

Peeter Espak

The God Enki
in Sumerian Royal Ideology
and Mythology

PHILIPPIKA

Altertumswissenschaftliche Abhandlungen

Contributions to the Study of Ancient World Cultures 87

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Abbreviations

AcOr	Acta Orientalia, Ediderunt societates orientales Batava, Danica, Norvegica. Leiden – Copenhagen
AfO	Archiv für Orientforschung. Berlin – Graz – Wien
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament. Ugarit-Verlag, Münster
ARET	Archivi Reali di Ebla. Testi
ARET 4	M. G. Biga – L. Milano. Testi amministrativi: Assegnazioni di tessuti (Archivo L. 2769). Testi IV. Università degli Studi di Roma “La Sapienza.” Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria, Roma, 1984.
ARET 5	D. O. Edzard. Hymnen, Beschwörungen und Verwandtes aus dem Archiv L. 2769. Archivi Reali di Ebla. Testi V. Università degli Studi di Roma “La Sapienza.” Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria, Roma, 1984.
ArOr	Archiv Orientalni. Prague
ARRIM	Annual Review of the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project. Toronto
ASJ	Acta Sumerologica Japonensia. Hiroshima
Belleten	Türk Tarih Kurumu, Belleten. Ankara
Beschwörungen	M. Krebernik. Die Beschwörungen aus Fara und Ebla. Untersuchungen zur ältesten keilschriftlichen Beschwörungsliteratur. Texte und Studien zur Orientalistik 2. Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim – Zurich – New York, 1984.
Bilinguismo	L. Cagni (ed.). Il bilinguismo a Ebla: Atti del convegno internazionale (Napoli, 19–22 aprile 1982). Istituto Universitario Orientale, Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, Series Minor XXII. Napoli, 1984.
BiOr	Bibliotheca Orientalis. Leiden
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies. London
BZAW 374	Th. R. Kämmerer (ed.). Studien zu Ritual und Sozialgeschichte im Alten Orient / Studies on Ritual and Society in the Ancient Near East. Tartuer Symposien 1998–2004. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 2007.
CAD	Chicago Assyrian Dictionary
Clergé	D. Carpin. Le Clergé d’Ur au siècle d’Hammurapi. Bibliothèque des Histoires, Gallimard/NRF, Paris, 1986.
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
CM 6/II	M. E. Vogelzang – H. L. J. Vanstiphout (ed.-s). Mesopotamian Poetic Language: Sumerian and Akkadian Proceedings of the Groningen Group for the Study of Mesopotamian Literature, Vol. 2. Cuneiform Monographs 6. Styx Publications, Groningen, 1996.
CM 7	I. L. Finkel – M. J. Geller (ed.-s). Sumerian Gods and their Representations. Cuneiform Monographs 7. Styx Publications, Groningen, 1997.
CM 31	= Fs. Leichty: A. K. Guinan – M. de J. Ellis – A. J. Ferrara – S. M. Freedman – M. T. Rutz – L. Sassmannshausen – S. Tinney – M. W. Waters (ed.-s). If a Man Builds a Joyful House. Assyriological Studies in Honor of Erle Verdun Leichty. Cuneiform Monographs 31. Brill, Leiden – Boston, 2006.
CM 35	= Fs. Vanstiphout: P. Michalowski – N. Veldhuis (ed.-s). Approaches to Sumerian Literature. Studies in Honour of H. L. J. Vanstiphout. Cuneiform Monographs 35. Brill, Leiden – Boston, 2006.

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- DDD K. van der Toorn – B. Becking – P. W. van der Horst (ed.-s). *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. Brill, Leiden, 1999².
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- Eridu M. W. Green. *Eridu in Sumerian Literature*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1975.
- ESP J. J. M. Roberts. *The Earliest Semitic Pantheon. A Study of the Semitic Deities Attested in Mesopotamia before Ur III*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore – London, 1972.
- ETCSL J. A. Black – G. Cunningham – J. Ebeling – E. Flückiger-Hawker – E. Robson – J. Taylor – G. Zólyomi. *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (<http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/>). Oxford, 1998–2006.
- FAOS 5 H. Steible. *Die altsumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften I/II*. *Freiburger Altorientalische Studien* 5. Franz Steiner Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1982.
- FAOS 7 I. J. Gelb – B. Kienast. *Die altakkadischen Königsinschriften des dritten Jahrtausends v.Chr.* *Freiburger Altorientalische Studien* 7. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 1990.
- FAOS 9 H. Steible. *Die neusumerischen Bau- und Weihinschriften I/II*. *Freiburger Altorientalische Studien* 9. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 1991.
- FARG *Forschungen zur Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte*. Ugarit-Verlag, Münster
- FAT 18 M. Weippert. *Jahwe und die anderen Götter. Studien zur Religionsgeschichte des antiken Israel in ihrem syrisch-palästinischen Kontext*. *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 18. Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 1997.
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- Genava NS Bulletin du Musée d'Arts et d'Histoire de Genève, NS = nouvelle série. Genf
- Genèses Genèses, revue de sciences sociales et d'histoire. Paris
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- HSAO D. O. Edzard (ed.). *Heidelberger Studien zum Alten Orient (Vol. 1 = Fs. Falkenstein: Adam Falkenstein zum 17. September 1966).* Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1967.
- Iraq Iraq: British School of Archaeology in Iraq. London
- IRSA E. Sollberger – J.-R. Kupper. *Inscriptions royales sumériennes et akkadiennes.* Paris, 1971.
- JANES *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society. The Jewish Theological Seminary, New-York*
- JAOS *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature. Society of Biblical Literature*
- JCS *Journal of Cuneiform Studies. New Haven – Baltimore*
- JEOL *Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux. Leiden*
- JNES *Journal of Near Eastern Studies. Chicago*
- JRAS *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*
- JSS *Journal of Semitic Studies. Oxford*
- MAD 2 I. J. Gelb. *Old Akkadian Writing and Grammar. Materials for the Assyrian Dictionary No. 2.* University of Chicago Press, Chicago – London, 1961.
- Mäetagused *Mäetagused, Journal of Folkloristics. Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu*
- MARI *Mari: Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires. Paris*
- Mari in Retrospect G. D. Young (ed.). *Mari in Retrospect. Fifty Years of Mari and Mari Studies.* Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, 1992.
- MEE *Materiali epigrafici di Ebla. Istituto Orientale di Napoli*
- MEE 4 G. Pettinato. *Testi lessicali bilingui della biblioteca L. 2769, Parte I: Traslitterazione dei testi e ricostruzione del VE. Materiali Epigrafici di Ebla 4.* Napoli, 1982.
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- MIO *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung. Berlin*
- MSL 4 B. Landsberger – R. Hallock – Th. Jacobsen – A. Falkenstein. *Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon IV.* Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, Roma, 1956.
- NABU *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires. Paris*
- NatPhen = Fs. Loon: D. J. W. Meijer (ed.), *Natural Phenomena. Their Meaning, Depiction and Description in the Ancient Near East. Proceedings of the Colloquium, Amsterdam, 6–8 July 1989.* Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, Amsterdam – Oxford – New-York – Tokyo, 1992.
- OA *Oriens Antiquus. Roma*
- OBO *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis*
- OBO 160/1 J. Bauer – R. K. Englund – M. Krebernik. *Mesopotamien: Späturuk-Zeit und Frühdynastische Zeit. Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 160/1.* Universitätsverlag Freiburg – Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Freiburg – Göttingen, 1998.
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- OIP The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications
- OIP 99 R. D. Biggs. *Inscriptions from Tell Abū Šalābīkh* (with a Chapter by Donald P. Hansen). *Oriental Institute Publications* 99. The University of Chicago Press, 1974.
- OLA 162/I G. del Olmo Lete (ed.). *Mythologie et Religion des Sémites Occidentaux*. Volume I. Ebla, Mari. *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 162. Peeters and Departement Oosterse Studies. Leuven – Paris – Dudley, 2008.
- OLZ *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*. Berlin
- Orient. *The Society for Near Eastern Studies in Japan*
- OrNS *Orientalia*. NS = Nova Series. Roma
- PAS P. Mander. *Il pantheon di Abu Šalābīkh, Contributo allo studio del pantheon sumerico arcaico*. Istituto Universitario Orientale, Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, Series Minor XXVI. Napoli, 1986.
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- Proc Am Philos Soc Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society
- PSD Å. W. Sjöberg et. al. *The Sumerian Dictionary of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia, 1984ff.
- QuSem *Quaderni di Semitistica*. Firenze
- RA *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale*. Paris
- RAI 17 A. Finet (ed.). *Actes de la XVII^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*. Université Libre de Bruxelles, 30 juin–4 juillet 1969. Publications du Comité Belge de Recherches Historiques, Épigraphiques et Archéologiques en Mésopotamie I. Ham-sur-Heure, 1970.
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- RAI 33 J.-M. Durand (ed.). *La Femme dans le proche-orient antique*. Compte rendu de la XXXIII^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (Paris, 7–10 juillet 1986). Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, Paris, 1987.
- RAI 35 M. de J. Ellis (ed.). *Nippur at the Centennial*. Papers Read at the 35^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Philadelphia, 1988. Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 14. Philadelphia, 1992.
- RAI 42 K. van Lerberghe – G. Voet (ed.-s). *Languages and Cultures in Contact*. At the Crossroads of Civilizations in the Syro-Mesopotamian Realm. Proceedings of the 42^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale (July 1995, Leuven). *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 96. Peeters, Leuven, 1999.
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- Literature and Art. History of the Ancient Near East / Monographs – III/3). Sargon srl, Padova, 2000.
- RAI 47 S. Parpola – R. M. Whiting (ed.-s). Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East. Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2–6, 2001. The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki, 2002.
- RAI 51 = Gs. Reiner: R. D. Biggs – J. Myers – M. T. Roth (ed.-s). Proceedings of the 51st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale. Held at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, July 18–22, 2005. The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 62. Chicago, 2008.
- RIME 1 D. R. Frayne. Presargonic Period (2700–2350 BC). Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Early Periods. Vol. 1. University of Toronto Press, 2008.
- RIME 2 D. R. Frayne. Sargonic and Gutian Periods (2334–2113 BC). The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods, Vol. 2. University of Toronto Press, 1993.
- RIME 3/I D.-O. Edzard. Gudea and His Dynasty. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods, Vol. 3/1. University of Toronto Press, 1997.
- RIME 3/II D. R. Frayne. Ur III Period (2112–2004 BC). The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods, Vol. 3/2. University of Toronto Press, 1997.
- RIME 4 D. R. Frayne. Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC). The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods, Vol. 4. University of Toronto Press, 1990.
- RIA Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie
- SEL Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici sul Vicino Oriente Antico. Verona
- StPohl 17 G. Cunningham. ‘Deliver Me from Evil.’ Mesopotamian Incantations 2500–1500 BC. Studia Pohl 17. Roma, 1997.
- StSem Studi Semitici. Centro di studi semitici, Università di Roma
- Subartu 12 L. Milano – W. Sallaberger – Ph. Talon – K. Van Lerberghe (ed.-s). Third Millennium Cuneiform Texts from Tell Beydar (Seasons 1996–2002). Subartu XII, Brepols, 2004.
- Sumer Sumer. Journal of Archaeology and History in Arab World. Baghdad
- UF Ugarit-Forschungen. Ugarit-Verlag, Münster
- Ugaritica Ugaritica. Mission de Ras Shamra. Paris, 1939–1978
- WO Die Welt des Orients. Wissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Kunde des Morgenlandes. Göttingen
- ZA Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie

Acknowledgements

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Since the 2010 monograph has already been cited and used by many scholars in their scientific works, it was decided not to reevaluate or change the principal assumptions and ideas presented by the author in the original published book. Therefore also Xianhua Wang's *The Metamorphosis of Enlil in Early Mesopotamia* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 385, Ugarit-Verlag, Münster 2011), Jan Lisman's *Cosmogony, Theogony and Anthropogeny in Sumerian Texts* (Alter Orient und Altes Testament 409, Ugarit-Verlag, Münster 2013), Wilfred G. Lambert's, *Babylonian Creation Myths* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 16, Eisenbrauns 2013) and the ideas presented in several other studies appeared since 2010 will not be discussed in the current book. Developing new perspectives and adding material to a text which has already been reviewed in scientific journals (see: G. J. Selz, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 102 (2012), pp. 342–343) would confuse the two different editions of the work and create contradictions between them. Although changes and additions have been made to the text, newer material and further developed ideas will be discussed in future studies of the author dedicated to the topic.

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Peeter Espak, Tartu

Preface of Gebhard J. Selz

Generally speaking, in the last decades, the History of Religions received renewed interest, certainly connected to the religious turn observable in so many societies. The same holds true for Ancient Near Eastern Studies in which numerous articles and books have been dedicated to various aspects of Mesopotamian religion. I refrain from providing names of scholars here as this would be highly problematic; one would be bound to be unfair to the works of the others. In any case, it is my firm conviction that Peeter Espak's book is a remarkable addition to such endeavors.

Ancient Near Eastern Studies have a long tradition of research on individual deities. Besides a wealth of articles dealing with individual deities' names, a number of books appeared which mostly concentrate on the so-called "great deities," such as Marduk and Nabû, Enlil and, last but not least on Enki(-g) – É-a (=Compare the writing of ^dé-a = ^dHà-a (Aj(j)a) < *hjj "alive" or "life;" p. 28 and 139f. with n. 2 and 141f. with n. 5 and p. 186). Many recent studies have been devoted to Inana(-k) – Ištar, and quite recently a work was published which focused on the conceptualization of goddesses within the Mesopotamian tradition.¹ Inana-k has an intimate but also complicated relationship with Enki-g – É-a, and the latter is well-known to generally show a special and positive attitude towards man. Enki, for example, is also the god who secured the survival of humankind, taking a stand against the other deities who decided to erase the human race by the Flood. Enki-g ordered to build an Ark, and such he was not only able to survive, he even gained, according to the later tradition, eternal life.

The pioneering study of Hannes Galter on Enki-g – É-a focused on the Akkadian tradition and was published more than 30 years ago.² Meanwhile many new sources became available and considerable progress was done, especially in Sumerian Studies. Many texts are now available in the WWW on Oxford's The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL) which is continuously updated. Given these circumstances it is not surprising that Peeter Espak concentrates on the aspects of the God Enki-g attested in Sumerian texts. In doing so the present book opens new and important perspectives and supplements the still useful work of Galter.

Besides Inana-k and Enlil Enki-g plays a salient role in third millennium Sumerian texts. He is venerated everywhere in the Cuneiform world – even more than the chief of the Sumerian Pantheon Enlil (p. 23). The reason for the wide-spread cult of Inana-k and especially Enki-g is not yet absolutely clear and apparently originates in proto-historic periods. Functionally speaking, Enki-g is above all the god of the sweet water realms,

1 Julia M. Asher-Greve, Joan Goodnick Westenholz 2013: Goddesses in Context. On Divine Powers, Roles, Relationships and Gender in Mesopotamian Textual and Visual Sources. *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 259, Fribourg and Göttingen.

2 Hannes Galter 1983: Der Gott Ea/Enki in der akkadischen Überlieferung. Eine Bestandsaufnahme des vorhandenen Materials. Dissertationen der Karl Franzens Universität Graz 58, Graz.

magic and craftsmanship, and the sources usually attribute to him Eridu(g), literally “Sweet (water) City,” as his home city. The general impression we gain from the earliest Sumerian sources is that Enki-g’s, like Inana-k’s importance may have preceded in salience Enlil and the Nippurean theology. In contrast to other Mesopotamian deities Enlil is, according to our sources, a specific *political* deity,³ see below chapter 9: “Enki and the Archaic Sumerian Religion: The Question of Rivalry between the Theologies of Enki and Enlil.”

Peeter Espak’s book is clearly structured. In chapters 1-7 he deals with datable official inscriptions, taking heed of the possible local variations. Doing so Espak is able to demonstrate that Enki-g’s function as god of creation was probably an extension of his original functions not attested before the Isin-Larsa period. When the author states that in several inscriptions of Rimsin of Larsa the name of the mother-goddess is omitted “and the “triad” An, Enlil, Enki (and) the great gods... is beginning to appear in royal ideology” (p. 121;⁴ see also chapter 8.5.4. “Enki and the Mother Goddess” and esp. p. 208) this is only one example for the value Espak’s work has for any historian of religion, not only in cuneiform studies. Chapter 8 is devoted to “Enki (Ea) in the Mythology of Creation.” The author attempts to establish an evolutionary scheme of how Enki (Ea) became a major deity of creation; he also includes a comparative discussion of Biblical sources.

That the reader may remain skeptical towards one or the other interpretation Espak proposes does not blemish his work. I am for instance not fully convinced that he is correct with the following statement deduced from his meticulous study of the sources: “Based on the Sumerian evidence analysed here, there is no reason to directly call Enki a water-god or a god embodying the sweet waters. In several texts Enki is related to canals and is associated with fertilising floods, reeds and canebrakes growing out of Engur. All these features can be attributed to several other deities of Mesopotamia” (p. 209). However, the name of Enki-g’s important home city Eridu(g), meaning “Sweet City,” most likely refers to sweet water wells there,⁵ that facilitated the proto-historic Sumerian settlement in this region.

In sum, the editors of *Philippika* deserve our gratitude for making Espak’s work available to the scholarly world for further use and consideration. This study offers new insights into one of the most fascinating figures of the large Mesopotamian pantheon. No doubt, the work will gain considerable impact on the study of Histories of Religions.

Gebhard J. Selz, Vienna 10th of June 2014

3 Compare also Xianhua Wang 2011: *The Metamorphosis of Enlil in Early Mesopotamia*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 385, Münster.

4 “This seems to be another indication of the diminishing role of the mother-goddess in the pantheon. Enki in turn is listed among the three most important deities.”

5 Compare also below chapter 8.3. “The Nature of Sumerian Abzu.”

Introduction

Hannes D. Galter begins his dissertation about the Sumero-Akkadian Ea/Enki from the year 1983 *Der Gott Ea/Enki in der akkadischen Überlieferung. Eine Bestandsaufnahme des vorhandenen Materials* with the observation that understanding religion is one of the most important means of comprehending the entire cultural complexity of Mesopotamia:

Untersuchungen der Religion bilden nach wie vor einen der wichtigsten Wege zum Verständnis einer Kultur. Und nirgends spiegeln sich Mentalität und Vorstellungskraft der Menschen deutlicher wider als in den Gestalten ihrer Götter. Dies gilt in besonderem Maß für den Bereich der mesopotamischen Kulturen.¹

His description can be complemented by Paul Tillich's famous but often neglected statement "Religion is the essence of culture, and culture is the form of religion."² Although this sentence can be interpreted in a number of ways, and there is no universally accepted definition for the terms "religion" and "culture," Tillich makes it clear that we cannot speak of religion as distinct from culture and there is no culture disjointed from religion. Bronislaw Malinowski interprets these questions in anthropological terms and tries to see a clear distinction between the notions of religion/magic and science, thus dividing culture into two separate parts – sacred and profane:

There are no peoples however primitive without religion and magic. Nor are there, it must be added at once, any savage races lacking either in the scientific attitude or in science, though this lack has been frequently attributed to them. In every primitive community, studied by trustworthy and competent observers, there have been found two clearly distinguishable domains, the Sacred and the Profane; in other words, the domain of Magic and Religion and that of Science.³

This kind of distinction might be called artificial at least to some extent, since both, religion/magic and science are complementary as well as interdependent. In most cultures and civilisations, it is impossible to scientifically describe or analyse one aspect separately from the other. This is especially the case with Ancient Near Eastern religions. As summarised by Niek Veldhuis: "In fact, the divine realm somehow affects everything; there is no separate province in either thinking or in social reality that we may isolate as either 'religious' or 'secular'."⁴ This statement can be applied to the topic of the current research as well. The god Enki does not belong to another reality definable as "divine" or "religious" in Mesopotamian culture but forms an integral part of all the imaginable spheres of life. The current dissertation is more dedicated to the official religion, royal ideology and

1 H. D. Galter, *Ea/Enki*, p. viii.

2 P. Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (1959), p. 42.

3 B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion* (1948), p. 1.

4 N. Veldhuis, *Religion, Literature, and Scholarship: The Sumerian Composition Nanše and the Birds* (2004), p. 16.

mythology. However, all these aspects are studied in light of comparative material from all kinds of textual examples.

The Current Study in the Frameworks of Previous Research

Anton Deimel defined the nature of the Babylonian god Ea in his *Pantheon Babylonicum* in 1914 as: “É-a, deus abyssi et aquae (dulcis?); deus sapientiae et artium; deus magorum.”⁵ Enki/Ea is described as the god of the underground sweet water region Abzu, the god of wisdom and crafts, and the god of magic. The article by Erich Ebeling “Enki (Ea)” in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 1938, also taking into consideration the change of the divine concept in different periods of history, describes Enki and Ea in similar terms to the definition given by Deimel. E. D. van Buren established the connection between the deity with streams flowing out from his shoulders and the god Enki/Ea in 1933 in the study *The Flowing Vase and the God with Streams*. The results of this early study have proved adequate up to this day and the emergence of new material has not produced any major new theories or perspectives in the understanding of the representation of the gods Enki and Ea in Ancient Near Eastern art. Both great pioneers of Sumerology, Samuel Noah Kramer and Thorkild Jacobsen were the authors of numerous shorter studies about the nature of Enki and Ea in Sumero-Akkadian mythology. A major study about the city of Enki, Eridu, was undertaken by Margaret W. Green’s doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago in the year 1975, titled *Eridu in Sumerian Literature*. The work offers a detailed survey about Enki’s city Eridu in archaeology, history, Mesopotamian mythology and literature. The most recent book about Enki and Ea in mythology and Mesopotamian literary tradition is *Myths of Enki, the Crafty God* by S. N. Kramer and J. Maier, published in 1989. The study is meant for the general reader interested in ancient literature, history of religions and comparative mythology. The topic has been discussed in shorter forms by almost every scholar involved in Ancient Near Eastern Studies of literature, mythology or history of religion, due to the high importance of the gods Enki and Ea during all the periods and all the geographic locations of Ancient Mesopotamia and beyond.

H. D. Galter’s doctoral dissertation *Der Gott Ea/Enki in der akkadischen Überlieferung. Eine Bestandsaufnahme des vorhandenen Materials* (1983) has remained the only longer study dedicated to the phenomenon of Enki/Ea in Ancient Near Eastern Studies. Galter’s dissertation is still up to date when compared to several modern theories and interpretations concerning the topic. The main focus of his dissertation was the god Ea/Enki in Akkadian contexts, although the Sumerian material available during the composition of the dissertation was also analysed and presented. The current research is mainly dedicated to the god Enki in Sumerian sources, starting from the first royal inscriptions of the Lagašite state from ca. 2500 BC. The last period under observation is the Dynasty of Hammurapi where it is no longer possible to speak about the Sumerian language or Sumerian mythology as living entities.

5 P. 111.

Objective, Method and Structure

The aim of the current study is not to define the god Enki and to try to answer the question “who the god Enki was?” The main objective is to understand how the god Enki was described by ancient priests and scribes, and how that description and mythology evolved during the different periods of Sumero-Akkadian history.

Before beginning with the task of the composition of the current text, some theoretical questions concerning the god Enki were raised in the study plan of the dissertation by this author. The questions were based on observations made during the previous studies concerning the topic.

One of the main observations was based on the fact that most of the theories about Sumerian and Ancient Near Eastern mythology are interpreted using the mythology and cosmogony of Enuma eliš and several other Babylonian mythological texts available in the earlier phases of Ancient Near Eastern Studies. Based on these, the Sumerian god Enki is always defined as the god of sweet waters, the god who personifies or embodies those waters. His divine domain Abzu is usually translated as “the under-earth sweet water ocean.” One of the first truly modern studies dealing with Mesopotamian religion was E. Douglas van Buren’s *The Flowing Vase and the God with Streams*, published in 1933, where the image of flowing water in Mesopotamian art was connected with the god Ea. Van Buren states:

Enki, the ideogram with which his name was written, designated him as “Lord of the Watery Deep”, because after he had overcome Mummu and Apsû by means of a powerful spell he founded in the Heavenly Ocean his dwelling called “the house of wisdom”. In the hidden depths all secrets were thought to lie concealed, thus Ea is lord of hidden, unfathomable knowledge, the counsellor of gods and men, the god of oracles which he revealed to men in dreams, the chief magician of the gods in whose province were all spells, the great exorcist. His, too, was the purifying water used in spells and magic rites, and as ruler of the waters of the Under World he was lord of rivulets and brooks which had their sources in the sweet-water ocean and flowed thence to make the land fertile.⁶

Van Buren describes the god Ea in later Babylonian religion, and all the functions of Ea described by her are truly present in the later layers of Ancient Near Eastern religion and mythology. However, when studying the 3rd millennium authentic Sumerian texts, not a single one of them seems to describe Enki as “water personified.” There are no texts available describing the Sumerian Abzu as an under-earth sweet water ocean. Therefore, one of the theoretical questions aimed to be analysed on the pages of the current dissertation was formulated as *Is the Sumerian god Enki originally a water-god?*

Samuel Noah Kramer was one of the Sumerologists who during his entire career always tried to seek out the evidence about the rivalry of the theologies of Enki and Enlil. One of the best examples of his theories, the study titled “Enki and His Inferiority Complex,”⁷ can be drawn as an example. Although already Thorkild Jacobsen observed that there is no

6 P. 9.

7 OrNS 39 (1970), pp. 103–110.

trace of actual rivalry available between the two gods,⁸ there has not been any definitive solution or opinion about the matter *Is there any detectable power struggle between the theologies of Enki and Enlil?*

Possibly resulting from the theories of rivalry or at least being somewhat influenced by them, different schools of Sumerian mythology and theology have also been proposed to have been in existence. The two most influential of them are defined as the school of Eridu and the school of Nippur. Jan van Dijk, in his exceptionally influential paper “Le motif cosmique dans la pensée sumérienne,”⁹ tried to seek different theological and even tribal origins of Sumerian cosmogony and creation mythology reflected in different mythological narratives. The fact that there are two kinds of different possibilities to create something new in Sumerian mythology is clearly attested: (1) by sexual intercourse between two divine creatures and (2) by forming something as a result of handiwork. *Do the different mythological motives reflect different “schools” of mythology?* is among the questions under consideration, based on the actual material available.

The question of structuring a dissertation or a study dedicated to a certain Mesopotamian god has remained the same as described by H. D. Galter in the introductory part of his dissertation published in 1983:

Bisher wurden bei ähnlichen Arbeiten zwei verschiedene Wege gewählt. Zum einen der Versuch, den Egbert von Weiher machte, ein chronologisch-religionshistorisches System aufzustellen, das das Phänomen einer Gottheit erklären kann. Zum anderen die Neuedition des einschlägigen Textmaterials mit dem Ziel, daraus das Wesen des Gottes zu erkennen, wie es Åke Sjöberg versuchte. Beide Wege sind nicht zur Gänze zufriedenstellend.¹⁰

Different types of texts, which directly or indirectly deal with the gods Enki and Ea, have become so numerous that within the frameworks of one dissertation, the study of all the available material would only be possible in the form of a catalogue. The current dissertation studies the available and relevant material from Mesopotamian royal inscriptions and hymns, and does so by following a chronological order. The chronologically ordered texts are illustrated by using examples from other written records from different periods and are commented on by relevant opinions from secondary sources.

The first seven chapters of the dissertation present the texts mentioning or describing the god Enki in Sumero-Akkadian royal inscriptions and hymns. The texts are presented in chronological order and grouped under the sub-chapters of Mesopotamian rulers of different dynasties and city states. *Chapter 1* describes the Early Dynastic royal inscriptions and other available materials from the period. Most of the inscriptions mentioning the god Enki come from the state of Lagaš, but some texts are available also from Umma and Uruk. *Chapter 2* contains the inscriptions of Naram-Su'en of Akkade mentioning the god Enki. Some other aspects from that period are discussed as well. *Chapter 3* deals with the sources of the Second Dynasty of Lagaš. The longest preserved text from that period is the Temple Hymn of Gudea, containing abundant information concerning Enki. *Chapter 4* describes

8 Fs. Talmon (1992), p. 415.

9 AcOr 28 (1964), pp. 1–59.

10 Pp. viii–ix.

and presents the sources of the Ur III Dynasty rulers in chronological order. Royal hymns and royal inscriptions from that period are rich in number and mostly come from the ruling period of the king Šulgi. Texts of the rulers of other states of the period, such as Puzur-Eštar of Mari and Iddin-Su'en of Simurru, are also discussed in the fourth chapter. *Chapter 5* presents the relevant inscriptions from the period of Isin. Most of the texts from that period describing Enki come from the reign of the king Išme-Dagan. The city laments and different Sumerian myths datable up to the period of Isin, are also discussed under that chapter. *Chapter 6* is dedicated to the next major power centre of Mesopotamia, the Dynasty of Larsa. The most abundant sources dealing with Enki and other gods of his circle come from the period of the king Rim-Su'en. Su'en-kašid of Uruk and Iahdun-Lim of Mari are also included in the Larsa Dynasty material. *Chapter 7* is the last chapter presenting the chronologically ordered texts and is dedicated to the sources from the First Dynasty of Babylon. During the reign of Hammurapi and Samsu-iluna, the concepts of Mesopotamian religion go through a significant change, and it becomes apparent that the Sumerian mythological thinking, as well as the Sumerian language, is being replaced by the ideology of Babylon. The Semitic name Ea is making its appearance in the royal inscriptions and is often used instead of the Sumerian divine name Enki. The texts of Ipiq-Eštar and Takil-ilišu of Malgium, which are rich in material describing Enki/Ea and Damgalnunna/Damkina, are also covered under this chapter. Every chapter is concluded by a summary of conclusions, where the most significant characteristics, changes and new elements in ideology are shortly underlined.

Chapter 8 is dedicated to Enki's role in different creation accounts and gives an overview of the nature of his abode Abzu and Enki's role in the process of creating mankind. Comparative material from the later mythological stories, such as Atrahasis, Enuma eliš and Hebrew Genesis, are also taken into consideration. The chapter does not always follow the previously used chronological order of texts since the age of mythological ideas, their origins, evolution and techniques of composition are impossible to determine with probative force. Even when a certain tablet's time of composition can be established with relative certainty, there is no way of determining the age of the mythological ideas it contains. This is also the case with different royal inscriptions and hymns – the occurrence of a royal name does not necessarily mean that the mythological ideas reflected in the text come from that period. However, it facilitates the establishment of a certain relative chronology of the ideas and motives. When a certain motive was never present in the records of previous periods, it becomes possible to suggest that influences from other national groups, geographical areas, but also internal developments of religion, might have arisen. On the other hand, when a motive is present from the earliest sources onwards, it allows us to determine its archaic (or Sumerian) nature.

Chapter 9 is an overview of Enki's place and nature in the hypothetical archaic Sumerian pantheon and religion. The questions of the so-called "rivalry" between the theologies of Enki and Enlil are also discussed in this chapter. The discussion is illustrated by several relevant modern theories by different authors. The chapter aims to be a comparative summary of the previous parts of the dissertation which mostly relied on authentic sources and mainly used secondary theories for illustrating the original texts.

As a summary, it may be stated that tracking the historical evolution of the concept of Enki, based on the chronologically ordered texts from Mesopotamian royal ideology, is the

most important goal of the dissertation. On the other hand, the last two chapters try to offer a synthesis or a summary of the divine concept and also to understand or describe “the nature” of the god. Every synthesis trying to summarise Mesopotamian religious phenomena or mythological ideas usually reflects the personal understanding and scholarly speculations of its author and can therefore never give a satisfactory overview of the ancient hypothetical reality which was in constant fluctuating change and never had a certain static point of departure or finalised form. On the other hand, every imaginative scenario of events, although never reflecting “the real situation,” helps to point towards certain possibilities in archaic religion and mythology.

None of the raised theoretical issues can be considered as the primary aim of the study, which is instead to present and subsequently analyse the available and relevant sources concerning the god Enki. However, the aim is to at least consider if some of the theories, which still influence the study of Ancient Near Eastern mythology, can be considered accurate based on the analysed material.

1. Early Dynastic Period

The Early Dynastic corpus of royal inscriptions largely comes from the state of Lagaš where Enki features in the inscriptions of Ur-Nanše, Eanatum, Enanatum I, Enmetena and Uru'inimgina. Among the rulers of other states, Ur-Lumma and Giša-kidu of Umma, Elili of Ur and Lugalzagesi of Uruk have composed texts where the god Enki is mentioned. The presented material mostly reflects the theology of Southern Mesopotamian Lagaš and might therefore give a biased picture of the overall religious situation in Sumer. However, also the Lagašite inscriptions reflect the majority of the most important deities of other regions. All the characteristics given to the god Enki in the inscriptions of Lagaš do not differ greatly from the later inscriptions from Ur III or Isin periods. The numbering of the Early Dynastic inscriptions corresponds to D. Frayne's RIME 1 which is significantly different from the previous standard edition FAOS 5/I–II by H. Steible.

1.1. Ur-Nanše

One text from the city of Girsu from the reign of Ur-Nanše written on a diorite plaque describes the building of Ningirsu's temple. The first three columns where the god Enki(g) and Enki and Nunki deities are mentioned seem closer to an incantation than to a regular royal inscription.¹ The last two columns of the inscription describe the building of the temple of Ningirsu at the city of Girsu in similar terms to all the other royal inscriptions.

Ur-Nanše 32:²

i	gi kù	Pure reed!
	gi ġeš-gi engur	Reed of the canebrake of Engur! ³
	gi pa-zu ₅	Reed, your top (arms)
	su ₄ -su ₄	are growing (or: are red?) ⁴
	úr-zu ₅	Your root ⁵
ii	^d en-ki	Enki
	ki buru ₅ ġál	in the earth-hole has placed. ⁶

1 G. Cunningham, StPohl 17, p. 6.

2 Ur-Nanše 32: RIME 1 = Urnanše 49: FAOS 5/I.

3 Th. Jacobsen, JNES 5 (1946), p. 139: "Here, accordingly, the engur is the subterranean waters as they come to the surface in the marshes." Reeds of Engur are constantly associated with the city of Eridu and Abzu in later hymns and myths. As Jacobsen states, the Engur here probably designates the waters of the marsh or lagoon where the reed is growing and where the canebrakes (ġeš-gi) are situated.

4 H. Steible, FAOS 5/I, p. 110 translates "sind (rot)braun." D. Frayne, RIME 1, p. 118: "you whose branches grow luxuriantly."

5 Cf. Th. Jacobsen, JNES 2 (1943), p. 118 finds that pa-zu₅ and úr-zu₅ indicate to "thy top" and "thy root" which seems a likely interpretation.

6 D. Frayne, RIME 1, p. 118: "After the god Enki set your roots in the (post) hole." G. Cunningham, StPohl 17, p. 29: "had set in the underworld." Cf. Th. Jacobsen, JNES 2 (1943), p. 118: "thy root being at one place with Enki."