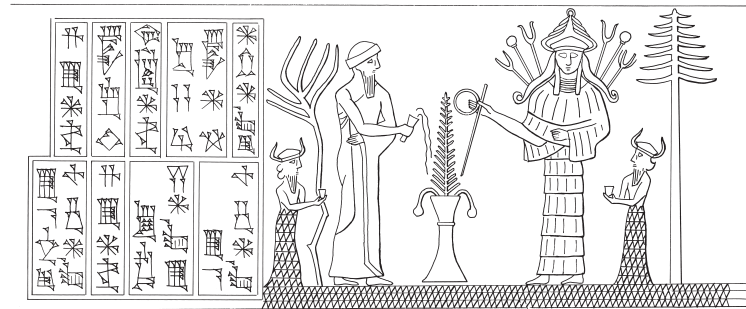


Julia M. Asher-Greve
Joan Goodnick Westenholz

Goddesses in Context

On Divine Powers, Roles, Relationships
and Gender in Mesopotamian Textual
and Visual Sources



Academic Press Fribourg
Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen

Cover illustration

Reconstructed drawing of the seal of Lugal-engardu, son of Enlil-amah. Original drawing by Richard L. Zettler (Review of Briggs Buchanan, *Early Seals in the Yale Babylonian Collection*, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 46 (1987): 60, fig. 1). Modified by Kimberley Leaman, December, 2010.



Publication subsidized by the Swiss Academy
of Humanities and Social Sciences

Internet general catalogue:

Academic Press Fribourg: www.paulusedition.ch

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen: www.v-r.de

Camera-ready text prepared by Marcia Bodenmann, University of Zurich

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Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen

ISBN: 978-3-7278-1738-0 (Academic Press Fribourg)

ISBN: 978-3-525-54382-5 (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht)

ISSN: 1015-1850 (Orb. biblicus orient.)

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In loving memory ז"ל

Joan Goodnick Westenholz died on 18 February 2013 shortly before this book went into print. During the preparation for publication Joan was diagnosed with a terminal illness and spent the last months of her life working on corrections and indices. By the time her strength ebbed and she could no longer work, the only item to complete was a revision of the subject index.

Joan often mentioned how much this work means to her and we put all our efforts into finishing it, hoping she could hold the printed book in her hands. When it became obvious that this would be unlikely, Christoph Uehlinger completed the cover design and sent it to her together with the final PDF version.

The subject index is based on the work Joan had already begun. We restructured and revised it as quickly and thoroughly as possible, trying as best as possible to maintain the entries she established. We are aware that this subject index does not achieve the meticulous standards Joan set for herself in all her work.

Ann Kessler Guinan made invaluable contributions to the revision of the subject index and textual corrections. We are very grateful for help and information provided by Jerold S. Cooper, Gebhardt J. Selz, and Piotr Steinkeller and to Geerd Haayer for his general support and advice. We are indebted to Richard L. Zettler for his immediate permission to reproduce his drawing on the book cover.

Two titles listed in the bibliography as “Westenholz forthcoming” demonstrate that Joan still pursued other projects beyond the present book. Both the lexical study on ‘man’ and her book on Nanaya will probably never appear in print, but we decided to leave these references as she had listed them. May they be considered as a reminder of her scholarship as much as an invitation to younger scholars to tackle those topics that Joan will no more comment upon.

Joan’s death has been a devastating loss. She was as an outstanding, inspiring, innovative, and generously supportive colleague and she was our very dear friend.

Julia M. Asher-Greve and Ann Kessler Guinan
February 2013

Acknowledgements

We would first like to express our thanks to Susanne Bickel for inviting us to participate in the conference on “Goddesses – Göttinnen – Déesses” held under the auspices of the SGOA (Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Orientalische Altertumswissenschaft) on March 8, 2008. The two lectures that we presented on that occasion served as the basis for this book. We are most grateful to Othmar Keel for his invitation to publish our lectures in the OBO series. Unknowingly, he provided us with the opportunity to realize an idea we have discussed for many years that we would like to write a book together. We would also like to acknowledge our indebtedness to Harvard University’s Women’s Studies in Religion Program that has shaped our thinking and ideas about gender in ancient Mesopotamia at a time when Assyriology barely began to recognize the importance of research on women and gender. Our different scholarly backgrounds and training proved to be complementary and widened our scopes as we discussed our individual ideas that sometimes led to revisions of interpretations. The chapters published here have profited from mutual readings and comments that began when we were working on the lectures. We hope that the readers may benefit as much as we have by this cooperation.

For bibliographic references, unpublished manuscripts, pdf copies or CDs of articles or books, as well as for other valuable information we want to express our gratitude to: Pascal Attinger, Kim Benzel (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), Manuel Ceccarelli, Mark E. Cohen, Mark J. Geller, Brigitte Groneberg, Ann K. Guinan, Henrietta Harisch (professor for Latin at Basel University), Hanna Jenni, Raphael A. Michel, Eleanor Robson, Marcos Such-Gutiérrez, Claudia E. Suter, Deborah Sweeney, Aage Westenholz, Frauke Weiershäuser, Ran Zadok, Ilona Zsolnay. A further debt of gratitude is owed to Nicholas Postgate who sent the PhD dissertation of his student Simon J. Sherwin.

Very special thanks go to Ann K. Guinan for reading and commenting on an early version, to Julia Assante, Gebhard J. Selz and Piotr Steinkeller who sent not only published and unpublished articles but spent much time discussing ideas and issues and to Rosel Pientka-Hinz for lively discussions,

offprints, and especially her original drawings of Sippar impressions and her kind permission to reproduce them here.

For photographs and/or reproduction permissions we want to acknowledge the help and assistance of: Jonathan Taylor of The British Museum (London), Catherine Giraudon of the Musée du Louvre (Paris), Gil Stein and Thomas R. James of the Oriental Institute Museum of Chicago University, Maureen Goldsmith of the Penn Museum of the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia), Joachim Marzahn and Olaf Teßmer of the Vorderasiatisches Museum of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, the Pierpont Morgan Library (New York), the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem, Manfred Krebernik of the Hilprecht Sammlung Vorderasiatischer Altertümer of the Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena, Eric Gubel of the Royal Museum of Art and History (Brussels), Claudia E. Suter, and to Ulrike Zurkinden for her drawings of seal impressions.

We would also like to express our deep appreciation to the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World of New York University for their financial support and generosity that made possible Joan's two trips to Basel to complete the work on this volume.

Finally, our acknowledgements would not be complete without mentioning the indispensable input of all those who worked with us to prepare this volume, especially Arthur Lawrence Asher as well as Christoph Uehlinger, co-editor of *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis*, and Marcia Bodenmann to whom we are most beholden.

Julia M. Asher-Greve and Joan Goodnick Westenholz
Basel and New York, Summer 2011

Introduction

Julia M. Asher-Greve and Joan Goodnick Westenholz

For over three millennia, the religious life of Mesopotamia was presided over by thousands of deities worshipped by a mixed population of Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians, Amorites, Kassites, and Arameans. The religion of southern Mesopotamia remained one of the few stable factors of *longue durée* in the 3000-year span of Mesopotamian history. Although political and social changes are reflected in cult and ritual, they did not alter the essential character of Babylonian religion.

In his last public lecture – the presidential address to the American Oriental Society on April 20, 1993 – Thorkild Jacobsen stated that “as the ancients experienced and recorded things, the gods were the very *nodes* of the causal network that gave events coherence and meaning”.¹ According to Jacobsen (1994: 147), the historian should take into consideration that the “ancients believed certain things about their gods and acted on these beliefs”, and that these “formed parts of a coherent whole, a distinct ‘mode’ of experiencing things and events, one which may suitably be called the theocratic mode of experiencing”. Similarly, Gebhard J. Selz comes to the conclusion that for ancient Mesopotamians the world of society and the world of religion are interdependent, and that the absence of a dichotomy between the physical and metaphysical produces interdependent representation of social and metaphysical systems. Selz defines this as ‘axiomatic holism’, meaning that the divine world can only be imagined as an “*Abbild*” (copy) or “*Urbild*” (archetypal image) of the earthly world.² While Jacobsen asked historians not to neglect the theocratic aspect in ancient Sumerian history, for Selz history is also history of religion.

Studies of polytheistic religions, such as the Sumerian, Akkadian and Babylonian, commonly focus on the deities that were worshipped. Although “the pantheon”, as well as individual deities regularly find mention in publications, in the last few years ‘the world of deities’ has become a favorite

¹ Jacobsen 1994: 146. Jacobsen died less than two weeks after he gave this lecture on May 2, 1993.

² Selz 2012: 62-63.

topic with scholars.³ Their discussions concentrate on various pantheons, local, regional and national, which could be said to reflect Mesopotamian socio-political diversity that alternated between smaller city-states and larger centralized territorial states like the Neo-Sumerian empire under the Third Dynasty of Ur (Ur III) (ca. 2100-2000 BCE) or Babylonia under its successive dynasties, the Old Babylonian dynasty (ca. 1894-1595 BCE), the Kassite dynasty (ca. 1475-1155 BCE), and finally the Neo-Babylonian dynasty (626-539 BCE).

Mesopotamia was a land of ethno-linguistic diversity. In this multilingual, multi-ethnic environment, the peoples communicated mainly through two languages, unaffiliated Sumerian and Semitic Akkadian. The land, which was home to these peoples, was an alluvial plain defined by the two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris, extending from their close approach north of Baghdad to their delta in the Persian Gulf (see map p. 10). In the third millennium, this area was inhabited by Sumerians (mostly in the lower part of the plain) and by Akkadians (mostly in the higher regions of the plain). From the second millennium, Babylonia, the geographical designation coined by the Greeks, is the term used by scholars to identify the entire plain of southern Mesopotamia named after its capital Babylon. Mesopotamia is the term Greeks used to identify the entire geographic area between the Euphrates and the Tigris.

The Late Uruk or Protoliterate period (ca. 3300-2900 BCE) coincides with the invention of writing in Mesopotamia. This early writing (termed proto-cuneiform script) is barely decipherable, the signs are only beginning to be interpreted. The term 'archaic texts' refers to the documents written in the proto-cuneiform script.⁴ Periods covering the third and second millennia are named successively:⁵ Early Dynastic (II/III) from ca. 2800-2350 with several local dynasties; Akkadian, after the city Akkade, capital of the dynasty founded by Sargon of Akkade that ruled from ca. 2334-2193; Neo-Sumerian that encompassed the overlapping second dynasty of Lagaš with its most famous ruler Gudea (ca. 2125-2110) and the Third Dynasty of Ur (Ur III, ca. 2112-2004). Major disruptions at the end of the Neo-Sumerian period caused devastation to cities and displacement of peoples.⁶ For Dominique Charpin

³ For example, Groneberg 2004; Groneberg and Spieckermann 2007; Herles 2006; Kratz and Spieckermann 2006; Krebernik and Oorschot 2002; Ornan 2005; Porter 2006; 2009; Selz 2008.

⁴ For a schematic overview of the historical periods and the development of writing, see Englund 1998: 23 fig. 2.

⁵ For a historical overview, see van de Mieroop 2004 (second ed. 2007); for a detailed history of the third and first half of the second millennia, see also: Bauer, Englund and Krebernik 1998; Sallaberger and A. Westenholz 1999; Charpin, Edzard and Stol 2004.

⁶ See Charpin 2004: 57-60.

(2004) the invasions of the Amorites were responsible. But Marc van de Mieroop points out that Amorites were in Babylonia for centuries with no significant impact on Babylonian culture. However, the collapse has been reinterpreted in the past few years. According to Seth Richardson (2008) at least some cities (e.g., Lagaš-Ĝirsu, Umma) did not disappear. Various rival dynasties ruled in Babylonia during the Old Babylonian period from ca. 2000 to 1595 among which were the dynasties of Isin, Larsa, and Babylon with its most famous king Hammurabi who established full dominance over southern Mesopotamia between 1766 and 1761. Hammurabi's empire did not survive him as his successors lost control over all territories except for northern Babylonia. What finally caused the end of the Old Babylonian period remains a matter of debate.⁷ Presumably, it was the collapse of the economy which forced the population of many cities including Ur, Uruk, Nippur, Larsa, and Ĝirsu to emigrate to northern Babylonia, taking the cult of their deities with them (see Chapter II.C.1). This situation was exasperated by social upheavals caused by the invasions of the Kassites, Hurrians and Hittites.⁸ Van de Mieroop argues that internal changes during the Old Babylonian period contributed to its still mysterious end, i.e., fundamental changes in the economy such as increased private ownership of land and outsourcing of administrative tasks with ensuing decentralization and loss of political control by urban centers that in turn caused economic collapse and the end of urban cultures. Northern Babylonia suffered less from this development than southern and central Babylonia where the cities were rapidly abandoned. According to van de Mieroop, these changes not only affected all aspects of society but contributed to the end of the Old Babylonian period.⁹

Furthermore, recent evidence demonstrates that the southern Babylonian cities were under the control of the Sealand dynasty. The displaced cults were apparently not neglected by the new rulers.¹⁰ Stephanie Dalley suggests an impoverished continuation of the cults in these cities in the period after 1720 rather than abandonment; and that the adoption of the veneration of local deities by the conquerors led to a renewal of their cults.

After the final fall of the Hammurabi dynasty in 1595 BCE, sources are so scarce that the following interval is called a "Dark Age".¹¹ However, recent discoveries have shed light on this Dark Age (see Chapter II.C.2). Around 1475, the Kassite dynasty had established hegemony over

⁷ Van de Mieroop 2005/2006, remarks that the late Old Babylonian period (1712-1595 BCE) is not well studied.

⁸ Charpin 2004: 372-384.

⁹ Van de Mieroop 2005/2006: 274-275; 2007: 90-119.

¹⁰ Dalley 2009: 7-9.

¹¹ According to Middle Chronology, the "Dark Age" lasted ca. 85 years, see Pruzsinszky 2009: 17, 29 with note 68.

Babylonia. In northern Mesopotamia, Assyria began to enlarge its territory around 1300 BCE. Under the Kassite dynasty many southern Babylonian cities and temples were rebuilt. After Babylon was conquered in 1155 BCE by the Elamites, kingship was transferred, according to the Babylonian King List, to a dynasty from Isin about which very little is known except for the achievements of king Nebuchadnezzar I who drove out the Elamite invaders. Babylonia went into a subsequent decline for more than 400 years. Caught between the Arameans and Assyrians, it maintained a precarious independence for a few centuries until subjugated by the Assyrians. Nabopolassar (626-605 BCE) founded the last dynasty of Babylon that ruled until 539 BCE when Cyrus conquered Babylonia, after which it became a province of the Persian empire. After his victory against the Persians at Gaugamela, Alexander entered Babylon in 331 BCE, where he was received by a populace hoping he would improve their situation. He intended to rebuild the city and make it into his capital but died prematurely in 323 BCE in Babylon before the reconstruction was finished. Under his successors, the Seleucids, who ruled for about 200 years, the ancient local cults and rituals continued but the capital moved to the new city of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris. The practice of ancient Babylonian religion came to an end under the Parthians who conquered Babylonia in 140 BCE. While traditional liturgical texts were copied well into the second, and perhaps first, century BCE, the temple cults seem to have gradually died out as the temples slowly decayed and were finally abandoned.

In Sumer, Akkad and Babylonia, the divine world was populated by numerous female divinities encompassing exalted powerful goddesses as well as goddesses with specific functions, in addition to female divine personifications of natural and material objects. Although there are numerous studies on individual goddesses, we have no comprehensive survey of Mesopotamian goddesses.¹² When the article on “*Gott*” was published in the third volume of the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* (1957-1971), the editors did not think of including one on “*Göttin(nen)*”.¹³ Samuel N. Kramer (1976: 13-14) was the first scholar who referred to goddesses as a group in a short paragraph titled “Female Deities: Victimization and Resentment”. He begins with a statement that became the *Leitmotiv* for future studies on goddesses: “But it was not only on the human plane that women had lost some of their rights and prerogatives in the course of centuries – it also happened on the divine plane”.

At the end of the paragraph Kramer notes that several goddesses held on or regained supremacy. For the next twenty-five years studies of goddesses

¹² For more recent surveys, see J.G. Westenholz 1998; 2002; 2005.

¹³ Van Dijk 1957-1971.

focused on their declining authority and similarities between the characters of goddesses and women's sex and gender roles, however, always from an essentialist Western viewpoint in regard to women's socio-cultural roles and the assumed socio-political systems (matriarchy vis-à-vis patriarchy). Some studies deal with particular aspects of goddesses, such as "fertility", or "mother goddess(es)", or discuss goddesses in the context of the gods with whom they are associated. That studies of goddesses are now less frequently subsumed under those of gods is evidence that gender awareness gains influence in analysis of Mesopotamian religion. It may be difficult for scholars educated in monotheistic cultures where the deity was and predominantly still is understood as male to understand the importance of goddesses and the multitude of divinities in polytheistic religions. For instance, Hinduism and Buddhism encompass the worship of a variety of goddesses who have similar characters and functions.¹⁴ Beginning in the first half of the third millennium, Sumerian theologians tried to systematize the assemblages of local gods into god-lists by devising hierarchical and genealogical relationships (Fara and Abu Salabikh god-lists), continuing with this effort through the centuries. Nonetheless, god-lists could never be synchronized with cults as the former remained mainly the concern of theologians and scholars whereas the latter, comprising both official and private worship, were in the hands of the priests and followed other rules and needs.

In 1914, Anton Deimel, the compiler of the first Sumerian dictionary, listed 3,300 names of Mesopotamian deities, but by 1950 the second edition of his *Pantheon* raised this to 5,580, and the number of deities has grown with each passing decade. The question of how many of these deities are feminine is difficult to determine without further clues to the nature of the Sumerian language.

Sumerian grammar distinguishes two nominal gender categories: (1) humans and deities and (2) animals and things.¹⁵ This categorization is in contradistinction to that of Semitic Akkadian and Indo-European English which distinguish the gender classes: masculine and feminine. It has been established that grammatical gender influences our ways of thinking and seeing the world around us.¹⁶ Consequently, it follows that the division masculine : feminine was not a fundamental aspect of Sumerian thought and that

¹⁴ E.g., Kinsley 1986; Lutgendorf 2003; Sharma 2005; Shaw 2006; Foulston and Abbott 2009.

¹⁵ Recent discussions of Sumerian gender formation, with references to earlier literature, are Edzard 2003: 29; Michalowski 2004: 35 s.v. 4.2.5; Foxvog 2011: 23-24; Jagersma 2011: 101-105. For criticism of the common but misleading use of the terminology "animate" vs. "inanimate", see Jagersma 2011: 102 (who prefers human : non-human) and Foxvog 2011: 23-4 (who prefers personal : impersonal).

¹⁶ For an assessment of this influence, see most recently Deutscher 2010.

the male : female division of human : animal world was not necessarily projected onto the cosmic plane. This peculiarity has been given various interpretations. It has even been suggested that deities originally had no gender and were only engendered in the period when they were anthropomorphized. It has also been claimed that, since the unmarked gender in many languages is male, Sumerian religion was male-dominated and the female element was only added secondarily.¹⁷ On the other hand, it has been noted that there is a lack of maleness even in the word *lu*₂ ‘man’, which is perhaps better understood as signifying ‘animate being’.¹⁸ There is even a ‘mother goddess’ with the name ^dLu₂-gu-la meaning ‘great man’.¹⁹ In contrast, the Semitic Akkadian language of Mesopotamia does distinguish masculine and feminine forms for deity: *ilu* ‘god’ and *iltu* or more commonly, *ištaru* ‘goddess’. However, even in Akkadian in the Old Akkadian, Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian periods, the lexeme *ilum* was understood as ‘divinity’ and could refer to a goddess as well as a god.²⁰

The English word ‘goddess’ is grammatically the feminine form of the word ‘god’ analogous to princess/prince, or French *déesse/dieu*, or German *Göttin/Gott*. On the other hand, in Sumerian, there is only one term for deity *diĝir*. Similarly, the word *nin* is also gender neutral and can stand for either ‘King/Master’ or ‘Queen/Mistress’.²¹ Both gods and goddesses have names composed of *nin* and a place name such as *Nin-Ĝirsu* ‘King/Master of Ĝirsu’, or *Nin-Isina* ‘Queen/Mistress of Isin’, or *nin* combined with an object or product, such as *Nin-mena* ‘Mistress of the crown’, or *Nin-kasi* ‘Mistress of beer’.

Unfortunately, the most easily accessible translations given in the corpus of ancient Sumerian literature online (ETCSL) do not consider the nuances of the English terms that are used in their translations. The term ‘Lady’ is employed to translate the two lexemes *nin* and *munus* although the glossary on the website makes it abundantly clear that the difference in meaning between these two lexemes is recognized. The former is given as ‘lady’ and the latter as ‘woman’. Other translations employ ‘Queen’ as well as ‘Lady’ for *nin*. The preponderance of and partiality for the translation ‘lady’ and also ‘queen’ is probably due to Christian cultural influence. Mary, mother

¹⁷ Kienast 1985: 113.

¹⁸ Jacobsen 1993; Lambert 1985: 199. See J.G. Westenholz forthcoming b.

¹⁹ Krebernik 1993-1997: 504 §3.9.

²⁰ Cf. CAD I/J 98 s.v. *ilu* mng. 1d and references in Shaffer and Wasserman 2003: 12.

²¹ For *nin* in divine names, see Edzard and Heimpel 2000. Aside from divine names, the referent of *nin* is always feminine (Heimpel 2002; Marchesi 2004). Marchesi (2004: 175 n. 133) maintains that: “the sign NIN was used for writing three different words with the respective meanings of 1) ‘sister’; 2) ‘mistress, proprietress’; 3) ‘lady, queen’”. Scholars generally transliterate it always as *nin*, but the Sumerian word for ‘lady’ and ‘queen’ was most probably *ereš*. See also Chapter III.A.2 in this book.

of Jesus, is most commonly addressed as ‘Our Lady’ (*Notre-Dame, Nuestra Señora, Nossa Senhora, Madonna*) and ‘Queen of Heaven’ (*Regina Caeli*). In Sumerian-Akkadian bilingual texts, the Sumerian logogram NIN is given two Akkadian translations: ‘Mistress’ (*bēltu*) or ‘Queen’ (*šarratu*)²² and two readings: ni-in/ne-en and e-ri-iš/e-re-eš (Proto-Ea 419-420, MSL 14 48). In this volume, we will translate ereš/nin as ‘queen/mistress’ and munus as ‘woman’.

Among the nin-deities are divine owners of cities (see Chapters II.B.1. and 2.) and high-ranking local gods (e.g. Ningirsu, Ninazu, Ningubla, Ningišzida), but the majority is of secondary and lower rank.²³ Nin may also identify a deity as descendant or attendant of a major goddess. The functions bestowed on minor nin-deities are often part of the parent deity’s own realm, especially where a nin-deity’s name also appears as surname or epithet of a major deity. Nin-deities exhibit several characteristics:

- Domains of many nin-deities concern nature, cities, objects, materials, abstract concepts (e.g., plants, animals, stone, trees, healing, incantations, tablet, crown, sceptre, drink, food) which are either gender neutral or a totality comprising both sexes, such as animals.²⁴
- In an early god-list, forty percent of the divine names are composed with nin, many with a major function (see Chapter II.B.2).
- Many minor nin-deities are the children of major or city deities. When a parent is known, this is more often the mother than the father.
- Many nin-deities belong to the entourage of a major deity.

Furthermore, the sign NIN can mark a transformation of deification. For example, in Early Dynastic Lagaš, NIN was added to sacred/divine objects and thus made their deification explicit.²⁵ Selz (1997: 172-173) suggests that the addition of NIN may be due to a relatively new theological concept relating a divine being, possibly anthropomorphic, to deified objects, animals, offices and institutions. Throughout the millennia, there are sporadic cases of NIN being added to already acknowledged deities. Examples are:

Nin-Aruru / Aruru

Nin-Aya²⁶ / Aya

Nin-Azimua / Azimua²⁷

²² For these epithets, see further Chapters II.B and II.C. Note that the ePSD translates the Sumerian lexeme nin as “lady, mistress, owner, lord”.

²³ See *RIA* 9 (1998-2001): 324-532 (*passim*).

²⁴ On classifications, see now: Selz 2008.

²⁵ A possible Ur III example from Nippur is ^dNin-^dŠu-nir (Zettler 1992: 265, 5N-T 435, 5N-T436+).

²⁶ Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “NIN.Aja”, Selz 2002: 664-665.

²⁷ Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-azimua / Azimua”.

Nin-Bilulu²⁸ / Bilulu
 Nin-DAM.MI²⁹ / DAM.MI
 Nin-Ĝeštinana / Ĝeštinana

The explanation of this phenomenon is uncertain.³⁰ It does not seem to be related to changes in role or gender.

One could and should ask, with some legitimacy, as to why female deities are singled out for separate analysis. The answer to this lies, to a large degree, in the history of discourse on goddesses since the late nineteenth century when matriarchal theories entered scholarly discourse.³¹ The topic of goddesses has been covered sometimes with academic rigor, sometimes with highly charged ideological arguments.³² But the goddesses of Babylonia were inseparably integrated into a complex divine world and therefore are studied here in their context. While one author focuses more on textual sources and the other on the historiography of the theory of marginalization and its evidence in visual images and mythological stories, there is some overlapping in which the same sources are cited.

That texts and images are rarely synchronic or comparable is not, as often assumed, primarily due to shortage of either visual examples or pertinent texts. Hundreds of thousands of texts and thousands of cylinder seals or their impressions represent a relatively comprehensive data bank and occasionally complement each other. However, the tendency to treat images merely as illustrations of texts or texts as clues to better understand images are methods that do not appreciate images as independent media with its own 'language' and sources for inspiration. Images, by their visual functionality, address viewers, not listeners or readers, and therefore were made expressly for visual perception and communication operating at a pre- or sub-verbal level.³³ Religions, with few exceptions, have made use of the specific 'power' of visual images in cult, ritual and worship. Therefore images should also be studied as a form of religious expression that follows its own rules. This does not mean that textual sources are unimportant in the interpretation of the meaning of images, but rather that textual and visual media potentially pertain to different aspects of religion. They may relate to each other reciprocally; images may visualize excerpts or climaxes of stories or rituals and texts may describe material objects. Stories of deities and heroes were also

²⁸ Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-Bilulu".

²⁹ Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-DAM.MI".

³⁰ Sallaberger (1993: 247) explains the addition of Nin to divine names to distinguish them from temple names.

³¹ Eller 2000, 2006; Hartmann 2004.

³² Cf. Chapter I.C in this volume.

³³ Kemp 2000: 1. Cf. in this volume Chapters IV.A and IV.B.

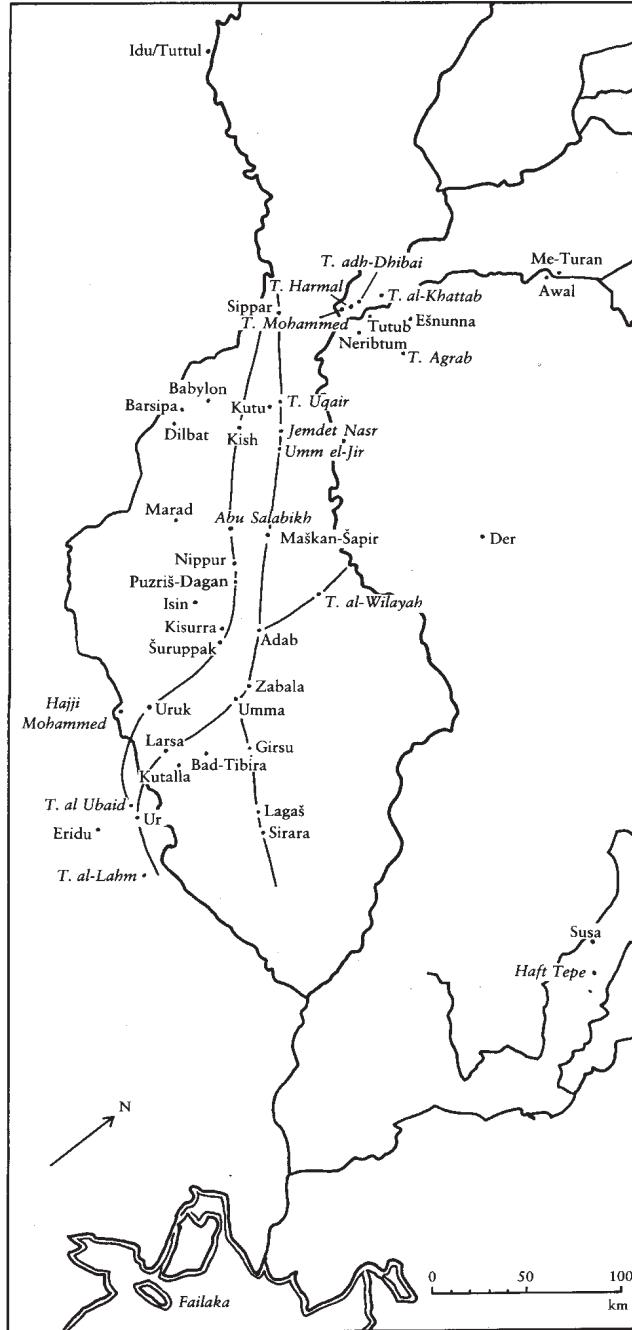
the subject of oral legends. While some oral tales were committed to writing, some were not, and even others were lost in the course of time. Sometimes visual imagery is the only remnant of these tales.

In addition to literary compositions, further textual documentation illuminates the traits and roles of these multitudinous goddesses. There were not only mundane administrative texts of temples listing offerings and donations to the deities but also royal inscriptions, hymns to divinities or kings, votive dedications, liturgical psalms, petitional prayers and exorcistic incantations. Furthermore, there were explicit ritual texts including temple rituals and royal rituals. Personal devotion is reflected in names which are constructed with a divine theophoric element and in passing references preserved in private letters.

The premise of this study is that combined analysis of textual sources, visual images and other material and contextual evidence produces a more differentiated picture about goddesses than focusing either on images or on texts alone. It is not a comprehensive treatment but concentrates on certain aspects of Mesopotamian goddesses including analysis of gender issues, continuities and divergences. We consider the independence of written and visual media, assess evidence for reciprocity between textual and visual representations as well as examine the different aims and functions of texts and images in Babylonian religion. Our focus is on the goddesses of Babylonia from the Late Uruk (ca. 3300-2900) through the late first millennium BCE. For convenience, we have chosen to use the middle chronology as relative historical dating system. Generally, transliterations of personal names and toponyms are normalized. In addition, Sumerian homonyms are distinguished by subscript numbers in Sumerian context whereas Sumerian logograms and Akkadian syllables are distinguished by the accentual system in Akkadian context.

Map of Mesopotamia

| <i>Ancient cities</i> | <i>Modern sites</i> |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Adab | T. Bismayah |
| Awal | T. as-Suleimeh |
| Bad-tibira | T. al-Mada'in |
| Borsippa | Birs Nimrud |
| Der | T. Aqar (Badra) |
| Dilbat | T. ed-Duleim / al-Deylam |
| Ereš (?) | Abu Salabikh |
| Eridu | Abu Shahrein |
| Ešnunna | T. Asmar |
| Ĝirsu | Tello |
| Idu or Tuttul | Hit |
| Isin | Ishan al-Bahriyat |
| Keš (?) | T. al-Wilayah |
| Kiš | T. Ingharra + T. Uheimir |
| Kisiga (?) | T. al-Lahm |
| Kisurra | Abu Hatab |
| Kutalla | T. Sifr |
| Kutû | T. Ibrahim |
| Lagaš | Al-Hiba |
| Larsa | Senkereh |
| Marad | Wannat es-Sa'dun |
| Maškan-šapir | T. Abu Duwari |
| Me-Turan | T. Haddad |
| Neribtum | Ishchali |
| Nippur | Nuffar |
| Puzriš-Dagan | T. Drehem |
| Šaduppum | T. Harmal |
| Sippar | Abu Habba + T. ed-Der |
| Sirara | Zurghul |
| Šuruppak | T. Fara |
| Susa | Shush |
| Tutub | Khafajah |
| Umma | T. Jokha |
| Ur | T. al-Muqayyar |
| Uruk | Warka |
| Zabalam | T. Ibzeikh |



Map of South Mesopotamia after J.N. Postgate 1992: Figure 2:4 (courtesy of J. Nicholas Postgate).

Chronology of Babylonia

(approximate dates according to Middle Chronology)

| | |
|----------------|---|
| 3300–2900 | Late Uruk (“proto-literate/archaic”) period |
| 2900–2800 | Early Dynastic I |
| 2800–2600 | Early Dynastic II |
| 2600–2350 | Early Dynastic III |
| | Mesilim of Kiš |
| | Ur Royal Cemetery |
| | Fara and Abu Salabikh texts |
| | 1st dynasty of Lagaš |
| 2550 | Ur-Nanše |
| 2450 | Eanatum |
| | Enanatum I |
| 2410 | Enmetena |
| | Enanatum II |
| 2350 | Uruinimgina |
| | Lugalzagesi of Uruk |
| 2334–2154 | Akkadian empire |
| 2334–2279 | Sargon |
| 2278–2270 | Rimuš |
| 2269–2255 | Maništušu |
| 2254–2218 | Naram-Sîn |
| 2217–2193 | Šarkališarri |
| until ca. 2120 | Gutian interregnum |
| 2150–2000 | Neo-Sumerian period |
| 2150–2100 | Lagaš II dynasty |
| 2125–2110 | Gudea |
| | Nammaḥani |
| 2212–2004 | Ur III dynasty |
| 2112–2095 | Ur-Namma |
| 2094–2047 | Šulgi |
| 2046–2038 | Amar-Suen |
| 2037–2028 | Šu-Sîn |
| 2027–2004 | Ibbi-Sîn |
| 2004 | Fall of Ur |
| 2000–1800 | Isin-Larsa period |
| 2017–1793 | Dynasty of Isin |
| 1953–1935 | Išme-Dagan |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1934–1924 | Lipit-Ištar |
| 2025–1763 | Dynasty of Larsa |
| | Kudur-mabuk (father of Warad-Sîn and Rim-Sîn) |
| 1834–1823 | Warad-Sîn of Larsa |
| 1822–1763 | Rim-Sîn I of Larsa |
| 1800–1600 | Old Babylonian period |
| 1880–1845 | Sumulael |
| 1792–1750 | Hammurabi |
| 1763 | Hammurabi conquers southern Babylonia |
| 1775–1762 | Zimrilim of Mari |
| 1761 | Hammurabi conquers Mari |
| 1749–1712 | Samsuiluna |
| 1740 | Samsuiluna lost control over southern Babylonia |
| 1683–1647 | Ammiditana |
| 1625–1595 | Samsuditana |
| 1595 | Conquest of Babylon by Hittite king Muršili |
| ca. 1600 | Sealand I dynasty |
| to 1430/20 | “Dark Age” |
| 1475–1159 | Kassite dynasty |
| ca. 1413 | Karaindaš |
| ca. 1400 | Beginning of Middle Babylonian period |
| 1307–1282 | Nazi-Maruttaš |
| 1263–1255 | Kadašman-Enlil II |
| 1254–1247 | Kudur-Enlil |
| 1185–1172 | Melišipak |
| 1159 | Conquest of Babylon by Šutruk-Nahhunte of Elam |
| 1157–1026 | 2nd dynasty of Isin |
| 1125–1104 | Nebuchadnezzar I |
| ca. 900–539 | Neo-Babylonian period |
| 886–855 | Nabû-apla-iddina |
| 760–748 | Nabû-šuma-iškun |
| 668–627 | Ashurbanipal |
| 626–539 | Neo Babylonian dynasty |
| 604–562 | Nebuchadnezzar II |
| 555–539 | Nabonidus |
| 539 | Conquest of Babylon by Cyrus II |
| 539–331 | Persian (Achaemenid) period |
| 331 | Alexander (the Great) of Macedon conquers Babylon |
| 331–64 | Hellenistic and Seleucid period |
| 64 BCE | Roman conquest by Pompey (Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus) |

Chapter I: Gender Theory and Issues

Julia M. Asher-Greve

A. On Sexual Differences and Gender Categories

“The sex of the gods stems from a mental operation that links the power and elements to the masculine and feminine. By associating air with Juno (or Hera), men were said to have ‘feminized’ (*effeminarunt*) her, because nothing is more tenuous than air” (Loraux 1992: 14). When I read this in Nicole Loraux’s article “What is a Goddess”, Tikva Frymer-Kensky’s study on Mesopotamian goddesses was yet unpublished,³⁴ and gender theory rather unknown in Ancient Near Eastern studies. I thought if quintessence of a goddess was re-defined as feminine it would imply that prior to this re-definition divinity had precedence over feminity and that Mesopotamian sources may contain evidence of this change.

When interest in gender issues reached Ancient Near Eastern studies in the 1990s, it was debated if change in the status of goddesses was related to gender or socio-political factors. Some scholars even argued that there is no evidence that changes in Mesopotamian history of religion were gender-based and that the theory of the marginalization of goddesses in the Babylonian pantheon is merely hypothetical (see below Chapter I.C).

That gender theory is relevant to a study of goddesses seems rather obvious. Although the analysis and critique of sex/gender differences started as a major goal of the political and sociological agenda, it has now also become part of religious studies and the humanities. Scholars from very different disciplines apply the paradigm ‘gender is the social organization of sexual differences’ on the expectation that the analysis of the operations of “social construction” of sex/gender would expose them “as a system of power”.³⁵

³⁴ Frymer-Kensky 1992. Loraux’s article was first published in Italian in 1990.

³⁵ Scott 2001: 21-22; Foucault’s theories were of enormous influence in analyses of sex/gender differences and systems of power. For references, see e.g. D. Richardson (ed.) 2008; Essed et al. 2005. For an introduction on Foucault’s ideas on power relationships, see Foucault 1980 (1986).

A most influential article for historians of gender was Joan Wallach Scott's "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis", published 1986. Thirteen years afterwards, Scott (2001) pointed out the "weakness" in the construct theory of sex and gender by stating that "gender does not replace physical sex" and that "random and contingent developments influence both nature and human social history". Scott argues that human bodies "*cannot* be understood entirely in terms of social construction ... (that) gender may no longer be the useful category it once was ..., (that) both gender and sex have to be understood as complexly related systems of knowledge" because sex is not entirely natural and gender is not entirely social (pp. 21-25).

Scott comments on how difficult feminists find separating social from physical referents to be, and that in scholarly literature gender and women are often synonymous. Contrary to her earlier approach she warns that gender "does not replace physical sex in discussion of sexual difference, but in the end it leaves sex in place as the explanation for social construction" (p. 23). This new viewpoint is more applicable to Mesopotamian sources. However, Scott adds that "while gender is given a history, biological sex is not", and that the latter as a subject in the sciences is "a form of knowledge, the organization of which also has a history" (pp. 24-25). She further remarks that she now uses "sexual difference" more often than "gender" (p. 34). Pamela E. Klassen (2009: 2) defines the 'concept gender' as "cultural norm attributed to one's sex". Although gender categories, in particular the category of women, have their roots in biological sex they have different meanings within different cultural and historical contexts.

The issue of sex/gender dimorphism in relation to Mesopotamian deities is intricate because deities are not members of any 'real' socio-cultural or biological categories although the theologians constructed pantheons of generations, families, and couples to reflect human society.³⁶ But when a god or goddess acts as sexual being or in a masculine or feminine way, it happens in a realm where sex or gender differences do not limit action or power *a priori*.³⁷ Every deity has important functions, but sex and sexuality, predominantly the domain of Inana/Ištar, is negligible with most, also in marriages between deities. Moreover, there is only indirect evidence for the theory of 'sacred marriages rite', presumably a sexual act between a goddess and a Mesopotamian ruler. However, some scholars dispute if this ritual included

³⁶ On divine couples and the 'couple principle', see Chapters II.B.2 and II.C.1 in this volume. In the Early Dynastic period the order of divine couples according to gender was not yet regulated.

³⁷ According to Groneberg (2006: 136) on the surface all deities are omnipotent and have the same potential and tasks, but special functions are attributed to a specific deity. But note Baines' statement (2000: 26) that omnipotence as a notion is alien to polytheism.

a sexual act at all.³⁸ The functions of a goddess who is the mother of divine daughters and sons and has the epithet ‘mother’ are not primarily those connected to biological and social motherhood.³⁹ A Mesopotamian ‘mother goddess’ gives birth,⁴⁰ and nurses (breastfeeds) kings (who call themselves her ‘son’) but generally not her divine children.

Sexual dimorphism and certain gender roles are human projections onto the divine world where they could and did change but for reasons other than in human society. Gender of a deity may be ambiguous, oscillate, or change. Definitions of sex and gender obviously do not suffice as paradigm for the relationship between sexual, gendered, and supra-natural aspects of deities in the polytheistic religious systems wherein deities have the powers to create, define, or determine what nature and society should be, including sex and gender.

B. Changing Gender, Functions, Domains, Rank/Status of Deities

Although the majority of Mesopotamian deities are characterized as masculine or feminine, the gender identity of numerous gods and goddesses is fluid, or changeable; two deities of different gender may also be fused into one of female or male or undefined gender.⁴¹ Primeval deities as well as genies and demons are apparently genderless or bi-gendered.⁴² Although the gender of Inana/Ištar is feminine, gender ambiguity is one of her characteristics and also included in her domain as goddess of sex and sexuality.⁴³ The goddess Namma’s gender is feminine but she is asexual Creatrix, “mother, who gave birth to Heaven and Earth” (^dama(-u₃)-tu(d)-an-ki), and “first mother, who gave birth to all (or senior) gods” (ama-palil-u₃-tu(d)-diĝir-šar-šar-ra-ke₄-ne).⁴⁴ Of the primeval deities (Namma, An, Uraš) none has a

³⁸ On the discourse about ‘sacred marriage’ and ritual performance, see Assante 2003: especially pp. 27-31; Cancik-Kirschbaum 2004; cf. Pongratz-Leisten 2008 and in this volume Chapter IV.C.6.2.

³⁹ Asher-Greve 2003: 35; see also Chapter III.B.1 in this volume.

⁴⁰ As giving birth to major gods is an important function of a ‘mother goddess’, some scholars prefer the term ‘birth goddess’ or ‘birthing goddess’ (see Chapter II *passim* and especially Section II.B.1 n. 133).

⁴¹ For numerous examples, see in Chapter II in this volume, in particular in paragraphs titled ‘Mutation’ and especially in Section II.C.1.

⁴² See sub individual divine names in *RIA*; Black and Green 1992; Wiggermann 1992; J.G. Westenholz 2010a.

⁴³ Groneberg 1986a; 1987; 1997; Harris 1991; Selz 2000; J.G. Westenholz 2007.

⁴⁴ Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. “Nammu”; see also the myth *Enki and Ninlil*: ETCSL 1.1.2. See also Chapter II.B.2 no. 15 in this volume.

name composed with *nin* (Mistress) or *en* (Master). *Nin*- and *en*-deities appear in the first generation after gender bifurcation.⁴⁵

No satisfactory explanation has yet been suggested for the masculine gender of deities whose names are composed with *Nin* + meaning ‘Queen/Mistress (of) so-and-so’ (see Introduction). One interpretation is that these gods were originally goddesses who switched gender as there are deities whose name remained although gender changed, like *Ninšubura*, or the beer goddess *Ninkasi*, or the crafts and birthing goddess *Ninmuga*, and *Ninsikila*, husband of *Lisin* who switched gender with his wife.⁴⁶ There is no evidence that gods with names composed with the ‘masculine’ equivalents for *nin*, i.e., *en* and *lugal* ever changed gender. Gebhard J. Selz (2000: 39 n. 2) doubts that *nin* as ‘title’ was originally related to gender, suggesting it was originally neutral.

That physical sex differences include intersexuals may be reflected in the organization of the pantheons, and probably also in amalgamated deities whose gender identity is ambiguous.⁴⁷ *Nin*-deities represent a large group, whereas *en*- and *lugal*-deities are fewer.⁴⁸ Most *en*-gods are major or primeval deities often with *nin*-spouses, whereas *lugal*-gods rank lower.

Because objects, abstract concepts, plants and materials are obviously sexless, the gender of their divine personification is irrelevant. It does not have to be defined unless the deity appears in a sex-related functions like giving birth or breast-feeding a king, or in ‘strong’ roles as mother, wife, or daughter. Some deities whose gender changes have spouses or are the child of a major deity but they are generally of secondary or low rank (for example, the husbands of *Mamu(d)* and *Ninšubura*, or *Paniġarra*, *Diġirmaḥ*’s son or daughter, respectively).⁴⁹

In the Early Dynastic pantheon of *Lagaš* the gender of many *nin*-deities remains ambiguous because gender is rarely identified in Early Dynastic sources, ascriptions usually come in later sources. That after the Old Sumerian period the gender of many *nin*-deities became fixed may be attributed to influence of the dichotomous divine system of the Semitic population. But Sumerian divine organization never developed into a completely

⁴⁵ See J.G. Westenholz 2010a: 307-314.

⁴⁶ Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. “*Nin-šubur*”: 491; Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “*Ninkasi* und *Siraš/Siriš*”; Michalowski 1987-1990 (*Lisin*); Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “*Nin-sikila*”. See also in this volume Chapters II.B.2, II.C.1, and on *Lisin* Chapter II.C.2. Another goddess who switched gender and kept her name is *Mamu(d)*, see Lambert 1987-1990. Further examples of gender switch are discussed in Chapter II *passim*.

⁴⁷ See in Chapters II.B.4 and II.C.1 in this volume.

⁴⁸ Selz 1995. For *nin*-deities, see also Chapter II.B.2. in this volume.

⁴⁹ See in Chapters IV.C.3.3.1 and IV.C.6.1 in this volume; for *Paniġarra*, see J.G. Westenholz and A. Westenholz 2006: 17-18.

dichotomous system as gender shift of deities continued over millennia (see Chapter II).

In Babylonian religion gender exchange of functions is attested in both directions (see Chapter II). Already in the third millennium gods were substituted by goddesses and vice versa, for example, in Adab the older city god Ašgi was replaced by his spouse Nintur, Diġirmaḥ, or Ninḥursaġa.⁵⁰ The Netherworld was originally ruled by the god Ninazu, also the city god of Enegi(r), who was replaced by his mother Ereškigal, whose first husband Gugalana, was replaced by Nergal, who eventually replaces his wife as ruler of the Netherworld (Katz 2003).

The most prominent case of power transferred from a goddess to god is that of Nisaba, goddess of writing, book-keeping, measuring, and administration. That the Sumerians ‘feminized’ civilizational achievement may seem strange to a culture accustomed to associate such achievements with masculine gender. Nisaba’s epithets are ‘princely’, ‘lofty’, ‘august scribe’, but also ‘lady of wisdom’, and ‘professor of great wisdom’ (geštu₂ diri tuku-e); she knows the secrets of mathematics, is advisor to all countries, and divine supervisor of the economy.⁵¹ In Sumerian tradition Nisaba is married to the rather unimportant god Ḫaya. In the second millennium she was overshadowed by the Semitic scribal god Nabû who rose to be one of the supreme gods in the Babylonian pantheon after the Old Babylonian period.⁵²

A goddess’ powers and realms could also increase as with Diġirmaḥ who eventually became more powerful in Adab than her husband Ašgi.⁵³ Another example is BaU who was exalted on account of her spouse Ninġirsu during the reign of the Lagaš II dynasty.⁵⁴ Exchange or redistribution of divine domains or status occur often between spouses when divine function or domain is not based on sexual difference. These exchanges were also facilitated by a lack of individual characterization of Mesopotamian deities and by the couple principle dominating the (theological) structuring of later pantheons.⁵⁵

The presence of female divinities is characteristic of polytheistic systems. Late fourth millennium evidence shows that Sumerian religion was polytheistic but composition of pantheons and focus on specific deities changed

⁵⁰ Such-Gutiérrez 2005/2006: 6-8; 26. see also in this volume Chapters II.B.2.3, II.B.3 and II.C *passim*.

⁵¹ Selz 1989; Edzard 1997: 61-62 (Gudea Statue T). See also Chapters II.B.2 no. 10.

⁵² Michalowski 1998-2001; Robson 2007; see also Chapter II.D.1 in this volume.

⁵³ If Ašgi was the son or married to the Nintur (Ninḥursaġa or Diġirmaḥ) is unclear, see Such-Gutiérrez 2005/2006: 6 and notes 53, 54. See also in this volume Chapter II.B.2.

⁵⁴ Steible 1998; Asher-Greve 2003: 19-24.

⁵⁵ According to Cancik-Kirschbaum (2009: 47) the divine couple is also connected with the Mesopotamian concept of time and eternity as it personifies permanence projected to the beginning of creation.

with time (Chapter II.B.1). This was also noticed by John Baines: “polytheisms may be relatively stable as ‘systems’, but over long periods they are not stable in composition and focus”.⁵⁶ To Burkhard Gladigow polytheism is also a “medium of reflection”, not an accumulation of deities. He emphasizes several characteristics of ‘sophisticated polytheism’: capability of integration; grades of freedom and openness; trans-regional genealogical relationships of city deities ameliorating the tension between political autonomy and shared culture; the possibility of choosing between deities.⁵⁷ The following inter(trans)-disciplinary examples concerning choice and change are based on civilizations sharing traits in religious structure.⁵⁸ Although politics, tradition, polity, or social groups determine or at least influence dedication to a deity, there are exceptions.⁵⁹ Naram-Sîn of Akkade chose Ištar-Annunītum, as his “favorite goddess” and “divine spouse”.⁶⁰ Numerous women chose the temple of a goddess for their votive gifts (for example, Inana’s temple in Nippur, or Ištar’s in Assur), or preferred the cult of a goddess (for example, the cult of Nanaya), or have names composed with that of a goddess, or are depicted worshipping a goddess.⁶¹ In ancient Egypt, Akhenaten (Amenhotep IV, 1382-1365 BCE) replaced traditional deities with his newly created god Aten.⁶² Individual Egyptians dedicated themselves to a deity before death to protect against other deities, or chose a personal deity; well known is the biography of Samut-Kiki, who chose the goddess Mut as his personal patron.⁶³ Hesiod’s favorite goddess was Hekate, although she belonged to the generation of deities defeated by Zeus.⁶⁴ In India, goddesses became more

⁵⁶ Baines 2004: 14.

⁵⁷ Gladigow 2002: 8-11. On polytheism in early civilizations, see Baines 2000: 9-22. The issue of choice is not well researched; cf. Gladigow 1995: 21-25. Cf. section on “Personal Choice” in Kearns 2010: 115-141, and on personal piety in ancient Egypt Luiselli 2008.

⁵⁸ Cf. Baines 2000: 9; see also Gladigow 1995; 2002: 9-11.

⁵⁹ Kearns: 121-122 (ancient Greece); Lipka 2009: 117-127 (ancient Rome); Gnirs 2003: 179-183 (ancient Egypt).

⁶⁰ Gödecken 1973; Selz 2000: 34.

⁶¹ Asher-Greve 1985; 2003; Bär 2003; Dolce 2008; Weiershäuser 2008: 183; J.G. Westenholz and A. Westenholz 2006: 15; Nakata 1995; on personal names with theophoric elements and their religious meaning, see Stol 1991. Of interest in this context is also Groneberg’s (2006: 136) remark, that religious texts seem to be momentary statements of attentiveness by an individual or a group to any deity.

On women’s choices and actions in ancient Rome, see Lipka 2009: 181-185.

⁶² Schlögl 2001; Bickel 2003; see also Baines 2000: 52-62.

⁶³ Ockinga 2001; Gnirs 2003: 176, 179-183 (“*Gotteswahl*”); Ritner 2008. As in Babylonia, in ancient Egypt personal names are testimony of allegiance and devotion to a particular deity or deities (Ritner 2008: 175); cf. Luiselli 2008.

⁶⁴ Kearns 2010: 120; cf. *ibid* pp. 121-122 on favorite divinities; Kearns (pp. 115-141) includes a chapter on “Elective Religion” but does not discuss if gender makes a difference. See also Furley 2007: 117 (on worship of “other” rather than no gods), 123-124 (on the question to which god to pray). See further on adopting new deities in ancient Rome,

important in Hinduism and Buddhism than they were in the preceding Vedic religion (conventionally dated from ca. 1700-700 BCE).⁶⁵ Goddesses were neither prominent nor important in Vedic religious texts, and only one goddess may be considered equal to gods of the second rank.⁶⁶ Multiple genders as well as gender changes occur only in polytheistic religions which contradicts the theory that god-based monotheism ultimately evolved from pre-historic goddess-based religion (theory of ‘*Urmonotheismus*’). As Hinduism and Buddhism show, goddesses can even gain in importance rather than the reverse.

Goddesses occupy every echelon in the Sumerian pantheons. They have a variety of epithets in common with gods and control largely the same realms of the world. But gods’ realms, attributes, and behavior often appear more explicitly masculine than those of goddesses appear feminine. In general, goddesses seem to have been more ‘approachable’ than the often distant and aloof gods, for example, An, Enlil, Nanna, or Utu.

In Mesopotamia the power of the deities also had regulatory and disciplinary implications, with effects evident in the cultic regimes and divinely sanctioned socio-cultural structures and practices. If a god or goddesses ‘vanished’ from earth – for example, when city and temple were destroyed – it was understood as retributive punishment for neglect of their cult and consequently the deities retreated to their non-earthly abode. But they could be brought back if appropriate measures and rituals were taken, meaning rebuilding of temple and strict observance of all rites and rules.⁶⁷ If a city was abandoned, the cult of a deity could be transferred to another city and be integrated into the local pantheon and cult or maintain its separate identity as when the ‘immigrant’ deity already presided over that city, as, for example, Inana of Uruk when her cult was transferred to Kiš after her sanctuary in Uruk was destroyed. A third eventuality could occur – an amalgamation or fusion of the cults of the deities.⁶⁸ But in general the permanent loss of main cult center meant patron deities lost their primary or original home on earth and consequently authority over a polity as, for example, BaU and Ninġirsu of Ġirsu/Lagaš, or Nanše of NINA, Šara of Umma, Sud of Šuruppak. These deities were still ‘around’ as members of the pantheon but their importance

Lipka 2009: 117-122 and p. 182 on women precipitated the building of the temple to *Fortuna Muliebris*.

⁶⁵ The dates for Vedic religion given in the literature vary, as late as 1500 to 500 BCE. For Hindu and Buddhist goddesses including chapters on Vedic goddesses, see Kinsley 1986; Shaw 2006; Sharma (ed.) 2005; for a short introduction to Vedic and Hindu deities, see Mitchell 1982; Foulston and Abbott 2009.

⁶⁶ Kinsley 1986; Jamison and Witzel 2003.

⁶⁷ For a detailed study of rules and rites accompanying the rebuilding of a temple, see e.g. Suter 2000; see further: Ambos 2010; Averbeck 2010; Dalley 2010; Fitzgerald 2010.

⁶⁸ See in this volume Chapter II *passim*.

diminished as they became one of many deities in the official cult of other cities.⁶⁹ Although this happened to both gods (e.g. Ninĝirsu, Šara) and goddesses (e.g. BaU, Nanše, Sud), southern Babylonian cities had more proprietary goddesses than those in northern Babylonia.⁷⁰ Considering Mesopotamian belief in the powers and actions of their deities, the loss of city, temple and deities must have been traumatic for the population, particularly when lacking the means to rebuild or restore temples and cult statues as done previously. One consequence of seeing the status of their major deities reduced in their new homes may have been to turn to more ‘successful’ and ‘reliable’ deities whose cities continued to prosper. Another outcome was the fusing or synchronization of their deities with those of the local pantheon (see Chapter II.A). Economic concerns may have been a reason that ‘host cities’ incorporated an ‘immigrant’ deity into an existing temple complex or merged them with existing deities of similar character rather than provide provisions and personnel for a new temple and cult. However, ‘family deities’ rarely changed due to emigration or migration, probably because family religion was integral to ‘identity construction’.⁷¹

Causes of gender change or fusion of a god and goddess into one deity were diverse; the trend to ‘masculinize’ the pantheon was not the only reason that the gender of some goddesses changed. ‘Downgrading’ to spouses/consorts can partially be attributed to political and economic upheavals in Southern Babylonia during the Old Babylonian period but for other reasons continued thereafter (see Chapters II.C and II.D).

C. The Discourse on the Marginalization of Goddesses

The theory of the marginalization or decline of goddesses is connected to the theory of matriarchal prehistory preceding the emergence of patriarchy. According to this theory, in women-centered and women-ruled (gynococracy) societies the worship of goddess(es) mirrored the rule of women on earth and the ‘patriarchal revolution’ replaced goddess(es) with gods.

Mother goddess theories had their roots in German romanticism.⁷² The Swiss historian of law and scholar of classics Johann Jacob Bachofen (1815-1887) is considered the ‘father’ of this evolutionary model of human history

⁶⁹ Cf. Charpin 1986; van der Toorn 1996: 142-147.

⁷⁰ See in this volume Chapter II.B.1 on goddesses in the Early Dynastic Period with a list of 37 city goddesses versus only 25 city gods.

⁷¹ Van der Toorn 1996: 142-147; cf. Kalla 2002: 130, 145-146, on theophoric elements in Old Babylonian names referring to a family’s original home town and their ‘loyalty’ to its deities. See also in this volume Chapter IV.C.3.2.

⁷² Eller 2006; Hartmann 2004; Zsolnay 2009.

which he published in 1861.⁷³ But during the latter half of the nineteenth century, British and US anthropologists developed independently from Bachofen various matri-centered models including mother goddess theories.⁷⁴

Although nineteenth-century theories of matriarchal prehistory were criticized by historians as well as classicists, Cynthia Eller (2006: 286) claims that they “*formed* the discipline of anthropology, since it was the matriarchal thesis and the debates it provoked that acted as a key foundation upon which anthropology established itself”.

The idea of matriarchy and goddess-centered religions lingered on even in academic circles, although historians and archaeologists of ancient cultures had proved these theories as ‘myths’ or ‘fiction’.⁷⁵ In the 1970s feminist scholars rediscovered theories of gynocentric societies and goddess worship, feminist theologians became interested in the ‘divine feminine’, and numerous books on goddesses in ancient cultures were published by authors who often lacked appropriate professional qualifications and knowledge. Cooperation was rare, an exception being the Sumeriologist Samuel Noah Kramer who wrote with Diane Wolkstein a book about Inana.⁷⁶

The current debate about the status of goddesses in ancient Mesopotamia can be traced back to Kramer, who in 1976 (pp. 13-14) stated that goddesses “held top rank in the Sumerian pantheon” and “were gradually forced down the hierarchical ladder by the male theologians who manipulated the order of the divinities in accordance with what may well have been their chauvinistic predilections”. It is surprising that this was written by a seventy-nine-year-old Sumeriologist and not by a young feminist scholar.

Ten years later, in the wake of growing importance of academic feminist discourse, the *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* in 1986 in Paris was dedicated to the theme of women⁷⁷ (Durand, ed. 1987) and W.G. Lambert addressed the issue of “Goddesses in the Pantheon”. Following a quote from Genesis about the creation of humans as male and female, Lambert continues (1987: 125):

So to understand these ancient deities one needs first to know something about the roles of the sexes in ancient Mesopotamia. There is

⁷³ For a short summary with bibliography, see Hartmann 2004: 5-10.

⁷⁴ Eller 2000; 2006; Goodison and Morrisson 1998; Röder et al. 1996.

⁷⁵ Hartmann 2004; Goodison and Morrisson 1998; Röder et al. 1996.

⁷⁶ Wolkstein and Kramer 1983.

⁷⁷ The first *Rencontre* on women was held in 1956 in Paris (“La femme dans l’Ancien Orient”), but only summaries (no proceedings) were published in *RA* 50 (1956): 220-221, *Orientalia Nova Series* 25 (1956): 411-414, and *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 13 (1956): 178-179. Two papers appeared as revised articles in *RA* 52 (1958): A. Falkenstein, “Enhedu’anna, die Tochter Sargons von Akkade”, and W. von Soden, “Akkadische Gebete an Göttinnen”.

so far no adequate work on this subject, so a few generalizations and some evidence must be given here.

Although Lambert's statement concerning research on the "sexes" is correct, in 1986 neither Assyriologists nor archaeologists had made use of contemporary theory and methodology in women and gender studies.⁷⁸ While Lambert is aware of gender dimorphism, he subsumes goddesses under the term 'gods'. About the primeval goddess Namma he writes that of course she must be female but adds that there are hints that she is bi-sexed or genderless. That Lambert's scholarly standpoint is essentialist becomes evident in his statements about what he considers 'inappropriate' or 'appropriate' for goddesses: On Nisaba, goddess of writing, book-keeping, measuring, administration, and grain distribution he writes, "neither activity was especially appropriate for a lady. In Sumerian society female scribes were very rare, and grain is sexually neutral" (1987: 126). As explanation for beer and brewing in the hands of goddesses, Lambert argues that much of this work was done by women at home. To Lambert motherhood and sexual love are appropriate for a goddess because "prostitutes in ancient society were normally female" (1987: 126-127).

Contrary to Kramer, Lambert (1987: 130) concluded that "sexism" cannot be blamed for the loss of importance of goddesses because this development had political reasons such as the decline of cities with titular goddesses as ongoing fusions and synchronization of goddesses and that "there is less problem in the decline of goddesses under Babylonian civilization than there is in their prominence under the Sumerians".

While scholars, teachers and students in other disciplines engaged in discourses on gender and religion, most Assyriologists continued to publish traditional positivist (or essentialist) studies of individual goddesses. In 1992 two studies on goddesses demonstrated the divide between positivist and engendered research: Henri Limet's article "Les déesse sumériennes: femmes modèles, modèles de femmes", and Tikva Frymer-Kensky's book *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth*.

Limet (1992: 131) defines goddess as feminine divinity, writing that "in Sumerian religion the world of gods is essentially masculine", dominated by the triad An, Enlil and Enki, whereas goddesses are above all "girls/daughters, wives, or sisters". He continues "maternity was the characteristic function of the woman, the goddesses are mothers", the goddess as spouse "must correctly play her role as companion, lover, and collaborator, and from the religious view point goddesses are of little importance". These statements

⁷⁸ See review by J.G. Westenholz 1990; further: Asher-Greve 1997; 2000.

not only read like essentialist statements justly criticized by feminist scholars but contradict evidence pertaining to the cults of goddesses and their temples. Limet describes powers, authority, rank, and functions of goddesses as well as the definition of the ‘feminine divine’ as if they had remained static over millennia.

Frymer-Kensky’s book (1992) not only represents the beginning of engendered study of goddesses of ancient Mesopotamia but is equally a pioneering work in application of gender theory in Ancient Near Eastern Studies although, as the subtitle indicates, her focus is not on Mesopotamian goddesses but on the transformation of divine concepts of sexual dichotomy and sexuality in the formation period of biblical monotheism.⁷⁹ Consequently, Mesopotamian goddesses are not analyzed in-depth and she concentrates only on those aspects important for her main subject. However, this does not explain why she based her discussion of Mesopotamian goddesses almost exclusively on literary material from the second millennium and did not include other textual or visual sources. As a result she overemphasizes sex/gender roles, sexuality, and fertility.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Frymer-Kensky was first in addressing the questions of divine sexual difference and sexuality.

The chapter concluding Frymer-Kensky’s discussion of Mesopotamian goddesses, “The Marginalization of the Goddesses” (pp. 70-80) intersects with mainstream Assyriological thought at that time. She describes the diminution of goddesses and its intensification in the Old Babylonian period and thereafter, the early disappearance of ‘primordial first-mothers’ and the shift of powers towards gods, concluding that “the eclipse of the goddesses was undoubtedly part of the same process that witnessed a decline in the public role of women, with both reflective of fundamental changes in society that we cannot yet specify” (p. 80). This statement is not irrelevant, but the changes in the status of goddesses were more complex and had multiple causes. Again, her argumentation appears to be a logical conclusion because it is

⁷⁹ After Tikva Frymer-Kensky’s premature death in 2007 a panel discussing the relevance of *In the Wake of the Goddesses* for contemporary scholarship was organized in December 2008 in San Diego during the annual meeting of the *Society of Biblical Literature*. Cf. Chapter III.A.1 in this volume.

⁸⁰ The chapters on Mesopotamia were meant as foundation and point of departure for Frymer-Kensky’s analysis of biblical concepts. According to Guinan (2009), the Mesopotamian chapters cannot be separated from the overall trajectory focusing on the way the Mesopotamian pantheon was absorbed and transformed by a new theological construct. Consequently the complex Mesopotamian divine cosmos was simplified as were the roles and functions of goddesses, in particular their place in cult and ritual. For a more detailed discussion, see Guinan 2009. However, Frymer-Kensky obscures differentiation between sex and gender, see Zsolnay 2009.

based on her definition of goddesses as mirror images of women in a society where ‘fertility’ and dual sexes are paradigmatic principles.⁸¹

Six years elapsed before another engendered study on goddesses was published by Joan G. Westenholz (1998). Critique of epistemology and ‘standpoint theory’ had not been incorporated into an Assyriological study before Westenholz discussed the problems in investigations of ancient Near Eastern religions and alerted scholars to various “layers of cultural ‘filters’” inherent in “our own cultural preconceptions” that also influence and may even distort interpretations.⁸² Analyzing different roles and spheres of Mesopotamian goddesses, Westenholz argues that “most of the goddesses popular in the third millennium continue to be worshipped” and that “those most often mentioned in texts, in addition to Ištar, are mother goddesses” but that in the second millennium, as the result of ethnic migrations, the goddesses’ “marginalization and the reduction of their roles, as well as domination by divine masculine spouses, curtailed their power of independent action” (pp. 77-78).

In 1999 Piotr Steinkeller presented a different theory (pp. 113-116), claiming that in the Uruk period (Middle to Late Uruk ca. 3500-3000 BCE) the pantheon was dominated by goddesses and most city-states had goddesses as their titular divine owners; the only dominant god was Enki, who was paired with most chief-goddesses. And further, that during the third millennium many political capitals still had goddesses as titular divine owners while the generation of sons gained importance, as for example Ninurta, Ningirsu, Šara and Ašgi, but these gods did not supersede the status of goddesses.⁸³ For Steinkeller the “growing masculinization” is partly the result of internal changes in the organization of Sumerian society, and partly caused by influence of the Akkadian population of Northern Babylonia, whose pantheon was dominated by gods.

Steinkeller’s theories elicited ongoing debate on the status of goddesses in archaic Sumer but also on the need of such studies. At the *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale on Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East* in 2001 in Helsinki, Piotr Michalowski (2002) questioned the relevance of separate study of goddesses because the processes – such as cities losing importance or vanishing, fusion and syncretism of deities, socio-cultural changes – occurred independently of each other and are not related to a marginalization of one divine gender. Nevertheless, Michalowski agrees with Steinkeller insofar as many important Sumerian cities were dedicated to god-

⁸¹ See Zsolnay 2009 for a thorough analysis and critique of Frymer-Kensky’s ‘mirror theory’ and “principle of fertility”.

⁸² J.G. Westenholz 1998: 64-65; see also Asher-Greve 1997: 226-228.

⁸³ Cf. Chapter II.B.2 in this volume.

desses who had higher profile than in subsequent periods, and that the early pantheons were different from those in later times. But he disagrees with Steinkeller's chronological development concerning divine mother-son-generations because cities of equal importance were dedicated to goddesses as well as gods and the latter do not date later than those with goddesses as patrons. Michalowski also stresses that the hierarchical power structure of the pantheon was controlled by gods and this existed as far back as one can trace it, and that An, Utu, Nanna, Enki, and Enlil dominate the divine world together with Enki's wife Ninḫursaġa.⁸⁴

However, in the Uruk period Inana is 'the' central most important deity in the successive political centers Uruk, Kiš, and Akkad, and her importance is also attested in the Early Dynastic city-states Umma, Zabalam, and Lagaš, whereas Enlil and Enki had no important cult centers outside their home cities Eridu and Nippur.⁸⁵

Another aspect of the importance of goddesses was recently studied in-depth by Gebhard J. Selz who relates the idea that symbolic nursing of the king by a goddess established a "*Milchverwandschaft*" (nurture kinship) confirming the ruler's ritual membership in the group of gods to a concept of functional divinity bound to the office not to the individual rulers, that is reminiscent of Kantorowicz's famous but controversial theory of 'the king's two bodies'.⁸⁶ On the declining importance of goddesses, Selz notes that change in the 'world of deities' in the third millennium is difficult to assess but suggests the old religious system was increasingly overshadowed by patrilineal structures.⁸⁷

In a study on goddesses in Nippur in the Ur III period, Brigitte Groneberg (2007: 319) points to their impressive power not only as leaders of cities but also in connection with war, kings, death and economic affairs. However, in her conclusion she falls back on the mirror image theory: "that their roles and functions (of goddesses) ranged widely, that in some cases their resources

⁸⁴ Steinkeller (1999: 114-115) argued that Tummal near Nippur was originally a cult place of Ninḫursaġa, the mother of Ninurta, the original divine ruler of Nippur; the cult of Enlil was brought at an early age from Northern Babylonia to Nippur and Enlil's wife Ninlil was superimposed on the cult of Ninḫursaġa. For a different view, see Chapter II.B.4 in this volume.

⁸⁵ On Inana's preeminent status among deities, see Selz 2010: 206, 208; 2012: 65. See further Chapter II.B.1 in this volume.

⁸⁶ According to Kantorowicz (1997), the body of the medieval king is divided into the mystic, eternal body of kingship ("body politic") and the private mortal body ("body natural") of the individual king. Kantorowicz argues that this Christian concept had its roots in Roman imperial ideology. But it appears that the Romans adapted a concept from the Near East where according to the canon of kingship a ruler's body is and remains physically and mentally perfect thus establishing a dichotomy between royal/godlike and mortal/human body; cf. Brisch 2006b: 42-43.

⁸⁷ Selz 2010 and 2012: 73.

were spectacular. This could mean that in the human world of Mesopotamia there were also women who were highly respected and honored, that they could also play many roles and that in the large cities they must have had chances to develop” (p. 330).⁸⁸

Although not concerned with the theory of marginalization, Eleanor Robson’s study (2007) on gendered literacy and numeracy in Sumerian literature is of interest because she provides evidence of the power of goddesses and also on how results depend on accessibility and genre of material (p. 145). Robson observes that in the corpus of Sumerian literature (*ETCSL*, categories 1-5) goddesses “are overwhelmingly associated with writing instruments and measuring equipment”, that “grander descriptions such as *maḥ* ‘majestic’ and *kalama-ma* ‘of the land’ are applied [...] mostly to goddesses”, and that goddesses and anonymous humans “are the two groups most closely associated with literacy and numeracy”.⁸⁹

It should be noted, that archaeological, particularly architectural and visual sources, were not incorporated into these studies, which are almost exclusively based on textual sources, occasionally illustrated with images of goddesses.

⁸⁸ Existence of goddesses is not linked to women’s social status and ‘chances’; women of high status or with extraordinary careers also exist in societies with monotheistic god-centered religions.

⁸⁹ Robson 2007: 224, 226, 227.

Chapter II: Plethora of Female Deities

Joan Goodnick Westenholz

A. The Processes: Syncretism, Fusion, Fission, and Mutation

All Mesopotamian deities underwent a continual process of reinterpretation and syncretism, mutation and fossilization, fusion and fission. These processes were based on the principle of the fluidity of divinity. The fluid notion of divine agency was basic to the Mesopotamian conception of the cosmic realm.⁹⁰ It can be clearly observed in the transfer of divinity into physical matter. Furthermore, the immaterial essence of the deity was not bounded and thus deities were not kept always fully distinct from each other.

Assyriologists have commented on this fluidity. According to Niek Veldhuis (2004: 71): “The possibility of making such choices is provided by the nature of the religious tradition, which does not prescribe a single identity for a divine person”. Jeremy Black (2005: 39) similarly recognized as faulty the tendency to view deities as “stable clusters of essentialist characteristics ... and ... with coherent anthropomorphic personalities”. He noted that any serious pockets of disagreement are usually dismissed as regional or chronological divergences. As he pointed out, to represent a deity as if it had a homogenous person-like core encounters fundamental problems: “A human being does not live for 3000 years; but clearly the cults themselves led persistent and durable lives ...at the same time their regional and diachronic manifestations are far from uniform; cult and beliefs must be expected to vary locally and with time to change beyond recognition”. While deities can be described as efficacious in one or another specific domain, their actions were never completely circumscribed by that domain.

The mutability of goddesses and their overlapping domains has interested scholars as well as laypersons. The tendency to see goddesses as merging with one another is a popular notion. The actual situation is more complicated than this simplistic view allows. The occurrence of the metonymic analogy or attributive epithet in place of a divine name is widespread in

⁹⁰ See further Chapter IV.B and *passim*.

the liturgy and in the mythology. As Thorkild Jacobsen wrote (1973: 295): “Names turn into mere epithets, epithets turn into names; a name may be but one of many designating a given deity and yet may prove also to be that of a separate, different minor deity in his or her entourage”.⁹¹ Deities with the same name and function turn out to be different; conversely deities with different names and functions appear to be one and the same. This fluidity is due to the multifaceted essential nature of divinity.

The fundamental processes that constitute the affective causes are:

1. Syncretism

The term “syncretism” is applied in religious studies to various phenomena:⁹²

A. Between religious systems

1. Blending of two or more religious belief systems into a new system, in areas where multiple religious traditions exist in proximity and function actively within the same cultural sphere, as for instance, in Hellenistic syncretism, where elements from several religions merged and influenced each other mutually.⁹³ Various types of acculturation provide the context for this kind of syncretism which can come about through conquests, colonization, migrations, or trade. Frequently, when a culture is conquered, the conquerors superimpose their religious beliefs on the subject peoples, or, as in Mesopotamia, the conquerors adopt the autochthonous religious system of the conquered. The syncretism found in Mesopotamian religion was once thought to be a simple amalgamation of Sumerian and Semitic belief systems (Ringgren 1969: 8). It is now used as the example of a religious syncretism when a substratum continues to exercise dominance (Colpe 1987: 220). Accordingly, the religious landscape of Mesopotamia was dominated by the Sumerians into which elements from the Akkadian, Hurrian, and later Amorite beliefs were integrated, making subtle changes in the character of the religious amalgam.
2. Incorporation of individual elements (such as rites, symbols, and divinities) into a religious tradition of beliefs from unrelated traditions.⁹⁴ This can occur for many reasons, and happens quite commonly in areas whenever religious traditions come into contact. Shifts and new linkages

⁹¹ On this subject, see also Krebernik 2002: 37.

⁹² For a survey, see Leopold and Jensen 2005.

⁹³ See further Ringgren 1969: 7 and Colpe 1987: 219, 222-23 (“Relations between complex wholes”).

⁹⁴ See further Colpe 1987: 219, 223-225 (“Relations between particular components”).

are established between these elements, in particular, in relation to divinities. The intermingling of ideas pertaining to different deities worshipped by different peoples, even geographically separated from one another, could have been made possible through the variety of cultural contacts mentioned above: migrations, conquests, colonization, or trade. In Mesopotamia, the conquerors indeed adopted the autochthonous religious system but with the addition of their more familiar deities.⁹⁵ The worship of Mesopotamian deities was carried westward and eastward by their traders and their colonies.

B. Within one religious system

1. Connections between complex wholes within one religious system (Colpe 1987: 222). The most common example used to illustrate this type of syncretism is that of the synthesis established in Egypt between the differing theologies of the various nomes.⁹⁶ In Mesopotamia, a similar amalgamation process occurred between the distinct theologies of the archaic cities of Eridu, Uruk, and Nippur (see below). A similar development transpired in the formation of the imperial cult of Marduk of Babylon which absorbed the theology of Eridu, in particular.
2. Harmonization of elements within one religious system.⁹⁷ Such syncretism ensues in Babylonia from diachronic processes consisting of juxtaposition, identification and exchange of qualities. Such can be seen in the early juxtaposition of Ningirsu of Girsu and Ninurta of Nippur, in the mystical identification of objects and symbols, and in the exchange of traits between Sud and Ninlil (see further Chapter III.B.2). The most conspicuous case is that of the Assyrian emulation of the cult practices of Babylonia and their harmonization in Assyria.

When studying these phenomena, historians of religion either compare two different systems of belief in order to evaluate the borrowings or isolate and contrast elements of each religion, in particular the ancient identification and equation of divinities. The latter procedure is assumed to be derived from *interpretatio Graeca*, the Hellenic habit of identifying gods of disparate mythologies with their own. This interpretation is understood to have begun when the proto-Greeks first arrived on the mainland of modern-day Greece early in the second millennium BCE and found locally venerated deities.

⁹⁵ For possible earlier substrate deities under the Sumerian, see van Dijk 1969: 171-179; Kienast 1985: 107-109, 113 (in particular as substrate goddesses); Selz 1990: 112; Rubio 1999: 3.

⁹⁶ See Bonnet 1999; Baines 1999.

⁹⁷ See further Colpe 1987: 223-225; Selz 1990: 113.

However, the term was conceived by Tacitus (98 CE) who used *interpretatione Romana* (*Germania* chapter 43) in reference to German deities.⁹⁸ In general, the conception of *interpretatio* is applied in order to treat the divine names of other religious systems as translations of one's own (Graf 2004: 9). In reference to the divine pantheons of the ancient Near East, the term *interpretatio* has been applied to the equation of Sumerian and Akkadian deities, an *interpretatio Babylonica* and to the Hittite and Hurrian deities, an *interpretatio Hurritica*.⁹⁹

Recent investigations on the subject of the interpretation or equation of divinities have focused on their "translatability".¹⁰⁰ Jan Assmann (1996: 25) maintained that the Babylonians were the first to equate two gods by a method which he termed "theological onomasiology", its aim being to find out how a given unit of meaning (in this case, a deity) is expressed in different languages. As Assmann understood the Babylonian theological method, it was initially applied within the same cultural sphere, and later extended to deities from other cultures. The underlying thesis is that foreign peoples worshipped the same gods. "Translatability" involves specific equations of deities of other cultures in connection with one's own deities (Smith 2008: 6). In the ancient Near East, "translatability" came to the fore in two periods due to the international *koine* shared by the various peoples of the time. The first international period was the Late Bronze Age (1400-1200 BCE). Identifications of Hittite and Hurrian gods (Archi 2006),¹⁰¹ of Egyptian and West Semitic gods (Smith 2008: 37-39), and of Akkadian and Sumerian gods (see further Chapter II.C.2) were established.¹⁰² Such "translatability" is clearly manifested in texts, such as treaties, which betray typologies of deities. The second international period was the Graeco-Roman period, when "translatability" of deities was instituted across the Mediterranean. Assmann (1997:

⁹⁸ *Sed deos interpretatione Romana Castorem Pollucemque memorant*, "but in the interpretation of the Romans, they worship the gods Castor and Pollux".

⁹⁹ On the latter, see Wilhelm 2002: 57.

¹⁰⁰ The model was used in reference to ancient Near Eastern deities by Assmann (e.g. 1996) who distinguishes "three types of cultural translation: 'syncretistic translation' or translation into a third language/culture; 'assimilatory translation' or translation into a dominating language/culture; and 'mutual translation' within a network of (economic/cultural) exchanges". He identified the Babylonian theological method as an example of "mutual translation". This conception was reviewed by Smith in 2008: 5-8 and *passim*. Assmann's theories have been applied to translations of Hurrian deities by Alfonso Archi (2004, 2006). Archi (2006: 148) suggested a demarcation between "translation" and "superimposition" (certain properties of one divinity are attributed to another).

¹⁰¹ These identifications, with certain exceptions, consisted of the juxtaposition of the deities rather than a type of fusion (Archi 2006: 153).

¹⁰² As Smith (2008: 45) points out: "Translation of deities is not a general feature of the cultures. It belonged to a highly limited political and scribal world". According to Smith, the syncretism of deities is not shared by the populace.

48-49) cites a particularly apt example of the “Queen of Heaven” and her many names in various cultures but whose true name is the Egyptian goddess Isis from the 11th book of the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius (2nd century CE).

In Assyriological studies, discussions of syncretism are mostly found in descriptions of ‘the’ Mesopotamian pantheon, and are limited to the merging of deities, rather than systems of belief or elements from such.¹⁰³ Exceptionally, Willem H. Ph. Römer (1969: 125) when speaking of the Babylonian-Assyrian religious amalgam, states that the term ‘syncretism’ is applicable “since it pertains to an admixture of divergent popular religions to form a polytheistic system with a Sumerian foundation”.

The first major discussion of syncretism in ancient Mesopotamia was that of Wolfram von Soden in 1936 (447-449) in which he spoke of “*Gleichsetzungstheologie*” (Equation Theology).¹⁰⁴ He applied this term to two different kinds and periods of syncretism in Mesopotamia. The first being the Akkadian amalgamation of the Sumerian deities and the second the first-millennium syncretism of various major deities which he saw as a tendency towards monotheism. As regards the plethora of deities, he saw the many deities as hypotases or epithets of one another (p. 447). Von Soden (1985a: 9) placed the beginning of the syncretistic reductionism in the hands of the theologians in the latter part of the second millennium. This dating was based on the innovation of the major bilingual god-lists (see further Chapter II.C.2).

As delineated by von Soden, the first internal process of gradual syncretism was set in motion in order to render similar the various local pantheons of the Sumerian city-states – to generate the conceptual amalgamation of diverse divine beings, rendering them, in effect, synonymous. According to Johannes J.A. van Dijk (1964/5: 4), the Sumerian theologians regarded “les différents dieux des panthéons locaux sont des ‘Erscheinungsformen’ – des formes pluralistes – d’une même divinité”.¹⁰⁵ With the development of political confederations, an overall regional pantheon was conceived which led to

¹⁰³ For discussions of ‘syncretism’ with regard to Mesopotamian deities, see van Dijk 1969; Selz 1990; 1992; Sommerfeld 2002; Sallaberger 2003-2005: 295, 298-299. Most recently PhD thesis of Simon Sherwin, *Mesopotamian Religious Syncretism: The interaction of religion and politics in the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC*, 1999. Concerning the adoption and syncretism of Hattian, Mesopotamian and Hurrian deities by the Hittites, see Wilhelm 2002.

¹⁰⁴ He reiterated these ideas in his 1985a article, pp. 8-9. This term is still operational and applied to various intents and purposes. Wilhelm (2002) applied the term *Gleichsetzungstheologie* coined by von Soden to the process of harmonization of the various strands in Anatolia. It has been translated as “Syncretistic Theology” by Donald Schley in his 1994 translation (*The Ancient Orient, An Introduction to the Study of the Ancient Near East*, pp. 179-182) of von Soden’s 1985b general volume *Einführung in die Altorientalistik* pp. 171-174.

¹⁰⁵ “The different deities of the local pantheons are ‘Manifestations’ – plural forms – of the same divinity”. The German term “Erscheinungsformen” (“Manifestations”) is common-

conflations of traditions and synthesis of local deities.¹⁰⁶ The results of this first period of syncretism were the compilation of the earliest lists of deities ('god-lists').

By the mid-third millennium, possibly politically motivated, the Akkadian theologians also sought to harmonize their own gods with those of the Sumerians.¹⁰⁷ However, syncretistic equations with possible Sumerian counterparts were not consistent. Some deities were completely absorbed by their counterparts while others maintained independent identities albeit with similar functions.

The period of 1500-500 was the second period of inner Mesopotamian syncretisms between the old traditions of Sumer and Akkad and newer traditions of Babylonia.¹⁰⁸ Trying to reach an understanding of the process, Wilfred Lambert (1990: 120-121) outlined different types of syncretistic identification: 1. indistinguishable identity of deities, 2. equation of similar but not identical deities, 3. assimilation of minor gods by major gods. The first type is considered 'fusion' in this volume, whereas the second two types are two different kinds of syncretism.

Many discussions of syncretism within the Mesopotamian pantheon tend to occur in the context of discussions regarding the late tendencies towards "monotheism".¹⁰⁹ Von Soden (1985a: 12-13) termed the late period religion as an era of "Monotheiotetismus" which he defined as: "die vorrangige Orientierung der babylonischen und assyrischen Religion [...] auf einen Vater-Gott und eine Mutter-Göttin, die man überwiegend unter den herkömmlichen Namen anrief".¹¹⁰ Similarly, Lambert (1990: 121) suggested that the process of identifying originally distinct gods of similar attributes continued until some ancient theologians identified all major male gods with Marduk in a kind of monotheism. Lambert (1997a: 159) traced the development and suggested that since gods existed among the earliest city pantheons who had essentially the same attributes but bore different names and were worshipped

ly used by scholars in reference to the embodiment of numinous powers (e.g. Wilhelm 2002: 55).

¹⁰⁶ See further, Lambert 1975a: 193.

¹⁰⁷ See Roberts 1972: 152-154; A. Westenholz 1999: 84; Sommerfeld 2002: 705; Sallaberger 2003-2005: 303-304.

¹⁰⁸ See Lambert 1975a; 1997a.

¹⁰⁹ See van Dijk 1957-1971: 539-540; Lambert 1975a, 1990, 1997a; von Soden 1985a, 1985b. Both views are discussed by Sallaberger 2003-2005: 295, 298-299.

¹¹⁰ "the primary orientation of the Babylonian and Assyrian religion that was directed to a father-god and a mother-goddess who were predominantly addressed by their common name." Von Soden (1985b: 173) credited this formulation to Benno Landsberger and defined it again as: "monotheiotetistischen Tendenzen, die auf die Lehre von nur einer, durch Gott und Göttin repräsentierten Göttlichkeit hinausliefen". The English translation (Schley 1994: 182): "monotheiotetistic tendencies, which amount to the doctrine of only a single divine nature represented by god and goddess".

in different towns, ancient theologians were motivated to equate such deities, already in the third millennium BCE. Consequently, with the passage of time, Lambert posited that this process led to theological imperialism and monotheistic creed. While Simo Parpola (2000) defended the Mesopotamian innovation of monotheism (particularly in Assyria), others applied the term monolatry to the typology of Mesopotamian religious devotion.¹¹¹ The word monolatry is based upon the Greek roots *monos*, ‘one’ and *latreia*, ‘service or religious worship’. It seems to have been first used by Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) to describe a type of polytheism in which only one god is worshipped because in the eyes of his devotee, only he deserved to be worshipped even though the existence of other gods was recognized. Jacobsen (1976: 235-6) proposed that this focus on one god to the exclusion of others reflected an idea of the unity of the divine essence behind the bewildering variety of divine personalities.

In recent years, discussions of “one-god” theism in Mesopotamia (Smith 2008: 157-174) have employed the terms *henotheism* and *summodeism*. Based upon the Greek roots *heis* or *henos*, ‘one’ and *theos* ‘god’, henotheism refers to the worship of a single god which does not exclude the possibility of other gods who also may be worthy of worship.¹¹² One definition is “the privileged devotion to one god, who is regarded as uniquely superior, while other gods are neither depreciated nor rejected and continue receiving due cultic observance whenever this is ritually required” (Versnel 2000: 87). Coined by the nineteenth-century scholar, F. Max Müller, henotheism involves the selective adoration of one god who is exclusively honoured either for that specific moment in time or as the permanent focus of a cult. The principle issue that differentiates henotheism from monolatry is their attitude to the existence of other gods: henotheism acknowledges the existence of other gods and accords them the merit of worship while monolatry also acknowledges their existence but denies them worship.¹¹³ Henotheism better characterizes the dynamics of the syncretistic processes in Mesopotamia and provides an explanation of the discrepancy between the liturgical hymn with its obsessive focus on an individual god who is linked with many others and the cults of the single deities who are worshipped in a variety of

¹¹¹ In his discussion, Jean Bottéro (2001: 41-43) pointed out that one feature of divine worship in Mesopotamia was the tendency to pray to a particular god as if he or she were the only god, or at least the only god that mattered. He described it as “a profound tendency [...] to encapsulate all sacred potential into the particular divine personality whom (the Mesopotamians) were addressing at a given moment” (2001: 42).

¹¹² See Versnel 2000: 87-88; Smith 2008: 167-168.

¹¹³ For the definition and comparison of these two terms, see Versnel 2000: 85-87. See further discussion in Smith 2008: 167-168. Note the opinion that there are good grounds to project the possibility of the existence of both henotheism as well as monolatry in Mesopotamia (Krebernik 2002: 44-45).

temples. It is henotheism rather than monotheism or monolatry that is given voice in the lines:

*lu zīzāma ṣalmāt qaqqadi ilāni
nāši mala šuma nimbû šû lu ilni*

Let the black-headed (people of Babylonia) be divided as to gods,
(But) as for us, by whatever name we call him, let him be our god.

(En. el. VI 119-120, see most recently Talon 2005: 67)

As Benjamin Foster (2005: 473 n. 2) comments on this line: “Marduk is to be the one god of all the gods (“us” are the gods), no matter how many gods humankind may serve”.¹¹⁴

Mark S. Smith (2008: 168) introduced the term “summodeism” to describe the Mesopotamian religious scene in the first millennium. This expression refers to one god being the sum as well as the summit of all other deities who remain deities in their own right¹¹⁵ and to the “worship of a supreme god as head of a polytheistic pantheon”. According to this theory, summodeism developed in Mesopotamia with the rise of the Neo-Assyrian empire. As Smith acknowledges, the phenomenon of summodeism is rare compared with contemporary Mesopotamian representations and symbolizations of multiple deities (ibid. 158).

It is noteworthy that all theories of ‘one-god theism’ do not take into consideration the goddesses. While references are commonly made to the one-god representations of Aššur in Assyria and of Marduk in Babylon (Smith 2008: 157), no mention is made of the many one-goddess descriptions (see further Chapter II.D). The female deities are not subsumed under any one god but are commonly linked with one goddess of varying identity (Ištar, Gula, Nanaya). The issue of the construction of one-goddess interpretations has yet to be investigated. Moreover, in the following chapters, an attempt will be made to uncover ancient conceptual categories for syncretism or translatability of goddesses.

In contradistinction to the extensive use of the term ‘syncretism’, definitions of this term in Assyriological literature are minimal. For instance, Manfred Krebernik (2002: 45) offered: “*Synkretismus, d.h. die Verschmelzung von*

¹¹⁴ This comment as well as that of Smith (2008: 175: “all the names of other deities ultimately translate into Marduk”) do not actually follow from the text in which the sovereignty in the divine world is determined for Marduk but the pious and reverent worship of all the gods and goddesses are ordained for humankind (“they” in the text).

¹¹⁵ The term was coined in order to give emphasis to the hierarchical structure of polytheism by Eric Voegelin (Smith 2008: 168, n. 134 with references, also to Assmann’s discussions of the term).

Gottheiten ähnlicher Funktion".¹¹⁶ Commonly, the terms syncretism, assimilation and merging of deities are used synonymously.

Simon Sherwin (1999: 3-5) attempted a more nuanced definition of syncretism in terms of equation and identification. Equation, he understood, as expressed in a particular text which may not be reflected elsewhere.¹¹⁷ He further analyzed equation into explicit equations, implicit equations, and partial or aspectual equations based on the use of divine names in the textual sources.¹¹⁸ Identification, on the other hand, he utilized to refer to equations which are stated or implied in a number of texts, and differentiated equation from partial and complete identification.

In this volume, the term syncretism will be narrowly defined as: "*analogical equations of discrete deities, based on the two modalities of association either by contiguity or by similarity*". Contiguity relates to closeness in space or time, such that deities in one city or during one time period could have been syncretized. Similarity or congruence, asserts that deity/goddess A is like deity/goddess B, or is likened to some aspect of deity/goddess B. One variable factor of association by similarity could be similarity by gender; goddesses commonly assimilate to other goddesses rather than to gods. The possibility of syncretism across gender boundaries will be taken into consideration in the following chapters. Congruence may also ensue through shared familial relationships, as for instance, among the daughters of the god An. In the process of syncretism, the deities are still distinct from each other and separate qualities are still conveyed by each divine name.

2. Fusion

Fusion is the merging or blending of two or more originally discrete divine beings so the amalgam is untraceable and separate attributes cannot be reconstructed.¹¹⁹ In this process, a complete identity change and transference of name and traits from deity/goddess A to deity/goddess B and vice versa has occurred. It is essential to understand the concept of the divine name which expressed the very nature and being of its bearer, thus for one god to use another's name was equivalent to the merging of the two (Lambert 1975a:

¹¹⁶ "(...) the amalgamation/fusion of deities with similar function". Cf. Selz 1990: 112-113.

¹¹⁷ Examples would be the syncretic hymns, where equations are made which are not substantiated by other texts (see further Chapter II.D).

¹¹⁸ He gave the following definitions: explicit equations are those in which the text expressly states $x = y$; implicit equations are those in which $x = y$ is implied by the context; partial or aspectual equations are those in which deities are described in terms of another and where the equation is qualified by a subsequent comment.

¹¹⁹ See application of the German term *Götterverschmelzung* by Selz 1990: 138 n. 9.

196). Plurality of names meant that an originally independent god became yet another name of the one who swallowed him up (Lambert 1997a: 159).¹²⁰

3. *Fission*

Fission is the process of separating into parts, with each part growing into a complete deity. This operation was recognized as *Götterspaltung* (“Splitting/Fission of Deities”, Selz 1990: 114-115). Proof of this transition is evident when a god’s epithet describing a certain numinous aspect or a limited function develops into an independent identity. Local hypostases of supra-regional deities developed through the process of fission. Richard Beal (2002), Gernot Wilhelm (2002: 67-69), and Jared Miller (2008) have highlighted the procedure of “splitting” or “dividing” by which two hypostases of essentially the same deity could be worshipped at two different places. This procedure is clearly elucidated by a passage in the Hittite text “Adlocation of the Goddess of the Night” which is unique in ancient Near Eastern literature. This text describes the rites lasting over seven days needed to build a second temple for the Goddess of the Night. In the pivotal moment the goddess is addressed: “Honored deity! Preserve your being, but divide your divinity! Come to that new temple, too, and take yourself the honored place!” (Miller 2008: 67). As Miller (2008: 67) remarks: “This incantation seems to imply that the deity was conceived of as a single entity, a distinct personality, which, however, could divide herself into two parts that would each retain the qualities of the original singularity”. This conception of the dividing and “adplanting” of a goddess from one cultural sphere to another in the Hittite empire most probably also existed in Babylonia.

4. *Mutation*

Mutation is the process in which a partial or complete change of attributes occurs, transforming one deity into another. For instance, the paradigm of the marriage of a young warrior god to a goddess of healing affected the attributes of other couples in which one partner or the other fitted this profile: Pabilsaĝ and Nin-Isina, Ninĝirsu and BaU as well as Ninurta and Nin-Nibru (Sallaberger 2003-2005: 298). Furthermore, mutation can be seen in the reinterpretation of the powers and functions of the goddesses, in particular, through exaltations.

¹²⁰ For the assimilation and fusion of Hittite and Hattian deities in the Old Hittite pantheon, see Archi 1993a; 2004.

In the following chapters, the historical conditions under which these four processes were set in motion and their effect on the personae of various female deities will be investigated. Both diachronic and synchronic developments of these processes will be studied on the basis of textual sources. However, the sources are not evenly distributed through time and space so that a clear diachronic picture is obscured. Ambiguity and confusion in the writing of the names of the deities and in their significance and meaning also hinder the analysis. Moreover, the sheer number of the female deities involved in these processes make it difficult to generalize their movements and rather easier to particularize each goddess.

B. The First Stage: Profusion

1. Goddesses and Their Cities in the Late Uruk Period (3300-2900)

When the first written records appear in this period, they reveal a variety of municipal theocracies in which each community had its own temple, in which its particular god or goddess was worshipped. The principle of one deity per sanctuary was paramount according to our earliest evidence. Although in time, reverence to a number of associated deities would be observed in one temple, it remained a temple – with a very few exceptions – of a single deity.¹²¹ Whereas scholars are beset with the idea of ‘the’ Sumerian pantheon,¹²² no such entity existed.¹²³ Despite the list mindset, which was characteristic of Mesopotamian thought, there is no early list of deities. Theologians only began to bring together and systemize their deities five hundred years later. This conspicuous absence has been noted. The later god-lists may represent an innovation of the Early Dynastic theologians (Englund 1998: 89).

In order to establish a baseline configuration before the process of syncretism was underway, let us look at the earliest goddesses who were proprietary (titulary) divine owners of cities.¹²⁴ In the archaic compendia of lexical information, there is a list of Cities.¹²⁵ The major metropolis of the period

¹²¹ For discussion of the principle of one deity per city, see Lambert 1975a and 1990. See also Selz 1990: 116 and references there. For the theology of the deity-city relationship, see van Dijk 1969: 182-187. The question of the origin and dating of the distribution of cities among the gods is another problem.

¹²² Cf. Steinkeller 1999: 113; Michałowski 2002: 414. On older traditions of independent local pantheons, see Selz 1990: 121 and Sallaberger 2003-2005: 300-301.

¹²³ Sallaberger 2003-2005: 294-308; Groneberg 2006: 133.

¹²⁴ Since the term ‘titulary’ might be misunderstood, in the following the term ‘proprietary’ is used to designate the holder of the title to and ownership of the city.

¹²⁵ Published in ATU 3 143-150. See also discussion by Matthews 1993 and Englund 1998: 92-94. At the head of the list are: Ur, Nippur, Larsa, Uruk. While the significance of this

is the city of Uruk, which signifies “The Sanctuary”, giving emphasis to the centrality of the dwelling of the deity in the community. Most ancient Sumerian toponyms reflect this emphasis. They are formed on one of two patterns. The first pattern is:

DIVINE NAME + SANCTUARY = City Name

Examples of which are:

NANNA_x (“Nanna” the moon-god) + UNUG (“Sanctuary”)
= “Sanctuary of Nanna” = City of Ur

UTU (the sun-god) + UNUG (“Sanctuary”)
= “Sanctuary of Utu” = City of Larsa

In the second pattern, the name of the city is coterminous with the divine name:

DIVINE NAME = City Name

Examples of this pattern are:

The signs EN_a.KID_a yield Enlil, the god, and City of Nippur.

The sign AB_b×KU_{6a}¹²⁶ yields Nanše, the goddess, and City of NINA (Niĝin / Nimin).¹²⁷

Regrettably, in the *Archaic City List*, the northern cities of the Mesopotamian plain were written syllabically or logographically and thus provide little information on their deities. Furthermore, of the eighty-eight lines which are partially preserved of this city list, only a few cities can be identified. It

sequence is not obvious, it has been suggested that it may reflect a mythological or cultic hierarchy, that is, beginning with the household of the moon-god NANNA, followed by that of the earth-god ENLIL, the sun-god UTU and so on (Englund 1998: 92). It is especially the mention of Uruk in fourth place that is puzzling. “One explanation ... that the perceived importance of any particular city in archaic Mesopotamia, as conveyed ... in the city lists, rested not upon its physical size nor upon its political clout, but upon a deep seated tradition of the ordered significance of certain shrines or tribal meeting places which existed before the rise in Mesopotamia of what were the world’s first cities” (Matthews 1993: 48).

¹²⁶ This writing also incorporates the fish symbol of Nanše 𒀭A (= KU_{6a}) within UNUG (= AB_b) “sanctuary”, see discussion in Veldhuis 2004: 19.

¹²⁷ For probable readings of this logogram, see Edzard 1998-2001: s.v. “NINA”; and Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 78. Note also the syllabic writing in the texts of the First Sealand Dynasty: ^dŠar-ra-at-ni-na “Queen of NINA” referring to Nanše (see below Chapter II.C.2).

is thus impossible to calculate the numerical division of patron deities of the early cities according to gender.

Only two cities can be identified as named after goddesses:¹²⁸

- The city of NINA is named after Nanše (line 18), a goddess who is traditionally associated with fish, birds and flowing waters on the one hand but was also an administrator, responsible for checking weights and measures, protecting the weak, meting out justice, and punishing immoral acts, on the other. She is best known for her association with divination, dreams and oracles.¹²⁹
- A city, the reading of whose name is unknown (line 55), but was formed with the name of the goddess Ezina (*Ašnan* in Akkadian)¹³⁰ who is associated with grain.¹³¹ She is the prime goddess of agriculture who was given this sphere of competency by Enki in the literary composition, *Enki and the World Order*:

en-e gana₂ zid-de₃ gu₃ ba-an-de₂ še gu-nu ba-an-šum₂
^den-ki-ke₄ gig-zid₂ gu₂-gal-la sa-zid₂ ba-an-e₃
 še-eštub še gu-nu še in-nu-ḥa-bi guru₇-še₃ mu-un-dub-dub
^den-ki-ke₄ guru₇-du₆ guru₇-maš-e im-ma-da-an-tab-tab

¹²⁸ According to ATU 3 47: 38, one city is formed with name of the goddess Ninlil written with the signs NUN.KID. According to the tablets, the only certain sign is the NUN (W 20355.2 has nothing; W 21206 has NUN.E₂[?]; W 23998,1 has E₂.E₂[?].NUN. Thus, the reading NINLIL is most unlikely. Similarly, the Early Dynastic recension has two versions of line 38: NUN-KID (OIP 99 21 iii 4) and NIN-KID (SF 23 iii 1). The last could be a contamination from the primordial gods listed in SF 23 v 20. Consequently, this writing in the *Archaic City List* probably renders an unknown toponym composed with NUN. There seems to be no reason to assume that Ninlil had any connection with this toponym.

¹²⁹ See Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. “Nanše”, Veldhuis 2004, and Alster 2005b.

¹³⁰ See Zgoll 1997: 313-14, Lambert 1999 and Cavigneaux and al-Rawi 2002: 40 (agrarian exorcism to save the crops). The two readings e-zī-na and áš-na-an of the logogram ŠE.TIR are given in the Sippar exemplar of the Old Babylonian lexical series Proto-Diri (MSL XV 59: ii 20'-21', 24'). The lexeme ezina is not only a divine proper noun but also a common noun for grain (ePSD). Later she is simply the divine hypotaxis of grain. It is interesting to note the appearance of the trait of sexuality in her description in the Old Babylonian Sumerian literary text, *Enki and the World Order* (cited below) but cf. the Early Dynastic IIIa myth in which her intercourse has a major role.

¹³¹ Her cult is found throughout the third millennium. For the Early Dynastic IIIa references, see below section 2. No. 11. The loci of her cult were Lagaš (Selz 1995: 25-26, for Ur III, see references in the database of BDTNS), Adab (Such-Gutiérrez 2005-6: 9; Old Akkadian period: Maiocchi 2009: 114 s.v. Ašnan), Umma (Cohen 1996: 30, see further Ur III references in the database of BDTNS), Ur (Ur III period: Richter 2004: 414), Nippur (Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 230-231, in Old Babylonian: Richter 2004: 157). Personal names constructed with Ezina/Ašnan as the theophoric element occur throughout the third millennium. A late first-millennium residence of Ezina is in the Ibgal of Inana at Umma (George 1993: 504).

^den-lil₂-da u^g₃-e ^he₂-^gal₂-la šu mu-un-di-ni-ib-peš-e
 sa^g bar gun₃-gun₃ igi la₃ šu₂-šu₂
 in-nin₉ e-ne su₃-ud ^gal₂ usu kalam-ma zi sa^g gig₂-ga
^dezina₂ ninda dug₃ ni^g₂ ki-šar₂-ra-ke₄
^den-ki-ke₄ zag-ba nam-mi-in-gub

The master called the cultivated fields, and bestowed on them mottled barley. Enki made chickpeas, lentils and grow. He heaped up into piles the early, mottled and innuḫa varieties of barley. Enki multiplied the stockpiles and stacks, and with Enlil's help he enhanced the people's prosperity. Enki placed in charge of all this her whose head and body are dappled, whose face is covered in syrup, the mistress who causes sexual intercourse, the power of the Land, the life of the black-headed – Ezina, the good bread of the whole world.

(ETCSL 1.1.3 lines 326-334)

In addition to the *Archaic City List*, impressions of archaic collective city seals were found on a large number of tablets (Matthews 1993: 33-40). These city sealings probably represent a league of cities which may have originally contained as many as twenty cities, the names of eleven now survive but only six identifications are certain. Of these six, we can add one more city with a proprietary goddess:

- The city of Zabalām (MUŠ₃.UNUG) is formed on the pattern of DIVINE NAME + SANCTUARY = City Name, thus MUŠ₃ (“Inana”) + UNUG (“Sanctuary”) = “Sanctuary of Inana” = City of Zabalām. This name is also to be restored in *Archaic City List* line 6 in accordance with the manuscripts of the *Early Dynastic City List* from five hundred years later. Her original character was lost before the dawn of history; her selfhood was swallowed up by that of Inana of Uruk.

Also to be restored in *Archaic City List* in line 5 and possibly represented in the city sealings is the city of Keš₃,¹³² the city of the birthing goddess.¹³³

¹³² Sign may be related to womb but note the later ŠU₂.AN.ĦI×GAD as the logographic writing of the city. See further Steinkeller 2002: 254 n. 27.

¹³³ Commonly, the collective term “mother-goddess” is used by Assyriologists (Edzard 1965: 103-106, Krebernik 1993-1997b) to designate those goddesses who played an important role in the creation of the gods and, in particular, of humankind. However, in Mesopotamia, the so-called “mother-goddesses” are basically involved in creation and birthing rather than nurturing and thus in this section, I shall term them “birthing” goddesses. On the other hand, it is true that the goddess Ninḫursaĝa had a role of a nursing and nurturing mother in Lagaš (see below). She is also called ‘mother’ by Eanatum of Lagaš (Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 134, 1.9.3.1 Ean. 1 xviii 8-9, see discussion Bauer 1998: 461-462). In general, typologies of deities (sky-gods, creator-gods, mother-goddesses,

However, since it is never written with the sign of a goddess, we do not know which goddess was the original patron deity of this city.

Another toponym named after a goddess found in the administrative texts and to be restored in *Archaic City List* line 7 is Ereš₂ a city coterminous with its goddess Nisaba.¹³⁴ She was a goddess of grain, but also of the scribal arts and literature, including accounting and surveying – the scribe of heaven and the interpreter of the stars.

These archaic collective city seal impressions from sites separated by a distance of some 200 km show a remarkable similarity, indicating intimacy of contact and attesting to some sort of formalized confederation, most likely on a religious basis. Indeed, the tablets on which the sealings occur contain offerings for the triple Inana deity of Uruk. An example is MSVO 1 165.¹³⁵ The summation of these tablets reads: “x commodities (issued by) the city of NI.RU (modern Jemdet Nasr)¹³⁶ / Urum (modern Uqair) for the triple Inana/deity of Uruk”. The cities on the seals were obliged to provide ritual offerings for the chief deity of Uruk, Inana. We can conclude that during the archaic period, there was an amphictyonic organization¹³⁷ around Uruk and its triple deity Inana (Steinkeller 2002). She was paid homage in every known town and village in this period; her cult was undoubtedly introduced into the temple of their respective patron deities. Due to contiguity, a complete fusion of identity took place between Inana of Zabalam, the patron goddess of the city Zabalam, and Inana.

The triple goddess Inana provides a unique case of fusion of a goddess of identical name with different domains of competence. The three manifestations of Inana known to receive offerings in the administrative texts and have separate cults are:

fertility-goddesses, etc.) were innovations of early modern work in the study of comparative religion (Smith 2008: 47-48 and n. 50).

¹³⁴ The reading and meaning of name is uncertain, see Michalowski 1998-2001. For the restoration in the *Archaic City List*, see Matthews 1993: 36-39, see also Michalowski 1993a: 120.

¹³⁵ For a discussion of this text, see Matthews 1993: 36-37 and Steinkeller 2002. For a discussion on the further possibilities for the reading of the three stroke signs, see Englund 2001: 19 and n. 39.

¹³⁶ For another interpretation of NI.RU as an administrative term, see Monaco 2004: 3-4, §8 and n. 4.

¹³⁷ This term is borrowed from the Greek word amphictyony (ἀμφικτυονία), a “league of neighbors”. It refers to an ancient association of Greek tribes, an Amphictyonic League, formed in the Archaic period of ancient Greece, while in historic times, an amphictyony survived as a form of religious organization enjoined to support specific temples or sacred places. It has been postulated that a similar arrangement existed between the cities of southern Mesopotamia, rooted in a religious and ritual network, around Uruk in the archaic period. For the use of the term amphictyonic organization, see Steinkeller 2002: 257.

- Inana-NUN¹³⁸ “Inana, the NUN”
- Inana-*ḥud*₂ “Inana, the morning”
- Inana-*sig* “Inana, the evening”

The two epithets *ḥud*₂ “morning” and *sig* “evening” describe the goddess as two manifestations of the planet Venus, one shining in the morning dawn and one in the evening sky. There existed two different cults for the Morning and Evening Inana. A fourth manifestation of Inana of Uruk, Inana-kur, literally “Inana, the mountain”,¹³⁹ is one for which no offering texts have been found and thus her cult in Uruk was on the decline. After the archaic period, all four of these manifestations disappear and there is only one cult of the singular goddess Inana in Uruk. Her astral dimorphism is the source of the various ambiguities and contradictions in her character rather than any absorption of other deities.¹⁴⁰

To sum up, the five city goddesses known by name in the archaic period are: Nanše, Ezina, Nisaba, Inana of Zabalam and the triple goddess Inana of Uruk. In addition, there is a birthing goddess whose exact name is unknown. It is interesting to note that the etymology of these divine names was lost in prehistory; there are no obvious Sumerian derivations of any of them although they were reinterpreted and given such by ancient lexicographers.

According to Gebhard Selz (1990: 116), functions of a city deity of either gender were the security of the city and its population and the fertility of the land. These identical functions (assimilation by similarity) give rise to the possibility of constructing syncretisms between various different city gods. A process of assimilation might explain Inana’s association with fertility.

2. Praising the Goddesses in the Early Dynastic Period (2900-2350)

In the early centuries of the third millennium, the religious landscape of southern Mesopotamia was dotted with a number of local pantheons whose cults were found in diverse metropolitan cities and suburban villages (*urubar-ra*). There does not seem to be any change in the proprietary deities of the cities according to the city lists and the Early Dynastic I city sealings

¹³⁸ NUN has been related to *nun* meaning ‘prince’ and to NUN.KI Eridu. Another possibility is to understand NUN in accordance with the later UD.GAL.NUN orthography where NUN = *gal* (Krebernik 1998: 301) or to associate Inana.NUN with the later primordial Nin-NUN, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-NUN”. Note the epithet *nun* used in the *zame*-hymns (see below under no. 26 referring to the goddess Sud and under no. 10. referring to the goddess Nisaba, the *nun* of Ereš). For *nun* in general, see also Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nun”.

¹³⁹ For an explanation of her name, see Szaryńska 2000: 66.

¹⁴⁰ See further J.G. Westenholz 2007. For the possibility that Inana is the likely product of a symbiosis of two deities, see Groneberg 2004: 153-155.

(Matthews 1993: 40-50). The *Early Dynastic City List* yields certain missing entries among which are those of lines 5-7: Keš₃, the city of the birthing goddess, Zabalam, the city of Inana of Zabalam, and Ereš₂, the city of Nisaba. Possibly due to the close relationship between city and god, there also developed a list of gods inserted into the *Early Dynastic City List*.¹⁴¹ A further development is the creation of various *theos eponymos* (formations such as Nin+ ‘Queen/Mistress’ of a city).¹⁴²

In this period, ancient theologians began to concern themselves with systematizing the constellations of local gods into god-lists by devising hierarchical and genealogical relationships. The major hierarchical list (SF 1) preserves 466 of the original 560 divine names. Inana appears as the highest-ranking goddess in the third position.¹⁴³ The fact that names composed with Nin+ (“Queen/Mistress of”) constitute 40% of the entries has been interpreted as indicating the major roles of female deities.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, female deities are not coupled with male partners according to this and other Early Dynastic lists. The addition of the element NIN to names may be due to a relatively new theological concept (Selz 1997: 172). In the listing of deities in this god-list, there are inconsistent attempts to identify female deities by using as epithets nu-nus (NU.NUNUZ, eme-sal for munus “woman”)¹⁴⁵ and lam ma “(female) tutelary deity, guardian spirit”,¹⁴⁶ the deity of good

¹⁴¹ SF 23 v 17 – vii 20 and 24, OIP 99 21-22 and the Old Babylonian parallel from UET VII 80 rev., edited in Mander 1986: 108-110; see Krebernik 1998: 339. Available on line at DCCLT s.v. Early Dynastic Cities 92-136.

¹⁴² In the following, the city name in the divine names composed with Nin+city will be hyphenated and capitalized whereas animal, vegetable, and mineral as well as uncertain terms in divine names will neither be capitalized nor hyphenated after they are first spelled out.

¹⁴³ Since this god-list places Inana after the high god of the heaven An and the executive head of the pantheon Enlil and before the birthing goddess (^dTUR₅ i 19), Krebernik (1986: 166) suggested that this list reflected an Uruk tradition.

¹⁴⁴ Krebernik 1986: 163, 165; Edzard and Heimpel 1998-2001: 570-580. It should be noted that sections containing divine names composed with NIN occur in other god-lists, see Old Babylonian Isin god-list (Wilcke 1987: 94 col. ii) and Mari exercise tablet with 44 names (Lambert 1985a). For a list of Old Akkadian personal names composed with Nin+, see Lambert 1988. The listing by the scribes of the NIN deities together is a common lexical classification according to signs, the acrographic arrangement, e.g. UET VI/3 824. For the meaning of NIN in the formation of names of female deities, see Introduction. For the introduction of the element NIN to deified objects, see Selz 1997: 172.

¹⁴⁵ Eme-sal (literarily either “thin tongue” or “women’s speech”) is a dialect of Sumerian, in which phonemic changes abound. See further discussion in Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “^dnuNunus”.

¹⁴⁶ As to the connotations of “Lam ma of DN”, whether it signifies that individual gods were thought to have their own lam ma or whether it refers to a lam ma form, an embodied image (statue or relief) of an individual god, it is impossible to judge. For the later dual nature and dual gender of the lam ma, see Foxvog, Heimpel and Kilmer 1983: 447-448. Lam ma also occurs in the name of the deity Lam ma-ša₆-ga (see below). See also Selz

fortune or protection. Further, epithets are applied inconsistently in an attempt to distinguish goddesses from gods. In this divine catalogue, deities whose roles and attributes were similar according to data from later sources were not recorded sequentially but at diverse places, demonstrating that they were singular in this period and not syncretized. The more genealogical catalogue (OIP 99 82, see Mander 1986) places two Inana manifestations in sixth and seventh place after her father, the moon-god Nanna, but unfortunately beyond the name Inana, these two lines are not sufficiently preserved so that no epithet or other identification of the two remains. The list may have originally contained about 400 entries but it is to be emphasized that the cults of the listed deities were not found together at any one place but were scattered among various metropolitan districts. For instance, in the state of Lagaš the worship of only sixty deities has been detected (Selz 1995: 291). Even among these, some might be said to reflect various substrata (Bauer 1998: 501). According to Selz (1990: 123-124), there were three periods of outside influence on local religious developments of the state of Lagaš: (1) the prehistoric period influence of Eridu that brought the worship of Enki, (2) the Late Uruk influence of Uruk that brought the worship of Inana, and (3) the Early Dynastic influence of Nippur that brought the worship of Enlil and Ninḥursaĝa, in particular, to the capital city of Ĝirsu. During the period when Lagaš belonged to the cultic orbit of Uruk, it is conjectured that Inana took over some powers from the major goddess of the city of Lagaš (Ĝatumdug).¹⁴⁷

At this point, the plethora of female deities is apparent, based on shared religious traditions over southern Mesopotamian, intertwined in a complex network of interrelated cults. In the context of this volume only a very limited number of female deities can be treated. In particular, the focus will be on those major city goddesses who were the proprietary or titular deities of their cities.

By mid-third millennium, there are many more sources that are available for investigation: literary, administrative (including cultic accounts), and lexical (in particular god-lists). Although their decipherment is still tentative, it is possible to understand some phrases of the literary texts of the myths and hymns composed in honor of the foremost deities and begin to gain a glimpse into their significance. For example, the scribes dedicated their writings to the goddess Nisaba, the goddess of scribal arts. In the doxologies at

1990: 137 n. 7. See further Chapter IV.C.3.2. In the Early Dynastic period ^dIamma appears in offering lists from Lagaš among deities. According to Selz (1995: 158-160) the evidence from Lagaš suggests ^dIamma is a functional name for specific deities such as BaU, Nanše, and Nin-MAR.KI.

¹⁴⁷ Selz 1990: 121.

the conclusion of literary works,¹⁴⁸ the scribes praise her for imparting her skills and knowledge necessary for their transcription of the tablet:

Nisaba nu-diri
 men men
 azu-nun
 men nu-un_x(UD)-ug_x!
 men-tuk [nisaba LUL]¹⁴⁹ LAK 654
 nisaba azu-ug_x(EZEN×AN)
 ug_x-ug_x
 mul_x(AN.AN)-¹LAGAB(x[x])¹⁵⁰

Nisaba, unexcelled,
 Crowned(?) one
 Princely scribe(?)
 Princely crown(?), lofty goddess
 Possessor of the crown, Nisaba
 Nisaba, the lofty scribe(?)
 The loftiest one
 {who consults}The stars of heaven...{praise be to her.}

(NTSS³ 82, see Cohen 1976: 88, Alster 1976: 117)

All the female deities from the archaic period can be found in the literary texts of the Early Dynastic Period. Moreover, they all occur in compositions discovered in cities not their own. They have become regional deities. The narrative compositions at this early period feature these female deities:

1) *Tale of Ezina and her seven children*¹⁵¹

This mythic tale is possibly an aetiological myth set in days of yore before some comestible (bread?) was eaten. After intercourse,¹⁵² Ezina gives birth to seven children who are likely to have played a major role in providing the missing elements of the Mesopotamian diet (Alster 1976: 124-125).

2) *Inana*

Two narrative compositions revolve around the couple, the god Ama-ušumgal and his beloved, the goddess, Inana, who is given the epithet ‘the field

¹⁴⁸ A doxology (from the Greek δόξα [*doxa*] “glory” + -λογία [*-logia*] “saying”) is a short hymn of praise added to the end of Sumerian compositions.

¹⁴⁹ Inserted from parallel NTSS³ 168, see Alster 1976: 117.

¹⁵⁰ Alster reads: mul.an [x].

¹⁵¹ OIP 99 231, 283-287; 288-296; for references, see Krebernik 1998: 365. Early Dynastic IIIa. This was a popular mythic tale found in numerous duplicates.

¹⁵² The identity of her partner is not clear, see Krebernik 1998: 322 n. 808.

measurer'.¹⁵³ This title reflects the image of the goddess Inana bestowing the rod and ring, the one-rod reed and a coiled measuring rope, the mensuration equipment for fields, to her beloved chosen kings (Robson 2007: 246). They are the foremost symbols of royal justice representing the fair mensuration of land amongst the people. Among the hymns addressed to Inana is an unfortunately fragmentary praise poem which catalogues her epithets – her various “names” (mu).¹⁵⁴ This is the earliest evidence of later syncretistic compositions.

3) *Nanše*

A fragmentary mythic tale concerning Nanše was found in the city of Adab, a far distance from her patron city of NINA.¹⁵⁵

Of special importance is a hymn that reflects an amphictyonic organization around Nippur. It seems to be a theo-political tract in which praise to Nippur and Enlil is placed in the mouths of the deities of other cities.¹⁵⁶ Of the seventy divinities listed, there are tentatively thirty-seven city goddesses vis-à-vis twenty-five gods. In addition, there are seven deities whose worship was less durative or whose names were written with unusual writings and thus are difficult to identify. Therefore, the gender of these deities is often impossible to discern.¹⁵⁷ As in the god-lists discussed above, there are also inconsistent attempts to identify female deities by using as epithets *lamma* “(female) tutelary deity, guardian spirit”¹⁵⁸ and *ama* “mother” in place of *nunus* “woman”. The honorific title “mother” has nothing to do with birthing.¹⁵⁹ It refers to the protective and caring aspects of the goddesses, in par-

¹⁵³ SF 31, copy and edition Krebernik 2003: 170; OIP 99 278 // Ebla ARET 5 20-21, see Krebernik 1998: 321. For discussion of both, see Krebernik 2003: 165-166.

¹⁵⁴ OIP 99 329 (+) 388, see Krebernik 1998: 272 nn. 438, 321, 324, 366. The seven names of Inana are standardized in the second millennium, see Chapter II.C.2.

¹⁵⁵ OIP 14 53, see Civil and Biggs 1966: 1-2 and Krecher 1992: 288. Early Dynastic IIIb.

¹⁵⁶ Biggs 1974 OIP 99 45-56, for bibliography up to 1998 see Krebernik 1998: 319-320, 365; further Steinkeller 1999, Krebernik 2003.

¹⁵⁷ 1. Nin-NAGAR OIP 99 52: 221-227, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “*NIN-Naĝar* (Gottheit)”; 2. Am-gal-nun (“The Great Princely Aurochs”) OIP 99 47: 52-54, a deified animal, see Selz 1997: 172; 3. Aš-DU.UD OIP 99 47: 55-56, 4. Ban-ku₃-la₂ (type of bow) OIP 99 47: 57-58, deified cultural achievement or property, see Selz 1997: 172; 5. Ab-gid₂-gid₂ OIP 99 49: 98-99, 6. Ki-ki^{mušen} (a type of bird) OIP 99 49: 100-101, deified animal, see Selz 1997: 172 and references cited on p. 193 n. 117; 7. NUN.GANA₂.GAL /Gan₂-nun-gal (perhaps related to Nungal or Manungal?) OIP 99 50: 147-148, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “NUN.GĀNA.GAL (Gottheit)”.

¹⁵⁸ See discussion by Jacobsen 1989: 74.

¹⁵⁹ See below Chapter III.A for a discussion on the usage of the term “mother”, and on the possibility that “mother-goddesses” could be conceptualized as city-goddesses, serving as protectresses of people and towns with reference to Römer 1969: 140.

ticular proprietary city goddesses. The goddesses and their cities of origin mentioned in this hymn, some of which we have discussed above, are hereby listed in order of their appearance in this hymn. In the following, the hymn is termed *zame*-hymn after the word *za₃-me (mi₃)* “praise”.

1. Nin-UNUG (“Queen/Mistress of Uruk¹⁶⁰”) – patron goddess of the city of Kullaba, an urban complex in district of Uruk,¹⁶¹ according to the *zame*-hymn. Possibly related to the more common minor deity whose cult is mentioned infrequently but in all periods. In the Old Babylonian period, she appears as the “mother of Kulab (Kul-UNUG)” and as a divine wet-nurse but without any definitive personality.
2. Inana¹⁶² – known already from Late Uruk period as patron goddess of the city of Uruk (see above). Her city is also specified as Kullaba, a district of Uruk. She was a major deity whose worship was primary in communication between the divine and human realms.
3. *ama Ningal* (Mother, “Great Queen¹⁶³”) follows her spouse, the moon-god Nanna, and her son, the sun-god Utu. Her epithets were: “mistress” (NIN)¹⁶⁴ of the city Ur (in Archaic Ur sources), and “mother” of Ur (in Ur III sources). Although a major deity who was venerated in all periods, her role was perceived as passive and supportive rather than active.
4. Damgalnun(a) (“Great Wife of the Prince [Enki]”)¹⁶⁵ – patron goddess of the city of Eridu. The writing of her name shows a close relationship with that of the city Eridu, both written with the logogram NUN. Unex-

¹⁶⁰ OIP 99 46: 15-18. The reading of the name of this goddess alternates between Nin-unug and Nin-irigala. For the former, see Selz 1992: 223 no. 97 (“Nin-unug”), Beaulieu 2003: 120-121 and Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 409. For the latter, see Falkenstein 1941: 31-39, Conti 1993, and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-irigala (‘Herrin des Irigal’)”. The interpretation of her name depends on the answers to the questions of whether she is to be identified with the eponymous goddess of the temple Irigal of Uruk and whether the name of the late Babylonian Hellenistic temple is to be read Iri-gal or Eš₃-gal (George 1993: 83-84, no. 270), and thus the name of the goddess in the late period is to be read Nin-Ešgal (Linszen 2004: 201 KAR 132 I 15 and *passim*). See further discussion by Richter 2004: 454 ad line iv 26. For the review of the evidence of the syllabic writings *gaš-an i-ri-ga-al*, see Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-irigala”.

¹⁶¹ For the locations of Kulab/Kullab/Kullaba, see Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 409. There exist syllabic writings for all the variants of this toponym. In the following, it will be designated arbitrarily ‘Kullaba’.

¹⁶² OIP 99 46-47: 19-29, see Selz 1992: 215 no. 32.

¹⁶³ OIP 99 47: 39-40, see Selz 1992: 219 no. 63 and Zgoll 1998-2001.

¹⁶⁴ It is impossible to discern whether the title NIN should be understood as *nin*, the equivalent of *bēltu* ‘mistress’ or as *ereš* the equivalent of later *šarratu*, ‘queen’. See further Chapters II.C.1 and II.D for their alternation is designations of different goddesses.

¹⁶⁵ OIP 99 47: 44-45, see Selz 1992: 213 no. 14, Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 245-246 and Biga 2005.

pectedly, her spouse Enki does not appear in the zame-hymns. Although also a major deity who was venerated in all periods, Damgalnun(a), like Ningal, had fundamentally the gender role of wife but partook of the functions of her husband in the domain of exorcism and purification.

5. Nin-UM (name of unknown meaning)¹⁶⁶ is identified with Inana-kur “Inana, the Mountain” and INANA.UNUG “Inana of Uruk” as well as with the patron goddess of the city of Zabalam in the zame-hymn to her. Attestations of this goddess are limited to the Early Dynastic period. Perhaps, this name reflects the original name of the goddess who is only known as Inana of Zabalam. She is linked with Ištaran, the god of Der, in the strophe to Nin-naġar/NIGIN₃.¹⁶⁷
6. Nin-bilulu (name of unknown meaning)¹⁶⁸ related to water sources, the Tigris and Euphrates, role similar to Enbilulu, god of irrigation. Lambert thinks the two deities are identical and that the NIN prefix does not necessarily indicate a female deity (Lambert 2006: 239). Since her attestations are limited to the Early Dynastic period, it is possible that this deity underwent a gender shift from female to male. On the other hand, the process of fission may have been set in motion. On the basis of the later mythological narrative (*Inana and Bilulu*, an ulila-hymn to Inana, ETCSL 1.4.4), it has been postulated that there was originally one goddess ^dBilulu who personified the deified thunderstorm and rain cloud and may have bifurcated into a male and a female persona.¹⁶⁹
7. ama Nin-tur₅ (Mother, “The Mistress Divine Birth Hut”)¹⁷⁰ – patron goddess of the city of Keš₃. In *The City Gazetteer*, she is titled “queen of Heaven and Underworld (Earth)”.¹⁷¹ A major deity who was highly venerated in all periods. In the Early Dynastic period, a hymn was composed to the temple in Keš₃ and its birthing goddess ^dTur₅ (TU) “The Divine Birth Hut”.¹⁷² It is one of the few Early Dynastic literary compositions that were preserved among the later scholastic texts. It delineates

¹⁶⁶ OIP 99 47: 46-51, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “^dNin-UM”. There does not seem to be any relation with the Ur month name ne-UM, for which see Cohen 1993: 126-129.

¹⁶⁷ This is the reading of Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “NIN-naġar”.

¹⁶⁸ OIP 99 48: 59-64, see Selz 1992: 219 no. 60 and Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-Bilulu”. For the goddess mentioned in line 60 as Nin-ŠITA₃ “Mistress of the Water Channel”, see Sallaberger 1998-2001.

¹⁶⁹ Schwemer 2001: 90.

¹⁷⁰ OIP 99 48: 75-77, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-tur”.

¹⁷¹ Biggs 1973: 31 x 6’. This text is also designated as the ‘Riddle Text’, see Biggs 1973.

¹⁷² OIP 99 307-311, Biggs 1971: 193-207; see most recently Wilcke 2006. The Keš Temple Hymn is available on line at ETCSL 4.80.2. ^dTur₅ is the earlier form of Nin-tur₅.

her function in birthing: ^dTur₅ (TU) ama gal tu-tu al-ĝa₂-ĝa₂ “Tur, the great mother sets birth-giving”.¹⁷³ The refrain of the hymn is:

e₂ keš₃^{ki} al-du₃ giri₁₇-zal-bi al-dug₃
AbS D iv 5’-7’ é keš₃^{ki} al-du₃ giri_x(LAK 85)-zal a[1-du₃]

nin-bi DIN-bi-a mu-un-tuš
AbS D iv 8’-10’ nin-bi DIN.B[I] mu-[tuš]¹⁷⁴

^dnin-ĥur-saĝ-ĝa₂ nin-bi DIN-bi-a mu-un-tuš
AbS D iv 11’-12’ [...]

keš₃^{ki}-gin₇ rib-ba lu₂ ši-in-ga-an-tum₂-mu
AbS D rev. i 1-2 [keš₃-g]i[m rib-ba] lu₂ an-ga-[tum₂]

ur-saĝ-bi ^{d.aš}aš₇-gi₄-gin₇ rib-ba ama ši-in-ga-u₃-tud
AbS D rev. i 3 ur-saĝ ^dA[š₈(ŠÁRxDIŠ)]-gi₄-gi[m] <. . .>

nin-bi ^dnin-tur₅-ra-gin₇ rib-ba-ra a-ba-a igi mu-ni-in-du₈

The Keš temple has been built; it has been built with rejoicing!
Its mistress has sat down to wine and beer.
Will anyone else bring forth something as great as Keš?
Will any other mother ever give birth to someone as great as its hero
Ašgi?
[later version adds: Who has ever seen anyone as great as its mistress
Nintur?]

(Biggs 1971: 203, see Wilcke 2006: 234, lines 119-124,
ETCSL 4.80.2, lines 121-126)

8. Men (“The Divine Crown”).¹⁷⁵ Her cult center does not seem to be given in the hymn unless it is the “ĝipar(-residence) of the en-priestess that grew together with heaven”. Her epithets are the gudu₄ an dumu nun “anointed one of the god An, the child of the Prince (Enki)”. Attestations of this goddess are limited to the Early Dynastic period, and it is uncertain

¹⁷³ Biggs 1971: 202 line 78, see translation by Krecher 1992: 289, Wilcke 2006: 225 (“Sodaß sie in Nintu, die große Mutter, alles Gebären legte”).

¹⁷⁴ Wilcke (2006: 234) reads this line: Nin-ĥ[ur]-s[aĝ] tin ka[š] mu-[tuš]. Regarding Wilcke restoration Nin-ĥ[ur]-s[aĝ] in this line, this idea was already seen and rejected by Biggs (1971: 206).

¹⁷⁵ OIP 99 48: 80-82, see Selz 1992: 212 no. 7, Krebernik 1993-1997: s.v. “MEN(?)”, and Steinkeller 1999: 111. For the archaic writing of her name GA₂×EN rather than GA₂×ME.EN, see Krebernik 1993-1997: s.v. MEN(?), and similarly, for the writing of the compound sign, see Steinkeller 1995: 704. For iconography and signification of the men-crown in the Early Dynastic period, see Asher-Greve 1995/1996: 183-187.

whether she is to be equated with Ninmena, a birthing goddess.¹⁷⁶ Rather, she may be identical to the goddess Men who belongs to the cycle of primordial gods listed in the *Early Dynastic City List*.¹⁷⁷ On the other hand, there are two entries in the major god-list (SF 1) which lists a ^dMen in col. i, line 7 and a ^dMen-bar in col. i, line 8.¹⁷⁸

9. Lamma Nin-sumuna₂ (Guardian Angel, “The Mistress of the Wild Cows”)¹⁷⁹ precedes her spouse Lugalbanda. The reading of both their cities is unknown. She is worshipped in all periods. Among the narratives revolving around the mythic cycle of Uruk, an Early Dynastic tale recounts the courtship of god Lugalbanda and the goddess Nin-sumuna.¹⁸⁰ Interestingly, she is also entitled Lamma in that composition as well as in the major god-list (SF 1 i 15, see Krebernik 1986: 168).
10. Nisaba,¹⁸¹ known from Late Uruk period as patron goddess of the city of Ereš₂ (see above). Although a major deity in early periods, she lost ground in the Old Babylonian period but continued to be invoked in sundry prayers and doxologies. In curricular literary Sumerian, she, more than any other deity of either sex, is associated with literacy and writing instruments as well as numeracy and mensuration equipment. She bestowed literate and numerate wisdom on the king (Robson 2007).
11. ku₃ Ezina/Ašnan (“Holy Ezina / Ašnan”)¹⁸² – known from Late Uruk period (see above). Her city is written here as AB×ŠUŠ (U₂) of unknown reading.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁶ Note that in the present context, she belongs to the cycle of Uruk, see Krebernik 1993-1997: 505-506: s.v. “Muttergöttin” §3.23. She is also mentioned in the Early Dynastic hymn of praise to Inana (see above). Inana-kur no. 23 is also equated with her in this hymn. Krebernik (1993-1997: s.v. “MEN(?)”) questions whether this reference to the goddess Men refers to the goddess of childbirth. Also, she is probably not the deified cultic object discussed by Selz 1997: 171-172. Her cult is also found in the northern Akkadian city of Sippar: Early Dynastic dedications to Nin-men were inscribed on a votive statue (Steible 1982: II 262, Gelb and Kienast 1990: 33 VP 13 and Braun-Holzinger 1991: 251 St 65) and a votive alabaster vessel (Gelb and Kienast 1990: 33 VP 14 and Braun-Holzinger 1991: 139-140, G 149).

¹⁷⁷ SF 23 vi 16, see van Dijk 1964/5: 6-8 and fig. 1, Mander 1986: 109, line 20, and the composite text in DCCLT Early Dynastic Cities 111.

¹⁷⁸ For this deity, see discussion in Selz 1997: 171.

¹⁷⁹ OIP 99 48: 83-84, see Selz 1992: 212 no. 91 and Wilcke 1998-2001. On the longer reading of ^dNin-sumun₂ (GUL) against the traditional reading ^dNin-sun₂, see Wilcke 1998-2001, George 2003: 256, 42 and Shibata 2009: 36.

¹⁸⁰ OIP 99 327, Jacobsen 1989, for references, see Krebernik 1998: 320, 366.

¹⁸¹ OIP 99 48: 89-91, see Selz 1992: 224 no. 102 and Michalowski 1998-2001; 2002: 417-420. For image, see Chapter IV.C.2, fig. 35.

¹⁸² OIP 99 49: 102-103, see Selz 1995: 25-26. For the epithet ku₃ (kug) and its relation to the later epithet ku₃-su₁₃ and its amalgamation to Ezina, see Michalowski 1993b: 159 and below section II.B.4. For images, see Chapter IV.C.2, figs. 22-25.

¹⁸³ For a discussion of the writings of Apišal, see Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 326.

12. Nin-ura (Nin-ur₄, name of unknown meaning)¹⁸⁴ of the city of Ĝiša¹⁸⁵ precedes her spouse Šara. In *The City Gazetteer*, her epithet is a ma-tu-da Ĝiša^{ki} “birthing mother of Ĝiša” (Biggs 1973: 28 iii 4). Attestations to her are limited to the third millennium.
13. Ĝatumdug (Ĝa₂-tum₃-dug₃, name of unknown meaning)¹⁸⁶ of the city of Lagaš. Her epithet is commonly the mother of the city of Lagaš already in the Early Dynastic period.
14. Nanše, patron goddess of the city of NINA known from Late Uruk period (see above),¹⁸⁷ precedes her brother Ninĝirsu, patron deity of the state of Lagaš. She heads the list also in *The City Gazetteer* (Biggs 1973: 27 i 2). After the Ur III period, she survived not only as a name in god-lists, literary texts and ritual liturgy, but also as the patron deity of the First Sealand dynasty (see Chapter II.C.2).
15. Namma¹⁸⁸ (“Creatrix”). No interpretation given of the cult center listed in the hymn. The so-called chthonic cosmogony known as the Eridu tradition centers on Namma as the engenderess of all – the Heaven, the Earth and the gods. She is probably the personification of the subterranean ocean. Her name was etymologized as Niĝ₂-nam-ma “creativity, totality, everything” (Wiggermann 1998-2001a: 136). She creates from herself by parthenogenesis. Evidence for her cult and veneration is extremely scarce in all periods.
16. Nin-akkil₂ (“Queen/Mistress of Akkil?”)¹⁸⁹ – patron goddess of the city Akkil₂. She is probably to be identified with the vizier of Inana, Ninšubura of Akkil (later spelling GADA.KID₂.SI), which is a small settlement in vicinity of Bad-tibira (Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 266).¹⁹⁰ Attestations of this form of the goddess are limited to the Early Dynastic and the Ur III periods.
17. Lamma-ša₆-ga (“Good Guardian Angel/protective spirit”).¹⁹¹ While in the zame-hymn, her city is given as Uruk(?), she is probably to be

¹⁸⁴ OIP 99 49: 104-105, see Selz 1992: 223 no. 98; Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-ura”.

¹⁸⁵ For this reading rather than Umma for GIŠ.KUŠU₂, see Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 357-358.

¹⁸⁶ OIP 99 49: 108-109, see Selz 1992: 214 no. 21; 1995: 134-136.

¹⁸⁷ OIP 99 49: 110-116, see Selz 1992: 218 no. 56; 1995: 181-212, and Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. “Nanše”. For images, see figs. and discussion in Chapters IV.C.1, IV.C.2, and IV.C.3.2.

¹⁸⁸ OIP 99 50: 140-141, see Selz 1992: 218 no. 54, Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. “Nammu” and J.G. Westenholz 2002: 16. For the latest discussion of the reading of her name, see Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 423.

¹⁸⁹ OIP 99 50: 142-144, see Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-šubur”: 491.

¹⁹⁰ For the identification of these two writings of the one toponym, see Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-šubur”: 491-492.

¹⁹¹ OIP 99 50: 149-151, on this goddess, see further Sjöberg 1974 and Selz 1995: 159 s.v. 5.4.

identified as the vizier of BaU.¹⁹² In *The City Gazetteer*, she indeed appears in the Lagašite region (Biggs 1973: 29 v 3') and temple dedications to her are made by the king Uruinimgina of Lagaš (Frayne 2008 [RIME]: 265-275, 1.9.9 nos. 2 ii 7 and 3 v 20'). This goddess and her male counterpart Udug-ša₆-ga become the guardians of gods, kings and humankind throughout all the generations of cuneiform traditions.

18. Nin-girima (A.MUŠ.ĤA.DU “Mistress of Snake and Fish Water”)¹⁹³ – patron goddess of Girima, probably a cult center, possibly in the district of Uruk-Kullaba.¹⁹⁴ She is associated with (a) water, (b) incantations, and (c) snakes and fish. As goddess of exorcism, she is portrayed as having priestly purification functions. Early Dynastic incantations were addressed to her. She is a universal deity, not closely tied to any particular locale although she has a city Murum in Old Akkadian Temple Hymns (see below). In the zame-hymn, she is likened to the snake-god Irḫan, a male deity, the name of an ophidian waterway.¹⁹⁵ This equation crosses the gender boundary through the similarity of domains – water and snakes.
19. Nin-ekuga (Nin-e₂-ku₃) (“Queen/Mistress of the Pure House”).¹⁹⁶ Little is known of this goddess since all attestations are limited to the Early Dynastic period.
20. Nin-mar (name of unknown meaning).¹⁹⁷ According to present scholarly opinion, she is not the Queen/Mistress-of-Mar of the city of Mar, but a well-known goddess of the town of Gu'aba in the district of Lagaš throughout the third millennium and first half of second millennium. Her role was mainly that of the deity before whom oaths were taken. She was also protectress of cattle.

¹⁹² On reading the name of this deity, written ^dBA.U₂, see Marchesi 2002 with opposing arguments by Rubio 2005. See also criticism by Richter 2004: 118 n. 526. In this volume, we will transliterate the name in texts as ^dBa-U₂ and normalize the name as BaU, following the approach of Ceccarelli 2009.

¹⁹³ OIP 99 51: 160-162, see Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-girima”. The meaning of name of this goddess is uncertain. Krebernik (1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-girima” 365) discusses the possible etymological possibilities of girim. For the relationship between Nin-girima and the girim-sacred water, see Cunningham 1997: 17, 82. Consequently, in the following, her name will be written Ningirima. For pictorial representation, see Chapter IV.C.5.

¹⁹⁴ See Selz 1992: 219 no. 66 and Cunningham 1997: 16-17.

¹⁹⁵ Krebernik 1984: 246, 298-300; Wiggermann 1998-2001c. Biggs (1974: 55 comments to lines 160-62) understands the reference to Irḫan as indicating the location of her cult center Murum on the Araḫtu, the main branch of the Euphrates rather than the mention of the deity.

¹⁹⁶ OIP 99 5: 163-164, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-ekuga”.

¹⁹⁷ OIP 99 51: 165-166, see Selz 1992: 221 no. 79, 1995: 256-261; Sallaberger 1998-2001: 464, and Richter 2004: 396-398 (her home being in territory of the state of Larsa), 498 (her home being in Ur). The manuscripts of the zame-hymn show two writings Nin-MAR and Nin-ŠITA₃ (“Mistress of the Water Channel”), see Sallaberger 1998-2001: 464, 2.

21. Nin-kara (name of unknown meaning),¹⁹⁸ a goddess of daylight probably to be identified with a minor deity Nin-kara₂ who occurs infrequently in all periods.
22. Nin-kasi (^dnin-^{ka}15kas₂-si,¹⁹⁹ name of unknown meaning)²⁰⁰ probably to be equated with Nin-kasi, the goddess of beer and brewing, who in later periods becomes male. Although a universal goddess, she might have had a possible cult center at Eridu.
23. ku₃ Inana-kur (“Holy Inana, the Mountain Peak”)²⁰¹ known from Late Uruk period (see above) here equated with ^dMen the divine crown (no. 8 above).
24. Nin-muga (name of unknown meaning),²⁰² from Kisiga (EZEN×KUG). She is known as a crafts goddess and a birthing goddess. During the Early Dynastic period, her worship is found in Šuruppak and Adab and a festival to her is the name of one of the Adab months.²⁰³ In the Old Babylonian period, she acquired a spouse, first Akkadian Išum and secondarily his Sumerian counterpart Ĥendursaġa.²⁰⁴ Her function as a crafts deity triggered a sex change in the late period. Her role did not change; it merely became his role.
25. Nin-SAR (“Mistress Greens/Herbs”),²⁰⁵ a popular goddess in various cities during the Early Dynastic period. In the zame-hymn, she hails from the city of AB.NAGAR, a toponym that could be interpreted as the eš₃-shrine of NAGAR on the pattern of DIVINE NAME + SANC-TUARY (UNUG) = City Name with the divine name replaced by an epithet.²⁰⁶ Her epithet given here is nagar “the carpenter / artisan of

¹⁹⁸ OIP 99 51: 167-169, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-kara”. The reference in line 167 to her relationship with the na-du₃ ‘stele’ is obscure.

¹⁹⁹ Originally read Nin-kas-si-din. For reading of this divine name, see discussion by Krebernik 1998: 284, 1998-2001: 442 s.v. “Nin-kasi und Siraš/Siris” §1.1. Selz (1997: 171-172) read this name as ^dnin-ka₁₅-kas₂-si “Mistress Barmaid” and identified it as a deified profession following Lambert’s suggestion (1981: 85 and n. 7).

²⁰⁰ OIP 99 51: 170-171, see Selz 1992: 220 no. 72 and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-kasi und Siraš/Siris” (and citations there to earlier references).

²⁰¹ OIP 99 51: 172-174, see Szaryńska 2000: 66.

²⁰² OIP 99 51: 175-176, see Selz 1992: 221 no. 82, and Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-muga”. The element mug could be related to a cultic building or object.

²⁰³ Visicato and A. Westenholz 2010: 9, 121 s.v. ^dnin-mug; Maiocchi 2009: 11-12, 15.

²⁰⁴ Cf. letter prayer addressed to her published in van Soldt AbB XIII 164, see Foster 2005: 219. Further, see Attinger and Krebernik 2005: 31 s.v. 2.4.4.

²⁰⁵ OIP 99 51: 177-179, see Selz 1992: 222 no. 88, 1995: 261; Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-SAR”. The vocalization of SAR is uncertain, see the overview by Peterson 2009a: 66, s.v. 175.

²⁰⁶ The toponym AB.NAGAR might also be related to the deities Nin-AB.NAGAR (Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “^dNin-AB.NAGAR”) and Nin-NAGAR.AB

heaven and earth”. Her role as divine butcher / slaughterer as well as housekeeper is well documented.

26. Sud₃, the patron goddess of the city of Šuruppak (name of unknown meaning).²⁰⁷ Her epithet in the same-hymns is given as nun “princely”. Her divine name is coterminous with the city name, DIVINE NAME = City Name. In two literary texts from her city, myths centering on her are narrated.²⁰⁸
27. Nin-ĜA₂×MUŠ (“Queen/Mistress of ĜA₂×MUŠ”)²⁰⁹ – *theos eponymos* of the city of ĜA₂×MUŠ. Nothing is known of her or her city outside this hymn and the contemporary god-lists.
28. Nin-a₂-NE (“Queen/Mistress of a₂-NE?”)²¹⁰ – *theos eponymos* of the city of a₂-NE. Nothing is known of her or her city outside this hymn.
29. Nin-Isina (IN) (“Queen/Mistress of Isin”)²¹¹ – *theos eponymos* of the city of Isin. She was the goddess of healing, the wise physician, whose worship spread throughout southern Mesopotamia but who after the Old Babylonian period, was seldom mentioned and became syncretized with Gula (“Great One”) (see Chapter II.C.1).
30. Nin-x-k[i] (reading uncertain), possibly *theos eponymos* of a city.²¹²
31. Medimša (^dMe-dim₂-ša₄[DU] “possessing lovely limbs?”),²¹³ wife of the storm god.²¹⁴ Her cult appears sporadically throughout the millennia.

(Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “^dNin-NAGAR.AB”), the latter is linked with the goddess Nin-SAR in a literary composition.

²⁰⁷ OIP 99 51: 180-181, see Selz 1992: 224 no. 107; Krebernik 1998: 239-240; 1998-2001: s.v. “Ninlil”: 454-455 §3.1.3, 457 §3.4.1.

²⁰⁸ SF 36, 40 (for references, see Krebernik 1998: 321, 325, 340). At end of SF 36, Enlil, known as her spouse in Old Babylonian literary texts, is mentioned (Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Ninlil”: 454 §3.1.3).

²⁰⁹ OIP 99 51: 182-183, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-ĜA₂×MUŠ” as ‘Gottheit’. This reference is a hapax so it is impossible to ascertain the gender of this deity. The assumption of female gender is based on the more common gender of the *theos eponymos* and deities named Nin+. This deity is related to ^dNin-^aarali in TCL XV 10 ix 2 according to Richter 2004: 217 note to line.

²¹⁰ OIP 99 51: 184-185. This goddess is not discussed in any scholarly literature. For Nin-a₂ as a primeval deity, cf. the various god-lists: SF 1 iv 19, AbS 82+ ix 14, and in the section embedded in the *Early Dynastic City List* 105, and see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-Á”.

²¹¹ OIP 99 51: 186-187, see Selz 1992: 220 no. 71 and Edzard 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-Isina”.

²¹² OIP 99 51: 188-192.

²¹³ OIP 99 52: 193-195, see Krebernik 1987-1990: s.v. “Medimša”. Regarding the possibility of a Sumerian etymology of her name, see the comments by Schwemer 2001: 170-171 n. 1207. See further, Schwemer 2001: 14-15, 170-172, 400-403.

²¹⁴ Schwemer (2001: 400) entertains the possibility that Medimša was originally not related to the storm-god Iškur, but was associated with him through a syncretism with his spouse, Šāla.

32. Nunus-dug (^dNu-nus-dug₃ “Good Woman”),²¹⁵ from the city of Kisiga. This goddess is only attested in the Early Dynastic period.
33. Dam-mi (name of unknown meaning).²¹⁶ Biggs (OIP 99 p. 56) suggested that this deity might be identified with the deity Nin-dam-mi, known from Early Dynastic god-lists.²¹⁷
34. Bu-lu₂-lu_x(NU) (name of unknown meaning),²¹⁸ goddess of the city of Umma. This goddess is only attested in the Early Dynastic period.
35. Nin-ŠUBUR.AL (name of unknown meaning),²¹⁹ cult center unknown. This goddess is only attested in the Early Dynastic period but may be another form of the well-known divinity Ninšubur(a), the true minister of the heavenly sphere, the mother (ama) and deity (dīġir) of the land (kalam) and in particular, the vizier of the goddess Inana.²²⁰
36. Tu-da (name of unknown meaning) from the city of KI.AN.²²¹
37. ama Lisin (Mother, ^dLi₈-si₄) (name of unknown meaning)²²² of the city of Ġišgi. While her cult in Lagaš (Selz 1995: 160), Umma, and Nippur is documented,²²³ her city is unknown. Cohen (1976: 92) suggests her city is to be identified with the modern Tell Abu Salabikh.²²⁴ In her role as lamenting goddess over her dead son, she becomes syncretized with other birthing goddesses. In theological lists from the Post-Old Babylonian period and sporadically earlier, she and her spouse undergo a corresponding sex change. However, in the cultic liturgy, she continued to maintain her female character and gender role.

The principle of one deity per city is not observed in the *zame*-hymn. Further, divine couples do appear but the order of husband and wife is not regulated. While one goddess Ninsumuna “Mistress Wild Cow” precedes her spouse Lugalbanda, another goddess Ningal “Great Queen” follows her husband

²¹⁵ OIP 99 52: 198-199, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nunus-dug”.

²¹⁶ OIP 99 52: 203-204.

²¹⁷ See Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-DAM.MI”.

²¹⁸ OIP 99 52: 205-206, see Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 358 for the identification of this deity as female.

²¹⁹ OIP 99 52: 207-208, see Selz 1992: 223 no. 92 and Wiggermann 1998-2001: 491 s.v. “Nin-šubur” §2.1.

²²⁰ For this poetic description of the goddess, see the hymn Ninšubura B (ETCSL 4.25.2). In general, on this deity, see J.G. Westenholz and A. Westenholz 2006: 13-14. For visual representation of the feminine Ninšubura, see below Chapter IV.C.2, figs. 30, 31, 63.

²²¹ OIP 99 52: 212-214, see Krebernik 2003: 166 n. 125. For her identification as a female deity, see Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 358.

²²² OIP 99 53: 228-235, see Selz 1992: 216 no. 39 and Michalowski 1987-1990.

²²³ Such-Gutiérrez 2003: I 339, Richter 2004: 146-147.

²²⁴ For other possible identifications of Tell Abu Salabikh, see Krebernik 1998: 254.

the moon-god Nanna. There are only comparatively few syncretisms made in the strophes about the goddesses. The associated goddess is most commonly an Inana figure. The praise-hymn to Inana of Zabalam addresses her as Inana-kur, Inana of Uruk, and Inana-ḥu-ud but in the final line invokes her as ^dNin-UM. Although the manifestation Inana-kur has become an epithet used to describe Inana of Zabalam, she has maintained her own separate identity and is herself likened to Men. The syncretism between Ningirima and the god Irḥan crosses gender boundaries. Of these thirty-seven goddesses, ten are unknown outside this text or known only from the Early Dynastic period and thus disappear, and two others are known just from the third millennium.

In addition to these literary texts, there are two other major sources that provide information on the goddesses worshipped at this period: administrative texts (including cultic accounts) and royal inscriptions. Administrative texts are plentiful for the Early Dynastic IIIa city of Šuruppak and the Early Dynastic IIIb city-state of Lagaš. In Šuruppak, the city of Sud (no. 26), eleven other goddesses, listed above as patrons of other cities, were worshipped: Nin-UNUG (no. 1), Tur₅ (no. 7), Nisaba (no. 10), Ezina (no. 11), Ningirima (no. 18), Nin-ekuga (no. 19), Nin-MAR (no. 20), Ninkasi (no. 22), Ninmuga (no. 24), Nin-SAR (no. 25), and Ninšubura (no. 35).²²⁵ This expansion of local deities into regional deities sets the stage for the appearance of all the processes outlined in Chapter II.A. In this archive, the gender of certain goddesses was marked by the use of an epithet, such as *ama*, whilst the gender of other goddesses was unmarked and referred to as *diĝir* “deity”.²²⁶ However, the distinction may not be one of marked versus unmarked sexual identity but of domain or function. Those goddesses addressed as *ama* are predominantly city-goddesses while those designated as *diĝir* are chiefly personal goddesses.

In the Early Dynastic IIIb city-state of Lagaš, among the sixty divinities worshipped, it is likely that goddesses had overlapping domains. The case of Ninḥursaĝa and Nin-tur₅ is instructive. In Lagaš, Nin-tur₅ is a minor deity who occurs in offering lists, and has two additional manifestations: Nin-tur₅-ama-uru-da-mu₂-a (“Nintur, mother who grew with the city”) and Nin-tur₅-za₃-ga (“Nintur of the Sanctuary”). The latter are explained as names of statues of Nin-tur₅ (Selz 1995: 266-267). On the other hand, a major goddess in Lagaš was Ninḥursaĝa (“Mistress of the Mountain Ranges”).²²⁷

²²⁵ See Pomponio 2001.

²²⁶ For goddesses addressed as *diĝir*, see Nisaba in the royal inscription of Urinimgina (Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 279, 1.9.9.5 viii 14 – ix 1) as well as Ninšubura in royal inscriptions of Meskigala (Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 33-34, E1.1.9.2001 I 6'-7') and Urinimgina (Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 280, E1.9.9.6 iv 10 and Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 282-83, E1.9.9.8 v 6-7).

²²⁷ Selz 1995: 252-254.

Ninḫursaġa has not previously been mentioned because she was not a patron deity of a city; her sanctuaries are to be found in suburban towns and villages. As pointed out by Wolfgang Heimpel (1998-2001b), this distribution supports Thorkild Jacobsen's suggestion (1973) that Ninḫursaġa and Nintur, were originally the birth-goddesses of wild and domesticated animals, respectively, which he deduced from their names, roles, and associated animals. On the other hand, Ninḫursaġa might originally have been not a birthing goddess at all but rather a nurturing goddess. Whereas Mesilim of Kiš declares that he is the "beloved son of Ninḫursaġa",²²⁸ the Lagašite kings claim Ninḫursaġa as the midwife who suckled them.²²⁹ Since they associate her with Enlil in their inscriptions, her prominence might be due to a Lagašite theological construction in which she is his wife²³⁰ and mother of Ningirsu. Ninḫursaġa had another manifestation Ninḫursaġa-še-da whose separate worship at the village/town of še-da(-lum-ma) can be demonstrated.²³¹

This phenomenon of local manifestations being given appellatives added to their names to identify the place of worship appears in this period. Previously, it was seen in the designation of the goddess Inana of Zabalam. At this period, there begins the proliferation of these local manifestations, such as Nintur of Zabalam²³² and Nanše of Šeš-gar-ra (Selz 1995: 188). This proliferation is the result of the process of fission dividing the goddesses. The procedure of "splitting" or "dividing" by which two hypostases of essentially the same deity could be worshipped at two different places was outlined in Chapter II.A.3. Under the force of fission, epithets of the birthing goddesses could take on life and develop into new deities, such as Ninmaḥ ("Exalted Mistress"), and Diġirmaḥ ("Exalted Deity").²³³ In Early Dynastic Lagaš, the king Enmetena built a temple dedicated first to Ninḫursaġa²³⁴ and then rededicated to Ninmaḥ²³⁵. It was the latter goddess' temple that was plundered by Lugalzagesi.²³⁶ In Early Dynastic Adab, the goddess Diġirmaḥ was the spouse of the patron deity of the city Ašgi²³⁷ but over the centuries

²²⁸ Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 71, 1.8.1.3:3-4.

²²⁹ Eanatum, Enanatum I, Enmetena, Lugalzagesi, see references in Behrens and Steible 1983: 202 s.v. ku₂ 1.b; Krebernik 1993-1997: 513-514, s.v. "Muttergöttin" §6.5. As their birth mother, the Lagašite kings claim either BaU (Eanatum, Lugalanda and Uruinimgina) or Ġatumdug (Enanatum I and Enmetena [Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 226, 1.9.5.22: 9-10]). On this subject, see Bauer 1998: 461 and Sjöberg 1972.

²³⁰ Selz 1995: 132, 254; Bauer 1998: 461. Note that the spouse of Ninḫursaġa in Nippur is Šulpae, see Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 279.

²³¹ Selz 1995: 252-254, Bauer 1998: 512.

²³² Biggs 1976: 27 ii 5, 28 ii 5, see Marchesi 1999.

²³³ Jacobsen 1973: 295.

²³⁴ Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 215, 1.9.5.12 v 2-5; 221, 1.9.5.17 ii 13-16.

²³⁵ Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 219, 1.9.5.16:27-30.

²³⁶ Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 277, 1.9.9.5 ii 10-13, Selz 1995: 256.

²³⁷ See Such-Gutiérrez 2005/2006: 6, 10-12. He notes the alternation between Diġirmaḥ and

came to overshadow him. The temple to Diġirmaḥ was rebuilt and renamed the E₂-maḥ by the ruler (ensi₂) of the city-state of Adab.²³⁸

3. *The Melting Pot of Goddesses in the Old Akkadian Period (2350-2150)*

In the latter part of the third millennium BCE, there were two periods when the region underwent political and cultural unification: the Akkadian empire and the Neo-Sumerian empire under the Third Dynasty of Ur (Ur III). In both periods, political centralization of the city-states into a territorial kingdom took place and extended to a realignment of the divinities of the city-states into the divinities of the kingdom.²³⁹ Under the Akkadian dynasty, the process of syncretism between the Sumerian deities and their Akkadian counterparts was actively encouraged. This process had already begun in the pre-Sargonic period (Sommerfeld 2002: 705). The relations between Sumerians and Akkadians are considered to typify a situation of symbiosis in which confrontation occurs between complex whole religions but this possibly negative confrontation was ameliorated by the efforts made to remove the distinctions (Colpe 1987: 222). These two peoples, the Sumerians and the Akkadians, co-existed for many centuries, gradually assimilating to one another. Correspondingly, their religious outlook and their deities blended together.

However, the syncretistic bilingual equations with possible corresponding Sumerian deities were not consistent.²⁴⁰ Sumerian gods were introduced for which the Semites apparently had no equivalent: Enlil and Ninurta. This is particularly true of the goddesses. Of the thirty-seven city goddesses lauded in the zame-hymn, only one – Inana – has a Semitic counterpart ‘Aštar. Furthermore, the first evidence occurs of a gender shift due to syncretism. The Semitic sun-goddess Šamaš was identified with her Sumerian counterpart the sun-god Utu and became male.

Under the Akkadian kings, a comparable set of temple hymns were collected to present the pantheons of Sumer and Akkad as a single entity.²⁴¹ Whilst the Early Dynastic collection of zame-hymns was addressed to seventy divinities, the Akkadian compilation that has come down to us includes only

Ninḥursaġa. The ruler of Adab dedicated a bowl to Mesilim, king of Kiš, beloved son of Ninḥursaġa. For the use in the Old Akkadian period of both Diġirmaḥ in royal inscriptions and Ninḥursaġa in the temple hymns and letters, see below. Administrative documents only record offerings to Diġirmaḥ, see Maiocchi 2009: 314 s.v. dingir-maḥ.

²³⁸ The foundation deposit of this temple was found as well as a stone ram figurine, see Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 29-31, 1.1.7-8. For the alternate name of this temple, E₂-SAR, see Such-Gutiérrez 2005/2006: 10-11.

²³⁹ For discussion of this realignment, see Zgoll 2006a.

²⁴⁰ Roberts 1972: 152-154, A. Westenholz 1999: 84.

²⁴¹ The text is available on line at ETCSL 4.80.1. For the problems in the temple hymns, see most recently Black 2002.

forty-two hymns. One of these hymns is dedicated to the divine king Šulgi, the Ur III king who lived at least a century after the Akkadian empire fell. Among the remaining forty-one hymns, only sixteen are addressed to female divine patrons (Ninlil, Šuziana, Ninḥursaġa [three], Inana [three], Ninšubura, Ningirima, BaU, Nanše, Nin-MAR, Dumuziabzu, Nin-Isina, Nisaba). The number of major female deities has diminished significantly from the Early Dynastic hymns, from a majority of thirty-seven to a minority of sixteen. Three new female deities are the spouses of the major gods: Ninlil, wife of Enlil of Nippur, Šuziana, second wife of Enlil of Nippur, and BaU, wife of Ninġirsu of Lagaš. The one exceptional goddess is Dumuziabzu of Kinirša (elsewhere Kinunir) in the state of Lagaš although she is known already in the Early Dynastic period (Selz 1995: 114-116). She might have been considered a wife of Ḥendursaġa (cf. Ninmuga above).²⁴² Not only are there three separate city temples to Inana as in previous hymns and lists, but there are three temple hymns addressed to goddesses all named Ninḥursaġa:

1. Ninḥursaġa of Keš is described as *nun-zu nun šeg₅-šeg₅-ga nin zid gal an-na dug₄-ga-ni an dub₂-bu ka ba-a-ni ud te-eš di* “your princess, the silencing princess, the true and great queen of heaven – when she talks heaven trembles, when she opens her mouth a storm thunders” (ETCSL 4.80.1:96-97). This description does not portray a birthing goddess. Although present in this temple hymn, Nintur, the former patron of Keš, is here credited with beautifying the temple (ETCSL 4.80.1:93) and is not syncretized with Ninḥursaġa. On the other hand, Aruru²⁴³ (ETCSL 4.80.1:98) is used synonymously with Ninḥursaġa.
2. Ninḥursaġa of Adab seems to be identical to the previous goddess, even her home of Keš is mentioned in the hymn (ETCSL 4.80.1:363-378). It has been proposed that the center of the cult of Ninḥursaġa was transferred from Keš to Adab during the Sargonic period marking the end of Keš as her cult center.²⁴⁴ On the other hand, Ninḥursaġa is hardly found in documents from Adab,²⁴⁵ with the exception of an oath by Ašgi and Ninḥursaġa in an Akkadian letter.²⁴⁶ In this hymn Nintur appears as a distinctly separate deity in the verse: *ama ^dnin-tur₅ ^den-lil₂ ^den-ki-ke₄*

²⁴² Marital status is fluid at this period. Family orientation and the couple principle in the divine world are not firmly established in the third millennium.

²⁴³ At this her first appearance, Aruru seems to be a powerful violent goddess closely associated with vegetation but not a goddess concerned with human birth and creation (Black 2005: 48).

²⁴⁴ Yang 1989: 102-103.

²⁴⁵ Such-Gutiérrez 2005/2006: 26 no. 94. Administrative documents only record offerings to Diġirmaḥ, see Maiocchi 2009: 314 s.v. dingir-maḥ.

²⁴⁶ Kienast and Volk 1995: 53-55. All other references are to Diġirmaḥ, e.g. the parallel epithets *ki-ag₂-Diġirmaḥ*, *ki-ag₂-^dAšgi* A 874:4-5 (Yang 1989: 343).

nam tar-ra “Mother Nintur, Enlil and Enki have determined your destiny” (ETCSL 4.80.1:369) and again is not syncretized with Ninḥursaĝa.

3. Ninḥursaĝa of 𒂗.𒍪.𒍪.𒀭, is entitled *šaĝ₄-zu an ki* “the midwife of heaven and earth” (ETCSL 4.80.1:504), an epithet highlighting the role of a birthing goddess, the same designation used by the kings of Lagaš (see above). In this hymn, the name Nintur is syncretized with Ninḥursaĝa.

Thus, these three deities have the same name but two different roles: an undefined powerful goddess (1, 2) and secondly, a birthing goddess (3).

Three temple hymns are addressed to Inana manifestations:

- Inana of Uruk
- Inana of Zabalam
- Inana of the Ulmaš, the Akkadian ‘Aštar

While the first two are similarly described as *ušumgal* “the great dragon”, (ETCSL 4.80.1:206,²⁴⁷ see also 322²⁴⁸), the last is the mistress of battle, the Akkadian ‘Aštar.²⁴⁹ Inana and her Semitic counterpart ‘Aštar, later Ištar, had partly merged by the mid-third millennium. In the Old Akkadian period, ‘Aštar was the titular goddess of Akkade, the capital of the Akkadian empire, and her fortunes and characteristics were intimately linked with the political aspirations of the Sargonic rulers. Sargon and his successors actively encouraged the syncretism between ‘Aštar of Akkade and Inana of Uruk in order to make the national Akkadian goddess acceptable to the Sumerians. It has been suggested that the notoriously warlike character of ‘Aštar was a specifically Akkadian trait. However, while it is true that ‘Aštar as the city-goddess of Akkade (*‘Aštar-annunītum* ‘Aštar the skirmisher) was indeed the ‘Mistress of Battle’, the Akkadian ‘Aštar was a multifaceted deity, like the Sumerian Inana. The primary aspect of Inana was her personification of Venus (see above), her Akkadian counterpart is ‘Aštar (written ^dINANA)-*kà-kà-bù* (‘Aštar the star).²⁵⁰ Thus, the qualities and functions of these two goddesses are essentially fused in the Old Akkadian period.

Whereas the early god-lists distinguished goddesses by employing epithets such as *nunus* “woman” and *lamma* “guardian angel” and the *zame-hymn* applied *lamma* “guardian angel” and *ama* “mother”, the Tem-

²⁴⁷ *ušumgal niĝin₃-ĝar-ra UN-gal an ki-a* ^dinana-ke₄ “the dragon of Niĝin-ĝar, the queen of heaven and earth, Inana” (ETCSL 4.80.1:206-7).

²⁴⁸ *ušumgal lu₂ [X X]-še₃ inim kur₂ di* “the dragon who speaks hostile words” (ETCSL 4.80.1:322).

²⁴⁹ *me₃ gu₂ e₃ hu-ul-hu-ul-le-eš sig₇-ga šita₂ 7-e si sa₂-e a₂-kar₂ a me₃ tu₅-tu₅* “arrayed in battle, jubilantly (?) beautiful, ready with the seven maces, washing her tools for battle” (ETCSL 4.80.1:514-515). The differences are actually of degree rather than absolute.

²⁵⁰ For a votive inscription to this deity, see CDLI P235775.

ple Hymns use such epithets sparingly. The goddesses described as *munus* “woman” are limited to only three (in order of the text): Šuziana (second wife of the high god Enlil), Inana, and Nisaba. There are four cases of the epithet *ama* “mother”: in relation to Nintur (the birthing goddess), Nin-Isina and BaU (the healing goddesses) and Ninlil. This group does not overlap with the previous.

Evidence of identical epithets is that of the *a-zu gal* “the great physician” given to both BaU and Nin-Isina:

nin a-zu gal saĝ giĝ₂-ga nam uru-na tar-re
dumu-saĝ an kug-ga ki-sikil ama ^dBa-U₂

Mistress, the great healer of the black-headed who determines the destiny of her city,
the first-born daughter of holy An, the maiden, Mother BaU,

(Temple Hymns, ETCSL 4.80.1:268-269)

nun-zu ama ...
nin-zu a-zu gal kalam-ma
nin-¹isin₂^{si}-na dumu an-na-ke₄

Your princess, the mother, ...
Your mistress, the great healer of the Land,
Nin-Isina, the daughter of An.

(Temple Hymns, ETCSL 4.80.1:387, 392-3)

One new deity not in the temple hymns is a prime example of the process of mutation of one goddess into another deity. When the worship of Išĥara, tutelary goddess of the dynasty of Ebla, spread from Ebla via Mari to southern Mesopotamia in the Akkadian period (Archi 2002: 29-30), she completely lost her identity. She was syncretized with ^ʿAštar and they are invoked together in an Old Akkadian love incantation.²⁵¹

Other deities were also conceptually linked in incantations. In particular, the goddesses Ningirima and Nanše are invoked together in Sumerian and Akkadian texts.²⁵² In one Sumerian incantation, they are both associated with Enki:

mu₂-dug₄-ga
^dNin-A.BU.ĤA.DU
mu ^dNanše

²⁵¹ On this goddess, see further Prechel 1996 and Archi 2002 (with references to his earlier articles on this goddess).

²⁵² Cunningham 1997: 50-57. See also Table 1.

a1-ME-a
 ĝa₂-[n]un dEn-ki-ka

(This is an) incantation-speech
 of Ningirima
 in the name of Nanše
 which is spoken
 in the chamber of Enki.

(MDP 14 91 rev. 6-10, see Cunningham 1997: 51)

The connection between these deities may possibly be related to their aqueous associations.

It is interesting to note that the element Nin continues to be a functional compositional addition to divine names. The Old Akkadian King Maništūšu dedicates a mace head found in Sippar to the goddess dNin-Aya.²⁵³

4. Retrospective Notions and New Trends: Goddesses in the Neo-Sumerian Period (2150-2000)

It can be inferred from the tens of thousands of Sumerian administrative texts from this one century that a second major reorganization and systemization of the pantheon in the Ur III period was carried out at that time. The motivation for the changes may possibly have come from the contact with the Akkadians and their pantheon of deities. Ur-Namma of Ur determined boundaries of the city-gods of a half-dozen city provinces in his famous “cadastre” text.²⁵⁴ It was under the third dynasty of Ur that Sumerian and Akkadian divinities were first set in opposition.²⁵⁵ Bilingual royal inscriptions name a Sumerian god in the Sumerian version and an Akkadian one in the Akkadian version. While in the Akkadian period, temples were organized in temple hymns, in the Neo-Sumerian period, temples were physically centralized – Gudea, king of Lagaš, undertook building projects in Ĝirsu, so that there should be a temple to each and every deity known in the cities of the Lagaš state in that city with the exception of Nanše. Sanctuaries proliferated to identical deities designated by place name, such as Gula of Umma in the city of Nippur (Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 330) and Ninĥursaĝa of Kamari in the suburbs of Umma (Cohen 1996: 29). The need to create a strong intimate bond

²⁵³ Frayne 1993 [RIME 2]: 79, 2.1.3.4. See further Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “NIN.Aja”.

²⁵⁴ Frayne 1997 [RIME 3/2]: 50-56, 3/2.1.1.21.

²⁵⁵ Sommerfeld 2002: 705.

between deity and city can be seen in epithets such as Ninḥursaĝa nin-uru-da-mú-a “Queen/Mistress grown with the city [Ĝirsu]”.²⁵⁶

There are a few sporadic attempts to differentiate female deities by using the epithet ama “mother”, by creating a parallelism between diĝir and diĝir-ama. The divine progenitors of Gudea are addressed in the following words: diĝir-zu en ^dNin-ĝiš-zid-da dumu-KA an-na-kam diĝir-ama-zu ^dNin-sumun₂-na ama gan numun zid-da “Your god, Lord Ningišzida, is the grandson of An; your divine mother is Ninsumuna, the bearing mother of good offspring” (Cyl. B xxiii 18-19, ETCSL 2.1.7 lines 1342-1343).

The functions and domains of female deities in the Neo-Sumerian period were not limited to any narrow definition. For example, Nintur, in addition to being the goddess of birthing, is described as the patroness of divination.²⁵⁷ Another area of competence in which goddesses had exerted their influence in the symbolic relationship between the human realm and the divine cosmos was that of exorcism. In the Neo-Sumerian period, although almost all incantations in this period originate in Nippur, the divinities of the Eridu pantheon predominate; Enki’s son Asalluḫi and his mother Namma take prominent roles. On the other hand, Ningirima’s role was circumscribed; she was restricted to being the divine purifier in charge of the basin of sacred water. In addition to Ningirima and Nanše, other goddesses are called upon in exorcism for their divine intervention because of their specific roles: the physician Gula to cut the umbilical cord and determine destiny, the birth-provider Nintur to ease the birth / delivery and the grain-goddess Ezina to stop post-natal bleeding (see Table 1, Chapter IV.C.5).²⁵⁸ This development is a typical case of functional congruence between divine entities.

It is a generally accepted axiom that Ninḥursaĝa was the highest-ranking female deity.²⁵⁹ However, the identification of the four great gods only occurs rarely in royal inscriptions in the late third millennium and early second millennium. Whereas Gudea exalted the deities An, Enlil, Ninḥursaĝa and Enki,²⁶⁰ none of the kings of the Ur III dynasty followed his example. Her exalted position is due to her being the sister or wife of Enlil rather than a wife of Enki.²⁶¹ The second-millennium god-lists confirm this kinship affili-

²⁵⁶ Gudea Statue A i 2, see Edzard 1997 [RIME 3/1]: 29, 3/1.1.7. See previously Nin-tur₅-ama-uru-da-mu₂-a (“Nintur, mother who grew with the city”).

²⁵⁷ The Neo-Sumerian king Šulgi of Ur identifies with her when he describes his abilities at divination, see Michalowski 2006: 247-48 and n. 5 for other references.

²⁵⁸ For Ezina’s sphere of competency including fertility, see above quote from *Enki and the World Order*.

²⁵⁹ Krebernik 1993-1997b: 512 §6.1; Michalowski 2002: 416.

²⁶⁰ Edzard 1997 [RIME 3/1]: 37, 3/1.1.17 StB viii 44-7.

²⁶¹ For this relationship, see discussion above. For her relationship with Enki, see above section III.B.1.

ation as the principle behind her foremost hierarchical position in the Mesopotamian pantheon.

The Neo-Sumerian period is a primary one of reinterpretation and exaltations of former less prominent deities. In particular, the expansion of the role of the attendant wives progresses at the expense of independent goddesses. They are the same goddesses that were praised in the Temple Hymns composed during the Akkadian period. Whereas in Early Dynastic Uruk, the fate of the kings was in the hands of An and/or Inana, the monarchs of the Third Dynasty of Ur owed their sovereignty to Enlil and Ninlil. The principal wives were:

- Ninlil, spouse of Enlil
- BaU, spouse of Ningirsu

Ninlil, the spouse of Enlil, assumes authoritarian power.²⁶² She is not only the counterpart of Enlil, with whom she acts in unison but also may be the foremost of the pair who takes precedence in deciding the fates. A statue inscription on behalf of a king of the Ur III dynasty extols Ninlil in these words: nitadam₄-ni en ^dnu-nam-nir-ra ni₃-al-du₁₁-ga-ni nun kur-kur-ra diri-ga “her husband, the master Nunamnir [epithet of Enlil], does not withhold her request, princess, supreme over the lands” (Šū-Sîn, Frayne 1997 [RIME 3/2]: 307, 3/2.1.4.4 i 8’-9’). To cite from royal praise poems of this period:

ĝa₂-ĝiš-šu₂-a ^re₂-gal maḥ-di gal ku₅-ru-da-ni
^rama^r gal ^dnin-lil₂-ra ul mu-na-ni-in-de₆
^den-lil₂ ^dnin-lil₂-bi dug₃ mi-ni-in-ĝal₂-le-eš ...
 igi zid mu-un-ši-in-bar-re-eš sipad ^dur-^dnamma-ra

In the Gagiššua of the great palace, where she renders verdicts with grandeur, he (the king Ur-Namma) made the great mother Ninlil glad. Enlil and Ninlil relished it there. ... They looked with approval at the shepherd Ur-Namma.

(Ur-Namma B 31-33, 36, see ETCSL 2.4.1.2)

ama^r ^ra-a^r ^den-lil₂-la₂ an lugal diĝir nam tar-re giri₁₇
 šu^r X mu-ni-[ĝal₂]
^dnin-lil₂-da ki ĝišbun_x(KI.BI)-na-ka zag-ge
 mu-ti-ni-ib₂-si-eš₂

Enlil’s ancestors and An, the king, the god who determines the fates, greets her. With Ninlil, they take their seats at the banquet.

(Šulgi R 65-66, see ETCSL 2.4.2.18)

²⁶² Michalowski 1998-2001: s.v. “Nisaba A”; 2002: 416.

Under the aegis of Ninlil, major gods and goddesses were worshipped. Four deities were worshipped in chapels in her temple: the moon-god Nanna, the scribal-goddess Nisaba, the goddess of healing Nintinuga (“Mistress who revives the dead”),²⁶³ and the goddess of childbirth, Ninḫursaĝa²⁶⁴ – of these only the presence of Nanna her son is easily explained. Regarding the scribal-goddess Nisaba, one can only cite the words of the Wise Woman Saĝburu:

a-na-gin₇-nam ereš₂^{ki} uru ^dnisaba-še₃
 uru^{ki} nam tar-ra an ^den-lil₂-la₂
 uru^{ki} ul uru ki aĝ₂ ^dnin-lil₂-la₂
 nam-maš-maš ak-de₃ a-gin₇ im-da-ĝen-ne-en

“How on earth could you think of going to do sorcery at Ereš, which is the city of Nisaba, a city whose destiny was decreed by An and Enlil, the primeval city, the beloved city of Ninlil?”

(*Enmerkar and Ensuhgirana* 251-254, see ETCSL 1.8.2.4)

In the city-state of Lagaš, the goddess BaU, spouse of Ninĝirsu, played a significant role throughout the third millennium.²⁶⁵ In the Neo-Sumerian period, BaU was exalted as “queen” not at the cost of other goddesses but of her husband Ninĝirsu!²⁶⁶ In Nippur, BaU was given precedence over her husband (Such-Gutiérrez 2003: I 321-22).

The importance of other Lagašite goddesses was not diminished. After his visit to Ninĝirsu, Gudea goes to his birth-mother Ĝatumdug and addresses her:²⁶⁷

nin ama lagaš^{ki} ki ĝar-ra-me ...
 ama nu-tuku-me ama-ĝu₁₀ ze₂-me
 a nu-tuku-me a-ĝu₁₀ ze₂-me

²⁶³ For this goddess, see Edzard 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-tin-uga”; Such-Gutiérrez 2003: I 288-296, Römer 2003, Richter 2004: 110-111, Peterson 2009b: 237 and references cited there. For the cult of this goddess in the Ninlil temple in Ur III Nippur, see Such-Gutiérrez 2003: I 288-297. In the Early Dynastic period and even perhaps, in the Ur III period, she was worshipped in the temple of Enlil (ibid. 289). In the Ur III period, she also had her own temple (ibid. 294). In addition to healing, her major roles were in the bathing ritual of the king (ibid. 291) and as the sorcerer / incantation priestess of Enlil (šim-mu₂-gal-^dEn-lil₂-la₂), see Such-Gutiérrez 2003: II 452 Tab. 60 III 1.11.

²⁶⁴ Sallaberger 1993: II 73. For the cult of the goddesses Ninḫursaĝa and less commonly Nintur in the Ninlil temple in Ur III Nippur, see Such-Gutiérrez 2003: I 274, 363; Richter 2004: 143-144.

²⁶⁵ Asher-Greve 2003: 19-24. For the healing aspect of BaU in Ĝirsu found in personal names such as ^dBa-U₂-a-zu and even field names, see Ceccareli 2009: 39. For images reflecting the role of BaU as a physician, see Chapter IV.C.3.3 in this volume.

²⁶⁶ Steible 1998, Sallaberger 1993: 288-291. Already suggested by Falkenstein (see Richter 2004: 515).

²⁶⁷ In this inscription, Gudea also designates his mother as Nanše (Cyl. A iii 25, v 11, see ETCSL 2.1.7: 83, 124) and as Ninsumuna (Cyl. B xxiii 19-21, see ETCSL 2.1.7: 1343-4).

Mistress, mother, you who founded Lagaš...
 I have no mother, you are my mother.
 I have no father, you are my father.

(Gudea Cyl. A iii 3, 6-7, see ETCSL 2.1.7:61, 64-65)

Syncretism

The names of the birthing goddess begin to be used interchangeably or sequentially and synonymously. With reference to Ninḫursaġa and Nintur, the ruler of the city-state of Lagaš, Gudea built a temple for Ninḫursaġa and placed in it a statue of himself which he named *nin an-ki-a nam-tar-re-de₃* ^d*Nin-tur₅* *ama diġir-re-ne-ke₄* *Gu₃-de₂-a lu₂-e₂-du₃-a-ka nam-ti-la-ni mu-su₃* “Queen who makes firm decisions for heaven and earth, Nintur, mother of the gods, let Gudea who built the house, have a long life”.²⁶⁸ This verse is the only such occasion of a syncretistic mention of Nintur in Lagaš where Ninḫursaġa was worshipped as mother of Ningirsu. Consequently, despite some overlapping, the various birthing goddesses still retain diverse attributes as can be seen in a hymn to Nisaba in which Aruru is used as an epithet of Nisaba:²⁶⁹

nin mul-an-gin₇ gun₃-a dub za-gin₃ šu du₈
^d*nisaba immal₂ gal ^duraš-e tud-da ...*
me gal 50-e šu du₇-a
nin-ġu₁₀ a₂-nun-ġal₂ e₂-kur-ra
ušumgal ezen-e dalla e₃-a
^d*a-ru-ru kalam-ma*

Mistress colored as the stars, holding a lapis-lazuli tablet!
 Nisaba, great wild cow, born by Uraš ...
 Perfectly endowed with fifty great divine powers,
 My Mistress, the most powerful in E-kur!
 Dragon emerging in glory at the festival,
 Aruru of the Land!

(Hymn to Nisaba A 1-2, 5-8, see ETCSL 4.16.1)

In these lines, Nisaba is syncretized with Aruru; not with Aruru’s birthing skills but with her position of power and authority, similar to the use of her name as a depiction of Ninḫursaġa of Keš in the Old Akkadian Temple Hymns.

²⁶⁸ Statue A iii 4-iv 2, see Edzard 1997 [RIME 3/1]: 30, 3/1.1.7.StA.

²⁶⁹ A version of the beginning of Hymn to Nisaba A, preserved on a stone tablet from Lagaš probably dates to the Ur III period. For the most recent edition, see Feliu 2010.

Fusion

In the Ur III period, deities with different names and functions underwent merging into compounded deities. Examples of compound divine names incorporating feminine deities in Ur III are:

- Ezina-Kusu²⁷⁰
- Ninḫursaġa-Gula²⁷¹
- Enlil-Ninlil²⁷²
- An-Ki²⁷³

While the juxtaposition appears to link the two gods who are named, the precise nature of that link is not explicitly stated; the paired names might be intended to identify a new god who combined the qualities of both named divinities (no examples), might imply absorption of one of the two gods into the persona of the other (Ezina-Kusu), or might be intended to equate two gods as separate but essentially identical divine beings (^dNinḫursaġa-Gula??).

The first compounded name Ezina-Kusu merges the goddess of grain, and early proprietary deity, Ezina, with Kusu, a purification goddess.²⁷⁴ The amalgam seems to be almost identical with Ezina as can be seen in the following quotation: gu₂-ed_{in}-na-ka ^dezina₂-ku₃-su₃ pa sikil-e absin₃-na saġ an-še₃ il₂-še₃ “Ezina-Kusu, the pure stalk, will raise its

²⁷⁰ Ezina continued to be worshiped as a solitary deity also in Ur III. Both deities continue to be venerated separately in the following millennia.

²⁷¹ Cohen 1996: 29 n. 5. In addition to the two references given there, four more are known: AnOr 7 303 (=MVN 18) rev. i 22, YOS 4 260 ii 10, Nisaba 6 32: 2 and Nisaba 9 3 rev. i 28'. Cf. ^dInana-gu-la RTC 399 rev. i 11. The dilemma that the addition of gu-la imposes is that it could be understood either as a reference to the healing goddess named Gula or to the adjective gu-la “great”. Possibly, these goddesses are to be understood as Ninḫursaġa and Inana in their aspect as a healing goddess. The addition of gu-la to divine names in this period is frequent, as for instance, ^dAl-la-gu-la (Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 225 and n. 987 where he lists all examples of further deities on whom the modifier -gu-la was bestowed).

²⁷² While Sallaberger (1993: I 137) evaluates an equation with Ninlil of Tummal, he comes to the conclusion that the couple should be seen as a unity in a ritual performance.

²⁷³ For this amalgam, see discussion in J.G. Westenholz 2010a: 322. In both Lagaš and in Umma during the Neo-Sumerian period there was a cult established dedicated to the unity of Heaven and Earth, An-Ki. It is also possible that this is not a pairing of two divinities but should be read ^dKI.

²⁷⁴ Kusu is the divine personification of the censer found in magical and religious texts (Michalowski 1993b: 158-160). In the form ^dku₃-su₃-ga(-PA.SIKIL), she was listed in the Lagaš offering lists (Selz 1995: 156). Note that Selz cites Bauer’s suggestion that her name means “reife Halme” (“ripe cereal”) or an “Ährenbündel” (“bundle of ears of corn”) (similarly, Selz 2002: 679 and n. 125). This interpretation of her name would make the amalgam of two grain goddesses very understandable. The writing of the name of the deity can also be interpreted as “provided with ku₃” which might be associated with the epithet ku₃ Ezina in the zame-hymns (see no. 11 above, Michalowski 1993b: 158-9). For Kusu in late purification rituals, see Chapter II.D.2.

head high in the furrows in Gu-edina” (Gudea Cyl. B xi 19-20, see ETCSL 2.1.7: 1074-5).²⁷⁵ In *The Debate between Grain and Ewe*,²⁷⁶ Grain is both Ezina and Ezina-Kusu.²⁷⁷ Further, Ezina-Kusu is commonly a title of Nisaba and of Aruru in their aspects as vegetation deities (Black 2005: 48).²⁷⁸ The amalgamated Ezina-Kusu became the traditional appellation of this goddess in the late Sumerian liturgy.

The fusion of Enlil and Ninlil as well as An and Ki links a male and female deity. Consequently, scholars have questioned the existence of this amalgam and suggest that this linkage may be one of conjoined juxtaposed deities.²⁷⁹ It could also be understood as the Ninlil of Enlil’s Temple rather than the Ninlil of the Kiur (Ninlil’s Temple).

The conjoined deities An and Ki may be related to a similar series of amalgams of both female and male deities are conjoined with the heavenly god An: AN-^dNISABA, AN-^dMAR.TU, and later in the Old Babylonian period, AN-^dINANA.²⁸⁰ Because the sign for An, the star, can also signify heaven, these deities have been understood as the cosmic counterparts of their terrestrial manifestations.²⁸¹ The phenomenon has been described as an astralization process (Selz 2008: 15-16, 22). The god thus provides his heavenly quality to the amalgam but not his gender. This path of fusion of names is similar to that of the syncretic process long known among Egyptian deities, a process known as theocracy, but it was only an ephemeral and negligible development in Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, it was not inconsequential since this undercurrent of theocracy comes to the fore in Assyrian

²⁷⁵ Edzard (1997 [RIME 3/1]: 95, 3/1.1.7.Cyl B) does not treat these conjoined deities as one amalgam; rather, he understands ku_3 - su_3 as an adjectival epithet “Bright-and-long” modifying Ezina.

²⁷⁶ For an edition of the text, see ETCSL 5.3.2.

²⁷⁷ For the suggestion that Nisaba, Ezina and Kusu were three names for the same goddess, see Groneberg 2007: 326. This is easily disproved by their receiving offerings separately in Lagaš, see Selz 1995.

²⁷⁸ According to Piotr Michalowski (2001: 176), Kusu as a name or aspect of Nisaba has nothing to do with the purificatory deity of the same name but is simply an epithet “goddess filled with purity” that was applied to Ezina/Ašnan and Nisaba. Sometimes the epithet was interpreted as a separate deity. In his 1993 article, Michalowski posited that there was only one goddess Kusu.

²⁷⁹ See Such-Gutiérrez 2003: I 63-65 where he offers proof of an alternation between the listing of the deities separately and conjoined. Note the possible parallel BaU-Enlila found in the Old Babylonian period (Richter 2004: 111).

²⁸⁰ While this deity already occurs in the Early Dynastic IIIa Cities List (AN.INANA SF 23 vi 17 and duplicates, see above) after the list of primordial deities, it is uncertain as to its significance. In other cases, these writings have other readings, such as AN-^dNAGA, the writing of Nanibgal.

²⁸¹ Van Dijk 1964/5: 6, fig. 1 note to text.

traditions. The great god of Assyria, Aššur was conjoined to other deities, both male and female.²⁸²

Fission

Epithets begin to evolve into independent goddesses, in particular those associated with Inana / ʿAštar. For instance, the Akkadian martial goddess ʿAštar-annunītum devolved into Annunītum.²⁸³

New Arrivals

Under the Ur III dynasty, foreign deities were absorbed into the state-sponsored pantheon worshipped at court such as the Hurrian goddess Šauška.²⁸⁴ Also imported and worshipped were the deities of the western periphery – Išhara was reimported as the great goddess of northern Syria (the Eblaite region) and together with Bēlat-Nagar, “Queen/Mistress of Nagar”, of Upper Mesopotamia²⁸⁵ was given a temple to share in the capital city of Ur by Šulgi, second king of the Third Dynasty of Ur (Archi 2002: 29). At the same time, the goddess Nanaya emerged abruptly in Uruk as the goddess of love.

Diminution, Decline, Disappearance, Demise

The decline in the number of female deities in this period is due to various factors. One factor was physical absorption when the worship of one goddess is located in the temple of another as was seen in the Ninlil temple in Nippur.

²⁸² Cf. Meinhold 2009: 61. Examples from the *tākultu*-ritual are: the male-male amalgam of ʿAššur-Adad, ʿAššur-Enlil / ʿEnlil-Aššur, ʿAššur-Šakkan, and the female-male amalgam of ʿAššur-Ištar, see most recent edition in Meinhold 2009: 377-412. This text is now dated to the eighth-seventh centuries BCE rather than the late second millennium, see discussion Meinhold 2009: 377-378.

²⁸³ This process actually took place at the end of the Old Akkadian period, as seen in dedication of a temple in her honor (Frayne 1993 [RIME 2]: 183).

²⁸⁴ Sharlach 2002.

²⁸⁵ This goddess of the Upper Mesopotamian territory under the dominion of Nagar was already venerated in the mid-third millennium in the pre-Sargonic period, see Guichard 1994, Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “NIN-Nagar”, Schwemer 2001: 273-274, Eidem 2008: 328. Note that Daniel Schwemer assumes this and similarly named deities (*Bēlet* + ‘Mistress of’) represent an “Ištar-Gestalt” as if any goddess must be equated with Ištar. Further, he (p. 445) makes the specific equation of “Ištar-Šawuška” and ʿNIN-na-gar₃^{ki} on the basis of the Hurrian inscription of Tišatal in which ʿNIN-na-gar₃^{ki} appears together with Hurrian deities (Wilhelm 1998). She is one of various goddesses who are patron deities of cities or territories, *theos eponymos*, and the only relationship that they have in common with Ištar is their gender. Schwemer is not alone in his point of view; Eidem (2008: 326) makes a similar claim that Bēlet-Apim is a local hypostasis of Ištar.

Another is the rise of male gods with the same functions. Ningirima, mistress of exorcism, already in Ur III shared her role with Asalluḫi (Cunningham 1997: 169). The last factor is the geo-political changes that took place in southern Mesopotamia.

C. The Second Stage: Recession

1. Goddesses in Transformation in the Old Babylonian Period (2000-1595)

At the close of the third millennium, the southern plains of Mesopotamia were overrun by Elamites and Amorites. In the laments over the destruction composed in the beginning of the second millennium, goddesses take on another role: that of *mater dolorosa*.²⁸⁶ Whether the goddesses were the proprietary heads of the cities or spouses of a male titular head or even lower down in the divine hierarchy, they all are pictured weeping over their cities:

nin-bi a uru₂-ĝu₁₀ im-me a e₂-ĝu₁₀ im-me
^dNin-gal-e a uru₂-ĝu₁₀ im-me a e₂-ĝu₁₀ im-me

Its queen cried, “Alas, my city”, cried, “Alas, my house”.
 Ningal cried, “Alas, my city”, cried, “Alas, my house”.

(Lament over Ur 246-247, ETCSL 2.2.2)

The genre of lamentation comprises a large part of Sumerian temple liturgy.²⁸⁷ The lamenting goddesses, who are patron goddesses of cities, are designated variously as the “mother”, the “mistress”, the “princess” or the “queen” of the city. Many designations encase their familial roles such as “wife”, “daughter” or “daughter-in-law” in relation to the main god of the city. The desolation of these goddesses is embedded in litanies:

ama ^dNin-líl er₂-e₂-kur-ra-ke₄
 dim₃-me-er-maḥ er₂-Keš₃^{ki}-ke₄
 ga-ša-an/diĝir nibru^{ki}-a er₂-e₂-šu-me-ša₄-ke₄
 ga-ša-an/diĝir ĝa₂-gi₄-a er₂-e₂-u₄-sakar-ra-ke₄
 ga-ša-an/diĝir i₃-si-in-na er₂-e₂-i₃-si-in-na-ke₄
 ga-ša-an/diĝir tin-lu-ba er₂-uru₂-saĝ-ĝa₂-ke₄

²⁸⁶ For a discussion of the conception of the Sumerian prototypes of the *mater dolorosa*, see Kramer 1983.

²⁸⁷ This liturgy is written in a dialect of Sumerian, the eme-sal (literally either “thin tongue” or “women’s speech”) dialect, in which phonemic changes abound. Thus, the names of the deities have a slightly different form in the litanies. The eme-sal writing of dim₃-me-er renders standard Sumerian diĝir and the eme-sal writing ga-ša-an renders standard Sumerian nin.

Mother Ninlil (sheds) tears for the Ekur,
 Dimmer-maḥ [Diḡirmaḥ] (sheds) tears for Keš,
 Gašan-Nibru [Nin-Nibru (“Queen/Mistress of Nippur”)],²⁸⁸ (sheds)
 tears for the Ešumeša,²⁸⁹
 Gašan-magia [Nin-ḡagia]²⁹⁰ (sheds) tears for the Eusakara,²⁹¹
 Gašan-Isina [Nin-Isina] (sheds) tears for the Temple of Isin,
 Gašan-tinluba [Nintinuga]²⁹² (sheds) tears for the (E)urusaḡa [literally
 “the foremost city”]²⁹³.

Krecher 1966: 60, vii 33-38)²⁹⁴

It is interesting to note that the goddesses in these litanies are those whose function is in the domain of healing. The other major goddess to appear in the role of *mater dolorosa* at this period is Inana and with her various syncretised goddesses, such as Nanaya.

In the aftermath of this destruction, certain previously important cities in the lower stretches of southern Mesopotamia were abandoned for political, social, and perhaps ecological reasons.²⁹⁵ Having been gradually reduced to a small ritual complex, the city of Eridu was the most famous center to disappear and its cult transferred. In the city of Ur, the clergy of Eridu re-established the worship of their deities²⁹⁶ and throughout Sumer, the populace continued to appeal to them for their aid. In addition to Enki and his mother Namma, Enki’s wife Damgalnuna was also addressed in petitions.²⁹⁷

²⁸⁸ This goddess is the wife of Ninurta, see Biggs 1998-2001. Note that this title is also used as an epithet of Ninlil (Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 170). For the problems of the syncretism of this goddess and Inana, see below.

²⁸⁹ Temple of Ninurta and Nin-Nibru in Nippur.

²⁹⁰ For this goddess, Nin-ḡagia “Mistress of the Cloister”, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “NIN-ḡagia”. Her cult was centered in Nippur. For third-millennium references, see Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 269-273.

²⁹¹ The name of this temple is only found in the liturgical genre of lamentations, see George 1993: 153, no. 1137.

²⁹² For this goddess of healing worshipped in Nippur, see below.

²⁹³ For this temple, see George 1993: 158, no. 1208. Originally, this temple may have been the temple of Nintinuga in Nippur, which is not given a specific name in third-millennium sources. For lamentation rites in Ur III possibly related to Nintinuga, see Such-Gutiérrez 2003: I 285, s.v. *ír-sízku-ur-ra* “Klageriten”, *Fest des 11^{er} Monats* (Tab. 36 4).

²⁹⁴ Much of this text is restored on the basis of parallels, see Krecher 1966: 198-201 and Cavigneaux 1996: 65, no. 125 (W.16743cg): 4-9. Note the alternation between *ga-ša-an* ‘mistress of’ and *diḡir* ‘deity of’ in these two versions. Unfortunately, the beginnings of the line are not preserved in the Uruk version so it is not clear whether there is or is not a clear indication of the gender of the goddesses.

²⁹⁵ Lambert (1987: 128-129) noted that the cult centers of many female deities went into decline, and the worship of their mistresses followed the same fate. For the reconsideration of the situation in the Lagaš region, see Richardson 2008.

²⁹⁶ Charpin 1986: 341-486.

²⁹⁷ Cunningham 1997: 115-116, 120.

Eridu and its *ab zu* remained the sacred source of purification and the cosmic abode of the goddesses, the divine purifiers.

Not only Keš, the ancient city of the birthing goddess, but also Ereš, the cult city of Nisaba and Šuruppak, the seat of her daughter Sud, as well as many other smaller places sacred to goddesses were either abandoned or much reduced in importance by Old Babylonian times. The date of their abandonment – gradual or catastrophic – and the circumstances that led to these events, as well as the consequences that they may have had for changes in religious systems, are all awaiting study. Thus, the decline in the number of goddesses as city patrons between the third and second millennia has been explained as due to the accident of the decline and subsequent permanent obliteration of many cities of lower Mesopotamia. However, the conception of the close relationship between a female deity and the city remains. In particular, the intimate interconnection of “(female) tutelary deity” of good fortune and protection, *lamma*, and the fate of the city is reflected in the sources. For example, the city of Uruk can only be destroyed after Uruk’s *lamma* is forced out of her city and into the desert according to the *Lament over Uruk*. In order to rebuild the city of Assur, Hammurabi restored its good *lamma* to the city. In the peripheral areas, goddesses continue as proprietary divine owners of cities and states, in either the traditional format of ‘Queen/Mistress’ of the state or as adjective based on the name of the city. Examples are: ²⁹⁸ *Ḫēlet(NIN)-Apim* “Queen/Mistress of the land of Apum” and *Batirītum* “She of the city of Batir”.²⁹⁹ Another epithet connecting goddess and city that first appears in the Old Babylonian period is the use of *Šarrat* “Queen” of a city in the northern Babylonian cities: *Šarrat-Dilbatim* “Queen of the city of Dilbat” and *Šarrat-Sipparim* “Queen of the city of Sippar”.³⁰⁰ *Šarrat-Sipparim* can refer to two goddesses, Annunītum and Ištar. Unless the epithet occurs in apposition to the divine name, the referent is not always certain. These epithets are not restricted to any group of written sources but are found in colloquial letters as well as in administrative documents.

As the cult center of the birthing goddess in Keš began to lose its priority, the religious center of Nippur gained by its loss. In the city dedicated to Enlil, his spouse Ninlil continued to take over the prerogatives of many of the other goddesses. One royal hymn praises the bestowal of powers by Enlil and his spouse Ninlil on the goddess Inana who was thereby relegated to a subordinate position:

²⁹⁸ Frayne 1990 [RIME 4]: 756, 4.27.4.2:4, see Eidem 2008: 326-327.

²⁹⁹ Frayne 1990 [RIME 4]: 702, 4.17.1:6.

³⁰⁰ Pientka 1998: 181 and n. 25.

ki-sikil ^dinana dumu ^dEN.ZU-na-ka
 me kalam-「ma dirig」ni^ĝ₂-nam-e sa₂ di ...
^dinana-ra an tuku₄-tuku₄-e ki sag₃-sag₃-ge
 ub-da 4-ba šu-ni ^ĝal₂-le nam-NIN gal-bi ak
 me₃ šen-šen-e ka du₈-e ^ĝiš ^ĝiš-e la₂-e
 nam-ur-sa^ĝ-bi am sumun₂-gin₇ teš₂-bi-da du₇-du₇
 uš₂ erim₂-ma a-gin₇ ki-e na₈-na₈ ad₆[!]-bi ^ĝar-^ĝar-e
 erin₂ gar₃ dar-ra-bi nam-ra-aš šum₂-mu igi-a sug₂-ga-bi
 u^ĝ₃ ki-ta an-na-še₃ ed₃-de₃ u^ĝ₃ kur₂ ki šu bal-e
 zalag ku₁₀-ku₁₀-še₃ du₃ ku₁₀-ku₁₀ zalag-še₃ dib-be₂
 [^den-lil₂] [^dnin-lil₂-bi kug ^dinana-ra
 mu-na-an-šum₂-mu-uš
 [an ki]-a gaba-ri nu-mu-ni-in-tuku-uš
 e₂ [X X] ama₅ ki ^ĝa₂-^ĝa₂ sa^ĝ-e-eš mu-ni-in-rig₇-eš ...
 ni₂-tuku-na ki-tuš ki ^ĝar-ra-na šag₄ zalag-ga ^ĝa₂-^ĝa₂
 ni₂ nu-tuku-na e₂ du₃-a-na ur₅ sag₉-ge nu-^ĝa₂-^ĝa₂
 nitaḥ munus-a munus nitaḥ-a-bi ku₄-ku₄ šu bal ba-a-ak
 ki-sikil-e-ne nam-^ĝuruš-e tug₂ zid-da mu₄-mu₄
^ĝuruš-e-ne nam-ki-sikil-e-eš₂ tug₂ gab₂-bu mu₄-mu₄
 X zu [nitaḥ-e]-ne ^ĝiš[?] bal šu-ba[?] ^ĝa₂[?]-^ĝa₂ munus-e-ne-er
^ĝiš[?] tukul šum₂-mu
 eme bungu munus-e e-ne di
 eme munus-e bungu e-ne [di] ...
^den-lil₂ ^dnin-lil₂-bi ^dinana-ra šu-ni-še₃
 mu-un-^ĝar-[re-eš]
 e₂-gal e₂ nam-NIN-ka-ni nu-gig an-na-ra
 mu-na-an-du₃-uš [su] zig₃ im-da-ri-eš
^ĝiš[?] rab₃ kur-kur-ra-ka mi-ni-in-kur₉-re-eš ni₂ me-lem₄
 bi₂-in-guru₃-uš

Young woman Inana, Suen's daughter,
 Who makes the divine powers of the Land supreme, ...
 To Inana – the capacity to make the heavens shake, to make the earth
 tremble,
 to hold the four directions in her hand and to act grandly as their queen,
 to shout with wide open mouth in battle and combat and to wreak
 carnage (?),
 to butt all at once valiantly (?) like a wild bull,
 to make the earth drink the blood of enemies like water and to pile up
 their bodies,
 to take captive their overwhelmed (?) troops and to make them serve,
 to make the people ascend from below to above, to make the foreign
 people change their place,
 and to turn light to darkness and darkness to light --
 Holy Inana was endowed (with them) by Enlil and Ninlil.
 They made her without rival in heaven and on earth.
 They bestowed on her the power to establish a woman's domain....
 With the capacity to gladden the heart of those who revere her in their

established residences,
 but not to soothe the mood of those who do not revere her in their
 well-built houses;
 to turn a man into a woman and a woman into a man, to change one
 into the other,
 to make young women dress as men on their right side,
 to make young men dress as women on their left side,
 to put spindles into the hands of men, and to give weapons to the
 women;
 to see that women amuse themselves by using children's language, to
 see that children amuse themselves by using women's language,
 Inana was entrusted (with them) by Enlil and Ninlil.
 A palace, her house of queenship, for the nu-gig of heaven,
 They built and invested it with fearsome radiance.
 They made it into the neck-stock of all the foreign countries, and
 imbued it with awe-inspiring, terrifying splendor.

(A hymn to Inana for Išme-Dagan [Išme-Dagan K]
 1-2, 7-17, 19-26, 28-31, see ETCSL 2.5.4.11)

At the same time, Inana was proclaimed the most prominent goddess among
 goddesses.³⁰¹ The words put in her mouth are:

an ĝa₂-a-kam ki ĝa₂-a-kam me-e ur-saĝ-ĝen unug^{ki}-ga
 e₂-an-na ĝa₂-a-kam zabal^{ki}am gi-gun₄-na¹ ma-a-kam
 nibru^{ki}-a dur-an-ki <ma-a-kam> urim₂^{ki}-ma e₂-dilmun-
 na <ma-a-kam> ĝir₂-su^{ki}-a eš₂-dam-kug <ma-a-kam>
 adab^{ki}-a e₂-šar-ra <ma-a-kam> kiš^{ki}-a ĥur-saĝ-kalam-ma
 <ma-a-kam> kisiga^{1ki} amaš-kug-ga <ma-a-kam>
 akšak^{ki}-a an-za-gar₃ <ma-a-kam> umma^{ki}-a ib-gal <ma-
 a-kam> a-ga-de₃^{ki}-a ul¹-maš ma-a-kam ma-ra ṛdim₃⁷-
 me-er teš₂ mu-da-sa₂-a

The heavens are mine and the earth is mine: I am heroic! In Unug the
 Eana is mine, in Zabal^{ki}am the Giguna is mine, in Nippur the Dur-an-
 ki is mine, in Urim the E-Dilmuna is mine, in Ĝirsu the Ešdam-kug
 is mine, in Adab the Ešara is mine, in Kiš the Ĥursaĝkalama is mine,
 in Kisiga the Amaš-kuga is mine, in Akšak the Anzagar is mine, in
 Umma the Ibgal is mine, in Akkade the Ulmaš is mine. Which god
 compares with me?

(Hymn to Inana F 21-33, see ETCSL 4.07.6)³⁰²

³⁰¹ The mythological statement of Inana's extended hegemony is given in the myth *Inana and Enki*, in which she persuades the drunken Enki to give her the meš, the divinely ordained principles of human civilization (Farber-Flügge 1973, see ETCSL 1.3.1). For the earliest evidence of this literary tradition of Inana's procurement of the meš (50) in Old Sumerian texts, see Krebernik 1998: 322 and n. 810.

³⁰² Lists of cult centers of Inana are embedded in various Old Babylonian literary texts, both

As van Dijk (1964/5: 4) stated: “Inanna aurait évincé ses rivales des pantheons locaux”.³⁰³ The characterization of the seven names of Inana, which becomes the standard number, first occurs in this period in a *balaĝ*-composition.³⁰⁴

The process of syncretism was mythologized: Sud of Šuruppak was equated with Ninlil of Nippur through her marriage with Enlil.³⁰⁵ When Sud becomes the bride of Enlil, she becomes Ninlil.³⁰⁶ Once she was identified with Ninlil, she disappeared for all practical purposes from the Mesopotamian religious scene. However, she leaves Ninlil with her syncretistic associations with other deities such as ^dSu-ud₃(-ag₂), the wife of the sun-god Utu (Akkadian: Šamaš) and mother of the benevolent fire-god Išum. Thus, in an Old Babylonian Akkadian Myth, Ninlil is surprisingly credited with having born Išum to Šamaš.³⁰⁷ Her name is even misunderstood to be an Akkadian noun in the Nippur god-list.³⁰⁸

With the general decline of the territory of Lagaš in the beginning of the second millennium, the cult of its gods diminished, including the veneration of the goddesses Nanše and BaU.³⁰⁹ In the schools, traditional literature continues to be studied including hymns to these goddesses and even to Lammašaga, the vizier of BaU. The opposite process transpires in the rise of cities that become prominent, for example, Isin and its goddess Nin-Isina (see below).

Another Old Babylonian phenomenon is the expansion of the worship of one goddess under the same name at different sanctuaries spread throughout the country. For instance, Inana-Zabalam of Uruk was worshipped in Larsa (Richter 2004: 291). This situation may be the result of royal actions designed to centralize the worship of all the gods of the kingdom in Larsa. On the other hand, it seems that Larsa is her only place of worship in this period.³¹⁰

From around 1720 BCE, the major southern Mesopotamian cities, such as Nippur, Uruk and Larsa, suffered neglect (previously understood as aban-

hymns and narrative compositions.

³⁰³ “Inana evicted her rivals from the local pantheons”.

³⁰⁴ See discussion in Volk 1989: 246-249.

³⁰⁵ For a detailed discussion of this literary text, see in this volume Chapter III.B.2.

³⁰⁶ She is possibly also renamed Nintur. The text is not clear. According to Black (2005: 45), the title Nintur is bestowed on Aruru.

³⁰⁷ CT 15 6 vii 8’-9’, see Römer 1966 and the discussion in Krebernik 1998-2001: 456-457, s.v. “Nin-lil” § 3.1.3.

³⁰⁸ Peterson 2009a: 72 note to line 3’.

³⁰⁹ For a review of the evidence regarding the decline of the state of Lagaš, see Richardson 2008. Note that the worship of BaU continued in the northern Babylonian city of Kiš where she became the major goddess (Sallaberger 2003-2005: 298). Furthermore, her cult in Kiš prospered into the Neo-Babylonian period, see further Chapter II.C.1 in this volume. For her syncretism with Nin-Isina, see below. For the revival or continuation of the worship of Nanše as patron deity of the First Sealand dynasty, see below.

³¹⁰ Charpin 1992a: 211 and 2004: 343-345.

donment); their cults were disrupted and reinstated in a more northern locale.³¹¹ The priests of Uruk fled north during the political upheavals and took sanctuary in the city-state of Kiš bringing with them three Inana deities (in addition to Nanaya and her family): Inana of Uruk, AN-^dInana of Uruk and AN-^dInana.³¹² However, none of these manifestations replaced the local Ištar of Kiš who is linked with her spouse Zababa, the chief god of Kiš, a martial deity. Unexpectedly, it is the goddess BaU of Lagaš who replaced Ištar of Kiš as the spouse of Zababa.³¹³ Her cult also took refuge in Kiš in the late Old Babylonian period and thus the mutation occurred.³¹⁴ Nevertheless, Ištar continued to reside in her temple in Ḫursaġkalama (George 1993: 32, 101, no. 482), while BaU was worshipped in her cella E₂-ġalga-su₃ (George 1993: 89, no. 333). The cults of other divinities also took refuge in the northern cities: from Larsa to Babylon,³¹⁵ from Isin to Sippar,³¹⁶ and from Nippur to Babylon³¹⁷ and Dūr-Abiešuġ.³¹⁸ This transference of cults provides testimony of the importance of these deities in group identity construction (see further Chapter IV.C.5).

After the god-lists of the twenty-sixth century BCE there are none until the beginning of the second millennium.³¹⁹ The Babylonians were gender oriented in their language and social constructions and this is reflected in their theologians' view of the divine world. The arrangement of the god-lists was hierarchic, gender-oriented and syncretistic. These lists are said to have been created due to the process of syncretism.³²⁰ The ancient theologians began to concern themselves with organizing the constellations of local gods by creating family ties between individual gods and thus genealogical relationships. Originally independent deities were coupled in “theological” mar-

³¹¹ On the question of this abandonment in the light of the recent evidence that these cities or their displaced cults were under Sealand control, see Dalley 2009: 7-9. Dalley suggests an impoverished continuation of the cults in these cities in the period after 1720 rather than abandonment; and that besides the transference of the respective cults, the adoption of the veneration of local deities by the conquerors led to renewal of their cults.

³¹² For a discussion of this amalgam, see below under fusion.

³¹³ Sallaberger 2003-2005: 298. Note earlier appearance of BaU as spouse of Zababa of Kiš in *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, ETCSL 2.2.3 ll. 115-118.

³¹⁴ Cf. Pientka 1998: 188-189, 376, 378. Note the possible occurrence of a conjoined diety: ^dBa-ú-^dInana on p. 188, 383.

³¹⁵ Charpin 2004: 343-345.

³¹⁶ Pientka 1998: 189-190.

³¹⁷ Pientka 1998: 190-195.

³¹⁸ On the transfer of the Nippur cults, see van Lerberghe 2008 and van Lerberghe and Voet 2009.

³¹⁹ The dating of the so-called Weidner god-list to the last century of the third millennium depends on one tablet VAT 6563, see Weidner 1924: 4-5, which is most probably to be dated to the Isin-Larsa period according to its palaeography. For this opinion of the dating, see also Veldhuis 2003: 628.

³²⁰ Van Dijk 1964/1965: 8-9, 13.

riages. Other gods were associated with these couples until a group of gods resembled an aristocratic family with courtiers and retainers.

The number of deities on the pedagogic list (so-called Weidner list) is limited to only 245, about half as many as the earlier lists.³²¹ The systemization demonstrated by this god-list shows little hierarchical order. As Lambert (1957-1971: 474) noted, it is difficult to discern the over-all principles of arrangement. His suggestion that various short lists have been compiled without any attempt at integrating them seems plausible. In this divine catalogue, the listing of the deities whose roles and attributes were similar according to data from later sources depended on their local associations. While some goddesses such as the birthing goddesses were recorded sequentially (standard lines 209-212 = Old Babylonian VAT 7759 vii 1-3), others such as three of the goddesses of healing, Gula (145), Nin-Isina (166) and Ninkarrak (167), were listed at diverse places, demonstrating that they were singular in this period and not syncretized. The goddesses listed after Inana and her spouse Dumuzi (standard lines 17-25 = Old Babylonian VAT 7759 i 5'-13') were probably seen as her daughters rather than syncretized goddesses.³²² The most important factor as regards syncretism in this list is the multiple versus single entries for one divine entity. For instance, Nanaya and her counterpart Bizilla occur together (standard lines 21-21 = Old Babylonian VAT 7759 8'-9') as do Damgalnuna / Damgalana and Damkiana (standard lines 58-59 = Old Babylonian VAT 7759 ii 17'-18'). In a separate section, local 'Inana' manifestations are catalogued (standard lines 157-165, preserved in Old Babylonian sources VAS 24 20 rev. i 13-17 and T07-1 iii' 7'-12').³²³ The goddesses mentioned are: Inana of Uruk,³²⁴ Inana of Zabalam (see above), Inana of Kiš, Inana (= 'Aštar) of Akkade and Inana of Ilip.³²⁵

³²¹ For the standard edition of the Weidner list, see Cavigneaux 1981: 79-99 and for the copy of the Old Babylonian tablet VAT 7759, see Weidner 1924: 4-5. Other Old Babylonian manuscripts of this god-list are: VAS 24 20, see DCCLT, and Tell Taban (Hassake, Syria) T07-1, see Shibata 2009. Note that the line count given in the colophon of VAS 24 20 rev. iv 2' is 205 lines for that manuscript of the list. For a possible manuscript from Nippur, see Peterson 2009a: 81-82. For a review of the extant manuscripts, see Shibata 2009: 35. For the reconstruction of the western peripheral list, see Gantzer 2006 and note he lists 255 entries for that list.

³²² For Nanaya as the daughter of Inana, see Pettinato 1998. For the assumed syncretism between Nanaya and Inana/Ištar, see Richter 2004: 307.

³²³ Shibata 2009: 36.

³²⁴ Whereas the entry in VAS 24 20 rev. i 14 has Inana of Uruk, the list from Tell Taban has this entry in the form ^dMUŠ₃-^ʿE₂-[an-na] "Inana of the Eana" (Shibata 2009: 36 iii 8' and see discussion of line on p. 40. Note that the Middle Babylonian peripheral god-lists have ^dNIN.E₂.AN.NA (line 156) and ^dINANA.UNU^{ki} (line 158), see Gantzer 2006: 307. Note that the former is again another instance of a divine epithet becoming a deity. The epithet of nin-e ana is used of Inana from the time of the third millennium (e.g. inscription of Ur-Namma, Frayne 1997 [RIME 3/2]: 63, 3/2.1.1.27 line 2).

³²⁵ For references to Inana of Ilip, see Peterson 2009a: 51 note to line 57.

Their lack of association with the entries of Inana and Dumuzi leads to the inference that these ‘Inana’ manifestations can more profitably be analyzed as local goddesses rather than hypostases of Inana.

The god-list from Nippur containing around 270 deities is arranged according to patriarchal principles.³²⁶ In its listing of married couples, the male spouse always precedes the female even where the female is more important. The most blatant example is that of Inana and her syncretistic manifestations who appear after her spouse Dumuzi.³²⁷ Unexpectedly, the consort of Marduk, Zarpanītum, is catalogued among these Inana goddesses. Similarly, many other singular goddesses have various hypostases listed after their name. After Enlil and his consort Ninlil, Šulpae³²⁸ is listed together with the birthing goddesses who were recorded sequentially (see below).

Another catalogue which became the basis of the major Babylonian god-list An = *Anum* comprised 473 entries and was more hierarchic and less patriarchal though no less genealogical.³²⁹ It placed all Inana hypostases together after the various courts of the male gods – sixty-eight goddesses – before Dumuzi. On the other hand, the singular female wives such as Ninlil, Nin-Nibru, Damgalnuna, Zarpanītum, Tašmētum, Ningal, as well as Nisaba were all listed subsequently to their respective spouses and again were followed by other syncretistic manifestations. As expected, Ninlil is syncretized with the goddess Sud but also surprisingly with a deified epithet of the birthing goddess ^dSig₄-za-gin₃ “Divine Lapis Lazuli Brick”.³³⁰

Whereas the Sumerian theologians were content with one word *dīĝir* for deity, without any indication of gender, the Babylonians differentiated the genders of their deities. However, whilst the word for goddess (*iltum*), the feminine form of god (*ilum*), was used in certain contexts, the most common generic word for goddess was *ištarum* derived from the name of the goddess Ištar. In order to distinguish it from the deity, the common noun *ištarum* was commonly written syllabically and without a divine determinative.³³¹ The two words *ilum* and *ištarum* form the conventional pair to express ‘god and goddess’:³³²

³²⁶ For its recent redaction, see Peterson 2009a who has assembled further Nippur sources. Note that the list has, in addition to a thematic theological ordering, especially in the latter sections, an arrangement by graphemic and lexical principles.

³²⁷ Peterson 2009a: 54-72. For a discussion of SLT 122 ii 14-31, see Richter 2004: 295-296.

³²⁸ As spouse of the birthing goddess, see J.G. Westenholz and A. Westenholz 2006: 17.

³²⁹ TCL XV 10 197-265 (“Genouillac god-list”), Forerunner of An = *Anum*, see Richter 2004: 292-294.

³³⁰ TCL XV 10 48-51, see Krebernik 1998-2001d: 454-55 s.v. “Ninlil”.

³³¹ In unpublished texts from Larsa, the generic term for goddesses is written with the divine determinative and the logographic writing of the name of Inana: ^dINANA.MEŠ, see Arnaud 2001: 26.

³³² For further examples, see Wasserman 2003: 86-87.

ul iplaḫū ilīšun
ul usellû iš-ta-ar-šu'-un

They did not reverence their gods,
 They did not reverence their goddess(es).

(Lambert and Millard 1969: 74-75, Tablet II ii 23-24, Atra-ḫasīs)

ilī mātim iš-ta-ra-at mātim

the gods of the land, the goddesses of the land

(Horowitz 2000: 196 line 5, prayer to the gods of the night)

An Old Babylonian example of *ištaru* as a common noun in the singular and with possessive pronoun is:

lizziz ina muttiki ilu abīja
lišann[iak]k[im] iš-ta-ri-i alaktī limdi

let the god of my father stand before you,
 let him tell you, my goddess, learn my way.

(Groneberg 1997: 110-111, lines 13-14, see Streck 2003: 305
 and Cavigneaux 2005, hymn to Ištar)

Note the contrast between the named goddess Ištar (written with a logogram) and the generic use of *ištarū* in the plural:

U.DAR *rittušša šerret nišī uki'al*
[iq]ullā iš-ta-ra-ta-ši-in [siqr]ušša

Ištar holds in her hand the nose-rope of the people.
 Their goddesses attend to her word.

(VAS 10 214 ii 10-13, see Groneberg 1997: 75,
 hymn to Ištar Agušaya)

A unique counter example of the generic use of the logogram U.DAR is:

U.DAR *ummīšu bāniat illatim*
ili ḫālīšu rēmēnūm eṭeršu ina pušqim

The goddess of his mother, who gives birth to the clan,
 The god of his uncle, the merciful one who saves him from trouble.

(Geller and Wiggermann 2008: 150-155 LB 1000:15-16, incantation)

As will become evident, this usage sets the stage for the equation of goddesses. This catalyst is not present in regards to the male gods. Conversely,

many recognized syncretisms between Ištar and other goddesses are in need of correction when the writings are taken into account. For example, the oft-quoted syncretism between Ištar and Išhara is not articulated in the Old Babylonian literary composition, the myth of Atraḥasis, but rather a naming of the goddess of marriage as Išhara:

*inūma <a-na> ašš[ūti] u mutūti ...9 ūmī [lišš]akin hidūtum iš-tar
[litta]bbū ^dišhara*

when for wifehood and husbandhood, ...Let there be rejoicing for
nine days, Let them call the goddess (of marriage), Išhara...

(Atraḥasis I 301-304)³³³

Syncretism

Under the process of syncretism, goddesses were grouped into limited domains. One of the major ones was that of healing. Two distinct goddesses of healing were at home in specific metropolitan areas in the third millennium: Nintinuga (“Mistress who revives the dead”) in Nippur³³⁴ and Nin-Isina (“Queen/Mistress of Isin”) in her city Isin³³⁵. A third obscure goddess, Ninkarrak, the Semitic goddess of healing, occurs in personal names and toponyms in various cities.³³⁶ However, these goddesses were gradually overshadowed by Gula (“the Great”), the “great physician”, who apparently originated in the Umma region,³³⁷ and appeared sporadically at Lagaš, Ur, Nippur, Uruk³³⁸ and Adab.³³⁹ The name of this goddess should probably be regarded as an epithet that ostensibly took on life and developed into a new deity towards the later part of the third millennium (as did Ninmaḥ and Diḡirmaḥ at the end of the Early Dynastic period).³⁴⁰ The epithet gu-1a

³³³ For the edition of this text, see Lambert and Millard 1969: 64-65, and for a recent translation, see Foster 2005: 238. Išhara also appears as the goddess of weddings in the Old Babylonian Gilgameš Epic (Gilg. P 196-197 [v 28-29], see George 2003: 178-179). For the two arrivals of the goddess Išhara in Mesopotamia, see Chapters II.B.3 and 4 in this volume.

³³⁴ See Chapter II.B.4.

³³⁵ See Chapter II.B.1 no. 29.

³³⁶ See J.G. Westenholz 2010b.

³³⁷ In the Neo-Sumerian attestations, Gula is commonly given a geographical origin as Gula of Umma or Gula of KI.AN (also in the territory of Umma).

³³⁸ Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 330.

³³⁹ Such-Gutiérrez 2005/6: 17. Her early presence in Adab might be indicated by a field either named after her or belonging to her temple mentioned in an Old Akkadian administrative document (Pomponio, Visicato and A. Westenholz 2006: 111 no. 35:2).

³⁴⁰ The question of the etymology of this divine name is moot as is her relationship to an earlier deity written ^dGu₂-1a₂, the wife of Ab-u₂. Richter (2004: 112) follows Kraus (1949: 68-69) in identifying the two deities. According to Kraus, Gula is a folk etymology of an incomprehensible name. Such-Gutiérrez (2003: 246-248) has provided a convincing

‘great’ occurs as an epithet of Nin-Isina in Neo-Sumerian sources. In a record of offerings from Lagaš, the goddess is registered as: ^dNin-isin₂^{si}-na gu-la in contradistinction to the goddess ^dNin-isin₂^{si}-na nam-tur (“smallness”).³⁴¹ In Nippur, provisions are given for the divine journey of Nin-Isina of Umma to Nippur.³⁴² Although the healing goddess of Umma was normally named Gula, the scribe of Puzriš-Dagan was more familiar with the healing goddess Nin-Isina. According to Sallaberger (1993: 154) this demonstrates that goddesses who were originally autonomous became fused and that their names to some degree exchangeable; this happened in cultic practice rather than in scholastic theology.

A hundred years later, the epithet gu-la is deified when it occurs in apposition to Nin-Isina as in the following hymn:

ku₃ ^dnin-isin₂^{si}-na nin ^dgu-la
^dnin-isin₂^{si}-na e₂-gal-maḥ an-ne₂ ki us₂-[sa]
^diš-bi-er₃-<ra> ki aḡ₂ šag₄-za-ra za-e ḥul₂-ḥul₂-mu-di-ni-ib

Holy Nin-Isina, Mistress Gula, Nin-Isina, in the Egal-maḥ, founded by An – bring joy to Išbi-Erra, the beloved of your heart.

(Hymn to Nin-Isina for Išbi-Erra, king of Isin [Išbi-Erra D] lines 12-14, see ETCSL 2.5.1.4)

While these goddesses of healing were understood as sharing the same domain and thus syncretized in function,³⁴³ they nevertheless had separate cults. The worship of Nintinuga continues to be localized in Nippur and diminishes with the abandonment/impoverishment of the southern cities³⁴⁴

argument to separate these goddesses on the basis of their geographical distribution and their listing in different sections of the god lists.

³⁴¹ Examples are ITT 4 7310 rev. ii 25 and 28; MVN 9 87 rev. ix 42'. For a discussion on the addition of “gu-la” to divine names in the Neo-Sumerian period, see above Chapter II.B.4.

³⁴² Sallaberger 1993: 153-54 §4.12.3, Such-Gutiérrez 2003: I 330, 354. The literary composition *Nin-Isina's Journey to Nippur* which was studied by Wagensohnner (2008) relates to her journey from Isin.

³⁴³ Kraus (1949: 70) posited that Nin-Isina, Ninkarrak and Gula were already understood as interchangeable names for one goddess since the Old Babylonian period. Richter (2004) takes the opposite view on p. 108 but he contradicts himself on p. 181 where he suggests that the fusion of the healing goddesses already is apparent in the Ur III period.

³⁴⁴ Nintinuga continues to be invoked in the liturgy in the eme-sal form of her name Gašan-tin-lu-ba, see Cohen 1988: 135: f+262, 157: 80 (balaḡ-compositions to Enlil) and *passim* as did Nin-Isina but not Gula or Ninkarrak. See discussion of the seal of Enlilalša, nu-eš₃-priest of Enlil, gu₄-priest of Ninlil, governor of Nippur, official(?) of Nintinluba(?) (fig. 148) in Chapter IV.C.7. In the first-millennium Nippur Compendium, her name is listed in the Divine Directory (George 1992: 156-157, §14:2) so her worship continued in her hometown.

whereas the veneration of Gula and Ninkarrak continued in northern Babylonia. However, the name of Nintinuga was enshrined in the Sumerian cultic liturgy, already in the Old Babylonian litanies:

u₃-a erim₆-ma-ĝu₁₀ ...
 sa₁₂-du-an-na ga-ša-an-i₃-si-in-na
 ama uru₂-saĝ-ĝa₂ ga-ša-an-tin-u₉(UG₅)-ba
 dumu-e₂-e ga-ša-an-ĝu₁₀ gu-nu-ra ...
 ama-e₂-e ^de[zina-^dku₃-su₃-x]

Alas, my treasure house...
 The land register of An, Gašan-Isina [Nin-Isina],
 The mother of the chief city, Gašan-tinuba [Nintinuga],
 The child of the house, my mistress Gunura,³⁴⁵ ...
 The mother of the house, Ezina-Kusu, ...

(Krecher 1966: 54 ii 6-15, see 119-135)

This litany is traditional in the liturgy down to the Seleucid period (see below).

In addition to those goddesses whose domain of activity solely consisted of healing, there were other goddesses who were characterized as physicians. In particular, BaU of Lagaš was regarded as a healing goddess from the third millennium onwards (see above Chapter II.B.4).³⁴⁶ The following hymn on behalf of the king of Isin addresses BaU with the epithets of Nin-Isina:

dumu an-na mas-su₂ inim pad₃-de₃ niĝ₂-nam šu-ni si
 nin a-zu gal saĝ gig₂-ga lu₂ til₃-le lu₂ u₃-tud

Daughter of An, expert, eloquent, who holds everything in her hand!
 Mistress, great doctor of the black-headed people, who keeps people
 alive, and brings them to birth.

(Hymn to BaU for Išme-Dagan, king of Isin
 [Išme-Dagan B] 5-6, see ETCSL 2.5.4.02)³⁴⁷

The healing goddesses are a typical case of functional congruence between divine entities. Consequently, all healing goddesses are invoked in incan-

³⁴⁵ For this goddess, daughter of Nin-Isina/Gula and sister of Damu, see Edzard 1957-1971, Wagenonner 2008 (participant in Nin-Isina's procession), George 1992: 107:16', 304, 332 (in Babylon in the first millennium) and J.G. Westenholz 2010b: 383 (for her lack of association with Ninkarrak).

³⁴⁶ For the Old Babylonian period, see Richter 2004: 195-196, 514-519.

³⁴⁷ For a discussion of this exceptional hymn in the context of BaU's healing powers and the context of this syncretism with Nin-Isina, see Ceccareli 2009.

tations for helpful intervention in combating illnesses (Cunningham 1997: 115-116).³⁴⁸ In addition, the aid of an anonymous group of healing goddesses is called upon in Old Babylonian incantations: the seven and seven Daughters of Anu.³⁴⁹ They assist in the healing process by sprinkling soothing water from their pure vessels over the victims of disease, warding off eye trouble, skin diseases and inflammations, as well as over the mother in childbirth, to assist in a safe delivery.

The most prominent case of syncretism is that of Nin-Isina. Despite its fragmentary state, an early syncretistic hymn³⁵⁰ demonstrates that Nin-Isina was explicitly equated with other goddesses:

ʿeš₃ʿ [nibru]ʿkiʿ dur-an-ki-a-kam
 ʿkiʿ [d]en-lil₂-la₂-ka
 [...] X-ga [e-ne ʰe₂-en]-ʿnaʿ-nam-ma-am₃ ...
 [...] ʿgal₂ʿ-¹la [e-ne ʰe₂]-ʿenʿ-na-nam-ma-am₃
 [...] [...]ʰe^{ki}-e [...] an-na-ka
 [...] [d]ĝa₂-tum₃-dug₃ [e]-ʿneʿ ʰe₂-en-na-nam-ma-am₃
 [...] an-ne₂ us₂-sa-a-na
 [...] ʿmulʿ dumu-saĝ e-ne ʰe₂-en-na-nam-ma-am₃
 [X X] ĝir₂-su^{ki}-e eš₃ numun i-i-ka
 ʿninʿ-ĝu₁₀ ama ^dba-u₂ e-ne ʰe₂-en-na-nam-ma-am₃
 [X]-gaʿ umma^{ki}-a ʿšeg₁₂ʿ-kur-šag₄-ga-ka
 [...] X mir-re gu₇ [e-ne ʰe₂]-en-na-nam-ma-am₃ ...
 ušum lu₂-ra ʿnu₂ʿ [...] kilib₃-ba eme ed₃-de₃
 nin-ĝu₁₀ ^dnun-ʿgalʿ e-ne ʰe₂-en-na-nam-ma-am₃
 nin-ĝu₁₀ lagaš^{ki}-a am₃-ma-da-an-ku₄-ʿku₄ʿ
 iri^{ki} kug ki šag₄-ge pad₃-ʿdaʿ-ni
 nitalam₃ ʿkiʿ [aĝ₂]-ĝa₂-ni [en] [d]pa-bil₂-saĝ-ĝe₂₆
 [...] NI A [X] ʿmuʿ-da-an-ĝar
 [...] ʿna₈ʿ-na₈-e-ne ...
 [...] RI asila₃-a [ud mu]-un-di-ni-ib-zal-e
 [X X (X)] ^dnin-isin₂^{si}-ʿnaʿ [za₃]-mi₂-zu dug₃-ga-ʿam₃ʿ

In the shrine of Nibru, Dur-an-ki,
 the place of Enlil,
 she is indeed....
 she is indeed In, the of An.
 ... she is indeed Ĝatumdug.
 In ..., her that reaches the heavens,
 she is indeed, the firstborn child.

³⁴⁸ See table 1 in Chapter IV.C.5 in this volume.

³⁴⁹ W. Farber 1990.

³⁵⁰ For another syncretistic hymn, TCL 16 75, an eme-sal hymn to Nin-Isina, see Tinney 1996: 172-4 and Ceccarelli 2009: 34. For a discussion of syncretistic hymns, see below Chapter II.D.

In Ĝirsu, the shrine which first brought forth the seed of mankind,
 my mistress is indeed Mother BaU.
 InUmma, in the Šeg-kuršaga,
 she is indeed
 a dragon lying in wait for men, asticking out its tongue at
 everybody,
 My mistress is indeed Nungal.³⁵¹
 My mistress entered Lagaš.
 In the holy city, her chosen place
 With her beloved spouse, Master Pabilsaĝ,³⁵²
 She lay down with him on
 and spent time joyously with him.
 Nin-Isina, it is sweet to praise you.

(Nin-Isina and the gods [Nin-Isina F], ETCSL 4.22.6,
 Segment B 10-12, Segment C 1-10, Segment D 1-12)

According to Richter (2004: 514-521), Nin-Isina was syncretized not only with BaU, but also with Inana, Ningirida and Ninsumuna. These syncretisms arose from association either by contiguity (same temple or spouse) or by similarity. Already in the third millennium, her worship spread from Isin to the southern cities (Larak, Ur, Uruk, Larsa, Lagaš) and to the northern cities (Kiš, Babylon). It was her temple at Babylon built by Sumuabum (George 1993: no. 319) that became the seat of Gula. On the other hand, Nin-Isina was syncretized with Inana because of historical events – the state of Isin lost control over the city of Uruk and therefore its king was unable to enact the “sacred marriage” with Inana.³⁵³ In order to provide for the welfare of the land, Nin-Isina was identified with Inana – through the similar sounding named goddess Ninsiana, ‘red queen of heaven’, the embodiment of Venus (the manifestation of Inana). Under the process of syncretism, there occurred an analogous expansion of functions of Inana into the healing domain and Nin-Isina into the martial arts.³⁵⁴

Fusion

The most prominent case of fusion in which the same goddess was worshipped under different names at different sanctuaries is that of the birthing

³⁵¹ For Nungal (‘great prince(ss)’), the merciful divine warden of Mesopotamian jails, see references in Civil 1993; Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nungal”. For her connection with the goddess of healing Nintinuga, see Peterson 2009b: 234.

³⁵² Pabilsaĝ is the spouse of Nin-Isina in Isin and Larak. For their important role in Lagaš, see Richter 2004: 195, n. 859. This syncretism may be due to syncretism of the spouses of the healing goddesses: Ninurta/Ninĝirsu/Pabilsaĝ.

³⁵³ Other scholars place this syncretism even earlier, see Richter 2004: 234.

³⁵⁴ Richter 2004: 233 n. 977, 234-5.

goddesses.³⁵⁵ Certainly, by the mid-second millennium BCE, a single birthing goddess can be recognized, referred to by a variety of wholly interchangeable names and whose role is limited to one based on gender. In all the god-lists, they appear as a unit inserted after spouses or other female deities. In the Nippur god-list, after the god Šulpaē, appear nine birthing goddesses:³⁵⁶

- Ninḫursaġa (“Mistress of the Mountain Ranges”), Sumerian
- Nin-diġir-re-e-ne (“Mistress of the Gods”), Sumerian
- Ninmaḥ (“Exalted Mistress”), Sumerian
- Nintur (“Mistress Birth-hut”), Sumerian
- Ninmena (“Mistress of the Crown”), Sumerian
- Aruru (name of unknown etymology)
- Diġirmaḥ (“Exalted Deity”), Sumerian
- Mama³⁵⁷
- *Bēlet-ilī* (“Mistress of the Gods”), Akkadian

This is the longest catalogue.³⁵⁸ The god-list from the city of Isin records the names of six birthing goddesses: Diġirmaḥ, Aruru, Nintur, Ninmena, Ninḫursaġa and Nin-x attached to the homophonous primordial goddess Nin-men-na.³⁵⁹ The Old Babylonian Forerunner to An = *Anum* has only five names: Ninḫursaġa, Diġirmaḥ, Ninmaḥ, Aruru, and Nintur placed after Tašmētum.³⁶⁰ Sherwin (1999: 19) asks if these are all variant names for the same goddess, for the same goddess in different places or for different goddesses with similar function who have coalesced.

According to the evidence from the literary texts, the fusion can be perceived in relation to the name of the mother of Ninurta.³⁶¹ His mother is variously named:

³⁵⁵ On the basis of administrative documents, the actual evidence of the cult of the birthing goddess seems to diminish (see Richter 2004: 144). Perhaps, this anomaly is due to a change in venue from public worship to private devotions with less offerings thus recorded from public stores.

³⁵⁶ SLT 122 i 8-16 // 123 rev. i 8-16 // 124 i 8-16 (note in 124 i 12 Men-na occurs in place of Nin-men-na), see Peterson 2009a: 14 lines 8-16; 19-20 score, but only lists the form Nin-men-na.

³⁵⁷ For Ma-ma already in Early Dynastic Lagaš, see Selz 1995: 175-176; in Early Dynastic Adab, see Such-Gutiérrez 2005/2006: 22 s.v. 69.A. For the unlikely possibility that Mama stands for *Aštar, see A. Westenholz 1999: 78-79. For the homophonous goddess, wife of the underworld god Nergal/Erra, see Krebernik 1987-1990: s.v. “Mamma, Mammi; Mammītum”.

³⁵⁸ This section appears in two OB exemplars of the Weidner god-list, both not completely preserved: [...] ^dNin-maḥ ^dNin-ḫur-saġ-ġa₂ (VAS 24 20 rev. iii 1-2) and [...] ^dA-ru-ru ^dNin-men-na! ^dNin-maḥ (VAT 7759 vii 1-3).

³⁵⁹ IB 1552+ Text A I 22-27, see Wilcke 1987: 94. The primordial goddess occurs in Text A I 21.

³⁶⁰ TCL XV 10: 112-116 (= iii 15-19), see Richter 2004: 144. Note Nin-men-an-na occurs three lines later.

³⁶¹ On the genealogy of Ninurta, see Streck 1998-2001: 513-14. A number of texts assert or

(1) Nintur

^dnin-tur₅-re šu niĝ₂ dim₂-ma-ni za-ra mu-ri-in-bad[?]
 ubur dug₃-ga-na ka ma-ra-ni-in-ba ga nam-šul-la
 mi-ri-in-gu₇
 am u₆ di-gin₇ alan-zu mu-un-er₉ a₂-ur₂-zu mu-un-gur₄[?]
 igi ni₂ bur₂-e en me-lem₄ nam-ur-saĝ da-da-ra-še₃
 mi-ri-in-dug₄
 kišib-la₂ zid-da-zu im-ma-an-dab₅ ama-zu ^dnin-tur₅-re
 e₂-kur eš₃ maḥ-a mi-ni-in-kur₉-re-en a-a-zu ^den-lil₂-ra
 mu-na-ab-be₂ dumu šu ĝar gi₄-zu nam gal tar-mu-ni-ib₂

For you, Nintur has opened wide her creative hands;
 She has breast-fed you from her sweet breasts;
 She has fed you with the milk of vigor.
 As if you were a spectacular wild bull, she has made your figure
 strong, she has made your limbs massive.
 She has fitted you out with appearance, awesome radiance and
 heroism.
 Your mother, Nintur, held you by the right wrist,
 She led you before your father in Ekur, the august shrine.
 Then she said: "Decide a great fate for the son who is your avenger!"

(An adab-hymn to Ninurta for Lipit-Ištar
[Lipit-Ištar D] 5-11, see ETCSL 2.5.5.4)

an-<gin₇> dim₂-ma dumu ^den-lil₂-la₂
^dnin-urta ^den-lil₂-gin₇ ṛdim₂-ma ^dnin-tur₅-ṛe^ṛ tud-da
 a₂-ĝal₂ diĝir ^da-nun-na-ke₄-ne ḥur-saĝ-ta e₃-a

Created like An, O son of Enlil,
 Ninurta, created like Enlil, born by Nintur,
 Mightiest of the Anuna gods, who came forth from the mountain
 range ...

(*Ninurta's Return to Nippur* [An-gim-dím-ma] 1-3,
see ETCSL 1.6.1)

In this last literary composition, Ninurta also names Ninlil as his mother but it might be understood as a honorific rather than a kinship term. On the other hand, because Ninurta is the son of Enlil, there exists a secondary genealogical line of descent from Enlil's spouse Ninlil.³⁶²

imply that as Ninurta was the son of Enlil, he was also the son of Enlil's spouse, Ninlil.

³⁶² For instance, ^dnin-urta kalag-ga u_x(PA)-a ṛmaḥ^ṛ [^dnin-lil₂-le tud-da "Ninurta, the strong one, the august provider, born of Ninlil!" (Hymn to Ninurta for Šu-Sîn [Šu-Sîn D] 25, see ETCSL 2.4.4.4).

(2) Ninmaḥ and (3) Ninḥursaĝa

In the mythological narrative *Ninurta's Exploits*, Ninurta addresses his mother as Ninmaḥ and renames her as Ninḥursaĝa. In this composition there is also a mention of Ninlil and Nintur. Aruru, however, is identified as the sister of Enlil although she is clearly portrayed as a birthing goddess.

munus kur-še₃ i-im-ĝen-ne-en-na-gin₇
^dnin-maḥ nam-ĝu₁₀-še₃ ki-bal-a
 mu-un-kur₉-re-en-na-gin₇
 me₃ ni₂ ḥuš-ba ri-a-ĝa₂ la-ba-an-sud-de₃-en-na-gin₇
 ur-saĝ-me-en gu-ru-um ĝar-ra-ĝa₂
 ḥur-saĝ mu-bi ḥe₂-em za-e nin-bi ḥe₂-em
 i₃-ne-eš₂ nam tar-ra ^dnin-urta-ka
 ud-da ^dnin-ḥur-saĝ-ĝa₂ di-še₃ ur₅
 ḥe₂-en-na-nam-ma-am₃...
 za-e nin-me-en i₃-da-sa₂-sa₂-a an-gin₇ ni₂ ḥuš gur₃-ru
 diĝir maḥ inim dirig-ge ḥul gig
 munus zid nin-ḥur-saĝ ki-sikil
^dnin-tur₅ a₂ sed-bi dab₅-be₂-še₃
 te-e-mu-da nin me maḥ ma-ra-an-šum₂ za-e
 ḥe₂-em-il₂-e
 en-e kur-ra nam mu-ni-in-tar-re du-ni eš₃ nibru^{ki}-a
 munus zid me-ni me dirig-ga nin nagar šaĝ₄-ga
^da-ru-ru nin₉ gal ^den-lil₂-la₂ gaba-na ba-e-gub

“Woman (munus), since you came to the mountains,
 Ninmaḥ, since you entered the rebel lands for my sake,
 since you did not keep far from me when I was surrounded by the
 horrors of battle –
 the pile which I, the hero, have piled up
 let the name of it be ‘Mountain Range’³⁶³ (ḥur saĝ) and may you be
 its mistress (nin):
 Now that is the destiny decreed by Ninurta.
 Henceforth people shall speak of Ninḥursaĝa. So be it.
 You, O Queen (ereš [nin]), become equal to An, wearing a terrifying
 splendor.
 Great deity/goddess³⁶⁴ who detests boasting,
 true Woman, Mistress of the mountain range (nin-ḥur-saĝ), maiden,
 Nintur, approach me.
 Mistress, I have given you great powers: may you be exalted”.
 While the master was fixing the destiny of the mountains, as he walked
 about in the sanctuary of Nibru,

³⁶³ For discussion of this term, see Steinkeller 2007: 223-230.

³⁶⁴ “Great Goddess” is written diĝir-maḥ and it could be taken as invoking another of the names of the birthing goddess.

True Woman, whose powers excel all powers, Mistress-creatrix-of-
the-womb,
Aruru, Enlil's elder sister, stood before him:

(*Ninurta's Exploits* [Lugale] 390-396, 406-413, see ETCSL 1.6.2)

(4) Diġirmaḥ, (5) Mami and (6) *Bēlet-ilī*

In the Akkadian mythological narrative *Ninurta and Anzu* the hero's mother is variously named. In the Old Babylonian version, the terrified gods call upon Diġirmaḥ³⁶⁵ whilst in the Standard Babylonian version, they summon *Bēlet-ilī*.³⁶⁶ Although, in the former, she lauds herself by the name of Mami,³⁶⁷ in the latter, Mami is renamed *Bēlet-kullat-ilī* ("Mistress of All the Gods").³⁶⁸

As is evident these six names are interchangeably used for the mother of Ninurta, having been conflated into a single divine persona. As to the remaining three goddesses catalogued in the god-lists in this same slot, two are distinct goddesses: Aruru and Ninmena, who although syncretized with the birthing goddess in literary texts, never actually fused with her, at least in Sumerian tradition. The last, Nin-diġir-re-e-ne, is really a back translation of *Bēlet-ilī* into Sumerian, an artificial creation and never an actual goddess. From this period onwards, there is one birthing goddess who has various names which are used interchangeably.

In the Ur III period, deities with different names and functions underwent merging into compounded deities and this phenomenon continued sporadically into the Old Babylonian period. In Nippur, there is another example of a goddess conjoined with Enlil, BaU-Enlil (Richter 2004: 50, 111), which is similar to Ninlil-Enlil found in the Ur III period.

On the other hand, it could be a scribal mistake for the more common BaU-Nibru 'BaU of Nippur'. In Kiš, there is one example of BaU-^dInana, if the reading is correct.³⁶⁹ As seen previously, amalgams existed of the sky-god An and other male and female deities (Chapter II.B.4). Whilst the logogram AN-^dMAR.TU continues to appear as an apparent synonym for ^dMAR.TU,³⁷⁰

³⁶⁵ 'Old Babylonian' Version "Tablet II" lines 36, 41, see Vogelzang 1988: 97 (text), 102 (translation).

³⁶⁶ Late Version, Tablet I lines 171, 176, see Vogelzang 1988: 38 (text), 45-46 (translation).

³⁶⁷ 'Old Babylonian' Version "Tablet II" 48, see Vogelzang 1988: 97 (text), 103 (translation).

³⁶⁸ Tablet I 181-2, see Vogelzang 1988: 38 (text), 46 (translation).

³⁶⁹ Pientka 1998: 188, 383 n. 205.

³⁷⁰ It has been suggested that since ^dMAR.TU can stand for the gentilic Amurrû "Amorite", the scribes might have used AN-^dMAR.TU to indicate unambiguously the god Amurru (Stol 1979: 178). Schwemer (2001: 32-33 and n. 160) discussed the phenomenon of AN+ deities in the context of AN-^dMAR.TU and proposed a possible realization ^dDiġir-Mar-tu = *Il(u)amurru(m)*. For other options, such as ^d*Ilum amurrûm* "the Amorite god" or preferably, ^d*Il Amurrim* "the god of Amurru (as a geographical entity)",

another compound deity occurs in the Old Babylonian period: an amalgam of the heavenly god An and Inana, An-^dInana. Scholarly opinions are divided as to how to understand this amalgam whether as referring to two deities ‘An (and) Inana’ or to one deity, the form of Inana worshipped in Uruk.³⁷¹ It has been claimed that An-^dInana is a goddess probably with a different reading.³⁷² Nevertheless, An is mentioned as a separate deity in the building inscriptions of the Old Babylonian kings of Uruk although he never occurs alone in archival texts but only in association with Inana. Consequently, Paul-Alain Beaulieu (2003: 109-111) suggested that originally there were two juxtaposed deities in Uruk who merged after their exile in Kiš into one deity.³⁷³ Another testimony to the dual nature of this amalgam is the reference to An-^dInana-bi-da-ke₄ “both An and Inana” (Richter 2004: 290 n. 1240). There is evidence for a single temple (e₂-AN.^dINANA) and one set of clergy devoted to the service of this dyad in Uruk and in Kiš.³⁷⁴ In this argument, another Inana/Ištar manifestation from Ur should be taken into consideration: *Iš₈-tar₂-DIĜIR/AN*, who has a temple in Ur,³⁷⁵ which seems to be a possible reading of the logogram An-^dInana.

This amalgam needs more careful investigation from a gender perspective. If the amalgam was seen to possess dual gender, it could be seen as either bisexual (androgynous/hermaphroditic) or asexual (genderless, neuter divine persona). Thus, if there are two divine persona occupying one physical manifestation, that entity might accommodate the divine powers, roles and domains of both deities. If the amalgam was seen to possess one gender, it could be either feminine or masculine. It would signify the complete absorption of An by Inana or Inana by An. Although the evidence is not conclusive, all scholars assume that if the amalgam is of a single gender, it would be feminine, on the presumption that it is parallel to AN-^dMAR.TU. On the other hand, if other amalgams are taken into consideration, it should be An

see most recently the evidence collected in Beaulieu 2005. The question was again taken up by Schwemer (2008: 29-30 and n. 79). For the Sumerian reading, ^dDiĝir-Mar-tu, see Peterson 2009a: 50. Nevertheless, they are both listed consecutively in the Nippur god-list (lines 45 and 47) which indicates that there should be two deities despite the evidence that the two forms interchange freely (Beaulieu 2005: 31).

³⁷¹ Cavigneaux 1996: 10 n. 45, “Ans Inana”.

³⁷² Charpin 1986: 404 and note 2. For the most recent discussion of this compound, see Beaulieu 2003: 109-111. Pientka (1998: 179 and in n. 9) cites van Dijk’s two manifestation forms of the deity DN ~ AN.DN. See also George 2000: 291 n. 48. For the conjunction of the dyad with Nanaya creating a triad written, AN.AN.INANA.(ù).AN.NA.NA.A, see references in J.G. Westenholz 1997: 67 and n. 82.

³⁷³ For their establishment in Kiš, in personal names and their cult personnel, see Charpin 1986: 403-415 and Pientka 1998: 179-187, 376, 378-9, 381, 383.

³⁷⁴ For references, see J.G. Westenholz 2010a: 324-325.

³⁷⁵ UET 5 112b: 25, Richter 2004: 467.

of Inana as it is BaU of Enlil or Ninlil of Enlil and thus masculine. A third possibility is that this amalgam represents a third gender type of deity. Until a definitive gender or sex can be ascribed or assigned to this deity, it must remain another example of the fluidity and complexity of Mesopotamian deities.

Fission

In second-millennium Larsa, a unique case of fission can be traced. Inana's functions were split between three goddesses: Nanaya, goddess of love, Ninsiana the dimorphic Venus goddess, and Inana, herself, who retained the attributes of the divine universal powers, the me's and of waging of battle. The worship of these three goddesses was mutually exclusive, each was provided with a temple, cult personnel, and separate rites.³⁷⁶ Further dimorphism occurs in the persona of Ninsiana who is female in certain locations and male in others (see below).

New Arrivals

Historical events brought another layer of deities. As said in Chapter II.A, in the religious syncretism in Mesopotamia the substratum continues to exercise dominance into which elements from the Akkadian, Hurrian, and later Amorite beliefs were accepted making subtle changes in the character of the religious amalgam. In the Old Babylonian period, Assyrian deities were also introduced into the Babylonian world of the gods. Among the Old Assyrian deities whose veneration was transferred to the northern Babylonian cities was Tašmētum ("Reconciliation").³⁷⁷ Her presence was established at Sippar (temple, Renger 1967: 155), Borsippa (Hammurabi year date 41, Renger 1967: 140), and Dilbat (theophorous names Kobayashi 1980: 69, 72). Tašmētum was considered the wife of Tutu/Nabium and together with Zarpanītum (meaning unknown, etymologized as "seed-creating"), wife of Marduk became the prototypical divine wives. They appear together with their spouses already in the god-lists. In the Isin god-list, there are a group of Tašme- named deities (Wilcke 1987b: 96 B vii 5'-7'), one of which is Tašme-Ištar. While the cults of these goddesses, Zarpanītum and Tašmētum, are known and included particular rites associated with women, their early character and role beyond that of their gender as women and wives

³⁷⁶ J.G. Westenholz and A. Westenholz 2006: 9-10, 12-15.

³⁷⁷ For Tašmētum in Old Assyrian texts, see Kryszat 2003. Note also the two letters sent by Tarīša from Assur to her sister (AbB VII 129, AbB XII 60).

is unknown. Whether or not related to the etymologizing of her name,³⁷⁸ Zarpanītum occurs as a ‘birthing-mother’ of Babylon in later texts.³⁷⁹

Diminution, Decline, Disappearance, Demise

Finally, some goddesses who were originally of great importance simply disappeared with time; one example is Nimintaba, “she who holds forty” a name which has been interpreted as “she who holds the universe/heaven and earth”.³⁸⁰

Mutation

Of the various types of possible divine mutation, the most common relates to the gender of the deities. The shift of gender can be complete and final or localized spatially or temporally. This fluidity does not demonstrate any bisexuality, hermaphroditism, or androgyny. Deities are only gendered male, female, or genderless. An example of a deity whose gender alternates is Ninsiana the dimorphic Venus. Through all the millennia, Ninsiana, the Venus star, had both male and female aspects – male in evening and female in morning.³⁸¹ In contrast, the intercessory goddess, Ninšubura, the mother of the land,³⁸² changed her gender over time due to the syncretization with a male Akkadian deity – an outstanding example of change due to the process of mutation.³⁸³ In Sumerian tradition, she was the vizier primarily to the court

³⁷⁸ Her Sumerian name, ^dE₄-ru₆ was also heard as *erû* “to be pregnant” in Akkadian (Krebernik 1993-1997: 516 s.v. “Muttergöttin”).

³⁷⁹ Krebernik 1993-1997: 516 s.v. “Muttergöttin”.

³⁸⁰ See Lambert 1985b: 199-201 and Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nimintaba”, who understands the name as “Doppelte Vierzig (Double-Forty)”.

³⁸¹ Heimpel 1998-2001: 487-88 s.v. “Ninsiana”. Reiner (1995: 6 and n. 14) quotes one solitary source (K.5990) that asserts that Venus is female at sunset and male at sunrise. See also Koch-Westenholz 1995: 125-126. Further, earlier and conclusive evidence that Ninsiana was considered male in the evening is found in a scholastic text from the archive of Ur-Utu, the chief lamentation priest (*kalamāhu*) of Annunītum, in Sippar-Amnānum in which the obverse has an esoteric text on the theme of evening (AN USAN) and the reverse a prayer addressed to ^dnin-si₄-an-na *ilum ellum* “radiant god” (de Meyer 1989). Note the suggestion by Shaffer and Wasserman (2003: 12) that *ilu* in reference to Ninsiana in the inscription of Iddin-Sîn of Simurru (vi 14-15), should not necessarily be understood as referring to the male manifestation of Venus but as the word for ‘deity’ regardless of gender. This occurrence in Akkadian would parallel that of the usage of *dîĝir* in Sumerian referring to goddesses (see Chapter II.B.2).

³⁸² For a discussion of her function as ‘mother’ within the domain of fertility, see Zólyomi 2005: 404-405.

³⁸³ The case for Ninšubura being the divine mirror image of the human *gala*, whose gender identity is ambiguous, was presented by Uri Gabbay (2008: 53-54). As he himself realizes, there is no basis for any equation *gala* = *lagar* (stated on p. 54 with reference to his own denial on p. 49 n. 4). Further, Ninšubura is never described as a *gala*. Similarity and/or overlap of one function (appeasing the gods) is not enough evidence on which to build

of Inana and secondarily to that of An (in which case the Ninšubura is male, corresponding to gender of the god he served). In Akkadian texts, Ninšubura is always masculine, representing the Akkadian god Ilabrat.³⁸⁴ During the third millennium and early second millennium, the female Sumerian Ninšubura and the male Akkadian Ilabrat existed side by side. Ninšubura is further syncretized in the first millennium with Papsukkal, originally an obscure servant in the household of the god Zababa of Kiš.³⁸⁵ It is this god who claims her privileges as vizier to Ištar and Anu. She becomes him, the archetypal vizier to all the gods.³⁸⁶ Thus, another non-gendered role was lost by female deities.

2. Continuity and Change: Goddesses in the Middle Babylonian Period (1595-1000)

The first two centuries of this period was considered a Dark Age from which very few sources were available. However, new archives have been revealed that shed light on this era. The major archive is that of the First Sealand Dynasty (Dalley 2009).³⁸⁷ It gives us an overview of the deities in southern Babylonia in the middle of the second millennium BCE. The deities of the southern cities of Nippur, Ur, Eridu and Uruk were undeniably worshipped. The patron deity of the dynasty is the goddess known from the archaic period: Nanše (dNa-zi).³⁸⁸ Another goddess stemming from end of the fourth millennium who occurs in these documents is Nisaba.³⁸⁹ In this archive, the generic term for goddesses is written with the divine determinative and the logographic writing of the name of Inana: dINANA.MEŠ (66:1). This writing makes it difficult to distinguish the goddess Inana/Ištar from the generic word 'goddess'. There are a variety of Ištar hypostases differentiated as: Ištar-of-

such a gender theory.

³⁸⁴ Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-šubur".

³⁸⁵ Wiggermann 1998-2001: 492-493 s.v. "Nin-šubur".

³⁸⁶ Beaulieu 1992: 60-67. Note the late second-millennium equation of deities given in the god-list which coordinates the names of the deities in the eme-sal dialect with the standard Sumerian and Akkadian (line 92): d^umun-šubur (eme-sal) = dⁿin-šubur (Sumerian) = d^{pap-sukkal} (Akkadian). This equation reflects the change in gender; umun is the eme-sal lexeme for the standard Sumerian en 'master' rather than nin 'mistress'. See also Wiggermann 1998-2001: 492-494 s.v. "Nin-šubur".

³⁸⁷ The dating of the two kings mentioned in the archive is uncertain, see discussion in Dalley 2009: 1-4. She places the date of accession for Ayadaragalama roughly between 1550-1480 and his predecessor Pešgaldarameš before him.

³⁸⁸ Dalley 2009: 4-5.

³⁸⁹ Dalley 2009: no. 83:34.

Uruk (^dINANA ša UNUG.KI),³⁹⁰ Bēlet-Eana (^dNIN.E₂.AN.NA),³⁹¹ Queen-of-the-Heavens (^dLUGAL-at AN),³⁹² Goddess-who-dwells-in-Uruk (^da-šī-ib-ti UNUG.KI),³⁹³ Ištar-Daughter-of-Sîn (^dINANA DUMU ^dEN.ZU),³⁹⁴ Inana-of-Larsa (^dINANA ša Larsa^{ki}),³⁹⁵ Ištar-King-of-the-Temple-of-the-Crescent-Moon (^dINANA šar-E₂-U₄.SAKAR),³⁹⁶ Ištar-Queen/Mistress-of-Sugal/Zabalam (^dINANA NIN-SU.GAL),³⁹⁷ and Ištar-of-the-Stars (^dINANA MUL).³⁹⁸ To be set alongside the proliferation of Ištar manifestations, are the appearances of merged deities. In this archive there is only one goddess of healing, namely Gula, and one goddess of birthing, Ninmaḥ.

The Kassite dynasty at Babylon achieved the domination of the southern plains of Mesopotamia about 1475 BCE. Under the Kassite kings, popular devotion to goddesses is reflected in the pious prayers and in the affirmations of attachment inscribed on the seals, see e.g. **fig. 147**. Among the Inana/Ištar patron deities of cities are Ištar of Akkade, Ištar of Kiš, Bēlet-Uruk-u-Eana and her more frequent form, Bēlet-Eana (^dNIN.E₂.AN.NA).³⁹⁹ Other goddesses invoked are Gula, Ningal, ^dNingēštin (“Mistress of the Vine”),⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁰ Dalley 2009: no. 64:25.

³⁹¹ Dalley 2009: nos. 66:9(?), 74:4', 82:23'. Both these deities occur in the Middle Babylonian peripheral god-lists. An earlier instance apparently occurs in the Old Babylonian manuscript of the Weidner god-list from Tell Taban: ^dbēlet(INANA)-É'-[an-na] (Shibata 2009: 36 T07-1 iii' 8').

³⁹² Dalley 2009: nos. 66:4, 76:20 (together with Nanaya), 78:14-15, 80:5, 82:21', 83:24' (^dINANA LUGAL-at AN), 84:10, 59:13 (exceptionally written with šar-). Although Inana is described with the epithet nin-gal an-na “great queen of heaven” (e.g. *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* 229), the proper name in this spelling is limited to this archive. This goddess also occurs in later first-millennium Uruk sources, see below Chapter II.D. Note, however, the use of this appellative for Ištar in the hymn to *Šarrat-Nippuri* (see below pp. 101-102. See also Krebernik 2009-2011.

³⁹³ Dalley 2009: nos. 59:17, 82:30'. The goddess designated by this epithet is most probably Inana but it is only used of her in the first millennium (Beaulieu 2003: 117). Another goddess in her entourage, Ušur-amāssu, is also addressed with this title in an inscription by the governor of the Sealand, Kaššû-bēl-zēri (1008-955 BCE), see Beaulieu 2003: 226-228.

³⁹⁴ Dalley 2009: nos. 59:21, 78:7 (^dINANA DUMU-30-NA), 82:19' (^dINANA DUMU. MÍ ^dEN.ZU), 84:9 (^dINANA DUMU-30-NA), abbreviated Daughter-of-Sîn (^dDUMU.MÍ ^d30) 76:24.

³⁹⁵ Dalley 2009: nos. 59:15, 64:28 (together with Nanaya), 82:24'.

³⁹⁶ Dalley 2009: no. 83:33'.

³⁹⁷ Dalley 2009: no. 83:36'.

³⁹⁸ Dalley 2009: no. 83:41'.

³⁹⁹ For a review of the deities and the qualities ascribed to them in the prayers, see Limet 1971: 51-55. Also mentioned in the prayers is a minor female deity ^dTi.mu₂.a, known from god-lists, see Peterson 2009a: 59. She appears in the astral Inana section in An = *Anum* IV 176 (Litke 1998: 161).

⁴⁰⁰ For this goddess, also known in Sumerian as Ama-ĝeštin(ana) and Ĝeštinana, the sister of Dumuzi, the surveyor/scribe of the heavens and the netherworld, see Geller's (1985: 89) comments on line 48 and Krebernik 2003a: 158-160. Note also her involvement in divination, see Lambert 1998: 154. Her Akkadian counterpart is Bēlet-šēri.

Ninimma,⁴⁰¹ Ninmaḥ, Nin-Nibru, Ninsiana.⁴⁰² Ninsumuna and Tašmētu.⁴⁰³ In this archive, as in that of the First Sealand dynasty, there is only one goddess of healing, namely Gula, and one goddess of birthing, Ninmaḥ. Frequently, these goddesses are addressed as spouses of gods: Ninurta and Gula as well as Marduk and Zarpanītu. Many unusual couplings appear in the attachment clauses, for example, Sîn and Ninmaḥ (Limet 1971: 59 no. 2.12) as well as Amurru (dMAR.TU) and Bēlet-ekalli (Limet 1971: 110 no. 9.2).⁴⁰⁴ Prayers are also directed towards the couple of the individual's personal deity and guardian genius, diġir and lamma (Limet 1971: 97-8 nos. 7.12, 7.14-7.16, 113 no. 11.2). Two compounded deities occur in the seals: dAN.MAR.TU (Limet 1971: 57 no. 2.4, 107 no. 8.15) and AN URAŠ (Limet 1971: 59 no. 2.10), which Limet understands as Anu-Antu.⁴⁰⁵

A major source of information on the divine world in the late Middle Babylonian and early Neo-Babylonian periods are the Babylonian entitlement steles (*kudurrus*), see e.g. **figs. 144-146, 149**. The oldest known monument dates to the reign of Nazi-maruttaš (1307-1282) while the latest to that of Šamaš-šuma-ukīn (669-653).⁴⁰⁶ These steles reflect the traditional ranking of the highest gods. The apex of the monument (see **fig. 144**) is presided over by the astral deities: the sun-disk of the god Šamaš, the moon-crescent of the god Sîn and the Venus-star of the goddess Ištar (see further Chapter IV.C.7). In the curse formula, the Akkadian birthing goddess *Bēlet-ilī* occurs once as the fourth of the four great deities after Anum, Enlil and Ea,⁴⁰⁷ while her Sumerian counterpart, Ninmaḥ, appears often in the fourth place.⁴⁰⁸ In

⁴⁰¹ Limet 1971: 60 no. 2.14 mentioned together with Ningal of Nippur. On this goddess (written Nin-imma₃ [SIG₇]), commonly understood as a creatrix goddess, see Focke 1998, 1999-2000 and 1998-2001. Her cult is already established in the Early Dynastic period. She is at home in Nippur since earliest times (Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 280-284) and in Nippur, her role is that of a goddess of writing, similar to that of Nisaba (Focke 1999-2000: 100 and 1998-2001: 385). In the Middle Babylonian period and later, Ninimma is also identified as a healing goddess whose worship is integrated with that of Gula (Focke 1998-2001: 385). Note, however, an early reference to a male Ninimma in Kraus 1985: 130-131 no. 148:6 (Old Babylonian letter probably from the northern Babylonian city of Sippar) and for later occurrences, see Focke 1999-2000: 106. See also Richter 2004: 93-95.

⁴⁰² Since this manifestation of Ninsiana is linked to the šuba stone (see most recently Abrahams 2008), it represents the feminine aspect of this deity rather than the masculine.

⁴⁰³ The deity Ninšubura is not included since it is uncertain whether it was considered male or female. On the problems of the gender of this deity, see above section 1.

⁴⁰⁴ For a discussion of the couple on this seal, see Lambert 1970: 47.

⁴⁰⁵ Theologians in Seleucid Uruk (Beaulieu 1992: 57-58) treat Anu and Antu consistently as one single divine manifestation. See further J.G. Westenholz 2010a: 320.

⁴⁰⁶ On these monuments, see most recently Slanski 2003 and Herles 2006. See further Chapter IV.C.7 on imagery on these steles.

⁴⁰⁷ Reschid and Wilcke 1975: 56 ii 52, *kudurru* no. 116, Marduk-šāpik-zēri (1081-1069), see Herles 2006: 37.

⁴⁰⁸ See Herles 2006: 271. For relationship between symbols and curse formulae, see Herles

addition to the more common deities, the divine world reflected in these monuments seems eclectic and, at the same time, remarkable for the atypical deities called upon to protect the steles. For example, Enlil-nādin-apli (1103-1100 BCE) composed the following blessing:

zikir ^dNamma u ^dNanše *ipallaḫu*
^dNamma u ^dNanše GAŠAN.<MEŠ> *eštarātu*
kīniš lippalsāšuma
 KI ^dEa *bān kala*
šīmat TIL.LA lišīmāšu
 UD.MEŠ *labāri u MU.MEŠ mīšari*
ana šerikti lišrukāšu

(And who) would revere the name of Namma⁴⁰⁹ and Nanše, may Namma and Nanše, mistresses (GAŠAN.<MEŠ>), goddesses (*eš-ta-ra-a-tu*), look upon him truly and with Ea, creator of all things distribute for him a destiny of life.

(BE 1/1 83 rev. 14-20, see Slanski 2003: 48-50)

In this period, theologians constructed midrashic exegesis of divine names. By inventiveness and bogus philology, the names of deities were made to enshrine theological truths about the god to whom the names were applied. Thus, in the later second millennium and in the first millennium, scholastic tradition invented fifty names for Marduk (Lambert 1990: 121). In the hymn extolling Ištar as the Queen of Nippur, learned etymological speculation is focused on her seven names (iii 52-91, iv 28-40).⁴¹⁰

^dAnum ^dEnlil u ^dEa *uba'ilūši ukannūši* ^dIgigi
ištījumma šušša sikraša rabium
ša qadmiš izkuruši abu dādiša ^dAnum
^dNin-an-na *šarratu šamāmē*
bēlet dadmē rā'imat nišī talīmat ^dŠamši...
 [š]aniumma *sikraša rabium*
 [ša] *ušarbuši āliduš il duranki*
 [^dNeana *ša šaqâ emūqāša ...*
 ... *kadratu ilat rēme*
 [ina *šalš*]i ^dNinšiku ^dEa *qurādu*
 [ina *na*]kli *nēmeqīšu ušātirši zikr[i]*
 [^dZa]naru *telijatuma ...*

2006: 34-45.

⁴⁰⁹ For this goddess, see Chapter II.B.2, no. 15.

⁴¹⁰ Lambert 1982. For the suggested Middle Babylonian date of origin of this section, see Lambert 1982: 176. For other lists of the seven names of Ištar, see above Chapter II.B.2 and below Chapter II.D.1 as well as the first millennium version of the *ba la ḡ-composition* *uru₂ am₃-me-ir-ra-bi* (Volk 1989).

[^dA]nunu bānāt ba'ūlāti
[muter]ret zikri ana sinniš u sinništu ana zikr[i]...

zimrūša duššupu rabû taknūša
^dŠarrat-Nippuri šaqât u šarrat...
issûni jammina šumīša ^dIgigi

Anu, Enlil and Ea magnified her, the Igigi honored her.
Her first name, her great title
Which Anu, her beloved father, called her of old,
Is Ninana: “Queen of Heaven”,
Mistress of habitations, who loves the people, twin sister of Šamaš,
....
Her second great title,
With which her begetter, God of Duranki [Enlil], made her great,
Is Ne'ana: “She whose Strength is Lofty”,
.... fierce, yet goddess of compassion.
[Thirdly] Ninšiku, the warrior Ea
[With] his sophisticated skill gave her a superior name:
Zannaru, the Wise Goddess,....
Anunu, creatress of the human race,
Who [turns] men into women and women into men.
....
Songs to her are sweet, it is great to honor her.
The Queen-of-Nippur, she is lofty and she is queen,
...
The Igigi have proclaimed her seven names.

(Lambert 1982: 198-199, 52-56, 59-61, 65-70; 202-203, 36-37, 40)

These names are bestowed on Ištar by other deities. In the Seleucid period, theological and philological speculations concentrated on the names of the goddess Antu (Beaulieu 1995). Nevertheless, the tradition associating Ištar with a variety of names was ensconced in syncretistic hymns of the first millennium.

Syncretism

Beginning in latter half of the second millennium and completed in the first millennium is the second major period of syncretism and realignment of the Babylonian deities under the god of Babylon, Marduk. One catalyst in this development was the international discourse between the great kingdoms of the ancient Near Eastern world during the Late Bronze Age (1400-1200 BCE). In international communication between rulers of relatively equal status, parity of power was expressed in corresponding equations of parity between the gods and goddesses belonging to the different kingdoms (Smith 2008: 17).

Accordingly, it is in the latter part of the second millennium BCE that bilingual lists and their translation of divinities enter the *Listenwissenschaft* (literally “list science”). All earlier catalogues of deities were simple catalogues of gods, in single column formats. At this period, a second column is sometimes added to the pedagogic Weidner list giving not only other names for the deity in the right hand column but also explanatory notes. The other names for the deity could be either an Akkadian one or a more common one, indicating obvious results of the process of syncretism. The foremost bilingual god-list An = *Anum* was compiled during the period 1300-1100 (Lambert 1975a: 195), or probably even earlier, on the evidence of the Kassite scribal exercise tablets from Nippur.⁴¹¹ Its ancient title comes from the first line of the text (incipit) in which the Sumerian god An is equated with the Akkadian god *Anum*. It was a dictionary equating all the Sumerian and Akkadian deities. The deities in this list number about 1970 (Lambert 1957-1971: 476).⁴¹² This theological *Interpretatio Babylonica* of the Sumerian deities is similar to that of the later Greek system. In the absence of an Akkadian parallel deity, a ditto mark occurs. Furthermore, each deity is commonly identified as to familial or other connections with the preceding god.

In addition to the bilingual catalogues, triple-column god-lists appear. The most well known is An = *Anu* = *ša amēli* (“the god An is the name of the god Anu as god of a person”). Whereas the format of the first two columns is the same as in An = *Anum*, the third column explains the significance of the god named in the first column. It consists of 157 named deities who are related to only twenty-four major gods in hierarchic order (Lambert 1957-1971: 476-477). Certain equivalences cross gender boundaries. For instance, the birthing goddess Ninmaḥ is equated with the male god of wisdom, Ea of irrigation (*ša mēkiri*),⁴¹³ and the male god Haja is equated with his spouse, the goddess Nisaba of prosperity (*ša mašrê*).⁴¹⁴

Moreover, the key principle of these late arrangements is that major deities could be identified with similar ones and that minor deities were absorbed into a major one (Lambert 1975a: 196). By this theological logistics, the total number of distinct gods diminished over the coming centuries. One result of this process was an increase in the names under which the major gods were worshipped. The treatment of the goddesses shows clearly the difference between those goddesses whose identity was completely fused as the birthing goddesses and those goddesses who were syncretized. Whereas Tablet II

⁴¹¹ Veldhuis 2000: 69, 79-80, 83-84.

⁴¹² Other estimates of the length of this list are 1750 (Krebernik 2002: 35) and 1800 (Groneberg 2006: 138).

⁴¹³ Litke 1998: 240 line 148.

⁴¹⁴ Litke 1998: 235 line 98.

of An = *Anum* lists forty-five Sumerian names of the Akkadian birthing goddess *Bēlet-ilī*, the goddesses of healing were given diverse matches. Tablet V attaches the catalogue of the goddesses of healing to the section devoted to Ninġirsu and BaU. Thus, it first catalogues goddesses related to BaU and her entourage, followed by Nintinuga who is equated with various obscure deities together with her spouse, after whom is Gula's family and last, equates the largest section of thirty-six names of healing goddesses, both obscure and familiar, with the Semitic goddess of healing, Ninkarrak. On the other hand, the gods of her entourage are related to Gula. There is a whole tablet, Tablet IV, devoted to Inana = *Ištar* which unfortunately is poorly preserved. Among her manifestations are those designated *Bēlet* "Mistress of" or *Šarrat* "Queen of" a geographical location, such as a city, temple or area. Brigitte Groneberg (2006: 140) has suggested that the proliferation of names for *Ištar* should be interpreted as an emotional (not political) syncretism that elevates *Ištar* at the expense of other goddesses. Another possible interpretation could be that the principle of graphic similarity underlies the grouping of all these INANA goddesses.

This key principle of the god-lists that major deities could be identified with similar ones was probably the catalyst in the creation of syncretistic hymns in which a deity addressed is described in terms of others (note the Old Babylonian example Nin-Isina F given above),⁴¹⁵ or in which a deity claims various identities. The latter genre seems to be limited to the goddesses. The dating of these texts is uncertain. One of the most famous of this genre is the Hymn to Gula authored by Bulluṣa-rabi whose composition Lambert has dated to the period between 1400-700 (Lambert 1967: 109, 113-114). Since all the manuscripts stem from the first millennium, these compositions will be discussed together in the next chapter. These hymns and similar ones demonstrate the theological speculation of the period. The result might be considered a kind of henotheism.

The *Interpretatio Babylonica* of the Sumerian deities is applied in the composition of bilingual literary texts; a deity is given one name in Sumerian and a different but equivalent name in Akkadian. For instance, among the healing goddesses, Nin-Isina occurs in Sumerian and is translated by Ninkarrak or Gula in Akkadian.

The theological speculation had concrete consequences for the worship of these deities. Frequently, the goddesses that were syncretized were worshipped together in one temple. For instance, the Middle Babylonian temple Egalmaḥ was home to both Gula and Nin-Isina – their worship was thus conjoined by spatial bounds and visually rendered an apparent syncretism (Richter 2004: 195-196).

⁴¹⁵ The earliest may be the Early Dynastic hymn in praise of Inana mentioned in Chapter II.B.2.

Texts that reflect the cult rather than theology show both the worship of discreet deities and groups of deities. For instance, one Kassite text describes the major temple complexes as well as smaller temples and shrines in Nippur.⁴¹⁶ In the Kiur complex of Ninlil, there is a sanctuary dedicated to the *Bēlētu* “Mistresses” (for the designation “mistresses” used as a generic epithet of goddesses when grouped as a unit, see below Chapter II.D). On the other hand, the major goddesses of Nippur with the exception of Inana⁴¹⁷ have their own temples: Ninlil, Nin-Nibru, Uraš-Nibru (“the deity Uraš of the city Nippur”),⁴¹⁸ Kusu,⁴¹⁹ Ninšubura,⁴²⁰ Ninsiana,⁴²¹ Damkina,⁴²² Ninkasi, Nin-SAR,⁴²³ Šuziana, and Ninimma.

Another phenomenon was the continuing use of epithets in place of the names of female deities throughout Babylonia. One seal invokes ^dNin (Limet 1971: 99 no. 7.20), probably to be understood as Akkadian *bēltu*, who could refer to any specific but unnamed goddess.⁴²⁴ In the Sealand dynasty archive, Nanše is “Queen of NINA” (^d*Šar-ra-at-ni-na*).⁴²⁵ In a Middle Babylonian entitlement stele (*kudurru*) found at Larsa, Nanaya bears the title of “Queen of Uruk and Eana” (*šarrat Uruk u Eana*)⁴²⁶ while Ištar is honored as “Queen of Nippur” (^d*Šarrat-Nippuri*). The latter title may have been a catalyst for a series of syncretisms in a chain reaction. For instance, Brigitte Groneberg suggested that Inana/Ištar and Gula, goddess of healing, merged in the literary

⁴¹⁶ Bernhardt and Kramer 1975, see discussion Richter 2004: 42 n. 192.

⁴¹⁷ Richter (2004: 123) explains this omission as the absence of any Inana temple at that period. According to Zettler (1992: 45-49), the Level II building of the Inana Temple in Nippur was probably constructed by Kassite kings, either Kadašman-Enlil I or Kadašman-Enlil II.

⁴¹⁸ In Nippur, Uraš was an earth goddess, see Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 313, 369 while in the northern Babylonian city of Dilbat, Uraš was the major male god of the city.

⁴¹⁹ For Kusu, the goddess of grain and purification, in Nippur, see Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 335-337; on this goddess, see also above Chapter II.B.4 and below Chapter II.D.1. The temple listed here in the Nippur temple list may refer to that of Ezina/Ašnan, see Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 231 n. 1007.

⁴²⁰ On the problems of the gender of this deity, see above Chapter II.C.1. In Nippur, Ninšubura appears in the retinue of the female deities, and is considered to be female, see Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 284-287. In the Old Babylonian period, offerings to her are made both in the Ninurta temple complex and in the Enlil temple complex, see Richter 2004: 69-70, 111-112, 134-136.

⁴²¹ In the Old Babylonian period, offerings to her are made in the Ninurta temple complex, see Richter 2004: 69, 115, 131-132.

⁴²² Later form of Damgalnuna, known from the third millennium, see above Chapter II.B.1, no. 4; the goddess was also known as Damkiana. For her variety of names in the Middle Babylonian period, see the An = *Anum* god-list II 173-184 (Litke 1998: 88-89).

⁴²³ See above Chapter II.B.2, no. 25.

⁴²⁴ For a discussion of this generic term for divinity as a specific referent, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “^dNIN”.

⁴²⁵ Dalley 2009: no. 81:14, see discussion pp. 7 and 79.

⁴²⁶ For this suggested reading, see Beaulieu 2003: 185.

traditions since both were called Nin-Nibru ‘Queen/Mistress of Nippur’.⁴²⁷ However, Nin-Nibru was the wife of Ninurta and the Akkadian translation of her name should be *Bēlet-Nippuri* whereas the similarly sounding goddess Ungal-Nibru was *Šarrat-Nippuri*. There is one contrary example of the name Nin-Nibru rendered in Akkadian as *Šarrat-Nippuri*. Nevertheless, as Wilfred Lambert (1982: 179-180) has demonstrated, these two goddesses were kept distinct with separate temples and cults. The former, Nin-Nibru, is linked with Ninimma and Gula through their association with Ninurta; Ninimma is related to Ninurta as his sister whereas Gula is linked to Ninurta as his spouse. The latter, Ungal-Nibru, might be another case of an epithet becoming a goddess; *un-gal* was bestowed as an accolade on various goddesses, such as Ninlil and Ningal. However, on the one occasion, Nin-Nibru/Gula and Ungal-Nibru do occur together in one temple, which is called after both their names: E₂ *Gu-la u Ungal-Nibru*.⁴²⁸ In literary texts and mythological commentaries as well as seal inscriptions, Ungal-Nibru is associated with Ninimma (Focke 1999-2000: 104). In the syncretistic hymn, Gula identifies herself as Ungal-Nibru but the temples mentioned, the Ešumeša and the Ekašbar, are the residences of Nin-Nibru (Lambert 1967: 124-125). Apparently this is another case of absorption. Once the syncretism was made between Nin-Nibru and Gula, Nin-Nibru disappears from the tablets of Mesopotamia and her title is taken by Gula (see Chapter II.D).⁴²⁹

Fusion

Under the Kassites, it was a period of revampment and syncretism as outlined above. The radical changes in the temple organization do not seem to be reflected in major changes in the pantheon.⁴³⁰ There are no prominent cases of fusion in which the same goddess was worshipped under different names at different sanctuaries beyond those established in the Old Babylonian period.

Fission

In the latter half of the second millennium, there was a plethora of *INANA*. *MEŠ*. Not only were Inana’s functions split between these goddesses, but

⁴²⁷ Groneberg 2004: 171-172; 2007: 325.

⁴²⁸ BE 15 34:2, see Richter 2004: 124. Richter’s inference that Ungal-Nibru is to be equated with Ištar and, consequently, that Ištar as *Šarrat-Nippuri* was worshipped in the temple of Gula seems doubtful.

⁴²⁹ For the complications regarding the syncretisms of these goddesses, see further Krebernik 2009-2011: s.v. “Šarrat-Nippur, UN-gal-Nibru”.

⁴³⁰ For the very conservative approach on the part of the Kassites to Babylonian theology, see Sommerfeld 1995: 928. For the changes in the temple organization, see provisionally, J.G. Westenholz 2004b: 293.

also her cult had multiple addressees who resided in the same temples (see above).

New Arrivals

Historical events brought another layer of deities. As said in Chapter II.A, in the religious syncretism in Mesopotamia the substratum continued to exercise dominance into which elements from the Akkadian, Hurrian, and Amorite beliefs were accepted making subtle changes in the character of the religious amalgam. In the Middle Babylonian period, a few Kassite deities were introduced into the Mesopotamian world of the gods.⁴³¹ The most prominent were the divine pair Šumališa and Šuqamuna, patron deities of the royal family, who were absorbed into the Mesopotamian pantheon (Sommerfeld 1995: 929). The Kassite identified their gods with Babylonian counterparts as can be seen from the Kassite-Akkadian name list and vocabulary.⁴³²

Diminution, Decline, Disappearance, Demise

The disappearance of Nin-Nibru as the result of the syncretism made between Nin-Nibru and Gula is described above.

Mutation

Of the various types of possible divine mutation, the most common relates to the gender of the deities. One result of the theological realignment in the god-lists was a change in the gender of various gods due to their order in the god-lists, an association by contiguity. For example, since traditionally Lisin (see above Chapter II.B.2, no. 37) preceded her husband Ninsikila in Old Babylonian god-lists, in the Middle Babylonian list An = *Anum* she is understood as a male deity while at the same time her male spouse becomes the wife. The latter occurs through homophony; he was identified with the goddess Ninsikila, a goddess of Dilmun. Another case of a male god becoming female relates to the goddess Ušur-amāssu. She appears at the very end of the second millennium and develops into one of the most prominent deities in Neo-Babylonian Uruk, in particular in the entourage of Nanaya and in association with Urkayītu. Her first mention is in an inscription by the governor of the Sealand, Kaššû-bēl-zēri (1008-955 BCE). However, a god under the same name is known from the Old Babylonian period.⁴³³

⁴³¹ For a list of Kassite deities, see Sommerfeld 1985: 15-19.

⁴³² Sassmannshausen 1999: 415.

⁴³³ On this goddess and her male predecessor, see Beaulieu 2003: 226-255.

D. The Third Stage: Homogeneity and Simplification

1. Conflation: Goddesses in the Neo-Babylonian Period (740-539)

In the first millennium, the plethora of female deities were circumscribed and demarcated by a levelling theological homogeneity which can be observed among all the local pantheons of Babylonia from the time that textual evidence is again available. Unfortunately, the first centuries of the first millennium are only covered in a handful of tablets. When the tablets become more frequent, they reveal that goddesses have resumed their archaic roles as proprietary deities of the cities. A *theos eponymos* of Uruk appears – Urkayītu (“the Urukean”).⁴³⁴ Her name originated as epithet but became a separate goddess with a distinct cult in the Neo-Babylonian period and was not part of the late Uruk triad of deities Ištar, Nanaya, and Bēltu-ša-Rēš (“Mistress of the Rēš Temple”).⁴³⁵ Furthermore, new goddesses were conceived as personifications of a specific ethno-linguistic identity, a *theos eponymos* of ethnic groups: Kaššītu “the Kassite”, Aḫlamayītu “the Aramean” and Sutītu “the Sutean”.⁴³⁶

Alongside the newer theological hierarchies presided over by Marduk in Babylonia and Aššur in Assyria, the traditional ranking of the highest gods remains conservative with the Akkadian birthing goddess Ninmah/Bēlet-ilī occurring, if infrequently, as the fourth of the great deities after Anum, Enlil and Ea.

In the first-millennium levelling process, two major goddesses were known as the mistress (*bēltu*) and the queen (*šarratu*) of their home city and such appellations occur both as names of these goddesses and as epithets. Ištar commonly took one of these roles. At Nippur, Ištar presided in the temple Ebaradurġara as the goddess Queen-Of-Nippur while Gula was worshipped in the Ešumeša with the title “mistress of Nippur” (taken from Nin-Nibru, see previous chapter). At Uruk, Nanaya was honoured as “queen of Uruk” while Ištar was worshipped as the goddess Mistress-Of-Uruk. Ištar was further venerated as the Queen-Of-Sippar and Nanaya as Queen-Of-Larsa. BaU was Queen-Of-Kiš although explanatory lists of sanctuaries give separate names for the cellas of BaU and the Queen of Kiš which may mean that cultically the two goddesses were not syncretized (George

⁴³⁴ Beaulieu 2003: 179, 255-266.

⁴³⁵ This first-millennium goddess is the protective spirit of the newly built Rēš temple complex dedicated to Anu and Antu in Uruk. On the triad, see Beaulieu 2003: 74-75 and for a possible pentad including Urkayītu and Ušur-amāssu, see Beaulieu 2003: 179.

⁴³⁶ See for a general discussion, Beaulieu 2005: 32 and nn. 6-7. Another example of this phenomenon of personification was the creation of the goddess Roma during and after the time of Augustus.

2000: 298). In the cities of Babylon and Borsippa, there seems to have been seemingly intentional confusion among the titles and epithets. In Borsippa, both Tašmētu and Nanaya were hailed as “queen of Borsippa” which may indicate their equivalence in the hierarchy rather than actual syncretism.⁴³⁷ In Babylon, Ištar resided in the temple Eturkalama and was known as Ištar-Of-Babylon or Mistress-Of-Babylon and even “queen of Babylon”, whilst Zarpanītu was worshipped as “mistress of Babylon” or “queen of the Esaġil (temple of Marduk)”. The apparent purpose of this confusion was probably to demonstrate that Ištar-of-Babylon and Zarpanītu were not only syncretized theologically, but also were absolutely identical with one another. Further steps were taken in the eighth to seventh centuries to identify Zarpanītu with Ištar-of-Uruk and to pair her with Marduk as Bēltiya “My Mistress” in her home city of Uruk.⁴³⁸ Marduk and his symbol were introduced into the temple of Eana, the temple of Ištar-of-Uruk, so that Marduk became consort of the goddess. Similarly, Nanaya, queen of Uruk, was paired with Nabû. These pairings symbolized their subordination to an ideology centred politically on Babylon and theologically to the position of wives to the male gods, Marduk and his son Nabû, the rulers of the pantheon (Beaulieu 2003: 75-79).

This is the second conspicuous case of syncretism due to a royal political agenda. The first was that of Sargon of Akkade’s attempt to equate ‘Aštar of Akkade with Inana of Uruk in the third millennium. In the eighth century, a king of Babylon, Nabû-šuma-iškun, is said to have introduced a representation of an “inappropriate goddess” in the Eana temple.⁴³⁹ As mentioned above, in this period the name Bēltiya “My Mistress” also occurs in place of Ištar-of-Uruk. Thus, the use of this appellative for Ištar-of-Uruk signifies a royal theological agenda which aimed at assimilating Ištar-of-Uruk to Zarpanītu, and consequently to Ištar-of-Babylon as well. During the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562), the cult statue of the “original” Ištar-of-Uruk was returned to Uruk, leading to further theological reform (Beaulieu 2003: 129-138).

In the centre of first-millennium Babylon stood forty-three temples: thirty dedicated to male deities and thirteen to female divinities.⁴⁴⁰ The goddesses

⁴³⁷ Their syncretism has been posited by Beaulieu 2003: 77-78. In the official cult of Borsippa, Tašmētu was actually overshadowed by Nanaya, see Waerzeggers 2010: 21. See further below.

⁴³⁸ This appellative in the first millennium most commonly belongs to Zarpanītu who is the Mistress (Bēltu), as her spouse Marduk is the Master (Bēl) in Babylon.

⁴³⁹ For a discussion of this event, see Cole 1994 and Beaulieu 2003: 130-138.

⁴⁴⁰ The temples of the city of Babylon are catalogued in the composition called TIN.TIR^{ki} = *Babilu*, see the edition by George 1992.

worshipped in Babylon were: Annunītu, Ašratu,⁴⁴¹ Bēlet-ilī,⁴⁴² Gula (two different temples), Išhara, Nanaya as well as her manifestation as Queen-of-Larsa, and Ištar manifestations (Mistress-of-Babylon, Mistress-of-Akkade, Mistress-of-Eana [two different temples], Ištar-of-the-Star(s), Mistress-of-Nineveh).⁴⁴³ Other goddesses had cellas in the major temples. They were distinct goddesses with separate cults. Ištar-of-Babylon was the paramour in a ménage-à-trois between the central deities of the city: the national god Marduk, and his consort Zarpanītu. The third-millennium goddess Ištar-of-Akkade (^dINANA-Akkade), as Mistress-of-Akkade (*Bēlet-Akkade*), continued to be the mistress of battle, she who fights at the side of the king, as can be seen in the dedication by Nabonidus, the ultimate builder of her temple (for her excavated temple, see **figs. 153a, b**):

*ana Ištar šurbûtim
ru'ûmtim ilī qarittim
Innin ilat tamḥāru
ēpišat tuquntim
namirti bēlet dadmi
šaḡûtim Igigi
rubâtim Anunnakki
našāt puluḥtim
bēlti ša melammūšu
šamû katmû
namrīrrūšu eršetim rapaštīm saḥpū
^dINANA-Akkade bēlet taḥāzi
šākinat šūlāti
āšibat Emašdari
ša qereb Babili(KÁ.DIĜIR.RA.KI)⁴⁴⁴ bēltija
Nabû-na'id šar Babili(TIN.TIR.KI)*

⁴⁴¹ This goddess, Ašratum, the wife of Amurru, appears for the first time in Amorite personal names on Old Babylonian tablets in the first half of the second millennium BCE. Further, a limestone slab, dedicated by an individual named Itur-ašdum to the goddess Ašratum, for the life of Hammurabi (Frayne 1990 [RIME 4]: 359, 4.3.6.2001) portrays her as being a “mistress of voluptuousness and joy” (nin ḥi-li ma-az-bi) and “mistress with patient mercy” (nin ša₃-la₂ su₃). She occurs in Old Babylonian god-lists, see Peterson 2009a: NGL 193 and comments pp. 69-70, in conjunction with netherworld deities. For her temple in Babylon, identified with DII, see George 1992: 25, 312-313. For her appearance in the Hellenistic cult in Babylon, see Linssen 2004: 64-65, 91; and for Uruk, see below.

⁴⁴² While the goddess appears in Tintir as Bēlet-ilī, she is also addressed as Ninmaḥ and Ninḥursaġa in the royal dedications to her temple, the Emaḥ (Beaulieu 1997).

⁴⁴³ For the excavated temples in Babylon dedicated to goddesses, see Table 2.

⁴⁴⁴ Babylon is written with two different logograms KÁ.DIĜIR.RA.KI and TIN.TIR.KI in these lines. As pointed out by George (1992: 312), the reference to KÁ.DIĜIR.RA.KI is ambiguous. Nabonidus could refer either to the quarter KÁ.DIĜIR.RA.KI or to the city of Babylon.

tiriš qāti Tutu
wašru kanšu pāliḫ ilāni rabūti
rē'ām zāninum
ša ana tēmi ilī putuqqu
šakkanakku šaḫḫa murteddū ūsi Ištar
muṭaḫḫid sattukku
mukīn nidbē
ša uddakam ištene'ū
dummuq māḫāzi ilāni
ina Esaḡila ekal ilāni(DIĜIR.DIĜIR)
igisā šurruḫu
ušerribu qerebšu
ana ešrēti ilāni kališina
sadru šulmānu
mār Nabû-balāssu-iqbi
rubû emqa anāku
inūšu Emašdari bīt ^dINANA-Akkade
ša uššūšu innamû
īmû karmiš
libnassu idrānim
iqmû ditalliš
ašaršu šuddû
la bašmu sagûšu
nadû simakkīšu
naparkû qutrīnu
epēš bīti šāti libbī tāmīma
kabattim ḫašḫāku
ašar bīti šuāti ašte'ēma
aḫīṭ temmenšu
išissu abrēma
ukīn libnassu
Emašdari in qereb Bābili(KÁ.DIĜIR.RA.KI)
eššiš ēpuš
ana šuāti ^dINANA-Akkade
ilat tamḫāru
bīta šāti
šubat narāmiki
ḫadiš naplisima
qibi balatam
ša urruku ūmīja
šum'udam šanātija
maḫar Marduk šar ilāni
atmi uddakam
ašar qablum
u tāḫāzim
idāja alki
lunār ajābīja

lušamqit
nakirīja

To Ištar, the supreme, beloved of the gods, the valiant,
Innin, goddess of battle, maker of melee,
Radiant, mistress of the inhabited regions, exalted among the Igigi,
Great among the Anunnakki, bearing awe,
Mistress whose aura covers the heavens,
Whose radiance overwhelms the wide earth,
Ištar of Akkade, mistress of battle, she who incites fighting,
She who dwells in the Emašdari
Which is in the midst of Babylon, my Mistress;
I, Nabonidus, king of Babylon, stretching out the hand (to?) Tutu
[name of Marduk]
Humble, obedient, who fears the great gods,
The shepherd, the provider, who is constantly attentive to the will of
the gods,
Reverent governor, who continually follows the way of Ištar,
Who makes the regular offerings superabundant,
Who establishes the meal offerings,
Who all day long inquires into the welfare of the cult centres of the
gods,
(And who) has had lavish gifts brought into the Esaġil [temple of Mar-
duk], the palace of the gods,
(And) has organized votive gifts for all the temples of the gods,
Son of Nabû-balāssu-iqbi, the wise prince;
At that time, the Emašdari, the temple of Ištar of Akkade
Whose foundations were crumbling
(And) which was turning into a ruin, whose brickwork the saltpetre
Burnt to ashes, whose site was abandoned,
Whose shrine was not standing, whose cella had fallen into ruin,
Incense offerings had ceased;
My heart spoke to me of building this temple and I desired it in my
innards.
I searched out the site of that temple and I inspected its foundation
inscription.
I tested its foundation and I re-established its brickwork.
Emašdari in the midst of Babylon I made anew.
Therefore, Ištar of Akkade, goddess of battle,
Upon this house, your beloved dwelling,
Look joyfully and command life (for me).
Of prolonging my days, increasing my years,
Before Marduk, king of the gods speak each day.
Wherever there is combat and battle come to my side;
So that I may smite my enemies and slaughter my foes.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴⁵ For the foundation inscription discovered *in situ* in the excavations, see Ehelolf in

The quantity of cities with temples to Ištar can be seen in the Canonical Temple List, which assigns the largest number of temples (more than seventy-nine) to Ištar in various cities.⁴⁴⁶ In this period, these goddesses were understood as both the one goddess as well as the many as can be seen from the syncretistic poems. In some respects these Ištar figures partake of a common essence, while in others they are distinct. The employment of various epithets in place of the names of the deities continued to grow. Various Ištar manifestations in the first millennium that were originally epithets were at that time considered goddesses in their own right. For instance, *telītu* “the capable one” was an old epithet attributed to Ištar.⁴⁴⁷ In Babylon of the first millennium there is a shrine (‘seat’) dedicated to her (Topography of Babylon, Tintir II 6).⁴⁴⁸ The tradition of the seven names of Ištar is embedded in the *ba la ḡ*-lamentation liturgy.

The syncretisms of various goddesses with Ištar persisted. The hymn addressed to her⁴⁴⁹ lauds in words that hark back to the hymns to Inana (cited in Chapter II.C) praising her dominion of the whole world, from the heavens to the seas, extending from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun. In every temple, she is the goddess:

[*ina*] Urim^{ki} ^dNingal *aḫāt ilī rabūti*
^dNingikuga *bēlet gimri elletu mubbibat eršeta*
 [*ina*] Ekišnuḡal *nāširat kiššat nišē nūr šamê rabūte*
ina Sippar ālu šāti nūr šamê u eršeti ilī u amēli
ina Ebabbar ^dAja bēlet maštaki mukillat rikšī

In Ur, Ningal the sister of the great gods,
 The goddess Ningikuga,⁴⁵⁰ mistress of all, the pure one, who purifies
 the earth,
 In the Ekišnuḡal,⁴⁵¹ the protectress of all the peoples, the light of the
 great heavens.

WVDOG 47: 135-137 (1925, with corrections by Güterbock 1926) and for a duplicate text, see S. Smith 1925.

⁴⁴⁶ Edited in George 1993: 5-38. Although this text is known only from copies from the libraries of Ashurbanipal, its date and place of composition is probably Kassite Babylonia.

⁴⁴⁷ For references, see CAD T s.v. *tele’u*. See also discussion of the epithet by Lambert 1982: 213-214.

⁴⁴⁸ George 1992: 44-45.

⁴⁴⁹ “BaU” Hymn KAR 109+, see Groneberg 1987: 174-175. Groneberg questions whether the hymn is dedicated to BaU. Only the final line or subscript refers to BaU: *kanītu BaU kullat adnāti rikis māti* “beloved BaU, for all men the bond of the land”. It could be the incipit of another poem. In the opinion of this author, the hymn is a syncretic poem dedicated to Ištar. Similar opinions have been stated by George 1993: 70 and *passim*. Gesche 2001: 238. Note that this text is found in the scholastic curriculum of the Neo-Babylonian schools, see Gesche 2001: 238-240 BM 36333:7’-11’.

⁴⁵⁰ Manifestation of Ningal, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-gikuga”.

⁴⁵¹ The major temple of Ur, belonging to the moon-god Nanna/Sîn.

In Sippar, the primeval city, the light of heaven and earth, of god and mortal,
 In the Ebarbar,⁴⁵² Aya⁴⁵³ mistress of the abodes, who holds the bonds
 of the cosmos.

(KAR 109: 6-10)

In reference to the blatant confusion discussed above concerning Zarpanītu and Ištar-of-Babylon, their syncretism is set forth in this same hymn:

ina Bābili(KÁ.DIĜIR.RA.KI) nēreb ilī dNingirima
ina Esaġil dE₄.RU₆ bānāt riġūti
[ina] Eturkalama bēlet Bābili(TIN.TIR.KI) mālikat dIggi

In Babylon (or: KÁ.DIĜIR.RA.KI),⁴⁵⁴ the entranceway/crossroads of
 the gods, Ningirima,⁴⁵⁵
 In the Esaġil, Erua [Zarpanītu], the creatrix of semen,...
 In the Eturkalama, Mistress-Of-Babylon [Ištar-of-Babylon], queen of
 the Iggi-gods.

(KAR 109: 12-13, 17)

Some of the confusion may be due to the use of her name, even with her divine determinative, as the common noun for ‘goddess’. Of the many examples of *ištaru* as a common noun in first-millennium texts, note this parallelism from the Epic of Gilgamesh:

išassi dīš-tar kīma ālitti
unambi dBēlet-ilī⁴⁵⁶ tābat riġma

⁴⁵² The major temple of Sippar, belonging to the sun-god Šamaš.

⁴⁵³ The spouse of the sun-god Šamaš, the goddess of dawn, see further Chapter IV.C.6.1.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. above a similar alternation in the writing of the name of Babylon between KÁ.DIĜIR.RA.KI and TIN.TIR.KI in Nabonidus’ dedication of the temple of Ištar of Akkade.

⁴⁵⁵ On this goddess, see above Chapter II.B.2 no. 18 and below as one of the triad of purification goddesses in first-millennium texts. The reference to Ningirima in this context is unexpected. While her importance as a purification goddess continued in the many and various rites involving the “holy water vessel” (see below and for Late Babylonian references, see Linssen 2004: 150-151), her worship is not especially centered in Babylon. Evidence of her presence is only provided by the description of Esarhaddon of the ceremonies in the Ekarzagina, the temple of Ea (Borger 1956: 89, 21-24) and the description of the New Year Ritual in which she participates (lines 377, Sum., “Ningirima who listens to the prayer” and 380, Akk., “Ningirima casts the spell”; Thureau-Dangin 1921: 142 and Linssen 2004: 222, 231). Note also her participation in the *mīs pi*-ritual, the consecration of the cult image, see discussion below.

⁴⁵⁶ Other manuscripts give Diġir-maḥ in place of Bēlet-ilī but there is no question that it is the birthing goddess who is the lamenting goddess.

The goddess began screaming like a woman in childbirth,
Bēlet-ilī, so sweet of voice, wailed.

(*Gilgamesh* XI 116-117, see George 2003: 710-11, lines 117-118)⁴⁵⁷

The writing of *ištaru* is syllabic rather than logographic in this example but at the same time, it is classified by the divine determinative. In addition to the Akkadian word *ištaru* used for ‘goddess’, her Sumerian name INANA is used as a logogram for the word *bēltu* “mistress”.⁴⁵⁸

^d*be-let* ^d[*bēle*]_t(INANA)-*Bābili*(TIN.TIR.KI) ^d*be-let-bīti*(É)
^d*be-let-ZU.DI* (= ^ā*li*^{ki}?!)^d*bēlet*(INANA)-*uruk*^{ki}
^d*bēlet*(INANA)-*a-kà-dē*^{ki} ^d*bēlet-ekalli*(NIN.É.GAL)
7 *bēlētu* (^dNIN.MEŠ)

Mistress, Mistress-of-Babylon, Mistress-of-the-Temple,
Mistress-of-the-City(?), Mistress-of-Uruk,
Mistress-of-Akkade, Mistress of the Palace,
7 “Mistresses”.

(Archive of Mystic Heptads, KAR 142 iii 35-38, see
Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 224 and George 2000: 296)

However, these seven “Mistresses” might also be understood as manifestations of Ištar (Inana). On the other hand, there are various other unspecified groups of “Mistresses”. One group of *bēlētu* (^dGAŠAN.MEŠ/ME) “Mistresses” in Neo-Babylonian Uruk was the focus of cultic performances, received offerings, served by distinct personnel who owned prebends, and possessed paraphernalia.⁴⁵⁹ Beaulieu ruled out the possibility that these god-

⁴⁵⁷ See also the comments by George (2003: 886 notes to line 117).

⁴⁵⁸ See George 1992: 307; 2000: 296. On the other hand, INANA-*Bābili* and INANA-*Uruk*^{ki} might also represent Ištar of Babylon and Ištar of Uruk. Note that the expected logogram for *bēltu* is NIN/GAŠAN as seen in the traditional writing of the goddess ^d*bēlet*(NIN)-*ekalli* (“Mistress of the Palace”), and in the summation (in accordance with the cuneiform text). For the goddess Nin-é-gal (Sumerian) / *Bēlet-ekalli* (Akkadian), see Behrens and Klein 1998-2001. While she existed as a separate goddess with temples and cult in the third millennium and later, in literary texts her name frequently served as an epithet of Inana and other goddesses from the second millennium onwards (Richter 2004: 368-371, 408, 482-3). Another possible example of the name of a goddess in which the writing of *bēltu* may alternate with Ištar is the goddess *Bēlet-bīti* “Mistress of the Temple”, usually written ^dGASAN-É (see references in Zadok 2009: 53, 81-82). She may be the same goddess as *Ištar-bīti* whose name is written in Neo-Babylonian administrative texts both syllabically ^d*Iš-tar-É* (Gordon Smith 90:10) and with the numerical sign of Ištar, ^dXV (e.g., ^dXV-É BM 109870 Waerzeggers 2010: 686 no. 224:17, Dar. I; and VAS VI 234:2). In Seleucid ritual texts her name is written logographically ^dINANA-*bīti*(É) AO 6472 rev. 5 (Thureau-Dangin 1921: 36) and syllabically ^d*Iš-tar-É* (George 2000: 293, lines 4 and 23).

⁴⁵⁹ Beaulieu 2003: 179-181.

desses were the major goddesses of the city and put forward the suggestion that “Mistresses” might be a collective term for the minor female deities in the Eana Temple.⁴⁶⁰

In one instance, Ištar disappears from one of her traditional temples listed in the Canonical Temple List – the temple of Ḫursaġkalama located in a town of the same name in the territory of Kiš. This temple was an ancient foundation, formerly dedicated to the worship of Ištar (see above Chapter II.C.1). Another temple in the same town was the Ekurnizu and its proprietor was Ninlil according to the inscription of the local governor under the Chaldean king of Babylonia, Merodach-baladan II (721-710 BCE).⁴⁶¹ Despite the undeserved repute that his reign brought about oppression of the interests of the northern section of the country and an eclipse of the hereditary privileges of the ancient cult centers, Merodach-baladan II claims to have maintained the cult places (Brinkman 1964: 13-18). However, he apparently imposed the cult of Ninlil on that of Ištar – another possible example of force majeure exercised by a ruling potentate. A Neo-Babylonian Explanatory Temple List records the temples of Ḫursaġkalama and Kiš (George 1993: 49-56); those of Ḫursaġkalama belong mainly to Ninlil with one to the alter ego of Nanaya, Bizila.⁴⁶² The question is whether there occurred an arbitrary removal of the cult of Ištar and its replacement with the cult of Ninlil and if so, whether it can at all be considered the result of a process of syncretism or even mutation. Rather, it could be that the name Ištar of the Ḫursaġkalama was understood merely as the *ištaru* (“goddess”) of the Ḫursaġkalama who was then named as Ninlil of the Ḫursaġkalama.

Groupings of goddesses proliferate in the first millennium. In these groupings, the goddesses are syncretised by gender role as the common denominator. One grouping found in Neo-Babylonian administrative texts as well as Late Babylonian tablets consists of the Divine Daughters of Babylonian temples. Known from other sources, both administrative and cultic, these are the daughters of the major deities of their respective temples. As George (2000: 295) pointed out, the Divine Daughters are best known from a Late Babylonian votive tablet found in the temple of Nabû ša ḫarê at Babylon:

^dSillu(MÍ)-uš-ṭāb(DÜG₃) u ^dKa-tùn-na
 mārāt(DUMU.MUNUS.MEŠ) É.SAĠ.ÍL
^dGaz-ba-ba u ^dKa-ni-sur-ra
 mārāt(DUMU.MUNUS.MEŠ) É.ZI.DA

⁴⁶⁰ Beaulieu 2003: 179.

⁴⁶¹ For the inscription, see Frame 1995 (RIMB 2): 141-142, 6.21.2001.

⁴⁶² George (1993: 54 comment to line 15) suggests that in this locality, Bizila acts in her capacity of vizier to Ninlil/Mulliltu. Another temple list (George 1993: 56-58) also designates the goddess of E₂-ḫur-saġ-kalam-ma^{ki} as Nin-lil₂.

^dDa-da-muš-da u ^dBe-let-DIĜIR.MEŠ
 mārāt(DUMU.MUNUS.MEŠ) É.MES.LAM
^dIq-bi-damiq(SIG₅) u ^dHu-us-si-in-ni
 mārāt(DUMU.MUNUS.MEŠ) É.DUB.BA
^dMa-mi u ^dNIN-É-GI-NA
 mārāt(DUMU.MUNUS.MEŠ) É.BABBAR.RA
^dIp-te-bīta(É) u ^dBe-let-É-an-ni
 mārāt(DUMU.MUNUS.MEŠ) É.i-bī-AN-ni
^dMan-nu-šá-nin-šú u ^dLarsam(UD.UNU.KI)-i-ti
 mārāt(DUMU.MUNUS.MEŠ) É.NIN-GUBLAGA

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Šilluš-ṭāb</i> and Katunna | Daughters of the Esaġil [at Babylon] |
| Kazbaba and Kanisurra | Daughters of the Ezida [at Borsippa] |
| Dadamušda and <i>Bēlet-ilī</i> | Daughters of the Emeslam [at Kutha] |
| <i>Iqbi-damiq</i> and <i>Hussinni</i> | Daughters of the Eduba [at Kiš] |
| Mami and Ninegina | Daughters of the Ebabbar [at Sippar] |
| <i>Ipte-bīta</i> and <i>Bēlet-Eanni</i> | Daughters of the E- <i>ibbi-Ani</i> [at Dilbat] |
| <i>Mannu-šāninšu</i> and Larsam-iti | Daughters of the E-Ningubla [at Larsa] |

(Cavigneaux 1981: 138, 79.B.1 / 20 [transliteration],
 173 [cuneiform copy])

The inclusive term for the Daughters of the Ebabbar in Sippar is *bēlētu* “Mistresses” (Zawadzki 2006: 173) and probably also in Uruk (Beaulieu 2003: 179). Additional groups of daughters are the Daughters of the Eana [at Uruk] as well as the daughters of the cities: Daughters of Uruk, Daughters of Nippur and Daughters of Eridu. These daughters all belong to the temples of male deities, their fathers, rather than to the temples of the female deities, their mothers. On the other hand, the daughters of the Esaġil are known as the “hairdressers of Zarpanītu” (Çağirgan and Lambert 1991-93: 101).

The genre of syncretistic hymns in which a deity addressed is described in terms of others or in which a deity claims various identities was very popular in the first millennium. Scholarly approaches to first-millennium syncretistic hymns see them as revealing a tendency towards monotheism, conveying the conception that the many gods were merely aspects of one god. This syncretistic literature was composed in what could be termed “mono-modes” of discourse (M. Smith 2008: 158). The most well-known of these syncretistic hymns is addressed to Marduk and explains the major gods as avatars of Marduk (KAR 25 ii 3-24).⁴⁶³ These deities are responsible for the various

⁴⁶³ For the most recent edition of the text, see Oshima 2003: 274-280. Also commonly cited is the mystical explanatory text from the late Babylonian period CT 24 50, BM 47406, ‘The Marduk Theology’, see Lambert 1975a: 197-198, Beaulieu 1995: 189, Hutter 1996: 38, Krebernik 2002: 45, Smith 2008: 171-172 and n. 148. In this latter text, the gods that are identified with Marduk are male. Consequently, the statement “all divinity is ultimately

functions of Marduk. All are male gods, with one exception – the goddess of victory, Irnina. Interestingly, where the text refers to ritual matters, the supplicant addresses a second person plural, i.e. Marduk and an additional deity or deities. There are several suggestions how to explain this problem. It is probable that there were originally two parallel hymns dedicated to two deities, Marduk and most likely, his consort, Zarpanītu. It is further possible that she was lauded with a syncretistic hymn in which all goddesses were equated with her. On the other hand, a hymn addressed to the god Ninurta syncretises various gods, male and female, equally with his body parts. Accordingly, the Mesopotamians seem to be gender-blind in their conception of the divine world and the powers that ruled the universe.

The genre, termed aretalogy, in which a deity claims in first person various identities seems to be limited to the goddesses. One of the most famous of this genre is the Hymn to Gula authored by Bulluṣa-rabi. Manuscripts of this composition stem from the Assyrian royal libraries as well as from Babylonian sources. This hymn extols in alternating stanzas the goddess of healing, as different divine personas, and her corresponding spouses and concludes with a prayer by the supplicant to Gula. It is only from this prayer that the actual goddess addressed can be adduced. The strophe in which the goddess calls herself Gula is towards the end of the hymn (lls. 139-148). The author has placed her own praises in the mouth of the goddess who speaks in the first person:

*iltum le'āti gimir ilī āšib parakkī
 etellēku bēlēku šūpāku u šīrāku
 šīhāku nanzaza sinnišāku baltu išī
 šutturāku ina ilāti
 ina šamē kakkabī ina eršetī rabi zikrī
 ṭābat ḥissatī šulum balāṭu
 liptu šulmu uštanamdana tenēšētu
 šu'u rabū ^dNintinuga
 qarrādu ḥā'irī mār ^dEnlil gašru ...
 pēteat šer'i muštēširat namāri ...
 ru'umat kakkabī idāt erēši ...
 muttabbilat ašlu ammat qanāti ginindanakku
 šīprussu nāšāt qan ṭuppi ēpišat nikkassī
 umma ^dNanše bēlet kudurri anākūma
 šīḥu mutī etellu šamē karūbu ...
 ūmī rabūti zīmū ruššūtu bēl bēlē ^dNinazu ...
 erimmu enšu dunnamū ušašru*

operative through Marduk" (Smith 2008: 172) needs amendment. It is curious that scholars have not seen the gender dichotomy in these syncretistic hymns with the exception of Hutter (1996: 38).

ana pāliḥija aqâššu balāḫi
ana muštē'û alkakātija ušeššer urḫu
šurbûtum mārat ^dAnu ummu ^dBaU napšāt niši anākūma...
^dUngal-Nibru^{ki} rubātum elletu anākūma ...
iltu rēmnîtu ^dNinsumuna anākūma ...

The goddess, the most powerful of all deities that reside in shrines
 I am an aristocrat, I am a mistress, I am resplendent, I am exalted,
 My location is lofty, I am feminine, I have dignity,
 I excel among the goddesses.

In heaven my star is great, my name in the underworld,
 Mention of me is sweet – (it is) good health and life,
 People discourse of me (in) sickness (and in) health,⁴⁶⁴
 My great name is Nintinuga.
 My spouse is the warrior, the mighty son of Enlil

...

She who opens the furrow, who directs the dawn,....
 The loved one of the stars, the signs for ploughing,....
 Who handles the measuring-cord, reed cubits, the measuring rod,
 Who carries the tablet-stylus for her work, who does the accounts,
 Mother Nanše, mistress of the boundary am I.
 My lofty husband is the aristocrat of heaven, the dignitary,....
 Great spirit, shining countenance, lord of lords, Ninazu.

....

I pity the weak, the poor I make rich,
 To him who fears me I give life,
 For him who seeks my paths, I make the way straight.
 The great daughter of Anu, mother BaU, life of the peoples am I.

....

Ungal-Nibru, the pure princess, am I.

....

The merciful goddess Ninsun [Ninsumuna] am I.

(Lambert 1967: 116-129, lines 1-9, 35,
 37, 41-43, 44, 53, 106-109, 129, 169)

In this hymn, the goddess identifies herself as Nintinuga, Nanše, Ninkarrak, Ninigizibara,⁴⁶⁵ BaU, Ungal-Nibru, Gula, Ninsumuna and Ninlil – all originally distinct goddesses discussed above and now syncretised in this hymn.

⁴⁶⁴ Translation of Foster 2005: 584.

⁴⁶⁵ For this problematic goddess, whose character depicted in this hymn as a healing goddess is unique, see Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. “Ninigizibara II”. However, in the data collected by Heimpel under Ninigizibara I (the harp goddess, the advisor of Inana), the “Harp-goddess” accompanies not only Nin-ibgala (“Mistress of the Ibgal”, an Inana manifestation) but also Gula of Umma to Zabalam. An association with Gula, therefore, may be of long-standing.

Nevertheless, each description renders the distinct roles and functions of the respective goddesses. The majority of these deities are goddesses whose domains include that of healing: Nintinuga, Ninkarrak, BaU, and Gula. The syncretism of the goddess of healing with Ungal-Nibru, the spouse of Ninurta, is an outgrowth of the identification of Gula's spouse as Ninurta. While two unexpected goddesses Nanše and Ninsumuna are lauded with their distinctive roles, Ninlil is depicted as a goddess of healing. This convergence in role may have arisen from the syncretism of Sud with Gula already apparent in the Weidner god-list.⁴⁶⁶ On the other hand, it seems to be other evidence of the extension of the roles of Ninlil in the first millennium, a movement which began in the third millennium (see Chapter II.B.4) and continued into the second (see Chapter II.C.1).

This hymn and similar ones demonstrate the theological speculation of the period. The result might be considered a kind of henotheism. This kind of syncretism is clearly evident in a bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian hymn to the goddess of love, Nanaya,⁴⁶⁷ in which she portrays herself in relation to a particular city, its temple and its god in around twenty strophes:

gašan.mu ^dEN.ZU ^dInana na.i.nim.gi u₃.tu.ud.da šu.a.ab.
 dil.e.ne
mārat ^dSîn(30) *telītu aḥāt* ^dŠamaš *maššītu ina Barsipa ḥammāku*
ina UNUG^{ki} ḥarīmāku ina Daduni tulēja kabbūte
ina Bābili ziqna zaq[nāku] anākūma ^dNanaya
 Uri₂^{ki} Uri₂^{ki} e₂.di ḡir.g[al.gal].e.ne šu.a.ab.dil.e.ne
mārat Uri šarrat Uri mārat ^dSîn(30) *muttallu sāḥirtu mūterribat bītāti*
qadištu nāšāt paršī ileqqi GURUŠ ina tūb lalīšu
 u KI.SIKIL *seḥertu ina maštakiša ušelli anākūma* ^dNanaya

My Mistress, Sîn, Inana, born of ..., similarly(?)/ I am the same(?)
 Wise daughter of Sîn, beloved sister of Šamaš, I am powerful in
 Borsippa,
 I am a hierodule in Uruk, I have heavy breasts in Daduni,
 I have a beard in Babylon, still I am Nanaya.
 Ur, Ur, temple of the great gods, similarly (?)
 They call me the Daughter of Ur, the Queen of Ur, the daughter of
 princely Sîn, she who goes around and enters every house,

⁴⁶⁶ Standard lines 145, 147, already in OB manuscripts: VAS 24 20 rev. i 6, 8; T07-1 iii' 2' (see Shibata 2009: 39 comments on line).

⁴⁶⁷ Reiner 1975. She gives the date of 744/734 (p. 223) as the *terminus ante quem* for the composition on the basis of the colophon from Assur. The main exemplars, thus, come from the Assyrian capitals of Assur and Nineveh. The second colophon indicates that another exemplar originated in the library of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal. While the northern sources are reflected in the one strophe related to the northern deities, the language of the composition as a whole reflects Babylonian origin. There are two Neo-Babylonian manuscripts. The artificial Sumerian has not been normalized.

Holy one who holds the ordinances; she takes away the young man
in his prime,
She removes the young girl from her bedchamber – still I am Nanaya.

(Reiner 1975: 224, strophes I and II, 233)

She identifies herself as other great goddesses: Damkiana, daughter and Queen of Eridu, daughter and Queen of Kullaba (in territory of Uruk);⁴⁶⁸ Gula/Ninkarrak/BaU probably in Isin (text fragmentary); Ninlil/Nin-Nibru, Queen of Nippur,⁴⁶⁹ in Nippur; Išhara⁴⁷⁰ and BaU, Queen of Kiš, in Kiš; Inana (Ištar) and Zarpanītu in Babylon; Annunītu in Akkade, Šāla (the storm goddess, wife of Adad)⁴⁷¹ in Karkar, Manzāt (“the rainbow”) in Dēr, Mammītu⁴⁷² in Kutha and other deities whose names are not well preserved. In two cities, Borsippa and Sippar, she identifies the goddess as herself – Nanaya. While the first is the center of her cult, the second certainly is home to other goddesses. These equations are most peculiar and do not seem related to any convergence in role or function. Underlying this hymn may be an exaltation of Nanaya. These are the major goddesses of each city that are being equated with Nanaya. It is the hierarchical position of Nanaya that is in question in this poem.

In the syncretic hymn, there was no mention of Tašmētum, wife of Nabû in Borsippa. Nanaya has not only become the major goddess of the city of Borsippa but also has at least two distinct manifestations in that city, Nanaya of the Ezida, spouse of Nabû and Nanaya of the Euršaba.⁴⁷³ This development demonstrates two processes: splitting of the manifestations of deities as well as the fluidity of these divine manifestations. These processes are probably visualized in two images of the goddess on the Nabû-šuma-iškun *kudurru* (fig. 149, see Chapter IV.C.7).

The fusion expressed in these syncretistic hymns provides evidence of two further processes that were set in motion: one was the restructuring of a profuse pantheon and the other was the glorification of certain gods by equating them with their rivals. The latter was especially prevalent as Gula absorbed all the healing goddesses and Nanaya all the major city goddesses. The syncretistic hymns express explicitly the mechanisms of these pro-

⁴⁶⁸ Later form of Damgalnuna, known from the third millennium, see above Chapter II.B.2, no. 4. Her home is in Eridu so the reference to Kullaba, commonly known as the residence of Inana, in this strophe is unexpected.

⁴⁶⁹ For Ištar as Queen of Nippur, see Chapter II.C.2.

⁴⁷⁰ The appearance of Išhara in place of either Ištar or Ninlil is surprising. However, for Išhara in Kiš and in particular in Ḫursaġkalama, see Prechel 1996: 149.

⁴⁷¹ For the goddess Šāla, the storm-goddess, the wife of Adad, see Schwemer 2006-2008.

⁴⁷² For the goddess Mammītu, the underworld goddess, wife of Nergal, see Krebernik 1987-1990 s.v. “Mamma, Mammi; Mammītum”.

⁴⁷³ Waerzeggers 2010: 20-22, 26-29 and see further Chapter IV.C.7 in this volume.

cesses. It has also been posited that the results of processes can be inferred as occurring implicitly in readings of even traditional narrative compositions. For examples, it has been speculated that the gods appear as garments in the composition *Descent of Ištar*, and that the eight points of her star could be understood as the eight male gods.⁴⁷⁴

Nevertheless, it can be discerned that there is a gap between the scholastic traditions and the cult – the syncretism of the former does not extend to the latter. On the other hand, the syncretistic hymns can only have a cultic setting in temple worship. The theological god-lists were traditional, no new major catalogues of gods occur in this period. The pedagogic Weidner list was an elementary text in the Neo-Babylonian school curriculum (Gesche 2001: 76). The traditional incantation rituals and devotional poetry give evidence of the continuity of the importance of certain specific goddesses, such as Nisaba and Ningirima as well as Kusu. These three goddesses constitute the triad of the primary purification goddesses.⁴⁷⁵ As Michalowski (1993b: 159) has pointed out, these goddesses were invoked at almost all cultic ceremonies and must be considered ubiquitous in ancient rituals. In the major transubstantiation ritual, in the creation of the divine cult image (*mīs pî* ‘washing of the mouth’), these goddesses had an important role. Kusu is entitled the *sanga₄-maḥ* ‘the chief exorcist of Enlil.’⁴⁷⁶ References are made to the “holy-water-vessel of Kusu and Ningirima”.⁴⁷⁷ An incantation to Nisaba forms part of the ritual.⁴⁷⁸ Relating to her role, Nisaba is called *pitât pî* *DIĜIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ* “the opener of the mouth of the great gods” (prayer to the gods of the night, Oppenheim 1959: 284 line 45). Other goddesses also participate in this momentous ritual. Mention is also made of reeds which come from the Apsû, named by, brought by or of Namma.⁴⁷⁹ Cornel wood and reeds of Nanše⁴⁸⁰ and Nintinuga⁴⁸¹ are among the sacred cult tools designated in the Ninevite *mīs pî* ritual incantations.

⁴⁷⁴ Parpola 2000: 197-198.

⁴⁷⁵ Ningirima is entitled “mistress of purification” (*bēlat tēlilti*), see Walker and Dick 2001: 108/112 lines 75-6. For her title *bēlet tēlilti* / *bēlat tēlilti*, see also the explanatory god-list CT 25 49 r. 1. from the library of Ashurbanipal, which according to its colophon is an Assyrian copy of an older original from Babylon.

⁴⁷⁶ For references, see CAD *Š/I* 376 s.v. *šangammāḥu* usage a). Walker and Dick (2001: 78 n. 26) suggest that there were two Kusu deities in this ritual, the first a female grain goddess, while the second was a god of exorcism and prayers, “the chief exorcist of Enlil”.

⁴⁷⁷ The “holy-water-vessel of Kusu and Ningirima” is listed in the Nineveh *mīs pî* Ritual Tablet (Walker and Dick 2001: 56 line 46), and is possibly preserved on reverse of STT 208-9 (ibid. 89). For the holy water basin of Ningirima, see also pp. 107/111 line 42.

⁴⁷⁸ The incantation to Nisaba (Walker and Dick 2001: 56 line 48) is possibly preserved among the Ninevite *mīs pî* ritual incantations in Rm 225 (Walker and Dick 2001: 87, 89).

⁴⁷⁹ See Chapter II.B.2, no. 15, Walker and Dick 2001: pp. 92/95 lines 15-16, line 23; 93/95 line 39; 94/96 line 57; 108/112 line 73.

⁴⁸⁰ Walker and Dick 2001: pp. 92/95 lines 15-16; 93/95 line 39; 108/112 line 74.

⁴⁸¹ Walker and Dick 2001: pp. 93/95 line 40.

Babylonian devotional poetry provides some indication of the impress of goddesses and their relationships among the populace. Goddesses, proprietary as well as universal, are endowed with intercessory roles between the individual and the major gods, their spouses as well as others.⁴⁸² The quality of mercy became a universal trait of the goddesses who were depicted as compassionate intermediaries with the stern male gods, their husbands. Petitioners not only request the help of Aya to intercede with Šamaš, but also the aid of Bēlet-ekalli with Uraš; they implore Bēlet-ilī and Gula to mediate on their behalf with Marduk.

Regrettably, our sources are skewed by their almost complete limitation to temple liturgies. For instance, the Sumerian *š-u-i-l-a*-prayers (“raising the hand [in prayer]”) were often recited in public rituals connected with the processions of the gods.⁴⁸³ On the other hand, the Akkadian *šullakku*-prayers express the entreaties of the individual.⁴⁸⁴ The primary goddess participating as the addressee to whom the petitioners turn is most frequently Ištar.⁴⁸⁵ Other goddesses who are recipients of prayer and entreaty are:⁴⁸⁶ Bēlet-ilī, Damkina, Gula/Nin-Isina, Išhara, Kusu, Nāru, Ninlil, Nisaba, Šāla, Tašmētu, Zarpanītu. These goddesses represent deities of wifely stature (Damkina, Ninlil, Šāla, Tašmētu, Zarpanītu), of healing (Gula/Nin-Isina), of marriage (Išhara), of birthing (Bēlet-ilī), and of purification (Kusu, Nāru). The case of Nisaba demonstrates a shift in her persona; in the first millennium her various identities and domains encompass not only grain and wisdom but also exorcism, purification and even “motherhood”. Further, there may be a few addressed to Aya, the Dawn, spouse of the sun-god Šamaš.⁴⁸⁷ Additional *šullakku*-prayers, in particular of post-neo-Assyrian authorship are rare. One of these unusual cases is that of the bilingual *šullakku*-prayer to Ningēštinana / Bēlet-šēri (“Mistress of the Steppe”).⁴⁸⁸ The epithets of the goddess exhibit an apparent syncretism; she is designated as “the bearing mother of the womb” and “the great physician” among other descriptions. These are two of the major domains of the goddesses in the first millennium.

⁴⁸² Watanabe 1990: 323-329.

⁴⁸³ For a discussion for the possibility of *š-u-i-l-a* in representations of Sumerian ritual, see IV.C.3.3.1. Although *š-u-i-l-a*-prayers are only attested in late sources, one of the rituals in which it was embedded is known from ED IIIb, see references to *nin-da-š-u-i-l-a* in the Reform Texts of Uruinimgina, Frayne 2008 [RIME 1]: 248-265, 1.9.9.1 vi 29, xi 15 and discussion p. 254.

⁴⁸⁴ Zgoll 2009: 128. They are often found embedded in a variety of rituals.

⁴⁸⁵ See Zgoll 2003c.

⁴⁸⁶ Taken from the overview given in Mayer 1976.

⁴⁸⁷ E.g. SpTU 3, 75. Further bilingual *eršaḥunga*-prayers addressed to Aya have been treated by Maul 1988: 296-302.

⁴⁸⁸ Cohen 1989. For this goddess, see above Chapter II.C.2.

One reason for the conflation of various goddesses with the domain of healing is a Neo-Babylonian institution. This institution, termed *bīt hiṣi* (lit. “house of pressing”), was a pharmacy with a pharmaceutical garden attached to the temples of the major city goddesses – in the Ekišnuḡal in Ur, belonging to Ningal; in the Ebabbar in Sippar, belonging to Šarrat(GAŠAN)-Sippar; in the Eana in Uruk, one belonging to Ušur-amāssu and Urkayītu and another to Nabû and Nanaya with the exception of that of Esabad, the temple of the goddess of healing, Gula, in Babylon.⁴⁸⁹ The roles of many goddesses overlap not only the domain of healing but also that of harming. The latter is alluded to as the disease of the Hand of the Goddess, either with the generic term goddess, the personal goddess, or with specific goddesses mentioned.⁴⁹⁰ For instance, the Hand of Ningêštinana is specifically related to skin afflictions.⁴⁹¹ Note that malevolent as well as benevolent deities can be either male or female in the medical texts.

In the devotional poetry addressed to Ištar, confusion occasionally arises between her and other goddesses. It is difficult to ascertain whether there is a conflation of names or whether this confusion is evidence of *ištaru* as a generic term for goddess. For instance, an incantation-prayer apparently directed to Ištar, concludes: EN₂ dXV dNa-na-a dXV *iqbamma anāku ušanni* “Incantation of Ištar-Nanaya, Ištar has told (it) to me and I have repeated (it)”.⁴⁹²

The worship of Babylonian goddesses proliferated in first-millennium Assyria, as demonstrated by a tablet containing *šullakku*-prayers dedicated to the ‘great and sublime goddesses’ (*ištarāte rabāte u šīrāte*), accompanied by rituals.⁴⁹³ Two prayers are addressed to Nisaba, one to Ištar, three to Tašmētu, and one to Nanaya. At the bottom of the tablet is a catchline referring to the next tablet in the series, which bore a prayer addressed to the goddess Išhara, indicating that this tablet was part of a larger corpus of collected hymns to goddesses. It was found in Nimrud at the temple of Nabû, which was a double temple to the god Nabû and the goddess Tašmētu. In the shadow of Nabû the scribe of the gods, the scribal goddess Nisaba continued her existence. The change in gender conception from Nisaba to Nabû, usually construed as evidence of the process of the decline in the status and

⁴⁸⁹ See discussion in Joannès 2006.

⁴⁹⁰ For an overview, see Stol 1993: 36-38 and Heeßel 2007.

⁴⁹¹ Stol 1991-2: 63. Also mentioned in reference to skin diseases are the Hands of Ningal among the goddesses and Šamaš, Sîn, and Adad among the gods. See also Stol 1991-2: 44-46 and Andersen and Scurlock 2005: 304, 572.

⁴⁹² Farber 2010: 75-76.

⁴⁹³ Wiseman and Black 1996: 54-59 no. 168, photographs pls. 149-150; see Lambert 1999-2000: 152-155, where he treats the second *šullakku*-prayer to Nisaba together with a new duplicate. Lambert suggests that this text is an amateur compilation by an ancient feminist. The text is now to be found on the internet at the CAMS site s.v. CTN IV 168.

powers of goddesses, is brought into question by these hymns to Nisaba. In Babylon, she had no association with Nabû. Her own “House of the Wisdom of Nisaba” was her seat.⁴⁹⁴ On the other hand, whilst she is lauded for her wisdom in the prayer, she is also credited with the creation of god, king and humanity, the last through sexual intercourse. Thus, her persona has taken on a decidedly female function.

This period is that discussed above (Chapter II.A) as an era of the appearance of monotheistic traits in Mesopotamian religion. The results from the present survey of the evidence given by syncretisms of goddesses do not attest to one great female goddess, of any kind, especially not a Mother Goddess. On the other hand, the intensification of henotheism in the worship of goddesses might be demonstrated by the proliferation of syncretistic hymns focussing on the manifestations of one and only one female deity.

2. *Goddesses in Perpetuity in the Late Babylonian Period (539-141)*

Under foreign rule, the Achaemenid Persian, Parthian and Hellenistic Seleucid dynasties, religious life in southern Mesopotamia continued to exist. In these latest periods of Mesopotamian culture, a new major source of information illuminating the religious life of the country becomes prominent – the ritual texts, especially from the cities of Babylon and Uruk. These describe the rituals proceeding steadily from one stage to the next. Each city and temple had its own religious calendar of festivals.

In Babylon, for instance, the rituals in the temple of Ištar, the *Eturkalama*, center on the love triangle between Marduk, his spouse Zarpanītu and his mistress Ištar of Babylon and the prescriptive texts have been termed “Love Lyrics”.⁴⁹⁵ Accordingly, there can be no syncretism between Zarpanītu and Ištar in these rituals. During the ritual events, the procession moves to temples of other goddesses: Šarrat-Nippuri ‘Queen-of-Nippur’ (Lambert 1975b: 104-105 iii 5)⁴⁹⁶ and Ninlil of the *Ḫursaġkalama* (Lambert 1975b: 104-105 iii 15) who apparently maintains a separate presence also in Babylon. The latter is one of several references to Ninlil of the *Ḫursaġkalama* (see above), which crop up in the rituals. According to an Ashurbanipal tablet, in the *akītu*-procession in the New Year Festival in Babylon, Ištar of Babylon sets out

⁴⁹⁴ For Nisaba in Babylon, see George 1992: 50-51 Tintir II 12” and comment on line p. 283; 94-95 line 34 (dais of Nisaba) and comment on line p. 401. Note the Month of the Feast of Nisaba in Nippur, possibly in Kislīmu or Tebētu, George 1992: 151:31’-32’. She was also resident in a sanctuary in Nippur (George 1992: 159:22 [in the house of praise in Nippur]. Three temples to her are listed in the Canonical Temple List 94-96, George 1993: 12.

⁴⁹⁵ For the edition of the text, see Lambert 1975b.

⁴⁹⁶ The name is written GAŠAN-Nippuri which Edzard (1987: 66) erroneously reads Bēlet-Nippuri.

accompanied by Zarpanītu and Tašmētu while the priests sing “Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Babylon is full of joy, O Ninlil, in accordance with all the rites” (K.9876+:13).⁴⁹⁷ According to this text, then, it also seems that Ninlil is ostensibly encroaching, on the rites of Ištar of Babylon. On the other hand, Ištar may also be encroaching on the domain of Ninlil in Nippur; the next section of the ‘Love Lyrics’ contains a hymn in praise of Enlil in Nippur in the temple of Sîn, father of Ištar. The development evident here might be reflected in a late syncretistic hymn (dated to 363 BCE), in which Ištar of Babylon is identified with Ninlil and Enlil. She is also explicitly equated with Ninlil of the Ḫursaġkalama:

telītum šinnat ^dNunamnir *ša purussāša la ut-tak-ka-áš*⁴⁹⁸ ^dNinlil *ša*
 Ḫursaġkalama ^den-líl-lá-át ^dnin-líl-át
^dIš-tar *ša melammē dullāti kīma ūme pulḫāti kišsurāt* ^dKI+MIN (= ^dNinlil *ša* Ḫursaġkalama)

The wise one, the equal of Nunamnir [Enlil], whose decisions are not to be altered, – Ninlil of Ḫursaġkalama – she is Enlil, she is Ninlil

–
 Ištar, who is covered with radiance, enveloped with awe as with a storm – Ninlil of Ḫursaġkalama ...

(Lambert 2003/2004: 21: 3-4)

The syncretistic process has come full circle – Ištar is explicitly equated with Ninlil of the Ḫursaġkalama who had usurped the prerogatives of Ištar in the Ḫursaġkalama. The question is whether these arbitrary associations should be considered significant and definitive syncretisms. The copyist of the hymn unfortunately had a damaged text in front of him. After the damage, he concludes with a corrupt rubric indicating that the text expounds on the various “names” of Ištar.⁴⁹⁹ Thus, the tradition which first was seen in the Early Dynastic hymn associating Ištar with a variety of names was also ensconced in syncretistic hymns of the first millennium.

⁴⁹⁷ Zimmern 1906: 136-143. For interpretations of this text, see Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 134, 228-232 (“Babylon ist in Freude für Ninlil entsprechend allen Kultbräuchen”); Lambert 1997b: 52-53 (“Be filled with rejoicing Babylon! How Ninlil maintains the rites!”); and Zgoll 2006b: 33, n. 107 (“Babylon ist voller Freude, o Ninlil, entsprechend allen Kultbräuchen”).

⁴⁹⁸ Perhaps, as was suggested to me by Erica Reiner, a copying error was made by the scribe who wrote ÁŠ for AŠ (= rù), and thus, the verse should read: *ut-tak-ka-rù* from the verb *nakāru* ‘to change a decision’. Cf. *dīn mātim ša adīnu...aj unakkir* “May he not alter the judgements which I have rendered concerning the country ...” (CH xlvi 72, see Roth 1997: 135).

⁴⁹⁹ Lambert 2003/4: 26; the text itself has (rev. line 36): MU ^dINANA.MEŠ, most likely “name(s) of Ištar hypostases”. See also in this volume pp. 94-95.

Certain of the rituals from the temple of Marduk, the *Esaĝil*, have been recovered, among which are various parts of the two New Year Festivals, which were celebrated in the first month of Nisannu and in the seventh month of Tašrītu as well as rituals for the months of Kislīmu and Šabātu. Some rituals include other temples, processions inside and outside the city and visits to and from other cities. Among the participating goddesses are Zarpanītu/Bēltiya (“My Mistress” the late common designation of this goddess), Ištar of Babylon / Bēlet-Bābili (“Mistress of Babylon”), the ‘daughters of the *Esaĝil*’ as well as unspecified “goddesses” (*ištarāti*)⁵⁰⁰. Whereas in one ceremony the priest addresses Bēltiya in Sumerian as Inana, in another he addresses her in Akkadian as Zarpanītu.

On Day 5 of the New Year Festival of the month of Nisannu in Hellenistic Babylon prayers for Bēl and Bēltiya (written ^dGAŠAN-*iá*) were recited.⁵⁰¹ In these prayers, both deities were identified with the names of planets and stars; Bēl/Marduk with the male heavenly bodies and Bēltiya/Zarpanītu with the female heavenly bodies. In the prayer to Bēltiya, her protective role is emphasized and she is identified with ^d*Dam-ki-an-na*, the wife of Enki/Ea and mother of Marduk.⁵⁰²

318. GAŠAN.MU GI₄.GI₄ GAŠAN.MU ḪUN.A...
 324. ^dDAM-KI-AN-NA *bēlat* AN u KI GAŠAN.MU MU.NE
 325. ^{má}DIL.BAD *nābāt* MUL.<MEŠ> GAŠAN.MU MU.NE
 326. ^{má}BAN ŠUB-*át* *dannūtu* GAŠAN.MU MU.NE
 327. ^{má}ÛZ *bārāt* AN-*e* GAŠAN.MU MU.NE
 328. ^{má}ḪÉ.GÁL.A MUL *nuḫšu* GAŠAN.MU MU.NE
 329. ^{má}BAL.TÉŠ.A MUL *baltu* GAŠAN.MU MU.NE
 330. ^{má}MAR.GÍD.DA *markas* AN-*e* GAŠAN.MU MU.NE
 331. ^{má}E₄-RU₆ *bānāt* *riḫātu* GAŠAN.MU MU.NE
 332. ^{má}NIN.MAḪ BA-*át* DIN GAŠAN.MU MU.NE

318. My Mistress..., My Mistress, be calm....
 324. Damkiana, the mistress of the heavens and the earth, her name is ‘My Mistress’.
 325. Venus, the most brilliant of the stars, her name is ‘My Mistress’.
 326. Bow-star, the one who fells the strong ones, her name is ‘My Mistress’.
 327. Goat-star, the one who watches over the heavens, her name is ‘My Mistress’.
 328. Abundance-star, the star of bounty, her name is ‘My Mistress’.
 329. Balteša-star, the star of dignity, her name is ‘My Mistress’.
 330. Wagon-star, the centre of the heavens, her name is ‘My Mistress’.

⁵⁰⁰ For these goddesses, see George 2000: 261. They are written with the sacred number of Ištar: 15.

⁵⁰¹ For a recent edition, see Linssen 2004: 215-237 (text) and discussion on pp. 79-86.

⁵⁰² For a discussion of these lines, see Oshima 2010: 146-147.

331. Erua-star, the one who creates progeny, her name is ‘My Mistress’.
 332. Ninmaḥ-star, the one who grants life, her name is ‘My Mistress’.

This type of explicit syncretic identification with the heavenly bodies is an innovation of the Hellenistic period.

The loss of the individual specific names of the goddesses, thus, leads to confusion. Bēltiya “My Mistress” is a particular case in point. Already in the second millennium, the term Bēltiya referred to a specific but unnamed goddess (cf. CAD B s.v. *bēltu* mng. 1a – 3’). In the first millennium, the specific referent was Zarpanītu, the consort of Bēl, Marduk. Nevertheless, in the liturgies, Nanaya (see below) and other goddesses were frequently addressed as “My Mistress” (GAŠAN.MU).

Related to the New Year Festival are certain other rites, probably those of Annunītu in which the priestly officiant is dressed in clothes of the goddess and appointed with regalia identified as various deities (George 2006). Among these various deities, the goddesses mentioned are Ištar (identified with two items), Bēlet-ilī (identified with three items), and Nintinuga.

The rituals for the months of Kislīmu and Šabātu in the temple of Gula in west Babylon (George 2000: 280-289) centered on BaU of Kiš, and Bēlet-balāṭi (“Mistress of Life”, epithet of Nintinuga) of Babylon and involved the deities of both cities. Other goddesses whose cults were well known in Babylon involved in this ritual are: Bēlet-Eana (“Mistress of the Eana”, temple of Inana in Uruk who resided in the E-kituš-girzal in Babylon), Bēlet-Ninua (“Mistress of Nineveh”, the last Assyrian capital, who resided in the Eḡiṣḡurankia in Babylon), and ⁴KAŠ.TIN.NAM (possibly late form of Nin-kasi, see Chapter II.B.2, no. 22). The goddesses of Kiš that participate are Ninlil of Ḥursaḡkalama and Bizila. The ritual for month of Šabātu also includes the deities of the city of Borsippa, Nanaya, Ušur-amāssu⁵⁰³ and the daughters of the Ezida, who come from Borsippa to Babylon and then are accompanied by Marduk and his retinue including the daughters of the Esaḡil to Kiš where they are greeted by the Queen of Kiš and the daughters of the Eduba. In addition there is a unique reference to an ennead of goddesses (⁴9-⁴INANA.MEŠ).

One ritual celebrated the marriage of Nanaya and Nabû in Borsippa.⁵⁰⁴ In this theogamy Nanaya has usurped the position of Tašmētu. A Seleucid ritual calendar records the performance of the marriage of Nabû and Nanaya in the second month, Ajaru:

⁵⁰³ This Urukean goddess was more commonly paired with the goddess Urkayītu (Beaulieu 2003: 74-75).

⁵⁰⁴ SBH p. 145 no. VIII ii 12-32, see Matsushima 1987: 158-161, Cohen 1993: 311 and Linssen 2004: 63, 68, 71.

^dAG ša ḥadaššūtu innandiq tēdīq ^dAnūtu TA qereb É.ZI.DA ina šāt mūši uštāpā nannariš kīma ^dXXX ina niphīšu unammār eklet ina qereb É.UR₅.ŠĀ.BA ušteššir išaddiḥu namriš irrumma ana maḥar ^dNIN.KA.LI⁵⁰⁵ šitkunu ana ḥada[ššūtu] ina qereb É.UR₅.ŠĀ.BA GIM u₄-mu išakkan namir[tu] ina majāltu mūši tābi ittanajalu šitta [tābta]

Nabû in (his) status as bridegroom is dressed in a garment of Anu-rank. Like the moon he shines forth from the Ezida (temple of Nabû) during the night. Like the rising moon he illuminates the darkness. He proceeds directly to the Euršaba (temple of Nanaya), parades radiantly, and enters before the goddess ^dNIN.KA.LI (Nanaya) to perform the wedding. Inside the Euršaba he creates brightness like daylight. In a bed of a pleasant night they lay down again and again in [sweet] sleep.

(II. ii 15-21)

In Uruk, during the Achaemenid and Seleucid periods, local theologians reorganized the pantheon by reinstating Anu and Antu as sole patron gods of the city and demoting Ištar to a secondary position (see Beaulieu 1992). The theologians in Seleucid Uruk treat Anu and Antu consistently as one single divine manifestation.⁵⁰⁶ These two divinities, Anu and Antu might be said to reflect the earlier Akkadian Ilum (‘god’) and ‘Aštar (‘goddess/Ištar’) – the masculine and feminine aspects of a single divine entity. Consequently, a syncretism was created between Antu and Ištar, with Antu absorbing the attributes of Ištar.⁵⁰⁷ As previously, the consequence of the pronouncement ‘Let Sud be called Ninlil’ was the amalgamation of Sud by Ninlil. Similarly, the declaration of the change of the name of Ištar, “may ‘exalted Antu’ be your name”, in the composition *Exaltation of Ištar* leads to this assimilation of aspects of Ištar by Antu.⁵⁰⁸ In this composition, Anu accepts the young maiden Ištar as his equal and spouse under the name Antu, endows her with the all the divine ordinances (*me/parṣu*) in his possession and exalts her in the sky as Venus.

Furthermore, a standardized ranking of the fourteen major gods of the Uruk pantheon was implemented of which eight were male and seven were female. In their hierarchical order, the goddesses were: Antu, Amasaḡnudi,⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁵ For this unique writing as rendering the goddess Nanaya, see Linssen 2004: 71.

⁵⁰⁶ Beaulieu 1992: 57-58.

⁵⁰⁷ For a detailed discussion, see Beaulieu 1995 and note in particular, the syncretism between Antu and Ištar-Ninsiana (p. 203).

⁵⁰⁸ ^dKi-šar₂ maḥ.a mu.sa₄.zu ḥe₂.em: *ana maḥar zikir šumija Antu širtu lu nibīt šumikīma* (Hruška 1969: 484 Tablet III lines 39-40). For discussions of text and dating, see Lambert 1971: 92-3 and Beaulieu 2003: 115-116.

⁵⁰⁹ For this goddess, wife of the vizier Papsukkal in Hellenistic Uruk, see Beaulieu 1992: 49-53. Beaulieu places her as a sub-entry of Papsukkal.

Ištar, Bēlet-šēri, Nanaya, Bēlet-ša-Rēš, and Šarraḫītu. The ritual texts from the city of Uruk reflect this change in the cults of the deities. In certain rituals, all the goddesses (^dINANA.MEŠ) take up positions before Antu. As part of the New Year Festival of the month of Nisannu, there is a procession to the *akītu*-temple in which Anu, Antu and Ištar and their retinues participate.⁵¹⁰ Parading with Antu are: Bēlet-ilī (the ‘birthing goddess’), Šāla (the storm goddess), Mārāt-Ani (Daughters of Anu), Aya (‘Dawn’, wife of the sun-god, Šamaš), Gula (the healing goddess), Ninešgal (‘Mistress of the Ešgal temple’),⁵¹¹ Amasaḡnudi, Sadarnuna,⁵¹² Ašratu (see above), Šarrat-šamê (‘Queen of the Heavens’).⁵¹³ These diverse deities are not commonly associated with Antu; they encompass various domains and two may be manifestations of Ištar (Ninešgal and Šarrat-šamê). Parading with Ištar are: Nanaya, Ninsiana, Ninigizibara (harp-counsellor of Ištar), Išartu (deified principle of righteousness), Ninmeurur (‘Mistress of the Meurur temple’),⁵¹⁴ Ilid-eturra,⁵¹⁵ Šaḡepada,⁵¹⁶ Daughters of Uruk, Daughters of Eana, Ninsumuna, Šarrat-parakki (‘Queen of the dais’). In contradistinction to the first grouping, most of these goddesses are well known either as manifestations of Ištar or as inhabitants of Urukian temples. The blatant differences between these two groups, one heterogeneous and the other homogeneous, lead to the conclusion that the first was an ad hoc conglomeration while the second was a traditional grouping of goddesses. In the ceremonies during the New Year Festival of the month of Tašrītu, the goddess Nanaya stands alone and it is in her bedchamber that the rite of holy marriage is performed.⁵¹⁷

The purification goddesses continue to be called upon during the daily, monthly, annual and occasional ritual ceremonies. Certain rites involve the “holy water basins” of Kusu and Ningirima (see Linssen 2004: 150-151).

⁵¹⁰ KAR 132, see Thureau-Dangin 1921: 99-108 and Linssen 2004: 201-208. The procession is discussed by Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 136-142.

⁵¹¹ This is a manifestation of Ištar. The Ešgal temple was probably the name of the temple of Ištar in Hellenistic Uruk (see George 1993: 83-4, Linssen 2004: 181), see discussion in Chapter II.B.2 s.v. no. 1 with footnote 160.

⁵¹² For this goddess at home in Nippur, the wife of Nuska, the chief vizier of Enlil, and the god of fire and light, and daughter of Anu, see Cohen and Krebernik 2006-2008.

⁵¹³ For this goddess (written ^dLUGAL-at AN) in the second-millennium records of the First Sealand Dynasty, see above Chapter II.C.2. For this sobriquet to describe Ištar, see above in the hymn to *Šarrat-Nippuri* (Chapter II.C.2). See further Selz 2000.

⁵¹⁴ For this temple of Nanaya in Uruk, see George 1993: 126, no. 793.

⁵¹⁵ For this reading of the name of the goddess, see Pongratz-Leisten 1994: 137-138. Thureau-Dangin (1921: 101 I 28), followed by Linssen 2004: 201 i 28, previously read the name as ÁB.Ē.TUR.RA. There is no such temple in George 1993.

⁵¹⁶ For this little-known goddess, see Krebernik 2006-2008: 520.

⁵¹⁷ AO 6459: 4-5, see Thureau-Dangin 1921: 89, 94 and Linssen 2004: 184, 188 and comments on line on p. 192.

The genre of syncretistic hymns in which a deity addressed is described in terms of others or in which a deity claims various identities continues to be popular in the late period. The scribes in the city of Babylon produced manuscripts of the Gula Hymn. In the Late Syncretistic Hymn to Ištar,⁵¹⁸ she is the goddess par excellence. In this hymn, she is praised as the queen of the totality, the one who controls the majestic divine ordinances, and the goddess of battle and at the same time her name was also served as the common noun ‘goddess’ which invited a merger of major goddesses. In addition to the various deities of the Ištar circle, she is equated with Zarpanītu (also under her name Erua) the spouse of Marduk, Tašmētu the spouse of Nabû, Ninlil, the spouse of Enlil, Ereškigal, the goddess of the underworld and Ninmaḥ the birthing goddess. Most significant is the equation “She is Enlil, she is Ninlil” alluding to her dimorphic aspects, cited above.

Similar to syncretistic hymns are the mystical expository texts whose purpose is to celebrate the “infinite complexity of a deity and its universal character” not by its identification with other deities “but rather through an exegesis of its names and epithets” (Beaulieu 1995: 188-89). One focused on Antu but also identifies her with other deities.⁵¹⁹ The exegesis of her name was done by rare and unusual lexical equations:

di ġir^{di-in-gi-ir} : an-tu₄ : il-tu₄ el-l[et]
^du^ú : an-tu₄ : ba-na-at kul-lat
^dkur^{ku-ur} : an-tu₄ : be-let ma-a-tú šá-niš be-let ri-šá-^r a-tú⁷
^dnin-si₄-an-na : an-tu₄ : be-el-^r tú⁷ mu-nam-<me>-rat AN-e

Diġir : Antu: the radiant goddess

U : Antu: the creatrix of all

Kur : Antu: the mistress of the land; second interpretation: the mistress of rejoicing

Ninsiana : Antu: the mistress who illuminates heaven

(Beaulieu 1995: 194-195, lines 3, 5, 7, 8)

The cult liturgy gives further evidence of the equation of the goddesses in the litanies found in the late first millennium compositions. A common litany identifies Nanaya by the various names and epithets of Zarpanītu (Panunanki), Tašmētu (Gašangutešasiga) and even Ninlil. There are two types of litanies, in the first she is identified with the other goddesses and in the second, she speaks in first person equating herself with other goddesses:

egi₂-re egi₂-re gu₃ am₃-me uru₂ in-ga-am₃-me u₃-li-li
 ru-ba-tu₄ MIN ši-si-it URU i-šas-si ina lal-la-ra-a-ti

⁵¹⁸ Lambert 2003/2004, dated to 363 BCE.

⁵¹⁹ Beaulieu 1995, MLC 1890, dated to 225 BCE.

a gašan-ĝu₁₀ nu-nuz-ša₆-ga u₃-<li-li>
 e₂-gi₄-a-e₂-saĝ-il₂-la u₃-<li-li>
 dumu-saĝ-^dUraš-a u₃-<li-li>
 dumu-saĝ-e₂-i-bi₂-^dA-nu-um u₃-<li-li>
 gašan-gu₃-teš₂-a-si₃-ke-a-ke₄ u₃-<li-li>
 gašan-ĝu₁₀ ^dNa-na-a u₃-<li-li>

“Princess! Princess!” is the cry which the city utters. Alas!
 Oh, my mistress, the beautiful woman! Alas!
 Daughter-in-law of the Esaĝil [Tašmētu]!, Alas!
 First-born of Uraš [Tašmētu]!, Alas!
 First-born of the E-ibbi-Anum⁵²⁰ [Tašmētu]!, Alas!
 Gašangutešasiga! Alas!
 My mistress, Nanaya, Alas!

(Cohen 1988: 179, 183, b+73-b+79)

e₂-ta mar-ra-men₃ er₂ nu-gul-la-men₃
 balaĝ-di e₂-ta mar-ra-men₃ er₂
 gašan-men₃ e₂-kur-ra e₂-ta mar-ra-men₃ er₂
 egi₂-men₃ ki-u[r₃ ki-gal e₂-ta] mar-ra-men₃ er₂
 egi₂-uru₂-[zu[?] TIN].TIR.KI-men₃
 ama-e₂-a [e₂-s]aĝ-íl-la-men₃
 a gašan-ĝu₁₀ Pa₄-nun-an-ki-men₃
 egi₂-zi-da gašan-bara₂-ge-si₃-men₃
 e₂-gi₄-a dumu-saĝ-^dUraš-a-men₃
 dumu-e₂-a dumu-saĝ-e₂-i-bi₂-^dA-nu-um-men₃
 egi₂-zi-da gašan-gu₃-teš₂-a-si₃-ke-men₃
 egi₂-gu-la gašan-ĝu₁₀ ^dNa-na-a-men₃

I’ve been expelled from the house. I cannot hold back the tears,
 Lamentation! I’ve been expelled from the house.
 I am the queen, (she of) the Ekur [Ninlil],
 I am the princess, (she of) the Kiur, the great place [Ninlil],
 I am the princess of the ÚRU-ma, of Babylon [Zarpanītu],
 I am the mother of the house, of the Esaĝil [Zarpanītu],
 Oh, my mistress! I am Panunanki [Zarpanītu],
 I am the faithful princess, Gašanbaragesi [Tašmētu],
 I am the daughter-in-law, the first-born of Uraš [Tašmētu],
 I am the child of the house, the first-born of the E-ibbi-Anum
 [Tašmētu],
 I am the faithful princess, Gašangutešasiga [Tašmētu],
 I am the great princess, my mistress! I am Nanaya.

(Cohen 1988: 520-521, a+2-a+13)

⁵²⁰ Temple of Uraš in Dilbat, see George 1993: 102, no. 493.

Groupings of goddesses occur in the first millennium but they come to the fore in Late Babylonian texts. This may be the result of the gaps in our written records – almost all ritual texts with few exceptions come from the latest period of cuneiform culture. One dais in Babylon is named “the Goddesses (^dXV.MEŠ written with the numerical sign for Ištar) Pay Heed to Zarpanītu” (George 1992: 99). An Ennead of ‘Nine Goddesses’ (^d9-^dINANA.MEŠ written with the INANA sign) appears in one ritual.⁵²¹ George (2000: 296) compared them to two different groups of seven *bēletu*-goddesses, the group listed in the Archive of Mystic Heptads (cited above) and a group of syncretised birthing goddesses:⁵²²

| | |
|--|--|
| ^d A-ru-ru | ^d <i>be-let-ilī</i> (DĠGIR.MEŠ) šá Sippar- ^d A-ru-ru ^{ki} |
| ^d Nin-tur ₅ | ^d <i>be-let-ilī</i> (DĠGIR.MEŠ) šá <i>Di-nik'-t</i> ^{ki} |
| ^d Nin-maḥ | ^d <i>be-let-ilī</i> (DĠGIR.MEŠ) šá É.MAḤ |
| ^d Nin-ḥur-saġ-ġa ₂ | ^d <i>be-let-ilī</i> (DĠGIR.MEŠ) šá Kèš ^{ki} |
| ^d Nin-men-na | ^d <i>be-let-ilī</i> (DĠGIR.MEŠ) šá ^{uru} Ú-tab ^{ki} |
| ^d Ša ₃ -sur-ra | ^d <i>be-let-ilī</i> (DĠGIR.MEŠ) šá ^{uru} Ur-rak ^{ki} |
| ^d E ₄ -ru ₆ | ^d <i>be-let-ilī</i> (DĠGIR.MEŠ) šá TIN.TIR.KI |
| ^d <i>be-let-i-la-a-ti</i> | ^d <i>Zar-pa-ni-tum</i> |
| 7 ^d <i>be-let-ì-lí</i> .MEŠ | |
| | |
| ^d Aruru | The <i>Bēlet-ilī</i> of the city of Sippar-Aruru |
| ^d Nintur | The <i>Bēlet-ilī</i> of the city of Diniktu |
| ^d Ninmaḥ | The <i>Bēlet-ilī</i> of the Emaḥ temple |
| ^d Ninḥursaġa | The <i>Bēlet-ilī</i> of the city of Keš |
| ^d Ninmena | The <i>Bēlet-ilī</i> of the city of Utab |
| ^d Šasura | The <i>Bēlet-ilī</i> of the city of Urrak |
| ^d Erua | The <i>Bēlet-ilī</i> of the city of Babylon |
| Mistress-of-the-goddesses | ^d Zarpanītu |
| 7 <i>Bēlet-ilī</i> -goddesses | |

(Pinches 1911: pl. XI 18 – pl. XII rev. 14)

This heptad begins with the birthing goddesses known from the third millennium and ends with two manifestations of Zarpanītu, the second being Erua. Zarpanītu is designated “Mistress-of-the-goddesses”, an all-inclusive term denoting her foremost rank among the female deities and her assumption of the rights and privileges of the other goddesses.

⁵²¹ George 2000: 293, BM 32516+BM 41239 obv. 3 and see his commentary on this line on p. 296.

⁵²² George inadvertently left out the first line of the text. For the missing first line, cf. Stol 2000: 74 n. 156, 78; Black 2005: 40, n. 1. This list can also be compared to that of the second-millennium god-lists, see above Chapter II.C.1.

Syncretism

In this latest period, the syncretisms among the deities put in place by the theologians became the established doctrines observed by the religious practitioners. In the following text, the priest first invites five deities to go in procession, addressing them by their own name, then by the god with whom they are being syncretised, and the latter's characteristic epithets:

[ridi ^dBēl ^dEnlil ^{šam}]ê u eršetim
 [...] šar ilāni rabûti
 [ridi ^dZarpanîtum] ^dBēlet-ilī bānāti kallati
 šarrat E[saġ]il šarrat Nippuri
 ridi ^dTašmētum ^dGula bēlet Isin
 tamlāk ilāni rabûti
 ridi ^dNanaya ^dIštar bēlet mātāti
 bēlet Uruk bēlet Ezida
 ridi ^dNabû (^dPA) ^dAnum šar šamê ellūti
 ašaredu ša ilāni rabûti

[Process, Bēl, Enlil of] heaven and netherworld,
 [...] king of the great gods.
 [Process, Zarpanîtu], Bēlet-ilī, the beautiful, the bride,
 queen of the Esaġil, queen of Nippur.
 Process, Tašmētu, Gula, mistress of Isin,
 counsellor of the great gods.
 Process, Nanaya, Ištar, mistress of the lands,
 mistress of Uruk, mistress of Ezida.
 Process, Nabû, Anum, king of the pure heavens,
 foremost of the great gods.

(Lambert 1997a: 161)

In the second part, the priest clearly enunciates the syncretisms in an explicit assertion of similarity that the new gods were replacing the old gods in the ritual procession:

ašib ^dBēl kīma ^dEnlil
 ašbat ^dZarpanîtum kīma ^dBēlet-ilī
 ašbat ^dTašmētum kīma ^dGula
 ašbat ^dNanaya kīma ^dIštar
 ašib ^dNabû (^dPA) kīma ^dAnim

Bēl is present like Enlil.
 Zarpanîtu is present like Bēlet-ilī.
 Tašmētu is present like Gula.

Nanaya is present like Ištar.
Nabû is present like Anum.

(Lambert 1997a: 161)

Explicit syncretisms, thus, characterize the last stage of the development of the relationships between the goddesses. Series of assimilations and transmutations of the characters and roles of the goddesses are recognized by the contemporary theologians and religious practitioners.

Fusion

Fusion was expressed in the syncretistic hymns. Two different processes were set in motion: one was the restructuring of a profuse pantheon and the other was the glorification of certain gods by equating them with their rivals. There are various local attempts to equate but not to fuse further any group of goddesses. The identities set up in the syncretistic hymns reflect an obsessive focus on an individual god who is linked with many others. As described by Bottéro (2001: 42), this focus derived from “a profound tendency... to encapsulate all sacred potential into the particular divine personality whom [the Mesopotamians] were addressing at a given moment.” Thus, fused goddesses were ascribed omnipotence in the circumscribed divine world of late Babylonia.

Fission

There are no cases of fission. Two other processes in late Babylonia mediate against the process of fission of deities: one is to fuse goddesses in groupings and the other to introduce new deities to replace long-established ones.

New Arrivals

In the late pantheon, there is a surprising number of new deities. For instance, a relatively new goddess by the name of Šarraḥītu (“The Glorified One”) assumed an important role in the cultic life of the city Uruk.⁵²³ She is one of the new plethora of goddesses introduced in the Seleucid period: Amasaḡnudi,⁵²⁴ Ama-arḥuṣ,⁵²⁵ among others. These deities were venerated in cult and revered in personal names. The strange resurgence of Ama-named goddesses could be seen as reflecting a need for a motherly conception of the deity.

⁵²³ This goddess first appears in Babylon where she apparently was identified with Ašratum the spouse of Amurru, see Krebernik 2009-2011 and also McEwan 1981: 188.

⁵²⁴ Beaulieu 1992: 47-53.

⁵²⁵ McEwan 1981: 188.

Diminution, Decline, Disappearance, Demise

Due to historical events under foreign rule and concomitant internal changes, many upheavals in the structure of the local pantheons occurred in the first millennium, in particular in Uruk. The pair Anu/Antu replaced Ištar and her circle as chief deities of Uruk and thus brought Uruk into correspondence with all other cities ruled by city gods rather than by goddesses.⁵²⁶ The disappearance of city goddesses was thus absolute. Whereas the *theos eponymos* of Uruk, Urkayītu, emerged in the Neo-Babylonian period, her position ceased to exist in the ensuing Seleucid era. Although the process of change from Ištar to Anu in predominant position in the hierarchy of the pantheon in Uruk took place over a long period in time, the new pantheon headed by Anu was established under Achaemenid kings.⁵²⁷ In this pantheon, the replacement of Urkayītu and Ušur-amāssu by Bēlet-šēri (“Mistress of the Steppe”) and Šarraḥītu (“The Glorified One”) was carried out.⁵²⁸

Mutation

Of the various types of possible divine mutation, the most common relates to the gender of the deities. The shift of gender can be complete and final or localized spatially or temporally. An example of a deity whose gender shift was complete and final is Ninšubura.⁵²⁹ Her avatar Papsukkal was not only the archetypal vizier to all the gods, but also became one of the fourteen major deities of Uruk in the late Babylonian pantheon under Anu. As Beaulieu (1992: 64) has stated, “the most conclusive evidence of the complete syncretism Papsukkal/Ninšubura comes from Seleucid Uruk where Papsukkal had completely replaced Ninšubura as the vizier of Anu, although scholastic tradition consistently attributed that function to the latter while at the same time insisting on his identity with the former”.

E. General Trends

The focus of this chapter has been the historical process of syncretism as it occurred among ancient Mesopotamian goddesses. Transformations of their identity through the processes of fusion, fission and mutation were examined. These processes extended through three millennia and stages of development

⁵²⁶ For the importance of the city gods in this late period and their acting as a focal point for henotheistic tendencies, see Oelsner 1994.

⁵²⁷ See Beaulieu 1992: 53-57 and Oelsner 1994: 490-492.

⁵²⁸ For an evaluation of the evidence concerning the eclipse of the goddess Ušur-amāssu in the Hellenistic period, see Kessler 2006: 278.

⁵²⁹ See above Chapter II.C.1.

were distinguished. In the introduction, syncretism was defined as: “analogical equations of discrete deities, based on the two modalities of association either by contiguity or by similarity”. Of these two modalities, association by similarity was the major cause and association by contiguity a lesser factor.

Various developments encouraged the processes of syncretism and fusion among the goddesses. The first major development was the movement from a named singular goddesses to the practice of employing epithets in place of proper names. Beginning in the third millennium, this manner of invoking goddesses was set in motion. In the third millennium, *Diġir-maḥ* (“Exalted Deity”) and *Nin-maḥ* (“Exalted Mistress”) became goddesses; in the second *Gula* (“Great One”), and in the first *Telītu* (“The Skilled One”). Descriptive appellations, such as *Annunītum* (“The Martial One”), became divinities in their own right. By becoming nameless through the loss of their proper names, goddesses could lose their presumed unique individualities. Thus, the path to syncretism was laid.

The second and similar development was the transformation of the titles given to the goddesses who were city patrons. The employment of the title ‘*Šarratu* (“Queen”) of a city’ for the patron goddesses commences in the second millennium while the utilization of the adjectival form based on the city name actually begins in the third but becomes more frequent in the first as seen above in the appearance of the goddess *Urkayītu*. This nomenclature stems from the earliest use of the names of the goddesses as *theos eponymos* in the archaic sources. However, all the ‘Mistresses/Queens’ became interchangeable. In later antiquity in Mandaic Texts (Müller-Kessler and Kessler 1999: 69-70), a new goddess occurs: *Bablīta* (“the Babylonian”), probably to be identified with *Bēlet-Bābili*, which, in turn, was originally an epithet of *Ištar*.

The third development was precipitated by the catalyst rooted in their gender roles which encouraged the movement towards grouping all the goddesses according to their familial function, daughters and daughter-in-laws are explicit, wives and mothers implicit. Thus, their individual characters and domains were obscured and became merged. The course was set by the promotion of those goddesses who were spouses at the expense of the singular unwedded deities. The rise of *Ninlil* and *BaU* led to their assimilation of the functions and positions of *Ištar* and *Nin-Isina*.

The fourth development in the process of syncretism was the frequent contiguity of association in location. Goddesses at home in one temple or city were identified with one another. *Nanaya* and *Tašmētu* shared this fate in the *Ezida* in *Borsippa*. The reason that the healing goddesses were syncretized and the birthing goddesses were fused could be due to the contiguity of the latter. As long as their temple names were preserved along with the

name of the resident goddess, some distinction was made among the healing goddesses.

The fifth and major development in the escalating process of syncretism was the sharing of domain – the birthing goddesses were fused by the second millennium and the goddesses of healing were similarly syncretised from that time. Contemporary traumatic historical events led to goddesses assuming the persona of *mater dolorosa*. The quality of mercy became a universal trait of the goddesses who were depicted as compassionate intermediaries with the stern male gods, their husbands. This role continued into the first millennium when the goddesses evoked potent images of female compassion and mercy vis-à-vis stern male justice, which is found in Jewish images of Shekhina and in medieval Christian worship of Mary as interceding for sinful man before God.

Different types of syncretisms were the outcome of these developments. Sumerian and Akkadian bilingual syncretism was matched by a religious syncretism, which led to the symbiotic pairing of goddesses – not only Inana/Ištar but also that of Diġirmah/*Bēlet-ilī*. There was a period of short-termed theocracy, when two deities were combined into unitary divine beings at the end of the third millennium. An example of a goddess superimposed on another is Ninlil of Ĥursaġkalama vis-à-vis Ištar of Ĥursaġkalama, her predecessor in that temple. Synthesis also led to the absorption of one goddess of others, such as Ninlil who absorbed Sud. Certain deities underwent transformation through association; an example of which is Išhara in relation to Ištar. Exchanges of qualities occurred when two goddesses were linked; the prime example of such an exchange is that of Nin-Isina and Inana. Equivalence and identification contributed to the theological reductionism of the later periods.

There were a few goddesses who kept their identity and maintained a discrete existence throughout the millennia and into later antiquity. One remarkable case is that of 'Aštar of Akkade, the guiding divinity of the Akkadian empire in the third millennium whose worship continued into the first millennium and beyond. Her worship might have been enshrined due to the factor that for the duration of Mesopotamian history, the Akkadian kings represented the ideal monarchy. As long as the Mesopotamian kings modelled themselves after these great kings of yore, they continued to honour their martial goddess. She not only guided the great kings of the past but also brought martial victories when she accompanied the kings into battle. She is one of the Mesopotamian deities found in later antiquity in Mandaic texts (Müller-Kessler and Kessler 1999: 72-73).

The culmination of the process of syncretism and fusion was the all-powerful divine entity, both male and female, embodied in Ištar. The

extent of her divine agency is reflected in her domination of the cosmos, from the heavens to the seas, extending from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun.

Through the study of these phenomena, the changes and transitions in Mesopotamian religious thought were highlighted. As an explanatory category, the concept of syncretism can be applied to characterize religious developments not only as a late stage in a particular epoch of the history of religions but as on-going phenomenon of the evolution of religions. This type of investigation has been and can continue to be a useful heuristic tool for uncovering political and social changes in the society at large.

Chapter III: Facets of Change

Julia M. Asher-Greve

In Chapter II various modalities were analyzed that caused changes in the positions, roles, and domains of numerous goddesses. Major mother/birthing goddesses, such as Ninḫursaġa/Ninmaḥ retained their powerful function under various names as did the patron goddess of Nippur, Enlil's spouse Ninlil, and both continued to be venerated into the first millenium. The following discussions focus on the changes in the conception of these two goddesses.

A. The Case of Ninḫursaġa

According to Wolfgang Heimpel "in early times the birth goddess Ninḫursaġa was the highest-ranking female deity".⁵³⁰ Her "decline of power and prestige" was, as Piotr Michalowski (2002: 416) suggests, caused by the rise of Enlil's spouse Ninlil, "the new power in the Mesopotamian pantheon". Ninḫursaġa was eventually worshipped in Ninlil's chapels together with Nanna and the goddesses Nisaba and Nintinuga; in the Old Babylonian period she was 'fused' with several other 'birthing' goddesses.⁵³¹

Aside from Ninḫursaġa, several other names are known for the only goddess presiding over the pantheon with An, Enlil, and Enki: she was also called Ninmaḥ, Diġirmaḥ, and in some texts Nintur.⁵³² The complex and somewhat confusing relationship between the names and goddess(es) and their temples is discussed in Chapters II.B.1-3 and II.C.⁵³³

It is a characteristic of Babylonian goddesses (and gods) that they have several roles, domains, and functions.⁵³⁴ That Ninḫursaġa had an important

⁵³⁰ Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-ḫursaġa".

⁵³¹ See Black 2005 and Chapter II.C.1 sub "Fusion" in this volume.

⁵³² Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-tur".

⁵³³ See also Selz 2010.

⁵³⁴ Cf. Veldhuis (2004: 17-29) on the different roles and identities of Nanše and Chapter II *passim* in this volume.

role in Sumerian kingship ideology is documented in a stone vessel inscription, the oldest known royal votive gift, donated by Mesilim, king of Kiš (ca. 2700 BCE) who calls himself ‘beloved son of Ninḥursaġa’.⁵³⁵ Two votive objects were dedicated to Diġirmaḥ, originally an epithet of Ninḥursaġa, by an Early Dynastic ruler of Adab.⁵³⁶ The archaic version of the Keš temple hymn is dedicated to Nintur’s temple in Keš but in the Old Babylonian version Ninḥursaġa and Nintur are identical.⁵³⁷ In the state of Lagaš, Ninḥursaġa is the highest ranking goddess and Ninmaḥ is one of her epithets.⁵³⁸ It is doubtful if Nintur was a separate goddess in third-millennium Lagaš.⁵³⁹ In the inscription of the statue Gudea dedicated to Ninḥursaġa she is identical with Nintur.⁵⁴⁰ In the Ur III period Ninḥursaġa had a temple in Nippur and received offerings in this temple as well as in the temple of Ninlil and Enlil and in the palace.⁵⁴¹

The “*Leitwort*” (keyword) for Ninḥursaġa, according to Wolfgang Heimpel, is maḥ and she was worshipped in Adab as Diġirmaḥ, (‘mighty/majestic goddess’). One of her epithets is ‘mighty/majestic Queen’ (nin-maḥ), and her temples in Adab, Ġirsu, and Babylon were called ‘majestic house’ (e₂-maḥ).⁵⁴² An Early Dynastic temple of Ninḥursaġa built by Aanepada of Ur was excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley at Tell al-‘Ubaid.⁵⁴³

The goddess also had a temple in Mari, where an engraved stele was excavated that may date as early as 3000/2900 BCE (fig. 1).⁵⁴⁴ The stele was ‘buried’ in a depot (*favissa*) underneath the floor in the “*Lieu Très Saint*” of the archaic Ninḥursaġa temple (level VII).⁵⁴⁵ This unique image is dominated by large eyes composed of seven engraved circles and a rim of short hatched lines. The arched lines of the eyebrows fuse into a thin straight line indicating the nose which ends in crescent-shaped nostrils. Instead of

⁵³⁵ Frayne 2008: 71 no. 3 [RIME 1.8.1.3]; see also Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 264 n. 1162; Selz 2010.

⁵³⁶ Frayne 2008: 29-30: nos. 1, 2. See further Chapter II.B.2 with n. 237.

⁵³⁷ Biggs 1971; Gragg 1969; Selz 2010: 189. The text is also available on line at: ETCSL 4.80.2. See further Chapter II.B.2 in this volume.

⁵³⁸ Selz 1995: 252-256, 293-295.

⁵³⁹ Selz 1995: 266-267.

⁵⁴⁰ Edzard 1997: 29-30 Gudea Statue A line iii 5.

⁵⁴¹ Ninḥursaġa was also worshipped in villages, for example, during the Ur III period in the region of Umma where she was the most popular goddess (M.E. Cohen 1996: 29).

⁵⁴² Sjöberg 1969: 72-74; Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-ḥursaġa”: 378-379.

⁵⁴³ The Early Dynastic temple was built by Aanepada of Ur: Frayne 1998: 396-398 nos. 3-5; Woolley and Hall 1927: 77-124, pls. II, XXXVIII (reconstruction).

⁵⁴⁴ Margueron 2004: 112-114; 2007. The objects found in the other deposits beneath the temple date from Late Uruk III to Early Dynastic II/III A, see Beyer and Jean-Marie 2007. Selz (2010: 180) suggests a possible date at the beginning of the Early Dynastic period; see also Dittmann 2010.

⁵⁴⁵ Margueron 2004: 112-114; 2007: 75-76, 108-111.

lips, there is a row of stylized horned animals and plants, below which is a pubic triangle flanked by more stylized horned animals.⁵⁴⁶ The headdress is decorated with two bands of hatched triangles plus wavy lines on top and bottom; two bands of hatched triangles frame the face on the bottom.⁵⁴⁷ Piotr Steinkeller (2004) suggested that this image operates on several levels not unlike the illusionary paintings of Giuseppe Archimboldo (1526-1593 CE) who composed flowers, fruits, vegetables and inorganic elements like books to resemble a portrait (Ferino-Pagdon 2008). In the composition of the image on the Mari stele, Steinkeller ‘sees’ three levels, i.e. face, body, and mountainous landscape with trees and deer.⁵⁴⁸ Based on the meaning of NinĦursaġa’s name, ‘Queen of the mountain ranges’ and textual evidence, he concludes that the Mari stele represents NinĦursaġa in the “mountain range of the primeval creation”. Archaeological evidence supports Steinkeller’s identification and it may be the oldest known icon of a goddess. It may also be one of the earliest polysemous images, as Gebhard J. Selz (2010) points out. He suggests that the Mari stele belongs to the context of Mediterranean mother-fertility goddess cults in which ‘fertility’ encompasses divine, human and animal procreation.⁵⁴⁹

From the Early Dynastic III period onward, NinĦursaġa’s most common epithets refer to her role as divine mother of ‘the world’: ‘mighty mother of all lands’ (ama-maĥ kur-kur-ra), ‘mother of the deities’ (ama diġir-e-ne), and ‘mother of all children’ (ama dumu-dumu-ne). She is also the ‘Queen, who decides the destiny in Heaven and Earth’ (nin-an-ki-a nam-tar-re-de), and one of the main goddesses on whom the legitimation of rulers is based.⁵⁵⁰ In the temple hymns, NinĦursaġa is characterized as “the silencing princess, the true and great Queen of heaven – when she talks heaven trembles, when she opens her mouth a storm thunders”.⁵⁵¹ This description alludes to the terrifying awe of major divinities.

Although NinĦursaġa’s authority also derives from her status as ‘mother’ of lands and deities, the meaning of her epithet ‘mother’ – comparable to the epithet ‘father’ for An, Enlil, and Enki – transcends motherhood.⁵⁵² The long tradition in scholarship that disregarded such differentiations is rooted

⁵⁴⁶ Steinkeller (2004) interprets the image as “female (naked) torso”. See now also Dittmann 2010 and Selz 2010: 180-182. On Early Dynastic II/IIIa seals a goddess is occasionally shown in scenes with animals that may represent cervidae or caprinae (figs. 3a,b, 4).

⁵⁴⁷ For this headdress, see Boehmer 1980-1983: 204 (figure no. 13).

⁵⁴⁸ See now Selz (2010) on the connection with wild and semi-wild animals.

⁵⁴⁹ Selz 2010: 179-181.

⁵⁵⁰ Selz 1995: 253, 354; Krebernik 1993-1997 s.v. “Muttergöttin”: 514.

⁵⁵¹ Sjöberg 1969: TH No. 7 lines 95-97; the text is also available on line at: ETCSL 4.80.1. Note that there are three temple hymns addressed to her, see Chapter II.B.3 in this volume.

⁵⁵² Asher-Greve 2003; see also Black 2005.

in nineteenth-century gender ideology that could not imagine motherhood other than in terms of an immanent feminine quality rooted in biology, contrasting with a universal, transcendental masculine divinity.⁵⁵³

‘Mother’ or ‘father’ is an epithet of all major deities as well of the divine patrons of cities and states. This corresponds to the higher status and esteem bestowed on mothers and fathers in human society. Motherhood bestowed authority on women and was considered an (not necessarily *the*) essential factor of femininity, perhaps why even the originally childless goddess Inana was equipped with a son, Šara, the city god of Umma, and the epithet ‘mother’.⁵⁵⁴ The epithet ‘mother’ (*ama*) does not primarily indicate that a goddess is the mother of other deities, but predominantly a metaphor for divine authority, particularly over cities and states. Divine mothers wielded considerable power in the pantheons, especially over their divine as well as symbolic sons, the rulers.⁵⁵⁵ When Ninḫursaĝa is addressed ‘supreme mother’ her divinity fuses with her femininity, mutually dependent and inseparable.⁵⁵⁶ In general, in the divine world the status of mother is high, as that of divine sisters may be, for example, Nanše, sister of Ninĝirsu, a very important goddess in the state of Lagaš.

Although less prominent than in the Early Dynastic period, she is nevertheless “the true and supreme Queen of Heaven” in the temple hymns attributed to Enḫeduana, daughter of Sargon of Akkade (2334-2279 BCE) and en-priestess of the Nanna at Ur.⁵⁵⁷ Due to her role in Sumerian kingship ideology, Ninḫursaĝa regained her former status in the Neo-Sumerian period: Gudea dedicated one of his statues to her, new temples were built for her and old ones restored, and she again bestowed legitimacy on kings.⁵⁵⁸ New is the emphasis on Ninḫursaĝa’s birth giving aspect, as evidenced in offering lists from Drehem dating to the reign of Šulgi (2094-47): apart from jewelry, votive gifts include one silver and forty-one copper umbilical cord-cutters.⁵⁵⁹ Ninḫursaĝa’s pre-eminent rank is not threatened until the Old Babylonian period, when she loses her status as member of the four supreme divinities at the head of the pantheon and her power to decide the destiny of the lands.⁵⁶⁰ To Wolfgang Heimpel the reason for Ninḫursaĝa’s diminishing importance can only be partially attributed to the diminishing importance of her cult cen-

⁵⁵³ Asher-Greve 2003; Assante 2003.

⁵⁵⁴ Groneberg 2004: 71, 187; ETCSL 4.30.1 (Song to Šara); Vulliet 2009-2011.

⁵⁵⁵ Selz 2010: 197-202, 208.

⁵⁵⁶ Asher-Greve 2003; cf. Groneberg (1986a: 45) argues that Inana is significant because she is *not* a mother goddess (my italics). On *ama*, see now also Selz 2010: 197.

⁵⁵⁷ J.G. Westenholz 1989.

⁵⁵⁸ Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-ḫursaĝa”; Groneberg 2004: 249; Selz 2010: 199, 208-209.

⁵⁵⁹ Hilgert 1998: 300-301 no. 483; Michalowski 2002: 417-418.

⁵⁶⁰ Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-ḫursaĝa”; cf. Krebernik 1993-1997 s.v. Muttergöttin”.

ters. However, according to Joan G. Westenholz the goddess does not lose importance but fuses with other ‘birthing’ deities and becomes *Bēlet-ili*.⁵⁶¹ An example for the enduring importance of this goddess is an inscription by Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562) commemorating the restoration of the Emaḥ in Babylon (figs. **154**, **155**). In this text the goddess is alternatively called Ninmaḥ and Ninḥursaġa and her epithets are “exalted ruler, creatress of mankind, queen of the great mountains”.⁵⁶²

Identification of Ninḥursaġa on reliefs and seals remains controversial.⁵⁶³ Rather certain is the identification in an Akkadian presentation scene (fig. **26**) where the goddess sits on a throne decorated with the symbols of Ninḥursaġa’s arch-domain, the mountain ranges.

B. Mythological Messages

Because of the fragmentary state and linguistic difficulties, the myths discussed are not fully understood. Following interpretations are based on an engendered viewpoint.

1. Enki and Ninmaḥ, or When the Goddess Fails as ‘Mother’

Several interpretations have been suggested for the *Enki and Ninmaḥ* myth, probably dating to the late Old Babylonian period.⁵⁶⁴ The date of its origin, the use of the name Ninmaḥ for Enki’s sister Ninḥursaġa, and the story itself indicate a change in the concept of a goddess.

The myth begins with a short account of the creation, followed by a feast given by Enki for his mother Namma, “the primeval mother who gave birth to the senior gods” and his sister Ninmaḥ. When Enki and Ninmaḥ get drunk, Ninmaḥ prides herself on her control over the physical condition of humans, but she is challenged by Enki who claims he can find a place in human society for even the worst-off. Immediately Ninmaḥ creates six ‘handicapped’ individuals for whom Enki finds a place at the royal court.⁵⁶⁵ Then he says to Ninmaḥ:

⁵⁶¹ See further Chapter II.C.1 in this volume.

⁵⁶² Beaulieu 1997.

⁵⁶³ Braun-Holzinger 1998-2001: s.v. “Ninḥursaġa”; Asher-Greve 2003.

⁵⁶⁴ I thank Manuel Ceccarelli for the information on the date of *Enki and Ninmaḥ*. For other recent interpretations, see Scurlock 2003a; A. Westenholz 2010. The translations are cited according to the on-line edition in ETCSL 1.1.2.

⁵⁶⁵ A. Westenholz 2010: 202.

I have decreed the fate of your creatures
and given them their daily bread.
Come now I will fashion somebody for you,
and you must decree the fate of the newborn”.

But Enki needs Ninmah’s help and asks her “to pour ejaculated semen into a woman’s womb”. One wonders why he does not do this himself. The woman gave birth – assisted by Ninmah – to a very sick and handicapped creature called Umul (u₄-mu-u1)⁵⁶⁶ or, as A. Westenholz recently suggested, Uĝu-u1.⁵⁶⁷ Several suggestions have been discussed concerning the meaning of this Sumerian term,⁵⁶⁸ however, none is totally convincing. One would expect, as Ann D. Kilmer suggested, a “baby” born by a mortal woman.⁵⁶⁹ However, Ninmah is astonished that Enki’s creature cannot speak, does not reach out for the bread she offers, and is incapable of other tasks (the text is incomplete).⁵⁷⁰ Ninmah complains to Enki: “The man or person (lu₂) you have fashioned is neither alive or dead. He (or this person) cannot support himself (?)”. The text resumes after a break with Ninmah’s lament:

Look, you do not dwell in heaven; you do not dwell on earth,
you do not come out to look at the Land.
Where you do not dwell but where my house is built, your words cannot be heard.
Where you do not live but where my city is built, I myself am silenced (?).
My city is ruined, my house destroyed, my child has been taken captive, I am a fugitive who has had to leave the Ekur, even I myself could not escape from your hand.

Ninmah’s complaint – Enki was not there when her city and temple were destroyed, her child (probably a reference to Ninurta⁵⁷¹) taken captive, she a fugitive forced to leave the Ekur (the Temple of Enlil in Nippur), and even she (his sister) could not escape from Enki’s destruction (?) – is reminiscent of descriptions of the destruction of cities in Sumerian lamentation literature.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁶ ETCSL line 88.

⁵⁶⁷ A. Westenholz 2010: 202.

⁵⁶⁸ A. Westenholz 2010: 202 n. 3.

⁵⁶⁹ Kilmer 1976; see also Stol 2000: 109-110.

⁵⁷⁰ A. Westenholz (2010: 203) points out that Enki’s comments on Uĝu-u1 are not “crystal clear” partly because they are broken. According to Westenholz’s interpretation “whoever honors Uĝu-u1, whoever assists the truly needy, honors Enki who created him and contributes to his glory”.

⁵⁷¹ For Ninurta/Ninĝirsu, whose mother is variously Ninĝursaĝa, Ninmah, Nintur, see Streck 1998-2001: 513-514. See also Chapter II.C.1. in this volume.

⁵⁷² On Ninlil as one of the lamenting major goddesses, see Chapter II.C.1 in this volume.

But it also indicates that the destruction of her city and temple,⁵⁷³ as well as the loss of her shrine (?) in Nippur mark the beginning of loss of power. This is also expressed in Enki's fragmentary reply to Ninmah in the final passage of the myth when he tells her to remove Umul/Uĝu-ul from her lap, decides its destiny for prayer and building Enki's temple, and says: "Today let my penis be praised". The myth ends in a rather androcentric tenor:⁵⁷⁴

Ninmah could not rival the great Master Enki.
Father Enki, your praise is sweet!

That Ninmah's handicapped humans are the result of a contest between intoxicated deities implies birth defects were attributed to an 'act of creation' separate from the original creation of humankind.⁵⁷⁵ This distinction is reflected in the use of two different verbs: *tud*, 'to be born, to give birth', used when goddesses give birth, and *dim₂*, 'to form, to create' describing the forming of clay into handicapped persons. Enki's 'Umul/Uĝu-ul' is both, first formed (*dim₂*, line 83) by Enki and then born (*tud*, line 85) by a mortal woman. In the primary creation the goddess Namma appears as Creatrix of the universe, and although called 'mother who gave birth (*tud*) to heaven and earth' and 'first mother, who gave birth (*tud*) to all the gods', no sexual act preceded any of these births.⁵⁷⁶

The verb *tud* is used whenever goddesses as well as the mortal mothers give birth. To be born by a goddess is a guarantee that the offspring, divine or human, is perfect. This is one reason why kings claim goddesses as symbolic mothers and why the metaphor of birth giving is used for fashioning cult statues.⁵⁷⁷ Statues as 'alter being' of deities and kings had to be perfect and therefore were 'born' not 'formed'; *dim₂*, 'to form, to create', is the verb used for other statues, steles, or animal sculptures.⁵⁷⁸

Throughout *Enki and Ninmah* the verb *dim₂* is used for the fashioning of handicapped persons because it was inconceivable that a goddess 'gives birth' to an imperfect being. Ninmah's creations make her not only responsible for birth defects but also for asexual beings.

⁵⁷³ May be a reference to Ninmah's temple in Keš. This temple is mentioned in a year name of Rim-Sin II. of Larsa (1741-1740), see Michalowski 2002: 416.

⁵⁷⁴ According to J.S. Cooper 1989: 89 "Enki's phallocentricity climaxes in *Enki and Ninmah*"; J.S. Cooper 1989: 87-88; cf. A. Westenholz 2010: 203.

⁵⁷⁵ For discussion of this text, see Lambert 1992 and Stol 2000: 109-110.

⁵⁷⁶ Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. "Nammu".

⁵⁷⁷ *al an mu-tu(d)* 'create a statue': Edzard 1997: Gudea statues A iii 3; B vii:13; C iii:17 = M iii:1 = N iii:3 = O iii:1 = P v:2; Q ii 3; T i'3'; Z i'5'; statue of Ur-Ningirsu II, p. 185-186 no. 6 (E3/1.1.8.6). See also Cassin 1982: 356.

⁵⁷⁸ E.g., in Gudea Statues A, B, E, F; see Edzard 1997.

Enki's 'imperfect baby (?)', although formed out of clay like Ninmaḥ's persons, had to then be put in the womb of a mortal woman who gave birth to it. This is remarkable because Enki needs a woman to bring his 'baby' into the world, whereas Ninmaḥ created persons without participation of Enki or another male. Perhaps male and female participation implies why Enki's 'baby' is not truly handicapped but rather requires, like any 'baby', motherly care. In contrast, Ninmaḥ's handicapped creatures are 'finished' persons who just need a place in society.

Divine motherhood is associated with creation myths. The creation of the world occurred in the ḥur-saĝ for which Steinkeller (2004; 2007) suggests the translation 'mountain range' or 'hilly landscape' instead of 'mountain'. The ḥur-saĝ also denotes the barrier separating sky from earth and the domain of Nin-ḥur-saĝa who participated in the creation of humanity and in deciding its destiny. It is perplexing that this goddess would not know what to do with a 'baby', because as symbolic mother of rulers she breast-feeds kings (see above). Divine motherhood, however, concentrates on gestation and birth, without any evidence of goddesses raising their own offspring.⁵⁷⁹ There are only occasional references to a goddess breast-feeding her baby or serving as wet-nurse.⁵⁸⁰ The childhood of deities is apparently never a theme; they generally feature as grown-ups. Care of babies is not part of the domain of Ninḥursaĝa-Ninmaḥ as 'mother-goddess', yet not *knowing* what she should do means she no longer qualifies as the supreme authority alluded to in the epithet "mother", an epithet missing in the myth.⁵⁸¹

Crucial in *Enki and Ninmaḥ* is that the goddess does not decide the destiny of Enki's 'baby', i.e., finding a place in society, as challenged by Enki. That Enki decides his creature's destiny implies Ninmaḥ's divine powers are limited and a goddess of limited knowledge and power does not qualify as supreme deity at the head of the pantheon. As the myth states, "she cannot rival Enki", the all-knowing masculine deity. Ninmaḥ's divine authority and rank are put into question.

Enki and Ninmaḥ combines historical event with change in religion and cult rooted in the destruction of her city and cult center and exemplified in a myth that does not portray her as supreme all-knowing deity. This myth originated when the decline of Ninḥursaĝa/Ninmaḥ was already in progress

⁵⁷⁹ Jacobsen (1973: 286) noted that a ma, 'mother', as a designation of a goddess refers to the biological implication of the word, not the social aspect of motherhood.

⁵⁸⁰ E.g., Nintur breast-fed her son Ninurta (ETCSL 2.5.5.4: Lipit-Ištar D), Nisaba her daughter Sud (Selz 2010: 205), and Ningirida her son Ningišzida (ETCSL 4.19.1: Ningišzida A). Ninimma, was the wet-nurse of Nanna/Sîn (Focke 1998; 1999-2000; 1998-2001). See also in this volume Chapters II.B.2 no. 1 and II.C.1.

⁵⁸¹ In a hymn to Ninkasi (ETCSL t.4.23.1: Ninkasi A), Ninḥursaĝa tenderly cared for Ninkasi, the daughter of Enki and Ninti.

after destruction of her main temple(s), the loss of her city's independent status as state, and the end of her cult in Nippur. By the Old Babylonian period there is hardly any evidence for the cult of a 'mother/birthing goddess' in Old Babylonian Nippur.⁵⁸²

2. *Two Tales About Becoming Enlil's Spouse*

How the status of goddesses was modified becomes also evident when comparing the two myths *The Marriage of Sud* (also titled *Enlil and Sud*) and *Enlil and Ninlil*.⁵⁸³

In *The Marriage of Sud* (ETCSL 1.2.2) the young Enlil engages in a worldwide search for a bride until he finds the beautiful Sud, patron goddess of Šuruppak, in Ereš, the city of her mother Nisaba.⁵⁸⁴ Approaching Sud with the offer to make her his queen, Enlil's behaviour is anything but polite; he accuses Sud of inappropriate behaviour ("standing in the street") and calls her "a shameless person". Sud responds:

If I want to stand proudly at our gate,
who dares to give me a bad reputation?
What are your intentions?
Why have you come here? ... from my sight!

When Enlil answers he wants to marry her and demands a kiss, she turns her back on him. No doubt Sud is self-secure and strong-willed. After long deliberations involving several deities, Enlil consents to their advice that he has to court Sud as well as her mother Nisaba. Finally Nisaba consents to the marriage.⁵⁸⁵

Through her marriage Sud assumes the name Ninlil and the rank of 'Queen of the House' (i.e. the Enlil temple in Nippur). The final passage of the myth juxtaposes 'Queen' (nin) for Ninlil and 'King' (lugal) for Enlil,

⁵⁸² Richter 2004: 144.

⁵⁸³ Black et al. 2004: 100-125; for easier distinction of the two myths I use *The Marriage of Sud*, the subtitle given by Civil 1983.

⁵⁸⁴ On Sud and Nisaba, see Chapter II.B.2 nos. 10 and 26.

⁵⁸⁵ In the Sumerian mythological composition *The Marriage of Martu*, the beduin god Martu asks his mother to find him a wife but she tells him to choose a bride himself. Like Enlil, Martu's choice is the daughter of the chief deity of a city, Adġar-kidug, daughter of Numuřda, god of Inab. Like Sud's mother, Numuřda advises on the right marriage gifts. No decision has been taken, and Adġar-kidug is warned by a friend that Martu is 'uncivilized' but at the end wants to marry him anyway. The text is available on-line at ETCSL 1.7.1.

and the myth ends with praise to both. Ninlil's high status is addressed in an *adab*-song dedicated to her:⁵⁸⁶

Ninlil, comprehensively replete with numerous divine powers!
 Equal to the Great Mountain (= Enlil); deciding destinies
 with Master Nunamnir (= epithet of Enlil) ...
 Joyous princess (?), Mistress with the princely divine powers;
 conveying terror; wise with advice!
 My Queen, unique and outstanding goddess
 throughout heaven and earth!
 Mother Ninlil, majestic Lady, unique and outstanding goddess
 throughout heaven and earth!

In *The Marriage of Sud*, the married Sud, now named Ninlil, is described as a proud young woman with raised head (*munus sag-il₂*), a majestic goddess who does not look down demurely and who surpasses the mountain (*kur-ra zag-dib*) which may be a metaphor for her ascent after becoming 'Queen of Nippur'. Joan G. Westenholz points out that this myth reflects the process of syncretism, and that Sud disappears after becoming Ninlil.⁵⁸⁷

A very different Ninlil is portrayed in *Enlil and Ninlil* (ETCSL 1.2.1), which begins with a short description of Nippur where Enlil, Ninlil and her mother are located⁵⁸⁸ – there is no mention of Šuruppak, the city of Sud nor of Ereš, the city of Ninlil's mother Nisaba.

Young Ninlil is warned by her mother that walking along or bathing in the holy river is dangerous because the lusty Enlil will want to have sex with her, to kiss her and then leave her. But Ninlil disobeys and encounters Enlil, who says to her (in this order) that he wants to have sex with her and kiss her; but he cannot persuade Ninlil, who replies that she is still young, inexperienced and a virgin. After consulting his 'minister' Nusku, Enlil eventually succeeds in seducing and impregnating Ninlil. But even a god can not behave as he wants without punishment and Enlil is arrested by the gods in the Kiur, a part of his temple complex in Nippur.⁵⁸⁹ Considered ritually impure he has to leave the city, but Ninlil chases him wherever he goes and both finally end up in the netherworld. Although Enlil refuses to see her, at each location Ninlil persuades a guardian to smuggle her into Enlil's bed-chamber and has sex with him; each time she gets pregnant and gives birth to a son, altogether four. In this context Jerrold S. Cooper's observation is of interest, that the

⁵⁸⁶ The text is cited according to the ETCSL 4.24.1 on-line edition, lines 1-4, 30-32.

⁵⁸⁷ See Chapter III.C.1 in this volume.

⁵⁸⁸ For the unusual description of Nippur that does not mention temples, palaces, houses, and streets, see Zgoll 2013.

⁵⁸⁹ Geore 1993: no. 636; the Kiur was the shrine of Ninlil in the Ekur at Nippur.

story is a “psychological portrait of Ninlil, ... an early attestation of the well-known ambivalence of the victim towards the oppressor, especially in sexual contexts”.⁵⁹⁰

Although Ninlil becomes Enlil’s consort, the myth does not mention marriage and the final passage contains a fourfold praise for Enlil but nothing equivalent for Ninlil – none of the exalted epithets or praises bestowed on her in *The Marriage of Sud* myth. In comparison, Sud held more power and authority, and is a proud young goddess ascending to highest status in Nippur, whereas Ninlil is described as a girl dismissing her mother’s advice, becoming pregnant and pursuing a lover who shuns her. At the end Ninlil becomes Enlil’s consort, but she is not elevated to the same status and position as Sud-Ninlil.⁵⁹¹

The characterization of Ninlil in *Enlil and Ninlil* is particularly striking considering that under the Ur III kings Ninlil was the supreme goddess in the state, expressed also in epithets identical with those of Ninḫursaĝa.⁵⁹² Most sources refer to Ninlil as Enlil’s spouse but she was not an independent goddess with her own city.⁵⁹³ The contrast in personality between young Sud and young Ninlil is so striking that it is hard to believe they are the same consort of Enlil. Sud’s transformation from independent city goddess to powerful patroness of Nippur on the side of Enlil reflects Ninlil’s status in the Ur III period.⁵⁹⁴ However, the characterization of Ninlil chasing after Enlil and then becoming his subordinate consort alludes not only to Ninlil’s but to many goddesses’ demotion to spouse in the Old Babylonian period (Chapter III.C.1).

Whereas in *Enlil and Ninlil* Ninlil’s status before marriage was that of daughter and thus a lower rank than that of spouse, Ninmah/Ninḫursaĝa’s rank is at the start equal to that of her brother Enki. She is characterized as a ‘loser’ who is herself responsible for the loss of her rank because of her inability to find places in society for the men and woman she created. Loss of supreme divine rank may be a metaphor for the situation of southern and central Babylonian cities, where the economy declined and which were abandoned in the second half of the eighteenth century BCE. That Enlil and Enki/Ea remained high ranking gods, although their respective cult centers Nippur and Eridu suffered like other southern Babylonian cities, suggests gender was an issue. The myths infer supremacy of gods that appear in the prologue of Hammurabi’s law code together with An (Roth 1997):

⁵⁹⁰ J.S. Cooper 1980: 180.

⁵⁹¹ Other interpretations are suggested by Scurlock 2003a; Zgoll 2013.

⁵⁹² According to Steinkeller (1999) Ninlil was “superimposed” on the cult of Ninḫursaĝa.

⁵⁹³ Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Ninlil”: 454 § 3.

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. Groneberg 2007.

When the august god Anu, king of the Anunnaku deities,
and the god Enlil, Lord of heaven and earth,
who determines the destinies of the land,
alloted supreme power over all peoples to the god Marduk,
the firstborn son of the god Ea,

Chapter IV: Images

Julia M. Asher-Greve

A. Image and Religion

1. The Image Issue

The term image includes all forms of visual representations such as sculpture, relief, engraving, inlays, and painting. Images have a specific logic; the meaning and significance of the ‘image’ cannot be substituted by something else.⁵⁹⁵ Paraphrasing Martin Kemp (2000: 4), the final product of an artist is a “‘structured field’ ... for the exercise of the spectator’s faculties”.⁵⁹⁶ To

⁵⁹⁵ Danto 1994; Imdahl 1994. Many Assyriologists, however, followed Oppenheim’s thought, that visual representations “do not seem to have any important role in Mesopotamian religion” (1977: 174).

⁵⁹⁶ To Martin Kemp (2000: 1, 3), “every act of perception is necessarily a highly directed and selective affair, whether the guiding principles are conscious or inadvertent; [...] every act of looking has the potential to become an act of analysis”. In the introduction to his book *Seen/Unseen* (2006: 3) Kemp writes: “The ‘visual’ has played and continues to play a key role, both because of its inherent importance in terms of observation and representation, and because ‘pictures’ provide highly effective ways of communicating to non-specialist audiences”. According to Kemp (ibid pp. 2, 3), the past can be reconstructed from visual and written evidence, and visual representation “assumed roles of narrative, naturalistic portrayal, direct meaning, and aesthetic contemplation”. Kemp further argues (p. 8), that “many of our visual instincts as expressed in images recur across different ages, however different the vehicles may be”. Kemp pays much attention to visual structures and the ‘idea of structural intuities’ that he sees “as historical fact” and considers important for art history (see Wallace and Kaniari 2009). What Kemp considers “history of the visual” overlaps partially with issues discussed in “*Bildwissenschaft*” (picture science or ‘iconic turn’), especially the notion that visualizing is an epistemological source. ‘Picture science’ reaches beyond iconographic dimensions by analyzing preconditions for figurality of representation and images in relation to their function. Kemp combines art and science(s) in his analysis and he posits that ‘acts of seeing’ are genetic and realized in the processes by which the brain is wired through a variety of experiences (Reed-Tsocha 2009).

Eyes and ‘looking at’ (which is vision), occur in Mesopotamian literature and are also expressed in pictorial representations (I.J. Winter 2000; Asher-Greve 2003). Consequently images, pictorial contents and its configuration are closely connected to vision. As Dominic Gregory (2010: 16) points out “pictures show how things look from viewpoints”.

decode meaning and significance of an image it does not suffice to compare visual with textual sources although this is an indispensable element in the analysis.

Images are elements of social interaction and communication and the result of processes of symbolization. Winfried Orthmann distinguishes three “modes of communication”: “*instantaneous*”, oral, “*repetitive*”, indirect like music or theater, and “*persistent*”, visual; to the last category Orthmann attributes works of art.⁵⁹⁷ The communicative task of iconic media differs from that of words (spoken or written) in that it is able to convey ideas, beliefs, emotions, and experiences without utilizing any words: “images are mute” and “have existence outside the language of texts”.⁵⁹⁸ Visual media generally precludes the need to translate which words evidently do not. This is also a reason for the wide geographical distribution of very similar visual forms, motives and iconography throughout the multilingual ancient Near East.

“What is a true image” opens Hans Belting’s study (2005: 7) on the history of religious images and the interconnection between image, sign and reality in Christianity. Belting argues that images ‘function’ only when the viewer believes in the truth (“*Echtheit*”) of what is represented. “Images demand belief, they are not made to convince but to impress”, writes Belting (2005: 7). As Molyneaux states (1997: 4), images are particularly effective in reinforcement of power and ideology, especially in religion.

While theologians historically feared and fought the power of images,⁵⁹⁹ philologists tend to claim that the study of art is intellectually less demanding than the study of texts.⁶⁰⁰ Such viewpoints result from, according to Hans Witte (1988: vii), “western preference for data from written sources above the information contained in visual images”. This tradition goes back to biblical aniconism and to Plato, no friend of visual art because he thought it amplified dependence on illusionary images, and that mathematical order

Of interest for analysis of Mesopotamian religious images is also the study on icons by Antonova (2010), student of Martin Kemp, particularly Antonova’s results concerning pictorial space and visual functionality, form and ‘presence’ of divinity in images, mediation of divine power, viewer’s perception, and the relationships between images as religious expression and ‘theological ideas’. Although most of my text had been written by the time Antonova’s book was published, as far as possible I have tried to integrate her insights into my analysis.

⁵⁹⁷ Orthmann 2008: 243.

⁵⁹⁸ Antonova 2010: 7. Cf. Molyneaux 1997: 1 (“silent images”), 4-5; according to Molyneaux (pp. 1, 4) “images tend to be ‘representations’ of ideas, they communicate directly to viewers/audiences and are “dense with information”.

⁵⁹⁹ Belting 1990: 11.

⁶⁰⁰ Dittmann 2001: 85; Wiggermann 2007: 137-139.

and harmony of the cosmos is beyond the reach of senses.⁶⁰¹ “The arts are neglected because they are based on perception”, writes Rudolf Arnheim (1969: 3), who stated in an interview in 2001 that

the essence of an image is its ability to convey meaning through sensory experience. Signs and language are established conceptual modifiers; they are the outer shells of actual meaning. We have to realize that perception organizes the forms that it receives as optical projections in the eye. Without form an image cannot carry a visual message into consciousness. Thus it is the organized forms that deliver the visual concept that makes an image legible, not conventionally established signs.

To Arnheim (2001) “images do not imitate reality, they hint at it ... (and) have the ability to make the essential part visible, and are thereby a fundamental principle for understanding the world. Vision and perception are not processes that passively register or reproduce what happens in reality. Vision and perception are active, creative understanding”. Arnheim challenged the distinction between perceiving and thinking, and between intuition and intellect: “thinking calls for images, and images contain thought. Therefore, the visual arts are a home ground of visual thinking”.⁶⁰²

Although some philologists recognize the importance of images in Mesopotamian culture they are rarely analysed as independent media. In 1990 Piotr Michalowski wrote that (p. 53):

Assyriology is usually viewed as a form of philology (and) because philologists study written documents, a tradition has come about in which many of us reconstruct ancient societies solely on the basis of written texts, with only perfunctory nods to archaeology and art history. A majority of scholars strongly influenced by this tradition, have considered ancient art and writing in completely different terms, as entities to be studied by people of different skill, training, sensitivity, and departmental loyalty.

Although more scholars take an integrative approach, images are still treated as illustrations because they share themes with texts. However, words are no substitute for visual images and vice versa. According to Brian Leigh Molyneux (1997: 1) visual messages may be as strong and distinctive as those of texts and visual representations may even enlarge and strengthen messages appearing in other forms. This is evident in the image-text combinations of numerous Mesopotamian monuments. However, narrow notions

⁶⁰¹ Arnheim 1969: 2-4.

⁶⁰² Arnheim 1969: 254; on scientist thinking in images, see Kemp 2000; 2006.

about images are still prevalent in such statements as Claus Wilcke's that "the figurative expression in language has been translated into a work of art"⁶⁰³, or Frans A.M. Wiggermann's that "iconography is the continuation of lexicography with different means".⁶⁰⁴ Visual images have their own 'language', they are neither 'translations' of texts nor to be 'read' like lexical entries.⁶⁰⁵ As Gottfried Boehm (1994: 30) states, images are not 'depots of details' but 'units of meaning'⁶⁰⁶ ("Bilder ... sind keine Sammelplätze beliebiger Details, sondern Sinneinheiten"). Images are distinguished from words and texts by immediate recognition of the total meaning without the time lag in hearing and reading. However, 'close reading' of images can reveal meaning and information underlying the generalization of form, style, and subject.

In her comprehensive study on production and consecration of cult images, Angelika Berlejung strives to correlate results gained from texts with iconography and archaeological materials.⁶⁰⁷ However, I do not agree with Berlejung's (2007: 41) conclusion that *together* image and text "construct ... *one image* of divinity" (italics mine). Although Berlejung concedes that images have independent meaning, she argues that there is no basis for "categorical division between image and text or deities in image and text" (2007: 43). This contradicts the Mesopotamian notion that a cult statue is identical with the deity (see Chapter IV.C.4). Further, religious images preceded religious texts and the importance as well as the experience of seeing did not depend on text, but texts may have been originally inspired by images. Nonetheless, as 'cultural outsiders' we need texts not only for interpretation of ancient images but also as sources for the historical and cultural matrix and contexts from which images originated. Finding the right balance between the independent meaning of images and the relevance of textual references is like tightrope walking.

Images are subject to material and technical restrictions whereas words and texts can theoretically be continued endlessly, even grammatical structures allow for more flexibility than the given spatial restriction of an image carrier. The power of material images depends on several criteria, such as form, contexts, and purpose, particularly when it is the recipient/subject of

⁶⁰³ Wilcke 1987a: 80.

⁶⁰⁴ Wiggermann 2007: 138.

⁶⁰⁵ In the 1920s and 1930s Aby Warburg (1866-1929) and Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) broadened the concept of iconography by including research on and interpretation of context and symbolism, a method called iconology.

⁶⁰⁶ A unit of meaning is a self-contained, unified, easily recognizable and memorable structure.

⁶⁰⁷ Berlejung 2007: 10-11, 39-43. On comparisons between images and textual descriptions, see particularly I.J. Winter 2000; 2002.

reverence, prayers, pleas, and offerings. Material images are also always charged with a mental image of what they represent,⁶⁰⁸ but about the latter we have perhaps indirect but not explicit testimony in cuneiform literature. Problematic is when perception and significance (*Stellenwert*) are distorted because of changes due to destruction and loss of the original “informational environment”⁶⁰⁹ (cultic context) as in a museum, where images become historicized and aestheticized as examples of a cultural and art historical period. In museums ancient images are devoid of their original function, meaning and sociology, the study of which is ‘outsourced’ to academic research. With the new conceptualization in Renaissance art, meaning and understanding of image as cult object changed and we have to ‘reconstruct’ ancient interrelation between image, religion, cult, and audiences. The ancient ‘viewer-worshipper’ remains largely elusive, but as Irene J. Winter notes in several studies, Mesopotamians knew of the “importance of seeing”⁶¹⁰ as cuneiform texts refer not only to images but also to their potency.⁶¹¹

2. Images as Religious Media

Mesopotamian religious system is pluralistic, multi-layered, and ‘flexible’ as evident by the practice of syncretizing, fusing, merging, separating, and reinterpreting divinities and divine functions.⁶¹² Divinity was manifest in stable material form in and as image. Images are indispensable in most religions, and therefore significant sources for the history of religion.

The majority of studies on Mesopotamian religion, pantheons, deities, cult and ritual neglect the importance of images and visual experiences by focusing on texts pertaining to official and state religion.⁶¹³ Further, generations of archaeologists favored excavation of urban centers with temples and palaces over domestic areas and villages.⁶¹⁴ This contrasts with the real life situation in ancient Mesopotamia where “religion was not a separate realm of reality”, as Nick Veldhuis writes (2004: 16).

Archaeological evidence for official religion precedes written evidence and comes from smaller and larger urban centers. Some forms of official religion predate the formation of cities and city-state religion characteristic of

⁶⁰⁸ Belting 1990: 54-57.

⁶⁰⁹ Molyneux (1997: 4) argues that “shifts in the informational environment” make “content analysis potentially more significant”.

⁶¹⁰ Quote from I.J. Winter 2007: 27; see also I.J. Winter 2000; 2002.

⁶¹¹ Cf. various articles in I.J. Winter 2010.

⁶¹² See Chapter II.A in this volume.

⁶¹³ Van der Toorn 1996: 1; Sallaberger 2006-2008: s.v. “ritual”; on Mesopotamian religious iconography, see Green 1995.

⁶¹⁴ Cf., for example, on deities worshipped in villages in the Ur III period, M.E. Cohen 1996.

third millennium Mesopotamia.⁶¹⁵ Each city or city-state had its own pantheon headed by a divine couple with family and children, court and associated deities (Chapter II.B.1). Divine families were constructed as mirror image of mortal ruling families and kingship ideology contains mythologemes and rituals emphasizing the king's closeness to the deities of his state.⁶¹⁶ Temples and other state buildings as well as art objects therein are forms of expressions in official religion centered in temples.⁶¹⁷

The second sphere of religion is family religion, the term preferred by Karel van der Toorn over domestic religion because religious activities of ordinary people took place not only in the family residence but also outside as, for example, in neighborhood shrines.⁶¹⁸ Family religion, contrary to official and state religion, is mainly oral, images and artifacts mostly of modest materials, small-scale and in general do not depict rituals; interpretation often remains speculative due to the lack of relevant textual information.⁶¹⁹ However, recent studies of terracottas, seals and texts have led to considerable progress in understanding family religion and its artifacts.⁶²⁰

Although different social groups had their own religious practices and values, official/state and family religion were not antagonistic. This is also evident in seal inscriptions where owners attest devotion to a major deity as well to their family deity,⁶²¹ or in terracotta images depicting Inana/Ištar as well as minor, often unknown deities. Of particular interest are seals because of their multiple functions as officially acknowledged instruments with private aspects. Outside the domestic realm they were used to seal official documents, various containers, doors, or other items.⁶²² Inscriptions on seals (legends) may contain personal information such as owner's occupation, profession, social, family, marital status, or religious affiliation(s); in the Middle Babylonian/Kassite period seals were often inscribed with a short prayer. Within the private realm, apart from sealing contracts and documents, seals also served as protective amulets, a function inherent in the images.⁶²³ Numerous religious images engraved on seals combine elements of official

⁶¹⁵ Collins 2000: 16-18, 48-49; Rothman 2009; Margueron 2009; cf. Algaze 2008: 114-116; Lambert 1975a: 191.

⁶¹⁶ For example, Brisch (ed.) 2008; Suter 2010; on analogies between divine and human worlds, see also Zgoll 2006a.

⁶¹⁷ The royal court was an integral part of official religion, see, e.g., Sallaberger 1993.

⁶¹⁸ Lambert 1975a: 191; van der Toorn 1996: 1-4; 2008: 20. Cf. Chapter IV.C.4.2 in this volume.

⁶¹⁹ Van der Toorn 1996: 11 (on sources of family religion).

⁶²⁰ E.g., Assante 2002; van der Toorn 1996; 2008; J.G. Westenholz 2008.

⁶²¹ Charpin 1990; van der Toorn 1996: 66-68.

⁶²² Cf. recently Zettler 2007.

⁶²³ Collon 1987: 119.

religion with those we cannot identify or interpret but may belong to the imagery of family religion not recorded in texts.

Worship of deities was an obligation of every man and woman, evident in nearly all written sources.⁶²⁴ The so-called ‘Instructions of Ur-Ninurta’ list the tasks of a pious man that when not followed will have disastrous results.⁶²⁵ These are the religious obligations of a man (Alster 2005a: lines 19-29a):

He who knows how to respect religious affairs,
 who voluntarily [pleases his god]
 who performs the rites,
 to whom the name of his god is dear,
 who keeps away from swearing,
 he goes straight to the place of worship,
 what he has lost is restored (to him),
 Days will be added to his days
 Years will be plenty in addition to the years he (already) has.
 His descendants will experience good health.
 His heir will pour water libation for him
 [His god] will look (favorably) upon him.
 [He will pay attention to him] ...
 He is chosen in his eyes.

This passage contains the keyword for religious imagery ‘place of worship’ where the pious man has to go to pay respect to his god. This is a religious action presenting itself for visualization as, for example, in so-called ‘presentation scenes’ that picture fulfilling religious obligation, i.e. having gone to a place of worship where the god or goddess will ‘look favorable’ upon the pious.⁶²⁶

Hans Belting’s remarks on classical and medieval images would also be valid for Mesopotamia, particularly for the role of cult statues and the society which identifies with and is identified by its deities. According to Belting, those roles which a polity cannot perform on its own with its own means are transferred to images and through those images metaphorically confer power and responsibility to non-earthly, extraterritorial powers. The authority these images thereby acquire make them capable of symbolizing a collective and idealized identity as a bond for the entire polity. Thus images also serve to

⁶²⁴ For example, Streck 2003-2005; see also letters, e.g., Hallo 1995: 1875-1877; Sallaberger 1999b: esp. pp. 25, 81-87, 119-122.

⁶²⁵ Alster 2005a: 221-240.

⁶²⁶ See above on vision and its close connections to images and pictorial contents.

create a ‘collective identity’.⁶²⁷ In ancient Mesopotamia, ‘collective identity’ is expressed in divine names and epithets composed with the name of a city, but also focused on temples with their cult statues.

When analyzing images as independent expressions of religion,⁶²⁸ attention should be given to their effectiveness beyond religion, because, as Belting (1990: 13) stated, images were never only a matter of religion but always also of the society which represented itself in and with religion. The major difficulty scholars confront are the intellectual and emotional barriers inherent in the fundamentally different world view of, and the distance of time from contemporary Western culture. Mark S. Smith (2008: 4-5) points out that “we may immerse ourselves in the features of ancient cultures, these signals from the past, and we may provide our educated guesses how best to understand them. In trying to communicate these signals from the past, translation can hardly be perfect”. To emphasize the “Herculean task” of scholars studying ancient cultures, Smith quotes Eva Hoffmann: “In order to translate a language, or a text, without changing its meaning, one would have to transport its audience as well”. This applies, of course, to Mesopotamian images.

Differences between texts and images are not so much a question of lack of relevant textual evidence but more an inherent aspect of visual media. Seeing involves different senses than words, but can elicit not only immediate emotional but also intellectual responses. Prose descriptions of reactions to and thoughts on images (if recognizable as such in cuneiform literature) are clouded in poetic language difficult to ‘translate’ across cultural and temporal boundaries. In the context of religious images this is of particular importance as they are a mode of expressing and transporting theological ideas.⁶²⁹

The distinct forms of images are also influenced by the object or image carrier, such as statue, stele, wall, stone or terracotta relief, seal, amulet, and many others. The bulk of ancient Mesopotamian images are two-dimensional figural scenes restricted by the circumscribed surface of the object. Composition, form, and figures re-create in a condensed (artificial) image the meaning of the underlying larger model, idea, or even vision.⁶³⁰ Religious images contain a transcendental aspect either as objects of veneration endowed with magical qualities, or when representing the object of veneration. Combining materiality with the numinous is an irreplaceable quality of the image. As Hans Belting remarked (1990: 11), the image is also

⁶²⁷ Belting 1990: 54-57.

⁶²⁸ On functions of images and relationship between image and viewer/user, see Asher-Greve 2003; Assante 2002; I.J. Winter 2000; 2002.

⁶²⁹ See, e.g., I.J. Winter’s studies (2000; 2002; 2010) on visual experience articulated in texts. See in general on this issue Antonova 2010, and pp. 10-11 on “*intrinsic time*” and quantitative difference between art and literature.

⁶³⁰ Cf. Boehm 1994.

a material symbol of belief. Another aspect, particularly of religious images is evoking physical sensation and emotions that we can hardly appropriate.

B. Visualizing Deities

The number of images of goddesses is relatively small compared to the plethora of goddesses attested in the texts, and not every goddess depicted is identifiable. Nevertheless, images reflect the changing circumstances over approximately two thousand years from the first discernible representation of goddesses on seals around 2700/2600 BCE (figs. 3, 4) to infrequent appearance in visual imagery after the middle of the second millennium.

As a result of erosion and destruction in antiquity as well as over millennia, few monumental images of deities have survived and therefore our knowledge largely depends on miniature images on seals, sealings, and terracotta plaques.⁶³¹ The vast majority of Mesopotamian images depict religious themes and/or have religious as well as political meaning.⁶³² Images of deities were placed inside and outside temples and palaces, in neighbourhood shrines, public spaces, private houses, even in landscapes (rock reliefs and steles). They also existed as portable statuettes and on portable image carriers. Engravings, inlays, or small figurines of deities adorned all kinds of objects (for example, boxes, vessels, game boards, and jewellery). Space and purpose also determined choice of images, themes, and figures. Highly important were environment and function(s) of the image carrier. The internal space inherent in the image. i.e. the background upon which figures are projected only occasionally defines location of action. It may be indicated by architectural or landscape (e.g., mountains, plants, water) features, whereas completely empty backgrounds imply a sacred or transcendental sphere.

Mesopotamian deities are visualized in anthropomorphic form but also believed to be present in other forms (e.g., celestial bodies, weather phenomena, rocks, rivers, concrete and abstract symbols).⁶³³ Multiple visual 'presence' signalled that a divine being existed simultaneously beyond time and space which lies with the human viewer-believer. The viewer-believer's recognition of the 'presence' of the deity in the iconic image is achieved by adherence to and repetition of canonical pictorial form(s),⁶³⁴ as Antonova states, form becomes the bearer of (divine) identity; further such

⁶³¹ Elizabeth C. Stone's (2002) results concerning the preservation of texts apply even more to image carriers.

⁶³² Orthmann 2008: 249-250.

⁶³³ See Chapters IV.C.4 and IV.C.7 in this volume; cf. Selz 2008.

⁶³⁴ Cf. Seidl 2000: 99.

images “directly impart conceptual information” and inseminate religious experience.⁶³⁵

In ancient Mesopotamian images divine figures are often juxtaposed with divine symbols, identifiable and unidentifiable elements, and occasionally inscribed divine names.⁶³⁶ In her study on the power of names, Karen Radner argues that a deity whose name is inscribed on a seal does not have to be pictured; either name or image suffices to secure the presence of the deity to the same effect as a statue or relief.⁶³⁷ I disagree with Radner that a name suffices to secure divine presence because the presence of the deity is achieved in the form of visual representation as this is significant for how the sacred is seen and perceived. Inscribed name or sight of an icon do not evoke the same viewer reaction, especially when facing a three-dimensional statue, or seeing the deity within a two-dimensional image. Reading an inscribed divine name not only requires knowledge of the written language but it may be doubted that it evokes the same psychological-religious emotion as does viewing, or oral prayer and ritual performance.⁶³⁸ Additionally, perceptual visual experience operates, as Martin Kemp states, on a “pre- or subverbal level”.⁶³⁹ Further, figurative representation not only precedes but is also far more common than inscriptions of divine names on reliefs or seals. The image is the carrier of divine presence, to which offerings are brought, prayers are addressed, devotion payed; rituals are also performed with the iconic figure of deity whose role is not perceived as passive. Direct (physical) encounter with divinity cannot be substituted by inscribed names in a society where the vast majority were illiterate. Further, neither name nor symbol can substitute for a deity’s gaze. As Irene J. Winter states, “the status accorded the gaze of the divine beneficiary, as necessary act of perception prior to affirmation and benevolent patronage, reinforces the power of visual cathexis in Mesopotamian tradition”, and audience response derives from “direct and intense visual experience of the sacred”.⁶⁴⁰

⁶³⁵ Cf. Antonova 2010: 2, 9, 63-65, 137-138.

⁶³⁶ Berlejung 1998: 33-35, 59.

⁶³⁷ Radner 2005: 114-116, 175.

⁶³⁸ As Baines (2000: 67) states, “religion was not experienced solely or dominantly through texts but through social life, ritual, and living and moving in an environment”. One may add that ritual centered on iconic images which were also present in various environments. On the importance of sensual perception in viewing religious images, see A.Koch 2004: 330-331, 341 (according to Koch when an image becomes text, its sense cannot be established by sensual perception).

⁶³⁹ See Kemp 2000: 1-5; Antonova 2010: 139-140.

⁶⁴⁰ I.J. Winter 2002: 30, 36; Winter further argues, that “for the gods, seeing is the point of departure, the trigger for an emotional response in anticipation of active engagement, whereas for the populace, the end experience *is* the act of seeing itself, intensified as the powerful emotional reaction of admiration” (ibid. p. 34). On religious emotion, its power, and emotional cultivation, see recently Riis and Woodhead 2010; according to whom

According to Angelica Berlejung, analogous to human means of communication between people, human encounters with deities concentrated on the faces and hands.⁶⁴¹ However, the totality of the divine body as well as its environment was certainly part of the visual and emotional experience of encounter in veneration of the image believed to be identical with the deity.⁶⁴² Everything pertaining to deities and relating to the temple was considered *ku₃* in Sumerian, a term whose meaning is controversial; it is translated variously with ‘holy’, ‘sacred’, ‘pure’, ‘lustrous’, ‘shining’, and ‘bright’.⁶⁴³

The religious iconography in two-dimensional imagery depicts figures in what is generally described as ‘stereotypes’ preventing identification of deities unless they are recognizable by their symbol or attribute. The role of stereotypes in art has interested scholars in different disciplines. According to Ernst H. Gombrich, adherence to formula or stereotypical figures has its cause in an “enormous pull in man to repeat what he has learned”, and possibly in a universal need for formula. Gombrich, familiar with Egyptian and Mesopotamian art, demonstrates with various examples from different cultures and periods how a formula was reused in successive representations and that the “revulsion from formula is a comparatively recent development”.⁶⁴⁴

That standardized divine figures are used in depictions of Mesopotamian deities suggests a *Typos Hieros* suited for worship. Creation of the lost archetypical divine images appears not to have been ad hoc but deliberate and planned as Early Dynastic steles and texts imply that rulers made “*Bildpolitik*” (politics of imagery).⁶⁴⁵ Following Belting, archetypes need repetition to establish authenticity, and once the authentic form was determined, form became norm, and the authentic became type.⁶⁴⁶ This process is evident in the development of Mesopotamian divine imagery in relief and on seals. Although the original archetypal divine figures (statues) are lost, these three-dimensional statues were the *Typos Hieros* serving as model for other forms of visual representations; all that remain are depictions and descrip-

(p. 91), not only images evoke feelings, but also sacred spaces are often “deliberately planned to evoke certain feelings, such as a sense of security and communion”. This is well attested in Mesopotamia, where building of temples as well as feeding the deities involved whole communities, see, e.g. Suter 2000; Maul 2008.

⁶⁴¹ Berlejung 1998: 58-59.

⁶⁴² See Chapter IV.C.4 in this volume.

⁶⁴³ Wilson 1994; Sallaberger 2006-2008: 295, s.v. “Reinheit”; Attinger 2007: 666; cf. Pongratz-Leisten 2009: 417-418, 422. When *ku₃* is the adjective for the divine word, Beate Pongratz-Leisten (2009: 418-420, 423) suggests it means ‘authoritative’, ‘inalterable’, ‘irrevocable and unchangeable’.

⁶⁴⁴ Gombrich 1986: 19-21, 126-152 (quotes: pp. 20, 128).

⁶⁴⁵ Belting 1990: “*Bildpolitik*” see Index p. 690; cf. Asher-Greve 2003; Orthmann 2008: 244-245.

⁶⁴⁶ Belting 1990: 30, 38-40, 148.

tions of cult statues. However, transformation of three-dimensional colorful composite models into two-dimensional figures on flat surfaces can only create an illusion of the original.

The Mesopotamian *Typos Hieros* depicted in relief is often a ‘generic figure’ representing certain types of specific groups and/or functions but also served as archetypal basic form for the iconography of ‘recognizable’ individual deities.⁶⁴⁷ The form of a ‘generic’ figure can relate to rank marked by posture such as seated versus standing, or view such as profile versus *en face* or frontal figure,⁶⁴⁸ and is available for various pictorial use as identity also depends on “seeing-in”.⁶⁴⁹ This term is adopted from Richard Wollheim who “understands pictures to be distinct from other kinds of representation in virtue of eliciting a special kind of experience: seeing-in. What a picture depicts is determined in large part by what appropriate observers can see in it”.⁶⁵⁰ Generic figures are not restricted to depiction of deities, for example, owners of seals may see themselves in the ‘generic’ figure of the worshipper, and see their deity in the divine ‘generic’ figure. The option of “seeing-in” their deity into the anonymous, generic divine figure suggests individuals may have had some choice concerning devotion to a particular favorite deity, with whom they cultivated a special relationship beyond the religious confinement dictated by society and/or family (cf. Chapter I.B).

⁶⁴⁷ According to *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* (1993): 945, ‘generic’ also means: “relating or applied to or descriptive of all members of a genus, species, class, or group: common to or characteristic of a whole group or class ... not specific or individual”.

According to Selz (2008) prototypical iconic classifiers (such as horned crown) are used in depiction of deities, and “images seem to concentrate on prototypes rather than on depicting individuals”. Although Selz’s concept of ‘divine prototypes’ resembles that of ‘generic figure’ it is not identical. A ‘prototype’ may serve as the matrix for individual images, (e.g. images of Enki/Ea, Inana/Ištar, Ningirsu, etc. (see, e.g., Boehmer 1965; Colbow 1991; Suter 2000)) whereas a ‘generic’ figure is not specific and typifies divine groups such as high ranking deities versus minor deities, or mortals; the ‘generic’ figure of deities is generally devoid of attributes other than a ‘horned crown’ or, from the Old Babylonian period onward, other forms of divine headdress.

⁶⁴⁸ The numbers of pairs of horns on divine tiaras are not a reliable sign of rank as the same goddess may be depicted with ‘simple’ (one pair of horns) or ‘multiple’ (several pairs of horns) ‘horned crown’ (see Chapter IV.C.3).

⁶⁴⁹ Although Wollheim (1980: 205-226) discusses perception of pictorial representation in his differentiation of “seeing-as” and “seeing-in”, his definition of “seeing-in” is more complex (phenomenological) than my modified definition for ancient Mesopotamian art: the ancient viewer-worshipper *sees-in(to)* depictions of generic (or stereotyped) figures specific identities, e.g., an individual deity, or him- or herself. The term “seeing-in” approximates the Mesopotamian concept of figural depictions being more than and not merely *seen as* image or representation of a figure.

⁶⁵⁰ Quoted from Kulvicki 2009: 387, who discusses various concepts of ‘seeing-in’.

Construction of pictorial space remains essentially unchanged in Mesopotamian imagery.⁶⁵¹ As mentioned above, occasionally an architectural or landscape feature specifies the otherwise neutral space. However, the background is rarely empty. Although a tendency towards *horror vacui* is obvious in many Mesopotamian images, this is generally less explicit in religious images with deities suggesting existence of a concept of religious iconography and compositional structure.

Visually the gender of clothed gods and goddesses are distinguished predominantly by socio-cultural gender markers such as hair styles and garments; sex is marked by secondary sex attributes beard and breasts but breasts are only occasionally accentuated with goddesses.⁶⁵² Texts mention that garments made for statues of deities differed from those of the highest ranked humans.⁶⁵³ Although garments of gods and goddesses were not identical, this gender differentiation is not always evident in images, particularly on seals. In texts, descriptions of physical differences focus on procreative organs, especially vulva and penis. Additionally, the physical attractiveness of deities, the beauty of goddesses, or the strength and prowess of gods are described in general terms or alluded to in metaphors many of which are baffling to modern readers.

The gender of some divine figures appears visually ambiguous as with Early Dynastic beardless foundation figurines, whose lower part are formed as peg and who may represent androgynous divine beings (fig. 2).⁶⁵⁴ In sculptures breasts of clothed goddesses as well as mortal women are often either rather flat or very small. The main markers for the feminine gender are hair styles and garments, whereas for the masculine gender beard or baldness, and occasionally nude upper body.⁶⁵⁵ I agree with Joan G. Westenholz (1998: 65) that the Sumerians, who did not linguistically distinguish between gods and goddesses, “were not primarily interested in the gender aspect of their deities”. This is reflected in the relative uniformity of divine figures with not always recognizable gender, especially in miniature art such as seals.

⁶⁵¹ See, e.g., Marzahn et al. 2008; Orthmann 1975; Strommenger-Hirmer 1962. Exceptions are, for example, the stele of Naram-Sîn or Neo-Assyrian wall reliefs; for photographs, see, e.g., Orthmann 1975: figs. 104, 202ff.; Strommenger-Hirmer 1962: figs. 122, 232ff.

⁶⁵² Asher-Greve 1997; 2003. When depicted nude, deities are ‘sex marked’: gods by penis and often beard, goddesses by breasts and triangle for vulva.

⁶⁵³ Waetzoldt 1980-1983: 28-30 § 10g; Zawadski 2006.

⁶⁵⁴ Asher-Greve 2002; for another example, see Aruz 2003: 80 no. 39.

⁶⁵⁵ For example, scholars hold different opinions concerning the gender of the statue of the singer Ur-Nanše from Mari (Asher-Greve 1998: 14), and of the figure of Abda on a votive plaque of Ur-Nanše of Lagaš (Asher-Greve 1985: 90-92; Frayne 2008: 83-84 no. 2); for photographs, see Asher-Greve 1998: Figs. 3 and 4; Aruz 2003: 152 no. 91a.

‘Archetypical’ figures with horns as sign of divinity appear during the Early Dynastic II period (ca. 2800-2600),⁶⁵⁶ whereas generic divine figures developed in the Akkadian period and served as models for centuries because, as mentioned above, canonical form guaranteed authenticity as well as immediate recognition. Cult statues in temples presumably influenced conception and construction of two-dimensional divine images.⁶⁵⁷ As in Christian icons, Mesopotamian “organization of pictorial space turns the icon into a highly specific image, an image invested with the power of containing real presence”.⁶⁵⁸

Identification is a major problem in the interpretation of images of divine figures as only a small number of deities have a distinct, recognizable iconography.⁶⁵⁹ However, even these deities may be represented without their recognizable symbols or attributes and identified by annotations or inscriptions. Additionally many symbols and attributes are not exclusive in that they do not identify only one specific divine figure. As Joan G. Westenholz discusses in this volume, Mesopotamian divine embodiment and selfhood is fluid, deities were not always fully distinct from each other. Benjamin D. Sommer remarks that perception of divine bodies in Mesopotamia differs from classical Greek culture because they were not always fully distinct from each other, could have multiple bodies, fluid selves, and overlapping identities.⁶⁶⁰ Sommer “believes” that “the Mesopotamian attitude toward divine embodiment is ... closely related to its view of divine selfhood as fluid” because “a deity’s presence was not limited to a single body; it could emerge simultaneously in several objects”,⁶⁶¹ which includes multiple statues of the same deities, their presence in symbols, and in locations beyond the earth (e.g., heaven, netherworld, underground sweet water ocean).

Apart from canonical visual form for the sake of authenticity and recognizability, lack of individuality or distinct character combined with the overlapping of domains and functions have, I believe, also influenced visual representation of deities. This becomes obvious in depictions of multitudinous divine figures in two-dimensional form on image carriers with circumscribed space. Studying visualizations of goddesses, I have taken into account fluidity, overlap of domains/functions, and transferability of symbols/attributes as well as the processes of change discussed by Joan G. Westenholz in Chapter II.A.

⁶⁵⁶ Cf. Asher-Greve 1995/96.

⁶⁵⁷ For statues as models, see Collon 1987; 1997.

⁶⁵⁸ Antonova 2010: 154.

⁶⁵⁹ Black and Green 1992.

⁶⁶⁰ Sommer 2009: 12, 16.

⁶⁶¹ Sommer 2009: 19.

C. Survey Through Time, Space and Places

1. Inventing Images of Goddesses in the Early Dynastic Period

Distinction between human and divine anthropomorphic figures in the archaic period (ca. 3300-2900 BCE) remains hypothetical. Opinions are divided whether the feminine figures on the Uruk Vase and on several seals from Uruk represent Inana or her priestess.⁶⁶²

Not until the appearance of horns on the heads of anthropomorphic figures during the Early Dynastic II period (ca. 2800-2600) are deities visually differentiated by one pair of horns from mortals.⁶⁶³ However, numerous images of mythological or cultic scenes depict deities without horns or horned crowns;⁶⁶⁴ goddesses can rarely be distinguished from gods before Early Dynastic II/IIIa (ca. 2700-2600).⁶⁶⁵ They first figure prominently on a number of reliefs, whereas in seal imagery goddesses are extremely rare (figs. 3, 4).

The defining attribute of divinity is a headdress with horns, the so-called 'horned crown'.⁶⁶⁶ Some reliefs depict goddesses with elaborate crowns (figs. 7, 8) composed of a circlet holding the crown on the head, to which is attached a cap or turban with a pair of horns upon which several elements are placed. The element in the center is a stylized lion mask crowned by a crescent or horns, to the left and right of the mask are twigs of grain. The most common adjective for divine crown (Sumerian *men*) is 'holy', 'sacred', 'lustrous', 'shining' (Sumerian *ku₃*).⁶⁶⁷ Adjectives and appositions exclusively used with men are radiant, brilliant, shiny, great, crown of heaven and earth, crown of eternity, crown of sovereignty. Grain, the 'gift' of the deities providing the foundation for prosperity, was also "a religio-economic element"

⁶⁶² Boehmer 1957-1971; cf. Steinkeller 1998; Bahrani 2002. I do not agree with H. Koch (2000) concerning Late Uruk period images of deities as none is distinguishable from depictions of humans. For the textual evidence of goddesses in the archaic period, see Chapter II.B.1 in this volume.

⁶⁶³ Furlong 1987. On horned crown as "iconic classifier" and as divine attribute, see Selz 2008: 16.

⁶⁶⁴ Frankfort 1939; 1955; Amiet 1980; Karg 1984.

⁶⁶⁵ Boehmer 1957-1971: 466 ('*Mesilim-Zeit*'); Karg 1984: 30, 362-368, pls.11, 12; Asher-Greve 2003: 4.

⁶⁶⁶ Asher-Greve 1995/96; for different interpretations, see Lambert 1997c and Selz 2008: 16.

⁶⁶⁷ On *ku₃*, see Chapter IV.B in this volume. *ku₃* is also an adjective of locations (e.g. *uru-ku₃*), sanctuaries (*eš₃*) and temples (*e₂*), or parts of temples such as the interior, statues of deities, objects like thrones (*bara₂*), vessels, trees, water, prayers, incantations. Wilson (1994) suggests as meaning for *KU₃* "pertaining/belonging to the realm of the divine" or "suited for deity". Deities are rarely called, exceptions are Inana (who is always *ku₃*), *Ĝatumdug*, and *Lamma*; generally *ku₃* applies to body parts (e.g. hand of a deity, heart of *BaU*, womb of *Ninsumuna* (p. 30)).

in ancient Greece (L.H. Martin 1990: 251). The lion ‘head’ is the visual metaphor for divine power, awe and terrifying splendor which, according to texts is also associated with the head of deities. Thus these crowns visualize the numinous as well as one of the most important functions of deities to create and provide abundance.⁶⁶⁸

‘Abundance’ is unquestionably a major theme in Mesopotamian literature and religion; agricultural surplus provided the foundation of urban centers and culture. According to Irene J. Winter (2007: 118), “surplus in our terms was in Mesopotamia equated with a concept of ‘abundance’ in natural production, and the representation thereof constituted a virtual ‘iconography of abundance’”. Deities created abundance and prosperity and it was hoped they would continue, an aspect that was visualized in various changing attributes or iconographic elements, such as water, plants, and animals.

The contexts of images of a single goddess often remain unknown because of the fragmentary state of the objects and imprecise or unknown provenance.⁶⁶⁹ More or less completely preserved are images of goddesses on an unprovenanced seal and a seal impression from Fara (figs. 3, 4), and two monuments originally belonging to temple inventory: a stele of Ur-Nanše, king of Lagaš (ca. 2550; fig. 5) and a votive plaque from Tello (ancient Ġirsu; fig. 6).⁶⁷⁰ The seals may be dated as early as Early Dynastic II/IIIa (ca. 2650-2600) and thus the oldest secure images of goddesses.

In the oldest images goddesses appear in different scenes. The unprovenanced seal (fig. 3) depicts three themes, two of them major themes in Early Dynastic III seal imagery: enthroned goddess, here with an animal under her feet, and in the upper register of the side scenes a banqueting couple ‘in front’ of an architectural construction; the boat scene in the lower register is relatively common on Early Dynastic II seals.⁶⁷¹ The goddess receives a man bringing an animal offering, between them stands a container (altar?) with twigs and underneath (but really means standing side by side) a libation vessel. The fragmentary seal impression from Fara (fig. 4) shows an enthroned goddess with frontal head crowned by two horns opposite a person with raised hand; on the other side sits a (female?) person (deity?) on whose lap jumps a gazelle. *En face* images of enthroned goddesses are also pictured on a stele, a votive plaque and a vase (figs. 5-7).⁶⁷²

⁶⁶⁸ Asher-Greve 1995/96: 184-187.

⁶⁶⁹ For a list of Early Dynastic III images of goddesses, see Asher-Greve 2003.

⁶⁷⁰ A goddess may also be depicted on a stele of Ur-Nanše found at Ur (Woolley 1956: pl. 39d U.17829): the main side shows a seated deity in profile with an attendant standing behind her; on each small side stands an attendant with an object; the inscription mentions the digging of an irrigation channel. For the inscription, see Frayne 2008: 116-117: no. 31.

⁶⁷¹ See Karg 1984: 62-68 (on banquet scenes), 68-70 (on boat scenes).

⁶⁷² Asher-Greve 2003.

For the following goddesses, it is documented that temples were built, or statues created, or votive gifts donated: Amaĝeština, BaU, Dumuzi-abzu, Ġatumdug, Inana, Lamma-ša₆-ga, Lamma-šita-e, Namma, Nanše, Ningirima, Ninġidru, Ninġursaġa/Ninmaġ, Ninki, Ninlil, Nin-MAR.KI, NinSAR, Ninšubura, Ninura, Nisaba; there are also numerous deities whose gender remains obscure.⁶⁷³ Approximately a dozen reliefs are published that depict deities.⁶⁷⁴ The oldest is the stele of Ur-Nanše commemorating the inauguration of the Ibgal in Lagaš-city (modern al-Hiba), the temple of Inana (fig. 5).⁶⁷⁵ Because of the state of preservation details are lost and only the contours of the figures remain. The goddess is represented on the main side of the stele sitting on a throne standing on an inscribed platform. She is shown in partial frontal view with extremely long hair and a date cluster in her hands. Her *en face* image is given its own space while the profile figures, including part of the royal family engaged in rituals (procession and banquet), share the space on the reverse and small sides of the stele. The image field with only the goddess alludes to a niche for a cult statue. Even if envisioning its original state and assuming the relief was originally painted with different colors, it is admittedly difficult to imagine how an ancient viewer perceived and reacted to this relatively crude image of a goddess. Perception changes with the slightly later representation of a goddess on the votive relief with libation scene from Tello (fig. 6). Although also depicted in partial frontal view and enthroned, the large eyes and slight smile of the goddess evokes stronger viewer reaction. The space is shared with a priest, but he is separated from the goddess by a vessel with plants into which he pours the libation. The identity of the goddess is disputed.⁶⁷⁶ Because of the mountain motif decorating the throne and platform, it is suggested that she represents Ninġursaġa. But Nanše is also associated with mountains as one of her epithets is “Mistress (of?) pure mountain”; she is the divine proprietress of NINA, a town in the state of Lagaš, and one of the most important deities in the state pantheon.⁶⁷⁷ Identification of Nanše holding a date cluster is confirmed by the dedicatory inscription by Enmetena of Lagaš (ca. 2410) on the fragment of a vase (fig. 7).⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷³ See Selz 1995; Frayne 2008: pp. xxiii-xxxi.

⁶⁷⁴ Asher-Greve 2003: 7 table 1.

⁶⁷⁵ For the decipherable parts of the text, see Frayne 2008: 87-89 (Ur-Nanše 6a).

⁶⁷⁶ Braun-Holzinger 1998-2001: s.v. “Ninġursaġa”: 381; Asher-Greve 2003: 11-13. Frayne 2008: 87-89 no. 6a (E1.9.1.6a); Frayne (2008 p. 87) identifies the goddess as Inana; much of the inscription is either badly eroded or illegible.

⁶⁷⁷ Asher-Greve 2003; see Chapter II.B.1 and II.B.2 no. 14 in this volume.

⁶⁷⁸ Asher-Greve 2003: 10-12; I.J. Winter 2007: 133, identifies the goddess as “Ninġursaġa”. Following names are preserved in the fragmentary inscription in this order: Nanše, Ninġursaġa, Inana (Frayne 2008: 228-229 no. 25).

Date cluster and mountain motif are examples of the transferability of symbols, which can even occur in the same local pantheon as here in the state Lagaš-Ĝirsu. In two images the principal goddess holds a date cluster (figs. 5, 7) which, like the grain in the crown (figs. 6, 7), alludes to divine tasks of creating and providing abundance and prosperity.⁶⁷⁹ The high status of the goddesses is expressed by rendering the heads *en face* which does not completely integrate into scenes with profile figures. Frontality is a form used in sacred and religious images because such figures ‘face’ the viewer/worshipper and thus establish the potentiality of communication between deity and worshipper.⁶⁸⁰ In Mesopotamian images frontality is relatively rare and therefore not merely an iconographical convention but a form conveying meaning and applied selectively. Inserted into two-dimensional images, the frontal or *en face* figure emphasizes high status and importance of a goddess as patroness of a city and kingmaker.⁶⁸¹ Contrary to depiction in profile, frontality is the visual form of the deity’s presence in her cult statue, in the partial frontal figure the deity’s presence is simulated for the viewer who simultaneously sees the deity in the image of the cult statue and as focus of a ritual.⁶⁸²

These ‘iconic figures’ replicate not only a statue of a goddess in her temple but also her manifest presence. For the unique event of the inauguration of Inana’s temple in Lagaš a different visual formula, i.e. isolation (fig. 7), is used rather than sharing the space with a mortal as in libation scenes which depicts a repetitive ritual (fig. 6). The construction of the pictorial space has a visual function of connecting the plane of divinity with the space and time of the ritual and the external space and time of the audience.

Goddesses are rarely depicted together with a god which may be a reflection of Early Dynastic god-lists that do not list bi-gendered divine pairs (Chapter II.B.2). An exception, although not shown as equal to the god, is the goddess on the main side of the victory stele of Eanatum of Lagaš (fig. 8) dating

⁶⁷⁹ I.J. Winter 2007: 133. On date clusters, see Asher-Greve 1985: 73-76 and Table 2; a date cluster in the hand of a god is rare (ibid, p. 74 n. 83).

⁶⁸⁰ ‘Frontality’ refers to figures depicted with full frontal body while the feet are generally shown in profile; ‘*en face*’ refers to an image of partial frontality, usually head and chest whereas the lower parts of the body are depicted in profile.

⁶⁸¹ Asher-Greve 2003.

⁶⁸² Antonova’s (2010: 154) statement in her study on icons may also be valid for ancient Mesopotamian art: “this principle of the organization of pictorial space turns the icon into a highly specific image – an image invested with the power of containing real presence. This could question the very distinction between subject and object which lies at the heart of aesthetics”. This dense form of visual representation strengthens the message by reinforcing divine presence and power but also its connection to royal ideology (compare, e.g., Molyneux 1997).

around 2450.⁶⁸³ Two partially preserved figures of a goddess show her as participant in the narrative scenes connected to Eanatum's war with Umma. The smaller size of the goddess as well as her position behind a much larger god in the upper register indicate that in this context (victory over an enemy) the god is more important than the goddess. The identities of the deities are debated based on the divine actors mentioned in the stele's text.⁶⁸⁴ In both scenes on the front side of the stele, god and goddess presumably represent the same couple: the parents of the state god Ninĝirsu, Enlil and Ninĝursaĝa. This identification is supported by the importance Enlil and Ninĝursaĝa have for Eanatum himself, in the stele's text, and their status in the state pantheon of Lagaš. Further, Enlil and Ninĝursaĝa are the symbolic parents of Eanatum and the first in the list of deities by whom Eanatum's enemy, the unnamed king of Umma, has to swear oaths.⁶⁸⁵ Because the text culminates in the oaths that should guarantee peace between Lagaš and Umma, and because Enlil and Ninĝursaĝa belong to the quartet of supreme deities presiding over the pantheon, deciding the destinies of state, city, king and people, it is plausible that they are represented on the main side of Eanatum's stele.⁶⁸⁶

That goddesses are associated with violence is evident in another fragmentary scene on a votive relief from Tello carved in the style of the Ur-Nanše stele (fig. 9). Seated and facing left with a cup in her hand – another 'transferable' attribute seen in the hands of many deities – the goddess turns her back to a bearded man (king?) who beats with a club on a bald, probably nude man's head with bound wrists, an iconography indicating he may represent a prisoner of war. Because of its fragmentary state, the small figure at the left of the goddess remains obscure.⁶⁸⁷ The scene is too fragmentary for speculation about the goddess' identity but the relief may also have depicted a victory banquet.

During the Early Dynastic period women preferred temples of goddesses for their votive gifts. Among the objects found in the Early Dynastic Inana temple at Nippur were numerous gifts donated by women, which may have also been the case at the archaic Ištar temple at Assur where many women's statues and votive gifts were deposited.⁶⁸⁸ But this practice changed in post-Early Dynastic times when only royal women and high priestesses donated votive gifts and their statues.⁶⁸⁹ The cause of this change remains unknown

⁶⁸³ Commonly referred to as the 'Stele of the Vultures'. For good photographs, see Aruz 2003: 190-191: figs. 52-53.

⁶⁸⁴ Frayne 2008: 127-140 [RIME 1.9.3.1].

⁶⁸⁵ Selz 1995: 252-255.

⁶⁸⁶ For this interpretation, see Asher-Greve (in press).

⁶⁸⁷ According to Boese (1971: 200) the figure represents a small, bald and beardless man turned towards the left who may have been part of a libation scene.

⁶⁸⁸ Bär 2003; Dolce 2008: 669-671.

⁶⁸⁹ The number of inscribed votive gifts dedicated to goddesses decreases substantially in

but perhaps results from changes in official religion or cult practices. Another cause could be women's financial situation as they may no longer have had the means for votive gifts or the right to decide independently about the use of their means.⁶⁹⁰

In Early Dynastic images goddesses are generally depicted either alone or in the company of a worshipper, or attendant, rarely of a god.⁶⁹¹ Exceptional is the image of two walking goddesses on a small nearly square Early Dynastic III shell inlay from Ur (fig. 10).⁶⁹² The leading goddess carries a staff-like object in her right hand; her left holds the left wrist of the goddess behind her who raises her right hand. In the crude execution it is unclear if her hand is just roughly incised like the hand holding her wrist or if she holds a beaker. The robe of the leading goddess is decorated with broad, crossed bands; the other goddess wears a plain robe. Form and size of this inlay are like those of gaming boards and sound-boxes of lyres decorated with diverse themes including mythological feasts.⁶⁹³ Lack of distinctly individual features, symbols or attributes of the two goddesses allow several possible identifications. Deities are rarely depicted walking 'hand-in-hand', nevertheless this iconographic detail as well as the image carrier (probably gaming board or music instrument) point to a feast or banquet associated with drink suggesting identification of the sister deities Ninkasi and Siraš, goddesses of beer and brewing, respectively. Another pairing is based on a hymn to Ninkasi mentioning Enki and Ninti as her parents and emphasizing Ninkasi was "tenderly cared for by Ninḫursaĝa".⁶⁹⁴ The latter (with staff and in more elaborate dress) may be shown together with Ninkasi. A third interpretation is an unidentifiable divine mother-daughter pair for which there is a human example on the stele of Ur-Nanše where his wife and daughter are shown facing each other (fig. 5). Another possible pairing is that of the divine girlfriends Ĝeštinana and Ĝeštindudu, one of the few relationships between goddesses based on friendship.⁶⁹⁵

The earliest known image of a goddess 'sitting' on a large bird comes from Nippur (fig. 11) and dates to the late Early Dynastic or early Akkadian

the post-Early Dynastic periods, see Braun-Holzinger 1991: 24-25; Frayne 1993; 1997: xxxvii-xl; 2008.

⁶⁹⁰ Asher-Greve 2006: 48-49, 53.

⁶⁹¹ An exception is the image on an unprovenanced seal showing libation before an enthroned god and goddess in frontal view, see Asher-Greve 2003: 24, fig. 13 (= Orthmann 1975: 133d).

⁶⁹² 2,9 x 2,6 cm. Woolley 1956: 170 (U.2826).

⁶⁹³ Woolley 1934: pls. 95-99, 103, 104; Dolce 1978.

⁶⁹⁴ ETCSL 4.23.1 (Ninkasi A); Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-kasi und Siraš/Siris".

⁶⁹⁵ Black, Cunningham, et al. 2004: 80 (Dumuzid's Dream).

period.⁶⁹⁶ Preserved is half of the upper register of a votive relief, probably part of a ritual scene with a minor god leading a man carrying a kid toward the goddess holding a cup and a fish. A god leading a man with sacrificial kid to the goddess is also represented on an Akkadian seal showing a goddess in a boat (fig. 21). Nanše is the goddess whose association with birds, waterfowl and fish is well attested.⁶⁹⁷ That Nanše is “attracted by the *goose*”⁶⁹⁸ and it becomes her favorite is described in the introductory passage of *Nanše and the Birds* ending with these lines (20-22):⁶⁹⁹

Nanše, delighted in her u₅^{mušen} (“goose”),
erected a lapis lazuli shrine
and set the pure u₅^{mušen} at her feet.

Another image reminiscent of the goddess on the votive relief is described in *Nanše and Her Fish*: “she (Nanše) holds a fish like a staff in her hand, it is (there as her emblem)”.⁷⁰⁰ As Bendt Alster (2005b: 2) suggests, “descriptions might relate to visual images” which is confirmed in the two Nanše hymns.

Nanše was not only the proprietary goddess of the city NINA but one of the most important goddesses in the Lagašite state pantheon.⁷⁰¹ A votive relief with her image in Nippur may surprise but an Ur III record of expenses from Tello lists ‘Nanše of Nippur’ as recipient of an offering of fruit.⁷⁰² Already in the Early Dynastic period Nippur as religious center of Sumer received votive gifts from outside as, for example, from Entemena of Lagaš and Lugalzagesi of Uruk.⁷⁰³ It cannot be excluded that the cult of ‘Nanše of Nippur’ dates back to the Early Dynastic period.

Some passages in the Nanše hymns read like a description of a statue of a goddess and its hymnic version probably spread to other places where the ‘goddess with bird’ motif was adopted for images of local deities (see below section 3.3.2). The Akkadian seal (fig. 21) shows the goddess in a boat sitting on a throne supported by two large waterfowl (Anserini). The boat is another attribute of Nanše, whereas Anserini are another example for the flexible use

⁶⁹⁶ On identification of goose (or swan), see in this Chapter sections 3.3.2. and 4.1.

⁶⁹⁷ Heimpel 1998-2001: 153 s.v. “Nanše”; see also on identification of the image of ‘goddess on bird’ as Nanše, Feldt 2005: 116-117.

⁶⁹⁸ Steinkeller (forthcoming) rejects Veldhuis’ translation “goose” and suggests u₅^{mušen} “Nanše’s holy bird and also her *alter ego* ... should probably be identified as the cormorant” characterized by “long straight beak and its perching position”; for further discussion, see in this Chapter section 3.3.2.

⁶⁹⁹ Veldhuis 2004: 117-118 (lines 1-14, 20-22); cf. Alster 2005b: 1 with n. 2.

⁷⁰⁰ Alster 2005b; for the quote, see 12-13 line iv 1.

⁷⁰¹ Selz 1995: 181-212.

⁷⁰² Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. “Nanše”: 159 § 15.

⁷⁰³ Klein 1998-2001: s.v. “Nippur”: 534.

of divine symbols and attributes.⁷⁰⁴ However, the bird on the Early Dynastic relief from Nippur (fig. **11**) neither resembles goose, swan, or cormorant,⁷⁰⁵ but may be a generic image of large bird, perhaps as reference to Nanše's association with birds and as Marsh Goddess.⁷⁰⁶

Figural images of identifiable goddesses first appear during the reign of Ur-Nanše (ca. 2550) and by the end of the Early Dynastic period visual forms of deities were created that became the matrix for Akkadian images. The horned crown (in a changed version) becomes the essential divine identifier; long hair and a dress covering the chest become the gender markers of feminine divinities. In several images emphasis is on the goddess' head, with the horned crown as sign of divinity, and extremely voluminous hair and disproportionately large eyes (figs. **5-7, 9, 10**). Huge eyes are associated with the importance of the 'gaze of goddesses',⁷⁰⁷ and hair is a sign of female beauty repetitively mentioned in texts.

Two basic images were 'invented' and developed during the Early Dynastic period:

- I. the enthroned goddess as main figure:
 - a. depicted in profile view,
 - b. depicted with *en face* head and upper part of body;
- II. standing or walking goddess in profile view.

Gods and goddesses may also be differentiated, aside from a beard, by size and/or positioning in the composition indicating rank, particularly in narrative scenes (fig. **8**). Several goddesses have attributes on their shoulders that sometimes resemble maces (figs. **6-8**), often a symbol of Inana,⁷⁰⁸ and several goddesses hold in their hands a short date cluster and cup, or cup and fish, or just a cup (figs. **5, 7, 9, 11**). That, for example, cup, date cluster or symbols

⁷⁰⁴ For more images of a goddess in a boat, see Boehmer 1965: Figs. 478-480. On Nanše and boats, see Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. "Nanše": 157; Alster 2005b.

Our knowledge about the symbolic meaning of most birds is still rudimentary, see in this Chapter section 3.3.2.

For references to goddesses flying (away) like a bird, see Heimpel 1968: 380-457. There is no study on the symbolisms of birds, but a bird can be a positive as well as negative symbol. The association of birds with message bringing or leaving a place is rather general and universal (see, e.g., Weszeli 2006-2008, and in this Chapter section 3.3.2). Not very useful in this context is Jeremy Black "The Imagery of Birds in Sumerian Poetry" in *Mesopotamian Poetic Language: Sumerian and Akkadian*, ed. M.E. Vogelzang and H. Vanstiphout, Groningen: Styx Publications, 1996, 23-46.

⁷⁰⁵ On the problems concerning differentiating goose and swan (*Anserini*), see in this Chapter section 3.3.2. On cormorants, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cormorant>.

⁷⁰⁶ Veldhuis 2004: 24-25,

⁷⁰⁷ See Asher-Greve 2003.

⁷⁰⁸ Colbow 1991; Asher-Greve 2003.

on shoulders are associated with different deities, suggests that flexibility concerning attributes and symbols pertains to domains and functions shared by several goddesses (see below and Chapter II.A).⁷⁰⁹

Wilfred G. Lambert (1997c: 2) argued “that art forms of the time did not allow a differentiation of gods by physical, facial appearance”. But such differentiation was never an aim – physical appearance of deities in image always emphasizes divinity over individuality. Consequently, the basic visual forms in representation of deities remained rather stable for centuries as they became established and immediately recognizable as divine image.⁷¹⁰ Resistance to substantially change such images is also found in pre-Renaissance and Eastern Christian religious art. Stability in form (repetition) guaranteed instant recognizability of divine or holy figures for both Mesopotamian divine images and images of Christ, Madonna and saints.⁷¹¹

As discussed, cross-cultural visual recognizability is inherently problematic because analogous forms or symbols/attributes may impart very different meanings in each culture, for example, Madonna versus woman or goddess with child, or frontal images of saints versus that of deities, or the symbolism of fish, birds, moon.

The underlying interpretive problem is frequent lack of individual identity as well as overlapping of domains and functions (Chapter IV.B), the transferability of attributes and symbols to several deities such as bird, lion, scorpion, snake, deer, goat, sheep, plants, cup, and additionally that a deity may have more than one symbol.⁷¹²

Particularly in the Early Dynastic period, when images of deities were created, the employment of attributes and symbols like multiple maces and plants may have been less discriminating than in subsequent periods. While many iconographic details were replaced during the Akkadian Period, a lasting ‘canon’ of effective ‘icons’ was developed in Early Dynastic religious imagery where goddesses occupy exalted positions.

2. Akkadian Innovative Images

In the Akkadian period, the variety of themes, motifs, and figures is greater than in the Early Dynastic or post-Akkadian periods.⁷¹³ New mythological

⁷⁰⁹ Compare Chapter II.A in this volume. See Groneberg (2000) on animals as divine attributes and symbols predominantly in later periods.

⁷¹⁰ In general, correspondence between form and meaning (i.e. iconicity) was more important than individual traits or features, see also images of rulers, e.g. Braun-Holzinger 2007.

⁷¹¹ Belting 1990; Antonova 2010.

⁷¹² Black and Green 1992; Groneberg 2000; Selz 2010.

⁷¹³ About fifty percent of the seals show contest scenes: Boehmer 1965; Collon 1982; 1987: 32-40; Zettler 2007: 14-20.

and religious themes appear in significant numbers first and only on Akkadian seals.⁷¹⁴ Among the iconographic innovations are divine headdresses, including those that became ‘canonical’: the so-called ‘horned crown’ with either one or multiple pairs of horns. In some images, high-ranking deities are distinguished by a multiple-horned crown from low ranking ones with a single horned crown (figs. **12, 15, 16, 20, 25**).⁷¹⁵ Other signs of distinction are more elaborate thrones,⁷¹⁶ different offering altars, and inscribed individual seals depicting the owner (figs. **17, 20, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31**).

That the Akkadian pantheon is more androcentric than Sumerian pantheons is reflected in narrative images largely centering on gods and in the preponderant number of seals featuring gods rather than goddesses. Although images with a principal goddess or several goddesses do not exhibit gender bias, Akkadian influence is evident not only in style and iconography but also in new concepts of representation.⁷¹⁷ This is particularly valid for images of Ištar, Akkad’s only goddess of importance and the goddess most frequently depicted on seals.⁷¹⁸ To accentuate her status, various frontal views (*en face*, partial or full frontality) are the most common visual forms. Furthermore, the lion becomes her attribute, either decorating her throne (figs. **15, 16**) or as a trampled animal on which she sets one or both feet (figs. **12, 16**).⁷¹⁹ Ištar is nearly always shown with maces on her shoulders (figs. **12, 15, 16, 20**), signs of her warrior aspect; some images show her also with wings (fig. **12**).⁷²⁰ In

⁷¹⁴ On myths, epics and legends depicted on seals, see Collon 1987: 178-181; on Early Dynastic mythological and narrative images, see Frankfort 1939: 62-79; Amiet 1980; Karg 1984. Steinkeller (1992) suggests that some motifs on Akkadian seals originate from unknown Semitic mythology.

⁷¹⁵ On Akkadian divine headdresses, see Collon 1982: 30-31.

⁷¹⁶ On furniture, see Collon 1982: 32.

⁷¹⁷ On differences between Akkadian and Sumerian pantheons, see Chapters II.B.2 and II.B.3 in this volume.

⁷¹⁸ The goddess most often named in the royal inscriptions of Sargon, Naram-Sîn and Šarkališarri is Ištar; she does not occur in the inscriptions of Rimuš and Maništušu (Frayne 1993 [RIME 2]); Inana only occurs once in an inscription of Sargon (Frayne 1993: 27-29 [RIME 2.1.1.11: 46]) ‘Inana.ZA.ZA in Ur’ once in an inscription of Sargon’s daughter Enheduana (Frayne 1992: 35-36 [RIME 2.1.1.16]). The only deities occurring in inscriptions of all kings of Akkade from Sargon to Šarkališarri are Enlil and Šamaš. In Naram-Sîn’s inscriptions more gods and goddesses are mentioned than by any other king of Akkade. The goddesses occurring in Naram-Sîn’s inscriptions are Ašnan, Nisaba, Ninkarrak, Ninḫursaġa and Nintur together, Ninḫursaġa in Keš (Frayne 1993: 113-114 [RIME 2.1.4.10 lines 35-36]); Ninḫursaġa in ḪA.A is mentioned once by Maništušu (Frayne 1993: 79-80 [RIME 2.1.3.5]). Other goddesses occurring in Akkadian royal inscriptions are Bēlet-Aya, Nin-Isina (Maništušu: Frayne 1993: 79-80 [RIME 2.1.3.4 and 2.1.3.5]), Niḡidru and Sud (Rimuš: Frayne 1993: 72-73 [RIME 2.1.2.2001]).

⁷¹⁹ On the association of Inana/Ištar with lion, see Groneberg 2000: 304-308; Cornelius 2009.

⁷²⁰ Boehmer 1965: pl. XXXII; Colbow 1991: pls. 3, 4; A. Westenholz 1999: 78-85.

Presumably the fragmentary figure of the deity opposite Sargon of Akkade on a victory stele is the goddess Ištar enthroned, rendered *en face* and holding a net with captives; see

one image Ištar holds a ring-like object and stands next to scenes of theomachy (fig. **13**); other images show her participating in the battle of gods.⁷²¹ Although the combination of theomachy and warrior goddess is not unusual, in one image her throne and weapon are exceptional (fig. **14**):⁷²² she sits on a ‘theomorphic’ mountain from which protrude head, one arm and feet of a slain god; the weapon in her right hand is composed of three maces and two spearheads, two further maces sprout from her back. In front of the goddess stands a small hour-glass-shaped altar over which a minor god extends his hands apparently asking Ištar for help. This is one of the few scenes showing Ištar in profile with a weapon in her hand, and not as goddess venerated by other deities and/or humans.

The majority of goddesses are shown in profile, enthroned as major or principal figure in ritual scenes (figs. **17-19, 21, 25-29, 32-34**), and/or receiving a single deity or a group of deities (figs. **12, 22, 23**).⁷²³ The seated deity may be positioned on the left or right side; the latter becomes normative on Neo-Sumerian seals. Occasionally the principal goddess, in particular Inana/Ištar, is shown standing (figs. **12, 13, 20, 35**).⁷²⁴ A standing instead of seated principal goddess is occasionally shown in post-Akkadian presentation scenes.⁷²⁵ When the principal goddess has one or both hands free she usually acknowledges the presence of other deities and/or mortals by raising one hand (figs. **15-18, 20, 21, 26**). Into the Old Babylonian period the enthroned goddess raising one hand remains the canonical image of major goddess. Rare are images of a Lamma-type goddesses leading or standing behind a worshipper (figs. **16, 18, 25, 26**).

Except for those deities with specific iconography (e.g., Inana/Ištar, the sun-god Utu/Šamaš, the god of wisdom Ea/Enki, the storm-god Iškur/Adad, images are frequently diffuse and may not depict an individual deity in the Akkadian or Sumerian pantheons but rather a ‘type’ of deity whose function or domain may be indicated by attribute(s) or symbol(s).⁷²⁶ For example, the seated goddess in the upper register on a seal from a private grave at Ur (fig. **18**) may be Ningal as the only symbol is a crescent, the symbol of

Amiet 1976; 12 fig. 7, 125 no. 6; Nigro 1998. Of the deity only the lower part of the garment, a small part of foot and pedestal, an outstretched left hand, and part of a staff with mace head are preserved.

⁷²¹ Boehmer 1965: figs. 352, 378, 379. Compare also Frankfort 1939: 116; Amiet 1976, 53, 57, 136 no. 102.

⁷²² For identification as Ištar, see Boehmer 1965: 55, 65.

⁷²³ Many of these scenes may represent an audience where a high ranking deity receives lower ranking ones; cf. Zgoll 2006a: 108.

⁷²⁴ For more examples, see Boehmer 1965: pl. 32; Colbow 1991.

⁷²⁵ E. g., Legrain 1951: nos. 516, 524.

⁷²⁶ Boehmer 1965: 45-46; Boehmer classified Akkadian seals accordingly.

her spouse, the moon-god Nanna.⁷²⁷ Occasionally a goddess is shown without any attribute or symbol as on the seal owned by a woman named Šaša (fig. 17).⁷²⁸ Offerings (perhaps bread and leg of an animal⁷²⁹) and an incense bowl from which rise flames (or perhaps smoke) stand on an altar over and upon which flows the liquid poured by Šaša. On another seal an incense bowl is placed on an altar in front of Inana/Ištar (fig. 16), while on a second seal smoke or flames rise from the altar in front of a goddess holding a scepter (fig. 19).

That the figure of the major or principal goddess is often depicted in generic form may have enabled each ethnic or local group or individual to ‘see-in’ their own deity. The ‘scribe’ with the Semitic name Ili-Ištar could see Ištar in the *en face* goddess on his seals (fig. 20), while a Sumerian viewer could see an image of Inana. The goddess with grain-like plants could be seen as Akkadian Ašnan or Sumerian Ezina.⁷³⁰ This also applies to other images of grain goddesses (figs. 22-24) or the goddess with a child on her lap (figs. 27-29) who would be Nintur or Ninḫursaġa for Sumerians or Mama/i for Akkadians. Visual flexibility of diffuse, generic forms of deities – e.g., goddess with flowing vase (figs. 20, 25), and/or with plants sprouting from her shoulders or dress (figs. 20, 23, 25) or holding a plant (figs. 21, 24) or a mace (fig. 19), or with cup in her hand (fig. 33) – may have facilitated syncretism and fusion of deities, especially those who were “not fully distinct from each other, and had fluid selves”.⁷³¹

Goddesses are relatively often shown in presentation, libation or offering scenes, or a combination of these rituals. The presentation scene in which a human and a deity meet face to face is an Akkadian invention but still relatively rare (figs. 16, 18, 25, 26).⁷³² When the theme first appeared in images it was, according to Henriette A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, “startling and original ... when seen against the foil of early Sumerian art”.⁷³³ In some scenes the worshipper is ‘presented’ by a Lamma goddess,⁷³⁴ who may stand behind

⁷²⁷ This seal was found in grave PG 35 at Ur, dated by Nissen (1966: 49) to the Neo-Sumerian period; it may have been a heirloom dating to the transitory period between the end of the Akkadian dynasty in 2193 BCE and the beginning of Ur III in 2112 BCE (cf. Ludovico 2008). Cf. also presentation scenes with principal goddess in Woolley 1934: pl. 211 nos. 294, 295 from PG 1859, dated by Nissen (1966: 51) to the Neo-Sumerian period. See further in this Chapter section 3 n. 816.

⁷²⁸ A goddess without attribute or symbol before whom a man pours libation is depicted on a seal from a private grave at Ur: Collon 1982: no. 226.

⁷²⁹ Boehmer 1965: 97 with n. 16.

⁷³⁰ Ezina is an old major goddess; on Ezina/Ašnan, see Chapters II.B.1, II.B.2 and II.B.3 in this volume.

⁷³¹ Sommer 2009: 12. See also Chapters II.A and II.B.3 in this volume.

⁷³² Haussperger 1991: 120-140.

⁷³³ Groenewegen-Frankfort 1987: 166.

⁷³⁴ On Lamma goddesses, see below section 3.2.

a woman pouring a libation (fig. 18), or lead a man with a sacrificial kid before Inana/Ištar (fig. 16). Worshippers can also be shown pouring a libation (fig. 17) or bringing an offering (fig. 19) for a goddess without being accompanied by a Lamma. In Early Dynastic images it is often a nude priest who pours the libation (fig. 6) or holds the spouted libation vessel,⁷³⁵ but on Akkadian seals the nude priest is a rare figure, more common are a clothed man or woman pouring a libation (figs. 15, 17, 18, 19).⁷³⁶ Although altars are occasionally depicted in Early Dynastic offering scenes,⁷³⁷ Akkadian images show not only a greater variety of altars but also a specific association between altar and type of offerings: meat and other foods as well as incense burners are placed on stepped altars (figs. 16, 17, 18?), incense and libations are set or poured on an hour-shaped altar (figs. 15, 19). Libation can also be poured over a stepped altar (figs. 17, 18). These altars were movable as temples had no permanent offering altars.⁷³⁸

Offerings of animals, other goods and objects were integral to Mesopotamian religious life. Value and amount of offerings made daily, during regular festivals, or on special occasions were determined by the status of a deity. Offerings, regular, standard, or special, consisted of various items such as food ingredients, liquids, fragrances, animals, and occasionally objects. Aromatic incense was offered to attract the deity's attention, who signalled visual acceptance of the offerings by raising the right hand, the same gesture seen in presentation scenes (fig. 26).⁷³⁹ The relation between offering animal and deity is seldom evident, but according to some texts ewe or lamb were for important deities, and goat for lesser deities or for divine or divinized objects (e.g., footstool, harp, chariot, plough).⁷⁴⁰ The kid brought by a man (figs. 16, 19, 21, 28) may have been used for extispicy. However, as Erle Leichty states, propitiation of deities, ritual, religion and divination were inextricably intertwined,⁷⁴¹ making it nearly impossible to associate images of offerings with specific contexts, such as festival or extispicy ritual.⁷⁴²

Different offerings are distinguished in seal imagery. On a seal with the image of *en face* Inana/Ištar the head of a sheep (ram?) and a flaming incense

⁷³⁵ Amiet 1980: nos. 823, 1328, 1355; Parrot 1960: 129 figs. 158 C, D; I.J. Winter 2010: 79 fig. 2. For clothed men pouring libation, see Orthmann 1975: figs. 133 d and f. I do not know of an Early Dynastic example of a woman pouring libation.

⁷³⁶ For rare Akkadian examples of a nude priest pouring libation, but not in front of a goddess, see 1. Buchanan 1981: no. 454 and 2. disk of Enheduana: I.J. Winter 2010: 68-69 with n. 21, 78 fig. 1.

⁷³⁷ For examples, see Amiet 1980: nos. 1316, 1326 (?), 1327, 1336; Orthmann 1975: fig. 133d.

⁷³⁸ W.R. Mayer and Sallaberger 2003-2005; 95 § 3.5.

⁷³⁹ On offerings, see e.g., W.R. Mayer and Sallaberger 2003-2005; M.E. Cohen 1993; Sallaberger 1993: on images of offerings, see Seidl 2003-2005: s.v. "Opfer".

⁷⁴⁰ M.E. Cohen 1993: 89.

⁷⁴¹ Leichty 1993: 237, 238.

⁷⁴² Sallaberger 2006-2008: s.v. "rituals".

burner are placed on the altar (fig. 16); the head is sign of the goddess' high rank and reminiscent of a passage in the *akītu*-festival where the king, after an elaborate rite of slaughtering sheep, sets a sheep head before Marduk.⁷⁴³ In another image a woman pours libation directly on the altar before Inana/Ištar and a second woman brings a bucket either containing more liquid or another offering (fig. 15).⁷⁴⁴ The minor goddess behind Inana/Ištar may represent her Lamma, or the Lamma of the absent seal owner, the overseer (*ugula*) *Ikunparakkum*.⁷⁴⁵

Nearly all stepped (or house-shaped⁷⁴⁶) and over half of the hour-glass-shaped altars stand before a goddess.⁷⁴⁷ The goddess before or next to whom an altar is placed is most often Inana/Ištar (figs. 14-16, 20).⁷⁴⁸ But an altar may also be placed in front of a grain or vegetation goddess.⁷⁴⁹ In a scene with vegetation deities, a barrel-shaped altar may be carried by two gods before the enthroned grain goddess (fig. 22). An altar with the same shape stands in front of a seated god to whom a man brings a sacrificial kid.⁷⁵⁰ It is noteworthy that offering scenes are associated more often with a goddess than a god, that a woman may pour the libation and that in a scene with a man pouring libation and carrying a kid, two women follow him with offerings (fig. 19).⁷⁵¹ Occasionally a couple is depicted bringing offerings to a goddess (fig. 28) or worshipping a divine couple with the man carrying a sacrificial kid standing before an altar set behind the god while the woman stands before the goddess with a cup in her right hand (fig. 33).

Constancy, i.e. a fixed iconography, applies only to few deities, flexibility or multiplicity, particularly of attributes, is common. Several deities are pictured with grain or vegetation and more than one grain or vegetation goddess

⁷⁴³ M.E. Cohen 1993: 419.

⁷⁴⁴ Buckets may also be votive gifts or contain an offering used in divination. Maul (2010) points out that individuals could make regular offerings to their patron deity according to their means; a wealthy man brought an animal, a poor person oil or flour, all used for divination; see also Pientka-Hinz 2008: 31-34.

⁷⁴⁵ Groenewegen-Frankfort (1987: 166) suggested, a seal owner not depicted on his seal "hides his identity" behind the intercessory (minor) goddess; e.g., fig. 12 in this volume. On Lamma, see below section 3.2.

The translations given for *ugula* in ePSD are 'instructor, overseer, foreman'; in the literature one also finds 'administrator' and 'captain'.

⁷⁴⁶ Woolley 1934: 355 ad no. 258; Frankfort 1955: 42; Boehmer 1965: 97, 114.

⁷⁴⁷ The statistic excludes altars before the snake-god, see, e.g., Boehmer 1965: 49; Collon 1982: 90-91, pl. 27 nos. 186-188.

⁷⁴⁸ See plates in Boehmer 1965: figs. 380, 381, 385; Collon 1982: no. 225, for 'Ištar', see pl. 32.

⁷⁴⁹ Boehmer 1965: figs. 299, 544, 546.

⁷⁵⁰ Boehmer 1965: fig. 652.

⁷⁵¹ On an Akkadian seal with presentation scene from Isin a male worshipper stands between two women, one with a bucket: Hrouda et al. 1977: pls. 20, 21 fig. 14 (IB 249), p. 74.

may be depicted (figs. 23, 25); some seals show vegetation gods and goddesses together (fig. 22), and on the seal of Enmenana's servant, the doorkeeper Ursi (fig. 24), a vegetation goddess holding a plant stands between two gods paying homage to an enthroned god.⁷⁵² While in the Early Dynastic period, grain as symbol of 'abundance' was integrated into divine crowns, now plants are placed on shoulders, attached to the garment, and in hands (figs. 22-24).⁷⁵³ A seal with depiction of two goddesses with plant symbols (fig. 23) – one seated, the other standing between a god and a worshipper – probably represents the grain goddess Ezina/Ašnan on the throne; one of her seven children may be the goddess with plants on her garment.⁷⁵⁴ There is no visible functional difference in representations of vegetation gods and goddesses; both can appear either as major enthroned deity (figs. 22, 25) or in presumably lower position before the major deity (figs. 13, 24).⁷⁵⁵ Rather extraordinary are the images of two vegetation goddesses on the seal of the 'royal cook' of Naram-Sîn of Akkade (fig. 25):⁷⁵⁶ The enthroned goddess receiving the worshipper holds the 'vase of abundance' and plants protrude from her back and left arm. Behind her on a pedestal stands the statue of a vegetation goddess indicating a temple as location of this presentation scene.⁷⁵⁷ Vase with flowing water and vegetation symbols suggest the enthroned goddess is represented in her aspect as "Mistress of abundance" (*nin-ḥegal*), an epithet of numerous goddesses. Such images may not necessarily depict different grain or vegetation goddesses but one of the "multiple bodies" of a goddess, or refer to overlapping identities.⁷⁵⁸ That a cook venerates a goddess whose domains include abundance of vegetation seems obvious, however, seals rarely depict a deity visibly associated with the seal owner's profession. A vegetation goddess and a goddess with flowing vase appear separately in a scene with Ištar shown standing and in partial frontal view (fig. 20). The bearded god facing the vegetation goddess also has plants rising from his shoulders; between these deities is an antelope. In this image three goddesses and a god are assembled whose functions include providing fertility, another aspect of abundance and prosperity.⁷⁵⁹

One of the few examples where a goddess other than Ištar is identified by specific attributes and context is depicted on a seal with the inscription:

⁷⁵² Enmenana was the daughter of Naram-Sîn and en-priestess of Nanna at Ur; for her inscriptions, see Frayne 1993: 175-177 nos. 2018-2020 (no. 2019 is inscription on Ursi's seal).

⁷⁵³ Boehmer 1965: 45-46; pls. 45-47.

⁷⁵⁴ On Ezina and her seven children, see Chapter II.B.2 (no. 1) in this volume.

⁷⁵⁵ Boehmer 1965: figs. 532, 533, 538.

⁷⁵⁶ Frayne 1993: 169-170 no. 2009.

⁷⁵⁷ Spycket 1981: 24-25; Dick 1998: 111.

⁷⁵⁸ Compare Sommer 2009: 12, 16.

⁷⁵⁹ According to Wiggermann (2010: 336, 337 (no. 25), 348 fig. 1.7) the only god in this scenes represents Dumuzi as "shepherd" and "dying/resurrecting god of vegetation".

Timmuzi, the *abarakkatum*: Takunai, her daughter's wetnurse⁷⁶⁰ (fig. 26). According to the inscription, the seal's owner is Takunai and, although a Lamma-goddess leading a woman before a goddess on Akkadian seals is rare (perhaps even unique), the question arises if, as on later Neo-Sumerian seals, the leading Lamma takes the hand of Takunai, the seal owner, or that of her higher ranking employer. On the few Akkadian seal images with Lamma the goddess either leads a man with sacrificial animal (fig. 16) or stands behind worshipper or deity (figs. 15, 18, 25).⁷⁶¹ Perhaps, the occasion for this elaborate seal was the weaning ceremony of the child and therefore, the wetnurse, Takunai, precedes Timmuzi.

Ninḫursaġa is identified by the mountain motif – resembling the pictogram from which the cuneiform sign for mountain (*kur*) developed – decorating the mountain-shaped central element in the goddess' crown, throne and pedestal. Further evidence is provided by the seal owner's profession as wetnurse and its affinity to Ninḫursaġa's aspect as nurturing goddess. This affinity is supported by the fact that wetnurses usually were employed by ruling families and one of Ninḫursaġa's function is symbolic nurture of her royal sons, the kings (see Chapter III.A).⁷⁶² There are no unambiguous images of 'mother goddess(es)' including the rare motif 'goddess with child' in adoration, offering, and presentation scenes (figs. 27-29).⁷⁶³ In one scene a priest in front of the sun-god performs a ritual act over a large vessel before an enthroned goddess who embraces a 'child'; the child dressed in a skirt looks at the priest (fig. 27). The two other seals show the child naked looking at the goddess (figs. 28, 29). On the seal of Šuilišu (fig. 28), the interpreter (dragoman) of/from Meluḫḫa,⁷⁶⁴ he brings an animal offering, and the woman behind him (probably his wife) carries a bucket, itself as offering or containing an offering. Behind the goddess are three large vessels, one on a stand before a kneeling woman(?) about to prepare food like the woman on another seal (fig. 29). In this scene there are three bottles on

⁷⁶⁰ For the inscription, see last A. Westenholz 1999: 73 ad fig. 8b; *abarakkatu(m)* is translated with "housekeeper, female steward, supervisor of household servants" (CAD A/1: 31-32).

⁷⁶¹ See also Woolley 1934: pl. 210: no. 258. The woman carrying a bucket is generally in secondary position often following a man with (occasionally also without) sacrificial animal who may stand directly before an enthroned goddess or god (e.g., in this volume: figs. 19, 20); see further: Moortgat 1940: no. 206; Porada 1948: no. 245. He may also be led by a god (e.g., in this volume fig. 21; see further Frankfort 1955: no. 577).

⁷⁶² Braun-Holzinger 1998-2001: s.v. "Ninḫursaġa. B. Archäologisch"; J.G. Westenholz 2002: 17 fig. 2. On Ninḫursaġa in the Akkadian period, see Chapter II.B.3 in this volume.

Wetnurses enjoyed a special status, were usually in the service of royal woman and privileged through their contact with the ruling family, see Asher-Greve 2003: 57.

⁷⁶³ Boehmer 1965: 97-98, pl. 47 figs. 555, 557, 560. Several seals show a woman (i.e. without horned crown) with a child, see also Asher-Greve 2006: 65-66, fig. 14a and g.

⁷⁶⁴ šu-ì-lí-sú eme-bal Me-luḫ-ḫa!. KI; it is the oldest reference to dragoman, see Gelb 1968: 94-95; cf. Edzard 1968: 15 no. 15.33, 17 no. 27.1.

a shelf above the woman who kneels behind a stand with a hanging vessel from which flows something soft or liquid into a flat bowl. A man carrying a beaker, perhaps with milk from one of the vessels, approaches the goddess with child. The images of goddess with child may visualize what Gebhard J. Selz describes as symbolic nurturing of the king by a goddess rather than a ‘mother goddess’.⁷⁶⁵

We have already discussed that the image of the ‘goddess on *goose*’ is reminiscent of literary compositions dedicated to Nanše. She may be depicted on an Akkadian seal as the goddess sitting over two Anserini (they may depict a goose and a swan).⁷⁶⁶ Two Anserini-like birds follow the boat navigated by two nude men, one standing in the front, the other sitting behind the goddess (fig. 21). The long thin, slightly bent object may indicate the demarcation line between water and land. The goddess is awaited by a god leading a man by the wrist who carries a sacrificial kid, the offering to be given to the goddess when the procession boat arrives ashore.⁷⁶⁷ A goose with its back to the god’s face looks towards the goddess. In the hymn *Nanše and the Birds*, Nanše is described as ‘goddess of birds’,⁷⁶⁸ and in the short balbale-song the goddess says:⁷⁶⁹

I am the Queen, I will sail my boat, and I will sail home.
I will ride on the prow of the boat, I will sail home.

The seal may show Nanše’s homecoming where she is received by a god leading a king by the hand who brings the animal offering for the goddess. This scene is reminiscent of the image on the Early Dynastic votive relief discussed above (fig. 11).⁷⁷⁰ In the Early Dynastic period animals were sacrificed at various locations also on the border of canals during the Nanše festivals; Nanše also received votive objects in form of boats.⁷⁷¹

⁷⁶⁵ For goddesses as symbolic mothers of kings and ‘nurture kinship’ (“*Milchverwandschaft*”), see now Selz 2010 (cf. in this volume Chapter I.C). On ‘mother goddesses’, see also in this volume Chapter II.B *passim*.

⁷⁶⁶ On identification of waterfowl and Anserini, see in this Chapter section 3.4.

⁷⁶⁷ On boat journeys of deities, see Wagensohn 2007: 241; 2008 (Nin-Isina’s journey by boat to Nippur).

⁷⁶⁸ Veldhuis 2004: 4-6, 117-124.

⁷⁶⁹ Veldhuis 2004: 114-145: lines 13-14 (ETCSL 4.14.2). For Nanše’s association with the sea and boats, see Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. “Nanše”: 153-154, 157; on boats offered to Nanše, see M.E. Cohen 1993: 73. .

⁷⁷⁰ For the figure of offering bearer representing a ruler, see Suter 1991-93; according to Suter the sacrificial kid is used for divinatory purpose.

⁷⁷¹ Selz 1995: 191-198, 199 no. 56, 200 no. 60.

Visual representation of the feminine Ninšubura is extremely rare, more common are depictions of the masculine version.⁷⁷² She may be depicted on two seals of Lugalušumgal, governor of Lagaš under Naram-Sîn of Akkade (ca. 2254-2218 BCE) and his son Šarkališarri of Akkade (ca. 2217-2193 BCE). The governor, carrying a sacrificial kid (figs. **30**, **31a**), is preceded by a goddess and both face a figure variously interpreted as god, the sun-god Šamaš, or king.⁷⁷³ On the impressions of the seal dating to the reign of Naram-Sîn (fig. **30**), the divine figure preceding Lugalušumgal is only partially preserved, but the long hair points to a goddess, rather than a king.⁷⁷⁴ The god she faces is identified as the sun-god Utu/Šamaš based on the rays emerging from his shoulders.⁷⁷⁵ A similar, better-preserved image is depicted on Lugalušumgal's second seal (figs. **31a**, **b**) with the difference that part of the central figure's head and tiara are missing as is the head of the figure on the right side (fig. **31b**). Both heads are restored in the first publication on which interpretations are based until recently (fig. **31a**).⁷⁷⁶ After re-examining the impression, Claudia Fischer (2002) points out that the figure with foot on the mountain has a weapon on his left shoulder the shaft of which he holds with his left hand. Fischer suggests this figure represents Šarkališarri in the pose of the sun-god. The central figure holds a staff and wears the striped (pleated) robe of attending goddesses or gods.⁷⁷⁷ Contrary to Fischer, Candida Felli interprets the central figure as Šarkališarri and the right figure as Šamaš or the moon-god Sîn; the central figure on Lugalušumgal's first seal (fig. **30**) she interprets as "interceding deity".⁷⁷⁸

On both seals the central figure is apparently beardless and stands between a high-ranking god or king (?) and Lugalušumgal as offering bringer or petitioner. Whether the central figure had a horned crown or not depends on how the damage on the impression is evaluated but also on the possibility that not all details were impressed in the clay when the seal was origi-

⁷⁷² Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-šubur": 491, 498; for the inscriptions, see Frayne 1993: 165-166: no. 2004, p. 200 no. 2004; see also Chapters II.B.2 and II.B.3 in this volume.

⁷⁷³ Fischer 2002; Felli 2006; Zettler 2007: 15. With reference to the Janice Polansky's dissertation (2002), Zettler suggested this scene probably depicts "the determination of destiny/fate – and its ritual enactment – in which the sun-god was a key figure".

⁷⁷⁴ Felli 2006: 36 with n. 8, 48, fig.77. According to Zettler (2007: 29) this is the earliest securely dated "presentation scene", but Lugalušumgal carrying an animal indicates either animal offering (cf. Maul 2010) or, as Suter suggests (1991-1993), the petitioner brings the animal for divination (extispicy) which is closely linked to petition.

⁷⁷⁵ For identification of the sun-god, see Boehmer 1965: figs. 431b, 432, p.75-76; Collon 1987: 125 ad no. 537.

⁷⁷⁶ Sarzec 1884-1912: 286 fig. F (= Delaporte 1920: T.106); Fischer 2002: 132 fig. 3; Felli 2006: 37-39, figs. 78, 79.

⁷⁷⁷ Collon 1982: 27.

⁷⁷⁸ Felli 2006: 47-48.

nally rolled over it. That this is not an image of a (deified) king is obvious when comparing it with the image of Naram-Sîn on his stele because he is shown not only with a horned crown but also with a beard as sign of his vital manliness.⁷⁷⁹ In both images Lugalušumgal may be escorted by the goddess Ninšubura identified by the staff in her hand.⁷⁸⁰ Ninšubura is one of the deities named in Puzur-Mama's royal inscription. He was a successor of Lugalušumgal as governor of Lagaš towards the end of Šarkališarri's reign, after whose death Puzur-Mama declared Lagaš independent and took the title 'king of Lagaš'.⁷⁸¹ In his votive inscription Puzur-Mama takes up Early Dynastic Lagašite traditional royal epithets: "granted power by the god Ninġirsu, granted intelligence by the god Enki, suckled with zi-milk by Ninġursaġa, called with a good name by the goddess Inana, natural [son] by the goddess [Ĝa]tum[d]ug, ... [his natu]ral moth[er] (a m a - t u - d a - n i) is the goddess Ninšubura, his personal god is the god Šulutul".⁷⁸² Ninšubura as birth-giving mother is unusual, but in this context is of interest, as Gebhard J. Selz recently remarked, that 'mother goddesses' are often named and worshipped as Lamma-deities, whose function is to protect their protégé.⁷⁸³ The choice of Ninšubura may be referential to Lagaš's last Early Dynastic ruler Uruinimġina (ca. 2350 BCE) who was known for his restitutive policy and whose personal goddess was Ninšubura.⁷⁸⁴ Later governors of Lagaš may have come from the same family and therefore chose Ninšubura as their personal or family goddess. In the Akkadian period the province of Lagaš was an economic center and its governors important. Puzur-Mama was so powerful that he could demand from the king, most likely Šarkališarri, guarantees for old Lagašite territorial rights.⁷⁸⁵ The extraordinary seals of Lugalušumgal may contain subtle signs of the governor's powerful position, like Ninšubura with her staff which, according to Frans Wiggermann, "symbolizes the right to rule" that the goddess passes to the ruler. Her role may not only be that of Lugalušumgal's 'protective' goddess but as mediator for Lagaš's claim to justice (i.e. its territorial rights) which would explain the image of the sun-god whose domain is justice and who is otherwise not prominent on Lagašite seals. Once again a goddess appears in a function predominantly the domain of other deities, primarily that of the sun-god but also that of the proprietary city deities.

⁷⁷⁹ Aruz 2003: 196 fig. 59, 206-207 fig. 133; Winter 1996: 13.

⁷⁸⁰ Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-šubur".

⁷⁸¹ Volk 1992; 2006-2008; Frayne 1993: 271.

⁷⁸² Frayne 1993: 271-272 no. 1.

⁷⁸³ Selz 2010: 210 n. 95.

⁷⁸⁴ Selz 1995: 264-266; 2005: 55, 60-63.

⁷⁸⁵ Volk 1992.

Images of two enthroned goddesses or an enthroned divine couple of equal rank are relatively rare.⁷⁸⁶ A scribe of Naram-Sîn's daughter Enmenana, en-priestess of Nanna at Ur, owned a seal with a banqueting divine couple (fig. 32) representing the moon-god Nanna identified by the lunar crescent on his crown and his spouse Ningal with multiple horned crown. Nanna and Ningal are framed by two goddesses with simple horned crowns; the rest of the image field is blank, there are no symbols, just four divine figures, three of them goddesses.

Different interpretations are suggested; recently Claudia E. Suter interprets the figure of the seated goddess as personification of Ningal by the en-priestess Enmenana based on the facts that the en-priestesses at Nanna's temple at Ur call themselves 'wife of Nanna' and that one of Enmenana's predecessors, Enheduana, shared the title *zirru* with Ningal, for which J.G. Westenholz suggests the meaning 'hen'.⁷⁸⁷ The personification theory conforms to Selz's theory that members of the ruling elite, such as royal couples, priest and priestesses "possessed some kind of functional divinity".⁷⁸⁸ But neither iconography nor inscription (standard formula of servants of high positioned persons) contain any sign indicating that the divine female figure represents the en-priestess in the role of 'functional divinity'. Further, there are no images – with the exception of Naram-Sîn of Akkade depicted with one pair of horns on his helmet⁷⁸⁹ – showing mortals with divine attributes or symbols of divinity.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁶ See, e.g., Boehmer 1965: pl. 56. Cf. Ur III seal impression with *en face* goddess seated opposite a deity: Asher-Greve 2003: fig 21 (= UE X no. 398), and Old Babylonian terracotta plaques depicting divine couples: Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pl. 82 nos. 161-163.

⁷⁸⁷ Braun-Holzinger 1998-2001: s.v. "Ningal"; Suter 2007: 321, 325-328.

On the discussion of the possible meaning 'zirru-hen' and its relation with Ningal, see J.G. Westenholz 1989: 541-544; Steinkeller, 1999: 121-122 and n. 61, 128; Zgoll 1997: 145-146, 301-302; Veldhuis 2004: 279.

Although intriguing (already suggested by Jacobsen, see J.G. Westenholz 1989: 542), the hypothesis raises the question if an en-priestess may be identified in the image of a goddess with multiple horned crown, when the deified Naram-Sîn is shown just with a simple pair of horns (Aruz 2003: 196 fig. 59, 206-207 no. 133). All images with some certainty identified as en-priestess depict her as human without horned crown (see Suter 2007; Lion 2009: 178). One may ask why en-priestesses should not always be represented in the same 'recognizable' manner in a visual system based on formula. See also below section 4.

⁷⁸⁸ Selz 1992b; 2012: 67-68.

Although Selz's theory of functional divinity is interesting, evidence is ambiguous. Apart from the deification of rulers and their wives predominantly in the Early Dynastic period (often post-mortem), and of some Akkadian and Ur III kings, in addition to the divine parenthood of kings, it remains questionable if rank or offices of queen, high priest or priestess bestowed quasi-divine status.

⁷⁸⁹ Aruz 2003: 196 fig. 59, 206-207 no. 133. The royal cap of the statue of Puzur-Ištar was reworked into a pair of horned crowns in the 8./7. century BCE, see Sallaberger 2006-2008, s.v. "Puzur-Ištar"; Braun-Holzinger 2007: 134, pl. 75; Orthmann 1975: fig. 160a.

⁷⁹⁰ Suter's theory cannot be verified by other images. Conversely, images of king in the role

Suter's interpretation would mean that the image of a goddess is not always what is shown, that the essence of a divine image may be relative and the ancient viewer could not trust the truth (“*Echtheit*”) of what is represented.⁷⁹¹ Suter's interpretation is also problematic in regard to the seal's function as an amulet. Why should a seal owner, assuming he knows the real meaning of the image, prefer an image of ‘personification’ instead of that of ‘true’ goddess who can provide divine protection? The core of the issue is whether the owner-viewer – who was not the en-priestess but a servant of hers – can trust the iconography of divine image as inherently permanent as opposed to depiction of a ‘personification’ inherently a component of temporary ritual. If the latter is represented one should expect a visual sign indicating the metaphoric aspect of the en-priestess titles ‘spouse of Nanna’ and ‘z₁rru’.

Deities and humans appearing together may indicate a different spatial setting than deities alone. Earth is signified as setting by the presence of humans as well as crescent and star. However, the seal of Enmenana shows four deities on a background empty of astral bodies or other symbols (usually present in ritual scenes with human participation) which indicates the sphere beyond the human world where only deities dwell. When deities are shown among themselves such symbols are generally absent, aside from those attributes specifying identity, context or narrative.⁷⁹² Also therefore, it seems unlikely that Enmenana's seal represents the en-priestess personifying the goddess Ningal because such a personification would be a ritual act performed in the temple, i.e. on earth, which should be indicated by lunar crescent, star (as visible from earth) and/or other symbols.⁷⁹³ Brigitte Lion

of ‘spouse of Inana’ depict him as human being without any divine attributes, see in this Chapter section 6.2.

⁷⁹¹ Belting 2005: 7, 25; see also Chapter IV.A in this volume.

⁷⁹² For examples, see Boehmer 1965: pls. *passim*.

⁷⁹³ On a low quality Neo-Sumerian seal from Ur (Legrain 1951: no. 353) the semi-pictographic signs SAL (meaning woman) and EN are inscribed behind a standing goddess with simple horned crown (Legrain identifies the female figure as “goddess” but a horned crown is not clearly visible in the photograph). This female figure raises her left hand and faces a seated goddess in flounced robe raising her right hand. Between them stands a long-necked bird turned to the seated goddess; a crescent above her raised hands, and the two objects behind the head of the standing goddess resemble contours of bowls rather than crescents as suggested by Legrain (1951: 27 ad no. 353); cf. Steinkeller 1994 and Suter 2007: 326 n. 29. – The seal was found in the area of the Royal Cemetery but it seems unlikely that it belonged to the grave of an en-priestess of Nanna because they were buried in the Ĝipar (for the burial place of en-priestess, see Weadock 1958: 20-24; 1975: 109-111; Charpin 1986: 208, 216-217). The bird may represent the u₅-bi₂ associated with Ningal who may be the seated goddess, while the figure facing her may represent Lamma and the signs SAL.EN may refer to an en-priestess, but as one would expect that the seal of an en-priestess is of higher quality, this seal may have belonged to a servant.

recently argued (2009: 178) that in visual representations an en-priestess be recognizable as such.⁷⁹⁴

This is also relevant for the second image of a goddess for which personification by an en-priestess is suggested by Suter (fig. 34).⁷⁹⁵ The seal belonged to Ninessa, en-priestess of the god Pisaĝ-Unug (dMes-sanga-Unug), and daughter of Lugal-TAR.⁷⁹⁶ Little is known on this god other than that he originates from or near Uruk and had a temple of later date in Babylon.⁷⁹⁷ Depicted are two enthroned twin-like goddesses facing each other that are attended by a god standing on the left and a human couple on the right. The inscription is probably not related to the figurative design because it was incised after the image was completed and erased the hands and one arm of each goddess. That goddesses look so similar is not unusual, but the image of two enthroned goddesses looking alike is unique. Rather than goddess and a priestess as her personification, they may represent sisters. Presumably they held cups in their hands, perhaps indicating they represent the sister goddesses Ninkasi and Siraš/Siris, the patronesses of beer and brewing.⁷⁹⁸ Double identical images of the same high-ranking seated goddess on the same object would be unique. This seal was probably re-used by Ninessa who had her inscription added, not realizing or not caring that parts of the figures would thereby be erased.

An en-priestess may be represented twice as mortal woman on a post-Akkadian seal from a grave at Ur (fig. 18).⁷⁹⁹ in the upper register pouring libation before the goddess Ningal, in the lower register in an audience scene seated on a throne.⁸⁰⁰

In Akkadian seal images the Early Dynastic tradition of mythological scenes is continued and new themes are added but goddesses are rarely involved.⁸⁰¹ A seal from a grave at Ur shows a warrior goddess *en face* participating in

⁷⁹⁴ See Suter 2007: figs. 1, 6-11, 14.

⁷⁹⁵ Suter 2007: 327-328; cf. J.G. Westenholz 2006: 36.

⁷⁹⁶ Frayne 1993: 277-278 no. 1001.

⁷⁹⁷ For reading Pisangunū, see Frayne 1993: 277; see further George 1992: 322-323; 1993: nos. 238, 1190; Krebernik 1993-1997 s.v. "Mes-sanga-Unug". Lugalzagesi, king of Uruk had the epithet "'man' (lu₂) of 'Mes-sanga-Unug': Frayne 2008: 435 [RIME 3.1.14.20.1: line i 30], 438 [RIME 3.1.14.20.2; line i' 3'].

⁷⁹⁸ Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. "Ninkasi und Siraš/Siris"; Michalowski 1994; for banquet scenes with two deities, see Boehmer 1965: figs. 671-673, 674.

Suter (2007) suggests that one figure represents the "real" goddess, the other is the personification of the goddess by the en-priestess (see note above).

⁷⁹⁹ This seal was found in grave PG 35, dated by Nissen (1966: 49, 164) to the Neo-Sumerian period; compare Pollock 1985: 148, but see also nn. 725 and 816.

⁸⁰⁰ J.G. Westenholz 2006: 36.

⁸⁰¹ For Early Dynastic and Akkadian seals with mythological scenes, see Amiet 1980: 94, 99, 103-109; Boehmer 1965. On Akkadian mythological motifs, see also Steinkeller 1992.

the ‘battle of the gods’,⁸⁰² and occasionally a nude goddess appears in the company of gods but neither her identity nor the mythological context is identifiable,⁸⁰³ which also applies to the goddesses appearing in the enigmatic “bent tree” scenes, for which several interpretations were suggested but none completely convincing.⁸⁰⁴

In ploughing scenes the enthroned grain goddess is sometimes approached by a god bringing a plough, a symbol of Ninurta (fig. 22).⁸⁰⁵ Unique is the presence of an active goddess in a ploughing scene (fig. 35). According to Rainer M. Boehmer, this goddess is Istar represented in her ‘fertility aspects’.⁸⁰⁶ But the image of a walking goddess as well as her attire and posture do not conform to Akkadian images of Istar (figs. 12, 13, 20),⁸⁰⁷ in particular the attire, a flounced skirt with a waist band and a square object covering the goddess’ chest. While walking in the same direction as the ploughing god behind her, she turns her head back towards him simultaneously filling seed into the hopper of the plough drawn by a lion. In the upper space between the two deities stands a small sized woman with raised hands who faces the goddess. At the right a bearded man looks at the ploughing scene raising his left hand while pouring a liquid onto the ground. Completing the agricultural setting are an ox above the lion, rake and flying bird in front of it, scorpion and dog behind the ploughing god.

A god with a plough drawn by a lion and a large scorpion above is depicted on an overseer’s (ugula) seal from Ešnunna (modern Tell Asmar).⁸⁰⁸ The association of ploughing and administration by overseers is well known from administrative texts.⁸⁰⁹ The divine overseer was the goddess Nisaba who also has the epithet ‘unsurpassed overseer’ (ugula-nu-diri) and Selz suggested that the name Nisaba means ‘Mistress of grain rations’.⁸¹⁰ The image of goddess with a tablet-shaped object on her chest putting seed into the hopper of a plough is indicative of Nisaba. In the broken final passage of *The Song of*

⁸⁰² Collon 1982: no. 136.

⁸⁰³ Boehmer 1965: figs 674, 675(?); Asher-Greve and Sweeney 2006: 140-144.

⁸⁰⁴ Boehmer 1965: figs. 683, 684, p. 118; for a summary of interpretations and a new one, see Steinkeller 1992: 267-272, pl. 6.

⁸⁰⁵ Wiggermann 1997: 38-39; Boehmer 1965: fig. 533; on Ninurta’s association with plough, see M.E. Cohen 1993: 89-91; Annus 2002: 70-71, 154.

⁸⁰⁶ The only reference to Inana in connection with a plough is in the broken conclusion of *The Song of the Ploughing Oxen*, where Inana apparently is not involved with ploughing; see Civil 1976 = ETCSL 5.5.5. For ploughing scenes, see Boehmer 1965: 67, 126-127; Collon 1987: 145-148; for further images depicting ploughs, see Seidl 2003-2005: s.v. “Pflug”.

⁸⁰⁷ Colbow 1991: pls. 2-5.

⁸⁰⁸ Frankfort 1955: no. 654; for the inscription see Jacobsen 1955: 49.

⁸⁰⁹ Hruška 2003-2005. The ploughing festivals involve gods, king and oxen but no lions, see Civil 1976; for agricultural festivals and rituals, see Livingstone 1999.

⁸¹⁰ Selz 1989; see also Michalowski 1998-2001: § 2; Robson 2007. Cf. in this volume Chapter II.B.2.

the Ploughing Oxen where the roles of deities in agriculture are described, the words ‘measuring seed in the right hand’ probably refer to Nisaba as one of her tasks was measuring.⁸¹¹ Her image on the seal depicts her ‘measuring’ the amount of seed which is recorded on the tablet hanging over her chest. The plough is the symbol of several gods, but especially of Ninurta.⁸¹² The presence of the oxen above the lion may be a reference to a festival also referred to in the *Debate between Hoe and Plough*, where plough extols that the king who participates in the plough’s festival, slaughters cattle, sacrifices sheep and pours libation. The text ends with praise to Nisaba.⁸¹³ The man depicted pouring liquid represents the king in farmer’s clothes reflecting the popular image of the king as “faithful farmer” participating in the plough festival.⁸¹⁴

Although this interpretation is based on textual evidence, the visual image is not an illustration of a text but a combination of mythologemes (plough with lion as draught animal, Nisaba sowing), elements of kingship and ritual interspersed with motifs from rural life. Connecting mythology to ritual and agriculture in condensed visual form renders the interrelationships instantly visible. The ploughing god, Nisaba as distributor and recorder of grain, and the king as farmer are the protagonists on whom the population put hope and expectations for a good harvest.⁸¹⁵

Akkadian images of goddesses rarely depict a specific goddess, more often the stereotypical figures developed from Early Dynastic models allow only identification of the functions or domain of a goddess based on attributes, symbols and context. Goddesses are predominantly represented in ritual scenes receiving offerings of libation, incense, meat or animals, other foods, and items carried in pails. First attested in Akkadian imagery is women’s active participation in cultic affairs by pouring libation or bringing offerings mostly in rituals performed before a goddess; however, a woman never carries a sacrificial kid. These images first visualize women’s affinity for

⁸¹¹ Civil 1976: 84, 89 l. 40 = ETCSL 5.5.5; for Nisaba and measuring tool, see Robson 2007.

⁸¹² Civil 1976; M.E. Cohen 1993: 84-85, 89-91; Wiggermann 1997: 38-39 with n. 55; for association of various gods with agriculture, see Lambert 1999. In its last line the *Song of the Ploughing Oxen* is defined as ‘ululumama song of Ninurta’ who may be the god holding the plough in the seal image. For Ninurta’s role as god of agriculture, see Streck 1998-2001: 515-516 § 6; Annus 2002: 152-156. On Ninurta’s association with Nisaba, see Annus 2002: 70-71, on their equation, p.4.

⁸¹³ The text is available on-line at ETCSL 5.3.1. For the association between Nisaba and Ninurta, see Annus 2002: 70-71 with note 200; in the Anzud myth Ninurta is equated with Nisaba (ibid. p. 4); on the festival, see M.E. Cohen 1993: 87-92.

⁸¹⁴ J.G. Westenholz 2004a: 285-286; cf. also M.E. Cohen (1993: 89-91) on ‘Lipit-Ištar and the Plough’ and other literary compositions focusing on the plough.

⁸¹⁵ On ritual practice in regard to expectations concerning agriculture, see Livingstone 1999.

goddesses which becomes particularly evident in Neo-Sumerian presentation scenes.⁸¹⁶

The variety of Akkadian images surpasses that of succeeding periods and, as mentioned, the greater religious multiplicity supported the development of generic divine figures suited to 'see-in' the diverse goddesses in Sumerian and Akkadian pantheons worshipped by a population of ethnic heterogeneity.

3. *Goddesses in the Majority: Neo-Sumerian Period*

Reorganization of the pantheon in the Neo-Sumerian period also influenced visual imagery,⁸¹⁷ particularly evident in the choice of themes preferred.⁸¹⁸ The importance of goddesses is reflected in texts, royal inscriptions, inscribed votive objects and particularly by their prominence in imagery.⁸¹⁹ In comparison to the Akkadian thematic and figural range, Neo-Sumerian visual imagery is substantially narrower. Two forms in representing goddesses dominate Neo-Sumerian art:

1. the iconic figure of seated principal goddess whose position in the pantheon ranges from highest to secondary rank;
2. standing goddess of minor rank, generally depicting Lamma in various functions.

⁸¹⁶ On royal or high elite status of these women, see Suter 2008. However, not all women depicted on seals may belong to these 'classes', e.g., Šaša, who has no title (fig. 17), or the wife of the interpreter of/from Meluḥḥa (fig. 28), or the unidentified women with pail (figs. 15, 17, 19); many wear the same type of dress and hairstyle as the women pouring libation. However, the wetnurse Takunai and her employer wear different garments (fig. 26). See also on agency of Akkadian women, A. Westenholz 1999: 70-72; Asher-Greve 2013: 368-371.

⁸¹⁷ On the reorganization of the pantheon, see Chapter II.B.4 in this volume. For the history of the Ur III period, see Sallaberger 1999a.

⁸¹⁸ The themes are not new as they appear on Akkadian or so-called post-Akkadian seals. However, there is no consensus among scholars about the chronological distinction between late Akkadian, post-Akkadian and early Neo-Sumerian styles, see Dittmann 1994; Ludovico 2008. Concerning post-Akkadian and Neo-Sumerian presentation scenes, there are no essential difference in the visual representation of goddesses that would influence my thematic analysis. Therefore I distinguish only between Akkadian and Neo-Sumerian periods and discuss some presumably post-Akkadian presentation scenes in this chapter. Note that Dittmann (1994: 101) suggests that the end of imperial Akkadian and late Akkadian may be characterized by coexisting diverse styles, and that Lagaš-Ĝirsu at the same time developed an art form which became the basis for the art of the Ur III/Isin periods. According to Ludovico (2008: 326) "the idea of "early Neo-Sumerian period" may be rightly used from the point of view of history of art". There is also no consensus concerning synchronism between Lagash II and Ur III, see, e.g., Frayne 1997: 5-7; Sallaberger 1999a: 133-134.

⁸¹⁹ See Chapter II.B.4 in this volume; Edzard 1997: 223-228; Frayne 1997: xxxiii-xxxv; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 24-25.

The two main visual genres belonged to different contexts: the steles and votive objects with reliefs that are preserved were placed in temples or other sacred locations, whereas seals were mostly privately owned. Environments influenced not only construction and meaning, but also the viewer's visual perception of images when monumental or miniature. Taking this into consideration, the two main groups of image carriers are discussed in separate sections. Further, seal images are analyzed as groups sharing characteristics and/or attributes providing grounds for identification of role and/or function of goddesses.

With few exceptions goddesses are shown in scenes of veneration, known as 'presentation scenes'. Other images of ritual, such as libation or offering scenes, are comparatively rare. Absent from the visual repertoire are many motifs popular in Akkadian imagery, in particular on seals, such as mythological themes and scenes only involving deities. Striking is the absence of scenes of violence other than contests between heroes or hybrids and lion or bull which account for less than twenty-five percent of Neo-Sumerian seal images.⁸²⁰

Neo-Sumerian concentration on 'presentation scenes' reflects Sumerian reaction against Akkadian 'innovations' comparable to the anger and reactions described in *The Curse of Agade*. The downfall of the Akkadian dynasty was blamed on "Naram-Sîn's insensitivity to Sumerian religious tradition", and the Sumerians' "resentment of religious and political innovations of Naram-Sîn and his predecessors".⁸²¹ Nevertheless, the 'presentation scene' and 'protective goddesses' first appear, although rarely, on seals dating to the Akkadian period. However, it is difficult to determine whether new images originate from Sumerians or Akkadians as both were present in Southern Babylonia. Because of formulaic character and lack of action, presentation scenes appear like static rituals. As it was difficult to visualize the religious and emotional intensity of confronting a deity, the static image may have been considered best suited to portray a worshipper immobilized before the divine.

The reduction from Akkadian variety to basically two types of seal images – static ritual and active contest scenes – resembles the dominance of banquet rituals (which also includes action) and contest scenes on Early Dynastic seals. New is also the substantial increase of inscriptions on Neo-Sumerian seals facilitating identification of owners and occasionally of deities.

Relatively few seals were found in stratified contexts, or come from official excavations. However, the origin of thousands of seal impressions, many

⁸²⁰ Fischer 1992.

⁸²¹ J.S. Cooper 1983: 6-7. The text of *The Curse of Agade* is also available on-line at: ETCSL 2.1.5.

unpublished,⁸²² is known because they were used to seal envelopes, tablets, and other things.⁸²³ The contextual information gained by seal impressions – many on dated tablets and mostly of inscribed seals – are valuable sources for the study of goddesses. Annotations to seal impressions occasionally provide additional information about seal owners and context or purpose of sealings. In terms of the communicative system to which seals must be allocated, the single individual worshipper portrayed within presentation scenes demonstrates that the extent of ritual life encompassed more social groups than previously.

3.1. High-Ranked Goddesses on Public Monuments

Goddesses feature prominently on the steles of Gudea and the so-called ‘Ur-Namma stele’,⁸²⁴ visualizing the interrelation between religion, ritual, and politics (figs. **36a**, **37a**, **38a**).⁸²⁵ Two fragments from steles of Gudea (figs. **36b**, **37b**) depict a goddess with frontal head and upper body, raising one hand. One fragment shows her also with flowing vase (fig. **36b**). In the reconstructions of the steles’ likely “scenarios” by Suter (2000) each goddess occupies the major position in the top register on the reverse side; the obverse side shows Gudea’s presentation to Ningîrsu, the state god of Lagaš (figs. **36a**, **37a**). Under Gudea the goddess BaU was elevated to the same status as her husband Ningîrsu which is expressed in new epithets such as ‘Queen who decides the destiny in Ĝirsu’ and ‘Mistress, judge of her city’ and visualized in partial frontal form and by placing her in a separate image field at the top of the stele; the image showing BaU with ‘flowing vase’ pertains to her older epithet *nin-ḫe₂-gal*, ‘Mistress of abundance’.⁸²⁶

The semi-frontal figure – head and upper body *en face*, lower body and feet in profile – is an interstitial form typical for images of Inana/Ištar in the Akkadian period (figs. **12**, **15**, **16**, **20**). The semi-frontal BaU connects the

⁸²² Unpublished are, e.g., numerous impressions from, e.g., Nippur (cf. Zettler 2007: 22), Lagaš-Ĝirsu, and Drehem as well as Umma; the publication of the dissertation on impressions from Umma by Mayr (1997) is in preparation.

⁸²³ On sealing practice in the Ur III period, see Fischer 1997: 98-100; Hattori 2001 (with references to earlier literature on p. 72 nn. 2, 3; Zettler 1987; 2007: 22-30).

⁸²⁴ The Ur-Namma date of the stele is now uncertain because the fragment with Ur-Namma’s name is apparently of a different stone and therefore belonged to another stele, see Canby 2001: 29-30; Suter 2010: 332-333. Note: because ‘stele of Ur-Namma’ is the title generally used for this monument, I follow this tradition but set the title in single quotation marks.

⁸²⁵ Not included here is the goddess depicted on the rock-relief of Iddi(n)-Sîn, dated by Seidl to the end of Ur III/beginning of the first dynasty of Isin, see Shaffer and Wassermann 2003.

⁸²⁶ Edzard 1997: 42-46 (Statue E), compare also Cylinder B lines v 16-18 (p. 91); Steible 1998; Asher-Greve 2003: 15-25.

ritual scene with profile figures on the surface of the stele with the space of the viewer.⁸²⁷ This form, also attested for Ningîrsu, emphasizes BaU's equal status (fig. 36) as well as her aspect as mediating protective goddess which is praised in the 'hymn to BaU's beneficent Lamma'.⁸²⁸

Although the impact on audiences of an *en face* image intensifies emotional response and experience of awe, it breaks the "reciprocity of visual exchange" between worshipper/petitioner and deity, in particular as the deity's gaze signals "positive acknowledgment and benevolence".⁸²⁹ As the frontal face is turned towards a virtual space, where it may be viewed by an audience outside the image, this form may infer 'if you also fulfil your religious obligations you are worthy of my benevolence'. On the Gudea steles BaU may be shown empowering Gudea as well as extending her divine patronage to his (= her) people.

On the 'Ur-Namma stele' the patron couple of Ur, Nanna and Ningal are seated opposite each other, each receiving the king's libation (fig. 38a). Major differences in comparison with Gudea's steles are the space shared by Nanna and Ningal, and that Nanna holds the symbols of kingship 'rod and ring' whereas Ningal acknowledges the king's presence by looking at him (she is shown in profile view) and raising her left hand. The 'couple principle' dominating the structure of Sumerian pantheons is visualized on the 'stele of Ur-Namma', whereas Gudea steles emphasize BaU's newly elevated rank. But the images of BaU and Ningal on the steles are also visual testimonies of the special relationships Gudea and Ur-Namma had with the highest ranking goddess in their local pantheon.⁸³⁰ That on seals both goddesses are also represented *en face* and seated on a 'lion throne' are further signs of their eminent status in Lagaš and Ur, respectively (figs. 41, 46).⁸³¹ That both goddesses are depicted on the same monument as their spouse, the main actor in the narrative scenes, concurs with textual evidence of the expansion of the role of divine wives.⁸³²

Extraordinary are images of a divine couple embracing each other; the goddess depicted in frontal view sitting on the lap of a god shown in profile (figs. 38b, 39).⁸³³ On a votive relief dedicated to the life of Gudea (fig. 39) BaU sits on Ningîrsu's lap, and on the 'stele of Ur-Namma' (fig. 38b) Ningal

⁸²⁷ Asher-Greve 2003.

⁸²⁸ The text is available on-line at ETCSL 4.02.1 (BaU A).

⁸²⁹ I.J. Winter 2002: 37, cf. also pp. 34-36.

⁸³⁰ Asher-Greve 2003: 31-35.

⁸³¹ For gods seated on a lion-throne, see Mayr 1997: nos. 222.4 (with additional lion under inscription, p. 268), 243 (p. 274), 316.2 (p. 269), 362.2 (p. 318), 498.4 (p. 367); cf. Groneberg 2000: 296.

⁸³² See Chapter II.B.4 in this volume.

⁸³³ For a detailed discussion, see Asher-Greve 2003: 27-33; figs. 11-12.

sits on Nanna's lap. Like BaU, Ningal was probably depicted in partial frontality as on a fragmentary seal impression from the Ĝipar/Ningal temple at Ur (fig. 41) showing Ningal on a lion throne (see below). The image of goddess on the lap of her spouse alludes to 'intimacy', rarely visualized.⁸³⁴ I have discussed elsewhere that the motif 'goddess on the lap of a god' relates to the special relationships of Gudea to BaU and Ninĝirsu and possibly also of Ur-Namma to Ningal and Nanna, but these images also indicate that these divine couples act in unison.⁸³⁵ The differences in the depictions of BaU and Ningal as divine patroness of their cities as well as 'loving spouse' confirms Joan G. Westenholz's observation that in the Ur III period goddesses are "depicted as multifaceted" (Chapter II.B.4).

We have ample textual evidence of divine couples presiding over local and state pantheons, but images of divine couples are extremely rare. An example, probably not depicting the local patrons, was found in the Ĝipar/Ningal temple at Ur (fig. 42): the goddess, shown *en face*, sits on a 'mountain throne', usually an attribute of Ninĝursaĝa (fig. 26) and faces a god in pleated skirt on a throne decorated with flowing vases; streams of water flow beneath the throne and at the god's sides. A similar divine figure on Gudea's seal (fig. 72) represents Ninĝirsu in his function as provider of abundance,⁸³⁶ but such an image is not (yet) attested for Nanna whose attribute is a crown surmounted by crescent.⁸³⁷ The major god depicted with flowing vase and/or streams of water is Ninĝursaĝa's brother Enki, father of Ningal.⁸³⁸ Enki and Ninĝursaĝa are the protagonists of a myth, of which an Old Babylonian copy was found at Ur, where both had sanctuaries in close proximity.⁸³⁹

3.2. Protective Goddesses

The ancient Mesopotamians had a nearly unlimited number of protective or tutelary deities for all of life's purposes and eventualities; many are anonymous.⁸⁴⁰ However, of the multitudinous protective divinities, very few are recognizable as such in visual representations. But they are a common component in the Neo-Sumerian presentation scene where one or two lower-ranking deities, at least one of them a goddess, escort a man or woman

⁸³⁴ This motif is also interpreted in the context of sexuality, see Wiggermann 2009-2011: 412.

⁸³⁵ Asher-Greve 2003: 27-33.

⁸³⁶ On abundance, see I.J. Winter 2007.

⁸³⁷ Woolley 1974: pls. 42d, 45a; Canby 2001: pls. 31, 32 fig.14, 45.

⁸³⁸ Collon 1982: nos. 439, 440; 1987: 165; Zgoll 1998-2001: 352.

⁸³⁹ Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-ĝursaĝa."; Attinger 1984; the text of the myth *Enki and Ninĝursaĝa* is also available on-line at ETCSL 1.1.1.; Sallaberger 1993: 59, 159.

⁸⁴⁰ Löhnert and Zgoll 2009-2011: 311-312; these deities are also described as "protective spirits", see *ibid.* p. 312. Cf. in this volume Chapter II.B.2.

before an enthroned goddess, god, or king (figs. **40, 41, 43-48, 51, 52, 55, 58-63, 70-75**). Their horned crowns indicate that deities and not spirits are depicted.⁸⁴¹ Protective goddesses already appear on Akkadian seals (figs. **18, 25, 26**).⁸⁴² The escorting goddesses are represented as two generic figures wearing various robes and a single or multiple horned crown.⁸⁴³ However, the protective goddess hardly ever wears a multiple-horned crown when standing before the principal goddess.⁸⁴⁴ The goddess taking the worshipper by the wrist while walking in front of him/her brings the individual to the principal enthroned deity. Her first appearance is on Akkadian seals (figs. **16, 26**).⁸⁴⁵ As 'leading goddess' she becomes the most frequently depicted divine figure in Neo-Sumerian presentation scenes. The other goddess who raises her two hands and is generally depicted standing behind the worshipper appears first on a Gudea stele and seal (figs. **36a, 72**).⁸⁴⁶ Her Akkadian prototype is depicted with one hand raised (figs. **18, 25**), a figure that occasionally appears also on Neo-Sumerian seals (figs. **53, 74**).⁸⁴⁷ Only gestures distinguish the figures; various robes and single or multiple horned crown pertain to all 'protective goddesses'. Frequently depicted on Neo-Sumerian seals (figs. **41, 45, 49, 53, 71-74**), the goddess with two-raised hands becomes the most popular goddess on second-millennium seals.⁸⁴⁸ Her identification as Lamma is based on an inscribed late fourteenth-century BCE stele with her image found at Uruk (fig. **142**).⁸⁴⁹ There are also three-dimensional Lamma bronze statuettes, as well as gold pendants and earrings in form of Lamma figures.⁸⁵⁰ Few were found *in situ* such as the bronze statuette of Lamma hidden in the plinth of a statue excavated in a neighbourhood shrine at Ur (fig. **86b/3**).

In the Early Dynastic period ^dIamma appears in offering lists from Lagaš among deities who receive an average amount of offerings, and there existed a place for offerings to Lamma (ki-^dIamma) in Ĝirsu und in Uru-ku.⁸⁵¹ To Gebhard J. Selz (1995: 158-160) the evidence from Lagaš suggests ^dIamma

⁸⁴¹ Cf. Löhnert and Zgoll 2009-2011: 312.

⁸⁴² On the Akkadian prototype for Lamma, see Spycket 1960: 80.

⁸⁴³ For the definition of 'generic figure', see Chapter IV.B in this volume.

⁸⁴⁴ Collon 1982: 130-131.

⁸⁴⁵ Collon 1982: 27 (sub 'striped robes'), pp.130-131; 1987: 36-39.

⁸⁴⁶ Suter 2000: 66-67, 199-200, 299, 286-287. The goddess occasionally stands between suppliant and king, e.g., Legrain 1951: pl. 27.

⁸⁴⁷ Spycket 1960: 80; Fischer 1997: no. 21.

⁸⁴⁸ Collon 1987: 170-171; Spycket 1980-1983.

⁸⁴⁹ Foxvog, Heimpel and Kilmer 1980-1983: 452; Spycket 1980-1983: 453-454; Löhnert and Zgoll 2009-2011.

⁸⁵⁰ Braun-Holzinger 1984: pl. 35; Marzahn et al. 2008: 282 fig. 195c, 316 fig. 235.

⁸⁵¹ Selz 1995: 158, 197.

is a functional name for specific deities as, for example, for BaU, Nanše, and Nin.MAR.KI.⁸⁵² Lamma-Ninsumuna, a well-known goddess in all periods, precedes her spouse, the legendary ruler Lugalbanda of Uruk.⁸⁵³

In his prayer to the Anuna deities Gudea refers to them as Lamma.⁸⁵⁴

O all you Anuna deities who are admiring
 (what) the Land of Lagaš (achieved),
 Lamma of all the countries, ...
 who have given a long life to the worthy man upon whom they looked.
 I, the shepherd, built the house,
 and my master (Ninġirsu) will enter the house –
 would you, O Anuna, say a blessing on my behalf?

Anuna is a general term for major deities of heaven and earth used when they act or are addressed as group and not individually.⁸⁵⁵ That Gudea addresses them as Lamma is evidence for Lamma being an integral element of deities pertaining to their protective aspect that includes blessing and granting long life. Granting long life is repeatedly mentioned in the inscriptions on Gudea's statues, each dedicated to an individual deity.⁸⁵⁶ The statue of a major goddess can be addressed as 'magnificent Lamma of the temple' (^dlamma maḥ).⁸⁵⁷

The description following Gudea's prayer to the Anuna resembles the presentation scene on his seal (fig. 33): "his friendly guardian (u₂-dug₄) walks in front of him, and his friendly Lamma is following him" into the Eninnu temple where Gudea prays to Ninġirsu.⁸⁵⁸ That Gudea received his personal Lamma from his divine mother Ĝatumdug may be alluded to in a passage where he tells Ĝatumdug of his travel plans to visit Nanše in NINA and says "may your kind Lamma accompany my footsteps".⁸⁵⁹

In literary texts ^dlamma is either singular or plural ^dlamma - ^dlamma, both translated with "protective goddess(es)".⁸⁶⁰ One or several Lamma protect not only individuals but also land, desert, cities, places, or sacred, public and private buildings.⁸⁶¹ The paramount character of Lamma (singular or plural) is that of good, kind, beneficent and sometimes eloquent divine 'chaperone' who loves the truth, listens to prayers, guides speech and tongue,

⁸⁵² On Nin-MAR.KI, see Sallaberger 1998-2001.

⁸⁵³ See in this volume Chapter II.B.2 no. 9.

⁸⁵⁴ Edzard 1997: 89 Cylinder B i 20 - ii 6 (^dlamma-kur-kur-ra).

⁸⁵⁵ Katz 2003: 402-404.

⁸⁵⁶ Edzard 1997: 29-67.

⁸⁵⁷ Brisch 2007: 228-231: lines 33, 35 (Rim-Sîn F).

⁸⁵⁸ Edzard 1997: p. 89 Cylinder B ii 9-15.

⁸⁵⁹ Edzard 1997: p. 71: Cylinder A iii 21.

⁸⁶⁰ These references were found by the search 'lamma' in ETCSL.

⁸⁶¹ Löhnert and Zgoll 2009-2011: 311.

and mediates between high-ranking deities and mortals; she is the deity of good fortune, advocate and intercessor for her protégé. These qualities are also suited for the amulet character of seals, which made the image of Lamma a most popular motif. Lamma is also portrayed as attractive and beautiful woman.⁸⁶² The inscription on a stone wig dedicated to Lamma for the life of king Šulgi by a high-priest of the goddess Nanše refers to the object as ‘wig of female beauty’.⁸⁶³

To Selz, ^dlamma is a “transpersonal spirit”, not a deity’s proper name but a “deified function comparable perhaps to what in modern mythology is called ‘positive energy’”.⁸⁶⁴ According to a praise poem of Išme-Dagan of Isin (1953-1935 BCE) Enlil assigned a “tireless protective goddess (^dlamma)” to the king.⁸⁶⁵ Lamma is also referred to as “BaU’s august minister, who creates life for the king” and as “holy messenger who brings the tablet of life down from the interior of heaven” indicating that Lamma is a divine attendant rather than another form of BaU.⁸⁶⁶ The sources are ambiguous because major deities assign Lamma to an individual, have a Lamma or are Lamma themselves. Lamma(s) guarding temples or escorting individuals are neither ‘personal Lamma’ nor the Lamma aspect of major deities.⁸⁶⁷

In images as well as literary texts Lamma resembles a ‘good guardian angel’ (or protective spirit) as on Gudea’s steles and seals where she walks behind the ruler who is led by the wrist to Ningirsu by his personal god Ningišzida (figs. **36a**, **37a**, **72**). To Suter this gesture is an expression of the relationship between personal god and king. However, it is also the gesture of the so-called ‘leading goddess’ (e.g., figs. **41**, **43**, **44**, **46-49**, **51**, **52**, **55**).⁸⁶⁸

The relationship between minor goddesses in presentation scenes and the personal deity was analyzed by Dietz O. Edzard who tentatively suggested the figure of goddess holding the worshipper’s wrist may represent his or her personal deity but not the goddess Lamma.⁸⁶⁹ However, neither Lamma with raised hands nor the ‘leading goddess’ taking the worshipper by the wrist can represent a personal deity because that would mean that all individuals shown with this figure on their seal would have had a personal *goddess* whereas according to written sources, a personal god is at least

⁸⁶² Foxvog, Heimpel and Kilmer 1980-83: 452 §10.

⁸⁶³ Wiseman 1960: 168, pl. 22b; Frayne 1997: 215-216 no. 2030.

⁸⁶⁴ Selz 2004a: 42.

⁸⁶⁵ ETCSL 2.5.4.01 (Išme-Dagan A + V).

⁸⁶⁶ ETCSL 4.02.1: a hymn to BaU’s beneficent protective goddess (BaU A).

⁸⁶⁷ Foxvog, Heimpel and Kilmer 1980-1983; see also Löhnert and Zgoll 2009-2011, and Chapter II.B.2 no. 17 on ^dlamma-ša₆-ga.

⁸⁶⁸ Suter 2000: 261; Collon 1982: 129; 1987: 25-26. The goddess is generally referred to as ‘leading’ or ‘interceding’ goddess, the latter also describes Lamma with both arms raised.

⁸⁶⁹ Edzard 1993: 205-206; see also Groneberg 1986b: 95-97.

as common.⁸⁷⁰ That personal deity and protective deities are not identical is evident in “Critical Wisdom”, stating “if his god has looked favorably upon him, his mind is opened (and so) his personal god and his protective deities will be present in (his) body”.⁸⁷¹

Lamma(s) and personal or family deities possess the functions of guardian/protector and their absence has negative consequences. How they interrelate is not well researched but in general Lamma is a positive force.⁸⁷² The example of Gudea, whose personal god is Ningišzida and who received his Lamma apparently from Ĝatumdug, suggests that in spite of functional overlaps Lamma and personal god are different divinities. According to Tzvi Abusch’s definition of personal god, each individual looked to the personal deity as protector and provider, the personification of the individual’s power of achievement and procreation, externalized onto a divine being. A personal deity was also the protector of the family, clan or tribe, serving through each generation as protector of clan values and norms of right or wrong. The loss of well-being or personal power was attributed to the absence of a personal deity or the deity’s punitive power. Misfortune could be caused by ‘anger’ of a personal deity.⁸⁷³ According to J.G. Westenholz (2004: 295), “the relations between a man and his personal god are ... seen in terms of a shepherd and his sheep”.

Like the ‘goddess with raised hands’, the ‘goddess taking the worshipper by the wrist’ may be identified as Lamma. Alone or together they escort worshippers of different social position, e.g. ruler (figs. 36a, 37a, 72), wife of governor (figs. 43, 44), high priestess (fig. 45), or priest (fig. 52), or individuals in the service of a deity or temple (fig. 48) or of a ruler/governor (figs. 62, 63), servants of a priestess (figs. 46, 54, 55, 73), scribe, artisan, and people who only call themselves wife, son, daughter, or ‘servant’ of so-and-so.⁸⁷⁴ Lamma generally follows her protégé, the worshipper, who either stands vis-à-vis the enthroned deity (figs. 38a, 45, 71), or is led by

⁸⁷⁰ Cf. Selz 1990: 112; Di Vito 1993. In the Old Babylonian period personal goddesses are in the minority: van der Toorn 2008: 22.

⁸⁷¹ Alster 2005: 277-278: lines D10 - D12. See also Sallaberger (1999b: 81-83, 119-122) on Old Babylonian private letters with appeals to deities for protection, justice, and other favors, but also for the love of a deity.

⁸⁷² There is much overlapping concerning the functions and relationship of humans to the diverse protective deities, see Löhnert and Zgoll 2009-2011.

⁸⁷³ Abusch 1999: 85-86, 105-107; see now also Löhnert and Zgoll 2009-2011: esp. 312. Another deity with special ties to an individual may be the deity whose name is part of the personal name that was deliberately chosen; however, it is not certain whether this theophoric component actually refers to the personal god or goddess, see Di Vito 1993: 272-275.

⁸⁷⁴ See e.g., Moorgat 1940: nos. 252ff.; Buchanan 1981: nos. 538ff.; Collon 1982: 10-11; Haussperger 1991: 165-209; Fischer 1997: 181-183; Asher-Greve 2006.

a personal god (figs. **36a**, **37a**, **72**, **73**) or by a second Lamma before the seated principal deity. Numerous worshippers, including such high-ranking individuals like Ninḫilia, wife of the governor of Umma (fig. **43**), the wife of Ur-Lamma a governor of Lagaš (fig. **44**), or Lu-Igalim, the lu₂-maḫ-priest of Ninibgal (fig. **52**), or Abbakala, son of the gu₄-priest⁸⁷⁵ of Nanše (fig. **57**) come to the principal deity without a Lamma following them but with a Lamma-goddess physically guiding them. While texts mention Lamma ‘walking behind’ her protégé, there are few references of a Lamma walking ahead of an individual and taking him or her by the wrist (see above for Lamma-Ninsumuna walking ahead of Lugalbanda). The guiding Lamma, or a personal god (figs. **11**, **21**, **72**, **73**), the goddess with a ‘child’ on her lap (figs. **27-29**, **49**), and Inana embracing the king (figs. **136-138**) are the only images of deities who have physical contact with a human being. It is noticeable that even on miniature seal images care is taken to show Lamma takes the worshipper by the wrist not by the hand. This may indicate she feels the worshipper’s pulse that probably rose in anticipation of facing the august deity. Physical contact coupled with walking ahead of the worshipper conveys assurance to the individual about to experience what Walter Burkert describes as “holy shiver”.⁸⁷⁶ According to Burkert such physical reactions are a trans-cultural mark of religion and there are numerous references in cuneiform text to the awesome fear evoked by sacred bodies, such as cult statues. Herein may be the difference in the relationship of an individual to/with Lamma and to/with the family/personal deity, as the latter may be a deity venerated in his/her own temple, whereas statues of Lamma are often placed in the temples of great (maḫ) or major deities.

Lamma’s role as guardian is expressed in her gesture and position behind her protégé implying a distance necessary for the watchful protectress. In comparison, the Lamma walking in front of the worshipper does not see what is happening behind her and uses physical contact in her primary task to bring the individual ‘safely’ to the deity. Based on references to multiple Lamma and their function as guardian of temples, the figure of Lamma leading the worshipper may represent a ‘Lamma of the temple’.⁸⁷⁷

The Lamma on Gudea’s seal (fig. **72**) and ‘Ur-Namma’s stele’ (fig. **38a**) stands behind the ruler and may represent his personal Lamma. ‘Lamma of the king’ (^dIamma-lugal) was worshipped in the temple of the goddess

⁸⁷⁵ The task of a gu₄ includes maintenance of purity and holiness of cult statues, sacred objects and areas of the temple (J.G. Westenholz and A. Westenholz 2006: 29).

⁸⁷⁶ Burkert (1996), discusses the biological manifestations of religious emotion concluding religion is intertwined with feelings of ‘horror’ and uncontrollable, ambivalent shiver that is implanted in humans and also the reason why temples were built and festivals conducted for deities.

⁸⁷⁷ Foxvog, Heimpel and Kilmer 1980-1983: 449 § 4.

Nintinuga in Nippur.⁸⁷⁸ The Lamma behind the ‘goddess with child’ (fig. 49) may be the Lamma the goddess assigns to the child. The name of a birth or mother goddess is a relatively common element in personal names,⁸⁷⁹ possibly an indication that the Lamma of the individual is that of or given by the goddess. This Lamma may be one of several, for example, Ur-Namma may have received a Lamma from Namma, another from his divine mother Ninsumuna, and the ‘Lamma of King’ when he became ruler of Ur. A Lamma (to be) ‘given’ by a goddess or god may be depicted standing behind the deity (figs. 49, 71, 75).⁸⁸⁰

There is no discernible reason why individuals other than, for example, a king (fig. 38a) or a high priestess (fig. 45) are not guided by a ‘temple Lamma’ and may stand directly vis-à-vis the deity like the scribe Lu-Ninšubura (fig. 71). Other scribes apparently ‘need’ the ‘temple Lamma’ as guide (figs. 41, 47, 49, 58, 63, 74, 75). Women are generally guided by a ‘temple Lamma’ (figs. 43, 44, 48, 51), never by a personal deity as Gudea (fig. 72), or the ‘scribe’ Ur-Damu, servant of Geme-Lamma, the high priestess of BaU (fig. 73). Exceptional is the scene with the woman named Geme-aga(?) standing before a goddess without any accompanying Lamma (fig. 66).

On Ur III seals the combination of personal Lamma and seated goddess is more common than the combination with seated god and may denote that mainly goddesses provided humans with a Lamma. Some individuals have several ‘guardian angels’ as, for example Lu-Diġira’s mother, who is “accompanied by many protective goddesses”.⁸⁸¹

Diminutive Lamma figures are rare and either stand before the god raising one hand (fig. 74) or behind him raising both hands (fig. 75).⁸⁸² Exceptional is the presentation scenes with three Lamma-goddesses as on the seal of the ‘scribe’ Lu-Ninġirsu, son of Irmu (fig. 74). The owner of this seal, who has no other title than *dub sar*, is guided by a ‘temple Lamma’ and accompanied by his personal Lamma. The third Lamma of diminutive size standing before the seated god may be the Lamma attached to the cult statue of the god.⁸⁸³ Such small Lamma figures may also have been hidden as the one found in the plinth of a statue of a goddess (see below section 4.2).

⁸⁷⁸ Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 295.

⁸⁷⁹ Limet 1968: 167; for a list of divine names in personal names, see *ibid.* pp. 153-163.

⁸⁸⁰ For an example from Umma, see Mayr 1997: nos. 151, 171 (behind deity).

⁸⁸¹ For the text, see ETCSL 5.5.1: B.

⁸⁸² For further miniature or small size Lamma, see Genouillac 1912 (= ITT vol. III/2): pl. 2 nos. 5978 and 6653; A Lamma with both hands raised stands between presentee and king: Delaporte 1923: A.269.

⁸⁸³ On a seal dedicated to Bilalama, a diminutive Lamma stands on the platform with the seated god Tišpak: see Frankfort 1955: pl. 66 no. 709.

Occasionally seals were recut and a Lamma inserted behind the deity replacing one line of the inscription box as on the seal of a dubsar named Lu-Ninġirsu, son of Ur-Nanše (fig. 53).⁸⁸⁴ This seal is exceptional also because the seated goddess is framed by two minor goddesses, a Lamma with both hands raised behind her, and facing the seated goddess a minor goddess raising her right hand; between them is a scorpion. This is one of the comparatively rare scenes showing a minor goddess paying homage to a higher ranking one,⁸⁸⁵ whose Lamma stands behind her.⁸⁸⁶ The meaning of this image may be that a personal goddess appears as intercessor before a high-ranking goddess and ‘in the background’ the eloquent Lamma speaks for her protégé.

In presentation scenes either a personal Lamma or a ‘temple Lamma’ may be present, both together are comparatively rare (fig. 74).⁸⁸⁷ However, more than two iconographical forms of ‘protective goddesses’ are depicted on seals: Lamma with raised arms as well as ‘temple Lamma’ have simple or multiple horned crown, wear pleated or flounced robe covering one or both shoulders. Occasionally, the ‘temple Lamma’ wears a robe without pattern.⁸⁸⁸ Multiple imagery of ‘protective goddesses’ represents the visual analogue to the plural ⁴lamma-⁴lamma and pertains to their various functions and tasks, but only three functions can be identified in the visual imagery:

- I. Lamma as personal guardian of the worshipper.
- II. ‘Temple Lamma’ guiding the worshipper.
- III. Lamma of a deity (or Lamma to be given by a deity to a person).

As these functions are not congruent with the visual variety of robes and horned crowns and as only one Lamma of each group appears in a single image, iconographical variety may allude to the existence of multiple as well as the different types of protective and escorting Lamma.

The reason why some individuals are accompanied by a guardian Lamma and a ‘temple Lamma’ is not obvious, and may depend on the individual’s

⁸⁸⁴ Mayr 1997: no. 171.

⁸⁸⁵ This motif is depicted on another recut seal from Lagaš: Fischer 1997: no. 21.

⁸⁸⁶ This seal was recut (Fischer 1997: 160), but I do not agree with Fischer’s interpretation that the figure before the seated goddess is a worshipper because the horns on the head are clearly visible (one would expect them to have been erased) whereas there seem to be no traces left of a leading goddess’ right bent back arm or her raised hand. In scenes where the worshipper stands directly before the seated deity, the Lamma stands behind the worshipper: see in this volume figs. 45, 71.

⁸⁸⁷ Another example is Fischer 1997: no. 5.

⁸⁸⁸ E.g., Collon 1982: nos. 389, 397; 1987: 36-39. Mayr (1997: 75-76 with note 326) argues that on some seals the rank of Lamma (“supporting goddess”) is lower than that of the Lamma guiding the worshipper (“introducing goddess”) because the former wears a simple horned crown and pleated robe, the latter multiple horned crown and flounced garment.

status in the temple hierarchy rather than an individual's preference for a particular image. The guiding principle of selecting these particular Lamma-goddesses for the visual representation of presentation or introduction to a deity must have been deliberate choice that conveyed information eluding us. More than any other genre seals could accommodate individual choice and preference for details but it remains unknown if these Lamma figures were chosen merely for reasons of customer's belief in them or if seal cutters created the iconography of protective goddesses known for their positive and benevolent powers.

3.3. *Principal Goddesses*

3.3.1. *Seal Images of Principal Goddess*

The image of a single principal goddess – predominantly represented as generic figure – was never more common than in presentation scenes on Neo-Sumerian seals.⁸⁸⁹ According to general agreement, 'presentation' or 'introduction' of a 'worshipper' to a deity represents a ritual.⁸⁹⁰ Textual information on cult practices such as the presentation or introduction to a deity pertain to kings (see above).⁸⁹¹ Concerning the meaning of presentation scenes, Piotr Michalowski (1994: 36) suggests that they are "graphic references" of sovereignty, implying "vassalage and obedience to the king of the realm or to the god who represents the realm and, thus, the king". Michalowski does not explicitly mention if "god" includes the numerous presentations to a goddess. There is no evidence that a goddess receives homage for the king. Images of seal owners being introduced to a deity have religious rather than the socio-political implications of an image of audience with the king. Although these spheres were not separated, the generic images of devotional man or woman before a deity are a visual expression of religious practice and piety rather than of 'vassalage' or 'obedience' to the king. According to Richard L. Zettler presentation scenes depict the ritual in which the fate or destiny of the worshipper is decreed. Zettler also differentiates between 'introduction' where the worshipper is led by Lamma before a god or goddess, and 'salutation' where the worshipper with raised right hand stands directly before god or goddess.⁸⁹² As noted above, there is a gender difference as women are always led by a Lamma – exceptions are apparently

⁸⁸⁹ Collon 1987: 36-39; Haussperger 1991; Ludovico 2005. According to Zettler (2007: 27-28) before Šulgi year 35 there was a mix of contest and presentation scenes, thereafter presentation scenes predominate in seal imagery.

⁸⁹⁰ Cf. Mayr 1997: 91-92.

⁸⁹¹ Sallaberger 1993; Such-Gutiérrez 2003: 26-27; cf. I.J. Winter 1986.

⁸⁹² Zettler 2007: 28; to Zettler the human figure in 'presentation scenes' is a 'petitioner'. As we do not know the precise ritual, or meaning and implications of these images, I prefer 'worshipper' as the broadest of possible meanings.

high priestesses like the *ereš-diĝir* Geme-Lamma – whereas some men, although according to the seal inscription they do not occupy a high position, are led by a god or stand directly before a goddess.⁸⁹³

The location of presentation scenes is presumably a temple but it seems unlikely that thousands of anonymous worshippers or ‘ordinary’ people who owned a seal with a presentation scene could appear before a major deity.⁸⁹⁴ People may have had access to courtyards of temples but access to the cella with the cult statue was restricted. Images do not necessarily ‘represent reality’ but may show ‘visions’ of the situation imagined in the past or in the future. Zettler (2007: 28) suggests that at least partially changing royal ideology and rhetoric caused the initial adoption of presentation theme for royal and official seals. Once this was adopted by the elite, others wanted seals with the same theme, also because it is the only religious image incorporating the figure of an ordinary seal owner into the action. Such rituals may also have taken place in neighborhood shrines with smaller icons made of less precious material than the composite cult statues (see below section 4).⁸⁹⁵

Most worshippers are shown with one hand raised (figs. **40, 41, 47, 49, 51, 52, 55, 58, 60, 61, 63, 70-75**), a gesture denoting a type of prayer, the so-called *šuilā*-prayer (prayer of lifting of the hand), but these prayers were spoken by a specialist and repeated by the worshipper who is also instructed by the specialists about the appropriate gestures and rituals. The rituals took place on roofs of private houses, or river banks, or in the room of a sick person and were accompanied by offerings of incense, drinks, and occasionally foods.⁸⁹⁶ As presentation scenes have neither a specialist accompanying the worshipper nor incense burner nor offerings and the action seems to be located in a temple before the statue of a deity, another ritual must be depicted.

The main role or a particular aspect of a goddess occasionally relates to a worshipper’s profession, office, or position in temple. Other reasons for

⁸⁹³ If this differs with presentation scenes featuring a principal god needs more study.

⁸⁹⁴ The role of artists in creating visual images has not received much attention in the analysis of Mesopotamian art (cf. D. Matthews 1995). More understanding about artistic processes and ‘ways of seeing’ may be gained by Martin Kemp’s studies on visualizations and ‘structural intuitions’, see Kemp 2000: 1-7; Wallace and Kaniari 2009: 13-15; Reed-Tschocha 2009. Ideas initiated by reading these articles could only sporadically be integrated in my analysis of goddesses, because the ‘specific’ context of this book is not suited for analysis of Mesopotamian art based on a rather paradigmatic change of ‘ways of seeing’.

⁸⁹⁵ Perhaps presentation scenes visualize what ‘letter prayers’ (which can be traced to the Neo-Sumerian period) express in words, i.e. appealing for divine assistance, favors, and love, see Hallo 1995; compare also Sallaberger 1999b: 81-84, 119-123; 2006-2008c: 424-426.

⁸⁹⁶ On the *šuilā*-prayers and accompanying rituals, see Zgoll 2003a: esp. pp. 192-196, 196; 2003b; 2009: 126-128; also Sallaberger 2006-2008: s.v. “ritual”. See also Chapter II.D.1 in this volume.

the choice of principal deity are difficult to discern because by far the two largest groups of owners are ‘scribes’ and individuals without any title.⁸⁹⁷ For Umma, where four-hundred-and-fifty individuals owned two or more seals, Rudolf H. Mayr observed that images on the seals of ‘scribes’ seem to conform to a rule:⁸⁹⁸ At the beginning of their career many ‘scribes’ have a seal with contest scene, when they rise to the next level the seal depicts presentation to a goddess, at the next level the presentation to a god, and at a higher level presentation to the king; those who rose to the highest level of governor (*ensi₂*), had a seal showing an audience with the king.⁸⁹⁹ This rule may be one reason for the high number of goddesses and the low number of kings as obviously few made it to highest ranks. An additional reason may be that women generally preferred worship of goddesses over that of gods.⁹⁰⁰

The Sumerian title *dubsar* (generally translated ‘scribe’) does not refer to a position but is an acquired degree from a scribal school.⁹⁰¹ Statistics for Lagaš show that ‘scribes’ owned eighty-three seals with presentation to a goddesses compared to sixty-six with presentation to a god (figs. **72-75**), and six with presentation to a king.⁹⁰² In Umma the percentages are 35.5 with a goddess, 48.6 with a god, and 9.2 with a king.⁹⁰³ The principal goddess often lacks identifying attributes, her throne is decorated like that of many deities and she wears either simple or multiple horned crown, and nearly always a flounced robe covering the body. Occasionally the generic figure of the goddess is annotated with her name as on the seal of Luizu, ‘scribe’ and servant of *Ḫabaluke*, governor of Adab (fig. **63**), where the goddess is identified as *Ninšubura*. A *dubsar* may ‘see in’ his patron goddess *Nisaba* in the generic figure of goddess, but her name is absent in inscriptions.⁹⁰⁴ Numerous *dubsar* were, however, associated with a temple, and the icon on their seal may represent the goddess of that temple as, for instance, *Ningal* on the impression of a *dubsar*’s seal found in *Ĝipar*/temple of *Ningal* in

⁸⁹⁷ Fischer 1992: 71-72; Mayr 1997: 164-166. This is mirrored in catalogues of seal collections.

⁸⁹⁸ Mayr 1997: 159-162.

⁸⁹⁹ I could not confirm this for seal impressions from Lagaš because the database is not compatible with that of Umma. Impressions from Lagaš are published in ITT I-V; Delaporte 1920; Fischer 1992; 1996; 1997 (Fischer 1997 refers to numerous unpublished seal impressions from Lagaš).

⁹⁰⁰ Groneberg 2007: 327.

⁹⁰¹ Steinkeller 1977: 48; Hallo 1981: 440-441; Waetzoldt 2009-2011: 251.

⁹⁰² Fischer 1992: 71-72.

⁹⁰³ Mayr 1997: 165.

⁹⁰⁴ Among the theophoric personal names in Umma *Ur-Nisaba* occurs three times on 909 seals. On scribes and *Nisaba* in the Ur III period, see Waetzoldt 2009-2011: 254-255 § 5, 264-265 § 12. In the Old Babylonian period *Nisaba* was the personal goddess of many scribes but is not recognizably depicted on seals (section 6 in this Chapter).

Ur (figs. **41a, b**). On the seal of *dub sar* Ur-Damu, servant of BaU's high-priestess Geme-Lamma, the image of Ningirsu signals the owner is an officer of the Eninnu, temple of Ningirsu and BaU (fig. **73**).⁹⁰⁵

On seals the rank of the principal goddess of a city or major goddesses of a local pantheon is rarely recognizable by her figural form but may be indicated by *en face* representation, attribute(s), symbol, or identified in the inscription. However, flexibility in assigning symbols and attributes in visual representations reflects the fluid character and manifold functions of goddesses.⁹⁰⁶ Many goddesses remain anonymous not because of their stereotypical depiction but because they lack identifying or identifiable symbols or attributes as, for example, the goddess on the seal of the scribe Abba, servant of Gudea of Lagaš (fig. **40**). The background totally empty of symbols is unusual for presentation scenes.⁹⁰⁷

Women in general, and high-positioned women and priestesses, in particular, often have seals with a principal goddess.⁹⁰⁸ Ninhilia, wife of Aakala, governor of Umma under king Šu-Sîn is presented to a goddess without attributes who may represent Ninura, spouse of Šara, the proprietary god of Umma and son of Inana of Zabalam (fig. **43**).⁹⁰⁹ Ninura's main epithet is 'mother of Umma' but she is of minor importance in the Ur III period and received comparatively few offerings.⁹¹⁰ The lion placed underneath the seal inscription box is a common feature on Umma seals of scribes and of members of governors' families, and probably the emblem of Umma and

⁹⁰⁵ Suter 2000.

⁹⁰⁶ Fischer (1997: 147-150) suggests that some 'motifs' (e.g., eagle, lion-headed eagle, nude hero) may be 'family coat of arms'.

⁹⁰⁷ The bearded figure of worshipper is reminiscent of Akkadian tradition, see Porada 1948: 202; cf. torso of the statue of Ur-Ningirsu II of Lagaš, son of Gudea of Lagaš: Aruz 2003: 434 fig. 305 (inscription: Edzard 1997: 186 no. 7) and a similar figure on a seal from Assur: Bär 2003: pl. 44 S 22. On the differentiation of late, post-Akkadian and Gudea periods, see in this Chapter section 3 n. 816.

⁹⁰⁸ Asher-Greve 2006: 69-71. Not all seals owned by women have inscriptions but on many the worshipper is a woman, cf. Suter 2008: table 2 nos. 53ff. For women's preference of goddesses, see Weiershäuser 2008: 182.

⁹⁰⁹ Ninura was the original patron deity of Ġiša (Umma) and replaced by Šara (see Chapter II.B.2 no. 12). On Ninura, see Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-ura"; on Šara, see Vulliet 2009-2011. See further damaged impression of the seal of Ninmelam, wife of Umma's governor Ur-Lisin preserving part of the guiding Lamma and seated goddess: Mayr 1997: 390 no. 584.

⁹¹⁰ Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-ura;" Sallaberger 1993: vol. 1: 84, 89, 247-48, 258, vol. II: 50-51, 137, 139, 142, 154, 168. Ninura had a *gudu*₄-priest and a chief administrator of her temple, a position only attested for her and Šara's temple; of the seals with Ninura's name, only one owner calls himself 'servant of Ninura': Mayr 1997: nos. 30, 458, 496, 819.

its administrative elite.⁹¹¹ Numerous images show a lion standard before or behind a god or goddess identifying them as Šara and Ninura.⁹¹²

As *ereš-diġir*- and *lagar*-priestess of Ġirsu's female patron deity BaU, Geme-Lamma was one of the highest-ranking individuals in the province of Lagaš.⁹¹³ Her seal shows that she is privileged to stand directly before BaU who holds the 'vase of abundance' towards her high priestess, accompanied by her Lamma (fig. 45).⁹¹⁴ On this and on the seal of Atašuta, Geme-Lamma's servant (fig. 46) BaU is shown *en face*, but subtle variations point to the different relationships to BaU of a priestess and her servant. Atašuta cannot directly stand before BaU but is led by a 'temple Lamma' to the libation vase with plants before BaU who acknowledges Atašuta's presence by raising her hand.⁹¹⁵ The status difference of Geme-Lamma and Atašuta is conveyed in subtle compositional and iconographical configuration demonstrating that even in miniature seal images such details convey meaning. The privilege to stand before the deity and not led by a Lamma is apparently an innovation of Ur-Namma who pours libation before Nanna and Ningal (fig. 38a), whereas Gudea is always led by his personal god (figs. 36a, 37a, 72).⁹¹⁶ Ur-Namma's grandson Amar-Suen is pictured without any Lamma (fig. 50), pouring libation before Inana/Ištar who holds the royal insignia 'rod and ring' towards him.⁹¹⁷ King and goddess are attended by two gods, whose skirt patterns indicate mountain as their domain. The scene is located in a mountainous landscape with trees.

The lion throne may be a prerogative of Inana or of the proprietary divine couple of a city.⁹¹⁸ For example, a lion decorates throne of BaU (fig. 46)

⁹¹¹ Mayr 1997: 127-133.

⁹¹² Haussperger 1991: 182; Buchanan 1981: no. 601; Mayr 1997: 70, 84-85. According to Groneberg 2002: 287, 290 n. 48, such standards are "city-totems"; compare Pongratz-Leisten 1992: 302.

Note: although representational symbols of cities were not the same as symbols or emblems of deities, in imagery one rarely can distinguish them; standards and emblems were made of gold, silver, bronze, copper, or precious stones like lapislazuli, and some received offerings, see Mayer-Opificius 1996.

⁹¹³ On Geme-Lamma, *ereš-diġir*- and *lagar*-priestess, see J.G. Westenholz 2009: 79, 83-85; on the *lagar*, see J.G. Westenholz 2011.

⁹¹⁴ According to Fischer (1996: 222 n. 42) there are numerous seals from Lagaš depicting a 'goddess dispensing water'.

⁹¹⁵ See above on the protective goddesses Lamma and 'leading' or 'touching' goddess, respectively.

⁹¹⁶ See also seals of Gudea and the *išib*-priest UrDUN: Suter 2000: 54 fig. 9; 197 fig. 21 (= Delaporte 1920: T. 108, T. 110); for *išib*-priest as prominent cultic functionary and counterpart to the *ereš-diġir*-priestess in Lagaš, see J.G. Westenholz 2009: 80, 82-85.

⁹¹⁷ On Inana's association with 'rod and ring', see also Chapter II.B.2 in this volume.

⁹¹⁸ Suter 2000: 197 fig. 21; Fischer 1996: fig. 8; 1997: no. 24, 28; Mayr 1997: 59-60 with notes 240, 241. According to Groneberg 2002: 304-307, the lion is the symbol but not an

whose spouse Ninĝirsu is also seated on a lion throne (figs. 37a, 73). By analogy, the goddess on lion throne on a seal impression found in the Ĝipar/Ningal temple complex at Ur represents Ningal (figs. 41a, b), who like BaU (figs. 45, 46), is represented *en face* as additional sign of her status as highest ranking goddess in Ur.⁹¹⁹ Although both lion throne and *en face* form are indicative of a goddess who with her husband presides over a local pantheon, one or the other feature seems sufficient to indicate that rank as on a seal from Tello (ancient Ĝirsu) presumably depicting BaU in profile on a lion throne (fig. 47).⁹²⁰ Symbols associated with several deities may also be signs of general divine characteristics (see below).⁹²¹ Specific meaning may depend on contexts or even the characteristics of a symbolic animal such as the goose. I therefore doubt that symbols or attributes or objects associated with the deities lose their symbolic power when transferred to other deities, contrary to Brigitte Groneberg.⁹²² From a visual viewpoint, a miniature lion underneath Ištar's feet can hardly be *seen* as more powerful than a lion on the throne of a deity. The lion on Ninĝirsu's and BaU's thrones may allude to lion or lioness (not evident which) defending their territory, i.e. Lagaš.

An atypical image of BaU is represented on the seal of Ninkala with a presentation scene in the upper register and swimming geese or swans and two scorpions in the lower register (fig. 48). Ninkala's profession 'midwife of BaU' identifies the enthroned goddess as BaU, whose role as 'great physician' is invoked by the upright snake.⁹²³ Although the seal of Ninkala is unprovenanced, the name of the goddess BaU indicates it comes from Ĝirsu (Tello), where BaU had her major temple. From Tello also come a number of two-register seals with swimming waterfowl, a composition so far only

independent animal attribute of Inana/Ištar, a metaphor of her warrior character as well as of courage and strength; as epithet the lion is only attested for Ištar.

⁹¹⁹ Asher-Greve 2003: 33-35.

⁹²⁰ For other images of goddess on lion throne from Lagaš, see Parrot 1954: nos. 106, 145.

⁹²¹ On interpretation of animal symbolism, cf. Collon 1985.

⁹²² Groneberg 2000: 290-291.

That a major god can adopt an animal symbol from another deity without it losing symbolic power is attested in ancient India: the goose was originally associated with the goddess Saravatī, but also became the vehicle of her spouse Brahmā; the goose was also associated with several other deities; see Vogel 1962: 13-16, 23-24.

⁹²³ On the healing aspect of BaU and the syncretism BaU/Nin-Isina, see Ceccarelli 2009; Groneberg 2004: 55, 171-172; further Chapters II.B.3 and II.B.4 in this volume.

On snakes' healing properties and association with birth, see Pientka-Hinz 2009-2011: 209, 213-214, 216. The snake is also a symbol of the healing god Ninazu, in Lagaš the father of Gudea's personal god Ninĝišzida (Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-azu."). Snake and scorpion are symbols of the goddess Išhara but she was not very popular in Ur III Sumer, see Prechel 1996: 26-32, 185-187; on deities associated with snakes, see further Pientka-Hinz 2009-2011: 215-217. On the 'mother' aspect of BaU, see Selz 1995: 96-99; cf. Asher-Greve 2003.

found at Tello and Ur (see below section 3.3.2).⁹²⁴ Such seal images were popular with women as they owned all those with inscriptions (fig. 66) and on those without inscriptions the worshipper is a woman where the gender is identifiable.⁹²⁵ While the scorpion is common in seal images and a symbol of marriage, eroticism and fertility,⁹²⁶ the symbolism of goose/swan is more complex (see below).

Five iconic images of BaU, either with multiple (figs. 36b, 37b, 39, 45) or single horned crown (figs. 46-48) are distinguishable in Neo-Sumerian imagery and show BaU in her different roles as multifaceted goddess:⁹²⁷

1. as spouse and mediator *en face* sitting on the lap of Ninĝirsu (fig. 39);
2. as patroness and source of ‘welfare’ with vase of abundance (figs. 36 a and b, 45);
3. as protector and defender of her city on lion throne (figs. 46, 47);
4. as divine physician with snake attribute (fig. 48);
5. as spouse and mother with scorpions and swans (fig. 48).

Another role of a principal goddess is represented on the seal of a *dub sar* from Lagaš named Ur-Ninĝišzida who owned the only known Ur III example of an image of goddess with a child on her lap (fig. 49), known from Akkadian seals (figs. 27-29). The motif may allude to the goddess as symbolic mother of a king and ‘nurture kingship’.⁹²⁸ That goddess and the ‘royal child’ embrace each other is suggestive of close relationship more indicative for Ninsumuna, the divine mother of Ur III kings than, as suggested by Fischer (1997: 120-121), for BaU.⁹²⁹ The dates of the impressions made of Ur-Ninĝišzida’s seal – Šulgi year 42 and Amar-Suen year 6 – suggest the ‘child’ possibly represents the future king Amar-Suen.

The principal goddess in a ‘presentation scene’ may represent a deity ranking below the highest female deity in a local pantheon. Her identification may be

⁹²⁴ Parrot 1948: pl. 30 nos. 69, 1569; 1954: nos. 30-33, 41; Legrain 1951: nos. 248-243; Collon 1982: nos. 333, 335. These seals are dated to post-Akkadian-early Ur III times, see Collon 1982: 109-111; 1987: 36; cf. in this Chapter section 3 n. 816.

⁹²⁵ Parrot 1954: nos. 31, 33; Legrain 1951: no. 249. The inscription and two seals (Parrot 1948: pl. 30 nos. 69, 1569) have to be checked on impressions as the photos are not very clear.

⁹²⁶ On scorpion, see Pientka 2004; Wiggermann 1992: 149-150, classifies snake and scorpion among the “awe-inspiring phenomena of nature”, that are only “religious entities” and different from gods.

⁹²⁷ On images dated to Gudea, who elevated BaU to the rank of Ninĝirsu and above Nanše, see Asher-Greve 2003. BaU is always represented with multiple horned crown (figs. 36b, 37b, 39) on images dating to Gudea; the seal impressions naming Geme-Lamma (figs. 45, 46, 54, 55) date to the reign of Šulgi (Fischer 1997: ad nos. 3, 4).

⁹²⁸ See in this volumes Chapter I.C and IV.C.2.

⁹²⁹ Wilcke 1998-2001: 503 § 4.5.

indirect as that of Nin-MAR.KI by the ‘bird’ attribute of her mother Nanše.⁹³⁰ Another possibility may be juxtaposition of the attribute of the goddess’ spouse, like the lion-standard identifying Ninura in Umma. In Lagaš the serpent-dragon, *mušḥuš* in Sumerian, is the symbol of Gudea’s personal god Ningišzida (fig. 72) and appears occasionally before a seated goddess (figs. 60, 61).⁹³¹ On one seal a *mušḥuš* standard is ‘squeezed’ between principal and leading goddess probably as sign of identity (fig. 60).⁹³² In Lagaš Ningišzida’s spouse is Ĝeštinana; an important goddess in the Lagašite pantheon with her own temple in Ĝirsu. Gudea dedicated three of his statues to her, one named “Ĝeštinana gave life to him”, another is named “Ĝeštinana directed her *zi*-gaze to him”.⁹³³ Whereas several deities ‘give life’ to Gudea, only Ningirsu, Nanše and Ĝeštinana directed their *zi*-gaze at the ruler, a gaze also directed by gods at other deities.⁹³⁴ In the absence of a specific visual symbol for Ĝeštinana her identity is apparently indicated by the recognizable symbol of her spouse, the *mušḥuš*. This may be a visual example of transferring the symbol for the sake of signifying the identity of the goddess; Ningišzida himself could be present in his symbol.

Another symbol possibly identifying a goddess is the winged lion-dragon or lion-griffin placed between the legs of a seated goddess and a ‘temple Lamma’ on the seal of Mani, cupbearer of Gudea and son of Ur-Lamma (fig. 62).⁹³⁵ A lion-griffin is also depicted below the legend on the seal of Mani’s son, and on the throne of a god.⁹³⁶ Upright lion-griffins are shown on two seals dedicated to Meslamtaea.⁹³⁷ One of the seal inscriptions gives Meslamtaea’s epithet as “right arm of Lagaš” referring, according to Dina Katz, to the warrior aspect of the god.⁹³⁸ But another epithet of Meslamtaea, “who smites the head of the evil doer” may hint at civic punishment.⁹³⁹ Meslamtaea is also among those deities for whom Gudea built a temple in Ĝirsu and to whom Gudea dedicated one of his statues.⁹⁴⁰ In Lagaš

⁹³⁰ Fischer 1997: 124.

⁹³¹ On *muš-ḥuš*, see Pientka-Hinz 2009-2011: 204-295, 207, 215.

⁹³² Suter 2000: 65-66.

⁹³³ Wiggermann 1997: 39-42, fig. 2 (4); 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-ĝišzida”; Edzard 1997: Statues M, N (name: iii 4-6), O (name: iii 2-4).

⁹³⁴ Asher-Greve 2003: 28-29.

⁹³⁵ On ‘lion-dragon/griffin’, see Braun-Holzinger 1987-1990.

⁹³⁶ Fischer 1996: Abb. 12; 1997: nos. 37, 38.

⁹³⁷ Collon 1982: nos. 470, 471; Frayne 1997: 223-224 nos. 2038, 2039.

On Meslamtaea, see Katz 2003: 420-428. On Ninšubura as spouse of Meslamtaea, see Selz 1995: 265-266.

⁹³⁸ This epithet is also attested on an Akkadian or possibly Neo-Sumerian seal with a contest scene, whose owner’s personal god is Meslamtaea (Collon 1982: no. 121; Katz 2003: 425 with n. 156).

⁹³⁹ Frayne 1997: 164-165 no. 64.

⁹⁴⁰ Edzard 1997: 65 (Statue X); 125 (Gudea 24); 194, 205-206 (Nammaḥani 15).

Meslamtaea's spouse is Ninšubura who had a temple in Ġirsu and was the personal goddess of Nammaḥani, brother-in-law of Gudea and last ruler of the second dynasty of Lagaš.⁹⁴¹ In analogy to the serpent-dragon identifying Ġeštinana in Lagaš (figs. **60**, **61**), the lion-griffin of Meslamtaea may identify Ninšubura as his spouse (fig. **62**). Ninšubura may also be depicted without any attribute, instead identified by inscription of her name behind the figure of enthroned goddess (fig. **63**). Ninšubura is called "his Mistress" (nin) by Gudea and Šulgi, "mother" (ama) in personal names, and her intercessory role made her a popular family and personal deity with a distinct iconography in the Old Babylonian period.⁹⁴² That the lion-griffin is associated with Ninšubura on two seals of the Mani family suggest she was the family's personal goddess which may be indicated in the minor iconographical detail that the lion-griffin's head is turned towards the 'temple Lamma' and Mani (fig. **62**). Contrarily, the serpent-dragon looks at Ġeštinana as its main function is identifying her as spouse of Ninġišzida (figs. **60**, **61**).

Most goddesses associated with waterfowl or other bird, mušḥuš, or lion-griffin either represent the spouse of a dominant city god, or have secondary rank in the local pantheon. This confirms, as mentioned above, that the roles and functions of divine wives broadened at the expense of independent goddesses (Chapter II.B.4).

In Akkadian imagery Inana/Ištar is represented in partial frontal view standing (figs. **12**, **13**, **20**) or enthroned with feet on a lion (fig. **16**), figures that occur on few Neo-Sumerian seals as on the two extraordinary seals belonging to priests.⁹⁴³ One comes from Nippur and was owned by Lugalengardu, the chief administrator (ugula) of the temple of Inana and nu-eš₃-priest of Enlil (fig. **50**). Inana is depicted in full frontal view with only her feet in profile; from her shoulders emerge maces and two-pronged objects, perhaps a simplified version of her double-lion-headed emblem in the Old Babylonian period (cf. figs. **91**, **92**, **106**, **107**).⁹⁴⁴ The goddess holds the royal insignia rod and ring in the direction of king Amar-Suen who pours libation into a palm-tree altar. King and goddess stand on a ground with mountain signs and are framed by two gods, whose skirt patterns indicate mountain as their domain, one grasps a tree, the other holds a cup and stands before a tree. The trees, the mountain design of the minor gods' skirts and the ground may indicate that the setting of this ritual is in a mountainous landscape with trees.

210 no. 1005; Frayne 1997: xxxiv; Suter 2000: 19, 23-24, 42 (no. 28); Katz 2003: 420-428.

⁹⁴¹ Suter 2000: 20, 23-24, 38, 43 (no. 73).

⁹⁴² Wiggermann 1985-86; 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-šubur".

⁹⁴³ There are few unambiguous Neo-Sumerian images of Inana/Ištar, see Colbow 1991: pls. 6-7; see also early Neo-Sumerian seal: Moortgat 1940: no. 243..

⁹⁴⁴ Fischer 1997: 175 no. 9; Colbow 1991: Fig. 38, pls. 11-19.

The second seal belonged to Lu-Igalim, the lu_2 - $ma\check{h}$ -priest of (the goddess) Ninibgal (fig. 52); Ninibgal refers to Inana as ‘Mistress of the Ibgal’, her temple in Umma.⁹⁴⁵ The image shows Lu-Igalim led by a ‘temple Lamma’ before the enthroned Inana whose feet rest on a lion, her face turned away from the action to the ‘outside’. It appears as if she has a short beard which could be seen as reference to her dual nature as female morning star and male evening star, according to Joan G. Westenholz “two aspects corresponding to the double character of Inana/Ištar as goddess of love and war”.⁹⁴⁶ However, what may look like a short beard may indicate two strains of hair ineptly engraved as they should be wider apart and fall along the neck like on Lugalengardu’s seal (fig. 50). Lu-Igalim’s seal shows other ineptitudes of the seal cutter: nose-mouth, overlapping of the minor goddess’ arm with the plant in the palm-tree altar and tip of her foot with jaw of lion whose head is too big for its body.

The choice of principal deity in images was rarely determined by family or specific alliances.⁹⁴⁷ However, although not obligatory, priests and priestesses, administrators of temples (including $dubsar$), their sons, and some servants often have the image of a goddess on their seal.⁹⁴⁸ It was also not obligatory for very high officials to have a seal depicting presentation to the king. For example, not represented on his royal or official seal is Lugalengardu (II), chief administrator ($ugula$) of the temple of Inana in Nippur, $nu-e\check{s}_3$ -priest of Enlil, and member of the Urmeme family, one of the most elite families in Nippur (fig. 50).⁹⁴⁹ Lugalengardu’s uncle, son of Urmeme and chief administrator of the Inana temple, had two seals, one with a presentation to a principal goddess with a goose (?) beneath her throne.⁹⁵⁰ His niece Inanaka, the sister of Lugalengardu (II), was married to the en -priest of Enlil and her seals show her being led by a temple Lamma before an enthroned goddess

⁹⁴⁵ George 1993: 103 no. 504; Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-ibgala”. A lu_2 - $ma\check{h}$ -priest of Inana is attested in Ĝirsu (Renger 1969: 127) where Gudea built her temple Ēana (Edzard 1997: 122-223 nos 20, 21); the name of Lu-Igalim’s father Ur-Eninnu also points to Ĝirsu, as Eninnu was the name of the temple of Ninĝirsu.

⁹⁴⁶ J.G. Westenholz 2002: 18.

⁹⁴⁷ Mayr 1997: 164-165.

⁹⁴⁸ Examples from Umma: Mayr 1997: nos. 30 ($sanga$ -priest of goddess Nin-e’e; cf. no. 150.2, 151), 92.2 & 3 (son of $gudu_4$ -priest of Inana of Zabalam; his wife had a seal with presentation to king: no. 155), 133 (great incantation-priest of Inana; seal with *en face* goddess); 227 (stone-cutter of Ninlil), 458 ($gudu_4$ -priest of Ninura), 716 (son of $gudu_4$ -priest of Ninĝursaĝa).

⁹⁴⁹ Buchanan 1981: no. 681 (inscription: Hallo p. 454); Zettler 1987: 60 fig. 1, 62; 2007: 26, 29. On the Urmeme clan, see Zettler 1984 (most seals of this family are unpublished). Among the unpublished sealings from the Ur III temple of Inana at Nippur are several with presentation scenes, see Zettler 1992: 241-254.

⁹⁵⁰ Zettler 2007: 24-25.

(fig. 51), possibly Enlil's spouse Ninlil.⁹⁵¹

It may have been a rule that wives of governors had a seal with the image of their city goddess which might explain why that goddess needs no identifying attributes (figs. 43, 44). Few chose a goddess, or more precisely a particular aspect of a goddess correlating with their profession as did the midwife Ninkala (fig. 48).

Emblems of spouses potentially identify some goddesses.⁹⁵² Although frequently not identifiable, indirect evidence derived from inscriptions or symbols suggest individuals venerated goddesses of their local pantheon and in particular those with a temple in the city. This is corroborated by the theophoric elements in personal names, with BaU and Nanše common in Lagaš, or Ninura in Umma.⁹⁵³ Seals with images of deities from outside the local pantheon may have been owned by individuals from other cities but this remains hypothetical, requiring more study.

That the same goddess may be depicted differently – e.g., multiple iconography for BaU, Nanše, Ningal – is congruent with the heterogeneous functions and mutable character of deities. Visual representation is consonant with the religious concept that deities have multiple or “fluid” rather than one-dimensional personalities and limited functions.⁹⁵⁴

Over fifty percent of seal inscriptions containing the reverential phrase ‘servant of deity so-and-so’ and nearly the same percentage of owners without title have a principal goddess on their seal. The ‘servant of goddess so-and-so’ *sees* her/his goddess in the iconic image; other seal owners may *see* the city goddess or the family deity. For all these worshippers it is irrelevant that the goddess’ (or god’s) identity may not be visually indicated because identity is also the deity the worshipper-owner believes is represented (see Chapter IV.A).

3.3.2. Seal Images of Principal Goddess Associated with Birds

Dozens of images on seals and seal impressions show a goddess associated with one, occasionally two larger birds positioned in different places.⁹⁵⁵ The

⁹⁵¹ Zettler 1984: 6 note 33; 2007: 24-25.

⁹⁵² On textual evidence of goddesses identified through their spouses in Nippur, see Groneberg 2007: 327-329.

⁹⁵³ Limet 1968: 118-124. See also Di Vito (1993) on the personal names containing the theophoric name of ‘personal deity’. According to Kalla (2002: 127, 131) in Old Babylonian personal names, great or local deities and their entourage were particularly popular theophoric elements, men had predominantly names with gods, women with goddesses; but choice of theophoric element was also an expression of identity, tradition and solidarity.

⁹⁵⁴ See in this volume Chapter II *passim*.

⁹⁵⁵ On birds in Mesopotamia and depictions on ancient artifacts, see in general Van Buren 1939: 82-96.

large birds are generally believed to represent waterfowl, particularly goose or swan, i.e. the tribe Anserini.⁹⁵⁶ Their association with one or several goddesses and their symbolism is controversial.

Identification of BaU as the goddess associated with goose or swan standard on seals owned by some servants of the *ereš-diĝir*-priestess Geme-Lamma is proposed by Claudia Fischer.⁹⁵⁷ However, her reasons are not completely convincing because servants, even of a high priest or priestess of a deity, may have seals with the image of another principal deity.⁹⁵⁸ The large standing bird with long straight neck under the feet of the principal goddess depicted on the seal of Geme-Lamma's servant Saĝbi (fig. 54) is incomplete and on comparable examples the goddess sits on a bird and has another under her feet (figs. 58, 59)⁹⁵⁹ A pole crowned with a bird is placed before the seated goddess on the seal of the shepherd Idabidu, another servant of Geme-Lamma (fig. 55). On seals from Tello an emblem or standard crowned with a bird appears in the hand of an unidentifiable goddess (fig. 56) and in scenes without a deity.⁹⁶⁰ In Ur a standard crowned with an unidentifiable bird is placed behind a woman worshipper in a presentation scene with winged swimming Anserini in the second register.⁹⁶¹ In the only example from Umma the bird associated with a goddess resembles a goose.⁹⁶²

Several seal impressions from Lagaš, a seal from Ur (fig. 59), and one of unknown provenance (fig. 58) show a goddess sitting on a large bird, some identified as Nanše.⁹⁶³ A fragmentary image from Lagaš (fig. 57) shows the

⁹⁵⁶ Hoyo, Elliott, and Cabot 1992: 536-585. "Waterfowl" or "wildfowl" is commonly used in reference to ducks, geese, and swans as a group. According to scientific classification ducks, geese, and swans belong to the subfamily Anserinae of the family Anatidae. Anserini are the largest tribe of this subfamily and include all the swans and the "true" geese (p. 536 with fig. on p. 537). On geese and ducks, see also Janković 2004.

⁹⁵⁷ Fischer 1997: 126-127 nos. 10, 11. According to Pongratz-Leisten (1992: 302) cities often have as emblem a bird mounted on a pole; the emblem of Ĝirsu also associated with BaU was the hybrid Anzu(d)-bird.

⁹⁵⁸ E.g., Fischer 1996, 222 note 41, fig. 8. In Umma only 56.7 % of seals of individuals who are 'servant of goddess so-an-so' show a goddess, see Mayr 1997: 166. In Old Babylonian Sippar *sang a*-priests of Šamaš owned seals without an image of the god they served, see Tanret 2010.

⁹⁵⁹ Fischer (1997: 122-125 notes 138-153) cites several unpublished images of seal impressions depicting a goddess with bird.

⁹⁶⁰ Parrot 1948: pl. 30 no. 532 (= Parrot 1954: no. 257); Fischer 1997: no. 21 (a miniature bird standard placed between a standing and a seated goddess), 122 n. 143.

⁹⁶¹ Legrain 1951: no. 247. A crescent standard above the head of an Anserinus (goose?) is depicted on a fragmentary Lagaš seal impression (Fischer 1997: no. 53); a small, low quality seal from Diqdiqeh near Ur shows a crescent standard on the back of a bird, perhaps a standing goose (Legrain 1951: no. 518 = Collon 1982: no. 361).

⁹⁶² Mayr 1997: nos. 123 (bird standard), 446 (goddess seated on bird (goose?) with long legs), no. 893.2 (large crane? before goddess).

⁹⁶³ Fischer 1997: 122-125; Delaporte 1910: p. XIV, pl. B: H.871 (*en face* goddess holding flowing vase enthroned on "swan"); Delaporte 1912 (= ITT IV): pl. 2 no. 7483; Genouillac

goddess seated on what is apparently a goose throne and in the legend she is indirectly identified as Nanše by the owner's lineage as son of the gud_u_4 -priest of Nanše.⁹⁶⁴

In Gudea's Cylinder A, the standard of Nanše is called $\check{s}u-nir\ u_5-ku_3$, with u_5-ku_3 translated variously 'white swan (?)', 'sacred seagull', 'holy goose', or 'pure cormorant'.⁹⁶⁵ This is just one example of the problems in translating bird's names, that is paralleled in iconography rendering it difficult, often impossible, to identify species.⁹⁶⁶ The controversy extends to the tops of the standards depicted on Gudea's steles (figs. 64, 65a, b): the head-pieces of the standards resemble bird-like creatures with large outstretched wings, extremely short necks, bird head in profile view, and in frontal view human arms folded before what looks like a pleated garment. The rectangular, wavy part attached to the symbol possibly depicts a textile streamer which would flutter in the wind thus making banners on the battle field more visible.⁹⁶⁷ According to Piotr Steinkeller, the "long bill" of the birds (figs. 65a, b) identifies cormorants; these birds are "undoubtedly Nanše's standard and to be identified with " $u_5^{mu\check{s}en}$, Nanše's holy bird and also her *alter ego* (as the goddess of fish and fishing birds) is known to have been a fisher".⁹⁶⁸ However, wings and bird's head are part of a hybrid creature with human arms holding a staff against the body;⁹⁶⁹ representing neither 'goose' nor 'cormorant' but a 'bird-man/woman'. Very likely it represents one of Nanše's emblems, the 'holy u_5 -standard' ($u_5-ku_3-\check{s}u-nir$ ^dNanše-kam) standing in front the goddess' clan.⁹⁷⁰ As other goddesses (and gods), Nanše presumably had several symbols, emblems, and attributes pertaining to her different roles and functions.⁹⁷¹

1921 (= ITT V); pl. 5 no. 10075 (seal of the $pa_4-\check{s}e\check{s}$ -priest of Nanše) and no. 10063; cf. Braun-Holzinger 1998-2001: s.v. "Nanše": 160.

⁹⁶⁴ For further identifications of images of Nanše, see Fischer 1997: 122-125 with notes; a large bird before the face of a goddess is depicted on seal with an inscription mentioning Nanše's daughter Nin-MAR.KI (Delaporte 1912 (= ITT IV): pl. 2 no. 7482).

⁹⁶⁵ Edzard 1997: Cyl A xiv: 19-23 (p. 78); Suter 2000: 394; Veldhuis 2004: 25, 210; Steinkeller 1994; forthcoming: "The Employment of Labor on National Building Projects in the Ur III Period".

⁹⁶⁶ Collon 1985; Fischer 1997: 122-125; Braun-Holzinger 1998-2001 s.v. "Nanše"; Veldhuis 2004: 209-305.

⁹⁶⁷ Mayer-Opificius 1996.

⁹⁶⁸ Steinkeller (forthcoming), see note above.

⁹⁶⁹ Suter 2000: 177-179; see also Börker-Klähn 1982: figs. nos. 67, 69, pls. C, E. The iconography is not distinct enough for definitive identification of the bird species; the head may or may not be modeled after a cormorant's. In any case, in my view, most large birds depicted in profile view on seals should not be identified based on the images of the standards on the fragments of Gudea steles.

⁹⁷⁰ Edzard 1997 [RIME 3/1], p. 78: Cyl. A xiv: 21-23.

⁹⁷¹ Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. "Nanše".

As mentioned, goose and swan are Anserini and the species currently seen as winter visitors in southern Iraq are Greylag Goose, Greater White-fronted Goose, and Whooper Swan.⁹⁷² In a paper presented to the Jacobsen symposium in 1994, Piotr Steinkeller distinguishes between swan and goose based on physical differences in imagery. He identifies Whooper Swans by their long necks in flowing S-curve, with or without lifted wings, floating on water (figs. **48**, **55**, **66**, **67**).⁹⁷³ Whooper Swans – in French, German, and Spanish known as ‘singing’ swans – measure 140 to 165 centimetres in length and weigh up to twenty kilos; they need large areas of water as they spend much time swimming because their legs cannot support their body weight for long but they are magnificent fliers with a wingspan of 205 to 275 centimetres. Migratory, they winter close to coastal areas preferably in low agricultural land.⁹⁷⁴

The different species of Anserini vary greatly in size, weight, and coloring. Body shape is generally broad and elongated; both geese and swans have relatively long necks and small heads with medium length bill of broad conical shape.⁹⁷⁵ In comparison to geese, swans have the largest neck of any bird (may be larger than their bodies) and the habit of carrying it curved and their wings fluffed. Neck and feet are proportionally larger but legs shorter than those of geese. Because their legs are set back on the body, they must run about six meters before they can take off. Tails of Anserini are relatively short, square or slightly rounded; the prevalent color of wild (‘true’) geese is gray, of swans white. Being heavy with broad bodies and relatively short legs they waddle rather than walk, but are good swimmers and powerful flyers. Swans can measure over 180 cm in length and over 240 cm in wingspan. The habitat of Anserini are lakes, marshes, streams, ponds, or reservoirs; their bodies ideally suited for aquatic life and they spend much time sitting on water. Both geese and swans usually occupy the same territory lifelong, defending it aggressively (“permanent pair bonds seem to be essential in extremely territorial ... species”⁹⁷⁶). Flocks of geese and swans are usu-

⁹⁷² Salim et al. 2009: 209. For pictures, see Hoyo 1992: pls. 40, 41; for on-line photos, see: <http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.deu/site/accounts/pictures/Anserinae.html>. See also, Janković 2004: 7-8.

⁹⁷³ For a list of birds in southern Iraq including Whooper Swan, see Salim et al. 2009: 209. Battini’s statement (2006: 60-61 nn. 20, 21) that the climate in Iraq is too warm for swans and there were no swans in ancient Iraq cannot be sustained. On identification of u_5 - bi_2 -bird with swan, see Veldhuis 2004: 295-296.

⁹⁷⁴ Hoyo, Elliott, and Cabot 1992: 578, pl. 40 no. 15. See also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whooper_Swan.

⁹⁷⁵ My descriptions of geese and swans are based on Hoyo, Elliott, and Cabot 1992: 536-585 and the following websites: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anser_\(genus\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anser_(genus)); http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swan_goose; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swan>.

⁹⁷⁶ Hoyo, Elliott, and Cabot 1992: 555.

ally composed of one family, occasionally of a few; they remain together as family into the first winter but often longer thus maintaining bonds with their relatives. Anserini's vocal expression is extremely well developed and important in communication. Sounds can be loud, far-carrying, or alarming; therefore geese often substitute for watchdogs.

Because goose and swan are closely related, they share several qualities and behavioral characteristics from which derive symbolisms of goose and swan attested in cultures worldwide.⁹⁷⁷ Their relationship with humans is the closest and longest of any birds with the exception of Galiformes (i.e., game birds, turkey, grouse, chicken, quail partridge, pheasant).⁹⁷⁸ Nearly world wide, Anserini are symbols for fidelity, married life, extreme protection of their young but also for mating behavior and family bonds because they are analogous to human ideals. Further, the goose is a symbol for vigilance, protection, bravery, loyalty, communication, fellowship, teamwork, as well as destiny and providence, and considered clever and incorruptible.⁹⁷⁹ Ancient Romans noticed that geese had premonitions of stormy weather and used geese in dream interpretation.⁹⁸⁰ Although renowned for gracefulness, swans can be belligerent and bark like a dog, but it is the goose that is considered a good 'watchdog' – their alerting sounds reputedly saved Rome in 390 BCE from being attacked by the Gauls; they were kept on the Capitoline Hill in memory of having saved the city.⁹⁸¹ Although to ancient Greeks the loud cackle of geese was also annoying and ugly, they were nevertheless considered 'holy animals'.

In legends, folklore, mythology, and as symbolic birds, goose and swan are often interchangeable, as in Aesop's fable *The Swan that was caught instead of the Goose*.⁹⁸² Swans or geese are also associated with goddesses as,

⁹⁷⁷ E.g., J.C. Cooper 1995: 114-115; 232-233: In comparison there is little evidence for the symbolism of cormorants, see *ibid.* 104-105.

⁹⁷⁸ Hoyo, Elliott, and Cabot 1992: 562-564.

⁹⁷⁹ J.C. Cooper 1995: 114-115; Werness 2004: 198-200.

⁹⁸⁰ Hünemörder 1998: 780. See also Nanše's function as dream interpreter, Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. "Nanše": 154 § 6.

Birds also play a role in omens, cf. Maul 2003-2005: 58, 59, 60. Omens based on the flight pattern of birds are first attested in the Old Babylonian period and involve at least six different birds: heron, eagle, hunting falcon, and three unidentified species (Weisberg 1969-1970; cf. Maul 2003-2005: 85-86 § 12). Oppenheim (1977: 210) remarked that "unprovoked omens given by birds are rather frequently mentioned in cuneiform texts"; see now also Jancović 2004: 23-26.

⁹⁸¹ Hünemörder 1998: 780; that they were Juno's geese it not generally recognized. In the context of 'House of Sleep' Ovid wrote about the goose in comparison to the dog "no watchdog breaks the deep silence with his baying, or goose, more watchful than the dog (Metamorphoses XI: 598-599).

⁹⁸² Perry 1975: 495-496 no. 399.

for example, Hera, Aphrodite, Venus, and the ancient Vedic-Hindu goddess Sarasvatī.⁹⁸³

There are few unambiguous images of a goose or a swan in Mesopotamian art. Some images apparently distinguish the species by representing swans with very long S-curved necks and without legs, often gliding over water for which they were and are still admired (figs. **48, 55, 58, 66, 67, 68**); some are depicted with lifted (fluffed) wings (figs. **66, 67**).⁹⁸⁴ The main distinctions in depictions of swan and goose are that the latter have less curved (just slightly bent) necks (figs. **56-58**), and often stand on legs (figs. **54, 58**).⁹⁸⁵ That swan and goose are not always distinguishable, in particular in seal imagery, is also due to minimal size. In general, imprecise rendering of birds as well as other animals is common on seals,⁹⁸⁶ the reason why archaeologist often use scientific terms for family (e.g., Bovidae, Cervidae) or subfamily (e.g., Bovinae, Caprinae).

Confusing swan with goose was relatively common, even for the cook in Aesop's Fable mentioned above. The difficulty to differentiate them in the Sumerian lexical corpus is also mirrored in translations of the Sanskrit word *hamṣa* with goose, swan, flamingo.⁹⁸⁷ According to Jean Philippe Vogel, *hamṣa* is to be translated with goose, in ancient India "a noble bird *par excellence*, ... embodied with highest virtues", also represented on religious monuments. Swans rarely appear in India and some images of geese resemble those in ancient Mesopotamian images.⁹⁸⁸

Wild Anserini are winter visitors in southern Iraq which is reflected in the geographic distribution of their depictions, with few exceptions, on seals from southern Iraqi sites. In addition to the above-mentioned figures of 'god-

⁹⁸³ Hünemörder 1998; 2001; Vogel 1962: 16; Kinsley 1988: 55-64; Shaw 2006: 234-2243; Foulston and Abbott 2009: 27-28; Werness 2004: 198-200, 395-379.

Much information is contained in following on-line websites:

on goose: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anser_\(genus\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anser_(genus))

on Swan Goose: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swan_Goose

on swan: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swan>

on whooper swan: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Whooper_Swan.

⁹⁸⁴ Collon 1982: nos. 287, 288; Delaporte 1923: A.189, A.190; Legrain 1951: nos. 249-251, 252, 255, 264; Parrot 1948: pl. 30 nos. 36, 69, 532, 1569; Porada 1948: no. 260.

⁹⁸⁵ Parrot 1954: nos. 18-26, 31-34; Legrain 1951: nos. 247, 250-255; see also Veldhuis 2004: 336 fig. 16 (goose); Salim et al. 2009: 209.

⁹⁸⁶ For examples of birds, see Delaporte 1923: A.206, A.208, A.211; Legrain 1925: nos. 233, 234; 1951: nos. 329, 336, 352; Parrot 1954: no. 248; Porada 1948: nos. 284, 285; Woolley 1934: no. 384.

⁹⁸⁷ Mylius 2001: 527. Vogel (1962: 1-3) argues that European dictionaries translate *hamṣa* primarily "swan" or "flamingo" and only secondarily "goose", has to be credited to the negative view geese have in Western countries and that Indian scholars followed their Western colleagues in their preference for swans. However, in old Indian literature *hamṣa* means predominantly, if not invariably "goose".

⁹⁸⁸ Cf. Vogel 1962: 1-2, pls. 3, 8, 12d.

dess seated on Anserini (goose or swan)' and 'goddess with *bird* standard' from Lagaš and Ur, the following images with Anserini also come from these two sites:⁹⁸⁹

1. Two register seals with presentation scene and row of swimming Anserini (figs. **48, 66**).⁹⁹⁰
2. Anserinus (or bird) placed between worshipper and 'leading Lamma' (figs. **68, 69, 70**).⁹⁹¹
3. Anserini in contexts without a deity.⁹⁹²
4. Swimming Anserini often with lifted wings (figs. **66, 67**).⁹⁹³

All provenanced seals with scorpions in the upper register and swimming Anserini in the lower one come from Tello (fig. **67**).⁹⁹⁴ Not attested in Tello but in Ur, Nippur, and with one example from Ešnunna is an Anserinus behind seated goddess, its head turned away from her; the logical sequence bird behind worshipper is often not visible on ancient or modern impressions.⁹⁹⁵ The widest distribution is the presentation scene with Anserinus or another bird before and with its head turned to the principal goddess (figs. **68-70**). Most examples come from Ur, followed by Tello, and only a single example each comes from Uruk (fig. **70**), Umma, Nippur, Larsa, and Ešnunna.⁹⁹⁶ Occasionally the bird's head turns away from the seated goddess towards 'temple Lamma' and worshipper.⁹⁹⁷

Anserini are predominantly either directly or indirectly associated with the principal goddess in presentation scenes.⁹⁹⁸ Identity of this principal god-

⁹⁸⁹ This is based on published predominantly provenanced seals and seal impressions.

⁹⁹⁰ Parrot 1948: pl. 30 nos. 69, 1569; 1954: nos. 30-33, 41; Legrain 1951: nos. 247-256.

⁹⁹¹ Cf. Fischer 1997: 123-124 notes 144, 146, 150, 151; Woolley 1934: nos. 387, 388; Legrain 1951: nos. 347, 365, 367.

The bird is placed before or behind the goddess where otherwise an altar, offering table or 'vessel' would stand on Akkadian/early Neo-Sumerian seals (in this volume figs. 14-20, 24, 33), and occasionally on Ur III seals: fig. 46, 52, 54.

⁹⁹² Parrot 1954: nos. 34, 35; Legrain 1951: nos. 222, 256 (= Collon 1986: no. 361), 264; Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pl. 62 U.16631; Collon 1982: no. 363.

⁹⁹³ Parrot 1954: pl. 2; Legrain 1951: nos. 257, 258.

⁹⁹⁴ Parrot 1948: pl. 30 no. 36; 1954: nos. 18-21.

⁹⁹⁵ Legrain 1951: nos. 329, 352, 365; McCown et al. 1967: pl. 110 no. 3; Legrain 1925: no. 246; Frankfort 1955: no. 706.

⁹⁹⁶ From province of Lagaš: Delaporte 1920: T.167; Parrot 1954: no. 140; Moortgat 1940 nos. 271, 271; from Ur: Legrain 1951: nos. 347, 367; Woolley 1934: nos. 386, 387; Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pl. 62 U. 16720; Collon 1982: no. 351; from Umma: Mayr 1997: no. 893.2; from Nippur: McCown et al. 1967: pl. 110 no. 6; from Larsa: Parrot 1954: no. 149; from Ešnunna (Tell Asmar): Frankfort 1955: no. 768.

⁹⁹⁷ Parrot 1948: no. 134; Collon 1982: no. 415.

⁹⁹⁸ Rare in provenanced seals is association of bird with a god (Delaporte 1920: T. 205; Mayr 1997: no. 241 (falcon?), Fischer 1997: 123 note 144 (at end of note), 125 note 153), or king (Frankfort 1955: nos. 764, 775, 932).

ness as well as symbolism or metaphoric meaning of the birds is controversial. A bird can have multiple meaning, as the raven that is ‘messenger of the deities’ and attribute of Enlil, Enki, and Inana.⁹⁹⁹ Although written evidence of goose or swan symbolism is rare, in visual images they appear as symbol or attribute of deities, or as signifying element. As already mentioned, in many parts of the world Anserini are symbols of love, marital union and fidelity, vigilance (especially geese), and also a metaphor for the transcendental nature of deities, implying that deities ‘fly’ to their heavenly abode.¹⁰⁰⁰ Sitting on a large bird or birds also suggests dominance.

Returning to the question of the bird species described at the beginning of *Nanše and the Birds*, some traits are characteristic of Anserini (Veldhuis 2004: 117 lines 1-9):

The $u_5^{mu\check{s}en}$ [came forth] from the pure reed-beds.
 It came forth from the pure reed-beds.
 The wise $u_5^{mu\check{s}en}$ spent the day high in the skies.
 The $u_5^{mu\check{s}en}$ cried out in the sky;
 Its honking was sweet, its voice [was pleasing].
 My Mistress [was attracted by] her $u_5^{mu\check{s}en}$.
 Queen mother Nanše [was attracted by] her $u_5^{mu\check{s}en}$.
 I am the Queen, how beautiful is my $u_5^{mu\check{s}en}$ and how beautiful am I!
 I am Nanše, how beautiful is my $u_5^{mu\check{s}en}$ and how beautiful am I!

In the following passage the goddess descends on earth implying she was flying like a bird (Veldhuis 2004: 118 lines 10-14):

She herself [descended] upon the water like a large $u_5^{mu\check{s}en}$.
 Stepping onto earth from heaven,
 she [stood] in the water like a pure wild cow.
 A $u_5^{mu\check{s}en}-ku_3$, a white wild cow [drank] water at the water side.
 She was clothed in huge waves.

Several of her epithets follow this metaphoric description of Nanše, and the introductory passage ends with following lines (Veldhuis 2004: 20-22):

Nanše, delighted in her $u_5^{mu\check{s}en}$,
 erected a lapis lazuli shrine
 and set the $u_5^{mu\check{s}en}-ku_3$ at her feet.

Flying all day, honking, descending on water, as well as the reference to the color white are the characteristics of the bird ‘delighting’ Nanše, which may

⁹⁹⁹ Veldhuis 2004: 299-301; Weszeli 2006-2008..

¹⁰⁰⁰ E.g., Vogel 1962; J.C. Cooper 1995: 114-115, 232-233.

be a swan rather than a goose, in particular because the “sweet honking” sound is not typical for a goose, whose cackling is the opposite of sweet. But, as discussed, in some seal images the bird looks more like goose (fig. 54), in comparison to the swan crowning the standard (fig. 55). One image (fig. 58) seems to depict both, a goose either serving as or decorating the throne upon which the goddess sits and a swan beneath her feet.

Considering the evidence of mistaking a goose for a swan or vice versa, and that Nanše was the goddess of birds, Anserini – whether goose or swan – may have been used as her symbol or attribute, in particular as both waterfowl exhibit qualities well suited to the functions of the goddess.

In folklore, legend and myths worldwide swans are admired for their gracefulness and geese are often said to be wise. Wisdom is also a quality ascribed to swans, and while the goose is associated with dream interpretation and premonition, the swan is a vehicle for divination.¹⁰⁰¹ In the Early Dynastic period Nanše had a sanctuary named ‘house of wisdom’ (igi-ĝal₂) and she was the only goddess whose temple staff includes a ‘wise person’ (abgal₂-dNanše);¹⁰⁰² Anserini may be a symbol of Nanše’s wisdom. Crediting the goose with providence in addition to wisdom probably originates from observation of geese having foresight by anticipating weather changes or emitting warning sounds in the event of danger; these characteristics may have been considered prophetic. Because of premonition, the goose may also symbolize Nanše’s function as dream interpreter. Analogous to the multiple functions of other goddesses depicted with different symbols or attributes (see above), different birds or other symbols/attributes may visualize Nanše’s various roles and functions. As Anserini are also associated with other goddesses and occasionally gods or king, this may be due to their specific qualities and characteristics.

Animals with symbolic function generally do not play a role in the economy, are wild, and have a specific characteristic such as speed, strength, or other abilities or special skill.¹⁰⁰³ This is exemplified by cross-culturally popular symbolic animals, such as lion, bull, eagle, goose, and swan. The u₅-bird associated with Nanše may be a wild goose, swan goose or Whooper

¹⁰⁰¹ Hünemörder 1998: 780; 2001: 273; cf. the Vedic-Hindu goddess Saravati who personifies wisdom: Foulston and Abbott 2009: 27-28. Dream interpretation is also one of Nanše’s functions: Heimpel 1998-2001: 154 s.v. “Nanše”.

¹⁰⁰² For Nanše’s association with wisdom, see Selz 1995: 183, 206. On the abgal₂ of Nanše, see D. Foxvog in N.A.B.U. 2007/4 no. 67. Anserini, water and wisdom are also associated with the ancient Vedic goddess Sarasvati: Kinsley 1986: 55-57.

¹⁰⁰³ Borgeaud 1985. However, in first millennium Sippar, geese had economic function, were domesticated or caught by professional bird catchers, see Janković 2004 and review by MacGinnis 2005/2006.

Swan (see above).¹⁰⁰⁴ The kur-gi₄-birds (also translated with goose¹⁰⁰⁵) included in the bridal gifts for BaU listed in the inscriptions on Gudea's statues E and G are not symbolic or emblematic birds of BaU but probably domesticated geese (translation uncertain) consumed at the festive meal because they are listed among ox, sheep, rams, lambs, dates, ghee, palm hearts, figs, fish, gambi-birds.¹⁰⁰⁶

In the province of Lagaš Anserini are the symbolic birds of Nanše but she is, like BaU, also represented *en face* without attribute as on the seal of the land registrar of her spouse Nindara.¹⁰⁰⁷ Comparable to written sources, where Nanše appears in different roles in different contexts, her *en face* image pertains to rank and role as proprietary deity of NINA.¹⁰⁰⁸ Visual representation in different roles is also attested for Ningal as spouse on the lap of Nanna (fig. 38b), as patroness of the king of Ur receiving his libation (fig. 38a, in second register), as patroness of Ur seated on a lion throne in a presentation scene (fig. 41). As mentioned, Ur is the only site apart from those in the Lagaš region with numerous images of a goddess associated with Anserini but there is only one low quality seal from Ur depicting a principal goddess with feet on a long-necked bird and seated on another bird (fig. 59).

Different iconographies – goddess seated on an Anserinus (figs. 57, 58, 59?), and/or with Anserinus below her feet (figs. 54, 58, 59), with 'Anserinus standard' (figs. 55, 56), or goddess with Anserinus or other bird in the image field at different levels before or behind her (figs. 68-70) – may have different meanings. Different positioning in images may specify association with a deity as well as the symbolic meaning of bird attribute, but does not necessarily undermine the symbolic power of bird attributes (see above). Behavioral characteristics of Anserini suggests amorous association, mating, conjugal attachment, and family life may be aspects of their association with goddesses, in particular those whose major role is that of divine spouse. Although this is the case with many goddesses but not exclusively as generally one spouse, either god or goddess, of the proprietary city couple is dominant.¹⁰⁰⁹ This is reflected by the fact that the vast majority of images of goddess with goose/swan before or behind her come from Ur, Nippur, and Umma, all cities with a dominant titular god, namely Nanna/Suen, Enlil, and Šara. Their spouses Ningal, Ninlil, and Ninura may be associated with

¹⁰⁰⁴ Cf. Fischer 1997: 122-124; Veldhuis 2004: 1, 46, 263-264, 269, esp. 294-295.

¹⁰⁰⁵ On geese (kur-gi^{mu}sen, Akkadian *kurkû*) as offerings to deities in the early Neo-Babylonian period, see Da Riva 2002: 259, 277-278 and Janković 2004: 23-26.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Edzard 1997: 44-49 statue E v 1-17 = statue G iii 5ff.; cf. Veldhuis 2004: 264.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Impressions of that seal are published in ITT II: pl. I no. 4272; III/2: pl. I no. 5931; ITT V: pl. I no. 10020 (see Braun-Holzinger 1998-2001: s.v. "Nanše" p.162 § 4).

¹⁰⁰⁸ Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. "Nanše"; Veldhuis 2004: 29.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Krebernik 2002: 36.

Anserini as symbols of love, divine marital union, and protection of their city and citizens. I think this metaphor is more cogent than the rather general symbol of fertility and life proposed by Laura Battini (2006) who identifies the ‘goddess with goose’ on terracotta reliefs as Inana (see below section 5). That women often owned a seal depicting a goddess associated with Anserini may be due to the metaphorical meaning of the latter but also confirms Brigitte Groneberg’s observation that “in general, it seems that especially goddesses who function as partners of gods were chosen by women to fulfil their own religious needs”.¹⁰¹⁰

The image of goddess with goose/swan before or behind her pertains to her role as divine patroness and protectress of her city and its inhabitants – inherent in the epithet ‘mother (ama) of city so-and-so’ – but she may also be represented in different roles. Not all birds depicted on seals seem to represent Anserini. For example, the bird with relatively long legs and slanted tail on a seal from Uruk owned by a man called Šu-Ninšubura (fig. 70) may depict a raven (although in proportion to the body the legs are too long), the bird associated with Inana.

Various associations seem to pertain to different symbolism of Anserini or visual metaphors where, however, the specific meaning is rarely evident in the composition.¹⁰¹¹ Those Anserini – not serving as or decorating a throne or head of a standard – placed before the enthroned goddess or elsewhere in the image field are primarily a feminine symbol or attribute. They are occasionally associated with one or more scorpions (figs. 48, 58, 67), another feminine attribute associated with fertility supplementing Anserini symbolism of love, couple and family life.¹⁰¹² Images of rows of Anserini gliding over water may indicate location of a temple or sanctuary near water where birds assemble (figs. 48, 66) or, where geese are depicted, also allude to their guardian-function. The flexible symbolism derived from the habits of Anserini is well suited for goddesses with multifaceted character or multiple functions.

3.4. Neo-Sumerian ‘Conservatism’

Akkadian visual variety of mythological and religious scenes with numerous thematic innovations was replaced in the Neo-Sumerian period by one dominant ‘devotional’ image: enthroned principal deity to whom the worshipper is presented; all other ritual images are marginal, in particular on seals. This

¹⁰¹⁰ Groneberg 2007: 327.

¹⁰¹¹ Veldhuis 2004: 213-305. Many references are to birds as food or have a negative connotation.

¹⁰¹² Pientka 2004: 397. Anserini with and without scorpion are shown on several seals depicting no deity but women: e.g., Parrot 1954: nos. 34, 35; Legrain 1951: no. 255.

concentration on an ‘old’ theme, the use of canonical forms (principal deity, Lamma(s), worshipper) in the iconographical repertoire and the compositional structure reflect a conservative attitude in the visualization of divinities. As mentioned, the Akkadian period brought changes eliciting subsequent adverse reaction, and it is a recurrent phenomenon in history that after a period of change, follows a period of restoration coupled with nostalgia for ‘good old times’ which in Ur III Sumer would be the Early Dynastic period. The influence of traditional values is evident in the conception of religious images, and the concept of ‘recognizability’ intensified the tendency towards ‘uniformity’.¹⁰¹³ To us, in general, innovations and/or changes in the visual arts of the third millennium may not appear dramatic because iconography remains stereotypical, structure and composition show relatively few innovations. However, the options for innovative designs were limited because ‘visual stability’ guaranteed ‘recognizability’ but is also rooted in the concept of permanent, eternal and stable divine essence. Another explanation, proposed by Julia Assante (2002: 3) for the conservatism of Old Babylonian terracottas, is that efficacy of the images depended to a great degree on suppressing human authorship. However, lack of individuality in anthropomorphic figures is not an issue of authorship, unless it concerned cult statues (see below). The few works signed by an artist and representing individual men are not portraits but stereotypical images, although of comparatively high quality.¹⁰¹⁴

Neo-Sumerian predominant iconic figure – enthroned deity – visualizes divine powers as guarantors of order, stability, prosperity, and perpetuity. Occasionally – more often with gods than goddesses – a divine domain or function is indicated. The secondary figures of ‘protective goddesses’ (Lamma) emphasize hope for positive divine intervention and protection. These aspects suggest Akkadian mythological scenes (many violent) as well as images only depicting deities no longer appealed to the psychological needs as did the more traditional religious images of worship. With the main focus on religious ritual, images of goddesses gained importance because their presence in religion, cult, and ritual equalled that of gods. But goddesses owe their prominence in seal images also to their roles as ‘life-givers’, protectors, mediators, beneficent and intercessory functions. In general, goddesses were more approachable than gods and people turned to them like Gudea who consults several goddesses, his divine mother Ĝatumdug first,

¹⁰¹³ A. Westenholz 1999: 56-59. Assante 2002: 3, 20.

¹⁰¹⁴ For the periods from Early Dynastic to Old Babylonian, three examples are known to me: two Early Dynastic reliefs: Asher-Greve 2006: 47-48, 59, and the Old Babylonian statue of Lu-Nanna: Mahrzahn et al. 2008: 196-197 fig. 125; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 279-280 St. 172; Frayne 1990: 360 no. 2002; cf. for similar statues Spycket 1981: 246-247. On artists and artisans in general, see D. Matthews 1995.

before he understands what Ninĝirsu wants from him.¹⁰¹⁵ When Ur-Namma died, it was because An and Enlil had changed his fate but it was Ninmah who laments his death and Ninsumuna who cried (Ur-Namma A 15-19):¹⁰¹⁶

The mother, miserable because of her son,
the mother of the king, holy Ninsumuna was crying “Oh my heart!”
Because of the fate decreed for Urnamma,
because it made the trustworthy shepherd pass away,
she was weeping bitterly.

Although goddesses rule over cities and people and decide their destinies they are more often than gods described as understanding and compassionate.

4. Statues

Mesopotamian religion was iconic, with cults centered on divine cult statues. Presence of deities in images was paramount as there could be no ritual without divine icon.¹⁰¹⁷ The Sumerian word for statue *alam*, *šalmu* in Akkadian, describes a three-dimensional figure representing a deity or human.¹⁰¹⁸ ‘Cult statue’ and ‘cult image’ are modern academic concepts and, although I use these terms, they do not correspond to the ancient Mesopotamian notion of divinities being identical with their statues which were considered and treated as if alive. Their temples were called ‘house’ (Sumerian *e₂*, Akkadian *bītu(m)*), constructed with state and living rooms, bed rooms and kitchen, all equipped with furniture. The cult statues were washed, combed, dressed, fed, carried in processions, went on voyages to visit other deities, or travelled to other shrines.¹⁰¹⁹ As deity and image are identical, losing the image – through destruction or taken as booty – meant losing the deity at that location.¹⁰²⁰ In accordance with the concept of ‘fluidity’ of divine embodiment, a deity could be present simultaneously in several bodies, however, it may not have been permanent as a deity could enter as well as leave a statue.¹⁰²¹

¹⁰¹⁵ Edzard 1997: 69ff. Cylinder A; Suter 2000.

¹⁰¹⁶ *The Death of Ur-Namma*, available on-line at ETCSL 2.4.1.1.

¹⁰¹⁷ The literature on this topic is considerable; see Berlejung 1998; Walker and Dick 1999; 2001; Dick 2005; Hurowitz 2003; Sigrist 2004; Alster 2005b: 16 (with references to earlier literature); Levtow 2008; Tohrū 2008 (Ur III); Sommer 2009; Reynolds 2010.

¹⁰¹⁸ CAD S: 78-85; Berlejung 1998: 62-66. According to Sommer (2009: 22) *šalmu* is to be understood as “incarnation, whose substance was identical with that of the deity”.

¹⁰¹⁹ Maul 2008; see also Walker and Dick 1999: 66-67; J.G. Westenholz and A. Westenholz 2006: 21-22; Wagensohnner 2007; Tohrū 2008. The food for the deities included sheep and oxen symbolizing earth, birds symbolizing heaven, and fish symbolizing ocean (Maul 2008: 79).

¹⁰²⁰ For a description of the destruction of a cult statue, see most recently Dahl 2011.

¹⁰²¹ See last on this issue (with references to previous studies): Sommer 2009: 12-24.

Texts describe deities in terms of perfection and therefore divine statues either created themselves or were created by other deities – “statue born in heaven”.¹⁰²² One of the goddesses involved in making statues of deities is Ninmuga, goddess of artisanship and birth as well as patron goddess of metal working.¹⁰²³ The fact cult statues were man-made was ritually eliminated by symbolically cutting off the hands of artists and artisans who had to swear they did not make the statue.¹⁰²⁴ Before a statue became a cult statue it had to be purified and transformed into deity by means of an elaborate ritual known as *mīs pî* (‘mouth opening’), accompanied by incantations.¹⁰²⁵ Cult statues and the ‘mouth opening’ rite are attested first in the Early Dynastic III period.¹⁰²⁶

The human body served as matrix for cult statues although divine statues did not mimetically copy human form and appearance because according to Mesopotamian notion deities are beyond human conception.¹⁰²⁷ Cult statues of important deities were approximately human sized but appeared larger as they were placed on pedestals; statues of minor deities measured between thirty and sixty centimetres. Reality is no referent for cult statues as their appearance was intended as otherworldly. Divinity was emphasized by lustrous, unusual and partly unnatural colouring, such as shiny silver or golden skin, blue ears and hair, extremely symmetrical features, accentuated eyes, eyebrows, ears, mouth, and hands.¹⁰²⁸ The body parts were given special names and in metaphorical description of a deity’s body “the human and animal was selected for a particularly striking physical feature”.¹⁰²⁹ Additionally, each statue had luxurious garments and jewellery, especially made for deities.¹⁰³⁰ Tiaras and garments were the most important symbols of divinity and removing them was therefore a dangerous act.¹⁰³¹

¹⁰²² Walker and Dick 2001: 163 line 23ab (translation p. 184); 1999: 64-65 with note 33 (‘Esarhaddon’s renewal of the Gods’); cf. Hurowitz 2003: 149-155. Dick 2005: 60-61. See also Early Dynastic references to statues being ‘born’ (tud): Behrens and Steible 1983: 25-26, 332-334; Selz 1992b; Asher-Greve 1998: 31 nn. 15, 16. On creation of cult statues, see also Berlejung 1998: 80-110, 172-177. Cf. in this volume Chapters II.D.1 with nn. 476, 477 and III.B.1.

¹⁰²³ Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-muga”.

¹⁰²⁴ Walker and Dick 2001: Niniveh Ritual lines 173-186, Babylon Ritual line 52, Incantation Tablet 3 lines 83ab-86ab.

¹⁰²⁵ Walker and Dick 2001; Hurowitz 2003; Levtow 2008. Similar rituals are known from ancient Egypt and contemporary India, see articles by D. Lorton and J.P. Waghorne in Dick (ed.) 1999.

¹⁰²⁶ Alster 2005: 16; Cunningham 1997: 75-76, 163; Dick 2005.

¹⁰²⁷ On anthropomorphic form, see Berlejung 1998: 62-66; cf. also Chapter IV.A and IV.B in this volume.

¹⁰²⁸ Berlejung 1998: 35-61; Reynolds 2010.

¹⁰²⁹ Reynolds 2010 (quote p. 249).

¹⁰³⁰ Berlejung 1998: 35-61; cf. 117-134; Postgate 2009-2011: 235-236 § 4.

¹⁰³¹ Waetzoldt 1980-1983: 28-30 §10 g; Matsushima 1993; Zawadski 2006.

An inkling of cult statues' luxuriance may be gained from a miniature composite figurine recently excavated at Ebla whose robe is totally covered with gold.¹⁰³² Rare and precious materials pertained to divine essence and immortality; brilliant, glowing shine evoked awe and 'holy shiver'. To Gebhard J. Selz it was because of their function why cult statues were intentionally *not* made of imperishable material because diverse materials 'caused' the deity's presence on earth and the composite divine body radiated into the cosmos.¹⁰³³

While individuals identified with their representation in stone statues, the multi-material anthropomorphic icon is just one form of divine manifestation as deities were also manifest in other forms such as astral bodies, animals, water, wind, rain, plants, or symbols.¹⁰³⁴ According to Berlejung (1998: 60), cult images were complex and part of an ensemble, nevertheless symmetry, "Prägnanz" (full of meaning), continuity, and similarity of parts contributed to recognizability.

Not only materiality of divine figures was important but also their appearance distinguishing them from statues of mortals as well as the *mise en scene* evident in the concept of temple complexes and the cult statue's placement in a cella. Although visual construction focused on cult statues, it extended to their (unattached) symbols, attributes, other statues as well as votive objects surrounding the iconic statue or placed in the same temple.

The cult statue was an agent of divine communication and the deity's 'epiphany' had to be achieved by specific rituals.¹⁰³⁵ Incorporation and involvement of the cult statue into ritual activity was an essential aspect of Mesopotamian religion. Image and cult were inseparable but the concept that a three-dimensional statue is '*Sitz der Gottheit*' (abode of the deity) and belief in its efficacy is not specific to Mesopotamian civilization and also attested in ancient Greece and to some extent is also valid for icons.¹⁰³⁶

Cult statues are attested in Early Dynastic royal inscriptions from Lagaš/Ĝirsu; the earliest evidence are the statues Ur-Nanše created for several deities.¹⁰³⁷ However, no genuine cult statue of a deity venerated in a major Mesopotamian sanctuary was ever found *in situ* and no preserved divine

¹⁰³² Merola 2008 (with color photographs); Matthiae 2009; on materials for statues and specialist artisans, see Sigrist 2004.

¹⁰³³ Selz 2001: 392-393. The focus of Selz's article is on stones, diorite as material of royal statues and the function of these statues; statues of deities are only mentioned in the summary. On 'radiance', see I.J. Winter 1994.

¹⁰³⁴ On cult statues of rulers and wives of rulers made of precious materials, see Selz 1992b.

¹⁰³⁵ Berlejung 1998; Dick 2005.

¹⁰³⁶ Antonova 2010 (on icons); Scheer 2000: 44-129; cf. Mylonopoulos 2010. On divine presence in image and perception, see also in this volume Chapter IV.B.

¹⁰³⁷ Frayne 2008: e.g., pp. 89-93 no. 6b vi 3-vii 6, pp. 95-96 no. 9, pp. 97-98 no. 11, pp. 103-104 no. 17.

image has been identified as cult statue.¹⁰³⁸ Due to this gap and the scarcity of other large images of deities it is often not fully realized that Babylonian religion was iconic, that cult, ritual, feasts, and veneration centered on anthropomorphic statues until ca. 1500 BCE when divine symbols replaced images of cult statues in numerous pictorial representations (see below section 7).

Archaeological records, written sources, and depictions of deities in genres other than three-dimensional statues attest that cult statues were venerated in temples. But there is also evidence of divine statues in palaces, and small neighbourhood shrines. Statues and statuettes found more or less *in situ* in palaces, neighbourhood shrines, or private houses are made of stone, bronze, shell, or terracotta.¹⁰³⁹ If composite materiality was essential for a deity's 'epiphany', the question is if statues made of basically one material – some have inlays of other materials and traces of color paint – were perceived as manifestation or rather as representation of a god or goddess. Written evidence is ambiguous as curses concerning destruction of monuments are inscribed on royal statues or steles both having functions different from that of cult statues. The functions of statues representing king, man, or woman was that of proxy and permanent worshipper; after death it became the object of ancestor cult.¹⁰⁴⁰ Destruction of an individual's statue impacted afterlife and ancestor cult, whereas destruction of a two-dimensional image on a stele may have been secondary to erasing the names.¹⁰⁴¹ The destruction of divine images on steles probably did not affect the deities' presence on earth. There is no evidence a deity was believed to be present in all image forms (e.g. on steles, other reliefs, seals, inlays, or small figurines) wherever the location or whatever the function of the image carrier. The commemorative function of a stele is expressed in inscribed text and visual representation, the event to be commemorated is of historical significance even where the image depicts a ritual, as on the steles of Ur-Nanše, Gudea, and Ur-Namma (figs. **5**, **36a**, **37a**, **38a**), or on the wall painting from the courtyard of Zimrilim's palace at Mari (fig. **76**).¹⁰⁴² Nearly all reliefs with two-dimensional images of deities pertain to official religion because monumental steles were the prerogative of rulers. Images of ceremonies or rituals with divine and human actors visualize the interrelationship of religion and political power. If deities

¹⁰³⁸ Seidl 1980-1983: 314-315; Selz 1990; Berlejung 1998: 37ff.

¹⁰³⁹ Berlejung 1998: 33. Exceptions are the two statuettes of women from the royal palace of Ebla (Merola 2008 (color photos); Matthiae 2009).

¹⁰⁴⁰ The cult of divinized kings (i.e. their statues) is attested, but it is unlikely that those kings not divinized also received offerings like a god.

¹⁰⁴¹ On erasing the name, see Radner 2005: 252-266. Steles are commemorative monuments and that some were transported to distant places – the steles of Naram-Sîn and Hammurabi to Susa – attests to the power of two-dimensional images.

¹⁰⁴² Suter 2000; Canby 2001; Parrot 1958: 53-64; plate A.

represented in these contexts were perceived by audiences in the same way as ‘true’ divine manifestation as in cult statues seems doubtful.¹⁰⁴³ Apparently two-dimensional depictions of rituals before a deity intentionally do not imitate the ‘real’ cult statue which may be deduced from the robes and colors in the wall painting from the ‘audience hall’ of Zimrilim’s palace at Mari (fig. 77).¹⁰⁴⁴ That Ištar as well as minor goddess and king wear robes with the same pattern and colors (only the god in the lower register wears a white garment), and that all figures have dark faces contradicts descriptions of cult statues having bright and shining faces, each wearing different robes of different colors and material.¹⁰⁴⁵

A significant difference between embodiment in three-dimensional form or two-dimensional image concerns visual perception. From the external viewpoint of audiences, *seeing* the deity in profile does not elicit the same awe and ‘holy shiver’ as facing the deity in its statue. The essence of an image changes with its optical representation; profile images, contrary to three-dimensional statues, represent figures *pars pro toto* and exclude face to face encounter outside of the profile figures’ space. Profile is the form of narrative, interaction and communication internal to the image; it transmits religious and other meanings to external viewers without engaging them. The visual form of the sacred is frontality and therefore statues constituted the centre of cult, rituals, feasts, offerings, veneration, and worship.

What remained of composite cult statues are their ‘pictures’ in relief or wall painting as, for example, Neo-Assyrian reliefs depicting the procession of deities, or the deportation of divine statues by Assyrian soldiers (fig. 78), or on Kassite and Neo-Babylonian reliefs (figs. 149-151).¹⁰⁴⁶ The two main causes for the total loss of cult statues are destruction and decay. Organic materials such as wood for the core of the body, clothes and leather for the garments and accessories decayed; precious stones and metals were stolen or reused. Cult statues were main targets for victors who mutilated, destroyed, or deported the deities of their enemies to deprive them of divine protection and powers.¹⁰⁴⁷ Selz suggests that destruction of the statues of deities were comprehended as their death in a localized sense as they remained somewhere in a form other than their epiphany on earth.¹⁰⁴⁸ A symbol like the

¹⁰⁴³ Berlejung 1998: 61.

¹⁰⁴⁴ For a reconstruction in color, see Parrot 1958: pl. E; Parrot 1960: figs. 348 A and B.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Berlejung 1998: 33-61; Zawadski 2006. Note that statues of deceased kings can receive the same type of robe as secondary deities (J.G. Westenholz and A. Westenholz 2006: 12).

¹⁰⁴⁶ On images of cult statues on seals, see Collon 2007; cf. Walker and Dick 1999. For depictions of cult statues see, for example, Börker-Klähn 1982: Tafeln (plates) e.g. nos. 187a, 190, 205, 207-210, N 240, N 270.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Berlejung 1998: 38-61 and nn. 191, 120-134; Matsushima 1993: 216-217; Renger 1980-83; Seidl 1980-1983; Walker and Dick 2001: 5-6.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Selz 2001: 392, n. 43.

sun-disk of Šamaš could replace his cult statue temporarily until the lost statue was replaced. However, this could not be done unless there was a “replica of the original image” that could be used as model.¹⁰⁴⁹ The antiquity of the model was a sign of its authenticity, a reason why the form of a deity’s image remained stable over centuries.¹⁰⁵⁰ The tablet with an image of Šamaš (fig. 151) describes how Nabû-apla-iddina of Babylon (887-855 BCE) ‘made’ a new cult statue of Šamaš about two-hundred years after its destruction by the Sutiens between 1069 and 1049:¹⁰⁵¹

When a relief of his (Šamaš’s) image
 a fired clay (impression)
 of his appearance and attributes,
 was found across
 the Euphrates ...
 Nabû-nadin-šumi,
 the *šangû* priest of Sippar, the diviner,
 ...
 showed that relief of the image
 to Nabû-apla-iddina,
 the king, his lord, and when
 Nabû-apla-iddina,
 the king of Babylon,
 to whom the fashioning of such an image
 had been entrusted by (divine) command,
 beheld the image,
 his countenance brightened,
 his spirit rejoiced.
 To the fashioning of that image
 his (Nabû-nadin-šumi’s) attentions was directed and so,
 ...
 with reddish gold (and)
 lapis-lazuli he properly prepared
 the image of Šamaš, the great lord.

We can only imagine the artistic quality of cult statues made by the best artists.¹⁰⁵² However, a miniature terracotta head of a goddess (fig. 79) dating to the Ur III/Isin-Larsa period provides a slight idea of their high standards.¹⁰⁵³ Most existing stone and bronze statues of goddesses do not

¹⁰⁴⁹ Seidl 2000: 97, 99, 108-109; Woods 2004; cf. Walker and Dick 1999: 58-66.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Cf. Woods 2004 (with illustrations).

¹⁰⁵¹ Woods 2004: 44, 83-89 (quoted text lines iii 19-iv 20).

¹⁰⁵² The artisans involved in creating cult statues were a special group who apart from being highly talented were required to be wise, stable, intelligent and pure as their work was considered a cultic act; see Bjerlejung 1998: 114-120.

¹⁰⁵³ On this head, see also Seidl 1996.

compare in quality with this terracotta head. Even the life-size statue of a goddess from Mari is no substitute for a genuine cult statue as she represents a minor deity (fig. 80).¹⁰⁵⁴ Missing heads or fragmentary state render it often impossible to determine if a statue or statuette represents a goddess or high priestess because both wear the same type of robe.¹⁰⁵⁵ The majority of three-dimensional sculptures are of small size ranging between under ten to fifty-five centimetres; at 1.42 meters the ‘Mari goddess’ is the tallest (fig. 80).¹⁰⁵⁶ Cult statues of major deities were taller, their relative size to other figures usually expressed by seated position.

In view of the conceptualization of cult statues, stone statues of deities cannot replace composite cult statues if composite materiality is a precondition for identity between icon and deity. However this may not apply to minor deities as they are represented in stone and bronze statues some found *in situ*. Minor goddesses appear in their roles as intercessor between divine and human world, or as protectors, or as providers of abundance for families and habitats such as palaces and houses. Presumably they were believed to be present in these mostly small statues made of stone, bronze, or even less expensive materials. To achieve identity between material image and deity, inlays and paint may have insinuated composite materiality (figs. 80, 82, 86b/2, 87).¹⁰⁵⁷

4.1. The Temple of Ningal at Ur and the Goddess on Anserini

The temple of Ningal and the Ĝipar, residence of the en-priestesses of Nanna at Ur were originally two separate buildings joined into one complex in the Old Babylonian period (fig. 81).¹⁰⁵⁸ The Ĝipar was separated from the Ningal temple (rooms prefaced with ‘C’ on plan),¹⁰⁵⁹ by a long narrow corridor with only one entrance to the temple. The cella (C 27) is situated at the end of the middle axis leading from room C 3, through the open courtyard (C 7) and two suites of rooms (C 19/29 and C 21/22). The latter Woolley named

¹⁰⁵⁴ Parrot 1959: 5-11, pls. 4-6.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Spycket 1981: 144-145, 185-187, 229-231; Suter 2007: 334 (table 1).

¹⁰⁵⁶ Most measure between 8 and 20 centimeters; exceptional is the statue of the god Alla measuring 1 meter; see Spycket 1981: 186-187, 229-231.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Presumably all stone statues were painted; bronze statues often had gold plating. Renger 1980-1983: 311 § 5; for examples of inlays, gold-plating and paint on statues of gods and humans, see, e.g., André-Salvini 2008: 75-77 fig. 31, 80 fig. 34, 86 fig. 44.

Weadock 1958: 5-6, mentions that many votive objects dedicated to Ningal were found in the Ĝipar and minor gods of the Ningal temple are named in offering lists (with reference to H.H. Figulla 1953: 104-111, 176-180).

¹⁰⁵⁸ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 5-9, 40-63; Charpin 1986: 211-220; Richter 2004: 434-435.

¹⁰⁵⁹ On the name of the temple written É.NUN, see George 1992: 324 sub no. 31; J.G. Westenholz 2006: 40 and with nn. 28, 29.

“shrines for subsidiary gods” because the so-called ‘statue of BaU’ (fig. **82 a, b**) was found in room C 20 in front of the brick base.¹⁰⁶⁰ The cella (C 27) was separated from the suite C 21/22 by a raised platform from where five steps lead to another platform with a base for a statue (fig. **83**).¹⁰⁶¹ Next to the cella is a slightly larger chamber (C 28) equipped with a brick bench suitable for a bed, presumably the ‘bedroom’ where, according to its inscription, the statue of the en-priestesses Enanatuma was brought,¹⁰⁶² that was found in room C 22.¹⁰⁶³

Among the votive objects found in cella and rooms C 22, C 23 and C 27 are numerous fragments of stone vessels, some inscribed, a fragment of seated bull figure, some tablets,¹⁰⁶⁴ and, as mentioned, the statue dedicated to Ningal by Enanatuma, daughter of Išme-Dagan of Isin (1953-1935 BCE), zirru- and en-priestesses of Nanna.¹⁰⁶⁵ Fragments of a large stone tablet by the en-priestesses Enanedu were found below the main court (C 7).¹⁰⁶⁶ Enanedu, installed as en-priestesses of Nanna by her twin brother Warad-Sîn of Larsa (1834-1823) in his seventh year of reign, reports on rebuilding activities. Also mentioned is a throne with gold inlays and a bed for Ningal, a statue whose face was inlaid with silver and gold and for which regular offerings were established. This passage ends with a “curse against the one who might be tempted to remove the jewels from the statue or otherwise deface it”.¹⁰⁶⁷ Although it is not stated that this is a statue of a deity, the silver-golden face, regular offerings, and the mention of Ningal “the shining [broken]” as revenger in the curse indicate Enanedu set up Ningal’s cult statue. Some scholars suggest the statue mentioned by Enanedu is the same as that mentioned in a letter of Kudur-mabuk concerning gold-plating of a statue of the en-priestesses of Nanna.¹⁰⁶⁸ Gold plating of statues of highest-ranking living or deceased individuals was not exceptional; there are numerous references to gold statues of kings. Therefore the statue Enanedu had made and the one mentioned in Kudur-mabuk’s letter need not be identical.

The small statue (height 29 centimetres) found in room C 20 in front of a low brick base (fig. **82**) represents a seated woman whose body and throne

¹⁰⁶⁰ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 6.

¹⁰⁶¹ Woolley and Mallowan: 1976; 6, 58-59; pl. 9.

¹⁰⁶² Frayne 1990: 43-44 (1.4.13); Charpin 1986: 210-214; Richter 2004: 433-434.

¹⁰⁶³ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 6, 59.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 57-59; Charpin 1986: 206; van de Mierop 1989.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 57, 169, 223 (U.6352), pl. 55a (without head). On the statue of Enanatuma, see last Suter 2007: 329-330, 355, fig. 9 (restored image). See also Charpin 1986: 206. For the titles of Enanatuma, see Frayne 1990: 29-31 (1.4.3-4).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Frayne 1990: 224-231 no. 15.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Frayne 1990: 225.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Charpin 1986: 43; Frayne 1990: 225.

are well preserved while face and hands are damaged.¹⁰⁶⁹ The missing eyes and nose were made separately and the face may have been covered with gold or silver plating of which there are no traces left. Her hands are folded and her attire – flounced robe, multiple necklace and broad circlet on the head – is that of goddesses as well as of high priestesses. The hair is arranged in a chignon with long tresses on each side of her face and neck typical for goddesses but not for en-priestesses.¹⁰⁷⁰ The top of the head is flattened and has a hollowed-out rim with two holes for fixation of a headdress. Copper binding and copper nails were found in the same room as the statue and may have been discarded when the tiara was removed from the statue's head.¹⁰⁷¹ The throne is decorated with waves of water on the back and below the swimming Anserini. Whether geese or swans, is controversial, but in comparison with swans, the relatively short necks and compact bodies suggest geese. The small birds below the feet of the goddess may represent goslings. As discussed in the preceding chapter, no agreement exists among scholars on the identity of the species or goddesses associated with Anserini.

There are several suggestions for the identity of the statue from the Ningal temple at Ur: BaU, Gula, Ningal, or recently by Suter (2007) en-priestesses of Nanna. Although Suter concedes the iconography is indicative of a goddess, she argues for representation of en-priestesses in the role of Ningal. According to Suter's personification theory (discussed above) the en-priestesses "adopted the goose throne from Ningal, whom she personified as Nanna's wife".¹⁰⁷² There is no visual evidence of symbolic personifications by an en-priestesses and even the king as symbolic 'spouse' of Inana is pictured as human being (figs. 136-138). It seems rather implausible that an en-priestesses is depicted as personification of a goddess when the king in a comparable role is shown in human attire without any sign indicating he personifies Inana's spouse (see below section 6.2). As Brigitte Lion recently pointed out, an en-priestesses' function should be identifiable in visual representation.¹⁰⁷³

Concerning the identity of the goddess, there are arguments for and against Ningal. Steinkeller (1994) identifies her as Ningal because in his view the aquatic birds represent swans, in Sumerian *u₅-bi*-birds that appear

¹⁰⁶⁹ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 6, 56, 169, 225 (U. 6779B), pl. 54. For a good color photograph, see Hrouda 1991: 226.

¹⁰⁷⁰ The chignon resembles that of Ningal on the 'Ur-Namma stele' (fig. 38a, register II) and goddesses on Ur-III seals (e.g., figs. 47, 48, 70); see also Collon 1982: pl. 44; en-priestesses (where identifiable) wear long hair falling onto the back, see Suter 2007: 335-336 (concedes that the hair style is exceptional for an en-priestess: p. 331).

¹⁰⁷¹ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 56 *ad* room C 19/20.

¹⁰⁷² Suter 2007: 336.

¹⁰⁷³ Lion 2009: 178; see also in this Chapter section 2.

in literary contexts with Ningal. Joan G. Westenholz proposed connections between literary contexts, the month in Ur named “The Eating of the u₅-bi-bird”¹⁰⁷⁴ and Ningal’s epithet *zirru*, which she translates with ‘hen’ concluding “Ningal is the female bird to Nanna as the male bird”.¹⁰⁷⁵ However, various orthographic writings of the month of ‘Eating of u₅-birds’¹⁰⁷⁶ may indicate not *one* bird species but a family or subfamily was consumed during that month, perhaps depending on the yield of hunting. It is also possible that the designation ‘u₅’ – a component of all orthographic variations of that month’s name – may have classified Anatidae or the subfamily Anserinae rather than Anserini, i.e. just geese and swans. The existence of a special month of eating u₅-birds may be an indication that these were wild birds with symbolic meaning but without economic importance (see above).

As suggested, Anserini may be symbols of marital union, but when a goddess sits on them it signifies the bird is her symbol or attribute. There is no secure evidence that the u₅-bi-bird is the symbol of Ningal or that it means swan, but – as discussed above – Anserini are well suited as attribute of Nanna’s spouse.

No specific iconography or attribute is attested for Ningal but she is represented in different roles (figs. **38 a, b, 41**).¹⁰⁷⁷ Her character is rather non-descript, spouse of the moon-god Nanna, mother of the sun-god Utu, the gods Ningublaga, Numušda, and according to most common tradition also of Inana. As ‘mother (ama) of Ur’ it was believed she gave birth to the city, and together with Nanna she rules over Ur and is involved in kingship matters (Zgoll 1998-2001). In the Ningal temple the main cult statue of Ningal was set up in the cella (C 27) but other statues of Ningal may have been set up showing her in different aspects; if these were of same or smaller size than the central cult statue is unknown.¹⁰⁷⁸ Cult statues were also surrounded by statues of deities of different rank in the pantheon and at least some may have been of rather small size and were set up in an antechamber.¹⁰⁷⁹

Among the deities who received offerings or are attested otherwise in Ur during the Isin-Larsa period is Nanše who received offerings together with Ningal.¹⁰⁸⁰ As mentioned, there is only one low quality seal image from Ur

¹⁰⁷⁴ Sallaberger 1993: 195; the month is named after a minor festival for Ningal’s spouse Nanna.

¹⁰⁷⁵ J.G. Westenholz 1989: 542-544.

¹⁰⁷⁶ See M.E. Cohen 1993: 147-148.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Braun-Holzinger 1998-2001: s.v. “Ningal”. On two-dimensional representations of Ningal in the Ur III period, see above section 3.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Berlejung 1998: 33-34 with n. 180.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Berlejung 1998: 33.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Charpin 1986: *passim*; van de Mieroop 1992: 96-103; Richter 2004: 416-506.

depicting a goddess sitting on a bird (fig. 59) and, apart from one image from Umma (Mayr 1997: no. 446), all others come from Lagaš.

Ningal's cult was not of great importance for the kings of Isin but this changed with the kings of Larsa, in particular under the reigns of Warad-Sîn and his brother Rim-Sîn for whom Ur held a special position.¹⁰⁸¹ Among the gifts made to the Ningal temple could have been the small statue of a goddess on Anserini, perhaps Nanše, placed with other votive gifts in the antechamber C 20 of the temple of Ningal. Alternatively, if the statue represents Ningal as 'hen' of Nanna with the geese and goslings as symbol of conjugal happiness and married life, size and material of the statue suggest this aspect of the goddess was not of very high importance.

4.2. Goddesses in Neighbourhood Shrines at Ur

Woolley excavated four 'chapels' in the AH area of houses at Ur dating to the Larsa period (fig. 84), in two – so-called Ninšubura and Ĥendursaĝa (1 Church Lane) chapels – he found statues (figs. 85, 86b).¹⁰⁸² Shrines are distinguished from houses by their location, steps in the doorway leading up to the interior which is higher than the street level, and as in temples they have reveals in the brick door jambs. Characteristic of public shrines is an open court with adjoining covered 'sanctuary' that has a recess for a cult statue in the wall facing the door (figs. 85/1, 85/2, 86a, 86b plan).¹⁰⁸³ The two shrines with statues were named by the excavators after inscriptions on mace heads found there: two mace heads are inscribed 'property of Ĥendursaĝa', and one is dedicated to Ninšubura by a man named Šeškala for his life (fig. 85/4).¹⁰⁸⁴

The Ninšubura shrine (fig. 85) is a triangular building of approximately forty-three square meters on Carfax at the junction of Store Street and Paternoster Row where its only entrance is located.¹⁰⁸⁵ The interior space was divided at a second stage into a courtyard and two small rooms, of which one could be closed off by a door (fig. 85/1). The main finds in the shrine were a large stone trough with a deep depression in the top (possibly a kind of altar), a large box decorated with snakes and human-like figures (fig. 85/5), a pile of beads, and a complete but weathered statue measuring forty-six centimetres that was apparently thrown down from its raised niche (fig. 85/3). Represented is a seated female figure with folded hands, wearing a simplified

¹⁰⁸¹ Charpin 1986: 280-302; Richter 2004: 421-426.

¹⁰⁸² Woolley and Mallowan 1996: 30-32, 133, 145-146.

¹⁰⁸³ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 30-32.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Braun-Holzinger 1991: 65 nos. K 102-K 104.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 30-32, 142-143; van de Mierop 1992: 141.

version of the flounced robe, long hair with tresses falling on her shoulders. The eyes are inlaid with shell and lapis lazuli and the grooved eyebrows were originally filled with bituminous paste. She wears no horned crown and there are no holes for attaching one of heavy material but the small groove separating the broad circlet from the flat top of the head may have held a light crown. Whether she represents a goddess, princess, or, as Suter suggests, an en-priestess is controversial.¹⁰⁸⁶ Princesses may be excluded as they wear different robes and hair styles than the statue and it is unlikely the statue of an en-priestess was dedicated to a deity of a small neighbourhood shrine because the en-priestess of Ur served the city's major god Nanna and were daughters of kings.¹⁰⁸⁷ However, if the shrine was dedicated to Ninšubura, it is because she belongs to the group of deities with shrines in the city's domestic quarters. The functions of these deities included that of intermediary between the highest level of the local pantheon and individuals which was the reason why Ninšubura was a popular personal and family deity.¹⁰⁸⁸

The shrine on 1 Church Lane (“Hendursaĝa” shrine) is a rectangular building of approximately one-hundred-and twenty square meters (fig. **86b** plan). There are two entrances, the main (A) on Church Lane no. 1 (Carfax) and a secondary one (B) to the service chambers 1 and 2 from Straight Street (figs. **84, 86a, 86b** plan).¹⁰⁸⁹ The tablets found in one of the service chambers 1 and 2 attest that the shrine was used for several generations in the nineteenth century BCE and also served as depository for records of private people.¹⁰⁹⁰ Another small storage room 3 off the main entrance A was packed with objects, among them the two inscribed mace-heads, numerous stone and clay objects. The tablets found in the shrine mention a priest who was present several days per week to conduct rites. The expenses of the shrine and the priest were paid for by revenues from real estate owned by the shrine.¹⁰⁹¹

The main entrance of the shrine was protected by the bull-man guardian god whose sixty-one centimetres high red painted terracotta image was found against the outer front wall (figs. **86a, 86b/1**).¹⁰⁹² From the main entrance a small vestibule led directly into the large ‘main court’¹⁰⁹³ with the adjoined “sanctuary” (room 4) at the opposite side. According to the excavators the

¹⁰⁸⁶ Spycket 1981: 254; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 226 n. 672; van de Mieroop 1992: 141; Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-šubur”: 499; Suter 2007: 334.

¹⁰⁸⁷ For the attire of princesses, see Suter 2008.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Van der Toorn 1996: 80, 136; 2008: 22; cf. Edzard 2004: 594-596.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 125-128; van de Mieroop 1992: 138-141.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Van de Mieroop 1992: 138-141; 280-281 (list of tablets and their contents found in the shrine).

¹⁰⁹¹ Van de Mieroop 1992: 31.

¹⁰⁹² On the apotropaic function of bull-man at temples, see Braun-Holzinger 1999: 159-166.

¹⁰⁹³ In Woolley and Mallowan (1976: 126) the ‘main court’ also has the room number 2.

main court was remarkably undisturbed, apparently with everything still *in situ* after its destruction. On the wall between court and sanctuary on both sides of the door was a base or pedestal made of mud brick, one with a rectangular indentation lined with bitumen. In front of the door to the sanctuary stood a seventy-five centimetre high brick altar with traces of bitumen on its top. On the paved floor of the court lay the fifty-five centimetres high stone statue which was fixed to a wooden hollow plinth that contained the copper figure of Lamma without arms measuring 10, 5 centimetres (figs. **86b/2**, **86b/3**).

The stone statue represents a female figure with clasped hands wearing a flounced robe. Her long hair falls on her back and in twisted braids on her shoulders. It is not clearly discernible from the photographs if she wears a bandeau or if the round part between the braids indicates hair. The ears are pierced for earrings and the eyes inlaid with lapis lazuli, black steatite, and tinted shell; traces of red color remain on the lips and black color on the hair. The surface of the head was prepared for attaching a headdress on a sharp-edged flat disk with three holes.¹⁰⁹⁴ Because the attire is worn by goddesses and *en*-priestesses, the identity of this female figure is as controversial as that of the statue in the Ninšubura shrine.¹⁰⁹⁵

Among the finds in this room were clay vessels, the skull of a water-buffalo, a stone weight and a 74 to 75 centimetres high pillar with cup-like indentation and reliefs on its four sides that probably served as altar (fig. **86b/4**). One side is decorated with two Anserini resembling geese, the other three sides each with a woman.¹⁰⁹⁶

The sanctuary could be closed by a door and its floor was raised above that of the court. In its back wall was a plastered whitewashed niche. A terracotta chariot with the image of a bull-man guardian god and a second statue were found here (figs. **86b/5**, **86b/6**). The statue, broken and mended in antiquity represents a woman in plain robe holding her hands clasped in front of her waist. Her hair is done in a chignon held together by a broad flat bandeau leaving a row of curls on her forehead visible; neither hairstyle nor bandeau resembles those of *en*-priestess who anyway only served major deities.¹⁰⁹⁷ Wiseman's suggestion that the statue represents a woman worshipper rather than a goddess is plausible because her attire and hair style are atypical for a goddess. Although one may expect a statue of the god Ḫendursaġa in a shrine with two mace heads inscribed with his name,¹⁰⁹⁸

¹⁰⁹⁴ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 239 sub U. 16425; Suter 2007: 336, suggests a circlet was attached to the head.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Suter 2007: 334-337 (esp. 337).

¹⁰⁹⁶ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 126-127.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Suter 2007: 334 (IM 18659; compare: figs. 9-11, 14).

¹⁰⁹⁸ See Wiseman 1960: 171.

according to Marc van de Mieroop it is an implausible expectation because the mace heads have no cultic context.¹⁰⁹⁹ However, they indirectly point to Nanše because *Ḫendursaġa* was closely associated with her.¹¹⁰⁰ Further, *Ḫendursaġa*'s diverse functions may explain the votive objects dedicated to him as he is the “protective god with friendly face”, who guards the streets at night, opens the gates at daybreak, guardian of law who watches over products and purchases (an indication is the stone weight found in the courtyard), he also advises on weddings, and is “the chief constable of the dead people who are brought to the underworld”.¹¹⁰¹

Identification of the statue of the standing figure with Nanše may be supported by her capacities as protector of the disadvantaged, benefactor of orphans, widows, indebted households, and the weak; another capacity of Nanše, not attested for Ningal, is her role in incantations as goddess associated with water but also in incantations relating to pregnancy and illness.¹¹⁰² The indentation in the altar indicates the use of water and the decoration (birds and women) alludes to family (see above). Presumably incantation rituals were performed here. Another argument against identification of the statue as Ningal is the absence of city gods and goddesses among those worshipped in the city's neighbourhood shrines.¹¹⁰³ The Lamma figure hidden in the statue's wooden plinth suggests she is the Lamma of the goddess.¹¹⁰⁴

Nanše and Ninšubura do not occur in the cultic calendar and official offering lists of Ur III but, as mentioned, Nanše was worshipped in Ur in the Old Babylonian period and Ninšubura was a popular family and personal goddess because of her role as mediator between deities and individuals.¹¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁹⁹ Van de Mieroop 1992: 140.

¹¹⁰⁰ Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. “Nanše”; Attinger and Krebernik 2005: 26-30. For the cult of Nanše in Ur, see Richter 2004: 498.

¹¹⁰¹ The quotes are from the hymn to *Ḫendursaġa*' (A): Attinger and Krebernik 2005: 32-33; also available on-line at: ETCSL 4.06.1.

¹¹⁰² Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. “Nanše”, §7; Cunningham 1997: 52-54, 115. Ningal is not mentioned in these incantations, see in this Chapter section 5.

¹¹⁰³ Van der Toorn 1996: 85-87; 2008: 22-23.

¹¹⁰⁴ Several similar Lamma copper figurines are known but none has a provenance, see Braun-Holzinger 1984: 45-47; Pl. 35; cf. Groneberg 1986: 97. See also in this Chapter section 3.2.

¹¹⁰⁵ Sallaberger 1993, vol. II: 139, 192 (sub ^dNanše), 193 (^dNinšubura); van der Toorn 1996: 70, 74, 80; Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-šubur”: 496-497. For Ninšubura in Old Babylonian Ur, see Richter 2004: 473-476 (Rim-Sîn of Larsa built temples for the masculine and the feminine aspects of Ninšubura, see *ibid.* p. 474); although evidence for Nanše in the official cult of Old Babylonian Ur is minimal (Richter 2004: 498), but her role in incantation rituals suggests she was popular in ‘family religion’ (see in this Chapter section 5).

Wiseman suggested that the shrines on Carfax served as *ibratu*-shrines, which were places where women gathered. Such shrines were situated on streets, had an altar, and were predominantly dedicated to goddesses as, for example, in Babylon where one-hundred-and-eighty *ibratu* (Sumerian *ub-lil₂-la₂*) were dedicated to Ištar (CAD I/J: 4-5).¹¹⁰⁶ Decoration of the ‘altar’ with geese and women is indicative of a shrine frequented by women. The statue of a woman worshipper in the shrine on 1 Church Street may represent a benefactress of the shrine which would suit its function as a meeting place for women and depository of private documents. That shrines or ‘family sanctuaries’ were built by private persons for ‘their deities’ is attested in Sippar.¹¹⁰⁷

The two shrines on Carfax were apparently dedicated to goddesses whose divine powers are well suited for deities of small shrines situated in the midst of a residential area. The presence of a priest performing rites in the shrine on 1 Church Lane attests that rituals were performed. Nimintabba may have been another family goddess as her name appears in Ur seal inscriptions and she had a sanctuary at Ur built by Šulgi; Nimintabba is a minor goddess in the entourage of Nanna.¹¹⁰⁸

4.3. Goddesses in Palaces and Private Houses

Statues of deities were also present in palaces, but few have been excavated *in situ*; an exception is the so-called *déesse au vase jaillissant*, (fig. 80), the goddess with flowing vase from Zimrilim’s palace at Mari (ca. 1775-1762).¹¹⁰⁹ The statue is equipped with an internal hydraulic pipe through which water flowed to the opening of the vase in the hands of the goddess. The goddess wears a robe decorated with vertical wavy pattern and a row of fish in the center over which the water flowed from the vase. The simple horned crown indicates she is a minor deity, the ‘palace version’ of a ‘goddess of abundance’, who is shown twice beneath the investiture scene with Ištar and Zimrilim of Mari in the wall painting from the palace of Mari (fig. 76).¹¹¹⁰

Few statues or statuettes of deities were found in private houses, but there is written and archaeological evidence of ‘house cults’.¹¹¹¹ Edzard (2004:

¹¹⁰⁶ Wiseman 1960: 171. See also George (1992: 368-369) on street corners shrines at Babylon where apparently predominantly women worshipped.

¹¹⁰⁷ Stol 2003: 296.

¹¹⁰⁸ Charpin 1986: 146-147; van der Toorn 1996: 83; Woolley 1974: 40-41 (“Dim-TAB-BA Temple”), pls. 53, 59; cf. George 1993: 167: no. 1367; Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nimintabba”.

¹¹⁰⁹ Parrot 1959: 5-11. For a good color photograph, see Aruz 2008: 31-32 no. 7.

¹¹¹⁰ For a good color photograph, see Aruz 2008: 28 fig. 13.

¹¹¹¹ Cult statues (“*Götterbilder*”) received offerings in private houses of high ranking persons: Sallaberger 1993: 107.

592) argues for the existence of divine icons (“*Götterbilder*”) in private houses and mentions in this context the ‘statue maker’ (alam-dim₂-dim₂). That this profession is written with dim₂ (‘to form, create, make, manufacture’) and not tud (‘born’), the verb used for making cult statues, indicates semantic difference between ‘true’ cult statue and an icon of a deity in private houses (see above).¹¹¹²

The torso of a white ‘marble’ statuette of rather high quality was ‘picked up’ near no. 3 Gay Street in the EM private houses area at Ur (fig. 87).¹¹¹³ It is the familiar figure of goddess with clasped hands wearing a flounced robe, shoulder-length hair originally arranged in a bun, and ‘dog-collar’ necklace. The eyes were inlaid, and hair, eyebrows, eyelashes and hem of the garments neckline painted black, the multiple necklace as well as the ear caps retain traces of red color. In the back of the head are two holes for attaching a head-dress. Although Woolley and Mallowan found the EM site in “lamentable condition”, there seem to have been several large houses whose owners may have had a stone statue of a goddess in their ‘house shrine’.¹¹¹⁴

A small (height 16, 2 centimetres) copper statuette of a four-faced goddess dating to the beginning of the Old Babylonian period was presumably discovered at Ishchali (fig. 89).¹¹¹⁵ It was hidden in antiquity below the floor of a large room in a private house together with the statuette of a four-faced god and other bronze objects.¹¹¹⁶ Jacobsen thought these objects may have been the property of a shrine like those at Ur, or may come from a private chapel standing above the find spot.¹¹¹⁷ The statuette shows a goddess sitting on a square stool and holding a flowing vase in her hands; the robe is decorated with vertical wavy lines imitating streaming water like the robes of the goddesses on the ‘basin of Gudea’ (fig. 90).¹¹¹⁸ Her unique head has four faces looking in four directions and a crown composed of a single pair of horns topped by a cylinder-shaped ‘hat’ decorated with a design reminiscent of temple façades; this crown is also worn by other goddesses depicted on seals and terracottas (figs. 102, 105).¹¹¹⁹ The combination of four faces,

¹¹¹² Cf. Asher-Greve 1998: 9, 31 note 16. See also in this volume Chapter III.B.1.

¹¹¹³ Barnett 1960; for no. 3 Gay Street, see Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 96-97, pl. 122; Stol (2004: 710) mentions a family in Sippar who had a “sanctuary of their god” in their home.

¹¹¹⁴ On the EH site, see Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 72-79.

¹¹¹⁵ Frankfort 1940: pp. 21, 81 (no. 339).

¹¹¹⁶ Hill, Jacobsen and Delougaz 1990: 83-87; 99-104.

¹¹¹⁷ This was reconstructed by the excavators as the statues were sold to the Oriental Institute Museum in Chicago before excavations began in Ishchali, see Hill, Jacobsen and Delougaz 1990: 99-100. For divine images in private houses, see Sallaberger 1993 vol. I: 107.

¹¹¹⁸ See also terracotta relief found in Paternoster Row: fig. 103. For the inscription, see Edzard 1997: 152 no. 58 [RIME 3/1.7.58].

¹¹¹⁹ Collon 1986: 28; Barrelet 1968: nos. 299-302, 305, 306, 308-310; Woolley and Mallowan

flowing vase and water symbolism in the pattern of her robe signifies the goddess provides prosperity in the ‘four corners of the world’, the Mesopotamian notion for everywhere. Four-faced deities are unique and Jacobsen suggested that the four faces of the god may allude to winds coming from four directions and the figure may personify the “god of winds”. Because the statuette of the goddess was found together with that of the god and because she holds a flowing vase, Jacobsen tentatively identifies her as “goddess of rainstorms”.¹¹²⁰ However, the figure ‘goddess with flowing vase’ is an image pertaining to the aspect of abundance and prosperity, a function of various goddesses. Rather than to rainstorms, the four faces may be a visual metaphor for ‘the four corners of the world’, meaning everywhere. Together with flowing waters this goddess is depicted as provider of abundance and prosperity everywhere; she may have been worshipped in ‘family religion’ of Nerebtum.

The image of ‘goddess with flowing vase’ appears first in the Akkadian period (fig. 25) in a ritual scene focussing on an enthroned goddess holding a vase with gushing streams of water. This goddess is also associated with vegetation symbolized two-fold, once in the twigs springing from her shoulders, and again in the small statue of a vegetation goddess standing on a high pedestal behind the seated goddess. In the Neo-Sumerian period BaU, patron goddess of the state of Lagaš, holds the flowing vase (figs. 36b, 45) as well as the less elevated goddesses on the water basin Gudea dedicated to Ninĝirsu (fig. 90).¹¹²¹ These goddesses walk ‘over’ water and the water flowing from their vases is also supplied from vases held by goddesses ‘in the sky’ who re-occur on the ‘stele of Ur-Namma’ (fig. 38a, register I).¹¹²² The basin was probably filled with pure water used in rituals,¹¹²³ and the goddesses were responsible for its flow from earth and sky as well as the additional function to protect the pure water. Like the Mari goddess with internal water pipe (fig. 80), the function of the goddesses and the basin is connected to endless flow of water.¹¹²⁴

A fragmentary statuette dating to the Isin-Larsa/Old Babylonian period shows a goddess holding a vase from which flows water with fish; of the second figure only a small part of right shoulder and naked arm on the back are preserved (fig. 88). According to Anton Moortgat the complete statuette represented two embracing goddesses; to Agnès Spycket it is a divine

1976: pls. 78 no. 128, Klengel and Cholidis 2006: pl. 9 nos. 101, 102.

¹¹²⁰ Hill, Jacobsen and Delougaz 1990: 101-104. Jacobsen suggests the figure may also represent Marduk.

¹¹²¹ Edzard 1997: 152-153 no. 58; Suter 2000: 62-63.

¹¹²² Suter 2000: 63, 246 fig. 33b, 247, 250 fig. 33d.

¹¹²³ Offerings of ‘holy water’ are mentioned in texts; Cohen 1993.

¹¹²⁴ Suter 2000: 62.

couple.¹¹²⁵ Embracing divine couples are well known from terracotta reliefs but the goddess does not hold a vase.¹¹²⁶ While depictions of divine couples reflect the ‘couple principle’, the ‘flowing vase’ in the hands of the goddess is a sign of her function as provider of abundance. This statuette may be the image of a divine patron couple of a city.

Images of major and minor goddesses with flowing vases are known in sculptures (figs. **80, 88, 89**), a wall-painting (fig. **76**), reliefs (figs. **36b, 38a, 90, 103**), and seals (figs. **25, 45**), represented standing or seated, some wearing robes with vertical wavy lines imitating water flow, occasionally fish decorating robe or swimming in the water streams. Dependence on water of a society whose wealth is based on agricultural surplus explains why images of ‘water goddesses’ or goddesses with flowing vases were created in various forms suited for temples, shrines, palaces as well as private houses (see in this Chapter sections 5-7).

5. Roles and Functions of Terracotta Images of Goddesses

Images of deities on small terracotta reliefs represent not only a different material genre than those of statues and in reliefs made of stone or metals, but – although scholarly opinions are divided – the vast majority of terracotta images of deities differ in several ways from the canonic principles followed in other genres. Function and use underlie conception of many terracotta images.

The majority of provenanced terracotta reliefs, also known as ‘terracotta plaques’ date to the early Old Babylonian period (ca. 2000-1700 BCE) but they first appear towards the end of Ur III and their production declines after 1700. According to Julia Assante (2002: 3, 20) “the plaque industry rose in response to people’s need during the social crisis” connected with the end of the Ur III dynasty.¹¹²⁷

Clay and terracotta were cheap materials used for reproducing images from moulds. They apparently had no intrinsic value as the majority were found in secondary contexts, including rubbish fills indicating they were thrown away like garbage.¹¹²⁸ Rather than being images of worship or ex-

¹¹²⁵ Moortgat 1967: 93; Spycket 1981: 231. On the depiction of pairs of goddesses, see Wrede 2003: 332. The statuette’s provenance is unknown; it may have been a votive gift to a temple.

¹¹²⁶ E.g. Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pls. 82, 83; Barrelet 1968: pl. XLIX; Wrede 2003: p. 336 Abb.99.

¹¹²⁷ Cf. S. Richardson 2008. Declining production of terracotta reliefs may be related to emigration, cf. Charpin 1992a.

¹¹²⁸ Moorey 2003: 2; J.G. Westenholz (2008) studied the find spots of all terracotta reliefs with sexual imagery finding no evidence for ex-votos.

voto objects (generally inscribed), they were used in magic rites or rituals presumably performed in the domestic sphere and neighbourhood shrines.¹¹²⁹

A major difference between terracotta reliefs and other visual media is the method of production. Sculptures, paintings, seals, as well as moulds are individually made singular objects, whereas terracotta reliefs are industrially produced in great numbers of nearly indistinguishable replicas made from re-usable moulds.¹¹³⁰ Nevertheless, the same relief is rarely found in several numbers, even at a production site like Diqdiqqeh near Ur.¹¹³¹ It is therefore problematic to speculate about statistics and to assume that because there are more images of goddesses than gods, or of a particular type, the existing numbers reflect ancient reality.¹¹³² Traces of paint still preserved on some terracottas show they were originally as colorful as the reconstruction of the famous terracotta relief with the nude winged goddess (formerly known as ‘Burney’ relief and renamed by the British Museum as ‘Queen of the Night’).¹¹³³

According to Assante, terracotta copies served important, crucial functions because, even when modelled on pre-existing ‘high art’, motifs were extricated from former contexts and modified to suit the functional system of terracotta images in predominantly domestic contexts. They represent documents “about magical thought and household religion ... grounded in psychic structures immune to the vagaries of high gods”.¹¹³⁴

Registers with rows of figures dominate compositions on stone reliefs and seals, whereas most terracotta reliefs depict one figure, less often two and rarely more than two. This is reflected in their forms – either rectangular (figs. **92**, **95**, **96**, **101**, **105**), or like a stele with arched rounded top (figs. **91**, **93**, **97**, **100**), or, some, more or less square (fig. **98**), or a pseudo-sculpture like the goddess seated on a chair with feet on the back side (figs. **94**, **95?**).¹¹³⁵ Terracotta images of goddesses imitate other genres but also add new iconography. Figural construction varies, goddesses are frequently shown *en face*

¹¹²⁹ On apotropaic figures of temples, see Braun-Holzinger 1999. Another use for some terracottas may have been connected to ‘festivals of ghosts’ when offerings were made to the deceased; M.E. Cohen (1993: 103-104) offers several explanations for this.

¹¹³⁰ For technology and use of terracottas as well as detailed description of the different terracotta images of goddesses, see Wrede 2003: 22-25, 290-303, figs. 85-88. On ‘mass production’ as ‘standardized craft goods’, see Silver 2006.

¹¹³¹ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 81-81; see also *ibid.* catalogue pp. 173-183.

¹¹³² Assante (2002: 12) suggests that relief artists avoided images of gods.

¹¹³³ Aruz et al. 2008: 22-23 no. 2. A photograph of the reconstruction is also available on the British Museum’s website.

¹¹³⁴ Assante 2002 (quote pp. 20-21). On family religion, see van der Toorn 1996 and 2008.

¹¹³⁵ For similar images, see Barrelet 1968: nos. 297, 795; Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pls. 78 no. 126, 83 no. 169.

(figs. **93, 100**), or in partial or full frontal view (figs. **91, 92, 94, 95, 97, 100, 101, 102, 103, 105**), less often in profile view (figs. **96, 98**).¹¹³⁶

The combination of image carrier, form, figural configuration and often empty background confers potency to these images comparable to that of Byzantine icons. The figure of a goddess extracted from original contexts and projected onto a blank surface gains iconic quality unachieved in multi-figural scenes with deities, humans, attributes, and other figures generally depicted in profile.¹¹³⁷ The potency inherent in frontal or partial frontal images relates to magical and apotropaic function of terracotta reliefs. If, or how the iconic quality worked for users, i.e. achieved the awesome, fearful ‘presence’ of a sacred figure remains speculative.¹¹³⁸

Apart from recognizable goddesses or images such as of Inana/Ištar (figs. **91, 92**),¹¹³⁹ ‘goddess on Anserini’ in full or partial frontal view (figs. **99-101**), and Lamma (fig. **96**)¹¹⁴⁰ now occasionally depicted in frontal form (fig. **97**),¹¹⁴¹ images of goddesses dominate that do not appear in institutional art or on seals (figs. **95, 98, 102, 105**).¹¹⁴² That some of these goddesses represent ‘house goddesses’ remains uncertain because interpretation of written evidence is controversial.¹¹⁴³ The cult of ‘house deities’ took place in private residences contrary to that of family deities which was conducted in sanctuaries in the neighborhood.¹¹⁴⁴ According to JoAnn Scurlock “the god and goddess of the master of the house, deceased immediate relatives, and the family’s collective ancestors might have counted among the “gods” of the household in the broadest sense of the term, the gods of the Mesopotamian house proper appear to have been Gula, Ištar, Išum, and the Pleiades as well as Šulak, the gate-guardian *kusarikku* and the divine protectors of other, lesser, parts of the house”.¹¹⁴⁵ Contrarily, Karel van der Toorn (2008) argues that the term ‘house god(s)’ refers to the ancestor or ancestors. In regard to goddesses on terracotta reliefs, it seems unlikely that ancestors, even though

¹¹³⁶ For further examples, see Opificius 1961: pls. 2, 3, 5; Barrelet 1968: *passim*; Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pls. 78-83; Wrede 2003: figs. pp. 293, 298, 301, pls. 38, 39; Klengel-Brandt and Cholidis 2006: pls. 9, 11.

¹¹³⁷ See last Wrede 2003: 27-28. For examples see also Barrelet 1968: pls. 28, 29, 61, 77; Moorey 1975; Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pls. 78-81.

¹¹³⁸ Cf. Chapters IV.A and IV.B in this volume.

¹¹³⁹ Colbow 1991: figs. 240-252.

¹¹⁴⁰ For further images of Lamma in profile view see, for example, Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pl. 80 nos. 143, 145; Hrouda 1977: pl. 24 IB 375; 1987: pl. 20 IB 1447; 1992: pl. 47 IB 1948. De Meyer 1984: pl. 17 no. 4. Wrede 2003: pl. 38 no. 1063.

¹¹⁴¹ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pl. 80 no. 149; Wrede 2003: no. 1061.

¹¹⁴² Although few are recognizable in terracotta imagery, as J.G. Westenholz (1998: 77-78) points out, worship of most goddesses popular in the third millennium continued.

¹¹⁴³ Scurlock 2003b; van der Toorn 1996; 1998; see also Löhnert and Zgoll 2009-2011.

¹¹⁴⁴ Stol 2003; van der Toorn 2008: 21-25; cf. Löhnert and Zgoll 2009-2011: 312-313.

¹¹⁴⁵ Scurlock 2003b: 106.

referred to as ‘gods’, may be represented with divine horned crown. Absent from the visual repertoire are, for example, recognizable images of Gula, although she shares the domain of healing with Nin-Isina, Ninkarrak, and Nintinuga.¹¹⁴⁶ Gula, Nin-Isina, and Ninkarrak are also among the goddesses involved in incantations to ward off illnesses and diseases (Table 1).¹¹⁴⁷ To Assante (2002: 8) “it is undoubtedly deliberate on the part of the relief industry that none can be securely identified with major deities in the official capacities”.

Excluding representation of family or house deities from those represented on terracotta reliefs and using the evidence provided by symbols and attributes as well as archaeological contexts, Assante’s theory seems plausible and is also confirmed by Joan G. Westenholz’s (2008) study on sexual imagery: terracotta reliefs belong to the context of magic-religious practices devised as protection against calamities, they are neither cult nor ex-voto objects.¹¹⁴⁸ If the major function of terracotta reliefs is prevention and warding off of adverse events, including diseases, then the goddesses may represent those mentioned in Neo-Sumerian and Old Babylonian incantations, many relating to child-birth, pregnancy, love, illness and health troubles, witchcraft, and evil demons and spirits. Among the goddesses invoked are Damgalnuna, Nin-Isina and Gula, Inana/Ištar, Namma, Nanaya, Nanše, Ningirima, Ninḫursaĝa, Ninkarrak, Nintur.¹¹⁴⁹

Table 1

| Functions of incantations (2500-1500 BCE) in which goddesses appear (according to Cunningham 1997) ¹¹⁵⁰ | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|-----------|------|------------|-------------|---------|------------------------------|-------|
| GODDESS | Birth | Pregnancy | Love | Witchcraft | Evil Demons | Illness | Purification Consecration | Other |
| Antu | | | | | • | • | | |
| Damgalnunna | | | | | • | | | |
| Daughters of Anu | • | | | | | • | • | |

¹¹⁴⁶ J.G. Westenholz 2010b: 388-389, 394 and Chapters II.B.2 no. 29, II.C.1 sub “Syncretism” in this volume.

¹¹⁴⁷ Cunningham 1997.

¹¹⁴⁸ Assante 2002; J.G. Westenholz 2008. Maul 1999a. For classification of incantations as religious, see Cunningham 1997: 4, 180-183.

¹¹⁴⁹ Cunningham 1997: 96-97, 131-156, 162-163.

¹¹⁵⁰ On additions, see Farber 1990; Finkel 1999.

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| Ezina/Ašnan | • | | | | | | | |
| Gula | • | | | | • | • | • | dogs, flies, scorpions, worms |
| Inana/Ištar | | | • | | | | | |
| Kusu | | | | | | | • | |
| Namma | | | | | • | • | • | scorpions |
| Nanaya | | | • | | | | | |
| Nanše | | • | | | • | • | | snakes |
| Ningirima | | | | • | • | • | • | snakes, military |
| Ninḫursaġa | • | | | | | | | snakes |
| Nin-Isina | | | | | • | | | |
| Ninkarrak | | | | | | • | | flies, dogs |
| Nintur | • | | | | | | | military |
| Šāla | | | | | | | | dogs |

According to Graham Cunningham (1997: 171) incantations are connected with “forms of symbolic identification”, and it seems obvious that symbolic identification with some goddesses relates to their divine function or domain, e.g., birth with Nintur and Ninḫursaġa, illness and healing with Gula, Nin-Isina, and Ninkarrak,¹¹⁵¹ sex and love related matters with Inana and Nanaya (Table 1).¹¹⁵² Many of the goddesses named in these incantations are major deities in the pantheon as Inana/Ištar, Nanaya, Nin-Isina/Gula, Ninḫursaġa, however, just Inana/Ištar is unambiguously identifiable on terracotta reliefs including some functions the goddess has in the official sphere such as guiding the king (fig. 92). This contradicts Assante’s hypothesis that no deity can be securely identified with major deities in the official capacities. The deities depicted on terracotta reliefs include recognizable deities as well as unidentifiable divine figures. The image of Inana/Ištar leading the king (fig. 92) may allude to ‘double protection’, divine as well as royal. In the domestic sphere such an image of the king – without weapons and in ‘alluring’ robe like on seals showing goddess and king embracing (figs. 136-138) – may allude to his role as mediator between divine and human worlds and as protector of his people.

¹¹⁵¹ On Ninkarrak as healing goddess and her connection with disease and exorcism, see now J.G. Westenholz 2010b.

¹¹⁵² See Cunningham 1997: 52-54.

In incantation rituals pure or consecrated water is a vital ingredient which may be reflected in images of goddesses holding one or two bottles without water pouring out of them (figs. **99**, **100**, **102**).¹¹⁵³ While bottles or vases with flowing water are generally associated with abundance and prosperity (figs. **98**, **101**, **103**), those where no water pours out may contain pure, consecrated water used in incantation rituals and signify the goddess' function in these rituals. As Walter Farber (1990) pointed out, particularly "the Daughters of Anu" were addressed to bring their vessels with fresh, pure water with its soothing effect in order to ward off disease and health trouble. Images of unidentifiable goddesses with one or two vessels may represent "Daughters of Anu",¹¹⁵⁴ perhaps even some of the goddesses seated on an Anserini (figs. **100-101**; see below).

The image of the frontal goddess holding two bottles with the unusual "battlemented crown", two chains of jewellery, rosettes with long sashes on each shoulder and surrounding her figure (fig. **102**), may depict Ningirima, the goddess of incantation and purification associated with water, fish and snakes, whose constellation is the scorpion.¹¹⁵⁵

Relatively popular was the image of a goddess with multiple-horned crown shown in frontal view sitting on a throne whose lower part is decorated with birds, often two geese as on a relief from Diqdiqqeh near Ur (fig. **95**).¹¹⁵⁶ Here the goddess' bare feet rest on a footstool, her arms stretched out and her hands holding tree-like posts topped with a palm-like plant, probably one growing in orchards. The front of the bench is decorated with two small birds, perhaps ducks rather than geese as geese are usually depicted with longer necks (figs. **99-101**).¹¹⁵⁷ This image seems to relate to agriculture: palms allude to orchards and ducks perhaps to animal husbandry.¹¹⁵⁸ Such an image of a goddess may have been used in the domestic sphere for apotropaic and protective purpose. In a society based on agriculture everybody's

¹¹⁵³ For further images of goddesses holding one or two bottles, see Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pl. 89 no. 225 (goddess seated on two Anserini); on p. 177 sub no. 125 the authors mention that numerous fragmentary examples of this type were found; Opificius 1961: pl. 5 no. 251; Barrelet 1968: pls. 29 no. 305; .30 nos. 311-313, pl. 78 no. 795; Wrede 2003: 298 Fig. 87e.

¹¹⁵⁴ E.g., Barrelet 1968: pls. XXX.

¹¹⁵⁵ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: p. 177 no. 125; Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-girima"; see also in this volume Chapters II.B.2 no. 18 and II.B.4; Ningirima is still associated with the holy water vessel in the Neo-Babylonian period, see Chapter II.D.

¹¹⁵⁶ For similar images, see Wrede 2003: pl. 39 no. 1077, 1978 (from Uruk); Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pls. 89 no. 225 (from Ur); Barrelet 1968: no. 298 (from Tello); Legrain 1930 pl. XL no. 212 and McCown et al. 1967: pl. 126 no. 4 (from Nippur); Moorey 1975: pl. XVIIIa (from Kiš).

¹¹⁵⁷ See also Barrelet 1968: no. 784b.

¹¹⁵⁸ However, according to Van Buren 1939: 95-96, wild ducks were abundant in Mesopotamian waters.

well-being directly or indirectly depended on harvests, cattle and farm animals which are reflected in incantations relating to adverse situations affecting plants or animals. The only goddess invoked in an agricultural related incantation is Ningirima, who is the goddess of exorcism, associated with water, incantations, snakes and fish.¹¹⁵⁹

Goddesses sitting on or associated with Anserini re-appear in terracotta art (figs. **98-101**). Some may represent Nanše as she is invoked in incantations associated with water and may therefore be depicted holding a bottle (figs. **99, 100**).¹¹⁶⁰ Nanše and Ningirima, both associated with water and purification, are often invoked together (see Chapter II.B.1.3). Another aspect pertaining to domestic concerns is Nanše's function as protector of the disadvantaged and weak.¹¹⁶¹ The geographical distribution of the twenty-two terracotta reliefs with a goddess associated with Anserini corresponds to that of provenanced Neo-Sumerian seal images (see above). These images potentially may represent Nanše in the functions she has in incantations including the atypical image found at Diqdiqqeh near Ur (fig. **101**) showing a frontal goddess seated on what seems to be a large goose; she holds a bottle out of which come streams of water; on each side of her horned crown is a crescent. It seems implausible that all these images, as suggested by Laura Battini, are representations of a "goddess of fertility, probably Inana in her most popular and most human aspect".¹¹⁶²

Battini distinguishes four different types at Ur, where ten terracotta reliefs were excavated, one type only at Tello of which seven examples were found; a type which also occurs with one example at Uruk; the differentiation of four types at Ur is based on combinations of astral symbols (crescent, sun disk, star) with symbols of abundance and life (water, fish, Anserini).¹¹⁶³ However, these symbols and attributes either represent astral deities (moon-god Nanna/Sîn, sun-god Utu/Šamaš, and Venus-goddess Inana), or abundance and prosperity and appear in seal imagery in various context with gods and goddesses shown in different roles and functions.

A type attested in Tello, Ur, and Uruk is that of *en face* goddess seated on two Anserini, raising her left hand and holding a bottle without water streams in her right hand (figs. **99, 100**).¹¹⁶⁴ The background is empty; there are neither symbols nor attributes other than the bottle in the goddess' hand which is an atypical attribute for Nanše, never seen on seals and may there-

¹¹⁵⁹ Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. "Nin-girima"; Cunningham 1997.

¹¹⁶⁰ See, for example, from Tello: Barrelet 1968: nos. 291-293.

¹¹⁶¹ ETCSL 4.14.1 (Nanše A).

¹¹⁶² Battini 2006: 62, 63.

¹¹⁶³ Battini 2006: 58-61.

¹¹⁶⁴ Battini 2006; see also Barrelet 1968: pl. 29 nos.291-295; Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pl. 80; Wrede 2003: pl. 39 no. 1076.

fore pertain to her role in incantations where she is also associated with pregnancy, illnesses, and demons.¹¹⁶⁵

The different iconographical types in Ur imply that the symbolism of Anserini may pertain to more than one goddess. As I suggest for seal images, Anserini may be positive symbols of conjugal and family life (see above section 3.3.2). A unique image from Ur (fig. **98**) shows a goddess flanked by geese – indicated by straight neck, longer legs than swans and compact body – who holds a jar from which flow four streams of water. Two streams flow along her body and the other two, with fish, rise above the geese at either side of her; the image is topped by two sun disks and two stars. The association of goddess and geese may express the metaphorical relationship between mother and child.¹¹⁶⁶

At Tello, Ur, and Uruk ‘chair-backs’ were decorated with birds some in combination with scorpions (fig. **104**).¹¹⁶⁷ The birds possibly symbolize women and home, reminiscent of similar motifs in ancient Greece where geese decorated women’s items.¹¹⁶⁸ On one terracotta image a bird is placed between a “divine couple” as symbol of love and marital union,¹¹⁶⁹ a symbolism also inherent in images of human couples embracing.¹¹⁷⁰

Nude, winged goddesses are either represented in full frontal or partial profile form, with bird’s feet occasionally standing on a pair of crouching animals.¹¹⁷¹ A winged partially nude goddess first appeared in Early Dynastic Mari, in the Akkadian period Istar is occasionally depicted with wings, and many Old Syrian seals depict a winged goddess.¹¹⁷² This points to the Semitic north and west as origin, in particular because wings as well as images of nude winged goddesses are absent in Early Dynastic as well as in Neo-Sumerian art. Such images do not appear in southern Babylonia before the Old Babylonia period and all provenanced examples are terracotta reliefs of average size.¹¹⁷³ Iconographical variations indicate different goddesses are

¹¹⁶⁵ See lists of incantations in Cunningham 1997.

¹¹⁶⁶ Heimpel 1968: 386-387. Association of geese and women is attested in ancient Greece, where objects of women including thrones and chairs were decorated with geese, see Hünemörder 1998: 780.

¹¹⁶⁷ Barrelet 1968: nos. 116, 119, 120 (from Tello); Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pl. 88; Ziegler 1962: pl. 8 nos. 128, 129 (from Uruk); Wrede 2003: p.353 Fig. 105, pl. 49 no. 1269. See also reliefs with one or two ‘geese’ from Isin: Hrouda 1987: pl. 21.

¹¹⁶⁸ Hünemörder 1998: 780.

¹¹⁶⁹ Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pl. 89 no. 222.

¹¹⁷⁰ Barrelet 1968: pl. 69; Woolley and Mallowan 1976: pls. 82-83.

¹¹⁷¹ See Asher-Greve and Sweeney 2006: 140-143; Klengel-Brandt and Cholidis 2006: 64.

¹¹⁷² Cf. Asher-Greve and Sweeney 2006: 140-142; Barrelet 1959; Boehmer 1965: pl. 32; U. Winter 1983: pp. 222-227.

¹¹⁷³ The so-called Burney relief is unprovenanced, see Barrelet 1952; Curtis and Collon 1996; Klengel-Brandt and Cholidis 2006: 64.

represented, one type may depict a Lamma, as I have suggested previously.¹¹⁷⁴ There is no secure image of nude goddesses in institutional art or textual evidence elucidating roles or functions of nude, winged goddesses with bird's feet standing on animals.¹¹⁷⁵

The average size of terracotta reliefs made for private use measures plus or minus ten centimeters but terracottas with the same motifs were also produced in larger size. Excavated examples were found in public spaces, like the terracotta relief (height 61 cm) depicting a bull-man god protecting the main entrance to a shrine on Carfax Square at Ur (fig. **86b/1**), or the large terracotta relief (height 73 cm), found a few houses down from that shrine in Paternoster Row that may have belonged to one of the shrines on Carfax Square (fig. **103**). Represented is a goddess with flowing vase dressed in a skirt with wavy line pattern imitating water streams. The Old Babylonian statue of a 'water-goddess' from the palace of Mari (fig. **80**) and the 'water goddesses' on the façade of the Kassite Inana temple in Uruk (fig. **140**) indicate that the iconography pertains to goddesses' role as provider of abundance for temples, shrines, or palaces.

Goddesses represent a relatively small percentage of all terracotta reliefs, there are substantially more terracotta images of nude women. The two groups – goddesses and nude women – exhibit remarkable differences concerning their state of preservation: comparatively few images of nude women were found intact, many were apparently intentionally broken in antiquity,¹¹⁷⁶ whereas many images of deities were found complete or with only accidental damage. As intentionally breaking or destroying a divine image could be equivalent to the deity's death (see above section 4), it is unlikely they would be discarded like rubbish. In my view, such divine images were not perceived as manifestation of the deity like its statue but 'performative representation' until the deity's presence is conjured up by the action of the ritual.

A few terracotta reliefs depict what Assante (2002: 9) describes as "characters excerpted from stories that were never written down or who are lost or are not yet found". To this group belongs an image with the enigmatic figure of a goddess from whose shoulders emerge two human heads and who is

¹¹⁷⁴ Asher-Greve and Sweeney 2006: 141-143.

¹¹⁷⁵ The only example of a nude female figure on an institutional monument is depicted on an Ur III stele from Nippur of which three fragments are preserved showing a nude headless female torso and a nude (?) god. For references, see Frayne 1997: 397-398 no. 1007. Hilprecht joined the fragments wrongly; no. 81 (head) belongs on top of no. 80 (male torso), see H.V. Hilprecht in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series 18 (Philadelphia 1896): pl. 12 nos. 80+29, 81. I thank Douglas R. Frayne for bringing this stele to my attention in 1995.

¹¹⁷⁶ Barrelet 1968; Woolley and Mallowan 1976; Asher-Greve and Sweeney 2006: 158 (with further references).

flanked on either side by symbols and crouching naked humans (fig. **105**).¹¹⁷⁷ The head emerging from the goddess' right shoulder tries to nibble or lick on a food item the goddess holds in her right hand; in her left arm she carries a baby or infant. The two naked figures squatting left and right at her side look emaciated and hold their hands on their cheeks; all human figures are bald. The goddess who is dressed in a flounced robe leaving her right arm, shoulder and part of her chest exposed wears a square top crown similar to that of the four-faced goddess from Nerebtum (fig. **89**).¹¹⁷⁸ The interpretations suggested associate the image with a 'mother goddess' whose symbol is believed to be the so-called 'Omega' formed object to her left and right.¹¹⁷⁹ However in view of the prophylactic magic of terracotta reliefs this image suggests the goddess should ward off evil from children. The reference may be a story where a goddess helped hungry 'children' (visualized in the emaciated figures) and fed them (visualized by her holding fruit or vegetable). As Assante suggested (2002: 9), a narrative is alluded to primarily for purposes of identifying the figure and the particular supernatural services he or she was expected to provide; taking the figure out of the original narrative (which may have been transmitted orally) liberates it from its own history and allows the figure greater freedom and consequently greater agency. An image no longer confined to its previous context could be used in new ways.

Having discussed goddesses relating to families' concerns in the context of incantations, their importance in family religion is also attested in written sources, in particular the function of intercessory goddesses that is also a function of female spouses of gods as family or personal deity.

¹¹⁷⁷ Paris, Louvre (AO 12442), and Bagdad, Iraq Museum (IM 9574); Barrelet 1968: no. 819 (Louvre AO 12442); Keel and Schroer 2004: 106-107 no. 58 (good color photograph). For other examples, see Hill et al. 1990: pl. 61 m (from Khafajah); Moorey 1975: pl. XX e (from Kiš); cf. Wrede 2003: pp. 295, 297 figs. g, h.

¹¹⁷⁸ A similar fragmentary relief was found on Mound D at Khafajah: Hill et al. 1990: 235 references to Plate 61 m.

¹¹⁷⁹ Wrede 2003: 295 with nn.1430-1434, 297.

For the Omega-symbol, see most recently Herles 2006: 270-272. Generally the so-called Omega symbol is not as elongated and has no round object in the upper part as on this terracotta relief. The object depicted in Mesopotamian art does not resemble medical images of the uterus (see, e.g. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/imagepages/19263.htm>).

Most Mesopotamian examples resembles the outline of the nude frontal women's hairstyle in the Old Babylonian period; see, e.g. U. Winter 1983: figs. 68, 69, 91, 93, 95, 191, 105-107, 113; Blocher 1987; Asher-Greve and Sweeney 2003; cf. also Seidl 1989: 199-204 ("Band").

Although several identifications are suggested for the nude frontal woman on seals, she may represent Nanaya and the so-called Omega-shaped object is her symbol derived from woman's hair which is mentioned in contexts referring to "female beauty" (Asher-Greve 2002). On Nanaya, see J.G. Westenholz 1997; Stol 1998-2001: s.v. "Nanaya."; see also Chapters II.C.1 and II.C.2 in this volume.

Family or personal goddesses of the general populace usually rank below the highest level of the local pantheon; major deities of cities are largely absent, whereas deities of neighbourhood shrines are common. Personal deities are never anonymous but among them are many little known minor deities.¹¹⁸⁰ If images of goddesses on terracotta reliefs represent such minor family deities is unknown but doubtful because the majority of family and personal deities are gods.¹¹⁸¹ Gods represent a minority of divine images in terracotta; additionally the cult of family deity or deities demanded a statue for the deity's manifestation. Although the magic-protective and apotropaic functions of goddesses on terracotta reliefs differ from those of family and personal deities, there is some functional overlap. The scope of deities worshipped in family religion does not manifest itself merely in images on terracotta reliefs as there are examples of bronze, stone, and three-dimensional clay figures that were present in private houses.¹¹⁸²

The bulk of small terracotta images pertain to magico-religious practices in domestic spheres, private houses and communal shrines.¹¹⁸³ Considering the significance of terracotta reliefs in family religion which extends to local shrines, it remains puzzling why their numbers declined so dramatically around 1700 BCE. In southern Babylonia this coincides with the adverse events under Hammurabi's successors, forcing large groups of the population to seek refuge in central and northern Babylonian cities.¹¹⁸⁴ There families did not 'convert' to local deities but largely continued to worship their old family deities because they were important for family and group identity.¹¹⁸⁵ But this 'religious conservatism' did not include continuing mass production of terracotta images.

Contrary to Assante's hypothesis (2002) – lower ranking, "unofficial" goddesses dominate in terracotta imagery because they follow other "systems of signs" than representation in official art – I think that there is evidence for well-known major as well as minor goddesses with functions important for families. They are goddesses who had the magic powers to prevent or produce situations or states feared or hoped for, could ensure prosperity, protection,

¹¹⁸⁰ Van der Toorn 1996: 80-87, 136-138; see also Kalla (2002: 162), who lists numerous high ranked deities occurring in personal names.

¹¹⁸¹ Van der Toorn 1996: 22; see also Löhnert and Zgoll 2009-2011.

¹¹⁸² See, e.g., Braun-Holzinger 1984: pls. 34-35; 1999.

¹¹⁸³ Van der Toorn 2008. Terracottas were found in "1 Church Lane ('Hendursaġa') shrine" at Ur: Woolley and Mallowan 1976: 125-128, e.g. pls. 88 (U.16347), 89 (U.16345).

¹¹⁸⁴ Charpin 1992a; 2004: 335-384; Pientka 1998: 11-12, 17-21, 179-181, 168-196, 249-256. As a result of the rebellion led by Rim-Sin II (1740-1741 BCE) against Hammurabi's son and successor Samsuiluna (1749-1712 BCE) the southern cities were ruined (among them Uruk, Ur, Nippur, Larsa); Samsuiluna apparently starved the south into submission by cutting off water from the Euphrates; cf. Chapter II.C.1 in this volume.

¹¹⁸⁵ Van der Toorn 1995; 1996: 142-147.

good luck, marriage, uncomplicated births, prevent or heal illness, ward off evil, in sum influence destiny. Babylonians believed the deities were responsible for the *condition humaine* but that it needs rituals and magic powers to influence destiny. For about three-hundred years terracotta reliefs were apparently *sine qua non* in incantation and magic rituals but when they were substituted by other objects. Inana/Ištar, Gula, and Nanaya remained important but the decline of Damgalnuna, Namma, Nanše, Ninḫursaġa, Nintur, and Ningirima was already in process (see Chapter II.C.1). The ‘fate’ of minor local goddesses who may be represented on terracotta reliefs but whose names are not mentioned in incantations or magic rituals is untraceable.

6. In the Minority: Goddesses on Old Babylonian Seals

The “Golden Age of Sumerian Culture”¹¹⁸⁶ ended in political and social upheavals followed by change in the religious system. What caused the disruptions which then reduced the importance of southern cities remains a mystery and a matter of argument. However, the changing conditions impacted on the status of proprietary goddesses of southern cities; the cults of even major goddesses were eventually transferred to northern cities. In god-lists, arranged according to patriarchal principle, many goddesses were syncretized and their numbers reduced.¹¹⁸⁷

Prominent cities at the beginning of the second millennium were successively Isin and Larsa, the capital of the Isin and Larsa dynasties, respectively, after whom this period is named (ca. 2000-1850).¹¹⁸⁸ The heritage of Ur III is evident in architectural construction projects and literature.¹¹⁸⁹ In glyptic art presentation scenes are continuously attested and, according to Michel Tanret “widely used” in Sippar.¹¹⁹⁰ Conversely, Eva Braun-Holzinger argues presentation scenes were only common in the early phase of Old Babylonian glyptic art.¹¹⁹¹ Dominique Collon also points out that traditional presentation scenes with royal names were still produced in the nineteenth century BCE.¹¹⁹² According to Gudrun Colbow, they only became rare after the reign of Ammiditana of Babylon (1683-1647).¹¹⁹³ However, Old Babylonian seal

¹¹⁸⁶ This is the title of the chapter on the Ur III period in Foster and Foster 2009: 61.

¹¹⁸⁷ See in this volume Introduction and Chapter II.C.1 (on transference of cults). See also Sharlach 2007, who argues there were “very fundamental differences” between societies and institutions of the Ur III and the Old Babylonian periods.

¹¹⁸⁸ On the chronology of the second millennium, see now Pruzsinszky 2009.

¹¹⁸⁹ Charpin 2004: 57-127; van de Mieroop 2007: 90-94.

¹¹⁹⁰ Tanret 2010: 184; see also Blocher 1992: 104. For a short survey of Old Babylonian seals, see Collon 2007b.

¹¹⁹¹ Braun-Holzinger 1996: 237.

¹¹⁹² Collon 1986: 1-3 and table next to p. 1; 2007b: 101-102.

¹¹⁹³ Colbow 1996: 37.

legends are distinctly different from Ur III legends because they include invocation of one or two, occasionally even more deities; further it becomes common – still rare in Neo-Sumerian seal legends – that the owner describes himself or herself as “servant of deity so-and-so” without mentioning his profession; fewer seals were owned by women.¹¹⁹⁴ That there is little correspondence between deities named in the inscriptions and those visually represented makes identification difficult and hypothetical.¹¹⁹⁵ According to Felix Blocher, divine names interspersed into the image field should not serve for the identification of deities, although there are occasional concurrences.¹¹⁹⁶

The figure of Lamma remains important while the principal goddess eventually disappears from presentation scenes.¹¹⁹⁷ Popular become so-called adoration and offering scenes with predominantly standing deities and king; other human figures are comparatively rare and generally men (figs. **111**, **114**, **116**, **121**, **126**, **133**) except for a nude frontal woman (figs. **119**, **110**, **128**, **131**).¹¹⁹⁸ Many scenes depict rituals with royal and/or human participation and may be ‘audience’ scenes with a major deity surrounded by its ‘court’.¹¹⁹⁹ Some scenes, showing only deities and superhuman often hybrid beings, may be either images of interiors of temples or visualize events pertaining to the divine sphere; they may represent a ‘mini-pantheon’ or ‘family of deities’¹²⁰⁰ or allude to assemblies of deities as described at the beginning of several myths.¹²⁰¹

The large repertoire of deities depicted in anthropomorphic form is augmented by symbolic representation.¹²⁰² Several deities are recognizable either by their attributes or symbol, however, a deity may have more than one symbol.¹²⁰³ Many deities depicted without any symbol or attribute, particularly goddesses shown in profile view and deities whose gender is not recognizable, remain unidentifiable. Rank among deities is indicated by positioning in the composition with the principal deity – according to Collon always on the right¹²⁰⁴ – facing, i.e. receiving others deities and/or king. Other markers of different rank or importance are frontal versus profile figures,

¹¹⁹⁴ Braun-Holzinger (1996: 240) observed that women worshippers are extremely rare on Old Babylonian seals.

¹¹⁹⁵ Walker 1986: 15-20.

¹¹⁹⁶ Blocher 1992: 139; cf. Braun-Holzinger 1996: 269.

¹¹⁹⁷ Colbow 1996: 40.

¹¹⁹⁸ Collon 1986: 31-35; Blocher 1992: 129-131; on Old Babylonian compositional structures, themes and iconography, see Colbow 2002: vol. 1.

¹¹⁹⁹ Renger 1972-1975: 435-437, 438-439 §§ 4, 5, 11; Zgoll 2003a: 192.

¹²⁰⁰ On ‘families of deities’, see Chapter II.C.1 in this volume.

¹²⁰¹ According to Collon (2007: 105) as many deities as possible are depicted for protection of the seal owner and his business transactions.

¹²⁰² There are many new symbols on Old Babylonian seals, see Collon 2007: 102.

¹²⁰³ Braun-Holzinger 1996; Herles 2006: 89-92; Groneberg 2000: 290-292.

¹²⁰⁴ Collon 2007b: 101.

and only occasionally seated versus standing; additionally, gesture, symbols and/or attributes may differentiate between higher and lower rank. Striking and of noteworthy contrast to Neo-Sumerian seal images is the often functional congruency of presumably secondary or minor deities whose tasks appear to be the same or at least rather similar. The textual sources discussed above provide some possible clues for the interpretation of images as they may reflect the process of syncretizing and fusion of goddesses. Goddesses with identical or similar roles and functions were worshipped under different names which may be visualized in seal images. Others whose identity remains obscure include those with gender ambiguous features and may represent a “compound deity” created by merging two deities with different names, same or different functions or gender into one divinity.¹²⁰⁵

With the exception of Lamma,¹²⁰⁶ goddesses only account for 2.5 to 3 percent of divine figures on the 1166 Old Babylonian seals listed by Eva Braun-Holzinger (1996). The relatively small number of goddesses in imagery and seal legends remains puzzling because goddesses receiving offerings in Uruk, Ur, Nippur, Isin, and Larsa account for about thirty percent of all deities receiving offerings.¹²⁰⁷ Numerous goddesses also occur in personal letters from the Old Babylonian period with Inana/Ištar leading the list, followed by Annunītum, Aya, Ninsiana, Gula and Zarpanītum; fewer entries are listed for Antum, Ašnan, BaU, Ereškigal, Maḥ, Ningal, Nisaba, Uraš; sporadically occur Ĝeštinana, Ninkarrak, Ninlil, Ninmuga, Ninsumuna, Mami, Nanše, Ninegal, Nintur; Lamma occurs only once.¹²⁰⁸

That Lamma remains the most frequently depicted goddess is not only due to her intermediary role but also to her interconnection with good fortune and protection urgently needed by cities and rulers undertaking reconstruction (Chapter II.C.1). Lamma is now also represented in company with several deities,¹²⁰⁹ or together with Udug (e.g. figs. **106**, **115**, **117**, **128**),¹²¹⁰ alone or doubled framing the legend.¹²¹¹ Although according to texts Gudea was already accompanied by Lamma and Udug (see above section 3.2), but they

¹²⁰⁵ See Chapters II.A and II.C.1 in this volume.

¹²⁰⁶ Lamma is depicted on numerous Old Babylonian images reproduced in this volume, see figures.

¹²⁰⁷ Richter 2004: 525-526. The majority of seals listed by Braun-Holzinger (1996) are unprovenanced and it is therefore generally impossible to determine if they originate from southern or northern Babylonia. Many seals and seal impressions are still unpublished (see Garrison 2003); among those published, images of goddesses are comparatively rare, with the exception of Sippar.

¹²⁰⁸ Urciuoli 2002: 16-21, 24-27. Compare Kalla's (2002: 162) list of distribution of deities' names in personal names (exempting women's names).

¹²⁰⁹ E.g., Collon 1986: pls. 2, 3; Colbow 1995: 169-172.

¹²¹⁰ Collon 1986: pls. 15-17; the Lamma taking the worshipper by his wrist is relatively rare, for examples, see Teissier 1998: nos. 78, 178, 181.

¹²¹¹ Collon 1986: 25 (“suppliant goddess”), pls. 40, 43; Colbow 2002: vol. 1 pp. 179-181.

together do not appear in images before the Old Babylonian period which represents a new visual combination of supernatural protective figures. Udug is depicted as bearded figure in turban and short dress holding a mace. He is a minor god, servant at the divine court, his function defending the seal bearer against evil.¹²¹²

Inana/Ištar, not exempt from being syncretized with other goddesses, remains “the most prominent goddess”.¹²¹³ Reflection of her literary persona is hardly evident in the visual repertoire although images of Ištar as warrior goddess are more numerous than those of any other goddess; however, the numbers are small in comparison with those of the sun-god.¹²¹⁴ She is generally rendered *en face* or as full frontal figure, with double lion-headed mace, *harpe*-sword, one foot on a lion, or standing on two addorsed lions (figs. **106**, **107**, **109**, **134**).¹²¹⁵ That most seals with images of Inana/Ištar are not inscribed with her name indicates her unmistakable iconography required no further identification.¹²¹⁶ Seals inscribed with ‘servant of Inana/Ištar’ never carry an image of the goddess and all owners were apparently men.¹²¹⁷

Gula who became the major goddess of healing, is rarely depicted together with her symbolic dog, but her name appears in numerous seal legends and she is occasionally represented by her dog (fig. **109**).¹²¹⁸ In the Isin-period gula is also an apposition to Nin-Isina and their healing functions were syncretized. Similar to Gula, one of Nin-Isina’s symbols is the dog and if only a dog is depicted in the Isin-period it may represent either deity.¹²¹⁹ There is no secure iconography for Nin-Isina,¹²²⁰ however, an exceptional figure on an impression from Tell ed-Der (Sippar)¹²²¹ depicts Nin-Isina-Gula

¹²¹² Wiggermann 1985/86: 23-25.

¹²¹³ On Inana/Ištar in Old Babylonian written records, see Chapter II.C.1 in this volume.

¹²¹⁴ Colbow 1995: 172-173; 2002: vol. 1 pp. 188-189; Collon 1986: 22-24. However, there are substantially fewer images of sun-god, moon-god, Enlil and Enki/Ea than of the weather-god, Amurru, Nergal, and Ninšubura (now usually masculine, Wiggermann 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-šubur”: 491-492 § 2); see Braun-Holzinger 1996.

¹²¹⁵ For further examples, see, e.g. Buchanan 1981: no. 953; Porada 1948: no. 391; Collon 1986: nos. 122, 384-397; al-Gailani Werr 1988: 37-46, pls. 6, 25, 27, 38 (from Larsa); Colbow 1991: pls. 11-15; cf. also Groneberg 2000: 304-308.

¹²¹⁶ Figure, symbol, and/or inscribed name supplement each other but seldom are all shown together. In general, the name of a deity shown in the image rarely also occurs in the seal inscription; see Collon 1986: 22-23.

¹²¹⁷ Braun-Holzinger 1996: 311, 321-321 nos. 811-814, 818-821; Collon 1986: nos. 178, 514; 615, 620; Porada 1948: no. 568.

¹²¹⁸ The dog may be depicted with and without staff; Braun-Holzinger 1996: 258, 336-337; cf. Groneberg 2000: 297-299, 304 (on dog with staff). On the difference between healing goddess and divine physicians, see Chapter II.C.1 in this volume.

¹²¹⁹ Groneberg 2000: 299-301; on Nin-Isina see Chapter II.C.1 in this volume. Ninkarrak, a healing goddess with a temple in Sippar is associated with a “terrifying dog” (J.G. Westenholz 2010b: 390) but the dog on this seal (fig. 109) does not look terrifying.

¹²²⁰ Edzard 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-Isina”; Göhde 2002.

¹²²¹ On the names of Sippar see below.

(fig. 111). The two-part scene consists, on the right, of a presentation to the king, and on the left, of two small nude men, one a priest on a pedestal, the other a hero with curls, framing a goddess standing on a pedestal supported by two big addorsed dogs; the goddess is holding ‘rod and ring’ in her right hand. This configuration suggests a sacred environment with the statue representing an amalgamated figure of Nin-Isina-Gula. ‘Rod and ring’ are generally presented by a major god or Inana/Ištar to the king (fig. 109). In the Ur III period Nanna presents ‘rod and ring’ to Ur-Namma (fig. 38a), Inana to Amar-Suen (fig. 50), in the Old Babylonian period Ištar to Zimrilim of Mari (fig. 76), or Šamaš to Hammurabi.¹²²² ‘Rod and ring’ are, according to Kathryn E. Slanski (2007), always in the hand of a deity and are symbols of justice established by the deity. The compound figure Nin-Isina-Gula with ‘rod and ring’ on double dog pedestal addresses two functions, that of their shared domain as divine physicians with Nin-Isina’s role as divine owner and ultimate ruler over Isin bestowing ‘royal insignia’ on the rulers of Isin.¹²²³ The ‘rod and ring’ symbol along with other aspects of Inana were transferred to Nin-Isina after the kings of Isin lost control over Uruk which established its own dynasty.¹²²⁴ A hymn to Nin-Isina contains a description of Nin-Isina-Gula comparable to our seal image (Zólyomi 2010: 415-416, 419):

Nin-Isina ...
 Gula was given the lapis-lazuli measuring rod and measuring line
 for the accountancy of the levees and ditches
 belonging to the Emi-tummal by Enlil and Ninlil.

Nin-Isina, the exalted woman,
 The midwife of heaven and earth,
 was given broad wisdom, created by the august hand
 by Enlil and Ninlil.

The names of Gula and Nin-Isina are inscribed on only few seals, but a family of *sanga*-priests in Sippar owned several seals impressed on documents attesting these men served as *sanga*-priest of Nin-Isina and Gula, or of Ninkarrak and Gula, or just of Gula.¹²²⁵ None of the healing goddesses is depicted on these seals but Gudrun Colbow suggests they may be alluded to by the symbols of their spouses.¹²²⁶

¹²²² Aruz et al. 2008: 19 fig. 10; Braun-Holzinger 2007: pl. 68 AB 10; Marzahn et al. 2008: 108 Abb.40; Orthmann 1975: fig. 181;

¹²²³ Edzard 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-Isina”; see also Chapter II.C.1 in this volume.

¹²²⁴ On the syncretism of Nin-Isina and Inana, see Chapter II.C.1 in this volume.

¹²²⁵ Tanret (2010) argues that, although iconographic traditions are found in families of *sanga*-priests of Šamaš (pp. 184-186), “no profession or social group had distinctive seals” (p. 245).

¹²²⁶ For ‘Gula seals’, see Braun-Holzinger 1996: 336-337; on the seals of a family of *sanga*-

Nin-Isina/Gula was not only “the great healer” but could also use illness as punishment for transgressions; her curse could inflict disease or misfortune.¹²²⁷ Seal owners apparently preferred protective and intermediary goddesses rather than an image reminiscent of a punishing goddess.¹²²⁸ Gula is, however, attested as ‘personal’ goddess.¹²²⁹ Nin-Isina is equated with several other goddesses including Gula (Chapter II.C.1) but no specific iconography was created for her. As proprietary deity of Isin she may be represented in frontal view, in particular as frontality is a visual feature of principal goddesses of cities as well as of Inana/Ištar with whom Nin-Isina is equated (see Chapter II.B.1).

Among goddesses whose name only appears in the formula ‘servant of goddess’ are Ninḫursaġa, the grain goddess Ezinu/Ašnan, Nisaba, Nanaya, Nimintabba.¹²³⁰ A goddess of trans-local popularity is the bi-gendered deity Ninsiana,¹²³¹ whose function was separated from Inana’s domains (Chapter II.C.1). Braun-Holzinger suggested she may be depicted on some seals as Venus-goddess with a star on top of her horned crown or on seals with her name and a star symbol (fig. **112**).¹²³²

In comparison to Neo-Sumerian principal goddesses, images of an enthroned goddess are extremely rare on Old Babylonian seals; further differences concern hairstyles, tiaras as well as the pattern of garments that are more varied than on Neo-Sumerian seals.¹²³³ As we have seen in seal images of the Akkadian and Neo-Sumerian periods the principal seated goddess is often depicted as generic figure and therefore cannot be identified. Identification of individual goddesses depends on several criteria either in the visual configuration or legend/inscriptions or external criteria such as contexts (e.g., source of impression and inscriptions on sealed documents, find spot, provenance).

priests, see Colbow 2000.

¹²²⁷ Avalos 1995: 105, 185, 191. Disease was caused by a deity and a sign of interruption of the good relationship between the sick person and a deity; the individual had caused the deity’s ‘anger’ (see Heeßel 2001: 248-251; 2007).

¹²²⁸ Göhde 2002; Ornan 2004; Braun-Holzinger 1996: 336-337. Images of Gula’s symbolic dog are also not very common: Klengel-Brandt 1989: no. 16d; al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. 7/33; Delaporte 1910: S.523. Gula was not only a healer but also gave diseases: Heeßel 2004: 108, 113 n. 44.

¹²²⁹ Van der Toorn 1996: 80. Gula had temples in numerous cities and other functions than those connected with diseases, see Frankena 1957-1971.

¹²³⁰ Van der Toorn 1996: 66-67, 80-83, 84-106.

For the changes in Old Babylonian seal inscriptions in comparison with Ur III, see Walker 1986; for other goddesses with occasional mention, see Braun-Holzinger 1996: 342, 345-46, 348. See further on the fate of these goddesses in the Old Babylonian period Chapter II.C.1 in this volume.

¹²³¹ Colbow 1995: 190; Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. “Ninsiana”.

¹²³² Braun-Holzinger 1996: 240-241; 244-245; 1997: 317-319.

¹²³³ Collon 1986; Braun-Holzinger 1996: 240-241; 244-245.

Such information is seldom available for seal images dating to the Isin/Larsa and Old Babylonian periods because there are few excavated cylinder seals and many provenanced seal impressions remain unpublished or show mainly fragmentary images. The impressions on tablets excavated in Babylon depict few goddesses but among the divine names occur Annunītum, Ištar, Inana of Zabalam, Ninsiana, and Zarpanītum.¹²³⁴ However, numerous seal impressions excavated at Sippar, i.e. Abu Habbah and Tell ed-Der, were published in detailed studies and, together with seals in ‘Sippar style’, provide a comprehensive iconographical corpus containing many images of goddesses.¹²³⁵

6.1. Images of the Sippar Pantheon

Sippar is located approximately sixty kilometers north of Babylon along the banks of the Euphrates and was one of the major cities in northern Babylonia. Its location on important trade routes made Sippar an important commercial and trading center that kept its own trading posts (*kārum*) ‘abroad’.¹²³⁶ Sippar is not a single but a “twin city” situated on two hills a few kilometers apart with the modern names Abu Habbah and Tell ed-Der.¹²³⁷ Abu Habbah’s ancient name was Sippar-Yahrurum, the city of Šamaš and his sanctuary Ebabbar (Sippar *ša* Šamaš); Tell ed-Der’s ancient name was Sippar-Amnanum, the city of the goddess Annunītum with her sanctuary Ulmaš (Sippar *ša* Annunītum).¹²³⁸ The temple of Šamaš and Aya, the É-babbar, meaning ‘shining white house’, was an important sanctuary for over two thousand years.¹²³⁹ More than 35,000 tablets and tablet fragments of its archive were excavated in 1881-1882, most dating from the seventh to fifth century BCE; only about three-hundred date to the Old Babylonian period.¹²⁴⁰

¹²³⁴ Klengel 1983: 16; Klengel-Brandt 1983; Ninsiana may be a bi-gendered deity (see Chapter II.C.1); in Old Babylonian Sippar-Amnanum the deity was venerated as god, see Heimpel 1998-2001: s.v. “Ninsiana”. Ninsiana often occurs in Old Babylonian seal inscriptions.

¹²³⁵ al-Gailani Werr 1988; Blocher 1992; Colbow 1995; 1996; 2000; 2002; Teissier 1998; Tanret 2010. Of the seal impressions from Babylon many apparently originated from Sippar, see Klengel-Brandt 1983; 1989; Klengel and Klengel-Brandt 2002: 1.

¹²³⁶ Postgate 1992: 27 fig. 2:4 (map), 209 fig. 11:2 (map), 213, 219, 221, 322 n. 372; Stol 2004: 874-875.

¹²³⁷ On the history of excavations, and Sippar in the Old Babylonian period, see Goddeeris 2002: 33-42; especially on seals and seal impressions, see Blocher 1992: 11-16.

¹²³⁸ Charpin 1988; 1992b; 2004: 92; Goddeeris 2002: 33, 39-40.

¹²³⁹ For references to building inscriptions, see George 1993: 70 no. 97; on the Ebabbar temple plan, see De Meyer and Gasche 1980.

¹²⁴⁰ Walker and Collon 1980; Renger 1999: 285 with references to publications in notes 2 and 3.

Mentioned in the Sumerian king list in the section of antediluvian kings, the earliest traces of occupation in Abu Habbah date to the Uruk period.¹²⁴¹ A statue of Ikun-Šamaš, an Early Dynastic king of Mari was dedicated to Šamaš in Sippar,¹²⁴² Naram-Sin of Akkade mentions Sippar in an inscription,¹²⁴³ and one of the Sumerian temple hymns is dedicated to the Ebabbar.¹²⁴⁴

In the Old Babylonian period the ‘twin city’ was ruled by its own kings until Sumulael of Babylon (1880-1845) integrated Sippar into the Babylonian kingdom.¹²⁴⁵ While southern Babylonian cities such as Uruk, Nippur, Isin, and Larsa were destroyed, their reconstruction neglected, Sippar became an international center during Hammurabi’s reign (1792-1750). But the city had no wall until Samsuiluna of Babylon (1749-1712), who called himself “beloved of Šamaš and Aya”, renovated the Ebabbar-Ziqqurat, “brought the gods Šamaš, Adad, and Aya into their shining dwelling” and returned its favorable Lamma (dLamma-sa₆-ga) to the temple.¹²⁴⁶ While Sippar blossomed, the devastating situation in southern Babylonia forced people to immigrate to northern cities where they brought their deities with them; the deities from Isin and their cult transferred to Sippar.¹²⁴⁷

Seal production in Sippar, according to Dominique Collon, reacted to this development by incorporating new ideas into the iconography.¹²⁴⁸ However, based on analysis of seal impressions from Sippar over a period of seventy years (ca. 1880-1750 BCE), Felix Blocher (1992: 144) comes to the conclusion that seal images show “continuity” even beyond the middle of the eighteenth century BCE and no visible break or change after Sippar’s conquest by Sumulael, but rather a strong tradition with its roots in nineteenth-century glyptic. Beatrice Tessier draws attention to the often “excellent quality” and specific “identity” of seals from Sippar until the reign of Hammurabi. Representing an exception from generally monotonous iconography of Old Babylonian glyptic and known for their quality, Sippar workshops apparently became “a center of seal excellence within Babylonia”.¹²⁴⁹ Seal images with provenance Sippar are predominantly known from impressions on enve-

¹²⁴¹ Walker and Collon 1980: 110.

¹²⁴² Frayne 2008: 305-306; Walker and Collon 1980: 111, pl. 25.

¹²⁴³ Frayne 1993: 104: no. 6 line i 17’, 106 no. 6 lines iv 4’-6’ (governor of Sippar).

¹²⁴⁴ Sjöberg 1969: 45-46 no. 38.

¹²⁴⁵ For a list of rulers of Sippar, see Harris 1975: 2-5; on Sippar in the Old Babylonian period, see Charpin 2004 91-94. So far no royal inscriptions or votive inscription of or for, respectively the kings of Sippar have been found, Charpin 2004: 91.

¹²⁴⁶ Frayne 1990: p. 377 lines 63-92 (RIME 4.3.7.3).

¹²⁴⁷ Pientka 1998: 189-190; the first transference of deities and their cult was that from Eridu to Ur, see in this volume Chapter II.C.1.

¹²⁴⁸ Collon 1987: 46-47; 2007b: 105-107.

¹²⁴⁹ Teissier 1998: 120, on unconventional and foreign seals in Sippar, see *ibid.* p. 119.

lopes, bullae, or docketts and toward the end of the Old Babylonian Period on also on tablets; cylinder seals from Sippar are rare as most in ‘Sippar style’ come from the art market (e.g., figs. **107, 113-116, 131, 134**).¹²⁵⁰

A large number of images from Sippar seem to depict a miniature pantheon with a limited repertoire of divine figures and similar themes. Combination and arrangement may vary but some deities repetitively take the same position in the composition. For example, major gods or divine couples are visualized in similar manner only distinguished by attribute(s) or symbol (see below). The ‘couple principle’ of the god-lists (Chapter II.C.1), evident also in seal inscriptions,¹²⁵¹ and in contracts where the pairs Aya and Šamaš, and Mamu(d) and Bunene are recurrently named as witnesses, may have served as model for images in that they represent members of Sippar’s ‘divine family’ (see below).¹²⁵²

One of the new figures is a standing frontal goddess in flounced robe covering both shoulders one arm stretched out in a gesture of pointing to the standing or seated principal god; her feet are shown in profile thus indicating direction in unison with her gesture (figs. **118-120, 123, 124**).¹²⁵³ This goddess is also represented on several unprovenanced ‘Sippar style’ seals (figs. **107, 113-116, 131, 134**). Occasionally she faces and points to the principal god (figs. **121, 122**). Lamia al-Gailani Werr suggests that the frontal pointing goddess may represent Šamaš’s consort Aya, whereas Dominique Collon, Eva A. Braun-Holzinger, and Gudrun Colbow consider her a minor goddess,¹²⁵⁴ although she is attached to several major gods (see below).

¹²⁵⁰ On provenance of tablets, see Goddeeris 2002: 34-40; on seals and seal impressions from Sippar, see al-Gailani Werr 1988: 37-46; Blocher 1992; Teissier 1998; Colbow 2002; Collon 2007b: 105-107; Tanret 2010.

¹²⁵¹ See Braun-Holzinger 1996: 278ff: most often inscribed are Šamaš and Aya (nos. 207-215, 469-475, 477-480, 482, 483, 746-750, 900), followed by Iškur and Šāla (nos. 18, 29, 35, 37, 39, 40, 42, 43, 49, 50, 52, 56, 59, 70, 71, 78, 82, 89-91, 93, 199, 200, 203), Enki/Ea and Damgalnun(a)/Damnun(a)/Damkina (nos. 902, 903, 907, 913, 914, 916, 917, 919, 923-925, 965, 965b, 967, 968), Nin-Isina and Kabta (nos. 754a-757, 759, 760, 762, 765, 766, 801, 802, 804, 810); occasionally inscribed are: Lugalbanda and Ninsumuna (nos. 1021, 1023, 1043), Enlil and Ninlil (nos. 969, 973), Nanna/Suen and Ningal (nos. 829, 893), Ĝeštinana and MAR.TU (nos. 268, 462), Ninḫursaĝa and Šulpae (nos. 1148, 1149) and Lugalabzu (no. 920); only one example is listed for: Ninĝirsu and BaU (No. 742), Ḥaya and Nisaba (no. 1093), Pabilsaĝ and Gula (no. 1046).

¹²⁵² For themes, types of composition, figures, and details, see al-Gailani Werr 1988: 35-46; Blocher 1992: 104-133.

¹²⁵³ For further (including fragmentary) examples, see al-Gailani Werr 1988: pls. 21/8 no. 140.b, 28/1 no. 234, 29/1 no. 217, 32/1 no. 195.b, 36/2 no. 251.a; Blocher 1992: Abb. 40 nos. 190, 254; Teissier 1998: nos. 77, 157, 280, 293, 294, 318; Klengel and Klengel-Brandt 2002: pl. 75 no. 121.1.

¹²⁵⁴ al-Gailani Werr 1988: 39-40 (al-Gailani Werr also refers to her as ‘introductory goddess’, p. 55); Braun-Holzinger 1996: 248; Collon 1986: 26-27; Colbow 2002: 194-195; cf. also Blocher 1992: 121.

Because this goddess without attributes appears in significant positions, it seems worthwhile to study her more thoroughly. She stands next to (i.e. behind) the sun-god with her hand pointing at his back (figs. **107, 113-116, 118-120**).¹²⁵⁵ This is no gesture of greeting¹²⁵⁶ which would appear out of context with a full frontal goddess not facing but standing behind the principal god in the scene. As repetitively pointed out, frontality is a visual form of distinction and this gesture is apparently an additional feature of the goddess' special status. This is further emphasized in that she does not participate in the procession of figures including deities leading towards the major god.¹²⁵⁷

The combination of the frontal face and body directed outward and away from the action, with her hand and feet directed towards the principal god involved in an action of profile figures, situates the goddess between two spheres, that of the world of deities and ritual and that of the viewer. As I have argued (Asher-Greve 2003), frontality is a form indicative of the divine patroness of a city, predominantly used in representations of high-ranking goddesses credited with more accessibility than high-ranking gods which is a characteristic of Aya as spouse of Sippar's principal deity Šamaš.

Aya is the Akkadian name of the Sumerian goddess Šer(i)da, spouse of the sun-god Utu. Her name appears in the archaic texts from Ur, the Early Dynastic god-lists from Fara and Abu Salabikh. The sun-god's Semitic name Šamaš was apparently only associated with Aya.¹²⁵⁸ Although Aya's association with dawn is contradicted, logographic writing of her name Šer(i)da suggests she is associated with morning light and consequently 'goddess of Dawn'. This is evident in a ritual performed in the Ebabbar written down between the eighth and seventh centuries BCE but which may be much older.¹²⁵⁹ This ritual, called "waking up the house", was performed on four days of the month in celebration of Šamaš, of which two days were dedicated to Aya who left her cella for the ceremonies (lines Vs 11 'f):¹²⁶⁰

The throne of Aya is brought down at dawn.
Then she (Aya) takes place in the lower court.

¹²⁵⁵ There are numerous (many fragmentary) images of this goddess on Sippar seal impressions: see plates in al-Gailani Werr 1988; Teissier 1998: *passim*; Colbow 2002: vol. 2, *passim*.

¹²⁵⁶ On gestures, see Braun-Holzinger 1996: 244-247, 248 (goddess with "seitlich ausgestrecktem Arm"); cf. Salonen 1957-1971 s.v. "Gruss"; Seidl 2000: 101-102, 105.

¹²⁵⁷ In Old Babylonian glyptic art frontal form is also used in depictions of 'nude woman', 'nude hero', and 'bull men'.

¹²⁵⁸ On the name, see Selz 2002: 664-665, 670.

¹²⁵⁹ Maul 1999b, on date and antiquity of the ritual, see *ibid.* pp. 311-313.

¹²⁶⁰ Maul 1999b: 301-303, text quote p. 293.

According to Stefan M. Maul, on the days Aya was present young crescent or full moon were visible, thus assembling the divine astral family: father Šîn, son Šamaš with his spouse Aya.¹²⁶¹

Aya's cult is attested since the Early Dynastic period. Among the objects placed in the temple of Šamaš and Aya (Šerda) are an armchair, bed, and throne for Šamaš and Aya, and just for Aya a "protective deity in the Ebabbar", an emblem, a golden statue of Aya and a high pedestal (^giš-aš-te-bara₂) for her statue.¹²⁶² Aya was particularly popular during the Old Babylonian period, her name alone or paired with Šamaš's is frequently inscribed on seals, appears in numerous personal names, and she was a favorite deity in the sphere of private religion.¹²⁶³

As spouse of the sun-god Utu/Šamaš, Šerda/Aya is the daughter-in-law of the moon-god (Nanna/Su'en), sister-in-law of the Venus-goddess (Inana/Ištar) and thus belongs to the family of astral deities. She is early morning light, personification of Dawn and referred to as 'morning maker'. Aya's epithet *kallatum* means bride and daughter-in-law and it may also imply 'the veiled one', an expression conveying the idea of high status which is referred to in her epithet 'Great Mistress' (*bēltum rabītum*). The most important role of Aya was that of intercessor with Šamaš on behalf of petitioners, one reason why she is so often invoked on seals. Beautiful, endowed with sex appeal, and the 'Beloved' of the sun-god, Aya was apparently the only one who could persuade and manipulate her often distant and difficult spouse in the interest of suppliants.¹²⁶⁴

In sum, Aya's importance as witness in contracts, aide for petitioners, and the frequent inscription of her name on seals, support the identification of the image of frontal goddess positioned behind Šamaš and pointing to him as Aya. Standing behind her spouse but looking outward towards the viewer-petitioner emphasizes Aya's function as intercessor.

Occasionally Aya stands before Šamaš with her arm directed toward him (fig. 121). Here Šamaš's only attribute is the ring (of the 'rod and ring symbol') in his right hand, an image occurring on other Sippar seals (figs. 125, 127).¹²⁶⁵ The seal was impressed on a rental contract witnessed by Šamaš, Aya and Amat-Šamaš; the name of Amat-Šamaš is annotated to the seal

¹²⁶¹ Maul 1999b: 301-303.

¹²⁶² Krebernik 2009-2011; Renger 1967: 147, 155; Pientka 1998: 228-239; Groneberg 2004: 211-212, 242, 244-245.

¹²⁶³ Richter 2004: 347. Note that Aya rarely occurs in texts from Larsa, the southern sanctuary of the sun-god; for example, she is not mentioned in Larsa offering lists (Arnaud 2001: 24-25, 29), or in the Larsa Ritual Tablet, see J.G. Westenholz and A. Westenholz 2006: 8-18.

¹²⁶⁴ Powell 1989; cf. on Šamaš's distant nature, Maul 1999b: 309-310.

¹²⁶⁵ On the god holding a ring, see Blocher 1992: 120; for more examples, see Teissier 1998: nos. 211-216, 280?; Klengel and Klengel-Brandt 2002: pl. 66 no. 39.1.

impression indicating her as owner of the seal.¹²⁶⁶ Aya and Šamaš are often the first witnesses named in contracts, the only other divine couple occurring in this function is Mamu(d) and Bunene.¹²⁶⁷

Together Šamaš and Aya are represented on seals in various combinations and forms:

1. Šamaš and Aya inscribed but no figural representation.¹²⁶⁸
2. Only figural representation without names inscribed (figs. **107, 118, 113-115, 121**).
3. Figural representation of Šamaš and Aya and both names inscribed (figs. **119, 116**).¹²⁶⁹
4. The figure of Aya and names of Šamaš and Aya inscribed (figs. **117, 129a**).¹²⁷⁰
5. Figural representation of Aya and name of Šamaš inscribed (fig. **108**).¹²⁷¹
6. Figures of Šamaš (?) and Aya-type figure each with DIGIR sign next to their head (fig. **120**).

Where both names are inscribed, the usual sequence is ^dŠamaš followed by ^dAya but on one seal (fig. **117**) this sequence is reversed. The image consists of two pairs, each with a goddess and a benevolent deity (Lamma) or spirit (Udug). The sun-god is not depicted, but the frontal goddess between Lamma and Udug may represent Aya pointing to Udug who faces a deity depicted in frontal view, shoulders and chest exposed and holding a symbol reminiscent of Ištar's mace. Ištar was an important deity in Sippar sharing the epithet 'Queen of the city of Sippar' and warrior function with Annunītum (see below). The composition in two pairs – Aya/Lamma and Udug/Ištar or Annunītum – combines divine functions of two major goddesses in Sippar with functions of intercession and protection of Aya, Lamma and Udug. In a similar composition (fig. **108**) ^dŠamaš is inscribed between the pair Lamma and Aya who points at a god facing a goddess standing on two adorsed lion-griffons, possibly a representation of Annunītum (see below).¹²⁷²

The figures to whom Aya points are well-known images of Šamaš: ascending sun-god holding saw (figs. **113-115, 116?, 120?**), or enthroned holding

¹²⁶⁶ Klengel and Klengel-Brandt 2002: 18: no. 42.

¹²⁶⁷ Teissier 1998: 115.

¹²⁶⁸ E.g., Walker 1986: 20; Braun-Holzinger 1996: 264.

¹²⁶⁹ Cf. al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. 21/8 no. 140.b, with inscription of ^dŠamaš, Aya figure and probably figure of sun-god.

¹²⁷⁰ Cf. fragmentary impressions with inscriptions ^dŠamaš and ^dAya and figure of sun-god: Teissier 1998: nos. 144, 145.

¹²⁷¹ Cf. fragmentary impressions: al-Gailani Werr 1988: 32/1 no. 195.b.

¹²⁷² See also Klengel-Brandt 1983: 68-69 no. 2: this seal impression from Babylon shows a man with offering animal before the seated sun-god, Aya pointing to a man in royal posture and cap, and a Lamma behind him.

‘rod and ring’ (fig. **118**).¹²⁷³ Some images show the sun-god only with rod (figs. **119**, **137**),¹²⁷⁴ or ring (figs. **109**, **121**).¹²⁷⁵ Occasionally he is depicted with his foot on a bull or human-headed bull with divine crown (fig. **107**).¹²⁷⁶

Seals depicting Aya alone or together with Šamaš may also have belonged to *nadītu(m)*-priestesses who dedicated themselves to Šamaš and Aya.¹²⁷⁷ They had a close attachment to Aya, addressed her as their mistress, only swore by Aya, and many *nadītus* had personal names composed with Aya.¹²⁷⁸ Outside Sippar Aya’s popularity in seal inscription may originate in her role as intercessor with Šamaš who was supreme patron of law and supreme judge, a domain where hopes were high for divine intercession. The temple of Šamaš named Edikuda, meaning “house of the judge”, was apparently the sanctuary where judges donated their votive gifts.¹²⁷⁹ Ikunpi-Sîn (I.), a *sanga*-priest of the Edikuda in Sippar-Amnanum owned (or used) a seal with apparently three deities depicted in frontal view, one probably representing Aya, another holding a trident-like weapon representing Annunītum, proprietary deity of Sippar-Amnanum (fig. **130**).¹²⁸⁰

A particular feature in Sippar seal imagery is a second frontal goddess appearing together with Aya or an ‘Aya-type’ goddess (figs. **113**, **119**, **122**, **123**, **125**). This goddess is distinguished from Aya by holding hands folded before her waist and a robe more typical of gods than goddesses as it exposes shoulder, chest, one or occasionally both arms. Because she also appears in the place occupied usually by Lamma or Udug (figs. **113**, **119**, **123**) this goddess is considered a minor deity.¹²⁸¹ However, she is also positioned prominently next to Ištar (fig. **110**),¹²⁸² Šamaš,¹²⁸³ Enki/Ea (fig. **122**), or as frontal

¹²⁷³ For further examples, see al-Gailani Werr: 29/1 no. 217; Blocher 1992: Abb. 40 no. 190; Moortgat 1940: no. 305; Klengel and Klengel-Brandt 2002: pl. 75 no. 121.1.

¹²⁷⁴ For a further example, see al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. 28/6 no. 212.e (= Teissier 1998: no. 163), 36/2 no. 251.a.

¹²⁷⁵ According to Slanski (2007) rod and ring are visual symbols of balance of power between temple and palace as well as of rulers’ prerogatives and obligations. Either rod or ring alone has the same meaning as the ‘rod and ring’ symbol.

For images with rod only, see also al-Gailani Werr 1988: pls. 28I/1,6,8,10, 29/5; Teissier 1998: no. 80; for a seal with the sun-god holding only a ring, see Collon 1986: no. 104.

¹²⁷⁶ See further, e.g., Teissier 1998: no. 80; Porada 1948: no. 391; Collon 1986: no. 104.

¹²⁷⁷ On *nadītu(m)* seals, see Teissier 1998: 117.

¹²⁷⁸ Harris 1975: 150, 308. A number of sealings are on tablets dealing with the affairs of *nadītus* (Klengel-Brandt 1983: 198; Teissier 1998). On personal names composed with names of goddesses in Sippar families, see also Kalla 2002, esp. p. 162.

¹²⁷⁹ Krebernik 2006-2008 s.v. “Richtergott(heiten)”; Frayne 1990: p. 428-429 no. 2001; George 1993: 74 no. 148.

¹²⁸⁰ Tanret 2010: 192 (fig. 25).

¹²⁸¹ al-Gailani Werr 1988: 39-40; Collon 1986: 26-27; Braun-Holzinger (1996: 248-249) interprets this figure as a Lamma-deity, and Colbow (2002: vol. 1 p. 194) as a minor goddess with a typical female gesture.

¹²⁸² Cf. Blocher 1992: Abb. 40 no. 128.

¹²⁸³ Klengel-Brandt 1989: 261 fig. 8a.

counterpart to Aya. Each frontal goddess – Aya-type and the one with clasped hands – is also positioned at opposite ends of a scene, conferring symmetrical balance to the composition (figs. 113, 119). Also symmetrically constructed are images composed with four figures grouped in two pairs, one of them with Aya and the frontal goddess with clasped hands (figs. 125, 127). One variation (fig. 125) juxtaposes the pair Aya-type goddess and frontal goddess as correlating pair to king with offering animal facing Šamaš holding a ring; the incomplete inscription can be completed as Šamaš and Aya. In another pairing (fig. 126) the Aya-type figure points to Udug (between them kneels a small nude man), the second pair shows the king facing a goddess depicted in profile (between them is an upright goat); the two pairs are separated by inscription of Enki's name (see below). The frontal goddess with clasped hands also appears in the center of a scene opposite the standing sun-god holding a ring (fig. 127); the two are framed by an apparently minor deity depicted in profile behind the frontal deity and an incompletely preserved Lamma behind the sun-god. In another, rather different variation (fig. 128) the central group consisting of Udug and Lamma with a small nude woman between them is framed by two frontal deities, one with clasped hands, the other a water-goddess with fish on her sides standing on addorsed goat fish, and accompanied by a miniature 'fish-man' next to her head; both hybrids are related to Enki/Ea.¹²⁸⁴ Identification of this goddess as Enki's spouse Damgalnuna or Damkina is proposed by Felix Blocher (see below).¹²⁸⁵

The significance of the frontal goddess with clasped hands is suggested by her position either in the center opposite the sun-god (fig. 127), next to Ištar (fig. 110) or Aya (fig. 125).¹²⁸⁶ That this frontal figure should represent a goddess of minor as well as of high rank seems unlikely, especially as frontality is the form of Ištar, Annunītum, Aya and other major deities. In this context it is of interest that the only single goddesses functioning as witnesses in Sippar documents are Aya, Annunītum, and the dream goddess Mamu(d), a daughter of Šamaš.¹²⁸⁷

The frontal deity with folded hands is also shown next to an enthroned *en face* goddess on an exceptional Old Babylonian seal, of which numerous impressions were found at Sippar and Babylon attesting that the seal was

¹²⁸⁴ On symbols and attributes of Enki/Ea in texts and images, see Galter 1983: 104-110; cf. Black and Green 1992: 75.

¹²⁸⁵ Blocher 1992: 121. For the names of Enki's spouse(s), see Galter 1983: 124-126 and Chapter II.C.1 in this volume.

¹²⁸⁶ This frontal goddess also appears as central figure in a scene on a fragmentary seal impression further depicting two Lamma, a frontal 'water-goddess', a lion-headed dragon, and two men: al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. 31/5 nos. 200.a and b (= Teissier 1998: no. 246); see also Teissier 1998: no. 243 where this goddess appears as prominent figure.

¹²⁸⁷ Teissier 1998: 115; Harris 1975: 148-149 (sub Bunene). In the god-list An =Anum Mamu(d) is listed as daughter of Šamaš, see Lambert 1987-1990; Richter 2004: 350.

used by several persons for over seventy-five years (figs. **129 a-c**).¹²⁸⁸ If all sealings were made with one seal, it must have been brought from Sippar to Babylon (fig. **129b**) where its latest owner was Nur-Marduk, chief warden of seal cutters (*ugula bur-gul*), who was witness to a transaction (loan in silver) dating to Samsuditana year 24/25 (ca. 1600 BCE).¹²⁸⁹

Although the number of figures is always the same, the modern drawings of the seal's impressions differ in positioning of figures and several details:

1. either Aya (fig. **129b**), or Šamaš (fig. **129c**), or both divine names (fig. **129a**) are inscribed;
2. the emblem of the enthroned goddess resembles either a pronged object (fig. **129b**), or an object with rectangular center piece (fig. **129a**), or a double lion-headed (?) mace with central vase and a ring attached (fig. **129c**);¹²⁹⁰
3. the length of the pole with the disc and crescent standard varies and is either short (fig. **129c**) or stands on the ground (figs. **129 a, b**); the disk is depicted with (figs. **129a, 129b?**) or without crescent (fig. **129b**);¹²⁹¹
4. the streams emanating from the water deity are wavy (figs. **129 a, b**) or straight (fig. **129c**).

Such differences may occur when drawings are made by several persons from different fragmentary impressions often distorted by the process of rolling the seal over wet clay.

The scene's major figure, the enthroned goddess with an emblem in her right hand, is identified by Evelyn Klengel-Brandt and Gudrun Colbow as Ištar,¹²⁹² an identification not secured by unequivocal images of enthroned Ištar from Sippar.¹²⁹³ While variations of the emblem are not uncommon on seals, it hardly resembles a double lion-headed mace (figs. **106, 107, 110**).¹²⁹⁴ Generally, Ištar is recognizable by her "well-established iconography"

¹²⁸⁸ Klengel-Brandt 1983: 66-67 no. 1; Pientka 1998: fig. on p. 238 (this drawing is based on impressions on CT 8,10C = BM 80549 from Sippar); Colbow 1991: 290-292, figs. 139a, 139b; 2002: vol. 1 p. 53; vol. 2 pp. 49-50. On seals being used over decades by several persons or by several generations, see Colbow 2002: vol. 1 pp. 50-54; Tanret 2010.

¹²⁸⁹ Klengel-Brandt 1983: 66-68 no. 1; Colbow 2002: vol. 1 p. 53.

¹²⁹⁰ Such variations are common, see Colbow 1991: pls. 11-16, 23.

¹²⁹¹ On the 'disc and crescent' standard, see Collon 1986: 48 D.3.d), nos. 279, 280, 315, 556; for an example from Sippar (disc and crescent next to sun-god holding ring); see also Teissier 1998: fig. no. 215. It may represent a *šu-nir* (standard), see Pongratz-Leisten 1992: 303, 307.

¹²⁹² Klengel-Brandt 1983: 66; Colbow 1991: 291-292; 2002: vol. 1 p. 188 (no. 81.1).

¹²⁹³ For images of an enthroned war goddess from Sippar, see Colbow 1991: 286 no. 107, pl. 15 fig. 132, 288 no. 114, pl. 15 fig. 136 (= Teissier 1998: nos. 167).

¹²⁹⁴ See Colbow 1991; pls. 11-16, 23; Collon 1986: p. 31 (fig. 388), al-Gailani Werr 1988: pls. 18/8 no. 123.b, 25, 38; Blocher 1992: pp. 117-118, Abb. 26-28.

showing her in ascending posture with a foot on a lion, her emblematic animal, but there is no trace of a lion.¹²⁹⁵

The identity of the seated goddess may be suggested by the name Aya; the signs DIGIR.A.A start below her elbow and are squeezed between throne and calf of the nude hero. Perhaps the emblem in the hands of the enthroned goddess is Aya's which is mentioned in texts, although not described.¹²⁹⁶

Šamaš's name is inscribed between the heads of the frontal deity standing before the enthroned goddess and the bull-man holding the disc and crescent standard, a minor god serving as attendant of the sun-god.¹²⁹⁷ The direction of the bull-man towards the right suggests either 'water-goddess' and hero holding a vase under the water streams should be positioned at the left side of the disc and crescent standard, or bull man and standard should be positioned to the right of the 'water-goddess', as shown in Gudrun Colbow's and Evelyn Klengel-Brandt's drawings (figs. 129 b, c).¹²⁹⁸

If the enthroned *en face* figure represents Aya; the iconography may be understood as visual expression of her high status as 'Great Queen/Mistress' and patroness of Sippar. Her spouse Šamaš is alluded to in name, disc and crescent standard, and the bull-man.¹²⁹⁹ Nevertheless, identification of Ištar or Annunītum – both prominent in Sippar, both with the epithet 'Queen of the city Sippar', both with their own temple¹³⁰⁰ and both being warrior goddesses – cannot be excluded.¹³⁰¹ As sister of Šamaš, Ištar is closely related to the city's chief god,¹³⁰² and an impression from Sippar shows Ištar together with the sun-god.¹³⁰³ However, in Sippar seal iconography – although rarely depicted – Ištar is usually shown standing with one foot on a lion, or in full frontal form on two lions as, for example, on a Sippar style seal (fig. 107) where she appears together with Aya pointing to Šamaš.¹³⁰⁴

¹²⁹⁵ For example, Collon 1986; pp. 31, 156-158; Colbow 1991; e.g. on pls. 10-14, 16-20.

¹²⁹⁶ Renger 1967: 152; Pientka 1998: 238 lists an "emblem of Šerda".

¹²⁹⁷ Black and Green 1992: 48-49.

¹²⁹⁸ On water deities associated with nude hero with curls, flowing vase streams and/or vase, see Collon 1986 p. 31 sub A, 28, p. 31 sub B.1.c, esp. no. 147 depicts a water-goddess in frontal view framed by two Lamma; Klengel-Brandt 1989: 281 ad no. 21.

¹²⁹⁹ A bull-man with sun-disk standard appears behind the seated Šamaš on another Sippar impression that also features goddess and king embracing, see fig. 137 in this volume.

¹³⁰⁰ George 1993; no. 244: E-edina, temple of Ištar as Bēlet-Sippar; no. 1169: E-ulmaš, temple of Annunītum. See also Chapter II.C.1 in this volume.

¹³⁰¹ In the Ur III period Annunītum occurs in the circle of Inana/Ištar in Nippur, Uruk and Ur: Gödecken 1973; Richter 2004: 30, 281-282, 414, 470. In the Old Babylonian period she also appears in god-lists among goddesses associated with Inana/Ištar: Richter 2004: 130, 292, 295.

¹³⁰² Harris 1975: 151. In Larsa, the southern cult center of the sun-god, Inana/Ištar is the deity most frequently represented in impressions; see al-Gailani Werr 1988: 48.

¹³⁰³ al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. 25/8.

¹³⁰⁴ For examples from Sippar: al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. 25/7 and 8 (= Teissier 1998: no. 186), 9, pl. 27/5; Teissier 1998: no. 226. Cf. Porada 1948: pl. 54; Collon 1986: nos. 62, 122,

Alternatively, Annunītum, the proprietary deity of the “twin city” Sippar-Amnanum, may be represented as enthroned goddess. Her temple Ulmaš was nearly as important and wealthy as the Ebabbar-temple of Šamaš and Aya in Sippar-Yahrarum.¹³⁰⁵ The image of warrior goddess suits Annunītum’s domain battle and she may also be depicted, as suggested above, standing on two lion griffins holding an emblem resembling Ištar’s (fig. 108), or in full frontal form holding a three-pronged weapon (fig. 130). The corresponding domains as warrior goddesses suggest the image of enthroned warrior goddess may represent Annunītum (fig. 129).

The frontal deity between enthroned goddess and bull-man resembles the deity appearing in other scenes as central figure (figs. 127, 129), or paired with Ištar (fig. 110), or with Aya (fig. 125). Her lack of attribute, distinct visual personality and gender allows for multiple interpretations including image of a compound deity.¹³⁰⁶ The importance of this deity on the Nur-Marduk seal (figs. 129a-c) results from frontal representation combined with the position next to the principal figure of enthroned goddess and association with Šamaš as his name is inscribed next to her head. Assuming the enthroned goddess represents Annunītum, then the associations of the full frontal goddess with name and symbols of Šamaš point to her identification as Aya personifying Dawn. Alternatively, she could represent Šamaš’s daughter Mamu(d), who alone or together with her spouse Bunene, vizier of Šamaš, figures among the three goddesses named as witnesses in documents (see above).¹³⁰⁷

Other goddesses with a temple in Sippar are Nin-Isina, Ninḫegal, Ninkarrak, and Tašmētum.¹³⁰⁸ Ninḫegal, the goddess of abundance may be a candidate for the figure with streaming water as symbol of abundance and prosperity. Enki’s spouse Damgalnuna/Damkina may be excluded as she is depicted with fish, goat-fish and human-headed fish but without water streams (fig. 128), behind or in front of Enki/Ea in Aya-posture (figs. 122-124). However, every divine patroness of a city was responsible for the prosperity of her city and its population. Images of major as well as minor goddesses with water streams occur in various forms and locations and may be just one of several iconographies of a goddess as, for example of BaU in Neo-Sumerian art (figs. 36a and b, 45).¹³⁰⁹

358, 388, pls. 29-30. Aya standing next to Ištar is depicted on a seal in the Yale Babylonian Collection (Buchanan 1981: no. 953).

¹³⁰⁵ Renger 1967: 152-155; Harris 1975: 150-151, 178-183; In Dekiere 1994-1996 Aya is the goddess with most entries (vols. 1, p. 263; 2, p.301; 3, p. 196; 4, p. 134; 5, p. 308), followed by Annunītum with substantially less entries (vols. 1 p. 203; 4, p. 134).

¹³⁰⁶ On compound or amalgamated deities, see Chapters II.B.4 and II.C.1 in this volume.

¹³⁰⁷ Teissier 1998: 115. On Bunene and Mamu(d), who had their own temple in Sippar-Yahrarum, see Harris 1975: 148-149.

¹³⁰⁸ Renger 1967: 152-155; Harris 1975: 150-152; Dekiere 1995-1996 (indices); on Ninkarrak in Sippar, see J.G. Westenholz 2010b: 384-385.

¹³⁰⁹ See also above Chapter IV.C.4.3.

As we have seen in Neo-Sumerian images, multifaceted goddesses as, for example, BaU or Ningal are visualized in different roles. Accordingly, in Old Babylonian imagery multiple iconographies may exist for Aya and other goddesses. This hypothesis is supported by texts as well as by identical or very similar iconography in depictions of different goddesses positioned directly behind, occasionally also before Šamaš or Enki/Ea, either representing Aya or Damgalnuna, or possibly the figure of frontal goddess with clasped hands who may represent an amalgamated deity.¹³¹⁰ But as mentioned above, images may reflect the fluid and multifaceted character of deities, rendering identification of individual goddesses uncertain.

‘Goddess with flowing water’ is an abiding motif and may not represent an independent deity but a domain or function as providing for abundance is an aspect of many deities, and in particular of cities’ patron deities. Like the small ‘water-goddess’ standing between Šamaš and Aya (fig. 107), the ‘water-goddess’ on the Nur-Marduk seal may allude to Aya’s function as patroness of her city endowing it with ‘abundance’. In other images from Sippar the Ištar or Annunītum figure is associated with a ‘water-goddess’ (fig. 128).¹³¹¹

Similar to Lamma, the ‘goddess of abundance’ may be attached to major local goddesses. Water occasionally with fish swimming therein is a recurrent symbol associated with high positioned or major city goddesses (figs. 25, 36b, 38b, 45, 88?) as well as with minor goddesses (figs. 76, 80, 90, 103).¹³¹² Images of ‘water-goddess’ are rare not just on Sippar seals but in general on Old Babylonian seals, perhaps because in Northern Babylonia water supply was less of a problem than in the south.¹³¹³ Comparable to other images of divinities (for example, pointing frontal goddess, full frontal deity with clasped hands) the water-goddess is a generic figure representing a function of particular goddesses whose identity is embedded in specific contexts.¹³¹⁴

Hypothetically, all three frontal goddesses on the Nur-Marduk seal (figs. 129 a, b) may represent manifestations of Aya: enthroned as patroness of Sippar with her name inscribed behind her, as personification of Dawn positioned between seated goddess and bull-man, as ‘water-goddess’ providing abundance and prosperity for Sippar and its population. Consequently, the sequence of figures from right to left may be: Aya as patroness of Sippar enthroned, Aya as ‘goddess of Dawn’, and Aya as ‘goddess of abundance

¹³¹⁰ See in Chapters II.A and II.C.1 in this volume.

¹³¹¹ Teissier 1998: no. 246.

¹³¹² Collon 1986: 31 sub A.28.

¹³¹³ For two, similar but fragmentary examples see, al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. 26/8 no. 237.d and Teissier 1998: no. 319; for a water-goddess apparently in the center of the action, see Klengel-Brandt 1989: 283 fig. 21a.

¹³¹⁴ On generic figure, see Chapter IV.B in this volume.

and prosperity' framed by Šamaš's minister and the hero with curled locks of hair. According to the ritual mentioned above, Šamaš is still in his cella being dressed and listening to payers and songs while Aya takes her seat in the courtyard.¹³¹⁵

Aya's textual record may not match that of other spouses of major gods such as Ninlil, or major goddesses as Nin-Isina, Inana and Nanaya to whom hymns were dedicated. Yet, she was a very popular goddess with the people and specific groups such as the *nadītu(m)*-priestesses which may be reflected in seal imagery.

The extraordinary image on the Nur-Marduk seal demonstrates the complexities and problems posed for identification of deities, in particular of goddesses. Images reflect what Joan G. Westenholz states for written representations, that syncretism equated discrete goddesses based on contiguities or similarities, merged or fused them, some becoming amalgamated deities, while many other goddesses were delegated to the roles of divine spouse (Chapters II.A, II.C.1). For the seal owner Nur-Marduk it may have been important that Aya was also equated with Marduk's consort Zarpanītum, who is occasionally catalogued among Inana goddesses (Chapter II.C.1).¹³¹⁶ Considering the interconnection between Sippar and Babylon and the heterogeneity of the population in Sippar, images may intentionally be ambiguous so that a figure could represent different goddesses who had functions in common. As emphasized repeatedly, identity may depend on what the beholder sees in a figure.

In Sippar the figure 'pointing frontal goddess' is also associated with Enki/Ea (figs. **123**, **124**).¹³¹⁷ It is the same figure that personifies Aya but she points at the back of the seated Enki whose feet and throne rest on addorsed goat-fish, the symbol of Enki. Identification of the goddess standing behind him as his spouse is based on the legend of one seal (fig. **124**) in which the owner, Enkimansum, calls himself 'servant of Enki and Damgalnuna'.¹³¹⁸ On another seal (fig. **126**) Enki's name is inscribed but he is not depicted. Enki and Damgalnuna (another name of the goddess is Damkina) had a sanctuary in part of the Annunītum complex in Sippar-Amnanum and are mentioned together in seal inscriptions.¹³¹⁹

That the figure of 'frontal pointing goddess' does not always represent Aya is also evident in the doubling of this figure on a Sippar style seal depicting a king offering an animal to Amurru (fig. **131**). The two goddesses standing

¹³¹⁵ Maul 1999b: 301-302.

¹³¹⁶ Maul 1999b: 308.

¹³¹⁷ al-Gailani Werr 1988: pls. 28/1 no. 234, 28/6 no. 212e, 36/2 no. 251a.

¹³¹⁸ Identification as Damkina is suggested by al-Gailani Werr 1988: 39 and Blocher 1992: 121; see also Braun-Holzinger 1996: 328-331.

¹³¹⁹ Harris 1975: 148; Braun-Holzinger 1996: 329-332.

side-by-side point in opposite directions suggesting that the one pointing left (i.e. to her right) should be placed at the right side of the legend. These goddesses are distinguished by different robes: that of the goddess at the left leaves shoulder and upper part of chest exposed, the other goddess has both shoulders and much of her left arm covered. Next to each the name of a god is inscribed: that of the weather-god Iškur/Adad next to the deity at the left may indicate she is his spouse Šāla, whose main function as intercessor is typical for the divine spouse; the cult of Adad is attested in Sippar (see below).¹³²⁰ Šamaš's name is inscribed next to the other goddess identifying her as Aya. The owner of this seal was Marilišu, son of Iliu-Šamaš, servant of Amurru, identified by Eva Braun-Holzinger as Amurru based on the crook underneath his stretched-out arm.¹³²¹

Multiple iconography may allude to Aya's diverse roles and functions as patroness of Sippar, intercessor, *kallatum*, and personification of Dawn. That Dawn may be visualized in a frontal goddess seems plausible in view of the rising round sun – somewhat resembling the round face of the frontal goddess with clasped hands – the positive connotations of dawn and daylight also perceived as the opposite of darkness of night the time when many demons are active.¹³²² Dawn makes everything 'visible' and in Aya's frontal image one 'sees' the face of Dawn.

Aya's various functions may also be reflected in an image showing her in profile (fig. 132). The figure 'frontal pointing goddess' represents predominantly spouse as intercessor whose identity is indicated when the husband's name is inscribed, or when she points to a god with known iconography such as Utu/Šamaš or Enki/Ea. Less common is identification of both divine husband and wife by inscription. Divine wives are occasionally represented in profile (figs. 132, 133). The sealing on a tablet recording a loan given by a *nadītu(m)* of Šamaš (fig. 132)¹³²³ depicts a goddess with raised arm following behind the sun-god receiving a king with offering animal. In analogy to the iconography of Aya/Šamaš, the profile 'pointing' goddess behind the sun-god may also represent Aya but rather as spouse than as intercessor.¹³²⁴ A goddess touching the back of the god standing before her is represented on one of the

¹³²⁰ Schwemer 2001; 2006-2008 s.v. "Šāla. A. Philologisch" (p. 567 § 6 Adad temple in Sippar); cf. George 1993: 70 no. 97 and 93 no. 382.;

¹³²¹ Braun-Holzinger 1996: 242, 332. For the inscription, see Collon 1986: 190 no. 522.

¹³²² E.g., Wiggermann 1992: *passim*.

¹³²³ Klengel-Brandt 1989: 284-286.

¹³²⁴ A comparable couple is depicted on an impression presumably from Sippar: Klengel and Klengel-Brandt 2002: pl. 67 no. 45.1. However, scholars have no unanimous opinion concerning the identity of the god, see Collon 1986: 29 sub A.19; Black and Green 1992: 155 "ring-staff".

sealings on a loan contract (fig. **133**).¹³²⁵ The identity of the god is considered unclear because of the ‘rod with balls’ (also called ‘ring-post’ or ‘ring-staff’) attribute;¹³²⁶ his foot is placed on an animal (bull ?) apparently with horned crown. Dominique Collon suggests that he represents the weather-god.¹³²⁷ Two attributes behind the king with offering kid, the lightning fork of the weather-god Adad and the bird symbol of his spouse Šāla,¹³²⁸ suggest an image of this couple who are often named together in seal inscriptions.¹³²⁹ The two goddesses to the left of the king, Lamma facing a frontal goddess in ‘sexy’ robe, seem unconnected to the offering scene; the combination with the ‘ball-and staff’ symbol is unusual.¹³³⁰ Where Lamma is part of a scene with Adad, her direction is towards the action.¹³³¹ The pairing of Aya with Lamma, and the frontal deity with clasped hands occurs occasionally on Sippar seals (figs. **117**, **123**) and may suggest Aya as representative of Sippar on the seal with Adad and Šāla.

A goddess in ‘sexy’ robe is depicted in profile view on two Sippar style seals. In one scene (fig. **115**) two goddesses frame the sun-god, Aya in full frontal view pointing at his back and a goddess depicted in profile facing him; she is followed by Lamma and Udug. The goddess opposite Šamaš holds her hands clasped and wears a décolleté robe exposing her right shoulder and breast. Her ‘sexy’ robe may imply that she personifies Aya as Šamaš’s ‘charming bride’. That a similar robe is worn by Annunītum and Ištar (figs. **108**, **117**) is suggestive of Aya’s sexual charm (see above). ‘Sexy’ robe is also a sign of the attractiveness of the goddess shown in a scene with the king offering an animal to Šamaš (fig. **134**). The owner of this seal was a man named Ini-Ea, ‘servant of Amurru and Šamaš’, son of a man named Warad-Amurru (meaning ‘servant of Amurru’). Amurru seems to have been the family god but is not represented on the seal contrary to Šamaš. The goddess wearing the ‘sexy’ robe stands on a stepped pedestal with her back to Šamaš facing the frontal Ištar holding her symbol and standing on two adorsed lions.¹³³² Pedestal and construction of the composition suggest as setting a temple with statues of Šamaš, his ‘sexy’ bride Aya and his sister Ištar to whom the king, followed by Lamma, brings an animal offering.¹³³³ This image may depict a gathering of the three closest members of Sippar’s

¹³²⁵ Klengel and Klengel-Brandt 2002: 18-19.

¹³²⁶ Collon 1980-1983 s.v. “Kugelbaum, Kugelstab”; Black and Green 1992: 155.

¹³²⁷ Klengel and Klengel-Brandt 2002: 60; Collon 1986: 29 A.19.

¹³²⁸ Otto 2006-2008 s.v. “Šāla. B. Archäologisch”, p. 569. On the enigmatic ‘ball and staff’ symbol, see Collon 1986: 49-51 D.5.

¹³²⁹ Braun-Holzinger 1996: 274-285; Schwemer 2006-2008 s.v. “Šāla. A. Philologisch”: 267.

¹³³⁰ Collon 1986: 49 sub D.5.b.

¹³³¹ Collon 1986: no. 432, 435, 445 (only Lamma).

¹³³² Pientka 1998: 230-232.

¹³³³ For cult statues as models, see Collon 2007.

divine family in the Ebabbar, the temple of Šamaš and Aya, where Ištar may have had a statue as she apparently put a claim on this temple.¹³³⁴

The visual representations of goddesses with various domains and functions is apparently more varied than may be presumed from textual sources where they occur predominantly as spouses of major gods. The generic figures used in their depictions gain individual identity by context. As on Neo-Sumerian seals, the multifaceted functions of a goddess is expressed in different visual forms, whereas one form can be used for different goddesses, as for example, the frontal pointing goddess representing Aya or Damgalnuna. Ancient viewers perceived identity (“seeing-in”¹³³⁵) not only because they were familiar with the options of visual forms, combinations and compositions, but also because the images show a limited group of goddesses familiar in Sippar.

6.2. Goddess and King embracing

Several Old Babylonian seals depict a goddess and a king embracing, a motif suggestive of intimate relationship between Inana (or a goddess in the same function¹³³⁶) and the king (figs. **136-138**).¹³³⁷ The gesture shows the goddess touching the back of the king’s shoulder while he “embraced her neck”, a gesture mentioned in ‘Nin-Isina’s journey to Nippur’.¹³³⁸ Intimacy is also alluded to in dress, the king, identified by his royal cap, exposes a naked leg while the goddess’ shoulder, part of her breasts and both arms are naked. Apart from her tiara, she has neither attribute nor emblem but is usually connected with Inana. On some seals the ritual character of the action is indicated by juxtaposed offering scenes.¹³³⁹ On a seal from Sippar (fig. **137**)¹³⁴⁰ and an unprovenanced seal (fig. **138**) the goddess and king embracing are placed next to a scene depicting Šamaš receiving the king’s animal offering. In ‘Nin-Isina’s Journey to Nippur’, after the embrace the goddess and the king sit down and listen to music and praise songs. Then the goddess “made the

¹³³⁴ George 1993: 70 sub no. 97.

¹³³⁵ See in this Chapter section 2.

¹³³⁶ For “sacred marriage” with Nin-Isina instead of Inana, see in this volume Chapter II.C.1; cf. Frankfort 1939: 169-170, who suggested Nergal and Ereškigal.

¹³³⁷ For more images, see al-Gailani Werr 1988: pls. 7/3 no. 45, 13/4 no. 47.a, 32/3 no. 205.a (= Teissier 1998: no. 300); Teissier 1998: 133 no. 61; Delaporte 1923: A.291), A.314; Frankfort 1955: pl. 86 no. 906; cf. Delaporte 1923: A.934; Ward 1910: 152 no. 401 (= U. Winter 1983: fig. 371).

¹³³⁸ Wagensohn 2008: lines 38-39.

¹³³⁹ See also al-Gailani Werr 1988: pls. 7/3 no. 45, 13/4 no. 47.a, 32/3 no. 205.b; Delaporte 1920: A.291, A.934; Frankfort 1955: no. 906.

¹³⁴⁰ For further images from Sippar, see al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. 25/1 no. 201.h; Teissier 1998: no. 61 (seal of sanga-priest of Šin)

dwelling in the Egalmah^h sweet” and the king slaughters an ox for her after which follows a meal.¹³⁴¹

These images are generally interpreted as ‘sacred marriage’ based on a ritual reconstructed from literary texts. However, its cultic reality is highly controversial and some scholars think that the ‘sacred marriage’ rite is a modern nineteenth-century theory.¹³⁴² Several royal hymns and songs of the twenty-first and twentieth centuries BCE contain more or less explicit references to erotic relationships between individual historical rulers and Inana.¹³⁴³ Beate Pongratz-Leisten (2008) argues that the “sacred marriage” is “a key metaphor” in royal hymns and inscriptions for the close relationship between king and deities emphasizing the king’s close ties to the divine world, the deities approval of the king, and his legitimacy; it is part of the ideology of interdependence between state and religion where the king directly communicates with the deities.

In imagery, the juxtaposition of the motifs ‘goddess and king embracing’ with ‘king bringing animal offering’ suggests a ritual context, in particular because the king is also shown receiving the royal insignia ‘rod’ (and ring¹³⁴⁴) from Šamaš (fig. 137). That Šamaš not the goddess bestows the royal insignia reflects the change Inana’s role underwent in the Old Babylonian period. Bestowal of powers now comes from Enlil to whom Inana is subordinate, she no longer chooses her royal spouse but Enlil and Ninlil present the king as her symbolic spouse.¹³⁴⁵ The ‘union’ is symbolized in the royal titles ‘beloved husband of Inana’ (dam ki-ag₂ dInana) and ‘spouse of Inana’ (dam dInana) a title that the kings of the Hammurabi dynasty continued to carry (Chapter II.C.1).¹³⁴⁶ Inana’s ‘subordinate’ position as executor of Enlil’s decision is visualized by omitting her power attributes, showing her in a robe also worn by other goddesses, and by Šamaš, not Inana, holding the rod symbol and receiving the offering of the king.¹³⁴⁷ The embrace may not imply sexual union as reality of a ‘sacred marriage’ ritual but is the visual metaphor for the royal epithet ‘spouse of Inana’ or ‘king by love of Inana’. In

¹³⁴¹ Wagensohn 2008: lines 42-49.

¹³⁴² Assante 2003: 27-31; Brisch 2006a: 168-170; 2007: 3, 20-26, 30-31; Cancik-Kirschbaum 2004; Pongratz-Leisten 2008.

¹³⁴³ Cancik-Kirschbaum 2004.

¹³⁴⁴ On a seal in the Louvre (Delaporte 1923: A. 291) with the image of embracing goddess and king, the king in worshipper posture faces Šamaš in ascending posture holding ‘rod and ring’.

¹³⁴⁵ Brisch 2007: 25-26; J.G. Westenholz 2007: 336-340; see also Chapter II.C.1 in this volume.

¹³⁴⁶ Cancik-Kirschbaum 2004; Brisch 2007: 25-26; J.G. Westenholz 2007: 339-340.

¹³⁴⁷ In the Akkadian period Ištar, the most important goddess of the ruling dynasty, is also depicted in frontal view holding the ring: Delaporte 1923: A.142 (= Boehmer 1965: fig. 300).

this context, the comments of Nicole Brisch (2006b: 42-43) may be relevant: “royal hymns, which describe a super-human image of the (divine) king as exemplified in the famous hymns of Šulgi, are all about kings who were long dead by the time the students copied them. The form in which they have been transmitted into the Old Babylonian period does not reflect poetic images of historical personalities Conversely, contemporary or recently deceased kings such as Rim-Sîn, Hammurabi, and Samsuiluna were extolled in a different kind of literature, one that emphasizes the king’s favorable relationship to the gods, especially his fulfillment of cult duties”.¹³⁴⁸

The small group of images with goddess and king embracing may be considered visual royal propaganda (“*Bildpolitik*”) by portraying the king as ‘beloved husband of Inana’ who fulfills his cultic duties symbolized in the animal offering (figs. **136-138**) and is worthy of the insignia of rulership (where depicted: fig. **137**).

6.3. Affinities to Goddesses

The most popular formula of seal legends is ‘servant of deity or deities so-and-so’ with up to three deities listed of which one is usually a goddess. The meaning of the expression ‘servant of deity so-and-so’ is controversial, but there is evidence that it refers to personal or family deity or deities.¹³⁴⁹ Members of the same family are often ‘servant of’ the same deity who represents the family god or, less frequently, goddess (see above sections 3 and 5).¹³⁵⁰ Seal owners rarely call themselves ‘servant of’ the patron deity or divine couple of their city. This is attested in seal inscriptions from Sippar where none of the seals with either visual representation of Šamaš and Aya or their names inscribed was owned by somebody calling her/himself ‘servant’ of Šamaš and/or of Aya. In theophoric personal names, however, Aya was a favorite element. The family deity is often also the choice for personal deity; its choice was influenced by the closeness of a shrine to the family’s residence, by profession, or gender. Scribes, for example, preferred the scribal deities Nisaba as their patron during the first half of the Old Babylonian period and thereafter Nabû.¹³⁵¹

Divine names as part of personal names of seal owners often contain a different divine name than those named in the ‘servant of deity so-and-so’ formula. This is an old tradition followed even by priests and priestesses as,

¹³⁴⁸ On Šulgi, see Klein 2006; on divine status of rulers, see I.J. Winter 2008.

¹³⁴⁹ Van der Toorn 1996: 66-68.

¹³⁵⁰ On ‘protective’ and ‘personal’ deities, respectively, see now Löhnert and Zgoll 2009-2011.

¹³⁵¹ On Nisaba as goddess of scribes, see Robson 2007; Waetzoldt 2009-2011: 264-265 § 12; Charpin 2009-2011.

for example, by the high priestess of the goddess BaU whose name Geme-Lamma means ‘servant of the goddess Lamma’ (see above section 3.3.1).¹³⁵²

Gender also influenced choice as women owned many seals with the inscription ‘servant of Inana’ as well as all seals inscribed with ‘servant of Nanaya’; the only goddess represented on these seals is Lamma.¹³⁵³ Although Nanaya became one of the most popular deities in the second millennium there is only one secure image of her dating to the middle Babylonian period.¹³⁵⁴ The tradition of women’s special affinity for goddesses dates back to the Early Dynastic period and is still evident in Old Babylonian seals inscriptions: eighteen of twenty-one women owning inscribed seals are ‘servant of deity so-and-so’, and of these ten are ‘servant of’ a goddess, six of a god and a goddess, and only one calls herself ‘servant of’ a god. Women’s preferences for goddesses is also expressed in their personal names, as mentioned many *nadītus* have names composed with Aya.¹³⁵⁵ In Old Babylonian Mari most popular deities in women’s names are those of the goddesses Annu,¹³⁵⁶ Eštar (Ištar), and Išhara,¹³⁵⁷ followed by Mama/i,¹³⁵⁸ Admu, Kakka, and Aya.¹³⁵⁹

The group of personal deities on seals is relatively small; it includes several goddesses, some of minor and others of high rank, in particularly spouses who could intervene with the gods at the top of the pantheon on behalf of individuals. Deities at the head of a local pantheon are generally not personal deities which is the task of their ‘minister’ or spouse, as, for example, Ištar’s minister Ninšubura, or the spouses Aya, Ninmuga.¹³⁶⁰ Seal images with inscription of divine names indicate Damgalnuna and Šāla also acted as intermediaries with their husbands.

The discrepancy between the percentage of images of goddesses on seals and in official cult may result from different notions about the relevance of goddesses in official and family religion, as well as (popular) notions about gender. Men predominantly preferred images of gods over those of god-

¹³⁵² Walker 1986; Fischer 1997: 155 ad no. 4. According to Kalla (2002: 132) the theophoric element in personal names is subject to other rules than family deities.

¹³⁵³ Braun-Holzinger 1996: 321-322 sub ‘Inanna’ p. 345. On goddesses and women, see also Weiershäuser 2008: 183; Chapters I.B. and II.C.1 in this volume.

¹³⁵⁴ J.G. Westenholz 1997; Stol 1998-2001. See Chapters II.C.2 and IV.C.7 in this volume.

¹³⁵⁵ Kalla 2002. Compare also Pruzsinszki 2002 on gender-specific names at Emar, where the theophoric element in women’s names is generally a goddess although a goddess name occurs as often in men’s names.

¹³⁵⁶ Annu may be related to Annunītum: Selz 2000: 35.

¹³⁵⁷ Lambert 1976-1980.

¹³⁵⁸ Krebernik 1993-1997: s.v. “Muttergöttin”: 503.

¹³⁵⁹ Nakata 1995, see p. 236 on Admu, wife of Nergal, and Kakka, a healing goddess at Mari “equated” with Ninkarrak and Ninšubura.

¹³⁶⁰ Van der Toorn 1996: 80-87, 136-138; Cavigneaux and Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-muga”.

desses on their seals, a choice that expresses strong belief in the powers of masculine deities. Aspects of goddesses preferred by women pertain to love, marriage, family, intercession, and protection. As married women generally adopted the god of their husband,¹³⁶¹ the goddess of their seals as well as the designation ‘servant of goddess so-and-so’ should refer to a family deity. However, unmarried women likely preferred goddesses for which we have several examples on seals. Where the image of one goddess’ features prominently like Aya’s in Sippar, a powerful group of women as the *nadītus* may have influenced relative gender equality in religious images.

Goddesses more often interact with other gods – who are sometimes their spouse – than with goddesses. Implicitly frontal goddesses also interact with human viewers.¹³⁶² The only other contact deities have with humans, other than the king, occurs in offering scenes but the recipient of animal or votive object as well as supplication is generally a god, rarely a goddess. From a gender viewpoint, goddesses, in particular Lamma and the frontal goddesses were more accessible to humans than most gods. Lamma is by far the most popular goddess in Old Babylonian religious imagery,¹³⁶³ but her context changes from that of a goddess among other deities to sole or doubled figure, occasionally even three as on a seal impression from Tell Dhiba’i (fig. 135) depicting three Lamma before an enthroned king.¹³⁶⁴

In regard to the religious significance of goddesses, the relatively few images of major goddesses and the preference for interceding or benevolent-protective goddesses, such as Aya and especially Lamma, reveal an important change in comparison with Neo-Sumerian images. Seal owners in the Neo-Sumerian period preferred the image of a major or at least locally important enthroned goddess together with one or two benevolent, protective Lamma escorting the worshipper with whom the seal owner identified. While Lamma’s function as ‘guardian angel’ remained indispensable, personal and family deities as well as deities of special groups, like Aya and Šamaš for the *nadītus*, or those named as witnesses in contracts gained importance.¹³⁶⁵ Although the seal owner may be mentioned in the inscription,¹³⁶⁶ they are hardly ever represented in the image. Images are integral to and reflect belief systems, and also pertain to religious practices. Therefore, Old Babylonian seal imagery, predominantly of northern Babylonian

¹³⁶¹ Van der Toorn 1996: 75, on personal and family deities, see pp. 71-78; see also Kalla 2002: 127-132.

¹³⁶² Asher-Greve 2003.

¹³⁶³ Lamma-figures made of gold were also worn for protection as pendants on necklaces: Marzahn et al. 2008: 282 fig. 195c (p. 315 cat. no. 315), 316 fig. 235 (p. 317 cat. no. 323).

¹³⁶⁴ E.g. Collon 1986: pls. 40, 41, 43, 44.

¹³⁶⁵ On the important role of the *nadītus* in Sippar, see Goddeeris 2002: 143-166.

¹³⁶⁶ Although there are numerous anepigraphic seals, general tendency is towards longer inscriptions.

provenance,¹³⁶⁷ may hypothetically reflect different ritual practices and even different relationships between deities and worshippers than in presentation scenes dating to the Neo-Sumerian and Isin/Larsa periods, predominantly of southern Babylonian provenance. It is difficult to evaluate how far change in religion and images relates to political and socio-economic change which accelerated after the Neo-Sumerian period. Frequent representation of the king combined with the scarcity of human worshippers depicted before deities reflect the growing centralization of power and perhaps even ‘politicization’.¹³⁶⁸ The king’s growing presence in imagery relates to the increasing economic importance of the palace with more dependents than probably those of temple households.¹³⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the example of Sippar seal imagery proves that at least some goddesses remained important figures not relegated to merely secondary divinities.

7. *Power of Presence: Images of Goddesses after the “Dark Age”*

Under the Kassite dynasty Babylonia experienced a period of prosperity and cultural revival.¹³⁷⁰ But the Kassites, although now the ruling class, adhered to Babylonian religious tradition and used Sumerian for most building and dedicatory inscriptions.¹³⁷¹ However, images of anthropomorphic figures of deities become less numerous than in the Old Babylonian period while symbols become more popular.¹³⁷² Tallay Ornan’s title *The Triumph of the Symbol* (2005), a study of second-millennium Mesopotamian pictorial representations of deities, echoes this development. Ornan concludes “that the removal of the Mesopotamian human-shaped deity from pictorial renderings resembles the biblical approach” (p. 178), and that the turn to symbols is rooted in an “emblematic trait” evident in Mesopotamian religious imagery “at least as

¹³⁶⁷ We lack seal impressions from southern Babylonia because hardly any Old Babylonian documents were recovered there (Goddeeris 2002: 11).

¹³⁶⁸ Goddeeris 2002: 10.

¹³⁶⁹ The lack of temple household documents from northern Babylonia may distort our impression, see Goddeeris 2002: 402-404.

¹³⁷⁰ For the “Dark Age”, see in Introduction and Chapter II.C.2: On the Middle Babylonian/Kassite period – a period of “revampment and syncretism” (J.G. Westenholz) – and goddesses of whom no images survived; see also Chapter II.C.2 in this volume. On second-millennium Babylonian chronology, see Pruzsinszky 2009.

¹³⁷¹ Brinkman 1976-1980: 466-469 § 4. Sassmannshausen 1999.

The terms Kassite and Middle Babylonian are often used interchangeably. On distinction between seals in Babylonian tradition and Kassite style, see D.M. Matthews 1990: 51-54, 115-117.

¹³⁷² Cornelius (1997: 22, 36) uses the term ‘aniconic symbols’ (in contrast to “empty space aniconism” or iconoclasm) for elements functioning as “abbreviation” or “shorthand” for an anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, or hybrid figure. On this issue, see most recently Nunn 2010.

early as the Late Uruk period” (p. 169); she further argues (against Jacobsen) that the anthropomorphic divine image “never fully triumphed in Mesopotamian art” (p. 173).¹³⁷³ But contrary evidence exists for Babylonia where symbols never fully triumphed, where cult and rituals always centered on the anthropomorphic cult statues of gods and goddesses for whom temples continued to be built or restored (e.g., figs. **153-155**).¹³⁷⁴ However, compared to the textual evidence (see Chapter II.D) only few excavated temples dating from the Kassite to the Late Babylonian periods are identified as that of a goddess (Table 2). As discussed in Chapter II.C.2, the names increased under which a deity was venerated, but in general the numbers of deities were reduced with corresponding consequences for the numbers of temples.

Table 2

| Excavated, Identified Temples/Sanctuaries of Goddesses (Kassite to Parthian) | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| City | Temple (area)/ Deity | References | Date/King |
| Uruk | Inana | Heinrich 1982: Abb. 288, 295, 297; pp. 220-21 | Kassite/Karaindaš |
| Isin | Gula | Heinrich 1982: Abb. 304, 305; p. 225 | Kassite, Neo-Babylonian (Nebuchadnezzar II) |
| Ur | Ningal | Heinrich 1982: Abb. 301, 306; pp. 226-27 | Middle Babylonian |
| Uruk | Eana ¹³⁷⁵ | Heinrich 1982: Abb. 372-378; pp. 279-81 | Mardukaplaiddina - Cyrus |
| Ur | “Ninezen temple” ¹³⁷⁶ | Heinrich 1982: Abb. 377; p. 281 | Neo-Babylonian (Nebuchadnezzar II) |
| Kiš | Ḫursaġkalama ¹³⁷⁷ | Heinrich 1982: Abb. 379, 380, p. 305 | Neo-Babylonian |

¹³⁷³ Ornan 2005: 168-187. For several reasons I do not agree with Ornan, but discussion here would stray too far from the theme of this study; cf. review by Bahrani 2006.

¹³⁷⁴ See in this Chapter section 4; further: George 1992; 1993; Collon 1987: 58-61; 2001; for anthropomorphic depictions of goddesses on *kudurrus*, see Seidl 1989: 195-197; for the cult statues and the cults of Mesopotamian goddesses in the Hellenistic period, in particular in Babylon and Uruk, see Linssen 2004: 13-15, 23-91; Seidl 2000; Bahrani 2006.

¹³⁷⁵ Including three temples: Heinrich 1983: 280-281.

¹³⁷⁶ See Woolley and Mallowan 1962: 34-35; cf. Krebernik 1998-2001: s.v. “Nin-EZEN(-na)”.

¹³⁷⁷ See Chapter II.D in this volume.

| | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--|------------------------------------|
| Kiš | Ziqqurat ¹³⁷⁸ | Heinrich 1982: Abb. 381; pp. 396-397 | Nebuchadnezzar II |
| Babylon ¹³⁷⁹ | Emaḥ ¹³⁸⁰ | Heinrich 1982: Abb. 400, 402; pp. 313-14 | Neo-Babylonian |
| Babylon | Emašdaria/ Ištar of Agade | Heinrich 1982: Abb. 403, 408, pp. 314-15 | Neo-Babylonian |
| Babylon | Ešasura/ Išhara (Temple Z) | Heinrich 1982: Abb. 401, pp. 316-17; George 1992: 315 | Neo-Babylonian |
| Babylon | Eḫilikalama/ Ašratum | George 1992: 25 n. 72, 313 ("Temple D II") | Neo-Babylonian |
| Ur | Ningal | Heinrich 1982: Abb. 410; pp. 319-22 | Nabonidus |
| Uruk | 2 temples in Eana | Heinrich 1982: p. 326 | Nabonidus |
| Uruk | "Irigal"/ Ninirigala ¹³⁸¹ | Heinrich 1982: Abb. 417, 423, pp. 331-33 | Seleucid |
| Nippur | Inana/Ištar | Gibson et al. 1998-2001 | continuously to Parthian period |

How important restitution of a cult statue was, is described on the 'sun-god tablet of Nabû-apla-iddina', king of Babylon from 887 to 855 BCE¹³⁸² (fig. 151): After the destruction of Šamaš's temple in Sippar his statue (i.e. the god himself) had vanished and a sun disc was "enshrined" until Nabû-nadin-šumi, the *šangû*-priest of Sippar finally found a model that allowed making a new cult statue (see above section 4).¹³⁸³ The sun disk was only a temporary object of cult and could not replace the cult statue (see below). The stone relief with the image of Šamaš serving as model for his statue was so precious, it was kept in a box containing several clay impres-

¹³⁷⁸ The temples name is É-anurkitušmaḥ, see George 1993 no. 86 and Chapter III.C.1; according to Heinrich (1982: 396) it had cellas of BaU (cf. George 1993: 334) and Ištar (cf.: George 1993 no. 89 and 1151).

¹³⁷⁹ For a map of Babylon with locations of temples, see George 1992: 24; see also J.G. Westenholz 1996: 215-219 and fig. 2 on p. 201.

¹³⁸⁰ The patron goddess of the Emaḥ is alternatively named Ninmaḥ, Ninḫursaġa, or Bēlet-ilī, see Beaulieu 1997.

¹³⁸¹ For reading of these names, see Chapter II.B.2 sub no. 1 in this volume.

¹³⁸² Brinkman 1998-2001: s.v. "Nabû-apla-iddina".

¹³⁸³ Woods 2004: 40-44, 51-53, text on tablet with relief: 83-89.

sions of the relief. The box is inscribed on all sides: “Image of Šamaš, the Master of Sippar, who dwells in the Ebabbar”; the same lines occur in caption I on the stone relief with an additional line specifying that the Ebabbar “is within Sippar”.¹³⁸⁴

There are substantially fewer anthropomorphic representations of deities in Middle Babylonian/Kassite than in Old Babylonian art.¹³⁸⁵ Of the twenty-four deities whose pictorial representations Michael Herles recently analyzed, only seven are goddesses: Gula, Išhara, Ištar, Lamma, Nanaya, Šāla the consort of the weather-god Adad, Šimalija (or Šumaliya) who together with her spouse Šuqamuna are the patron deities of the Kassite royal family and were absorbed into the Babylonian pantheon.¹³⁸⁶ Gula, Lamma, and Nanaya are depicted in embodied form, Išhara and Šimalija are represented only as symbols, and images of embodied Ištar and Šāla are unsure.¹³⁸⁷

Images of goddesses are rare whether on seals,¹³⁸⁸ or on public monuments like temples, steles, and the so-called *kudurrus*.¹³⁸⁹ Goddesses appear on the frieze decorating the lower part of the façade of the Inana temple in Uruk, built by the Kassite king Karaindaš around 1413 BCE (figs. **139**, **140a**).¹³⁹⁰ Alternating figures of a god and a goddess, each in separate niches, hold a vase from which water flows out over the niches onto the temple walls (figs. **140 a, b**). That gods and goddesses are of the same size, wear the same square topped horned crowns and are only distinguished by beard and different garments signals equal status. Providing abundance may have been a role assumed by the patron deities of the Kassite royal family who as couple on the façade of Inana’s temple became integrated into the cosmos of Inana.

Lamma remained rather popular on Middle Babylonian/Kassite seals but is now often shown without a horned crown.¹³⁹¹ Representation of Lamma on steles and other image carriers continues into the first millennium

¹³⁸⁴ Woods 2004: 35; 83.

¹³⁸⁵ Ornan 2005: 18.

¹³⁸⁶ For a list of Kassite deities, see Sommerfeld 1985: 15-19; see also Chapter II.C.2 in this volume.

¹³⁸⁷ Herles 2006: 23, 40, 45, 50, 193, 293 (Nanaya), 154, 251 (Nanše), 221-222 (Gula), 223-225 (Išhara), 226-228 (Ištar), 231-232 (Lamma), 261-262 (Šāla), 262-263 (Šuqamuna and Šumaliya).

¹³⁸⁸ Herles 2006: 78, -81, 95-95; see also summary on images of anthropomorphic figures on seals in M.D. Matthews 1992: 2-3. Altogether there are less than 400 seals dating to the Kassite period: Collon 2007b: 107.

¹³⁸⁹ According to Slanski (2003: 7, 19-64, 95-95) the precise term is ‘entitlement monuments’; see also Chapter II.C.2 in this volume.

¹³⁹⁰ For a photo of the reconstruction of part of the temple façade in the *Vorderasiatische Museum* in Berlin, see Jacob-Rost et al. 1992: 95 fig. 42; Marzahn et al. 2008: 183 fig. 115. On deities with ‘vase of abundance’, see Herles 2006: 80.

¹³⁹¹ Collon 1987: p. 59 figs. 235, 236, pp. 170-171; Herles 2006: 80, pls. 82.

(fig. 151) and she remains the only protective goddess repetitively depicted on seals. Two nearly identical Kassite steles (figs. 141, 142) show traditional images of Lamma with raised hands and multiple horned crown.¹³⁹² One was found at Uruk and is dedicated to Inana for the life of the Kassite king Nazi-Maruttaš (ca. 1307-1282 BCE).¹³⁹³ In the inscription the goddess is identified as ^dLamma UD¹³⁹⁴-maḥ and the stele's location is called 'high place' (ki-gal), which refers to either a temple or the *bīt akītu*-sanctuary where the stele was found in the burnt rubble of the Neo-Babylonian period.¹³⁹⁵ On Neo-Babylonian monuments Lamma behind king is still represented in presentation scenes but in much smaller scale than the seated principal god Šamaš (fig. 151). The difference in rank is also indicated by the crowns, Lamma's has three pairs of horns, Šamaš's four pairs.

Deities represented in anthropomorphic figure or symbol on *kudurrus* should ensure the hereditary durability of the entitlement in heaven and on earth. These stone monuments were introduced by the Kassites to record land-grants by kings or occasionally deities and were kept in temples.¹³⁹⁶ According to texts on these steles more goddesses were involved than are identified in the imagery.¹³⁹⁷ Gods and goddesses are predominantly represented by their symbols; among the fourteen deities identified by captions are the goddesses BaU, Gula, and Šāla, represented in figural form are Nanaya (fig. 143), Gula (figs. 144-146), perhaps Šāla, and several unidentified goddesses.¹³⁹⁸

The seated goddess featuring prominently on one entitlement stele of the Babylonian king Melišipak (ca. 1186-1172 BCE) is referred to in the stele's text as Nanaya. The text records the donation of an enormous land-grant by Melišipak to his daughter Hunnubat-Nanaya and the stele was originally

¹³⁹² Becker 1993: p. 57, pl. 44. The inscription of the stele in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York is unpublished (personal information in 2010 by Kim Benzel, curator in the Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York).

¹³⁹³ Brinkman 1998-2001: s.v. "Nazi-Maruttaš".

¹³⁹⁴ The reading and meaning of the sign UD is problematic: Falkenstein reads u[d]-maḥ and understood this epithet as "*höchsten ›Geist[wesens]‹*" but commented on the uniqueness of this phrase (in Falkenstein and Lenzen 1954/55: 43-44). Falkenstein's interpretation was followed by most subsequent authors. Another reading *gada-maḥ* "(wearing) a *gadamāḥu*-garment" was proposed by Wiseman (1960: 167) but this epithet seems most peculiar in this context. Since UD can also be read *piriḡ₂*, this epithet might be related to the Early Dynastic goddess, ^dPIRIḠ.LAMMA (see Krebernik 2003-2005: s.v. "^dPIRIḠ.KAL") which has been translated as "the Lion(ess) (is) a Protective Goddess" by Selz (1997: 172).

¹³⁹⁵ Becker 1993: 59 no. 791; Foxvog, Heimpel and Kilmer 1980-1983: 452.

¹³⁹⁶ Slanski 2003; Herles 2006: 22-26, 293.

¹³⁹⁷ Slanski 2003: *passim* (see in index of deities, pp. 349-350).

¹³⁹⁸ Slanski 2003: 127-128; Herles 2006: 23-24, 102, 221-222, 261-262; pls. 19, 22, 23, 29.

placed before Nanaya (fig. 143).¹³⁹⁹ It was found among the ransacked monuments taken by Melišipak's son-in-law, the Elamite king Šutruk-Nahhunte, when he conquered Babylon around 1155 BCE. Depicted is a presentation scene with a king raising his right hand and facing the enthroned Nanaya. The goddess' gesture signals acceptance of the incense offering, indicated by the censer (*nignakku*) on the stand before her, and her guarantee to protect the prebend of the princess. Hunnubat-Nanaya is brought before Nanaya by her father who like a personal god or 'temple Lamma' takes his daughter by the wrist; the princess carries a lyre probably as votive gift for Nanaya. The composition follows classical presentation scenes with two exceptions: first, the king-father instead of a 'temple Lamma' guides the suppliant daughter; second, the canonical principle of isocephaly (i.e. heads on same level) is abandoned for emphasis of hierarchical differences descending from goddess to princess. Additionally, the figure of Nanaya is considerably larger than the king or his even smaller daughter. The small size of the princess either indicates lower status, or not yet an adult when she received the prebend. The king leading his daughter differs from the ritual of presentation to a deity and makes Nanaya's function explicit that she protects the king's grant to his daughter and guarantees it will not be contested, dissolved, or taken away.

Emphasizing hierarchical difference in scale occurs not only between humans and deities but also between deities, as in the presentation scene on the seal of Enlilalša, nu-eš₃-priest of Enlil, gud₄-priest of Ninlil, governor of Nippur, and official(?) of the deity ^d[n]in⁷.[tin].lu.ba (fig. 148),¹⁴⁰⁰ the emesal form of the name Nintinuga.¹⁴⁰¹ Two goddesses present Enlilalša to a god seated above the group. The deities may be identified as those mentioned in the inscription: Enlil enthroned, the tallest goddess with multiple-horned crown and raised left hand, leading Enlilalša by his wrist is Enlil's spouse Ninlil, and behind Enlilalša in same size follows the healing goddess Nintinuga. That this goddess touches Enlilalša's shoulder indicates she is his personal goddess. Positioning and postures (seated and standing) are traditional Babylonian but the heads of the figures are, as on the Melišipak stele (fig. 143), not on the same level. Presentation scenes with strong hierarchical differentiation are also attested in first-millennium art (fig. 151) and may be an indication of changing relations between mortals and major deities, such as Enlil and Šamaš.

¹³⁹⁹ Seidl 1989: 26 no. 23; Slanski 2003: 42-53, 142-43; Ornan 2005: 20-21; for photographs of the complete stele, see Orthmann 1975: fig. 191; Marzahn et al. 2008: 221 fig. 149. For Nanaya see, Stol 1998-2001.

¹⁴⁰⁰ D.M. Matthews 1992: 130-136 no. 189 (inscription by W.G. Lambert).

¹⁴⁰¹ See Chapter II.C.1 and n. 344 in this volume.

Gula is the goddess most frequently represented as anthropomorphic figure on ‘*kudurrus*’.¹⁴⁰² Seated on a throne raising both hands, either with her symbolic dog sitting beside her (figs. **144**, **146**) or name inscribed (fig. **145**¹⁴⁰³), she conveys the impression that she presides over the symbols of the deities around her. Her gesture, as Nanaya’s on the Melišipak stele (fig. **143**), may signal approval of the grant. Like most deities, Gula is often represented by her symbol, the dog as, for example, on a late ‘*kudurru*’ dating to the reign of the Babylonian king Nabû-šuma-iškun (ca. 760-748 BCE; fig. **149**).

The Nabû-šuma-iškun ‘*kudurru*’ is an exceptional monument, not only because of its imagery (only a small part of the tablet-formed stone¹⁴⁰⁴), but also because it does not document a royal grant but a gift of a prebend by two deities: Nanaya and Mār-bīti allow the priest Nabûmutakkil to enter the cella of Nabû and grant him a prebend.¹⁴⁰⁵ The inscription opens with praise to Nanaya containing exalted epithets, several equivalent to those of Ištar: “O Nanaya, exalted Mistress, supreme among the deities, valiant, goddess of goddesses, highest among the mistresses, who listens to prayers, who accepts supplications, spouse of Nabû, sister of Šamaš, beloved of Marduk, firstborn daughter of Anu, ...”¹⁴⁰⁶ The second, shorter praise poem is addressed to Mār-bīti of the Ezida temple in Borsippa. Nanaya and Mār-bīti are the only deities addressed by name in the text including blessing of both.¹⁴⁰⁷

Association of Nanaya and Mār-bīti is attested in several sources; Mār-bīti is connected to Nabû, has a warrior aspect and is described as ‘terrifying hero’.¹⁴⁰⁸ On the ‘*kudurru*’, in addition to the symbols of deities, are images of statues of a god and two goddesses on pedestals. The god with warrior attributes and winged griffin-demon at his feet is most likely Mār-bīti. Problematic is the identification of the two goddesses standing on pedestals with mountain pattern. The only goddess named in the text is Nanaya whose image on the Melišipak stele (fig. **143**) does not show any individual characteristics. The first goddess with a lion at her feet, rod and a sickle-

¹⁴⁰² Seidl 1989: nos. 18, 48, 49-54, 56, 59, 67, 74, 86, 91, pp. 23-24.

¹⁴⁰³ Restored the signs preserved on the throne read ^dGula, see Herles 2006: 29, 46-47; for photographs, see Seidl 1989: pls. 12c, 13a-d no. 29.

¹⁴⁰⁴ The figural relief part resembles a narrow frieze at the top, ca. one-sixth to one-fifth of this small rectangular stone (height 21.7, width 15.4, thickness 7 cm).

¹⁴⁰⁵ Nabû-šuma-iškun is mentioned in the date formula; on Nabû-šuma-iškun, see Frame 1998-2001. For a transcription and translation of the text, see Thureau-Dangin: 1919: 141-144; on this exceptional inscription, see also Slanski 2003: 23-24, 99-100, 122, 132-133; for details on the monument and description of image, see Seidl 1989: 59-60, 91-92 no. 103.

On priests and prebenders, see now Waerzeggers 2010: 34-38.

¹⁴⁰⁶ On Nanaya, see also Chapter II.D.1 in this volume.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Slanski 2003: 99-100, 191.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Krebernik 1987-1990: s.v. “Mār-bīti”.

sword in her hands is reminiscent of images of Inana/Ištar but she is already represented in her star (Venus) on top of the ‘*kudurru*’ (fig. 149). Although the anthropomorphic figure may represent another Ištar, such as Ištar of Akkade, Ištar of Babylon, Ištar of Nineveh, Ištar of Uruk, or Anunitum, it cannot be excluded these are images of two different statues pertaining to the two manifestations of Nanaya in Borsippa: Nanaya consort of Nabû who was venerated in the Ezida temple and the powerful Nanaya Euršaba who had her own separate temple, priestly staff, and, contrary to Nabû’s consort Nanaya, received offerings independent of Nabû; additionally Nanaya Euršaba has a warrior aspect.¹⁴⁰⁹ Further, evidence from Borsippa attests to Mār-bīti’s association with Nanaya Euršaba. Consequently the two goddesses depicted on the ‘Nabû-šuma-iškun *kudurru*’ may represent Nanaya as consort of Nabû behind the more powerful, independent Nanaya Euršaba with warrior aspect.

Ištar is one of the three deities represented on the damaged stele of Šamaš-reš-ušur governor of Suhu and Mari dated to circa 760 BCE (fig. 150).¹⁴¹⁰ The stele was excavated among the monuments at Babylon but may originate from the city of Anat, whose name is often written with the divine determinative sign indicating that Anat was the main cult centre of the goddess Anat. The city Anat, about 125 kilometres south of Mari, was at times the capital of Suhu.¹⁴¹¹ Although the Assyrians dominated that region in the eighth century, Babylonian influence is evident in the literary language, writing style, and the governor’s genealogy that he traces back to Hammurabi.¹⁴¹² With the exception of the Šamaš-reš-ušur whose attire combines Assyrian and Syrian traits,¹⁴¹³ the deities’ appearance is Babylonian: feathered crowns, garments covering their feet and decorated with rondels, and pedestals with mountain patterns, all details resembling those of the deities on the nearly contemporary *kudurru* of Nabû-šuma-iškun (fig. 149).

The rectangular image field is framed on two sides by five columns of inscriptions (fig. 150 a, b); the back side of the stele is empty. The major part of the inscription ends with the curse in the third column beneath the figure of Ištar; columns IV and V contain short notices about agricultural achievements.¹⁴¹⁴

¹⁴⁰⁹ Waerzeggers 2010: 20-22, 26-29.

¹⁴¹⁰ Cavigneaux and Ismail 1990: for the stele see pp. 398-405; Börker-Klähn 1982: no. 231, pp. 218-219; 2005: 62-63.

¹⁴¹¹ For details on the city of Anat, the history and geography of Suhu, see Northedge et al. 1988: 1-5; Cavigneaux and Ismail 1990: 329-332 with note 54.

¹⁴¹² Northedge et al. 1988: 5; Cavigneaux and Ismail 1990: 321-329, 340.

¹⁴¹³ Ornan 2005: 63.

¹⁴¹⁴ Cavigneaux and Ismail 1990: 404.

The four figures are identified by captions from left to right as (fig. **150b**) “image of the goddess Ištar” (a), “image of the god Adad” (b), “image of Šamaš-reš-ušur, governor of the lands of Suhu and Mari” (c), and restored [image of Anat].¹⁴¹⁵ Inscribed between Adad and the governor is the amount of regular offerings stipulated for this stele (d). Placed between the heads are Marduk’s spade (above Ištar’s hand), to its right is Nabû’s stylus and above the head of Šamaš-reš-ušur the crescent symbolizing Sîn. Ištar holding a bow crowned by a star appears in her aspect as war goddess, Adad, a lightning symbol in each hand, additionally holds a ring in his left hand touched by Šamaš-reš-ušur’s right fist, perhaps indicating that he receives that symbol as ruler (see above). As on other monuments depicting a ruler and deities (figs. **143, 151**) the figure of Šamaš-reš-ušur is substantially smaller than those of the deities.

These two stone monuments (figs. **149, 150**), dated approximately around 760 BCE, document that the figural representation of deities, including goddesses – on these reliefs outnumbering figural representation of gods – remained important. However, on the Šamaš-reš-ušur stele neither of the embodied deities is individually invoked in the curse but rather included in the phrase “the great gods of heaven and earth” written with the gender neutral Sumerogram DIGIR.MEŠ.¹⁴¹⁶

The difference between symbolic and embodied presence seems enigmatic as the function of a deity, particularly related to the function of the *kudurrus*, is not always evident. To Kathryn E. Slanski (2003: 133) divine symbols functioned *together* with the inscribed divine curses to protect the stele (as well as the entitlement). Although Slanski only mentions symbols, the embodied deities fulfil the same functions.

Traditional iconography of goddesses did not change substantially – innovations concern primarily details and contexts. Remarkable innovations in Kassite Babylonia are the multiple figures of a goddess and a god on the façade of the Inana temple at Uruk (fig. **140**) and the trend towards representation of deities in symbols that often outnumber anthropomorphic figures, reversing traditional compositional principles. But symbols did not eclipse embodied form of deities as attested by images of Ištar, Nanaya, Gula, and additionally in the first millennium by Anat.¹⁴¹⁷ Lamma continues to be present in imagery, for example on the tablet from the Ebabbar temple in Sippar (fig. **151**). The image of Šamaš on this tablet is often cited as an example of the depiction of a cult statue as well as for veneration of a symbol representing the god, i.e. the large sun-disc with star on a table in front of the

¹⁴¹⁵ Börker-Klähn (1982: p. 218) assumes there was originally a fourth deity behind Anat.

¹⁴¹⁶ Cavigneaux and Ismail 1990: 399 iii 7-8.

¹⁴¹⁷ Colbow 1991; Collon 2001: 122-126 (Gula), 127-129 (Ištar); cf. Seidl 2000.

canopy with the cult statue. Both cult statue and divine symbol are clearly distinguished in the text inscribed on the tablet.¹⁴¹⁸ But whether the image depicts removal or installation of the sun disc is controversial.¹⁴¹⁹

To Izak Cornelius (1997: 36), symbols functioned as substitute for the divine statue, a kind of “abbreviation” or “shorthand” for a cult statue; symbols were also easier to transport and move as, for example, with an army,¹⁴²⁰ or a clan as shown on a stele of Gudea.¹⁴²¹ Not agreeing with Cornelius, Astrid Nunn (2010: 136) argues that “symbols *are* deities”, that there is no essential difference between cult statue and symbol because deities “lived in their symbols like in their statues”. However, Nunn’s hypothesis does not explain how visual perception of, and viewer reaction to form and content of an anthropomorphic statue differs in comparison with that of a divine symbol. Another issue concerns the ‘cultic orders’ which apparently could not be transferred from cult statue to symbol. As described on Nabû-apla-iddina’s sun-god tablet (fig. 151), once the ‘image of Šamaš’ (*šalam* ^dUTU) had been taken away, “his cultic orders were forgotten, his appearance and his attributes had vanished beyond grasp”.¹⁴²² That the ‘cultic orders’ were forgotten means the sun disc was not perceived as equal to the ‘image of Šamaš’ who apparently could only be fully ‘grasped’ when present as statue. To reconstruct the statue, it needed a model of an image showing appearance and attributes.¹⁴²³ A statue of Aya (probably reconstructed) was also reinstalled in the Ebabbar temple receiving offerings and royal gifts.¹⁴²⁴

The form of ‘appearance’ in statue versus symbol differs in substance: while the sun disk is a remote astral body, iconic representation in anthropomorphic form is *physical presence* of a deity one can face, an emotional experience not equalled by seeing and offering to a divine symbol. Because anthropomorphic cult statues also resemble mortals in that they differentiate gender, and because mortals could communicate face-to-face with gods and goddesses, cult statues could not be replaced by symbols and consequently survived over millennia. The youngest ‘models’ for a cult statue (fig. 152 a, b) were found in the vicinity of a workshop of artisans built at the same time – probably sixth century BCE – as the temple of Ištar of Akkade, the

¹⁴¹⁸ Woods 2004: 83-89, on the sun disc cf. pp. 50-53.

¹⁴¹⁹ Cf. Woods 2004: 51; cf. recently Nunn 2010: 137.

¹⁴²⁰ Cornelius 1997: 33-35. Cf. on fig. 8 in this volume the Anzu(d) standard of Lagaš behind the goddess.

¹⁴²¹ Suter 2000: pl. A; cf. in this Chapter section 3.3.2 (figs. 64, 65a, b), for the symbols of Nanše carried in front of her clan.

¹⁴²² Woods 2004: p. 83 lines i 9-11.

¹⁴²³ Woods 2004: p. 85 lines iii 19-21. For late Babylonian models of deities, see Seidl 2000: 108-114.

¹⁴²⁴ Woods 2004: 86-89 v-vi.

Emašdari, ‘House of Animal Offerings’, in Babylon (fig. **153 a, b**).¹⁴²⁵ Three hollow moulds inscribed with the name of its owner, Nabû-zakir-šumi, son of Nur-Sîn, stone mason of (the god) Marduk, are the artist’s trial pieces for a cult statue presumably of Ištar of Akkade. As stone mason of Marduk, Nur-Sîn must have been one of the best (or the best) artists in Babylon. According to Ursula Seidl no previous temple with cult statue existed at this location and the three moulds show the artist’s efforts in developing models for a new cult statue. The complete mould (fig. **152 a**) depicts a goddess with high cylindrical crown holding her hands before her breasts; much of the figure is unfinished.¹⁴²⁶ Although the appearance of the final statue is unknown, the artist’s idea to show her with hands before her chest seems unusual for images of Ištar.

As discussed in Chapter II.D, some goddesses continued their function as proprietary city deity and Ninmaḥ/Bēlet-ilī is again a member of the quartet of supreme deities ranking after Anum, Enlil and Enki/Ea. When Ashurbanipal (668-627 BCE) (re)built the Emaḥ, the temple of Ninmaḥ in Babylon, the goddess’ divine powers are addressed in the building inscription (Frame 1995: 205-206 no. 5 lines 13-18):

On the account of this (= building the Emaḥ),
may the goddess Ninmaḥ, the august Queen,
look upon my good deeds with pleasure
and say good things about me daily
before the god Bēl (Marduk)
and the goddess Bēltiya (Zarpanītu).
May she determine as my fate a long life
(and) make my reign as firm as heaven and netherworld.

During the reign of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty (626-539 BCE) the Emaḥ was rebuilt or restored several times. In one of the building inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II the goddess of the Emaḥ is alternatively called Ninmaḥ and Ninḥursaḡa.¹⁴²⁷ It is uncertain if the excavated remains of the Emaḥ upon which Robert Koldewey based his reconstruction are those restored by Nebuchadnezzar II (figs. **154, 155**).¹⁴²⁸ Many temples and shrines of goddesses were built or rebuilt during this period. Even the last king of the Babylonian empire, Nabonidus (555-539 BCE), whose dedication to ‘traditional’ Babylonian deities was unjustifiably doubted by scholars, fulfilled the

¹⁴²⁵ For a short description, see Koldewey 1990: 286-290; see also Seidl 2000: 109-111.

¹⁴²⁶ Seidl 2000: 111-114.

¹⁴²⁷ Beaulieu 1997.

¹⁴²⁸ Heinrich 1982: 313-314.

royal duty of building and renovating temples in several cities (Table 2).¹⁴²⁹ Among others he rebuilt Ningal's temple at Ur and built two temples in the Eana at Uruk. The Neo-Babylonian temples as well as the return of the cult statue of Ištar-of-Uruk to Uruk by Nebuchadnezzar II prove that cult continued to center on anthropomorphic statues.¹⁴³⁰

Our sources show continuity in divine images over about two thousand years. Creation of cult statues of goddesses and the depictions of cult statues in reliefs are first attested for Ur-Nanše of Lagaš (ca. 2550) who also built numerous temples for goddesses. Among those still worshipped at the end of this tradition in sixth-century Babylonia are old goddesses such as Inana/Ištar, Ninmah, Nanše, Nisaba, and the younger goddesses Annunītum, Nanaya, and Gula whose worship dates back to the Ur III period.

Fundamental to Babylonian polytheism was gender dimorphism as well as the cult of goddesses. Another essential aspect was embodiment of deities in visual form, anthropomorphic or hybrid (partially anthropomorphic), the latter more common in ancient Egypt than in Mesopotamia where predominantly daimons are depicted as hybrid creatures.

Ancient Mesopotamians never doubted that 'cultic order' also depended on manifestation of gods and goddesses in their cult statue which was equally object and agent. Embodied presence on earth was essential for the deity's epiphany as well as for rituals involving the deity. A powerful attestation of the crucial importance of images is that acceptance of anthropomorphic images enabled originally iconoclastic Oriental Christianity to succeed in the Greco-Roman world; legally forbidding such images in Byzantium in the eighth century CE led to civil war.¹⁴³¹

¹⁴²⁹ Beaulieu 1989; Dandamayev 1998-2001. On Nabonidus as builder of the temple of Ištar of Akkade, see Chapter D.1 with n. 445 in this volume.

¹⁴³⁰ Cf. Seidl 2000: 97. For the return of the statue of Ištar-of-Uruk to Uruk and Nabonidus' foundation inscription of the Temple of Ištar of Akkade, see Chapter II.D.1 in this volume.

¹⁴³¹ Belting 1990: 18, 38.

Epilogue

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The intrinsic importance of goddesses in Mesopotamian religion is marked by their permanent presence throughout time and space. Although their prominence and powers over the millennia were modified and redefined, these changes were never dramatic. One reason for the lack of dramatic change is the religious conservatism evident in temple cults and rituals centering on iconic statues. Goddesses remained powerful numinous presences in the religious life of the peoples of Mesopotamia. They were neither replaced by gods nor ‘marginalized’ in the sense that they became extrinsic or were relegated to the fringes of religious practice. In fact, throughout Mesopotamian history, goddesses retained functions, which were substantial and vital for individuals as well as for society as a whole.

Goddesses – Sex and Gender

Gender differentiation is an aspect that Mesopotamian religion shares with other polytheistic religions, but what may be considered feminine in one religion may be masculine in another. The most commonly cited example is the variation in gender attached to the moon and the sun. Another aspect of polytheism is that the gender of deities may change.

Similar to other polytheistic religions, it has been suggested that the Mesopotamian divine world is a projection from the human sphere. Consequently, it is maintained that the relationship between deities in Mesopotamia was constructed genealogically. However, it was only a gradual development of theological speculation as well as political forces and expediency that led to the conception that deities were related to each other and were members of a family headed by a couple (‘couple principle’).

Ascribing the index of humanity to divine agents is fundamental in Mesopotamian speculative thought – to impute human personality, character, will, love, compassion, anger to deities makes them accessible to human understanding. Deities are described as behaving like men or women, but this does not imply that they were considered in ‘essence’ as masculine or feminine. The sexual attributes of deities may be the same as those of humans, but their

sexual behavior may deviate. A goddess may give birth but her pregnancy is rarely referred to; giving birth is merely mentioned. Although she may breastfeed kings, she generally does not nurse her own divine children. In sum, goddesses are not ‘deified woman’.

There is no textual, inscriptional, visual, or other material source conveying the message that gender attributes in goddesses had greater importance than divine ones. Even those goddesses whose role changed to that of predominantly divine spouse are not portrayed as powerless but rather as influential partners with protective and mediating powers. Temple architecture, pictorial representations as well as offering lists, hymnic literature, royal inscriptions, and other texts attest that goddesses were not perceived as deified sex or gender but as divinities who also had a gender identity and additionally may have behaved or functioned like ‘sexed’ beings. Further, there is no evidence the ‘divine feminine’ itself may have had higher *Stellenwert* than the ‘divine masculine’; goddesses continued to be venerated independently of gods.

Domains, Function, and Roles of Goddesses

Domains dominated by goddesses throughout the millennia were those of healing, purification, dream interpretation, love, eroticism, sexuality, marriage, conception, birth and nurturing as well as weaving and prison. Domains goddesses shared from the beginning with gods are agriculture, animal husbandry, wild animals and birds, exorcism, incantation, divination, and war. Domains that they later shared with gods are grain, writing, record-keeping and mathematics. There are also domains (beer and brewing, crafts, and probably dreams) originally held by a goddess whose name stayed the same but whose gender switched to male. A special case is the sphere of death and the netherworld which was ruled by various deities of different gender according to locality until it was generally recognized to be the domain of Ereškigal and Nergal. The results of our study demonstrate that no domain was completely lost by a goddess; many were the domains where the importance of goddesses continued unabated.

In addition to their domains of activities, goddesses had primary and essential functions, foremost that of cosmic creatrix. Another major function of goddesses was royal legitimation. Kings as diverse as the Early Dynastic (ca. 2600-2350) Mesilim of Kiš, Eanatum, Enmetena and Uruinimgina of Lagaš, Sargon of Akkade (ca. 2324-2279), Gudea and Ur-BaU of Lagaš (ca. 2150-2100), Ur-Namma (ca. 2112-2095) and Šulgi (2094-2046) of Ur, Rim-Sîn of Larsa (ca. 1822-1763), Anam of Uruk (ca. 1800 BCE), Adad-apla-iddina of Isin II (1168-1100), or Esarhaddon of Assyria (680-681) claim

they received their kingship from a goddess or have the epithet ‘son of goddess so-and-so’. Goddesses also bestowed names on kings and decided their destinies.

Furthermore, they functioned as mediators between the human and divine world, possessing protective and intercessory powers. The role of Lamma(s) as ‘guardian angels’ was not only performed by the personal Lamma of individuals but also by major goddesses. Petitions and prayers were addressed to goddesses entreating them to present their cases to their spouses and other higher-ranking gods. Goddesses’ role as protectress, intercessor, and guardian is a recurrent theme in texts as well as images, often visually embodied in the figures of Lamma. Beginning with Gudea, depictions of protective and interceding goddesses (Lamma) become more frequent with their popularity rising steadily thereafter. In the Old Babylonian period images of Lamma are the most numerous on seals, followed by Ištar and goddesses as divine spouse as intercessors.

In general they decided the fates of human beings, and provided abundance and prosperity. While many functions of goddesses mentioned in text are not visualized, their task of providing ‘abundance’ (which they share with gods) is a recurrent theme in texts and images. From Early Dynastic III to the Middle Babylonian periods abundance is symbolized in plants, vessels and/or water, occasionally also in the pattern of the garments and is associated with major as well as minor goddesses.

One can distinguish between two types of roles of goddesses, those that are gendered, such as mother, wife, sister, daughter, and the non-gendered role as proprietary deity of a city.

All the domains, functions and roles combine feminine with concrete as well as abstract powers suggesting that goddesses dominated daily life more than gods.

Identification and Recognizability between Generic and Particular

Goddesses are often represented as ‘generic’ figures and given generic epithets. Few deities have individual iconography as, for example, Inana/Ištar, Enki/Ea, sun-god, or weather-god. That the basic visual forms for figures of goddesses remained rather stable over the millennia ensues from their divine character and religious meaning comparable to that of Christian images prior to the Renaissance. Stability in form (repetition) guaranteed instant recognizability of divine figures.

Identification and recognizability was achieved by various means. Identification of goddesses might be indicated by signs such as their own attribute(s), or a symbol of their spouse, or a gesture. Often a goddess is

identified indirectly in the inscription. But in many images goddesses are depicted without any identifying attribute or symbol and their identity may be an act of ‘seeing in’ by viewer-worshipper. Seal owners, for example, might be shown venerating their personal or family deities and/or petitioning the patron deity of their city or the deity of the temple with whom they (or father or husband) are associated, or the goddess to whom they have a special attachment.

Already in the earliest recognizable images dating to the Early Dynastic II/III period, the predominant icon of enthroned goddess (or god) in Mesopotamian art visualize deities in their role as guarantor of order, stability, peace, abundance and prosperity with the focus on themes of ritual and veneration. That images of major deities never changed substantially is rooted in their unchanging divine essence that allowed only change of contexts and roles in which the rather ‘static’ divine figures were visualized. Identification or recognizability also depends on contexts, as goddesses’ roles were subject to political and religious developments. Public art, such as reliefs, provides both narrative and non-narrative representational context from which the identity may be adduced.

The personality of many goddesses reflects their protective functions as proprietary deities of a city or a state. Their general functions can overshadow more specific roles as, for example, Nin-Isina, who is foremost the patron goddess of Isin but also a major goddess of healing. This phenomenon is also evident in visual imagery in which the iconography of goddesses may be so similar (‘generic figure’) that a goddess is not identifiable if not distinguished by at least a minor attribute or the inscription.

Another factor in the determination of identification of a ‘generic figure’ is provenance of the object. There is a noticeable preference to depict the goddesses of the local pantheon on royal steles as well as on individual seals.

Whereas images combine the generic with the particular, textual depictions of goddesses move from the particular to the generic. In the above chapters, it has been demonstrated how the plethora of goddesses with many individual traits and personalities developed and at the same time how their characterizations were fluid so that overlap in domains caused them to merge into one another. Epithets such as exalted, merciful, compassionate, protective were attributed to all and sundry goddesses. Specifically, the name of the goddess Inana/Ištar became the generic appellation for any goddess (e.g. *Ištar-bīti* or *Ištar-tašmê*) or just the word *ištaru* “goddess”. Unrecognizable are the late deities, the Ama-named goddesses or Šarraḫītu (“The Glorified One”).

Concerning the heterogeneous functions and mutable character of deities, visual representation is consonant with the religious concept that deities have

multiple or “fluid” rather than one-dimensional personalities and limited functions. One reason may be found in weak or lack of personality of most goddesses exemplified in the sharing of epithets enabling transformation of epithets into separate goddesses. Visual representations of goddesses exhibit the same lack of personality as the majority of written narratives.

Congruence and Divergence between the Textual and the Visual

Because of the quantitative discrepancy between the fewer number of visual and the larger amount of textual sources, the basis for comparisons is skewed. Whereas there are many different categories of texts with religious relevance, there are much fewer religious images; some of the image carriers are inscribed but most are not. However, both media are of equal value for the history of goddesses in Mesopotamian religion.

Visual representations of deities are predominantly mentioned in royal inscriptions, lists of offerings and votive gifts, in ritual, liturgical, and literary texts. However, one-to-one congruency between texts and visual images are extremely rare, apart from occasional captions identifying deities, from the Kassite period on.

The basic differences between inscribed image carriers with depictions of goddesses are contextual: royal steles are inscribed with narrative texts whereas the primary purpose of inscriptions on votive objects is a petition addressed to a goddess for long life. The purpose of seal inscriptions is generally identification of the seal owner, in the Old Babylonian period there are also inscriptions of only divine names, and many Kassite seals are inscribed with a short prayer.

When inscribed monuments, such as narrative royal steles, combine image and text, these may be complimentary but not congruent as, for example, on the steles of Ur-Nanše (fig. 5) and Eanatum (fig. 8). In the case of the steles of Gudea (figs. 36a, 37a) where most of the text originally inscribed on the steles is lost, we are fortunate to have two inscribed cylinders containing descriptions of themes comparable to the scenes depicted on the steles. The cylinder texts do not contain references that identify the goddesses depicted on two steles – although steles are mentioned in the text – but the roles and character of several goddesses are described in the texts. Comparing other Gudea texts with similar themes (e.g., Statue B) with the images on the steles show thematic similarities but no congruency. In general, even where deities are identified by captions, as on the Neo-Babylonian relief of Šamaš-reš-ušur (fig. 150), its text does not elucidate but complements the image.

Dedicatory inscriptions may identify the goddess depicted, as on the votive vase of Enmetena (fig. 7) by the sequence of the temples that begins

with Nanše's temple. Although inscription and image are not complementary in the sense that the inscription contains no passage comparable to the depicted scene/figure – the image of the goddess is connected to the building of her temple (image of her cult statue?) – one may say the object combines in two different media temple with goddess. Another relationship between image and text is provided by objects with dedicatory inscriptions containing a petition addressed to the goddess to whom the object is dedicated and on which she is also depicted as, for example, the fragmentary votive relief dedicated to BaU for the life of Gudea and depicting BaU on the lap of her spouse Ningirsu (fig. 39) – object, inscription and image constitute a coherent whole.

Although the Lamma goddess depicted on the stele dedicated to Inana for the life of Nazimurattaš is identified in the text (fig. 142), the image and the text are complementary rather than a coherent whole because the text explains the purpose of the stele but its addressee (Inana/Ištar) is not identical with the goddess depicted. Such direct identification of the image of a deity in the inscribed text is rare. Another example is the sun-god tablet (fig. 151), however, its purpose was completely different as it was specifically made as model for a statue of Šamaš and consequently image and text constitute a unity because if the text was missing we could still understand the scene but not the purpose of either image or object.

Captions identifying deities occur on '*kudurrus*' (e.g., Gula, fig. 145), but as '*kudurrus*' are legal documents, the relationship between image and text is functional and complementary. The goddesses represented either in anthropomorphic or symbolic form guarantee and protect the grant described in the text.

On seals with depictions of goddesses the connection between inscription (legend) and image is tenuous, but the seal legend may contain a clue to the identity of the goddess in a title, office, or name of the seal owner.

In the interpretation of the images of inscribed as well as anepigraphic seals various texts are used as hermeneutic tools. This hermeneutic approach has also been applied to other images without inscriptions. Different depictions on different image carriers pertain to different religious practices although ritual or liturgical function described in texts is rarely expressed in the image itself – there is no congruency.

In sum, written and visual media are not only perceived in different ways but address different senses and often also different audiences. Much of what has come to us in written form was in reality 'performed' or spoken before and with the participation of deities present in form of cult statues. Thus word (text), images, and performance (rituals) constituted if not a unity an ensemble 'acting' together.

Goddesses and Women – Social Barometer

Do changes in the status of goddess function like a social barometer in that they predict or react to the socio-cultural situation of women? Our sources contradict such a theory, as goddesses are not primarily portrayed as ‘gender models’ for women. The reverse, women’s influence on cultural symbols cannot be verified. However, as Susan Starr Sered remarks, “although there is no necessary association between women’s experience and any particular symbolization of Woman (such as goddess or demoness), the more agency women have, the more control they have over the creation and interpretation of symbols”.¹⁴³²

Although powers and functions of goddesses were to some degree reduced to aspects equated with femininity, as exemplified by Ninlil and Aya, they are divinities not acting according to rules and regulations for mortals. If the essence of goddesses had been *a priori* femininity rather than divinity, there would have been no reason for reducing their general powers and authority or to transfer their domains and functions to gods. That in the second millennium gods were preferred over goddesses has much to do with the changing legal and social position of women and particularly that of royal wives and princesses who no longer occupied major roles in cult and ritual.

Although the number of goddesses diminishes over the millennia, the need for goddesses persisted not only in the kingship ideology but also particularly for women, although men also turned to goddesses with their prayers and pleas. Women owned many, but not the majority of inscribed seals depicting a goddess as major figure. That women showed a preference for goddesses is attested since the Early Dynastic period and apparently did not change. On Akkadian and Neo-Sumerian seals women are pictured petitioning or libating before a goddess rather than a god.

Summary

In the third millennium gods and goddesses share realms, equally important domains and functions, individual deities of both gender hold powers and have authority over other deities, land, states, cities, society and humans as well as over all aspects of communal and individual life. Texts describe assemblies of gods and goddesses deciding together (not necessarily in unison). Images rarely show goddesses involved in narrative actions. In general, images of goddesses interacting with gods or humans are relatively rare, predominantly attested in the Akkadian and Old Babylonian periods; narrative is predominantly a subject of literature.

¹⁴³² Sered 2009: 12.

In general the character of goddesses transcends female/feminine even with those goddesses with strong biological or feminine traits; neither female biology nor feminine gender roles define a goddess. This is also visible in images where goddesses are rarely represented as sexualized beings or in roles obviously feminine. Like all Mesopotamian divinities, goddesses are transcendental beings with a secondary feminine aspect and even when emphasis shifted towards their roles as mother/birth goddess or spouse, they remained foremost divinities. Because of the lack of emphasis on gender differentiation and the pairing of deities as married couples, transferal of domains and functions were facilitated but could go both ways. Major goddesses whose importance declined were predominantly old Sumerian deities presiding over cities. Additionally, the synchronization and fusion that already began in the third millennium may have influenced visual representation of 'generic' rather than individualized divine figures.

The changing status of goddesses from powerful, titular deity to – not exclusively but predominantly – spouses and intermediaries can be traced to the Ur III period but is primarily attested in the Old Babylonian textual and visual sources. In god-lists goddesses feature behind their husbands which is reflected in the Old Babylonian seal imagery where goddesses contrary to gods lose their elevated position as the enthroned deity. The major enthroned goddess virtually disappeared from the visual repertoire and is replaced by standing goddesses juxtaposed to gods and other figures. The prominent 'feminine' religious icons on Neo-Sumerian reliefs and seals nearly vanished from the figural repertoire, only Inana/Ištar continues to feature prominently often together with the king. At the same time, official cults of goddesses continue and private veneration is exemplified in theophoric personal names. The question arises why their visual presence diminished, particularly as the choice of personal names also reflect religious ideas, family piety and relationship to a specific deity or deities.

The discrepancies between the changing status of goddesses during the second millennium from powerful titular and patron divinities to spouses and their simultaneous hold on supreme divine powers indicate on one hand different notions about divine genders and on the other hand continuity in regard to the notions about the essence of divinity. The essence of divinity is not rooted in the 'sex' of a deity. One particular aspect considered 'feminine' in goddesses is 'mediating' between mortals and gods. Goddesses, even very high ranking ones, were perceived as more approachable than gods. Thus, we can conclude that goddesses are divinities with what are still considered 'feminine' qualities, such as interpretation, mediation, and empathy – today we speak of the social competence of women when we mean these qualities. The 'social competence' of major Mesopotamian goddesses may be visually

expressed in *en face* images and reflected in texts as, for example in this prayer to Gula:¹⁴³³

O Gula, most great lady, merciful mother,
 who dwells in the great heavens,
 I call upon you, my lady, stand by me and hear me!
 I seek you out, I turn to you, I seize your hem (= gesture of
 entreaty) as if it were that of my (personal) god
 and my (personal) goddess.
 Because judging the case, rendering the verdict,
 Because reviving and granting well-being are yours (to grant),
 Because you know how to save, spare, and rescue,
 O Gula, most great lady, merciful mother,
 I turn to you, from among all the stars of heaven,
 O my lady, I turn to you, I am heedful of you.
 Accept of me my flour offering, receive my plea,
 Let me send to my angry (personal) god,
 my angry (personal) goddess,
 To the god of my city who is in a rage and furious with me,
 On account of omens and dreams
 that are continually besetting me,
 I am afraid and always anxious.
 O Gula, most great lady, with the utterance of your sublime
 command, which is greatest in Enlil's Ekur,
 And with your firm assent, which cannot be changed,
 May my angry (personal) god return to me,
 may my angry (personal) goddess relent to me,
 May the god of my city who is in a rage and furious with me,
 Who is angry, calm down; he who was vexed,
 may he be soothed!
 O Gula, most great lady, who intercedes for the weak,
 Intercede for me with Marduk, king of the gods,
 the merciful lord; say a favorable word.
 May your broad protection
 and imposing forgiveness be with me,
 Grant me favor and life,
 Let me proclaim your greatness,
 let me sound your praises!

¹⁴³³ Text: BMS 6, lines 71-94; duplicate: Mayer 1976: Gula Ia. Translation by Foster 2005: 671-672.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| AbB | Altbabylonische Briefe in Umschrift und Übersetzung (Leiden, 1964ff.). |
| AbS | Siglum of texts from Abu Salabikh, published in OIP 99 by Robert Biggs. |
| ADFU | Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft in Uruk-Warka (Berlin, etc., 1936ff.) |
| AfO | Archiv für Orientforschung (Graz/Vienna, 1923ff). |
| AnOr | Analecta Orientalia (Rome, 1931ff.). |
| AO | Antiquités orientales (Louvre), Museum accession number. |
| AOAT | Alter Orient und Altes Testament: Veröffentlichungen zur Kultur und Geschichte des Alten Orients und des Alten Testaments (Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn/Münster, 1969ff.). |
| ARET | Archivi reali di Ebla: Testi (Rome, 1985ff.). |
| ASJ | Acta Sumerologica (Japan), (Hiroshima, 1979 ff.). |
| ASOR | American School of Oriental Research |
| ATU | Archaische Texte aus Uruk, Vol. 1: A. Falkenstein, Archaische Texte aus Uruk (= ADFU 2, 1936); Vol. 2 = ZATU. |
| AUWE | Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka. Endberichte. (Mainz, 1987ff.). |
| BAR | British Archaeological Reports (International Series, Oxford, 1978ff.). |
| BE | The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, Series A: Cuneiform Texts (Philadelphia, 1893ff.). |
| BBVO | Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient (Berlin, 1982 ff.). |
| BDTNS | Database of Neo-Sumerian Texts directed by Manuel Molina at the Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Madrid). |
| BiMes | Bibliotheca Mesopotamica (Malibu, CA, 1975 ff.). |
| BM | British Museum (London), Museum accession number. |
| CAD | The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago (Chicago, 1956-2006). |
| CAMS | Corpus of Ancient Mesopotamian Scholarship; directed by Eleanor Robson at the Department of History and Philosophy of Science, University of Cambridge. On-line at: http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/cams . |
| CANE | J.M. Sasson et al., eds., Civilizations of the Ancient Near East, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. |
| CDLI | Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative; directed by Robert K. Englund of the University of California at Los Angeles and Peter Damerow of the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin. On-line at: http://cdli.ucla.edu . |
| CH | Codex Hammurabi (cuneiform text: E. Bergmann S.J., Codex Hammurabi [Rome, 1953]; editions: G.R. Driver /J.C. Miles, The Babylonian |

- Laws [Oxford 1955]; M.T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* [Atlantic, GA, 1995]).
- CM Cuneiform Monographs (Groningen/Leiden/Boston, 1992ff.).
- CRRAI Comptes rendus de la ... Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale.
- CT Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum (London, 1896ff.).
- CTN Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud (London, 1972ff.).
- CUSAS Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology (Bethesda, MD, 2007ff.).
- DCCLT Digital Corpus of Cuneiform Lexical Texts, directed by Niek Veldhuis of the University of California at Berkeley (Berkeley, CA, 2003ff.).
On-line at: <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/dcclt>.
- EPA II Encyclopédie photographique de l'art, Musée du Louvre. Tome II: Mesopotamie, Canaan, Chypre, Grèce (Paris, Editions "TEL", 1936).
- ePSD Electronic version of Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary (PSD).
On-line at: <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/>.
- ETCSL Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Ebeling, J., Flückiger-Hawker, E., Robson, E., Taylor, J., and Zólyomi, G., *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (Oxford, 1998-2006).
On-line at: <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/>.
- FAOS Freiburger Altorientalische Studien (Wiesbaden/Stuttgart, 1975ff.).
- IB Siglum of texts from Išān-Baḥrīyāt (Isin), published in Hrouda, 1977ff.
- ITT I-V Inventaires des Tablettes de Tello conservées au Musée Impérial Ottoman. Mission Française de Chaldée (Paris, 1910-1921).
Authors: F. Thureau-Dangin (vol. I, 1910); H. de Genouillac (vols. II/1, 1910; II/2, 1911; [III/1 not published]; III/2, 1912; V, 1921); L. Delaporte (vol. IV, 1912).
- JANER Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions (Leiden, 2001ff.).
- JAOS Journal of the American Oriental Society (New Haven/Ann Arbor, 1843ff.).
- JCS Journal of Cuneiform Studies (various places, 1947 ff.).
- JNES Journal of Near Eastern Studies (Chicago, 1942 ff.).
- KAR E. Ebeling, *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*, I/II (= WVD OG 28, 1919; 34, 1920/23).
- M.A.R.I. Mari, *Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires* (Paris, 1982ff.).
- MDP Mémoires de la Délégation de Perse [Vols. 16-28 (1921-1939); Vols. 1-13 (1900ff.); Délégation en Perse. Mémoires; Vol. 14 (1913); Mémoires de la Mission archéologique de Susiane; Vol. 15: Publications de la Mission archéologique de Perse; Vols. 29-38 (1943-1965); MMAI (Mémoires de la Mission archéologique en Iran); Vols. 39ff. (1966ff.): MDAI = Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique en Iran.
- MSL B. Landsberger et al., *Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon / Materials for the Sumerian Lexikon* (Rome, 1937-2004); SS = Suppl. Series (Rome: 1986).
- MSVO *Materialien zu den frühen Schriftzeugnissen des Vorderen Orients* (Berlin, 1991ff.).
- MVN *Materiali per il Vocabolario Neosumerico* (Rome, 1974ff.).
- MVS *Münchener Vorderasiatische Studien* (Munich etc., 1977ff.).
- N.A.B.U. *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* (Paris/Rouen, 1987ff.).

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| Nisaba | Studi assiriologici Messinesi (Messina, 2002ff.). |
| NTSŠ | R. Jestin, Nouvelles tablettes sumériennes de Šuruppak au Musée d'Istanbul (Paris, 1957). |
| OBO | Orient Biblicus et Orientalis (Fribourg: Academic Press [Freiburg Schweiz: Universitätsverlag] / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973ff.). |
| OIP | Oriental Institute Publications (Chicago, 1924ff.). |
| OLA | Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta (Leuven, 1974/75ff.). |
| OPSNKF | Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund (Philadelphia, 1976ff.). |
| RA | Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale (Paris, 1884/85). |
| RIA | Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie (Berlin/New York, 1928ff.). |
| RIMB | The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Babylonian Periods (Toronto/Buffalo/London, 1987ff.). |
| RIME | The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods (Toronto/Buffalo/London, 1990ff.). |
| RTC | F. Thureau-Dangin, Recueil de tablettes chaldéennes (Paris, 1903). |
| SAA | State Archives of Assyria (Helsinki, 1987ff.). |
| SBH | G. Reisner, Sumerisch-babylonische Hymnen nach Thontafeln griechischer Zeit (Berlin, 1896). |
| SCCNH | Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians (Winona Lake, IN / Bethesda, MD, 1981ff.). |
| SF | A. Deimel, Schultexte aus Fara (= Die Inschriften aus Fara II = WVDOG 43, 1923). |
| SpTU | Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk, I: H. Hunger (= ADFU 9, 1976); II-III: E. von Weiher (= ADFU 10, 1983; 12, 1988); IV-V: E. von Weiher (= AUWE 12, 1993; 13, 1998). |
| STT | The Sultantepe Tablets, I: O.R. Gurney/J.J. Finkelstein; II: O.R. Gurney/P. Hulin (= Occasional Publications of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara 3/7, London 1957-1964). |
| TCL | Textes cunéiformes. Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités Orientales (Paris, 1910ff.). |
| TCS | Texts of Cuneiform Sources (Locust Valley, NY, 1966ff.). |
| UAVA | Untersuchungen zur Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie (Berlin, 1960ff.). |
| UE | Ur Excavations. Publications of the Joint Expedition of the British Museum and of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, to Mesopotamia (London/Philadelphia, 1927ff.). |
| UET | Ur Excavations: Texts (London, 1928ff.). |
| UVB | Vorläufiger Bericht über die von der Notgemeinschaft der deutschen Wissenschaft in Uruk-Warka unternommenen Ausgrabungen 1(1930) – 31/32(1982) (Berlin). |
| WVDOG | Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft (Leipzig/Berlin etc., 1900ff.). |
| WZKM | Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes (Vienna, 1887 ff.). |
| YOS | Yale Oriental Series. Babylonian Texts (New Haven/London/Oxford, 1915ff.). |
| ZA | Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie (Leipzig/Berlin, 1886ff.). |

ZATU M.W. Green and H.J. Nissen, Zeichenliste der Archaischen Texten aus Uruk: unter Mitarbeit von Peter Damerov and Robert K. Englund (= ADFU 11 = ATU 2), (Berlin, 1987).

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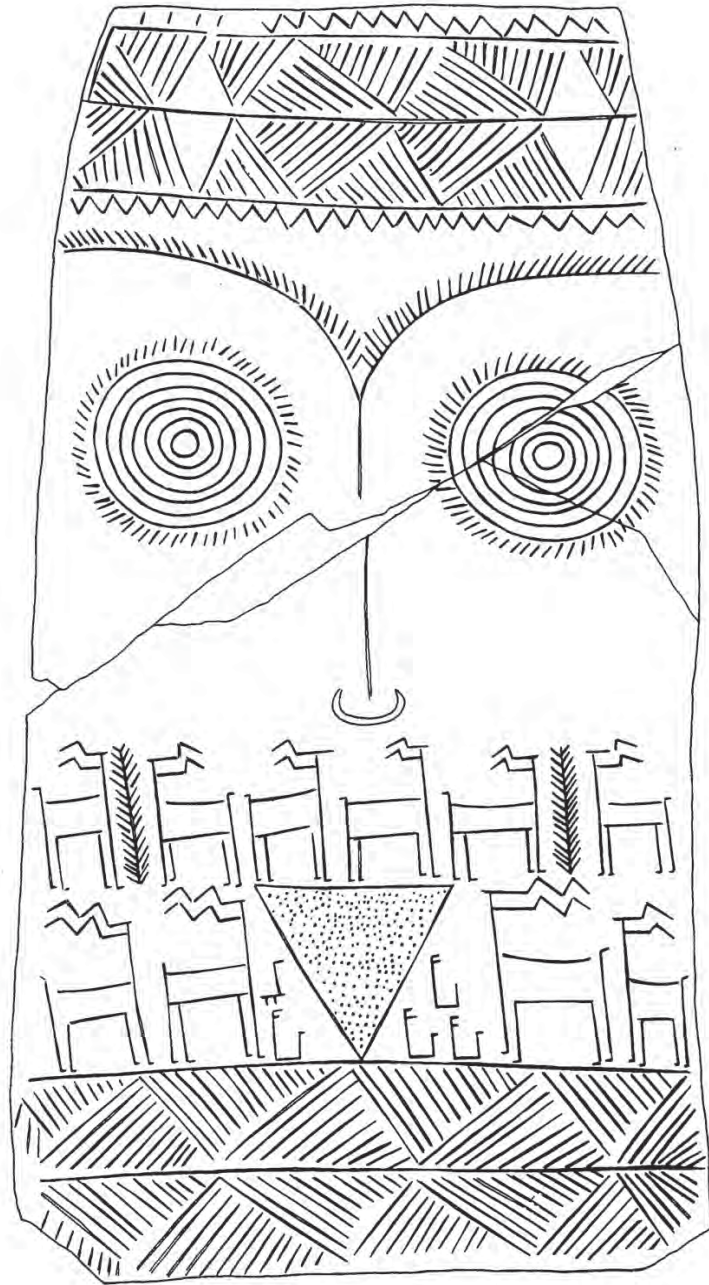


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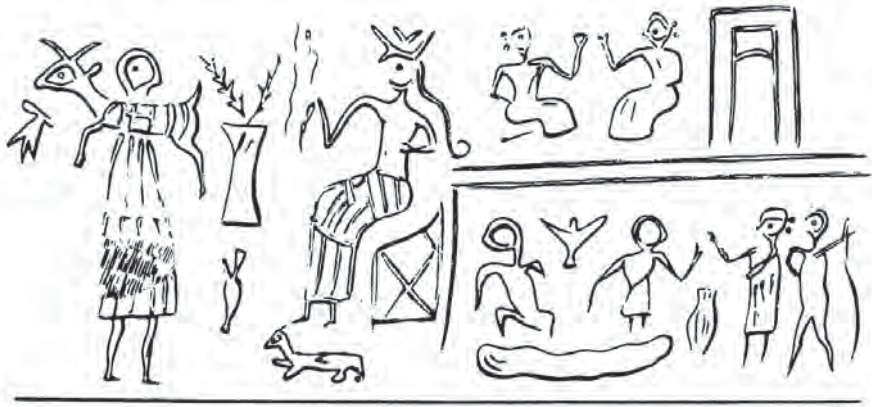


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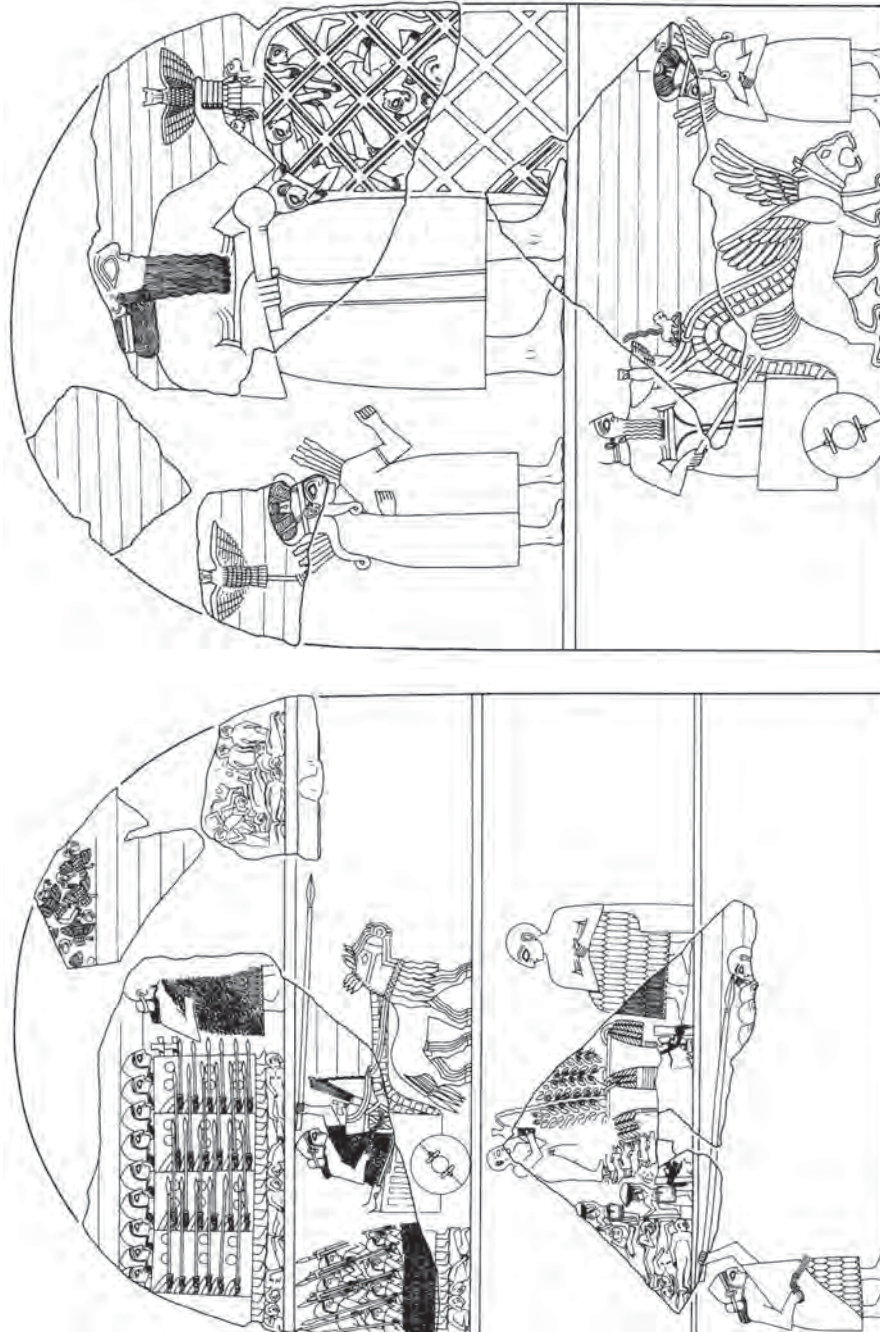


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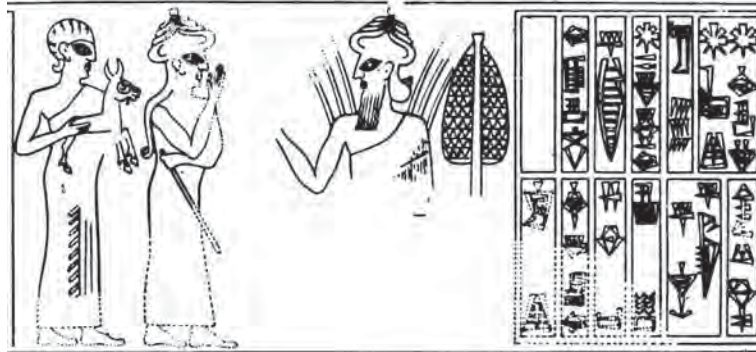


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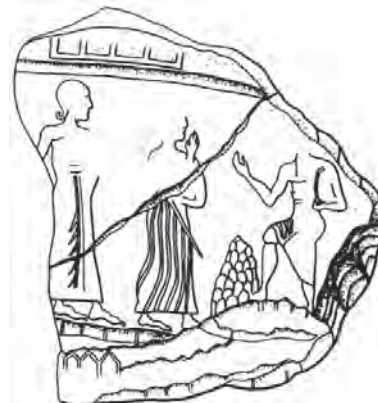


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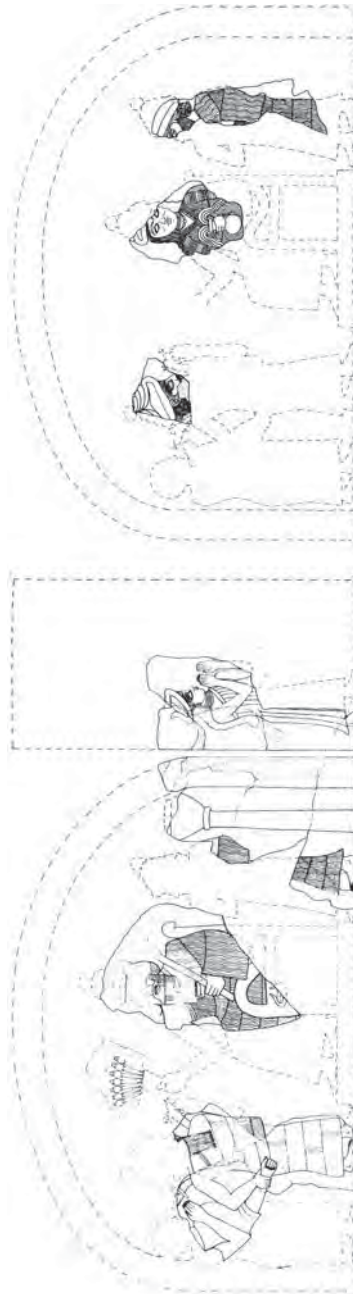


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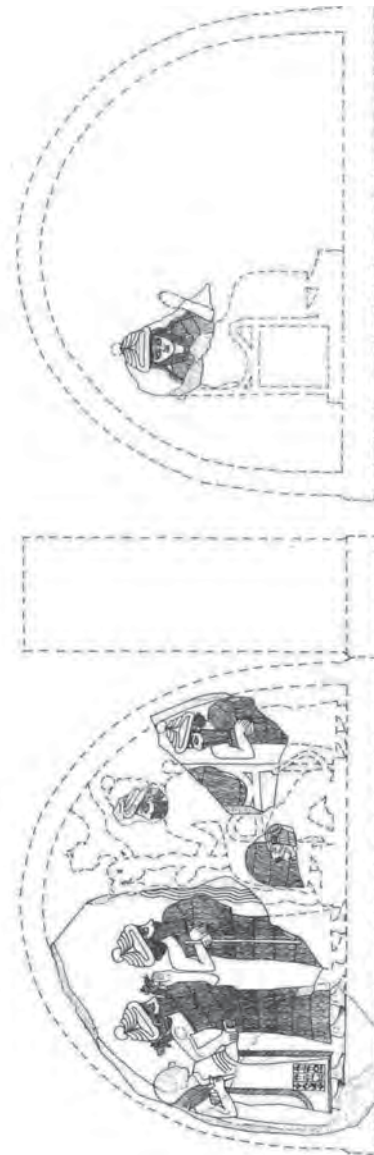


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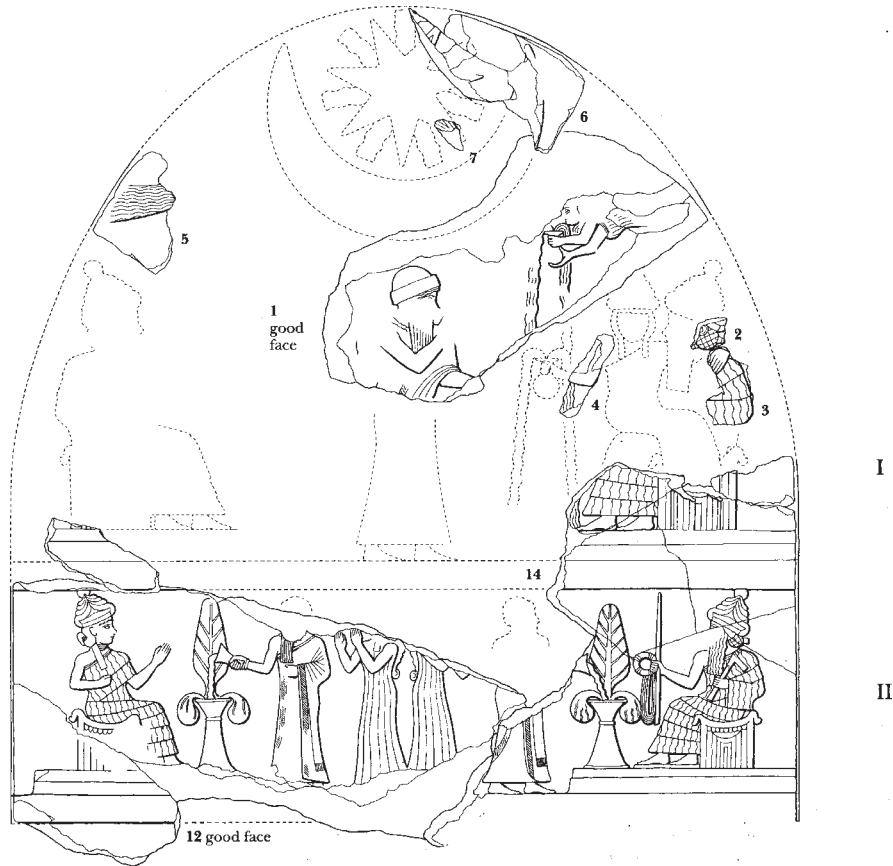


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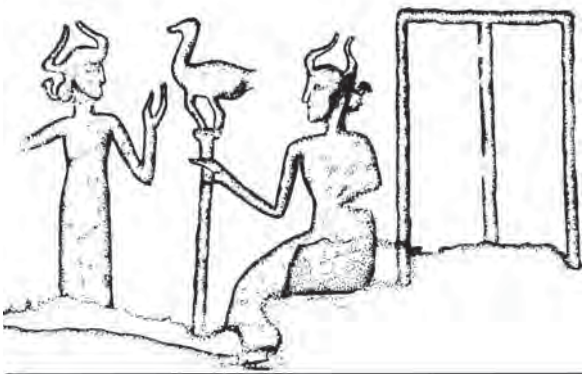


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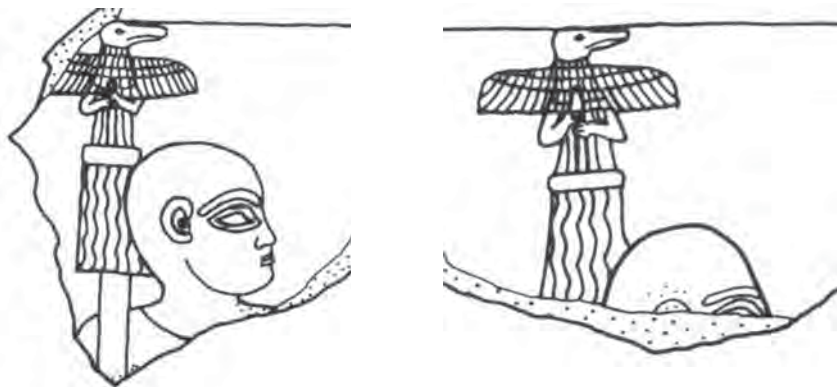


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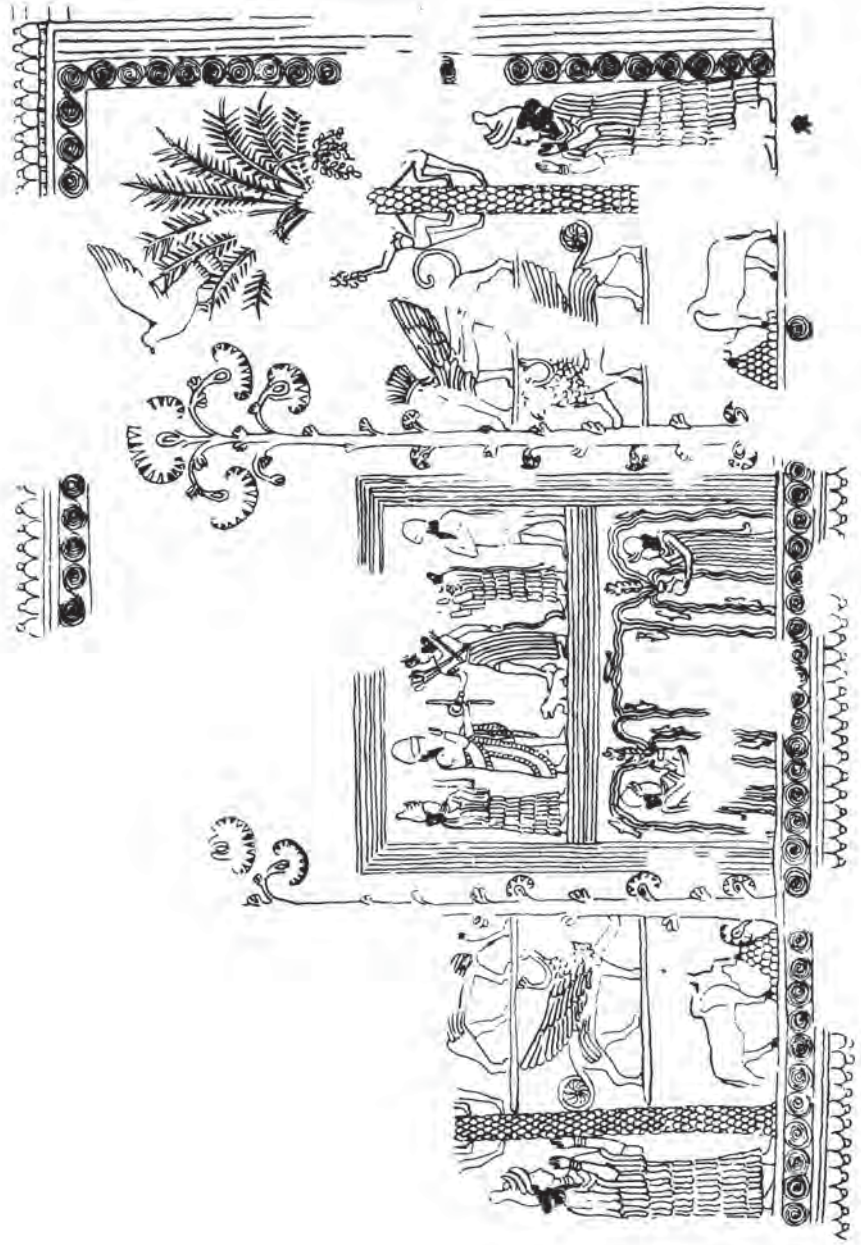


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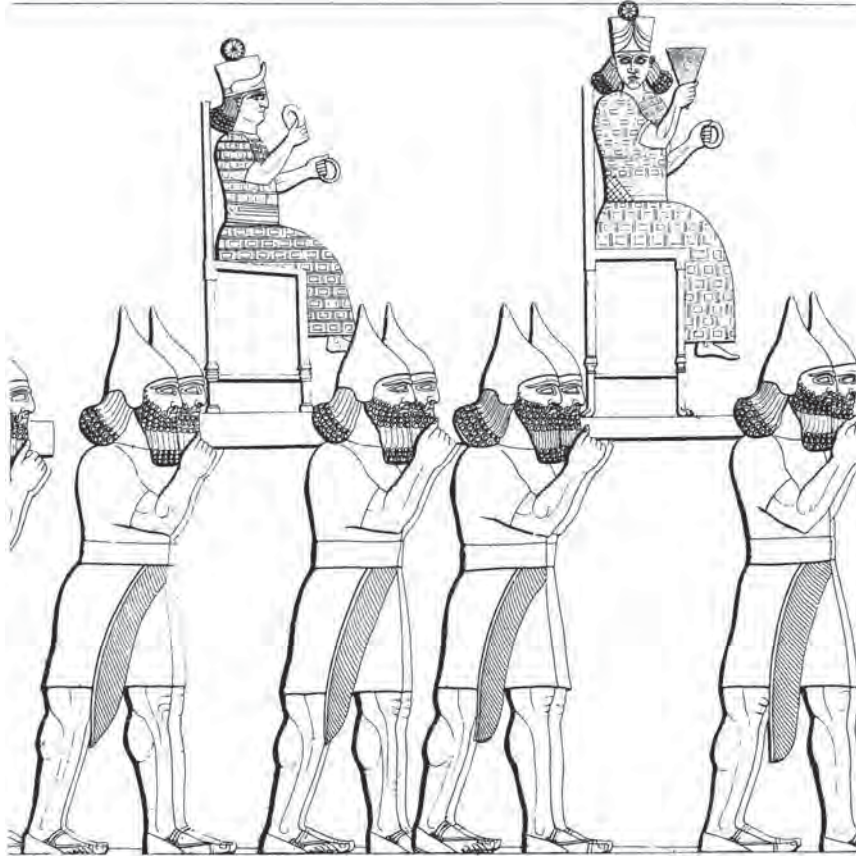


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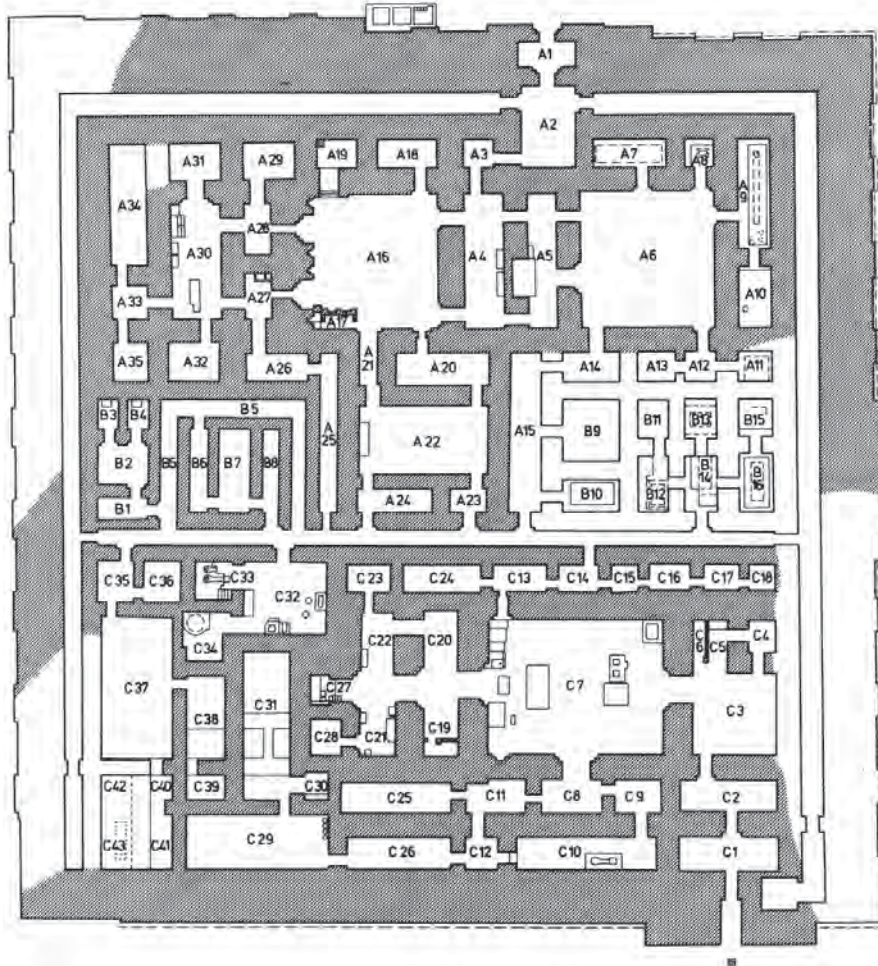


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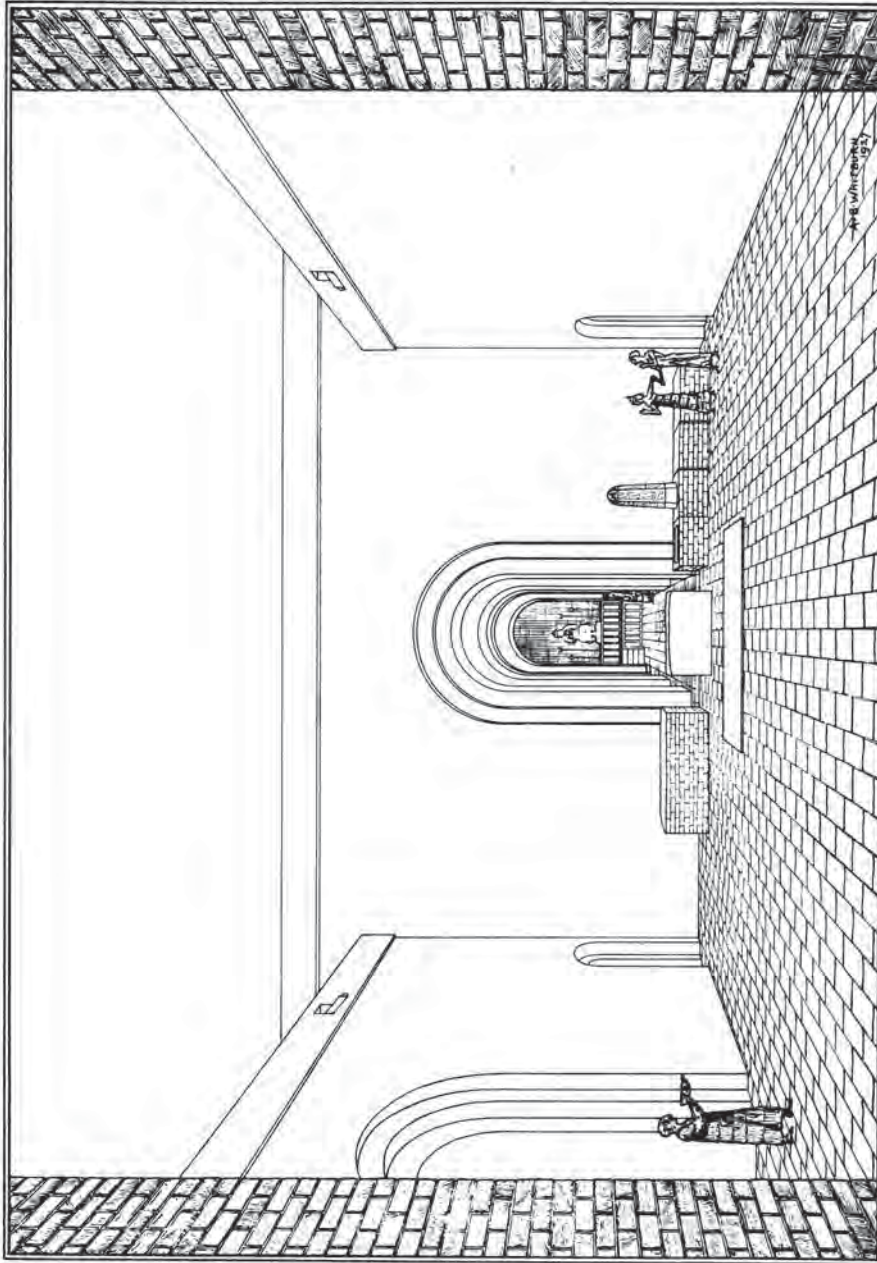


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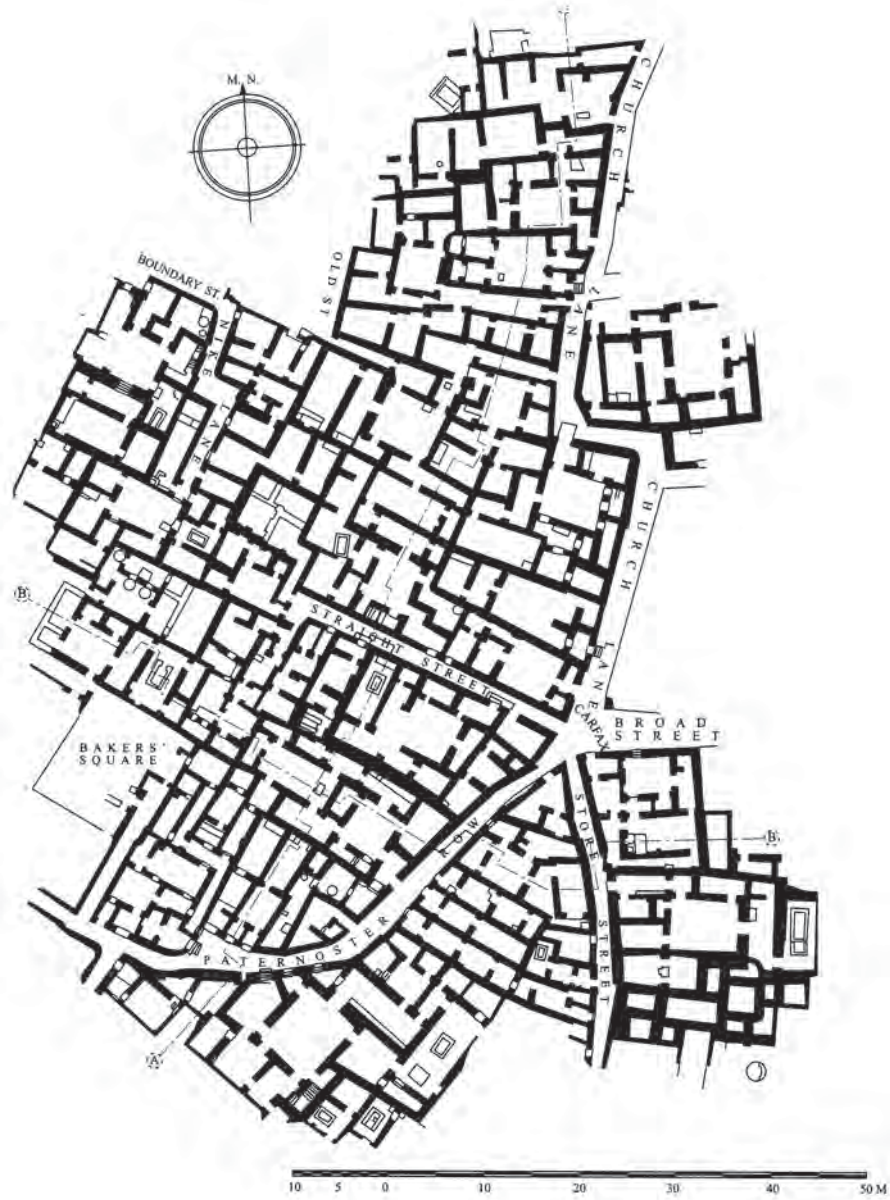
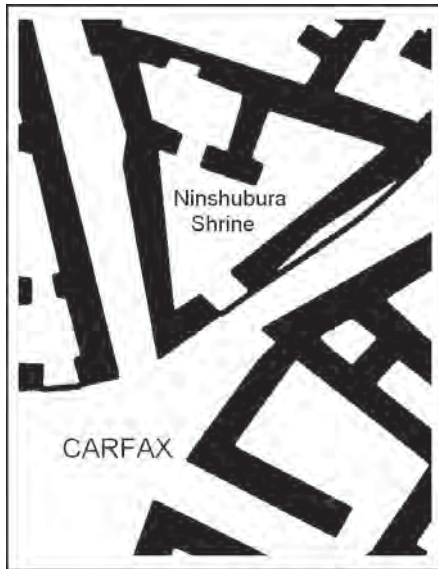


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1.



2.



3.



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From Room 2 (courtyard):

2. Statue (U.16425); Baghdad, Iraq Museum 18658 (after UE VII: 55b).

3. Lamma figure (U.16369) found in statue U. 16425; London, British Museum 123040 (after Orthmann 1975: fig. 166b).

4. 'Altar' (U. 16434); Baghdad, Iraq Museum (after Börker-Klähn 1982: no. 10).

From Room 4 ('cella'):

5. Statue (U.164424); London, British Museum 122933 (after Orthmann 1975: fig. 164b).

6. Terracotta chariot decorated with bull-man god holding door post (U.16345) (after Wiseman 1960: pl. XXIVc).



Fig. 87a, b: Front and back of torso of goddess with inlays. Height 15.2 cm. Isin/Larsa period. Probably from Ur (north-east of no. 3 Gay Street). London, British Museum 132101 (courtesy of The British Museum, London).



Fig. 88a, b: Front and back of fragmentary statuette of divine pair. Height 22.7 cm. Isin-Larsa/Old Babylonian. Paris, Louvre AO 6974 (a: after Moortgat 1967: fig. 119; b: after Zervos 1935: 170).



Fig. 89a, b: Front and side view of statuette of four-faced goddess. Bronze. Height 16.2 cm. Beginning of second millennium. From Ishchali (ancient Nerebtum). Chicago, The Oriental Institute Museum A 7120 (courtesy of The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago).



Fig. 90: Large limestone basin of Gudea of Lagaš from Tello; ca. 2125-2100. Length 1.18 m, height 68 cm, width 57 cm. Paris, Louvre AO 67 & Istanbul, Archaeological Museum EŞEM 5555 (photograph courtesy of Claudia E. Suter).



Fig. 91: Terracotta relief, from Tell Asmar(?). Paris, Louvre AO 12456 (after Marzahn et al. 2008: 175, fig. 107).



Fig. 92: Terracotta relief depicting Inana/Ištar leading king, from Nippur. Jena, Hilprecht-Sammlung Vorderasiatischer Altertümer HS 0044 (courtesy of Hilprecht Collection, property of the University of Jena).



Fig. 93: Terracotta relief from Diqqiqqeh near Ur (U.6846). Philadelphia, Penn Museum of the University of Pennsylvania CBS 15633 (after UE VII: pl. 80, no. 144).



Fig. 94: Drawing of terracotta figure from Tello (after Cros et al. 1914: 391, fig. 16).



Fig. 95: Terracotta relief from Diqdiqqeh near Ur (U.2989). London, British Museum 119160 (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).



Fig. 96: Terracotta relief with Lamma. London, British Museum 127497 (after Zervos 1935: pl. 131).



Fig. 97: Fragmentary terracotta relief from Diqdiqqeh near Ur (U.1304). Philadelphia, Penn Museum of the University of Pennsylvania CBS 15681 (after UE VII: pl. 80, no. 142).



Fig. 98: Terracotta relief from Diquiqqeh near Ur (U.16965). Philadelphia, Penn Museum of the University of Pennsylvania 31-43-421 (courtesy of the Penn Museum, image no. 74075).



Fig. 99: Fragmentary terracotta relief from Tello. Paris, Louvre (after Genouillac 1936: pl. 96, 1a).



Fig. 100: Terracotta relief from Diquiqqeh near Ur (U.6846). Baghdad, Iraq Museum 1617 (after UE VII: pl. 80, no. 147).



Fig. 101: Terracotta plaque (chair-back?) with goddess on 'goose-throne' from Diqqiqeh near Ur (U.7076). Philadelphia, Penn Museum of the University of Pennsylvania CBS 16267 (after UE VII: pl. 80, no. 148).



Fig. 102: Terracotta relief from Diqqiqeh near Ur (U.1744): Philadelphia, Penn Museum of the University of Pennsylvania CBS 15634 (courtesy of Penn Museum, image no. 8540).



Fig. 103: Terracotta relief from Ur, Paternoster Row (U.16959). Height 73 cm. Philadelphia, Penn Museum of the University of Pennsylvania 31-43-577 (after Parrot 1960: fig. 301).

Fig. 104: Drawing of 'chair-back' from Uruk (W.88604). Baghdad, Iraq Museum 88604 (after Wrede 2003: pl. 49, no. 1268).



Fig. 105: Terracotta relief. Paris, Louvre AO 2442 (after Parrot 1960: 301, fig. 368).





Fig. 106: Old Babylonian seal. London, British Museum 130694 (after Collon 1986: no. 388).



Fig. 107: Old Babylonian seal. Jerusalem, Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem BLMJ 2508 (courtesy of the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem).



Fig. 108: Old Babylonian seal. London, British Museum 89058 (after Collon 1986: no. 401).



Fig. 109: Drawing of seal impression, probably from Sippar. Old Babylonian. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum VAT 739 (after Klengel-Brandt 1989: fig. 8b).



Fig. 110: Drawing of seal impression, probably from Sippar. Old Babylonian. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum VAT 846 (after Klengel-Brandt 1989: 275, fig. 15c).



Fig. 111: Drawing of seal impression from Tell ed-Der (Sippar-Amnanum). Old Babylonian. Baghdad, Iraq Museum 49347 (after al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. XXIV/1, no. 167).



Fig. 112: Seal of Sîn-išmeanni, servant of Ninsiana and Kabta. Old Babylonian. London, British Museum 132153 (after Collon 1986: no. 477).



Fig. 113: Old Babylonian seal. London, British Museum 113880 (after Collon 1986: no. 359).



Fig. 114: Seal of Nin.IGI-KULLAB, oracle priest of Enlil. Old Babylonian. New York, Morgan Library and Museum seal 399 (courtesy of The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York).



Fig. 115: Old Babylonian seal. London, British Museum 89368 (after Collon 1986: no. 356).



Fig. 116: Old Babylonian seal. Jerusalem, Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem BLMJ 2503 (courtesy of the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem).



Fig. 117: Old Babylonian seal. London, British Museum 102515 (after Collon 1986: no. 402).



Fig. 118: Drawing of seal impression from Sippar. Old Babylonian. London, British Museum 16819 (after al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. XXVII/6, no. 190.g).



Fig. 119: Drawing of seal impression from Sippar; inscriptions: ^uAya / ^uŠamaš. Old Babylonian. London, British Museum 17440A (after Teissier 1998: no. 160).



Fig. 120: Drawing of seal impression inscribed with two DIGIR signs; probably from Sippar. Old Babylonian. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum VAT 1115 (after Klengel and Klengel-Brandt 2002: pl. 75, no. 120.1).



Fig. 121: Drawing of seal impression from Sippar. Old Babylonian. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum VAT 880 (after Klengel and Klengel-Brandt 2002: pl. 66, no. 42.1).

Fig. 122: Drawing of seal impression; probably from Sippar. Old Babylonian. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum VAT 1287 (after Klen-gel-Brandt 1989: 278, fig. 17).

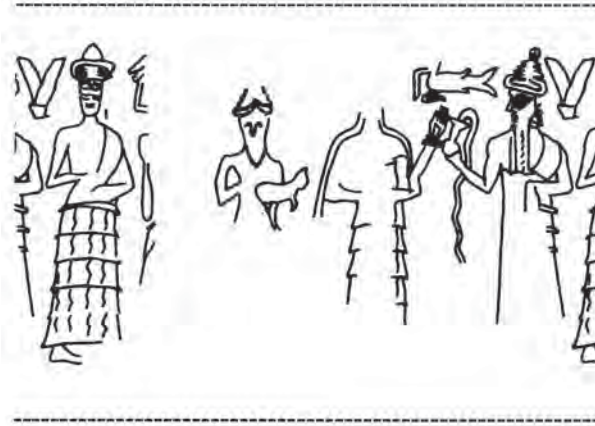


Fig. 123: Drawing of seal impression from Sippar. London, British Museum 17069A (after al-Gailani Werr 1988: 23, pl. XXVI/6, no. 212d = Teissier 1998: no. 162).



Fig. 124: Drawing of impression of seal of Enkimansum, servant of Enki and Damgal-nunna, from Sippar. Old Babylonian. Paris, Louvre AO 1651 (after al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. XXVI/1, no. 206.c).





Fig. 125: Drawing of seal impression from Sippar; inscriptions: ⁴[UTU] / ⁴A[-A]. Old Babylonian. Paris, Louvre AO 4139 (after al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. XXVIII/3, no. 237.c).



Fig. 126: Drawing of seal impression from Sippar; inscription: ⁴EN.KI. Old Babylonian. London, British Museum 17063A (after al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. XXVIII/2, no. 221.e = Teissier 1998 no. 139).

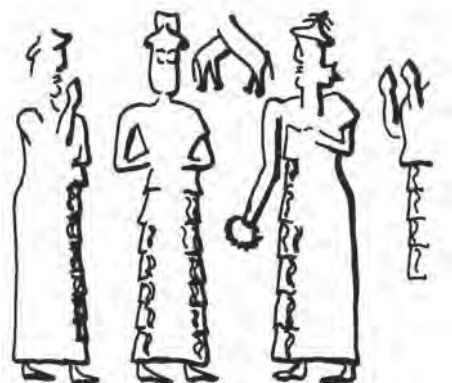


Fig. 127: Drawing of seal impression from Sippar. Old Babylonian. Baghdad, Iraq Museum 43487 (after al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. XXIX/4, no. 218.a).

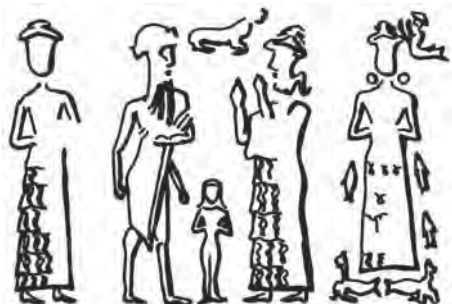


Fig. 128: Drawing of seal impression from Sippar. Old Babylonian. Paris, Louvre AO 1649 (after al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. XXVI/7, no. 198.f).

Fig. 129a: Drawing of impression of 'seal of Nur-Marduk' from Sippar; inscriptions: ^dAya / ^dŠamaš. Old Babylonian. London, British Museum 80549 (courtesy of Rosel Pientka-Hinz).



Fig. 129b: Drawing of impression of 'seal of Nur-Marduk' from Babylon; inscription: ^dAya. Old Babylonian. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum VAT 13288 (after Klengel-Brandt 1983: 67, Abb. 1).



Fig. 129c: Drawing of 'seal of Nur-Marduk' based on several impressions from Tell ed-Der (Sippar-Amnanum); inscription: ^dŠamaš. Old Babylonian (after Colbow 1991: pl. 15, no. 139a).





Fig. 130: Drawing of impression of seal of Ikuṅpi-Sīn, sanga-priest of the Edikuda in Sippar-Amnanum; from Sippar. Old Babylonian (after Tanret 2010: 298, fig. 25).



Fig. 131: Seal of Marilišu, son of Iliu-Šamaš, servant of Amurru. Old Babylonian. London, British Museum 89036 (after Collon 1986: no. 522).



Fig. 132: Drawing of seal impression, probably from Sippar. Old Babylonian. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum VAT 968 & 970 (after Klengel-Brandt 1989: 286, figs. 25/26).



Fig. 133: Drawing of seal impression, probably from Sippar. Old Babylonian. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum VAT 792 (after Klengel and Klengel-Brandt 2002: pl. 67, no. 45.1).



Fig. 134: Seal of Ini-Ea, son of Warad-Amurru, servant of Amurru and Šamaš. Old Babylonian. London, British Museum 89161 (after Collon 1986: no. 358).

Fig. 135: Drawing of seal impression from Tell Dhiba'i. Baghdad, Iraq Museum Dh.2-450 (after al-Gailani Werr 1988: pl. XVI/6, no. 131.f).



Fig. 136: Seal of Šin-imitti, son of Bur-Mama, servant of Šulpae. Old Babylonian. London, British Museum 129524 (after Collon 1986: no. 557).



Fig. 137: Drawing of impression of seal of [Bur-Šin], sang a-priest of Šin, son of Šin-šemi, from Sippar. Old Babylonian. London, British Museum 92584 (after Teissier 1998: no. 80).



Fig. 138: Drawing of Old Babylonian seal (after Ward 1910: 114, no. 319).



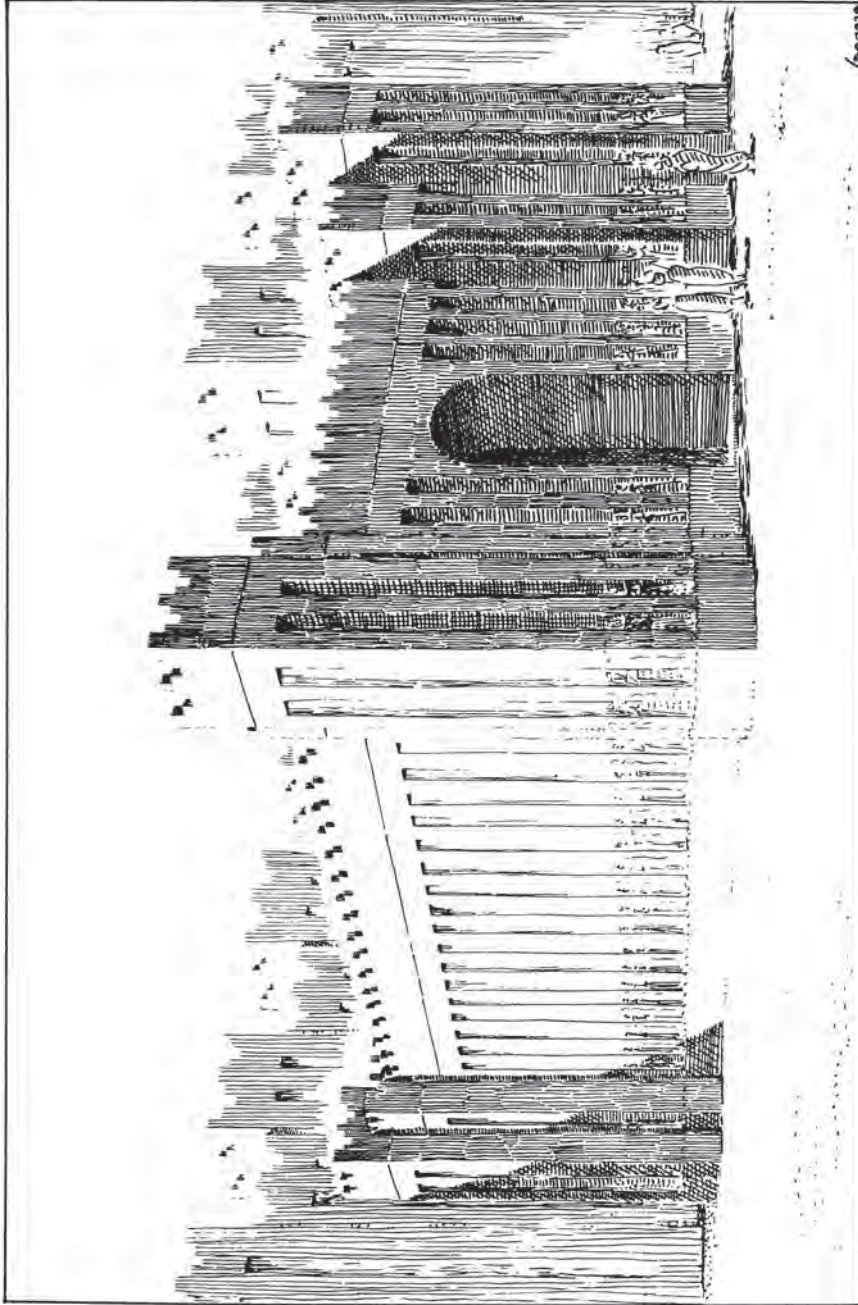


Fig. 139: Reconstruction drawing of Inana temple in Uruk, built by Karaindaš ca. 1413 BCE (after Heinrich 1982: fig. 295).

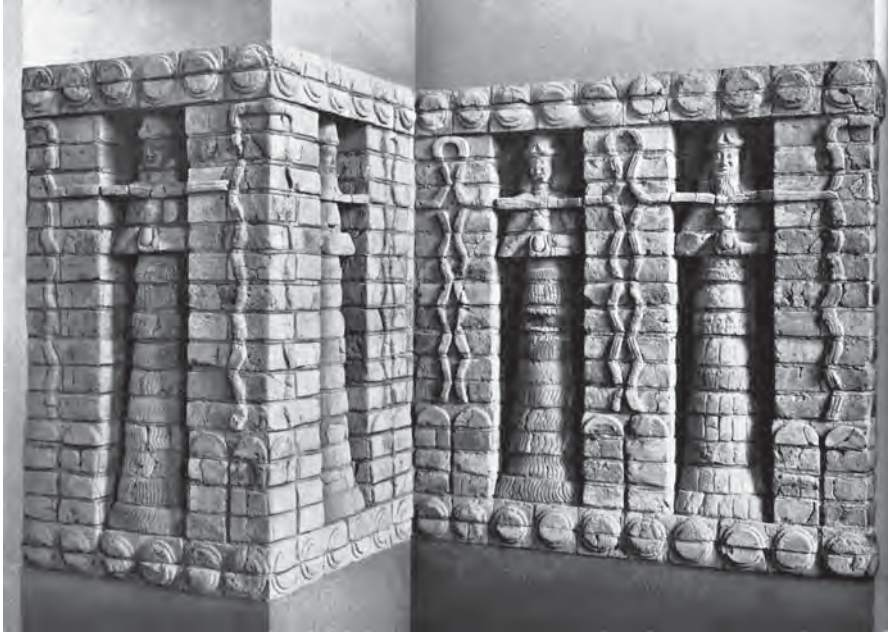


Fig. 140a: Façade of Inana temple in Uruk, built by Karaindaš, ca. 1413 BCE. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum VA 10983 (after Strommenger and Hirmer 1962: pl. 170).

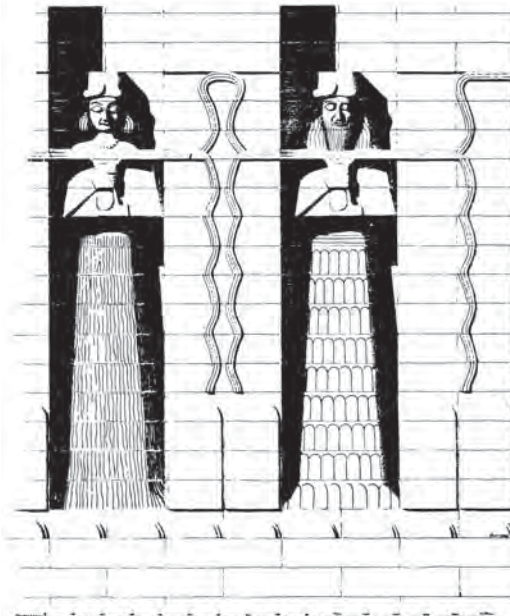


Fig. 140b: Drawing of a god and a goddess on façade of Inana temple in Uruk (after Heinrich 1982: fig. 288).



Figs. 141: Stele with image of Lamma. Height 72.2, width 27 cm. Kassite. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art inv. no. 61.12 (after Becker 1993: pl. 44).



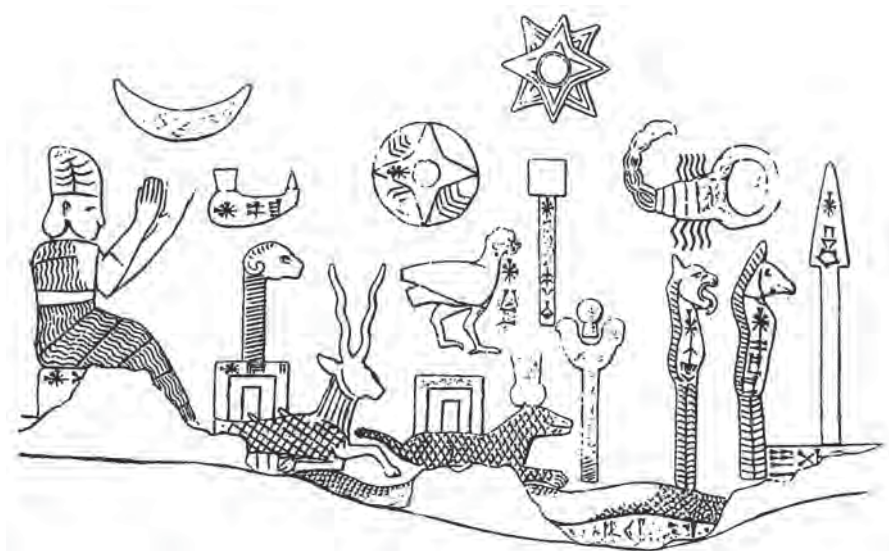
Fig. 142: Stele with image of Lamma dedicated to Inana by Nazi-Maruttaš (ca. 1307-1282 BCE). Height 85, width 30 cm. From Uruk. Baghdad, Iraq Museum 59247 (after Becker 1993: pl. 45).



Fig. 143: Detail from *kudurru* of Meliṣipak, king of Babylon (ca. 1185-1172); from Susa. Paris, Louvre SB 23 (after Orthmann 1975: fig. 191).



Fig. 144: *Kudurru* of Nebuchadnezzar I, ruler of the Second Dynasty of Isin (ca. 1125-1104), from Sippar. London, British Museum 90858 (after Strommenger and Hirmer 1962: pl. 272).



Figs. 145: *Kudurru* with image of Gula and fragmentary annotation on throne; from Susa. Paris, Louvre Sb 3224 (after Herles 2006: pl. 14, no. 29).

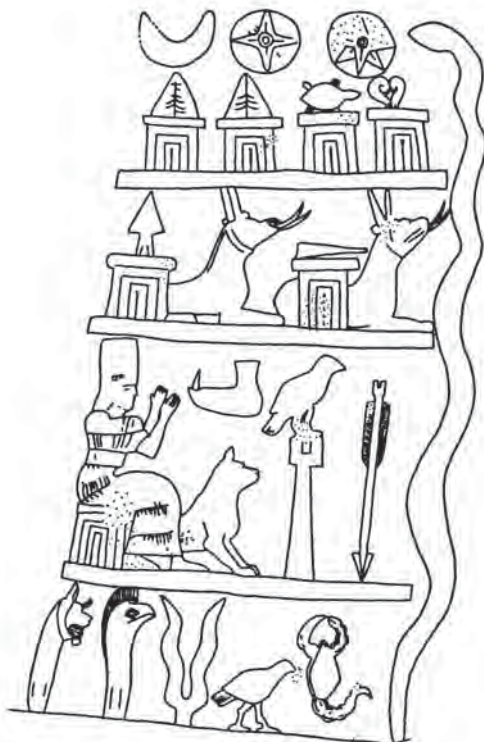


Fig. 146: *Kudurru* from the time of Nabû-mukîn-apli of Babylon (ca. 978-943). London, British Museum 90835 (after Herles 2006: pl. 33, no. 74).

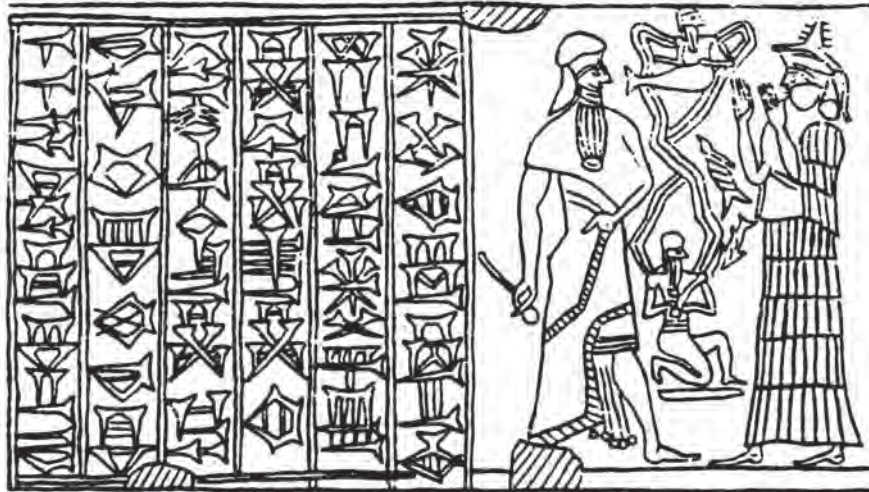


Fig. 147: Drawing of seal with inscribed prayer. Kassite, ca. 1450-1350 BCE. London, British Museum 89853 (after D.M. Matthews 1990: no. 3).

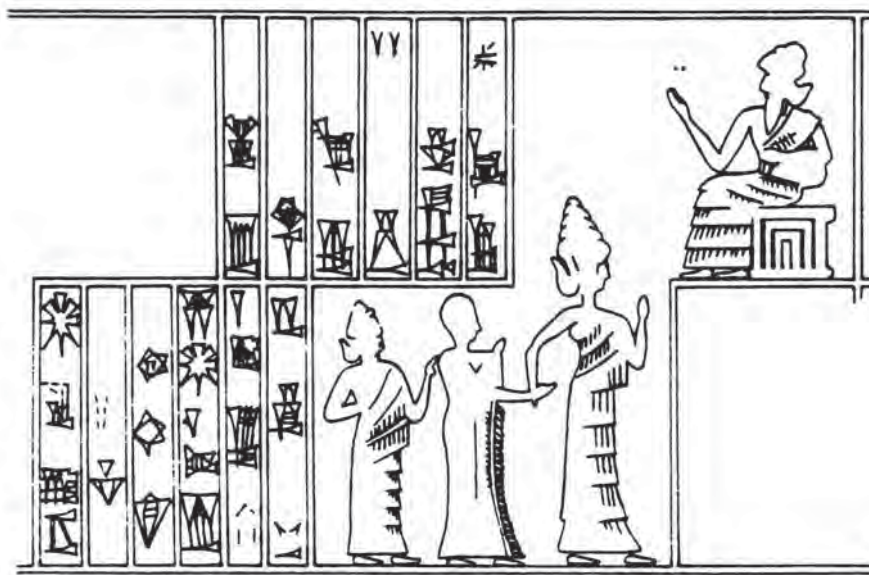


Fig. 148: Drawing of seal of Enlilalša, nu-eš₃-priest of Enlil, gu du₄-priest of Ninlil, governor of Nippur, official(?) of the goddess Nintinuga; from Nippur. Date: Kadašman-Enlil II to Kudur-Enlil year 4, ca. 1263-1250); (after D.M. Matthews 1992: 130-136, no. 189).

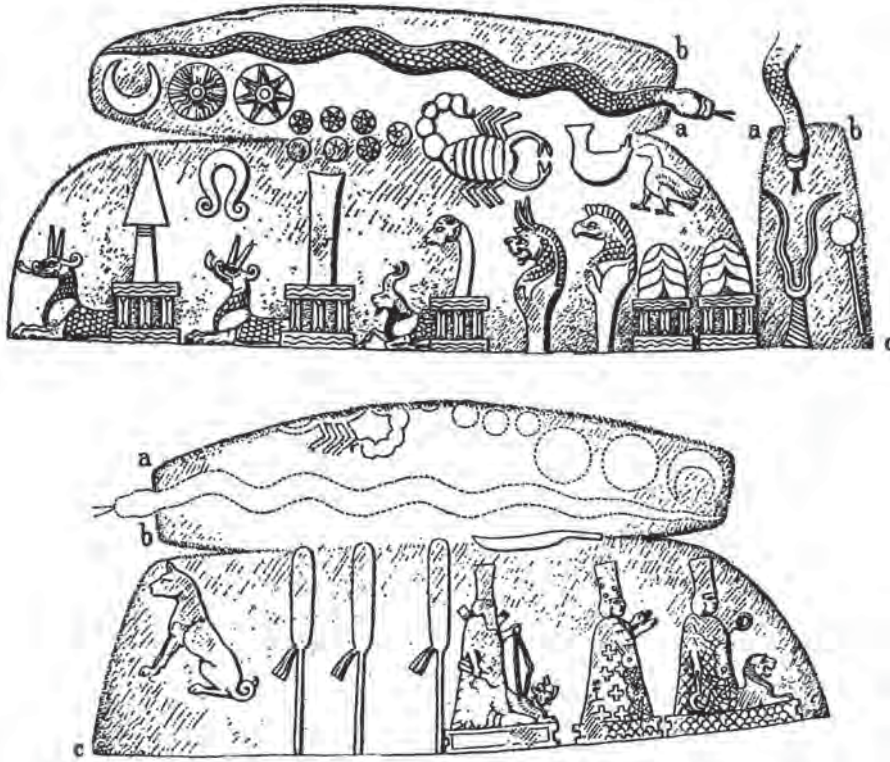


Fig. 149: Drawing of the two sides of the upper register of the *kudurru* of Nabu-šuma-iškun, ca. 760-748 BCE. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum VA 3031 (after Herles 2006: pl. 46, no. 103).



Fig. 150a, b: Relief of Šamaš-reš-ušur, governor of Suhu and Mari, ca. 760 BCE; from Babylon. Istanbul Museum 7815 (a: Börker-Klähn 1982: no. 231 (detail); b: after Cavigneaux and Ismail 1990: 401 fig. 3).



Fig. 151: Tablet with relief depicting image of Šamaš and inscription by Nabu-apla-iddina (ca. 886-855 BCE), from Ebabbar temple in Sippar. London, British Museum 91000 (courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).

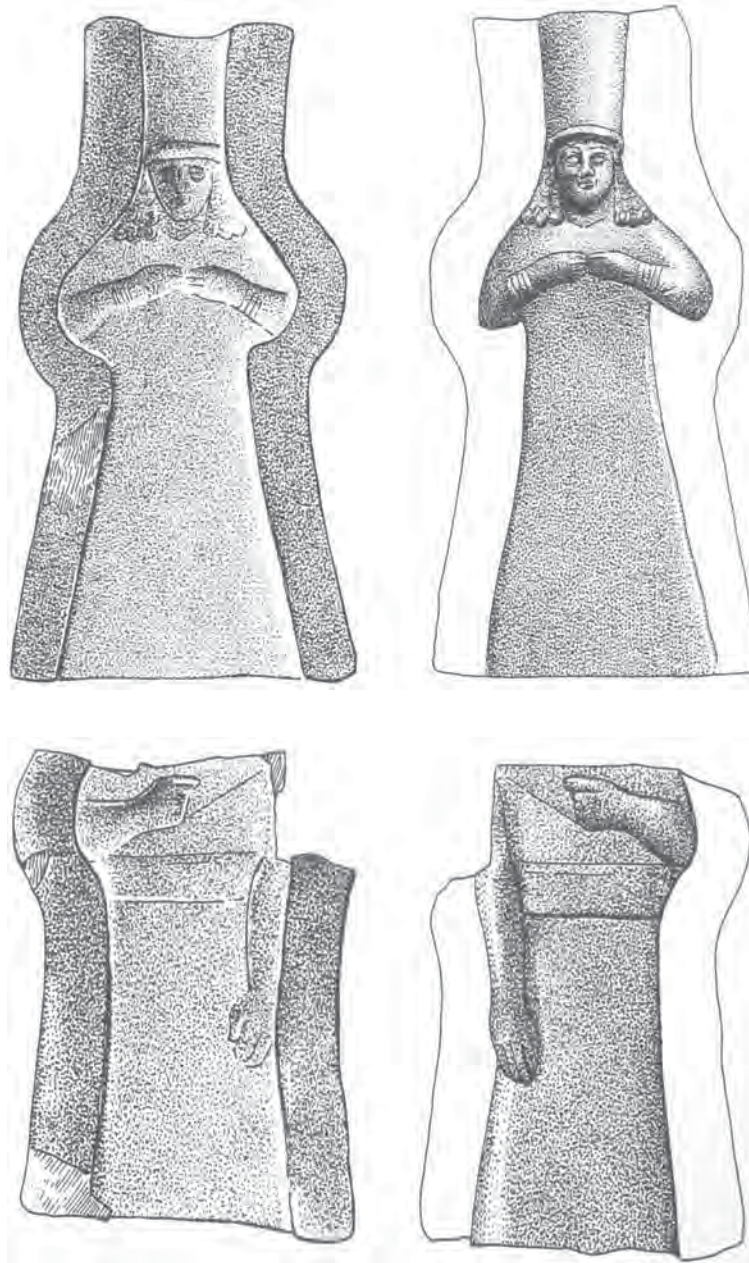


Fig. 152a, b: Modern impressions made from ancient moulds for models for statue of Istar (moulds were owned by Nabu-zakir-šumi, (son of) Nur-Sîn, sculptor of Marduk); from house XVII in Merkes quarter at Babylon. Neo-Babylonian. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum Bab 44 653 & 44688 (after Seidl 2000: 112, figs. 18, 19).

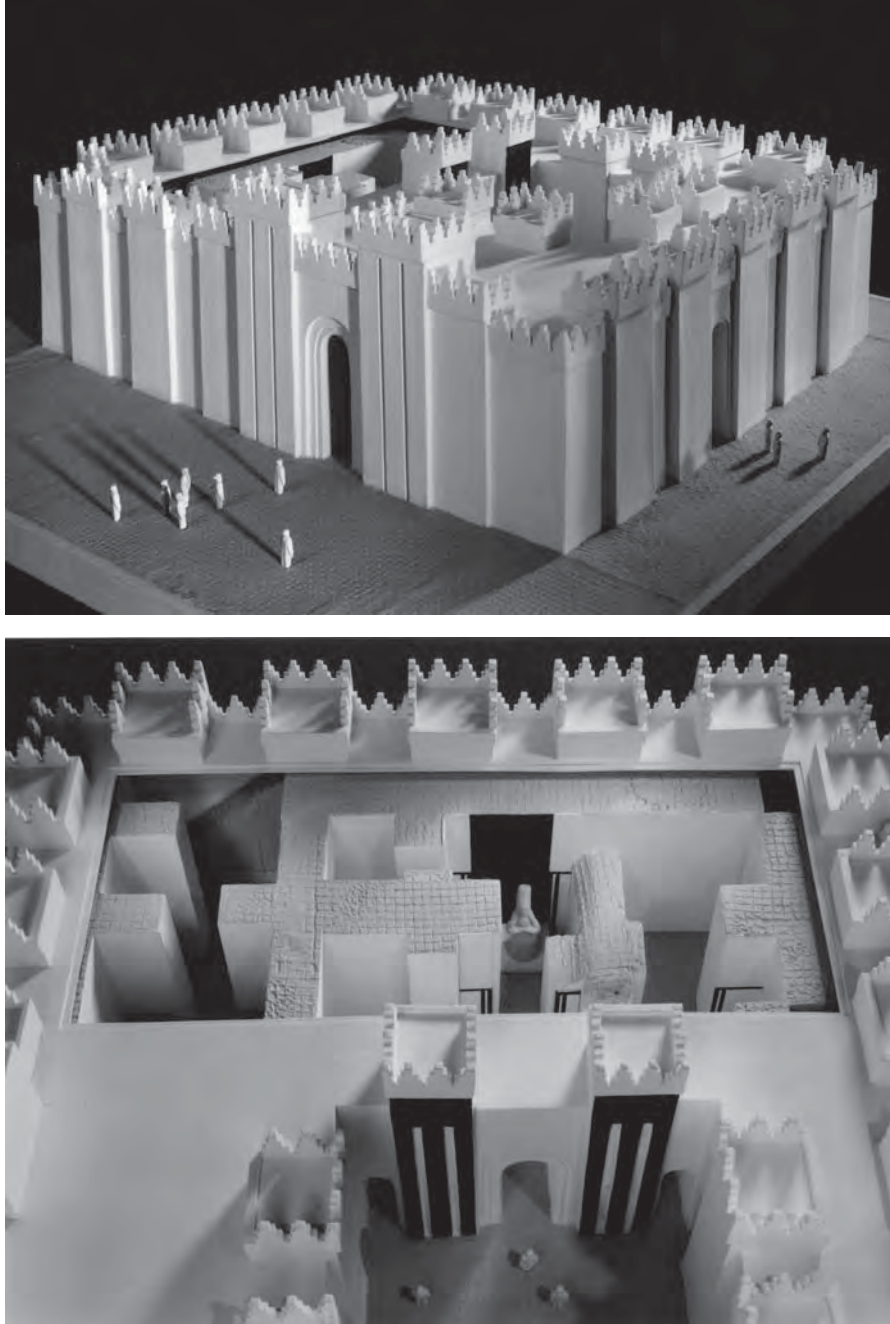


Fig. 153a, b: Temple of Istar of Akkade in Babylon: reconstruction of exterior and interior with view on statue of goddess. Neo-Babylonian (courtesy of Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem. Photographers: M. Amar & M. Grejevsky).



Fig. 154: Plan of Ninmah temple in Babylon. Neo-Babylonian (after Heinrich 1982: fig. 400).



Fig. 155: Reconstruction drawing (bird's eye view) of Ninmah temple in Babylon by R. Koldewey. Neo-Babylonian (after Heinrich 1982: fig. 402).

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Summary

Goddesses in Context examines from different perspectives some of the most challenging themes in Mesopotamian religion such as gender switch of deities and changes of the status, roles and functions of goddesses. The authors incorporate recent scholarship from various disciplines into their analysis of textual and visual sources, representations in diverse media, theological strategies, typologies, and the place of image in religion and cult over a span of three millennia.

Different types of syncretism (fusion, fission, mutation) resulted in transformation and homogenization of goddesses' roles and functions. The processes of syncretism (a useful heuristic tool for studying the evolution of religions and the attendant political and social changes) and gender switch were facilitated by the fluidity of personality due to multiple or similar divine roles and functions.

Few goddesses kept their identity throughout the millennia. Individuality is rare in the iconography of goddesses while visual emphasis is on repetition of generic divine figures (*hieros typos*) in order to retain recognizability of divinity, where femininity is of secondary significance.

The book demonstrates that goddesses were never marginalized or extrinsic and that their continuous presence in texts, cult images, rituals, and worship throughout Mesopotamian history is testimony to their powerful numinous impact.

This richly illustrated book is the first in-depth analysis of goddesses and the changes they underwent from the earliest visual and textual evidence around 3000 BCE to the end of ancient Mesopotamian civilization in the Seleucid period. *Goddesses in Context* is a compelling contribution to Mesopotamian religion and history as well as to history, art history, history of religion and gender studies.