strong as an *ildag* tree planted by the side of a watercourse. You are a sweet sight, like a fertile *mes* tree laden with colourful fruit. You are cherished by Ninegala, like a date palm of holy Dilmun. You have a pleasant shade, like a sappy cedar growing amid the cypresses.

This can also be seen from the passage from *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* (ll. 518ff), a message put into the mouth of Enmerkar's messenger:

This is what my master has spoken, this is what he has said. My king is like a huge *mes* tree, son of Enlil; this tree has grown high, uniting heaven and earth; its crown reaches heaven, its trunk is set upon the earth. He who is made to shine forth in lordship and kingship, Enmerkar, the son of Utu, has given me a clay tablet.

From this passage it is clear that, already in the third millennium, the Sumerian king was held to be a personification of the Cosmic Tree.⁴¹⁵ The Cosmic Tree, like the Cosmic Mountain, was considered to be a bond between heaven and earth. This cosmic bond (*axis mundi*) between the two regions could be imagined to materialize as a city (e.g., Nippur) or as a temple (e.g., Ekur). Most imaginary terms for the same notion were the Cosmic Tree (the tree of life) or the mountain (kur-gal or dur-an-ki). Most often, the tree of life connected with the kingship was specified as the *mes*-tree. Like the divine King, Ninurta was identified with the *mes*-tree:

Lugale 188-89 (Enlil:) The Lord, the authority of the E-kur, the King who imposes the strong shackle for his father, a cedar rooted in the abzu, a crown with broad shade.

Cf. 310-11 (Šarur:) Lord, great *mes* tree in a watered field, Hero, who is like you? My master, beside you there is no one else, nor can anyone stand like you, nor is anyone born like you.

A Tigi to Ninurta for Šulgi, l. 2: Ninurta, *meš* tree with a broad shining canopy (^dnin-urta ^{giš}meš pa mul dagal-la [...])⁴¹⁶

Because the king carries the sceptre, he is a full-fledged ambassador of the divine and through his coronation he is identified with the cosmic tree.⁴¹⁷ In a Sumerian incantation which was the literary predecessor for the opening section of the twelfth tablet of the *utukkū lemnūtu* series, the king is compared to Enki and the *kiškanû*-tree:

The king is created in a pure place like a *kiškanû*-tree, Enki is created in a pure place, like a *kiškanû*-tree. His flood fills the earth with abundance. His place of walking is its shade which, like the appearance of lapis lazuli, stretches across the midst of the sea. (Geller 1980: 24.)

An incantation concerned with placing a black *kiškanû*-tree at the head of a sick man describes the palm tree in terms of kingship (ll. 50ff):

Incantation. O date palm, pure and resplendent, set in the orchards, as a purifier of the body, suitable for the (offering) table, as a bond of the reign (bala níg.kéš.da = *markas palê*), suitable for the kingship. The mighty date palm, with heroic strength, stands in the furrow of a pure place, its might reaching to heaven. (Geller 1980: 29.)

⁴¹⁵ On this problem in general, see G. Widengren, *The King and the Tree of Life in Ancient Near Eastern Religion* (Uppsala 1951).

⁴¹⁶ Edition in Sjöberg 1976: 416ff (= Šulgi T).

⁴¹⁷ van Dijk 1983: 13f; in a Neo-Assyrian colophon, "the Date Palm" appears as a logogram for the king Sennacherib, ^[giš]gišimmar (= *šar*) kur^dAš-šur, see R. Borger, *BiOr* 30 (1973) 171, IV 48; cf. MSL 12, p. 94:34: ^{giš}gišimmar = *šar-ru* "the date-palm= King."

In an Assyrian incantation relevant to the ceremony of investiture, the holy tree is brought from Dilmun for the throne of the king.⁴¹⁸ The incantation (K 4906+, K 9276+) begins with the words “Tree of the Sea, grown in the holy place, oak, *mēsu*, ebony, tree of the sea, brought from Dilmun, whose destiny is decreed by Enlil...” (Berlejung 1996: 21). Accordingly, the material for king’s throne was thought to originate in the sacred tree.⁴¹⁹

The interpretative model of Assyrian or Mesopotamian religion known as the “Assyrian Tree of Life” has been recently generated by S. Parpola (1993; 1995). More often than not, this interpretation is held to be controversial.⁴²⁰ According to Parpola, the Mesopotamian sacred tree or the Tree of Life was the embodiment of one divine entity, expression of monotheistic belief. The Assyrian sacred tree is occasionally presented antropomorphically, “in the form of a crowned man shown from the front, with pairwise limbs carefully depicted in symmetrical position” (Parpola 1995: 386).

Ninurta’s epithet is frequently “overseer of the equilibrium of the universe” (*sāniq mithurti*). The equilibrium of the universe was probably envisaged as the trunk of the Cosmic Tree. The esoteric meaning of the name of Gilgamesh, as deduced by S. Parpola, was “he who balanced the tree of equilibrium,” hidden into the cryptographic signs ^dGIŠ.GÍN.MAŠ (see Parpola 1998). As the perfect king was the icon of Ninurta, he was the embodiment of the sacred tree as well. The king was the perfect man, uniting divine and human powers in his body. As the embodiment of the sacred tree, he was considered to be a cosmic bond, holding cosmic cables in his hands and directing events on the earth. While the king was the perfect man, Ninurta should be called the “perfect male,” the warrior who restores the symmetry when it is unbalanced.⁴²¹ The descriptions of the ideal king of Sumer in the royal hymns also apply to the Mesopotamian king in general:

... king of Sumer was the perfect, ideal man: physically powerful and distinguished-looking; intellectually without peer; spiritually, a paragon of piety and probity. ... Even more impressive than his majestic appearance were his physical powers, his courage and bravery. (Kramer 1974: 171.)

The symbolism of the cosmic tree was very complex and Ninurta could certainly at times be seen as the embodiment of the cosmic tree, as the maintainer of symmetry. The sacred tree is “flesh of the gods,” according to a passage in the Erra Epic, where Marduk addresses Erra (I 149-53):

⁴¹⁸ In *Enki and the World Order* (II. 221f) Enki decrees the fate of the land of Meluhha: “Black land, may your trees be great trees, may your forests be forests of highland *mes* trees! Chairs made from them will grace royal palaces!”

⁴¹⁹ Cf. the entry in Hh IV 113a (CAD M/2 s.v. *mēsu* A, p. 33f): *giš.gu.za.giš.mes = (kussû) šá me-e-si*.

⁴²⁰ See J. Cooper, *JAOS* 120 (2000), 430ff; Porter 2000: 214ff; E. Frahm, *WdO* 31 (2000-2001), 31ff.

⁴²¹ Ninurta is called *zikru qardu* “male, warrior” in STT 340, see K. Watanabe 1991: 350 23. The “perfect maleness” of Ninurta is emphasised in the Akkadian translation of *Lugale* 31, *zikaru mutlellû* “exalted male.”

Now then warrior Erra, as concerns that deed you said you would do, where is the wood, flesh of the gods, suitable for the lord of the uni[verse], the sacred tree, splendid stripling, perfect for lordship, whose roots thrust down a hundred leagues through the waters of the vast ocean to the depths of hell, whose crown brushed [Anu’s] heaven on high? (Foster 1996: 765.)

The epithet of the sacred tree in this passage, “the splendid stripling” reflects a Sumero-Akkadian word-play on *mēsu*-tree and Sumerian *mes* “young man.” This “stripling” is said to have enormous proportions, extending from the depths of hell to up heaven. An Assyrian literary text similarly describes God in terms of divine powers incarnated as the limbs of Ninurta and his bodily functions. In this syncretic hymn, Ninurta is depicted as the macranthropos, whose organs are equated with different gods. This hymn has survived in two manuscripts from Assur (KAR 102 and 328). The Sultantepe tablet (STT 118 rev.) is parallel, but not a duplicate. There is evidence for the repeated copying and importance of the text in Assyria. A new edition of KAR 102 is offered in Appendix A (see Text 1 [p. 205f]). The Middle Assyrian signs which survive in extant copies suggest that the present text is a revision of an early Assyrian composition, dating perhaps to the twelfth century (Porter 2000: 241). The use of this text after some five hundred years in an Assyrian scribal school’s curriculum indicates that it had, over time, achieved the status of a minor classic (*ibid.*). The surviving portions of the text describe the upper part of Ninurta’s body, especially the minute details of his human head as manifestations of other divinities, thus providing a framework of cooperation of the gods in a single anthropomorphic structure.⁴²² As the gods are also the manifestations of nature, Ninurta can be seen as a pantheistically projected Man or microcosm, a Macrocosmic Adam. As B. Porter has commented:

The poet has used the poem to play on the spectrum of potential meanings inherent in the multivalent conception of *ilu*, using its rich variety to paint a vivid image of Ninurta’s impressiveness and power as a god who is by turns a divine person, an astral phenomenon, and an embodiment of all important earthly activities and powers – in short, a god, or rather *ilu, par excellence*. ... The poet’s superlative praise of Ninurta, however, picturing him as the locus of almost all divine qualities and powers, reflects strong attraction to a single god, which has led the poet to focus on that god’s superlative qualities and represent the rest of the pantheon, for the moment at least, as insignificant in comparison.⁴²³

According to this hymn, Ninurta has cosmic dimensions, and the description might be compared to that of Ningirsu in Gudea’s dream, where he appeared as “one like heaven and earth in extent” (Cyl. A v 13). In *Lugale* 75f, “the Lord arose, touching the sky, with one step (?) he covered a league.” Ninurta’s frequent epithet is *šurbû* “very great,” and in the syncretic hymn, Ninurta’s organs are compared to heaven and earth in size, and have infinite

⁴²² In the Babylonian *Göttertypentext*, Ninurta is said to have a human body ([*p*]a-ag-[*ru*] LÚ), see F. Köcher MIO 1 (1953), 66 ii 4.

⁴²³ Porter 2000: 251; cf. Livingstone 1986: 101.

cosmic dimensions. A distinctive anthropomorphic description is similarly given to Marduk in En. el. I 87-100.⁴²⁴ The gigantic and majestic size of the god (Ninurta/Marduk) had a legacy in the Jewish speculations about the cosmic size of the demiurgic angel, which was a hypostatic form of God (Stroumsa 1983: 287f). The representation of God as a divine body with gigantic or cosmic dimensions does not have its ultimate origin in pre-Platonic Orphic conceptions (*ibid.* 269), but is accordingly already found in ancient Mesopotamian texts. The gods were so described in ancient Greece as well; such representations had been current in Greek thought for a very long time:

Inside the Greek world, representations of the cosmos as a macranthropos, with a head (the heaven), a belly or a body (the sea or the ether), feet (the earth), and eyes (the sun and the moon) are found, with some variations, in the Greek Magical Papyri, the Oracle of Sarapis in Macrobius, the Hermetic Corpus, and already in an Orphic fragment, where the cosmos is the body of Zeus. (Stroumsa 1983: 269-70.)

Both Christians and Gnostics adopted and transformed the Mesopotamian-Jewish conception of the hypostatic form of God. In my opinion, this hymn to Ninurta can be plausibly viewed as a predecessor of the macranthropomorphic depictions of God in later Jewish literature. In the Assyrian hymn, Ninurta is the anthropomorphic *mes*-tree, embodying all the gods, in concordance with the double meaning of the Sumerian word *mes*.⁴²⁵ The most effective tool against biblical anthropomorphisms was the Platonic concept of God as a purely immaterial being, but the encounter between Jewish thought and Platonic philosophy was severed after Philo. The Jews and Christians conceived of God in human terms, relying on biblical verses such as Isa 66:1: “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool,” according to Origen’s testimony, which was based on a rabbinic conception known to him (Stroumsa 1983: 271). The notion of *shi’ur qomah* “a tall structure” is the expression used in Hebrew texts of the rabbinic period to refer to God’s body (*ibid.* 273). Also, the Hermetic tractate *Poimandres* attests, under possible Jewish influence, the duality between the invisible and formless supreme God (*Nous*) and the hypostatic form of his Son, the Primordial Man (*ibid.* 274). In Judaism of the first Christian century, there existed a cluster of mythologoumena about the archangelic hypostasis of God, the First Adam, the true image of God who bore God’s name and had created the world at his command, whose body possessed cosmic dimensions. This figure is attested, e.g., in Jewish *Shi’ur Qomah* material and as two revelatory beings in the book of Elchasai (*ibid.* 279).

⁴²⁴ Arbel 1999-2000: 349-50.

⁴²⁵ Sumerian *mes* sometimes corresponds to Akkadian *eṭlu* in the lexical lists (see CAD s.v.), and *eṭlu gitmālu* “the perfect man” is a frequent epithet of the king. The conception of *mes* both as “king” and “the sacred tree” was most probably current in ancient scholars’ speculations, much as the Greek *phōs* was an important term in Hermetism, meaning both “man” and “light” depending on the accentuation.



Fig. 11 The winged disc assisting Assyrian troops in battle (on a glazed wall tile from Assur). [British Museum]

This anthropomorphic mythical conception lies in the background of the oldest christological hymn in Philippians 2:6-11. In order to achieve the metamorphosis into the form of a servant, Christ is said to have emptied himself. According to the original conception from which this description derives, Christ was previously “in the form of God,” and his cosmic body filled the whole world, being identical to *pleroma* (Stroumsa 1983: 283):

Incarnation, therefore, literally implied that Christ emptied the world (or the *pleroma*) that is, in a sense, himself. The hymn adds that Christ was given by God “the name which is above every name (vs 9), in other words, the divine Name. This formula is strikingly similar to the tradition about Yahoel-Meṭatron, according to which he received his Master’s name ... incarnation implies for Christ giving up the greatness of his previous gigantic dimensions. (Stroumsa 1983: 283.)

In the *Odes of Solomon* also, Christ is said to have diminished his greatness (Syriac *rabūtā*) through his kindness and showed himself to his devotee in his simple form of Helper (Stroumsa 1983: 283f). Accordingly, the Assyrian hymn to Ninurta as macranthropos describes the God in his state of fullness or *pleroma*. The king, as the incarnation or icon of Ninurta, is the visible form of the God who has “emptied” his greatness in order to be incarnated.

There is an old theory of B. Pering (1932-33) which interprets the winged disc hovering over the Assyrian sacred tree as a depiction of Ninurta. Pering claims that the Assyrian winged disc resembles an eagle. He believes that Ninurta had the eagle for his symbolic bird, given his association with the monster eagle Anzû. Some iconographic representations of the Assyrian winged disc make it probable that it was sometimes considered to depict

Ninurta. In one relief, the winged disc containing a divine figure who holds a bow is depicted as assisting the Assyrian troops of Assurnasirpal II in battle (Fig. 11). Assisting the troops in battle fits well with Ninurta as the warrior god battling against the enemies of the country. During the time of Assurnasirpal, which witnessed a peaking of Ninurta's cult, it may well be true that the winged disc was believed to hold the god Ninurta, but for the other periods of Assyrian art, it seems to be more natural to assume that the winged disc represents the god Aššur (see Parpola 1993).

Ninurta and the Mountain of Stones

The most esoteric section of the *Lugale* Epic is certainly the one where Ninurta judges various stones, cursing and blessing them. This scene is evidently that of a judgement and can be approached with various methods taking on different presuppositions. Ninurta is here already the Victor who judges his earlier enemies. There is certainly an analogy with the acts of the terrestrial king after the victorious battle. One might compare it with the description of Sennacherib, how he judged the inhabitants of Ekron after his victory, releasing the innocent and coercing the guilty ones into exile:

I approached the city of Ekron. The governors and rulers who had committed sin I killed and I hung their corpses on the towers of the city area. The inhabitants of the city, who had sinned and misbehaved, I counted among the booty, while those remaining, who were not guilty of crimes and misbehaviour, I ordered their release.⁴²⁶

The judgement scene of Ninurta over the stones is described much more exhaustively. In some cases the stones are blessed or cursed as a group, sometimes a single one is treated “personally” by the god. J. N. Postgate has seen here a primordial scene of assigning properties to substances:

It is not easy to decide if the poem envisages the acts of blessing (**nam... tar**) or cursing as constitutive acts by which Ninurta first assigned the different properties to the different stones, or if they were conceived of as already possessing their properties, so that Ninurta was only prescribing their function in the future world order. But the two go together, and this text's link between *property* and *function* agrees perfectly with the early Mesopotamian world view ... It is easy to see, in a world which has the concept of a prescribed destiny (**nam... tar**), that the very distinct properties observable in certain stones, which make them suitable to fulfil certain functions, should be perceived as their prescribed destiny. (Postgate 1997: 214.)⁴²⁷

⁴²⁶ Frahm 1997: 54, ll. 46b-47: *a-na* ^{uru}*Am-qar-ru-na aq-rib-ma* ^{lú}*GÌR.ARAD.MEŠ* ^{lú}*NUN.MEŠ ša hi-iṭ-tu ú-šab-šu-ú a-duk-ma ina di-ma-a-ti si-hir-ti URU a-lul pag-ri-šú-un* ⁴⁷*DUMU.MEŠ URU e-piš an-ni ù gíl-la-ti a-na šal-la-ti am-nu si-it-tu-te-šú-nu la ba-bil hi-ti-ti ù gul-lul-ti ša a-ra-an-šú-nu la ib-šu-ú uš-šur-šu-un aq-bi.*

⁴²⁷ This is similar to the Stoic conception of Logos: “To have control over destinies is to have control over the very essence of things. From the Stoic point of view the control

On the other hand, by decreeing the destiny of various kinds of stones, Ninurta certainly acts here as a judge, a role which is attested in his epithets.⁴²⁸ The cursing and blessing scene is phrased as a judgement in court, and the “stones” accordingly are to be understood as persons, “endowed with reason, being judged on the basis of their comportment towards the divine will” (Parpola 2001: 188). It has been pointed out above that Ninurta's weapons had a protective role to play in the legal affairs of taking oaths and swearing in witnesses (see *Ninurta as Scribe* [pp. 81-90]). Ninurta's role as the judge is attested in the literary texts, as in the prayer to Ninurta as protector of the king:

You judge the case(s) of mankind, you do justice to the wronged, the powerless, the destitute girl, you grasp the weak by the hand, you exalt the helpless, you bring back the person who is being sent down to the netherworld (*arallû*), you absolve the guilt of the guilty. You promptly reconcile the man whose (personal) god or goddess is angry with him.⁴²⁹

There are some scholars who have interpreted Ninurta's battle and the stones in *Lugale* in “natural” terms. V. Emelianov (1994: 250) explains that Ninurta might be considered as the mighty flood-wave, the only force which can remove the stones from the mountains, cf. *Angim* 119-20. Ninurta's role as judge over the stones can also be conceived as one of mediator or controller of trade. J. V. Kinnier Wilson, on the other hand, has explained *Lugale* and Ninurta mythology fully in terms of a geological event.⁴³⁰

However, the myth could also be allegorized as an eschatological revelation of *the fate of the sinners and the just on the day of judgement*. Asakku, the leader of the stones, is, like Anzu, referred to as “evil” and associated with the nether-

of destinies is is the control over the φύσις (*physis*) of things – animate or inanimate. That is to say, the ability to determine destinies is the ability to determine the nature, property or constitution of things. In the Stoic conception, bodies are compounds of matter and Logos. The Logos within matter is not something *other* than matter but a necessary constituent of it; it is the essential, logical connection with the controlling universal Logos, that which makes the universe a cohesive, logical whole.” (Lawson 2001: 85-86.)

⁴²⁸ See Tallqvist 1938: 426. Jacobsen (1957: 110-11) has commented on this role of Ninurta in *Lugale*: “In this myth the young king, Ninurta, appears to hold, even in peacetime, a position of relative permanence. Owing his influence and standing in the community largely to the established positions of his father he is yet able to vie with the older prominent members of the community in public esteem. He maintains a body of warriors with which he goes on raids outside the borders, but his main function is that of an Old Testament ‘judge,’ a powerful individual to whom people in trouble turn for help to get their rights. In the jealousy with which he guards this prerogative we have an instructive example of ‘power-defence.’ When the plants assemble and choose a king, the Asakku, who also maintains a body of warriors, the stones, and also ‘judges’ in the land, Ninurta immediately sets about crushing him.”

⁴²⁹ E. Ebeling, *Die akkadische Gebetsserie “Handerhebung” von neuem gesammelt und herausgegeben* (Berlin 1953), 24-27, ll. 19-24; translation by Foster 1996: 617, ll. 9-14.

⁴³⁰ J. V. Kinnier Wilson, with the assistance of Herman Vanstiphout, *The Rebel Lands. An Investigation into the Origins of Early Mesopotamian Mythology*, Oriental Publications 29 (London: Cambridge University Press 1979).

world, taboo, and sin, while the stones themselves are divided into “evil” and “good” ones on the basis of their actions, and cursed or blessed accordingly (lines 411-647). (Parpola 2001: 188.)

It may be illuminating to note that the stones are regularly presented by kings to the gods at coronation ceremonies. In a Middle Assyrian ritual (SAA 18* 7 i-ii), the king presents numerous stones (not specified) to the various deities. These stones are summarized as “110 stones (for) the gods of the House of Aššur” (*ibid.* iii 16). King Gudea of Lagaš placed several stones of cultic significance in Ningirsu’s new temple and gave them names. These stones or steles were carved from the stone-slabs brought to him from the “mountains,” see Cyl A xiii-xiv. Later in the inscription, Gudea attaches the emblems of Ninurta’s slain adversaries to each of these “stones” (A xxv-xxvi). This sequence might be interpreted to mean that the “stones” belonged to Ninurta’s vanquished enemies, i.e., petrology fell within Ninurta’s domain.

On the other hand, as S. Dalley has rightly pointed out, stones in antiquity were considered able to influence the fate and affairs of persons who wore them. Thus the victory over the stones explains why Ninurta possessed healing powers, because stones are known as *materia medica* (Parpola 2001: 188). A Babylonian author, Zacharias, wrote a treatise, which attributed man’s destiny to the influence of precious stones, dedicated to King Mithridates in the second century AD (Pliny, *NH* 37.169). This treatise probably reworked a cuneiform manual, *Abnu Šikinšu*, on the properties and uses of stones, which survives fragmentarily from Assyrian libraries at Assur and Sultantepe.⁴³¹ Among the descendants of this book was a Greek poem *Lithika*, which concerned the magic powers of stones and was attributed in the Middle Ages to Orpheus:

[It] contains Babylonian-style correlations between divine powers and different stones. Together with a similar work known as the *Lithika Kerygmata*, it belongs generally in the group of literature known as Hermetic, which implies restricted access and secrecy, and is a type of work often attributed to Hermes Trismegistos. Several characteristics point to a core of older, Mesopotamian material within a Hellenized end-product. ... Likewise both Greek works are set into a mythological framework, the catalogue of stones begins with crystal, and the god often addresses the stone in question as if it were a person (Dalley 1998: 48-49.)

One can investigate the list of stones in *Lugale* on the basis of the materials involved. It seems reasonable to assume that certain stones in ancient Mesopotamia had a theological significance. The statues of gods were sometimes made out of stones, and it was certainly not a matter of chance what kind of stone was chosen for the statue of a particular god. The Ninurta myth *Lugale* probably provided a theological background for why a certain kind of stone was the raw material for a particular god’s statue. Thus, according to line 3 in the list of Bel’s statues in Esagila, his statue in the temple of *Ninurta of the Courtyard* was called Asarre. This was the principal cultic image in the

⁴³¹ Dalley 1998: 48, Reiner 1995: 120ff.

chapel of Ninurta and it was made from *marhušû*-stone (Lambert 1997: 75-77). *Lugale* 592-99 deals with the *marhušû*-stone as follows:

My King turned to the *marhuša* stone, Ninurta the son of Enlil pronounced its destiny. “*Marhuša*, the string in my place, you were taken, since you did not participate in the crimes of your city,; you shall be the bowl under the filter-jug, the water shall filter into you. *Marhuša*, you shall be used for inlay-work, You shall be the perfect ornament for sacred brooches. *Marhuša*, you shall be duly praised in the temples of the gods.”

In line 4 of the same list, the name of Bel’s statue in Enamtila is called Lugal-dimmer-ankia and is made of alabaster (Lambert: *ibid.*). The parallel passage is *Lugale* 512-21:

The Hero stood before the *gišnugal* (alabaster) stone. Ninurta son of Enlil fixed its destiny: “*Gišnu*, whose body shines like the daylight! Purified silver, youth destined for the palace, since you alone held out your hands to me, and you prostrated yourself before me in your Mountains, I did not smite you with the club, and I did not turn my strength against you. Hero, you stood firm by me when I yelled out. Your name shall be called benevolence. The treasury of the Land shall be subject to your hand, you shall be its seal-keeper.”⁴³²

In line 5, the statue of Bel in the temple of Ninurta of Ehursagtila is recorded. Its name is not preserved, but it is made of haematite (ka.gi.na). From the blessings Ninurta utters to this stone, it is possible to interpret the name of the stone as “truth stone,” corresponding to Akkadian *kittu* “truth.”

Cf. *Lugale* 497-511: The Hero turned to the *kagina* (haematite) stone, he addressed it for its hardness. Ninurta son of Enlil fixed its destiny: “Young man worthy of respect, whose surface reflects the light, *kagina*, when the demands of the rebel lands reached you, I did not conquer you I did not notice you among the hostile ones. I shall make room for you in the Land. The divine rites of Utu shall become your powers. Be constituted as a judge in the foreign lands. The craftsman, expert in everything, shall value you as if gold. Young man of whom I have taken possession, because of you I shall not sleep until you come to life. And now, according to the destiny fixed by Ninurta, henceforth *kagina* shall live! So shall it be.”

Ninurta’s blessing can be read against the royal programme of establishing “truth and justice” (*kittu u mišaru*) in the land (cf. “I shall not sleep until you come to life”). Also, according to *abnu šikinšu*, “haematite” (ka.gi.na.dib.ba) is “the stone of truthfulness, he who wears it shall speak the truth, only a pious man may wear it” (Reiner 1995: 122). This concept is probably reflected in the statement of Pliny that possession of haematite reveals treacherous designs on the part of the barbarians.⁴³³

⁴³² The stone’s name, giš-nu₁₁-gál, can be esoterically interpreted “emasculated” (“having no penis”) which can be, in connection with the stone *kurgarānum* (l. 637), associated with the class of emasculated devotees of Ištar called *kurgarrû* (Parpola 2001: 188).

⁴³³ F. Köcher, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen* (Berlin), 194 vii 4; Pliny, *NH* 37.60.

The statue of Bel in Egišhurankia, in the room of Belet-Ninu'a, is made of *dušû*-stone (Lambert: 1997: 75-77). In *Lugale* 528-42, the *dušû* stone is addressed collectively with many other stones:

My King turned to the *dušia* stone. He addressed the *nir*, the *gug* (cornelian) and the *zagin* (lapis lazuli); the *amaš-pa-ed*, the *šaba*, the *hurizum*, the *gug-gazi* and the *marhali*; the *egi-zaga*, the *girin-hiliba*, the *anzugulme* and the *nir-mušgir* stones. The Lord Ninurta, son of Enlil, fixed their destinies for the water-skin: "How you came to my side, male and female in form, and in your own way! You committed no fault, and you supported me with strength. You exalted me in public. Now in my deliberation, I shall exalt you. Since you made yourself general of the assembly, you, *nir*, shall be chosen for syrup and for wine. You shall all be decorated with precious metal. The principal among the gods shall cause the foreign lands to prostrate themselves before you, putting their noses to the ground."⁴³⁴

We can see that all these stones which were used for making the gods' statues were blessed by Ninurta and none of them is cursed. There exists a certain congruence between *Lugale* and the list of Bel's statues. A sequence of stones similar to the one mentioned in the passage quoted above occurs in other sources. The same stones were used in royal ornaments. As we know from a Neo-Assyrian source (SAA 18* 18:46-50), the wearing of jewels belonged to the cultic context of the royal ritual which involved the killing of an enemy: "... the king removes the jewellery. Shields are raised. The king approaches and defeats his enemy. Having defeated his enemy, he puts on his jewellery (*dumāqi inašši*)" (cf. Livingstone 1986: 142-43).

A partially identical sequence of stone names with that in *Lugale* 528-42 is attested in the Neo-Assyrian incantation relevant to the coronation ceremony of the king (Berlejung 1996: 30ff). The intent of the stones mentioned there is "for the flesh of the gods," and they are "fit for the chest of the king."⁴³⁵

Die vorliegende Beschwörung richtet sich an die Steine des Königsschmuckes, die nach ihrer Herstellung erst einmal dazu befähigt werden mussten, ihre Funktionen aufzunehmen und dem König zu einer imposanten Erscheinung, die Überfluss vermittelte, zu verhelfen (Berlejung 1996: 32.)

The stones mentioned in line 221b of this incantation text are *na₄nír*, *na₄gug*, *na₄za.gìn.na*, a sequence identical with the *Lugale* passage quoted above. The next two stones in this Neo-Assyrian text are (line 222) *na₄duh.ši.a* and *na₄šuba*,⁴³⁶ which may be identical with *na₄du₈.ši.a* and *na₄ša.ba* which are found in the same section of *Lugale* 531ff. Thus they correspond to items 14-17 and 19 in the list of stones compiled by J. van Dijk (1983: 38f). The

⁴³⁴ See Jacobsen 1987: 262f, n. 58; on *hulālu* (*nír*), see Frahm 1997: 147f.

⁴³⁵ Berlejung 1996: 30, ll. 219-20: *su.dingir.e.ne.ke₄ gal-bi túm-ma / ana ši-ir DINGIR. MEŠ ra-biš šu-lu-ku* and ll. 227-28: *gaba kù lugal.la.ke₄ me.te.aš gál.la / ana ir-ti KÙ-ti šá LUGAL ana si-ma-ti šá-ka-nu*.

⁴³⁶ This stone also occurs in Ninurta hymn G 73 (Cohen 1975-76: 26) "about the neck of holy mother Nanše," see the references by Sjöberg 1969: 112.

stone *na₄nír.muš.gír* is also found in both sections of these different works. And finally, three stones mentioned occur also in the *Identification List* as items 14-16 (cf. *Šurpu* VIII 85-87; Livingstone 1986: 176-77):

14.	[^{na₄}]gug	^d nin.líl	Cornelian	:Ninlil
15.	[^{na₄}]za.gìn	^d dili.bat	Lapis lazuli	:Venus
16.	[^{na₄}]nír	^d amar.ra.hé.è.a eri ₄ .du ₁₀ ^{ki}	Chalcedony	:Amaraheea of Eridu ⁴³⁷

In this context, one might also include a passage from a *Širnamšubba* (*Ninurta G*, ll. 136-54):

My king, you covered the edge of the sea with rays of light. On that day from the gold (?) of Harali you are Ena-tum. From the cornelian [^{na₄}gug] and lapis lazuli [^{na₄}z a-gìn] of the land of Meluha you are Ena-tum. From the *dušia* stone [^{na₄}du₈-ši-a] of the land of Marhaši you are Enakam. From the silver of fifteen cities you are Enakam. From the copper and tin of Magan you are Enakam. From the bronze of you are Enakam (?). From the silver of Dilmun you are Ena-tum. From the im-kalaga clay of the mouth of the hills you are Enakam. From the gypsum of the shining hills you are Enakam.

The stone *du₈-ši-a*, which begins the section in *Lugale*, is probably to be translated "crystal" (German *Achat*, Berlejung 1996: 31, ll. 222-25). Crystal also begins the section of stones in the Babylonian Lipšur Litanies and also the Hellenistic work *Lithika Kerygmata*. S. Dalley compares the section of *Lugale* under discussion⁴³⁸ to a passage of the Hermetic treatise *Lithica* which is addressed to crystal:

I know the powers that your sovereign portions possess against evil,
O wonderful stone, hailed by mortals. (Dalley 1998: 49.)

It is certainly not by accident that all stones found in these parallels are blessed by Ninurta and none of them is cursed.⁴³⁹ It is possible to infer from these parallels that Ninurta was an expert on stones, a notion which is cognate to his role as the god of wisdom. The stones used for producing important artefacts such as statues of gods and royal embellishments were "blessed" in primordial times by the expert Ninurta. The Mesopotamian tradition concerning important stones survived in the later Hermetic tradition. It is interesting to speculate if the medieval "stone of the philosophers" (*turba philosophorum*) originated in the Mesopotamian idea. Ninurta himself might be con-

⁴³⁷ Amaraheea is the daughter of Sin (KAV 63 obv. i 15-16; Livingstone 1986: 180). It seems that these three stones were used for the representations of the goddesses.

⁴³⁸ Which she interprets as follows: "The Lord turned to crystal, and addressed chalcedony, cornelian, and lapis lazuli: 'You shall be the first to come to my workshop, be prepared for anything that is required of you.'" (1998: 49.)

⁴³⁹ In the list of cursed stones occur *maš-da* (l. 569) and *šakkarû* (l. 582), which are probably associated with the homophonous words for "gazelle," a symbol of instinct (see CAD s.v. *šabitu*) and "drunkard" (see CAD s.v. *šakkarû*) respectively (Parpola 2001: 188). "Gazelle" occurs in the lists of "beasts" in BM 92687 and in BM 45619 (see Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 23).

sidered to play the role of “philosopher’s stone” in *Lugale* because he gives life to the substances. There are some conceptual links with later Hellenistic literature:

Both *Lugale* and the *Lithika Kerygmata* attribute to (a form of) crystal both male and female manifestations. The *Lithika Kerygmata* contains very little information about places of origin with the notable exception of ‘za(m)pila(m)pis’ from the Euphrates and ‘the Babylonian stone,’ probably carnelian, which it says is mainly worn by palace dignitaries.⁴⁴⁰

The Quest of Gilgamesh and the Heroic Deeds of Ninurta

Gilgamesh is depicted in ancient Mesopotamian literary compositions as a valorous king and victorious hero. It is only natural to suppose, on the basis of what has been discussed above, that the heroic deeds of Gilgamesh were somehow related to those of Ninurta, although Gilgamesh never subdued rebellious countries and his deeds were of an apolitical nature. The divine secret is given to Ninurta after his battle against Anzû (SAA Anzu III 30f), similarly as it is disclosed to Gilgamesh by Utnapishtim as a reward for his quest.⁴⁴¹

If one begins with the most obvious facts, the first mention that should be made is of the Old Babylonian syncretism of Ninsuna, the mother of Gilgamesh, and Gula, the wife of Ninurta. According to this genealogy, Gilgamesh would have been the son of Ninurta. In the later god lists, one finds the identifications Lugalbanda = Ninurta and Ninsuna = Gula.⁴⁴² According to tradition, Gilgamesh was the son of Lugalbanda and Ninsuna, and both Ur-Namma and Šulgi claimed the same parentage for themselves.⁴⁴³ In the Standard Babylonian version of the Epic, Ninsuna lives in Egalmah (SAA Gilg. III 15), a traditional house of Gula (Richter 1999: 173, n. 710). When comparing the Epic of Gilgamesh to Ninurta myths, one has to remember what Mondy wrote in a slightly different context:

Each literary work has its own unique program, and this thematic overlay often conceals from us the very mythic associations upon which it depends for its meaning and force – particularly in those cases where tension is generated by

⁴⁴⁰ Dalley 1998: 49. These traditions further continued in the Babylonian Talmud: “Particular kinds of stones were specified in the Akkadian manuals, and they, like the deities, were made less specific in the Jewish adaptation. Both for healing and for divination the ancient Mesopotamians had developed a ‘science’ of stones, and their tradition remained prestigious throughout the Seleucid period when the Babylonian scholar Sudines was famous, and into the second century AD when Zacharias carried it on.” (Dalley 1998: 156.)

⁴⁴¹ For Ninurta as *šēmi pirišti* “who has heard the secret,” and *bēl pirišti*, see van Dijk 1983: 6.

⁴⁴² See E. F. Weidner, *AfK* 2 (1923-24) 14; cf. SAA Anzu III 147 and Lambert 1967: 126, ll. 158, 177.

⁴⁴³ See Cohen 1981: 103, Kramer 1974: 164f.

divergence from an audience expectation based on this underlying tradition. The comparison of conceptual motifs, more so than that of narrative parallels, can provide access to this hidden world of shared mythic thought. (Mondy 1990: 146-47.)

The battles of Gilgamesh with Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven have at least some similarities on the level of “shared mythic thought” with the battles of Ninurta. Humbaba is depicted iconographically in Mitannian and Assyrian glyptic in the style of the ‘hero’ with four or six large curls. This ‘hero’ in other contexts is the apotropaic god-type *lahmu*.⁴⁴⁴ *Lahmu* is not found among the monsters defeated by Ninurta but occurs in the Creation Epic (I 133ff) among the monsters created by Tiamat. The Bull of Heaven (*alû*) is philologically not related to Ninurta’s enemy *kusarikku* – the Bison-man (Wiggermann 1992: 174-79). While the royal lion hunt symbolized Ninurta’s battle against the monsters of chaos, the royal bull hunt probably represented Gilgamesh’s battle with the Bull of Heaven (Ch. Watanabe 2000).

Thus it seems that, concerning the origin of monsters, a different tradition from Ninurta mythology is integrated into the Gilgamesh Epic. But the deeds of Gilgamesh are still similar to those of Ninurta. In the Bulluṣa-rabi hymn to Gula, the god Zababa defeated the stones and ‘buted’ the mountains (II. 92-100); the hero Lugalbanda trampled on the sea and subdued the rebels (II. 149-58). In the epic of Erra, Erra is ready to conquer Asag and Anzû (III 33). It is only natural that a hero such as Gilgamesh was credited with his own victories. In the Sumerian composition *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld* (140ff) it is described how Gilgamesh got rid of an evil snake, Anzud with his young, and the demon Lilith by uprooting the cosmic *haluppu* tree:

He took his bronze axe used for expeditions, which weighs seven talents and seven minas, in his hand. He killed the snake immune to incantations living at its roots. The Anzud bird living in its branches took up its young and went into the mountains. The phantom maid living in its trunk left (?) her dwelling and sought refuge in the wilderness. As for the tree, he uprooted it and stripped its branches, and the sons of his city, who went with him, cut up its branches and bundled them. He gave it to his sister holy Inana for her chair. He gave it to her for her bed. As for himself, from its roots, he manufactured his *ellag* and, from its branches, he manufactured his *ekidma*.

It seems that in this episode Gilgamesh has replaced Ninurta. In *Angim* 39-40 it is said that Ninurta “brought forth the Anzud bird from the *halubharan* tree. He brought forth the Seven-headed serpent from the ... of the mountains.” Ninurta is the traditional subduer of the snake, Anzud and the tree in Sumerian mythology, and thus it is possible that in this episode Gilgamesh has replaced Ninurta (see Afanasyeva 2000: 60f).

It is significant that, in the Akkadian Epic, Gilgamesh also conquers a weird set of “Stone Ones” (*šūt abni*) before ascending to Uršanabi’s boat. There are several interpretations for the “stone ones” in scholarly literature, the most

⁴⁴⁴ Green 1997: 138; see also W. G. Lambert, “Gilgamesh in literature and art: the second and first millennia,” in: *Monsters and demons in the ancient and medieval worlds*, Fs. E. Porada (1987), 45 and Wiggermann 1992: 164ff.

recent by A. Kilmer (1996). Ninurta's battle with the stones is the main theme in *Lugale*, and in the Gilgamesh Epic, after consulting Šiduri as to the way to Utnapištim, the hero defeats the Stone Ones:

Like an arrow he (= Gilgamesh) fell among them, in the midst of the forest his shout resounded. Ur-šanabi saw the *bright*, he took up an axe, and he ... him. But he, Gilgameš, struck his head..., he seized his arm and ... *pinned him down*. They took fright, the Stone [Ones, *who crewed*] the boat, who were not [*harmed by the Waters*] of Death. the wide ocean, at the waters ... he stayed [not his hand]: he smashed [them in his fury, *he threw them*] in the river. (George 1999: 79, X 96-106.)

In the Old Babylonian Gilgamesh tablet from Sippar, Sursunabu (= Uršanabi) explains to Gilgamesh that the Stone Ones were necessary for crossing the Waters of Death. Gilgamesh has to prepare [three hundred] punting-poles in substitution (George 1999: 126).

And [the Stone Ones] he smashed in his fury. [Gilgameš] came back to stand over him, as Sursunabu looked him in the eye. ... "The Stone Ones, O Gilgameš, enabled my crossing, for I must not touch the Waters of Death. In your fury you have smashed them. The Stone Ones were with me to take me across." (George 1999: 125f, Si iv 1-3; iv 22-25.)

The battle of Gilgamesh and Enkidu with Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven is described in similar terms as Ninurta's battle with Anzû. An OB fragment of the Epic describes the fourth dream of Gilgamesh about the defeat of Anzû which foretells Humbaba's defeat:

'My friend, I have had the fourth, it surpasses my other three dreams! I saw a Thunderbird in the sky, up it rose like a cloud, soaring above us. It was a ..., its visage distorted, its mouth was fire, its breath was death. [There was also a] man, he was strange of form, he ... and stood there in my dream.' [He bound] its wings and took hold of my arm, he cast it down [before] me, upon it.' (George 1999: 117.)

The vehicle for the "victorious return" of Gilgamesh from his long journey to Utnapištim is a divine boat which recalls Ninurta's return from the battle with Asag in *Lugale*. The fact that Tiamat is transformed into the boat Sirsir after the battle with Marduk additionally gives an impression of a shared mythical thought.

Es existieren in der Wissenschaft Tendenzen, der Schiffsfahrt des Marduk eine mythologische Implikation zu verleihen; zum einen wird darin eine Anspielung auf den Kampf Marduks gegen Tiamat gesehen, zum anderen die Schiffsfahrt "als die Fahrt der Toten über das Wasser, als z.B. die Fahrt über Styx oder Acheron, als die Fahrt des Gilgameš zum unsterblichen Utnapištim ... betrachtet. (Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 22.)⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁵ See Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 196-98 ("Götterschiff"); E. Heinrich, *Die Tempel und Heiligtümer im Alten Mesopotamien*, DAA 14 (1982), 303; W. Andrae, *Alte Feststrassen im Nahen Osten* (Stuttgart 1964), 30.

On his return journey, Gilgamesh loses his magic plant to a snake while bathing. This motif ties in with the episode of Enlil's bathing in the Epic of Anzû when Anzû steals from him the Tablet of Destinies.⁴⁴⁶ It is probable that this motif is also found in the text "Ninurta and the Turtle" where Ninurta has apparently taken hold of the Tablet of Destinies but loses it, when it "returns to Apsû."

There is a kind of esoteric parallel between Ninurta mythology and the Gilgamesh Epic. In SAA Gilg. V 83f Humbaba scorns Enkidu: "Come, Enkidu, you spawn of a fish, who knew no father, hatchling of terrapin (*raqqu*) and turtle (*šeleppû*), who sucked no mother's milk" (George 1999: 41). Cf. KAR 76 rev. 5ff: *umma* ^d*Ninurta ša Dēri* (A.DUR.AN.KI) *bēluka-ma umma ana mār* ^d*Bā'ir-aluttimma ana šēp šelippî u kišād raqqimma muššir eṭlamma ina sammê* (ZAG.SAL) *ribit lit[eq] muššir ardatu-ma li-qāt-ta melul[taša]*. "Thus says Ninurta of Der, your lord, to the Son-of-the-Crab-Fisher, to the Foot-of-the-*šeleppû*-Turtle (and) to the Neck-of-the-*raqqu*-turtle: Release the young man, may he pass the street with the lyre, release the young woman, may she ... dance!" (Ebeling 1953: 405-407, see CAD s.v. *šeleppû* 1a). Ninurta of Der is Ištar according to SAA Anzu III 141. To some extent one can make sense of this parallel: Enkidu's name can be etymologized as "created by Enki" (Enki-dù). In "Ninurta and the Turtle" Enki similarly fashioned a turtle (ba-al-kú) against Ninurta from the clay of the Abzu (l. 36).

Ninurta Mythology and the Myths of Kingship

During the discussions of various aspects of Ninurta mythology above, it has become manifest that the name and figure of Ninurta were tightly connected with Near Eastern conflict myths. Since H. Gunkel's book *Schöpfung und Chaos* (1895), there has been a trend in religio-historical studies, mainly based on Old Testament scholarship, to see a causal connection between the primordial combat and the creation of the cosmos.⁴⁴⁷ The connection is attested in the Babylonian Creation Epic, and a number of passages in the Old Testament associate the two concepts (see Day 1985). The case is not so clear in regard to Ninurta mythology – motifs from it were used in the creation myths, as in the Babylonian *Enūma eliš*, but it is hard to find texts where Ninurta appears as the creator. In *Lugale*, Ninurta does appear as the creator of arable farming and as a master giving functions to substances, but not as the creator of the universe, rather as the restorer of the right order. Ninurta's act of creation in *Lugale* was called "the new creation" by J. van Dijk (1983). It may be interpreted as "partial creation" which focusses on restoration of

⁴⁴⁶ W. Röllig, *Gilgamesch*, in: EM, Bd. 7 (1987), col. 1250.

⁴⁴⁷ H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit. Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen. 1 und Ap. Joh. 12.*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1895).

order in certain phases of creation. The Babylonian Creation Epic then combines the divine conflict and the creation of the universe, as does also the Hebrew Bible in some passages. The versions of the conflict myths in Ugaritic as we know them do not combine the two themes either. Marduk as the creator and vanquisher of monsters is in this respect remarkably similar to the biblical Yahweh:

... in Ugaritic mythology creation and the subduing of the monsters of chaos are functions divided over different gods, notably El and Baal. It is unlikely that in any contemporaneous Ugaritic myth the two were combined in one god. ... the circumstance that creation and chaos-battle are so often mentioned side by side in the O.T. should not be explained in terms of a mytho-historical process. Rather, it was the result of the universal claims laid in the name of mono- or henotheism. Many other functions of El and Baal were deliberately mentioned side-by-side as belonging to the absolute power of YHWH, even in very old formulae like Gen 49:25 – YHWH governs both the rainfall (Baal) and the childbirth (El).⁴⁴⁸

There is an ingredient more important than creation in Ninurta mythology, and it is pivotal – the institution of kingship. The most important sequence in these myths is the endangered divine office/order and a cosmic battle for the throne, i.e., supremacy. The main theme of Ninurta myths then ultimately unfolds as the royal succession (Enlil-Ninurta). The office of the divine king is held by an elder god (Enlil) thereafter endangered by a usurper (e.g. Anzû) and finally rescued by the younger god for himself (Ninurta). In the Creation Epic, the birth of the champion is prefaced by a theogony of the older gods:

... a specific theogony in the narrow sense is a hallmark of ancient Near Eastern traditions. Typical of it is a certain dynastic depth, as if the “current” layer of ruling divinity resulted from generations of succession, usurpation, conflict, and all the other time processes that human kingship might be heir to. (Puhvel 1987: 23.)

The struggle with the powers of chaos and consequently the work of creation were not merely conceived as being events of the past. In the allegoric interpretation, these events were believed to take place both in the present and in the future. The conflict between the god and his opponents was only resolved in a definitive way for a limited time span. The beneficial gods are invoked to defeat the forces of evil all over again.⁴⁴⁹ Therefore the “creation” accounts in Ninurta mythology should be understood as re-establishing the cosmic world order, the world which was threatened by the forces of chaos.

In the present section, I intend to apply my results on the study of Ninurta mythology and very briefly discuss comparable material in West Semitic, Hurro-Hittite, Greek, Egyptian and Vedic Indian traditions. I feel it inadequate to trace them all back to a particular “Ninurta mythology” and I prefer to discuss all these parallels as instances of kingship myths. I believe that the same folkloristic motifs which are present in Ninurta mythology occurred

⁴⁴⁸ M. C. A. Korpel and J. C. de Moor in *JSS* 31 (1986) 244 (review of Day 1985).

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 243ff.

with variations in a vast area extending far beyond the Near East, but I am ready to agree that “none of these versions match one another to the point where one might draw up a consistent stemma of transmissions.”⁴⁵⁰ My discussion below is a short one supplementing J. Puhvel’s treatment of the creation myth in the Ancient Near East and its diffusional derivatives in Hurro-Hittite and classical traditions (Puhvel 1987: 21-32). As has been said, creation myths and conflict myths are somewhat different entities, but in some versions or contaminations they might be connected into a single mythical story.

In his introduction to the edition of the *Lugale*, J. van Dijk has already studied the Ninurta mythology from the comparative point of view (1983: 11, 17-19). He points out that the same mythological themes which occur in Mesopotamian written sources are already attested much earlier in the archaic glyptic. Therefore it is reasonable to suggest that a predecessor of the so-called “Ninurta mythology” existed orally in prehistoric times (van Dijk 1983: 4, n. 10). Tracing the origins of the known ancient myths in prehistory is a somewhat difficult, if not an impossible, task and therefore my comparisons below are carried out in a mostly formal way, leaving aside discussions of possible paths of transmission.

According to Th. Jacobsen, the prehistoric deity to whom the later Ninurta in the Sumerian pantheon corresponds was the personified thunder cloud. He holds the deity to be identical with the thunderbird Imdugud or Anzu(d) (see Hruška 1975). Jacobsen has argued that Ninurta was originally a thunder god whose preanthropomorphic form was Thunderbird, personifying the thunder cloud. In later Sumerian texts, this mythical bird came to be called Anzud:

Basically he was a god of nature, the power in the thunderstorms over the eastern mountains in spring, and in the flood of the Tigris caused by these rains as the mountain streams poured their waters into it. He was envisioned originally as the thunder cloud, seen as an enormous bird; and because its thunderous roar could come only from a lion’s maw it was given a lion’s head (Jacobsen 1987: 235).

Jacobsen claims that most of the Mesopotamian deities had a ‘pre-anthropomorphic’ form in prehistoric times. For Ninurta, Thunderbird Anzu(d) was this form according to his theory. In later mythology, Anzu(d) is in the service of Enlil as was Ninurta. In his study on Mesopotamian protective spirits, F. Wiggermann has argued for Anzû’s association with Enlil instead of Ninurta on the basis of iconographic evidence:

The *Anzû* then is not Ningirsu’s symbol, nor that of any of the other gods with whose symbolic animal it is combined. It represents another, more general power, under whose supervision they all operate. This higher power can only be Enlil, which is exactly what the *Lugalbanda* Epic and *Anzû* myth ... tell us. Thus the [iconographic] posture of the lion-headed eagle, wings stretched out above the symbolic animals of other gods, becomes understandable: it is neither that of attack, nor that of defence, but that of the master of the animals. (Wiggermann 1992: 161.)

⁴⁵⁰ Puhvel 1987: 27; cf. van Dijk 1976: 125.

According to Jacobsen, Ninurta's natural powers were represented by two theriomorphic forms – that of a bird and that of a lion – which tended to compete in the image of the god. Anzud was thus an earlier form of Ninurta, his hypostasis, who was iconographically represented sometimes as a lion-headed bird, sometimes as a winged lion with a bird's tail and talons, sometimes all lion.

In time the animal forms were rejected in favor of imagining the god in human form only, yet down to the time when this work [= *Lugale*] was presumably composed he still retained some of the theriomorphic features such as the bird wings. In his human form his image was that of a young warrior-king riding to battle in his loudly rumbling war chariot. (Jacobsen 1987: 235).

It is possible that several stories were told of this Thunderbird, of which we have catalogues in Ninurta's later mythological texts. A myth of the vigorous deity who fought victoriously against the demonic forces is certainly older than any extant textual sources of this myth. This is proved by Mesopotamian iconography. In the time from which we have sources, the combat myth was most strongly associated with Ninurta because of the religious authority of Nippur that he personified. The enemies Ninurta defeated were:

... the enemies of god and man, the chance products of Heaven, Earth and Sea that they encountered while colonizing the world from the *du₆-kù*, the first tell, their original home. Only much later, in Enūma Eliš, were good and evil promoted to Good and Evil, and became the victory in a cosmic battle, the foundation of the ordered universe (Wiggermann 1989: 124).

Prehistory of the myth. Myths of kingship similar to those of Mesopotamia were developed in several neighbouring areas. Whether they were genetically related to the Mesopotamian ones or not remains an open question. These myths include the Hurro-Hittite myths of Illuyankas and Kumarbi, the Egyptian myth of conflict between Horus and Seth, the West Semitic myth of the battle between the Thunder-God and the Sea (e.g., the Ugaritic myth of Ba'lu and Yammu), and the Greek myth of the kingship of Zeus. The Vedic myth of Indra slaying Vṛtra can also be rated as typologically similar. The later motifs of the Ancient Near Eastern succession myth or the kingship myth occur in the *Phoenician History* of Philo Byblios, and in the episodes of Firdausi's *Šahnama* (see Puhvel 1987: 30f).

A genetic connection between these myths can be established only by the folkloristic approach, and it would presuppose an immense accumulation of data, both ancient and modern. The analysis of the folkloristic motif AaTh 1148B might serve as a starting point as this is a variant of a very ancient conflict myth. This motif has been extensively studied by the Estonian folklorist Uku Masing (1977).⁴⁵¹ In a monograph based on forty years of research on this folkloristic relic, he maintains that the myth about the conflict between *Thunderbird and Watermonster* certainly goes back to prehistoric

⁴⁵¹ Due to the restrictions of the Soviet period, this valuable paper is still published only in Estonian. A translation is projected by the University of Tartu.

times because its variants extend to Northern Europe (Estonia, Finland, Lapland and Scandinavia). The Near Eastern, Siberian and American Indian variants:

make it possible to establish the oldest form of this myth, about 10,000 BC. It was related that the Thunder-Being (usually a bird) and the Water-Being (usually a horned monster, whale or fish) contending with one another had lost some of their limbs, organs (claws, eyes, heart, horns, etc.) to one another and were unable to pursue their normal activities. A human being, impartial to both sides, is needed to mediate between them. He restores the former state of affairs, and is rewarded during a feast by one (or both) of them. For the first time this myth is written down in Asia Minor (Illuyankas, Ullikummi, Kumarbi; in the Balkan bogomil repertoire the clutching of the feet of the adversary is combined with the tale of the Frozen Giant), later it is quoted by Greek mythographers (Apollodoros, Oppianos, Nonnos). There may have been analogous Sumerian myths (Anzud, its Arabian and Indian survivals). (Masing 1977: 168.)

One motif of this ancient myth is preserved in the Mesopotamian story of Etana which tells of a reward to a mortal for an eagle's physical restoration.⁴⁵² The quotation from Masing here serves only as an indication of the problems involved when dealing with the genetic relationship of the myths. It is possible that this kind of a combat myth was indeed circulating in ancient Mesopotamia in oral form. *Thunderbird and Watermonster* might correspond to Mesopotamian Anzud and the human-headed bison Kusarikku. The Akkadian 'bison-man' *kusarikku* could inhabit the sea (see SAA Anzu I 12), and Imdugud/Anzû was a thundercloud. Perhaps one can use the iconographic evidence for showing the existence of a similar myth:

In some way connected with the symbolism of Utu is the ED III scene of an *Anzû* attacking a human-headed bison (*RIA* 7 94) [see Fig. 12]. The more explicit pieces combine the scene with the boat god (Fuhr-Jaepelt 1972: Abb. 86), Utu (Boehmer *UAVA* 4 79f.), or elements of the boat god scene (bird-man, plow, human-headed lion, scorpion, vessel, Abb. 77, 78, 109, 137). On one seal (Abb. 87) the *Anzû* attacks one of the mountains through which the sun rises, here in the form of a human-headed bison (Abb 78, cf. *RIA* 7 94). Twice *Anzû*'s occur in the boat god scene with other animals (Abb. 85, 112). In those cases they do not attack. *Anzû*'s attacking other animals than the human-headed bison are extremely rare (Wiggermann 1992: 161).⁴⁵³

This unclear case serves as an example indicating that the surviving evidence for conflict-myths and so-called Ninurta mythology once formed only a fraction of the ancient lore. The myths surviving in the ancient texts may be related to one another through numerous oral variants which are lost to us.

⁴⁵² Masing 1977; in Islamic legends, Nimrod is comparably described as flying to heaven on an eagle's back, see Aro 1976: 26.

⁴⁵³ This is only speculation, but in the Kassite glyptic there occur scenes which seem to depict Kusarikku and Anzû in a deficient state: "Es drängt sich die Frage auf, ob Kusarikku und Anzû auf manchen Darstellungen deshalb ihr hybrides Aussehen verlieren, weil sie als bezwungene Wesen einen Teil ihrer Kräfte verloren haben? Oder handelt es sich lediglich um vertauschte Rollen beim Nebeneinander beliebter Sagenelemente?" (Stiehler-Alegria 1999: 255.)

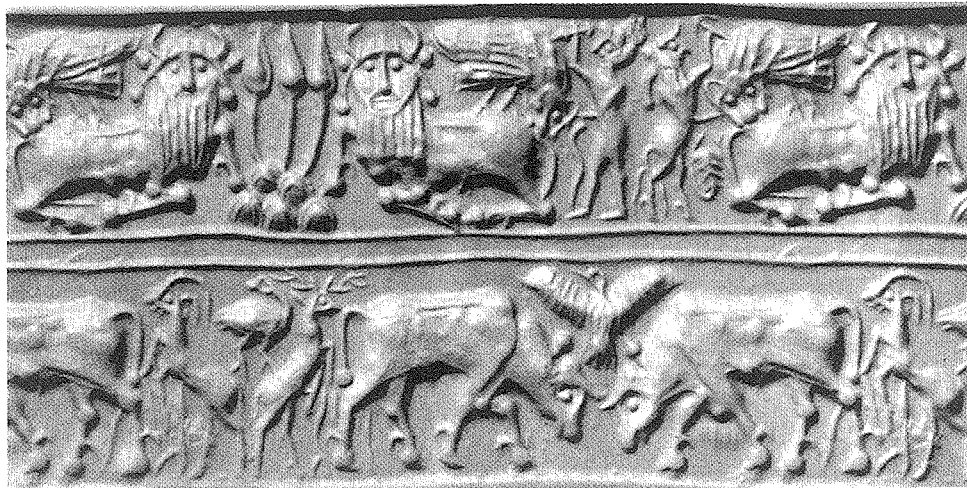


Fig. 12 Anzû attacking a human-headed bison. [BM 22962]

If the picture becomes more complete, we may be able to clarify the relations between various myths of kingship.⁴⁵⁴ Therefore, the following discussion serves only as a preliminary introduction to the matter.

West Semitic. In Mesopotamian mythology, the combat of a young champion of the gods is directed either against the Mountains or against the Sea. The first attestation in the written sources of a god's battle against the Sea comes from an Old Akkadian school tablet where the god Tišpak, the later avatar of Ninurta, is called *abarak Ti'āmtim* "steward of Sea."⁴⁵⁵ In the incantations of Ebla of the third millennium BC, the storm-god Hadda appears to have vanquished a kind of dragon.⁴⁵⁶ Traces of the myth about the Thunder-god's battle against the Seamonster are found in a royal letter from the Old Babylonian Mari archive (Durand 1993). In this prophetic text, the god Addu of Aleppo speaks through his prophet (*āpilum*) Abiya to the king Zimri-Lim: "Let me re[sto]re to you the thr[one of your father's house]. I will give you back the weapon[s] by which I slew the Sea (*tēmtum*). I have given to you the oil of my triumph (*šamnu ša namrirūtiya*)."⁴⁵⁷ According to Durand (1993: 53), the last statement refers to the unction ritual at the enthronement of the king. The triumph over the sea stands here in clear parallelism with mortal kingship and the allusion is to an established form of royal investiture (Wyatt

⁴⁵⁴ On the other hand, the ideology is more important than the narrative in this myth, as N. Wyatt notes: "it was the application rather than the narrative line which explains its continued transmission down the centuries in a variety of contexts." (1998: 841.)

⁴⁵⁵ A. Westenholz, *AfO* 25 (1974-77), 102.

⁴⁵⁶ See Fronzaroli 1997; cf. Schwemer 2001: 116ff.

⁴⁵⁷ Or: "oil of my brilliance/radiance"; cf. S. Parpola, *SAA* 9 3 ii 7.

1998: 841). There are more references in the Mari letters to the "great weapons" of Addu with which the kings have slain their enemies (Schwemer 2001: 226f).

The myth about a god's battle with the sea is quite often argued to be of West Semitic origin (Jacobsen 1968) or even of 'Amorite' origin (Durand 1993). Scholars who argue for the 'West Semitic' origin of this conflict myth in my view underestimate its antiquity. The combat against the sea is probably only a variant of a pre-historic culture myth and it is useless to assign its origin to any particular people or nation. The object against which the primordial battle is directed only mirrors and emphasizes the local environment. The names of the gods who are involved in the battle are replaceable when they become obsolete. I believe that we are already dealing with the diffusional derivatives of the same myth in the third millennium BC. The argument which is used by the scholars arguing for the West Semitic origin of the conflict-myth is the absence of seashore for the Mesopotamian inland population. In congruence with the supposed antiquity of the conflict-myth in Mesopotamia, one may argue against it that "many geomorphologists contend that the Gulf shoreline has retreated as much as 150 to 200 kilometers to the southeast since 4000 B.C." and the sea was not an unknown phenomenon for its early inhabitants.⁴⁵⁸ This is not to say that the conflict-myth originates in Mesopotamia. It is prehistoric and it has been diffused to a large area of the whole Ancient Near East and beyond.

In the cases of Ebla and Mari, the protagonist of the reported myth is the god Addu (of Aleppo), who is religio-historically similar, perhaps even identical with both Ugaritic Baal and Sumerian Ninurta. In Ninurta mythology, his image as the slayer of monsters is intimately connected to his role of patron of agriculture. The *Lugale* epic presents Ninurta as the founder of agriculture which fits well with the god of thunderstorms. Ninurta in this function is similar to Haddu, the rain god of West Semitic origin, with the difference that "plants in southern Iraq grow on water from the rivers, not on rain, of which almost none falls" (Lambert 1988: 138). Thus in the dry farming areas the monster-slayer was traditionally a storm god. In the West Semitic tradition he was Baal, as at Ugarit; or Adad/Haddu as at Ebla and in Mari texts. D. Schwemer has argued (2001: 504ff) that Ba'lu was originally only an epithet of the West Semitic weather god Haddu, which became the independent name of the god, e.g., in Ugarit, where Haddu remained as an archaic epithet of Ba'lu.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁸ See S. Pollock *Ancient Mesopotamia. The Eden that Never Was* (Cambridge: University Press 1999), 35; Larsen, *JAOS* 95 (1975), 43ff; P. Sanlaville, *Paléorient* 15 (1989), 5ff.

⁴⁵⁹ Schwemer 2001: 505f: "Denn diesem Modell, das letztlich einen Tausch von Name und Epitheton postuliert, steht die Hypothese gegenüber, Ba'lu sei ursprünglich ein eigenständiger Gott, der erst sekundär aufgrund der Zugehörigkeit zu einem gemeinsamen Göttertyp mit dem Gewittergott Haddu verknüpft worden und schliesslich ganz mit diesem zu einer Göttergestalt verschmolzen sei."

Thus the West Semitic material is directly relevant to Ninurta mythology, being a regional hypostasis of the common religious-intellectual background. Recent scholarship has richly attested Ninurta in the second millennium West (Artzi 1999, Fleming 1992). At Emar, in the late Bronze Age, ^dNIN.URTA is the logographic writing for an unknown Syrian god. This *Ninurta* is the city-god of Emar, and remarkably also “son of Dagan,” like the Ugaritic Baal. The god Dagan is already identified with Sumerian Enlil, father of Ninurta, in Old Babylonian times and they share the logogram BAD (= IDIM). The name of Dagan is written logographically ^dKUR in Emar as an alternative to the syllabic ^d*Da-gan*. ^dKUR is a shortened form of Enlil’s epithet KUR.GAL “great mountain,” which was borrowed by Dagan, and he is already described as the great mountain in a Mari letter.⁴⁶⁰ That in Emar there existed a cult for Dagan as ^dKUR.GAL points to the awareness of Sumerian traditions concerning Enlil, it “shows that some connection with the ancient title was preserved behind the common writing of the divine name as ^dKUR,” and leaves no doubt that Enlil is the model behind Dagan in Emar.⁴⁶¹ The god Dagan had the same theological position in the North as Enlil had in the South in the third and second millennia:

In the same way that Enlil at Nippur confers on a victorious ruler the kingship of the Land, Dagan at Tuttul ... gives the “banks of the Euphrates.” It is a guess, but a plausible one, that the temple of Dagan at Tuttul functioned as a symbolic center for a wide area of modern Syria, from Mari to Aleppo (Halab), and perhaps including Ebla (Postgate 1995: 400).

Dagan’s role in bestowing kingship thus had a long history in northern Mesopotamia and Syria. The gods with similar functions as Ninurta’s must have been regarded as Dagan’s sons, Adad/Haddu and perhaps later, Baal. The writing ^dNIN.URTA for a Syrian god in thirteenth-century Emar thus attests a conscious syncretism which introduced Sumerian writing for the West Semitic god. The Emar god *Ninurta* is the son of Dagan, and the equivalence of Dagan and Enlil led the scribes trained in the Mesopotamian system to use this Sumerian writing for the name of his son. The Emar god *Ninurta* most probably corresponds to Ugaritic Baal and the difference in writing the god’s name is simply the result of the use of different writing systems – cuneiform in Emar and alphabetic script in Ugarit. Emar and Ugarit were in close scribal contact with each other and the exchange of literature between them is an established fact. Ba’lu’s battle with Yammu thus represents one version of the old Syro-Mesopotamian mythology which, through the Emar god *Ninurta*, is bound to the old Sumerian traditions (cf. Schwemer 2001: 231f). The constant epithet of Marduk in *Enūma eliš* and also Ninurta’s common epithet in the Epic of Anzū is *Bēl* ‘Lord,’ which indicates that there might have been several Mesopotamian gods behind the Ugaritic Baal figure.

⁴⁶⁰ See D. Fleming “The Mountain Dagan: ^dKUR and (^d)KUR.GAL,” NABU 1994/16.

⁴⁶¹ D. Fleming, NABU 1994/16; cf. Schwemer 2001: 561, n. 4462. Enlil is referred to as “Dagan” in the Anzū Epic I 170; II 58; III 24, 27, 34.

Baal contends with Yammu in the Canaanite myth, which is again the battle for kingship because Yammu exercises kingship before he is slain by Baal, who becomes king (KTU 1.2 iv 7b-13a):

Kôtaru-wa-Hasisu speaks up: I hereby announce to you, Prince Ba’lu, and I repeat, Cloud-Rider: As for your enemy, O Ba’lu, as for your enemy, you’ll smite (him), you’ll destroy your adversary. You’ll take your eternal kingship, your sovereignty (that endures) from generation to generation. Kôtaru prepares two maces and proclaims their names: You, your name is Yagrušu, drive out Yammu, drive Yammu from his throne, Naharu from his seat of sovereignty. (Pardee 1997: 248-49.)

The Ugaritic Baal Cycle deals with the legitimization of Baal’s rule in heaven and the construction of his palace or temple on Mount Saphon, but behind these mythological events “lie the concerns of the king’s rule on earth and the construction of his house (palace or continuation of his dynasty) in Ugarit,” as N. Wyatt has rightly argued.⁴⁶²

Ninurta, as the god of arable farming, resembles the West Semitic Baal and Haddu, who was also the god of plantations. Thus, the Syrian and Mesopotamian traditions, which in their various stages were elaborated separately, had a common intellectual background (see Annus 2001: 7ff). This tradition has ultimately entered the Hebrew Bible where the kingship of Yahweh is closely related to his victory over the sea and the monsters inhabiting it:

It is now well known that Tannin and Leviathan (but not so far Rahab) are not, contrary to Gunkel, borrowed from Mesopotamian Marduk mythology, but from West Semitic traditions where Baal was the monster-slayer. The traditional monster-slayer of Mesopotamia was Ningirsu, alias Ninurta, to whom eleven victories of this kind are ascribed, and on whom Marduk was (relatively late) modelled. Thus one is justified in inquiring whether there are other similarities between the two gods. Baal as storm god provided the rain on which plants flourished, so that a tree, plant or branch is often depicted as his symbol. Ningirsu/Ninurta (the latter meaning “Lord Earth”) was a Sumerian, and later Babylonian god of arable farming, but is not the same as the storm god Adad ... In this light the differences between the ideas of the various Near Eastern civilizations seem secondary, and depend on, probably, a common intellectual heritage. (Lambert 1988: 138-39.)⁴⁶³

Numerous Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian cylinder seals depicting Ninurta’s combats found their way to Palestine in the first millennium BC, and pictorial sources contributed there to Ninurta’s heroic hunter image.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶² N. Wyatt, “Degrees of Divinity. Some mythical and ritual aspects of West Semitic kingship,” UF 31 (1999), 854; see also my discussion in SAACT 3 (2001), xxxi-xxxiii.

⁴⁶³ On the relevant discussion over the biblical and Ugaritic *Thronbesteigungsfest* of the storm god at the beginning of the rainy season, see the good introduction by O. Loretz, “Die mythische und kultische, profane und sakrale Zeit des Neujahrsfestes im ugaritischen Baal-Zyklus” in: *Zeit in der Religionsgeschichte*, MARG 13 (Münster 2001), 147-86.

The name form *'nšt* is found on Aramaic docketts, and the form *'nrt* in Aramaean and Ammonite inscriptions of the seventh century BC.⁴⁶⁵ The seals bearing the name of Ninurta found in Ammon were probably brought along by their Neo-Assyrian or Neo-Babylonian holders.

Hurro-Hittite. The “Song of Ullikummi” is the Hittite version of the Hurrian myth which belongs to a group of Kumarbi texts. The Hurrian origin of the myth becomes clear from the Hurrian names of the gods and places mentioned. The subject of this myth is the Heavenly Kingship that passed from one generation of the gods to the next, the sequence being Alalu, Anu, Kumarbi and the Storm-God Tešub. The song of Ullikummi deals with the time when Tešub is already king and the dethroned old ruler, Kumarbi, challenges the rule of the Storm-God by creating an adversary. Kumarbi, who is eulogized at the beginning of the epic as “the father of all gods,” creates the stone-monster Ullikummi by copulating with a rock. The stony origin of the adversary is comparable to Asakku and his army of stones in *Lugale*. The monster who will oppose the rule of the king of the gods is the grandson of the sky-god.⁴⁶⁶ The monster Ullikummi grows in the sea, attached to the shoulder of a cosmic giant, Upelluri. He becomes a deadly threat to the gods, forcing them to retreat from the battleground around Mount Hazzi on the Syrian seashore to Tešub’s last stronghold of Kummiya (Puhvel 1987: 25). Tešub’s brother and vizier Tašmišu, who is comparable to Ninurta’s herald Šarur, gets the bright idea that they should visit Ea in Apsû for advice. Ea is comparably the last resort for Ninurta in the Anzû Epic. Ea turns to the Former Gods urging them to bring forth “the former saw” by which they separated Heaven and Earth at the creation. Ullikummi’s diorite feet are cut off from Upelluri with the saw. Ullikummi’s threat to the world order can be seen as an attempt to re-unite the two realms of Heaven and Earth which were already divided. Thus the Stone’s force is broken, the gods may fight him again and the Storm-God engages in a new battle. The last portions of the myth are not extant, but the end of the story must have been the final victory of the Storm-God over the Stone, and Tešub establishing his rulership over the Hurrian pantheon.⁴⁶⁷

The song of Ullikummi is a clear case of myth diffusion in the Ancient Near East: there are gods of Mesopotamian tradition (Anu and Ea) and Hurrian names (e.g., Kumarbi). The whole myth deals with divine kingship and has some motifs common with the Mesopotamian Ninurta mythology, the most conspicuous being the stony nature of the last enemy.

The battle between the weather god and the snake Illuyanka is the subject of the Hattic-Hittite *Illuyanka*-myth (CTH 321) which was cultically con-

⁴⁶⁴ C. Uehlinger, DDD, col. 1183 (s.v. Nimrod); see O. Keel and C. Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole* (Freiburg 1993²), §§ 169-170.

⁴⁶⁵ Sefire I A 38; KAI no. 55; see C. Uehlinger, DDD, col. 1181.

⁴⁶⁶ This is comparable to the Mesopotamian lists of “seven Asakku’s” which are occasionally described as “sons of Anu,” see n. 191 above.

⁴⁶⁷ H. G. Güterbock, “The Song of Ullikummi,” *JCS* 5 (1951), 139-40.

nected to the Old Anatolian spring festival *purulli(ya)*.⁴⁶⁸ A comparison of this myth and the Pišaiša fragment, which reports that the weather god killed the sea-god, to the Syrian traditions has been offered by D. Schwemer (2001: 232-35). The myth of Illuyankas contains a motif of stolen organs (the heart and eyes) which is also found in the Egyptian myth in the combat between Horus and Seth.

Greek. The Greek parallels to Mesopotamian myths of kingship include Hesiod’s *Theogonia* and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* which have been discussed by M. L. West (1997: 276-86, 300-304) and Ch. Penglase (1994). As pieces of Mesopotamian mythology existed in Hurro-Hittite myths (see above), so are motifs with various origins combined in the Greek sources as well. The *Theogony* of Hesiod, which contains the Succession Myth, has parallels with the Hittite song of Ullikummi. There are some parallels between *Enūma eliš* and the Hesiodic narrative, some of which are unmistakable, and they include some that are absent from the Song of Ullikummi (West 1997: 282).

The final adversary of Zeus in his struggle for the kingship of the gods is named Typhoeus or Typhon, the son of Kronos’ mother Gaia, who mated with Tartaros. Typhon was Kronos’ last hope of reversing his fortunes, like Ullikummi was for Kumarbi (Puhvel 1987: 29). As has been rightly noted by West, the Typhon episode in Hesiod’s *Theogonia* does not fit very well into the structure of the Succession Myth, is rather a separate story drawn from the general area of tradition, and may be compared with several other oriental myths (1997: 300f). The appearance of Typhon in the myth is a challenge to the kingship of Zeus, like the birth of Asag in *Lugale* or the birth of Ullikummi in the Hurrian tradition:

The weird appearance of Typhon and the awesome cosmic imagery associated with his battle with Zeus should not blind us to the fact that this is likewise a political struggle for the office of divine kingship. The political nature of the threat is explicit already in Hesiod: had Zeus not taken notice of his machinations, Typhon “would have been king of gods and men,” a remark that has given more than one Hesiodic commentator pause for thought. This political ambition of Typhon is in fact one of the few things about him that is fairly consistent throughout the textual sources. (Mondi 1990: 185.)

The Greek Byzantine mythographer Nonnos of the fifth century AD describes in his work *Dionysiaca* Typhon advancing to battle in terms that are uncannily reminiscent of Ullikummi: “There stood Typhon in the sea, his feet firm on the bottom, his belly in the air and his head crushed in the clouds” (Puhvel 1987: 29). According to Hesiod, Zeus sears his hundred heads of snakes with his thunderbolts and hurls Typhoeus in a heap down to Tartaros. Apollodorus, in his *Library*, states that Zeus wounded the monster with a sickle which parallels the saw used for the cutting off of Ullikummi’s base. Typhon flees to Mount Kasios in Syria which parallels Mount Hazzi in the

⁴⁶⁸ See G. Beckman, “The Anatolian Myth of Illuyanka,” *JANES* 14 (1982), 11-25; Schwemer 2001: 234f.

Song of Ullikummi, where Tešub and Tašmišu flee before the danger of the monster:

There Typhon wrests the sickle from Zeus and cuts the sinews of his hand and feet; he then dumps the incapacitated Zeus in the Corycian cave in Cilicia. Here there is obvious intrusion by an aboriginal myth of Anatolia that is also preserved in Hittite, in which the dragon Illuyankas robs the storm-god of his heart and eyes. Zeus ultimately recovers his sinews through the intervention of trickster-gods (Hermes and Aigipan in Apollodorus, Corycian Pan in Oppian's *Halieutica*, and Kadmos in Nonnos). He is thus restored and ends up burying Typhon alive under Mount Etna in Sicily, where he continues to rumble and breathe fire from time to time. (Puhvel 1987: 29.)

After the battle with Typhon, Zeus becomes king of the gods and he assigns to them their functions and privileges (*Theogonia* 885). According to Hesiod, Zeus bestowed privileges in accordance with the gods' merits in the battle against the Titans. This may parallel the judgements passed over the army of stones by Ninurta in *Lugale* 416-647 (West 1997: 304).

This is the Greek myth of Zeus' kingship. Ch. Penglase has discussed the Mesopotamian motifs also found in the *Homeric hymn to Apollo*. Apollo is not the champion of the Olympians, in contrast to Ninurta or Marduk. This role in Greek religion belongs specifically to Zeus, who overcame Typhon, a monster which is closely associated with the Pythian monster in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. Apollo still achieves, like Ninurta and Marduk, cultic power and sets up his cultic apparatus as a result of his conflicts (Penglase 1994: 102). After Apollo's arrival on Olympus in the hymn, and the display of his power over the gods (cf. *Angim*), he carries out a journey to establish his temple and cult in Delphi, and in doing so, he performs two heroic exploits through which he achieves power. He settles on a place for his oracle, to which end he defeats both the Pythian serpent and Telphousa, a male and a female monster. The two feats which Apollo performs parallel, according to Penglase, the Mesopotamian myths of Anzû and the Creation Epic (Penglase 1994: 101). For the parallels of details in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, see Penglase 1994: 100-108. In his study, the same author has found numerous parallels between Mesopotamian Ninurta narratives and Greek myths.

Egypt. In Ancient Egypt, kingship establishes itself through the conflict between Horus and Seth, already attested in the Pyramid texts. This is the conflict which perennially establishes kingship, but is never resolved in a definitive way. Horus, who vanquished Seth, became identified with the living king (Griffiths 1960: 15). The myth of conflict between Horus and Seth which results in kingship is simultaneously the myth of royal succession, as in Greece. The myth involves Osiris, who is killed by Seth, lamented by Isis and finally revenged by Horus. Both in the Egyptian myth and in the Hurro-Hittite myth of Kumarbi, there is a motif of castration signifying the loss of sovereignty (Griffiths 1960: 39).

According to the royal titulary of the Egyptian pharaoh, the king is the embodiment of the god Horus and, from the fourth dynasty on, he was thought to be the son of the sun-god Re. Among the epithets of the Egyptian king, we find an epithet "The Two Ladies" and also "The Two Lords." These two lords

were Horus and Seth, and the king was identified with both of these gods. The king was the representative of Horus, and the embodiment of both of them as a pair, as opposites in equilibrium:

Horus and Seth were the antagonists per se – the mythological symbols for all conflict. Strife is an element in the universe which cannot be ignored; Seth is perennially subdued by Horus but never destroyed. Both Horus and Seth are wounded in the struggle, but in the end there is a reconciliation: the static equilibrium of the cosmos is established ... It indicates not merely that the king rules the dual monarchy but that he has crushed opposition, reconciled conflicting forces – that he represents an unchanging order. (Frankfort 1978: 22.)

We can see here a similar relationship as between Ninurta and the Monsters (see above, pp. 109-21). Ninurta and Anzû might be religio-historically related as different facets of the same phenomenon (see Jacobsen 1976: 127ff). Horus and Seth are sometimes believed to be co-operative in the single deity Horus-Seth. They contend and are reconciled, they are separated and reunited (Velde 1977: 69-70). The separation of Horus and Seth is equated to setting a boundary between cosmos and chaos which surrounds cosmos like a flood (Velde 1977: 60). The annual inundation of the Nile is occasionally compared to the great mythical renovation, the integration of Horus and Seth. When they are reconciled they do not fight against each other, but against a common enemy like the snake Apopis (Velde 1977: 71). The omnipotent pharaoh is Horus, but when he must use force he is Seth; the co-operation of both gods in the king guarantees the welfare of the world (Velde 1977: 71f). The Mesopotamian king using force against enemies is often compared to Nergal or Erra, and Ninurta as the God of Wrath had animal forms:

[My king] who like Irra has perfected heroship, Dragon with the "hands" of a lion, the *claws* of an eagle, Lord Ninurta who like Irra has perfected heroship, Dragon with the "hands" of a lion, the *claws* of an eagle ... My king, when your heart was seized (by anger), You spat venom like a snake, Lord Ninurta, when your heart was seized (by anger), You spat venom like a snake.⁴⁶⁹

The vanquished monsters of Mesopotamia functioned as apotropaia and the fierceness of the kings' soldiers is frequently compared to the Thunderbird in royal inscriptions (see Hruška 1975: 46f). Both Anzû and Seth are sometimes regarded as the personifications of death. Ningirsu and Anzud are associated with the flood already in the cylinders of Gudea, which points to contacts between Egyptian and Mesopotamian ideologies of kingship.

Vedic India. According to A. K. Lahiri (*Vedic Vṛtra* [Dehli: Motilal Banarsidass 1984]) the Near Eastern conflict myth, which he regarded as of West Semitic origin, was transmitted through Mesopotamia to India, and the influence is reflected in the *Ṛgveda* hymns 1.32, 1.85, 1.165, 1.170 and 1.171, in the Vedic cycle of Indra and Vṛtra. The storm god Indra, the king of the gods, defeated his cosmic enemy Vṛtra who blocked the waters with the aid of weapons made by the divine craftsman Tvaṣṭar. Indra is the god of rain, Wielder of the Thunderbolt, typologically similar to both Adad and Ninurta

⁴⁶⁹ Ninurta E, translation according to S. N. Kramer in *ANET*, p. 577.

in the Mesopotamian pantheon. One of Indra's many epithets as the slayer of *Vṛtra* in *Rgveda* is *apsujit-*, which can be translated as "who wins in the waters" (*apsu* as loc. pl. of *āp-*, f.), but *apsu* could also be interpreted as a distant reference to *Apsû*, the first husband of *Tiamat*. There is also an incantation against a black serpent called *Taimātá* in *Atharvaveda* V, 13, 6, which might be a borrowing from Mesopotamian *Tiamat* (Panaino 2001: 154). The *Rgveda* hymn to Indra 1.32, which contains the most information on the conflict, begins as follows (translation according to Puhvel 1987: 51-52):

1. Let me say right out the heroics of Indra, the first that he did, the *vajra*-holder: He slew the snake, broke open the waters, and split the bellies of the mountains.

The release of waters also accompanies the defeat of *Asag* by *Ninurta* in *Lugale*. "The bellies of the mountains" is also a notable parallel with *Ninurta*'s enemy *Kur*. The hymn continues:

2. He slew the snake who reclined on the mountain. *Tvaṣṭar* had forged for him the whizzing bolt. Like lowing cows, the flowing waters went swiftly down to the sea. 3. In bullish fashion he ordered up a soma, on a three-day binge he imbibed the brew. The Generous One took the bolt for his missile and slew that firstborn of snakes.

The peaceful drinking episode also precedes the cosmic battle in *Lugale*. The divine craftsman, who fashions the weapons for the hero, is found with *Baal* in the Ugaritic epics (see above, p. 179). In the next section, it becomes evident that the creation of the world was associated with conflict, as in *Enūma eliš*. The Vedic hymn switches to praise of *Indra*:

4. As you, *Indra*, slew the firstborn of snakes, as you moreover outtricked the tricks of the tricksters, producing sun, sky, and dawn, from that time on you never found a foe to match you! 5. This shoulderless Archobstructionist [= *Vṛtra*] he slew, *Indra* with his big murderous bolt. Like tree branches split with an axe, the snake lies flat on the ground.

The image which often underlies the description of the battle in *Lugale* is that of a heavy storm (*Ninurta*) shaking and uprooting a large tree. In another Sumerian hymn *Ninurta* fells the trees for the benefit of his mother.⁴⁷⁰ Besides the association with stone, one also finds the symbolism of the tree with *Asag* (see Jacobsen 1988).⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷⁰ *Ninurta D* (= Sjöberg 1976: 414ff), ll. 1-5: "I will fell trees, I will strike down forests. Let my mother know it. I, *Ninurta*, will fell trees, I will strike down forests. Let my mother know it. I will clear them away like an axe. Let my mother know it. I will strike down walls like a huge axe. Let my mother know it. I will make their troops tremble like Let my mother know it. I will devour them like storm and flood. Let my mother know it." *Gilgamesh* did a similar thing in the cedar forest (see SAA Gilg. V 244).

⁴⁷¹ See Jacobsen 1988: 230: "There are references [in *Lugale*] to its height (31), its wood (62), and its seeds or cones (294) which it spreads widely over the mountains, thus apparently engendering their pine covers. It was born by the soil, 'fertilized' by the rains

6. Like a nonwarrior who can't hold his liquor, he provoked the hard-pressing, lees-quauffing super champion. He did not withstand the onslaught of his weapons. He was crushed for having challenged *Indra*, his features smashed. 7. Without feet or hands he waged battle against *Indra*. The latter hit him in the back with his bolt. A castrato aspiring to match the macho, *Vṛtra* lay shattered in many places. 8. As he lies there like a broken reed, the rising waters of *Man* go past him.

Releasing the waters for mankind is emphasized as the first action after the battle in *Lugale* as well (see *Ninurta as Farmer* above [pp. 152-56]):

Those whom *Vṛtra* had blockaded in his heyday, under their feet the snake has come to lie. 9. *Vṛtra*'s dam had a fit of fainting as *Indra* bore down on her with his weapon. Above was the mother, beneath her the son – *Dānu* lay like a cow with her calf. 10. Amid ever-moving, restless courses, waters rush over *Vṛtra*'s deposited, hidden corps. In long darkness he came to lie for having challenged *Indra*. 11. Dominated by the demon, watched over by the snake, the waters stood sequestered like cows by the *Pani*. But he that slew the Obstructor tapped the reservoir that had been bottled up. 12. You turned into a horsehair, *Indra*, when he bashed you in the fangs, you, the one god. You, hero, won the cows, you won the soma, you set free to flow the Seven Rivers! 13. Neither lightning nor thunder availed him, nor the mist and hail he spread around. When *Indra* and the snake fought, the Generous One won a victory even for the future. 14. Whom did you see as the snake's avenger, *Indra*, that fear came to your heart after the kill, that you crossed the ninety-nine streams, even as frightened falcon traverses the skies? 15. *Indra* is the king of the moving and the unharnessed, of the hornless and horned, he with the bolt in his hand. He as king rules the folk; like the felly the spokes, he encompasses them.

Indra's epithet is *Vṛtrahán-* 'Obstruction-smiter,' which is attested with several other mythical figures. *Indra* is the dragon-killer and one of the deities who is called 'the king' in the Vedic texts. He can slide over into being a storm-god with a thunder weapon (*vájra-*). The name of the dragon, *Vṛtrá-*, is a secondary concretization of the noun 'obstruction' (Puhvel 1987: 51). The cosmic enemy in the Vedic texts is otherwise known as *Triśiras-* 'Three-Headed' or *Viśvarūpa* 'All Shapes' (alluding to *māyā*-qualities). *Indra*, who is a storm-god and the dragon-killer,

controls precipitation for pastoralist and agriculturalist alike, polarizing the foe into a demon of drought who needs to be vanquished in order to make rains (and hence the rivers) flow. On a more earthly level the enemy takes on traits of a cattle-rustler who ... absconds with the herds of the Aryans and sequesters them in a mountain cave. (Puhvel 1987: 51.)

Actual myths of the deeds of *Indra* are scarce, which might point to his foreign origins. A notable one is the story of the birth of *Soma* in a high (heavenly or mountainous) locale, to which an eagle carries *Indra* in order to acquire it for the gods and humankind, losing only a feather in the process to its demonic guardian archer *Kṛśānu* (RV 4.26-27) (Puhvel 1987: 65). This myth is similar to the Mesopotamian *Etana* myth and this parallel encourages

from the sky, and became king of the plants. All of this indicates a plant, specifically a tree growing in the high mountains, most likely a pine."

a search for more Mesopotamian material in the Indian traditions. One might compare the occasional juxtaposition of two themes in Mesopotamian iconography – the defeat of Humbaba is sometimes combined with the motif of ascension to heaven on the eagle's back:

a Mitannian cylinder seal from Tell Billa shows the same juxtaposition of scenes of Humbaba's death and a person riding on the back of an eagle ... Whatever else, the association of the two themes demonstrates that they were thought in some way to belong together ... Interestingly, the two stories seem to be confused in a late, classical, source, Aelian's *De natura animalium*, which refers to the rescue of the baby "Gilgames" by an eagle in flight. (Green 1997: 138-39.)

EPILOGUE

Continuity of Mesopotamian Traditions in Late Antiquity

And when Ioanton had heard from his master that the seven planets are not fixed in the heavens, Ioanton said, "My Master, I see the heavens turning in direct proportion, and I know that these seven planets are not fixed in the heavens as other stars; by what other powers do they run more hastily for a time, sometimes from East to West, at other times from West to East?" Nimrod responded, saying: "Above these seven [planets] the creator commanded seven winds; each one of them takes up its course according to the power of its wind and the latitude of its wheel [i.e. its orbit]. For example, when the direction of the same [winds] is from West to East, you should know that their [i.e. the planets'] course is from East to West, but the winds which dominate them bring them back and they revolve backward and by constraint.

Liber Nimrod (according to *Traditio* 37 [1981] 205.)

The legacy of Mesopotamian ideologies discussed above can be detected in several religious doctrines of late Antiquity. The importance of the subject matter becomes obvious where the roots of Messianic belief are concerned. The roots of messianic belief lie in the Ancient Near Eastern ideology of kingship. The first messianic visions in the Hebrew Bible, those of Isaiah and Micah, are indebted to several Mesopotamian motifs. Isaiah 11:1-9 describes a utopian situation with the cohabitation of wolf and lamb, and of lion and calf which, according to Mesopotamian traditions, existed in the "paradise" at the origin of history, and were rooted in the tradition of creation. The descriptions of the ideal king are found both in Israelite prophecies (Isa 9: 1-6) and Mesopotamian oracles (Weinfeld 2001: 281f). The attributes of the ideal king in Isa 11 are common as Mesopotamian royal titles, and the reign of a good Mesopotamian king was expected to bring about messianic bliss.⁴⁷² Several details show that Isaiah also drew on non-Israelite sources in his eschatological visions:

the visions of the birth of a redeemer, of the pilgrimage of nations to the Temple Mount [Isa 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-4], and of the ideal king establishing eternal peace had been existent in the Near East since early in the second millennium BCE. They

⁴⁷² Weinfeld 2001: 283; see also W. G. Lambert, "Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia" in: J. Day (ed.) *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, (Oxford 1998), 54-70, esp. 69f.

burst out in Israel during the reign of Hezekiah because of particular circumstances – the deaths of the tyrant Tiglath-Pileser III and Ahaz, the impious king who had concluded a treaty with the Assyrian king. (Weinfeld 2001: 286-87.)

Ninurta personified only one aspect of the Mesopotamian king and the crown prince – that of the defender of the divine world order (Parpola 2001: 185). In this role, his mythology and figure became a model for the phenomena which we know as apocalyptic messianism. Ninurta was only one aspect in the ideology of kingship: the king in all Ancient Near Eastern cultures was the source of wellbeing and blessing for his people, the one who ensures the regular course of natural processes. He personifies the Sky-god (Anu), the Moon-god (Sin), the Sun-god (Šamaš) – practically all the great gods could be identified as aspects of the king. On the other hand, with the emergence of monotheism, the unique god could be considered as the king over the universe. Here follows the description of the evolution of Messianic concepts according to M. Idel's superb study:

The ancient Near Eastern and Mesopotamian sources describe a type of king who was a conservative figure par excellence, because his cultic role was to ensure the preservation or the continuation of the structured present into the immediate future. The mythical aspect of this function is paramount, while a historical orientation, dealing with the redemption of the king's nation in a future time, plays at most a marginal role. (Idel 1998: 39.)

The king is a part of the cosmic processes and also an active participant in these processes. The ritual function of the king is part of a mythical vision of the world, which may be considered intrinsically alien to eschatology, but which in its later stages of development became the very matrix of eschatology (Idel 1998: 39). If the myth of Ninurta's battling for the restoration of the divine world order was sometimes viewed as a historical fact with real historical persons as the *dramatis personae* – as was the case with Esarhaddon battling against his brothers (see p. 100) – the mythical processes were thought to be present as history. If the expectations imposed on the institution were not fulfilled, the trust in the ruling king switched to a belief in a political saviour, which was also a move from experience to hope. As a consequence, history became eschatologized: "Thus, though coming in future historical time, the king-Messiah does not destroy history but rather restores an old regime. Here the conservative and restorative drives are cooperating" (Idel 1998: 40).

In the biblical sources after the Babylonian exile, the cosmic-ritualistic role of the king was reduced in favour of a more political one. The term Messiah, previously used for the anointed king, no longer stands for the present king who secures the current order, but for the future king, the one who will restore the splendour of the past to its pristine state, or to an ideal, utopian condition. But in the biblical view, the future king is nevertheless destined to play his part in history (Idel 1998: 40). The cosmic and historical models of kingship are explicitly connected to the term Messiah, but the apocalyptic redeemer, who will transcend history and destroy it, is not so much linked to the term Messiah in the Bible. Eschatology becomes mythological during the time of the exile:

This means that the major role of the apocalyptic Messiah figure has been conceived now to be instrumental in radically transcending present history, viewed as a negative state of affairs, by obliterating it. The fallen order, or the present historical one, is to be undone by the advent of this figure. Hence, it is not a continuation of the mythical order that the Messiah seeks, but rather a rupture, or a more radical innovation or re-creation. This Messiah does not rely on ritual as the main avenue of activity but rather takes political action, wages war against the enemies of God, who are also the enemies of his people. This is an apocalypse, which is at the same time a much more utopian eschatology than the second [historical] one. (Idel 1998: 40).

The mythical figure of Ninurta served as a model for the Jewish Messiah and the Christian Saviour. The Jewish equivalent of Ninurta is the archangel Michael. He is called "the Great Prince," he is the vanquisher of the Dragon and its army, he is the helper of the sick, the holder of the scales of judgement and keeper of the celestial keys.⁴⁷³ In both Jewish and early Christian tradition, the Saviour-Messiah is a king who was expected to overthrow the corrupt world order and to found a new universal empire (Parpola 1997a: 53). The Mesopotamian god Ninurta had an impact on a gallery of divine beings:

Ninurta/Nabû corresponds to the archangel Michael, who in early Christianity (Hermas) was equated with the Son of God, and in Jewish apocalyptic and mystical tradition is known as "the great prince" (*Sar ha-Gadol*) and coalesces with the heavenly scribe, Enoch-Metatron, the "perfect man" (Adam Qadmon); ... In Jewish magical texts, Michael, like Ninurta/Nabû, figures as "the healer" and is associated with the planet Mercury. (Parpola 1997: ci, n. 196.)

The Prince of the heavenly host in the book of Daniel and in Qumran writings came to be identified with Michael from the first century AD onwards. Michael, as the angel who battles for Israel against its enemies, perfectly corresponds to the role of Ninurta in the Assyrian annals.⁴⁷⁴ In Christian tradition, it was St. George who partly took over the role of Michael from the thirteenth century onwards, when Jacobus de Voragine ascribed the role of the dragon-killer to the previous martyr.⁴⁷⁵

Jewish, and subsequently Christian, apocalyptic is heavily indebted to Mesopotamian literature. In the book of Daniel, there is virtually nothing which does not have a parallel in Mesopotamian literature.⁴⁷⁶ The book of

⁴⁷³ See A. Brückner, "Michael," EM, cols. 624-32; M. Mach, "Michael," DDD, cols. 1065-72.

⁴⁷⁴ See J. W. van Henten, DDD, col. 151; cf. 'Cosmic Battle' in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions above, pp. 94-101.

⁴⁷⁵ H. Fischer, "Georg, Hl." in EM, cols. 1030-39, esp. 1032: "Unter westl.-christl. Aspekt ist G[eorg] der miles Christi, der für Christus und sein Reich kämpft und leidet; er wird zur figura Christi, indem sich an ihm das Leiden des Erlösers wiederholt. Den Tod erduldet er, um mit Gottes Hilfe als Märtyrer vom unzerstörbaren Leben wieder aufzuerstehen. Der Drachenkampf symbolisiert die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Gut und Böse und findet eine Entsprechung im Kampf des Erzengels Michael mit Luzifer." See also Emelianov 1999.

⁴⁷⁶ See e.g. M. Henze, *The Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar*. The Ancient Near Eastern Origins and Early History of Interpretation of Daniel 4. JSJ Supplements 61,

Daniel as a cornerstone of Jewish apocalyptic has been written by an expert on Babylonian traditions. I have elsewhere offered a discussion of the dependency of the prophetic vision in Dan 7 on Mesopotamian and Ugaritic sources and on Ninurta mythology.⁴⁷⁷ The Son of Man as a prominent messianic figure can be shown to derive partly from the figure of Ninurta as the son of Enlil.⁴⁷⁸ As H. Kvanvig has pointed out in his study on the same biblical chapter, the *Gattung* of nocturnal vision has several parallels in the Akkadian dream-visions, and the composer of Daniel's vision had borrowed the style of Babylonian prophecies in the description of the ideal king (1988: 489f). The imagery of the four winds of heaven and subsequent birth of monsters from the sea certainly stems from the Babylonian Creation Epic and Ninurta mythology (Annus 2001: 8ff), but the *Gattung* itself exists in the framework of Mesopotamian royal propaganda as well. For example, the *Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince* (SAA 3 32) describes

the descent to the nether world of a king who offended the gods. It tells about the rebel king who even though he possessed the supreme wisdom, revolted against the gods. And it tells about the (prophesied) ideal king, called "the unique man," who was determined to rule a worldwide kingdom. (Kvanvig 1988: 441.)

The tradition of a wicked monarch who did not fulfill expectations is similar to that of the rebel king. The rebel king was "a beast" to be vanquished by the true one, who might see himself as the incarnation of Ninurta (cf. Isa 30:7; Ezek 29:3, 32:2). For example, the wickedness of Nabonidus became a literary motif which, in the book of Daniel, was associated with Nebuchadnezzar's name.⁴⁷⁹ The chain of inappropriate kings, which will be replaced by the true king is the main topos of the literary predictive texts, also called the Akkadian prophecies. In Enochic apocalypses, history is similarly periodized, and the national good is awaiting restoration after times of trouble, by placing *vaticinia ex eventu* on the lips of ancient Jewish worthies. In this way Enoch was destined to outshine Enmeduranki and the Babylonian Nabû as the expert on divination (VanderKam 1984: 189).

In Jewish apocalyptic literature, the Messiah assumes a divine nature; he is a pre-existent supernatural figure, who lives in a supernal world and waits

(Leiden: Brill 1999); W. G. Lambert, *The Background of Jewish Apocalyptic* (University of London: The Athlone Press 1978). Cf. Parpola 1998, Kingsley 1992: 343f.

⁴⁷⁷ See Annus 2001. See also J. A. Emerton, "The Origin of Son of Man Imagery," *JTS* 9 (1958), 225-42; L. Rost, "Zur Deutung des Menschensohnes in Daniel 7" in G. Dellling (ed.), *Gott und die Götter. Festgabe für Erich Fascher zum 60. Geburtstag* (Berlin 1958), 141-43.

⁴⁷⁸ See Annus 2001: 14. *Anthropos* was one designation of the highest being in many Gnostic systems which links together supreme divinity and humanity. God is the prototype of Man, thanks to which redemption from the world created by the archons is possible (R. L. Gordon, DDD, cols. 108ff).

⁴⁷⁹ The Mesopotamian tradition of the wicked king did disservice to the fame of Assyrian kingship in the figure of Sardanapalos who as a real nowhere man was taken as *pars pro toto* for the whole of Mesopotamian history; see H. McCall, in Dalley 1998 (ed.): 183ff.

to enter into history. In later biblical sources, in Jewish apocalypses, and in Christianity a remythologization took place: the supernatural was not present in a ritualistic enactment that preserves the order, but in a strong figure whose extraordinary power shatters the order (Idel 1998: 41). In other words, myth became history in the most actual way, and messianism manifested itself in societal factuality. The Mesopotamian and Egyptian conceptions of kingship probably remained operative in the development of Jewish mysticism:

the apotheotic impulse, similar to the theory of kingship in Mesopotamia, where the king was thought to have been adopted by God, is central to the development of Jewish mysticism, especially in the Heikhalot literature, ecstatic Kabbalah, Sabbateanism, and Hasidism, whereas the theophanic mode, reminiscent of the Egyptian view of the king as God, is more operative in the theosophical-theurgical Kabbalah. (Idel 1998: 42.)

The second important point of contact between Babylonian scholarly tradition and Jewish apocalyptic is the passage in the throne vision of Ezekiel 1: 26-27. This vision is the cornerstone of Jewish Merkabah mysticism and it had immense significance in the Judeo-Christian tradition (Kingsley 1992: 344). Both in Ezek 1:26-27 and in a Babylonian mystical text (Livingstone 1986: 82f) the god – Bel in the Babylonian version – is seated in his throne chamber on a throne of lapis lazuli in his abode in the middle heaven, viz. immediately above the lowest heaven of the stars, and is surrounded by the gleam of amber. The view of the cosmos which the Babylonian text describes, consisting of three heavens and three earths, occupied an important place in Babylonian priestly tradition (Kingsley 1992: 341-42). The colophon of the Babylonian tablet explicitly attests that the information on it was considered to be esoteric (Livingstone 1986: 260). This important and very exact parallel sheds some light on the nature of the cultural transmission:

In the case of Ezekiel we appear to be faced with an example of transmission from one religious tradition to another – but transmission of a very particular kind. In the rabbinic tradition of Judaism the central details of Ezekiel's vision remained as esoteric, as strongly guarded a secret, as they had been in the Babylonian priestly tradition which preceded him. This clearly implies that the transmission was not, as one might suppose would be the case with cultural borrowings of imagery or ideas, a straightforward matter of contact between the periphery of one religion and the periphery of another. On the contrary, the transmission seems to have occurred directly between the heart of one tradition and the heart of another: from centre to centre, core to core. How exactly it happened, we do not know; what matters is the fact that it evidently did happen. (Kingsley 1992: 345.)

Merkabah mysticism contains Jewish mystics' visions of God sitting upon his "throne chariot." Ninurta's, Enlil's and Marduk's chariot played an important role in Mesopotamian religious history, and should be regarded as the predecessors from which the Merkabah speculations ultimately grew. Details of the descriptions of mystical visions in the Merkabah literature depart from other Jewish literary traditions which makes it possible to assume that they contain echoes of Mesopotamian mythological patterns.⁴⁸⁰ The

⁴⁸⁰ Arbel 1999-2000: 336; cf. Parpola 1993: 205.

authors of the Hekhalot and Merkabah mystical literature appear to have been familiar with several Mesopotamian theological concepts. Similarities are found in the images of God's kingship, his physical appearance, and in the recognition of his kingship by lesser divine beings. In addition to the sophisticated means of cultural transmission, we can assume that these borrowings resulted from the syncretistic milieu of late Antiquity as the scene of cultural interaction.⁴⁸¹

As T. Eskola has shown, the enthronement and exaltation discourse in New Testament Christology is in many ways indebted to Merkabah mysticism. The exaltation of the resurrected Christ in Acts 2:22-36 is interpreted as an act of enthronement of the Messiah, and the description involves symbols that are associated with coronation, which is similar to the pattern used in Merkabah mysticism. The apostle Paul appears to be well acquainted with Jewish mysticism, and in his christological descriptions he relies heavily on enthronement discourse. He is one of the early Christian teachers who uses Merkabah terminology in Christological formulations.⁴⁸²

The cult of Mesopotamian gods persisted until late Antiquity. The god Nebo was principally worshipped in such Syrian cities as Edessa, Mabbog (Hierapolis), Palmyra and Dura Europos (Pomponio 1978: 223ff). Nebo had a position in the pantheon of Harran as well, probably as the son of the moon god. The city was noted for varied and intense intellectual activity, which points to a connection between Nebo and Harran (Green 1992: 70). There is evidence for a cult of Nabû in Hatra as well.⁴⁸³ At least in Edessa and Palmyra, the New Year Festival was celebrated according to the ancient Babylonian pattern involving Bel and Nebo at the beginning of Nisan. A pagan high-priest of Edessa in the first century AD converted to Christianity, but was compelled to sacrifice to Nabû and Bel during this festival. According to the Syriac *Acts of Sharbel*, Bel and Nabû were brought together in a procession to the high altar in the city centre, accompanied by dancing, music, and the reciting of ancient myths. This shows that the cult of Bel and Nabû in Edessa clearly belonged together with Mesopotamian tradition and myth.⁴⁸⁴ The festival in Edessa was celebrated at least until the end of the fifth century AD.

The Syrian city of Edessa might serve as a model for the channel through which the pagan ideas entered into Christian doctrines. Called the "Athens of the East," it had a school where young aristocrats were educated in philosophy and rhetoric. Syriac-speaking Christianity in northern Mesopotamia and in the East Syrian region, as in Antioch and in Edessa, was mainly of gentile

⁴⁸¹ See Arbel 1999-2000.

⁴⁸² T. Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah mysticism and early Christian exaltation discourse*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, Reihe 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2001), 142; see *Conclusion*.

⁴⁸³ Dalley 1995: 148; see W. al-Salihi, "The Shrine of Nebo at Hatra," *Iraq* 45 (1983), 140-45.

⁴⁸⁴ Arbel 1999-2000: 342, Pomponio 1978: 224.

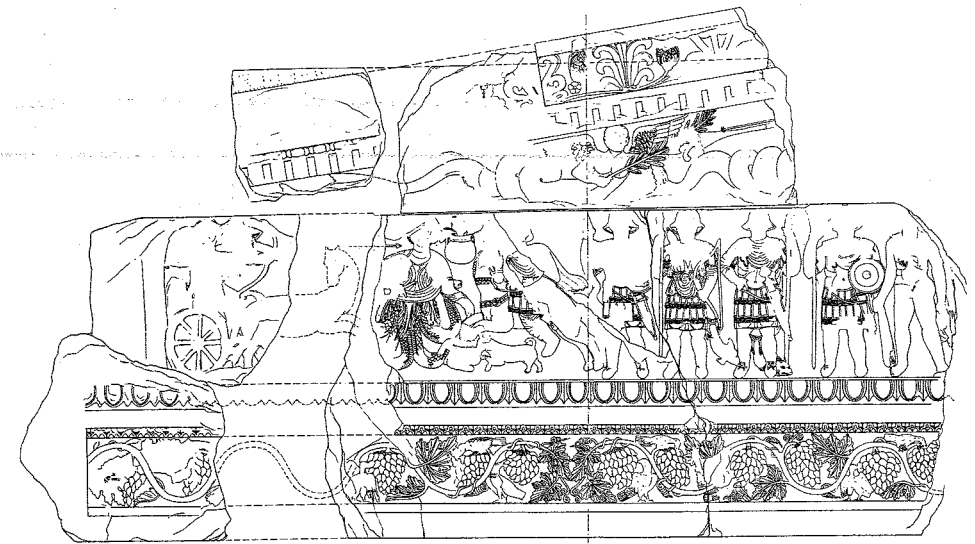


Fig. 13 Bel fighting Tiamat on a frieze from the Bel Temple in Palmyra [after Seyrig et al., *Temple de Bêl à Palmyre*, Album (1968), 90]

origin, not substantially influenced by Judaism or Judaeo-Christianity.⁴⁸⁵ The name of an influential theologian in this branch of Christianity was Tatian the Assyrian, which is a Hellenized form of the Aramaic name Tatî, already attested in Assyrian imperial sources.⁴⁸⁶ His religious ideas of *encratism* ('self-control'), basically involving sexual abstinence, were of common currency in the East Syrian area. Tatian was an exponent of the Syriac spiritual climate and its powerful promotor at the same time. Such third-century apocryphal writings as the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Odes of Solomon*, as well as all Thomasine literature, reflect Tatian's ideas to such an extent that they can be considered a commentary on them.⁴⁸⁷ The ultimate message of Thomasine literature is the inversion of social hierarchies, emphasizing that everyone can regain his kingly status if he vanquishes the desires of the flesh in himself. The Aramaic philosopher and astrologer Bardesanes (154-222) from Edessa also preserved a portion of the ancient Mesopotamian ideas in his syncretistic doctrines. The new ideas which came along with Christianity to Syria were simply fitted into the existing intellectual patterns. Christian belief and paganism co-existed rather peacefully in Edessa, whereas Christianity owed much to its pagan fellow:

Pagan and Christian held different views, but they did not fight each other. The predominant position of Nebo, god of wisdom and human fate, son of the god of

⁴⁸⁵ Drijvers 1994: II 141-43.

⁴⁸⁶ S. Parpola "Assyrians after Assyria," *JAAS* 12/2 (2000), 14, n. 55.

⁴⁸⁷ See Drijvers 1984: I 7; 1994: IV.

heaven Bel, has its counterpart in the Christian Jesus, son of God and the incarnation of His Wisdom. The accent on the healing capacities of Christ and His Wisdom in Christian doctrine at Edessa might have some relations to pagan views and practice. (Drijvers 1980: 195.)

The main temple of Palmyra was dedicated to the god Bel, and the temple of Nabû or Nebo stood closest to it. The only extant large-scale depiction of Bel fighting Tiamat from the Babylonian Epic of Creation is on the great frieze from the temple of Bel in Palmyra (Fig. 13).⁴⁸⁸ There is written evidence that merchants of Babylon were involved in the rebuilding of the temple of Bel in AD 32 and,

there is another piece of probable evidence to connect the cult to ancient Mesopotamia. The temple of Bel at Palmyra had an inner sanctum called *haikal*, the Babylonian word for a palace which was also commonly used to mean a temple from the late Assyrian period onwards; and the outer sanctum was called 'NDRWN', which should probably be derived from the Sumerian loan word *anduruna*, "heavenly abode." For this rare, ceremonial word is used of the home of the gods in the epic of Creation. (Dalley 1995: 140.)

The corpus of Aramaic inscriptions from Assur and Hatra attests that ancient Mesopotamian religious practices continued in the first centuries AD in the north of Mesopotamia as well as in the south. The inscriptions show that the gods of ancient Assyria were still worshipped in Assur.⁴⁸⁹ The *akītu* house at Assur was rebuilt during the Parthian period according to the ancient model, and consequently, it can be assumed that the old rituals were still current.⁴⁹⁰ In the newly founded city of Hatra, the chief temple in the second century AD was dedicated to Šamaš as Bel, and was named Esagil. This shows that the cult of Bel-Marduk was still extremely prestigious because the temple name came from Babylon, even if the god was different. The goddess Iššar was known as Bel in Assur and presumably the god Aššur was, in the same way, the Bel of Assur. This evidence indicates that Bel is only a title for a god who defeats the forces of chaos at the New Year (Dalley 1995: 144). The goddess Iššar-Bel in Hatra is probably the legacy of Ištar of Arbela:

A Syriac text on the martyrdom of Aitalaha refers to a priest of Sharbel the goddess of Arbela, in which the male epithet Bel is expressly added to the name of the goddess, which is given in an abbreviated form as Šar for Iššar. The evidence so far shows that the epithet Bel could be applied to various national gods or patron deities of major cities, but only to deities whose ancestry was Mesopotamian. In Late Babylonian texts from Mesopotamia, the god Marduk was sometimes called Sangilay, i.e. the god of Esagil. It now appears possible that other gods could have the same name. Since Ishtar was called Bel at Hatra in the second century, we can deduce that Ishtar of Arbela was still flourishing with her

own, local *akītu* festival, and was worshipped at Hatra at that period. (Dalley 1995: 145.)

Sin was Bel at Harran from the time of the Assyrian empire onwards and Adad was the supreme god (= Bel) of the Aleppo area until late Antiquity, having Aleppo and Apamea as his cities (Dalley 1995: 145f). From the Hellenistic period onwards, an *akītu* festival was celebrated in honour of these several Bels, and not necessarily in the month of Nisan:

cults of Bel continued to flourish during the Parthian period both within and outside areas controlled at times by Rome: at Palmyra, Dura, Apamea-on-Orontes and Hatra the cult or at least its buildings appear to be newly emerged, but at Ashur, Arbela, Harran and Babylon powerful traditions of great antiquity have survived into the Roman period. The language in which the epic of Creation was recited began as Babylonian, but creeping Aramaicisation may have resulted eventually in an all-Aramaic version. (Dalley 1995: 150-51.)

It is not feasible to give a full account of all the *akītu* festivals celebrated in late Antiquity in Near Eastern cities. But it is still certain that these festivals celebrated the local Bel of the city as the defeater of chaos in accordance with the local calendar and customs. A Late Babylonian ritual tablet attests that the *akītu* festival in Babylon was not confined to the month of Nisan, but was celebrated with the recitation of the Creation Epic in the month of Kislimu as well.⁴⁹¹ This evidence can be taken as an indication of a more variegated cult from Persian times onwards. The end of pagan cult practices can only be roughly dated – to the mid-third century at Hatra and Assur; to the fourth century AD in Palmyra, Dura Europos, Apamea and Arbela, and even to the tenth century in Harran (Dalley 1995: 151).

The intellectual heritage of Mesopotamian religious traditions remained operative in late Antiquity. The most persistent element of the Ninurta mythology in late Antiquity was the notion of the heavenly tablets or the book of life (= Tablet of Destinies), which flourished in several forms as the cult of holy script. The Jewish apocalyptic books of Enoch and Jubilees refer to 'heavenly tablets' which seem to contain not only laws and a chronicle of contemporary events, but also predictions for the future (Dalley 1998: 166). In the Christian Gnostic homily called *The Gospel of Truth*, the book of life is the object of the description. In this book, the Father makes himself known to the "little children," and the book has a nature similar to that of the Mesopotamian Tablet of Destinies:

There was manifested in their (= children) heart the living book of the living – the one written in the thought and the mind [of the] Father, which from before the foundation of the totality was within his incomprehensibility – *that (book) which no one was able to take, since it remains for the one who will take it to be slain* (my emphasis).⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁸ Dalley 1995: 137; see Dirven 1997.

⁴⁸⁹ Dalley 1995: 143f; see B. Aggoula, *Inscriptions et graffites araméens d'Assour* (Napoli 1985).

⁴⁹⁰ Dalley 1995: 144; see W. Andrae and B. Hrouda, *Das wiedererstandene Assur*, (München 1977), 249.

⁴⁹¹ Dalley 1995: 146f; see G. Cağirgan and W. G. Lambert, "The Late Babylonian *kislimu* ritual for Esagil," *JCS* 43-45 (1991-93), 89-106.

⁴⁹² NHL, p. 41, translated by H. W. Attridge and G. W. MacRae. The section ends as follows: "No one could have become manifest from among those who believed in

It was Anzû who was able to take the Tablet of Destinies and was slain by Ninurta, and this parallel alone ensures that the notion of the book of life was a continuation of Mesopotamian tradition. The living book is written in logographic or hieroglyphic signs, with letters of the Father:

This is the knowledge of the living book which he (= the Father) revealed to the aeons, at the end, as [his letters], revealing how they are not vowels nor are they consonants, so that one might read them and think of something foolish, but they are letters of the truth which they alone speak who know them. Each letter is a complete <thought> like a complete book, since they are letters written by the Unity, the Father having written them for the aeons in order that by means of his letters they should know the Father. (NHL, p. 43.)

There is no tablet without a scribe who wrote it. The example of Ninurta/Nabû certainly contributed to the figure of the divine scribe, who took several forms in late Antiquity, such as Nebo, Hermes, Thoth and Enoch. Nebo, in the Syrian cities where his cult was preserved, was regarded as a political protector and bestower of a revealed wisdom. In the latter function he became linked with:

the Greek Hermes, the Egyptian Thoth and the Persian Hoshang, as well as Apollo and Orpheus in the Hellenistic and early Christian periods, Enoch or Idris later under Islam. Among the Mandaeans, Nebo is considered as the Lord of wisdom and knowledge, and in this role he even stands in opposition to the Moon god. In part, this was made easier by his identification in Mesopotamian astrology and planetary worship with Mercury, who became an important figure in the Hermetic tradition. (Green 1992: 71.)

The concept of the holy tablet is present in Gnosticism and Hermetism. The emerald tablet of Hermes Trismegistos contained the secrets of the gods, and was sometimes said to have been sealed with the seal of Hermes. Hermes, to whom the Gnostic writings were attributed, was called Hermes Trismegistos 'thrice great' and he was thought to embody the wisdom of the Greek Hermes, the Mesopotamian-Jewish Enoch, and the Egyptian Thoth (see Dalley 1998: 166ff).

The Greek god Hermes was identified with Nabû and there were reasons for it. Both gods were associated with the planet Mercury and had "swift feet." As the divine messenger and the brother of Apollo, Hermes became the god of the divine message, the god of magic, alchemy and astrology. Here we can see again a link between the extraordinary speed of the legs and the brain. Athletic games were celebrated in honour of both Ninurta and Hermes; the latter was honoured as the god of gymnastics and agonistics. Hermes' creative talents came to be associated with speech (*logos*), and as a figure of *logos*, he was equated with the Saviour by the Christian-Gnostic group Naasenes.⁴⁹³

salvation unless that book had appeared. For this reason the merciful one, the faithful one, Jesus, was patient in accepting sufferings until he took that book, since he knows that his death is life for many."

⁴⁹³ See L. H. Martin, DDD, col. 774; cf. Hippolytus, *Ref.* 5.2.

The figure of Enoch, "the scribe of righteousness," who was most tightly connected to the Jewish-Hellenistic apocalyptic literature, was originally modelled on the Mesopotamian traditions of antediluvian sages and kings.⁴⁹⁴ In late Antiquity, however, Enoch was understood as a heavenly scribe, which role was probably refracted from Mesopotamian traditions.⁴⁹⁵ In Jubilees 4:17, Enoch is the first man who learned how to write, and in later Jewish mysticism, Enoch was equated with the archangel Metatron. The book of Jubilees enlarges the account of Enoch's life after the angels removed him permanently to the Garden of Eden. There he continued to perform his duties of scribe, as the recorder of all human misdeeds, until the day of judgement (4:24):

It seems likely that the older traditions that the patriarch had written the divine indictment of the Watchers (*1 Enoch* 12-16), that he had read from the heavenly tablets on which all human actions – past, present and future – were inscribed, and possibly that he had invented writing combined to create the image of him as God's recorder of all that people do. In this instance he performs another duty that in other ancient cultures was assigned to one of the gods (e.g., Nabu, Thoth). To be sure, the writer carefully nuances the motif of a divine scribe and also relates it to Jewish eschatological expectations, but the fact remains that he uses the notion. (VanderKam 1984: 185.)⁴⁹⁶

Enoch's record of human wickedness will serve as the basis for God's verdicts at the final judgement because, in the Aramaic version of *1 Enoch* 92:1, Enoch is referred to as judge of the world (*ibid.*). The figures of Enoch and the Son of Man are interconnected because Enoch is sometimes referred to with the title Son of Man (*1 Enoch* 71). The Last Judgement scene in Matthew 25:31-46 is indebted to the figure of Enoch the Son of Man in *1 Enoch* 37-71.⁴⁹⁷

The tablet of wisdom was inseparable from metaphysical wisdom itself which in late Antiquity was widely believed to have its origins in ancient Babylonia and Egypt. The wisdom of the east, especially astronomy and astrology, in the Greek and Roman world was believed to originate in both these lands, and the questions of priority or possible mutual influence was certainly much discussed. The wisdom of these divine sages was then a wisdom of composite origin, originating in Hebrew scriptures, Greek philosophy, and in various kinds of Mesopotamian and Egyptian divination.

The most prominent contribution to this wisdom from the Mesopotamian side was astrology. The Mesopotamian gods, who formed an assembly to determine heavenly and mundane affairs, were regarded as planets, and decisions on the fate of these affairs were read from the night sky by learned men. The assembly of Mesopotamian gods was thought to rule over society

⁴⁹⁴ See Kvanvig 1988, VanderKam 1984, and p. 128 above; cf. Dalley 1998: 165.

⁴⁹⁵ See H. Gunkel, *ARW* 1 (1898), 294-300; cf. VanderKam 1984: 105.

⁴⁹⁶ For Nabû as the Recorder of Sins, see I. L. Finkel, "The Dream of Kurigalzu and the Tablet of Sins," *Anatolian Studies* 33 (1983), 75-80.

⁴⁹⁷ See C. Rowland, DDD, col. 580.

and to be represented by the (Assyrian) state council. The biblical 'Host of heaven' was borrowed from the Mesopotamian notion of the divine assembly. The 'Host of heaven' or 'Host of Yahweh' were either warriors helping God in his wars or the divine assembly gathered around him. The king Yahweh carries the title 'Lord of Hosts.'⁴⁹⁸ In accordance with developments in Mesopotamian religion, the 'Host of heaven' was astralized, and came to be understood as the sun, moon and stars.⁴⁹⁹ In the Jewish post-exilic texts, the 'Host of heaven' denotes stars or celestial beings, as well as Yahweh's divine council. In addition, the 'Host of heaven' came to be understood as a group of angels under the service of God. Already in Second Temple Judaism, the angels were grouped into a hierarchy, manifesting the powers of God. The seven angels were equated with the seven classical planets, the heavenly host. This was a borrowing of the Mesopotamian concept: the metaphor of the divine assembly or 'Host' consisting of the seven great gods underlined the unity of the divine powers and their organic interaction (Parpola 1997: xxi).

In late Antiquity, deities or angels as planets or planetary spheres were considered as the divine powers who rule the physical universe and as such they corresponded to Gnostic archons and to sefirotic powers (Parpola 1997: lxxxv). In Gnostic texts, the former Mesopotamian gods are transformed into evil archons, governing the physical universe under the service of the evil creator god. The archontic exegesis of the Scriptures originates in the Hellenistic milieu as part of the exegesis of the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The number of archons was seven like the number of angels. Their names are strikingly Hebraic and the archons' Jewish origin seems highly likely.⁵⁰⁰ The angels of first millennium AD Judaism in turn correspond in every respect to Mesopotamian gods (see Parpola 1997: lxxxiv, n. 41). Seven planetary deities were considered as archons and were involved in astral fatalism. This is a legacy of the Mesopotamian concept of the divine assembly consisting of seven destiny-decreeing gods and their irrevocable decisions. Hellenistic religion witnessed a high point of astrological determinism; astrology was an element of general education in that period, and astronomy as a science was more developed than ever before:

Neugebauer and others have demonstrated that the image of the Chaldaean priesthood as the source of ancient astral lore and wisdom was in large measure a product of the diffusion of Greek ideology in the Near East, since it was not until the beginning of the Seleucid era that there had developed a mathematical astronomy of sufficient sophistication to allow the calculation of the elaborate

⁴⁹⁸ H. Niehr, DDD, col. 811f; see 1 Kgs 22:19, Isa 6.

⁴⁹⁹ H. Niehr, DDD, col. 812; see Deut 4:19, Ps 148:2-3.

⁵⁰⁰ According to Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 1.30), there were Ialdabaoth, Iao, Sabaoth, Adoneus, Eloeus, Oreus and Astanphaeus. According to Origen (*Contra Celsum* 6.31), the seven archons of Ophite mythology were Ialdabaoth, Iao, Sabaoth, Adoniaios, Astaphaios, Eloaios and Horaios. The archon Sabaoth was identified with Egyptian Seth according to magical papyri. The seven planetary spheres controlled by these archons were the sun, moon, and the five planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, bounded by the region of the fixed stars. See D. E. Aune, DDD, cols. 158f.

horoscopes which formed the basis of Hellenistic astrology. It was during this same relatively late period as well that that astrological staple, the zodiac, was "invented." (Green 1992: 41-42.)

As a well developed science, astrology had a great new impact on contemporary religion. Stars as gods or stars instead of gods formed the divine assembly governing the events of the cosmos. While for large masses of people this was a welcome explanation for understanding the world, for the other part, consisting of the limited number of devotees of redemptory religions, this acknowledged truth was regarded as a necessary disaster. For these people, the religion of astral fatalism, whose earliest forms ultimately originated in the Mesopotamian world view, became a prison of this-worldly powers. Therefore the previous powerful forces of the monotheistic god were demonized as wicked angels or archons of an impotent and witless demiurge. It was not denied that these powers govern the universe, but this was regarded as a disaster. The notion of redemption became much more important on the basis of these presumptions. The idea of redemption was already present in Mesopotamian religion, in the cult of Ištar, and in the royal cult of Dumuzi/Tammuz or Ninurta.⁵⁰¹ The consistent belief both in harmonious heavenly powers and in redemption was split into controversial belief in the inconsistency of these two traditional aspects. The current world order was marked as negative, redemption being emphasized instead. This controversy resulted in Gnostic dualism, which probably originated in pre-Christian Jewish Gnosticism. Dualism is an obvious way out of determinism because it posits the second important counter principle in addition to the dominating one.⁵⁰²

The term *kosmokratores* was frequently used for planets in Greek magical papyri. They were personified as rulers of the heavenly spheres, and sometimes regarded as evil.⁵⁰³ In the Nag Hammadi Gnostic treatise *The Hypostasis of the Archons* (92, 4ff), there is a passage which curiously resembles the Mesopotamian account of the Flood, the only difference being that instead of the "great gods" there are "archons." The passage is by no means a rewording of the biblical flood story:

Then mankind began to multiply and improve. The rulers took counsel with one another and said, "Come, let us cause a deluge with our hands and obliterate all flesh, from man to beast." But when the ruler of the forces came to know of their decision, he said to Noah, "Make yourself an ark from some wood that does not rot and hide in it – you and your children and the beasts and the birds of heaven from small to large – and set it upon Mount Sir."⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰¹ See Parpola 1997, *Introduction*.

⁵⁰² There is a parallel in the current philosophical discussion over 'physicalistic determinism.' With the tremendous advance in some fields of modern science, the existence or the causal efficiency of the 'qualitative' aspects in the physical universe are being vehemently negated by 'physicalists.' The most comfortable way out of such determinism has proved to be a dualistic approach. See e.g., U. Uus, *Blindness of Modern Science*, Tartu 1994.

⁵⁰³ See D. E. Aune, DDD, col. 154.

⁵⁰⁴ NHL, p. 166, translated by B. Layton; see my note in *NABU* 2000/68.

This means that from the point of view of Gnostic authors, Mesopotamian gods were demonized and regarded as evil beings, and Mesopotamian traditions were inverted from their original intention.⁵⁰⁵ These archons were sometimes regarded as the fallen angels recorded in Gen 6:1-4 who taught wicked things to mankind. Archons, as the rulers of this world, hold the Gnostic spirit in captivity; only through a spark of divinity in one's soul can one find salvation from these forces:

The seven spheres ... are controlled by supernatural beings designated by various terms including *archontes*. Seven *archontes* are usually presided over by a chief *archōn*, who is also the demiurge who created the world, and resides in Ogdoad, the eighth region above the seven planetary spheres. Since the attainment of salvation is linked with attaining to the sphere of the unknown God, passage through the concentric ranks of hostile archons is necessary. One specific form of this myth is presented in the Coptic Gnostic treatise *The Hypostasis of the Archons*, where the *archontes* are said to guard the gates of the seven planetary spheres, impeding the upward movement of souls.⁵⁰⁶

The discourse of the soul's salvation in Gnosticism was heavily indebted to the corresponding Mesopotamian ideas. The seven gates of ascent correspond to the seven gates of the underworld through which the goddess Ištar descends to those who need salvation.⁵⁰⁷ The Gnostic saviour is depicted as fighting against these demonic forces, imprisoning the souls in much the same way as Ninurta battled with the forces of sin and death. Sometimes the saviour is reported as having disguised himself in order not to be recognized by the archons.

It seems clear that Gnostic inversion of Mesopotamian astral fatalism was a reaction to the deterministic world view dominant in the Hellenistic period. Astral determinism or fatalism in the contemporary mainstream religion was regarded as "sin" by Gnostics and some Christians, and this should be regarded as a major intellectual advance. By negating the previous religious traditions and polarizing the concepts, the Gnostics still remained dependent on the very same traditions.

Gnosticism differs in this respect from the Christianity of Syria where the Mesopotamian religious concepts were developed in other ways. In the *Odes of Solomon*, the poet depicts himself as the son of God, the eternal king, just as Jesus is God's son, and Solomon was David's son. These odes display the same anthropological-christological doctrine as the famous *Hymn of the Pearl*, which condenses the message of the *Acts of Thomas*. Thomasine literature reflects the milieu where strong emphasis was laid on the function

⁵⁰⁵ On the double role of the "sons of Seth," see A. Annus, *SAACT* 3 (2001), xxv-xxx.

⁵⁰⁶ D. E. Aune, *DDD*, col. 158f.

⁵⁰⁷ For the Gnostic parallel to the Descent of Ištar, see Parpola 1997: xxxi-xxxiv. Cf. Drijvers 1980, 192-93: "The return of the soul to its heavenly palace of origin is, in fact, a journey through the spheres of the planets. At each sphere the soul crosses it leaves behind the quality the planet gave it when the soul descended for a temporary sojourn in a human body. At the end of its journey the soul is completely emptied, ethereal, nude, and then finds eternal rest."

of the human and divine Spirit as the means of returning to an original condition of immortality and closeness to God. Man is taught to regain that condition, his original royal status:

Man is permanently exposed to the powers of seduction against which he ought to fight. Christ is ... a divine helper, with whom man can identify provided that he creates room for Christ's Spirit in his physical being by keeping it pure. Then, but only then, can every man gain royal status, whereas kings and their nobles are exposed as poor defenders of a social order that is mere earthly appearance and does not have any value and subsistence *sub specie aeternitatis*. (Drijvers 1994: III 240.)

Such beliefs do not share the negative view of matter and creation current in Gnosticism. But they share the urge to salvation, which is expressed in the idiom of becoming a king and restoring the original god-given condition of the world. However modified into metaphorical speech, these conceptions appear to be familiar from the Mesopotamian cult of Ninurta.⁵⁰⁸

The Manichaeans and their traditions were of substantial importance both in Edessa and Palmyra, the foci of early Manichaean activities. Mani himself was brought up in an Elchasaite sect, whose revelatory book was once preached by a certain Alcibiades from Apamea-on-Orontes where the cult of Bel was famous for its oracle and the paganism of Mesopotamian origin survived into the fourth century AD.⁵⁰⁹ The epithet of Mani, the "Babylonian Man" had a basis in reality, and the "Queen Tadmor" (Palmyra) is quite often mentioned in Manichaean texts. One of the Manichaeans' most important writings, the sacred Book of the Giants, was partly a reworking of the Epic of Gilgamesh.⁵¹⁰

A new fragment of the Gilgamesh episode, which was used in the chapter of the Book of Enoch at Qumran, known as the Book of Watchers, has shown that Enoch played the part previously ascribed to Enkidu in the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh. So Enkidu – Enoch was the archetypal "heavenly twin," the soul-mate sent by heaven to bring spiritual values to the errant hero. We may therefore suggest that Babylonian and Assyrian religious practices at Palmyra made the city particularly favourable to Manichaean overtures. (Dalley 1995: 150.)

There are more Mesopotamian survivals in the Manichaean traditions. One of them can be seen in Theodore bar Khonai's description of the Manichaean mythological concepts concerning the third creation. It is about how the pure women seduced the archons, based partly on Gen 6:1-4. The forms of the male-female Living Spirit, which was revealed to the sons of Darkness, caused them to emit semen which became light for the creation of the cosmos. After the archons emitted some of the light they had previously swallowed, a portion of "the sin" fell on the sea where it became "a hateful beast in the likeness of the King of Darkness" The Adamas of Light was sent to fight

⁵⁰⁸ See Drijvers 1994: III 245-46; cf. Parpola 2001.

⁵⁰⁹ Dalley 1995: 150; see also A. Annus, *SAACT* 3 (2001), xxvii-xxviii. On Mani's place in Syrian intellectual traditions, see Drijvers 1984: XIII.

⁵¹⁰ See Dalley 1995: 149f, Reeves 1993.

against this "hateful beast" which was also named "the Giant of the Sea," and it is quite similar to the conflict in the Babylonian Creation Epic. It seems to be important that the monster originated from the semen of the archons according to the Manichaean interpretation.⁵¹¹ Here we can see again a conscious development of Mesopotamian traditions.

A good example of continuity in Ancient Near Eastern religious history from the beginnings through Christianity is the New Testament passage of Rev 21:1-4 which has been compared to the Ugaritic Baal cycle by M. S. Smith, but the comparison might be extended to the Ninurta mythology as well:

This passage includes the death of Sea, the descent of the heavenly city and the final destruction of Death. The Baal Cycle describe a similar sequence, specifically Baal's defeat of Yamm, Baal's enthronement in his heavenly palace, and his battle against Mot. In both Rev 21:1-4 and the Baal Cycle these events issue in the rejuvenation of the earth and the proximity is represented by the divine presence dwelling in the temple-city which signals the transformation of the world. It is no exaggeration to suggest that early forms of many, if not most, formative religious concepts of the western civilization may be found in the Baal Cycle. (Smith 1994: xxvii.)

Even so late as the end of the seventh century AD, Jacob of Edessa recorded a Chaldean cosmology in his *Hexaemeron*. Accordingly, there was first chaos, then the spirit hovering over the waters created the seven planets as the start of ordering the cosmos, "and it made Bel first and after him Marud as lords of the gods (*Mar^elahê*)." (Drijvers 1980: 74.) The name Marud echoes here Nimrod, and his conjunction with Bel indicates that the world view involving Enlil/Marduk and Ninurta/Nabû as co-rulers of the universe was still known in the Syria of Jacob's time.

⁵¹¹ Stroumsa 1984: 156, n. 61; see also Witzel 1920: 153f.

CONCLUSIONS

The current investigation has been divided into three broad areas which correspond to the main chapters of this book. In the first two chapters, the primary focus was the relationship between Ninurta and kingship. The first chapter gives a diachronic overview of the cult of Ninurta during all historical periods of ancient Mesopotamia. Several scholars have pointed out earlier that the mortal king in first millennium Mesopotamia was considered to be of equal rank and identified with the god Ninurta. The present study has tried to show that the conception of Ninurta's identity with the king was present in Mesopotamian religion already in the third millennium BC. Ninurta was the god of Nippur, the religious centre of Sumerian cities, and the most important attribute is his sonship to Enlil. While the mortal gods were frequently called the sons of Enlil, the status of the king converged to that of Ninurta at the coronation, through the determination of the royal fate, carried out by the divine council of gods in Nippur. The fate of Ninurta parallels the fate of the king after the investiture.

Ninurta has two main characteristics – he is the fierce warrior and the god of fertility at the same time. The two seemingly contradictory aspects of Ninurta are the two most important aspects of kingship as well – protection of the land against enemies, and the maintenance of fertility and prosperity.

Religious syncretism is studied in the second chapter. The configuration of Nippur cults had a legacy in the religious life of Babylonia and Assyria. The Nippur trinity of the father Enlil, the mother Ninlil and the son Ninurta had direct descendants in the Babylonian and Assyrian pantheon, realized in Babylonia as Marduk, Zarpanitu and Nabû and as Aššur, Mullissu and Ninurta in Assyria. While the names changed, the configuration of the cult survived, even when, from the eighth century BC onwards, Ninurta's name is to a large extent replaced with that of Nabû.

In addition to being a divine hypostasis of the king, Ninurta was the keeper of the insignia of mortal kingship in his temple Ešumeša, as already witnessed by the *Cursing of Agade*. Ninurta delivered ritually at least some of the royal insignia to the king at the investiture, and this tradition of Nippur was continued by the Nabû *ša harê* Temple in Babylonia and Assyria. This temple had a paramount status in the royal ideology of the first millennium. Ninurta was the seal-keeper of Enlil in Nippur which means that Ninurta acted with the seal owner's authority. Enlil's seal was probably kept in the temple of Ninurta and a similar situation was also found in Assyria, where seals of Aššur were kept in the temple of Nabû *ša harê*. That Ninurta is the holder of the Tablet of Destinies, is only an extension of this idea.

Ninurta's *akītu* in Nippur which is already documented from the third millennium BC, had a legacy to the important *akītu* festivals of later times. Ninurta's triumphal return to his father in the Nippur cult was continued by Marduk's triumph in the Babylonian New Year Festival and by the Assyrian military *akītu* and some other Assyrian state rituals. Ninurta's *akītu*, which was celebrated in the second Nippur month, was most probably continued by the sacred marriage rituals in Iyyar and Shebat in first millennium Babylonia and Assyria. Ninurta's *akītu* in Nippur was called the *gusisu* festival and had an aspect of fertility which was probably connected to the spring flood of the two rivers. Ninurta's part in the festival was that of the triumphant king, the master of the flood. The flood is the connecting point between the fertility and military aspects of these festivals. As the flood can be dangerous for the growing crops, Ninurta was held to be responsible for blocking the waters. This task was considered as one of Ninurta's mythological battles. The king's battles against the enemies of the land were described in Assyrian royal annals in identical terms as the battles of Ninurta were described in literary texts. Ninurta is the protector of justice who punishes the unjust with his merciless weapon, and the weapons of Ninurta are described as accompanying the Assyrian king on his military expeditions. The king shares very many important epithets with Ninurta.

In the third chapter various manifestations or hypostases of Ninurta were discussed. Besides the monster slayer, Ninurta was envisaged as farmer, star and arrow, as healer, or as tree. All these manifestations confirm the strong ties between the cult of Ninurta and kingship. By slaying Asakku, Ninurta eliminated evil from the world, and accordingly he was considered the god of healing as well. The healing, helping and saving of the believer in personal misery was thus a natural result of Ninurta's victorious battles. The theologoumenon of Ninurta's mission and return was used as the mythological basis for quite many royal rituals and this fact explains the extreme longevity of the Sumerian literary compositions *Angim* and *Lugale* from the third until the first millennium BC. Ninurta also protected legitimate ownership of land, and granted protection for refugees in a special temple of the land. The "faithful farmer" is an epithet of both Ninurta and the king.

Kingship myths similar to the battles of Ninurta are attested in an area far extending the bounds of the Ancient Near East. The conflict myth, on which the Ninurta mythology was based, is probably of pre-historic origin, and various forms of the kingship myths continued to carry the ideas of usurpation, conflict and dominion until late Antiquity.

APPENDIX A

Selected Texts

Text 1

Syncretic hymn to Ninurta

Text: KAR 102 (= VAT 9739). The texts of KAR 328 rev. and STT 118 are parallel, but not duplicates. Previous edition: E. Ebeling, *MVAeG* 23/I (1918), 47ff; translations: Seux 1976: 131ff; W. von Soden, *SAHG* p. 258f, Foster 1996: 618f.

1. [x x x]-[ni¹ ma-ru-r[u x x x]
2. [x x x].MEŠ-e ta-na-ta-š[u x x x]
3. [UKKIN¹ DINGIR.MEŠ [GAL¹.MEŠ ú-šar-[bi¹-[ka x x x]
4. ^dNin-urta qar-ra-du ta-[x x x]
5. ha-mim ina kiš-šú-ti-šú-nu ta-[x¹-[x x x]
6. tal-[qi¹-ma par-ši-šú-nu tu-x[x x x]
7. LUGAL-ú-tum šá EN-e qa-tuk-k[a paqdat]
8. be-lum ru-ub-ta-ka a-bu-bu [x x x]
9. qar-ra-du šá DINGIR.MEŠ šá-qa-ta be-[lum x x]
10. be-lum pa-nu-ka ^dšam-šu qim-mat-ka ^d[Nisaba]
11. IGI.2.MEŠ-ka be-lum ^dEn-líl ù ^d[Nin-líl]
12. ^dLAMMA-át IGI.2.MEŠ-ka ^dGu-la ^dBe-let-ì-l[í x x x]
13. SIG₇ IGI.2.MEŠ-ka be-lum maš-še-e ^d30 [x x x (x)]
14. a-gap-pi IGI.2.MEŠ-ka ša-ru-ur ^dšam-ši ša [x x x x]
15. ši-kín KA-ka be-lum ^dIš-tar MUL.MEŠ [x x x]
16. ^dA-nu-um u An-tum NUNDUM.2-ka qí-bit-ka x[x x x]
17. mul-ta-bíl-ta-ka ^dPa-bíl-sag šá e-la-an x[x x x]
18. AN-e KA-ka be-lum kip-pat AN-e KI-ti šu-bat DINGIR.[MEŠ GAL.MEŠ]
19. ZÚ.MEŠ-ka ^d7.BI mu-šam-qí-tu lem-nu-[ti]
20. ře-eh TE.MEŠ-ka be-lum ři-it MUL.MEŠ na[m¹-ru-ti]
21. GEŠTUG.2-ka ^dÉ-a ^dDam-ki-na NUN.ME né-me-qí [x x x x]
22. SAG.DU-ka ^dIM šá AN-ú KI-tim GIM kiš-kàt-te-[e¹ [x x x]
23. SAG.KI-ka ^dša-la [hi]-ir-tu na-ra-am-tú mu-řib-[bat ka-bat-ti ^dIM]
24. GÚ-ka ^dAMAR.UTU DI.KUD AN-e [u KI-tim] a-bu-ub [x x x]
25. nap-řat-ka ^dZar-pa-ni-tum ba-n[a-at U]N.MEŠ šá [ri²-x[x x x x]
26. GABA-ka ^dPA ba-ru-ú x[x.ME]š a-[x x]

27. MAŠ.QA.MEŠ-ka ^dLUGAL šá-kín h[i-iš-bi m]u-šá-az-[ni-in nu-uh-ši]
 28. [ZA]G-ka ^dUtu-u₁₈¹-lu bi-x[x x á]š² a-[x x x x]
 29. [GÜ]B-ka ^dNin-pap-nigìn-gar-r[a x x]-lu mu-x[x x x]
 30. [Š]U.SI.MEŠ KIŠIB.MEŠ-ka šá-q[u-ti x x a]-gi-e [x x x]
 31. [UM]BIN.MEŠ-ka be-lum ^{mu}[x x x n]a-bu-ú [x x x x]
 32. [x]x.MEŠ-ka ^dDa-gan šá ^rx¹ [x x x x x x x] x[x x x]
 33. [x]x ina GÌR.2 [x x x x x x x x x]
 34. [L]I.DUR-ka be-lu[m x x x x x x x x x]
 35. [x x x]-ka ^dZ[a-ba₄-ba₄ x x x x x x x x x]

Translation

1. [...] are/were made [...]
2. [The ...]s [...]ur² praise
3. [The Assembly] of the great gods has magnified [you ...]
4. Ninurta, warrior, you [...],
5. Gatherer, their authorities you [...],
6. you have taken their officies and you [...],
7. kingship of lords [is entrusted] in yo[ur] hand,
8. lord, your anger is flood [...],
9. warrior of the gods, you are exalted, lo[rd ...]
10. lord, your face is the Sun, you locks [Nisaba],
11. your two eyes, lord are Enlil and Ninlil,
12. your eyeballs are Gula and Belet-il[i]
13. your eyelids, lord are the twins Sin and [...],
14. your eyebrows are brilliance of the Sun, which [...],
15. your mouth's shape, lord – Ištar of the stars [...],
16. Anu and Antu are your lips, your speech – [...],
17. your Mover (= tongue?) is Pabilsag, who [...] on high,
18. the "heaven" of your mouth, lord is circumference of heaven and earth, dwelling place of the [great] gods,
19. your teeth are the Seven, the slayers of evil,
20. your cheeks, O Lord are the rising of bri[lliant] stars,
21. your ears are Ea and Damkina, sages of wisdom [...]
22. your head is Adad, who [makes] heaven and earth [...] like a kiln,
23. your brow is Šala, beloved spouse, who makes [Adad's heart feel happy],
24. your neck is Marduk, judge of heaven [and Netherworld], deluge [...],
25. your throat is Zarpanitu, creat[ress of peop]le, who [...]
26. your chest is Šullat, who examines [...]
27. your shoulders are Haniš, who establishes p[le]nty, r[ains] down abundance,
28. your right side is Uta'ulu [...],
29. your left side is Ninpanigarra [...],
30. the fingers of your fists are [...],
31. your nails are the bright star [...],
32. your [...] are Dagan, who [...],
33. [.....] in the feet [...],
34. your navel, lord is [...],
35. your [...] is Z[ababa ...].

Text 2

Hymn to Ninurta as Sirius (K 128). Previous edition: Burrows 1924: 33-36. Translations: W. von Soden, *SAHG*, pp. 275-77, no. 22; Seux 1976: 480-82; Foster 1996: 621-22.

1. ^dMAŠ šur-bu-ú DINGIR qar-du a-šá-re[d] ^dA-nun-na-ki mu-ma-²i-ir ^d5.1.1
 2. DI.KUD kul-la-ti sa-niq mit-hur-t[i mu-šá]h-li ik-le-ti mu-nam-mir e-²tu-ti
 3. pa-ri-is pu-ru-us-se-e ^ra¹-na UN.MEŠ a-pa-a-ti
 4. be-lí šu-pu-ú mu-²tib UZU.KUR šá ina t[a-mar]-ti-šú GIG di-²i-i lem-nu
 5. ih-ha-zu tub-qa-a-ti GIG naq-du i-tur-ru áš-r[u-u]š-^ršú¹
 6. re-mé-nu-ú ga-mil nap-šá-ti mu-bal-li² m[i-tu-t]u
 7. ta-mi-[i]h kit-ti u mi-šá-ri mu-hal-liq [x x x x x]
 8. šu-ku-du [la] a-ni-hu šá kul-lat ^ra¹-a-bi i-[ne-(e)-r]u
 9. u₄-mu ra-[bu]-ú ta-mi-ih šer-re-[et AN-e u KI-tim]
 10. DI.KUD pu-ru-us-se-e ba-ru-ú te-re-[e-ti x x x x]
 11. ^dGÍŠ.BAR mun-na-ah-zu qa-m[u]-ú lem-[nu-ti x x x x]
 12. šá ^{mu}KAK.SI.SÁ ina AN-e zi-kir-šu ina [g]i-mir ^d5.1.1 šur-b[u]š ^rx¹-ka
 13. ina kul-lat ka-la DINGIR.MEŠ šu-[un]-na-tu [0 DI]NGIR-ut-ka
 14. ina ni-pi-ih MUL.MEŠ nu-um-m[u]-ru zi-m[u-ka ki-ma] ^dUTU-ši
 15. ta-bar-ri si-hi-ip da-ád-me [ina] nu-ri-k[a nam-r]u
 16. te-né-še-e-ti áš-šú na-as-k[u u d]al-pu šu-[te-šu-ri x x-ka]
 17. ina šá la i-šu-ú mam-ma-na tu-kul-ta-šú at-ta [x x x x x x x x]
 18. ta-gam-mil šá ina šur-qu pu-un-zu-[r]u-ma ez-bu a-[na x x x x x]x
 19. ul-tu a-ra-al-le-e ta-qab-bi né-eš-su šá [x x x x x]x
Reverse
 20. la-^rmu¹-u qab-lu a-na mu-ú-tu šu-lu-ku-ma iz-ku-ru zi-kir-ka
 21. re-mé-na-ta be-lum ina dáb-de-e ta-gam-mil-šú u ana-ku DUMU LÚ.HAL pa-li-hu ìr-ka
 22. ur-ri dal-hu-ma a-še-²i ma-ru-uš-ti di-i-nu šup-šur-²ma a-na la-ma-da áš-²tu
 23. pa-ra-as ár-ka-tú né-sa-an-ni ^dUTU-ši a-ku-šam-ma ina GI₆ ú-qa-a-a SAG-ka
 24. a-na la-ma-da ar-ka-ti at-t[a]-ziz ma-har-ka a-na šu-te-šu-ru di-i-nu
 25. ni-iš qa-ti ra-šá-ku i-ziz-za-am-m[a ina] qé-rib AN-e KUG.MEŠ ši-mi zi-kir KA-ia
 26. pu-²tur ár-nu pu-su-us hi-[ti-t]i tu-bu-uk-ku-ú-a lik-ru-bu-ka
 27. sér-qu-ú-a lib-ba-ka li-ni-[i]h e ta-šit i-ziz-za-am-ma
 28. [di-n]a di-i-nu un-nin-ni-ia ^rli¹-qé-e-ma ši-mi té-s-li-ti
 29. [a-n]a mim-mu-ú ak-pu-^rdu¹ p[u]-ru-us-su-ú šu-kun-ma ina an-ni-ka ki-nu-um
 30. [lu]-ma-²i-ir ur-tu u ana-ku ina IGI-ka ZI-tim lu-tir ^dMAŠ šur-bu-ú
 31. [DINGIR] el-la ina SISKUR.SISKUR GUB-za-am-ma ina KA-ia, MU šu-mu u mim-ma mál DÜ-šú
 32. [t]a-mit a-kar-ra-bu kit-ti lib-ši
-
33. [ik]-rib ^{mu}KAK.SI.SÁ ki-ma i[na] ^dUTU.È iz-za-zu

Translation

1. Greatest Ninurta, warrior god, foremost of the Anunnaki-gods, commander of the Igigi-gods,
 2. Judge of the whole (world), maintainer of harmony, enlightener of the darkness, who illuminates the gloom,
 3. Who makes decisions for the teeming mankind,
 - 4-5. my resplendent lord, who makes the land feel well, at whose appearance evil headache clings to the corners, and the critically ill reverts to his previous (well) condition,
 6. Merciful (god), who spares life, reviver of the d[ea]d,
 7. who embraces truth and justice and destroys [wickedness],
 8. tireless arrow, who [kills] all the enemies,
 9. great storm, who holds the leading rope [of heaven and earth],
 10. judge of verdicts, examiner of oracle[s ...],
 11. consuming fire, who burns up the evil [il ...],
 12. who is Kaksisa in heaven, your [utterance] is greatest among all the Igigi-gods [...],
 13. among the totality of gods your divinity is singular,
 14. when the stars rise, [your] features are shining [like] the sun,
 15. (when) you watch over the totality of habitations [in] your brightness [...].
 16. Mankind [looks to you] to do justice to the rejected and to the sleepless ones,
 17. for him, who has nobody, you are his trust [...],
 18. you spare those who are kidnapped and abandoned to [...],
 19. from the underworld you command back to life him who [...],
Reverse
 20. to him who is surrounded in battle and brought (near) to death (and) calls your name,
 21. you are merciful, O lord, you spare him from disaster. I, too, son of the diviner, your reverent servant,
 22. my days are troubled, I found distress, the case was laborious and difficult to understand.
 23. The determination of the case is far from me: in the daylight I came and in the night I await you
 24. to learn the future I stand before you, to make the right verdict,
 25. I have my hands raised, take your station in the middle of the sky and hear what I say,
 26. clear away my guilt, erase my sin, expurge my filth, may my offerings
 27. bless you, may your heart relent, do not disdain to stand with me,
 28. give judgement, accept my entreaty and hear my prayer,
 29. in all I have planned, establish a decision, so I may give an order (based) on your firm "yes!"
 30. As for me, may I live a long life in your service, greatest Ninurta,
 31. holy [god], stand in this sacrifice, and let there be truth in what I say in the pronouncement of the name, in whatsoever I do,
 32. and in the inquiry which I ask your blessing on.
-
33. Prayer to Sirius when it stands at sunrise.

APPENDIX B

A Comparative List of Neo-Assyrian Personal Names with Ninurta

The following is a list of Neo-Assyrian personal names which contain the element Ninurta. The names are listed in alphabetical order, with Ninurta in its Neo-Assyrian form Inūrta. The list has the following structure: 1) the attested name; 2) the translation of the name; 3) a list of gods which are attested in the Neo-Assyrian corpus with the name of exactly the same structure. Only a few names are not attested with other gods.

Daiān-Inūrta: "Ninurta is the judge" — Adad, Anu, Aššur, Ištar, Marduk, Šamaš

Dān-Inūrta: "Ninurta is strong" — Adad, Aššur

Dūr-maki-Inūrta: "Ninurta is the protective wall of the frail" — Adad, Aššur, Ištar

Inūrta-abu-iddina: "Ninurta has given a father" — Adad, Aššur

Inūrta-abu-riša: "O Ninurta, replace the father"

Inūrta-abu-ušur: "O Ninurta, protect the father" — Adad, Asalluhi, Aššur, Bānitu, Ea, Haldi, Marduk, Mullissu, Nabû, Nergal, Nusku, Sîn, Šamaš, Urkittu

Inūrta-ahhē-ēreš: "Ninurta has desired brothers" — Nabû

Inūrta-ahhē-šallim: "O Ninurta, keep the brothers safe!" — Adad, Aššur, Nabû, Šamaš

Inūrta-ahia-šukšid?(KUR): "O Ninurta, make my arms victorious"

Inūrta-ahu-iddina: "Ninurta has given a brother" — Adad, Apladad, Aššur, Bābu, Bānitu, Gula, Ištar, Kubābu, Marduk, Mašar, Nabû, Nergal, Nusku, Pānil, Sebetti, Sîn, Šamaš

Inūrta-ahu-ušur: "O Ninurta, protect the brother" — Adad, Anu, Asalluhi, Aššur, Gula, Haldi, Enlil, Marduk, Nabû, Nergal, Sebetti, Sîn, Šamaš, Šulmanu, Zababa

Inūrta-aiālu-iddina: "Ninurta has given help"

- Inūrta-ālik-pāni:** “Ninurta is the one who goes in front” — Aššur, Erra, Ištar, Nergal, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-apil-Ekur:** “Ninurta is the heir of Ekur”
- Inūrta-apil-kūmū'a:** “Ninurta stands up for me” — Nergal
- Inūrta-aplu-iddina:** “Ninurta has given a heir” — Adad, Aššur, Haldi, Ištar, Marduk, Nabû, Samūna, Sē', Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-aplu-ušur:** “O Ninurta, protect the heir!” — Apladad, Aššur, Ištar, Marduk, Nabû, Našuh, Nergal, Saggil, Sîn
- Inūrta-ašared:** “Ninurta is Foremost” — Adad, Aššur, Ištar, Nergal, Sîn, Šulmānu
- Inūrta-balassu-iqbi:** “Ninurta has commanded/promised his life” — Aššur, Marduk, Nabû, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-ballissu:** “O Ninurta, keep him alive” — Aššur, Nabû, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-balliṭ:** “O Ninurta, keep alive” — Adad, Aššur, Marduk, Nabû, Nergal, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-bāni-ahhe:** “Ninurta is the creator of brothers” — Adad, Aššur, Marduk, Nabû, Pālil, Šamaš
- Inūrta-bēlu-ušur:** “O Ninurta, protect the lord!” — Adad, Aššur, Bānītu, Ištar, Issārān, Marduk, Mullissu, Nabû, Nergal, Pālil, Samnuha, Sîn, Šamaš, Šulmānu, Urkittu
- Inūrta-bēlšunu:** “Ninurta is their lord” — Adad, Aššur, Nabû, Samnuha
- Inūrta-daiān:** “Ninurta is the judge” — Ištar, Nabû
- Inūrta-dūri:** “Ninurta is my protective wall” — Asalluhi, Aššur, Bānītu, Ištar, Mammītu, Mullissu, Nabû, Nergal, Nusku, Sē', Sîn, Šamaš, Urkittu
- Inūrta-ēreš:** “Ninurta has desired” — Adad, Anu, Asalluhi, Aššur, Bābu, Bānītu, Dādi, Gula, Haldi, Ištar, Kubābu, Kūbu, Marduk, Nabû, Nergal, Pālil, Sîn, Šamaš, Tašmētu, Zabāba
- Inūrta-eriba:** “Ninurta has replaced” — Aššur, Kubābu, Marduk, Nabû, Nanāia, Nergal, Sîn, Šamaš, Zabāba
- Inūrta-eṭir:** “Ninurta has saved” — Adad, Anu, Aššur, Gula, Haldi, Enlil, Marduk, Nabû, Nergal, Sē', Sîn, Šamaš, Šulmānu
- Inūrta-eṭiranni:** “Ninurta has saved me” — Aššur, Nabû
- Inūrta-gāmil:** “Ninurta spares” — Erra, Nabû
- Inūrta-iddina:** “Ninurta has given” — Adad, Apladad, Bābu, Enlil, Marduk, Nabû, Nergal, Nikkal, Nusku, Sîn, Šamaš, Urkittu
- Inūrta-ilā'i:** “Ninurta is my god” — Adad, Apladad, Aššur, Bābu, Dādi, Ea, Haldi, Ištar, Mullissu, Nanāia, Nabû, Nergal, Nusku, Samsi, Sebeti, Sē', Sîn, Šamaš, Šēr, Šuriha, Tēr, Urkittu, Zabāba
- Inūrta-iliya:** “Ninurta is my god”
- Inūrta-ilšu:** “Ninurta is his god” — Šamaš

- Inūrta-ilu:** “Ninurta is the god” — Adūnu, Gad, Tēr
- Inūrta-iqbi:** “Ninurta has commanded/promised” — Adad, Aramiš, Aššur, Dādi, Ištar, Marduk, Mašar, Nabû, Nergal, Ningišzida, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-issē'a:** “Ninurta is with me” — Adad, Aššur, Ištar, Nabû, Šamaš, Tašmētu
- Inūrta-išmanni:** “Ninurta has heard me” — Šamaš
- Inūrta-kazbati:** “Ninurta is my attraction”
- Inūrta-kēnu-idi:** “Ninurta knows the true one” — Aššur, Nabû, Sîn
- Inūrta-kēnu-ušur:** “O Ninurta, protect the true one” — Aššur, Nabû, Nergal, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-kibsi-ušur:** “O Ninurta, protect my walk!” — Nabû
- Inūrta-kudurri-ušur:** “O Ninurta, protect the eldest son” — Enlil, Nabû
- Inūrta-kušuranni:** “O Ninurta, put me together” — Aššur, Nabû, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-le'i:** “Ninurta is almighty” — Adad, Aššur, Marduk, Nabû, Nergal, Nusku, Palil, Šamaš
- Inūrta-malaka:** “Ninurta has ruled”
- Inūrta-mar'u-iddina:** “Ninurta has given a son”
- Inūrta-mukin-niše** “Ninurta is the one who establishes the people”
- Inūrta-mušēzib:** “Ninurta is the saviour” — Aššur, Ištar, Nabû, Nergal
- Inūrta-mutaqqin:** “Ninurta is the one who keeps order” — Aššur, Sîn
- Inūrta-na'di:** “Ninurta is praised” — Adad, Apladad, Aššur, Bānītu, Ištar, Marduk, Nabû, Našuh, Nergal, Sîn, Šamaš, Šulmānu
- Inūrta-nādin-ahhe** “Ninurta is the giver of brothers” — Aššur, Ištar, Marduk, Nabû, Sîn
- Inūrta-nādin-ahi:** “Ninurta is the giver of a brother” — Adad, Asalluhi, Aššur, Nabû, Nergal, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-nādin-šumi:** “Ninurta is the giver of a name” — Adad, Aššur, Ištar, Marduk, Nabû, Šamaš
- Inūrta-nāšir:** “Ninurta is protector” — Adad, Aššur, Enlil, Kubābu, Marduk, Nabû, Našuh, Nergal, Nusku, Palil, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-nišeka-ušur:** “O Ninurta, preserve your people!”
- Inūrtānu:** “Ninurta”
- Inūrta-piya-ušur:** “O Ninurta, protect my word” — Nabû
- Inūrta-pilā:** “Ninurta ...”
- Inūrta-qāti-šabat:** “O Ninurta, take my hand!” — Marduk, Nabû, Našuh
- Inūrta-rāši:** “Ninurta is the owner”

- Inūrta-rēmāni:** “O Ninurta, have mercy on me!” — Adad, Asalluhi, Aššur, Haldi, Ištar, Marduk, Nabû, Nergal, Nusku, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-sukki** “Ninurta is my shrine”
- Inūrta-šallim:** “O Ninurta, keep safe!” — Adad, Aššur, Marduk, Nabû, Nergal, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-šarru-ibni:** “Ninurta created the king” — Adad, Aššur, Ea, Ištar, Nabû, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-šarru-ušur:** “O Ninurta, protect the king!” — Adad, Anu, Aramiš, Aššur, Enlil, Ištar, Marduk, Mullissu, Nabû, Nergal, Nikkal, Nusku, Saggil, Samnuha, Sîn, Šamaš, Šērua, Šulmanu, Tašmetu
- Inūrta-šēzibanni:** “O Ninurta, save me!” — Adad, Aššur, Mullissu, Nabû, Nergal, Nusku, Šamaš
- Inūrta-šumu-iddina:** “Ninurta has given a name” — Adad, Asalluhi, Aššur, Bābu, Ištar, Marduk, Nabû, Nergal, Nikkal, Sîn, Šamaš, Šulmanu
- Inūrta-šumu-lēšir:** “O Ninurta, may [his] name prosper!” — Aššur, Gula, Ištar, Marduk, Nabû, Nergal, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-šumu-ušur:** “O Ninurta, protect the name” — Adad, Asalluhi, Aššur, Ištar, Marduk, Nabû, Nergal, Nikkal, Šamaš
- Inūrta-tabni-[ušur]:** “O Ninurta, you have created [a son, protect him?]” — *tabni-ušur*: seems more plausible reconstruction, because it is attested with Aššur, Nabû, Sîn, Šamaš, while *tabni* :alone with the goddesses Gula, Mullissu and Nikkal.
- Inūrta-taklāk:** “In Ninurta I Trust” — Adad, Aššur, Ea, Ištar, Nabû, Nanāia, Sîn, Šamaš
- Inūrta-tāriš:** “Ninurta sets straight” — Nabû
- Inūrta-tukulti-Aššur:** “Ninurta is the help of Aššur”
- Inūrta-uballissu:** “Ninurta has made him live” — Nabû, Nergal
- Inūrta-ubla:** “Ninurta has brought” — Šamaš
- Inūrta-ušalli:** “I prayed to Ninurta” — Nabû, Nanāia
- Inūrta-zēru-iddina:** “Ninurta has given offspring” — Adad, Aššur, Ištar, Nabû, Nergal, Sîn, Šulmānu
- Inūrta-zēru-ušur:** “O Ninurta, protect the offspring!” — Aššur, Nabû, Šamaš
- Inūrtī:** “Ninurta”
- Išmanni-Inūrta:** “Ninurta has heard me” — Adad, Aššur, Ilu, Ištar
- Kur^e-Inūrta:** “The Herd-god is Ninurta”
- Mannu-ki-Inūrta:** “Who is like Ninurta” — Adad, Adda, Ea, Allāia, Anu, Apladad, Aššur, Bel, Ilu, Ištar, Marduk, Nabû, Našuh, Nergal, Ramman, Salmanu, Sē', Šamaš

- Mušallim-Inūrta:** “The one who keeps safe is Ninurta” — Adad, Aššur, Bābu, Ilu, Ištar, Marduk, Našuh, Nergal, Šamaš
- Mušēzib-Inūrta:** “The one who saves is Ninurta” — Adad, Aššur, Bel, Ilu, Ištar, Marduk, Nabû, Šamaš
- Na'di-Inūrta:** “Praised is Ninurta” — Adad, Ea, Anu, Aššur, Ilu, Ištar, Marduk
- Qurdi-Inūrta:** “My heroism is Ninurta” — Adad, Asalluhi, Aššur, Dādi, Ea, Gula, Ištar, Ištarān, Mullissu, Nanāia, Nergal
- Silim-Inūrta:** “Ninurta is peace” — Adad, Aššur, Dādi, Ištar, Kurra, Nergal, Sē', Taqūmu
- Sinqi-Inūrta:** “My famine is Ninurta” — Adad, Aššur, Ištar
- Šamši-Inūrta:** “My Sun-god is Ninurta” — Adad
- Šep-Inūrta:** “Ninurta's foot” — Adad, Aššur, Ea, Ištar, Marduk, Nergal, Šamaš
- Šep-Inūrta-ašbat:** “I grasp the foot of Ninurta” — Aššur, Ištar, Nabû
- Tukulti-Inūrta:** “Ninurta is my trust” — Aššur, Šērua
- Ṭāb-Inūrta:** “Ninurta is good” — Anu, Aššur, Dādi, Ea, Nanāia, Nergal, Sē'
- Urdu-Inūrta:** “slave of Ninurta” — Adda, Allāia, Allātu, Anu, Aššur, Bānītu, Dagan, Dādi, Ea, Gula, Iardā, Ištar, Ištarān, Kūbu, Marduk, Mullissu, Nabû, Nanāia, Nergal, Sîn, Sutītu, Šamaš, Šērua, Tašmētu

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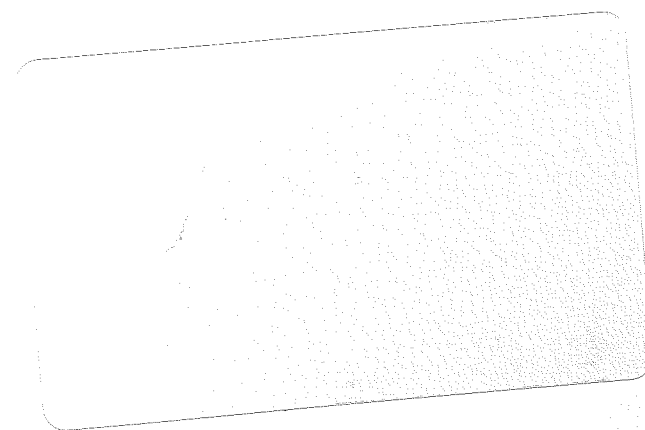
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