

They are Seven:
Demons and Monsters in the Mesopotamian Textual and Artistic Tradition

by

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List of Abbreviations:

Several texts are referred to frequently in this study; for ease of reference, they are referred to by the shortened titles as cited below. Particular passages from each text, when cited, are given by line number, in the case of a single-tablet composition, or by tablet and line number together, when the text comprises multiple tablets.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <i>Enūma eliš</i> | <i>Enūma eliš</i> . Edition in: Lambert, W.G. <i>Babylonian Creation Myths</i> . Vol. 16 of <i>Mesopotamian Civilizations</i> . Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013. |
| <i>Erra</i> | <i>Epic of Erra</i> . Edition in: Cagni, Luigi. <i>L'Epopea di Erra</i> . Vol. 34 of <i>Studia Semitici</i> . Rome: Istituto di Studi del Vicino Oriente, 1969. |
| <i>Forerunners</i> | Old Babylonian Forerunners to the Udug Hul incantation series. Edition in: Geller, Markham J. <i>Forerunners to Udug-hul: Sumerian Exorcistic Incantations</i> . Vol. 12 of <i>FAS</i> . Stuttgart: Wiesbaden, 1985. |
| <i>Gilgamesh</i> | <i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i> . Edition in: George, Andrew. <i>The Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. |
| <i>Hymn to Hendursaĝa</i> | Text as cited in this study follows my own transliteration/translation of the text; the current published edition is: Attinger, Pascal, and Manfred Krebernik. "L'hymne a Hendursaĝa," in <i>Von Sumer bis Homer: Festschrift für Manfred Schretter</i> , edited by R. Rollinger. Vol. 325 in <i>AOAT</i> . Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2004. 21-104. |
| <i>Lugalbanda in the Wilderness</i> | <i>Lugalbanda in the Wilderness</i> . Edition in: Vanstiphout, Herman. <i>Epics of the Sumerian Kings: the Matter of Aratta</i> . Vol. 20 of <i>Writings from the Ancient World</i> , edited by Jerrold S. Cooper. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003. |
| <i>Lugalbanda and the Anzu Bird</i> | <i>Lugalbanda and the Anzu Bird</i> . Edition in: Vanstiphout, Herman. <i>Epics of the Sumerian Kings: the Matter of Aratta</i> . Vol. 20 of <i>Writings from the Ancient World</i> , edited by Jerrold S. Cooper. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003. |
| <i>Udug Hul</i> | The Udug Hul/ <i>Utukkū Lemnūtu</i> incantation series. Edition in: Geller, Markham J. <i>Evil Demons: Canonical Utukkū Lemnūtu Incantations</i> . Vol. 5 of <i>SAACT</i> . Helsinki: NATCP, 2007. |

AAA	Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology
AcAntHung	Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
AfO	Archiv für Orientforschung
AfO Beih.	Archiv für Orientforschung Beiheft
AMD	Ancient Magic and Divination
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt
AnSt	Anatolian Studies
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ARET	Archivi reali di Ebla. Testi
AS	Assyriological Studies
ASJ	Acta Sumerologica
ASKT	P. Haupt, <i>Akkadische und sumerische Keilschrifttexte</i>
BA	Beiträge zur Assyriologie und semitischen Sprachwissenschaft
BAW	Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-Historische Klasse
BSOAS	Bulletin for the School of Oriental and African Studies
CAD	Oppenheim et al., <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i>
CHAN	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CLAM	Canonical Lamentations of Ancient Mesopotamia
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
CT	Cuneiform Texts
EPSD	Electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary
ETCSL	Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
GBAO	Göttinger Beiträge zum Alten Orient
FAS	Freiburger Altorientalische Studien
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
FS Böhl	<i>Symbolae biblicae et mesopotamicae Francisco Mario Theodoro de Ligare Böhl dedicate</i> , Leiden: 1973.
HR	History of Religions
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
JAAS	Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies
JANER	Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JHS	Journal of Hebrew Scriptures
JSP	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigraphia
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
KAR	Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts
LKA	Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur
LSS	Leipziger Semitistische Studien
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations
MGS	Melbourne Monographs in Germanic Studies

MRW	Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft
MSL	Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon
NATCP	Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project
OBC	Orientalia Biblica et Christiana
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OPSNKF	Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund
Or (OrNs)	Orientalia (Orientalia New Series)
OrAnt	Oriens Antiquus
PAPS	Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society
RA	Revue d'Assyriologie
RIMA	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods
RIMB	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Babylonian Periods
RIME	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods
RLA	Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie
SAA	State Archive of Assyria
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
StPohl SM	Studia Pohl Series Major
StSem	Studia Semitici
STT	O. Gurney and J. Finkelstein, <i>The Sultantepe Tablets, I/II</i> .
TAPS	Transactions of the American Philosophical Society
TBC	Texts from the Babylonian Collection
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources
TIM	Texts in the Iraq Museum
UF	Ugarit Forschungen
VAT	Vorderasiatische Abteilung Tontafeln
VS	Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler der (Königlichen) Museen zu Berlin
WdO	Welt des Orients
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
YOS	Yale Oriental Series
ZA	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie

Abstract

This study is concerned with how the people of Mesopotamia viewed creatures such as demons and monsters and, on a broad scale, examines the place these supernatural creatures held in the textual and artistic record. It further focuses upon a particular group of demons, known as the Sebettu, or the Seven. The Sebettu are both a means by which to examine the larger problems pertaining to the study of demons in Mesopotamia, and the focal point of a full and detailed study of their own. Attestations to the Sebettu comprise a corpus of over two hundred references, from as early as 2100 BCE to as late as 300 BCE, which cross over a number of textual genres, including incantations, literary texts, royal inscriptions, and divine hymns, among others. Despite being fierce and terrifying demons, the Sebettu appear increasingly in protective, nearly benevolent roles from the latter half of the second millennium BCE onwards. They are shifted over the course of several centuries into the divine pantheon of state deities, while simultaneously retaining their demonic qualities.

In examining this shift, it is clear that the Sebettu are characterized by their fierce, military prowess and ability as warriors, and this ability may be directed at the enemies of the state, when the demons are acting beneficently, or at the state itself, when they appear antagonistically. Initially, this study tracks the major literary works wherein the Sebettu feature – such as the Old Babylonian period (twentieth to sixteenth centuries BCE) Sumerian epic of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A* and the Sumerian *Hymn to Hendursaga*. At this stage, the Sebettu are restricted to literary texts and hymns and are not represented in the household sphere. These texts begin to establish a continuity of imagery for the Sebettu, which is followed, and in a sense

subverted, by the later, first millennium texts such as *Erra*, where the Sebettu are given a different divine genealogy and interact with the titular god Erra against the Mesopotamian homeland, as opposed to earlier texts where they are tasked to assist one divine figure or another. All of these texts work together to create a common, if complicated, conception of the Sebettu, which the Neo-Assyrian kings of the first millennium draw upon in artistic representations and royal inscriptions, incorporating the Sebettu into the divine pantheon of Neo-Assyria without losing the terrifying, potentially destructive force that the Sebettu possess, characteristics that are more in line with their original demonic natures. The dissertation examines the development of the Sebettu over time, analyzing how they are eventually employed as tools in the propaganda machine of the Neo-Assyrian Empire as the demons' very nature is forcibly shifted from demonic to divine.

Chapter One: Introduction

*Monsters, however, command more of one's attention.*¹

This work is a study of demons and monsters in Mesopotamia, through the lens of a focused investigation into a particular group of demons known as the Sebettu – quite literally, "the Seven," – who held a position of increasing importance in Mesopotamia over the course of their attestations, which range from the late third millennium BCE to the late first millennium BCE.² Over the long march of their appearances in Mesopotamia, it becomes clear that the group of demons acquired a special significance as terrifying figures, first gaining increased prominence in Sumerian literary texts of the early second millennium, before seeing a meteoric rise in the number of their attestations under the Neo-Assyrian Empire of the first millennium. While they command a bank of fierce and antagonistic imagery, over the history of their appearances in Mesopotamia, the Sebettu were shifted to act as protective forces, until they were finally incorporated into the divine pantheon of Neo-Assyria. In this role, one that spreads outside of the sphere of state-exclusive use, their demonic, militaristic nature is directed against an enemy – even another demonic enemy – facilitating and allowing for their protective, and thus benevolent, use.

The Sebettu serve as the focal point for this study, and through an investigation of how

¹ Joseph Brodsky, *Watermark* (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux), 83.

² The name Sebettu itself is often written as imin-bi in texts, or literally "the Seven." Groups of seven are not uncommon in Mesopotamian texts, and a catalogue of every strictly non-numerical appearance of seven would be, ultimately, a futile and maddening endeavor. What will require analysis, however, are instances where seven or a group of seven is accompanied by the distinctive descriptive language associated with the Sebettu.

they are treated in Mesopotamian society and the textual tradition, we can also consider the larger questions of the place of demons and monsters in the textual canon of Mesopotamia. They can serve as a means to analyze the demonic identity crisis that concerns the study of demons as a whole: how to define, classify and contain demonic – and thus ultimately chaotic - entities. The Sebettu are not merely a tool for focusing this study, as they are themselves mired in a complicated web of intertextuality that both deserves and requires its own dedicated study. Within the overall arc of Mesopotamian textual history, the demonic Seven cross over from one category to another, acquiring epithets that become incorporated into a stock set of images. Moreover, they move beyond this sphere to engage with artistic representations, acquiring a predictable, albeit fluid, iconography.

The demons operate as a collective and are overwhelmingly identified as such – a group of seven, acting as one. However, they are also regarded and described as individuals, and furthermore, individuals which are each themselves linked to a specific image or epithet. If the situation so far has appeared complicated, the chronology is of no great assistance, as the Sebettu have nearly two thousand years worth of attestations to consider. The Seven are similarly fluid in action and intent, appearing as both malevolent and benevolent figures, a duality that is intrinsically attached to their overall position as either (or, simultaneously) demonic or divine figures during their long and complex history. If, as the quote fronting the introduction suggests, monsters do require more of our attention, then the Sebettu may require even more than most.

1.1. Prior Research

In surveying the present state of research concerning this topic, it is useful to divide the overview itself into two distinct areas: first, the nature of research concerning demons and monsters overall in Mesopotamia, and second, the body of research specifically focused on the

Sebettu. Though the former proves an essential foundation for work on the latter, there is a decided disparity in the available body of research to be found in the two categories.

Considering the first category, demons and monsters in Mesopotamia have received greater attention in scholarship of recent years, though there are still significant gaps, particularly regarding studies dedicated to the wider spectrum of demonic and supernatural beings in Mesopotamia. The majority of scholarly work concerning demons are studies which concentrate on the place and function of demons, often upon a single demonic entity or isolated and thus specifically identified group as it appears within a certain text. Other studies focus their attentions on representations of a single demon in art, as seen in analysis of statuettes of the demons; this approach and focus is particularly apparent when considering representations of the demon Lamaštu on plaques, or the statues of the demon Pazuzu, or works examining the monsters which appear on Assyrian seals or relief sculptures.³ Considering the nature of that focus, these studies examine the specific role of the demon or monsters within the single text or image, and do not compare that one representation to the larger collective of demons and the varied contexts wherein they are referenced. As such, the case studies are useful on a individual basis, but are not often anchored in a larger comparative framework.

Beyond this, scholarship has often focused on demons and monsters as they appear outside of their literary representations. The presence of a large body of incantation texts has resulted in a focused attention on the function of demons as tangible figures, often as antagonistic harbingers of ill fortune or vectors of disease which must be exorcised, through said incantation texts. Other demons may appear as beneficial, apotropaic figures meant to assist in

³ See the following: Bendt Alster, "Demons in the Conclusion of Lugalbanda in the *Hurrimkurrum*, Iraq 67 (2005): 61-71. See also: Laura Feldt, "Heralds of the Heroic: the Functions of Angimdimma's Monsters," *Your Praise is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy Black from Students, Colleagues, and Friends* (London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq, 2010), 69-82.

removing demonic illness from an individual or in protecting a person or location from future misfortune.⁴ In the case of these benevolent supernatural figures, the demons are often examined from the art and object-based perspective, as figurines of these demons were placed in public and private spaces in order to protect a dwelling.⁵ While there are studies which focus on individual demons with a broader analysis of the collection of their appearances, these demons, notably the demon Pazuzu⁶ or the demoness Lamaštu,⁷ appear only in these artistic representations and in incantations. They are not represented in literary texts.

In regards to a single, more comprehensive study, one of the most recent works on demons in Mesopotamia is a University of Pennsylvania dissertation by Karen Sonik, who deals with the supernatural as it appears in art, literary texts, and incantations.⁸ Sonik constructs a system for the classification of demons in Mesopotamia: a demonic taxonomy, as it were, looking at various demons as monsters of order or chaos, and examining the roles they play accordingly. Although she discusses many different demons, her work focuses on Tiāmat and Lamaštu, female monsters which Sonik examines in light of comparative studies on other monsters. Interestingly, though prior works on Pazuzu and Lamaštu have examined the role of

⁴ For an edition of apotropaic texts, see F.A.M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: the Ritual Texts* (Groningen: Styx, 1992).

⁵ Private houses in the Neo-Assyrian period have been excavated that have figurines of these 'monstrous creatures' buried in doorways and windows, or in the corners of the houses – places where evil would be able to enter the dwelling to menace those living within. See Carolyn Nakamura, "Dedicating Magic: Neo-Assyrian Apotropaic Figurines and the Protection of Assur," *World Archaeology* 36 (2004): 11-25. Palaces and temples, on the other hand, employed monumental, wall-relief or statuary depictions of these creatures, who stood flanking doorways to offer a similar sort of protection. See Margaret Huxley, "The Gates and Guardians in Sennacherib's Addition to the Temple of Assur," *Iraq* 62 (2000): 109-37. Relief-figures from the palaces at Nimrud have also been reconstructed; see Janusz Meuszyński, *Die Reconstruction der Reliefdarstellungen und ihrer Anordnung im Nordwestpalast von Kalhu (Nimrud)* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1981).

⁶ This was first perhaps first studied in: Carl Frank, *Lamastu, Pazuzu und andere Dämonen: Ein Beitrag zur babylonisch-assyrischen Dämonologie* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1941). Pazuzu was given a more comprehensive treatment in the much more recent work: Nils P. Heeßel, *Pazuzu: Archaeologische und philologische Studien zu einem alt-orientalischen Dämon* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

⁷ F.A.M. Wiggermann, "Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu. A Profile," in *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting*, ed. M. Stol (Groningen: STYX Publications, 2000), 217-52.

⁸ Karen Sonik, "Daimon-Haunted Universe: Conceptions of the Supernatural in Mesopotamia," (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2010).

demons as antagonists in incantations, Tiāmat is principally a literary creation, and does not appear directly as an aggressor that must be actively combated via incantations.

The Sebettu themselves lack a recent detailed study dedicated to them, which is particularly needed given the complexity of the group of demons and the complicated history of their attestations throughout the Mesopotamian tradition. That lack alone necessitates an in-depth study on this particularly complex group of demons. There are several articles which focus on the Sebettu and serve as introductions to the broad scope of appearances and representations of the demons, particularly in different periods. In this regard, they are useful catalogues of the occurrences of the Sebettu.⁹ As the most recent of these articles that may be considered comprehensive was written in 1979, however, there is a need for recent scholarship on these demons.¹⁰ Some more recent work has touched upon the particular uses of the Sebettu in light of the role of their astral representation of the Pleiades, but this has been focused on their appearance within a particular text in a similarly specific period.¹¹

1.2. Arc of this study

The questions this study is concerned with are rooted in the interactions between different textual categories in the Mesopotamian textual tradition. The continuity of references and imagery used to refer to the Sebettu over their long history suggests that the distinct categories of incantations, literary texts, and omens were connected to and in communication with each other. While this is not an unknown phenomenon in Mesopotamia, the depth and degree of influence

⁹ See F.A.M. Wiggermann, "Siebengötter," *RLA* 12 (2010): 459-66.

¹⁰ See Charles F. Jean, "d.VII-bi," *RA* 21 (1924): 93-104 and Simonetta Graziani, "Note sui Sibitti," *Istituto Orientale di Napoli Annali* 39 (1979): 673-90.

The latter of the two works is a more recent survey of the Sebettu, that isolates their references in different periods, treating the seven chronologically.

¹¹ See John Z. Wee, "Grieving with the Moon: Pantheon and Politics in the Lunar Eclipse," *JANER* 14 (2014): 29-67.

such connections had on the conceptions of the Sebettu themselves are of note.¹² Beyond that, this work is, principally, a study of a very particular group of supernatural figures across the broad arc of Mesopotamian history, and thus a consideration of how the Sebettu, as well as the category of demonic and monstrous beings as a whole, may change (and be changed) as they adapt to their own shifting place across the millennia of the Mesopotamian religious, social, and cultural landscape.

The first of the major chapters is thus concerned with setting the groundwork for how demons and monsters may be considered in Mesopotamia in the broader context. This chapter, "On the Nature of Demons," explores the fact that while the Sebettu were, in many regards, atypical supernatural figures, incorporated readily into the divine pantheon, their ability to be used protectively while also harboring inherently dangerous and destructive forces was not a feature unique to the group. Instead, this is an ability shared by other supernatural figures, particularly those found within the realm of incantations. Notably, the *udug* and *lama*, who may help the exorcist, or *āšipu*, may also be cast in negative or antagonistic roles without much concern over the potential contradiction in their actions. Overwhelmingly, a survey of these positive or negative attestations of the *udug* or *lama* finds that their actions with the text are an expression of the narrative of the incantation itself. The *udug* and *lama* are inherently paired figures, appearing benevolently or antagonistically together as a set, and the *lama*'s strong tradition of operating independently as a benevolent figure preferences the pair to act as such whenever the incantation's narrative permits. If, however, the pair fall into a section of the incantation's narrative which requires an "evil" *udug* and *lama* to appear, both will then act malevolently. Thus, the inherent predisposition of a supernatural figure is placed as second to the

¹² See: Miguel Civil, "Feeding Dumuzi's Sheep: the Lexicon as a Source of Literary Inspiration," in *Language, Literature, and History: Philological and Historical Studies presented to Erica Reiner*, vol. 67 of *American Oriental Series*, ed. Francesca Rochberg-Halton (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987), 37-55.

demands of the narrative of the text, and these figures can, critically, be manipulated as required by the text.

Having established this groundwork concerning demons in Mesopotamia from the broader perspective, the remaining chapters focus on the Sebettu themselves, following a loosely chronological order of their attestations. Chapter Three, "Early Attestations and Later Malevolence," considers the earliest references to the Sebettu, which include several scattered and contested appearances from the late third millennium. The more sizeable body of attestations in this early period, however, can be found in Old Babylonian texts: *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, *Lugalbanda in the Wilderness*, the *Hymn to Hendursaga*, and the Old Babylonian incantations that will later find their way into the standard Babylonian recension of the *Udug Hul* or "Evil Demons" series. Within each of these texts, the Sebettu play major, and often repeated roles, instead of throwaway single attestations. They begin to develop a consistent character, which includes, typically, a martial, militaristic nature and chaotic, destructive potential. These Old Babylonian references furthermore begin to develop the link between the Sebettu and the star cluster of the Pleiades, their astral representation. Though this connection will be far more prominent in the first millennium, important associations between the Sebettu and this more astral behavior is actually developed in the early second millennium.

As Chapter Two was concerned with the flexible nature of demons, Chapter Four, "The Grounding of Second Millennium Political and Literary Sources," considers the framework of literary archetypes and tropes within Mesopotamian texts that also work to enable the later use of the Sebettu by the Neo-Assyrian kings. In particular, there is a prevailing trope in the treatment of the monstrous in literary texts wherein, if they are defeated by a greater, often divine, force, they are thus bound to the will – or subjugated – by their conqueror. This is expressed in the

treatment of the monsters in *Enūma eliš*, as well as the fate of Huwawa in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, and the trope stands as a critical prototype for the treatment of the Sebettu: although the Seven are equally destructive, uncontrolled, and thus dangerous, if they can be brought under the control of a greater, often divine, power then their chaotic destructiveness can be directed, if not harnessed outright. The effect of this is compounded by its connection to such a deeply entrenched literary tradition. Accompanying this literary foundation is an initial investigation of the developing cult to the Sebettu, which first surfaces in Kassite period Babylonia, in arguably the mid-second millennium, to migrate to the north, appearing in royal inscriptions and referenced on *kudurru* of the late Middle Assyrian period. These references stand as the first attestations of the Sebettu in a cultic sense, as divinities rather than demons, and form an important bridge between the use of the Sebettu in the Neo-Assyrian and the Old Babylonian periods, wherein they can take on more antagonistic roles than the overwhelmingly apotropaic character expressed in their first millennium attestations.

Following the work established in the previous three chapters, Chapter Five, "The Escalated Use of the Sebettu in the First Millennium," examines what is built on top of this now stable religious and political foundation; namely, the rapid expansion in the use of the Sebettu during the first millennium, particularly during the Neo-Assyrian period. The role of the Sebettu is further expanded in the first millennium thanks to the circulation of literary texts such as, most significantly, the poem of *Erra*, where the Sebettu are prominently featured as chaotic and militaristic forces. This and other literary texts of the first millennium exist alongside the developing narrative of royal inscriptions to feature the Sebettu. Although the Sebettu began to appear in a cultic context, increasingly incorporated into the royal – or state – pantheon of deities, it is a narrative based upon utility. Their position in the pantheon may be more assured

by the Neo-Assyrian period, but they still maintain peripheral elements. In part, this appears as a function of their inherently chaotic nature as demonic figures, who may pose as much of a threat to the homeland as a potential benefit. Beyond that, however, the use of the Sebettu appears to function according to the situation of each ruler who chooses to invoke them within his own inscriptions. Those who focus on campaigns where the Sebettu would be most useful reference the Seven with greater frequency, while those who may need to shore up the stability of their own reign are more likely to rely on better established, and less potentially problematic figures.

Although the political narrative underlying the use of the Sebettu by the Neo-Assyrian kings is the most visible thread by which to track the changing nature of their attestations, it is not the only avenue by which the Sebettu are employed. The final two chapters consider the wider, non-state use of the Sebettu, first examined through incantations in Chapter Six, "The Spread and Proliferation of the Sebettu in Non-State Use." While some of these texts are directed for use in the royal/state sphere, such as an incantation intended to protect the king while on campaign, the majority are clearly intended for personal, private use. Indeed, the Sebettu's starring role within this incantation corpus is as one among a large group of figures who are called upon to protect a new house. These more "common use" incantations speak to the overall acceptance and integration of the Sebettu into the pantheon of the first millennium.

Contemporaneous with these texts, however, is the standard Babylonian recension of the Udug Hul series, which features the Sebettu as antagonistic figures. The increased presence of the Sebettu in positive, protective roles while also appearing as a major antagonistic force in the Udug Hul series appears to present no major concerns regarding the nature of the demons themselves: as with the udug and lama, these are regarded as different expressions of one fluid nature.

An underlying thread that runs through the entire history of the attestations of the Sebettu remains their astral representation of the Pleiades, and Chapter Seven, "The Iconography of the Sebettu and the Presence of the Pleiades on Seals," returns, at the close of this study, to examine this astral context in greater detail. The astral movements of the Pleiades, as well as their references in texts, form a touchstone for the actions of the Sebettu themselves. Furthermore, although there are other artistic representations for the Sebettu, including a line of seven theriomorphic figures, the Pleiades are by far the most popular means to represent the Sebettu, with the seven dots of the Pleiades widely distributed as an motif on cylinder seals, which were highly personal objects. The Sebettu are, to a certain extent, created in contrast, a status echoed in the disconnect between their inherently chaotic and liminal nature as demons and the more orderly traits bestowed upon them by their association with the eminently predictable realm of celestial mechanics. Despite this, the astral element and their demonic nature, however, work not in conflict but in concert with each other. Both form intrinsic, interconnected aspects of their character as far-ranging, fearsome warriors, utilized by the kings and the state, but always, on some level, feared for their inherent aptitude for uncontrolled and cataclysmic destruction.

1.3. Concerning Terminology: On Demons

In a study on the nature of demons in the ancient Near East, terminology is the first, most immediate obstacle to dismantle. The term demon carries with it an assortment of connotations, most of which are ill-suited for the "demons and monsters" belonging to Mesopotamia and the civilizations chronologically and geographically adjacent to it. While I submit to the inevitability of using "demon," despite its inherently imprecise nature, in this study, it is with the tacit understanding and acceptance that the term is an imperfect translation for the Mesopotamian creatures under study. This problem of terminology pervades studies of magic and religion as

well, where several other tactics have been used in studies on the topic of demons.¹³

One such approach is to co-opt other terms for use when discussing demons in Mesopotamia, such as the word *daimon*, from the ancient Greek term δαίμων.¹⁴ However, while utilizing this term may avoid the decidedly Judeo-Christian connotations and implications of the word "demon," it is still subject to its own prejudices. As a term and a concept, *daimon* was employed first from early Greek traditions, and then reinterpreted during the Roman Imperial period: the full scope of the use of δαίμων in both Greek and Roman texts could merit a full study of its own, with existing works dedicated to the very topic.¹⁵ When the term appears in Homeric texts, principally in the *Odyssey* although it is also present in the *Iliad*, it is used to describe an entity quite dissimilar from the Mesopotamian demons.

A *daimon* may be responsible for benevolent or malevolent deeds (though it is much more frequently responsible for the latter) and has no visible shape or form. As a whole, a *daimon* is by nature ill defined, described in equally vague terms. It is never subject to exorcism, and while it can carry disease, it does so only rarely, with plagues carried by vectors other than

¹³ On this discussion in relation to studies of magic overall, see S.J. Tambiah, "The Magical Power of Words," in *Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Eastern and Western Societies*, eds. R. Horton and R. Finegan (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), 175-208; as well as the more extensive treatment of the subject by the same author in *Magic, Science, Religion and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Treatments of the subject of magic in Mesopotamia will be discussed in greater detail as pertinent to later chapters, but initially see W. van Binsbergen and Frans Wiggermann, "Magic in History: a Theoretical Perspective and its Application to Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives*, vol. 1 of *AMD* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1-34. In regards to assuming a common, if unspoken, consensus on the understanding and definition of such a complicated term within the scope of Assyriological studies: P. Michalowski, "The Early Mesopotamian Incantation Tradition," in *Literature and Literary Language at Ebla*, vol. 18 of *Quaderni di semitistica*, ed. P. Fronzaroli (Florence: Università di Firenze, 1992), 306.

¹⁴ Karen Sonik, "Daimon-Haunted Universe," 27-28. Sonik adopts this tactic, with the acknowledgement that using *daimon* as a substitute for demon has its own flaws. While I agree with her assessment that demon is a loaded term that carries with it a wealth of baggage, I would argue that *daimon* carries its own problems in regards to loaded connotations.

¹⁵ In particular, see Frederick E. Brenk, "In the Light of the Moon: Demonology in the Early Imperial Period," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der Neuen Forschung. II* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 2068-143. This work serves as a comprehensive overview of Demonology in the stated period as a whole, and the evolution of literature concerning the term δαίμων in particular.

daimons.¹⁶ There is a faint association with the winds, which serves as one of the few points of similarity between the *daimon* that exists within the context of Homeric texts, which again serves as a background for Greek and Roman references to the term, and the earlier Mesopotamian demons.¹⁷ More importantly, however, *daimon* is still an imported, non-native term, and distorts the indigenous views of the period just as much as the application of the term "demon" would.¹⁸ Given that, the options for terminology appear as follows: first, the use of native, untranslated terminology whenever referring to the creatures in Mesopotamia; second, the use of a term such as *daimon*, which is still non-native, if more widely understood than Akkadian or Sumerian terms might be; and third, the use of the English term, demon.

The first option is untenable for two reasons. Firstly, it would require the constant use of a highly specialized set of terms, which runs the ever-present risk of becoming absurdly and prohibitively cumbersome. Secondly, using specialized native terminology without attempting an explanation of the terms circumvents the more important issue of explaining the supernatural beings themselves. While the other terminology may be imprecise, it is, at the least, employed in the attempt to explain the concepts behind them, and ground those concepts – here, the Sebettu and other demons in Mesopotamia – in understandable, English terms. The second option runs into similar issues, which I have already discussed: it is also a non-native term, and carries with it its own issues that should not be disregarded in favor of avoiding the issues attached to using

¹⁶ This is evident from the very beginning of the *Iliad*, where Apollo inflicts a plague upon the Achaean forces and any and all *daimons* are entirely absent from the event.

¹⁷ Brenk, "In the Light of the Moon," 2081.

¹⁸ See Ragnar Cline, *Ancient Angels: Conceptualizing Angeloi in the Roman Empire*, vol. 172 of *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. D. Frankfurter, J. Hahn, and H.S. Versnel (Leiden: Brill, 2011), xv-xviii.

Specifically, his justification for the use of the Greek and Latin words *angelos* and *angelus*, instead of the English translation of the term: "By maintaining the period-specific terminology I thus hope to avoid the imposition of an anachronistic terminological category. This approach is intended to more accurately reflect the religious views of the later Roman period rather than force such views to conform to religious and scholarly terminological categories of a later age, which would, by necessity, come laden with their own connotations and prejudices."

the word "demon."¹⁹

That leaves us with the third option: the use of the word demon. This solution requires, as stated, the initial acknowledgment that employing the term requires first divorcing its connotations from their accompanying baggage. The word itself grows out of a very certain set of circumstances, and remains to a certain degree defined by them. In a discussion of the demonic in antiquity, Jonathan Z. Smith aptly summarizes the relationship between the use of this (or any similar term) and the society that surrounds it:

The demonic is a relational or labeling term which occurs only in certain culturally stipulated situations and is part of a complex system of boundaries and limits. In certain situations, the breaking of limits is creative; in others, it is perceived as leading to chaos...A given society at a given moment may conceive of law and order as a bulwark against the demonic; at another time, it may perceive law and order as a repressive imposition of the demonic.²⁰

Demons in Mesopotamia exist as transgressions against the natural order. Some, such as the *ardat lili*, the spirit of a woman who dies unwed (and so haunts young men), are created because of conditions thought to be antithetical to the norms of a functioning society. They are not, however, representative of the sort of good versus evil duality that we see often typified with the introduction of monotheistic religions, primarily those that fall within the realm of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Instead, they are representative of chaos, or a deviation from the norm.

To reference Smith's arguments on this topic once more, when we consider the demonic: "we are not attempting to interpret substantive categories; but rather situational or relational categories, mobile boundaries which shift according to the map being employed."²¹ Given that distinction, the application of the term demon becomes a useful, general descriptor for the

¹⁹ See Ragnar Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 1-11 for his discussion on the debate concerning the word *daimon*, as used in classical works, primarily reinforced by the arguments of Platonists, and the terms *daimones/daimonia* as used in biblical texts.

²⁰ Jonathan Z. Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt, Vol. 2:16.1* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1978), 429.

²¹ Smith, "Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," 430.

supernatural beings under review – the Sebettu, udug, lama, and others – as they exist in their native Mesopotamian worldview and context. Demon, in this case, will reference a class of creature that shares amongst its members certain qualities, including an inherently liminal position and the ability to help or to harm. It is imperfect, to be sure, but having identified and discussed its flaws, this imperfect solution is, still, perhaps, the best one available to us.

1.3.1. Sumerian and Akkadian Transliteration and Transcription Conventions

As we are currently occupied with textual conventions, it is a prudent place to discuss, in brief, the patterns of transcription that govern the use of Akkadian and Sumerian sources throughout this work. Generally speaking, Akkadian is presented in italics, with diacritics to represent the variable readings of a sign – e, é, and è representing e, e₂, and e₃, respectively. When presented with a line of Akkadian wherein Sumerograms are used, the Sumerian sign is enclosed in parentheses, the Akkadian text normalized and in italics preceding it. Sumerograms that comprise multiple signs are connected by periods, not dashes, and are not written in expanded spacing, as opposed to when Sumerian itself is written. Determinatives are presented in superscript, as are phonetic complements. Grammatical elements, however, such as possessive suffixes, follow the parathetical Sumerian sign in the expected, italicized and hyphenated, Akkadian transliteration.

Sumerian texts are written with only subscripts, not diacritics. When quoted within a paragraph or larger block of text, or when an isolated word, the Sumerian is distinguished by an expanded spacing (as with the words udug sa₆-ga). When a large enough section of text is quoted that it can be independently set apart from the body of text, such expanded text is superfluous, and not presented.

1.3.2. Writing the Sebettu

We have not yet vanquished the monsters of terminology, as the Sebettu themselves have their own set of concerns inherent in the very reading of their name. In keeping with the complicated nature of the Sebettu, the reading of their name is itself problematic. The seven are most often written logographically, as ^dimin or ^dimin-bi; or, rather, as the cuneiform sign for seven, preceded by the divine determinative, diĝir, and attestations wherein they are referred to syllabically are scarce. The few that do exist tend to be clustered in Neo-Assyrian documents, such as their appearance in Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty, where they appear in a list of divine figures: "^dsi-bit-ti ilānī(diĝir)^{meš} [qa]r-d[u-te ina ^{ĝi}šakkē(tukul)^{meš}-šú-nu] ez-zu-ti na-aš-pan-[ta-ku-nu liš-ku-nu] : [May] the Sebettu, the [heroic] gods, mas[sacre you with their] fierce [weapons].²²

There does not appear to be one uniform method of representing the logogram syllabically: we see the translation of the signs ^dimin-bi rendered as ilānū(diĝir)^{meš} si-bit-ti, which points to that reading instead of ^dsebettu. This Akkadian rendering of the Sumerian ^dimin-bi would necessitate the oblique case. This is at odds with a Babylonian syllabic attestation of the Sebettu, which lists the seven as ilānū(diĝir)^{meš} se-bet-tú, when including them among a list of gods, to be later identified as the sons of the god Enmešarra.²³

1.4. Why Seven? The Significance of the Number as a Group in the Ancient Near East

Mesopotamia was fond of sevens: it is a popular enough grouping in Mesopotamia that attempting to connect each group to the Sebettu would lead to few fruitful conclusions. In the ritual and cultic context, sevens are particularly prolific: texts are incanted and ritual instructions are repeated sevenfold to enact a greater effect, and groups of seven – witches, other demons and

²² SAA Vol. 2, No. 5

²³ STT 79, 15'.

monsters, gods – proliferate throughout Akkadian and Sumerian texts.

Given its popularity, the question at hand is what significance may be attached to the grouping of seven. Overwhelmingly, when considering the appearances of sevens the number signifies transition and liminality. It serves as a marker of both spatial and temporal distances, and works to move a particular character, and the audience of the text along with them, from one state or location to another. In many of these occurrences – particularly in reference to the *Gilgamesh* epic – the distances indicted in multiples of seven are journey markers to locations that bring the characters closer to the Netherworld, or closer to spaces removed from the more stable reality of the rest of the text. Gilgamesh is compelled to cross seven mountains to find the cedar forest in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* and the mountains where he combats Huwawa are, as an entryway to the Netherworld, the site of many possible deaths: Gilgamesh, who could have died in battle; Huwawa, who is slain by Gilgamesh and Enkidu; and Enkidu, who dies later in part as punishment for the slaying of Huwawa, one of Enlil's servants. These same tropes reiterate through the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, as seen in particular points in the text:

Text:	Event: ²⁴
Tablet I: 194	“For six days and seven nights, Enkidu, erect, did couple with Šamhat.”
Tablet VI: 51-52	“You [Ištar] loved the lion, perfect in strength, seven and seven pits you have dug for him.”
Tablet X:	“For six days and seven nights I (Gilgamesh) wept for him (Enkidu).”
Tablet XI: 128-131	“For six days and seven nights, was blowing the wind, the downpour, the gale, the Deluge [laying flat the land.] When the seventh day arrived, the gale relented...”
Tablet XI: 209	“Come, for six days and seven nights do not sleep.”
Tablet XI: 230	“The seventh [loaf of bread] was on the coals: he touched him and the man awoke.”
Tablet I: 20-21	The text begins and ends with an identical reference to the Seven Sages:

²⁴ For text citations and translations see Andrew George, *The Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Tablet XI: 326	“See if (Uruk's) brickwork is not kiln-fired brick, and if the Seven Sages did not lay its foundation.”
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Each of these instances of seven occurs as either a transition between states or a link to death; most of them do both of these things. In coupling with Šamhat, Enkidu becomes human, or at least, he becomes human enough to die. In mourning Enkidu for seven nights, as he recounts to Siduri, Gilgamesh marks not only Enkidu's death but his own transformation in the story into a mirror of Enkidu as he first was, something half-wild and not-quite-human. The deluge is a weapon which destroys the land and its people but also forever sets Utnapištim and his wife apart; as they possess immortality, they are forced to live on the outskirts of the world, past the sea of death.

Seven functions as a more spatial transitional element in other texts. As will be discussed in further detail, the land Aratta itself, though presented as a land that appears to obey the same laws as Uruk, is another example of a place beyond that of the familiar figures of the epic, who occupy the homeland itself. In the texts where Aratta appears, there is the clear distinction between the land of Uruk as heroic space, where larger-than-life figures are anchored by the familiar environment, and Aratta as an epic space, where rules governing what is possible begin to blur.²⁵ To reach this city, the protagonist must cross seven mountains in a transitional journey.

kur ur₂-ra kur bad₃-da ma-du-um-e
 za₃ an-ša₄-na-ta saĝ an-ša₄-an^{ki}-na-še₃
 hur-saĝ ia₂ hur-saĝ aš₃ hur-saĝ imin im-me-ri-bal-bal²⁶

At the foot of the mountain, at the peak of the mountain, to the plain,
 From the border of Anšan to the capital of Anšan,
 He crosses the fifth mountain, the sixth mountain, the seventh mountain.

This border of seven mountains parallels what Gilgamesh must cross to find and fight Huwawa.

²⁵ Adele Berlin, "Ethnopoetry and the Enmerkar Epics," *JAOS* 103 (1983): 22.

²⁶ Claus Wilcke, *Das Lugalbandaepos* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1969), 122.

There is a sense in both of these stories that, in crossing seven mountains, the protagonist may be making a journey from which he cannot return. Some of these journeys, if they lead to the Netherworld, for example, are only one way.²⁷ Though this stands as but a brief survey to the underlying semantic nature and use of the number seven in Mesopotamia, these traits, as articulated above, find their way into the characteristics of the Sebettu throughout their attestations.

²⁷ This sense is interestingly echoed in a first-millennium incantation against the evil eye edited in Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2005), 832. Once the evil eye and its effects have been removed from the afflicted, it is sent away across seven rivers, canals, and mountains, forbidding it from ever returning.

Chapter Two - On the Nature of Demons: Protective Spirits and Demonic Dualities

Mesopotamian religious and literary traditions are populated – even crowded – with a host of monstrous and demonic figures. To borrow, if not steal outright, a turn of phrase from Flannery O'Connor's description of the genre of southern gothic fiction: Mesopotamia may not have been demon-centric, but it was most certainly demon-haunted, with a veritable pandemonium of supernatural figures.²⁸ Some of these figures are cast firmly in benevolent or malevolent roles from which they rarely, if ever, shift. Others can appear to change allegiances based upon the roles they play in incantations and other texts, wherein they function primarily either as agents of misfortune or illness, or, paradoxically, as an aide to the *āšipu*, or exorcist. The mutable quality of these demons remains integral to their own composition. It is a quality that the demons known as the Sebettu share, as they too can appear both as malevolent, destructive figures and beneficial, protective, entities, the latter quality being one that appears most often when they are harnessed under the command of a more powerful deity in the Mesopotamian pantheon or work to aid an heroic figure, most notably Gilgamesh.

Two such supernatural figures, the lama and the udug, are the focus of this chapter, and their nature is studied through their behavior in the texts. Strictly speaking, the behavior of these figures is not only the visible and outward manifestation of their nature, but can be seen as the closest possible definition of that nature. Though it is tempting to define the lama as "good" and the udug as "evil," a more nuanced analysis of the texts wherein they appear breaks down such distinctions quickly, and uncovers the basic inapplicability of such terms along the way. Instead,

²⁸ See Flannery O'Connor, "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction," in *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969).

it becomes clear that the *lama* and *udug* may have been predisposed to behave in a particular manner, but that predisposition was by no means set in stone. It must bend to the constraints of the texts. Through firstly examining the general chronological arc of each figure's independent appearances and then considering their role when appearing together in texts, the primacy of the narrational requirements of the text, most often an incantation, becomes clear. This is not to say that the entities under discussion did not themselves have their own natures, but that these characteristics, along with the innate flexibility of these figures, could – and did – yield to the requirements of the text itself. In this regard, function takes priority over form.

Discussing these demons necessitates a brief introduction to the exorcist himself, the *āšipu*. The term *āšipu* is itself complicated, with several different Sumerian equivalents for the Akkadian term. There is furthermore a complex relationship between the *āšipu* and the figure called the *mašmaššu*, who acts in many respects similarly to the *āšipu*-exorcist, though the latter has stronger connotations of purification and operated predominantly in a cultic setting.²⁹ The *āšipu* was one of several figures in Mesopotamia who dealt with illness and its potentially supernatural causes: other figures included the *asû*, whose role is often translated as "physician."³⁰ The distinction between the two professions is blurred: the *āšipu* did not exclusively work with incantations and the *asû* was not limited to herbs and poultices. Both were learned professions, and certain instructional texts were associated with and utilized by each

²⁹ For a discussion of the lexical equivalents for the term *āšipu*, see Cynthia Jean, *La magie néo-assyrienne en contexte: Recherches sur le métier d'exorciste et le concept d'āšipūtu*, vol. 17 of *SAAS* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2006), 22-31. Jean also discusses the overall differences between the two terms, though it should be noted that Jean's study is, as the title suggests, focused on the first millennium.

Graham Cunningham, *Deliver Me from Evil: Mesopotamian Incantations 2500-1500 BC*, vol. 17 of *StPohl SM* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico), 14-16 briefly discusses the difficulty with the term *mašmaššu*, stressing the link between the term and one who purifies. A more in depth description of the term is found in Karlheinz Deller and Kazuko Watanabe, "*šukku(m)*, *šakkulu* 'abwischen, auswischen,'" *ZA* 70 (1980): 198-226.

³⁰ See E.K. Ritter, "Magical-expert (= *āšipu*) and Physician (= *asû*): Notes on Two Complementary Professions in Babylonian Medicine," in *FS Landsberger*, vol. 16 of *AS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956) and JoAnn Scurlock, "Physician, Exorcist, Conjurer, Magician: A Tale of Two Healing Professionals," in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives*, ed. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn, vol. 1 of *AMD* (Groningen: Styx, 1999), 69-79.

profession.³¹ The two professions required that one possess a literate command of the corpus of specialized texts, with considerable overlap and interweaving between the two.³² One of the more detailed descriptions of the *asû* comes not from a text utilized by the profession itself, but rather from a hymn to the goddess Gula, the patron deity of healing in general and the *asû* in particular. Though the dating of this hymn is uncertain, it may be roughly and broadly dated between 1400 and 700 BC, and features the goddess alongside others, standing as one of the major texts to feature her. Within this hymn, the attributes of Gula as a divine *asû* are listed:

a-sa-ku-ma bul-luṭ a-le-'-i
na-šá-ku šammī(u₂)^{hi-a} kul-lat-su-nu ú-né-es-si mur-šu
ez-ḫe-ku tu-kan-nu šá ši-pat ba-la-tu
na-šá-ku maš-ṭa-ru šá šá-la-mu
a-nam-din bul-tu a-na ba-'-ú-la-a-tú
el-lu rik-su sim-ma ú-na-aḫ
rap-pu ši-in-di murša(gig) ú-pa-áš-šá-ah
ina ni-iš īnī(igi)^{II}-ia mi-i-tú i-bal-luṭ
ina e-peš pi-ia muq-q[u i-t]e-eb-bi

I am the *asû*, I can heal,
 I carry all plants, I drive away disease.
 I gird myself with the leather bag containing health-giving incantations,
 I carry texts that bring recovery,
 I give cures to mankind.
 My pure dressing alleviates the wound,
 My soft bandage relieves disease.
 At the raising of my eyes the dead comes back to life,
 At the opening of my mouth palsy disappears.³³

Even this text, however clearly stated as it may appear to be, carries difficulties. It lays out the principal responsibilities of the *asû*, including a focus on those that led to the translation of the term as "physician": the use of medicinal plants, poultices, and bandages in order to heal the

³¹ As Scurlock, "Physician, Exorcist," 73-74, points out, many of these instructional texts have identifying colophons designating the tablet as belonging to the *āšipu* (*āšipūtu*) or to the *asû* (*asūtu*).

³² Jean, *La magie néo-assyrienne*, 30-31.

³³ Lines 79-87. W.G. Lambert, "The Gula Hymn of Bulluṣa-Rabi," *OrNs* 36 (1967): 105-32. Of the sources for this text, this section is represented primarily in two tablets: Ashm 1937-620 (Source A in Lambert's edition) and Sm 1420+1729+Rm II 554 (Source I). Source A is far more complete for this section, and is the primary source for Lambert's edition. The variations found in Tablet I are minor. On Gula in general, see: Barbara Böck, *The Healing Goddess Gula: Towards an Understanding of Ancient Babylonian Medicine* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

patient. However, the text also describes how the *asû* carries *šipat balātu*, health-giving incantations, from the term for incantation or magic, *šiptu*. In this regard, Gula's own powers – notably her ability to resurrect the dead – are seen to be far greater than those allocated to the mortal *asû*. Despite the irregularities between her and the more standard and mortal *asû* (who did not include resurrection among his abilities), the inclusion of the incantation among Gula's toolkit finds its own parallels to the tools and training of the *asû*. Incantations were a normal item in his standard healing inventory.

Later in the text, Gula reiterates her abilities, stressing the objects of her office which she carries with her: the knife and scalpel, and further reiterating her role as the mistress of healing, the *bēltu ša balātu*.³⁴ However, in the lines following this summation of her skills and powers, she proceeds to list her other roles: *asāku barāku āšipāku* – I am physician (*asû*), I am diviner (*barû*), I am exorcist (*āšipu*).³⁵ While her association with healing and thus the *asû* are strongest, she is also explicitly related to other scholarly professions, associations that are, in some respects, emblematic of the complicated, interconnected nature of such learned professions in Mesopotamia as a whole.³⁶

As detailed above, the boundaries between the positions of the *āšipu* and *asû* often shifted – to the point where one individual who was recorded as an *āšipu* in Assyrian court

³⁴ Lambert, "Gula Hymn of Bulluṣa-rabi," Line 182.

³⁵ Lambert, "Gula Hymn of Bulluṣa-rabi," Line 183.

The text that follows this line is worthy of brief note, as it reads: *sa-at-tak-ku man-ma ul uš-ta-pi...bul-lu-tu i-ba-āš-ši* / "No one has made plain my cuneiform signs...there is recovery." Given the placement of the incantation text, the written tablet, as one of the tools in Gula's medicinal arsenal, this mention of the indecipherable nature of her cuneiform raises the question of whether the incantation texts are meant to transmit her own divine healing ability.

³⁶ See: A. Leo Oppenheim, "The Position of the Intellectual in Mesopotamian Society," *Daedalus* 104 (1975): 37-46.

The relationship between learned professions in Mesopotamia, particularly those of the *āšipu* and the diviner, or *bārû*, is of particular interest considering the significance that the Sebettu, in their astral incarnation as the Pleiades, have in celestial divination in the first millennium BCE.

records was, several years later, referred to instead as an *asû*.³⁷ Despite methodological similarities, the *āšipu* and the *asû* approached the problem of illness from quite different perspectives. To the *āšipu*, disease was an expression of supernatural causes, whether it be witchcraft, malignant demons, or divine disfavor. The *asû*, in contrast, performed a diagnosis based upon his own interpretation of the physical symptoms of the patient, which he then worked to treat.³⁸ He did not focus on directly combating potential supernatural causes, whereas the *āšipu* worked to fight the problem at its supernatural source, so to speak, by attacking the supernatural force that caused it.³⁹

From the supernatural perspective, the *āšipu*'s job was a dangerous one. In order to effectively help his patient, he had to place himself in a liminal space similar to that occupied by the demons or other antagonistic supernatural forces affecting the patient. In effect, the *āšipu* had to set himself closer to the demons he would fight. In healing the patient, he had to do battle with the demons or witchcraft at the root of the affliction, defeating them in order to ensure the patient's recovery, a battle which could be implicitly or explicitly stated in the text. Texts of the Marduk-Ea type, wherein the god Marduk/Asalluḫi would consult with his father, Enki/Ea, concerning the misfortune, witchcraft, or demons afflicting the patient, constructed a narrative that resembles the structure and plots found in myths, and the actions of the *āšipu* thus took on a similar epic quality.⁴⁰

The *āšipu*, overwhelmingly, though not exclusively a male figure, carried with him the assumption of divine favor, particularly from Enki, the patron deity of incantations and

³⁷ Robert D. Biggs, "Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health in Ancient Mesopotamia," *JAAS* 19 (2005): 13.

³⁸ Ritter, "Magical-Expert and Physician," 299-321.

³⁹ JoAnn Scurlock, *Magico-Medical Means of Treating Ghost-Induced Illnesses in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 13.

⁴⁰ On Marduk-Ea incantations, and the Marduk-Ea incantation formula, see A. Falkenstein, *Die Haupttypen der sumerischen Beschwörung*, vol. 1 of *LSS* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1968).

benevolent magic.⁴¹ The term "benevolent magic" here is one I employ as a matter of convenience, as the more accurate description of "apotropaic or curative magic, intended to counter the negative effects of malignant magic or supernatural forces, or protect against future attacks of a similar nature" is prohibitively cumbersome to write out at each required instance, and, at present, no acceptable abbreviation has presented itself.

The common terms used to describe this division – white magic and black magic – carry connotations as weighty as those associated with the term demon or *daimon*. More importantly, they imply a strict division in regard to magical practices that is at odds with the Mesopotamian conceptions of magic, where the greatest difference between the witch, who functions as one of the primary agents of "black" magic and the *āšipu*, who employs "white" magic, is one of legitimization. The latter carries the force of divine sanction, while the former transgresses those same boundaries without that sanction, becoming in the process something both demonic and malevolent. The witch, nearly always female, interrupts the established social order through her chaotic transgression of established boundaries. When the *āšipu* acted, it was with Enki's sanction: his actions and speech were thus validated, a concept made explicitly clear in a late text, titled in its edition "A Catalogue of Texts and Authors."⁴² This text is found in several fragmentary tablets, the majority of which are copies from the library of the Neo-Assyrian king Aššurbanipal, giving it a decidedly late for its circulation, if not also its composition. The passage enumerates the various textual tools associated with and belonging to various officials, before coming to the *āšipu* and listing his own textual tools:

⁴¹ Tzvi Abusch, "The Demonic Image of the Witch in Standard Babylonian Literature: the Reworking of Popular Conceptions by Learned Exorcists," in *Religion, Science, and Magic: in Concert and in Conflict*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Paul V. Flesher (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 31-32. Marie-Louise Thomsen, *Zauberdiagnose und Schwarze Magie in Mesopotamien* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1987).

⁴² W.G. Lambert, "A Catalogue of Texts and Authors," *JCS* 16 (1962): 59-77.

Or rather: the corpus of the *āšipu*; the corpus of the *kalû*-priest; the series *enūma anu enlil*; the physiognomic omens *alam-dimmu*; the text "not completing the months" (sag iti nu-til-la); the medical omen series sa-gig-ga; the omen series "if the utterance of a mouth" (ka-ta du₁₁-ga); the text lugal-e...these are of the mouth of Ea.⁴³

Enki was responsible for the power behind the incantations used by the *āšipu*, and this link was strengthened by the strong association between the *āšipu* and the deity Marduk or Asalluḫi. He was described as the exorcist of the gods, standing as a divine equivalent for the *āšipu*, and explicitly referred to as such.⁴⁴ The exorcist could reference the link to the divine exemplar and liken his own lineage to Marduk's, once more relying upon the legitimacy provided by the connection.⁴⁵ However, this was not adequate protection against the full range of dangers presented by the demons the *āšipu* fought against.

In addition to this, then, the *āšipu* also had more direct protection in the form of spirits (or "good demons") that stood by his side, as well as the protection of his personal god. Incantations directly illustrate the potential threats in combating the supernatural without this protection: in one instance, a man without a personal god confronts the *ardat lilî* demon (guruš diġir nu-tuku-ra gaba im-ma-an-re-eš – "the man without a personal god, he confronts (her)") and in the process is attacked by other demons, who carry him off to his presumably grisly fate.⁴⁶ In this regard, the lack of the protection of his personal god is equivalent to a death

⁴³ Lambert, "A Catalogue of Texts and Authors," 64, 70.

⁴⁴ W.G. Lambert, "Marduk's Address to the Demons," in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives*, eds. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn, vol. 1 of *AMD* (Groningen: Styx, 1999), 293.

⁴⁵ Alasdair Livingstone, "The Magic of Time," in *Mesopotamian Magic*, 136-37.

⁴⁶ S. Lackenbacher, "Note sur l'Ardat-Lilî," *RA* 65 (1971): 126. A very similar text is edited in M.J. Geller, "Fragments of Magic, Medicine and Mythology from Nimrud," *BSOAS* 63 (2000): 332. This text, from the Nabû temple at Nimrud, is much more fragmentary, and Geller reconstructs the relevant line, '15, based primarily upon BM 42338 as: [guruš diġir nu-tuku-ra gaba] mi-in-ra-ra // [la be-el ilî] 'ú-mah¹-hi-ir-ši-ma – "[The young man without a personal god] has confronted her." Here, the critical half of the line is entirely reconstructed, but the incantation follows the pattern seen in the better preserved example well enough to ensure the reconstruction.

A similar incantation, although one without the dire consequences for the lack of the protection of one's personal god, is discussed in M.J. Geller, "New Duplicates to SBTU II," *AfO* 35 (1988): 1-23.

sentence.

Beyond this, the *āšipu* had access to other weapons in the form of objects that were commonly consecrated during incantations, namely, the cultic torch (gi₂-izi-la₂/*gizillû*), the cultic "holy water basin" (a-gub₂-ba/*agubbû*), and the censer (niĝ₂-na/*nignakku*). These objects were each connected with a particular deity: Gibil, Kusu, and Ningirima, respectively, though these equivalences have some degree of flexibility across periods, and are not always set in stone.⁴⁷ The practice of purifying the ritual elements before use in an incantation is common, particularly with incantations combating malignant supernatural forces. Furthermore, the ties between the cultic objects and their respective deities were well established in Mesopotamia from the Pre-Sargonic period onwards.⁴⁸ The purifying power of fire, and consequently the god Gibil, is further referenced in incantations when fire was used to destroy figurines representing a witch, and through the analogous properties of such sympathetic magical rituals, would destroy the witch herself as well. However, the primary protections accorded to the *āšipu* remained the divine power legitimating his own abilities and the accompaniment of his own personal, protective deity.

2.1. "Good" Demon or "Bad" Demon: Inherent Natures and Some Statistics

The first difficulty in classifying the nature of specific demons is the lack of an overall classification scheme for Mesopotamian demons themselves. Different classification schemes

⁴⁷ Piotr Michalowski, "The Torch and the Censer," in *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo*, ed. Mark E. Cohen, Daniel C. Snell, David B. Weisberg (Bethesda: CDL Press, 1993), 152-62.

⁴⁸ See Cunningham, *Deliver Me from Evil*, 5-42. For a discussion of similar purification practices in exorcisms in early Christianity, see: A.A.R. Bastiaensen, "Exorcism: Tackling the Devil by Word of Mouth," in *Demons and Devils in Ancient and Medieval Christianity*, ed. Nienke Vos and Willemien Otten (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 129-44.

Bastiaensen details, in his discussion of exorcism conventions, the convention of rendering the oil and water that may be used in an exorcism to *creatura olei* and *creatura aquae*, respectively, which was seen as original and unspoiled.

have been suggested: Karen Sonik focuses on the liminal nature of supernatural creatures in Mesopotamia, and on their position as *Zwischenwesen*, in reference to the inherent character of these particular entities.⁴⁹ Beyond that, in Sonik's terminology, the *Zwischenwesen* fragment into different subcategories of monsters. One interacts principally with gods, while *daimons* interact primarily with humans, operating either under the command of the gods or following their own, personal, whims. Their actions further classify them as monsters associated with chaos or with order, or as *daimons* that act benevolently or malevolently towards humans.⁵⁰ This is complicated, however, by the presence of creatures that can operate either positively or negatively in regard to mankind, who would then exist outside these categories by design or be excluded from them by the nature of their actions in incantations, where they can either protect the *āšipu* or work against him.

Other classification schemes are possible. The supernatural beings of Mesopotamia can be grouped primarily by their titles and by the places wherein they appear within the textual tradition, particularly if they function differently in incantations as opposed to literary texts, or if their behavior similarly varies in Sumerian texts when considered against their appearances in Akkadian texts.⁵¹ This system is not without its own faults, as we encounter difficulties when considering how to classify a demon who appears in both Sumerian and Akkadian texts, or one who appears in incantations, literary texts, and other textual categories. Immediately, questions regarding the nature of the demon are raised: if the demon behaves in a markedly different manner in the different texts, how should that the demon's character be reconciled in regard to its classification? Should the different actions of the same demon, such as when it behaves benevolently in one text and malevolently in another, be regarded as evidence to consider it two

⁴⁹ Sonik, "Daimon-Haunted Universe," 3-5.

⁵⁰ Sonik, "Daimon-Haunted Universe," 35.

⁵¹ E. Ebeling, "Dämonen," *RLA* 2 (1978): 107-13.

distinct demons sharing a common title? The Sebettu, for example, are precisely such demons, and do not easily fit into this classification scheme. This system does not easily accommodate figures who, like the Sebettu, cross over textual categories and present complicated and nuanced behavior across their various attestations. A system with greater flexibility is required.

Franz Wiggermann's overview of supernatural creatures in Mesopotamia, which he terms the "Mesopotamian Pandemonium", takes a different approach by grouping demons based on similar characteristics or origins, rather than creating stricter classification categories. Drawing the initial distinction between beneficial and often primeval monsters, with whom the not quite monstrous primeval sages share similarities, and other demons, Wiggermann also acknowledges the often ambiguous nature of spirits embodied by winds or storms, which serve as early, primeval precursors to later demons.⁵² Following that, demons are categorized into the following groups:

- *utukkū lemnūtu* or *udug hul* (literally "evil demons") demons as commonly seen in the titular incantation series designed to combat them
- demonized diseases, combated through the attentions of the *asû* (healer) as well as the *āšipu*
- wandering souls such as ghosts, *eṭemmu*, who caused harm in order to solicit attention and offerings from the living
- wild animals which typified dangerous, otherwise indescribable evil, such as the *mimma lemnu* (anything evil) demon, a first-millennium demon which served as an all-inclusive description of potential harm
- the *numina loci* of deserted places, particularly places that should otherwise be inhabited
- personified time periods, including demons who were linked to particular times, only appearing during the night, or only at dawn or at dusk
- personified or anthropomorphized abstract concepts, which could be either positive or

⁵² F.A.M. Wiggermann, "The Mesopotamian Pandemonium: A Provisional Census," in *Demoni Mesopotamici*, ed. Dietz Otto Edzard and Michael P. Streck (Rome: Sapienza University, 2011), 319. For a discussion of how the four winds were embodied as spirits and then served as a precursor to the demon Pazuzu, see: Wiggermann, "Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu," 217-52.

negative⁵³

These categories cover the majority of Mesopotamian demons, though some defy such easy categorization, failing to fit neatly into any one box. The demons Pazuzu and Lamaštu are two notable such exceptions. Regardless, this system of grouping demons according to their common type or function allows for more flexibility in examining the various demons and illustrates how one demon may in different textual attestations represent itself as a member of different categories. It also serves to highlight one the major differences between the *āšipu*, who would have to contend with demons from any of these categories, and the *asû*, who encounters demons while treating the diseases that they were believed to embody or cause.

The focus in this chapter is on the shifting and malleable nature of demons, particularly their ability to change said alignment as it relates to the requirements and needs of the *āšipu*. With this as an aim, it is more useful to follow a classification scheme similar to Wiggermann's and examine the various demons in groups of similar functions. This task is made easier by the limited size of my immediate corpus; namely, only those figures within the Mesopotamian Pandemonium who appear to aid or combat the exorcist directly in incantations.⁵⁴ As such, this limits the group to three major figures; the *udug/utukku*, *lama sa₆-ga/lamassu*, and the *alad/šēdu*, along with mentions of other, less prominent demons that also appear in incantations. While not a perfect system (a full, detailed analysis of the roles played by the entire Mesopotamian pandemonium could easily be the focus of its own study, or several) it presents a workable foundation for further analysis of the Sebettu.

The demoness Lamaštu, for example, would certainly belong to this group. She is featured prominently in incantations and always in an antagonistic role, to be actively fought or

⁵³ Wiggermann, "Mesopotamian Pandemonium," 302-19.

⁵⁴ To utilize *Paradise Lost's* term for the collection of demons via Wiggermann's usage of it.

protected against. The typical method of protection against Lamaštu is the invocation of another demon, Pazuzu. As there is a large body of scholarship on these two demons, both as independent entities and regarding their relationship to each other, a brief summary of the situation as it relates to the shifting nature of demons as a whole will suffice.

The question of a taxonomy of demons, and the inherent difficulties in constructing just such a classificatory scheme, raises greater, underlying questions about the very nature of demons. Demons have shifting natures and definitions and the terms which can be used to describe them carry different connotations in various periods. All this leads to certain difficulties when employing non-native terminology. Despite this, demons are consistently bounded by a set of rules in each culture they inhabit, even if those rules themselves change. Though chaotic, they are not amorphous and ill-defined activities. Jonathan Z. Smith stresses this point when he proposes the following:

Whenever and wherever the demonic occurs, the observation of John Glanville in his *Saducismus Triumphatus* holds: "the devil is the name for a body politic in which there are very different orders and degrees of spirits and perhaps as much variety of place and state as among ourselves." And therefore, the chief question that ought to preoccupy scholars should be: why is it that the demonic, associated with the marginal, the liminal, the chaotic, the protean, the unstructured, appears cross-culturally as so rigidly organized a realm?⁵⁵

I will not attempt a full answer to the question that Smith poses. I am, however, interested in considering his question in light of how both the demons under consideration in this chapter, as well as the Sebettu themselves, are so variously but, overall, quite rigidly, defined. These characteristics and the practice of defining demons may be seen as a reflection of the place these figures inhabited in Mesopotamia as a whole. An ill-defined malevolence is all the more dangerous for its nebulous qualities: once defined and its edges delimited, it can more easily be defeated. By defining the conceptual space such malignant creatures inhabit, the areas to which

⁵⁵ Smith, "Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," 437.

they can be banished or restricted to are also constructed, grounding the dislocative function of many exorcistic incantations. In Mesopotamia, this space is most often constructed as the *kur*, variously "the mountains" or the Netherworld, and in either case, a location set on the frontier, if not beyond it. The demons under discussion are defined by belonging to such a liminal zone.

2.1.1. Concerning Pazuzu and Lamaštu

Of the various demons employed apotropaically, the demon Pazuzu, although a late addition to the demonic pantheon, was a figure often employed in Mesopotamian protective rituals and spells. The demon himself, a four-winged creature, vaguely anthropomorphic in shape but with suitably monstrous features, solidified as an entity during the first millennium, both in physical form and in purpose, serving as a powerful and necessary oppositional force to the demoness Lamaštu.⁵⁶ Initially then, Pazuzu might seem to fit the criteria of a protective spirit, such as the *lama* or benevolent incarnations of various demons that come to the aid of the *āšipu*. However, the resemblance is at best superficial, and Pazuzu functions in a markedly dissimilar manner when compared to the behavior of other beneficent figures in Mesopotamia.

Pazuzu's origin is itself tied to the demon he opposes. Lamaštu, the demon who preys principally upon infants, has her own history. In comparison to the sometimes ill-defined natures of other demons, Lamaštu has a fairly fixed personality and set of fearsome traits, although the demon's role in the divine and demonic pantheon does evolve over the chronological course of her attestations. Written ^ddim₃-me, there are incantations against the threats Lamaštu posed from the early second millennium, written in both Sumerian and Akkadian.⁵⁷ Lamaštu herself appears in a more abstract form earlier than that, in a late third millennium text containing a list

⁵⁶ F.A.M. Wiggermann, "Pazuzu," *RLA* 10 (2003-2005): 372.

⁵⁷ For a listing of these incantations, see: Wiggermann, "Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu," 217.

of ^ddim₃-me demons, wherein Lamaštu is mentioned first.⁵⁸ Of the other ^ddim₃-me demons, ^ddim₃-me-a-ra-li is worthy of note, considering the links between Arali and names for the Netherworld.⁵⁹

In terms of apotropaic function, Pazuzu is an independent agent, and did not lend his support directly to the *āšipu*; instead, his speech in incantations was a close echo of the words normally attributed to the exorcist. The incantations including Pazuzu were often told from the first person – which is to say, Pazuzu's – point of view.⁶⁰ This distinction is emblematic of the conceptual difference between the use of Pazuzu in apotropaic incantations and the employment of other demons in benevolent roles. Pazuzu remains a destructive force in these incantations: his nature has not been altered or inverted, rather, the incantation directs this destructive malevolence against Lamaštu, and thus in a useful direction. The *udug*, when it appears benevolently, works with the *āšipu* as it comes to his aid. The protection Pazuzu offers, on the other hand, is incidental. His aggression is directed against the malevolence of Lamaštu, and in that regard he can be considered an apotropaic force. His aim, however, is to combat Lamaštu, and the protection that results is merely a side-effect of that primary aim.

2.2. The Uduḡ and its Ambivalence

Of the three demons that follow, the *udug* demon is the most ill-defined, and as such, is also the most malleable in regard to its appearances and uses in incantations. There are few descriptions of the demon, and no identifiable artistic attestations to it in seal impressions or statuary. The word *udug* can also be applied to a specific demon or used to refer to a larger

⁵⁸ Wiggermann, "Mesopotamian Pandemonium," 319.

⁵⁹ G. Komoróczy, "Das mythische Goldland (H)arali im Altenorient," *AcAntHung* 28 (1972): 113-123.

⁶⁰ Nils P. Heeßel, "Evil against Evil: the Demon Pazuzu," in *Demoni Mesopotamici*, ed. Dietz Otto Edzard and Michael P. Streck (Rome: Sapienza University, 2011), 360.

category of demons, a term for demonic entities as a whole in Mesopotamia.⁶¹ It appears in a far-reaching variety of texts from the third millennium to the late first millennium, in part thanks to the prominence and wide circulation of the standard Babylonian incantation series Udug Hul, where the titular udug demon features prominently. The Udug Hul texts feature broadly across this study, as they also stand as one of the major attestations to the Sebettu, featuring the Seven prominently in several of its sixteen tablets. It is in this incantation series that the demon is given what approaches a physical description, seen in the section quoted below:

Udug Hul, Tablet XII, 14-20:

- 14 a-a-ĝu₁₀ udug hul muš₂-me-bi i₃-kur₂-ra alan-bi i₃-sukud-da
a-bi ú-tuk-ku lem-nu šá zi-m[u]-šú nak-r[i] la-an-šú zu-uq-qur
 15 diĝir nu za-pa-aĝ₂-bi i₃-gal-gal-la m[e-l]am₂-bi i₃-sukud-da
ul i-lu ri-gim-šú ra-bi m[e-l]am-mu-šu šá-qu-ú
 16 u₄-šu₂-uš-ru an-dul₃-bi kukku₂-g[a] su-bi zalag-ga nu-un-ĝal₂
ur-ru-up šil-la-šú uk-ku-ul ina zu-um-ri-šú nu-ú-ri ul i-ba-áš-ši
 17 a₂-ur₂-a₂-ur₂-še₃ i₃-gir₅-gir₅-re nir-ĝal₃-bi la-ba-an-su₈-ge-eš
ina pu-uz-ra-a-ti ih-ta-na-al-lu-up e-tel-liš ul i-ba-a'
 18 umbin-bi ze₂-ta bi-iz-bi-iz-za-bi ĝiri₃-bi uš₁₁-hul-a
ina šu-up-ri-šú mar-tu it-ta-na-at-tuk ki-bi-is im-ta le-mut-tú
 19 ^{tug₂}dara₂-a-ni nu-du₈-a a₂-a₂-n[i] su₃-su₃
ni-bit-ta-šú ul ip-paṭ-ṭar i-da-a-šú i-ḥa-am-ma-tu
 20 ki-ib₂-ba-bi er₂ diri ki šar₂-ra-ke₄ gu₃-kiri₆ nu-un-ĝa₂-ĝa₂
a-šar i-tag-ga di-im-tú uš-ma-al-la-a-[m]a šá-a-ri ta-nu-qa-tu₄ ul i-kal-
*la*⁶²

- 14 My father, the evil udug – its appearance is malignant and its stature
 towering,
 15 Although it is not a god, its voice is great and its radiance towering,
 16 It is gloomy, its shadow is very dark, there is no brightness in its body,
 17 It always hides, taking refuge, they do not stand authoritatively,⁶³
 18 Its claws drip bile, its step leaves poison,
 19 Its belt cannot be released, his arms *enclose*,
 20 It fills the target of his anger with tears, in all the lands, [its] battle cry

⁶¹ Markham J. Geller, "The Faceless Udug-demon," in *Demoni Mesopotamici*, ed. Dietz Otto Edzard and Michael P. Streck (Rome: Sapienza University, 2011), 333.

⁶² Udug Hul, Tablet XII: 14-20. For this section, see also: O.R. Gurney, "Babylonian Prophylactic Figures and their Rituals," *AAA* 22 (1935): 76-81.

⁶³ In the Sumerian of this line, both the su₈ and the ending of this verb mark the subject as plural, which is not otherwise clearly stated in the Sumerian text for this passage. The Akkadian, however, is clearly singular, leading to a disconnect between the Sumerian and Akkadian employed in this bilingual text.

cannot be restrained.

This text establishes several characteristic features of the udug demon, though its overall physical appearance remains ill-defined, particularly in contrast with the alad and lama, who were both represented artistically in figures and statuary. The udug is characterized by its lack of form, and is even explicitly described as nameless and formless, once again in the standard Babylonian Udug Hul text:

Udug Hul, Tablet VI, 184-185:

184 lu₂ saĝ-ta nu-sa₄-a im-ma-an-us₂
 ša it-[ti r]e-ši la na-bu-u ir-te-di-šú
185 lu₂ su-bi ne-e₃-de₃ im-ma-an-us₂
 šá ina zu-mur la šu-pu-u ir-te-di-šú⁶⁴

184 The one who, from the beginning, was not called by name, followed her .
185 The one who never appeared in bodily form followed her.

Though this incantation is clearly identified as that of the evil udug (ka inim-ma udug hul-a-kam) or "it is the wording of the incantation of the evil demon," the udug itself is only identified through its complete lack of identifiable characteristics. It is defined in terms of what it is not and is thus presented as lacking even the fundamental qualities that would constitute an identity: a name and shape or form.

The first quoted text, in contrast, does give the udug physical form but rather than painting a definitive image of its form, the incantation pays only cursory attention to the udug's

⁶⁴ The "her" in this text refers to the ki-sikil, or maiden. Transliteration following the edition in: Markham J. Geller, *Evil Demons: Canonical Utukkū Lemnūtu Incantations*, Vol. 5 of *NATCP* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2007), Tablet VI: 184-85.

However, these lines are also represented in the Old Babylonian forerunners to the standard edition of Udug Hul; see: Markham J. Geller, *Forerunners to Udug-Hul: Sumerian Exorcistic Incantations*, vol. 12 of *FAS* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985), Tablet III: 452-53.
Note that the lines are heavily reconstructed, likely from the standard edition cited above. The Old Babylonian version cites the lines as follows:

[lu₂ s]ag-ga₂-ta nu in-[sa₄-a im-ma-an]-r¹us₂¹

[lu₂] r¹su¹-ta nu-r¹e₃-da im-ma-an-us₂¹

The one who, from the very beginning, was not called by name, followed her.

The one who never appeared with a form followed her.

physical characteristics, stating merely that it is terrible in form and tall in stature. It focuses instead on the other qualities of the demon: its shadow (and the overall absence of light associated with the demon), its movements, the poisons it possesses, and the terrifying power of its voice. These are instruments the udug may use or behaviors it may be characterized by, but they remain ancillary characteristics. Furthermore, these characteristics – a terrifying aura, poison, a thunderous voice, and the act of continually roaming about – are traits common among demons as a whole and can be found in the Udug Hul series attached to the other demons featured in the text. Even this tenuous description is subject to change, and the udug demon appears under a different guise in other texts, particularly those from the late period.

One such text is the first millennium, Neo-Assyrian text, the "Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince," wherein the titular prince dreams that he descends to the Netherworld and is brought before the god Nergal, who, enraged, threatens him with death. He is only saved by the eleventh-hour intervention of the god Išum. Along the way, he encounters a number of different demonic figures. Among this list, the udug appears and is described as possessing a lion's head (*qaqqad(saĝ.du) nēši(ur.mah)*), while his hands and feet are those of the Anzu.⁶⁵ This description, echoed in the beginning of the text, describes well not the udug, but the *ugallu*, a common figure on Neo-Assyrian royal reliefs.⁶⁶ In this particular case, the inclusion of the phrase udug hul may more reliably act as a broader term for evil demons and not the specific udug demon itself. Even so, it is the only demon referred to as such within the text, so if the term is indeed referencing the *ugallu* demon, then the udug as an independent demon has been neglected entirely within the text.

We must ask why, then, the udug demon shifts descriptions and categories so frequently,

⁶⁵ Alasdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, vol. 3 of *SAA*, ed. Robert M. Whiting (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989), 72.

⁶⁶ Mehmet-Ali Ataç, "The 'Underworld Vision' of the Ninevite Intellectual Milieu," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 71.

or often fails to be described at all? The complexity arises, in part, from the inherent flexibility of the term: *udug* can be used interchangeably to refer to a specific demon or a larger collective of demons, as seen when the *udug* demon is described in the "Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince." The term itself is nebulous: the *udug* can be used as a very specific term for an equally specific demon, as in the section in the *Udug Hul* incantation series where the *udug* itself is described. In this sense, *udug* stands as one individual demon among many, and appears uniquely identified amongst lists of other demons wherein it appears. The *udug* appears often in this manner, and the principle is clearly illustrated in one bilingual incantation from Nimrud, which seems similar in formula to the *Udug Hul* incantations. Here, the *udug* is again included among such a list: "An evil *namtaru* has seized his head, an evil *utukku* (*udug hul/û-tuk-ku lem-nu*) has seized his throat, an evil *alû* has seized his breast, an evil *eṭemmu* (or ghost) has seized his shoulders, an evil *gallû* has seized his hand, an evil god has seized his hand, an evil *rābiṣu* has seized his feet: they have covered this person like a net."⁶⁷ In this circumstance, the *udug* demon merely occupies one place in a larger list of demonic entities and is not given any wider meaning or preference when compared to the overall group. Furthermore, the stress is on the individual nature of each demon – though they work as a collective, each demon is listed independently and none are given greater importance or stressed above any of the others. To a degree, this stressing of the individual nature of each demon is in line with this section of the incantation series, as each body part of the patient is paired with its own tormenting demon.

The term *udug* can, as discussed, also indicate a general category of demons, with both specific demons or more generically categorized demonic entities falling within its classification scheme. In this usage, *udug* is a broad classifier for demon and each demonic category as well as certain other specific demons, fit within that overarching category. Thus, we see incantations

⁶⁷ See E. E. Knudsen, "Two Nimrud Incantations of the *Utukku* Type," *Iraq* 27 (1965): 160-70.

that refer to the several different demons, prefacing each demon with the introduction of *udug hul/utukku lemnu*, before describing the demon in greater detail. This formula is furthermore applied to permit the inclusion of more specific demons, with lines such as the *udug hul*, the *gallû*,⁶⁸ and several different demons grouped together, as seen in incantations such as the following, presented in parallel columns:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | <i>en₂ diĝir hul udug-hul</i> |
| 2 | <i>udug eden-na udug hur-saĝ-ĝa₂</i> |
| 3 | <i>udug a-ab-ba udug urugal-la-ke₄</i> |
| 4 | <i>^dalad₂ hul u_x-lu me-lam₂-ma</i> |
| 5 | <i>im-hul ni₂-te-ĝa₂</i> |
| 6 | <i>su-munšub₂ su mu-un-zi-zi udug hul</i> |
| 7 | <i>zi an-na he₂-pa₃ zi ki-a he₂-pa₃</i> |
-
- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | <i>ilu(diĝir) lem-nu ú-tuk-ku [lem-nu]</i> |
| 2 | <i>ú-tuk še-e-re ú-tuk [šadī(kur)ⁱ]</i> |
| 3 | <i>ú-tuk tam-tim ú-tuk [qab-rim]</i> |
| 4 | <i>še-e-du lem-nu a-lu-u me-[lam-mu]</i> |
| 5 | <i>im-ḥul-lu la a-di-ru</i> |
| 6 | <i>šá-rat zu-um-ri-šu zu-uz-[zu ú-tuk-ku lem-nu]</i> |
| 7 | <i>niš šamê(an)^e lu-u ta-mat niš(uĝ₃) eršetī(ki) l[u-u ta-mat]</i> |
-
- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Incantation: evil god, evil demon, |
| 2 | demon of the steppe, demon of the mountain ranges, |
| 3 | demon of the sea, demon of the underworld, |
| 4 | evil <i>šēdu</i> -demon, its radiance, |
| 5 | a fearsome wind, |
| 6 | the hair, its flesh rises, evil demon, |
| 7 | Be adjured by the heavens, be adjured by the earth! ⁶⁹ |

To a certain extent, the incantation intends to cover all possible evil demons, thus ensuring that whatever demon is causing harm, it will certainly be driven away. This pattern of ensuring that any and all contingencies are prepared for is seen in other types of Mesopotamian incantations: texts to appease the heart of an angry personal god, identified by the rubric "*ka inim-ma diĝir*

⁶⁸ O.R. Gurney and P. Hulin, *The Sultantepe Tablets: Vol. 2* (Ankara: British Institute of Archaeology, 1964): 1.

⁶⁹ Note that, again, the Akkadian differs in some respects for this line; this translation tracks most closely to the Sumerian. See Rykle Borger, "Die erste Teiltafel der zi-pa₃-Beschwörungen (ASKT 11)," in *Lišān mithurti*, ed. Kurt Bergerhof, Manfred Dietrich, and Oswald Loretz (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1969), 3.

ša₃-dib-ba gur-ru-da-kam" or, "it is an incantation to appease an angry god."⁷⁰ The penitent, unsure of which of his potential crimes has offended his god, offers up a list of possible transgressions, begging forgiveness for each of them.⁷¹ Another example in this vein is the existence of the *mimma lemnu*, or the "anything evil" demon, which could occur at the end of a longer list of specific demons.⁷² As with these examples, the *udug* is a broad-scale term in meaning and application.

Furthermore, Akkadian equivalents for the Sumerian term also vary. The most direct equivalent is *udug* = *utukku*, but the Sumerian *udug* may find Akkadian equivalents with the terms *šēdu*⁷³ and *rābiṣu*.⁷⁴ The Akkadian terms, however, despite the lexical and bilingual equivalences to *udug*, cannot be seen to cover exactly the same semantic ground as the Sumerian *udug*. While this is not the most common Sumerian equivalent for either term, neither is its use so infrequent as to be considered particularly unusual when it does appear.

Beyond this, the word itself acquires a range of meaning when presented in different contexts. While its principal connotation is of a demonic entity, in either the specific or general sense, the word is also employed for a spirit or shade of the deceased, where one might rather expect the term *eṭemmu*. This is seen most prominently in the twelfth tablet of *Gilgamesh*, when the shade of Enkidu rises from the Netherworld:

Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet XII, Lines 85-87:

85 *qar-ra-du eṭ-lu* ^d*šamaš*(utu) *mār*(dumu) ^d*nin*-[gal xx]x
86 [lu-man] *tak-ka-ap eršetim*(ki)^{tim} *ip-te-e-ma*
87 *ú-tuk-ku šá* ^d*en*-[ki-dù ki-i za-qí-qí ul-tu eršetim(ki)^{tim} *uṣ-te-la-a*]

⁷⁰ W.G. Lambert, "Dingir.ša.dib.ba Incantations," *JNES* 33 (1974): 267.

⁷¹ Specifically, the penitent pleads that "my iniquities are many: I know not what I did...[my god] disregard my transgressions, receive my prayers, turn my sins into virtues." See I: 29-32 in Lambert, "Dingir.ša.dib.ba," 275.

⁷² Scurlock, *Ghost-Induced Illnesses*, 503.

⁷³ See the lexical lists: Aa I/8 231, *Erimhuš* V 58.

⁷⁴ See the lexical list: *Ea* I 363.

- 85 The young warrior Šamaš, the son of Ningal,
 86 opened a crack in the Netherworld,
 87 he brought up the shade of Enkidu from the Netherworld like a phantom.

Here, the term *utukku* is compared to a *zaqīqu*, a phantom or ghost. Ghosts could themselves be dangerous: they were capable of haunting a location, and a spirit who had died in a manner deemed unnatural by Mesopotamian society ran the risk of becoming an antagonistic spirit. This was best demonstrated through the actions of creatures such as the *ardat lili*, who was herself the ghost of a young woman who, having died unmarried, became a demon and drifted in like the breeze to torment young men.⁷⁵ The *ardat lili* had a male counterpart, though he was far less frequently attested in Mesopotamia.

This use of *udug/utukku* to refer to a shade or spirit of the deceased is not unique to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, as a dire astrological omen also warns that: "the ghost of the wronged man will seize the land" (*utukku(udug) ḥab-lim mātam(kur) iṣabbat(dab₅)^{bat}-ma*).⁷⁶ Here, the *utukku*-ghost has clear negative connotations and actions. The definition of "ghost" does not preclude the figure from antagonistic actions, though it does alter the origin of the spirit, grounding it firmly in the once-mortal realm to which proper Mesopotamian demons never belonged. While such distinctions would bring little comfort to the Mesopotamian patient who believed himself to be suffering from its ill effects, there remains a fundamental difference between the *udug* and ghost.⁷⁷ That the term *udug* can apply to either, despite the categorical distinction between the supernatural entities, speaks once more to the inherent flexibility – and moreover, the inherent lack of definition – found within the use of the term *udug* itself. As it stands, *udug* may act as either a generic or specific term and thus be applied to many categories. The demon itself, the

⁷⁵ S. Lackenbacher, "Note sur l'ardat-lili," *RA* 65 (1971): 119-54.

⁷⁶ No. 163: 7. See R. Campbell Thompson *The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon in the British Museum* (London: Luzac and Co. 1900).

⁷⁷ Despite this, the two remain quite closely related, a connection that can also be seen in the extreme similarity between the cuneiform signs for *gidim* and *udug*, respectively.

most widespread and frequently attested of Mesopotamian demons, even when it appears in a reference to the specific, is without a noted personality or character. Even its nature is ill-defined: while it is persistently evil, even when simply written as *udug* instead of the full *udug hul*, it is not exclusively so.

2.2.1. The Benevolent *Udug*

The benevolent *udug*, written as *udug sa₆-ga*, or "good *udug*" appears in a number of literary texts, royal hymns. and incantations. The first category includes both of the *Lugalbanda* texts, *Lugalbanda in the Wilderness* and *Lugalbanda and the Anzu*, or *Lugalbanda Returns*, both of which center on the exploits of its eponymous hero. Attestations to the good *udug* are found in royal hymns of kings of the Ur III period, and the references to the benevolent figure are found in the following instances:

Incantations: *CT* 44:30 and *CT* 44:32

The Old Babylonian Sumerian monolingual Forerunners to the *Udug Hul* series

An Old Babylonian incantation against *Lamaštu*⁷⁸

Of course, attestations of the good *udug* are vastly outnumbered by those where it acts as its malevolent counterpart. In examining this limited corpus, one pattern becomes immediately clear: the ever-present pairing of the *udug sa₆-ga* and the *lama sa₆-ga*. When the *udug* does appear benevolently, it is coupled with the other protective spirit, and the *udug*'s role in these texts is informed by the role the *lama* traditionally plays. The *lama*, which is by its nature benevolent, appears to act as an example which the *udug* follows. Furthermore, the *udug*, when it appears benevolently, appears in a set phrase and is thus even further distanced from any unique identifying characteristics, sparse though they may have been when seen in conjunction with the evil attestations of the demon. That phrase, when it appears in incantations, follows this

⁷⁸ See M. V. Tonietti, "Un incantesimo sumerico contro la *Lamaštu*," *Or* 48 (1979): 301-23.

general pattern:

udug sa₆-ga ^dlama sa₆-ga he₂-em-da-su₈-su₈-ge-eš⁷⁹
May the good udug and the good lama stand (as guardians)

While there is some variation possible – the alteration of the verb of su₈-su₈ with re₇-re₇ 'to go',⁸⁰ the basic principle remains intact. The phrase appears close to the end of each incantation wherein it appears, an assurance that the patient will be relieved from his sickness and returned to good health.

The texts are not contradicted by the simultaneous presence of the udug hul and udug sa₆-ga. In the Old Babylonian texts that serve as monolingual Sumerian versions later incorporated into the standard Babylonian Udug Hul series, the good udug appears in an incantation defined as ka inim-ma udug hul-a-kam, or "it is the wording of the incantation of the evil udug." In this incantation (from which the earlier description of the udug as one without a name or shape also springs) the closing lines of the Sumerian text are as follows:

[udug] ḥul¹ e₂-a ba-ra-an-k[u₄-ku₄-de₃]
[udug hul dab₅-ba]-ni bar-še₃ he₂-em-ta-g[ub]
[udug sa₆-ga ^dlam]a sa₆-ga he₂-en-da-su₈-su₈-g[e-eš]⁸¹

So that the evil udug may not enter the house,
May the evil udug that seized her stand aside!
May the good udug and the good lama stand (as guardians).

The immediate question here becomes whether the evil udug is to be distinctly differentiated from the good udug. While the nebulous nature of the term could stretch to accommodate that line of analysis, with the good udug standing as a demon separate from its evil counterpart, it is a conclusion that does not stand up to rigorous investigation: the udug is described as a distinct

⁷⁹ For this particular example, see *CT* 44.30, 34.

⁸⁰ As seen in *VS* 17.13, 14

⁸¹ The "her" in this incantation is once more the maiden, or ki-sikil; however, it is not clear whether the good udug and lama spirits are meant to stand beside her, or the exorcist who would be performing the incantation itself. Transliteration follows Geller, *Forerunners to Udug-hul*, 46-47.

(albeit shapeless and formless) demon in this incantation, and there is no evidence to suggest that the good udug is distinct from the udug when it appears an independent demon. Instead, the good udug is under the power of the exorcist and works to aid him.

The incantation against Lamaštu, edited by M.V. Tonietti,⁸² follows the general theme seen in these incantations by invoking other demons in order to combat Lamaštu, a parallelism that is most clearly seen when Pazuzu is pitted against Lamaštu. Unlike those texts, where Pazuzu appears to assume the speech commonly assigned to the exorcist, the exorcist remains the primary actor in this text. The incantation is structured along similar lines to a Marduk/Ea incantation and Asalluḫi is invoked early on as the child of Eridu, drawing on his link to the mystical pure-water source, the Apsû, which lies beneath the city, and his father, Enki. The incantation itself is identified as ka inim-ma ^ddim_x-me, or, "it is the wording of the incantation against Lamaštu."⁸³ The list of gods invoked against the demon includes Anu, Enlil, Enki, and Nergal, with Lamaštu herself defined within the incantation as the child of Anu, or dumu an-na.⁸⁴ The inclusion of Nergal among the deities is also of note, though the netherworld deity is not otherwise unattested among this, or a similar list of deities called upon in incantations.⁸⁵ He also appears alongside other netherworld deities in similar texts.⁸⁶ Of more immediate concern is the latter half of the incantation – although the Marduk/Ea incantation formula has not appeared, even in an abbreviated form, its structure of providing instructions in the second-person, followed by the imminent results of such orders, which is then rendered in the

⁸² See Tonietti, "Un incantesimo sumero contro la Lamaštu," 301-23. Discussed in Farber, *Lamaštu: Edition of the Canonical Series*, 7-8 as a possibly independent incantation, separate from the late, more major, series of Lamaštu incantations.

⁸³ TIM IX 63 5'

⁸⁴ TIM IX 63 6' and 17', respectively.

⁸⁵ See W.G. Lambert, "An Old Babylonian Letter and Two Amulets," *Iraq* 38 (1976): 62. Lambert translates a sparse exorcistic text that lists the names of Enlil, Enki, and Nergal in succession.

⁸⁶ See Lambert, "Letter and Two Amulets," 57-64. Lambert cites an incantation amulet that commands the demon to be exorcised by Nergal, Ereškigal, Namtar, and Ḫušbiša, the wife of Namtar.

precatative, is still intact within the text:

nam-šub eridu^{ki}-ga u₃-me-šum₂
d^dudug hul a-la₂ hul d^dgidim hul gal₅-l[a₂] hul
d^ddim₃-me d^ddim_x-a
lu₂ hul igi hul ka hul eme hul
bar-še₃ he₂-im-ta-gub
d^dudug sa₆-ga d^dlama sa₆-ga he₂-im-da-su₈-su₈-ge-eš
zi an-na he₂-pa₃ zi ki-a he₂-pa₃⁸⁷

When you cast the incantation of Eridu,
The evil udug, evil ala, evil ghost, evil galla,
Lamaštu, Labašu,
Evil man, evil eye, evil mouth, evil tongue -
Then they [all] shall stand aside!
Then the good udug and good lama shall stand (as guardians).
Then it shall be adjured by the heavens, it shall be adjured by the earth.

Here, the evil udug appears in proximity to the good udug, who, unlike in its prior cited attestations, is divinized. This is a trait more characteristic of the *šēdu* demon in its beneficent appearances than the udug, but it is also found in a text where the udug is not only identified as unique, but as unique among a list of other demons.⁸⁸ Given the udug's clear identification within the text, it would be curious for the text to reference two different demons with the same cuneiform sign.

Just as this benevolent role is not confined to incantation texts, neither is the pairing of the udug and lama so limited. However, when traveling into the area of literary texts, the pitfalls of the *šēdu* comparison are more apparent. To cite a literary example, when the udug and lama appear in the second of the two Lugalbanda epics, they are provided as an example for the dire fate that could await Lugalbanda if he insists on traveling alone:

Lugalbanda and the Anzu Bird, 329-332:

⁸⁷ TIM IX 63 35'-41'

⁸⁸ See a similar line in CT 16:39, 14f. Here the text reads:
udug hul a-la₂ hul gidim hul da-ta gub-ba
utukku lemnu alû lemnu šēdu ša ina šahāte izzazzu
The evil udug, evil ala, evil *šēdu* which stand at the side

- 329 me-na-am₃ dili-zu-ne kaskal-e saĝ ba-ra-mu-ri-ib-us₂
 330 ^dudug sa₆-ga-me nam-ba-e-ne-gub-ba
 331 ^dlama sa₆-ga-me nam-ba-e-ne-ĝen-na
 332 ki gub-ba-me-a nam-ba-e-ne-gub-bu-nam
- 329 "Why do you (Lugalbanda) insist on traveling this road all alone?
 330 If our good udug does not stand with you,
 331 If our good lama does not go with you,
 332 You will not again stand with us in our station."

In this particular text, the lack of other demonic entities, coupled with the divinized nature of the udug, indicates that the udug here is potentially meant to represent the *šēdu* demon, rather than the udug itself. The *šēdu* is much more at home in the role of an independent personal protective spirit, and here it is a force that his brothers attempt to press upon Lugalbanda for his own protection. When the, once again divinized, udug sa₆-ga appears in a text of the ruler Rim-Sin, a prayer the ruler directs towards the deity Nanna, it is again without a malevolent udug to compare it against.⁸⁹ Though the text is monolingual Sumerian, the association is clear as the ^dudug and ^dlama are further detailed as guardians of the abula mah – the great gate – and are thus almost certainly apotropaic guardians protecting the entranceway.⁹⁰

The largest difficulty in analyzing these texts, as has been illustrated, is the parallel between the udug demon and the *šēdu*, the demon which stands as the focus of the next brief section. The *šēdu* demon, which can be both positive and negative, is much more commonly represented as a positive force than the udug demon, and can be written with the Sumerograms *alad* or *udug*. So, when is an udug not an udug? When is it instead a *šēdu*? In bilingual texts, this question is easily answered, as the Akkadian reveals the identity of the udug as *šēdu* or *utūkkū*, but when the demon appears in a monolingual Sumerian text, the matter is more difficult. When the udug sa₆-ga appears alone, without the lama, the demon is more confidently

⁸⁹ See .J. Gadd, "Rim-Sin approaches the Grand Entrance," *Iraq* 22 (1960): 157-65.

⁹⁰ ETCSL 2.6.9.4: A prayer to Nanna for Rīm-Sîn (Rīm-Sîn D); see Gadd, "Grand Entrance," 159.

identified as the *šēdu*, as the *udug* lacks the flexibility that would permit it to act benevolently without the *lama* accompanying it. These singular references are, however, very rare occurrences.

Conclusions concerning the *udug* are, in some regards, as tenuous as the demon itself. The nebulous nature of the demon is clear from its attestations, and the multiplicity of possible Akkadian equivalents for the Sumerian term only further complicate the issue. What is clear, however, is that the demon has an inherent tendency towards malicious actions, and even when used to describe a group of demons, the demons within its purview are most often equally malevolent. The demon is a direct threat to mankind in the incantations wherein it appears, inflicting harm that necessitated the intervention of the *āšipu*. Its origins are not detailed in incantations, and it does not fall under the direct command of any major deity. Much like the term, the nature of the *udug* appears to be one of chaotic malignancy, and it appears benevolently only in a pair with the *lama*.

2.3. The *šēdu*

If the *udug* is predominantly evil and the *lama* overwhelmingly good, then the *šēdu* demon is cast between the two, in regards to both its characteristics and its dependency on either demon to determine how it acts in a text. Bilingual texts and lexical lists also provide evidence for equivalence between the *udug* sign and the reading *šēdu*, presenting two potential Sumerograms which could represent the *šēdu* demon. However, the equivalence of *udug* and *utukku* can also exist alongside the *šēdu* (particularly as represented by the divinized *alad* sign) even within the framework of the same text: "The great evil *utukku* roaming in the street, the great evil *šēdu* enveloping like a storm."⁹¹ Here, *utukku* and *šēdu* are represented with the *udug*

⁹¹ Uduḡ Hul, Tablet 3, lines 3-4.

and ^dalad signs, respectively. The *šēdu* here acts in a manner typical of other demons – roaming about, swirling as a storm, drawing upon destructive wind imagery. The restless *šēdu* was capable of seizing individuals, directly harming the afflicted.

Beyond that, however, the *šēdu* was commonly seen as a protective spirit, identified with protective qualities in a similar manner to the *lama*. However, the *lama* has an extensive history of attestations as a protective deity and apotropaic supernatural figure, which served to cement its overall character as an overwhelmingly (though not exclusively) positive figure. The *šēdu*, on the other hand, lacks this entrenched foundation as a beneficial figure, and freely switches from positive to negative roles and appears in its positive attestations, in large part, at a later date in Mesopotamian textual history, primarily during the first millennium.

As an individual protective spirit, the *šēdu* could be strongly associated with one person, to the point where it acquires a significance similar to a guardian spirit. This stance is seen in a Neo-Assyrian letter concerning reports on the health of one Nabû-nādin-šumi, a servant of the king: *ilu(diġir) u ^dšēdu(alad) ša šarri(lugal) bēl(en)-ia ib-ta-laṭ*: "He recovered through [the benevolence of] the god and *šēdu* of the king, my lord."⁹² Here, the *šēdu* and personal deity of the king, working in conjunction with one another, are together responsible for the recovery of the stricken servant. Beyond that, however, they are emblematic of the king's good will and dispatched to serve his purpose.

When the *alad/šēdu* does represent a positive, beneficent figure, it is often (though not exclusively) paired with the figure of the *lama*. In statuary, the two are represented simply as a pair, one *lama* figure matched to one accompanying ^d*alad/šēdu* figure. However, the two are also seen as a chimerical, joint figure, the *aladlammû* (^d*alad.lama*), which appears in the Neo-

⁹² Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, Part I: Texts*, vol. 5/2 of *AOAT* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker, 1970), 204-5, No. 263.

Assyrian period, referenced in royal inscriptions.⁹³ The *aladlammû* itself could appear in a pair with another *aladlammû*, positioned as apotropaic sculptures or reliefs, placed protectively in doorways or by entrances. They were also positioned flanking certain individuals, as depicted on rock reliefs of Sennacherib found by the banks of the Gomel River. The upper register of this relief depicts Sennacherib with the deities Aššur and Ninlil, but the lower register is dedicated to an armed, gigantic, hero-figure, flanked by two equally huge *aladlammû* beasts.⁹⁴

The confluence of the two protective figures into one joint figure is tentative and not always represented as such: the creature may be written as "d^{alad}meš u d^{lama}meš," as in one recension of an inscription of Esarhaddon and thus seen as two separate creatures. In the majority of attestations of this inscription, however, *aladlammû* is written as "d^{alad}.d^{lama}meš," indicating a conjoining of the two figures into one beast.⁹⁵

The joint figure does differ from its predecessors: while the lama is primarily a female protective spirit, the *aladlammû* figures are bearded, human-headed bulls, and clearly male.⁹⁶ The colossal figure *apsasû* (^{munus}ab₂.za.za), in comparison, is depicted as feminine.⁹⁷ Unlike the *udug*, which lacked basic descriptions and particular characteristics, beyond what would be commonly found for most demons, the *alad* or *šēdu* is increasingly described and specialized, given physical shape through statuary depictions, and a certain gender attached to it. Those characteristics remain constant, though the benevolent nature of its actions within different texts

⁹³ CAD A volume 1, 286-87.

The name of this bull colossus is always written logographically, and so the Akkadian reading of *aladlammû* is unattested, but it remains the most probable interpretation of the signs. See B. Landsberger and Th. Bauer, "Nachträge zu dem Artikel betr. Asarhaddon, Assurbanipal," *ZA* 37 (1927): 218-219.

⁹⁴ T. Ornan "The Godlike Semblance of a King: Sennacherib's Rock Reliefs," in *Ancient Near Eastern Art in Context: Studies in Honor of Irene J. Winter by her Students*, vol. 26 of *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East*, eds. J. Cheng and M. Feldman (London: Brill, 2007), 167.

⁹⁵ Rykle Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien*, vol. 9 of *AfO Beih.*, ed. Ernst Weidner (Osnabrück: Biblio-Verlag, 1956), 61-62.

⁹⁶ Jeremy Black, Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (London: British Museum Press 1992), 115.

⁹⁷ CAD A vol. 2 *apsasû*. In the Old Babylonian period, the ^{ab₂}za-za is an animal in its own right, the zebu or water buffalo, and appears in the text of Enlil and Sud, among others.

do not.

2.4. The Benevolent Lama

Among all the supernatural beings discussed so far, the lama is the least ambiguous, at least in terms of its moral alignment. With but a few exceptions, it is a benevolent figure. Within incantations, it stands by the side of the *āšipu*, offering its protection and support. Beyond that, the lama has a long history of attestations within personal names, the earliest of which are seen in the third millennium.⁹⁸

A female protective figure, the lama itself has a history of being identified both as a deity, albeit one with distinctly protective qualities, and a protective spirit, associated with an individual or with a specific place. The two roles are not mutually exclusive, as – particularly in Lagaš – the patron deities of cities had among their main responsibilities the protection and security of the city.⁹⁹

The oldest references to the lama are from Lagaš, one dating from the twenty-fourth century B.C., during the reign of Enannatum I. This text is a simple list of canals, each accompanied by the name of both a fish and a snake, intending to act as clues to identify the city to which these animals belong. In effect, the text is a list of riddles. Other deities listed, presumably for other cities, include Hendursaġa and Ninġirsu, who, along with lama sa₆-ga, were well known as deities of the Lagaš region. The lama appears in this list of riddles as a city's patron deity:

ku₆-bi ʾKA ʾ-sur muš-bi muš-an
i₇-bi ^dlama-igi-bar
diġir-bi ^dlama sa₆-ga

⁹⁸ Robert A. Di Vito, *Studies in Third Millennium Sumerian and Akkadian Personal Names: the Designation and Conception of the Personal God*, vol. 16 in *StPohl SM* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993).

⁹⁹ Gebhard Selz, "Studies in Early Syncretism: the Development of the Pantheon in Lagaš, Examples for Inner-Sumerian Syncretism," *ASJ* 12 (1990): 116.

Its fish is the...fish; its snake is the "snake of heaven,"
Its canal is the Lama-igi-bar,
Its deity is the good lama.¹⁰⁰

Here, the lama figure is clearly identified as the city's own deity, responsible for its protection. Though the city itself is not known (the name of the city is not preserved in the text), the pattern establishes that the lama is considered not only a protective figure, but a deity in her own right.

The link between the lama and protection is reiterated in other texts. The following za₃-mi₃ hymn, a praise to the deity, compiled from numerous sources all from the city of Abū Šalābīkh, reinforces the protective power of the lama and its early role as a beneficent deity, particularly in relation to cities:

lama an-ki
ama unug(?) ga he₂-nun
^dlama sa₆-ga za₃-mi₃

The lama of the heavens and earths,
The mother in Uruk[?], may she be foremost
Praise to the good lama¹⁰¹

The reading of this passage, it should be noted, is difficult and unclear. Considering this interpretation, this lama is then associated not with a smaller city in the Lagaš region but potentially with the major city of Uruk. As she was not the tutelary deity of this larger city, it divorces her divine protective abilities from the local, small scale cities she may have been directly responsible for. This division signals the major split in the lama, as she moves from being a deity to a protective spirit, often still divinized, but under the control of other deities,

¹⁰⁰ R.D. Biggs "Pre-Sargonic Riddles from Lagash," *JNES* 32 (1973): 29.

¹⁰¹ See Robert D. Biggs, *Inscriptions from Tell Abū Šalābīkh, OIP 99* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 50.

Another early attestation underscores the deified nature of the lama:

i₇-bi ^dlama igi-bar diġir-bi ^dlama sa₆-ga u₈-ganun dumu-nun

See Gebhard Selz, *Untersuchungen zur Götterwelt des altsumerischen Stadtstaates von Lagaš*, vol. 13 of *OPSNKF* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 158-59.

assigned to them as beneficent protective spirits, just as she appears as a protective spirit of kings and exorcists.

In sum, the lama appears in two major functions: first, as a protective deity of a city, the divine lama sa₆-ga (and in the case of the attestations from Lagaš) as a deity onto herself.¹⁰² This appears to be itself an earlier function, based upon the relative chronology of attestations of the ^dlama sa₆-ga, which is bolstered by early references to her possessing a specific temple, as in two inscriptions of the Early Dynastic ruler Urukagina (c. 2350 BC), which describe him dedicating just such a temple:

^d [lama] sa ₆ -ga-[ga]	For the good lama,
ġiš-i[gi-tab]-ba-ni	His <i>attention</i> ? ...
e ₂ -ni mu-na-du ₃	He built for her her temple ¹⁰³

This line is repeated, verbatim, in another, similar, text of the ruler. The temple Urukagina is constructing for the lama is indicative of her status as a deity in her own right in this early period and stands in contrast to later attestations wherein she is regarded as a protective spirit but not necessarily as an independent deity. While it should be noted that her attestations, particularly in regard to temples and offerings, are clustered in Lagaš, which had its own pantheon, ^dlama is found in personal names from Ur in the Early Dynastic period, and from Umma and Nippur in the Pre-Sargonic period, in addition to a number of attestations from Lagaš.¹⁰⁴ The use in personal names, above anything else, stands as proof positive that the deity must have possessed a strong protective connotation in common use.

Regardless, in context of temples, the lama appears relegated to an occasional fixture as statuary in the temples of other deities but claims no temples of her own. In general, demons and

¹⁰² Åke W. Sjöberg, "A Hymn to ^dLama-sa₆-ga," *JCS* 26 (1974): 159.

¹⁰³ Urukagina I ii 6-9; see Dietz Otto Edzard, *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁴ Di Vito, *Sumerian and Akkadian Personal Names*.

other spirits lack temples dedicated exclusively to them and it is only in the first millennium, for example, that the Sebettu have a temple dedicated exclusively to them, when they have acquired more of a divine standing.¹⁰⁵ Here, the Sebettu demonstrate a development inverse to that of the lama: whereas the Sebettu appear to gain greater prominence as deities over time, the lama becomes increasingly developed as an individual protective spirit instead of a singular deity.

As with other demons described in this section, the lama is a complicated entity. In addition to the attestations cited so far, the ^dlama sa₆-ga also appears in what seems to be apposition to the names of female deities, as seen in an inscription of Ur-Ninĝirsu, another early ruler in Lagaš (c. 2080 BC), who is better known in connection to his more famous father, Gudea. Here, the text describes a temple built for the lama of another goddess:

[^dla]ma sa₆-ga [^dn]in-sun₂ [diĝir]-ra-ni
[e₂] uru-ku₃-ga-ka-ni [m]u-na-du₃

For the good lama, Ninsun, his goddess,
He built her temple in Uru-ku¹⁰⁶

The placement of ^dlama sa₆-ga within the text of the inscription is ambiguous, presenting the problem of translating the text either as above or treating ^dlama sa₆-ga as an epithet of Ninsun and thus translating the initial line as "for the benevolent protective goddess, Ninsun, his goddess..."¹⁰⁷ In his article on the ^dlama sa₆-ga and edition of an Old Babylonian bilingual text dedicated to the figure in connection to the goddess Baba, Åke Sjöberg confronts this issue as it appears in one text:¹⁰⁸

^dlama-re kisal uru-ku₃-ga-za saĝ-ĝe₆-ge-zu si ša-ra-ab-sa₂-e

¹⁰⁵ Al-Rawi, "Temple of the Sebettu at Khorsabad," *Sumer* 13 (1957): 219-21.

¹⁰⁶ See YBC 2128, 2'-6'. Dietz Otto Edzard, *Gudea and His Dynasty*, Vol. 3/1 of *RIME* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 8-9.

The e₂ uru-ku₃-ga was the location of the e₂-tar-sir₂-sir₂ temple of Baba, as well as other sanctuaries, essentially the sacred precinct in the city of Girsu. See Andrew George, *House Most High: the Temple Lists of Ancient Mesopotamia* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 22.

¹⁰⁷ See again Edzard, *RIME* 3/1, 8-9., where the line is translated in this manner.

¹⁰⁸ *CT* 36 39:18ff. See Sjöberg, "Hymn to ^dLama-sa₆-ga," 160.

^dba-ba₆ ^dlama-re kisal uru-ku₃-ga-za saĝ-ĝe₆-ge-zu si ša-ra-ab-sa₂-e

The lama leads the black-headed people to you, into your courtyard in uru-ku₃,
Baba, the lama leads the black-headed people to you, into your courtyard in the
uru-ku₃,

Here, Sjöberg considers the lama figure as one independent from the goddess Baba, understanding the lama as a subservient spirit to Baba herself. While female divinities could be described as the protective deities of certain cities or lands, the lama was also an independent spirit working with these deities.¹⁰⁹ What this text further reinforces is the positive nature of the lama. Unlike many of the lama's attestations, the lama here is not written as ^dlama sa₆-ga, but merely ^dlama. Despite that, the lama is clearly a positive figure within the framework of the text, acting as a shepherd over the people of Larsa and working in conjunction with the goddess Baba, who is associated with healing deities, a role she held from the Old Babylonian period onwards.

In contrast to the earlier, chronologically speaking, view of the lama as a deity with its own, dedicated temple, the lama is seen here as a protective figure. She can function together with a particular deity but can also be attached to an individual, and her removal or departure would cause that person harm or ill fortune. She can furthermore be placed within, or subordinate to, the temple and powers of another god. Two references from the Old Babylonian period demonstrate this nature of the lama, particularly in connection with the goddess Inanna or Ištar. The first example comes from a hymn to the goddess from this period, called Inninšagurra after its opening line (in-nin-ša₃-gu₄-ra).¹¹⁰ The line in question well represents the qualities cited above:

Inninšagurra, Line 123:

¹⁰⁹ See *KAR* 128 r.31

¹¹⁰ Åke W. Sjöberg, "In-nin ša-gu₄-ra: A Hymn to the Goddess Inana by the En-Priestess Enheduanna," *ZA* 65 (1975): 161-253.

me teš₂ ^dalad₂ ^dlama ki-šu-peš zu-zu [^dInana za-a-kam]
du-tam ba-aš₂-tam ši-da-am [la]-ma-sa-am ma-ḥa-za-am wu-du-um

[It is in your power, Ištar,] to assign vigor, divinity, and alad and lama [male and female] protective spirits to the cult centers.¹¹¹

The line comes in the midst of a list of Inanna's qualities; namely, that which is given to her and what she is herself capable of performing. Unlike the previously cited hymn, where the lama works in connection with the deity Baba, acting on her behalf to shepherd people to her, the lama and *šēdu* figures here are subordinate to and dependent upon the powers of Ištar, as figures dependent upon her for their own abilities.

This action is repeated on a more human scale in Ammiditana's twenty-ninth year name, which recounts:

mu am-mi-di-ta-na lugal-e ^dlama ^dlama bar su₃-ga-ke₄ nam-ti-la-ni-še₃ šu am₃-mu₂-
mu₂-am₃ ku₃-sig₁₇ huš-a ^{na4}kal-la-bi-da-ke₄ šu-am₃ bi₂-in-da-ra-du₇-a
bi₂-in-dim₂-dim₂-ma-a ^dinana ereš gal kiš^{ki}-a saḡ lugal-la-na-ke₄ an-ši-in-ib₂-il₂-la-
aš in-ne-en-ku₄-ra

The year in which Ammi-ditana the king made and adorned with reddish gold and precious stones powerful protective deities, who pray for his life, and brought them to Inanna the great lady of Kiš who raises the head of the king.¹¹²

Here, the king himself has commissioned these protective statues and dedicated them to the divine figure, Inanna. Unlike the udug, however, the lama and *šēdu* have definitive and concrete form – something best attested through the presence of monumental guardian figures, as detailed in the prior section dedicated to the *šēdu*. However, these smaller protective figures were also of considerable importance, given their commemoration in a year name.

The lama appears to function, as with the udug, in a broader sense: when Samsu-iluna is recounting his achievements in a bilingual inscription, he lists among them the restoration of the

¹¹¹ J.J.A. Van Dijk, "Textes Divers du Musée de Baghdad, II," *Sumer* 13 (1957): 72.

¹¹² A. Ungnad, "Die Chronologie der Regierung Ammiditana's und Ammišaduga's. Mit elf Seiten autographierter Texte," vol. 6 of *BA*, ed. Friedrich Delitzsch and Paul Haupt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1907), 1-53.

E-babbar temple, described as follows:¹¹³

67	e ₂ -babbar-ra šu-gibil im-mi-ak	<i>é-babbar ú-ud-di-iš</i>
68	u ₆ -nir gi-gun ₄ -na mah-ne-ne	<i>ziqqurat(u₆.nir) gi-gu-na-šu-<nu></i> <i>ši-ra-am</i>
69	saĝ-bi an-gin ₇ mi-ni-il ₂	<i>re-ši-ša ki-ma ša-me-e ú-ul-li</i>
70	^d utu ^d iškur	<i>^dšamaš(utu) ^diškur(im) ù da-a</i>
71	^d še ₃ -ri ₅ -da-bi	
72	ki-tuš ku ₃ -ne-ne-a	<i>a-na šu-ub-ti-šu-nu el-le-tim</i>
73	asila ni ₂ -hul ₂ -hul ₂ -la-bi-še ₃	<i>in re-ša-tim ù ħi-da-tim</i>
74	mi-ni-ku ₄	<i>ú-še-ri-ib</i>
75	e ₂ -babbar-ra	<i>a-na é-babbar ^dlama(lama)-šu</i>
76	^d lama sa ₆ -ga-bi im-mi-gi ₄	<i>da-mi-iq-tam ú-te-er</i>

I renovated the E-babbar, raised high as heaven the top of the ziqqarrat, their lofty gignunu temple, (and) brought the gods Šamaš, Adad, and Aya into their shining dwelling amidst joy and rejoicing. I returned to the E-babbar its good, protective lama.

Here, the lama is linked to another deity through, again, their occupancy of her temple. Unlike the reference to the lama figures of Inanna, which depend on the goddess for their own protective abilities, this lama belongs to the temple itself, and it is not specified which of the three deities cited in the text may claim the lama as its own.

From all these attestations, the lama's function seems straightforward enough: first, a protective deity; and, later, a protective spirit. However, her role can be far more complicated. The lama sa₆-ga appears in three city lamentations from Mesopotamia, in similar roles within each. These texts typically describe the destruction that befalls a particular city, and the devastation of its inhabitants, until the once-thriving city is left as a desolate mound. The lama is used to herald the destruction of each city, in a similar fashion to its appearance in *Lugalbanda and the Anzu Bird*. The three texts include the Old Babylonian texts *Zibum Zibum of Enlil: Arise!* *Arise!* and *Elum Gusun: Honored One, Wild Ox*, and the first millennium text called *Mutin*

¹¹³ Douglas Frayne, *Old Babylonian Period (2003-1595 BC)*, Vol. 4 of *RIME*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) 374-378.

*Nunuz Dima: Fashioning Man and Woman.*¹¹⁴ There are clear similarities to how the lama appears in each. In *Zibum Zibum*, the reference appears in the midst of a long list of gods: the narrative has moved to the temple of Enlil, where prayers are offered first to the temple's titular deity, and then to a long list of other deities, wherein the lama is also referenced:

Zibum Zibum of Enlil, a+247:

^dlama sa₆-ga sila ġi₆ eden-na
The good lama of the deep shade of the street¹¹⁵

The references to the lama become more complex in the two other lamentations where she appears. If we proceed chronologically, the protective figure is then referenced in the Old Babylonian version of the text:

Elum Gusun, Old Babylonian e+188:

^dlama sa₆-ga me-lam₂ an-na
The good lama, the radiance of the heavens¹¹⁶

Old Babylonian e+231:

^dlama sa₆-ga sila ġi₆ eden-na
The good lama, the deep shade of the street

The first millennium version of this text contains bilingual attestations of these lines:

Elum Gusun, (First Millennium) c+140:

^dlama sa₆-ga me-lam₂ an-na
la-mas-si dam-qu šá me-lam-mu-šú šá-qu-u
The good lama, the radiance of the heavens
The good lama, the one of towering radiance

¹¹⁴ Mark E. Cohen, *Canonical Lamentations of Ancient Mesopotamia (CLAM)*, Vol. 1, (Potomac: Capital Decisions Ltd., 1988).

¹¹⁵ Mark E. Cohen, *CLAM*, Vol. 1, 362.

¹¹⁶ *CLAM* 282, note that this line differs in one manuscript, writing in ^dalad₂-sa₆-ga for ^dlama-sa₆-ga. See Samuel Noah Kramer, "BM 96927: A Prime Example of Ancient Scribal Redaction," in *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*, ed. Tzvi Abusch, John Huehnergard, and Piotr Steinkeller, vol. 37 of *HSS* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 251-70, as obv. i, ii are a duplicate to this text.

Elum Gusun, (First Millennium), c+188:

^dlama sa₆-ga sila dagal-la eden-na

^dŠU-ma da-mi-iq-tú šá re-bit ú-[...]

The good lama of the street, of the desert

The difference in the text in c+188 is problematic when compared to the clearer phrase of sila ḡi₆ eden-na, "the deep shade of the street," a phrase with its own interpretative history. The connotations of sila-ḡi₆ eden-na are clearly protective when referring to the abilities and qualities of the lama, as when the term elsewhere appears: ama-ḡu₁₀-da nu-me-a sila-a-ḡi₆ eden-na i-em₃-mi-in-sar-re, "without my mother, you would be driven out from the deep shade of the street," which appears in a text wherein Inanna is attempting to convince her then husband-to-be, Dumuzi, of the superiority of the family he will be marrying into.¹¹⁷

In this text, however, the lama, while maintaining its strong protective connotations, is also described as belonging to the steppe, although this variation is notably seen only in the first millennium recension of the text and is not present in the earlier, Old Babylonian text. These are not issues that the last lamentation text, *Mutin Nunuz Dimma*, simplifies:

Mutin Nunuz Dimma, c+266:

^dlama sa₆-ga me-lam₂ an-na

la-mas-si dam-qu šá me-lam-mu-šú šá-qu-u

The good lama, the radiance of the heavens

The good lama, the one of towering radiance

Mutin Nunuz Dimma, c+314:

^dlama sa₆-ga sila-dagal-la eden-na

^dšu-ma da-mi-iq-tú šá re-bit ú-[...]

The good lama of the streets, of the steppe

¹¹⁷ Åke W. Sjöberg, "A Hymn to Inana and her Self-Praise," *JCS* 40 (1988): 177.

For the line itself, see Samuel Noah Kramer, "Cuneiform Studies and the History of Literature: the Sumerian Sacred Marriage Texts," *PAPS* 107 (1963): 493-494. See also M. Civil, "Early Dynastic Spellings," *OrAnt* 22, (1983): 1-5, wherein Civil describes a similar interpretation of the term, citing it in reference to kiri₆ 'orchard.'

These lines occur, as in the other texts, in the middle of the standard long list of deities to whom prayer is offered in an attempt to pacify them. In the second of the two references, the lama-sa₆-ga appears after citations of the netherworld deity Nergal. The inclusion of the phrase "the good lama of the steppe" appears incongruous to the inherently protective nature and duty of the guardian spirit. The steppe is traditionally the domain of more antagonistic supernatural entities, and to stray into the steppe is to risk danger and one's potential, and almost certainly grisly, demise. Furthermore, a protective deity retreating to the steppe is an act linked to abandoning the city it was to protect, as seen in the Uruk Lament:

^dalad sa₆-ga-bi im-ta-an-e₃-[e-eš] ^dlama-bi ba-da-an-k[ar-re-eš]
^dlama-bi eden-na bar-bi₂-ib-da gir₃-kur₂ ba-ra-an-dab₅-be₂-[eš]

Its good alad left; its good lama ran away;
 Its lama (said) "hide in the steppe!"; they took unfamiliar paths.¹¹⁸

Here, when calamity is about to strike the city of Uruk, the abandonment of Uruk by its protective alad(*šēdu*) and lama deities is a sure sign of the city's impending and, at this point, inevitable destruction.

The retreat of one's protective spirit was as damaging to an individual as to a city, as their presence or absence is indicative of good or ill fortune, respectively. The presence of a lama spirit is synonymous with a favorable omen outcome and can be attached to individuals, cities – as the city lamentation texts have shown – or armies themselves.¹¹⁹ The examples cited during the above analysis of the good udug stand well as a basis for the analysis of the role of the lama in incantations, where she acts as an aide to the exorcist. She may appear on her own, and thus does not always need to work in conjunction with another spirit. The characteristics of the lama,

¹¹⁸ M.W. Green, "The Uruk Lament," *JAOS* 104 (1984): 268.

Note in this text that while the *šēdu* is identified explicitly as 'good,' the ^dlama bears no such distinction, and still maintains its positive attributes within the text.

¹¹⁹ For the last, see *KAR* 446:2.

as deity or personal spirit, may be somewhat ambiguous but the nature of the spirit is not. Unlike the *udug*, with its complicated and poorly-resolved history of development through its attestations, the earliest appearances of the *lama* define her first and foremost as a protective deity. In later appearances where she is a personal spirit, the same protective nature remains prominent.

2.5. The Occasionally Malevolent Lama

Of course, there are exceptions to the good nature of the *lama*, though they are few and far between. Of the references to the *lama*, the overwhelming majority are positive and the figure serves a benevolent function, often indicated by the inclusion of the adjective *sa₆* "good," modifying *lama* or made clear from the narrative of the text when the *sa₆-ga* modifier is not included. However, there are instances where *lama* occurs in a negative, antagonistic context, as is seen in three texts:

- A hymn to Inanna as the goddess *Ninegala* (*Inanna D*)¹²⁰
- A *šir₃-gid₂-da* to *Ninisina* (*Nininsina A*)¹²¹
- An Old Babylonian Sumerian Incantation, BM 92670 (*CT* 44.26)

The first two texts listed are literary texts, both associated with particular goddesses. Of the three texts, the hymn to Inanna stands apart. The Old Babylonian incantation, the third text listed, is against a demonized disease, and the second text, dedicated to *Ninisina*, has a narrative similar to that of an incantation, as the goddess is called upon to effect healing in a stricken individual.

The hymn to Inanna, on the other hand, does not deal with illness but instead is rife with imagery that falls in line with the goddess's warlike nature. Within this text, the ^d*lama hul*,

¹²⁰ Numbered as in the corpus listed on the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL 4.07.4). See published edition in: Hermann Behrens, *Die Ninegala-Hymne: die Wohnungnahme Inannas in Nippur in altbabylonischer Zeit*, vol. 21 of *FAS*, ed. Burkhard Kienast (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998).

¹²¹ See edition in: Willem Römer, "Einige Beobachtungen zur Göttin Nini(n)sina auf Grund von Quellen der Ur III-Zeit und der altbabylonischen Periode," in *lišān mit[h]urti*, vol. 1 of *AOAT* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Verlag Butzon & Bercker, 1969): 279-305.

accompanied as ever by the ^dudug hul, behaves in a fashion congruent with that martial imagery. The text is fragmentary in the section where the udug and lama appear; however, what is present is as follows:¹²²

- 156 sila-dagal ušumgal na₂-a-gin₇ [zi]-ga [mi]-ni-ib-tum₃-tum₃
 157 ki-sikil-[e] e₂-mah mu-un-šub-be₂ e₂ [X]-[ĝu₁₀]-gin₇ mu-un-gul-e
 158 ĝuruš nam-mah-zu mu-un-zu-a kiri₄ šu ba-ab-tag-ge
 159 ^dinanna [er]eš-me-šar₂-ra-me-en diĝir nu-mu-e-da-sa₂

Lines 161-165 are fragmentary; then follows a break in the text:

- 189 e₂-gal-eden [za₃]-ba um-mi-in-X
 190 [^d]udug hul ^dlama hul gaba-bi im-ta-an-ri
 191 [^d]inanna ereš-me-šar₂-ra-me-en diĝir nu-me-e-da-sa₂
- 156 Into the wide street (the levy of troops) is brought like a crouching lion,
 157 The young woman abandons the e₂-mah, destroys the temple as my...
 158 The young man who knows your great majesty bows in obeisance before
 you.
 159 Inanna, you are the lady of all divine powers; no god can equal you.
- 189 Beside the temple of the desert x x x,
 190 The evil udug and evil lama oppose it,
 191 Inanna, you are the lady of all divine powers; no god can equal you.

Here, the text appears to refer to the literal translation of the phrase – the temple of the steppe – rather than either of the specific temples. As Behrens points out in his edition of the text, the e₂-gal eden also appears in one of the Old Babylonian forerunners to the Udug Hul series, in conjunction with the udug demon.¹²³ In this text, the temple is opposed by the udug and lama, though the demons do not appear to directly oppose Inanna herself.

The next text, an Old Babylonian hymn to the goddess Ninisina, is more transparent in function and describes the intercession of Ninisina on behalf of an individual taken with illness. She not only performs the incantations to dispel the illness that has seized the patient but also stands for him before the great gods Anu and Enlil:

¹²² Transliteration following Behrens, *Ninegala-Hymne*, 58-59.

¹²³ Geller, *Forerunners to Udug-Hul*, 46-47.

45 ku₃ ^dnin-in-si-na ki-mah nam-mu-ne-de₃-en-ku₄-ku₄
 46 ^dudug hul ^dlama hul lu₂-ra šub-ba
 47 ^ddim₃-me ^ddim₃-<me>-a-bi ku₄-ra ġi₆-u₃-na
 48 nam-tar a₂-zag₂-ga lu₂-ra nu-e₁₁-de₃
 49 lu₂-ra su₈-ge-eš u₃ mu-ni-ib-kar
 50 diġir-ni mu-un-ni-ra-a-ni
 51 saġ-ġu₁₀-a ba-an-di-ni-ib-šub-ba
 52 lu₂-bi ensi-ra mu-un-pa₃-de₃ eġir-ra mu-un-zu-zu
 53 lu₂-ulu₃ nam-tar im-ma-an-diri-ga
 54 ku₃ ^dnin-in-si-na siskur mu-na-ab-be₂ a-ra-zu mu-na-ab-be₂
 55 nin-ġu₁₀ ka-tar-ra₂-za im-du-du
 56 tu₆-zu lu₂-ra mu-u-ta-e₁₁-de₃
 57 šul diġir-tuku he₂-em-mu-un-ak¹²⁴

45 Pure Nininsina enters the *grave*,¹²⁵
 46 The evil udug, the evil lama who are set upon the man,
 47 The dimme and dimmea demons who enter at night,
 48 The namtar and asag demons do not leave the patient.
 49 They stand by the patient; he is robbed of sleep,
 50 His god who smites all,
 51 *The one who lays them down before me,*
 52 That man calls out to the dream interpreter, wishing to know the future,
 53 The patient whose illness is exceedingly great,
 54 He pleads to Nininsina, he prays to her,
 55 "My mistress, I come to praise you!"
 56 Your incantation descends towards the man,
 57 So that you will treat him as a youth who has a protective god.

Nininsina, in this hymn, is asked to intercede directly for the patient, who is afflicted with a host of ailments, all demonically induced through the malevolent actions of a number of entities: the lama hul, udug hul, dimme, dimmea, namtar, and asag demons, all named individually and presented in a queue. Aside from the lama and udug, the other demons cited possess unambiguously evil natures. The evil lama here, again with the evil udug, are depicted as directly tormenting the patient, and the protective spirit is instead replaced with a general protective deity.

The final text that details the ^dlama hul is an Old Babylonian incantation, *CT* 44, 26

¹²⁴ Transliteration following text edition in: Römer, "Beobachtungen zur Göttin Nini(n)sina," 285.

¹²⁵ Literally "great place," ki-mah may refer to a cultic location.

(BM 92670), which, the inclusion of the ^dlama hul aside, follows a standard incantation format.

The reverse contains a drawing of a demon, and the text appears matched with *CT* 44, 25 (BM 92669) which, though different in content – it is a difficult incantation dealing with the possible binding and removal of magic affecting the king through the scapegoat medium of a bird – is similar in form, orthography, and also has a drawing of a demon on the reverse of the tablet.

CT 44, 26 (BM 92670)¹²⁶

1 en₂ e₂-nu-r[u]
 2 a₂-sag₃ gig-ga su lu₂-k[a]
 3 lu₂-ulu₃ pap-hal-la tug₃-gin₇ im-mi-[in-dul]
 4 šu-bi ġir₃-bi nu-ub-ši-in-[ġa₂-ġa₂]
 5 nun gal ^den-ki en ka inim-ma-[bi]
 6 ^den-ki-ne-še₃ ^dnun-ki-ne-[še₃]
 7 maš₂-saġ gaba-ri-a ba-an-šum₂
 8 saġ-maš₂ saġ-lu₂-še₃ ba-an-šum₂
 9 gu₂-maš₂ gu₂-lu₂-še₃ ba-an-šum₂
 10 gaba-maš₂ gaba-lu₂-še₃ ba-an-šum₂
 11 mud₂-maš₂ mud₂-lu₂-še₃ ba-an-šum₂
 12 lipiš-maš₂ lipiš-lu₂-še₃ ba-an-šum₂
 13 a₂-zi-da a₂-zi-da-še₃ ba-an-šum₂
 14 a₂-gab₂-bu a₂-gab₂-bu-še₃ ba-an-šum₂
 15 ti-ti-še₃ ba-an-šum ^{uzu}murgu ^{uzu}murgu-še₃ ba-an-šum₂
 16 ġiš-ge-en-ge-na ġiš-ge-en-ge-na ʾba-an-šum₂¹ u₃-mu-e-šum₂

edge

17 igi [su[?]] bar-ra-na šu-u₃-mu-ni-su-<ub>-su-ub

rev.

18 xx [e] AN AŠ ma-na u₃-me-ni-e₃
 19 [z]e₂-ba gi-izi-la₂ u₃-me-ni-bar₇
 20 [gi]dim hul a-la₂ hul su lu₂-ta
 21 [xxx] he₂-eb-ta nun-xxx-di¹²⁷
 22 [xxx]-ra-ne-ta he₂-eb₂-ta-xxx
 23 [^dudug h]ul ^dlama h[ul]¹²⁸

¹²⁶ See Wolfgang Schramm, *Ein Compendium sumerisch-akkadischer Beschwörungen*, vol. 2 of *GBAO*, ed. Brigitte Groneberg (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2008), 40-43, 113-19. Schramm utilizes this text, alongside similar incantations, to create a composite edition of a standard incantation of this type.

¹²⁷ Schramm reconstructs this final verb as gu[ru]d; however, the tablet leaves space for at least one additional sign between the nun and di signs, and he cites no parallel incantations to compare against for this line and its reconstruction.

¹²⁸ Schramm reads this line as [udug si]g₅ ^dlama s[i]g₅ or "the good udug, the good lama," which renders it as inverse in meaning to the translation I have given. The signs in this line are, admittedly, fragmentary; however,

- 24 [xxx] bar-ta¹ (da) su₈-su₈-g[e-e]š
 25 ka inim-ma maš₂ gaba-r[i-ga-kam]
- 1 Incantation:
 2 The evil asag-demon in the body of the man
 3 covers the patient like a garment,
 4 He cannot raise his hand nor his foot,
 5 The great prince Enki, the lord of incantations
 6 To the Enki and Ninki gods
 7 Gave a foremost goat as a substitute:
 8 He gave the head of the goat for the head of the man;
 9 He gave the neck of the goat for the neck of the man;
 10 He gave the chest of the goat for the chest of the man;
 11 He gave the blood of the goat for the blood of the man;
 12 He gave the innards of the goat for the innards of the man;
 13 He gave the right side [of the goat] for the right side [of the man];
 14 He gave the left side [of the goat] for the left side [of the man];
 15 He gave rib for rib; he gave blood for blood;
 16 [He gave] limbs to limbs. After you have given,
 17 *The flesh he has seen*; after you gather it together,
 18 xxx After you come forth,
 19 After you burn away that poison by torch,
 20 The evil ghost, evil ala demon from the body of the patient
 21 May they *leave*.
 22 The evil udug, the evil lama;
 23 They will stand aside!
 24 It is an incantation of the substitute goat

This Old Babylonian incantation replaces each afflicted limb of the patient with one of the substitute animal, thus transferring the ailment entirely to the goat, and drawn out of the patient. Of the evil demons afflicting the patient, the asag, the original antagonist in the incantation, is not depicted as one of the demons cast out of the patient. Though the Marduk/Ea incantation formula is not repeated within the incantation text, the second-person statements are typical to the formula.

So, given the overwhelming presence of the lama as a protective spirit, why is she depicted as malevolent at all? The attestations of her in this context are scattered, and so it

from a collation of the tablet what remains aligns more closely to a "hul" than a "sig₅", particularly when compared against other hul signs on the reverse of the tablet.

cannot be attributed to one scribal mistake or similarly isolated idiosyncrasy. Given the close association of the signs for lama and alad₂, one wonders if the scribe in each instance meant to indicate the latter instead of the lama. While this cannot be as neatly dispelled as we would like – unfortunately, that would require the presence of a bilingual attestation for the ^dlama hul – the presence of the udug in each of these lines, even reconstructed, suggests that the lama should be read as such.

To return to the nature of the lama in these texts, the clearest explanation is that, just as the good udug takes its behavioral cues from the lama in texts where they appear benevolently together, the lama here follows the lead of the normally malignant udug. In these few instances, the connection between the two figures, when they operate as a pair, is a deliberate enough link to overcome the inherent tendency of the lama to be a positive figure. Of the scattered attestations, only one is found in an incantation text, however. Considering the lama's position as a protective spirit, and thus one of the first tools employed by the exorcist in his own defense, to ascribe to her a malevolent position in such a text would be an even greater inversion of her normal role. This stability, as we have seen, is a function of her own entrenched history as a protective figure; similarly, we will now proceed to analyse the earliest attestations to the Sebettu, in the hopes of gaining a similar sense of their foundational characteristics.

Chapter Three: The Seven which Stalk the Land – Examining Early Attestations and Later Malevolence

Although the first attestations of the Sebettu can be found in the late third millennium, they are complicated thanks to being both scarce in number and difficult to interpret in this early period. A firmer foundation of interpretive sources is first seen in the early second millennium, particularly present in Old Babylonian literary sources. This chronological division, however, is not as clear-cut as the divide between millennia. Sumerian literary texts from the Old Babylonian period, especially those written about rulers and other figures of note from the Ur III period, may be later copies or recensions of texts that were circulated in Ur III sources, or they may be entirely Old Babylonian inventions.¹²⁹ Regarding the Old Babylonian texts that are the focus of this chapter, there are no concrete exemplars to tie them to an Ur III origin, though the texts concerning the figure of Gilgamesh have ancillary features that would support such early origins. At this point, the more immediate concern lies with the character of the Sebettu during the confirmed third millennium references.

To revisit the inherent flexibility found in the behavior of "demonic" beings such as the udug and lama, it was clear, although the udug may be predisposed to malevolent behavior, and the lama similarly predisposed to benevolent behavior, their actions within texts are primarily determined by the requirements of the text of the narrative in question, and they shift to

¹²⁹ Flückiger-Hawker discusses the nature of several specific trends in Old Babylonian copies of Ur III inscriptions, hymns, and stela in her work, *Urnamma of Ur in the Sumerian Literary Tradition*, vol. 166 in *OBO* (Freibourg: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 50-56. For examples of Old Babylonian copies of earlier texts, see: Niek Veldhuis, "Guardians of Tradition: Early Dynastic Lexical Texts in Old Babylonian Copies," in *Your Praise is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy Black from Students, Colleagues, and Friends*, ed. Heather D. Baker, Eleanor Robson, and Gabor Zólyomi (London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq, 2010), 379-400.

suit what is required of them. Thus, no inviolable tenets of demonic nature (if such tenets could even be considered possible in the first place) are transgressed if we see a *lama hul* or an *udug sa₆-ga* within a certain text. Although attestations of *lama sa₆-ga* and *udug hul* are, respectively, more common than the reverse, ultimately, supernatural creatures cannot be unilaterally described as either benevolent or malevolent within the Mesopotamian sphere, and the terminology of "good" and "evil," although the easiest means by which to describe these creatures, is inherently flawed, and must be recognized as such.¹³⁰ In a similar fashion, over the broad arc of the history of their attestations, the *Sebettu* appear to wear a number of different costumes – they are destructive, calamitous forces, but that same destructive power may serve to help or hinder the homeland. The literary conventions that underlie and support this flexibility, the ability to move easily from harmful to helpful, will serve as the focus of Chapter Four, while the political narrative that then utilizes it forms the basis of Chapter Five. The task at hand for this chapter, however, is to explore the foundation for the character of the *Sebettu* – so well established by the early first millennium – through the texts that defined it in the Old Babylonian and earlier periods.

3.1. Third Millennium References

There are but a few third millennium references to the *Sebettu*, and they require careful consideration. Wiggermann cites three Pre-Sargonic period mentions of the *Sebettu* (or *si-bí*, as they appear on the tablets themselves) and one potential reference to offerings occurring at an open-air shrine called the *ki^dimin*, appearing in a long list that inventories offerings and other,

¹³⁰ As described in the section of the introduction which deals with similar conundrums of organization and description, although they are imprecise and imperfect, these terms are the easiest and simplest methods to interact with and analyze this material. It is, however, important to recognize the foreign nature of these descriptions in light of the Mesopotamian constructions of the supernatural.

similar objects.¹³¹

At first glance, the citation of the ki ^dimin (or ki diĝir imin) would stand as clear evidence of a cult to the Sebettu extant from the third millennium. Cults to demonic figures at all are anomalous, let alone cults in this early period.¹³² There are several points to first consider. First, we have no way of knowing the identity of this group of seven and whether they should be associated with the Sebettu properly or not. The format typically seen in the name of these open-air shrines such as the proposed ki ^dimin is as follows: ki (place), followed by the name of the particular deity, and thus the reading of ki ^dimin would, within that context, conform to the expected pattern. However, Mesopotamia has a long history of grouping supernatural beings and places in sevens, and even the an (heavens, skies) and the ki (earth, place, netherworld) are found in allotments of seven, to the point where the grouping of seven heavens and seven earths can be seen as a repeated feature of incantations, as well as part of the expected geography of the world, a representation of its furthest reaches, as the Mesopotamian world conceived of its geography.¹³³

Another potential complication with the translation of this phrase lies in the rendering of imin, “seven.” Although the Sebettu – which itself translates literally to “the seven” – can be written as ^dimin, the writing ^dimin-bi is far more widespread and would be the expected logographic or Sumerian writing for the Sebettu. If the diĝir sign in the reading of this offering location is considered as a stand-alone noun – “god” – instead of acting as a divine determinative for imin, the name can be interpreted as “the place [of] the seven gods,” instead of “the place of

¹³¹ Wiggermann, “Siebengötter,” 464.

¹³² The exceptions to the presence of an attested “demonic cult” include both the kūbu demon and the Sebettu. On the kūbū, see: W.H.P. Römer, “Einige Bemerkungen zum dämonischen Gotte Kūbu(m),” in *Symbolae Biblicae et Mesopotamicae: Festschrift für M.T. Böhl*, (Leiden: Brill, 1973), and Mirko Novák and Sabina Kulemann-Ossen, “Kūbu und das Kind im Topf,” *AoF* 27 (2000): 121-31.

¹³³ See Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, vol. 11 of *MC* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011).

the divine Seven (or ^dSebettu).” Each and every one of these constructions assumes a genitive marker where there is, in fact, none present. The proper, grammatical construction for “the place of the seven gods” (where the “seven gods” are not identified as any one particular set of seven) would be better represented as *ki diĝir imin-na*, but such a lapse, in this case, could be accounted for by the difficulties of inserting a group such as “the seven gods” into a structure that anticipates, and is set to receive, a single divine name. Furthermore, genitive markers can often be omitted from common, if not frozen, forms.

In addition to these references, we find Pre-Sargonic mentions of a *diĝir-si-bi*, occurring in three separate texts, which are primarily listings of locations.¹³⁴ In two, the critical phrase appears to be *e₂ diĝir-si-bi*,¹³⁵ written in one of the two instances as *sa¹ diĝir-si-bi*,¹³⁶ the last of the three attestations reads *ur diĝir-si-bi*.¹³⁷ If the reading of the first two attestations is correct, both (assuming in the second case the incorrect writing of *sa* for *e₂*) would translate as “the temple (literally: house) of the Sebettu.” The translation, of course, of “the temple of the seven gods” is equally possible. In either case, the interpretation leaves us with more questions than answers, and the definitive identification of the citations concerning the Sebettu cannot be proven. The existence of cultic evidence from this early period would, furthermore, imply the presence of a cult of worship for the Sebettu that is then otherwise unattested until the latter half of the second millennium, presenting a problematic gap in the continuity of attestations to the Seven. Given all the following concerns, the references discussed above are best considered as interesting, but uncertain, possibilities, and cannot be factored into an overall analysis of the Sebettu.

¹³⁴ The texts are *TSA* 10, 11, and 12: all three are listings of objects and places.

¹³⁵ As seen in *TSA* 12, viii 7.

¹³⁶ *TSA* 11, vii 13.

¹³⁷ *TSA* 10, vi 5.

3.2. The Sumerian Narrative of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*

The earliest certain references to the Sebettu come not from the cultic or ritual sphere, but from the realm of Sumerian literary texts. The focus of this investigation rests upon the Sumerian text of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, which is itself seen in two versions: A and B. These particular texts provide another narrative account of the incident of Gilgamesh and Enkidu's combat with – and eventual triumph over – Huwawa (whose name appears in the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh* as Humbaba).¹³⁸ All the Sumerian texts featuring Gilgamesh (excepting one, *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*, which is found on Ur III tablets) are confirmed only in Old Babylonian and later copies. The relationship between the two versions, A and B, of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, works to establish a potential case for the similar Ur III dating of at least one of the versions.¹³⁹ Although the two versions cover a similar narrative, they differ in critical ways: Version B presents a shorter and simpler narrative than Version A and Version B demonstrates, at times, potential influence from the Akkadian text.¹⁴⁰

Of the two, Version A, as one of the texts of the Decad, was in wide circulation with, at present, 85 identified fragments from the cities of Nippur, Ur, Isin, Kish, Sippar, as well as

¹³⁸ On *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A and B* see: Samuel N. Kramer, "Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living," *JCS* 1 (1947): 3-46; D.O. Edzard, "Gilgameš und Huwawa A. I. Teil," *ZA* 80 (1990): 165-203; D.O. Edzard, "Gilgameš und Huwawa A. II. Teil," *ZA* 81 (1991): 165-233; D.O. Edzard, *Gilgameš und Huwawa: Zwei Versionen der sumerischen Zedernwaldepisode nebst einer Edition von Version "B,"* vol. 4 of *BAW* (München: Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1993).

¹³⁹ There is further evidence for earlier copies of texts featuring the central protagonists of literary texts that gain such prominence in the Old Babylonian period. Principally, we see this with texts concerned with Lugalbanda, who features in an Early Dynastic text (c. 2600) that is unique in comparison to the later texts concerned with Lugalbanda. See Piotr Michalowski, "Maybe Epic: the Origins and Reception of Sumerian Epic Poetry," in *Epic and History*, ed. David Konstan and Kurt A. Raaflaub (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 12-13.

¹⁴⁰ See Daniel Fleming and Sarah Milstein, *The Buried Foundation of the Gilgamesh Epic: the Akkadian Huwawa Narrative*, vol. 39 of *CM* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 16-17 and Tzvi Abusch, "Hunting in the Epic of Gilgamesh: Speculations on the Education of a Prince," in *Treasures on Camels' Humps: Historical and Literary Studies from the Ancient Near East Presented to Israel Eph'al*, ed. M. Cogan et al. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2008), 17-18.

several fragments of unknown provenance.¹⁴¹ In contrast, the shorter Version B is only represented in five sources and its narrative itself plays out quite differently as this text details, in its fragmentary final section, Gilgamesh and Enkidu claiming Huwawa as their servant, to act as their guide. The text breaks off completely soon after and we are left in the dark as to whether Gilgamesh and Enkidu later changed their minds and killed Huwawa, regardless of first co-opting him into their service.¹⁴²

There are several further key differences between the narratives presented in each version. Although Enkidu is addressed as Gilgamesh's servant (if not slave; the Sumerian is *arad-da-ni*) in both, Version A posits a more equal standing of brothers-in-arms for the two than is seen in Version B. Version A depicts a much more involved interaction with Huwawa, including the verbal trickery by which Gilgamesh convinces Huwawa to lower his seven protective auras – *me-lam₂* or *melammu* – enabling his own defeat at Gilgamesh's hands. This particular episode and what it represents within the greater trope of control through subjugation, is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Four (see section 4.1.2). Of all these differences, the most relevant for our purposes is found within the presentation of seven warriors that Utu gives to Gilgamesh. They work to help Gilgamesh on his way to the Cedar Forest and are assigned different qualities in each text.

Seven Brothers, Sons of One Mother:

In *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A*, Gilgamesh pleads for Utu's help on his journey to the

¹⁴¹ The Decad was a set of ten texts that were well circulated as a common element in the Old Babylonian scribal curriculum. See Steve Tinney, "On the Curricular Setting of Sumerian Literature," *Iraq* 61 (1999): 159-172. On the distribution of this text, see Paul Delnero, "Variation in Sumerian Literary Compositions: A Case Study Based on the Decad" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2006).

¹⁴² For Version B, see: D.O. Edzard *Gilgameš und Huwawa: Zwei Versionen der sumerischen Zedernwaldepisode nebst einer Edition von Version "B,"* vol. 4 of *BAW* (München: Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1993).

cedar forest and Utu obliges the warrior by sending him seven warriors who are introduced by a very specific set of imagery – a set of the epithets, in fact, that will describe the Sebetu in nearly every instance where they appear as individuals, instead of as one singular collective of seven figures.¹⁴³

From Paul Delnero's extensive collation of the texts of the Decad, it is clear that the following lines, though fragmentary, were well represented in a number of different copies of the text from several cities, including Nippur, Kish, and Ur. Thus, the inclusion of the detailed epithets for the Seven cannot be confined to one city or its scribal tradition. Furthermore, Delnero's composite score of the text reveals that the large majority of the sources included the two lines (lines 36 and 37) which introduce the seven warriors ("the seven warriors, sons of one mother are they; the first kinsman, the paw of a lion, the talon of an eagle"), although most choose to omit listing the full set of seven, moving instead to the first line after the seventh would be described. What we see below is the full listing of individual epithets for the Seven, along with the different copies wherein each line – or fragment of each line, as the case more often is – appears.

Delnero's compilation of the various sources of this text illustrates the curious variation between the different copies; I follow his notation for the following lines:¹⁴⁴

Line ¹⁴⁵	Extant Copies
36: ur-saĝ dumu ama aš imin me-eš	N _{I1} , N _{I2} , N _{I3} , N _{I4} , N _{I5} , N _{III1} , N _{III4} , N _{III6} , N _{III8} , N _{III9} , N _{III10} , N _{III11} , N _{III30} , N _{P1} , K ₁ , X ₁ , X ₂

¹⁴³ There is, of course, one exception, which is also discussed in this chapter – the references seen for the Sebetu in the *Hymn to Hendursaga* features, uniquely, animal imagery. The hymn is, however, rooted in the Lagaš religious tradition, and may thus be anomalous.

¹⁴⁴ Note, for ease of reference, that N indicates Nippur, K indicates Kish, and Si, the city of Sippar. X is used to indicate that the tablet is unprovenanced.

¹⁴⁵ See Delnero "Sumerian Literary Compositions," 2417. In light of space constraints, I have used his composite text for these lines; the full score of the pertinent lines can, of course, be found in Delnero's edition. The textual variants of each line from source to source are not particularly pronounced nor illuminating, save for the critical fact of the omission or inclusion of the lines at all. See Delnero, "Sumerian Literary Compositions," 2396-2401 for a full list of the tablets: this excerpt follows his numbering.

37: diš-am ₃ šeš gal-bi šu piriĝ-ĝa ₂ umbin hu-ri ₂ -in-na	N _{I1} , N _{I2} , N _{I3} , N _{I4} , N _{I5} , N _{III6} , N _{III9} , N _{III10} , N _{III11} , N _{III30} , N _{P1} , K ₁
37a ₁ : min-kam-ma muš ša ₃ -tur ₃ ka [...] KU šu UŠ	N _{III6} , N _{III9} , K ₁
37b ₁ : eš ₅ -kam-ma muš ušumgal muš [...] x RU	N _{III6} , N _{III9} , K ₁
37c ₁ : limmu-kam-ma izi bar ₇ -bar ₇ [...] ku ₄ -ra	N _{III6} , N _{III7} , K ₁
37d ₁ : ia ₂ -kam-ma muš saĝ-kal ša ₃ gi ₄ -a ub KA x [...]	N _{III6} , N _{III7} , K ₁ , Ur ₃
37e ₁ : aš ₃ -kam-ma a-ĝi ₆ a gul-gul-dam kur-ra gaba ra-ra	N _{III7} , K ₁ , Ur ₃
37f ₁ : imin [...] nim ĝir ₂ -ĝir ₂ -re-lu ₂ nu-da-gur-de ₃	N _{III7} , K ₁ , Ur ₃
37g ₁ : imin-bi-e-ne mu-un-na-ra-an-šum ₂	K ₁ , Si ₃ , ¹⁴⁶ Ur ₃
38: ma ₂ -ur ₃ ma ₂ -ur ₃ hur-saĝ-ĝa ₂ -ka mu-ni-ib-tum ₂ -tum ₂ -mu	N _{I1} , N _{I2} , N _{I3} , N _{I4} , N _{III2} , N _{III3} , N _{III10} , N _{III11} , N _{III12} , N _{III30} , K ₁ , K ₂ , Si ₃ , Ur ₃

The reconstructions of these lines can be translated as follows:

- 36: The warrior, seven sons of one mother are they
37: That first kinsman, their oldest brother, the paw of the lion, the talon of the eagle,
37a: The second, the snake...a mouth...
37b: The third, the dragon...the snake...
37c: The fourth, the burning fire...
37d: The fifth, the foremost snake, overwhelming...
37e: The sixth, the flood (that) is the destructive water in the land, beats upon the knoll in the land,
37f: The seventh, flashing lightning (that) none could turn back,
37g: Those seven (Utu) gave to him,
38: They lead (him) through the shallows of the mountain ranges.

The individual epithets as listed above must be considered in depth, but even a cursory analysis establishes the image of the Sebettu as fierce and terrifying warriors. This imagery repeats when the Sebettu appear as individuals in the bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian standard Babylonian Udug Hul incantation series, as well as the first millennium Akkadian text of *Erra*.

These terrifying epithets are fitting for the martial prowess of the warriors accompanying

¹⁴⁶ As the only word extant in this line for this copy is imin, its inclusion is tentative, though it does follow the next lines of the composite text.

Gilgamesh. They are also one part of a larger system of imagery that continually references the Sebettu, creating links to other demons. This begins as early as the text of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, with its potential earlier, Ur III, roots and continues throughout the entire span of the attestations to the Sebettu, appearing in a number of texts that cite them, among other demonic (or not quite so demonic) entities. One example of this particular pattern can be seen in an excerpt from the later, Standard Babylonian Udug Hul incantation series, which details the following when describing the actions and origins of a group of demons:

en₂ udug hul-gal₂ eden-na a₂ na-an-gi₄
 ú-tuk-ku lemnūtu(hul)^{meš} šá ina še-ri is-su nu-hu-[u]
 ur-saĝ dumu ama diš-a-meš imin-n[a-xxx]
 qar-ra-du [xxx] iš-ta-[at xxx]¹⁴⁷

The evil demons that return to the steppe,
 Warriors, the sons of one mother, the Seven...

Following this segment, there is an unfortunate gap of approximately ten lines, obscuring the narrative, but the parallel to line 36 of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A* is apparent in its citing of the phrase, "the sons of one mother, the Seven." These "brothers" accompanying Gilgamesh may be terrifying, if not monstrous, in their inhuman connotations and descriptions, but they are nevertheless compelled obey Gilgamesh and aid him in his task. Through the imagery common to this group of seven as well as to the Sebettu, in both *Erra* and Udug Hul, a link may be proposed between all three groups of seven. We must then ask who is mimicking whom, or rather, are the epithets given to the brothers intended to merely summon the imagery associated with the Sebettu, or to imply that the brothers are, in fact, the Sebettu themselves? To this end, the two versions of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* should be considered together, but there remains some work to be done on the individual epithets of the Sebettu before engaging with these particular questions.

¹⁴⁷ Udug Hul: Tablet VI: 154'-155'

An Investigation into Fragmentary Epithets

As recounted in the cited passage above, there are seven specific lines of text, each with its own unique imagery, attached to the Sebetu in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*. Some of these references, from the fragmentary state of the text, are not preserved in full, but the references for the first, sixth, and seventh of the Seven are completely presented in the text. The first task at hand, then, is to see what can be reconstructed – or, at the least, proposed as a reconstruction – for the epithets pertaining to the other four Sebetu. To this end, we have three different texts presenting sets of quite similar imagery for the appearances of the Seven, as described as individuals, though in each case there is some variation to be found – as is to be expected, considering the chronological span separating the *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* references, those found in *Erra*, and the standard Babylonian Uduḡ Hul text. There is, however, a certain continuity among references to demons and monsters as a whole, and with these tools at hand reconstructions of some of the fragmentary lines are possible.

The second of the seven includes the clear "ka" (mouth) sign before the line breaks off. In conjunction with the snake (or dragon, as the case may be) in the line, one would expect the image of a gaping-mouthed snake or a similarly snarling creature, in which case, we may expect a similar "gaping" (ĝal₂-tak₄) to follow the ka sign, for which there is certainly space.¹⁴⁸ More problematic are the "ku šu uš" signs found at the end of the line – though their reading is clear, their meaning is anything but. A verbal form would be expected to close the line, but the three signs that are present do not conform to any such verb, leaving us with the image of the snarling snake but no indication of whatever action it may be doing, a similar circumstance for the third

¹⁴⁸ This is, for example, the image to be found in the Uduḡ Hul series, where the second of the seven is a "gaping-mouthed dragon, towards whom no one dares advance" (ušumgal ka ĝal₂-tak₄ lu₂-na-me saĝ nu-un-ĝa₂-ĝa₂-e-da).

of the seventh.

For the fourth of the seven, a parallel line from the literary text Inana B, "raining blazing fire upon the land" (izi bar₇-bar₇-ra kalam-e šeĝ₃-ĝa₂), provides a contextual comparison.¹⁴⁹ Given that possibility, and the ku₄-ra that closes the line, the imagery here may be of the fourth Sebettu, the one who rains blazing fire, entering the homeland, and the line could be thus reconstructed as: izi bar₇-bar₇-[ra kalam-e] ku₄-ra. This would highlight the ability of the Sebettu to cause destruction against both the home and foreign lands. Of the seven, the fifth includes the difficult phrase "ša₃ gi₄-a," which, taken literally, would translate as "which turned the heart," but can most easily be rendered as "overwhelming," referring as it does to the terror emitted by the fifth of the Seven, the muš saĝ-kal, which causes such fear in those approaching it that they retreat. Unfortunately, there is no known parallel to this expression, muddling any potential reconstructions of this entire line.

Role within the Text

Beyond the individual epithets, the Seven play further roles within the narrative itself, appearing as a group to aid Gilgamesh in his journey to the cedar forest. Principally, they act as guides, as they are stated to possess knowledge of the mountain passes.¹⁵⁰ Gilgamesh is greatly pleased by the gift of these seven warriors. The text confuses the matter, however, by having Gilgamesh then call the men of the city to his side. Presumably he thus raises his own, mortal, battle company, but the text appears to conflate the two groups at times, describing Gilgamesh's warriors with language that parallels the Seven warriors (or the Sebettu) proper:

¹⁴⁹ The Exaltation of Inana (Inana B), line 13. See Annette Zgoll, *Der Rechtsfall der En-hedu-Ana im Leid nin-me-shara*, vol. 246 of *AOAT* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1997).

¹⁵⁰ *Gilgamesh and Huwawa B*, the earlier version of this text, has an extended version of this passage that suggests that the astral association of the Sebettu, their role as stars, informs their knowledge of geography.

*Gilgamesh and Huwawa A: 51-57*¹⁵¹

51 dumu uru-na mu-un-de₃-re₇-eš-am₃
 52 diš-am₃ šeš gal-bi šu piriĝ-ĝa₂ umbin hu-ri₂-in^{mušen}-na
 53 ma₂-ur₃ ma₂-ur₃ hur-saĝ-ĝa₂-ke₄ hu-mu-ni-ib-tum₂-tum₂-mu
 54 hur-saĝ diš-kam-ma in-ti-bal^{ĝiš} eren ša₃-ga-ni nu-mu-ni-in-pa₃
 55 hur-saĝ imin-kam-ma bal-e-da-bi^{ĝiš} eren ša₃-ga-ni mu-ni-in-pa₃

51 The sons of the city who went along,
 52 That first (kinsman), their oldest brother, with paws of the lion, the talons
 of an eagle,
 53 Indeed, they led him through the shallows of the mountain passes,
 54 He crossed the first mountain range – he did not find cedar.
 55 He crossed the seventh mountain range and thus he found cedar.

Here, the accompanying warriors are identified in the narrative as the sons of the city – Gilgamesh’s city, to be exact. However, the eldest among them is further identified as possessing monstrous, chimerical physical elements – the claws of a lion and talons of an eagle. One of the hallmarks of the artistic representations of demons is the inclusion of monstrous, bestial features – the head of an animal, or claws/talons instead of feet – on an otherwise human figure. This chimera-like composition has led to the application of the term *Mischwesen*, literally “mixed-being,” for monsters and demons in Mesopotamia as a whole. The goal of the group also parallels the seven warriors introduced earlier, as they also are to lead Gilgamesh through the ma₂-ur₃ ma₂-ur₃ hur-saĝ-ĝa₂ – the shallows (translated literally, portage passes, where boats would be carried from one watercourse to the next) of the mountain ranges. These are both links that tie them very closely to the seven warriors who were introduced fifteen lines prior.

However, their later behavior in the tale is at odds with the terrifying warriors who are described earlier: when Huwawa appears they are seized with paralyzing terror:

63 dumu uru^{ki}-na mu-un-de₃-re₇-eš-am₃
 64 ur-ĝi₇ tur-tur-gin₇ ĝiri₃-ni-še₃ šu ba-an-bulug₅-bulug₅-me-eš¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Transliteration follows Delnero, “Sumerian Literary Compositions,” 2424-25.

¹⁵² Delnero, “Sumerian Literary Compositions,” 2428.

- 63 The sons of the city (that) accompanied him,
64 Like small puppies, they *trembled* by his feet.

If the sons of the city are to be associated with the fearsome Sebettu, they certainly seem to lack the resolve one would imagine their terrifying qualities would provide them. Later in the text, once Gilgamesh has convinced Huwawa to remove his first protective aura (me-lam₂) the “sons of the city who accompanied him” are responsible for bundling it up and taking it away. In this regard, they do serve Gilgamesh, even if it is by doing his basic labor. Given the disparate actions and qualities of the two groups – the seven warriors that Utu bestows upon Gilgamesh and the sons of the city that Gilgamesh himself raises to his aid – it seems that although the text conflates the two at times, they are best considered as independent parties. This is, however, only an argument that may be applied to *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A*. Within the narrative of the (arguably earlier) *Gilgamesh and Huwawa B*, however, the landscape of descriptions identifying the seven brothers changes.

3.2.1. *Gilgamesh and Huwawa B* and Aratta:

The text of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa B* features many of the main narrative points found in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A* but varies in several of the specifics, including the circumstances and epithets used to describe the seven brothers who aid Gilgamesh. The Seven are presented in this text as individuals; unfortunately, the passage is even more poorly preserved than *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A*. Of the seven, brothers one through four are entirely obscured by lacunae, though from the traces it seems clear that they were recorded in the text. The lines that present the brothers are in improving but still imperfect states of preservation, and clearly demonstrate the parallel imagery used to refer to the seven warriors in the two versions of the text:

Gilgamesh and Huwawa B: 42-50

42 [ia₂-kam-ma] xxx [...mu-u]n-tab-tab-e
 43 [aš₃-kam-ma] a-ĝi₆ ul-ul-gin₇ [kur-r]a gaba ra-ra
 44 ʾimin-kam¹-ma nim-gin₇ i₃-gir₂-gir₂-re ʾa₂¹-bi-ʾše₃¹ lu₂ nu-ub-gur-e
 45 e-ne-ne an-na mul-la-me-eš / [k]i-a har-ra-an zu-me-eš
 46 [a]n-na mul ʾxxx¹ il₂-la-me-[eš]
 47 ki-a kaskal-Aratta^{k_r1} zu-me-eš]
 48 dam-gar₃-ra-[gin₇] ĝiri₃-bal zu-me-eš
 49 tu^{mušen}-gin₇ ab-[lal] kur-ra zu-me-eš
 50 ma₂-ur₃ ma₂-ur₃ hur-saĝ-ĝa₂-ka he₂-mu-e-ni-tum₂-tum₂-mu-ne¹⁵³

42 [The fifth]... *burns*,
 43 [The sixth] like a swelling wave, beats upon the knoll in the land,
 44 The seventh flashes like lightning, no man can draw near to its side,
 45 They who shine in the heavens, they know the paths on earth
 46 In the heavens, they shine...they who are raised up,
 47 On the earth, they know the road to Aratta,
 48 Like merchants, they know the trails,
 49 Like doves, they know the crevices of the mountain,
 50 So that they bring him [Gilgamesh] through the mountain ranges.

Version B inserts the text of lines 45-49 in an addition that is unattested in Version A of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*. We see these texts draw a clear parallel to the potentially astral nature of the Sebettu, a theme revisited in the section of *Lugalbanda and the Anzu Bird* discussed later in the chapter. Here, the Sebettu shine in the heavens – an-na mul – positioned as stars would be.

The critical word is found in line forty-nine of the text is ab-[lal], or ab-la₂ as reconstructed by Edzard. When compared to other, very similar lines found in *Gilgamesh*, *Enkidu*, and *the Netherworld*, we see the meaning of "opening" for ab-la₂/ab-lal₃ stands as the only potential meaningful translation.

Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld, Lines 240-243

240 i₃-ne-še₃ ab-lal₃ kur-ra gal₂ u₃-bi₂-in-tag₄
 241 šubur-a-ni kur-ta e₁₁-de₃-mu-na-ab

¹⁵³ Following Edzard's edition of the text. The "e" found in the verb in this final line, "he₂-mu-e-ni-tum₂-tum₂-mu-ne" would normally indicate the presence of the second person; although clearly present in the main tablet preserving this line, the insertion of the second person cannot be reconciled with the text's narrative.

- 242 ab-lal₃ kur-ra gal₂ im-m[a-a]n-tag₄
 243 si-si-ig-ni-ta šubur-a-ni kur-ta mu-un-da-re-ab-e₁₁-de₃
- 240 "Now, when you make an opening in the Netherworld,
 241 Bring his servant up to him from the Netherworld!"
 242 He made an opening in the Netherworld,
 243 By means of his spirit he brought his servant up to him from the
 Netherworld.¹⁵⁴

The Netherworld is given a number of epithets in Mesopotamian texts, often referred to as the kur, a word used in Sumerian to suggest the mountains as well, leading to periodic confusion in translating texts (as well as the potential direction of the Netherworld) with the mountain ranges located on the borders of Mesopotamia. It is also referred to as kur nu-gi₄-a – the land of no return – linking to one of its essential qualities. The topography of the Netherworld is most often described in stories which detail certain gods' attempts to enter or leave its territory. The latter is typically an unsuccessful attempt: the laws of the Netherworld dictate that with the potential exception of divinely appointed messengers, once one has entered the Netherworld it is impossible to leave. Bargains or exchanges may be attempted in order to free the individual who entered the Netherworld, but these hardly guaranteed success.¹⁵⁵

It is most often reached by a road that acts as a pathway from the world above to the one below, and is associated as well with the places of the rising and setting sun.¹⁵⁶ Its situation is rarely specified beyond that, although one text of Inanna's descent to the Netherworld describes

¹⁵⁴ George, *Epic of Gilgamesh*, 754-74.

¹⁵⁵ While Inanna is able to escape, in part or entirely, the Netherworld, through substituting her place with Dumuzi, a similar bargaining attempt appears unsuccessful in the story of Nigišzida's death and trip to the Netherworld. See Jacobsen Thorkild and Bendt Alster, "Nigišzida's Boat-Ride to Hades," in *Wisdom, Gods, and Literature: Studies in Honour of W.G. Lambert*, ed. A.R. George et al. (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 315-44. Nergal is similarly bound by the laws of the Netherworld in "Nergal and Ereškigal," and cannot leave once he enters.

In regard to access to the Netherworld, we do not see a path to the Netherworld as clearly mapped as in Greek and Roman sources. Odysseus, for example, is given explicit instructions on how to reach the Netherworld in the *Odyssey*, as is Aeneas in the *Aeneid*. In the latter case, the Netherworld – and its entrance – is even linked to the quite real location of Lake Avernus. As with the Mesopotamian texts, it is exiting that is the more difficult task.

¹⁵⁶ This association persists throughout Mesopotamian literary history. In the Standard Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, he travels to named mountains where the sun rises and sets. Mehmet-Ali Atac, "The 'Underworld Vision' of the Ninevite Intellectual Milieu," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 67-76.

the path she takes from Uruk to the Netherworld, following the Iturungal Canal upstream and passing the cities of Bad Tibira, Zabalam, Adad, Nippur, Kiš, and finally Akkad, where she enters the Netherworld without crossing over the Hūbur River.¹⁵⁷ Once she has entered the Netherworld, however, she is subject to its laws and must pass through seven gates before reaching her sister, Ereškigal.

Horowitz, in his work on Mesopotamian cosmic geography, further catalogs the various texts that refer to the seven gates or gatekeepers of the netherworld.¹⁵⁸ The gates themselves were individually named and well known, particularly the first gate of the Netherworld, Ganzir, given the epithet *igi kur-ra*, the "front of the Netherworld." This gate, given its significance as the initial entrance to the Netherworld, was a measure of extremity, or a symbol of the Netherworld itself.¹⁵⁹ Although the gates of and within the Netherworld appear to be, in some texts, more coherently defined, these are not the means by which demons enter and exit the Netherworld. One of the few entities capable of leaving and returning to the Netherworld, demons seem capable of making their own pathways through these liminal spaces, whether by clearly designated routes or via more nebulous paths. The Netherworld is thus portrayed as a location that requires innately supernatural qualities to reach and is well suited to the Sebettu.

3.2.2. Constructing Aratta

The Netherworld does not stand alone in the ranks of fantastical or fictional locations. The city of Aratta and its potential location has its own host of problems as a similarly constructed place. As it is used as a point of reference to describe the Seven and their abilities as

¹⁵⁷ Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 353.

¹⁵⁸ Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 348-62.

¹⁵⁹ A.R. George, "Sennacherib and the Tablet of Destinies," *Iraq* 48 (1986): 136. In this text celebrating the gods bequeathing the Tablet of Destinies to Sennacherib, the Tablet itself is described as the "Link of the Canopy of An and Ganšir" (134).

well as the particular depths of their knowledge, the problem of Aratta is one that must now be considered, if only in brief. In discussing the matter of Aratta, the first concern is the status of the city itself – namely, its *fictional* status. Aratta is set as a parallel to Uruk - sharing so many of its features that the two appear to be nearly twinned, but is nevertheless distinctly and uniquely set apart.

While various locations for the city have been proposed over the years, most focusing on references to Aratta's importance in the lapis lazuli trade or proximity to the identified region of Anshan, said to lie to Aratta's west, the city itself remains hidden.¹⁶⁰ Its potential locations have been presented and debated in scholarship on Aratta.¹⁶¹ The city itself, however, is unattested in any economic, administrative, or topographical text – indeed, the only genre where it appears is literary texts.¹⁶² What we have then, is a choice between the possibility of Aratta as a fictional location, or as an actual place, a major city with which Mesopotamia had sustained contact and presumably also engaged in major trade, given Aratta's description as rich in gold, silver, lapis lazuli and other precious metals. The former option is certainly the more plausible and easily supported by the present evidence.

The next task, then, is to examine why such a fictional city was required in the narrative, and what its reappearance in these different texts tells us about the city itself and the underlying culture of the texts which created and substantiated its fictional premise. Aratta exists as a space which is nearly identical to Uruk: their peoples speak the same language, worship the same gods

¹⁶⁰ See Yousef Majidzadeh "The Land of Aratta," *JNES* 35 (1976): 105-13 and J.F. Hansman "The Question of Aratta," *JNES* 37 (1978): 331-36.

¹⁶¹ See D.T. Potts, "Exit Aratta: Southeastern Iran and the Land of Marhashi," *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān* 4 (2004): 1-11, and Michalowski, "Corners of the Universe."

¹⁶² See Michalowski, "Corners of the Universe." While an Uruk III text circa 3000 BCE appears to contain a potential, though not entirely certain, reference to Aratta outside the literary corpus, subsequent scholarship has confirmed the most probable reading of the city as the most decidedly not-fictional city of Šurruk.

as both cities are described as sacred to the goddess Inanna, and by all accounts they seem to hold the same customs. Aratta is useful, then, for its similarities to Uruk, not its differences.

The second point of concern for Aratta governs the creation and discussion of fictional places in general. Unsurprisingly, it is somewhat difficult to find studies of places that never existed but works which deal with the underlying theory behind what cultures experience as they construct narratives of fictional places are thankfully more common. In this regard, I turn to Sumathi Ramaswamy's work on Lemuria, the fictional sub-continent in the Indian Ocean, as it is remembered in Tamil literature.¹⁶³ Ramaswamy's scheme outlines three qualities Lemuria shares with many constructed world counterparts from the Victorian era, and her points prove applicable to Aratta as a constructed place as well.¹⁶⁴ Firstly, the requirement that Lemuria belongs to a time prior to those who made it. In Aratta's case, the second-millennium stories showcase the action of earlier hero-characters and Aratta stands as a constructed stage upon which they can act. Secondly, its existence as a, in Ramaswamy's terms, "paleo-place-world" puts Lemuria (or Aratta) at the mercy of imagination – and thus literature – for its very existence. These places are inaccessible outside of the imaginary venue created by the literary texts they inhabit.

Ramaswamy's final point is that Lemuria is a lost place-world, and the contortions Tamil literature undergoes to process that loss form one of the major themes of her book. Aratta was from its beginning a foreign place, deliberately constructed to create a sense of "the other," a mirror by which the city of Uruk may be viewed. Once we consider Aratta as a constructed space, it neatly fulfills the required function of a rival to Uruk, a foil to the city that demonstrates Uruk's superiority. Aratta becomes the aphelion by which the sphere of influence of Uruk can be

¹⁶³ See Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Lost Land of Lemuria: Fabulous Geographies, Catastrophic Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

¹⁶⁴ Ramaswamy, *The Lost Land of Lemuria*, 6.

measured.

The Seven brothers – or rather, the Sebettu – are credited within *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* B as knowing the path to Aratta. In consideration of the aforementioned arguments concerning Aratta's role within the literary corpus, Aratta is used here as a reference point for the Sebettu, namely, that their knowledge of places on the frontier and beyond it, places outside the homeland of Mesopotamia, is so detailed that they even know the route to Aratta, the furthest possible point that may be referenced.

This thus reiterates that the Seven possess knowledge that extends beyond that of the known world: they are capable of transgressing the boundaries that Gilgamesh would normally be constrained by, and he will need their guidance in order to find the path to the Cedar Forest, which also exists only as a mythical space. Although Aratta lacks the paradisaical connotations associated with many other imagined locations, it retains the sense of being located far beyond the known boundaries of the map – *hic sunt dracones*, in effect.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the reference to Aratta reinforces the indefinable and unconstrained nature of these Seven themselves. If Aratta and the Cedar Forest are spaces of transition, existing on the edges of accepted and tangible space, it reinforces the nature of the Sebettu themselves as creatures associated with the mountains bordering the Netherworld. They are closely linked to not only the Netherworld but also to the entrances and exits of the Netherworld, and this text invokes the sense of their existing in the “cracks” of the Netherworld, the in-between and transitory spaces.

3.3. Lugalbanda in the Wilderness: the Torches of Inanna

Lugalbanda stands as the hero within his own cycle of literary texts. Concerning the king

¹⁶⁵ Though there are many different examples for the 'distant paradise' model of a created place, James Hilton's creation of Shangri-La may have the most popular relevance for modern western culture. James Hilton, *Lost Horizon* (London: Macmillan: 1933).

himself, there are several types of evidence connected to him: the king's name appears in the Sumerian King List; his own divine status is enumerated in documents from the Ur III period; further references to his heroic nature populate later texts; and, finally, the king is the subject of two major Sumerian texts – *Lugalbanda in the Wilderness* and *Lugalbanda and the Anzu Bird* – which comprise one connected narrative.¹⁶⁶ In the former text, the beginning of the narrative duology, Lugalbanda journeys to the city of Aratta, along with a group of seven men (his brothers, the significance of which is described in subsequent sections) but falls ill along the route and is left in the wilderness to either recover or perish. In the latter text, Lugalbanda encounters the Anzu bird, and after gaining the bird's favor by looking after its offspring, is gifted with superhuman abilities, particularly swiftness, which allows him to cross the seven mountain ranges that separate the city of Uruk from Aratta and so attack the city.¹⁶⁷

The narrative of *Lugalbanda in the Wilderness* is bookended by the appearance of two rather different groups of seven. In the beginning, when the king Enmerkar issues a call for soldiers in order to attack Aratta, Lugalbanda answers his call along with seven men. These men are described his brothers – making Lugalbanda the eighth among their number. The seven brothers themselves have their own introduction in the text:

Lugalbanda in the Wilderness, 59-64, 70-71:

59	u ₄ -bi-a imin he ₂ -na-me-eš imin he ₂ -na-me-eš
60	di ₄ -di ₄ -la ₂ peš-tur-zi kul-ab ₄ ^{ki} imin he ₂ -na-me-eš
61	imin-bi-ne ^d uraš-e tud-da šilam ga gu ₇ -me-eš
62	ur-saĝ-me-eš ki-en-gi-ra sig ₇ -me-eš a-la-ba nun-na-me-eš
63	^{ĝi} šbanšur an-na-ke ₄ a ₂ e ₃ -a-me-eš
64	imin-bi-ne ugula-a-me [!] -eš ugula-a-me-eš
70	en-ra KA-KEŠ ₂ igi-bar-ra-ka-na mu-na-sug ₂ -sug ₂ -ge-eš
71	lugal-ban ₃ -da ussu-kam-ma-ne-ne

¹⁶⁶ See H.L.J. Vanstiphout, "Sanctus Lugalbanda," in *Riches Hidden in Secret Places*, ed. T. Abusch (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002): 263.

¹⁶⁷ See the edition of the text in Vanstiphout, *Epics of the Sumerian Kings*.

- 59 At that time, they were seven, they were seven;
 60 The very young descendants in Kulab, they were seven.
 61 Those seven, Uraš birthed them; the wild cow fed them milk.
 62 They are warriors, in Sumer they are beautiful and splendid in their
 appearance.¹⁶⁸
 63 At the table of Anu, they were raised,
 64 Those seven were lieutenants, they were lieutenants.
- 70 For the lord, they served as his elite scouts,
 71 And Lugalbanda was the eighth of them.

These descriptions echo those in other, later, references to the Seven – particularly the references encountered in the genealogy of the Sebettu provided in the later *Erra*. However, the description of Lugalbanda's seven brothers – who are, outside of these literary texts, absent – can be examined on its own terms, divorced from later potential connections. The mother of the seven is here given as Uraš, a female divinity associated with and representative of the earth, who is also one of the consorts of the god Anu. Although their father is not explicitly named as Anu, the Seven are described as being "reared at his table," and absent of an explicitly stated father he fulfills this role for the group. This genesis immediately distinguishes the brothers as supernatural and inherently liminal, echoing those that are commonly provided to demons in general and the Sebettu in particular: in incantations, often directed against such figures, their names, and thus their characteristics, are described as known on neither the heavens nor the earths and thus belonging to neither.

The conclusion of *Lugalbanda in the Wilderness* – what can be reconstructed from it – departs from the central narrative of the text itself. In this last section, Lugalbanda is witness to the appearance of a number of divine figures, principally Inanna, who is joined by seven (or,

¹⁶⁸ Vanstiphout, *Epics of the Sumerian Kings*, 107 translates a-la-ba nun-na-me-eš as "princely in their prime." Given the description of their beauty that immediately precedes it, I have focused on the translation of a-la/lalû as a desirable appearance or charms.

alternatively in one text, fourteen) figures.¹⁶⁹ The entire scene has interesting astral connotations, with the text itself closing with the reappearance of the sun. In later references to the Sebettu, particularly those in the latter half of the second millennium and in the first millennium, the Pleiades constellation is firmly linked to the Seven as their astral representation. Many deities in Mesopotamian texts possess an astral representation and it is no great surprise that the Sebettu in their later, divine, attestations would have a similar form. Here, however, we see evidence for the very early foundations of this astral link. The seven (or fourteen) figures appear in close association to the goddess Inanna:

Lugalbanda in the Wilderness, 463-469:

463 lu₂ ša₃ ^dinana si₃-ge-me-eš me₃ ba-an-su₈-ge-eš
 464 me₃ izi-ĝar-bi imin-[variant: 14]-me-eš nu-ga-mu-rib-ba-me-eš¹⁷⁰
 465 ĝi₆ sa₉-a e₂ saĝ ĝar-ra ʾšu^ʔ₁ [...]
 466 ĝi₆ u₃-na-ka izi-gin₇ mu-un-sar-sar-re-de₃-eš
 467 KA-KEŠ₂-da nim-gin₇ mu-un-na-an-ĝir₂-ĝir₂-re-de₃-eš
 468 MIR ša₃ sig₁₀-ga me₃-ka
 469 a-mah e₃-a-gin₇ gu₃-nun mi-ni-ib-be₂

463 They are beloved of Inanna's heart, they are steadfast,
 464 They are the seven [variant: fourteen] torches of battle, no one is as great.
 465 At midnight, they...
 466 In the night, they flash like fire,
 467 Together in a band, they flash like lightning.
 468 In the *most violent*...heart of battle,
 469 Like the rising of the great flood, they roar grandly.

While some of this imagery is obscure to say the least, the last three lines of this segment match language used to refer to the Sebettu in their introduction as the seven brothers in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*. Here, we see once more a group of seven that acts as a single collective, with imagery meant to reference the same ferocity that is often attached to and characteristic of demons, but connected to a constantly stressed astral presence.

¹⁶⁹ Alster, "Demons in Lugalbanda," 65.

¹⁷⁰ One text, CBS 6792, has 14 for the 7 in this line. When this line repeats later on, the 14 is consistently also repeated. See Alster "Demons in Lugalbanda," 62, 65-66.

The astral association is heightened by Inanna's own connections to her astral representation as the star Venus, particularly in light of how the celestial mechanics governing Venus's movements are reflected in Inanna's own actions in literary texts.¹⁷¹ A similar link underlies the role of the Sebettu, particularly in light of these early astral representations. The astral link, however, is further stressed in this section as a counterpoint to the fierce, demonic imagery also attached to the Seven. They are presented in clearly astral terms, deemed the "torches of battle" in the previously quoted section of the text, and accompany Inanna "under the clear sky" in the following section, where they are also explicitly described as providing light in the evening, highlighting their role as stars:

Lugalbanda in the Wilderness, 471-473:

471 me₃ izi-ĝar-bi imin-me-eš
 472 an sig₇-ga men saĝ il₂-la-gin₇ ul-la ba-an-sug₂-ge-[eš]
 473 saĝ-ki-ne-ne igi-ne-ne an-usan₂ sig₇-ga-me-eš

471 They are the seven torches of battle,
 472 They stand joyfully under the clear sky, worn as a crown,
 473 Their foreheads and eyes – they are pale (in) the evening.

If the astral representations are so prevalent in these early texts – they are also clearly described in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* – they provide an early forerunner for the later connection between the Sebettu and their astral representation as the Pleiades. This connection is, in turn, one the text stresses several lines later, alongside one last set of astral references:

Lugalbanda in the Wilderness, 491-496:

491 an ki za₃-ba ĝiš mu-un-ni-kam
 492 niĝ₂-erim₂ dug₄-ga ensi-bi-me-eš
 493 niĝ₂-a-zig₃-ga igi du₈-bi-me-eš

¹⁷¹ See Jeffrey Cooley, "Inana and Šulkaletuda: A Sumerian Astral Myth," *KASKAL* 5 (2008):161-172 and G. Kurtruk, "The Identification of Inana with the Planet Venus: A Criterion for the Time Determination of the Recognition of Constellations in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Astronomical and Astrophysical Transactions* 17 (1999): 501-13.

- 496 an sig₇-ga-am₃ mul šar₂-ra bi₂-in-e₁₁-[de₃]
 491 They are the *door* of the edge of heaven and earth;
 492 They are the dream interpreters of evil words;
 493 They are the *spies* of righteousness...
 496 It was in a clear sky (that) the numerous stars rose.

Some problems surround the particular references attached to them, such as their being the "doors at the edge of the heavens and earths," a line that references how the structure of the universe echoes the framework of a house, with doors and windows providing passage from one area to another.¹⁷² In this regard, the liminal function that characterizes the Sebettu is not only present in these early attestations but appears as intrinsically connected to their astral functions as well as to their demonic qualities. Furthermore, the reference to the group as "spies" alludes once more to their ability to access information and knowledge that others do not possess.

In light of the Seven's demonic qualities, we see that the composition *Lugalbanda in the Wilderness* bears more direct references to demons, a discussion of which requires backtracking in the text slightly. Prior to Lugalbanda's reception of his dream instructions and his building of the shrine wherein he sacrifices to the gods, he is visited by a number of hostile spirits, which are all described in explicitly demonic terms.¹⁷³ The full section is found in lines 398-421 of *Lugalbanda in the Wilderness*, and while the entire section may be found in the appendix of this chapter, the particularly relevant sections are quoted below:

- 401 d_iškur-ra a₂-dah-a-ni-me-eš
 404 ki-bal hul gig d_isuen-na-še₃ ud-de₃ du-du-e-me-eš
 411 si-si-ig sim^{mušen}-sim^{mušen} d_iutu-ka ur₂-ba šu mi-ni-in-te
 412 e₂-e₂-a i-im-ku₄-ku₄-ne
 413 e-sir₂-e-sir₂-ra gu₂ mu-un-gid₂-gid₂-i-ne
 414 ga-ab-du₁₁ inim du₁₁-ga-ab šu-a ga-bi₂-ib₂-gi₄-me-eš
 415 ama-ra kiĝ₂ du₁₁-ga ereš gal-ra inim gi₄-a

¹⁷² Wolfgang Heimpel, "The Sun at Night and the Doors of Heaven in Babylonian Texts," *JCS* 38 (1986): 127-51.

¹⁷³ See Alster, "Demons in Lugalbanda," 63.

416 ʾda¹ ḡiš-nu₂-da-ka ki-nu₂ ak-a

417 X si-ga-ʾa²¹ saḡ ḡiš ra-ra

401 They are the helpers of Iškur,

404 In tempests they batter the rebel lands, hateful to Sîn.

411 They are breezes, swarms of swallows whirling from their holes at day,

412 They enter house after house,

413 They haunt street after street,

414 They speak constantly, and still they say: "Talk to us!"

415 Seeking words with a mother, answering to a great lady,

416 They nestle at the bedside,

417 They strike down the [*strong and the*] weak.

What, then, is to be made of this section? Although the demons threaten mankind, they also appear to act on behalf of a number of the great gods, Sîn among them. Their chaotic and destructive nature can be directed against the enemies of the land – referred to above as the "rebel lands," an act that would aid the homeland. Despite that, they are further depicted as a threat to that same homeland, particularly the core of the settled lands, which are embodied by the city as the place of civilization and order. The language used in the passage above – entering houses and haunting the street and lying in wait to attack once their target has fallen asleep – is archetypal demonic imagery. It is well recorded in earlier and later incantations that feature demons as the affliction that the *āšipu* needs to forcibly expel from the patient.¹⁷⁴

The more interesting imagery, however, is found in lines 413-414 of the text, as it describes the ability of the demons to speak, and particularly, their connection to a family. This runs counter to the established demonic imagery and abilities in Mesopotamia in two ways: first, it assigns the power of intelligible speech to demons, which, although not unattested, is atypical when considering the general depiction of demons in both Mesopotamia and the ancient Near

¹⁷⁴ As seen in the Uduḡ Hul corpus, repeatedly.

East as a whole.¹⁷⁵ Second, it presents the demons in light of familial bonds – here, most notably, the bonds of a mother. As demons are described by their lack of family, this quality is either emblematic of their connections to the divine sphere, already emphasized through linking them to both Iškur and Sin, or it references those the demons attack, and the demons work to destroy the familial bonds of the patient. In light of this suggestion, however, it is time to consider the more formulaic references to the Sebettu as demons, even if those references entangle us in the beginnings of a chronological quagmire.

3.4. The Malevolent Sebettu in Incantations of the Old Babylonian Period

To date, we have seen the Sebettu primarily described as warriors, chaotic beings that possess martial abilities. This characterization is one that persists for the group throughout the long history of their attestations, and it is one that the Neo-Assyrian Empire is quick to seize upon when incorporating the Seven into its divine pantheon. However, even when they are referenced as warriors we can recognize supernatural, liminal elements and their ever-present ability to pose a threat to both friend and foe.¹⁷⁶ These qualities are markers of their inherently demonic nature and form one of the fundamental underlying characteristics that define the Sebettu as a whole. As they, in this representation, constitute a consistent threat to mankind, it is no surprise that they appear in texts that serve as a means by which that threat can be countered – namely, incantations. In particular, we see the Sebettu as one of the prominent demonic antagonists in the incantation series *Udug Hul* or "Evil Demons."

Although sections of the text are found as early as the third millennium, the text as it

¹⁷⁵ When considering the range of actions that demons take in the *Udug Hul* corpus, for example, speech is rarely attested. In Egypt, demons are referenced in particular as lacking the full, human capacity for speech. See: A. Roccati, "Demons as a reflection of Human Society," in *Ancient Egyptian Demonology: Studies on the Boundaries between the Demonic and the Divine in Egyptian Magic*, vol. 175 of *OLA* (Leuven: Peeters Publishing, 2011), 89-98.

¹⁷⁶ This motif continues in later references to the seven, most notably in the *Epic of Erra*.

appears in its standard form is a decidedly first millennium construction. As such, it must be considered a product of that later period. Thanks to this complicated chronology, the standard Babylonian text as a whole is considered in full in Chapter Six, alongside other chronologically contiguous incantations featuring the Sebetu. The focus of this section, however, is on the Old Babylonian text, which can be clearly and definitively dated. These earlier cohesive forms of the first millennium text allow us to trace the development and influences on the later text, at the least in the Old Babylonian period.

3.4.1. Old Babylonian Tablets of Udug Hul

The Old Babylonian tablets that precede the standard Babylonian Udug Hul series differ in key respects from the later version: unlike the bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian of the later text, this is in monolingual Sumerian, as is to be expected. Often fragmentary, the text exists in a number of tablets: single-column tablets containing only one incantation. Though of uncertain archaeological provenance, they appear so similar as to come from one archive, perhaps located at Sippar.¹⁷⁷ The other tablets, which contain multi-column manuscripts, originate from archives at Nippur and bear a closer resemblance to the structure of the later, first millennium incantation series, particularly given the inclusion of the "it is the wording of the incantation of the evil udug" (ka inim-ma udug hul-a-kam) rubrics for each incantation.¹⁷⁸

The incantation series itself follows the introduction of a varied list of demons, each associated with the particular dangers they embodied. Similarly, the role of the exorcist is plagued by a number of individuals, including different cultic priests, and, in the divine context,

¹⁷⁷ Geller, *Forerunners*, 5.

¹⁷⁸ Geller, *Forerunners*, 3-5.

the god Asalluhi.¹⁷⁹ Otherwise, the text introduces already familiar demonic imagery – particular demons are described as "sired by Anu; they are born of the earth" (a an-ne₂ ri-a-meš dumu ki-in-du tu-da-meš).¹⁸⁰ This language, of course, parallels references to the liminal nature of demons by positioning them as the products of the extreme opposites of sky (an, also the sky god Anu) and the earth (ki-in-du).¹⁸¹ Furthermore, we see that these typical references yield to more specific connections to the Sebettu themselves. In this regard, however, the Sebettu are presented with a background that differs from the more expected genealogy found in some of our later texts, but matches the paternity expressed in the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*, as discussed later in this chapter, by articulating their relationship with the god Enki. The full text of the excerpt below can be found in the conclusion of this chapter.

Forerunners to Udug Hul, Tablet III 385-399:¹⁸²

385 Incantation:
 386 [Twice] seven are [the warriors].
 387 [...]
 388 [They have no spouse, they] bear no [child].
 389 [They are the horses who] came from the [mountain ranges].
 390 [They are the] kin (šeš-gal) [of Enki].
 391 They are the [throne-bearers] of the gods,
 392 [A disturbance in the street], they stand in the path,
 393 [Before Nergal], the warrior of Enlil, they go,
 394 [May (they) be adjured by the heavens], may they be adjured by the earth,
 395 May (they) be adjured [by Sin], lord Ašimbabbar,
 396 May (they) be adjured [by Hendursaĝa], watchman of the quiet street,
 397 [As for the body of the patient], son of his god,
 398 (They) will not approach him, *you will keep illness from him*.
 399 It is the wording of the incantation of the evil udug.

The defining characteristic of this group of demons is their number. Although seven is a common enough unit for groups – we will shortly, in fact, analyze another section of this incantation

¹⁷⁹ In regards to this role of Asalluhi, see Falkenstein, *Haupttypen der sumerischen Beschwörungen*.

¹⁸⁰ Geller, *Forerunners*, 34. Line 247.

¹⁸¹ Regarding ki-in-du see Attinger and Krebern timer, "Hendursaĝa."

¹⁸² Follows edition in Geller, *Forerunners*, 41-42. For this and other quoted excerpts, full Sumerian is provided at the close of this chapter.

series where a group of seven is notably *not* the Sebettu – the identity of each group is made plain within the text itself, and is invariably expressed at some point in the incantation. Here, instead, we are simply provided the information that they are a grouping of seven evil demons, and the "udug hul" element can only be gleaned through the rubric of the incantation, found in line 399 of the text.

The most instructive lines of the incantation above deal with the various deities that the Sebettu are connected to. They express a relationship with Enki, to whom they are claimed as relations (šeš gal), and Nergal, who is linked to their warrior qualities. These qualities are further stressed in the second line of the text, where the seven are referred to as warriors (ur-saĝ). In particular, the Seven are described as going before Nergal, and the verb in this line (i₃-su₈-su₈-be₂-eš) implies their stance is that of the vanguard – they do not go before Nergal in defeat and disgrace, but as an advance military unit. Several of the preceding lines display the contradictory nature of the Sebettu – although they are associated with the gods and are identified as the throne-bearers (gu-za-la₂) of the gods, they are also the cause of disturbances to the public and disrupt daily events by standing in the paths of the city: they are "a disturbance in the street, they stand in the path" (e-sir₂-ra lu₃-lu₃-a sila-a gub-bu-meš).

These demonic traits introduced in one incantation are repeated throughout the Sebettu's appearances in the Old Babylonian tablets: the incantation corpus as a whole does not shy away from repetition. However, while the respective incantations share similarities, each successive text builds upon the qualities introduced in the previous, and thus the second incantation portrays the Sebettu in increasing detail. The above incantation provides aspects of the Sebettu that fall in line with most demons, as well as those that are more specific to the Sebettu and atypical when compared to other demons. Specifically, we see that this text stresses the connection the Sebettu

have to Enki, through the identification of their dwelling place as the Absû, the underground reserve of pure water where Enki dwelt. Although preserved in full, the meaning of some of the lines of this section text remains obscure (see the full Sumerian text presented at the conclusion to this chapter):

Forerunners to Udug Hul, Tablet III, 400-419.¹⁸³

400 Incantation:
401 The Seven are they, the Seven are they,
402 In the source of the Apsû, the Seven are they,
403 His (Enki's) adornments are the Seven,
404 From the source of the Apsû, from the sanctuary, they emerged.
405 They are neither male nor female,
406 They flit about,
407 They have no spouse, they have borne no child,
408 They do not know what they do,
409 They do not listen to prayers or supplication.
410 They are all equal sons, equal heirs,
411 They are the horses who came out from the mountain ranges,
412 They are the officials of the gods,
413 A disturbance in the street, they stir up a storm,
414 As they go around in the path,
415 They are seven of seven, they are seven times seven.
416 May they be adjured by the heavens, may they be adjured by the earths,
417 As to the body of the man, the son of his god,
418 (They) may not draw near, you will turn (them) away for him;
419 It is the wording of an incantation of the evil udug.

Given the link to the Apsû, the god Enki is the most likely referent for "his" in line 403, and this text then stands as one of the first links between the Sebettu and the god Enki, specifically identifying the Seven as not only his kin, but also his ornaments. In other respects, this particular incantation repeats the imagery that we are, at this point, beginning to expect in regards to these Seven.

When are the Seven not the Seven? - Identifying the Sebettu

¹⁸³ Geller, *Forerunners*, 42-45.

In the following incantation from the Old Babylonian corpus we can see how, despite the prevalence of groups of seven, it is possible to distinguish the Sebettu from another grouping of the same number – "the Seven" as opposed to "a seven." This incantation begins with a description of a group of seven demons, with reference to their number: "seven are they, seven are they" (imin-na-meš imin-na-meš).¹⁸⁴ Following several lines referencing this number in relation to the group of demons, we see them described as neither male nor female (u₃ munus nu-meš u₃ nita nu-meš), followed by a gap in the text.¹⁸⁵ From what is present it is clear that when the incantation resumes the lines that were not preserved contained individual references to the seven demons that form the focus of the incantation, as the text resumes with the introduction of the third and fourth of the demons:

*Forerunners to Udug Hul, 428-437.*¹⁸⁶

- 428 [The third one] goes?....
- 429 The fourth [one...]...sets to the mountain like water,
- 430 The fifth one, beside his bed...he lays him down.
- 431 When the sixth one approaches the patient; he raises his neck from his center,
- 432 When the seventh one approaches the patient, he (the patient) sets his mind to the Netherworld.
- 433 They are seven, the...of the Netherworld,
- 434 In the Netherworld, they....
- 435 The evil udug, the evil ala, the evil ghost, the evil galla demon,
- 436 Dimme, Dimma, Dimme-Lagab demon,
- 437 Be adjured by the heavens, be adjured by the earths.

This text demonstrates the difficulty inherent in classifying these demons. At first glance, this group of seven appears to fall into the same patterns we have seen present for the Sebettu, even in regard to the identification of individual traits. Unlike the past references to the Sebettu, however, these references – those that can be reconstructed - cite the particular actions taken by

¹⁸⁴ Geller, *Forerunners*, line 421.

¹⁸⁵ Geller, *Forerunners*, line 426.

¹⁸⁶ Follows edition in Geller, *Forerunners*, 44-45.

each of the demons: laying the patient down, afflicting his neck and head, and setting his mind to the Netherworld. These actions are already incongruous when compared to the descriptions of the Sebettu as individuals that we have seen – and will see once more in the *Epic of Erra* – wherein the Sebettu are described in terms of fearsome imagery but not seen performing targeted actions against the patient. As later incantations demonstrate, the Sebettu are, generally speaking, too menacing to direct their antagonistic attentions against any particular individual. They devastate cities and threaten entire empires but do not, generally, target individuals, operating on a scale of destruction far too massive for such personal attention. This collection of seven exists because of the popularity of seven as a semantic unit in Mesopotamia – the grouping carries its own weight, and the number carries its own connotations as a space of transition, as well as the astral context of seven as a lunar-focused unit of divisible time. Here, the final lines of the text identify the seven as a host of individually identified demons: Udug, Ala, ghost, the Galla, Dimme, Dimma, and Dimme-Lagab demons. Given that, although the opening lines of the incantation appear to parallel those devoted to the Sebettu, these seven are best placed in their own grouping, sharing similar demonic traits but not considered among the attestations of the Sebettu.

3.5. The Hymn to Hendursaĝa and Lagaš Peculiarities

Although the Sebettu demonstrate a remarkable continuity of imagery in the references to them, particularly in light of the enormous gulf of time between the earliest and latest attestations, there are exceptions to the expected canon of references to the seven. In particular, the text known as the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*, a Sumerian text dedicated to the deity that demonstrates a unique set of references to a group of seven figures that appear within the narrative of the text as aides to its central deity. Given the disconnect between this set of

references – where the Seven are described in reference to particular animals – and the terrifying, more demonic language that is more frequently found, we must first ask why this particular set of seven ought to be considered the Sebettu at all. Mesopotamia is, after all, populated – even crowded – by groups of seven, as the number is a significant grouping, associated with magical and religious importance.¹⁸⁷ In this case, however, the seven seen in the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa* are provided with other contextual hints to indicate that they should be considered as the same group of seven that is the focus of this study.

First and foremost of these associations is the connection with Hendursaĝa, and so the character of this deity is the first point for analysis. The deity Hendursaĝa has his own complicated history, independent of his link to, and use of, the Sebettu.¹⁸⁸ First attested in the Fara god lists, the deity then reappears, in more substantial roles, in Lagaš during the reign of Eannatum (c. 2500 BCE). From his early attestations Hendursaĝa is linked with the function of a herald (or, in the Sumerian texts, the office designated as "niĝir," or, more specifically, "niĝir kalam-ma" the "herald of the homeland").¹⁸⁹ The deity himself has curious associations with the Netherworld, and although the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa* highlights his role as a herald, these Netherworld connections are also alluded to in lines such as: "of the dead being brought to the underworld, you are the head galla-constable" (saĝ ug₅-ga kur-ra lah₅-e-da galla-gal-bi-[me-en]).¹⁹⁰ As Hendursaĝa is connected to Lagaš, he also inherits the particular qualities of the Lagaš pantheon of deities.

¹⁸⁷ On the significance of the number seven in the ancient Near East, see: Gotthard G.G. Reinhold, ed., *Die Zahl Sieben im Alten Orient: Studien zur Zahlensymbolik in der Bibel und ihrer altorientalischen Umwelt* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008).

¹⁸⁸ On Hendursaĝa, see: D.O. Edzard, "Hendursaĝa," *RLA* 4 (1972-1979): 324-25; the introduction to Attinger and Krebern timer's edition of the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*, Attinger and Krebern timer, "Hendursaĝa," 21-27; and H. Sauren, "Hendursaĝa, Genius des Saturn, Gott des Todes," *OLP* 10 (1979): 75-95. See also Andrew George, "The Gods Išum and Hendursanga: Night Watchmen and Street-lighting in Babylonia," *JNES* 74 (2015): 1-8.

¹⁸⁹ Edzard, "Hendursaĝa," 324.

¹⁹⁰ *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*: 38. See also Sauren, "Gott des Todes," who discusses this connection at length.

In later Akkadian texts, Hendursaĝa is represented as the god Išum, who shares the same characteristics and qualities.¹⁹¹ Išum's connection to the Sebettu is notable in much later periods, notably in the early first millennium *Erra*, where Išum is one of the central characters represented in the narrative: he serves as an advisor and servant to Erra and tries to counsel and control his lord's warlike nature. When Erra rouses himself to violence against the homeland, Išum is described as the "door bolted before them," (^d*Išum daltuma edil pānūšun*) – "them," in this case, referring to the Sebettu, who have joined Erra in his violence against the homeland and in some sense, precipitated the assault itself, as they incite and encourage Erra's fury.¹⁹² Išum is furthermore represented as the name of the particular deity from its earliest attestations, appearing as an element in personal names from the Pre-Sargonic period onwards, though not with great frequency.¹⁹³ The deity as a whole will be considered again in section 5.1.2, where the *Erra* is discussed in greater detail, but the repeated connection between the two stresses the association between Hendursaĝa (or Išum) and the Sebettu. In the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa* itself, the qualities of the deity as a herald and a watchman are stressed, and the invocation of the Seven appears to fall in line with those same abilities.

Individual Epithets: Animal Connections

The description of the Sebettu as individuals appears following a large break in the text, destroying the preceding context for the Seven's appearance; it is however clear that the text works to establish the Seven in a positive light:

Hymn to Hendursaĝa, 74-76:

¹⁹¹ This connection is seen directly in bilingual texts, where the Sumerian line will represent the god's name as Hendursaĝa, and the Akkadian will write it as Išum.

¹⁹² Concerning this role of Išum in the *Epic of Erra*, see: Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, vol. 104 of *OBO* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 266.

¹⁹³ Bodi, *Ezekiel and Erra*, 266, n. 34.

74 e-ne-ne-ne en ge₆-par₄-ra bi₂-in-huĝ-e-ne
 75 ereš-diĝir maš₂-a im-mi-in-dab₅-be₂-ne
 76 gudu₄ hi-li-a bi₂-in-gub-bu-ne

74 They appoint the en-priestess to the gipar-cloister by means of omens,
 75 They appoint the Ereš-Diĝir by means of omen,
 76 They install the Gudu-priest with the ritual wig.

This text, then, depicts the Seven as essential to the ordered functioning of society and the religious system. They are described as directly responsible for the proper appointing of the en-priest, the Ereš-Diĝir, and the Gudu-priest – each of which was a preeminent role within the religious and cultic hierarchy.¹⁹⁴ The en-priest and the Gudu-priest, similarly, are high positions within the cultic architecture. Interestingly, the appointment of these two positions is used elsewhere as a marker of the absence or presence of order: in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa B*, we see the following: "A captured warrior who is released! A captured en-priestess who is returned to the gipar! A captured Gudu-priest who is restored to his wig – who has ever witnessed such a thing before?" (ur-saĝ dab₅-ba šu bar-ra-am₃ en dab₅-ba gi₆-par₃-še₃ gur-ra-am₃ gudu₄ dab₅-ba hi-li-še₃ gur-ra-am₃ ud ul-li₂-a-ta a-ba-a igi im-mi-in-du₈). Here, the officials are considered as captured and removed from their normal functions through the denial of very specific hallmarks of office. The Seven, in the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*, are responsible for ensuring that these particular individuals, of great status within the temple hierarchy, are not only installed, but are correctly chosen and given all the appropriate signifiers and symbols of their power.

Having completed those actions, the Seven are presented as a list of individuals, each described by unique imagery. They are first sighted at dusk, a particularly liminal time of day,

¹⁹⁴ The Ereš-Diĝir was a high ranking woman in direct service of a god or goddess, a position that appears prominently from the third to the first millennium BCE, and travels outside of the Mesopotamian sphere to appear in texts from Emar, Ugarit, and Hattusa. See Ada Taggar-Cohen, "The NIN-DINGIR in the Hittite Kingdom," *AoF* 33 (2006): 314.

and are introduced with the following imagery:

Hymn to Hendursaĝa, 77-84:

77 u₄-ne u₄-te-en-e um-ma-te-a-ta
78 imin-ba diš ka₅-a-am₃ kun im-ur₃-ur₃-re
79 min-kam-ma ur-gi₇-gin₇ si-im-si-im i₃-ak-e
80 eš₅-kam-ma ugu^{mušen}-gin₇ za-na gug[?] im-kul-e
81 limmu-kam-ma ti₈-mušen mah adda gu₇-a-gin₇ ka i₃-ša-an-ša-ša
82 ia₂-kam-ma ur-bar-ra nu-me-a sila₄ gi₆-ga i₃-šub
83 aš₃-kam-ma ^dnin-imma_x-mušen-gin₇ iri^{?!?} u₃[?] tuš-a-ba gu₃ im-mi-ni-ib-ra
84 imin-kam-ma kušu₂^{ku₆}-am₃ a-ĝi₆ im-bu-bu-bu¹⁹⁵

77 On this day, when the evening draws close,
78 Among the seven, the first is as a fox, dragging its tail,
79 The second is like a dog, scenting about,
80 The third is like a raven, pecking at larva,
81 The fourth is as a mighty bird of prey/vulture, which eats the dead,
overpowering,
82 The fifth, although not a wolf, falls upon the black lamb,
83 The sixth, like a perched harrier, screeches,
84 The seventh, a *shark*, flitting about in the waves.¹⁹⁶

In contrast to the more terrifying, unequivocally demonic imagery utilized in the references to the Sebettu preserved in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A* (as well as, somewhat poorly, in version B) and in the (much later) *Erra* and standard Babylonian Udug Hul, this particular set of references is a list of animal associations, each of which merits individual consideration. In general, we see two major categories of animals in this list of imagery: three of the seven are compared to canids

¹⁹⁵ This verb, im-bu-bu-bu, is rarely attested but does appear in other texts:

Home of the Fish, line 8:

e₂-ki-kaš-de₂-a-zu num nu-mu-un-gid₂-gid₂-gid₂

The flies cannot be chased away from your house, which is a drinking place

Edition: M. Civil, "The Home of the Fish. A New Sumerian Literary Composition," *Iraq* 23 (1961): 156-57.

The verb also appears in the *Lament over the Destruction of Ur*, line 131-32:

e₂-uru₂-si-ga mu-un-sir₂-sir₂-ra-mu

amaš^{lu₂} sipa-da-gin₇ ha(!)-ba-an-sir₂-sir₂

My smitten house and city which have been torn down

Like the sheepfold of a shepherd verily has been torn down

The verb in line 131 presents as mu-un-sir₂-sir₂-sir₂ in three variants of the text

Edition: Samuel N. Kramer, *Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur*, vol. 12 of *AS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), 30-31.

¹⁹⁶ This animal may be identified as a crocodile: see A. Loktionov, "Kušû: Crocodile after all?" *NABU* 2014/4: 164-67.

(a fox, dog, and wolf) while another three of the seven are equated with birds (a raven, vulture, and harrier). The last of the seven, a "kuš_u₂ ku₆," is a water animal that is not definitely identified, but may be a shark; its noted characteristic is apparently a full set of teeth.¹⁹⁷

None of these references is entirely singular – these animals appear in other Sumerian literary texts, with varying frequencies. The fox, ka₅-a, is one of the animals that appears in a large number of texts, including a number of proverbs (over 50) where the fox often speaks, an ability only afforded to animals within proverbs. A particularly relevant reference to the fox appears in the Old Babylonian tablets of the Udu_g Hul series, where a number of qualities are assigned to an ala (a-la₂) demon, to be cast away from the patient each time. The demon is variously described as a ship, as a bird, as covering the patient like a net, and, finally, as "the evil ala-demon who can prowl at night like the fox in the quiet city" (a-la₂ hul ka₅-a uru si-ga-gin₇ ġe₆-a i₃-du₉-du₉-e-da he₂-x / šá ki-ma še-lib a-lim šá-qum-mi ina mu-ši i-du-lu).¹⁹⁸ Here, the fox – and its action of "prowling" (i₃-du₉-du₉) – are closely linked to a demon. In the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*, however, the image of the fox is couched in terms that stress the animal's own nature through the image of its dragging tail (kun im-ur₃-ur₃-re).

The other two canine references follow this pattern in stressing the defining animalistic quality in each image. The second of the Sebettu is linked to a dog, "scenting [about]" (si-im-si-im i₃-ak-e). The act of sniffing about is also a quality intrinsic to dogs, so much so that a dog that does not scent about – or no longer scents about – is an indication of disorder. This image is less common than others invoked in the city lament texts, but still appears in this genre,

¹⁹⁷ Attinger and Krebernik, "Hendursaĝa," 66. A snapping turtle has also been proposed for this animal, but Jeremiah Petersen, in his work on *testudines*-related animals, does not include this line, and so seems of the non-turtle consensus. On turtles and related animals in Sumerian texts, see: Jeremiah Petersen, "A Study of Sumerian Faunal Conception with a Focus on the Terms pertaining to the Order *Testudines*," (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2007).

¹⁹⁸ Geller, *Forerunners to Udu_g Hul*, III: 866.

as seen in the *Lament for Sumer and Ur*: "The dogs of Ur no longer sniff at the base of the city wall," (uri₅^{ki}-ma ur-bi ur₂-bad₃-da si-im-si-im nu-mu-un-ak-e).¹⁹⁹ Neither is the image of "sniffing like a dog" restricted to the *Hymn to Hendursagâ* in particular – among other texts, the phrase appears in the Sumerian text *The Home of the Fish*, where the speaker admonishes: "May you not retreat like a dog to where you scent about: face towards me!" (ur-gin₇ ki si-im-si-im ak-zu-še₃ na-an-ga-ba-e-da-du-e igi-zu ki-ĝu₁₀-uš-še₃).²⁰⁰ In curious contrast to this, the fifth of the Seven is utilizing an oppositional structure in its referent line – although the fifth of the Sebettu is *not* a wolf (ur-bar-ra), it still performs the action for which that particular animal would be known and recognized by.

A very similar wording is seen in the text of *Enmerkar and Ensuhgirana*, where the actions – in particular, the swiftness – of the messenger who travels from Uruk to Aratta (and back again) are described in terms of several animal images. He traverses the mountain ranges like a donkey, one that is particularly eager to run, roars like a lion, and "like a wolf pursuing a lamb, he hastens forth" (ur-bar-ra sila₄ šu ti-a-gin₇ ul₄-ul₄-e im-ĝen).²⁰¹ The image of the wolf and its action of hunting and killing sheep is so closely connected that, when the fifth of Seven is described as "falling upon the black lamb" the text takes steps to establish that, despite this very wolf-like behavior, the entity in question is not, in fact, a wolf.

The other grouping found within the Seven is avian, as the third, fourth, and sixth of the listed Seven all appear linked to birds – a raven, vulture, and harrier. Similarly to the three canine references, these three references also draw strong parallels by linking the Sebettu to the

¹⁹⁹ This reference is surrounded by signs and references that the natural, prosperous order has been broken: prior to it we see the line that "Ur, like a city that has been wrought by the hoe, became a ruined mound" (line 346) and immediately following it the text cites the "one who (used to) drill large wells, (now just) scratches the ground in the market place" (line 351). Piotr Michalowski, *Lament over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, vol. 1 of *MC* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 58-59: line 350.

²⁰⁰ See Civil Miguel, "The home of the fish: a new Sumerian literary composition," *Iraq* 23 (1961): 154-75.

²⁰¹ Vanstiphout, *Epics of Sumerian Kings; Matter of Aratta*, line 50.

characteristic behavior of each animal: the raven pecks at larva (za-na gug im-kul-e), the vulture eats the dead (adda gu₇), and the harrier, perched, screeches (gu₃ im-mi-ni-ib-ra). Similar, as well, to the other set of references, each of these particular images is attested elsewhere, although the raven (uga^{mušen}) is also assigned the action of cawing (uga^{mušen} gu₃-gu₃ nu-mu-ni-be₂), to signify the presence or absence of order.²⁰² The vulture, te₈-uš^{mušen} is the most obscure of the three birds – although te₈^{mušen}, a bird of prey (the Akkadian *erû*) is rarely attested, the te₈-uš^{mušen} is even more so, and only appears once outside of the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*, in the Sumerian composition *Nanše and the Birds*.²⁰³ The last of the three birds is the harrier, the ^dnin-šara₂^{mušen}, which screeches (gu₃ mi-ni-ib-ra) as it sits, perched (tuš-a-ba). The identification of "harrier" for this particular bird is somewhat uncertain, but the critical concern – and what is assured – is its identity as, at the least, a raptor.

Although six of the Seven fall neatly into two categories: canine and avian, the last of the list belongs to neither, and the animal itself cannot even be clearly identified. The kušu₂, or kušu₂^{ku₆}, appears, thanks to its determinative ku₆, to be definitely an aquatic animal of some kind, but the specifics following that are hazy, to say the least. The Akkadian word *kušû* appears in lexical lists as kušu₂ = *kušû*, and correlates to two different Sumerian words – the discussed kušu₂ as well as kud-da.²⁰⁴ In contrast to the more piscine kušu₂, with its accompanying ku₆ determinative, kud-da appears in a list of mammals whose hide is used, and it is further described as an enemy of the kušu₂.²⁰⁵ In this particular text, the image appears to invoke a terrifying water creature, but one that is simply moving about in the water, that is to say, in its

²⁰² The line in particular joins one of a number of references to normal activities – the raven cawing, the wolf seizing the lamb – that, in their absence, place the opening narrative of the literary tale of Enki and Ninhursag in a mythical, primordial time. See: P. Attinger, "Enki et Nin[h]ursa[g]a," *ZA* 74 (1984): 1-52.

²⁰³ Niek Veldhuis, *Religion, Literature, and Scholarship: the Sumerian Composition Nanše and the Birds, with a Catalogue of Sumerian Bird Names*, vol. 22 of *CM* (Brill: Leiden, 2004).

²⁰⁴ *CAD* K, 602.

²⁰⁵ Here, the *CAD* entry on *kušû* cites the references found in the lexical lists *Hh*. XI and *Hh*. XIV.

natural habitat. In each of these lines, the imagery stresses the link the Sebettu have to the natural aspects of each animal. Even if those natural aspects are inherently terrifying, it is almost a side-effect of the invoked imagery, instead of the original intended consequence.

Having gone to some pains to establish the Seven along bestial lines through firmly rooting all their references in bestial imagery, the text swiftly moves to undermine that link. It brings the underlying demonic aspects of the Seven to the fore in the lines that immediately follow the last individual invocation of the Seven:

Hymn to Hendursaĝa, 85-89:

85 imin-be-ne diĝir munus nu-me-eš u₃ nita₂ nu-mu-eš
 86 nita₂-ra ša mu-un-du₃-ne munus-ra a₂ mu-un-la₂-ne
 87 munus-ra ^{ĝiš}tukul da-ga⁷ mu-ni-ib-ĝa₂-ĝa₂-ne
 88 ir-si-im kalam-ma ba-an-ĝa₂-ĝa₂-ne
 89 me diĝir-re-e-ne šu im-du₇-du₇-ne

85 These seven, they are neither female divinities nor male divinities,
 86 They bind men; they bind the arms of women,
 87 They set the weapon at the side for women,
 88 They place a fragrance (from offerings) in the homeland,
 89 They perform the rites of the gods.

Here, the text breaks away from its previously established pattern of animal imagery to reinforce the more expected demonic set of references. The Seven lack a gender, and we would normally expect the next line to reference their lack of any family at all – that they have neither husband nor wife, and have, in addition, no children. It is a pattern that we see followed in other references to the Sebettu, the Udug Hul texts among them.

Instead, the text follows with another expected demonic reference – that the Seven bind (ša--du₃) the man as well as the arms (a₂--la₂) of the woman. The line that follows, however, though difficult to fully understand, references an action repeated throughout birth incantations, where a weapon (^{ĝiš}tukul) would be set to the side of an infant if it is a boy, and a comb (^{ĝiš}ga-

rig₂) if it is a girl.²⁰⁶ These objects are seen as intrinsically linked to the spheres – martial ability and warfare, or the household and domestic – to which each gender belonged, and symbolized the skills they would need to cultivate for success in either world. By placing a weapon at the side of the female, the Seven are working against the established gender norms, and in direct defiance of their expected and established behavior throughout the text so far, where they have worked to uphold the natural order, a practice reinforced by more commonly used imagery. To further confuse the issue, the very following pair of lines moves back to reinforcing the Seven's role as upholders of order – they set offerings in the homeland (kalam) and perform (šū--du₇) the rites (me) of the gods.

What, then, are we to make of the abrupt presence of chaotic behavior when the established pattern has worked to uphold order? As the earlier lines of this particular section reinforce the demonic – and thus chaotic – nature of the Seven, this line may also exist as a reminder of that same chaotic nature. The Seven in this text are clearly closely identified with the herald (niĝir) persona of Hendursaĝa. At one point in the text, they are even described as "patrolling about the rooftops of the homeland on Hendursaĝa's behalf" (ur₃ bad₃ kalam-ma-ka ma-ra-ši-[ni]-nigin₂) – and thusly linked to upholding order. Indeed, they are credited with actions that are explicitly designed to preserve the natural order of events, particularly in the cultic and ritual sense. Despite this, their demonic qualities are still present, and are thus also expressed by their actions within the text. In their animal references, they uphold order through inherently fierce or borderline transgressive, if essential, actions. The passage follows with a clear reference to their more demonic inclinations, together underlying the essential contradiction in both their nature and use.

To further complicate the landscape of the Seven in the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*, the text

²⁰⁶ See J.J. Van Dijk, "Incantations accompagnant la naissance de l'homme," *OrNS* 44 (1975): 52-79.

continues to reference yet another group of Seven – the question here, of course, is whether the identity of the two groups of seven overlap completely, only to some degree, or not at all. The text certainly opens with a disturbing description of their origin, as they are described, variously, as both the offspring of the crab (al-lu₅) and as a result of a curious coupling of Enki and a corpse (ad₆):

Hymn to Hendursaĝa, 165-71:

165 ^den-ki-ke₄ ad₆ a-a si-ga geš₃ bi₂-in-du₁₁-ga-ta
 166 dumu imin-na mu-un-ši-ib-tu-da
 167 dumu al-lu₅ imin-na-ne-ne
 168 an-na ša₃-ĝar-bi-še₃ im-ta-ab-ge-ne₂

165 Enki - after he copulated with the water-sodden corpse,
 166 Of the seven offspring, which he engendered,
 167 They, the seven sons of the crab,
 168 Because of the need for sustenance in heaven, he established them.

There are, unsurprisingly, some uncertainties with this passage. The "you" in lines 169 and 171 must be Hendursaĝa, given the other places within the hymn where the deity is addressed directly, i.e., as the target of the second-person dative "ra" within the verbal chain.²⁰⁷ The identity of the "she" who bears the seven children to Enki in line 166 is less certain, and Enki's actions in regards to the "water-sodden corpse" (ad₆ a-a si-ga) are inexplicable. Throughout their history, the Sebettu have a number of different origin stories with their creation given variously as the seed of Anu, the offspring of Enki and thus born of the Apsu,²⁰⁸ and born in both the eastern and western mountains, among others.²⁰⁹ This description appears to be another variation on their origin, and the interjection of the act of copulation with a corpse reinforces their transitory and transgressive nature – birthed of both the living and the dead. This passage,

²⁰⁷ This second-person address is most often seen in this hymn's repeated refrain of "Hendursaĝa, your me are supreme, no one could desire (them)" (^dhendur-saĝ-ĝa₂ me-zu mah-am₃ lu₂ al nu-um-me).

²⁰⁸ Described in *Forerunners to Uduĝ Hul*.

²⁰⁹ Seen in the Uduĝ Hul incantation series proper.

furthermore, introduces a longer section of this hymn where the Seven are presented one by one, each upholding some particular act that reinforces order, most of which are centered around agricultural or economic activities.

The final point of analysis concerns the closing lines of the hymn, which lend a sudden martial atmosphere to the text:

Hymn to Hendursaĝa, 265-69:

265 ugnim igi zu₂ keš₂ me₃-ka
266 niĝir-e sig gu₃ um-mi-in-ra
267 ur-saĝ an-eden-na du-a-ni
268 niĝir ušumgal ĝiri₃-ba zi-zi-de₃
269 ^dhendur-saĝ-ĝa₂-ke₄ su-ba zi-zi-de₃

265 To the troops before the massing of battle -
266 Once the herald sounds the horn,
267 Once the warrior goes to the high plains,
268 When the lion rises up (to attack) the herald on his path,
269 The herald of Hendursaĝa – he frightens him away.

Here, the herald appears to summon the larger mass of troops into battle, fulfilling a function similar to the advance scout or vanguard of a military unit, a role the Sebettu commonly occupy. In this section, the herald – in the singular, frustrating a direct link to the Sebettu – of Hendursaĝa occupies several roles, protecting the city by summoning the army and acting as a fierce warrior himself, as he frightens away the monster (ušumgal) in the high plains (an-eden-na) with his very presence. Much like the Sebettu, his fearsome martial abilities place him in the position to perform an indispensable service to the homeland.

At first glance, the imagery of the Seven in the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa* is so that the entire text seems an outlier – the exception that proves the rules, rather than a member of the more unified corpus of Sebettu references. However, the overall thematic elements as attested in this hymn – the role of the herald to protect the homeland while simultaneously mustering an offense

in its favor, the complicated and at times contradictory elements of supporting order whilst also undermining it – are more in line with the overall nature of the Sebettu as supported by these early references than opposed. In fact, the body of Old Babylonian references to the Seven, particularly as featured in literary and incantation texts, constructs the image of an overwhelmingly chaotic group, one that is defined by their innate ability as warriors and capacity for harm.

3.6. Referenced Texts: Old Babylonian Sumerian Incantations

The following are the full quoted sections of the texts presented only in translation in the chapter. For ease of identification, each is presented in the order they would be encountered in the chapter.

Forerunners to Udug Hul, Tablet III 385-99:

385 [en₂ e₂]-nu-[ru]
386 [ur-saĝ] imin a-r[a₂¹-min-na-meš]
387 [...] ʾx¹ en-n[a...]
388 [dam nu-tuku-meš dumu] nu-tu-ʾud¹-d[a-meš]
389 [anše kur-ra hur-saĝ-t]a e₃-ʾa¹-[meš]
390 [^den-ki-ke₄ še]š-gal-ʾa¹-[meš]
391 [gu-za-la₂] diĝir-re-e-ne-m[eš]
392 [e-sir₂-ra lu₃-lu₃-a] sila-a gub-bu-meš
393 [igi ^dne₃-iri₁₁-gal] ur-saĝ ^den-lil₂-la₂ i₃-su₈-su₈-be₂-eš
394 [zi an-na he₂]-pa₃ zi ki-a he₂-pa₃-de₃-e[š[?]]
395 [zi ^dsuen-na] ʾen¹ ^daš-im₂-babbar-ra he₂-pa₃
396 [zi ^dhendur-saĝ-ĝa₂] nimgir₂ sila si-ga he₂-pa₃
397 [su lu₂-ulu₃] dumu diĝir-ra-na
398 [nam]-mu-un-na-te¹-ʾĝe₂₆-de₃¹ tu-ra mu-un-na-da-g[i₄-g]i₄-de₃-en
399 ka imin-ma ʾudug¹ hul-a-kam

385 Incantation:
386 [Twice] seven are [the warriors].
387 [...]
388 [They have no spouse, they] bear no [child].
389 [They are the horses who] came from the [mountain ranges].
390 [They are the] kin [of Enki],
391 They are the [officials] of the gods,
392 [A disturbance in the street], they stand in the path,
393 [Before Nergal], the warrior of Enlil, they go,
394 [May (they) be adjured by the heavens], may they be adjured by the earths,
395 May (they) be adjured [by Sin], the lord Ašimbabbar,
396 May (they) be adjured [by Hendursaĝa], the watchman of the quiet street,
397 [As for the body of the patient], the son of his god,
398 (They) will not approach him, *you will keep illness from him*.
399 It is an incantation of the evil Udug.

Forerunners to Udug Hul, Tablet III 400-19:

400 ʿen₂ e₂¹-nu-r[u]
 401 ʿimin¹-na-meš ʿimin¹-na-meš
 402 idim ʿApsû imin¹-na-meš
 403 [š]e-er-ʿka¹-an [d]u₁₁-ga-ʿni¹ imin-na-meš
 404 [idim Ap]sû-ʿta agrun-ta¹ e₃-a-meš
 405 [u₃] ʿmunus¹ [nu]-meš ʿu₃¹ nita nu-meš
 406 [e-ne-n]e-ne bu-bu-meš
 407 [dam nu]-ʿtuku-meš¹ dumu nu-tu-ud-ʿda¹-me[š]
 408 [niĝ₂ šu k]i₃-ʿki₃¹-da nu-un-zu-me[š]
 409 [a-ra-zu sisk]ur-ʿra¹ ĝiš nu-un-tuku-meš
 410 [dumu-dili-meš] dumu-saĝ dili-meš
 411 [anše kur-ra] ʿhur¹-sag-ta ʿe₃¹-a-meš
 412 [gu-z]a-la₂ diĝir-ʿre-e-ne¹-meš
 413 [l]u₃-ʿlu₃¹-a sila-a mir su₃-meš
 414 ʿe-sir₃¹-r[a] ʿnigin₂¹-na-meš
 415 imin-ʿna-meš imin¹-kam imin a-ra₂-imin-meš
 416 ʿzi an-na he₂-pa₃-de₃¹-de₃-eš zi ki-a he₂-pa₃-de₃-eš
 417 ʿsu¹ l[u₂-ulu₃] dumu diĝir-ra-na-aš
 418 n[am]-ʿmu-un¹-na-te-ĝe₂₆-ʿde₃-en¹ šu-ra mu-un-na-g[i₄]-ʿgi₄¹-de₃-en
 419 k[a inim-ma udug hul-a]-kam

400 Incantation:
 401 The Seven are they, the Seven are they,
 402 In the source of the Apsû, the Seven are they,
 403 His[?] Adornments are the Seven,
 404 From the source of the Apsû, from the sanctuary, they emerged.
 405 They are neither male nor female,
 406 They flit about,
 407 They have no spouse, they have born no child,
 408 They do not know what they do,
 409 They do not listen to prayers or supplication.
 410 They are all equal sons, equal heirs,
 411 They are the horses who came out from the mountain ranges,
 412 They are the officials of the gods,
 413 A disturbance in the street, they stir up a storm,
 414 As they go around in the path,
 415 They are seven of seven, they are seven time seven.
 416 May they be adjured by the heavens, may they be adjured by the earths,
 417 As to the body of the man, the son of his god,
 418 (They) may not draw near, you will turn (them) away for him;
 419 It is (a wording of) the incantation of the evil udug.

Forerunners to Udug Hul, Tablet III 428-37:

- 428 [eš₅-kam-ma...]-ka ʾDU-DU¹
 429 ʾlimmu¹-[kam-ma...h]a kur a-gin₇ mu-un-ĝa₂-ĝa₂
 430 ia₅-kam-ma ^{ĝi}n[u₂-da-na]-ʾx¹ mu-ni-in-nu₂-e
 431 aš₃-kam-ma lu₂-u[lu₃ pap]-ʾhal¹-la mu-na-te gu₂-ni ša₃-ta mu-un-da-zi-zi
 432 imin-kam-ma lu₂-ul[u₃] pap-hal-la mu-un-na-te-ĝa₂-na
 geštug_x(TUG₂.PI.PI)-a-ni ki mu-un-ši-in-us₂
 433 imin-na-ne-ne lil⁹ a-ra-li-meš
 434 a-ra-li-a zi-dug₄ mu-un-de₃-za
 435 udug hul a-la₂ hul gidim hul gal₅-la₂ hul
 436 ^ddim₃-me ^dʾdim₃¹-a ^ddim₃-ʾme-lagab¹
 437 zi an-na he₂-e-p[a₃ z]i ʾki-a he₂-e¹-pa₃
- 428 [the third one] goes?....
 429 The fourth [one...]. . .sets to the mountain like water,
 430 The fifth one, beside his bed...he lays him down.
 431 When the sixth one approaches the patient; he raises his neck,
 432 When the seventh one approaches the patient, he (the patient) sets his mind
 to the Netherworld.
 433 They are seven, the...of the Netherworld,
 434 In the Netherworld, they....
 435 The evil Udug, the evil Ala, the evil ghost, the evil Galla demon,
 436 Dimme, Dimma, Dimme-Lagab demon,
 437 Be adjured by the heavens, be adjured by the earths.

Chapter Four: "Rome was also built on ruins": The Grounding of Second Millennium Literary and Political Sources

The Old Babylonian period marks a tonal shift in the appearances of the Sebettu – in regard to the demons themselves, as well as to the manner by which those appearances are themselves utilized. The earlier references to the demons focused primarily – though not exclusively – upon their terrifying demonic qualities and inherent potential for destruction. In contrast to this, the Sebettu as represented in the latter half of the second millennium increasingly appear in roles where these destructive abilities, while still featured, are seen as a potentially positive quality, a ferocity that may be directed against the enemies of the state. In essence, the second millennium attestations begin to lay the framework by which the Sebettu become members of the divine pantheon and thus tools of the Neo-Assyrian state. While we are not quite building upon the ruins of these literary texts, as this chapter title may suggest, we are certainly building upon their foundations.²¹⁰

The road from demon to deity is hardly straightforward, and necessitates a careful analysis of the literary models that facilitated this transition. To this end, this chapter is first concerned with the means and ways by which these volatile figures can be controlled; the literary prototype, so to speak. It is clear that the demons appear in a beneficent role when, and only when, they are commanded to do so by a power greater than their own: often a deity, preferably a rather highly-ranked one. This is most prominent in the Sumerian epic *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A*, where they serve the heroes Gilgamesh and Enkidu at the behest of Utu, the sun god.²¹¹ It is

²¹⁰ Eliza Griswold, "Ruins," *Poetry* (December 2012).

²¹¹ See, in particular, the line: "The seven which the youthful warrior, Utu, gave to Gilgamesh: ur-saĝ šul ĝeš-

Utu alone who has the ability to command the Sebettu, but when he tasks the demons to aid Gilgamesh and Enkidu, the two heroes are given this power by proxy. The presence of this higher, legitimating authority was critical. Without it, the Sebettu were lawless, unbridled, and dangerous.

This pattern of controlling a wild, monstrous, force by defeating and thus subjugating it to the will of the victor is one that proliferates throughout Mesopotamian literary texts and royal inscriptions and it establishes the prototype by which the Sebettu themselves can be manipulated. Unsurprisingly, it is used to greatest effect when incorporated in a combat narrative, wherein a divine warrior or hero defeats monstrous creatures, and once he has defeated them, he subjugates them to his own will. It is a theme well utilized in texts where the divine warrior is replaced with semi-divine heroes such as Gilgamesh or Lugalbanda. These figures, a mix of god and mortal, straddle the more abstract, mythical space that the gods occupied and the epic space connecting these figures to the sphere populated by mortal humans.²¹² As such, they too have a function to serve – more than human, but less than (entirely) divine, they are easier models for the truly mortal kings to follow.²¹³

The literary texts in Mesopotamia, of course, are connected on levels beyond simple shared narratives and tropes. For example, *Enūma eliš* and the earlier, Old Babylonian recensions of the Anzu epic, are directly related to one another in that the later text takes large thematic and

bil₂-ga-mes-ra imin-bi-e-ne mu-na-ra-an-šum₂." This follows the introduction to the seven as individuals, who are presented as all manner of terrifying and destructive creatures.

²¹² This distinction in the functions and understanding of time in Mesopotamian myth and epics is outlined in Adele Berlin, "Ethnopoetry and the Enmerkar Epics," *JAOS* 103 (1983): 17-24.

²¹³ Although we are more concerned with how this pattern may be utilized in the first millennium, it should be noted that the Neo-Assyrians were hardly innovative, as the Ur III kings took full advantage of a divine-ruler prototype in their hymnography. See: Jacob Klein, "Gilgamesh and Shulgi, Two Brother-Peers (Shulgi O)," in *Kramer Anniversary Volume: Cuneiform Studies in Honor of Samuel Noah Kramer*, ed. Barry L. Eichler, Jane W. Heimerdinger, and Åke W. Sjöberg, vol. 25 of *AOAT* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon & Bercker Kevelaer, 1976), 271-92.

structural elements from the earlier.²¹⁴ This model of direct – or quite nearly direct – transmission is not what we see in regard to the Sebettu in particular or, more generally, the monsters and demons their behavior is patterned on.²¹⁵ With the Sebettu, we see the creation of a body of imagery, a collection of common themes so interconnected that the invocation of any one of the associated references is equivalent to falling upon the entire host of imagery to which it is connected.²¹⁶ This synecdochical construction allowed for a loose relationship to exist between the various texts that referenced the Sebettu or the other terrifying demons in whose wake they followed.²¹⁷

Other texts maintain a looser relationship with each other: one text can act as a pattern or a prototype that other, later texts then echo. While we cannot claim that the first millennium authors of the royal inscriptions which reference the Sebettu were intending to directly invoke any of these earlier texts, the existence of this pattern does concretely illustrate that the later authors were not breaking new literary ground. Although they may not have been following directly in the footsteps of the earlier texts, neither were they entering uncharted literary territory. These tropes were well enough attested to be considered an established pattern in their own right.

²¹⁴ Andrea Seri, "The Fifty Names of Marduk in *Enūma eliš*," *JAOS* 126 (2006): 507-19 and P. Machinist, "Order and Disorder: Some Mesopotamian Reflections," in *Genesis and Regeneration: Essays on Conceptions of Origins*, ed. S. Shaked (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2005), 31-61.

²¹⁵ Marduk, as he functions in *Enūma eliš*, is in many respects a direct representation for the role Ninurta plays in the Anzu myth, to the point of creating narrative friction where the text of *Enūma eliš* requires different feats of its hero, only to collide with the preexisting narrative rules of the earlier Anzu text.

²¹⁶ Pongratz-Leisten emphasizes the deliberate nature of these references in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions and other texts. See: Beate Pongratz-Leisten, "The Other and the Enemy in the Mesopotamian Conception of the World," in *Mythology and Mythologies: Methodological Approaches to Intercultural Influences*, ed. R.M. Whiting, (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2001), 228.

²¹⁷ Although my focus herein is on the loose connections between texts, the invocation of earlier texts could be a deliberate act on the part of scribes or those who commissioned the texts they wrote, wherein the relationship between the two was, in fact, a carefully crafted scribal creation. In particular, see the evidence provided in: E. Weissert, "Creating a Political Climate: Literary Allusions to *Enūma eliš* in Sennacherib's Account of the Battle of Halule," in *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten*, ed. H. Waetzoldt, H. Hauptmann (Heidelberg: Heidelberg Orientverlag, 1997) 191-202.

4.1. The Subservience of Demons: Subduing Demonic Powers

In regard to the Sebettu, we can track the general pattern of control through subjugation and defeat, one that may be literal or figurative. In the latter case, it may not even occur within the framework of the text at all, instead referenced as an action occurring in a carefully non-specific *a priori* space compared to the narrative of the text. Although the terrifying nature of the Sebettu is always present when they appear in texts, the Seven are also, especially in literary texts, cast in a role as subservient to the other figures – most often divine – who also appear in the text.²¹⁸ Much of the Sebettu's behavior and characteristics are particular to the group of demons, belonging to the unique set of characteristics that the group of seven exclusively exemplifies. Other terrifying creatures in Mesopotamia – demons and monsters among them – may be commanded once they are defeated and thus subjugated by the power of the victor, brought into his sphere of control.²¹⁹

In the Mesopotamian sphere, this feature of forced subservience through domination is seen in a number of texts. Chief among these is *Enūma eliš*, the late second-millennium literary text detailing Marduk's defeat of Tiamat and his establishment of the ordered world, with himself positioned at the top of the Mesopotamian pantheon.²²⁰ The subjugation trope is expressed

²¹⁸ This subservience is seen, for example, in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A*, where the Sebettu are represented by the seven brothers who serve Gilgamesh. Here, their subservience is not to Gilgamesh, necessarily, but to Utu, as they serve Gilgamesh and Enkidu at Utu's behest. Similarly, the Sebettu, though destructive, serve Erra in the text of *Erra*. Although the Sebettu may verbally spar with Erra, chastising him when his destructive actions do not appear to live up to their standards, they still operate under his particular control, as Erra can direct them against either the homeland or its enemies.

²¹⁹ In making the argument that these patterns are well-established enough that they occur despite nearly a thousand years of distance, we can note the existence of this trope in other, later cultures and texts, particularly those with significant resonance on modern perceptions of demons and monsters. Namely, subjugation-via-defeat is a clear theme in the pseudepigraphical text of Solomon's building of his temple. See: Sarah L. Schwarz, "Reconsidering the *Testament of Solomon*," *JSP* 16 (2007): 203-237. Solomon's ability to command demons, as related in the *Testament of Solomon*, also links into the theme of controlling demons through the knowledge of their identity, something echoed by the exorcist's desire (through the medium of Asalluhi's inquiries to Marduk) to know the identity, and thus name, of the demons he is fighting before he can properly exorcise them. On a similar theme, see: Julien Véronèse, "God's Names and their Uses in the Books of Magic Attributed to King Solomon," *MRW* 5 (2010): 30-50.

²²⁰ Lambert argues a date of roughly 1100 BCE for the composition of *Enūma eliš*; see, W.G. Lambert, "The Reign

continually throughout *Enūma eliš*, inserted whenever the narrative provides the opportunity.

Early in the text, Ea enchants both Apsû, the personified embodiment of the freshwater spring beneath the earth, and Apsû's vizier, Mummu, into a deep slumber and slays them, setting up the former's body as his own realm. Once Marduk has been created, he deals Tiamat, the saltwater ocean and primordial mother of the gods, a similar fate. Once defeated, Marduk uses her corpse as the essential building material for the heaven and earth:

Enūma eliš, Tablet IV, 135-40:

135 *i-nu-úh-ma be-lum šá-lam-taš i-bar-ri*
136 ^{uzu}*ku-bu ú-za-a-zu i-ban-na-a nik-la-a-ti*
137 *iḥ-pi-ši-ma ki-ma nu-un maš-ṭe-e a-na ši-ni-šu*
138 *mi-iš-lu-uš-ša iš-ku-nam-ma šá-ma-mi uš-ṣal-lil*
139 *iš-du-ud maš-ka ma-aš-ša-ra ú-šá-aš-bit*
140 *me-e-ša la šu-ša-a šu-nu-ti um-ta-'-ir*

135 Bēl rested, surveying the corpse,
136 In order to divide the monstrous shape by a clever scheme,
137 He split her into two like a dried fish:
138 Half of her he set up and stretched out as the heavens.
139 He stretched the skin and appointed a guard,
140 With the instruction not to let her waters escape.

As with Apsû, Tiamat has been completely subjugated in defeat, reduced to raw material, her body utilized as the building blocks for the ordered universe that Marduk crafts. The fates of Tiamat's allies are all variations on this theme. Kingu, her consort and the adversary the text establishes as a direct foil to Marduk, is stripped of the Tablet of Destinies and killed:

Enūma eliš, Tablet IV, 119-22:

119 *ù^dkin-gu šá ir-tab-bu-u i-na bi-ri-šu-un*
120 *ik-mi-šu-ma it-ti^duggê(ug₅.ga)^e šu-a-¹ta¹ im-ni-šu*
121 *i-kim-šu-ma tuppi šīmāti(dub nam.tar)^{meš} la si-ma-ti-šu*
122 *i-na ki-šib-bi ik-nu-kám-ma ir-tuš it-muḥ*

of Nebuchadnezzar I: A Turning Point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion," in *The Seed of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of T.J. Meek*, ed. W.S. McCullough (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 1-13.

- 119 As for Kingu, who had once been the greatest among them,
 120 [Marduk] defeated him and counted him among the dead gods,
 121 He wrested from him the Tablet of Destinies, wrongfully his,
 122 And sealed it with his own seal and pressed it to his breast.

Marduk's victory is absolute and he easily defeats the legion of monsters that Tiamat birthed to serve as her army against the gods. Interestingly, as Tiamat is depicted as giving birth to monsters while she lives, in death Marduk employs her corpse to create wondrous things: *ibannâ niklāti*.

However, while the text focuses on the death of Kingu, it stresses the subjugation of the bound god and not their death by Marduk's hand, a critical difference in these examples in relationship to the principles of demonic subjugation that underlie the appearances of the Sebettu. Whether they are defeated and slain, or defeated and pressed into service, is decided based on how the various creatures are regarded, and thus, in what category of being the text considers them. *Enūma eliš* explicitly outlines the fate of the different types of enemies. Once Marduk has slain Tiamat, her army is routed and divided into two fundamental groups, each accorded different punishments. For the gods who fought with Tiamat, Marduk imprisons them:

Enūma eliš, Tablet IV, 109-14:

- 109 *ú-še-ṣu-ma nap-šá-tuš e-ṭe-ru*
 110 *ni-ta la-mu-ú na-par-šu-diš la le-'e*
 111 *i-sír-šú-nu-ti-ma^{ges} kakkī(tukul)^{mes}-šú-nu ú-šab-bir*
 112 *sa-pa-riš na-du-ma ka-ma-riš uš-bu*
 113 *en-du ṭúb-qa-a-ti ma-lu-ú du-ma-mi*
 114 *še-ret-su na-šu-ú ka-lu-ú ki-šuk-kiš*

- 109 They attempted escape to save their lives,
 110 But they were surrounded and could not escape.
 111 He bound them and smashed their weapons,
 112 And they lay enmeshed, lying in a snare,
 113 Hiding in corners, filled with woe,
 114 They bore his punishment, held in prison.

Marduk deals more harshly with the more monstrous creatures who fought with Tiamat, those

she birthed from herself. Unlike the aforementioned gods, who are treated similarly to military captives following a battle, the monsters are immediately destroyed:

Enūma eliš, Tablet IV, 115-19:

115 *ù iṣ-ten-eš-ret nab-ni-ti šu-ut pul-ḥa-ti ṣa-'-nu*
116 *mi-il-la gal-le-e a-li-ku kir₄-dip im-ni-šá*
117 *it-ta-di ṣer-re-e-ti i-di-šu-nu ú-ka-as-si*
118 *qá-du tuq-ma-ti-šú-nu šá-pal-šú ik-bu-us*

115 And as for the eleven creatures, covered in fearsome auras,
116 The gang of demons who all marched on her right as grooms,
117 [Marduk] fixed them with ropes and tied their arms,
118 He trampled them together with their battle beneath him.

The "gods" who fought with Tiamat, though rebels and on the losing side besides, are still divine and thus merit their comparatively lenient treatment. The monsters, on the other hand, are conquered entirely, their autonomy removed and Marduk's will imposed in its place – when they are not simply killed outright. This differential treatment continues in the text – once Marduk has taken possession of the Tablet of Destinies, sealing it with his own seal and claiming his full and legitimate authority, the text reiterates that he "strengthened his hold on the Bound Gods."²²¹

The conquered gods, here equated to the human prisoners of war that a king might seize following a battle, are treated in a suitably humane manner. The monsters, on the other hand, are rendered harsher punishments. As *Enūma eliš* may be considered as the most prominent and widely known example of this trope, the significance of this distinction between the fate of monsters and that of rebel gods is critical. The Sebettu are defeated, but subjugated and commanded in that defeat, and they are never referenced as being killed, or “counted among the dead gods,” to cite the fate which Kingu met.

²²¹ *Enūma eliš*: Tablet IV, 127.

4.1.1. The Beasts of Marduk's Chariot

Marduk, thanks to his position in the Mesopotamian pantheon and his persistent definition as a warrior, asserts his superiority over other creatures – namely monsters – on several occasions and across different texts, following a pattern established by the warrior god Ninurta. As with the monsters Ninurta defeats within the narrative of his own particular epics, Marduk's conquests appear in conjunction with his chariot. The chariot serves a literary function as well as a material one: first, it is his conveyance of choice in battle, and second, it is the means by which the actual cult statue of the god was moved from temple to temple during particular religious ceremonies, such as the *Akītu*, or new year's, festival. In particular, the monsters are harnessed to Marduk's chariot, serving as beasts of burden.²²² When Marduk, upon his chariot,

²²² Although Marduk defeats the legion of monsters Tiamat creates to fight for her during the battles that occupy the narrative *Enūma eliš*, he treats them in defeat as the spoils of war – should they be dead – or as prisoners of war – if he captures them alive. This behavior is markedly different from Ninurta's interactions with monsters. Ninurta is, in many regards, the prototype for Marduk; just as the texts of *Enūma eliš* and the earlier *Epic of Anzu* are closely interrelated, with the former borrowing heavily from the latter, so too are the characters of Marduk and Ninurta, who fulfill identical roles in each respective text. Ninurta's role as warrior god, defeating the Anzu bird who seized, wrongly once more, the Tablet of Destiny, is clearly the model for Marduk's own role as champion, defeating in turn the enemy that, like the Anzu bird, would overpower the gods. In fact, many of the narratological difficulties with the text, such as extensively establishing Kingu as the foil to Marduk and villain to parallel him, only for the text to discard Kingu and rush in Tiamat for the final and most dramatic confrontation – may stem from the latter text borrowing so heavily from the earlier, that it fails to take into account the differences in narrative structure that impede such a close borrowing from one text into another. Namely, both Anzu and Kingu, in possessing the Tablet of Destinies, are enemies so powerful that they cannot be defeated in fair and open combat. Ninurta is able to circumvent this obstacle through creative trickery, but Marduk does not employ any such method. Instead, the text of *Enūma eliš* shifts its attention, quite abruptly, to the figure of Tiamat as adversary, and Marduk defeats Kingu after he conquers Tiamat in battle, the latter conflict reduced to mere footnote, despite the earlier effort to create in Kingu a rival for Marduk. Concerning the aggressively intertextual nature of *Enūma eliš*, see: P. Machinist, "Order and Disorder: Some Mesopotamian Reflections," 31-61.

When Ninurta encounters monsters in one of his major myths, *Angimdimma*, he defeats them in combat, as would Marduk, but where Marduk is described as imprisoning the majority of his adversaries in *Enūma eliš*, Ninurta kills his monstrous foes outright and uses their corpses to adorn his own war-chariot. As in *Enūma eliš*, the monstrous hordes are fairly ancillary to the narrative structure of the overall text. Though Marduk must fight Tiamat's host of monsters over the course of his battle, the major fights are set between Tiamat and himself, or Kingu and himself. In the text of *Angimdimma*, the monsters are collected as trophies, and there is a sense that Ninurta exerts effort to encounter them to prove his strength and martial might. In this regard, parallels can be drawn not between the actions of Marduk and Ninurta, but rather between Ninurta and Gilgamesh and Enkidu, when the latter two journey to the Cedar Forest, and in so doing, slay Huwawa and collect the cedar trees (trophies) of their own prowess on the field of battle. Regarding the text of *Angimdimma*, see: J.S. Cooper, *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur* (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1978). On its monsters: Laura Feldt, "Heralds of the Heroic; the Functions of Angimdimma's Monsters," in *Your Praise is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy*

rides into battle against Tiamat in *Enūma eliš*, his own military might is emphasized both by flood imagery and by the accompaniment of a host of terrifying, monstrous creatures:

Enūma eliš: Tablet IV, 49-56:

- | | |
|----|--|
| 49 | <i>iš-ši-ma be-lum a-bu-ba</i> ^{giš} <i>kakka</i> (tukul)-šú <i>rabâ</i> (gal) ^a |
| 50 | ^{giš} <i>narkabat</i> (gigir) <i>u-mi la maḥ-ri ga-lit-ta ir-kab</i> |
| 51 | <i>iš-mid-sim-ma er-bet na-aš-ma-di i-du-uš-šá i-lul</i> |
| 52 | <i>ša-gi-šu la pa-du-ú ra-ḥi-šu mu-up-par-šá</i> |
| 53 | <i>pa-tu-ni šap-ti šin-na-šu-nu na-šá-a im-ta</i> |
| 54 | <i>a-na-ḥa la i-du-ú sa-pa-na lam-du</i> |
| 55 | <i>uš-ziz im-nu-uš-šu ta-ḥa-za ra-áš-ba u tu-qu-un-tú</i> |
| 56 | <i>šu-me-la a-na-an-ta da-a-a-i-pat ka-la mut-</i> ^{te} <i>ten-di</i> |
-
- | | |
|----|---|
| 49 | The lord, he raised the deluge, his great weapon, |
| 50 | He rode the fearful chariot of the overwhelming storm. |
| 51 | He yoked four teams to it, and he harnessed them to it, |
| 52 | The Murderer, the Pitiless, the Trampler, and the Fleet. |
| 53 | Their lips were drawn back, their teeth bore venom, |
| 54 | They do not know weariness, trained to overwhelm. |
| 55 | At his right he stationed Terrifying Violence and Strife, |
| 56 | On the left, Battle, to overwhelm a united army. |

This excerpt identifies seven individual creatures, four of which are yoked to Marduk's chariot, the team that pulls it into battle, while the remaining may be interpreted as projections of Marduk's own ferocity – accompanying the chariot, but acting more akin to aspects of its fierce aura, or *me-lam*₂. Each of the beasts is named appropriately, considering its enlistment in such an esteemed chariotry. In particular, *šāgišu*, "murderer," is a title that appears in reference to murderous enemies and demons.²²³ Similarly, *pādû*, as it appears in the context of *lā pādû*, is most often an attribute of gods, kings, demons, and divine weapons.²²⁴ A similar context occurs with the terms *rāḥiṣu* and *mupparšu*, though to a lesser degree in regard to their potential

Black from Students, Colleagues, and Friends, ed. Heather D. Baker, Eleanor Robson, and Gabor Zolyomi (London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq, 2010), 69-92.

²²³ See *CAD* Š Vol. 1: *šāgišu*. The *bīt mēseri* ritual includes "murderer" or *šāgišu* among the list of various words – such as "the death," *mūtu*, and "the snatcher," *ekkēmu*, in order to refer to particular demons that may lurk outside someone's house in order to potentially do the inhabitant harm.

²²⁴ When the seven creatures attack the petitioner in the text of *The Poem of the Righteous Sufferer* (*Ludlul Bēl Nemeqi*), they are introduced as being "merciless as a demon," or *ūmiš lā pādû*, as the attribute is closely enough linked to demonic entities in Mesopotamia to be used a point of descriptive reference. See *CAD* P, *pādû*.

demonic associations.²²⁵

Marduk often calls upon other forces to aid him, and those forces may well come in groups of seven, a common unit in Mesopotamian literary texts. Within the narrative of *Enūma eliš*, for example, Marduk utilizes seven winds, which work at his behest and create the storm that rips apart Tiamat's innards.²²⁶ Although demons are frequently described in terms of storms and storm-like imagery, such associations are often invoked for other entities with similarly fearsome traits, such as weapons, kings, or gods themselves. Marduk, once again within this text, is himself described in such terms.

Given the prevalence of all this imagery, repeated across a number of attestations for different demons in different circumstances, the appearance of seven terrifying monsters that function as a group and serve Marduk is itself not sufficient evidence to claim that those monsters are the Sebettu. And perhaps this should not even be our attempt – instead, we see that the seven (or four) monsters that are harnessed to Marduk's chariot share a similar function to a more decidedly identified attestation of the Sebettu, found in a later oracle text preserved in four copies, three of which are Neo-Babylonian, and one, poorly preserved late Babylonian copy.²²⁷ This text is a *tamītu*, a question is posed to Šamaš and Adad concerning the suitability of a horse to pull Marduk's chariot, one of a pair used to draw the barque conveying the cult statue of the god. Although the *tamītu* text contains a section that falls neatly in line with other *tamītu* texts in the description of the question to be posed to Šamaš and Adad. It also contains, uniquely, a short hymn to the horse, which is itself treated as divine:

- 15 *at-ta sīšû(anše.kur.ra) bi-nu-ut šadī(kur)^{meš} ellūti(ku₃)^{meš}*
16 *šar-ḥa-ta-ma i-na kal za-ap-pi*
17 *kīma^d manzât(tir.an.na) ina šamē(an)^{meš} es-ḥe-e-ta*

²²⁵ See CAD R, *rāhišu*, and CAD N vol. 1, *naprušu*.

²²⁶ Action which occurs in Tablet IV of *Enūma eliš*.

²²⁷ W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Oracle Questions*, vol. 13 of MC (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 80-83.

18 *ta-'-al-dam-ma ina šadi(kur)^{meš} ellūti(ku₃)^{meš}*
 19 *ta-ta-nak-ka-ia^{šim} burāša(li) el-la*
 20 *mē(a)^{meš} kup-pi tal-ta-na-[a]t-ti šá šá-di-i hur-sa-a-ni*

15 You, horse, creature of the sanctified mountains,
 16 You are magnificent among all the Pleiades,
 17 You are assigned in the sky like the rainbow,
 18 You were born in the holy mountains,
 19 You eat sanctified juniper,
 20 You drink spring water of the mountains and hills.²²⁸

The language used in the short hymn to the divinized horse differs from that which is usually associated with the Sebettu, but not entirely alien. Horses were imported into Mesopotamia from neighboring lands, such as the land of Kush, in northern Africa, and another location known as Mesu, in western Iran, the latter of which was the primary source for the animal.²²⁹ Foreign lands were themselves long associated with areas beside and beyond the mountains, termed *kur* in Sumerian.²³⁰ Otherwise, the hymn stresses the purity of the horse, and the horse is further given divinity by association – the first section of the *tamītu* text ends with the pronouncement that it is "a *tamītu* of the horse (*sīsū*(anše.kur.ra)) of the god."²³¹

As Lambert points out in his edition, the association between horses and the Pleiades is unusual. Though the tablets are all late, the original composition itself is difficult to date precisely. The use of the term *šakkanakku*, or governor, as a title for the king is a development that would pin the composition to the middle Babylonian period at the earliest, which would match the general introduction of the horse into Mesopotamia.²³² In the absence of concrete

²²⁸ Lambert, *Oracle Questions*, 82-83.

²²⁹ Although horses were imported initially into Mesopotamia, they were firmly established as part of the military by the Neo-Assyrian period, as chariotry units. Lisa A. Heidorn, "The Horses of Kush," *JNES* (1997) 56: 105-114; Stephanie Dalley, "Foreign Chariotry and Cavalry in the Armies of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II," *Iraq* 47 (1985): 31-48.

²³⁰ This word covered a fairly wide topographical range, including terms for the Netherworld, also a spawning ground for demons and the description of being born in the western and eastern mountains (*kur*) is applied to demons in general and the Sebettu in particular.

²³¹ Lambert, *Oracle Questions*, 83. This excerpt quotes line 13 of the text.

²³² Lambert, *Oracle Questions*, 81. On the introduction of the horse into Mesopotamia, and the proliferation of its

dating evidence for the composition, the date of the tablets themselves – late first millennium date for all four – may carry over to the potential date of the text as well. Lines 15-16 of the text are key: they indicate that the celestial representation of the horse is the "horse star," which is one of the stars belonging to the Pleiades. One of the names of the star cluster, *zappu*, meaning "bristles," references its proximity to the constellation Taurus, where the Pleiades were viewed as the mane of the bull constellation.²³³ In the first millennium, horses, winged or not, gained ground as astral representations of divine creatures; they are, for example, hitched to a chariot which is identified with the *anzû* bird, and here as well the *anzû*-star is identified with the "horse star."²³⁴

Of course, each and every group of seven cannot be linked directly to the Sebettu, but this *tamītu* text suggests a link – or at least a similarity – between the Sebettu and the monsters that serve to accompany the chariot into battle. Like the Sebettu, both are subjugated creatures, bound to the service of a greater divine will. Although the *tamītu* text is arguably later than the first attestation of the monsters of Marduk's chariot in *Enūma eliš*, it provides a more probable and potentially direct relationship. Although we must extrapolate a more direct association to the Sebettu-associated horses harnessed to the chariot of the cult statue of Marduk, as indicated in the *tamītu* text, the connection remains.²³⁵

use as a cavalry animal, see: P.R.S. Moorey, "Pictorial Evidence for the History of Horse-Riding in Iraq before the Kassite Period," *Iraq* 32 (1970): 36-50.

²³³ See Lambert, *Oracle Questions*, 82; CAD Z, *zappu*.

²³⁴ Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 2nd Edition, vol. 8 of *MC* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 35. Cf. A. George, "Babylonian Texts from the Folios of Sidney Smith: Part Two: Prognostic and Diagnostic Omens, Tablet I," *RA* 85 (1991): 157 n. 122.

²³⁵ As the *tamītu* text is later, of course, it references the Pleiades, or astral aspect of the Sebettu directly, but the link between the Pleiades and the Sebettu, and the standing of the former as the astral representation of the latter, is a topic that will be visited in depth in subsequent sections of this study.

4.1.2. Binding Huwawa: Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and Huwawa

The link between defeat and control is hardly limited to the text of *Enūma eliš*. Indeed, one of the earliest examples of this trope is expressed in the number of texts that detail the fight between Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and Huwawa.²³⁶ Huwawa is the guardian of the Cedar Forest and functions as such on behalf of Enlil, the head of the pantheon. He is thus linked to a higher divine authority, requiring that the texts juggle the privileges implicit in that position with Huwawa's monstrous nature. As such, his treatment is atypical when compared to the demons of *Enūma eliš*, as he straddles the categories of monster and divine servant.

The two heroes travel to the Cedar Forest to confront Huwawa so that they may cut down the trees they need to build their temple to the god Utu, while Gilgamesh simultaneously aims to prove his own martial worth by triumphing over Huwawa. The Sumerian texts of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A* and *B* feature a much more extended conversation between Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and Huwawa than the version found in the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Notably, the Sumerian narrative has Gilgamesh and Enkidu wrest victory over Huwawa through trickery, instead of martial force. The inhuman aspects of Huwawa are well-featured: the *Epic of Gilgamesh* describes Huwawa (or Humbaba, as the name is rendered in the Akkadian text) as follows:

Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet II, 291-93, 298-99:

291 ^dhum-ba-ba rig-ma-šú a-bu-bu
292 pi-i-šu ^dgirru(ĝiš.bar)-um-ma na-pi-is-su mu-ú-tu
293 i-šem-me-e-ma a-na 60-šu bēr(danna) ri-ma-at ^{ĝeš}qišti(tir)

298 áš-šú šul-lu-mu ^{ĝeš}erēnī(eren)
299 ʾana pul-ḥa-a¹-ti šá nišī(uĝ₃)^{meš} i-šim-šú ^den-lil

291 Humbaba, his voice is the Deluge,

²³⁶ Namely, *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A*, *Gilgamesh and Huwawa B*, and the *Epic of Gilgamesh* itself. The particular section of Gilgamesh, Huwawa, and the Cedar Forest is also discussed in Andrew George and Farouk Al-Rawi, "Back to the Cedar Forest: the Beginning and End of Tablet V of the Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgameš," *JCS* 66 (2014): 69-90

292 his speech is fire, his breath is as death.
 293 He hears the murmur of the forest for sixty leagues.

298 In order to keep the cedars safe,
 299 Enlil made it his fate to be the terror of the people.

The images in lines 291 and 292 are fairly standard imagery used for monstrous creatures.

Similar references are attached to the Sebettu, as well as to other demons or gods.²³⁷ The other cited abilities of Huwawa are more closely connected with his role as guardian of the Cedar Forest, as he possesses the ability to hear or otherwise sense any activity within the bounds of the forest that is under his protection. The source of these powers, and the role they play, is of note. Huwawa's abilities are expressions of the fate given to him by Enlil, head of the pantheon. They are therefore not only intrinsic but also intended aspects of his nature. In this respect, Huwawa fails to entirely fit the category of monster – despite his fearsome, more-than-human and terrifying presence, he converses with the two warriors as a thinking, reasoning individual, pleading for his life once his martial strength has failed him in combat against Gilgamesh. He resorts to very human methods in his desperation, throwing himself on Gilgamesh's mercy:

Gilgamesh, Tablet V, 149-53:

149 [x] x x ^dĜIŠ-gim-maš mi-i-ti ^rul¹ x-tar-ri [(x)]-lu
 150 [ár-du bal-t]u ana be-^rli-šú¹ [.....]
 151 ^dĜIŠ-gim-maš ^re-ṭir napišṭī(zī)^{ti}¹ [.....]
 152 lu-ši-ba-ak-kúm-ma ina [.....]
 153 iṣ-ṣi ma-la taq-qa-ba-^ra¹ [.....]

149 "...Gilgamesh, a dead man cannot...
 150 [a slave] living for his lord [can...]
 151 Gilgamesh, spare my life...
 152 let me dwell here for you in...
 153 As many trees as you command from me..."

Though fragmentary, what remains of this section is still more than sufficient to demonstrate

²³⁷ Though the wording is not identical, the Sebettu in the Uduḡ Hul texts, specifically Tablet 16, line 10, echo the appellation of a furious deluge.

how it conforms to the established pattern. Once Huwawa is faced with the prospect of his own defeat and death at the hands of Gilgamesh, he positions himself as a potential servant, one who will obey Gilgamesh's commands if only Gilgamesh will let him live. His efforts are in vain, of course, as Enkidu convinces Gilgamesh to behead Huwawa, and the pair kill him.

In interpreting the above passage, Huwawa's desperate begging is critical. Had Gilgamesh responded favorably, Huwawa's allegiance would have shifted entirely and he would have been completely subservient to Gilgamesh. In killing Huwawa, however, Gilgamesh rejects his appeal to be treated as a prisoner of war and thus as a man. He kills him and, furthermore, appears to take some part of Huwawa as a trophy of his victory, or of his successful hunt: "from the head he takes the fangs as booty."²³⁸ This motif is furthermore well represented on cylinder seals depicting the conquest of Huwawa by Gilgamesh and Enkidu.²³⁹ Despite this decision on Gilgamesh's part, Huwawa's behavior in the entire segment is still much more in line with what we might expect from a defeated prisoner than a captured monster, including his eventual pleading with Enkidu to speak to Gilgamesh on his behalf when he sees his direct address has failed, as he appears to have spared Enkidu at some point in the past:

*e-nin-na-a-ma^d en-ki-dù itti(ki)-ka šá-^lki^l-in ru-um-m[u-^l-a]
qí-bi-ma a-na^d ĜIŠ-gim-maš napišī(zī) lī-ṭi-ir*

Now, Enkidu, my release rests with you,
Speak to Gilgamesh so that he spares my life.²⁴⁰

Huwawa has a larger personal history – a history that he and Enkidu even share – that he is both cognizant of and capable of using to try and secure his own salvation. In addition, once he has realized that Gilgamesh and Enkidu are resolved to kill him, he curses the pair of them:

a-a ú-lab-bi-ra ki-lal-la-^lan^l

²³⁸ *Gilgamesh* Tablet V: 267.

²³⁹ See Sarah Graff, "Humbaba/Huwawa," (PhD diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University 2012).

²⁴⁰ *Gilgamesh* Tablet V: 179-80.

elī ib-ri-šú^d GIŠ-gim-maš^d en-ki-dù qé-bi-ri a-a ir-šú

May the pair of them not grow old,
Aside from his friend Gilgamesh, may Enkidu have no one to bury him!²⁴¹

Huwawa's curse proves prescient: although Enkidu encourages Gilgamesh to kill Huwawa in order to avoid incurring the wrath of the god Enlil, they are still visited with divine punishment in retribution for their slaying of Huwawa and, later, the Bull of Heaven.²⁴² The dichotomy between the treatment of men and monsters in defeat following a battle is keenly echoed by Marduk's treatment of the defeated monsters in *Enūma Eliš*. The captured gods who sided with Tiamat he treats as prisoners of war, but Tiamat's monstrous brood he kills, destroying them utterly.

The defeat of Huwawa in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A* follows a different route than within the Akkadian *Gilgamesh*. In the former, Gilgamesh must first trick Huwawa into lowering his seven me-lam₂ (*melammu*), terrifying auras that are often associated with divinity and kingship but are also linked to demons, albeit rarely, in incantations (predominantly the Uduḡ Hul texts).²⁴³ The text further differs from the Akkadian *Gilgamesh* in that Utu, not Enlil, appears to be Huwawa's governing deity. The narrative is muddled as Gilgamesh and Enkidu are also under the protection and patronage of Utu, but Enlil is still the deity who expresses the most discontent

²⁴¹ *Gilgamesh* Tablet V: 256-57.

²⁴² Enkidu is keenly aware that they are committing a transgressive act in slaying Huwawa, and when Gilgamesh hesitates in killing Huwawa, he urges his companion on in his task – not out of fear that they will be betrayed and defeated by Huwawa should they allow him to live, but rather, because of the potential repercussions:

gù-m[ir-šú] né-er-šu tē-en-šú hul-[liq]

la-am iš-mu-ú a-šá-re-du^d[en-líl]

lib-ba-ti-ni i-mál-lu-ú ilānū^{meš} rabūtu(gal)^{meš}

"Finish him (Huwawa), slay him, do away with his abilities!

Before Enlil, the foremost (god) has learned (of it)!

The great gods could become angry with us." (*Gilgamesh*, Tablet V: 184-86).

Enkidu fears retribution from the higher deities, particularly Enlil and Šamaš (Utu in the Sumerian text).

²⁴³ A more detailed discussion of me-lam₂ will appear later in this study, in conjunction with the term as it is applied to the Sebettu in the *Uduḡ Hul* texts. The major monograph on me-lam₂ is E. Cassin's *La splendeur divine: Introduction à l'étude de la mentalité mésopotamienne*, (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1968), with a recent addition of Shawn Zelig Aster, *The Unbeatable Light: Melammu and its Biblical Parallels*, vol. 384 of *AOAT* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012).

at Huwawa's demise.

Gilgamesh's use of verbal trickery in order to defeat the monster Huwawa lends a curious dimension to this battle with Huwawa that is not emphasized in *Gilgamesh's* version. Here, Gilgamesh is allowed to triumph over Huwawa in a combat with multiple valences. On the one hand, he is able to prove his martial strength, but he is also capable of proving his intellectual superiority, or superior guile.²⁴⁴ Perhaps because Huwawa has been established as a standard, a test by which Gilgamesh is to measure himself, the monster must be rendered capable of higher thinking and a greater intellect, lest this additional dimension to the conflict be lost.²⁴⁵

The trickery itself is rife with sly political commentary.²⁴⁶ In the text, Gilgamesh approaches Huwawa, accompanied by Enkidu and a number of youths from Uruk (who only come into play when they appear to assist in the removal of the cedar trunks), and Gilgamesh promises Huwawa that he shall do the following:

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 130 | zi ama ugu-ĝu ₁₀ ^d nin-sumun ₂ -ka a-a-ĝu ₁₀ ^d lugal-ban ₃ -da |
| 131 | kur-ra tuš-a-zu ba-ra-zu tuš-a-zu he ₂ -zu-am ₃ |
| 132 | en-me-bara ₂ -ĝi ₄ -si nin ₉ -gal-ĝu ₁₀ nam-dam-še ₃ kur-ra hu-mu-ra-ni-ku ₄ -ku ₄ |
| 135 | peš ₃ -tur nin ₉ -ban ₃ -da-ĝu ₁₀ nam-lukur-še ₃ kur-ra hu-mu-ra-ni-ku ₄ -ku ₄ |
| 136 | ni ₂ -zu ba-ma-ra su-zu-a ga-an-ku ₄ ²⁴⁷ |
-
- | | |
|-----|--|
| 130 | By the life of my mother, Ninsumuna, and my father, Lugalbanda, |
| 131 | As no one knows of your dwelling in the mountains, I will make your dwelling famous, |
| 132 | I will bring Emebaragesi, my elder sister, to you, to be your wife in the |

²⁴⁴ Here, the conflict parallels the dispute between the two rulers in *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* as well as *Enmerkar and Ensugirana*, as the text allows Sumer to prove its superiority over Aratta in multiple venues, proving the very culture and civilization of Mesopotamia, not just its military force, to be superior: Piotr Michalowski, "Maybe Epic: the Origins and Reception of Sumerian Heroic Poetry," in *Epic and History*, eds. David Konstan and Kurt A. Raaflaub (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 14.

²⁴⁵ This parallelism is repeated in other texts, particularly when the antagonist, be it monstrous or not, is set up as a direct foil for the protagonist. An example of this can be seen in the Beowulf epic, where a number of links exist between Beowulf and Grendel: both are described as having the strength of thirty men, for example. See: Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscripts* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewster, 1995), 32.

²⁴⁶ Piotr Michalowski, "A Man Called Enmebaragesi," in *Literatur, Politik, und Recht in Mesopotamien*, eds. W. Sallaberger, K. Volk, and A. Zgoll, vol. 14 of *OBC* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz: 2003), 195-208.

²⁴⁷ Following transliteration in: Edzard, "Gilgameš und Huwawa A. I," 165-203, referencing also the edition of text in Delnero, "Sumerian Literary Compositions."

mountains,
 135 I will bring Peštur, my younger sister, to you, to be your junior wife in the
 mountains,
 136 So give me your auras; I wish to join your family!

In acting as he does, Gilgamesh approaches Huwawa as if the guardian were the leader of a foreign power, the ruler of this distant land of the Cedar Forest. The promise of his two "sisters" in marriage to Huwawa echoes the means by which marriage was used to broker and cement alliances between the rulers of different lands.²⁴⁸ Accompanied by his gang of youths from Uruk, as well as Enkidu, Gilgamesh and company resemble an expeditionary military force more than anything else. Although the youths from Uruk do not assist in the battle itself, nor do they appear to do much of anything other than carry off the cedar trees, they still provide an armed presence. Within the text, Gilgamesh is a king with a full retinue: an armed, experienced military force coming to a potentially inhospitable and dangerous foreign ruler.

Overall, Gilgamesh's actions echo the intermediate position Huwawa holds within the text. Gilgamesh mocks him by addressing him as a fellow ruler, but one lacking in cunning, skill, and basic political and cultural knowledge. Huwawa is treated like an oaf, and the association between somewhat animalistic, bestial creatures and foreign rulers is established in other contexts in Mesopotamia.²⁴⁹ Once he has tricked Huwawa into dropping all of his auras, rendering him vulnerable, Gilgamesh restrains him, as described in two variant texts of

²⁴⁸ Bendt Alster, "Court Ceremonial and Marriage in the Sumerian Epic 'Gilgamesh and Huwawa,'" *BASOAS* 55 (1992): 1-8.

²⁴⁹ In particular, and most famously, this trope appears during the reign of Ibbi-Sin, where in a letter to Puzur-Mumušda, the king writes:

u₄-na-an-ga-ma^den-lil₂-le ki-en-gi hul mu-un-gi₄
 ugu^{u2}₄-bi kur-bi-ta e₁₁-de₃
 nam-sipa kalam-ma-še₃ mu-un-il₂
 As Enlil hated Sumer,
 A monkey, who descended from his mountain,
 (Enlil) raised to the shepherdship of the homeland.

See Åke W. Sjöberg, "The Ape from the Mountain who Became the King of Isin," in *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo*, ed. Mark E. Cohen, Daniel C. Snell and David B. Weisberg (Bethesda: CDL Press, 1993), 211-20. See also, Michalowski, "Enmebaragesi," 195-208.

Gilgamesh and Huwawa A:

- 145a am dab₅-ba-gin₇ saman bi₂-in-šub
145b ġuruš dab₅-ba-gin₇ a₂-ni mu-un-la₂-la₂²⁵⁰

- 145a Like a captured bull, he set the halter over him,
145b Like an imprisoned young man, he bound his arms.

In addition to being unable to decide whether he should live or die, Gilgamesh is torn as to how to properly treat Huwawa – as an animal, and thus a monster, or as a captured prisoner of war, and consequently as a man. As in the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, he seems unable to decide between the two choices. However, Enkidu takes a more active role in making up Gilgamesh's mind, and the texts either describe the pair of them killing Huwawa, or Enkidu alone dealing the killing blow and slitting Huwawa's throat. In either instance, Huwawa is destroyed, and they once again carry off one of his body parts as a trophy – in this case, the two place Huwawa's head inside a sack (ša₃ ^{kuš}a-ġa₂-la₂-še₃ mu-un-da-ġar)²⁵¹ and carry it away with them, to present it later before Enlil, an act which itself could be ambiguously associated with behavior dedicated to either human or bestial defeated foes.

Enlil's behavior when presented with this grisly trophy continues the trend of Huwawa's indeterminate state. The god is extremely angered by Gilgamesh and Enkidu's actions, and chastises the pair:

- 171 a-na-aš-am₃ ur₅-gin₇ i₃-ak-en-ze₂-en
172 ba-du₁₁-ga-ke₄-eš mu-ni ki-ta ha-lam-ke₄-eš
173 igi-zu-ne-ne he₂-en-tuš
174 ninda gu₇-zu-ne-a he₂-en-gu₇
175 a naġ-zu-ne-a he₂-en-naġ

171 Why did you act in this manner?
172 Was it because of orders, that his name is wiped from the earth?
173 He should have dwelt before you,
174 He should have eaten the bread you ate,

²⁵⁰ Transliteration following: Delnero, "Sumerian Literary Compositions," 2461.

²⁵¹ Delnero, "Sumerian Literary Compositions," 2469 – *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* line 167.

175 He should have drunk the water you drink!²⁵²

Although Gilgamesh and Huwawa have presented the head of Huwawa as a hunting trophy, Enlil assigns very human qualities to Huwawa, stating that he should have merited a place beside Gilgamesh and should have received the same food and drink as Gilgamesh himself: essentially, that he should have been placed firmly in the same category as the king. The issue of Huwawa's nature is an interesting wrinkle in the overall argument of how Gilgamesh ought to have treated the monster. He possesses great and terrible abilities, radiant auras (me-lam₂) that Gilgamesh cannot match, but is also treated as if he were a foreign ruler, and owed the respect and reciprocal customs such a position would afford. In either situation, or either category, Gilgamesh's defeat of Huwawa brings him under the dominion of the former's will, and Huwawa follows this trope by offering to serve the king as his dutiful slave. While the creatures in *Enūma eliš* fell into the category of either monster or deity, and were given different punishments as befit either classification, Huwawa does not occupy either exclusively. In this sense, he stands as one of the potential parallels to the Sebettu as they occupy different spaces as they transition and shift from demon to deity.

4.2. Laying the Foundations: Second Millennium Cultic Evidence

The initial use of the Sebettu in a non-malevolent context during the second millennium forms an essential foundation for the first millennium's proliferation of attestations of the demons. In particular, the references during this second millennium period take a decidedly cultic form, as the Sebettu begin to appear with a cult dedicated to them, and, following this growing context of worship, the demons gradually shift to more positive forms of utilization.

²⁵² Gilgamesh and Huwawa A: 171-75, transliteration following Delnero, "Sumerian Literary Compositions," 2470-71.

They appear with temples dedicated directly to them – which are the earliest and most significant references to the benevolent role of the Seven – as well as in royal inscriptions, and in personal names as protective elements. These attestations, particularly the presence of temples, point increasingly to a developing cultic and ritual context for the demons, as well as to the development of an avenue by which the king could directly utilize the ever-present martial qualities of the demons to his own ends. These and similar rituals, such as rituals detailing offerings from the king to the ruling god of the city, helped to legitimate the position of the king as a whole. They drew upon the same literary foundations that allowed the king to serve as a substitute for the hero or warrior god in myths in the first place.²⁵³

Although Mesopotamian history is a punctuated equilibrium of periods of unity, often forcibly imposed through military conquest, separated by longer periods of disunity, where Mesopotamia fractures into smaller polities, each period does not exist in a vacuum, unconnected to those that came before and followed. The periods that this and following sections of the study are concerned with – Middle Assyrian, Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian – were brief periods of unity that, despite the intervening years of disunity, remain connected to each other. The later periods remained aware of many of the practices and traditions of the former, and chose to embed themselves in those practices or discard them as best suited their own purposes. Generally speaking, the second millennium references form a bridge, spanning the distance from the early, almost entirely literary references, and the later, highly politicized usage of the Sebettu that proliferates in the first millennium.

²⁵³ The gifts associated with the Middle Assyrian *šulmānu* rites in particular follow this pattern. See: Baruch A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of the Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1997): 29-30. On the *šulmānu* texts and ritual, see: J.J. Finkelstein, "The Middle Assyrian *Šulmānu*-Texts," *JAOS* 72 (1952): 77-80 and edition in Karl Fr. Müller, *Das assyrische Ritual I: Texte zum assyrischen Königsritual*, vol. 41/3 of *MVAG* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1937).

4.2.1. Second Millennium Cults and Worship

Beginning with the latter half of the second millennium, we begin to see consistent documented evidence for the Sebettu in a cultic context, with temples and offerings dedicated to them. While the Middle Assyrian royal inscriptions that detail the Sebettu, such as those of Tukulti-Ninurta I and Aššur-bēl-kala, provide the clearest link to the first millennium texts, the practice of dedicating temples and cults to the Sebettu precedes them.

Many, though not all, of these earliest attestations are Assyrian, a connection that holds true in regard to the particular ruler employing the Sebettu as well as the context for each attestation. The Sebettu, for example, appear in a list of deities in the opening lines of a tablet that comprised one of the sections of a set of rituals, called *tākultu*, that were used by the kings as early as the Middle Assyrian period, aimed at securing the support of the state pantheon.²⁵⁴ The ritual context for this text is specifically that of the pantheon in Assyria in this period, and that fact underlies the appearance of the Sebettu, who appear in an opening list of other gods, all of whom are dedicated to the king.²⁵⁵ The *tākultu* ritual itself was documented during the reign of Adad-nerari I (1305-1274 BCE), based upon potsherds that describe how they were used in the third *tākultu* performed during Adad-nerari I's reign.²⁵⁶ Similarly inscribed potsherds have been dated to the reign of Shalmaneser I (1273-1244 BCE), which provides continuity for the practice of the *tākultu* ritual, and thus the invocation of the Sebettu in it, for at least the two consecutive reigns.²⁵⁷ The Sebettu, when they do appear in the ritual, are in conjunction with the goddess Narunde, in both early and later tablets.²⁵⁸ The larger context places the gods within the

²⁵⁴ The collection of these rituals (*tākultu*) is edited in: R. Frankena, *Tākultu de sacrale maaltijd in het Assyrische ritueel* (Leiden: Brill, 1954).

²⁵⁵ See *KAR* 214: Vs. 1: 5

²⁵⁶ A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: From the Beginning to Ashur-resha-ishi I* (Weisbaden: Harrasowitz-Verlag, 1972), 72.

²⁵⁷ Grayson, *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, 97-99.

²⁵⁸ See R. Frankena, "New Materials for the *Tākultu* Ritual: Additions and Corrections," *BiOr* 18 (1961): 200; and

ritual as follows:²⁵⁹

[^d]Sebettu(imin.bi) ^d[na-r]u-[du]
[ša]mû(an)^u eršetum(ki)^{tum}
[ilānū(diġir)^{meš}] šu-pu-ti

The Sebettu and Narunde,
[Upon] the heavens and the earth,
The supreme gods.

The connection between Narunde and the Sebettu first surfaces in this period. Later, in the Neo-Assyrian period, the Sebettu are also linked with either the god Enmešarra or goddess Išhara. Narunde, as an independent figure, is herself relatively unattested after the second millennium, but the proliferation of her cult, localized in Susa, is early, beginning in 1800 BCE.²⁶⁰ Given this earlier foundation for Narunde as an independent deity, her connection to the Sebettu – particularly how that connection reappears in the first millennium – is curious, and merits further study in light of the Sebettu's constant association with foreign spaces and deities. Narunde appears in connection with her "seven brothers," for example, in a first millennium apotropaic incantation.²⁶¹ Along the way, her status as an independent deity has been replaced by a familial connection to a group that is noted for their lack of precisely that relationship.

It is tempting to assign the connection to a foreign deity, such as Narunde, who was certainly a benevolent goddess, as one of the major reasons for the shift in how the Sebettu were utilized in this period, and credit this outside influence as the catalyzing element for viewing the Sebettu increasingly as divine figures. This solution, however, suffers from a dearth of evidence. The transition from demonic to divine was not the result of a single change or a sudden outside influence, such as the introduction of a new deity, but rather the culmination of slower, smaller shifts aided by the entrenched presence of pre-existing tropes detailing how monsters and demons could be controlled and commanded once subjugated by more powerful figures. Once

R. Frankena, *Tākultu d sacrale maaltijd in het Assyrische ritueel* (Leiden: Brill, 1954).

²⁵⁹ R. Frankena, "Tākultu Ritual: Additions and Corrections," 200: Col. V, 4'-6'.

²⁶⁰ H. Koch, "Narunde" *RLA* 9 (1998-2000): 160.

²⁶¹ Green, Anthony. "Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons: the Iconography of Good and Evil in Ancient Assyria and Babylonia." *Visible Religion* 3 (1984): 83.

fostered in cult and ritual, this trend was open to full utilization – even exploitation – for the purposes of political propaganda is well evidenced in the Neo-Assyrian period.

Kassite-period Evidence: 𒀭𒂗𒍪𒌦

Other evidence and some of the most interesting foundational evidence for the developing worship of the Sebettu can be found in Kassite-period Babylonia. The most prominent example of this type comes from Nippur, where 𒀭𒂗𒍪𒌦, a local official, commissioned a temple to be built to the Sebettu.²⁶² While the exact dates for this temple – or indeed, for 𒀭𒂗𒍪𒌦 himself – are uncertain, he appears to have gained prominence in Nippur thanks to the decentralization of power following the late Old Babylonian period, and, by best estimate, would have been active between the latter half of the sixteenth and the end of the fifteenth century BCE.²⁶³ If this dating is correct, 𒀭𒂗𒍪𒌦 provides an important bridge as one of, if not the, earliest references the Sebettu in a cultic context. Its dating helps to link the predominantly literary Old Babylonian attestations of the Sebettu and the politically-motivated use of the Sebettu in Middle and Neo-Assyrian texts.

Thanks to its proximity to the capital city of Dur-Kurigalzu, Nippur was a prominent city in the Kassite period. The excavation of a large administrative archive at the site of the capital provided a wealth of texts concerning the reigns from Burna-buriaš II (1359-1333) to Kaštiliaš IV (1232-1225 BCE).²⁶⁴ These tablets further document the substantive building and rebuilding efforts in Nippur during this period, and while 𒀭𒂗𒍪𒌦 predates the archive itself, his actions are certainly in line with what they describe. 𒀭𒂗𒍪𒌦 commissioned and dedicated

²⁶² Andrew George makes brief mention of this in *House Most High: the Temples of Ancient Mesopotamia*, vol. 5 of *MC* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 169.

²⁶³ Johannes Boese, "𒀭𒂗𒍪𒌦. Ein kassitischer Fürst in Nippur," in *Festschrift für Gernot Wilhelm*, ed. Jeanette C. Finke (Dresden: ISLET, 2010), 74.

²⁶⁴ Robert D. Biggs, "A Letter from Kassite Nippur," *JCS* 19 (1965): 96.

temples to both Enlil and the Sebettu, and he recounts his building efforts concerning the latter temple on a Sumerian clay votive cone.²⁶⁵

1	^d imin-bi	For the Sebettu,
2	lugal-meš-a-ni	His lords,
3	^d ḥa-aš-mar-gal-šu	Ḥašmar-galšu,
4	nita kala-ga	The strong male,
5	dumu ma-la-ab-ḥar-be	The son of Malab-Ḥarbe,
6	e ₂ ki-aḡ ₂ -ne-ne	The temple, beloved (of the Sebettu),
7	nam-ti-la-a-ni-še ₃	For the lengthening of his life,
8	mu-na-us ₂ -us ₂	He established (it).

Although the Sumerian of this text is idiosyncratic – or, alternatively, riddled with grammatical failings – the structure follows a pattern indicative of the period.²⁶⁶ For example, in the second line of the inscription "his lords" is expressed as lugal-meš-a-ni, placing the plural marker "meš" before the possessive "a-ni," though that is the least of the line's grammatical concerns: the proper form of the plural (by good, Old Babylonian Sumerian grammatical standards) would rightly be: lugal-a-ne-ne-er.²⁶⁷ More interesting is the last line, "mu-na-us₂-us₂," which suggests a plural verbal form despite the fact that the subject here, Ḥašmar-galšu, is clearly in the singular.²⁶⁸ The scribe has confused the proper singular subject of Ḥašmar-galšu with the plural Sebettu, and that confusion has yielded a plural verbal form at the end of this text.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁵ Text published with handcopy in Ferris J. Stephens, *Votive and Historical Texts from Babylonia and Assyria*, vol. 9 of *YOS*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), with duplicate published in F. M. Th. Böhl, *Mededeelingen der koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunder* (Amsterdam: C. G. Van der Post, 1899) 45.

²⁶⁶ Concerning particular grammatical variations within the Kassite period, see: Malcolm J.A. Horsnell, "The Grammar and Syntax of the Year-Names of the First Dynasty of Babylon," *JNES* 136 (1977): 277-85.

²⁶⁷ Boese, "Ḥašmar-galšu," 76.

²⁶⁸ The verb is furthermore irregular in its possible meaning here: of the various reading of the "uš" sign, few track to the meaning that is clearly implied contextually in this inscription, one of building or erecting a structure. The closest potential equivalence is us₂ in the context of its meaning of "to impose," or *emēdu*. This meaning is further corroborated by the rare compound verb "ki us₂" meaning "to set (impose?) on the ground," or *šuršudu*. Regardless of these connections, the translation here is aided more by the context of the inscription than the isolated meaning of the verbal root itself.

²⁶⁹ The longest Sumerian inscription from the Kassite period is found on the statue of Kurigalzu (1375 BCE) and serves as the best gauge for the peculiarities of Kassite Sumerian. Though in fragments, the text establishes a continuity of literary and religious tradition: Kurigalzu's scribes were cognizant of both the gods of Mesopotamia and the Sumerian language used to describe them typical to Old Babylonian texts. The text also deviates from the far

The inscription can be compared not only to other Sumerian texts of the period, but more specifically against other temple inscriptions of the period. Ḫašmar-galšu was responsible for a number of building projects and temples around Nippur, including a votive inscription dedicating the great gate (ka₂ mah) of the Ekur of Enlil, and further bricks bearing inscriptions identifying them as bricks used to build the Ekur temple.²⁷⁰ As such, there are two texts that detail temple dedications by Ḫašmar-galšu to Enlil; one, at only five lines, is too short to be of much comparative use, but the other is more useful at fifteen lines. The first ten lines of the text are as follows:

1	^d en-lil ₂ -le	To Enlil,
2	lugal kur-kur-ra	The lord of all the lands,
3	lugal-a-ni-ir	For his lord,
4	^d ha-aš-mar-gal-šu	Ḫašmar-galšu,
5	nita kala-ga	The strong youth,
6	dumu ma-la-ab-har-be	The son of Malab-Harbe,
7	^{na4} sig ₄ me-te	The "suited" brickwork,
8	ka ₂ mah e ₂ -kur-ra	The great gate of the E-kur,
9	nam-ti-la-a-ni-še ₃	For the lengthening of his life,
10	a mu-na-ru	He dedicated (them) to him. ²⁷¹

The Sumerian of this particular inscription is less idiosyncratic than that found in the dedication to the temple of the Sebettu, something seen in particular in the proper grammar of line three, as compared to the incorrect "lugal-meš-a-ni" in the dedication for the temple of the Sebettu.

In large part, this text is exempt from the mistakes that mark that text.

more formulaic patterns seen in royal inscriptions or building dedications. This inscription was made through the dedicated effort of scribes who were well versed in lexical texts and cognizant of the preexisting literary traditions of Mesopotamia. There are several particular forms in Kurigalzu's inscription, including an unusual spelling of the first and second person copula, me-en₂₃ in place of the expected –me-en, and an unexplained preference for syllabic spellings. More useful for our purposes, this text demonstrates that Kassite Sumerian trended towards the use of plural verb forms, even in circumstances where the subject was clearly in the singular. The inscription dedicating the temple of the Sebettu belongs, from grammatical patterns alone, to this general period. See: Niek Veldhuis, "Kurigalzu's Statue Inscription," JCS 60 (2008): 26-28.

²⁷⁰ J.A. Brinkman, *Materials and Studies for Kassite History, Vol. 1: A Catalogue of Cuneiform Sources pertaining to Specific Monarchs of the Kassite Dynasty*. (Chicago: the Oriental Institute, 1976): 325 ff.

²⁷¹ Note that this inscription, in contrast to the unusual "us₂-us₂" of the previous inscription's final line, employs the far more typical verb "a ru," meaning "to dedicate," found frequently in temple inscriptions.

The similarities between the two texts carry more weight than the differences. Enlil, of course, commanded a large cult centered in Nippur from the third millennium onwards and was thus the subject of numerous hymns.²⁷² His own temples were held in the esteem appropriate for such a prominent deity. Although building inscriptions follow, by default, a formula, that formula may only be applied to the Sebettu if they – and, subsequently, their temple – are considered to belong to the same category as Enlil and his temples, albeit lesser by certain degrees of grand magnitude. Although the temple dedicated to the Sebettu only includes a votive text of eight lines, it supports a similar classification for both Enlil and the Sebettu: they are both unequivocally viewed as deities by this period. There appears to be little difference in how the two are treated by Ḫašmar-galšu, in regard to the building of their temples.

4.2.2. The Sebettu on *Kudurru* Inscriptions

Once these Kassite-period references to the Sebettu as gods appear, the number of references to them acting in a similar capacity quickly grows, though our material remains scattered in the late second millennium. Among these references, the Sebettu begin to appear on boundary stones, or *kudurru*, inscriptions, though they are infrequently referenced in such contexts.²⁷³ In part, the interest of these references to the Sebettu on these boundary stones

²⁷² Xianhua Wang, *The Metamorphosis of Enlil in Early Mesopotamia*, vol. 385 of *AOAT* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013).

²⁷³ On *kudurru*, see: Susanne Paulus, *Die babylonischen Kudurru-Inschriften von der kassitischen bis zur frühneubabylonischen Zeit: untersucht unter besonderer Berücksichtigung gesellschafts- und rechtshistorischer Fragestellungen*, vol. 51 of *AOAT* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2014); Ursula Seidl, *Die babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs: Symbole mesopotamischer Gottheiten* (Freiburg: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1989) and L.W. King, *Babylonian Boundary Stones and Memorial-Tablets in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1912): xv. The Sebettu were not the only divine figures to possess identifiable pictorial representations, as King briefly summarizes the other connections: the solar disk, Šamaš; the crescent or moon, Sin; the eight-pointed star or rosette, Ištar, the horned helm, Anu and Enlil; the ram-headed staff and apkallu goat-fish, Ea; the spear, Marduk; the wedge and stylus, Nabû, the lightning, distinctively forked, Adad; the lion-bearded mace, Nergal; the twin-lion-headed mace, Ninurta; the eagle-headed-mace, Zababa; the square-topped mace, Šukamuna; the lamp, Nusku; the seated goddess or a dog, Gula; the walking bird, Bau; and the scorpion, Išhara. In providing the entire list we can see the clear link that exists between some of these divine figures, their images, and their established

comes from the presence of an easily identifiable artistic representation – the seven stars of the Pleiades constellation – alongside the inscriptions themselves.

The Sebettu appear on a text concerning the legal distribution of property; it presents the terms of a land grant, describing the ten *gur* of land that were to be given to a certain Qišti-Marduk, son of Amêl-Ištar-ilassu, by the ruler Kurigalzu.²⁷⁴ The inclusion of Kurigalzu as the benefactor behind this particular land grant allows us to date this particular *kudurru*. There existed two rulers named Kurigalzu: Kurigalzu son of Kadašman-Harbe, who ruled in the late fifteenth century BCE, and Kurgalzu son of Burna-Buriaš, the twenty-second king of the Kassite dynasty, who ruled during the late fourteenth or early thirteenth century BCE.²⁷⁵ Though identifying the correct Kurigalzu is difficult, the text serves in either case as yet another example bridging the scattered references of the early Kassite period with texts at the close of the second millennium, which connect in turn to the even larger body of references that populate the Neo-Assyrian period.

Within the text, the Sebettu are invoked in the list of divine figures in the oath section. The *kudurru*'s text features an initial list of divine figures that act as warning against those who would claim, at any point, that the given field was not Qišti-Marduk's. These deities appear in the following order: the three major deities of Anu, Enlil, and Ea, followed by a slightly more untraditional trio of Nanna, Šamaš, and Marduk.²⁷⁶ These three are then followed by a number of deities presented in pairs, including Nergal with Laš, his occasional spouse.²⁷⁷ The closing lines of the *kudurru*, after which the text breaks, include the final admonishment that:

21 *ša tup-pa an-na-a i-ḫi-ip-pu-u*

astral representations, whilst others have no such ready comparison.

²⁷⁴ King, *Babylonian Boundary Stones*, 205.

²⁷⁵ Brinkman, *Kassite History*, Vol. 1, 325 ff.

²⁷⁶ BM 102588: Face B, 9-12.

²⁷⁷ BM 102588: Face B, 13.

- 22 *a-na amê(a)^{meš} i-nam-du-u*
 23 ^d[Ištar]ar([u]-dar) *a-šib^{uru} DÊR <d> Sebettu(imin.bi)*²⁷⁸
- 21 Whoever shall break this tablet into pieces,
 22 Or shall cast it into the water,
 23 May Ištar, who lives in Der, and the Sebettu...

Whether grouped in pairs – as a husband and wife – or in groups of three, as in the opening lines of this list of deities – Ištar and the Sebettu are the only deities in the list to appear without a connection to another deity, but the Seven and Ištar are often found in each other’s respective company. Considering the strong connections both Ištar and the Sebettu have with war and battle, they are well matched.

The text of the *kudurru* ends at the final line quoted above, line 23. Although there are traces of a line following the last line quoted, it appears to have been deliberately erased. The Sebettu are thus the final deity – or group of deities - in this list, closing the invocation of divine figures who can stand in to render justice against one who breaks an oath or transgresses his sworn word. The Sebettu's place in this list affirms their position not only as deities, but as deities associated directly with the gods of the state. Although this contract is between individuals who were all natives of Kassite-period Babylonia, the Sebettu maintain their position in the lists of native deities into and through the Neo-Assyrian period, where the format of treaty texts themselves has been altered to elide references to foreign gods.

There are several factors that may contribute to why the Sebettu, from this point, are typically (though not exclusively) placed at the end of god lists. As they were originally demons, a role that certainly, as to be further discussed in the following chapters, informs their increasing role as divinities, they are thus liminal creatures that occupy the borders of the known world. Moreover, although they are included in the list of deities that are there to aid the authors of

²⁷⁸ BM 102588: Face B 21-23.

these texts, their nature is still uncontrolled. Placing them at the end distances them from the content of the text itself, and sets a long list of more established deities between the Sebettu and the body of the text. Additionally, their inclusion at the end may also be a function of their position as more recent imports into the pantheon. Finally, the Sebettu may simply be most effective there, able to do the most good slightly removed from the center of the text. Known for martial abilities, the Sebettu are furthermore described as far-ranging warriors, the vanguard of the army, ranging far afield in search of combat. Ištar, though a well-established member of the pantheon, also possesses similarly fearsome martial abilities, and is seen at or close to the end of such god lists.

4.2.3. Personal Names

The apotropaic use of the Sebettu is, in a word, complicated. Although they are first seen in a cultic and thus venerated, context in the south – in the temple Hašmar-Galšu builds in their honor – references make it clear that it is the Assyrian north that favors the Sebettu most strongly and that thread is certainly emphasized by the Neo-Assyrian usage. The protective onomastic usage of the Sebettu does appear to connect more strongly with the Kassite-period southern use of the Seven than the later Assyrian proliferation of their divine references, but the evidence is scattered enough that these conclusions are presented with caution. What is certain, however, is the protective nature of this function. If a deity or any supernatural being (such as the *lama*) is invoked in a personal name, it is definitely in a benevolent role – we do not see "ill-fated" names in the Mesopotamian context.

We see an individual named Arad-Sebetti (literally, the "servant of the Sebettu") appear in the text of one *kudurru*-inscription, dated to the reign of Nabû-mukîn-apli, whose reign

from 978-943 BCE.²⁷⁹ While Arad-Sebetti himself has a good Akkadian name, he falls into a group of figures with Kassite patronyms who all live in the southern areas of Mesopotamia in the post-Kassite period. In Arad-Sebetti's case, he is the son of Abirattaš and follows the general pattern shared by other, similar figures in this period in pairing an Akkadian personal name with Kassite patronym.²⁸⁰

In this regard, Arad-Sebetti is the exception. The practice of using the Sebettu as an element in personal names in the later second millennium is predominantly found in the north and begins in the Middle Assyrian period.²⁸¹ We see such names as the following: Sebettu-aḫḫē-iddin ("the Sebettu gave me brothers"),²⁸² Dayyānī-Sebettu ("the Sebettu are my judges"),²⁸³ Rabû-Sebettu ("the Sebettu are great"),²⁸⁴ Kidin-Sebetti ("Ward of the Sebettu"),²⁸⁵ Ašarēdū-Sebettu ("the Sebettu are foremost"),²⁸⁶ Mušabšī-Sebettu ("the Sebettu are creators"),²⁸⁷ and the name Arad-Sebetti repeated in Assyrian contexts.²⁸⁸

In comparison to this proliferation of Middle Assyrian names, the post-Kassite period

²⁷⁹ Arad-Sebetti appears on the kudurru published as: No. IX in L.W. King, *Babylonian Boundary Stones and Memorial-Tablets in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1912), 51-69. Nabû-mukîn-apli was a king in Babylon, a contemporary of the little-attested Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser II, and prior to that, the Assyrian king's predecessors Aššūr-reš-iši II (971-967 BCE) and Aššūr-rabi II (1012-972 BCE). On his regnal dates, see: J.A. Brinkman, *A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia (1158-722)*, vol. 42 of *AO* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1968): 173.

²⁸⁰ L. Sassmanshausen, "Adaptation of the Kassites to the Babylonian Civilization," in *Languages and Cultures in Contact: At the Crossroads of Civilizations in the Syro-Mesopotamian Realm*, vol. 96 of *OLA* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 418.

²⁸¹ Viktor Golinets, "Exkurs: Die mesopotamische Gottheit Sebettu," in *Die Zahl Sieben im Alten Orient: Studien zur Zahlensymbolik in der Bibel und ihrer altorientalischen Umwelt*, ed. Gotthard G.G. Reinhold (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008), 130.

²⁸² K.L. Tallqizist, *Assyrian Personal Names* vol. 43 of *Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae* (Helsinki: 1914), 195.

²⁸³ Saporetti, C. *Onomastica medio-assira. Vol. I. I nome di persona*, vol. 6 of *StPohl* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 190.

²⁸⁴ J.J. Finkelstein, "Cuneiform Texts from Tell Billa," *JCS* 7 (1953), 162:2.

²⁸⁵ H. Freydank, *Mitterlassyrische echtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte IV. Tafeln aus Kār-tukultī-Ninurta*, vol. 99 of *WVDOG* (Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag, 2001), 33, 106, 96:15'

²⁸⁶ Saporetti, *Onomastica medio-assira*, 29

²⁸⁷ Saporetti, *Onomastica medio-assira*, 331, and Freydank, H. *Mitterlassyrische echtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte III*, vol. 92 of *WVDOG* (Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag, 1994), 21.

²⁸⁸ J.J. Finkelstein, "Cuneiform Texts from Tell Billa," *JCS* 7 (1953): 123; Saporetti, *Onomastica medio-assira*, 332

south of Mesopotamia boasts only the aforementioned Arad-Sebetti and one Pilaḥ-Sebettu ("revere the Sebettu").²⁸⁹ Beyond these two areas, the only example for a greater geographic spread of personal names concerning the Sebettu appears to be an attestation of the name Arad-Sebetti in Mari.²⁹⁰ Once established, the trend continues as individuals such as Sebettu-aḥḥē-iddin and Sebettu-rēmanni appearing in texts dating to the Neo-Assyrian period.²⁹¹

As already discussed in brief, these references to the Sebettu are inconsistent with the later usage of the Seven. When examining the first millennium references, it becomes clear that the Sebettu are poorly unattested in southern Mesopotamia (particularly in Babylonia) until late in the Neo-Assyrian period, when the Neo-Assyrian empire itself held sway over Babylonia as well as Assyria. The other attestations from the latter half of the second millennium are limited to Assyria and the rulers of the Assyrian empire, and there is a much more direct line from those attestations to their usage by the Neo-Assyrians. Though few, the appearances of the Sebettu in the Middle Assyrian period include, for the first time, royal inscriptions, which attest not only to the efforts of Assyrian kings to dedicate temples to them, but also to the martial prowess of the Sebettu being called upon to fight on behalf of Assyria.

4.2.4. Assyrian Royal Inscriptions

Aside from the formula established throughout literary and mythological texts, the Neo-Assyrian kings were aided in their efforts to utilize the Sebettu by an already entrenched precedent of royal inscriptions that featured the Sebettu. Starting in the Old Babylonian period, we begin to see evidence for a cult for the Sebettu, attested, as discussed, first in Kassite-period

²⁸⁹ Clay 1912a: 116; M. Hölscher, *Die Personennamen der kassitenzeitlichen Texte aus Nippur*, vol.1 of *IMGULA* (Münster: Rhema, 1996), 167.

²⁹⁰ M. Birot, *Textes administratifs de la salle 5 du palais (2^{ème} partie)* vol. 12 of *ARM* (Paris, 1992), 144 n. 407: 4.

²⁹¹ K. Radner, *Die Macht des Names. Altorientalische Strategien zur Selbsterhaltung*, vol. 8 of *SANTAG Arbeiten und Untersuchungen zur Keilschriftkunde* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), 139.

Babylonia and further in the Middle Assyrian period when Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243-1207 BCE) includes the Sebettu in a list of deities to whom he has built temples, recognizing the deities as a group of state gods under his particular rule. Although the Sebettu do not gain widespread representation in texts until the first millennium, Tukulti-Ninurta's inscription stands as important evidence for the growing state cult surrounding the seven. Interestingly, while the Sebettu are generally the last gods to appear in the curse formula, closing off the listing of divine, potentially vengeful, figures, in this text they are followed by the goddess Ištar, whose warrior nature lies well in line with the Sebettu.²⁹² This pairing of the two is also seen in an Old Babylonian e₂-gal-ku₄-ra incantation, where the petitioner is flanked by three divine figures, one who precedes him, unidentified, in this particular case, though possibly the goddess Gula; one who flanks him, here Ištar; and one who follows him, the Sebettu.²⁹³

An association between Tukulti-Ninurta I and the Sebettu is fitting, given the king's status as a military campaigner: the most famous piece of writing associated with the ruler is his epic, which describes his successful campaign against Kaštiliaš IV, the king of Babylon, and his sack and looting of the city.²⁹⁴ This campaign provides an interesting potential link concerning the use of the Sebettu as both gods and warriors by Tukulti-Ninurta I. The military action itself had theological ramifications: Babylon was in many respects a singular city. Even in Assyria, it was revered in the Mesopotamian religious tradition and associated with many of the gods the Assyrian pantheon claimed as their own. Thus, although Assyria increasingly attempted to

²⁹² M.L. Barré, "The First Pair of Deities in the Sefire I God-List," *JNES* 44 (1985): 205-10 cites Sebettu as the last in the list of deities.

²⁹³ The text in particular is published in *Or* 59, 26. I owe this observation to a presentation given by Henry Stadthouters. "Egalkura and Related Incantations: Tablets, Texts, and Themes" (presentation at Universität Würzburg, April 16, 2013).

²⁹⁴ Peter Machinist, "Literature as Politics: the Tukulti-Ninurta Epic and the Bible," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 38 (1976): 455-56. For the text itself, see: Peter Machinist, "The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I: A Study in Middle Assyrian Literature" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1978).

establish itself as culturally independent, even superior, to Babylon, it was still caught in the curious paradox of wanting to distance itself further from the religious culture and tradition of Babylon while being equally drawn to the strength and deep context of those traditions.²⁹⁵ In light of this, any sack of the city had to contend with the honor with which the city was still held, lest the ruler risk drawing the ire of the gods themselves with his sacrilegious act against the venerated city.

This tension between the north and the south in Mesopotamia may have been expressed openly, but it was also manifested culturally, through a *Kulturkampf* where Assyria attempted to extricate its traditions from Babylonia's, or supplant them with its own.²⁹⁶ Given the complicated cultural history, as well as the cultural pedestal upon which Babylon was still placed, the epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I was intended to justify the military actions of the king. Kaštiliaš IV is depicted as an oath-breaker in violation of international treaty agreements, and thus the sack of Babylon is a just – if not required – retribution for these transgressions. Tukulti-Ninurta I, according to his epic, was not only in the right, he was effectively forced into attacking Babylon by the treacherous actions of its king.²⁹⁷

The military epic further develops language that will be familiar by the Neo-Assyrian period: Tukulti-Ninurta I is cloaked in terrifying radiance and awesome brilliance, and the text further stresses the connection between Tukulti-Ninurta I and the gods in whose stead he acts.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁵ J.A. Brinkman, "Sennacherib's Babylonian Problem: An Interpretation," *JCS* 25 (1973): 89-95.

²⁹⁶ Machinist, "Literature as Politics," 470. A similar dilemma faces the Neo-Assyrians, despite the deeper entrenchment of Assur as the head of the Assyrian pantheon. When Sennacherib destroys Babylon, his son Esarhaddon spends time atoning for it, and Sennacherib is himself careful to place the blame for the sack of Babylon at the feet of the Babylonians themselves, who had violated the sanctity of Marduk's temple by stripping away precious materials from it. See: Marc Van de Mieroop, "Revenge, Assyrian Style," *Past and Present* 179 (2003): 3-23.

²⁹⁷ Kathryn F. Kravitz, "Tukulti-Ninurta I conquers Babylon: Two Versions" in *Gazing on the Deep: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Tzvi Abusch*, ed. Jeffrey Stackert, Barbara Nevling Porter, and David P. Wright (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2010), 122-23.

²⁹⁸ Peter Machinist, "Literature as Politics," 463.

Tukulti-Ninurta I is described as a representative of the gods Assur and Enlil, and, as such, he draws upon a direct connection to those deities. He is not himself divine, but acts as their agent and with their authority, an attractive legitimizing theme the Neo-Assyrian kings revisit, at length.²⁹⁹

When the epic details Tukulti-Ninurta I's attack against Babylon, it lists the gods of Assyria who come to his aid on the field of battle, along with the appropriately terrifying imagery assigned to each deity:

*The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I, 33-40:*³⁰⁰

- 33 Aššur in the vanguard went to the attack; the fire of defeat burned the enemy;
- 34 Enlil...in the midst of the foe, sends flaming arrows smoking;
- 35 Anu pressed the unpitying mace upon the wicked;
- 36 The heavenly light Sin imposed upon them, the paralyzing weapon of war;
- 37 Adad, the warrior, let a wind and flood pour down upon their fighting;
- 39 Šamaš, lord of judgment, dimmed the eyes of the armies of the land of Sumer and Akkad;
- 39 Heroic Ninurta, first of the gods, smashed their weapons;
- 40 And Ištar whipped her jump rope, driving their warriors mad.

Although fairly standard in some respects, this list of deities does serve as a map of the perceived loyalties of the gods. Marduk, chief god of Babylon, is notably and, as expected for the Assyrian epic, absent, although at this point Marduk had begun to be established as a god in Aššur as well.³⁰¹ While the text of the epic is not preserved in full, were the Sebettu to find a place in the text at all, they would be best suited to this particular section, as one of the deities called upon to aid the king in his attack.

While the Sebettu never attain the prominence of any of the deities presented in the above list, as warriors, and moreover, warriors who would have been eminently at home – and

²⁹⁹ Peter Machinist, "Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria," in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, (Providence: Brown University Press, 2006): 162-65.

³⁰⁰ Peter Machinist, "The Epic of Tukulti-Ninurta I, " 118-21: lines 31', 33'-40'.

³⁰¹ Machinist, "Literature as Politics," 473.

particularly useful – in a tale of military conquest such as Tukulti-Ninurta's, their absence is curious. The lack of the Sebettu in this text may indicate the still incomplete nature of their integration into the Assyrian royal pantheon – an integration that the conquest of Babylon helped to facilitate. Conversely, as with Marduk, the absence of the Sebettu may point to the fact that, at the time of the epic's composition the Seven were more closely associated with Babylon than with Assyria.

In the case of the former possibility, we find supporting evidence in a royal inscription of Tukulti-Ninurta I. After a description of the king's military deeds, including his conquest of Babylon, Tukulti-Ninurta I describes his construction projects within his new capital.³⁰² These include the construction of several cult centers, dedicated to the various gods of Assyria, all grouped as members of the state pantheon:³⁰³

39 *ina u₄-mi-šu-ma e-ber-ti āl(uru)-ia* ^d*a-šur-^denlil(bad) bēl(en) ma-ḥa-za*
40 *e-ri-šá-ni-ma e-peš at-ma-ni-šú iq-ba-a*
41 *i-ta-at ba-it ilānī(diġir)^{meš} ma-ḥa-za rabâ(gal)^a šu-bat šarru(man)-ti-ia*
42 *ab-ni āli(uru) kar-^{giš}tukul-ti-^dninurta(maš) šum(mu)-šu ab-bi*
43 *ina qer-bi-it-šú bīt(e₂) ^da-šur ^dAdad(iškur) ^dšamaš(utu) ^dnin-urta ^dnusku*
44 ^d*Nergal(u.gur) ^dSebettu(imin.bi) ù ^diš₈-tar ilānī(diġir)^{meš} rabûti(gal)^{meš}*
 bēl(en)^{meš}-ia

39 At that time the god Aššur-Enlil, (my) lord, on the bank opposite my city,
40 He requested of me a cult centre and commanded to build his sanctuary.
41 Beside the desired object of the gods, I built the great cult centres,
42 I named it Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta. I completed it,
43 within the temple of Aššur, Adad, Šamaš, Ninurta, Nusku,
44 Nergal, the Sebettu, and Ištar, the great gods, my lords.

The inscription also details the other building works of Tukulti-Ninurta I, such as the "Canal of Justice," (*Pattu-mēšari*) to flow to the new temple complex, and in so doing established regular

³⁰² The prologue of this text, which describes his military victories, parallels a long text from Aššur which details his prowess in battle and military campaigns, ending with a plea that Aššur, Adad, and finally Ištar ensure his continued success on the field of battle and his continued, undisputed sovereignty: Grayson, *RIMA* 1, 243-246. Tukulti-Ninurta I: A.0.78.5.

³⁰³ Transliteration following edition in: Grayson, *RIMA* 1, 269-271. Tukulti-Ninurta I: A.0.78.22.

offerings to be brought to "the great gods, my lords in perpetuity" (*ana ilānī(diġir)*^{meš} *rabûti(gal)*^{meš} *bēl(en)*^{meš} *-ia ana dariš*), reiterating that the Sebettu are indeed included in the category of the gods to whom Tukulti-Ninurta I built sanctuaries, and furthermore, that all these gods are considered among the "great gods" cited in the final line above.³⁰⁴ They are incorporated into the Assyrian pantheon, and their cult is celebrated alongside more established divine figures.

This tradition continues, though with a gap of nearly two centuries, with a peculiar Middle Assyrian inscription dating to the reign of Aššur-bēl-kala (1073-1056 BCE), who revived the empire after the defeats inflicted by the Arameans during the later years of the reign of Tiglath-Pileser I.³⁰⁵ Aššur-bēl-kala was so successful in this enterprise that Babylonia was brought back under the dominion of Assyria, control which Aššur-bēl-kala demonstrated by appointing Adad-apla-iddina as the ruler of Karduniaš, or Babylon, and which he further cemented by marrying Adad-apla-iddina's daughter.³⁰⁶ Tukulti-Ninurta I, the last Assyrian ruler to concern himself with both the Sebettu and Babylon, may have sacked the city, but he did not maintain a stable rule over it.

Aššur-bēl-kala recorded his exploits, mostly military, in over a dozen inscriptions, and the text that concerns the Sebettu can charitably be called peculiar. Inscribed on the back of a stone female torso excavated at the temple of Ištar in the city of Nineveh, the text opens with a standard four lines which detail Aššur-bēl-kala's position as king of Assyria and the universe, and list his father and grandfather, who are given similar epithets.³⁰⁷ It continues with the

³⁰⁴ Grayson, *RIMA* 1, 269-271. Tukulti-Ninurta I: A.0.78.22.

³⁰⁵ Grayson, *RIMA* 2, 108. Aššur-bēl-kala: A.0.89.10

³⁰⁶ See A.Kirk Grayson's edition of Chronicle 21, the Synchronistic History, 25'-37', which recounts these power dynamics. A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, vol. 5 of *TCS*, edited by A. Leo Oppenheim (Locust Valley: J.J. Augustin Publisher, 1975), 157-70.

³⁰⁷ Grayson, *RIMA* 2, 108. Aššur-bēl-kala: A.0.89.10

following lines:

4 *a-lam-ga-a-te an-na-te qé-[reb] NA[M^{me}]^š ālī(u^{meš})*
5 *ù ub-re-te^{meš} ina muḫ-ḫi ši-a-ḫi e-ta-p[a-á]š*
6 *mu-né-kir₆ šiṭ-ri-ia ù šum(mu)-ia^d Sebettu(imin.bi) ilānū(diġir)^{meš}*
7 ^{kur}*Amurri(mar.tu) me-ḫe-eš še-ri i-ma-ḫa-šu-uš*

4 I crafted these sculptures in the *provinces*, in the cities
5 and in the garrisons for titillation.
6 The one who removes my inscriptions and my name, the Sebettu, the
 gods
7 of the West, will defeat him on the battlefield.³⁰⁸

This inscription is the first text we have where the king calls directly upon the Sebettu to defeat his enemies, and it presents us with many questions. The sculpture is of an unidentified female torso, which can be seen in Figure 1, in the appendix to this chapter. The only female deity identified with the Sebettu at this point would be Narunde, though the reference to the Sebettu as the gods of the land of Amurru, or the West, would be an unusual pairing with Narunde, who is an import from Elam, and thus originates from the other direction. Furthermore, although Narunde is one of the only female figures associated with the Sebettu during this period, the female figure upon which this inscription appears should almost certainly not be connected to her. The figure here, though very unusual, most likely fulfilled the function of a Mesopotamian pin-up – hence the phrase "for titillation in its inscription."³⁰⁹

The reference to the west, or to the land of Amurru, is also a conundrum. It marks the Sebettu as foreign, albeit foreign and at the command of the Assyrian king Aššur-bēl-kala. This foreign quality is at odds with the nature of the text itself: the closing lines are, in essence, a curse formula, warning against the defacement or destruction of Aššur-bēl-kala's inscription. Such a formula, as we have seen, relies upon the presence of deities native and thus loyal to the

³⁰⁸ Grayson cites von Soden, *Ahw* p. 642a (sub *meḫṣu* 4) and CAD M, Vol. 10/2 (sub *meḫṣu* 3) for evidence for the reading of "snake-bite" for *meḫeš sēri*, instead of the interpretation of to "defeat on the battlefield," a reading that tracks back to Luckenbill's earlier edition of this text.

³⁰⁹ As discussed by Zaineb Bahrani in *Women of Babylon*.

king or state to which they are sworn. If Aššur-bēl-kala can command the Sebettu, it indicates that not only is his might great enough to command deities that were once foreign, but that the Sebettu themselves are not, despite the reference to the West, as foreign as this inscription would have us believe, but are instead integrated into the state pantheon. They maintain, even in the best of times, the certain position of outsiders, a trait that we will see reiterated in the Neo-Assyrian period, despite the degree to which the Neo-Assyrian kings call upon the warrior might of the Sebettu, their terrifying nature and capacity for violence.

4.3. Figure 1: Inscription of Aššur-bēl-kala



Figure 1: Limestone Female Torso
Temple of Ištar at Nineveh
Height: 93 cm
British Museum: 124963

Chapter Five: "Cry 'Havoc!': The Escalated Use of the Sebettu in the First Millennium

In 1976, under the direction of the author Chris Claremont and artists Dave Cockrum and John Byrne, Marvel Comics launched the Phoenix Saga, a dramatic new storyline in the comic *The X-Men*, one of their flagship titles.³¹⁰ Over the course of the subsequent story arc, the character Jean Grey, in an attempt to save the lives of her teammates, becomes a host for and assumes the full powers of the Phoenix force, a nigh-omniscient cosmic entity. Of course, as is demanded by the high drama of comic book storylines, the Phoenix force becomes too powerful for Jean Grey to control. Although this power initially allowed her to save her teammates and defeat the enemies that threatened them, when unchecked the consequences are nearly apocalyptic, and the storyline itself culminates with Jean Grey's death (in a battle on the dark side of moon, no less) in order to prevent the entity within her from committing further destruction.³¹¹

The Neo-Assyrian kings might well have empathized with the dramatic nature of comic books; at the least, they would have recognized the propagandistic elements that color many of the narratives, particularly those written in reaction to or concurrent with times of open war or covert political turmoil.³¹² And while the Phoenix force and its utilization within the medium of

³¹⁰ Chris Claremont and Dave Cockrum, "Enter – The Phoenix!" *The X-Men* 1: 101 (October: 1976), New York: Marvel Comics.

³¹¹ Chris Claremont and John Byrne, "Phoenix Must Die!" *The X-Men* 1: 137 (September: 1980), New York: Marvel Comics.

³¹² Paul Hirsch, "Pulp Empire: Comic Books, Culture, and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1941-1955," (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2013). This is particularly apparent in how the 'origin stories' of particular superheroes are consistently reworked to match the political climate most relevant to current readers. In his 2008 film incarnation, the character of Iron Man was created thanks to events in Afghanistan; his original 1963 debut in comics pitted him against enemies associated with the, at that point, current conflict in Vietnam. A different sort of retroactive continuity colors the Neo-Assyrian's inclusion of the Sebettu into the divine pantheon, but the

comics has no overt political messages as such, the image of a primal, destructive force, which was at the best of times only barely under control and could at any moment turn upon those who controlled it, was compelling enough that the entity was resurrected in various, increasingly colorful and contorted iterations over the subsequent decades since its initial introduction to the Marvel Comics universe. This trope of a dangerously destructive force is a common enough theme that can be found in the mythological and literary epics of many different cultures throughout history.³¹³

The Sebettu are similarly dangerous and are used along similar lines as the other cited examples. Although the demons can aid individuals, they must be controlled, lest those same warrior abilities that would make them useful companions then turn them into the next enemy to ravage the homeland. As an inherently chaotic force, they bowed only to the greater gods themselves, or to those with the direct divine sanction of those selfsame gods.³¹⁴ Because of this, those who did claim to control the Sebettu claimed in the same act the divine sanction that would allow them to do so. They become a tool, one the Neo-Assyrian kings employed in order to benefit from both the image of the skilled and militaristic Sebettu and the legitimation implied by the divine sanction required to use them.

The history of the Neo-Assyrian empire was one of conquest and military expansion; to this end, the image of the Neo-Assyrian rulers as ruthless leaders who showed little, if any, mercy on the battlefield was carefully cultivated. It carried as much weight as a mace and could be a weapon as useful as the army itself. Though the king was the central point of this

techniques remain similar.

³¹³ Parallel examples are widespread across many different periods and cultures: the trope is particularly well known as employed in Euripedes' *The Bacchae*, where, in a fury, Agave rips apart her son, Pentheus, with her own hands. Reginald Gibbons trans., *The Bacchae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³¹⁴ The key example of this is, as discussed in Chapter Two, seen in how Utu gifts the Sebettu, represented by the seven brothers, to Gilgamesh to assist him in the text of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*.

iconography, he was not the only force responsible for its creation. With very few exceptions, the king was himself illiterate, and the machine of textual propaganda was a scribal endeavor.³¹⁵ The complicated system of commentary texts engaged with underlying politics as embedded in both royal inscriptions and literary texts.³¹⁶

This image was reinforced by a veritable propaganda machine, as well as the more straightforward, if sanguinary, aftermath of the actual battlefields themselves. The Sebettu, warriors from their earliest appearances in Mesopotamia, were already harnessed into the official pantheon of deities by the first millennium, and thus ideally situated to become new and useful additions to the Neo-Assyrian arsenal. The Neo-Assyrian empire was well versed in combining religion and politics and clearly recognized the potential in fully incorporating powerful warriors such as the Sebettu into its divine pantheon.³¹⁷

Beyond their utilization of the foundations provided by the incorporation of the Sebettu into second millennium royal inscriptions, the Neo-Assyrian empire and its scholars were also aided by pre-existing literary conventions. The kings in this period were able to draw upon the precedent demonstrated in literary texts, such as *Enūma eliš*, which provided a prototype for a monstrous, potentially destructive figure, to transform from a chaotic enemy to a servant of the state. In other words, the literary texts established the pattern of control through subjugation.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ The notable exception to illiterate kings remains Aššurbanipal, who makes a point of stressing his vast scribal abilities. See A. Livingstone, "Ashurbanipal: Literate or Not?" *ZA* 97 (2007): 96-118; P. Villard, "L'éducation d'Assurbanipal," *Ktema* 22 (1997): 135-49.

³¹⁶ The questions of literacy in the first millennium and the role of scribal culture in shaping ideology are vast. On the latter, see; Eckart Frahm, "Counter-texts, Commentaries, and Adaptations: Politically Motivated Responses to the Babylonian Epic of Creation in Mesopotamia, the Biblical World, and Elsewhere," *Orient* 45 (2010): 3-33; Eckart Frahm, "Keeping Company with Men of Learning: the King as Scholar," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, ed. Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2011), 508-32.

³¹⁷ Although the divine status is under some debate, the kings still occupied a different, more exalted position, which was easily exploited for its political and propagandistic potential: "The kings were not members of the state pantheon, but they dwelt in closer physical and ontological proximity to the gods than any other mortals." See Steven W. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 182.

³¹⁸ Considering the date of *Enūma eliš*, this prototype would be well situated to have direct influence on the Neo-

Furthermore, the Neo-Assyrians were well versed in incorporating literary tropes into their own royal inscriptions.³¹⁹ Of course, the Neo-Assyrian period is not without direct representations of the Sebettu in literary texts, the most prominent of which is *Erra*. It and other literary texts of this period serve the dual function of reinforcing the trope of the subjugation of demons and providing another venue by which the Sebettu can proliferate, in a role which invariably mirrors their relationship to and use by the king in the first millennium.

To be certain, the kings of the Neo-Assyrian period inherited foundations that were easily expanded upon. In tracking the divine appearances of the Sebettu, we see them first in the Kassite period, in the south of Mesopotamia, followed by attestations in the Middle Assyrian period originating in the north, with the latest inscription in our arsenal coming from the reign of Aššur-bēl-kala (1073-1056 BCE). As the last reference to the Sebettu in the second millennium, it places the Seven not only after the probable composition date of *Enūma eliš* but also provides a clear bridge to the royal inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrians. As he is arguably the best example of the literary prototype of monstrous subjugation by a warrior figure, the Neo-Assyrians kings would find the divine warrior Marduk a helpful prototype for their own activities. The dates of these royal inscriptions form a clear bridge to this period and its use of the Sebettu.

Although we have grappled with a fragmentary and patchwork history of attestations in the latter half of the second millennium, the Neo-Assyrian period provides a clearer and much more consistent record of attestations. This vast leap in the sheer number of sources that reference the Sebettu is in and of itself a problem, however, in that we must ask whether this "perfect storm" of literary texts, the existing foundation provided by the second millennium royal inscriptions and cultic texts, and the political conceits of the Neo-Assyrian rulers themselves is

Assyrians, although the text of *Enūma eliš* is itself rooted in a dense intertextual relationship with other earlier texts, such as the Anzu epic.

³¹⁹ See Michalowski, "Adapa," 77-79.

all enough to account for such an increase in how – and with what frequency – the Sebettu were utilized.

The answer lies in both politics and the legitimization of political power. The Neo-Assyrians might well have been ignorant of more modern terms such as "political capital," particularly as such concepts require a less militaristic method of interaction and exchange, but they did have a clear understanding of the importance and power of political image.³²⁰ Their use of the Sebettu, then, was shaped by the requirements of first establishing political power, and then, and in turns, expanding, maintaining, or recovering said power. In developing the larger political narrative that included the Sebettu to such a broad extent, the new, increasingly divine, role of the demons themselves falls into place.

We will examine this development in several sections: the earlier expansions of the empire, followed by its decline, and then the actions of rulers who worked to reestablish its power. Finally, we will turn to the kings who had to deal most directly with Babylon and the ramifications of the power – religious, political, and military – held in the lands in the south of Mesopotamia. Mapping these four phases directly to the rulers who referenced the Sebettu, we can then follow the expansion of the empire under Aššurnāṣirpal II and Shalmaneser III, the period of its decline under Adad-nerari III and Aššur-nerari V, and the subsequent re-expansion of its territories and power under Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II. It is here that our narrative takes a turn; although the Neo-Assyrian empire remains strong, Sennacherib's actions against the south (in general) and Babylon (in decimated particular) led to a shift in tone of the empire reflected in Sennacherib's son and successor, Esarhaddon, who has to grapple with the turmoil he inherited thanks to his father's sack of Babylon, and, following Esarhaddon, Aššurbanipal, who had his own concerns – not with the rebuilding of the city of Babylon, but with dealing with its

³²⁰ Richard D. French, "Political Capital," *Representation* 47 (2011): 215-30.

revolts under the rule of his brother, Šamaš-šumu-ukīn.

5.1. First Millennium Literary Texts

If the political narrative is one of the development and then exploitation of propagandistic potential, there remains one important piece to be discussed and so added to the full array of texts and imagery available in this period; namely, the literary texts of the first millennium which also feature the Sebettu. The previous chapter traced the thread wherein the literary texts of the second millennium developed a model by which demons and monsters, once subjugated, could be controlled. Literary texts in the first millennium begin to feature the Sebettu directly as the main actors in this subjugated-monster role.

Among the literary texts in this period, we have two that feature the Sebettu in both prominent and interesting ways and both are discussed herein.³²¹ The two texts: a more esoteric text known as the Birdcall text and the much more substantial and widely recorded text of the poem of *Erra*, may at first appear so dissimilar as to work at cross purposes: the Birdcall text appears in only a few fragments, and the meaning of the text is obscured by its own difficult language more than its considerable lacunae.³²² The text does, however, highlight the monstrous qualities of the Sebettu, which are occasionally obscured in this period by the presence and increasing integration of the demons into the divine pantheon.³²³

Erra, on the other hand and in contrast to the limited distribution of the former text, was

³²¹ This is not to be taken as a complete list of literary texts in the first millennium which feature the Sebettu as players, major or otherwise: instead, these are simply the texts featuring the Sebettu of direct relevance to the present study.

³²² W.G. Lambert, "Sultantepe Tablets: IX. The Birdcall Text," *AS 20* (1970): 111-17.

³²³ As the warrior abilities of the Sebettu are increasingly stressed, there is a corresponding lack of emphasis placed upon the demonic qualities – particularly those of the more chaotic destructive force variety – of the demons. The Birdcall text is notable for stressing the demonic above the group's other qualities; other texts present a unity between the two, such as the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin, wherein the enemy kings and their troops are described in unequivocally demonic terms.

widespread, with a larger contemporary impact. Beyond that, *Erra* featured the Sebettu in their role as bloodthirsty warriors who wanted, above all else, battle for battle's own sake. This formed a core, defining aspect of their personality, and the ferocity that was associated with it was exploited, in turn, by the Neo-Assyrian rulers themselves. To be sure, the Sebettu are well-versed in playing such roles in literary texts: they appear in this function from their earliest attestations, as the seven brothers in the Sumerian epic of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*. These first millennium literary epics reinforce the role of the Sebettu as fierce warriors, and furthermore, warriors acting for the rulers of this period, who had themselves begun to assume the position of warriors on behalf of the gods.

5.1.1. The Birdcall Text

The text known as the Birdcall Text is characterized by its absence of grounding context. Reconstructed from three Neo-Assyrian tablets, it remains frustratingly obscure in content. Of the tablets, one originates from Sultantepe, another small tablet from the library of Aššurbanipal, and the other from the city of Aššur.³²⁴ Although we are working with a small group, the three different locations of the sources posits a sizeable range for the text itself. Furthermore, the three sources contain significant textual variants, leading to the suggestion that the traditions surrounding the text diverged significantly. The more immediate and unfortunate consequence of such divergence is a jumbled composite text. One of the tablets, *KAR 125*, presents so many variants when compared to the other two sources that it is best treated as a separate text. Based upon this pattern, if there are other sources for this text, we may anticipate further variation.

The manuscripts, despite their differences, follow a similar pattern: the text opens with a list of birds, each of which is paired with a particular divinity and assigned a unique, often

³²⁴ Respectively, the sources are *STT 34*, and *CT 41 5*, and *KAR 125*.

onomatopoeic, call. The esoteric nature of the text begins with the dubious identification of some of the birds, as several appear to be *hapax legomena*, and others are found elsewhere in only one or two other attestations. The calls of the birds themselves are also curious, as they reference literary texts, city laments, or monstrous tropes in turn. Some of them are simple word plays that echo the call of the bird itself – a link made more difficult to determine given the unidentifiable nature of several of these birds.³²⁵

Of the deities that the text references, several have a direct relationship to the Sebettu, and as such, their lines create a collective context for the inclusion of the line which directly invokes the Seven. We see this in the following lines, which are excerpted from the larger text as a whole:

Text A, excerpted lines, 2, 5, 9-14.³²⁶

- 2 dara.lugal^{mušen} iṣṣūr(mušen) ^de[n-me-šàr]-ra taḥ-ta-ṭa a-na ^dtu-¹tu¹
iṣtanassi(gu₃.gu₃)^{si}
- 5 si-iḥ-KUR^{mušen} ^rd¹nar¹-ru-du u₈-u-a u₈-u-a iṣtanassi(gu₃.gu₃)^{si}
- 9 šu-nu-nu-tu^{mušen} iṣṣūr(mušen) IB x x [k]i.min iṣṣūr(mušen) tam-tim
šu-nir-zu ušumgal ka-bi-ta
- 10 nu-e₃ x (x) x uš₁₁ nu-[bi-i]z :: [bi-iz-b]i-iz-a šum-gal-lum¹ ul-tú
pī(ka)-šú uš₂ e₃-a ki.min
- 11 im-tu la in-na-tu[k]-ku iṣtanassi(gu₃.gu₃)^{si}
- 12 ku-ub-šá-an^{mušen} iṣṣūr(mušen) ^dnusku ^ds[ir-si]r ^dmarduk malah^(lu₂ma₂lah₄)
tam-tim ^dNabû(muati) šá-qu-u ^dNabû(muati) dan-nu šá ZA KIN[?] ŠÚ[?]
- 13 ka-tim-mat^{mušen} iṣṣūr(mušen) a-ḥ[at] ^dSebettu(imin) ahu(šeš) ab[?].du₁₁[?].ga[?]
^da-nim iṣtanassi(gu₃.gu₃)^{si}
- 2 The cock is (the bird of) Enmešarra. "You sinned against Tutu," it constantly cries.
- 5 The siḥ-KUR is the bird of Narunde. "Alas, alas," it constantly cries.

³²⁵ Lambert, "The Birdcall Text," 111. Lambert posits additionally that the obscure nature of several of the bird calls at may hint to a larger, primarily oral tradition: "they are part of the large body of myths that were not, so far as is known, ever committed to writing in epic style" (113).

³²⁶ Text A follows the tablets *STT* 34 and *CT* 41 5. Transliteration follows the edition by: Lambert, "The Birdcall Text," 111-17.

- 9 The swallow is the bird of .[.].[.]. ki.min The bird of the sea:
 10 "Your symbol is a beast from whose mouth
 11 Poison (variant: blood) drips," ki.min
 12 The *kubšānu* is the bird of Nusku. The Sirsir bird is of Marduk, the sailor
 of the sea. Lofty Nabû, mighty Nabû, who...
 13 The *katīmatu* is the bird of the sister of the Sebettu. "Brother, *offspring* of
 Anu!" it constantly cries.

Within these few lines, we see several demons referenced: the sea, a reference to Tiamat, described as an ušumgal, the Sebettu themselves, who are given a genealogy as the "offspring of Anu." These are not, however, the only demons to appear. A complete demonic listing requires the inclusion of line 14 and 17 of the text, the latter of which is the final line of this composition. Both lines refer to the bird of the ^da₂-sag₃, or the *asakku* demon, and the birds are given as the *kur-ki-i*^{mušen} (goose) and the *buru₅-habrud-da*^{mušen} (partridge). Their cries, respectively and somewhat ominously, are given as "they brought (me) up to the earth without...in drinking water...they seek blood from me" and "go away, Asakku! Go away, Asakku!"³²⁷

The text emphasizes the link between the birds and demons/monsters, through both direct references to the latter and more oblique references to the common tendencies of demonic beings to drip poison and bile from their mouths.³²⁸ The parallel text, *KAR* 125 (Text B) for this composition presents a longer list of birds with the linked calls and deities – as we have only one tablet in a poor state of preservation for this particular version, we are at the mercy of its lacuna. However, a few points of note can be extracted from the rubble, including the listing of the *suššuru* bird as the bird of Enmešarra, who gives forth a cry of "how [he is desolated]" and line

³²⁷ Lambert, "The Birdcall Text," 115.

³²⁸ See, for example, the reference to the enemy soldiers in the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin. The soldiers were at first suspected of being monsters themselves, and the test appears to be whether or not they bleed blood (in which case, are actually human) or poison and bile (which would confirm their monstrous nature); Joan Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 314-15.

18, the second to last line of the text, which mirrors line 13 of the longer text:

ka-tim-mat^{mušen} *iš-šur*^d *na-ru-du ahi(šeš) ahi(šeš) [...]*
 The *katīmatu* is the bird of Narudu (Narunde). [Its cry is], "Brother, brother..."³²⁹

Enmešarra, a chthonic deity with a long history of attestation, is a complicated enough figure on his own merits, particularly in light of his link to the Sebettu, who are occasionally counted as his seven children.³³⁰ As it stands, between these two texts, we have three lines that refer to the Sebettu, either directly or through the reference of Narunde, and a host of other lines which reference demons or destruction in some fashion. Concerning the first point, we see that line 5 of Text A and line 13 of Text B both reference Narunde directly, although line 5 presents an unusual spelling of "nar-ru-du," with a doubled consonant in the name. The juxtaposition of line 18 of Text B (where Narunde is explicitly identified as the sister of the Sebettu) with line 13 of Text A (where the name Narunde is omitted from the line) helps connect both to line 5 of Text A, which introduces a different bird for Narunde, who is referenced independently of her connection to the Sebettu. Thus, the three lines present us with the following pairings of bird, god, and cry:

Text A, line 5:	<i>siḫ</i> -KUR; Narunde; "Alas, alas!" (<i>u₈-u-a u₈-u-a</i>)
Text A, line 13:	<i>katīmatu</i> ; "the sister of the Sebettu;" "Brother, offspring of Anu" (šeš ab [?] .du ₁₁ [?] .ga [?] <i>a-nim</i>)
Text B, line 18:	<i>katīmatu</i> ; Narunde; "Brother, brother..." (šeš šeš)

This text, unfortunately, does not provide us with much to work with, given its complicated nature. The *katīmatu* is barely attested outside of this text, appearing in a personal name and in a handful of lexical lists.³³¹ The name derives from the Akkadian verb *katāmu*, to cover or veil,

³²⁹ KAR 125.

³³⁰ Lambert, *Creation Myths*, 213-14 wherein he translates a text that includes the Sebettu as the seven sons of Enmešarra.

³³¹ CAD K: 306.

and the lexical lists give us the Sumerian name of $\text{arad}_3\text{-da}^{\text{mušen}}$ for the bird.³³²

The cries of the birds are a combination of mythological and literary allusions and onomatopoeic wordplays. Two draw upon either the link between Narunde and the Sebettu, stressing her sororal link to them or comment on the genealogy of the Sebettu themselves, calling them the children of Anu. The unidentifiable *sih*-KUR bird of line 5 in Text A merely cries out in despair.³³³ Lambert argues that the context provided by the other cries is of little help, although it does add to the argument that the meaning of each bird cry is rooted in a homophonic and onomatopoeic interpretation. The duck calls out *qingu qingu*, which mirrors the "quack" noise of the duck; the owls hoots *tukku tukku*, to mimic the hooting noise of an owl; and the cock calls out *tahtaṭā ana tutu*, which could reference its own crow.³³⁴ While the cry of the *katīmatu* bird does not match up to any possible bird call, its presentation follows the general pattern of articulated onomatopoeic cries.

Certain of the birds call out allusions to other literary epics, notably *Enūma eliš*, but an overriding theme of devastation runs through the calls of the various birds: from the inclusion of cries such as "alas!" and others which allude to the desolation of ruined abandoned cities, lines that would be more appropriately placed in city laments. Beyond that, however, this text allocates birds to a number of recognized deities, but also to the Asakku and to Tiamat, the latter of whom is given a bird whose cry reflects Tiamat's more monstrous nature. Asakku, as well, has a bird whose very cry is a plea for the Asakku demon to leave. The Birdcall Text, enigmatic though it is, is itself perfectly cognizant of other, major literary texts in Mesopotamia as well as

³³² Concerning lexical lists for *katīmatu*, see: *Hh* XVIII 264, and *Hg* C I 9 and *Hg* B IV 292. The latter two attestations also equate $\text{arad}_3\text{-da-mušen}$ with *erullu*, another bird name which is otherwise unattested.

³³³ Given the unknown *sih*-KUR bird, Lambert questions whether it is, in fact, a corruption of *ka-te-mat*, for the *katīmatu* bird. Considering the connection between Narunde and the *katīmatu*, and the completely unidentifiable nature of a *sih*-KUR bird, his conclusion seems a likely one. Lambert, "The Birdcall Text," 116.

³³⁴ Lambert, "The Birdcall Text," 115.

the religious traditions of the deities and demons it lists. In appearing in this text, the Sebettu present their own increasingly integrated position in the divine pantheon and literary landscape of the Neo-Assyrian period, while still retaining their fearsome, if not entirely demonic, qualities.

5.1.2. *Erra*

Undoubtedly, the Sebettu's most significant literary appearance in the first millennium occurs in the poem known as *Erra*.³³⁵ In this text, the Sebettu feature as major participants, playing a central role in the narrative. The poem describes Erra's unrest and the violence it spurs, and the destruction that violence visits on the homeland, before being redirected, properly, against foreign enemies.³³⁶

Our first concern is the dating of the text itself. Although decidedly first millennium, establishing the specific date of the text's composition relies on analysis drawn from several different clues within the text itself. We can connect the poem to historical events such as the invasions of Babylon and other cities in Mesopotamia by the Suteans, who are directly mentioned in the poem.³³⁷ This is less helpful than it could be, however, as the Suteans presented a military threat from the end of second millennium to the end of the reign of Esarhaddon in 669 BCE, providing a period of over three centuries to work with.

Following this, we see arguments to set the poem's composition as connected to a particular period of political disturbances in Uruk in 765-763 BCE.³³⁸ The proposed date is the latest possible for *Erra*: the themes of the text would be out of place once Neo-Assyria had

³³⁵ As stated, editions for the Epic of Erra follow: Luigi Cagni, *L'Epopée de Erra*, vol. 34 of *Studia Semitica*. (Rome: Istituto di Studi del Vicino Oriente, 1969).

³³⁶ Peter Machinist, "Violence in Erra," 222.

³³⁷ Daniel Bodi, *The Book of Ezekiel and the Poem of Erra*, (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1991), 55.

³³⁸ See: Machinist "Violence in Erra," 221. Von Soden argued for a late dating of Erra, in "Etemenanki vor Asarhaddon nach der Erzählung vom Turmbau zu Babel und dem Erra-Mythos," *UF* 3 (1971): 253-63.

undisputed control over the entirety of Mesopotamia. There are additional inconsistencies concerning the construction of the Esagil temple in Babylon which would dispute the proposed very late date of 765 BCE.³³⁹ The other arguments for the dating of the text, then, cite a range of potential dates, with 1050 BCE as the earliest potential date.³⁴⁰ While the date of the text is imprecise, the author is not: the text identifies its own author as Kabti-ilāni-Marduk.

Erra contains a central narrative, primarily given in direct speech from the deities Erra, Išum, and Marduk. In brief, Erra opens the text in a state of disquiet, wishing to fight and campaign, lacking only Išum's approval to do so. The Sebettu are introduced, given a range of terrifying epithets, and provide the encouragement which Erra needs, though Išum counters that violence and destruction will only bring about misery. In what follows, Marduk leaves his seat of power to see to the restoration of his cult statue, and Erra takes up his position and, with his new authority, sets the Sebettu against the cities of Mesopotamia, in recompense for their lack of reverence towards him. Išum manages to counter Erra's rage, directing Erra and the Sebettu against the enemies of Mesopotamia instead of its inhabitants, and the text ends with praise of Erra.³⁴¹

Within this text, we see a different origin for the Sebettu than the genealogy presented in the Old Babylonian incantations presented in Chapter Three.³⁴² Here, the Sebettu are specifically described as coming from the union of specific gods. Anu impregnates the earth (Uraš) with his own power, and from this union the Sebettu are born. In this respect, the Sebettu are born of both regions – upper and lower - and belong exclusively to neither. As with the Uduḫ series

³³⁹ Bodi, *Ezekiel and Erra*, 56.

³⁴⁰ W.G. Lambert, "Review of F. Gössmann, *Das Era-Epos*," *AfO* 18 (1957-1958): 395-401.

³⁴¹ See translation and summary in: Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda: CDL Press, 2005): 880-911. Edition of *Erra* in: L. Cagni, *L'epopea di Erra*, vol. 34 of *Studi semitici* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1969). For further discussion of *Erra* see: A.R. George, "The Poem of Erra and Ishum: A Babylonian Poet's View of War," in *Warfare and Poetry in the Middle East*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 39-71.

³⁴² Geller, *Forerunners to Uduḫ-Hul*.

which references them, the Sebettu exist apart from the normal classifications of gods or demons. They are closely tied to Anu, acting at times as a messenger for or agent of the deity. While they are not given individual names, they are identified with particular descriptions, first as a group of seven:

Erra I, 23-27:

23 *ša^d Sebettu(imin.bi) qar-rad la šá-na-an šu-un-ṛna¹-ta i-lu-su-un*
 24 *i-lit-ta-šú-nu a-ha-at-ma ma-lu-u ṛpul¹-ha-a-ti*
 25 *ṛa¹-mir-šú-nu uš-taḥ-ḥat-ma na-pis-su-nu mu-tù-m-ma*
 26 *nišīl(uḡ₃)^{meš} ṛšaḥ¹-tu-ma ul ir-ru a-na šá-a-šu*
 27 *^di-šum dal-tù-m-ma e-dil pa-nu-[uš-šú-u]n*

23 Of the Sebettu, warriors without equal,
 24 Their origin is strange, they are filled with terror
 25 One who looks at them is made afraid; their very breath is death.
 26 The people are afraid of them, and do not go near them.
 27 Išum is a door, bolted before them.

The text presents the common identity of the Sebettu: a group that, while comprised of seven individual demons, functions collectively. The Sebettu are defined as terrifying agents of death and destruction. Išum's role here echoes his overall actions in *Erra*: just as he counters the ravages inflicted by Erra, he stands as one of the safeguards against the Sebettu, who would encourage and enable much of that same devastation.³⁴³ The association between Išum and the Sebettu is also seen when the deity appears as Hendursaġa, continuing to fulfill the functions of a watchman and herald, protecting the city from threats.³⁴⁴ The opening of the epic even presents the two names of the deity in its opening lines:

Erra: I, 2, 4:

2 *^dhendur-sag-gá apil(ibila) ^den-lil reš-t[u-u] [...]*
 4 *^di-šum ṛá-bi-ḥu na-a'-du šá ana ṛna-še-e ^{ḡiš}kakkē(tukul)^{meš}-šú¹ ez-zu-ti*

³⁴³ Machinist, "Order and Disorder," 47.

³⁴⁴ On this role, see: Dina Katz, "City Administration in Poetry: the Case of the Herald" in *City Administration in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 53e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 69-79.

qātā(šu^{II})-šú as-ma

- 2 O Hendursaĝa, firstborn of Enlil...
4 O Išum, zealous slaughterer, whose hands are suited to brandishing fierce
weapons

The opening lines of this text serve to establish the major actors of Išum, Erra (described as "the warrior of the gods, restless in his dwelling, who desired to do battle" – "^d*erra qarrād ilanī inušū ina šubti irissu libbašu epēš tāḫāzi*"),³⁴⁵ and the Sebettu, who receive their introduction in this opening passage when Erra speaks to them: "To the Sebettu, warriors without equal, "May your weapons be girdled" (*ana ^dSebetti qarrād la šanān nandiqā kakkīkun*),³⁴⁶ a call to arms that Erra, who is stricken with weariness, immediately repudiates, commanding the Sebettu to instead return to their dwellings, where he would have them remain.³⁴⁷

Already, the text establishes that the Sebettu follow Erra's commands and are themselves warriors, with their martial abilities standing as their defining attributes. Here, the epic diverges away from the narrative to describe the Sebettu in greater detail, presenting them, critically, as individuals. We see this presentation of the Sebettu in this manner in only three other texts in Mesopotamia: *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, the Uduḫ Hul incantation series, and the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*. The imagery used for the first two aligns closely with the imagery used in *Erra's* treatment of the Sebettu, suggesting a common tradition underlying the texts. The *Hymn to Hendursaĝa* is the outlier in this small group – although it presents the Sebettu as a group of seven unique entities, it describes them in bestial imagery, instead of the destructive imagery we see in the other three texts.

Within *Erra*, then, we see the following references to the Sebettu as individual entities, a scene which follows at the heels of the description of Anu's siring of them:

³⁴⁵ *Erra* I: 5-6.

³⁴⁶ *Erra* I: 8.

³⁴⁷ *Erra* I: 18.

Erra: I, 31-38:

- 31 *is-si-ma iš-ten i-šak-ka-na ʔ[è]-e-ma*
 32 *e-ma [ta-a]n-di-ru-ma ta-at-tal-ku ma-ḫi-ra ʔe¹-[t]ar-ši*
 33 *i-qab-bi ana šá-né-e kīma^d Girri(ḡiš-bar) ku-bu-um-ma ḫu-muṭ kīma*
[n]ab-li
 34 *i-t[a-mi] ana šal-ši zi-im la-bi lu šak-na-[t]a-ma a-mir-ka liš/liḫ₄-ḫar-miṭ*
 35 *i-qab-bi ana ri-bi-i ana na-še-e^{ḡiš} kakkē(tukul)^{meš}-ka ez-zu-ti šadū(kur)^u*
li-ʔtab¹-bit
 36 *a-na ḫa-an-ši iq-ta-bi kīma šá-a-ri zi-iq]-ma kip-pa-ta ḫi-i-ṭa*
 37 *šeš-šá um-ta-'i-ir e-liš u šap-liš ba-a'-ma la ta-gam-mil mam-ma*
 38 *si-ba-a i-mat ba-áš-me i-še-en-šú-ma šum-qí-ta napišta(zi)^{ta}*

- 31 He (Anu) summoned the first and instructed him:
 32 "Wherever you go spread terror, you have no equal."
 33 He says to the second: "Burn like fire, scorch like flame."
 34 To the third: "Look like a lion, the one who sees you is annihilated."
 35 He says to the fourth: "May a mountain fall to your fearsome weapons."
 36 To the fifth he said: "As the wind, blow about and encircle."
 37 The sixth: "Go everywhere, below and above, and do not spare anyone."
 38 The seventh he gave venom (saying): "Slay what lives."

Much of this language resonates with the ferocity commonly assigned to demons and monsters, as well as that allocated to gods and kings. As Bodi and Cagni note in their studies on *Erra*, the references to the Sebettu in *Erra* mirror the destructive actions of Erra in later sections of the poem, which parallel each other as follows:³⁴⁸

The Sebettu:	Erra's Action:
I 33: He says to the second: "Burn like fire, scorch like flame."	I 113: <i>ina a-pi^d Girra-[ku] ina qí-ši ma-ʔag¹-šá-rak</i> "I am the fire in the reed thicket; I am the ax in the rushes." IV 149: <i>a-pi ù qí-i-ši ú-šah-rib-ma ki-i^d Girri iq-mi</i> "He devastated the reeds and the rushes; he burned them like fire."
I 34: To the third: "Look like a lion, destroy the one who sees you."	IIIC 21-22: <i>šá^d ér-ra xxx zi-im lab-bi xxx</i> "Of Erra...a lion-like aspect" IV 21: <i>zi-im lab-bi taš-šá-kin-ma te-te-ru-ub a-na ekalli(e₂.gal)</i> "You took a lion-like aspect, and you entered the palace"

³⁴⁸ See Bodi, *Ezekiel and Erra*, 104 and Cagni, *Erra*.

I 35: He says to the fourth: "May a mountain fall to your fearsome weapons."	IV 142: <i>iš-ši-ma qās(šu)^{ll}-su i-ṭa-bat šadâ(kur)^a</i> "He raised his hands and leveled the mountain"
I 37: The sixth: "Go everywhere, below and above, and do not spare anyone."	I 115-116: <i>ki-i šá-a-r[i] a-za-qu ki-i^d Adad(im) ur-[t]a-ša-an ki-i^{r^{dl}}[Šam]ši(utu)^{šⁱ} a-bar-ri [k]ip-pa-ta [k]a-la-ma</i> "Like the wind I blow; like Adad I thunder; like Šamaš I survey the entire orbit (of the world)"

Internal allusions and complicated foreshadowing such as this reminds us of the complexity that permeates the text of *Erra*. Rife with puns and wordplay, *Erra* functions as an intellectual exercise, engaging its reader on multiple fronts.³⁴⁹

Anu, having decreed the destinies of the Sebettu, bequeaths them to Erra, tasking him to use them when the noise of humanity grows too great for him to endure, a theme that resonates with the destruction (or attempted destruction) of mankind in other Mesopotamian texts, reaching back to the Old Babylonian period.³⁵⁰ Thus, Erra and the Sebettu are encouraged to act as a check on humanity, limiting their number when they would grow too numerous.³⁵¹

Erra I, 40-42, 44:

40 *id-din-šu-nu-ti-ma ana^d èr-ra qar-rad ilānī(diġir)^{meš} lil-li-ku i-da-ka*
41 *ki-i šá nišī(uġ₃)^{meš} da-ád-me hu-bur-ši-na elī-ka im-tar-šu*
42 *ub-lam-ma lib-ba-ka a-na šá-kan ka-mar-ri*

44 *lu-ú^{ġiš} kakkū(tukul)^{meš}-ka ez-zu-ti šu-nu-ma lil-li-ku i-da-a-ka*

40 He gave those to Erra, the warrior of the gods, (saying)
"Let them go at your side."
41 If the noise of human habitation pains you,

³⁴⁹ Scott B. Noegel, "Wordplay in the Song of Erra," in *Strings and Threads: A Celebration of the Work of Anne Draffkorn Kilmer*, ed. Wolfgang Heimpel and Gabriella Frantz-Szabó (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 161-92.

³⁵⁰ On the role of noise and creation, see: Peter Machinist, "Violence in Erra," 221-226 and Piotr Michalowski, "Presence at the Creation," in *Lingering Over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran*, ed. Tzvi Abusch et al (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990): 381-96.

³⁵¹ We see a similar scenario in the *Atra-ḫasis* myth, where Enlil limits potential human population by ensuring some women will be barren, and tasking the "Exterminator" – a name of Lamaštu – with snatching babies from the laps of mothers, to better help keep humanity's numbers controlled. See Wiggermann, "Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu," 225.

42 And in your heart you resolve to wreak devastation...

44 May these be your fierce weapons, may they go at your side.

The language of this section stresses that Anu has quite literally given the Sebettu to Erra (*iddinšunūtima ana^dErra*) with the specific intent that they will act as his flank guard, securing him from the enemies that come before him, protecting him from all attacks.³⁵² Furthermore, they are to slaughter mankind and kill their livestock, if Erra is troubled by the noise (*hubūru*) of humanity. In Old Babylonian texts, *hubūru* was paired with *rigmu* as terms that described both the clamor of creation and that of humanity, the latter of which eventually troubled the gods so greatly that they decided to eradicate mankind.³⁵³

The Sebettu do their best to goad Erra into a fight. They lay several accusations at his feet: they command him to do his duty as a warrior and not hide away in rest and peaceful respite within the city. They articulate a list of grievances to him: that he, and they, are no longer respected or revered, and they have grown soft with a lack of training and military action, inaction which has bored them greatly.

Many of the accusations which the Sebettu hurl against Erra draw upon the contrast between the city and the countryside. The former was emblematic of civilization, while the latter represented the settled borderlands before one entered the eden, or *šēru*, the high plains or steppe. Beyond the eden lay the mountains, the kur. In other texts, such as the Uduḡ Hul series, the Sebettu are defined as beings who were raised, if not born, in the kur, and their thoughts on the supremacy of the countryside resonate with their own origin. They tell Erra how a man in the countryside will never be revered by the people, and the strength of a city dweller could never

³⁵² In comparison to this, Erra later asks Išum to march out onto the field of battle with him, as his vanguard and rear guard, securing the positions not covered by the Sebettu.

³⁵³ Michalowski, "Creation," 381-396; Yağmur Heffron, "Revisiting 'Noise' (*rigmu*) in *Atra-ḫasis* in Light of Baby Incantations," *JNES* 73 (2014): 83-93.

equal that of a campaigner (*ālik šēri*) as the best offerings of the city could not hope to equal those of countryside.³⁵⁴ They even front this attack on the virtues of the city with an admonition that only the elderly, women, and children stay within the city walls:

Erra I, 47-50:

- | | |
|----|--|
| 47 | <i>mīn-su ki-i šī-i-bi muq-qí tu-šib ina āli</i> |
| 48 | <i>ki-i šēr-ri la-^r 'i^l-i tu-šib ina bītim</i> |
| 49 | <i>ki-i la a-lik šēri(edēn) ni-ik-ka-la a-kal sin-niš</i> |
| 50 | <i>ki-i šá ta-ḥa-zi la ni-du-ú ni-ip-la-ḥa ni-ru-da</i> |
-
- | | |
|----|--|
| 47 | Why have you been sitting in the city like a feeble old man, |
| 48 | Why sitting at home like a helpless child? |
| 49 | Like those who do not venture afar, shall we eat the bread of women? |
| 50 | As those who do not know battle, shall we be afraid and tremble? |

The Sebettu have made it clear that to stay within the city not only strips Erra of any respect due to him as a warrior, but also consigns him to categories that an able-bodied man cannot occupy. To stay in the city, he must be elderly, a child, or a woman: essentially, a non-combatant. The city, and thus civilization, strips Erra of his martial prowess. His place, the Sebettu insist, is on the field of battle, and the civilized city can present no great challenges for him. Although the literary tradition of Mesopotamia tends to locate narrative in the urban landscape of the city, true adventure occurs in the countryside and beyond it.³⁵⁵

The Sebettu are furthermore concerned that they are not as revered as they once had been, a decline in esteem that is thanks to their lack of active campaigning. This anxiety on their part may reflect the relatively new status of their cult. As the Sebettu only have offerings dedicated to them once their cult surfaces in the early Kassite period, and *Erra* reflects them as warriors who are more closely aligned to their original demonic representations, they may fear the

³⁵⁴ *Erra I: 57-59*. The contrast is a reappearing trope in literary texts: Beate Pongratz-Leisten, "The Other and the Enemy in the Mesopotamian Conception of the World," in *Mythology and Mythologies: Methodological Approaches to Intercultural Influences*, ed. R.M. Whiting (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2001), 195.

³⁵⁵ Seth Richardson, "The World of Babylonian Countrysides," in *The Babylonian World*, ed. Gwendolyn Leick (New York, Routledge, 2007): 18.

diminishment of their cult.

The Sebettu's long speech celebrating conquest, battle, and war ends with a listing of how their once-great qualities have now grown weak thanks to their lack of use:

Erra I, 87-91:

87 ù né-e-nu mu-¹de¹-e né-reb šadé(kur)^e nim-ta-á[š-ši ḥa]r-ra-nu
88 ina muḥḥi til-le-e šērī(eden)-ni šú-ta-[a] qé-¹e¹ e[t-t]u-tu
89 qa-šat-ni ṭa-ab-tú ib-bal-kit-ma id-ni-n[a e]lī¹e¹-m[u-q]i-ni
90 šá uš-ši-ni zaq-ti ke-¹pa¹-ta li-šá-a[n]-šú
91 pa-tar-n[i] ina la ṭa-ba-ḥi it-t[a-d]i šu-uḥ-tú

87 We too, who know the mountain passes, we have [forgotten] how to go,
88 Cobwebs are spun over our field gear,
89 Our fine bow resists and is too strong for us,
90 The tip of our sharp arrow is bent out of alignment,
91 Our blade is corroded for want of a slaughter!

While most of these qualities are directly linked to their abilities, the reference to knowing the mountain passes draws a connection between the Sebettu as they appear in this text and their appearance in the Sumerian literary epic *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*. In version B of this text, the Sebettu claim a similar knowledge:

47 On earth, they know the road to Aratta
48 Like merchants, they know how to traverse the path
49 Like doves, they know the crevices of the mountains
50 So that they can bring him through the mountain passes³⁵⁶

Although the two texts are separated by a great chronological divide, we see evidence for common bank of imagery for the Sebettu which both texts allude to in turn. Both references work to create a similar effect. This section, when presented in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, first and foremost reminds the reader that the Sebettu possess knowledge that extends beyond that of the known world: they not only know the road to Aratta, but also the passage through the mountains, or possibly, to the Netherworld. These are routes beyond the knowledge of man or, in

³⁵⁶ Following Edzard, *Gilgamesh und Huwawa*, 1993.

Gilgamesh and Huwawa, even beyond demi-god hero figures such as Gilgamesh. In *Erra*, it is implied that their knowledge would be beyond Erra's as well.

Erra is stirred to action by the Sebettu's speech, and Išum's attempts to dissuade him by recounting the probable devastation are unsuccessful. When his attempt to go on campaign is discouraged by the other gods, Erra, frustrated, turns his ire against one of Mesopotamia's own cities. If he cannot have the glory that the Sebettu promised awaited him in the countryside, fighting against the enemies of Mesopotamia, then he is ready to accept the substitute of devastating the homeland itself, and *Erra* describes these actions with language that echoes those found in city laments.³⁵⁷ He releases the Sebettu on the city as well, in a section of the text that is sadly broken, with the lines wherein the Sebettu attack the city obscured by their state of poor preservation.³⁵⁸ What is extant seems to echo the imagery used for the Sebettu that was present in the beginning of Tablet I: one is described as "like fire" (*kī^d Girri*),³⁵⁹ and another possesses the "face of a lion" (*zīm labbim*),³⁶⁰ followed by a line implying the anger of one of the Sebettu as, "in the raging heart" (*ina aggi libbim*).³⁶¹

Išum counters all this destruction with a speech, over 140 lines in length, where he recounts the great martial feats that Erra has already achieved. He describes how Erra ransacked Babylon, against the wishes of Marduk, and Sippar, similarly against the will of Šamaš, before finally recounting how indiscriminate Erra is in his retribution:

Erra IV, 104-107:

³⁵⁷ On city laments, see: Cohen, *CLAM*; Michalowski, *Lament over Sumer and Ur*, Nili Samet, *Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur*, vol. 18 in *MC (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014)*, and Daniel E. Fleming, "Ur: After the Gods Abandoned Us," *The Classical World* 97 (2003): 5-18. Other laments focus on the destruction of cities such as Nippur, Uruk, Eridu, among others. In this section of the epic, Enlil is forced to leave his own dwelling within the city, also paralleling the action found in city laments, wherein the patron deity or deities of a town abandon it to its fate.

³⁵⁸ *Erra* III: Pericope C: 12-26.

³⁵⁹ *Erra* III: Pericope C: 17.

³⁶⁰ *Erra* III: Pericope C: 22.

³⁶¹ *Erra* III: Pericope C: 23.

104 *qu-ra-du^d ẽr-ra ki-nam-ma tuš-ta-mit*
 105 *la ki-nam-ma tuš-ta-mit*
 106 *šá iḫ-ṭu-ka-ma tuš-ta-mit*
 107 *šá la iḫ-ṭu-ka-ma tuš-ta-mit*

104 Warrior Erra, you have put the just man to death,
 105 You have put the unjust man to death,
 106 He who sinned against you, you put him to death,
 107 He who did not sin against you, you put him to death.

Much like the Sebettu who accompany him, Erra appears as a ruthlessly indiscriminate force of chaos. There does not seem to be any logic in whom he attacks and his ferocity marks him as a force that the gods, even those of far greater standing and position in the pantheon, can only try to redirect. And redirect they (or rather Išum) do, as Erra is appeased by Išum's speech and halts his destruction against the city. Išum's speech parallels neatly the speech which the Sebettu give to first incite Erra into action: in both, Erra is goaded into doing the will of the speaker and each ends with Erra pleased by the speaker's words – with the identical phrasing as "the speech which Išum made pleased him like finest oil."³⁶² The text has come full circle, as Išum now joins Erra's military exploits, safely directed against the Suteans, and leads the Sebettu against them, destroying their mountain and laying waste to both their cities and the unsettled land:

Erra IV, 139-140:

139 *^di-šum a-na Šaršar(šar₂.šar₂)^{kur} iš-ta-kan pa-ni-šu*
 140 *^dSebettu(imin.bi) qar-rad la šá-na-an i-šap-pi-su ar-ki-šu*

139 Išum set out for the mountain Hehe,
 140 The Sebettu, warriors unrivaled, fell in behind him.

Although Erra is just as destructive and uncontrolled as the Sebettu, that violence may be directed against the enemies of Mesopotamia, instead of the homeland itself. In this regard, *Erra* serves as both a reinforcement of the destructive, demonic nature the Sebettu possess even as

³⁶² This line is present on Tablet I: 93 for the Sebettu and Tablet IV: 129 for Išum.

deities, and a cautionary tale that, as in the text, if they are left idle for too long they could easily turn into a calamitous storm that would decimate the inhabited cities of Mesopotamia.

5.1.3 Parallel Structure: The Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin

Though *Erra* may feature the Sebettu most directly, it is not the only literary text with relevance for the group of Seven. In looking for parallels to the link between seven and demonic qualities, one of the most prominent comes in the standard Babylonian recension of the *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin*, also referred to by the title "Naram-Sin and the Enemy Hordes." This first millennium text describes how the Sargonic-period ruler Naram-Sin faces a legion of enemies, headed by seven kings whose descriptions fall in line with a number of demonic tropes, including ones that refer especially to both the Sebettu and the legion of monsters that Tiamat spawned in the text of *Enūma eliš*. We see the foreign kings introduced early in the text as follows:

Cuthaeen Legend of Naram-Sin, 32-34, 36-40:

- 32 *ib-nu-šu-nu-ti-ma ilānū(dīgīr)^{meš} rabûtu(gal)^{meš}*
 33 *ina qa-qar ib-nu-ú ilānū(dīgīr)^{meš} a-lu-šú-[nu]*
 34 *ti-a-ma-tu ú-še-niq-šú-nu-ti*
- 36 *ina qé-reb šadī(kur)ⁱ ir-te-bu-ma i-te-eṭ-lu-ta ir-ta-šú-u mi-na-te*
 37 *sebet(imin) šarru(lugal)^{meš} at-ḫu-u šu-pu-u ba-nu-tu*
 38 *aš₃-lim-am₃ um-ma-na-tú-šú-nu*
 39 *anu-ba-ni-ni abū(ad)-šú-nu šarru(lugal) umma(ama)-šú-nu šar-ra-tú*
 ^{munus} *me-li-im šumša(mu.ni)*
 40 *ahū(šeš)-šú-nu rabû(gal)^u a-lik pānī(igi)-šú-nu^{diš} me-ma-an-duh*
 šumšu(mu.ni)

- 32 The great gods created them.
 33 On the land created by the gods, their city.
 34 Tiamat suckled them.
- 36 In the midst of the mountains, they grew up, reached man's estate, and attained full stature.
 37 Seven kings, brothers, resplendent with beauty,

- 38 360,000 were their troops.
 39 Anubanini was their father, the king; their mother was the queen, Melili her
 name.
 40 Their eldest brother, their leader, Memanduh was his name.³⁶³

The concept of a legion or league of seven kings united against a foreign enemy reiterates in later periods in history and the theme underlies another famous group of seven, the seven kings who fight against the city of Thebes in Aeschylus' play *Seven against Thebes*.³⁶⁴ The kings in the play are entirely human, however, while the inhumanity and potential demonic nature of the kings in the Mesopotamian text is constantly highlighted. Although they are also cited as created by Belet-ili, their description of being suckled by Tiamat speaks to a monstrous heritage. The text itself will later question their very humanity. These rulers, much like demons, are also creatures who originated in the kur, the regions found once one encroaches on the mountains and, thus, also approaches the Netherworld. They are foreign kings of foreign lands, and their status as "other" defines them, as does their demonization because of it.

The text, having established the overwhelmingly foreign nature of these rulers as a group, proceeds to assign them individual, but also suitably foreign and alien names, following the same pattern established for the introduction and naming of the first brother:

- 41 Their second brother, Medudu was his name.
 42 Their third brother, [...]tapiš was his name.
 43 Their fourth brother, Tartadada was his name.
 44 Their fifth brother, Baldahdah was his name.
 45 Their sixth brother, Ahudanadih was his name.

³⁶³ The edition of this text is in Joan Goodnick Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Agade*, vol. 7 in *MC* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997). In the Middle Babylonian edition of this tale, which is far more fragmentary, the kings appear in a horde of six. Their troops number only 600 and the kings themselves do not appear to be named, although they are again referred to as "brothers, resplendent in beauty" in Westenholz, *Kings of Agade*, 289.

³⁶⁴ This theme is furthermore reiterated in the seven nobles, including Darius, who banded together against Smerdis; on which, see: Lester L. Grabbe, "Of Mice and Dead Men: Herodotus 2.141 and Sennacherib's Campaign in 701 BC," in *Like a Bird in a Cage: the Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BC*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003), 119-40. On the play *Seven against Thebes*, see: Isabelle Torrance, *Aeschylus: Seven against Thebes* (London: Duckworth, 2007) and Daniel Berman, *Myth and Culture in Aeschylus' Seven against Thebes* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 2007).

46 Their seventh brother, Hurrakidu was his name.³⁶⁵

The names of the seven kings themselves are nonsensical, reduplicated to sound foreign.

Anubanini, however, was an actual, historical ruler, a king of the Lullubi, known at the time from inscriptions.³⁶⁶ They were located near the Zagros mountains; and whether or not this name is meant as a link to the actual Anubanini, it still creates a connection to a far eastern territory.

Following their introduction, the seven kings ravage through the lands, swarming first over Burushanda (or Purushanda), a city in Asia Minor which was well attested, though in earlier periods than this late composition and primarily (though not exclusively) in economic documents.³⁶⁷ In the Old Assyrian period this city stood as the westernmost location attached to an Assyrian trade colony.³⁶⁸ In this first-millennium composition, its inclusion signifies the northwestern limit of the known world. Moving beyond it would indicate, in effect, that one has fallen entirely off the edge of the map. The text, then, places the kings as coming from a land beyond the farthest possible point where trade had, albeit nearly a millennium prior, been established, a place people were known to visit and – perhaps more importantly – return from. Their monstrous abilities aside, this distant point of origin would be enough to distinguish their quality as both other and not-human.

The text is unwilling to leave aside the point of that monstrous nature, as the greater and more terrible the enemy, the more glorious the final victory over it. Naram-Sin appears himself aware of their monstrous abilities, and instructs one of his soldiers to strike at one of the seven,

³⁶⁵ *STT* 30 lines 41-46.

³⁶⁶ Michael C. Astour, "Ezekiel's Prophecy of Gog and the Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin," *JBL* 95 (1976): 574 and O.R. Gurney, "The Sultantepe Tablets (Continued) IV: The Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin," *AS* 5 (1955): 95.

³⁶⁷ The "not exclusively economic" examples, though few, are quite significant, including a mid-second millennium account, "The King of Battle" recounting Sargon's expedition against the leader of Purushanda. See Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade*, 102-40. The location further features in descriptions of the campaign of the Hittite ruler Anitta.

³⁶⁸ See J. Garstang and O.R. Gurney, *the Geography of the Hittite Empire* (London: Occasional Publications of the British School of Archaeology in Ankara, 1959), 64 and Astour "Ezekiel's Prophecy," 575.

so that:

Cuthaeen Legend of Naram-Sin, 66-68:

66 *šum-ma dāmū(uš₂)^{meš} u-šu-ni ki-i na-ši-ma awīlū(lu₂)^{meš} šú-nu*
67 [*šumma dāmū la ūšū*]-ni še-e-du namtaru(nam.tar)
68 [*utukkū rābišū*] lem-nu-te ši-pir^d En-lil šú-nu

66 If blood appears, they are men like us.
67 If blood does not appear, they are evil demons of fate,
68 Fiends, evil demons, creatures of Enlil.³⁶⁹

Here, as if remembering that having true demons command actual armies would be too far a stretch, the demonic nature of the kings is summarily shelved: they bleed and are swiftly found to be human after all. We are, of course, never told how the soldiers accomplished this feat, but the text required concrete evidence to disprove their potentially inhuman and demonic nature. Even if they are human, they are fearsome.

5.2 Expansionist Politics: the Initial Stages of the Assyrian Empire

The Sebettu's role in *Erra* serves to reinforce two key aspects of their personality: firstly, that they were warriors of great and terrifying martial ability, and secondly, that that selfsame ability could – and was – often tied to the service and commands of a deity or king. These themes existed in earlier literary texts, both those concerning the Sebettu in particular or monsters and demons in general; however, *Erra* took these roles and expanded them, abstracting their own characteristics into those that would be, in turn, employed by the first millennium kings.

The Sebettu have appeared in these roles before the Neo-Assyrian period, but it is here that the utilization of the demons greatly accelerated, to the point where unbroken lines of

³⁶⁹ Reconstructions follow Westenholz, *Kings of Agade*, 314-15. The text is also discussed in Michael Haul, *Stele und Legende: Untersuchungen zu den keilschriftlichen Erzählwerken über die Könige von Akkade*, vol. 4 of *GBO* (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2009).

consecutive rulers invoke the Sebettu. The greater number of attestations during the Neo-Assyrian period can be attributed to several factors: the growing influence and circulation of literary texts featuring the Sebettu; the position of the Neo-Assyrian kings as stewards and warriors of the gods, fighting on their behalf; the military nature of Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, utilized as propaganda; and, finally, the state of documentation and preservation of material from the period. When combined with the groundwork laid by the Assyrian rulers of the second millennium, this greatly facilitated the proliferation of the Sebettu and their full incorporation into the Neo-Assyrian pantheon – which led, in turn, to the use of the demons by non-elites as protective spirits.

The narrative of the use of the Sebettu is not only one of literature or religion but also of politics and power. To that end, a study of the attestations of the Sebettu can be centered on an examination of the general strength and security of the Neo-Assyrian empire over the timeline of the Sebettu's use. In doing so, several questions rise to the forefront, all of which shape the Sebettu's place within the narrative of the Neo-Assyrian period. Was a particular ruler embarking on a period of military expansion, in order to establish the empire, or attempting to hold the line of conquest he had inherited? Was he pushing forward to expand a stable power-base, or hedging his bets in order to consolidate power? Unfortunately, there is not a completely continuous chronological record of the Sebettu in use by the Neo-Assyrians – that is to say, they are not utilized by each and every king. The list of kings we do have begins with Aššurnāṣirpal II (883-859 BCE) and ends with Aššurbanipal (668-627 BCE). Considering the scattered state of the attestations during the second millennium, however, the greater number of attestations over Neo-Assyria's two-hundred and fifty years is a comparative embarrassment of riches.

5.2.1. Aššurnāširpal II (883-859 BCE)

Aššurnāširpal II is the first Neo-Assyrian ruler with documented references to the Sebettu in his royal inscriptions, and linked them to his policy of dedicated and continuous military expansion. Additionally, Aššurnāširpal II demonstrates a true understanding and harnessing of the power of propaganda and image. His grandfather, Adad-nerari II, as the first ruler of the Neo-Assyrian empire, had begun a series of military campaigns to recapture and reconfirm Assyrian power over its vassal territories and quell potential incursions from its neighboring enemies, particularly the Arameans in the northwest. Aššurnāširpal II's father, Tukulti-Ninurta II, continued in the steps of his father, and thus Aššurnāširpal II had two generations of successful military conquest to draw upon.

Aššurnāširpal II took these successes and built upon them, working to consolidate the power and image of the Neo-Assyrian empire itself. He moved the capital from Aššur to Nimrud, where he commissioned a series of royal reliefs for his palace that remain one of our most well-preserved sources for Assyrian relief art and complemented the image he broadcast of a ruthless military leader.³⁷⁰ Expanding the borders of the developing empire required constant years on campaign, particularly in the beginning of his rule: the king campaigned seven times in the first five years of his rule, and four times during his remaining twelve.³⁷¹ Moreover, the ruler was, according to his royal inscriptions, vicious even by Neo-Assyrian standards. This translated to his achieving victory over the coastal cities of the Levant without having to actively engage them in battle: the threat was, apparently, sufficient incentive to bring about their surrender.³⁷²

³⁷⁰ On the reliefs at the palace at Nimrud, see: John Malcolm Russell, *Writing on the Wall: the Architectural Context of Late Assyrian Palaces*, vol. 9 in *MC* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999).

³⁷¹ W.G. Lambert, "The Reigns of Aššurnāširpal II and Shalmaneser III: An Interpretation," *Iraq* 36 (1974): 107.

³⁷² Aššurnāširpal was also a shrewd military strategist, from what can be interpreted from the patterns of his conquest, and his deliberate avoidance, on his march west to conquer the rich port cities of the eastern Mediterranean coast, of areas of Syria that could pose a true threat to the Neo-Assyrian force he commanded. See: Lambert, "Aššurnāširpal II and Shalmaneser III," 107-108.

Given Aššurnāṣirpal II's ferocity, and moreover, the planned and carefully cultivated nature of the image of relentless military power – what A.T. Olmstead famously deemed the "calculated frightfulness" of the Neo-Assyrian rulers - his use of the Sebettu is thematically well suited to the overall tenor of his rule.³⁷³ We see the Sebettu invoked in two of his royal inscriptions: both references allude to his building and dedicating temples to the cult of the Sebettu, alongside temples dedicated to other major gods of Assyria. The format parallels the inscription of Tukulti-Ninurta I wherein the ruler listed various temples he had built and dedicated to their respective gods, including one dedicated to the Sebettu. It provides worthwhile evidence that the Neo-Assyrians had continued the integration of the Sebettu into the pantheon begun by the Assyrian kings of the second millennium.³⁷⁴

What we do not see, however, is the invocation of the Sebettu in texts themselves as Aššurnāṣirpal II does not reference them directly in his royal inscriptions, as gods that he summons for assistance or to reinforce his own power. He is certainly familiar with the practice, albeit with other gods. One inscription, which lines the walls and floor of the temple of the Ninurta at Nimrud, begins with a long and stately invocation of the warrior god. The text chooses to prioritize Ninurta's warrior aspects above all else: "to the god Ninurta, the strong, the mighty, the exalted, foremost among the gods, the splendid (and) perfect warrior (whose) attack in battle is unequalled, the eldest son who commands battle (skills)...the hero who rejoices in battles, the triumphant, the perfect, lord of springs and seas, the angry (and) merciless whose attack is a deluge, the one who overwhelms the enemy lands (and) fells the wicked."³⁷⁵ Aššurnāṣirpal II uses similar language to describe himself within this same inscription: he is the hero, the warrior, the lion – the "merciless weapon which lays low lands hostile to him...capable in battle,

³⁷³ A.T. Olmstead, "The Calculated Frightfulness of Ashur Nasir Apal," *JAOS* 38 (1918): 209-63.

³⁷⁴ Discussed earlier, references text in: Grayson, *RIMA* 1, 269-271. Tukulti-Ninurta I: A.0.78.22.

³⁷⁵ Grayson, *RIMA* 2, 193-194. Aššurnāṣirpal II: A.0.101.1, Col. i: 1-2, 6-7.

vanquisher of cities and highlands."³⁷⁶ The text recounts in detail the various military campaigns of the king, as well as his characteristic cruelty to those who would stand against him: "the rest of [the soldiers] I burnt. I built a pile of (human) heads before his gate. I impaled on stakes 700 soldiers before their gate. I razed, destroyed, (and) turned the city into desolate hills. I burnt their adolescent boys (and) girls."³⁷⁷ Royal inscriptions from earlier periods were certainly apt at recounting how many of the enemy their king killed or captured but never with quite the zeal of Aššurnāširpal II and later Neo-Assyrian kings.

Given his militaristic image, the exclusion of the Sebettu in god lists and divine invocations appears at first curious: the warrior Seven would seem to be exactly his sort of deities. Instead, the ruler links himself most closely to the warrior god Ninurta, and excludes the Sebettu from the long lists of deities that open several of his royal inscriptions. One stone stele from Nimrud, three meters high, begins with an invocation of various deities, presented in order as: Aššur, Anu, Ea, Sin, Marduk, Adad, Ninurta (*qardu qarrad ilānī*(diġir)^{meš} *mušamqit lemnute* – "hero, warrior of the gods, the one who lays low the wicked"), Nusku, Ninlil, Nergal (given the epithet of "king of battle"), Enlil, Šamaš, and finally, Ištar (described as the one who is skilled in combat).³⁷⁸ In the royal inscriptions of later kings, we will see the closing position in such a list of deities is occupied by the Sebettu, but this practice is not yet in place with Aššurnāširpal II. Even his "standard inscription," engraved on the reliefs which lined the walls of his palace at Nimrud, describes Aššurnāširpal II in the introduction as the "chosen of the gods Enlil and Ninurta, beloved of the gods Anu and Dagan, destructive weapon of the great gods...valiant man who acts with the support of Aššur."³⁷⁹ Aššurnāširpal II, then, has aligned himself with the

³⁷⁶ Grayson, *RIMA* 2, 196. Aššurnāširpal II: A.0.101.1, Col. i: 33.

³⁷⁷ Grayson, *RIMA* 2, 210. Aššurnāširpal II: A.0.101.1, Col. ii: 109.

³⁷⁸ Grayson, *RIMA* 2, 238. Aššurnāširpal II: A.0.101.17, Col. i: 6.

³⁷⁹ Grayson, *RIMA* 2, 275. Aššurnāširpal II: A.0.101.23, 1.

warrior god Ninurta and neglected the Sebettu. To a certain extent, this is a sensible choice: the Sebettu were minor figures as compared to Ninurta, who was also prominently known from literary texts such as Lugal-e, also in circulation during this period. As concerned with the power of his own image as he was, Ninurta would have been a more impressive association to forge than the Sebettu: he had a longer history as a warrior, with none of the Seven's potentially problematic demonic qualities. Furthermore, if we accept any of the later dates for the composition of *Erra* (with the latest date at 765 BCE),³⁸⁰ we place Aššurnāširpal II's own reign firmly before the text's own date, and also before its own helpful addition to the bank of texts citing and circulating the image of the Sebettu as powerful warriors. The question at hand is less why Aššurnāširpal II represents Ninurta in his inscriptions, but if – and why – the preeminence of Ninurta is connected to the dearth of references to the Sebettu.

Aššurnāširpal II does not neglect the Sebettu entirely, however, having two particular citations of the Seven during his reign. One of these, a text found in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud, is unique in composition thanks to its inclusion of a full menu for the dedication ceremony of the palace.³⁸¹ The text, excavated during Mallowan's 1951 season at Nimrud, is complete, and the opening lines of the standard inscription list a series of campaigns that occurred during the first five years of his reign (884-879 BCE), aiding in the dating of the text.³⁸² It includes a low-cut relief of the king, surrounded by the insignia of his gods, namely, Sin, Aššur, Šamaš, Enlil, Adad, and the Sebettu, the last of which is represented by a group of seven dots, or the Pleiades, one of which is broken in the relief.³⁸³ As the ruler who moved the capital to Nimrud, Aššurnāširpal had a number of extensive building projects and reliefs within the

³⁸⁰ Bodi, *Ezekiel and Erra*, 56.

³⁸¹ See introduction to text in: Grayson, *RIMA* 1, 288-93. Aššurnāširpal II: A.0.101.30.

³⁸² D.J. Wiseman, "A New Stela of Aššur-našir-pal II," *Iraq* 20 (1952): 26.

³⁸³ Wiseman, "Stela of Aššur-našir-pal II," 24.

newly-dedicated capital, all with a carefully planned imagery.³⁸⁴

The text continues with a list of temples that Aššurnāširpal II founded; namely, temples to the gods Enlil and Ninurta, which had not before existed in Nimrud, followed by pre-existing temples that he rededicated, including temples to the following gods, often paired: Ea-šarru and Damkina, Adad and Šala, the goddess Gula, the god Sîn, ending with the following:

- 57 *bīt(e₂)^d Nabû(muati) bīt(e₂)^d Šarrat-Nip̄hi(gašan.kur)^{hi} bīt(e₂)
^dSebettu(imin.bi)*
58 *bīt(e₂)^d kid₉-mu-ri ēkurri(e₂.kur)^{meš} ilānī(diġir)^{meš} rabūti(gal)^{meš}*
59 *ana eš-šū-te ina lib-bi ad-di šu-bat ilānī(diġir)^{meš}*
60 *bēl(en)^{meš}-ia ina qé-reb-ši-na ú-kín ú-si-im-ši-na³⁸⁵*

- 57 (I rededicated) the temple of the god Nabû, the temple of the goddess
Šarrat-nip̄hi, the temple of the Sebettu (é^dimin-bi),
58 the temple of the Kidmuru, the temple of the great gods.
59 I established them in the seats of the gods,
60 my lords, I decorated them splendidly.

Given the brand-new position of Nimrud as the capital, its temples would require massive restoration and rededication to suit this new status, and to accommodate the influx of people and new infrastructure the capital of the Neo-Assyrian empire would require. Here, Aššurnāširpal II dedicates the temple of the Sebettu in close connection with the temple of the Kidmuru, a temple associated with Ištar, who, with her war and battle connotations, is a good match for the Seven.³⁸⁶ When the Sebettu are, in the inscriptions of later Neo-Assyrian kings, included in the oath sections which close treaty texts, they are at the very end, most often following directly after an invocation of Ištar. Aššurnāširpal II's inclusion of the temple of the Sebettu is not found across the entire corpus of his inscriptions. When we examine a text inscribed on the two stone lions which flank the entrance to the temple of the goddess Šarrat-nip̄hi, a temple Aššurnāširpal

³⁸⁴ John Malcolm Russell, "The Program of the Palace of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud: Issues in the Research and Presentation of Assyrian Art," *AJA* 102 (1998): 655-715.

³⁸⁵ Text found on a large stone slab in the North West Palace at Calah/Nimrud, now in the Mosul Museum (ND 1104). Edition following: RIMA 2, 291. Aššurnāširpal II: A.O.101.30.

³⁸⁶ At this point, Ištar has already begun to assimilate the roles of many other divinities, these included.

II cites as restoring and rededicating, he describes founding temples to the gods Enlil and Ninurta, Ea and Damkina, Adad and Šala, Šîn, Gula, Šarrat-nip̄i, and to the great gods.³⁸⁷ The Sebettu, on the other hand, and any temples to them, are absent from this particular list and are thus only sporadically represented by this early ruler, perhaps lacking the status to merit more frequent attestations.

The other text of Aššurnāširpal II reiterates the presence of the cult of the Sebettu, being a baked brick shaped as part of a lining to a well, presumably located on or near the grounds of the temple of the Sebettu, although at the time of the initial excavation no particular temple dedicated to the Sebettu had been found at Nimrud.³⁸⁸ A brick with an inscription dedicated to the Bit-Kidmuri ("Lining-wall of the well of the temple of Kidmuru") was also found within the same well, and that particular temple was excavated at the site. We can assume the presence of an actual temple of the Sebettu in Nimrud, though it may have been located outside the city proper, as with the only fully excavated Sebettu temple, from from the reign of Sargon II. References to other temples do appear in letters and administrative documents from the Neo-Assyrian period, however, though no archaeological sites matching these references have yet been found.³⁸⁹

In piecing this (admittedly sparse) evidence together, we get a picture that details the inclusion of the Sebettu into the Neo-Assyrian pantheon under Aššurnāširpal II, but only tangentially. The dearth of evidence is its own argument: given how often the king cross references deities in other inscriptions – for example, the long list of deities invoked on an inscription outside the temple of Šarrat-nip̄i – the absence of the Sebettu contributes to the picture of their exclusion by Aššurnāširpal II. He built a temple to them, and contributed thus to

³⁸⁷ Grayson, *RIMA* 2, 286. Aššurnāširpal II: A.0.101.28.

³⁸⁸ D.J. Wiseman, "The Nimrud Tablets," *Iraq* 15 (1953): 149.

³⁸⁹ F. Safar, "The Temple of the Sibitti at Khorsabad," *Sumer* 13 (1957): 219-21.

their cult, but that appears to be the extent of his devotion to or use of the Seven.

5.2.2. Go West, Young Man, Go West: Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE)

Shalmaneser III continued the military expansion which Aššurnāṣirpal II, his father, had so successfully begun. In particular, he campaigned in the west, against the territories in Syria and the Levant.³⁹⁰ His reign, better documented than that of his predecessor, was equally characterized by constant campaigning – occurring in each of his regnal years - and extensive building projects in Aššur, both actions that were reflected in his corpus of royal inscriptions.³⁹¹ As the the first Assyrian king to concentrate on the west, Shalmaneser was to gain a certain degree of Biblical notoriety.³⁹² The king conquered Israel, and his victory over the territory is commemorated by its own ruler kneeling in submission before him.³⁹³ If Shalmaneser III's reign can be assigned any one significant trait, it is this trend of western campaigns.

All royal inscriptions, particularly those of the Neo-Assyrian period, follow certain predictable patterns, and this trait should be heightened considering we are tracking the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III directly against those of his father. Despite that, there are some differences in the gods that each ruler is associated with. Shalmaneser III cites himself as the "chosen of the god Aššur," and acts with "the support of Aššur and Šamaš."³⁹⁴ Another inscription, best preserved on a single stone monolith, opens with a list of deities: Aššur, Anu, Enlil, Ea, Sin, Šamaš, and closing with Ištar, the "mistress of war and battle, whose game is

³⁹⁰ On Shalmaneser III's campaigns, and the king himself, see: Shigeo Yamada, *The Construction of the Assyrian Empire: A Historical Study of the Inscriptions of Shalmaneser III (859-824 BC) Relating to His Campaigns in the West*, vol. 3 of *CHANE* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). Specifically concerning his campaigns in the Levant: Michael C. Astour, "841 B.C.: The First Assyrian Invasion of Israel," *JAOS* 91 (1971): 383-89; M. Elat, "The Campaigns of Shalmaneser III against Aram and Israel," *Israel Exploration Journal* 25 (1975): 25-35.

³⁹¹ Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 30. Shalmaneser III: A.0.102.5.

³⁹² Discussed, against the background of Shalmaneser III's overall campaigns in the west, in A. Kirk Grayson, "Shalmaneser III and the Levantine States: the 'Damascus Coalition,'" *JHS* 4 (2004): 3-10.

³⁹³ See Shalmaneser III's Black Obelisk: Grayson, *RIMA* 3, Shalmaneser III: A.0.102.14.

³⁹⁴ Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 7-8. Shalmaneser III: A.0.102.1, 7.

fighting."³⁹⁵ To Shalmaneser III, this list comprises the great gods of Assyria. It repeats, in unaltered order, on another of his inscriptions found at Tell Aḫmar.³⁹⁶

To be fair, Shalmaneser III does not neglect Ninurta entirely and invokes the god in association with other major deities. He references Ninurta, the "strong and mighty one, splendidly preeminent of the gods," and the deity appears between Šamaš and Ištar in the otherwise anticipated opening list of deities.³⁹⁷ The martial connotation of Ninurta is echoed in references to how the king is "supported by the god Ninurta" while on military campaigns,³⁹⁸ and another text pairs Ninurta with Nergal, as the gods who "love my priesthood, (and) gave to me the wild beasts and commanded me to hunt."³⁹⁹ But the direct references to Ninurta's capacity as a warrior have diminished in this corpus of inscriptions: it is only when presented with a different order of gods for the opening of Shalmaneser III's annals that we see the king reference him alongside a full listing of the "gods of Assyria": Aššur, Anu, Enlil, Adad, Ninurta ("lord of battle and strife" – *bēl(en) qabli(murub₄) ù tāhāzi(me₃)*), Ištar (here, as "foremost in heaven and underworld"), Ea, Sin, and finally Marduk. Another text refers to Ninurta as the "warrior (*qarrad*) of the Igigu and Anunnaku gods," and to Nergal as the "king of battle (*šar(lugal) tamḫāri*)," assigning the same epithet to Ištar as in the previously cited text.⁴⁰⁰

As opposed to his father's close association with Ninurta and insistence upon constant references to the god's warrior nature, Shalmaneser III's inscriptions more readily shuffle the deck of the established pantheon. Furthermore, Shalmaneser III's years are better and more prolifically recorded than those of his predecessor's, and as such, we benefit from numerous,

³⁹⁵ Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 13. Shalmaneser III: A.0.102.2.

³⁹⁶ Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 26. Shalmaneser III: A.0.102.4.

³⁹⁷ Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 33. Shalmaneser III: A.0.102.6, Col. i: 6.

³⁹⁸ Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 30. Shalmaneser III: A.0.102.5, Col. iv: 2.

³⁹⁹ Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 41. Shalmaneser III: A.0.102.6, Col. iv: 41-43.

⁴⁰⁰ Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 64. Shalmaneser III: A.0.102.14. 9-10.

detailed inscriptions. In shifting away from Ninurta, Shalmaneser III opens up the possibility of other gods being called upon to serve the king in a martial capacity. While he fills this new availability by pairing Nergal with Ninurta, on occasion, he also cites the Sebettu directly.

Shalmaneser III only cites the Seven within one text, but it is extraordinary for the detailed epithets the king uses for the Sebettu. Engraved onto a stone altar at Nineveh, the text dedicates said altar to the Sebettu, though (much) later Greek inscriptions rededicate both the altar and the city, according to an official (Apollonios). Aššurnāširpal II may have included the Sebettu in the pantheon of the Neo-Assyrians, and built temples to them, but Shalmaneser had greatly expanded upon that role with this particular altar dedicated to them. The text is as follows:

- 1 [To the Sebettu (^dimin.bi)] the great gods, the noble warriors, lovers of
marshes, who march on mountain paths,
- 2 who survey the heavens and earth, who maintain shrines, who heed
prayers, accept petitions, receive requests,
- 3 who fulfill desires, who lay low enemies, the compassionate (gods) to
whom it is good to pray,
- 4 who dwell in (Nineveh), my [city], the great lords, my lords: Shalmaneser,
appointee of the god Enlil, vice-regent of Aššur, son of Aššurnāširpal (II),
- 5 [appointee of the god Enlil], vice-regent of Aššur, son of Tukultī-Ninurta
(II), appointee of the god Enlil, vice-regent of Aššur: I dedicated (this) to
the divine Sebettu, my lords, for my life, that my days might be long, my
years many
- 6 for my descendants and my land, for the safekeeping of my vice-regal
throne
- 7 for the scorching of my enemies, for the destruction of all my foes, to
subdue at my feet [rulers who oppose] me.⁴⁰¹

The text is given in full, with its Akkadian transliteration in the close of this chapter. In general form and content, this text matches other royal inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, wherein the ruler dedicates the text to one deity and follows that dedication with his own lineage and rank, always

⁴⁰¹ Translation and transliteration, the latter of which is provided in the appendix to this chapter, following: Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 153-54. Shalmaneser III: A.0.102.95.

careful to lead with the fact that he is appointed by Enlil and acts on the god's behalf.⁴⁰² For our purposes, this text stands as one of our longest inscriptions dedicated specifically to the Sebettu, and as such, it contains a number of interesting epithets for them.

The opening line provides a reiteration of the Sebettu's warrior qualities, and the reference to their marching in the mountains links to the Sebettu's place as both outsiders – as all demons inherently are – as well as warriors who fight ahead of the enemy. It also touches on an image repeated in *Erra* and *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*; namely, that the Sebettu have a knowledge of paths through the mountains that would be otherwise obscure to men. In delineating the Sebettu as those who travel in the marshes, the text also establishes their ability to campaign as far north as the mountains or as far south as the southern marshes of Mesopotamia, essentially functioning as the commonly cited "Upper and Lower Sea" of other royal inscriptions from as early as the Sargonic period. Where this text deviates from the established imagery of the Sebettu is in establishing them as beings that receive prayers and show mercy: thus acting as gods do. The Sebettu, to this point, have been fully divine, but this is first instance we see of their assuming those roles to the point of being depicted as, of all things, "compassionate gods."

The question then shifts to why Shalmaneser III decided to include such detail in a direct appeal to the Sebettu. Having opened space within the pantheon for their warrior qualities to be fully utilized, the ruler could undoubtedly see the value in the demons, value reinforced by their role in *Erra*. Furthermore, we can compare this text with one of our only other texts exclusively dedicated to the Sebettu, a Middle Assyrian inscription from the reign of Aššur-bēl-kala (1073-1056 BCE), discussed previously. This text, inscribed on the back of a stone female torso is also from Nineveh and includes the closing lines that "the one who removes my inscriptions and my

⁴⁰² For example, see a dedicatory text to Nergal, in Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 152. *RIMA* 3, 153-54. Shalmaneser III: A.O.102.94.

name, the Sebettu, the gods of the West, will defeat him on the battlefield."⁴⁰³ Both texts are from Nineveh and may be connected to a cult dedicated to the Sebettu in this city. More interestingly, however, is the enigmatic reference to the Sebettu as the "gods of the West." Given Shalmaneser III's constant campaigns in western lands, he would be eager to call upon gods who would be particularly suited to bring him success in this particular military area.

5.3. Initial Decline: Adad-nerari III (810-783 BCE)

We lack references to the Sebettu in the royal inscriptions of Šamši-Adad V (824-811 BC). Perhaps, as he started his reign grappling with a revolt by his brother, Aššur-da'in-apla, a threat to his succession that he eventually – though not without considerable difficulty – put down, the king was inclined to follow more established and stable trends in regard to which deities he called upon.⁴⁰⁴ Most of his military actions were thus centered in the south, against Babylon. Owing to the shorter reign of this king, we have fewer inscriptions that detail his activities.

His son, Adad-nerari III, took the throne following years of regent rule by his mother, Sammuramat. At this point, Adad-nerari III inherited the problems that plagued the empire of his father – growing dissent, weakening control over Babylon and a general decline in the Assyrian state as a whole. Over his nearly three decades of reign, the king embarked on several military campaigns designed to bring the south back under Assyrian control, as well as constant campaigning to the west, to the area of Aram-Damascus, which had similarly slipped away from direct Assyrian control, losing territory that Shalmaneser III had worked to seize and hold. The

⁴⁰³ Grayson, *RIMA* 2, 108. Aššur-bēl-kala: A.0.89.10.

⁴⁰⁴ Lambert suggests that the unequal terms in the treaty that Šamši-Adad signed with his brother indicate that he agreed to major concessions because he was unable to win outright military victory over the rebellious territories. See: Lambert, "Aššurnāṣirpal II and Shalmaneser III," 108.

latter campaign was more successful than the former, and the king seems to have shifted his attention away from military campaigning in his inscriptions, and towards an image of himself as a ruler rooted in a glorious dynasty.⁴⁰⁵

Adad-nerari III's reign also sees the continued trend of administrative reshuffling in the Neo-Assyrian system of governance, wherein officials with greater and greater levels of importance and power appear. These high officials could, and occasionally did, maintain this high standing under successive kings, and they themselves also created their own corpus of important, though non-royal, correspondence.⁴⁰⁶ As such, we see an increasing level of communication between the king and these officials, who had ever greater power and responsibilities.

In line with Adad-nerari III's shift away from his (less than impressive, when weighed against the achievements of his grandfather) military campaigns in his royal inscriptions, the Sebettu are not cited in royal inscriptions wherein their military abilities are invoked. Adad-nerari III does list the deities in the closing of certain texts, in a curse section against those who would move against him, citing the gods Aššur, Marduk, Adad, Sin, and Šamaš, as well as the god Sîn who dwells in western city of Harran.⁴⁰⁷ When Adad-nerari III does focus on a particular deity, he turns to Aššur or the god Adad, the latter of whom the ruler undoubtedly felt an easy connection to.⁴⁰⁸ Otherwise, the ruler cites a link to the god Nabû, as Adad-nerari III completed major construction on the E-zida, the temple of the god at Nimrud.⁴⁰⁹

There is, however, evidence for the further proliferation of the cult of the Sebettu in

⁴⁰⁵ Luis Robert Siddall, *The Reign of Adad-nīrārī III: an Historical and Ideological Analysis of an Assyrian King and his Times*, vol. 45 of *CM* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 187.

⁴⁰⁶ See Siddall, *Adad-nīrārī III*, 190-91, on the restructuring of the government under this ruler, and Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 201 concerning the prominence of the high officials.

⁴⁰⁷ Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 205. Adad-nerari III: A.O.104.3.

⁴⁰⁸ See Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 208 (Adad-nerari III: A.O.104.6) and 211 (Adad-nerari III: A.O.104.7) for royal inscriptions of Adad-nerari III that begin with an invocation of Adad.

⁴⁰⁹ Siddall, *Adad-nīrārī III*, 173-77.

references to the veneration of their cult and temples. While the only excavated temple to the Sebettu is found at Khorsabad and was dedicated during the reign of Sargon II, a letter dated to the reign of Adad-nerari III (specifically, the "eponym year of Bel-tarši-ilumma, the prefect," a year which can be dated to 797 BCE)⁴¹⁰ also references offerings to a temple of the Sebettu, located in the city of Nineveh. One hundred votive gifts are dedicated as offerings to be sent to this temple of the Sebettu.⁴¹¹ Interestingly, these actions, though dictated by Adad-nerari III, were intended for an official to carry out, the king himself invoked in a manner not dissimilar to the Sebettu themselves.

The increase in the power of high officials during Adad-nerari III's reign corresponds to a similar shift in the audience of inscriptions and texts concerning the Sebettu. These texts reference the deities but are addressed to a specific individual and highlight a more personal use. Following a standard introductory formula, this broken tablet has the impressions of two royal seals, and then appears to detail the closing section of a missive addressed to the high official Bēl-Harran, assuring him the good will of the state, closing with the list of gods:

*šum(mu) ^daš-šur ^dša-maš ù ^dEnlil(en.lil₂) ^dIštar(iš.tar) áš-šu-ri-te ^dAdad(im)
^dNergal(maš.maš) ^dNinurta(maš) ù ^dSebettu(imin.bi) našār(pab) ilānū(diġir)^{meš} an-
 nu-te rabûtu(gal)^{meš} ša^{kur} aš-šur rubû(nun)^ú arkatu(eġir)^ú pi-i dan-ni-te šu-a-tu la ú-
 šam-sak*

The name of Aššur, Šamaš, and Enlil, the Assyrian Ištar, Adad, Nergal, Ninurta, and the Sebettu, all the great gods of Assyria, a future prince shall not alter the words of this document.⁴¹²

Here we see a direct utilization of the closing list of deities, standing as a threat should one forswear an oath or violate a treaty agreement. The Sebettu have been presented as the final god in the opening list of deities presented in a text, but this is the earliest attestation of the Seven

⁴¹⁰ *SAA* XII, no. 76: 23.

⁴¹¹ *SAA* XII, no. 76: 10-14.

⁴¹² See edition: L. Kataja, R. Whiting, *Grants, Decrees, and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period*, vol. 12 of *SAA*. (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1995), no. 10.

fulfilling a role they will come to know well – as the final figures in the closing list of divine figures. This text deviates from the order of gods which will come to be nearly standard, wherein Ištar and the Sebettu are the final pair of deities invoked. At least the Sebettu are understandably placed next to Ninurta and Nergal and so accompanied by warrior and netherworld deities, respectively. Given the Sebettu's own martial qualities, they should feel properly welcomed by such an entourage.

5.3.1. Aššur-nerari V (754-745 BCE)

Once again, we see a gap in the chronology of attestations: this time, we pass over two kings, Shalmaneser IV (782-773 BCE) and Aššur-dān III (772-755 BCE). Aššur-nerari V's two predecessors were both his brothers, connecting all three rulers and also fragmenting the dynastic line of father-son succession that Adad-nerari III had been fond of referencing in his own royal inscriptions. There is scant information for this king's short reign: the power of high officials had increased enough that the power of the king was threatened, as evidenced by the power exercised by the high-ranking military official Šamaši-Ilu, and Aššur-nerari V's own inscriptions allude to the unstable position of the empire at this point, regarding its control – or lack thereof – over its outlying territories.

Concerning the latter, the Neo-Assyrian empire was engaged in constant attempts to maintain the lands it had conquered under previous kings. During Aššur-nerari V's reign, as well as during the rule of his brothers, the territory of Arpad presented a constant problem. Located in the west in the present vicinity of Syria and to the north of Aleppo, it was a point of concern even before it became connected to the Urartian kingdom. Having amassed considerable power during the ninth century BCE, the kingdom had acquired enough military prowess to be a concern, a problem magnified by the growing military power of Urartu itself, now enough of a

presence on the greater stage of ancient Near Eastern politics that it was capable of holding its own against Assyria, if not defeating it outright.⁴¹³ Aššur-nerari V had not had much success in campaigning: following one military excursion the armies of Assyria remained within the heartland for several years, indicating that the military may have been weakened following a possible defeat.

The resolution of the tempestuous situation with Arpad, when it eventually came, was reached not through military might but via diplomacy. The threat of a potential alliance between the territory of Arpad and the kingdom of Urartu was sufficient to force Assyria to consider a peaceful resolution of matters with Arpad. Although Aššur-nerari V had to settle for a peaceful resolution to this situation, Assyria held the advantage, as reflected in the language of the treaty text itself. Aššur-nerari V is given a full set of traditional titles, whereas the King of Arpad is referred to simply by his name, Mati'-ilu. The terms, such as they are, are also overwhelmingly in favor of Assyria. The resulting treaty, sections of which are not preserved, details fairly standard conditions such as the requirement that Arpad come to the aid of Assyria in a military conflict and return fugitives who flee into Arpad's lands.⁴¹⁴ It follows with a particularly descriptive series of curses for disobedience that center on Adad and Sin.

The Sebettu appear in this treaty at its conclusion, situated near the presumable end of the list of gods in column VI – though the end of the text, as with the beginning, is broken. The divine list is fronted by a number of divine pairs, beginning with Aššur, who is himself unpaired, as is common in texts wherein he is referenced:

6	^d aš-šur šar(man) šamê(an) eršeti(ki) tùm-ma-tú-nu
7	^d a-nu-um an-tum ki.min ^d Illil(be) ^d Mullissu(nin.lil ₂) ki.min

⁴¹³ Trevor Bryce, *The World of the Neo-Hittite Kingdoms: A Political and Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2012).

⁴¹⁴ See edition in: Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, vol. 2 of *SAA* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988), no. 2.

- 6 You are sworn by Aššur, king of the heavens and earth!
 7 As well by Anu and Antu! As well by Illil and Mullissu!⁴¹⁵

Aššur is the sensible and common beginning to this divine list – the supreme deity of the pantheon often fronts the of list treaty-gods.⁴¹⁶ The text continues by listing divine pairs to bind the individual taking the oath, each time repeating the *ki.min* or "ditto" signs. Following these two lines, the text invokes the following divine pairs, in order: Ea and Damkina, Sin and Nikkal, Šamaš and Aya, Adad and Šala, Marduk and Zarpanitu, Nabû and Tašmetu, Ninurta and Gula, Uraš and Ninegal, Zababa and Bau, Nergal and Laš, Madanu and Ninġirsu, Humhummu and Išum, and figures of Girra and Nusku.⁴¹⁷ The full list is presented in section 5.8.2, but the focus here is on the pairings of deities. Each of these deities appears together with his or her spouse, with a very few instances where the female deity in the pair seems to be presented as the more preeminent of the two. Following this list of divine pairs, we have the presentation of the following deities:

- 15 As well by Girra, by Nusku! As well by Ištar, Lady of Nineveh!
 16 As well by Ištar, Lady of Arbela!
 17 As well by Adad of Kurbail!
 18 As well by Hadad of Aleppo!
 19 As well by Palil, who marches in front! (^d*Palil(igi.du) ālik mahri*)
 20 As well by the heroic Sebettu! (^d*Sebettu(imin.bi) qardūti*)
 21 As well by Dagan of Mušuruna!⁴¹⁸

What we have preserved of the final lines of the treaty follows this section of divine figures with more pairs of figures – Melqarth and Eshmun, Kubaba and Karhuha, and Hadad and Ramman of Damascus.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁵ Parpola and Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties*, no. 2, col. vi.

⁴¹⁶ J.M. Barré, *The God-List in the Treaty between Hannibal and Philip V of Macedonia: A Study in Light of the Ancient Near Eastern Treaty Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1983), 22.

⁴¹⁷ *SAA* 2, no. 2, col. vi: 8-15.

⁴¹⁸ *SAA* 2, no. 2, col. vi: 15-20.

⁴¹⁹ *SAA* 2, no. 2, col. vi: 21-23. The last preserved lines present the deity Hadad, in an incompletely preserved

As a whole, the treaty text readily incorporates smaller, more locally oriented deities, and follows this practice throughout the entirety of the treaty itself, not just in the god list. An earlier section of the treaty, following a curse that describes how Mati'-ilu, should he violate the conditions of this treaty, will be slaughtered like a spring lamb, runs through a longer admonishment utilizing the gods Adad and Sîn.⁴²⁰ However, in invoking Sîn, the text is careful to associate Sîn with the western city of Harran, which retains a worship of the moon god well into later periods.⁴²¹

This entire divine list has a decided focus on western gods, in light of the location of Arpad, the other party in the treaty. Nikkal, for example, though known in Mesopotamia as the wife of Sîn, was also found as a goddess in Ugarit, associated with orchards.⁴²² Laš, a little-known goddess, was one of the spouses of Nergal, and only appears paired with him. She may be of foreign origin, though the evidence for such an origin has less to do with concrete proof of a foreign importation, and more with the lack of evidence for a Mesopotamian one.⁴²³

Some of these deities are associated with cities and areas on the periphery of the Neo-Assyrian empire. This is seen in the inclusion of Hadad of Aleppo and Ramman of Damascus. The deities of Kubaba and Karhuha were Hittite imports from Karkamiš: Kubaba was associated

pairing, followed by Ramman of Damascus. The edition presents line 21 as follows: ^d[d]a-Γgan¹ ^{rd1}[m]u-šur-ru-na, instead of what I have reconstructed above, which I based on a comparative lack of evidence for a deity Mušurruna, as opposed to the recorded city name Mušuruna, as well as the already attested: ^dDagān ^{uru}Mušurūna, as Dagan of the city of Naḥal Mušur. See Edward Lipiński, *On the Skirts of Canaan in the Iron Age: Historical and Topographical Researches: Historical and Topographical Researches*, vol. 153 of *OLA* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006): 136-39.

⁴²⁰ This particular symbolism involving substituting a lamb as a metaphor – but not a sacrifice – during the treaty as a consequence of betrayal is one of the more singular aspects of this treaty, and not often seen in other similar texts.

⁴²¹ Tamara M. Green, *The City of the Moon God: Religious Tradition in Harran* (Leiden: Brill, 1992). Green's study details how Harran retains the worship of Sîn despite the later Islamic traditions of the area, and rituals and festivals that appear to incorporate Sîn-related traditions are seen into the early medieval period in Harran.

⁴²² See Anne Draffkorn Kilmer, "The Cult Song with Music from Ancient Ugarit," *RA* 68 (1974): 69-82. Johannes C. de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit* (Leiden: Brill, 1987): 142.

⁴²³ Rocío da Riva, "Dynastic Gods and Favorite Gods in the Neo-Babylonian Period," in *Concepts of Kingship in Antiquity*, eds. Giovanni B. Lanfranchi and Robert Rollinger (Padova: Sargon Editrice e Libreria, 2010): 49.

with the city directly, and Karhuha was a protective deity, and the pair appear together in New Hittite texts and Luwian inscriptions.⁴²⁴ In addition, the pair Melqarth/Eshmun is comprised of two Phoenician deities.

In the midst – or, rather, near the end – of this list, we find the Sebettu. Their place at the end of the list is not unusual, although their being followed by the god Dagan is. Despite his initially foreign – though at this point, well integrated – nature, he was not associated with war or battle, as those who accompany the Sebettu typically are. The question thus remains why the Sebettu appear as they do, placed alongside more peripheral deities or those with initially foreign origins. While it could be reflective of their position as former demons, the ancient Egyptian pantheon suggests a more plausible solution: the god Seth, associated with chaos and disorder, located in the desert and placed outside of human habitation in ancient Egypt, was often paired with foreign deities such as Anat, taking them as his wives.⁴²⁵ Seth's destructive and uncontrolled nature made him well-suited to handle these deities, who are often by nature themselves destructive and coupled with or patrons of warfare and battle.⁴²⁶ The Sebettu, perennial outsiders, are equally well-placed in this list of foreign deities – as in *Erra*, they act as the vanguard and the rangers, positions that demand they roam ahead and away from the gods who must stay within the city walls. Furthermore, it is a role they were introduced to during the reign of Adad-nerari III, nearly half a century before they are called upon to revisit it here. At this point, the Sebettu are increasingly set in their role as gods whom Assyria may call upon, while also maintaining and reinforcing a particular significance as western deities. Furthermore, the warrior

⁴²⁴ Ann C. Gunter, "Neo-Hittite and Phrygian Kingdoms of North Syria and Anatolia," in *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East*, ed. D.T. Potts (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2012): 808-809.

⁴²⁵ H. Te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of his Role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

⁴²⁶ Seth was further connected to other Asiatic gods – an incantation places his name alongside "the names of Asiatic gods such as Baal, Reshef, Anat, Astarte, Kadšu, Ningal etc., and references to myths which are certainly of Asiatic origin." Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion*, 123.

connotations of the Seven are reintroduced and reinforced by their appellation as "heroic" or warlike here. Given the nature of the closing lines of divinities in treaty texts, each figure, if given any reference at all, must be condensed into the few words that describe them best. For the Sebettu, that description is invariably one of martial might and ability.

5.4. Returning to Strength: Tiglath-pileser III (744-727 BCE)

Tiglath-pileser III began his rule on the road most bloody, having attained the throne during a revolt, seizing power in a *coup d'état*.⁴²⁷ The complicated chronology of kingship presented by the succession of brothers who ruled before him is continued here, as Tiglath-pileser III makes no reference to his father in his own royal inscriptions, indicative of his own irregular succession. The Assyrian King List states that he was a son of Aššur-nerari V, but such documents were easily tailored to support any given king's desired vision of history and are not absolutely reliable sources for genealogy.⁴²⁸ The period of inner turmoil following the reign of Aššur-nerari V ran from 746 BCE, until Tiglath-pileser III's ascension as king. His actual role in the rebellion – whether as direct instigator or merely as the one who profited the most from it – is vague, but his achievements are not. The great empire builder of the Neo-Assyrian period, Tiglath-pileser III was responsible for winning back the territory lost or in dispute after the defeats Assyria had suffered in Arpad under Aššur-nerari V, retaking those territories and fully subjugating them to Assyrian rule. No longer treated as vassal states, they were fully integrated as provinces into the Neo-Assyrian empire.

⁴²⁷ See Stefan Zawadzki, "The Revolt of 746 B.C. and the Coming of Tiglath-pileser III to the Throne," *SAAB* 8 (1994): 53-54; P. Garelli, "The Achievement of Tiglath-pileser III: Novelty or Continuity?," in *Ah, Assyria ... Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor*, ed., M. Cogan and I. Eph'al (Jerusalem: the Magnes Press, 1991): 46-51.

⁴²⁸ Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, vol. 19 of *Writings from the Ancient World* (Boston: Brill, 2004)

This integration was essential to the success of Tiglath-pileser III's rule, and was the result of expansive and systematic control that functioned on economic, cultural, and even ethnic levels.⁴²⁹ Tiglath-pileser III had seen the trouble created by the prior system of loosely controlled vassal states and brought these territories directly under the dominion of the central government, through a standard, if ruthless, system of massive deportations, razing of the urban centers of once semi-independent areas and restructuring of the land itself along Assyrian lines – in regard to its architecture, government and governance, taxation, standards, weights and measures, and language – Aramaic.⁴³⁰ Under Tiglath-pileser III and his son and successor Sargon II, the Neo-Assyrian empire underwent forty years of fiercely effective military expansion and administrative restructuring.⁴³¹

In tracking the king's military campaigns, we see him first venture to the south, settling the Babylonian frontier in his favor. He carved out new provinces in areas controlled by the Medes and defeated the armies of Urartu in 743 BCE. Beyond that – and perhaps in response to the long struggles of his predecessor with Urartu – the king went to war in the west, defeating and subjugating completely both Arpad and its neighbor Hamat in 738 BCE. Not content, Tiglath-Pileser III moved onward, conquering Damascus and the northern areas of modern Israel, the latter of which was incorporated into the Assyrian province of Megiddo. Unsurprisingly, the Biblical accounts of Tiglath-pileser III depict an aggressive military leader, and the king himself would not, perhaps, have disagreed with them.

The king focused the vast majority of his energy on combat and the military,

⁴²⁹ Simo Parpola, "Assyria's Expansion in the 8th and 7th Centuries and its Long-Term Repercussions in the West," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism and the Power of the Past*, eds. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 100.

⁴³⁰ Parpola, "Assyria's Expansion," 100-101.

⁴³¹ Giovanni B. Lanfranchi, "Consensus to Empire: Some Aspects of Sargon II's Foreign Policy," in *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten* (Heidelberg: Orientverlag, 1997), 81-87.

restructuring the army itself into a professional fighting machine.⁴³² He instituted only one major building project, a new place at Nimrud, and instead devoted his attentions to the military. Given all these trends, it is unsurprising that we see the Sebettu in Tiglath-pileser III's inscriptions, though the references are scattered. In particular, he utilizes the Sebettu in two of his surviving inscriptions.⁴³³ The Seven appear in an introductory list of deities of Assyria that seems identical in both inscriptions, and so we will examine primarily the better preserved Mila Mergi rock inscription, found in northern Iraq. The introductory list of deities presents an unsurprising group, each with their respective epithets, first Aššur, then Marduk, followed by:

3 Nabû, who holds the stylus, who carries the tablet of decrees of the Gods,
This is followed by Šamaš, the king of heaven and earth; Sîn, luminous; and Adad, the canal inspector, in the next three lines of text. Continuing, we see:

- 7 Ea, [lord] of wisdom, who forms all thing [of every kind], who fashions creation,
- 8 [Ištar,] lady of the battle, Ištar (my) lady, who loves [the king] who pleases [her], who subdues...
- 9 The Sebettu, mighty lords, who lead my troops, who strike down [my enemies,]
- 10 Amurru, who carries the curved staff (and) the bucket; Sumukan, who sets right...
- 11 The great gods, who dwell in heaven and earth, [...] guard [my kingship.]

His inscriptions thus place the Sebettu within the group of great gods, as they rightly are to be placed. The epithet given to them, "who lead my troops," reiterates the role of vanguard which

⁴³² P. Dubovský, "Neo-Assyrian warfare: logistics and weaponry during the campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III," in *Anodos: Studies of the Ancient World* 4-5 (2004/05), 61-67.

⁴³³ The two inscriptions and their respective editions are as follows: the first under study here is a relief, the earliest annalistic account known in the corpus of Tiglath-Pileser's inscriptions, found at Mila Mergi: J.N. Postgate, "The Inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III at Mila Mergi," *Sumer* 29 (1973): 47-60. The second inscription, found on a stele of Tiglath-Pileser III, is edited in Hayim Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath Pileser III, King of Assyria*, (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Science and Humanities, 1994): 91-97. See also *RINAP* 1, 89-92. Tiglath-pileser III: 37.

the Sebettu are increasingly placed into.⁴³⁴ Even given our latest proposed date for the composition of *Erra*, that text would have been in circulation at this point, and the role the Sebettu play there echoes their own position here: an expeditionary force that moves to strike first. This image is one the later kings will further develop, giving the Sebettu increasingly specialized martial aspects.

5.4.1. Sargon II (721-705 BCE)

Sargon II continued many traditions of his father, Tiglath-Pileser III, including that of seizing the throne by force: the gap of years before the beginning of his reign is accounted for by the short rule of Shalmaneser V, his brother and the chosen heir.⁴³⁵ His own son and successor, Sennacherib, was already an adult by the time Sargon II took power, and as such, was heavily involved in the maintenance of the empire. He certainly had his work cut out for him: revolts marked the start of his rule. He was able to subdue these with some difficulty, moving onto military campaigns that increased the wealth of the empire and enabled Sargon II to engage in massive building projects.

In fact, Sargon II joins other Neo-Assyrian rulers in moving the capital of the empire; this time to Dur-Šarrukin, modern-day Khorsabad, a city which was constructed entirely during Sargon II's reign and abandoned as capital in favor of Nineveh following his death on the field of battle, an extremely ill omen, particularly as his body was not recovered.⁴³⁶ The building of the new capital demanded new temples, and these circumstances give us the only excavated temple

⁴³⁴ The line is repeated in another inscription of Tiglath-pileser III, a stele recovered in Iran: see Tadmor, *Inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III*, 91-97.

⁴³⁵ G.W. Vera Chamaza, "Sargon II's Ascent to the Throne: the Political Situation," *SAAB* 6 (1992): 21-33 and Holloway, *Aššur is King!*, 297.

⁴³⁶ An ill omen of this magnitude required a number of responses to mitigate the implied loss of divine favor. The resulting texts worked to shift the blame away from anything Sargon II himself may have done. See: Hayim Tadmor, Benno Landsberger, Simo Parola, "The Sin of Sargon and Sennacherib's Last Will," *SAAB* (1989): 3-51.

of the Sebettu, discovered by a team from the University of Mosul in the early 1950s (see Figure 2, in section 5.8.5). Within the city walls of Dur-Šarrukin, a number of temples dedicated to other deities – Nabû, Adad, Šamaš, Sin, Ningal, Ninurta, and Ea – exist, but the temple of the Sebettu is found outside the citadel, directly between one of its gates and one of the gates of the city wall.⁴³⁷ A plan of the city and the citadel can be seen in Figures 3 and 4 in section 5.7.4. The temple is easily identifiable as one belonging to the Sebettu, thanks to the inscription upon one of fourteen identical altars found at the site:⁴³⁸

*Sargon šar(lugal) kiššati(šar₃) šar(lugal) māt(kur) aššur(šur)^{ki} šakkanakku(šagina)
 Babylon(ka₂.diĝir.ra)^{ki} šar(lugal) māt(kur) Sumer(eme[?])^{ki} ù Akkad(uri)^{ki} iškin(ĝa₂)-
 ma ba(dim₂)-niš a-na^d Sebettu(imin.bi) qar-rad la šá-na*

Sargon, king of the universe, king of Assyria, the high priest of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, placed and presented (this altar) to the Sebettu, the warriors without equal.

The temple itself speaks to the fully integrated position of the Sebettu within the Neo-Assyrian pantheon, but it was an integration that respected the inherent characteristics and qualities of the Seven. The temple of the Sebettu was located equidistant between Gate A of the citadel and Gate 7 of the city wall of Dur-Šarrukin. As demons, the Sebettu never lose the threat inherent in their chaotic nature, but as far-ranging warriors, they also stand as the first line of defense of the city, set between the gate of the wall and the gate of the citadel – and thus in the path the most direct line of attack on the citadel itself. This position remains a contradiction present in their other attestations within the corpus of royal inscriptions.

Divine Hymns of the First Millennium

Royal hymns may glorify a ruler by extolling the virtues of one of his titularly deities,

⁴³⁷ Safar, "Sibitti at Khorsabad," 219.

⁴³⁸ See Safar, "Sibitti at Khorsabad," 220 for a handcopy of the inscription, from which my transliteration and translation are based.

elevating his own renown through his connection to the lauded deity. This tactic is taken by Sargon II in his hymn to the goddess Nanaya, who at this point is connected to the figure of Ištar.⁴³⁹ The beginning of this hymn is broken and only two sources for it survive. What can be reconstructed of the opening features an invocation and celebration of Nanaya's military prowess:⁴⁴⁰

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 | [na]m-ša-ru pe-tu-ú x[x x x x x] |
| 3 | [q]ul ^l -mu-ú zaq-tu si-mat ^d [se-bet-tu] |
| 4 | im-na u šu-me-la su-ud-dur tam-ḥa-ru |
| 5 | a-šá-rit-ti ilānī(diġir) ^{mes} šá me-lul-šá qab-lum |
| 6 | a-li-kàt mah-ri šu-ut se-bet at-ḥe-e |
-
- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 | the naked sword, [emblem of Nergal], |
| 3 | the pointed axe, suited to the [Sebettu] |
| 4 | On (her) right and left battle is arrayed. |
| 5 | The foremost of the gods, (she) whose play is battle |
| 6 | Who goes ahead of the brotherhood of the Seven |

This reference echoes much earlier attestations of the Sebettu wherein they appear as a group of brothers, such as *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* and the Uduġ Hul incantation series, and are referred to specifically as the "seven sons of one mother." Beyond that, it works to establish the context of battle within which Nanaya has been placed.

In a similar function can be found in a hymn to the god Ninurta (*KAR 102*) that assigns to the deity qualities linked to and described in terms of other divine figures. Although this particular text cannot be definitively attributed to any one particular ruler, all copies appear to belong to the first millennium texts.⁴⁴¹ This particular text calls upon the Sebettu to bolster the fearsome martial image of Ninurta. The particular reference to the Sebettu appears in a long list of similar divine referents, each associated with a particular body part or aspect of Ninurta. The

⁴³⁹ This association is a fate shared by many goddesses in the later periods of Mesopotamian history, as Ištar assimilates them into her general divinity.

⁴⁴⁰ *SAA* 3, no. 4.

⁴⁴¹ The most recent edition of *KAR 102* is found in Amar Annus, *The God Ninurta in the Mythology and Royal Ideology of Ancient Mesopotamia*, vol. 14 of *SAAS* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2002), 205-209.

Sebettu are set within the text as:⁴⁴² "your [Ninurta's] teeth, my lord, are the Sebettu, the ones who strike down evil – *šinnūka* ^d*Sebettu mušamqitū lemnūti*."⁴⁴³ In this regard, the mention of the Sebettu is used in the same manner as in royal inscriptions, enhancing his ferocity. Earlier rulers of the Neo-Assyrian period appeared to favor assigning either Ninurta or the Sebettu warrior epithets in turn, this text, however, utilizes both, bolstering Ninurta's own warrior abilities through incorporating the Sebettu into his own personage and imagery. The Sebettu, furthermore, are described as the god's teeth, or fangs, a trait associated with their particular invocations in *Erra*, the Udug Hul texts, and *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, as well as a quality – fangs that destroy the enemy and drip bile or poison – associated with demons and monsters.

5.5. The Destruction of the South and Sennacherib (704-681 BCE)

Sennacherib inherited a troubled empire, thanks to the circumstances surrounding his father's battlefield death. Perhaps in an attempt to distance himself from any ill omens connected to his predecessor's demise, he moved the capital once again, from the only recently completed Dur-Šarrukin to the city of Nineveh, whereupon he engaged in major rebuilding particularly focused upon the construction of a massive palace complex. Outside of his efforts concerning the new capital, Sennacherib devoted himself to military campaigns, in response to a series of rebellions. One such revolt was localized in the Levant, leading to his siege, though not sack, of Jerusalem.⁴⁴⁴ The more perpetual thorn in Sennacherib's side, however, was Babylon. The south had rebelled under his own father and the pattern of rebellion continued under Sennacherib, bolstered by aid from Elam. When Sennacherib's own son, placed in Babylon to maintain order,

⁴⁴² KAR 102, obv. 19.

⁴⁴³ *mušamqitu*, "the one who strikes down or overthrows evil," otherwise written with the šub Sumerogram, is a common reference to the Sebettu, appearing as well in Tiglath-Pileser III's inscriptions containing the Sebettu.

⁴⁴⁴ Adding Sennacherib to the list of kings who had their own Biblical (mis)representations. See: William R. Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

was captured by the Elamites, Sennacherib reacted violently, leading an attack on Elam itself. Finally, after years of continued battle, he besieged and destroyed the city of Babylon itself in 689 BCE. Babylon held a place of great religious significance in Mesopotamia, but Sennacherib recounts his full-on destruction of the city, regardless of its holy status:

The hands of my people laid hold of the gods dwelling there and smashed them...I destroyed the city and its houses, from foundation to parapet; I devastated and burned them. I razed the brick and earthenwork of the outer and inner wall, of the temples...I dug canals through the midst of the city, I overwhelmed it with water, I made its very foundation disappear, and I destroyed it more completely than a devastating flood. So that it might be impossible in future days to recognize the site of that city and (its) temples, I utterly dissolved it with water (and made it) like inundated land.⁴⁴⁵

He did not attempt to destroy Babylon so much as eradicate it. Despite his pride in his actions against the city of Babylon, Sennacherib was careful to avoid directly implicating himself its destruction, transferring responsibility to carefully non-specific and unidentified individuals.

Sennacherib's sack of Babylon is not, however, destruction for destruction's sake. Instead, the ruler was well aware of the religious sway that Babylon held over Assyria and seems to have taken calculated steps to shift that ideological center back to Aššur. This is visible in his manipulation of the *akītu* temple and the buildings and rituals concerned with it, as the king worked to rebuild the cella of the *akītu* temple in Aššur.⁴⁴⁶ His actions were carefully calculated maneuvers to assure the power of Assyria and his building plans reflected that, borrowing specific elements such as the placement of gates and the dais of destinies from the very temples he sacked in Babylon. Of the new gates of the Aššur temple, the gate of the front of the temple was named the "gate of kingship" (*bāb šarrūti*) while other gates referred explicitly to the submission of the Igigi gods.⁴⁴⁷ The gates and their precise layout resemble the celestial concept

⁴⁴⁵ J.A. Brinkman, "Sennacherib's Babylonian Problem: An Interpretation," *JCS* 25 (1973), 94.

⁴⁴⁶ See Andrew George, "Exit the House of Which Binds Death," *NABU* 43 (1993) 34-35.

⁴⁴⁷ Andrew George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 1992), 183.

of Babylon: here, the temple of Aššur replicated the idea of a cosmic geography. Sennacherib created a path to the gate of kingship that confirms the divine place of his own kingship in Aššur. Sennacherib's son, Esarhaddon, took steps to reverse what he saw as the sin of Sennacherib's destruction of Babylon through extensive rebuilding projects in the city of Babylon. Sennacherib, in contrast to Esarhaddon's later attempts to repair and reinforce the power of Babylon as a religious center, was more concerned with its destruction and eventual replacement with the city of Aššur and Assyria as a whole.

Given, then, Sennacherib's focus on his own acts of military might as well as his calculated awareness of the power of image and its manipulated possibilities, it may seem strange that we only have two references to the Sebettu within the corpus of his royal inscriptions. The deities would seem particularly well suited to the ruler's own qualities and the image he presented, the far-ranging advance scouts and the merciless warriors.

The first text is a unique inscription dated to 690 BCE – thus, immediately prior to Sennacherib's sack of Babylon – and opens, as is typical, with a list of gods before following with a description of Sennacherib's military exploits. The god list itself begins with the following list of deities:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | ^d Aš-šur bēlu rabû abu(ad) ilāni(diġir) ^{meš} ^d a-num ^d en-līl ù ^d è-a ^d sin ^d šamaš
^d adad ^d marduk ^d Nabû(ag) ^d Nergal ^d Iš-t[ar] |
| 2 | ^d Sebettu(imin.bi) ilānī(diġir) ^{meš} rabûti(gal) ^{meš} ša i-di šarrim pa-li-ḫi-šú-un
za-zu-ma eli kul-lat na-ki-ri ú-šam-ra-ru ^{rġiš1} kakkī(tukul) ^{meš} -š[ú]: |
| 1 | Aššur, the great lord, the father of the gods, Anu, Enlil, and Ea, Sin,
Šamaš, Adad, Marduk, Nabû, Nergal, Ištar, |
| 2 | the Sebettu, the great gods who stand at the side of the king their
worshipper, who make his weapons bitter to all hi[s] enemies ⁴⁴⁸ |

We have here the expected list of deities. Sennacherib, who dedicated himself to establishing the

⁴⁴⁸ A.K. Grayson, "The Walters Art Gallery Sennacherib Inscription," *AfO* 20 (1963): 88-89.

preeminent place of Aššur, leads with that deity. The king does exclude Ninurta, and we see instead both Nabû and Marduk – who, while not entirely strangers from divine lists, are not as well represented in the earlier periods, given their strong links to Babylon and the south. Of the gods listed, however, the Sebettu appear last and closest to the text's reference to the great gods, who stand beside the king and "make his weapon bitter to all his enemies" (*eli kullat nakirī ušamrarū* ^{giš}*kakkīšu*).⁴⁴⁹ Outside of Sennacherib's inscriptions, this phrase is also utilized by Esarhaddon, though otherwise not well attested and the verb itself, *marāru* or *ses*, (to be bitter), is further associated with demons. While the "great gods" here include the Sebettu, they does not refer to them alone, but to the entire list of cited deities. Regardless, the text introduces a verb with potentially demonic connotations.

This list of deities is best considered in light of the other inscription of Sennacherib, which also invokes a number of deities in its introduction. Contrary to the pattern established in the previous inscription, and one that will be followed by other inscriptions of later kings, this text introduces some unusual deities. The order begins in the same manner; however, following Nabû, the order alters:

- 11 *eršetim(ki)*^{tim} *sa-niq mit-hur-ti* [...]
- 12 ^d*nin-urta apil(ibila)* ^d*en-lil* x [...]
- 13 *mu-šat-ti-ru šadī(kur)*^{meš} x [...]
- 14 *a-na ilānī(diġir)-ti-ša* ^r*rabûti(gal)* ¹[^{ti}...^d*Sebettu(imin.bi)*]
- 15 *ilānū(diġir)*^{meš} *šur-^rbu¹-[ti[?] ša i-di šarrum(lugal) pa-li-ḫi-šú-un[?]]*
- 16 *iz-za-zu-ma [eli kul-lat na-ki-ri ú-šam-ra-ru* ^{giš}*kakkī(tukul)*^{meš} *-šú]*

- 11 [Nabû, of heaven] and of earth, who controls harmony...
- 12 Ninurta, heir to the god Enlil...
- 13 The one who breaks up mountain...
- 14 ...for her (Ištar's) great divinity,
- 15 [...the Sebettu], the supreme gods who, of the king who reveres them,
- 16 They stand at his side, and [make his weapons prevail over all

⁴⁴⁹ CAD M/1, *marāru*.

enemies.]"⁴⁵⁰

In contrast to the prior inscription, Sennacherib cites Ninurta in this text. Generally, the most important and prominent deity is fronted in the divine list, and the Sebettu have a history of being placed at the end of this divine list, as warrants their position outside of the city and also as a reflection of their comparatively late importation into the pantheon. Here, the Sebettu are given a specific role – they flank the king, aid him in battle, and fight on his behalf against his enemies. All these are traits well linked to the Seven, and here we see the same phrase as in the previous inscription, though, whereas there it is applied to the entire host of cited deities, here the pairing of god and epithet makes a stronger case that it is the Sebettu in particular who make bitter the weapons of the king against his enemy, functioning as warriors with a demonic edge.

5.6. Rebuilding and Revolt: Esarhaddon (680-669 BCE)

Esarhaddon came to the throne with substantial baggage. As the city of Babylon was held in near-holy esteem by both Babylon and Assyria, his father Sennacherib's sack of it could potentially bring down divine wrath upon Assyria, a fate that Esarhaddon hoped to mitigate by rebuilding the city during his reign.⁴⁵¹ If nothing else, Esarhaddon was aware of the advantages to be found in the manipulation of the existing religious system.

Consequently, Esarhaddon attempted to make redress for his father's actions. Assyria was well aware of its link to and cultural reliance on Babylon, and while Sennacherib may have acted in defiance of this relationship – or in an attempt to supplant it with a self-sufficient (cultically and religiously speaking) Assyria, Esarhaddon acted in accord with it, beginning by transferring

⁴⁵⁰ *RINAP* 3/1, 233-235. Sennacherib: 36.

⁴⁵¹ On Esarhaddon and his conceptions of Babylon and its destruction, see: Ann M. Weaver, "The 'Sin of Sargon' and Esarhaddon's Reconceptualization of Sennacherib: A Study in Divine Will, Politics, and Royal Ideology," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 61-66; J.A. Brinkman "Through a Glass Darkly: Esarhaddon's Retrospects on the Downfall of Babylon," *JAOS* 103 (1983): 35-42.

the blame to the Babylonians themselves, stating that they had called down the anger of Marduk by acting improperly.⁴⁵² Furthermore, he rebuilt Babylon and the main Esagil temple of Marduk in the city center, the beginning location for the *akītu* festival rites.

As concerned as Esarhaddon was with the potential ruin the gods could bring down upon his realm, he was well versed in utilizing omens via divination and extispicy texts. As such, we can view his more frequent use of the Sebettu as part of his response to his father's actions, and his own understanding of the power inherent in the manipulation of divine power, as well as the ever-present threat of that power, in this light. The Sebettu were, in this period, represented in a number of temples. Akkullanu, an official who was active in a bureaucratic capacity during the reign of both Esarhaddon and his son,⁴⁵³ refers a priest of the temple of the Sebettu in one of his letters:

As regards the priest of the temple of the Sebettu (*bīt(e)₂* ^d*Sebettu(imin.bi)*) in Nineveh about whom I wrote to the king, my lord: "He wants to tell something – he should be questioned" – The king, my lord, wrote to me: "Let him be in attendance." So far nobody has questioned him.⁴⁵⁴

The text is vague in some regards and has less information concerning the particular actions of any of the other temples dedicated to the Sebettu, and while the priest of the "temple of the Sebettu at Nineveh" was clearly high-ranking and important enough to be a point of concern for the king directly, the how and why of his attaining that position is more obscure. Unfortunately, none of our textual references to priests of the various temples of the Sebettu connect to our one actually excavated temple, found at Khorsabad and dedicated by Sargon II.

Utilizing the Sebettu

⁴⁵² Brinkman, "Glass Darkly."

⁴⁵³ On Akkullanu, see *SAA* 10: xxv-xxvi.

⁴⁵⁴ *SAA* 10, no. 95: rev. 18-24.

We see Esarhaddon's inscriptions concerning the Seven on a number of texts from his reign, most often employed in regard to their function as state gods who would strike against his enemies or otherwise support the Neo-Assyrian empire. The following inscription, found on a number of tablets from Nineveh, describes a list of gods who selected the king, Esarhaddon, for rule. The text, of which one hundred lines are preserved across the various sources, lists a number of gods who endorsed Esarhaddon's reign, beginning, understandably, with the god Aššur, moving to Anu and Enlil, so covering the trio of great gods. Following a number of other divine figures, the following series of gods, all associated with the netherworld or warfare, appear to close the inscription:

- 10 [the god Ner]gal, the almighty endowed with [strength and power, the
one who cap]tures enemies, the Enlil of the vast netherworld,
- 11 The goddess Agušaya, the mistress of [war] and battle, the one who starts
fighting, causes conflict,
- 12 The Sebettu, valiant gods, who hold bow and arrow, whose assault is
combat and warfare,
- 13 the great gods, who reside in heaven and netherworld, whose favorable
words cannot be changed,
- 14 truly selected me, [Esarhaddon], to shepherd their people.⁴⁵⁵

This inscription places the Sebettu in similarly militant company: Nergal and the goddess Agušaya.⁴⁵⁶ The Sebettu here are given the role not only of warriors, but of archers. Archers had been a part of the military since the third millennium, though study of their role is complicated by a lack of archeological remains of the weapons themselves, which did not survive Mesopotamia's climate.⁴⁵⁷ From comparisons to the use of archers in other militaries, they would have been deployed as units that utilized their potential for far-ranging attacks and were often

⁴⁵⁵ This text is commonly referred to as Aššur-Babylon A (AsBbA). For edition see, Erle Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680-669 BC)*, vol. 4 of *RINAP* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 103-109. Esarhaddon: 48.

⁴⁵⁶ For Agušaya in earlier periods, see: Michael P. Streck, "Notes on the Old Babylonian Hymns of Agušaya," *JAOS* 130 (2010): 561-71.

⁴⁵⁷ Miguel Civil, "Of Bows and Arrows," *JCS* 55 (2003): 49-54.

separated from the main body of a major military unit as a result of their ability to attack from a greater range. In this, the Sebettu seem well-placed to function as archers, and their description as such is prominently seen with Esarhaddon's invocation and repeated with the inscriptions of other kings.

Commemorating Military Victories

Aside from the rebuilding of Babylon and the plethora of issues that surrounded this act, Esarhaddon was engaged on several large campaigns, including those directed against Egypt. He was a successful military leader, and, for all his worries over his reign and the potential and ever-imminent disaster that could strike it, was often on campaign. As opposed to treaty texts, where the list of gods closes out the text, royal inscriptions detailing military conquest open with a list of divine figures and Esarhaddon's inscriptions follow suit. Even here, the Sebettu are most often placed at the end of the list of divine figures, regardless of whether that list itself fronts or closes the inscription. Esarhaddon utilized the Sebettu in two inscriptions of this type, and in each case, the order of divine figures fronting the text is the same: Aššur, Anu, Enlil, Ea, Sin, Šamaš, Adad, Marduk, Ištar, and the Sebettu.⁴⁵⁸ The list of divine figures is presented in this abbreviated format in one of the texts, which commemorates Esarhaddon's victory over (and subsequent looting of) Memphis. The other text, however, presents the list of gods with a fuller accompaniment of their epithets. In particular, we see Ištar and the Sebettu close the opening of the text:

- 9 ^d*Ištar*(inana) *be-let qabli*(murub₄) *u tāhāzi*(me₃) *a-li-kāt i-di-ia*
10 ^d*Sebettu*(imin.bi) *ilānū*(diġir)^{mes} *qar-du-u-ti sa-pi-nu na-ki-ri-ia*

⁴⁵⁸ The texts are, respectively: a stele commemorating Esarhaddon's invasion of Egypt, thus dated to after 671 BCE, and an inscription carved into a rock face in Lebanon, describing the defeat of the pharaoh Taharqa and Esarhaddon's looting of Memphis, also dated to after 671 BCE. See *RINAP* 4, Esarhaddon: 98 and Esarhaddon: 103.

- 11 *ilānū(diġir)^{meš} rabûtu(gal)^{meš} epeš(du₃)-šû-nu mu-šim-mu šim-ti*
 12 *ša ana šarrim(lugal) mi-gir-šû-un i-šar-ra-ku da-na-an li-i-tú*
- 9 Ištar, lady of war and battle, who goes at my side,
 10 The Sebettu, valiant gods, the ones who overthrow my enemies,
 11 The great gods, all of them, who decree destiny
 12 They give victorious might to the king, their favorite⁴⁵⁹

The text continues with an affirmation of Esarhaddon, and proceeds with his titles, in a grandiose listing typical of royal inscriptions. Although other deities are referenced in the rest of the royal inscription, most notably Marduk, Aššur, Anu, and Enlil, the Sebettu's appearance is limited to their place as the closing deity in the initial paragraph for each text.

5.6.1. The Sebettu in Esarhaddon's Treaty Texts

Esarhaddon frequently utilizes the Sebettu in the curse sections of texts, citing them as one of the gods who will destroy oath-breakers. We see them in particular in Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty and the king's treaty with Baal, the king of Tyre.⁴⁶⁰ Perhaps because of the difficulties surrounding Esarhaddon's own ascension to the throne, following the murder of his father Sennacherib, Esarhaddon was careful to outline the course of his own succession, and attempted to bind all parties to his decision.⁴⁶¹ The Sebettu, thus, become one of the tools in his arsenal.

Treaty with Baal, King of Tyre:

This treaty details the aftermath of Esarhaddon's conquest of the lands of Eber-nari, to the west, the territories that he then entrusted to Baal, the ruler of Tyre. This is not, then, a

⁴⁵⁹ *RINAP* 4, 181-186. Esarhaddon: 98.

⁴⁶⁰ Respective editions for these two texts: Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, Vol. 2 of *State Archives of Assyria* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988), no. 5, no. 6.

⁴⁶¹ On the murder of Sennacherib: Simo Parpola, "The Murder of Sennacherib," in *Death In Mesopotamia*, ed. B. Alster (Copenhagen, 1980), 171-82.

declaration of aggression against Tyre but is meant to ensure Baal will govern the territories as Assyria would, a stipulation which alters the tone and content of the text to a degree. As the Sebettu had long been utilized in treaties connected to the conquest and governance of lands to the west of Assyria, they appear now in the god list in the latter segments of the treaty, accompanied by foreign (also western) deities:

Tablet IV: 3'-8'

3 ^dgu-la a-zu-gal-la-t[ú gal-tú marša(gig) ta-né-hu ina libbī(ša₃)^{bi}-k]u-nu
 4 si-im-mu la-zu ina zu-mur-ku-n[u liš-kun da-a-mu ušar-ku ki-ma amê(a)^{meš}]
 ru'-un-ka
 5 ^dsi-bit-te ilānū(diĝir)^{meš} qar-du-te ina ^{ĝi}š kakkē(tukul)^{meš}-šú-nu [ez-zu-ti
 na-áš-pan-ta-k]u-nu liš-kun
 6 ^dba-a-a-ti ilānū(diĝir)^{meš} ^da-na-ti-ba-^la¹-[a-ti ilānū(di)ĝir)^{meš}
 7 ina qāt(šu)^{II} nēši(ur.mah) a-ki-^lli¹ [lim-nu-u-k]u-nu

3 May Gula, the great physician, [put illness and weariness in] your [hearts]
 4 An unhealing sore in your body; bathe [in blood and pus as in water]!
 5 May the Sebettu, the heroic gods, [smi]te you [down] with their [fierce]
 weapons.
 6 May the gods Bethel and Anath-Bethel
 7 [deliver] you to the paws of a man-eating lion.⁴⁶²

The text closes with an admonishment that, should the treaty be broken, the gods of Assyria, of Akkad, and Eber-nari will curse the transgressor. The territory of Eber-Nari here stands for the geographic region of Syria and Palestine, and this would be one of its earliest attestations, though the region is referred to as late as Achaemenid period texts.⁴⁶³ Although the Sebettu have, at this point, become well integrated into the Neo-Assyrian pantheon, there is again the link between their appearance and matters concerning western territories, a link first stated directly with Aššur-bēl-kala's inscription dedicated to them. Here, it is further reinforced by the company they keep – normally the last deity in the list, they are instead followed by foreign gods.

⁴⁶² SAA 2, no. 5.

⁴⁶³ Matthew W. Stolper, "The Governor of Babylon and Across-the-River in 486 B.C.," *JNES* 48 (1989): 288-89.

Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty:

The succession treaty of Esarhaddon, a long text preserved in many duplicate copies, also presents the Sebettu in its list of deities who must be obeyed. Here, the Sebettu fall into a line of deities who are presented in a similar order to those in Esarhaddon's treaty text with Baal. Once again, there is a list of deities associated with battle and war, followed by a similar reference to Gula cursing the individual, afflicting the transgressor with sickness, and following this particular curse the Sebettu themselves are referenced:

^d*si-bit-ti ilānū*(diġir)^{meš} [*qa*] *r-d[u-te ina* ^{ġiš}*kakkē*(tukul)^{meš} -*šú-nu*] *ez-zu-ti na-aš-pan-*
[ta-ku-nu liš-ku-un]

[May] the Sebettu, the [heroic] gods, mas[sacre you with their] fierce [weapons]⁴⁶⁴

The reference to the Sebettu here is relatively standard in nature, outside of its syllabic spelling. The two treaty texts are similar enough to each other in this section that the editions use one text to reconstruct the other, as they find their respective lacunae in different locations in each line. The frequency with which Esarhaddon refers to the Sebettu speaks to the full assimilation of the Seven into the divine pantheon. They remain, in their own way, outlying deities and though referenced in major texts and treaties, they are not invoked with the same regularity and position as other, more established, gods.

5.7. Aššurbanipal (668-627 BCE)

Aššurbanipal is the last of the great Neo-Assyrian kings. Following his death, the empire saw weakening and fragmentation through civil war and fights for succession, with its swift end

⁴⁶⁴ See: *SAA* 3, no. 6: 464. Regarding Esarhaddon's Succession treaty, see also: Jacob Lauinger, "Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty at Tell Tayinat: Text and Commentary," *JCS* 64 (2012): 87-123. Note that the tablet from Tell Tayinat edited by Lauinger does not include the line above which references the Sebettu, and instead presents new sections from those found in the edition in *SAA* 3, no. 6.

and takeover by Neo-Babylonian empire coming with the sack of Nineveh in 612 BCE. The king himself had a curious upbringing: not the intended heir to the throne, Aššurbanipal received scribal training, which fostered – or at the least contributed – to the ruler's interest in and creation of a royal library of texts of every genre. His building projects included the North Palace at Nineveh, with its own set of royal reliefs, but he was also well known for his military campaigns, including the conquest of Egypt and sack of Thebes in 664 BCE. Aššurbanipal was forced to contend with revolts in the south, and an eventual full-on rebellion led by his brother, Šamaš-šum-ukin, who had been installed as the ruler of Babylon, in the hopes, perhaps, that having the two brothers ruling Assyria and Babylonia would quell the rebellious tendencies of the south.

Thanks to Aššurbanipal's boasting of his literary prowess, his texts citing the Sebettu can utilize similar scholarly tricks. Increasingly, we see the astral representation of the Sebettu, the Pleiades star cluster, appear in royal inscriptions, though the connection between them has been present since the Old Babylonian period, if not earlier. The increasing reliance on the astral connection to inform the actions of the Sebettu does lend an added dimension to the interactions of many of these divine figures in texts. When gods appear together, there is the question of how much their behavior, and particularly their movements, are dependent upon what the constellation or planet which represented them could do, in terms of observable celestial phenomena.⁴⁶⁵ The use of the astral form of the Sebettu, particularly in omen texts, remains an issue to be tackled in Chapter Seven.

When Aššurbanipal utilizes the Sebettu, they appear in a hymn the king dedicated to the

⁴⁶⁵ This behavior, for example, explains the actions of Inana in the Sumerian myth "Inana and Šukaletuda," where Inana, who has been raped by Šukaletuda, cannot enter into the homeland of Mesopotamia proper to search for her rapist to mete out punishment; as Venus, she appears on the horizon in Mesopotamia, but does not cross over the land directly. See: Jeffrey Cooley, "Inana and Šukaletuda: A Sumerian Astral Myth," *KASKAL* 5 (2008): 161-72.

god Marduk and his wife, Zarpanitu.⁴⁶⁶ The Sebettu appear within the text as one of the groups of gods which accompany Marduk, lending him their support. This text is an acrostic, where the initial signs of lines of the text, when assembled together, construct another line of the text.⁴⁶⁷ As another such work, the *Babylonian Theodicy* arguably demonstrates the highest measure of regularity in regards to poetic meter, although even it vacillates between a structure that consists of quatrains or triplets.⁴⁶⁸ The presence of an acrostic, in both the *Theodicy* as well as Aššurbanipal's hymn to Marduk, does, if nothing else, argue for the intended, written, format and presentation of the work, as such a structure functions when the text is seen visually. In our hymn, we see a list of deities who work together with Marduk, finally reaching the reference which includes the Sebettu:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 3 | <i>[ru]-bu-u na-a'-du ar-mu ina sa-pa-ri-ka [x x x]x-tum im-nu-u[k-ka x x x x x x x x]</i> |
| 4 | <i>šumelu(gab₂)-ka^dErragal(ir₃.ra.gal) dan-dan ilānū(diġir)^{meš} ʾpa¹-nu-u[k-ka]^dSebettu(imin.bi) ilānū(diġir)^{meš} qar-[du-te x x x x x]</i> |
| 5 | <i>imittim(zag) u šumelim(gab₂) i-ha-am-mat^dGirra(ġiš.bar) a-šar t[a-g]u-gu a-[x x x x x]</i> |
| 3 | Prince, praiseworthy, shrouded one! In your net [...]; on your right is [...], |
| 4 | On your left is Erragal, the strongest one of the gods, in front of [you go] the Sebettu! |
| 5 | Fire burns to (your) right and left [...] wherever you have raged. ⁴⁶⁹ |

This text revisits the connection between Erra and the Sebettu, reminiscent of the poem of *Erra*. It inverts, however, the position of the Sebettu as demonstrated in that text: here, the Sebettu act as the vanguard, while Erra is set as the flank guard for Marduk, the warrior figure. Išum, our missing member of the *Erra* trio, is absent entirely from the stanza, perhaps because of his

⁴⁶⁶ Edition in: Alasdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*, vol. 3 of *SAA* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989), no. 2.

⁴⁶⁷ The most well known of the acrostic texts is the *Babylonian Theodicy*, which details a dialogue between a man plagued with the evils of the world and his companion. See Takayoshi Oshima, *The Babylonian Theodicy*, vol. 9 of *SAACT* (Helsinki: NATCP, 2013); W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996).

⁴⁶⁸ M.L. West, "Akkadian Poetry: Metre and Performance," *Iraq* 59 (1997): 178-80.

⁴⁶⁹ Livingstone, *Court Poetry*, 9: rev., 3-5.

actions in *Erra*. Unlike the other two, Išum worked to curtail the ravages of Erra and the Sebettu, and that restraint has no place here. Overall, the text describes a military formation with three fearsome deities, and it emphasizes the caliber of warrior with which the Sebettu are linked. Ištar, Erra, and Marduk are all very powerful deities associated with battle and war, and the Sebettu are placed directly alongside them, as their companion in battle and are thus set as their equal, or close to it, within this martial context.

This role underlies the use of the Sebettu during the reign of the Neo-Assyrian kings as a whole. As the representatives and warriors of the gods, the various Neo-Assyrian kings were keenly aware of their particular role within the greater religious architecture that worked to buttress the Neo-Assyrian Empire and also cognizant of the lengths to which they could utilize that position. Over the course of these attestations, the narrative of use is a utilitarian one: when the Sebettu can be of greater use and are helpful additions to the king's citation of the pantheon, he is ready and willing to employ them. In the early periods of the Empire, however, or when the ruler might find himself on less steady ground, the more established members of the Assyrian pantheon are more likely to be employed.

5.8. Excerpted Texts and Figures

The following texts were presented in either excerpts or only in translation in the main body of the chapter, and are here presented in full, organized by the king with whom they are concerned.

5.8.1. Shalmanesar III

Dedication to Sebettu inscribed on an altar:⁴⁷⁰

- 1 [ana ^dSebettu(imin).bi) ilānī(diġir)^{meš} rabûti(gal)^{meš} a-li-li gît-ma-lu-tú ra-'i-
mu-ut ſu-ſe-e mu-^rtal¹-li-ku sa-an-ga-ni ħa-i-tu
- 2 [šamê(a)n)^e erſeti(ki)^{ti} mu-ki-nu eš-re-ti ſe-mu-ú ik-ri-bi leqû(ti)^ú un-ni-ni
ma-ĥi-ru téſ-li-ti
- 3 [mu-šam-ſ]u-ú mal lib-bi mu-šam-qi-tú za-a-a-ri re-me-nu-tú šá su-pu-šú-
nu t̃abu(du₁₀.ga) a-ši-bu-ut
- 4 [Nīnua(nina)^{ki} alī(uru)[?]]-a bēlū(en)^{meš} rabûtu(gal)^{meš} bēlī(en)-a ^{diš}šûl-ma-
nu-ašarēdu(saġ.kal) šakin(ġar) ^dEnlil(bad) ^riššak(šid)¹ aš-šur ^rmār(dumu)¹
aš-šur-nāšir-apli(pab.ibila)
- 5 [šakin enlil] iššak(šid) aš-šur mār(dumu) tukul-ti-^dNinurta(maš)¹
šakin(gar) ^dEnlil(bad) šangim(šid) aš-šur ana balāṭ(ti) napšātī(zi)^{meš}-a
arāk(gid₂.da) ūmī(u₄)^{meš}-a ^ršúm¹-ud šanātī(m[u])^{meš}-a
- 6 [šulum(silim) zēri(num)un]-a mātī(kur)-a našār(pab) ^{ġiš}kušši(aš.ti)
iššakkūtī(šid)^{[t]i}-a za-i-ri-ia ana qa-me-e kúl-lat ge-ri-a ana ĥu-lu-qi
- 7 [mal-ki nakrī(kur₂)]^{meš}-a ana šēpī(ġir₃)^{II-meš}-a šuk-nu-^rše ana¹
^dSebettu(imin-bi) bēlī(en)^{meš}-a aqīš(niġ₂.ba)

- 1 [To the Sebettu] the great gods, the noble warriors, lovers of marshes, who
march on mountain paths,
- 2 who survey the heavens and earths, who maintain shrines, who heed
prayers, accept petitions, receive requests,
- 3 who fulfill desires, who lay low enemies, the compassionate (gods) to
whom it is good to pray,
- 4 who dwell in [Nineveh], my [city], the great lords, my lords: Shalmaneser,
appointee of the god Enlil, vice-regent of Aššur, son of Aššurnasirpal (II)
- 5 [appointee of the god Enlil], vice-regent of Aššur, son of Tukultī-Ninurta
(II), appointee of the god Enlil, vice-regent of Aššur: I dedicated (this) to
the divine Sebettu, my lords, for my life, that my days might be long, my
years many
- 6 for my descendants and my land, for the safekeeping of my vice-regal
throne, for the burning of my enemies, for the destruction of all my foes,
- 7 to subdue at my feet [rulers who oppose] me, I dedicate this to the divine
Sebettu.

⁴⁷⁰ Transliteration following: Grayson, *RIMA* 3, 153-54. Shalmaneser III: A.0.102.95.

5.8.2. Aššur-nerari V

Aššur-nerari V: Treaty Text with Arpad.⁴⁷¹

- 6 ^d*aš-šur šar*(man) *šamê*(an) *eršeti*(ki) *tùm-ma-tú-nu*
7 ^d*a-nu-um an-tum* ki.min ^d*Illil*(be) ^d*Mullissu*(nin.lil₂) ki.min
8 ^d*Ea*(diš) ^d*dam-ki-na* ki.min ^d*Sin*(30) ^d*Nikkal*(nin.gal) ki.min
9 ^d*Šamaš*(utu) ^d*Aia*(a.a) ki.min ^d*Adad*(im) ^d*ša-la* ki.min
10 ^d*Marduk*(amar.utu) ^d*zar-pa-ni-tum* ki.min ^d*Nabû*(ag) ^d*Tašmetu*(lal₂)
ki.min
11 ^d*Ninurta*(maš) ^d*Gula*(me) ki.min ^d*Uraš*(ib) ^d*Ninegal*(nin.e₂.gal) ki.min
12 ^d*za-ba₄-ba₄* ^d*Baba*(ba.u₂) ki.min ^d*Nergal*(u.gur) ^d*la-aš* ki.min
13 ^d*Madanu*(di.ku₅) ^d*Ninġirsu*(nin.ġir₂.su) ki.min
14 ^d*hum-hum-mu* ^d*i-šum* ki.min
15 ^d*Girra*(^{ġi}š^{bar}) ^d*Nusku*(pa.tug₂) ki.min ^d*Ištar*(15) *bēlet*(nin) ^{uru}*ni-na-a*
ki.min
16 ^d*Ištar*(innin) *bēlet*(nin) ^{uru}*arba-il* ki.min
17 ^d*Adad*(im) *šá* ^{uru}*kur-ba-il* ki.min
18 ^d*Hadad*(im) *šá* ^{uru}*hal-la-ba* ki.min
19 ^d*Palil*(igi.du) *a-lik mah-ri* ki.min
20 ^d*Sebettu*(imin.bi) *qar-du-ti* ki.min
21 ^d[*d*]*a-ṛgan*¹ <*šá*> ^{ruru?}¹[*m*]*u-šur-ru-na* ki.min
22 ^d*m*[*i-il-qar-tu* ^d*ia-s*]*u-mu-na* ki.min
23 ^d*k*^ṛ*u¹-b[a-ba* ^d*kar*]-*hu-ha* ki.min
24 ^d*Hadad*(im) ^d[*x*] ^ṛ*x* ^d*ra'-ma'-nu'*¹ ki.min

- 6 You are sworn by Aššur, king of heaven and earth!
7 As well by Anu and Antu! As well by Illil and Mullissu!
8 As well by Ea and Damkina! As well by Sin and Nikkal!
9 As well by Šamaš and Nur! As well by Adad and Šala!
10 As well by Marduk and Zarpanitu! As well by Nabû and Tašmetu!
11 As well by Ninurta and Gula! As well by Uraš and Ninegal!
12 As well by Zababa and Babu! As well by Nergal and Laš!
13 As well by Madanu and Ninġirsu!
14 As well by Humhummu and Išum!
15 As well by Girra, by Nusku! As well by Ištar, Lady of Nineveh!
16 As well by Ištar, Lady of Arbela!
17 As well by Adad of Kurbail!
18 As well by Hadad of Aleppo!
19 As well by Palil, who marches in front!
20 As well by the heroic Sebettu!
21 As well by Dagan of Mušuruna!
22 As well by Melqarth and Eshmun!

⁴⁷¹ Edition in: Simo Parpola and Kazuko Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, vol. 2 of *SAA* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988): No. 2.

- 23 As well by Kubaba and Kurhuha!
 24 As well by Hadad, [...] and Ramman of [Damascus]!

5.8.3. Tiglath-pileser III

Mila Mergi rock inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III:⁴⁷²

- 3 ^dNabû(ag) ta-mi-iḥ qan ṭuppi(gi.dub.ba)^e na-ši tup-ši-[mat ilānī(diġir)^{meš}] a-
 ši-ru
 4 ^dŠamaš(utu) šar(man) šamê(an)^e ṛeršetim(ki)^{tim} banû(du₃)^u šal-mat
 qaqqadi(saġ.du) [...] ab-ra-a-ṛti¹
 5 [^d30] na-an-ṛna¹-ru nam-ru na-din ṛġiš¹ haṭṭa(gidru) a-ṛge¹-[e] mu-kin
 be-ṛlu¹-ti
 6 ^{rd1}Adad(im) gugal(gu₂.gal) šamê(an)^e eršetim(ki)^{tim} mu-kám-[mir ṭuḥ]-ṛdi¹
 ḥengalla(he₂.ġal₂) mu-ṭaḥ-ḥi-du ṛnu¹-[uḥ-ši]
 7 [^d]é-a [bēl(en)] né-me-qi pa-tiq kul-lat min-[ma šum-šú] mu-ṛban¹-ṛni¹-u
 nab-ṛni¹-[ti]
 8 [^dIštar] be-let mākali(unug) iš₈-tár bēlet(gašan) ra-i-mat šarram[lugal] mi-
 iq-[ri-ša] mu-kan-ni-šat x x
 9 ^dSebettu([imin].bi) bēl(en)^{meš} geš-ru-ti a-li-kut pa-ṛan¹ ummānī(erin₂^{hi.a})-ia
 mu-šam-qi-ṛtú¹ x x
 10 [^d]Amurru(ma[r].tu) na-ši gam-lī bandudē(^{ġiš}ba.an.du₈.du₈)
^dSumukan(šakkan₂) muš-te-ṛšir¹⁴⁷³
 11 ilānū(diġir.diġir) rabûtu(gal.gal)^{meš} a-ši-bu-tu šamê(an)^e eršetim(ki)^{tim} mu-
 [...] x x-ti-ṛia¹ na-ši-ru [...]

- 3 Nabû, who holds the stylus, who carries the tablet of decrees of the Gods,
 the one who reviews...
 4 The god Šamaš, king of the heaven and netherworld, creator of the black-
 headed...of humanity;
 5 The god Sîn, bright light, the one who gives scepter and crown;
 6 The god Adad, canal inspector of the heaven and earth, the one who heaps
 up abundance and plenty, the one who provides plenty
 7 Ea, [lord] of wisdom, who forms all thing [of every kind], who fashions
 the creations,
 8 [Ištar,] lady of the temple, Ištar (my) lady, who loves [the king] who
 please [her], who subdues...
 9 The Sebettu, mighty lords, who lead my troops, who strike down [my
 enemies,]
 10 Amurru, who carries the curved staff (and) the bucket; Sumukan, who

⁴⁷² J.N. Postgate, "The Inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III at Mila Mergi," *Sumer* 29 (1973): 47-60. *RINAP* 1, 89-92.
 Tiglath-pileser III: 37.

⁴⁷³ The *gam-lī* in this line, though idiosyncratic, appears to be the confirmed reading across multiple editions of the text.

- sets right...
- 11 The great gods, who dwell in heaven and earth, [...] guard [my kingship].

5.8.4. Esarhaddon

Section of text detailing the gods selecting Esarhaddon for reign.⁴⁷⁴

- 10 [^dNergal(u).gur) *dan-dan-nu bēl(en) a-[ba-ri u du-un-ni ka]-mu-u [a]-a-bi*
^dEnlil(en.lil₂) *eršetim(ki)^{tim} rapaštım(dagal)^{tim}*
- 11 ^da-gu-še-e-a ^dAgušaya(gašan) [*qabli(murub₄)*] *u tāhāzi(me₃) de-kāt a-na-*
an-ti ša-ki-nat tu-qu-un-ti
- 12 ^dSebettu(imin.bi) *ilānī(diġir)^{meš} qar-du-ti ta-me-ḥu til-pa-nu uš-ši ša ti-bu-*
šú-nu tam-ḥa-ru šá-áš-mu
- 13 *ilānū(diġir)^{meš} rabūtu(gal)^{meš} a-ši-bu-ti šamē(an)^e u eršetim(ki)^{tim} šá*
qí-bit-su-nu mitgurtu(še.ga)^{ti} la ut-tak-ka-ru
- 14 *ia-a-ti [^mAššur-ahu-iddin] ina re-e-[ut nišī(uġ₃)]^{meš}-šú-un*
- 10 [The god Ner]gal, the mighty lord endowed with [strength and power, the
 one who cap]tures enemies, the Enlil of the vast netherworld,
- 11 The goddess Agušaya, the mistress of [war] and battle, the one who starts
 fighting, causes conflict,
- 12 The Sebettu, valiant gods, who hold bow and arrow, whose assault is
 combat and warfare,
- 13 The great gods, who reside in heaven and netherworld, (whose) agreement
 cannot be changed,
- 14 Truly selected me, [Esarhaddon], to shepherd their people.

⁴⁷⁴ This text is commonly referred to as Aššur-Babylon A (AsBbA). *RINAP* 4, 103-109. Esarhaddon: 48.

5.8.5. Figures

Figure 2: Plan of the Temple of the Sebetu at Khorsabad⁴⁷⁵

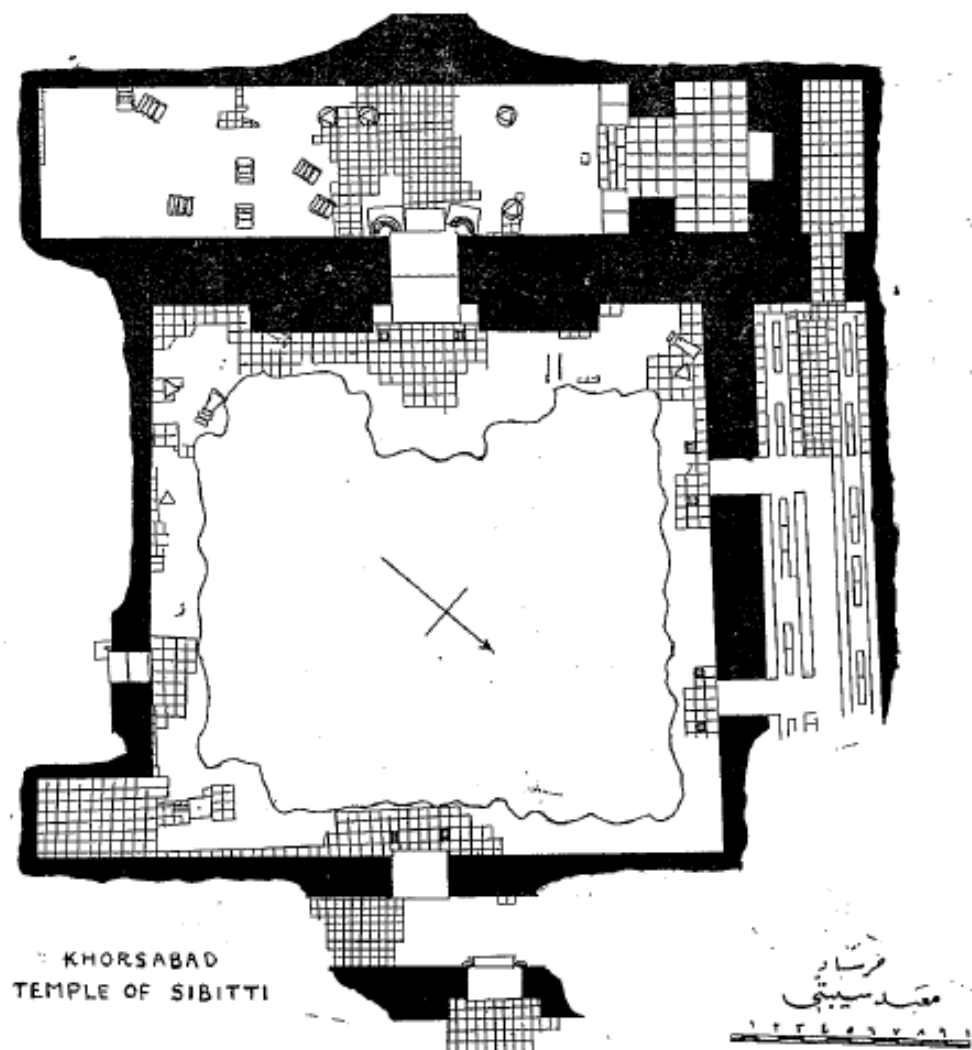
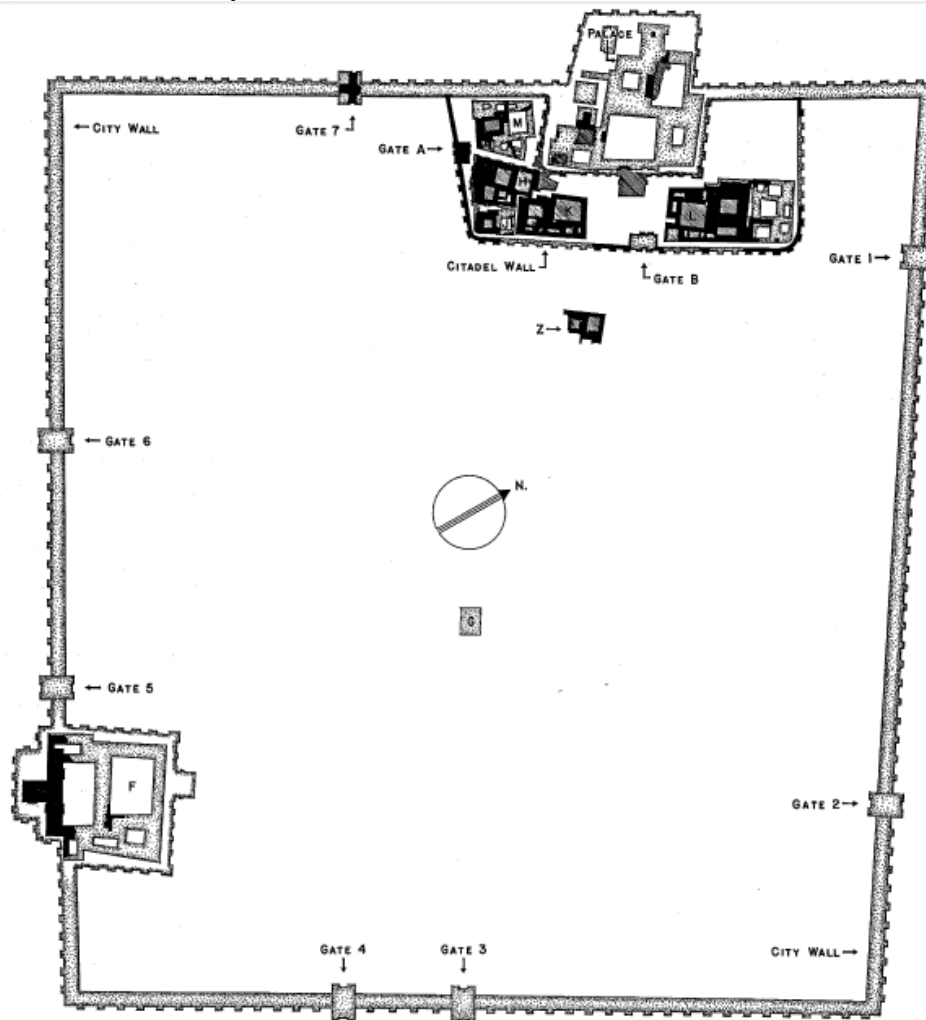


Fig. 1. The Temple of Sibitti الشكل ۱ - مقدار سیبیتی

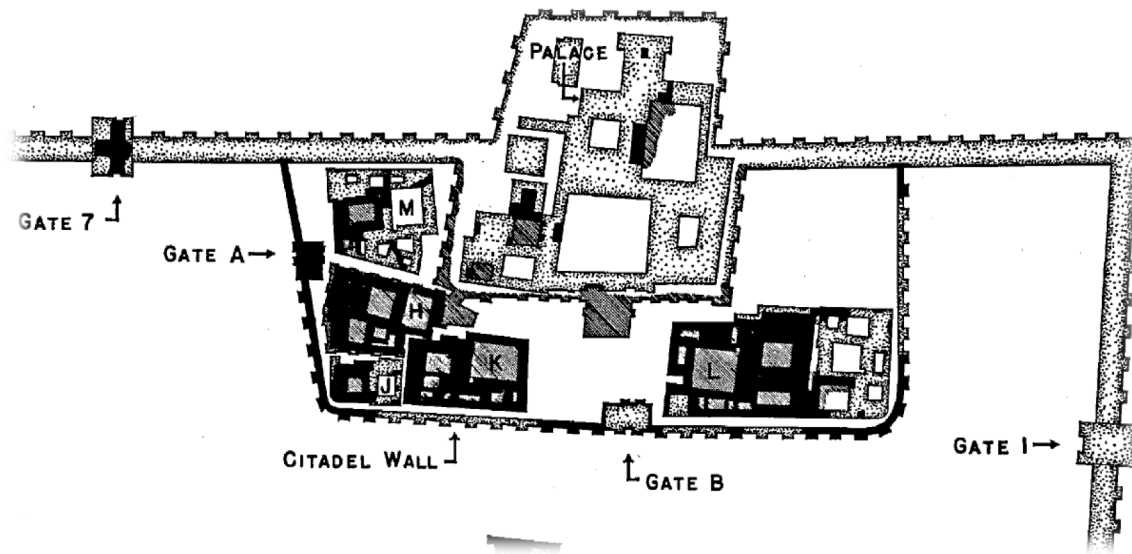
⁴⁷⁵ Safar, "Temple of the Sibitti."

Figure 3: Plan of the City of Dur-Šarrukin⁴⁷⁶



⁴⁷⁶ Gordon Loud and Charles B. Altman, *Khorsabad, Part 2: the Citadel and the Town*, vol. 40 of *OIP* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1938).

Figure 4: Detail of the Area around the Citadel and Gate 7⁴⁷⁷



⁴⁷⁷ Loud and Altman, *Khorsabad: the Citadel and the Town*.

Chapter Six: Terrifying and Bright: The Spread and Proliferation of the Sebettu in Non-State and Household Use

The increased use – or newfound popularity – that characterizes the appearances of the Sebettu during the first millennium is manifested in several forms. The Sebettu first proliferate in royal inscriptions of the late second and continue into the first millennium, a usage that varies from ruler to ruler, in a process that evolves within the line of Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian kings. At the grand conclusion of this narrative, however, by the end of the Neo-Assyrian period the Sebettu occupy a completely different position in the religious, cultural, and cultic landscape of Mesopotamia. The Neo-Assyrian kings – or rather, their inscriptions – are the most visible thread by which to track that progress, but they are not the only means by which it may be considered. As the royal inscriptions of this period incorporate the Sebettu into increasingly dedicated protective roles, the Sebettu begin to fulfill a similar function outside of the state sphere with increasing frequency.

The use of the Sebettu in the royal sphere complements their use in non-state contexts. While the demons need not be domesticated, they must be controlled before they can be harnessed for positive, effective use. Thus, the Sebettu are employed first and foremost in royal inscriptions and temple dedications in the latter half of second millennium. Once that initial framework has been accepted and improved upon by the Neo-Assyrian rulers, there is a subsequent – and in some cases, simultaneous – use of the Sebettu as apotropaic figures in non-state contexts. Thus, the royal use of the demons by means of their forced inclusion into the state pantheon in the first millennium paved the way for their broader use.

The division between the two spheres is not always distinct. The invocation and utilization of the Sebettu may be more individualized, but it does not exist as completely divorced from the presence of temples to the Sebettu. Personal offerings to the Sebettu must function within this framework. For a specific example, we may turn to personal letters, which include references of offerings to the Sebettu. One particular letter, dated to the reign of Aššurbanipal, includes a long list of offerings: "5 bread offering-tables including their *huhurtu* breads, 10 loaves of *huhurtu* bread of 1 'liter' each, with utensils and 6 shekels of silver belonging to the Sebettu (6 *šiqil*(gin₂)^{meš} *kaspi*(ku₃.babbar) *ša* ^d*Sebettu*(imin.bi))."⁴⁷⁸ The use of and devotion to the Sebettu is thus a highly personalized phenomenon: although there are incantations that detail the Sebettu in use for more elite or royal purposes – such as an Akkadian incantation that includes blessings and protections to the king while on campaign, most of the incantations that feature the Sebettu do not operate in this royal, or state, sphere but rather in private use.

6.1. The Sebettu in Incantations

In the first millennium, the body of incantations that feature the Sebettu is a diverse enough group that the first task is simply to collect them together with the following list emerging:

Table 1: The Sebettu in Incantations in the First Millennium

Date	Language	Text and Tablet
First Mill.	Akkadian	Protection of a house: Specifically directed against enemies approaching a house, discussed as <i>Šēp lemutti ina bīt amēli parāsi</i> ⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁸ SAA 14, no. 89. The text is dated to the year 650 BCE, the reign of Aššurbanipal.

⁴⁷⁹ Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*.

First Mill.	Akkadian	Incantation providing protection on a newly-build house ⁴⁸⁰
First Mill.	Akkadian	Incantation: reference to the Sebettu standing behind the practitioner [<i>STT</i> 176: 6' f., <i>STT</i> 230 11 f.]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Incantation, citing lines from the Hulbazizi series ⁴⁸¹ [<i>ARET</i> 2, 14 obv.]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Incantation: The Sebettu and the twins stand with me [<i>UET</i> 6/2 393: 24]
First Mill.	Bilingual Sumerian/Akkadian	Udug Hul (Evil Demons) – standard Babylonian exorcistic incantation series ⁴⁸²
First Mill.	Akkadian	Namburbi: Protection against the malevolence foreshadowed by the presence of the <i>katarru</i> -fungus on the walls of a house ⁴⁸³
Neo-Babylonian	Bilingual Sumerian/Akkadian	Namburbi: Seven braziers lit for the (potential) Sebettu ⁴⁸⁴ [BM 42273]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Namburbi: Incantation citing protection by Išum and the Sebettu ⁴⁸⁵ [<i>KAR</i> 282 / VAT 11730]
Pre-7 th c. Babylonia	Akkadian	Incantation for protection of the king while on campaign ⁴⁸⁶ [BM 98561]
First Mill.	Akkadian	<i>Šuilla</i> incantation-prayer: Dedicated to the Sebettu, the Pleiades, to be recited during the <i>bīt salā mē</i> ritual
First Mill.	Akkadian	Incantation: <i>anāku nubattu ahāt</i> ^d <i>Marduk</i> : I am the Vigil ⁴⁸⁷

With the exception of the standard Babylonian Udug Hul series, in each and every incantation wherein the Sebettu appear, they are represented positively, as forces that work to help create a beneficial effect.⁴⁸⁸ Many of these incantations detail the protection of a house or an individual,

⁴⁸⁰ Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*.

⁴⁸¹ The Hulbazizi ("the evil is eradicated") texts are, as of yet, not fully collected and edited.

⁴⁸² See edition in Geller, *Evil Demons*.

⁴⁸³ Richard I. Caplice, "Namburbi Texts in the British Museum: I", *OrNs* 39 (1970) 124ff., discussed in JoAnn Scurlock, "Ancient Mesopotamian House Gods" *JANER* 3 (2003): 99-106.

⁴⁸⁴ Jana Matuszak, "A New Version of the Babylonian Ritual of Evil Portended by a Lightning Strike (BM 42273), *WdO* 42 (2012): 135-52.

⁴⁸⁵ Stephan Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung: eine Untersuchung altorientalischen Denkens anhand der babylonisch-assyrischen Löserituale (Namburbi)*, vol. 18 of *BagF* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1994): 179.

⁴⁸⁶ Daniel Schwemer, "Protecting the King from Enemies, at Home and on Campaign: Babylonian Rituals on Th 1905-4-9, 67 = BM 98561" *ZA* 102 (2012): 209-18.

⁴⁸⁷ Stol, "The Moon as seen by Babylonians."

⁴⁸⁸ Furthermore, the Udug Hul series, though represented here with its first millennium, standard Babylonian form, is a series of texts with much earlier roots, as seen in the Old Babylonian forerunners to the series, for which see Geller, *Forerunners*.

while in others, the Sebettu appear to help protect the practitioner – often the *āšipu*. While the Udug Hul texts do represent a major cycle of incantation texts and the Sebettu play a large role as one of the major antagonists in its latter half, the far greater number of incantations wherein they appear in a beneficent contexts speaks to the increasingly important role of the Sebettu as protective figures.

6.1.1. Protecting Houses: Apotropaic Incantations and the Sebettu

The greater acceptance and wider proliferation of the apotropaic qualities of the Sebettu in the first millennium are matched by an increasing number of attestations for, and applications of, that use. Upon the realization of the potential power of the Sebettu as apotropaic figures, their protective qualities were employed with an utilitarian zeal. One of the most prominent of these protective incantations is also the longest of the group. As we will quote from several points in this incantation, it will be identified following its incipit (as Wiggermann does in his edition of the text) as: *šēp(ġiri₃) lemūtti(hul)^{ti} ina bīt(e₂) amēli(lu₂) parāsi(ku₅)^{si}*, "to block the entry of the enemy into someone's house."⁴⁸⁹ The incantation comprises some 300 lines (preserved, at least) describing a ritual conducted over five days that includes the purification and placement of protective figurines of several different monsters and gods, including *lahmu*, *apkallu* of various bestial associations,⁴⁹⁰ and the Sebettu.⁴⁹¹

The use of small monstrous figurines to fulfill an apotropaic function is best attested in the Neo-Assyrian period, though such figures are in use from earlier periods.⁴⁹² The Neo-Assyrian period, however, is able to couple the use of these smaller figurines, most often of

⁴⁸⁹ Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*: 7.

⁴⁹⁰ On the apkallu and their history, see Lenzi, "The Uruk List of Kings and Sages," 140.

⁴⁹¹ For a summary of the various figures included in the ritual, see Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*, 103.

⁴⁹² See Dessa Rittig, *Assyrisch-babylonische Kleinplastik magischer Bedeutung vom 13.-6. Jh. v.Chr* (Munich: Verlag Uni-Druck), 1977.

various demons and monsters, buried beneath the windows, doorways, and corners of houses, with the imagery associated with the protective spirits seen in the royal palace reliefs.⁴⁹³ Placed at points of entry or exit, they protected these inherently liminal zones that were subject to attack by outside forces, which could use them to gain entry into a dwelling. The language of incantations is rife with examples of a particular demon or monster sneaking into the house of the patient through the doorway (Lamaštu, in particular, "slithers" past the door pivot),⁴⁹⁴ or entering the house through the window, as with the *ardat lili*, who enters the house of her victim by wafting through the window on the breeze.⁴⁹⁵

The incantation itself begins with a long list of the potential evils that could threaten the house. As also seen in other texts, the incantation proceeds to cover all possible threats by including several phrases that fill any gaps in the list of supernatural *persona non grata*.⁴⁹⁶ The text lists, for example, the following as barred from entry: "a ghost of the family, or a ghost of a stranger, or anything evil, whatsoever there be, or anything not good that has no name."⁴⁹⁷ Even unknown quantities – anything that may be evil but whose name is unknown – are prohibited.

The incantation is accompanied by a detailed ritual, with embedded references to other incantations that are to be recited by the practitioner as part of this rite. In particular, we see the command to "recite the incantation 'Evil 'Spirit' in the Broad Steppe,'" among other referenced

⁴⁹³ Concerning the private use of apotropaic figurines and their archaeological recovery, see: Nakamura, "Dedicating Magic: Neo-Assyrian Protective Figurines," 11-25. The more particular implications of the protective reliefs in the royal palaces, which is not the present focus, are discussed in a number of studies, see: D. Kolbe, *Die Reliefprogramme religiös-mythologischen Charakters in neu-assyrischen Palästen* (Bern: Peter Verlag, 1981).

⁴⁹⁴ On Lamaštu in general, see Walter Farber, *Lamaštu: An Edition of the Canonical Series of Lamaštu Incantations and Rituals and Related Texts from the Second and First Millennia B.C.*, vol. 17 of MC (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2014).

⁴⁹⁵ See Geller, "Medicine, Magic, and Nimrud," and Lackenbacher, "Note sur l'*ardat-lili*," 129-130, for a description of the *ardat-lili*'s activities in an incantation designed to counter her.

⁴⁹⁶ We see a similar phenomenon in *diġir-ša₃-dib-ba* incantations, which recount a long list of crimes that the particular individual may have committed – and in doing so, offended his personal deity.

⁴⁹⁷ Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*, 7.

incantations to be said within the one larger text.⁴⁹⁸ The use of incipits to indicate that an entire incantation is imbedded within the ritual instructions of another incantation marks the elaborate nature of the text itself. The Sebettu themselves appear in the ritual instructions, as the text describes the creation, consecration, and utilization of their statues. The section is quoted in full below.⁴⁹⁹

To Prevent the Entrance of the Enemy Into Someone's House (*šēp lemūtti ina bīt amēli parāsi*): 86-96:⁵⁰⁰

- | | |
|----|---|
| 86 | <i>an-na-a taqabbi(du₁₁.ga)-ma ina pāši(tun₃) ħurāši(ku₃.sig₁₇)</i> |
| | <i>šaššāri(šum.gam.me) kaspi(ku₃.babbar)</i> |
| 87 | <i>[^{ĝi}bi-n]u talappat(tag)^{at}-ma ina qul-mi-i taparris(ku₅)^{is}</i> |
| 88 | <i>[ana āli(uru) tellām(e₁₁)-ma] ʾsebet(imin)¹ ṣalmū(nu)^{meš d}Sebettu(imin.bi)</i> |
| | <i>a-gi-e ramāni(ni₂)-šú-nu</i> |
| 89 | <i>ʾap-ru lu-bu¹-uš ramāni(ni₂)-šú-nu lab-šú ina kigalli(ki.gal) ^{ĝi}bīni(šinig)</i> |
| 90 | <i>ʾpu¹-ri-da tušzas(gub)-su-nu-ti šaršerru(im^{sa}₅) ina til-li-šú-nu lab-šú</i> |
| 91 | <i>ina qāt(šu)^{II-meš} imitti(za₃.udu)^{meš}-šú-nu qul-ma erī(zabar)</i> |
| 92 | <i>ina qāt(šu)^{II-meš} šumēli(gab₂)-šú-nu patar(gir₂) erī(zabar) na-šu-ú</i> |
| 93 | <i>[mī]-ʾser_x(muš)¹ erī(zabar) ina qabli(muru₂)-šú-nu ʾrak¹-sa</i> |
| 94 | <i>[e]-ri erī(zabar) ina qaqqadī(sag.du)^{meš}-šú-nu ʾrak¹-sa</i> |
| 95 | <i>[qarnī(sī)]^{meš} erī(zabar) šak(gar)-nu ^{ĝi}x x x ^{ĝi}qaštī(pana)^{meš} iš-pa-a-ʾti¹</i> |
| 96 | <i>[ina] ʾidī(a₂)^{1meš}-šú-nu al-la tepp(du₃)-uš</i> |
-
- | | |
|----|--|
| 86 | This you shall say, and with the golden axe and silver saw, |
| 87 | You will touch the tamarisk and cut it down with a hatchet; |
| 88 | [You shall go to the city; then] seven statues of the Sebettu crowned with their |
| 89 | Own crowns, clad in their own garments, you place them on a pedestal |
| 90 | Of tamarisk in a walking pose; they are clad in red paste over their uniform; |
| 91 | (They) hold in their right hands a hatchet of bronze, |
| 92 | And in their left hands a dagger of bronze. |
| 93 | Bound around their waists with a girdle of bronze, |
| 94 | Bound around their heads with a headband of bronze, |
| 95 | Furnished with horns of bronze, and bows and quivers, |
| 96 | With hands at their sides – you shall make (them). |

⁴⁹⁸ Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*, 7.

⁴⁹⁹ Because of the prevalence and frequency of Sumerograms within the text, most have been maintained in the transliteration and not normalized into Akkadian, as this may more accurately reflect the nature of the text itself.

⁵⁰⁰ Following Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*, 9-10. Note that when Akkadian renderings are unclear the Sumerian has been presented without them in the transliteration.

The Sebettu are the second of the created groups of statues mentioned in the ritual instructions of this incantation. They are preceded by statues made of ^{ĝi}šma-nu wood and though the identity of these statues is uncertain they too are seven in number.⁵⁰¹ Each one is colored with a different paste and they appear to be tasked with the protection of various cities. Following that, is a reference, in more passing fashion, to statues of tamarisk, which is linked to the subsequent description of the seven statues of the Sebettu themselves. Afterwards, we see the appearance of several other groups of figurines, thirty-one statues in total as represented in the following list:

Seven statues of ^{ĝi}šma-nu wood, representing cities,⁵⁰²
 Seven statues of the Sebettu of tamarisk wood,
 Four statues of Lugalgirra, of tamarisk,
 Seven statues of the "weapon-men" (*šu-ut* ^{ĝi}š*kakke*(*tukul*)^{meš}), of tamarisk,
 One statue of tamarisk,⁵⁰³
 Four statues of Meslamtaea, of tamarisk
 One statue of the goddess Narudda(Narunde), of tamarisk

The statues are then collectively described as creatures of the heavens (an) and creatures of the Apsû, lending evidence to an association between the unnamed seven associated with cities, and the seven *apkallu* sages, which contemporary incantation tradition also assigns to individual cities.⁵⁰⁴ The text continues with the creation of figurines, but in smaller number, commanding the *āšipu* to create the following: two statues of hairies (*laḥmu*), two statues of vipers (*bašmu*(*muš.ša₃.tur*), two statues of furious snakes (*mušhuššu*(*muš.huš*)), two of the great storm-beast (*ugallu*(*u₄.gal*), two statues of mad lions (*uridimmu*(*ur.idim*)), two statues of bison (*kusarikku*), two statues of scorpion-men (*girtablilu*(*ĝir₂.tab.lu₂.ulu₃*)^{lu}) both male and female,

⁵⁰¹ Wiggermann identifies this wood as cornel, but that definition is uncertain. Steinkeller identifies it instead as willow: see Piotr Steinkeller, "The Foresters of Umma: Towards a Definition of Ur III Labor," in *Labor in the Ancient Near East*, vol. 68 in *American Oriental Series*, eds. Martin Powell (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987), 91-93.

⁵⁰² Respectively, the statues are dedicated to Ur, Nippur, Eridu, Kullab, Keš, Lagaš, and Šuruppak.

⁵⁰³ This statue is not associated with a particular figure, and, unlike the other statues, its size is also described, as "one cubit" (1 *kuš₃*). It, like several of the other statues, is inscribed with "who repels the evil constables" written on the left side of the statue and "who causes the good *šēdu* and good *lama* to enter," on its right.

⁵⁰⁴ See Udug Hul, Tablet XII: 120-39.

statues of Lulal (^dlu₂.lal₃), two statues of Fish-men (*kulīlu*(^{ku6}lu₂.ulu₃)^{lu}), two statues of carp-goats (*suhurmāšu*(suhur.maš₂), and ten statues of dogs (*kalbu*(ur.gi₇), all of different colors and variously named.⁵⁰⁵ Following this, the instructions focus on the ritual manipulation of these statues, requiring no more to be made.

The grouping of the figures is as revealing as the figures themselves. The first group includes a population of deities, or, in the case of the "weapon-men," human-like figures, who may thus be closely linked to warriors. The latter group, however, while greater in number than the first, primarily divine group – including the ten dog statues – focuses its attention on monstrous figures. The seven figures that are associated with a particular city are the one possible exception to this classification scheme. As such, the Sebettu's inclusion in the first, and thus divine, category, as opposed to the second, which is more monstrous and populated by composite creatures or *Mischwesen*, speaks to the integration of the Sebettu into a protective pantheon.

The passage directly referencing the figures provides other critical information on the treatment and subsequent prestige of the Sebettu. They are stationed in a line of walking figures, heavily armed, with an ax in their right hand and a dagger in their left. They are given bows and quivers as well, and are also described as bearing horns of bronze. They bristle with weapons armed to the proverbial (if not literal) teeth.⁵⁰⁶ The text has given them, if anything, an overabundance of weapons, and any of the Sebettu would undoubtedly find it difficult to use any one of their weapons without first setting others down.

⁵⁰⁵ Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*, 15: 184-205.

⁵⁰⁶ This usage of the Sebettu stands as an example of the division in the armaments of the Sebettu as they appear in royal inscriptions – where they would most often be described as using bows and arrows, acting as archers (as discussed in the previous chapter) and the weapons that they are given in their iconographic representations, where their role as archers is superseded, though not entirely replaced, by their bearing close-combat weaponry, such as the ax and dagger they are given in this text.

Narunde, or Narudi as she appears in the incantation below, closes the list of divine figures. This connection is revisited in the later section of the incantation where the Sebettu reappear in time for their statues to be manipulated. Unfortunately, the incantation itself breaks off here in what is presumably its closing sections, based upon the pattern of actions within the text.⁵⁰⁷

šēp lemutti ina bīt amēli parāsi, 308-316:⁵⁰⁸

308 [kima(gin₇) an-na-a šid-nu-u] ana pāni(igi) sebet(imin) nu^{meš}
^dSebettu(imin-bi) sebet(imin) šu-ut patri(ġiri₂)^{meš}
309 u qul-ma-a-ti ina qatī(šu)[-šu-nu na-šu-]u
310 ù^dNa-ru-di [kām taman(šid)-n]u
311 [en₂ at-tu-nu šalmū(nu)^{meš d}Sebettu(imin.bi) ilānī(diġir)^{meš} rabūti(gal)^{meš}
312 [mārū(dumu)^{meš d}en-me-šār-ra na-áš^{giš} kakkī(tukul)^{meš}] lēmni(hul)^{meš}
313 e-s[i-ḥu iš-pa-tú ta-mi-ḥu nam]-sa-ra erī
314 sa-pi-[nu ḥur-sa-a-ni xxx^m]^{es}
315 da-a-a-[i-ku la a-ni-ḥu xxx] x
316 mu lemnū(hul)^{meš} šá ina [bīt(e₂) nenni a nenni]⁵⁰⁹

308 [As soon as you have recited this], in front of the seven statues of Sebettu,
309 The seven (statues) that [hol]d daggers and hatchets in [their] hands,
310 And (in front of the statue of) Narunde, r[ecite as follows:]
311 [Incantation: you are the statues of Sebettu the great god]s,
312 The son[s of Enmešarra, who hold] furious [weapons],
313 Having gir[ded a quiver (on the side), holding a d]agger,
314 Leve[ling the mountains...]
315 Killers, [tireless...]
316 Because of the evil ones [that in the house of so-and-so [son of so-and-so]

The last line of this incantation reflects the practice of personalizing the incantation by inserting the name of the patient as well as his father's name, expressed as "nenni a nenni." This phrase allows for the insertion of the required name, and, to a degree, speaks to the utilitarian nature of these texts.

⁵⁰⁷ Namely, that we see an incantation recitation directly over the figures, followed by their burial in subsequent lines.

⁵⁰⁸ Following Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*, 14-15.

⁵⁰⁹ The two lines following 316 are fragmentary. What can be read includes a reference to "his life," *napišti*(zi)-šu and "cedar," ^{giš}*erennu*(eren) before proceeding to the next section of the incantation.

Narunde is a goddess with repeated associations with the Sebettu, and is sometimes referred to directly as their sister.⁵¹⁰ However, the enigmatic nature of the goddess herself leaves us with more questions than answers regarding the association. The goddess originated outside Mesopotamia, as an import from the east, most likely from Elam. The evidence for the Sebettu, on the other hand, suggests that their own origin is to the west, given the references to them as the gods of the west, their more constant use in the god lists of treaties concerning Assyria and western, particularly Levantine, lands, and the earlier presence of the Sebettu, represented by the Pleiades, on cylinder seals from the Levant and Syria (for which, see Chapter 7).

The incantation also connects the Sebettu to another enigmatic figure: the underworld deity Enmešarra. Given the dearth of dedicated studies and subsequent confusion that surrounds Enmešarra, the link is difficult to fully classify.⁵¹¹ This chthonic deity is referenced in several texts, most often in light of familial connections he may possess to other figures. Such is the case in the Sumerian text of "Enlil and Namzitara," where he is said to be Namzitara's deceased uncle (u₄ ^den-me-šar₂-ra šeš ad-da-zu LU₂xGAN₂-da-a). He is the subject of two narrative texts that expand his own mythology – "Enmešarra's Defeat," and "The Defeat of Enutilla, Enmešarra, and Kingu," both recently edited and both stressing his link to monstrous or rebellious figures who are in turn defeated in combat by warrior gods.⁵¹² The connection between Enmešarra and his seven sons, as described in this incantation, reappears in a version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, where Gilgamesh defeats not only Huwawa, but also his seven sons. Here, the connection is to the monstrous guardian of the Cedar Forest and not the enigmatic

⁵¹⁰ See Anthony Green, "Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons: the Iconography of Good and Evil in Ancient Assyria and Babylonia," in *Visible Religion: Annual for Religious Iconography: Vol. III, Popular Religion*, ed. H.G. Kippinbeg (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 82-83.

⁵¹¹ The connection between the the two was first referenced by C.F. Jean as one of the three potential categories for the appearances of the Seven – the other two being the Pleiades and the seven sages in a deified representation. See: C.F. Jean, "^dVII-bi," *RA* 21 (1924): 102-103.

⁵¹² For editions of both, see Lambert *Babylonian Creation Myths*, 281-98 and 326-29, respectively.

underworld deity, but the situation in *Gilgamesh* requires that it be read in light of the body of texts focusing on Enmešarra. The particular lines of the text refer to these "seven sons" in, by this point, recognizable terms:⁵¹³

- 307 [u]l-tu se-bet-ti-šú-nu mārē(dumu)^{meš}-šú i-na-a-ru
 308 [z]i-za-ni na-i-ru si-mur-ra šá-¹sa¹-a en-qa kap-paḥ? u₄-gal-¹la¹
- 307 After they had slain his seven sons,
 308 Cricket, Screecher, Typhoon, Screamer, Crafty,...Storm-Demon

These references bear some resemblance to the names by which the seven monsters are introduced in *Enūma Eliš*: the Murderer, the Pitiless, the Trampler, the Fleet, Terrifying Violence, Strife, and Battle."⁵¹⁴ The repeated imagery underscores the terrifying nature of both groups of seven, as well as their potentially connected identity. Furthermore, given Enmešarra's status as a chthonic, Netherworld deity, his connection to the Seven is understandable: they often also reside in the Netherworld and inhabit similarly liminal zones. As demons are often explicitly described as possessing no family, the only discordant note in the connection between Enmešarra and the Sebettu remains the familial terms within which it is couched. Perhaps, as the Sebettu are functioning in a more divinized role herein, such constraints are loosened somewhat.

Though *šēp lemutti ina bīt amēli parāsi* is the longest incantation to feature the Sebettu, the use of them was popular enough that they appear in other similar contexts, as seen in another text focusing on the purification of a new house.⁵¹⁵ Present in Neo-Assyrian period tablets from the site of Kouyunjik, the text includes roughly twenty lines on both the obverse and reverse, both incomplete.⁵¹⁶ The Sebettu appear close to the beginning of the preserved section of text and their role parallels the one they play in the longer incantation:

⁵¹³ Farouk N. Al-Rawi and Andrew George, "Back to the Cedar Forest: the Beginning and End of Tablet V of the Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh," *JCS* 66 (2014): 82-83.

⁵¹⁴ *Enūma eliš*, Tablet IV: 52-56.

⁵¹⁵ Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*, 119-125.

⁵¹⁶ Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*, 119.

11 [sebet(imin)] *šalmī(nu)*^{meš} *šu-ut*^d *Sebettu(imin.bi) šá šaršerri*(^{im}sa₅) *lab-šú*
 12 [*šá*] *šalam(nu)*^d *na-ru-di ina panī(igi)-šú-nu ina XV bābi(ka₂) tešš(hur)-ir*

11 [Seven] figures of Sebettu, clad in red paste,
 12 [with] a figure of Narunde in front of them; you shall draw (them) on the
 right side of the gate.⁵¹⁷

They are later referenced in a more fragmentary part of the text, as the seven figures of the Sebettu followed by the seven figures of "weapon-men," and the seven figures of the sages (*apkallū(nun.me)*^{meš}). It is no surprise since seven is, as discussed, a grouping with a ritual and religious significance; the grouping persists throughout the ritual instructions of this and other incantations.⁵¹⁸ Given the common goal of both texts, the two find much in common. Not only is there a clear overlap in ritual – from what can be determined of the second, shorter and more fragmentary text – but also parallelism in the figures used and the supernatural beings or gods that they are meant to represent.

So, why these figures? Of all the uses of the Sebettu, why do we see them attain such relative popularity and narrative prominence in regard to incantations dedicated to the protection of a house? In this regard, the answer may better be found through examining the use as expressed in the royal sphere. The system of imagery used on Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs includes a number of chimerical figures employed for apotropaic purposes and placed strategically. Several of these figures may even be intended to parallel the Sebettu themselves, though we have only three examples of different animal-monster hybrids, and not the seven separate figures to offer a more perfect parallel.⁵¹⁹ Regardless, the ferocity of the Sebettu, as well as their more malleable nature, allowed for their employment as apotropaic figures in the household sphere. This was simply a redirection of their abilities – instead of working against the

⁵¹⁷ Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*, 120

⁵¹⁸ See Gotthard G.G. Reinhold, ed., *Die Zahl Sieben im Alten Orient: Studien zur Zahlensymbolik in der Bibel und ihrer altorientalischen Umwelt* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008).

⁵¹⁹ Green, "Iconography of Good and Evil," 83.

enemies of the state, they fight now against enemies that would threaten a single dwelling.

6.1.2. The Epic of Erra and Amulets

There are several potential avenues to consider when examining the links between literary texts and other genres of the Mesopotamian textual tradition. Royal inscriptions in Mesopotamia, carefully crafted pieces of propaganda, were written with the full awareness of and intent to utilize, the groundwork provided by divine precedents taken from the literary canon. The kings of Mesopotamia followed the examples established by warriors such as the gods Ninurta and Marduk. Furthermore, the same cast of divine characters populates ritual, hymnic, and literary texts.

More directly, however, certain texts belonging to one genre can be repurposed for other means. The clearest example of this is in the text of the *Epic of Erra*, where the epic itself is written upon apotropaic amulets.⁵²⁰ The *Epic of Erra* itself is a singular text, as the narrative shifts in the closing lines of Tablet V, the final tablet of the epic, and it dictates apotropaic powers mirroring an incantation:

Epic of Erra, Tablet V, 56-61:

- 56 *ina a-šir-ti um-ma-ni a-šar ka-a-a-an šu-me i-zak-ka-ru ú-zu-un-šú-nu*
 a-pet-ti
57 *ina bīt(e₂) a-šar ʔup-pu šá-a-šú šak-nu^d èr-ra li-gug-ma liš-gi-šú*
 ^dSebettu(imin.bi)
58 *pa-tar šip-ti ul i-ṭe-ḫi-šu-ma šá-lim-tu šak-na-as-su*
59 *za-ma-ru šá-a-šú a-na ma-ti-ma liš-šá-kin-ma li-kin ga-du ul-la*
60 *ma-ta-a-ti nap-ḫar-ši-na liš-ma-ma li-na-da qur-dī-ia*
61 *nišū(uḡ₃)^{mes} da-ád-me li-mu-ra-ma li-šar-ba-a šu-mì*

- 56 By the instruction of the scholars, where my name (Erra) is ever spoken, I
 will grant knowledge.
57 In the house where this tablet is set, though Erra may be furious and the
 Sebettu may be murderous,

⁵²⁰ Erica Reiner, "Plague Amulets and House Blessings," *JNES* 19 (1960): 148-55.

- 58 The sword of destruction/pestilence shall not approach it; rather, peace
will be assured for it.
59 May this song last forever and endure for all time,
60 May all the lands hear it and praise my might,
61 May the people see and extol my name.

This peculiar, incantation-style ending of *Erra* is echoed by its use on actual apotropaic amulets. These amulets all include quotations from the Epic of Erra and range from a full thirteen lines on the largest of the group to only five short lines on the smallest and most abbreviated. We may consider one of the amulets as treated in Reiner's discussion of them, K. 5984. Its lacuna is restored from comparison to a parallel amulet, TM 1931-2, which is now in Baghdad.⁵²¹ The first six lines of the former amulet, found in the British Museum, read as follows:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | [^d <i>Marduk</i> (amar.utu) <i>apkal</i> (ab)gal) <i>ilānī</i> (diġir me) |
| 2 | [^d <i>Īr-r</i>]a <i>qar-rad ilānī</i> (diġir me) |
| 3 | [^d <i>I</i>]- <i>šum nagir</i> (niġir) <i>sūqi</i> (sila) |
| 4 | [^d <i>Sebettu</i> (imin.bi)] <i>qar-rad la šá-na-an</i> |
| 5 | [<i>ana-ku</i>] ^{diš} <i>šum₄-ma</i> - ^d <i>Nabû</i> (muati) <i>mār</i> (dumu) <i>ilī</i> (diġir)- <i>šú</i> |
| 6 | <i>arad pa-liḫ-ku-nu</i> |
-
- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Marduk, the wise sage of the gods, |
| 2 | Erra, warrior of the gods, |
| 3 | Išum, herald of the street, |
| 4 | The Sebettu, warriors without equal, |
| 5 | Have mercy on me; Šumma-Nabû, the son of his god, |
| 6 | Your reverent servant. |

Both amulets close with the phrase that, should protection be assured upon the wearer, he will "sing your praises for all time to come to all mankind."⁵²² These amulets demonstrate the personal and private applications of *Erra*, as well as the adaptability of the text itself and the divine figures within it.

⁵²¹ R. Campbell Thompson, "A Selection from the Cuneiform Historical Texts from Nineveh (1927-32)" *Iraq* 7 (1940): 111, no. 41, fig. 17.

⁵²² Reiner, "Plague Amulets," 151.

6.1.3. The Sebettu in Namburbi Texts

Although the Sebettu appear broadly as protective figures in incantations, they take a particular role when acting as a part of rituals known as "namburbi." Written in Sumerian as *nam-bur₂-bi* or in Akkadian as *namburbû*, these texts intended to ward off evil foretold by any number of different unsolicited omens – that is, omens that appear without any prompting actions, such as astronomical omens, or omens based upon lightning strikes or other natural occurrences.⁵²³ Also included in this category are actions that could be considered prophetic – unsolicited, divinely transmitted, information.⁵²⁴ All of these omens are distinguished by the lack of control by the human agent: they were divinely sent and could only be argued with to a certain degree. A diviner could attempt verification through extispicy to confirm an unusual, unsolicited omen only so many times before further dispute risked angering the gods believed to have sent the omen in the first place.⁵²⁵ Solicited omens or oracles, on the other hand, such as extispicy, required an active request and direct engagement from the human diviner. Particular questions could be posed for confirmation and through the entire act the human agent or diviner retained a measure of control over the procedure.

As namburbi were responses to specific unsolicited omens, they were, at their core designed to counteract or avert the swiftly approaching ill fate. Thus, while they occupied a particular niche, namburbi incantations functioned similarly to apotropaic incantations by aiming to offset evil before it could strike. In this regard, namburbi texts and household blessings did not occupy mutually exclusive positions. One Neo-Assyrian text, a namburbi incantation to be

⁵²³ For a basic overview of Namburbi rituals, see: Caplice, "Namburbi Texts in the British Museum", Niek Velduis, "On Interpreting Mesopotamian Namburbi Rituals," *AfO* 42/43 (1995/1996): 145-54; Maul, *Zukunftsbewältigung*.

⁵²⁴ Maria deJong Ellis, "Observations on Mesopotamian Oracles and Prophetic Texts: Literary and Historiographical Considerations," *JCS* 41 (1989): 127-86.

⁵²⁵ Concerning the limitation on the number of times extispicy might be used to confirm an unsolicited omen: Ulla Susanne Koch, "Three Strikes and you're Out! A View on Cognitive Theory and the First-Millennium Extispicy Ritual," in *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World*, ed. Amar Annus (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010), 43-60.

performed when ill-omened *katarru*-fungus⁵²⁶ appeared on the walls of a house, lists the Sebettu as among the four household gods invoked, each governing a different cardinal direction.⁵²⁷ The incantation provides options for which god to invoke, depending upon which wall, and thus direction, the inauspicious fungi appears. To the north, Išum; to the east, the "goddess," presumably Ištar; to the south, Gula; and to the west, the Pleiades.⁵²⁸ Given the already stated links between the Sebettu and the west, their assignation to this direction is no coincidence, and the incantation details the Sebettu's role as follows:⁵²⁹

Namburbi against *katarru*-fungus: 58-64

- 58 *šumma*(diš) *ka-tar-ru ina bīt*(e₂) *amēli*(lu₂) *ina bar igāri*(iz.zi) *ina*
^{im}*amurri*(mar.tu) *ittabši*(i₃.gal₂)
59 *mār*(dumu.nita) *amēli*(lu₂) *imāt*(uš₂)-*ma bu-š*u₂-*š*u₂ :: *mim-u-š*u *dan-nu*
ileq(ti)-*qé*
60 *ana lemni*(hul) *katarru*(ka.tar) *š*u-tu-*qí*...
62 ... *mašgalla*(maš₂.gal) *bu-ru-qá*
63 *ina pāni*(igi) *zappi*(mul.mul) *tanakkis*(ku₅)^{is}-*ma mu-uḫ-ra* ^d*Sebettu*(imin.bi)
ilānū(diġir)^{meš} *rabūtu*(gal)^{meš}
64 *lemnu*(hul) *an-na-a pu-uṭ-ra taqabbi*(du₁₁.ga)-*ma*
- 58 If there is a *katarru*-fungus in the man's house on the outer west wall,
59 The son of the man will die and a strong man will take his belongings
60 To avert (the evils of) the *katarru*-fungus,
62 A goat with a red hide,
63 You will slaughter before the night sky and say: "Receive (this), the
Sebettu, the great gods,
64 Dispel this evil!"

The timing implied in the dedication of the incantation stresses the astral nature of the Sebettu.

Of the four known dedications to avert the evil of the *katarru*-fungus, the section associated with the Sebettu is the only one to be performed under the night sky, where the Pleiades, the astral

⁵²⁶ The *katarru*-fungus appears predominantly in omen texts; see *CAD* K: 303.

⁵²⁷ See Scurlock, "Ancient Mesopotamian House Gods," 101.

⁵²⁸ Scurlock, "Ancient Mesopotamian House Gods," 102. Scurlock cites Ištar-Dumuzi rituals that reference the "goddess of the house" as an epithet of Ištar as evidence for this similar reference to indicate that Ištar herself is the intended goddess here.

⁵²⁹ See R. Caplice, "Namburbi Texts in the British Museum V," *OrNS* 40 (1971):140 ff.

representation of the Sebettu, bear witness. The role of the night sky and the deities associated with it is well recorded in incantations; ritual objects could be consecrated directly by exposure to the stars and the particular deities the constellations represented.⁵³⁰ The link between divine figures and the importance of their astral associations, particularly in the ritual context, can even be seen in literary texts.⁵³¹

Aside from these direct references to the Sebettu, other incantations of similar type contain subtler potential allusions to the Seven and their astral representations. A first millennium namburbi text to ward against the evil portended by a lightning strike is rife with seven as a number by which divine offerings are made, and the latter sections of the text detail in depth the preparation of seven braziers, which are then lit. These braziers are linked to Nergal, and left outside on the roof for the stars to witness.⁵³² Once again, the very presence of the nighttime sky acquires a ritual significance.

The link between Nergal and seven braziers (or seven lights in the heavens) is elsewhere reiterated and is not restricted to the first millennium. It is seen in a much earlier text, with features that may date it, albeit not indisputably, prior to the Old Babylonian period.⁵³³ In it, Nergal is referred to as a terrifying serpent (ušumgal), before then referencing seven terrors or auras. These may refer directly to Nergal or to temples associated with him: "seven auras are

⁵³⁰ As seen in the text of the Old Babylonian Prayer to the Gods of the Night, where certain gods are clearly linked to their respective astral representations: See David Ferry and William L. Moran, "Prayer to the Gods of the Night," *Arion* 1 (1990): 186; Wayne Horowitz and Nathan Wasserman, "Another Old Babylonian Prayer to the Gods of the Night," *JCS* 48 (1996): 57-60.

⁵³¹ John Z. Wee, "Lugalbanda Under the Night Sky: Scenes of Celestial Healing in Ancient Mesopotamia," *JNES* 73 (2014): 23-42.

⁵³² Matsuzak notes in her discussion of this text that preposition *ana* may here indicate "under" instead of "for," and thus be a further instruction of the proper position and placement of the seven braziers. Matsuzak, "Evil Portended by a Lightning Strike," 139.

⁵³³ J. Petersen, "A New Occurrence of the Seven Auras in a Literary Passage featuring Nergal," *JANER* 8 (2008): 171-180.

imbued around their⁷ temple" (saĝ-ki-ne-ne-da ni₂ imin gur₃-ru).⁵³⁴ Outside of this text, the only reference we have to an individual possessing seven auae or me-lam₂ is found with the guardian of the Cedar Forest, Huwawa/Humbaba. Much like the Sebettu, Huwawa is hardly an example of an archetypal Mesopotamian demon – though such a description may be, inherently, a contradiction in terms. Strongly associated with the god Enlil, he acted under his authority; despite that, he also possessed unequivocally monstrous traits. The presence of his seven me-lam₂ is evidence of his dual divine-demonic nature.

6.1.4. Incantations on behalf of the King

Though the Sebettu may have spread to the realm of private use, that was not to the detriment of their capacity to serve the king. Given the warrior nature of the Sebettu, the references wherein they appear on behalf of the king are, unsurprisingly, closely associated with martial endeavors, such as the following incantation wherein the Sebettu appear as one of the deities protecting the king while he is abroad on campaign:

Incantation, Protecting the King from Enemies, 18-27:⁵³⁵

- 18 en₂-e₂-nu-ru li-lik^dnin-urta ina pa-ni-ia
19 ^dmes-lam-ta-è-a ina arkī(eĝir)-ia
20 ^dsebettu(imin.bi) šu-šu-rù pa-da-nam ina še-ri-ia
21 ša na-a-ri a-a i-la-am ša na-ba-li (erasure)
21a pu-ri-su a-a ip-te
22 mu-un-daḥ-šú e-s[īh[?] mu[?]]-rú-ta¹-am
23 mu-ut-tál-li-kam er-[še-tu(?)] i-iš-bat
24 i-na a-mat li-i-te-i[a ša iq-b]u-nim šar(man) kiššati(šar₂) ^dbēl(en)
ilī(diĝir)^{meš}
25 u^dti-ru-ru r[u-bar ḥar-ra]-na-a-ti
26 ka inim-ma lu₂-kur₂-r[še₃¹] e[den-na di]b-be₂-da-kam
27 ur-mah lu₂-r[sa¹-g[az dab]-ba-da-kam

18 Incantation: May Ninurta march before me,

⁵³⁴ Petersen, "A New Occurrence of the Seven Auae," 174.

⁵³⁵ Following the edition in Schwemer, "Protecting the King from Enemies."

- 19 Meslamtaea behind me;
 20 the Sebettu are clearing the way for me.
 21 May the (enemy) on the river not come ashore, may the (enemy) on land
 not run alongside.
 22 The warrior *is* [girded with d]eath,
 23 May the *ne*[therworld s]eize the roaming (enemy) -
 24 By the decree of [my] victory [which bestowed] on me the king of the
 universe and Lord-of-the-gods
 25 As well as Tiruru, *the* [queen of cam]paigns.
 26 It is the wording (of an incantation) for [go]ing [through the steppe] against
 the enemy,
 27 And overcoming the lion and the robber.

With the closing rubric of this incantation, the king and his army are effectively shielded from threats both civilized, or human (the robber), and wild, or animal (the lion). The text then continues with two lines of ritual instructions, dictating that one produce four figures, recite the incantation seven times, and then cast the four figures to the cardinal directions.

We also see the points of comparison and dissonance between this text, intended for royal use, and incantations utilized in the private or household sphere. The language of this text, including the positioning of the deities – both Ninurta and the Sebettu – is similar to the body of royal inscriptions which also reference the Sebettu. Additionally, the final figure of Tiruru, though associated with demonic figures, has, in this late period, strong connections to the goddess Ištar.⁵³⁶ This language is, however, also referenced in texts describing the deities who flank an individual to provide protection; in turn, they echo even earlier e₂-gal-kur-ra texts, examples of, if not entirely malevolent, at least effective, non-protective, magic.⁵³⁷ This text,

⁵³⁶ See Wiggermann, "Demons of Time," 114.

⁵³⁷ Aside from one poorly understood text that appears to be a letter-prayer written, somewhat duplicitously, on behalf of one posing as another, asking that evil befall the letter-writer, we have no examples of antagonistic magic in Mesopotamia. It is referenced in texts designed to counter its effects, particularly of the witchcraft variety, but the incantations that may have themselves been the impetus for such magic are non-existent. Of course, this is not entirely surprising – antagonistic magic, taboo as it would have been, would not have been the subject of a long and approved scribal tradition. E₂-gal-kur-ra texts, however, appear designed to influence the outcome of a particular legal decision – to ensure that one's case is successful in court. Thus, while they are not attempting evil, necessarily speaking (the loser of the legal case might have disagreed), they are designed to create an outcome other than neutralizing evil or preemptively protecting a person or property, and exist in their

then, suggests that both categories of incantations draw from the same basic conceptions of the Sebetu, reinforcing the similarities between the imagery and usage that governs the appearances of the Sebetu within them.

6.2. The Sebetu in the Standard Babylonian Udug Hul Series

The Udug Hul incantation series has a long history. It is one of the most prominent and prolific sources featuring the Sebetu, and the series has attested Old Babylonian sources, as discussed in Chapter Three. The full sixteen tablets are only represented in the first millennium recension. We may consider this particular version of the text the "standard" form; it remains, at present, the only published edition.⁵³⁸ Despite that, it is still important to recognize that the standard Babylonian text was the distillation of a tradition that had representative examples from the third millennium onwards. Thus, the incantation series has its foundations in much earlier periods of textual history. The presence of the Sebetu in Old Babylonian (and thus early second millennium) texts indicates that the Sebetu were also present in the incantation series from its earlier stages, though they may not have appeared in the same scope as within the first millennium standard edition.⁵³⁹

The first millennium texts provide a bounty of references and information concerning the Sebetu. They are one of the major antagonists within the series, appearing multiple times within the arc of the text and in major, headlining roles within its narrative. Their roles are thus complicated, to say the least. The first conundrum concerns their characterization within the incantation series, as they are not presented in a consistent fashion throughout the text, and are

own category as a result.

⁵³⁸ Geller, *Udug Hul*.

⁵³⁹ In particular, the final tablet XVI, wherein the Sebetu appear prominently, is only represented in the first millennium text. See John Z. Wee, "Grieving with the Moon: Pantheon and Politics in the Lunar Eclipse," *JANER* 14 (2014): 29-67.

given different, sometimes conflicting, genealogies, aims, and actions. In part, this may be attributed to the wide spectrum of the Sebettu's attestations within the text. They appear at the following points. Note that each grouping of line numbers indicates the specific incantation wherein the Seven appear:⁵⁴⁰

Tablet V: 76-100	Initial appearance of a group of demonic Seven, associated with evil winds.
Tablet V: 151-166	The Sebettu described as warriors, who were sired by Anu; they are also described as the evil ones of Ea.
Tablet V: 167-182	The Sebettu described as originating in the "cella in the source of the Apsû." Otherwise, the terminology parallels above incantation that references them.
Tablet VI: 154-155, 164-165	Incantation with large gap in middle of text, describes: "the heroes, sons of a single mother, the Seven..."
Tablet XII: 120-153	Describes the wise Seven, each associated with different cities. This reference, however, is almost certainly to the seven <i>apkallu</i> sages, and not to the Sebettu themselves. ⁵⁴¹
Tablet XV: 1-44	The Sebettu are the primary antagonists on this tablet. Their actions are as follows: Lines 1-15: Their initial description: they raise a clamor and have no names. Lines 16-37: The Sebettu devastate the earth and the heavens. They are given no offerings and are not worshipped and are therefore angry. Lines 38-57: The gods withdraw, and Girra consults with Marduk concerning the Sebettu. Lines 58-86: Girra is given instructions, followed by a Marduk-Ea formula.
Tablet XV: 210-219	Description of ritual materials, which cleanse the afflicted of the Seven.
Tablet XVI: 1-22	The Sebettu are described as "born in the base of the heavens," and given individual descriptions.
Tablet XVI: 23-78	The various gods consult with each other concerning the Sebettu: Enlil and Enki discuss the Seven's threat to the order in heaven (23-37), with further discussion by Nusku (38-44), who carries Enlil's message to Enki (45-53), after which follows a Marduk-Ea formula with prescriptions against the Sebettu (53-78).

⁵⁴⁰ All line and tablet numbers follow the numbering as in Geller's edition. (Geller, *Udug Hul*).

⁵⁴¹ In his description of the ring structure of the *Udug Hul* series, Geller labels Tablet XII as "sibitti" but the seven within the tablet are clearly representative of a benevolent group of seven, and not concretely attached to the identity of the Sebettu (See Geller, *Udug Hul*, xvii).

The Sebettu appear in both the initial and final sections of the series, though they are more prevalent and their appearances more critical as the narrative progresses. Discounting the seven sages who appear in Tablet XII, there is a significant gap between the earlier, (Tablets V and VI), and later (Tablets XV and XVI), appearances of the Sebettu. Geller, in his edition, suggests a ring composition for the narrative of the standard Babylonian series, but the gap between the appearances of the Sebettu cannot be explained by such a structure.⁵⁴² Indeed, the two tablets of the latter half of the series wherein the Sebettu are prominent are themselves atypical – Tablet XV belongs to the cohesive group of three tablets forming a single incantation (Tablets XIII-XV) and Tablet XVI is an independent incantation that appears to have been added onto the series as a whole. It itself describes the myth centered on the lunar eclipse, and will be considered in that light in both this and the following chapter.⁵⁴³

6.2.1. Provenance Uncertain: Issues of Origin

Some of the contradictions that cluster around the Sebettu may be put down to the long history of the text, while others are connected to the intrinsic nature of demons, which are themselves presented as an image constructed in negative – not according to what they are, but rather as what they are not. When the Sebettu first appear in Tablet V, they are given a divine lineage (albeit one that contradicts later genealogies included in the text). This portion of the text is also preserved, if fragmentarily, in the Old Babylonian version. As such, we can attribute it to the older portions of the text; the first millennium, more complete version, presents this section as follows:

Udug Hul, Tablet V: 167-182⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴² Geller, *Udug Hul*, xvi-xvii.

⁵⁴³ See Wee, "Grieving for the Moon."

⁵⁴⁴ Compare this section to the complementary passage in Geller, *Forerunners to Udug Hul*, Tablet III: 385-99.

167 en₂ imin-na-meš imin-na-meš
si-bit-ti-šú-nu si-bit-ti šú-nu
 168 idim apsû-ta imin-na-meš
ina na-gab ap-si-i si-bit-ti šu-nu
 169 še-ir-ka an du₁₁-ga-na imin-na-meš
zu-u'-u₄-nu-ti ina šamê(an) si-bit-ti šú-nu
 170 idim apsû-ta e₂-zil-ta e₃-a-meš
ina na-gab ap-si-i ina ku-um-me ir-bu-u šú-nu
 171 u₃ munus-nu-meš u₃ guruš nu-meš
ul zi-ka-ru šu-nu ul sin-niš-a-ti šu-nu
 172 e-ne-ne-ne lil₂-la₂ bu₂-bu₂-meš
šú-nu za-qí-qum mut-taš-rab-bi-tu-ti-šú-nu
 173 dam nu-tuku-a-meš dumu nu-tu-ud-da-meš
áš-šá-tam ul aḥ-zu ma-ri ul al-du šú-nu
 174 ḡar-šu ak-ak-da nu-un-zu-meš
e-ti-ra ga-ma-lu ul i-du-u
 175 a-ra-zu siskur₂-ra ḡiš nu-tuku-a-meš
ir-ri-bi taš-li-tu ul i-šim-mu-u
 176 anše-kur-ra hur-saḡ-ta e₃-a-meš
si-su-ú šá ina šadī(kur) ir-bu-u šú-nu
 177 ^den-ki-ke₄ ses-si-meš gu-za-la₂ diḡir-re-e-ne-meš
šá ^dé-a lem-nu-ti šú-nu gu-za-lu-ú šá ilānī(diḡir)^{meš}-šú-nu
 178 e-sir-ra lu₂-lu₂-a sila-a gub-ba-meš
su-la-a ana da-la-ḥi ina su-qí it-ta-na-za-zu šú-nu
 179 ses-si-meš lem-nu-ti šú-nu lem-nu-ti šú-nu ses-si-meš
 180 imin-na-meš imin-na-meš imin-a-ra₂ min-na-meš
si-bit-ti šú-nu si-bit-ti šú-nu si-bit a-di ši-na šú-nu
 181 zi an-na he₂-pa₃-de₃-eš zi ki-a he₂-pa₃-de₃-eš
 182 ka inim-ma udug-hul-a-kam

167 They are seven, they are seven,
 168 In the depths of the Apsû they are seven,
 169 Adorned in heaven, they are seven.
 170 They grew up in the depths of the Apsû, in the cella.
 171 They are not male or female.
 172 They are drifting ghosts.
 173 They take no spouse, they beget no son.
 174 They do not know how to spare lives or show mercy.
 175 They do not hear prayers or entreaties.
 176 They are donkeys that grew up in the mountains,
 177 They are the evil ones of Enki, they are the officials of the gods.
 178 They stand in the street and cause trouble.
 179 They are evil, they are evil!
 180 They are seven, they are seven, they are twice seven!
 181 May they be adjured by the heavens and by the earths!

182 It is the wording of the incantation of the evil udug.

From first glance, the connection between this version and the incantations quoted as lines 385-399 and 400-419 of the Old Babylonian monolingual Sumerian text is clear. We see the same essential aspects of the Sebettu: a group of evil demons that number seven, an origin in the depths of the Apsû, and thus a link to Enki. The sections are not identical, however: the Old Babylonian texts take care to connect the Sebettu to Enki through kinship.⁵⁴⁵ In format, this section resembles a combination both Old Babylonian incantations.

The qualities that do remain constant between the two texts pertain to the merciless nature of the Sebettu. They had originated on the outskirts of civilization but are, apparently, equally at home terrorizing the populated city streets, and the destruction they cause is set against civilization as a whole. The repeated attestations of these attributes speak to both their enduring qualities and also, and perhaps more importantly, to their transmissible aspects – that these characteristics of the Sebettu are well enough known that they remain present and attested despite the chronological gap. In this regard, the earlier and the later incantation series are in conversation with one another.

These texts raise considerations in regard to their grammar and translation on account of their bilingual nature. In general, my translation follows the Sumerian text, in part because the Udug Hul text represents Sumerian lines without their Akkadian complements, often in the rubric of the incantation, as seen in V: 181-182,⁵⁴⁶ while Akkadian lines do not appear unaccompanied by their corresponding Sumerian text. The two languages do not always yield the same translation, however, particularly regarding the person and number of the subject. This is

⁵⁴⁵ Geller, *Forerunners to Udug Hul*, Tablet III: 390.

⁵⁴⁶ 180 zi an-na he₂-pa₃-de₃-eš zi ki-a he₂-pa₃-de₃-eš

181 ka imin-ma udug hul-a-kam

180 Be adjured by the heavens, be adjured by the earths.

181 It is the incantation of the evil demon.

seen in V: 161-163⁵⁴⁷ – although the Akkadian text clearly shows grammar consistent with a second person address, and would more closely be translated as "may you be adjured," this second person address is not represented in the Sumerian. Furthermore, V: 160 demonstrates a clear third person plural subject, for the group of seven (or twice-seven) evil demons, in both the Akkadian and Sumerian texts.⁵⁴⁸ Tablet V: 181, which has no accompanying Akkadian text, displays the same third person plural subject, with the -eš suffix seen on both precative forms for the verb "to adjure:" he₂-pa₃-de₃-eš. A full study of the curious variants in the Akkadian and Sumerian of this bilingual text is, unfortunately, outside of the scope of this study, but there are definitive differences to be found between the two.

Given how popular the grouping of seven was in Mesopotamian texts – particularly in the ritual and cultic context – it must be underscored that not all groups of seven are, in fact, the Sebettu, particularly considering how rife the Uduḡ Hul texts are with such groups. For example, the incantation that spans lines 76-100 in Tablet V, and thus closely precedes the text discussed above, bears all the superficial marks of belonging to the Sebettu, as a group of seven beings is described and presented in particularly demonic terms. However, the seven are then identified with a range of other sevens – evil gods, Lamaštu, Labašu demons and other groups of malignant sevens – and it becomes clear that the group is but one in a demonic parade of sevens and cannot be associated directly with the Sebettu.

⁵⁴⁷ 161 zi an-na he₂-pa₃ zi ki-a he₂-pa₃
niš šame(an)-e lu-ú t[a-ma-ta niš-ti lu-ú ta-ma-ta]
 162 zi ^dsuen-na en ^ddili-im₂-babbar-ra-ke₄ he₂-pa₃
niš ^d30 be-el nam-ra-ši-it lu ta-ma-ta₅
 163 zi ^dhendur-sag-ĝa₂ niĝir sila-a sig₃-ga-ke₄ he₂-pa₃
niš ^di-šum na-gir su-qí šá-qu-um-mi lu ta-ma-ta₅
 161 Be adjured by the heavens, be adjured by the earths,
 162 Be adjured by Sin, by Dilimbabbar.
 163 Be adjured by Hendursaĝa, guardian of the quiet street.
⁵⁴⁸ 160 [i]gi ^dne₃-iri₁₁-gal ur-saĝ kala-ga ^den-lil₂-la₂-ke₄ mu-un-su₈-su₈-ge-eš
ina ma-ḫar ^dmin qar-ra-du dan-nu šá ^didim it-ta-na-al-la-ku šú-nu
 160 Before Nergal, the strong warrior of Enlil, they go.

6.2.2. The Sebettu Terrorize Society – Tablets XIII-XV

The Sebettu are the primary antagonists for Tablets XIII-XV. Their introduction in this section emphasizes their primary characteristics: from the beginning they are described in terms of a raucous, chaotic din, a cacophony, linked to the western and eastern mountain ranges.⁵⁴⁹ The passage that introduces them makes the breadth of their power clear:

Udug Hul, Tablet XIII, 9-13:

- 9 They are eminent(nir-ĝal₂-la/*etellu*) in heaven and earth,
- 10 They are the waves(a-ĝe₆/*agû*) in the sea,
- 11 They are the terrors(hu-luh-ha/*gilittu*) of the marsh(ambar/*apparu*),
- 12 They are the *asakku*-disease in the canebrake(^{ĝis}gi/*apu*),
- 13 They are the flaming embers(izi-ĝar) in the forest.

In each of these references, the Sebettu are portrayed as having supreme might and authority: of all the various terms that convey the concept of power or might, the text utilizes nir-ĝal₂, a complicated term that conveys to "have nir" or "authority." The term is often utilized in conjunction with kings and deities, appearing in reference to Gudea, Ur-Namma, Iddin-Dagan, and Rim-Sin, among others.⁵⁵⁰ Also written nam-nir-ĝal₂, the phrase designates a particular form of power or governance. The other references utilized in this passage share the exaggerated claims of power – the Sebettu are often described as waves, in particular those constituting a flood, one that would overwhelm the land and any who would oppose it. This, too, is associated with other deities.⁵⁵¹ We even see the link to the weapons that the deities may wield, as with Ninurta's mace and his ability to wage war: "like an onrushing flood (a mah e₃-a-gin₇),

⁵⁴⁹ Consider arguments on the noise of creation; see Michalowski, "The Unbearable Lightness of Enlil."

⁵⁵⁰ See Gudea Cylinder B: Col. 2, line 18.

⁵⁵¹ The text dedicated to Nungal references both her and her temple as such: see, Åke Sjöberg, "Nungal in the Ekur," *AfO* 24 (1973): 19-46.

overflowing in the mountains."⁵⁵²

Beyond the terror that the Sebettu inspire with their various references, they are also depicted in such a way that the threat they represent is preeminent in all possible locations. They are found in the heavens and on the earths, in the sea, in the marsh and canebrake, and in the forest. Effectively, there is nowhere one can go to escape them. The influence of the Sebettu even appears to encroach upon the human, inhabited world, with the final warning that the Sebettu are, as well, the "neglected fruit in gardens" (^{ĝi}š₆kiri₆-^{gi}š₆kiri₆-a gurun šu <kar>-ri-a-m[eš] / *ina ki-ra-a-tú ma-ši-'u in-bu šú-nu*).⁵⁵³

This section of the text provides further information on the motives, if they may be described as such, for the Sebettu's actions. The demons are described as being angered by their lack of offerings, and are therefore driven to these destructive attacks:

Udug Hul, Tablet XIII, 26-28:

- | | |
|----|--|
| 26 | e ₂ diĝir-re-e-ne-ke ₄ ba-an-re-re-a-meš
<i>bi-ta-at ilānī(diĝir)^{meš} ir-ta-nap-pu-du</i> |
| 27 | ^{zi} 2mad-ĝa ₂ la-ba-an-dub-dub-be ₂ -eš
<i>maš-ḥa-tu₄ ul is-sar-raq-šú-nu-tú</i> |
| 28 | siskur diĝir nu-ub-be ₂ -eš a-ra ₂ -bi hul ba-an-us ₂
<i>ni-qí-i i-lu ul in-naq-qí-šú-nu-tu a-lak-ta-šú-nu lem-né-et</i> |
| 26 | They continually wander about in temples, |
| 27 | But as no <i>mašhatu</i> -flour has been scattered for them, |
| 28 | And no divine offering has been made for them, their behavior is aggressive. |

The presence of daily offerings and upkeep for divinities was a central aspect of Mesopotamian religion – to such a degree that the Oppenheim described the religious system as maintained by

⁵⁵² Although, of course, this reference utilizes the image of a great mass of water (a mah) instead of a targeted wave of tsunami-like abilities, the destructive power is the same. See: Jerrold S. Cooper, *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1978), line 119.

⁵⁵³ Udug Hul, Tablet XIII: 15.

the "constant care and feeding of the gods,"⁵⁵⁴ and there is more concrete evidence for this in the presence of large quantities of foodstuffs relegated to temples, and the economic descriptions of schedule of daily offerings.⁵⁵⁵

In the end, the actions of the Sebettu affect even the great gods, who retreat to the heavens and abandon humanity and civilization, withdrawing their protection ([an]-na an-ne₂-bi-ne im-ma-an-gid₂-i-eš / [ana] *šamê(an)^e šá-qiš iš-du-du-ú-ma*).⁵⁵⁶ Finally, Marduk himself also withdraws to heaven, and the god Girra is left to deal with the problem and threat of the Sebettu.⁵⁵⁷ Following this, the text follows the conventions of the Marduk-Ea formula found in incantations, with the alteration of Marduk consulting with Girra in order to research and enact the ritual solution.

6.2.2.1. Marduk-Ea dialogue with Girra and Marduk

The Marduk-Ea dialogue is triggered by the lack of knowledge concerning the identity of the Sebettu: they are described as being unknown in both the heavens and on the earths, and are an unknown quantity from their entrance in the opening of this section of the text, described in great, and terrifying, detail, but deliberately left otherwise undefined – or rather, unidentified:

Udug Hul, Tablet XIII-XV, 7-8:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 7 | mu-ne-ne an-ki-a la-ba-an-ġal ₂ -la-a-meš
<i>šum-šú-nu ina šamê(an)^e eršeti(ki)^{ti} ul i-ba-áš-ši</i> |
| 8 | šid-de ₃ an-ki-a la-ba-an-šid-a-meš
<i>ina mi-na-at šamê(an)^e eršeti(ki)^{ti} ul im-man-nu-ú</i> |

⁵⁵⁴ A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 183.

⁵⁵⁵ Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001), 126-128.

⁵⁵⁶ Udug Hul, Tablet XIII-XV: 38.

⁵⁵⁷ On Girra: as a fire deity, Girra (or Gibil) was one of the three purificatory instruments used in incantations, and consequently his role herein is in line with those abilities. See R. Frankena, "Girra und Gibil," *RLA* 3 (1957-1971): 383-85;

- 7 Their names do not even exist, not in heaven nor on earth,
 8 And in the census of heaven and earth they are not counted.

The inability to identify the malevolent force threatening an individual is one of the hallmarks of the Marduk-Ea incantation formula: the former petitions his father for information because he is at a loss as to how to alleviate the situation and dispel the malignance threatening the patient. That information, once provided, comprises the ritual instructions for the incantation as well, creating a direct line of transmission from the divine to the *āšipu* and fully legitimizing his entire operation in the process. That he is completely incapable of identifying the Sebettu – indeed, that their anonymity appears to be staged and presented as one of their key traits – sets thus stage for the Marduk-Ea formula which dominates the following lines of this incantation, albeit with the god Girra fulfilling the role typically held by Asalluhi, the exorcist's divine stand-in:

Udug Hul, Tablet XIII-XV: 56-57

- 56 *kislah kur-ra-ke₄ gu₂ mu-un-la₂-eš*
 ina ni-du-ti er-še-ti it-te-né-'e-lu-ú
 57 *e-ne-ne-ne niĝ₂-nam nu-un-zu-meš an-ki-a nu-un-zu-meš*
 šú-nu mīm-ma šum-šú ú-tad-du-ú ina šamē(an)^e u eršetī(ki)^{ti} ul
 il-lam-ma-du
- 56 They go about in the uninhabited lands of the Netherworld.
 57 They are completely unknown, they are unknown on the heavens and
 earths.

This section reiterates the Seven's basic principles: that the Sebettu are unknown – even by the "wise gods" (*diĝir gal-an-zu-bi*) – and that they roam freely from the Netherworld to attack the inhabited, or civilized, lands. As long as the Sebettu are unidentified and undefined agents, they cannot be countered.

The Marduk-Ea dialogue works to correct this problem, by describing their origin, upbringing, dwelling, and current location:

Udug Hul, Tablet XIII-XV, 69-72:

- 69 imin-bi kur-ra e₃-a-meš
si-bit-ti-šú-nu ul-tu erše-ti(ki)^{ti} it-ta-šu-ni
70 imin-bi kur-ta ba-tu-ud-da-meš
si-bit-ti-šú-nu ina er-še-ti i'-al-du
71 imin-bi kur-ta ba-buluĝ₃-ĝa₂-meš
si-bit-ti-šú-nu ina er-še-ti ir-bu-ú
72 da-da engur-ra-ke₄ zukum-e ba-an-na-te-eš
i-da-at ap-si-i a-na ka-ba-si iṭ-ḫu-ú-ni
- 69 Those Seven came forth in the Netherworld,⁵⁵⁸
70 Those Seven were born from the Netherworld,
71 Those Seven were reared from the Netherworld,
72 They draw near and they tread on the edges of the Apsû.

In this stage of the text, the origin of the Sebettu that matters for the incantation at hand – and, in particular, for the effective countermeasures to their demonic actions – is one closely connected with the Netherworld. The Sebettu are strongly linked to the Netherworld and invade the inhabited world through skirting around the edges of the Apsû.

Once identified, ritual instructions are transmitted to counter the threat the Sebettu pose. Here, the standard incantation formula influences the overall threat of the Sebettu. Though they have been described in terms of their larger threat to society as a whole, the ritual instructions also include the means to drive away the Seven from an afflicted individual:

Udug Hul, Tablet XIII-XV, 74-78:

- 74 ^{ĝi}šma-nu ^{ĝi}šhul-dub₂-ba udug e-ne-ke₄
e-ri ^{ĝi}šhul-túp-pu-ú šá ra-bi-ši
75 ša₃-bi ^den-ki-ke₄ mu-pa₃-da
šá ina lib-bi-šú ^de-a šu-mu zak-ru
76 ka inim-ma tu₆-mah eridu^{ki}-ga na-ri-ga-am₃
ina šip-ti šir-ti ši-pat e-ri-du šá te-lil-ti
77 ur₂-pa-bi izi u₃-bi₂-tag lu₂-tu-ra imin-bi nu-te-ge₂₆-da-ke₄
ap-pa u iš-di i-šá-ti lu-pu-ut-ma ana mar-ši si-bit-ti-šú-nu a-a iṭ-ḫu-u
78 sa-par₃ dagal-la ki dagal-la nu₂-a u-me-ni-šub
ki-ma sa-pa-ri rap-šú ina áš-ri rap-šú šu-né-el i-di-ma

⁵⁵⁸ Perhaps as a consequence of being a late text, the Sumerian here is confused, and marks kur (Netherworld) with the locative, where we might expect the ablative-instrumental ta to correspond to the *ultu/ištu* in the Akkadian text.

- 74 The ^{giš}manu/erî-wood staff of the (protective) spirits (udug/rābišū),
 75 In the midst of which Ea is invoked by name,
 75 It is the wording of the incantation of Eridu; the purification:
 77 After you set fire to the tip and base (of the staff), so that the Sebettu do not
 draw near the patient,
 78 And toss (the flame) like a broad net spread out in a broad place...

The staff or scepter remains by the head of the patient, even during his sleep, so that he is protected from the Sebettu, and Girra is in turn invoked to further protect the patient. As in incantations where lesser demons are threatening the patient, the Sebettu are driven away from the afflicted individual, who is surrounded by a demarcated area of protected space.

6.2.3. Individual Imagery

The Sebettu are most often referred to as a collective, a group of seven operating as one single entity, and treated as such. Although the Udug Hul series treats the Sebettu as a group more often than not, it also presents the Seven as individuals, with specific imagery. In doing this, Udug Hul joins a small group of texts where the Sebettu are given similar treatment, joined by *Erra*, and the earlier texts of *Gilgameš and Huwawa A and B*, and the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*.

The incantation that comprises Tablet XVI is atypical in light of the rest of the Udug Hul series, comprises one cohesive text that focuses on the lunar eclipse, and the astral significance of the Sebettu influences the structure of the tablet as a whole.⁵⁵⁹ For our purposes, the tablet is useful for its introduction; it begins by presenting the Sebettu as individually and uniquely identified demonic figures, instead of as a collective grouping. This section introduces the Sebettu with the reminder that they are whirling storms and evil gods (diĝir hul), and that they wish to do harm and plan to commit murder and slaughter. It follows with:

Udug Hul, Tablet XVI, 5-12:

⁵⁵⁹ See Wee, "Grieving with the Moon."

- 5 imin-bi-ta ušum-am₃^{tumu}u₁₈-lu šur₂-ra-a na-nam
ina si-bit-ti-šú-nu iš-tén šu-ú-tu₄ ez-ze-tù-m-ma
6 min-kam ušumgal ka ġal₂-tak₄ lu₂-na-me sag nu-un-ġa₂-ġa₂-e-da
šá-nu-ú u-šum-gal-lu šá pi-i-šú pi-tu-ú man-ma la-i-'i-ir-ru-šú
7 eš₈-kam piriġ-banda₃ huš-a sa-kar-ra⁵⁶⁰ ba-an-dib-be₂-eš
šal-šu nim-ru ez-zu šá pi-i-ru i-ba-'a-a
8 limmu-kam muš-mir hu-luh-ha na-nam
ri-bu-ú šib-bu gal-ti šu-[ú]
9 ia₂-kam-ma piriġ šu-zi-ga a-ga-bi-še₃ tu-lu nu-un-[gi₄-gi₄]
ha-áš-šá lab-bi na-ad-ri šá ana arkati(eġir)-šú ni-'i-a la [xxx]
10 aš₃-kam-ma [a-ġe₆]-a zi-ga diġir lugal-la-še₃ [xxx]
šeš-[šu a-gu]-ú ti-bu-ú šá ana ili(diġir) u šarri(lugal) [xxx]
11 imin-kam-ma [^{tumu}mir]-ra im-ul-a gi₄-[gi₄]
si-bu-ú me-hu-ú šá-a-ru lem-nu šá gi-mil-li tur-^rru¹
12 imin-bi-e-ne lu₂-kin-gi₄-a an lugal-la-a-meš
si-bit-ti-šú-nu mar šip-ri šá^da-nim šar-ri šú-nu

- 5 Among the seven of them, the first, the furious south wind is he,
6 And the second is a gaping-mouthed dragon, towards whom no one dares
advance,
7 The third one is a furious young lion, which *the work force encountered*,
8 The fourth one, a frightening serpent is he,
9 The fifth one is a lion rampant, which no one can turn [back],
10 The sixth one is a wave rising against god and king,
11 The seventh one is a storm, a destructive wind wreaking vengeance,
12 The seven of them are messengers of the king, Anu.

In addition to providing critical individual identifications of the Sebettu, this passage provides another key association in line 12: the role of the Sebettu as messengers of the god Anu. The references themselves fall into three categories: metaphors based in natural elements (such as winds, waves, and storms) as with the first, sixth, and seventh of the Sebettu; dragons and serpents, used for the second and fourth; and, finally, lions. The text, however, does distinguish between a young (piriġ-banda₃) and an adult (piriġ) lion for the third and fifth, respectively. Comparisons to the former are most common in texts relating to Shulgi, and the references to the former are far less common than allusions including the latter.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁶⁰ The meaning of sa-kar-ra is obscure: this reference aside, the term does not appear outside of lexical lists.

⁵⁶¹ Piriġ-banda₃ appears in particular the texts of Shulgi A (line 71), Shulgi D (line 24) and Shulgi O (line 26).

The imagery pertaining to the Sebettu that finds its roots in terrifying, fierce weather imagery – storms, rain, and floods – is the most common and transparent of the seven disparate references to the Sebettu and connects to imagery used to describe demons in general. The draconic and serpentine references, on the other hand, fall more closely in line with those employed in *Erra*, as that text references both a gaping-mouthed dragon (ušumgal ka ġal₂-tak₄) and a frightening serpent (muš-mir hu-luh-ha). In regard to the first, we see that the use of the particular term "gaping mouth," is also used in connection to natural events or features: "the gaping mouthed mighty river" (i₇ mah ka ġal₂ tak₄), for example.⁵⁶² The other descriptor, the muš-mir serpent, is also found within a similar context, where a temple is described as "risen to the heavens like a muš-mir serpent" (e₂ an-še₃ muš mir-re-ġin₇ zig₃-ga).⁵⁶³

The text conveys a sense of inevitability concerning the behavior of the Sebettu: following their introduction, they "move from city to city, bringing nightfall (or dusk) with them" (uru-uru-am₃ an-usa₂-da ġa₂-ġa₂-meš/ a-li ana a-li da-um-ma-ta i-šak-ka-nu šú-nu).⁵⁶⁴ They are further accompanied by their now familiar storm imagery. The Sebettu causing rain, however, stands as a nearly positive addition to their repertoire of imagery.⁵⁶⁵ For all that the references to the Sebettu in the *Hymn to Hendursaġa* are anomalous when considered against the backdrop of the more cohesive body of imagery found in Udug Hul and the other two texts, the section quoted above does provide one thread of connection. The Sebettu, in their function as heralds and watchmen in the *Hymn to Hendursaġa*, are most active at dusk and dawn, and keep

⁵⁶² See Kesh Temple Hymns, Line 124.

⁵⁶³ See Kesh Temple Hymns, Line 50.

⁵⁶⁴ Udug Hul, Tablet XVI: 13.

⁵⁶⁵ Specifically, the Sebettu appear as "the dense clouds, causing rain in the evening" (dungu-sir₃-ra an-na-ke₄ im-še₃ hi-ši in-ġa₂-ġa₂-meš / er-pe-tu₄ šá-pi-tu₄ šá ina šamê(an)^e da-um-ma-ta i-šak-ka-nu šú-nu). See Udug Hul, Tablet XVI: 15.

watch throughout the long night. Despite their antagonistic qualities, the Sebettu still appear to maintain an inherently ambiguous nature, particularly in light of their connections to other deities, as further evidenced by the following passage:

Udug Hul, Tablet XVI, 19-22:

- 19 a₂-zi-da ^diškur su₈-s[u₈]-meš
 ina i-mit-ti ^diškur(im) il-l[a-ku]
- 20 an-ur₂-ra nim-gir₂-gin₇ [gir₂-gir₂-re-meš]
 ina i-šid šamê(an)^e ki-[ma] bir-qí it-ta-[nab-ri-qu šú-nu]
- 21 saĝ ĝiš ra-ra-e-de₃ šag-ta s[u₈-s]u₈-meš
 né-er-tú ana na-a-ri ina maḥ-ri il-la-ku šú-nu
- 22 an dagal-la ki-tuš an lugal-la-ke₄ hul-lu-bi su₈-ga-meš gaba-ri nu-tuku-a-meš
 *ina šamê(an)^e rap-šu-ti šu-bar^d a-nim šar-r[i] lem-niš iz-za-zu-ma
 ma-hi-ra ul i-šú-u*
- 19 They walk on the right side of Iškur.
 20 On the horizon they flash like lightning,
 21 They go first, in order to commit murder.
 22 In the broad heaven, the dwelling of Anu, the king, they are ready to do
 evil, they are without rival.

Whereas the Sebettu were described in an earlier section as the messengers (lu₂-kin-gi₄-a /*mār šipri*) of Anu, here the text reiterates that they fall fully under his authority. The previous reference to their function as messengers is also in line with their border-crossing abilities: the only beings capable of regularly traversing the border of the Netherworld were divine messengers. Here, however, their actions – standing beside Iškur, moving forward ahead of any others – are more akin to the flanking motions depicted by protective spirits in incantations. They also echo the behavior of the Seven characteristic of their appearances in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions.

6.2.4. Comparing Imagery

The individual references to the Sebettu that populate the Udug Hul series provide an

analog by which to consider the unusual references found in the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*, which remain the discordant set in the otherwise connected group of references. Considering how distinct the references in the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa* are, in comparison to the other three texts (i.e., the imagery found in the *Epic of Erra*, the *Udug Hul* series, and *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A and B*), the only means to uncover any direct lines of connection is to compare the references side-by-side. As the imagery in *Udug Hul* is the most well preserved and is represented in Sumerian, this text is used for comparative purposes, although it is, of course, much later than the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*.⁵⁶⁶

Although bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian, the *Udug Hul* text focuses here on its Sumerian, for ease of comparison with the monolingual Sumerian of the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*. The numbers pertaining to the specific lines of the *Udug Hul* text are in bold:

Hymn to Hendursaĝa, 78-84 compared to *Udug Hul*, 16: 5-11

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 78 | Among the seven, the first is as a fox, dragging its tail, |
| 5 | Among the seven of them, the first, the furious south wind is he, |
| 79 | The second is like a dog, scenting [about], |
| 6 | And the second is a gaping-mouthed dragon, towards whom no one dares advance, |
| 80 | The third is like a raven, pecking at larva, |
| 7 | The third on is a furious young lion, which <i>the work force encountered</i> |
| 81 | The fourth is as a mighty bird of prey/vulture, which eats the dead, overpowering, |
| 8 | The fourth one, a frightening serpent is he, |
| 82 | The fifth, although not a wolf, falls upon the black lamb, |
| 9 | The fifth one is a raging lion, which no one can turn [back] |
| 83 | The sixth, like a perched harrier, screeches, |
| 10 | The sixth one is a wave rising against god and king, |
| 84 | The seventh, a <i>snapping turtle/shark</i> , flitting about in the water. |
| 11 | The seventh one is a storm, a destructive wind wreaking vengeance. |

From first glance, the difference between the two sets of imagery is stark – the *Hymn to*

⁵⁶⁶ It should be noted, however, that until a full edition of the *Udug Hul* texts, with the sources of each particular passage from the composite text, is available, the possibility that particular parts of the standard Babylonian text were, in fact, represented in earlier periods remains.

Hendursaĝa is clearly from an entirely different tradition localized in Lagaš, one that does not extend to the more widespread imagery that dominates the *Udug Hul* texts. The text of the latter is, by and large, more abstract, if equally terrifying. While there are animal references within the *Udug Hul* set of seven, they are all animals that themselves exist on the borders of the monstrous – a dragon (ušumgal), young lion (piriĝ banda), serpent (muš-mir), and lion rampant (piriĝ šu-zi-ga).⁵⁶⁷ In contrast, the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa* images are linked to actual - and quite real – animals, which are also far more specific than the somewhat vague notions of terrifying animals that constitute the images in the *Udug Hul* texts. The animal imagery that populates the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*, furthermore, is connected to the actions of those respective animals – the vulture consumes the dead and the harrier cries out, and while these actions may themselves fall in line with images of battle or ferocity, they are, regardless, also the actions with which these animals are associated. In each line of the text, the comparison underscores the connection to the animal itself, whereas the mythical and monstrous comparisons of the *Udug Hul* text distance the Seven from the real.

6.2.5. Terrifying Radiance: the me-lam₂/melammu of the Sebettu

Within *Udug Hul*, the Sebettu are characterized as possessing me-lam₂ or *melammu*, a terrifying, often divine, radiance most commonly associated with gods and kings. The idea of me-lam₂ can be understood as a more abstract notion – a radiance that terrifies all those who behold it – or it can exist as a more concrete construct, as in something that functions as an aura, or force-field, that repels and protects against attacks. The most noted example of the latter quality is seen in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, where Gilgamesh must trick Huwawa into lowering

⁵⁶⁷ On the significance of lion and lion-imagery, see: Brent Strawn, *What is Stronger than a Lion?: Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, vol. 212 of *OBO* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

his seven auras (me-lam₂) before he can defeat him. As demons are not often linked to me-lam₂, the Sebettu's possession of the quality is unusual, though not unattested for demonic entities. While me-lam₂ is most commonly linked to gods and divine figures, kings, temples and other sacred buildings and objects are also given me-lam₂, though less frequently.

The Akkadian equivalent for me-lam₂, *melammu*, is often found alongside the term *puluḫtu*. The latter is, semantically, easier to pin down, connoting not just awe, but also a sense of terror as well.⁵⁶⁸ Generally, as the former appears in a wide variety of contexts, it is best approached through an analysis of the circumstances wherein it appears.⁵⁶⁹ Both terms, and the concept itself, find parallels in the representation of the divine presence in Biblical texts, which describe divine glory in terms of overwhelming light and blazing fire.⁵⁷⁰ When considered in isolation, however, me-lam₂ lacks a clear semantic definition: although the word is composed of two independent Sumerian words, me and lam₂, only the former is concretely and independently defined. Me, rendered most often as *parṣu* in Akkadian, does not find any direct parallels in English, as it rather embodies both the concepts of cosmic order and of divine function.

As a concept, me-lam₂ it is not restricted to gods though it has the most common and direct links to divine figures. A number of different figures, animate and inanimate, can be described in conjunction with me-lam₂.⁵⁷¹ The first of these are monsters and other mythical animals, as is seen in the monsters of *Enūma eliš*, where Tiamat clothes her monsters in both

⁵⁶⁸ Shawn Zelig Aster, *The Unbeatable Light: Melammu and its Biblical Parallels*, AOAT 384 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 81-85.

⁵⁶⁹ Aster, *The Unbeatable Light*.

⁵⁷⁰ While the most comprehensive direct consideration of divine radiance in ancient Near Eastern and Biblical contexts is to be found in Aster, *The Unbeatable Light*, other sources deal with this relationship as well. See Michael B. Hundley, *Keeping Heaven on Earth: Safeguarding the Divine Presence in the Priestly Tabernacle*, FAT Vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 39-43. Hundley's work takes a different approach than Aster's, in focusing on the priestly system itself and its interpretations and expressions of the divine presence, as opposed to a more direct analysis of the divine presence itself as represented in text and image.

⁵⁷¹ Aster, *The Unbeatable Light*, 60-66, specifically 2.8.1-2.8.6.

puluḫtu and *melammu*.⁵⁷² The most notable monstrous figure bearing *melammu* or *me-lam₂* is, as previously discussed, Huwawa, the guardian of the cedar forest in the Gilgamesh cycle of texts. In this regard, *me-lam₂* or *melammu* indicates an overwhelming power and the ability to terrify those who would stand against the particular monster. For example, the mere act of entering the cedar forest where Huwawa dwells is enough to cause terror to seize an individual: "and the one who goes into [Huwawa's] forest, infirmity will seize him / *u a-rid tiri(tir)-šú i-ṣab-bat-su [lu]-u'-tu*.⁵⁷³ After Huwawa's defeat by Gilgamesh and Enkidu, Enlil places his seven *melammu* in different temples, echoing one of the other associations of *melammu*; namely, as a property of walls and buildings, which are given me to emphasize their own majesty or their martial and protective qualities. In the case of the latter – the appellation is often applied to the walls of a city, for example.

This overwhelming terror, the sense of something that cannot be withstood or overcome, is also seen when the term is attributed to illnesses and to the demons that may cause them. The sense that an illness or a demon can expand in all directions to envelop the afflicted, falls in line with general depictions of demons possessing individuals, when they can be described as covering or enveloping one's body like a cloth. In this sense, the term *melammu* is a useful tool by which to describe the characteristic behavior of demonic entities. Also in line with the terrifying power of *melammu*, the term is attributed to weapons, particularly those carried by divine figures, such as Ninurta's mace in the text of *Angimdimma*, described as: "the mace, the terror of which envelops the land / ^{ḡiṣ}tukul ni₂ me-lam₂-a-ni kalam-ma [dul-la] : *kak-ku šá pu-luḫ-tu me-lam-me-šú ma-a-tum [kat-mat]*.⁵⁷⁴ This association between *melammu* and

⁵⁷² *Enūma eliš* II 24; III 28, 86.

⁵⁷³ Transliteration following Andrew George's edition: *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, Tablet II: 229.

⁵⁷⁴ Jerrold S. Cooper, *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur: An-gim dīm-ma* (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1978), line 147.

weapons can be seen as early as the Ur III period, in descriptions of the weapons and power of the king, and it is found throughout the history of the term's attestations.⁵⁷⁵

While demons can claim *me-lam₂* as one of their attributes, it is one of the more unusual applications of the term. Within the Udug Hul corpus, however, the Sebettu consistently employ *me-lam₂* as one of their attributes. They are described in terms of a divine radiance and fearsome aura, which shrouds their appearance and disguises them from the gods.⁵⁷⁶ This reference occurs first in a previously quoted section, Udug Hul XIII: 1-15, and the occurrences repeat when the text describes the malevolent actions of the Sebettu, who disturb and destroy society:

Udug Hul XIII, 23-24:⁵⁷⁷

- | | |
|----|---|
| 23 | <i>ni₂ su-zi u₁₈-lu-gin₇ mu-un-da-ru-uš me-lam₂ dul-la-meš</i>
<i>pu-luḥ-tú šá-lum-ma-tu₄ ki-ma a-le-e ra-mu-ú me-lam-mu kát-mu šú-nu</i> |
| 24 | <i>a₂-ur₂ ki-nu₂ u₄-zal-le-ke₄ me-lam₂ šu₂-šu₂-a-meš</i>
<i>pu-zur ma-a-a-al ki-mu u₄-mu ú-nam-ma-ru me-lam-mu saḥ-pu šú-nu</i> |
| 23 | Like the <i>alu</i> -demon, they are imbued with terrifying radiance; they are covered with <i>melammu</i> . |
| 24 | They make the secret of the bed as clear as day, they are covered by <i>melammu</i> . |

The comparison with another demon – here, the *alu* – suggests that *me-lam₂* can be attributed to other demonic entities, though such attribution is a rare occurrence. The use of *me-lam₂* in this passage runs in line with the overall characteristics of the aura – it prevents the Sebettu from being known, covering them, cloaking their presence. It also, however, works to impose a sense

⁵⁷⁵ Namely, Šu-Sîn describes one of his weapons, in a statue inscription, as the "arm of combat whose terrifying *melammu* reaches up to the sky / a₂-nam-ur-saĝ-ĝa₂ ni₂-me-lam₂-bi an-ne₂ us₂-sa." Douglas Frayne, *RIME 3/2* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 1.4.4, 307.

⁵⁷⁶ Udug Hul 13-15: 5, 23, 24, 50.

⁵⁷⁷ This section of the text is represented, nearly in full, in *CT 16 42* lines 39-41, and discussed as well in Shawn Zelig Aster, *The Unbeatable Light*, 26-27. Although Aster references Geller's *Forerunners to Udug Hul: Sumerian Exorcistic Incantations*, in his monograph, he does not cite Geller's *Evil Demons* edition of the Udug Hul series. However, in translation, both he and Geller are in agreement in describing the *melammu* associated with the Sebettu as a representation of the demons' power, and not as an actual mask the demons use to disguise themselves, as Oppenheim interprets the passage.

of awe and terror on any who would approach them. The presence of me-lam₂ works to reinforce both the terror and unknown, and thus liminal, qualities of the Sebettu.

6.3. Malevolence and Benevolence: A Survey of the Incantations as a Whole

Principally, the Sebettu have become beneficial forces in this period, and are only employed in apotropaic functions. Their major appearance as malignant entities is found within the Udug Hul series, and those characteristics, much like the entire incantation series itself, are linked to much older roots. The negative actions of the Sebettu in the Udug Hul texts are, however, less a throwback and more of an appeal to the roots grounding a very long tradition. The prominent role of the Sebettu within this series speaks, as well, of the long history of the Seven: as the incantation series evolved, so did their role within it. However, although the earliest concrete attestations of the Sebettu within the Udug Hul series can be found within the Old Babylonian sections of the incantation series, the sections of the text where they have full prominence are found most fully represented in the first millennium, standard Babylonian recension.

By this period, the Sebettu have become firmly fixed in their role as protective figures, but that role is in turn one rooted in their martial abilities, and thus, their ability to command the image of terrifying, destructive warriors. Their appearance in this first millennium version helps to reinforce the ability of the Sebettu to devastate any enemy or obstacle in their path. It is hardly an accident that this ability is reintroduced in a period where the Sebettu are now employed beneficently – in fact, it is a trait in more demand than ever thanks to their new role. The Sebettu's use in protective incantations on a private, household scale may have initially been legitimized by the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions that employed them as warriors on behalf of the king, but it is their efficacy as martial figures that popularized their apotropaic use.

Chapter Seven: In the Heavens, They are Seven: The Iconography of the Sebettu and the Presence of the Pleiades on Cylinder Seals

The peoples and cultures of Mesopotamia possessed a profoundly different relationship to the natural world than can be found in modern, and particularly, industrialized societies. This may seem, at surface level, self-evident, but the depth to which natural phenomena shaped the Mesopotamian world view cannot be overstated. Its importance can be seen in dualities such as the division between the civilized and inhabited world of the city and the desolate and demon-haunted desert or mountains that lay beyond.⁵⁷⁸

One of the most prominent of these natural phenomena was the sky itself. While the sun, the embodiment of the god Utu/Šamaš, and the moon, the embodiment of the god Nanna/Sîn, held obvious significance given their overall prominence and constant presence as natural phenomena, most members of the pantheon had astral representations, appearing as stars or other planets.⁵⁷⁹ Considering the stunning celestial theater presented by the nighttime sky as experienced by a society without the dimming effects of light pollution, the presence of a full roster of astral representations for divine figures is unsurprising.⁵⁸⁰

The Sebettu, seven in number, are represented astrally by the Pleiades star cluster, a

⁵⁷⁸ On demons and the desert in the ancient Near East as a whole, see: Henrike Frey-Anthes, "Concepts of 'Demons' in Ancient Israel," *WdO* 38 (2008): 38-52; concerning the desert and its connection to the Netherworld, see: Matthew J. Suriano, "Ruin Hills at the Threshold of the Netherworld: the Tell in the Conceptual Landscape of the Ba'al Cycle and ancient Near Eastern Mythology," *WdO* 42 (2012): 210-30.

⁵⁷⁹ Solar mythology, of course, is a thread that underlies many polytheistic pantheons, both those chronologically or geographically contiguous to Mesopotamia – such as the sun-god Re in Egypt – and those far from the ancient Near East, such as the sun goddess Amaterasu (one of the less common female solar deities) of Japan, who was first represented in the *Nihon Shoki* and *Kojiki* of the early 8th century CE.

⁵⁸⁰ There have been efforts to consider the effects of light pollution on culture in response to how the lack of a full-dark sky may impact society and its interactions with the natural world. See Terrel Gallaway, "The Value of the Night Sky," in *Urban Lighting, Light Pollution, and Society*, ed. Josiane Meier, Ute Hasenöhrl, Katharina Krause et al. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 267-83.

pairing with old, deeply entrenched roots. The Pleiades, properly titled Messier 45 or M45, are one of the nearest star clusters to earth and the group of seven more recognizable stars within the cluster - which actually contains over a thousand confirmed members – is easily identifiable by virtue of its being one of the brightest celestial bodies in the night sky.⁵⁸¹ The rise of astral representations is pinned to the increasing significance of astral divination in the Neo-Assyrian period, though the Sebettu's connections to their astral representation exist in far earlier periods.⁵⁸² The Pleiades are also represented in artistic sources, commanding a complex iconography, the study of which forms the basis of this chapter. Although the references to the Pleiades in textual sources appear limited to the literary corpus, and, in particular, the earlier Sumerian sources such as the Lugalbanda epics and *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A and B*, artistic representations of the Pleiades are a later development, and they appear on objects noted for their common – or personal – use; most notably, cylinder seals. An examination of the presence of the Pleiades in artistic sources, however, first necessitates a brief discussion of the role of astral representations of the other members of the pantheon, as their representations were used in tandem with that of the Pleiades.

⁵⁸¹ The Pleiades' position as a bright, easily recognizable astral body places them as significant figures in the mythologies of many different cultures, and they held particular prominence within Greek mythology, which stands as the point of origin of their modern name. They were arguably used as a marker for sailing in the Mediterranean during this period, thanks to their predictable patterns of appearance.

⁵⁸² On the importance of celestial divination in the Neo-Assyrian period, see: Lorenzo Verderame, "Astronomy, Divination, and Politics in the Neo-Assyrian Empire," in *Handbook of Archaeoastronomy and Ethnoastronomy* (New York: Springer, 2015), 1847-53; and the following two articles in *Divination and the Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World*, ed. Amar Annus (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2010): Cynthia Jean, "Divination and Oracles at the Neo-Assyrian Palace: the Importance of Signs in Royal Ideology," 267-76 and Niek Veldhuis, "The Theory of Knowledge and the Practice of Celestial Divination," 77-92. See also Eleanor Robson, "Empirical Scholarship in the Neo-Assyrian Court," in *Die empirische Dimension altorientalischer Forschungen*, ed. Gebhard J. Selz and Klaus Wagensohnner (Vienna: LIT Verlag), 603-29; Karen Radner, "Royal Decision-Making: Kings, Magnates, and Scholars," in *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, ed. Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 358-79; and Joel Sweek, "Inquiring for the State in the Ancient Near East: Delineating Political Location," in *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*, ed. Leda Jean Ciruolo and Jonathan Lee Seidel (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 41-45.

7.1. The Celestial Mechanics of the Pleiades

If the actions of the Pleiades constellation, its passage across the night sky, and the other particular celestial figures that it may appear together with, inform the actions taken by the Sebettu in texts as well as in the general Mesopotamian consciousness, it is, first and foremost, necessary to detail those actions of the Pleiades. This is a task made less arduous thanks to the eminently predictable nature of celestial mechanics and increasingly accessible means to access this information. The astronomers of Mesopotamia were also, of course, capable of predicting celestial events such as eclipses, as was required for the preparation of celestial omen compendia, where the presence – or absence – of such events had prognosticatory significance.⁵⁸³ For our purposes, most of the examples discussed in this chapter will use the city of Babylon as an example, though the state of the sky from more northern locations, such as Aššur, can also be considered.⁵⁸⁴

We can first attain a sense of the times of sunrise and sunset in Mesopotamia during the first millennium. Of course, these would have differed slightly according to the particular city,⁵⁸⁵ but given the test location of Babylon, (modern day Tell al-Hillah, coordinates 32° 29' 0" N, 44° 26' 0" E) and the date of 700 BCE, we see the following times of sunrise and sunset, adjusted to the local time⁵⁸⁶ and linked to the first of each month of the current (Gregorian) calendar.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸³ For example, we see that a lunar eclipse occurring when one was not predicted – or, alternatively, not occurring on schedule – would be a very negative omen.

⁵⁸⁴ With relatively little variance seen from either location in regard to the behavior of any of the astral representations under discussion.

⁵⁸⁵ This is more a consideration when examining the movements of the stars and planets as observed from locations with significantly different latitudes: the differences in longitude, which would affect times of sunrise and sunset, are less pronounced. The city of Aššur, for example, is found at 35° 29' 24" N, 43° 15' 45" E, compared to Babylon's location of 32° 29' 0" N, 44° 26' 0" E.

⁵⁸⁶ Adjusted from Coordinated Universal Time (UTC).

⁵⁸⁷ Data of times of sunrise and sunset compiled from information found on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Earth System Research Laboratory (NOAA ESRL): www.esrl.noaa.gov

Table 2: Times of Sunset and Sunrise

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Approximate Mesopotamian Month
April 1	05:44	18:23	<i>Nisānum</i>
May 1	04:57	18:50	<i>Ayyarum</i> (Iyyar)
June 1	04:27	19:18	<i>Simānum</i>
July 1	04:25	19:30	<i>Dumzi</i>
August 1	04:52	19:13	<i>Abum</i>
September 1	05:26	18:33	<i>Ulūlu</i> (<i>Elūnum</i>)
October 1	05:59	17:45	<i>Tašrītum</i>
November 1	06:36	17:01	<i>Araḥsamna</i>
December 1	07:12	16:40	<i>Kislīnum</i>
January 1	07:31	16:52	<i>Ṭebētum</i>
February 1	07:14	17:24	<i>Šabāṭum</i>
March 1	06:36	17:54	<i>Addarum</i>

In terms of longitude, more critical in regard to the length of the day during the year, the location of this site is roughly equivalent to that of the cities of San Diego, Nagasaki, or Marrakech, to use several internationally scattered examples. There is some variance in regard to the length of sunlight, but relative proximity to the equator at only 32° 29' 0" N prevents true extremes of daylight length during the summer as opposed to the winter. Building on this information, the following times are those when the Pleiades constellation would have been visible, working again from the sample site of Babylon at 700 BCE.

Table 3: Patterns of Visibility of the Pleiades

Date	First Visible	No Longer Visible
April 1	Sunset	18:50
May 1	Pre-dawn ⁵⁸⁸	Sunrise
June 1	03:00	Sunrise
July 1	01:00	Sunrise
August 1	02:45	Sunrise
September 1	23:45	Sunrise
October 1	21:45	Sunrise

⁵⁸⁸ The constellation is seen briefly in the pre-dawn hours.

November 1	18:30	05:15 ⁵⁸⁹
December 1	17:00	03:15
January 1	Sunset	01:15
February 1	Sunset	23:15
March 1	Sunset	21:30

Interpreting this data presents the following pattern: that the star cluster begins to appear on the very edge of the eastern sky beginning in May in the immediate pre-dawn hours. The Pleiades appear in the eastern sky earlier and earlier at night as the year progress, allowing them to exist as a visible astral phenomenon for longer and longer periods and to thus cover more of the sky as they move from east to west. This behavior continues until October and November, when the Pleiades appear closely following sunset and cross over the entire sky, to nearly reach the western horizon. In the months of December and January, the Pleiades have already entered the visible sky by sunset, and appear increasingly progressed across the sky, drawing nearer and nearer to the western horizon by the time they are visible after sunset. This pattern continues until approximately the month of April, when the Pleiades have progressed so far across the sky by the time of dusk and sunset that they are only visible in the far west for a very short time before disappearing from view. They thus appear to have jumped the entire sky to move to the western horizon. The entire pattern of movement begins again with their first tentative reappearances in the eastern sky in the pre-dawn hours.

We thus know that the Pleiades are a winter constellation, although they are still present during the entirety of the year, even if only during the predawn hours in the early summer. It is only during the months of October through December, however, that the Pleiades are capable of traversing across the broad arc of the night sky, and during the transition from their appearance in April and May – around the start of the Mesopotamian new year – they transition from being

⁵⁸⁹ The Pleiades track across the entire night sky, to exit the visible field and dip below the horizon before dawn.

observed in the far west to suddenly appearing in the far east, leaping over the entire sky. The Pleiades are thus linked with both the far western and far eastern horizons as well as the ability to cross over the entire arc of the night sky or jump from one horizon to another.

7.2. Astral Imagery and the Gods

The gods of the Mesopotamian pantheon had a number of different forms in both textual and artistic sources: most often, the former chose to anthropomorphize deities, describing them as male or female figures. In this regard, the gods were fully-realized characters, vivid personalities whose lives were filled with high drama.⁵⁹⁰ We need only take a cursory glance at the various activities of the deity Inanna (or Ištar) to get a sense of the complexity of these divine stories.⁵⁹¹ A deity and his or her astral representation were deeply connected, and the latter could, very often, be treated as equivalent to the former. Indeed, the astral body could be interpreted as the deity him or herself, as a manifestation of the deity, or as a separate deity in his or her own right.⁵⁹² In considering particular texts such as *Inanna and Šukaletuda*, it is clear that the first of the three possible categories was represented directly by the actions of particular deities within the canon of literary texts.⁵⁹³

The largest distinction in astral representations may be found between the two deities

⁵⁹⁰ In this regard, these divine depictions are not dissimilar to those found in the representations of the pantheons of Ancient Egypt, although the Mesopotamian deities are less frequently found in half-animal, theriomorphic representations than the Ancient Egyptian pantheon, for which such representations were common. Some Egyptian gods were more closely linked to animal representations than others: the god Anubis stands as one of these deities, depicted as a jackal-headed human-figure, or a jackal entirely. See: Dorothea Arnold, "An Egyptian Bestiary," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 52 (1995): 1-64.

⁵⁹¹ Inanna/Ištar engages in perhaps the most colorful array of activities of any of the Mesopotamian pantheon, involving her descent to the Netherworld, theft of the divine rites (me) from Enki for the city of Uruk, and several different lovers, all of whom meet unfortunate ends.

⁵⁹² See: Francesca Rochberg, "'The Stars their Likenesses': Perspectives on the Relation between Celestial Bodies and Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *What is a God: Anthropomorphic and Non-Anthropomorphic Aspects of Deity in Ancient Mesopotamia*, ed. Barbara Nevling Porter (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 41-92.

⁵⁹³ See Cooley, "Divination in the Myth of Inana and Šukaletuda" and "Inana and Šukaletuda: A Sumerian Astral Myth."

represented by the moon and the sun and those represented by planets or stars – either constellations or star clusters. The latter category concerns a much broader range of figures, the Pleiades included. The sun and moon followed securely predictable patterns and were daily, constant presences in the sky. Furthermore, the moon could also be seen during the morning and evening hours, acting as the only astral representation to share temporal space with the sun. Deities represented by other celestial bodies, conversely, were far less constant figures, and although their own appearances followed clear, observable, and predictable patterns, those trends were themselves variable, based upon the particular season, as well as time of night, and not all stars and planets followed the same pattern, or even expressed outwardly "rational" movements. Constellations could appear only near the horizon, as with Venus, the representation of Inanna/Ištar, never appearing high enough in the sky to seem to cross over the larger area of territory occupied by Mesopotamia proper. This suggested a confinement to the edges, the periphery (though the goddess was able to surmount this restriction in many texts). In the case of the Pleiades, we see that their overall movements as well as their presence as a constellation with prominence during the winter greatly informed their overall character and behavior in literary texts, as well as their characteristics throughout the wide arc of their attestations as a whole.

7.3. The Sebettu as the Pleiades and their Role in Omens

The association between the Sebettu and the Pleiades has deep foundations. Although the link between the two is best attested in the first millennium, there are clear references to the astral function of the Sebettu in Sumerian texts from the early second millennium.⁵⁹⁴ In the first millennium, however, this astral representation gains a far greater prominence through the

⁵⁹⁴ See Tomislav Bilić, "A Note on the Celestial Orientation: Was Gilgamesh Guided to the Cedar Forest by the Pleiades?" *Vjesnik archeoloskog muzeja u Zagrebu* 40 (2007): 11-14.

concurrent rise of celestial divination. Although extispicy, the form of divination most popular in the Old Babylonian period, was still widely practiced, celestial divination acquired great prominence, particularly in the royal sphere.⁵⁹⁵

This rise was also linked to the increasing presence of celestial omen compendia, works that detailed the particular meanings inherent in the movements of, and associations between celestial objects. The first millennium did not witness the genesis of celestial divination, which had its roots in earlier periods. The presence and significance of the stars is mentioned in texts such as Gudea cylinder A, when Ninĝirsu alludes to the proper method for building his temple based on astral phenomena: "Gudea, I shall tell you the signs for the building of my house; I shall tell you the holy stars of the heavens indicating my ordinances" (gu₃-de₂-a e₂-ĝu₁₀-da giškim-bi ga-ra-ab-šum₂ ĝarza-ĝa₂ mul-an ku₃-ba gu₃ ga-mu-ra-a-de₂).⁵⁹⁶ Here, the connection is between the role of the stars and their positions in relation to the divine ordinances or decrees of the gods.

Celestial omens are referenced far more directly in the Old Babylonian period, where we see our first omens appear. Many of these texts were found in areas on the Mesopotamian periphery, such as Anatolia, the Levant, and Susa, though there is also recorded evidence for texts that would serve as Old Babylonian forerunners to the omen series *Enūma Anu Enlil*, best known for its Neo-Assyrian recension.⁵⁹⁷ The Old Babylonian omens follow the pattern that is well represented in the later text, focusing in this instance on the meanings inherent in lunar eclipses observed at different points in the year. One such text recounts how an eclipse on the

⁵⁹⁵ See, for example, Ivan Starr, *Queries to the Sun: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria* vol. 4 in *SAA* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 1990).

⁵⁹⁶ Gudea Cylinder A, 9: 10-11, as discussed by Ulla Susanne Koch, *Mesopotamian Astrology: An Introduction to Babylonian and Assyrian Celestial Divination* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1995).

⁵⁹⁷ Francesca Rochberg, *In the Path of the Moon: Babylonian Celestial Divination and its Legacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 306.

20th of the month of Du'ūzu will result in the "downfall of Elam; it will perish at the gate of the land."⁵⁹⁸ When particular individuals are mentioned, it is most often by title: "the king" in lieu of a particularly identified individual, for example.

More oblique references to the practice of celestial divination, or at least its importance, continued until the late second millennium, when we begin to see a rise in the number and prominence of works directly addressing and cataloguing the actual movements of celestial bodies.⁵⁹⁹ These texts, unlike omens, do not assign outcomes to the movements of these astral bodies, and may be treated as compendiums of astronomical observations or star catalogues, rather than celestial omens. The Middle Assyrian period yields the text of Astrolabe B, which stands as the best preserved second millennium text concerning astronomical observations, though there is a fragmentary earlier copy of the text. It is clearly well represented in first millennium collections, and the month-by-month presentation of various and shifting celestial observations stands as a great resource.⁶⁰⁰

Astrolabe B includes a reference to the Pleiades among the various stars that follow along the path of the god Ea. There are three stellar paths detailed within the text, with twelve stars assigned to each.⁶⁰¹ A Middle Babylonian star catalogue from Nippur, the potential and most likely forerunner to this text, also details three paths, though there are only ten stars assigned to

⁵⁹⁸ Rochberg, *Path of the Moon*, 312.

⁵⁹⁹ A general diachronic study of the development, or at least appearances, of Mesopotamian astronomy and celestial divination can be found in Ulla Susanne Koch, *Mesopotamian Astronomy: Introduction*, 32-51. Among these texts include incantations, as already discussed, and prayers, such as the well-known Prayer to the Gods of the Night, which originates in the Old Babylonian period. See: Wayne Horowitz and Nathan Wasserman, "Another Old Babylonian Prayer to the Gods of the Night," *JCS* 48 (1996): 57-60; Wolfram von Soden, "Ein Ophferschaubaut bei Nacht," *ZA* 43 (1936): 305-08; G. Dossin, "Prières aux 'dieux de la nuit,' (AO 6789)," *RA* 32 (1935): 182-185.

⁶⁰⁰ The text of Astrolabe B is edited in Maria C. Casaburi, *Tre-stelle-per-siascun(-mese): L'Astrolabe B: Edizione filologica* (Naples: Università degli Studi di Napoli, 2003). It is also discussed in Rumen K. Kolev, *The Babylonian Astrolabe: the Calendar of Creation*, vol. 22 in *SAAS* (Helsinki: NATCP, 2013).

⁶⁰¹ Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 158.

each.⁶⁰² In this case, considering Ea's Sumerian representation as Enki, the assignation of the Pleiades to his path falls in line with the earlier references to the Sebettu found in the Old Babylonian Udug Hul texts, where they are described as having grown up in the Apsû, and are thus linked to Enki. Chronologically, the Pleiades (mul-mul)⁶⁰³ are said to rise for the god Ea during the month of Iyar (*Ayyarum*), a time also allotted to them in the later text of the star catalogue Mul-Apin.

As stated above, Astrolabe B sets the Pleiades among the group of stars that travel in the path of Ea, grouping them as follows:

The Field, which stands in the east, lies across to the south; that star is the star of the beginning of the year, the leader of the stars of Ea.

The stars which stands behind it are the Pleiades (mul-mul), the seven gods, the great gods.⁶⁰⁴

To be followed by the rest of the twelve stars belonging to the path of Ea:

The Jaw of the Bull,
The True Shepherd of Anu, the god Ninšubur (Orion),
The Arrow, the god Ninurta (Sirius),
The Bow, the Elamite Ištar, daughter of Anu (Canis Majoris),
The Kidney, the god Ea (Puppis),
The star Exalted Lady,
The Wild Dog (Lupus),
The star standing before Ea, Mars,
The star Mouse, the god Ningîrsu,
The star Fish, Ea.⁶⁰⁵

While the Pleiades do not front the group of astral representations, they are the second element to appear and are thus one of the stars leading the entire group. The set of stars belonging to Ea are

⁶⁰² Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 159.

⁶⁰³ Given that mul is also the determinative for stars, the Pleiades are occasionally interpreted as ^{mul}mul as opposed to mul.mul. As they are noted, most particularly, for having seven stars, the plural implied by the doubling of mul, as opposed to treating the first of the two as the determinative, seems the more logical of the two readings.

⁶⁰⁴ For Astrolabe B, see the edition in Maria C. Casaburi, *Tre-stelle-per-siascun(-mese): L'Astrolabe B: Edizione filologica* (Naples: Università degli Studi di Napoli, 2003).

⁶⁰⁵ See Casaburi, *L'Astrolabe B* for the edition of this section, which occurs in Part B of the text of the Astrolabe. On this text, see also Kolev, *The Babylonian Astrolabe*, 160-61.

all described in terms of their relationship and proximity to each other, particularly, each astral body is introduced as it relates to the one that proceeds it. If we consider the entire construction of stars as one long and interdependent series, the Pleiades stand as one of the elements upon which nearly the entire construction depends.⁶⁰⁶ The section quoted above is furthermore critical in connecting the rendering of the Pleiades as mul-mul to the Sebettu, a feat it accomplishes quite handily by placing the two appellations in direct apposition to each other: mul-mul dⁱimin-bi diġir^{meš} gal^{meš} (the Pleiades, the Sebettu, the great gods).⁶⁰⁷

The presence of these astral texts and their increasing significance continue into the first millennium with another roster of texts detailing the observations of the movements of the Pleiades among other celestial phenomena, as in to Astrolabe B. In addition, we see texts that deserve omen predictions from the foundation of this observational data. The first category contains major texts such as the Babylonian star catalog Mul-Apin, which recounts the observed movements of celestial phenomena in a manner similar to Astrolabe B.⁶⁰⁸ As opposed to Astrolabe B, however, which grouped the Pleiades with Ea, Mul-Apin places them with them among those found on the Path of Anu: "the Pleiades (mul-mul), the seven gods, the great gods."⁶⁰⁹ Mul-Apin further divides the stars according to the deities on whose paths they lie – Anu, Enlil, and Ea – and also to the directions of northern, southern, and equatorial. The Pleiades are one of the equatorial stars on the path of Anu, and in some interesting company:

Mul-Apin, Col. i 40 – Col. ii 12:

The field, the seat of Ea, which goes at the front of the stars of Anu.
The star which stands opposite the Field, the Swallow.

⁶⁰⁶ Note that in this section of text we see how the Pleiades are written with a reduplication of the mul sign (mul-mul), which alone would mean "star". The Akkadian rendering of mul.mul would be *zappu*, which is also represented syllabically in texts (most often as *za-ap-pu* or *za-ap-pu-u*).

⁶⁰⁷ See Kolev, *The Babylonian Astrolabe*, 160-61.

⁶⁰⁸ See Hermann Hunger and David Pingree, *Mul.Apin: An Astronomical Compendium in Cuneiform* (Horn: Berger und Söhne, 1989).

⁶⁰⁹ Hunger and Pingree, *Mul.Apin*.

The star which stands behind the Field, Anunitu.
 The star which stands behind it: the hired Man, Dumuzi
 The stars (Pleiades), the seven gods, the great gods.
 The Bull of Heaven, the Jaw of the Bull, the crown of Anu.
 The True Shepherd of Anu, Papsukal, the mesange of Anu and Ištar.
 The twin stars which stand opposite the True Shepherd of Anu: Lulal and Latarak
 The star which stands behind it: the Rooster.
 The Arrow, the arrow of the great Warrior Ninurta.
 The Bow, the Elamite Ištar, the daughter of Enlil.
 The Snake, Ningizzida, lord of the Netherworld.
 The Raven, the star of Adad.
 The Furrow, Šala, the ear of corn.
 The Scales, the horn of the Scorpion.
 The star of Zababa, the Eagle, and the Dead Man.⁶¹⁰

This section alone hints at the depths of possible connections: the Pleiades are recounted as the bristle or spine of Taurus in texts, in light of how close the two are in the night sky.⁶¹¹ Their connection to Dumuzi is not otherwise referenced within the textual corpus, but they are found in proximity to the twins in incantations.⁶¹² Beyond that, this section of the star list consistently groups martial figures together: the bull of heaven, deployed by Ištar to great effect in the Gilgamesh cycle of texts; the arrow of the warrior god Ninurta, and the bow of an eastern, Elamite associated Ištar. These astral representations have, of course, more modern titles: the Field are the four stars of the body of the constellation Pegasus and the Bull of Heaven is Taurus, but the Bull's Jaw is the star Aldebaran, the Arrow is found in the constellation Canis Major, and, the serpent, unsurprisingly, is Hydra.⁶¹³

That the earlier text (Astrolabe B) references the Pleiades as belonging to the stars of Ea, while the later Mul-Apin groups them with Anu is of further note. Over the course of the

⁶¹⁰ Text following Rita Wilson and Wayne Horowitz, *Writing Science before the Greeks: A Naturalistic Analysis of the Babylonian Astronomical Treatise MUL.APIN*, vol. 48 of *CHANE* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 65.

⁶¹¹ See Lambert, *Babylonian Oracle Questions*.

⁶¹² As discussed in Chapter 6.

⁶¹³ For a discussion of the astronomical dating of the Mul-Apin star list, see T. DeJong, "Astronomical Dating of the Rising Star List in MUL.APIN," in *Festschrift für Hermann Hunger*, ed. Markus Kohbach (Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik, 2007).

Sebettu's complex (and inherently contradictory) set of genealogies, they are connected to both deities. The Sumerian incantation series that serve as the forerunners to the Uduḡ Hul texts, in comparison, presents the Sebettu definitively as belonging to Enki/Ea.⁶¹⁴ While this text predates Astrolabe B, it is still closer chronologically to the first millennium Mul-Apin. Literary texts of the first millennium, such as *Erra*, forge a connection between the Sebettu and Anu, as they are described in the text as birthed of Anu and Uraš – quite literally, the heavens and the earth. In this case, the astral context parallels those within other chronologically comparable texts, and the progression of associations between the Sebettu and other divine figures is represented in the realm of astral texts as well as those of either incantations or literary texts.

The astral texts work to further reinforce the distant nature of the Pleiades, a trait well represented by their liminal qualities as demonic entities. Mul-Apin in particular uses the Pleiades as a marker of extremity, citing their rising as one of the indications of the furthest possible eastern location.⁶¹⁵ These directions are connected with the origin points for each of the cardinaly-oriented winds, with the rising of the north wind connected to Ursa Major (^{mul}mar-gid₂-da), the south to Piscis Austrinus (^{mul}ku₆), and the west to Scorpio (^{mul}gir₂-tab). Finally, the section recounts that:

^{mul}šu.gi u zappu(mul.mul) ina tīb^{im} šadī(kur.ra) izzaz(gub)^{meš} -z[u]
ina u₄-me maššarti(en.nun)-ka šāra šá illaku^{ku} kakkabānu^{meš} ú-kal-la-mu-k[a]

Perseus and the Pleiades stand at the rising of the east wind.
On the day of your observation, the stars will tell you which way the wind is blowing.⁶¹⁶

These sections are connected to the origin for each of the winds, and thus, each of the four

⁶¹⁴ As discussed in Chapter 3. The Old Babylonian incantation series is also represented in the Standard Babylonian, and thus first millennium, full text of Uduḡ Hul, but the presence of particular sections in the second millennium versions provides us with concrete evidence of its older roots, for these sections at least.

⁶¹⁵ As observed by Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 198-99.

⁶¹⁶ See discussion of this section in Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 199.

directions with which that wind is associated. For such a connection to hold, the constellations referenced must stand as visible and clearly identifiable links to the most distant point on the horizon. In the case of the Pleiades, their association immediately references the eastern sky, one that is clearly and frequently reiterated in the movements of the star cluster. The text further utilizes these connections to sketch out the farthest edges of the western and eastern horizons: "the Pleiades rise when Scorpio sets; Scorpio rises when the Pleiades set."⁶¹⁷

In addition to – and building off of – these collections of astronomical observations are texts that derive divinatory outcomes themselves from the movements of each celestial phenomenon. Most prominent among these in the first millennium is the text of *Enūma Anu Enlil*, ("When the gods Anu and Enlil"), thematic excerpts of which are currently published.⁶¹⁸ The omens concerning the Pleiades appear in two major sections: in the planetary omens in conjunction with appearances of Venus (representative of Ištar) and in the sections concerning weather omens, where they are seen in relation to both Adad (or Iškur) and Venus. In both cases, their appearance, though it may herald a number of events, is often connected to calamity, particularly of a violent, if not catastrophic, character.

Within the text of *Enūma Anu Enlil*, the Pleiades are found in the section dedicated to planetary omens in fifteen references; of these, several are fragmentary, with the apodosis not

⁶¹⁷ Hunger, Pingree, *Mul-Apin*, 47.

⁶¹⁸ Sections of *Enūma Anu Enlil*, divided by tablets, correlate to the effects of different celestial phenomena and are grouped as such in publications. Tablets 15-22, dealing with the lunar eclipse phenomena, are published in Francesca Rochberg-Halton, *Aspects of Babylonian Celestial Divination: the Lunar Eclipse Tablets of Enūma Anu Enlil*, vol. 22 *AfO Beiheft* (Horn: Berger und Söhne, 1985); the solar tablets of 23-30 published by Wildred H. Van Soldt, *Solar Omens of Enūma Anu Enlil* (Leiden: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1995); the weather omens of tablets 44-49 in Erland Gehlken, *Weather Omens of Enūma Anu Enlil: Thunderstorms, Wind, and Rain: Tablets 44-49* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). The initial several tablets have also been published, with tablets 1-4 published within the four volumes of Erica Reiner and Hermann Hunger, *Babylonian Planetary Omens* and also by Lorenzo Verderame, *Le tavole I-VI della serie astrologica Enūma Anu Enlil* (Messina: Dipartimento di science dell'antichità, Università di Messina, 2002). The initial tablets are discussed as well by Lorenzo Verderame, "Enūma Anu Enlil Tablet 1-13," 447-55 in *Under One Sky: Astronomy and Mathematics in the Ancient Near East*, ed. John M. Steele and Annette Imhausen (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2002).

fully represented. Several of these more poorly preserved sections simply state that the Pleiades and Venus have been found in conjunction with one another, dictating that "if Venus rises...the Pleiades(mul-mul),"⁶¹⁹ and "if Venus comes close to the Pleiades(mul-mul)."⁶²⁰ Other omens, although still poorly preserved, are more daunting: "If Venus enters into the Pleiades(mul-mul): Elam next year..." with a variant that "a city will be destroyed," found in one tablet.⁶²¹

These omens hint at the more dire consequences foretold in the sections of *Enūma Anu Enlil* dealing with weather omens, particularly those concerning the interaction of Adad and the Pleiades. These consequences are articulated in one particular omen:

If Adad thunders in the middle of the Sebetu(^dimin.bi), and if their seven stars are showered on the earth...one town will show hostility to another town, one household to another household, (every) brother to his brother, man to man, the irrigation canal will show hostility to the river, the small branch of the irrigation canal towards its irrigation canal, the irrigation ditch towards its small branch of the irrigation canal, for fifty-five years men will eat human flesh, men will dress in human skin.⁶²²

That Adad is instrumental in providing the impetus for the Sebetu is a function of the categorization of the omen itself. It is placed among the group of particular weather omens of which Adad is fundamentally the catalyst that precipitates the omen's actions. Overall, this omen conveys the resultant, if not inevitable, rebellion that would follow the descent of the Sebetu to the earth. Given the chaotic nature of the Sebetu themselves, their arrival directly disturbs the order of society, causing rebellions and instilling chaos in the land.

The Pleiades are, of course, not the only astral phenomena referenced when great calamity could befall the land, a common enough theme for omens. Adad's behavior alone can be sufficient for an apodosis that describes a "great drought for sixty-seven years," and that "the

⁶¹⁹ Reiner, *Babylonian Planetary Omens*, vol. 3, 86-87.

⁶²⁰ Reiner, *Babylonian Planetary Omens*, vol. 3, 100-102.

⁶²¹ Reiner, *Babylonian Planetary Omens*, vol. 3, 68-70.

⁶²² Gehlken, *Weather Omens*, 81.

gods will destroy the lands with a curse."⁶²³ However, we do see that the instances of Adad and the Pleiades are universally negative, with one omen stating that: "If Adad thunders in the middle of the Sebettu...there will be an epidemic in the land,"⁶²⁴ and another recounting how a general sense of devastation and destruction will prevail, should the same event occur.⁶²⁵ Another fragmentary text recounts the various potential connections between Adad's thunder and the Pleiades, all of which end disastrously, from what is preserved.⁶²⁶ The format of this particular omen does run parallel to the larger text quoted above, where the end result of the Pleiades coming to earth (thanks to the actions of Adad) is inevitably cannibalism. That the Pleiades result in such a transgressive behavior – one that clearly breaks social and societal norms – speaks to their own role as border-crossing beings.

The commentaries to astrological texts such as *Enūma Anu Enlil* add greater depth to the entire complex system of associations among particular astral phenomena. They further serve to sketch out some of the broader connections between the Pleiades and more distant regions, even those outside of Mesopotamia proper. One commentary text describes the following: "the Pleiades, a star of the land of Elam, Per[seus...]" (mul-mul *kakkab*^{kur} *elamtī*(elam-ma)^{ki} mul^{šu}.[gi...]).⁶²⁷ The particular associations may be overtly referenced, as above where the Pleiades are explicitly described as the stars linked to Elam, and thus the East, or they may be more subtly articulated, through references to their actions in regard to other stars and planets. The latter case can be seen in a section of a divinatory treatise that highlights one of the key points that will be under consideration as we examine the Pleiades in more detail:

ni-ip-ḥa " tāmartī(igi-du₈-a)^{meš} šá^d sîn(30) ar-ḥi-šam namrū(igi)^{-ru} šite'e(kin-kin)-ma

⁶²³ Gehlken, *Weather Omens*, 91.

⁶²⁴ Gehlken, *Weather Omens*, 119.

⁶²⁵ Gehlken, *Weather Omens*, 54.

⁶²⁶ Gehlken, *Weather Omens*, 121.

⁶²⁷ See Horowitz, *Cosmic Geography*, 177 for his discussion of this fragmentary text, 81:7-27, 81:4'.

šit-qul-ta šá zappu(mul-mul) u ^dsin ušur(uru₃)-ma li-pu-ul-ka-ma

Observe the "correspondence" of the Pleiades and the Moon and let it provide you with the answer. Seek out the months of the year, the days of the month. Be exact in all you do.⁶²⁸

This text serves as a particularly apt example, given the significance of the moon's interactions with the Pleiades. As we will see in this chapter, both the demonic and the astral nature of the Seven contribute to their ability to pose a threat to the gods.

7.3.1. The Pleiades in Incantations

The astral context of the Sebettu is also a feature of their presence on incantations, where they are specifically referred to as the Pleiades: both in name and in function. This is clearly seen in one particular text, an incantation with a rubric that identifies it as a *šuilla* (as seen in the final line of the text, "it is the wording (of the incantation): *šuilla* to the Pleiades: ka inim-ma šu-il₂-la mul-mul-kam). The *šuilla* rubric, which translates in Sumerian to "the raised hand," is a reference to the actions associated with the texts, considered incantation-prayers, or *Gebetsbeschwörungen*.⁶²⁹ This incantation is one of many from a long list of such incantation-prayers that the king had to recite during the *bīt salā mē* (the "house of the aspersion of the water") ceremony.⁶³⁰ This text appears to be the last of the incantations recited as a part of this ritual, and was known only fragmentarily until the recent discovery of a duplicate which covers

⁶²⁸ See A. Oppenheim, "A Babylonian Diviner's Manual," *JNES* 33 (1974): 200.

⁶²⁹ Namely, W. Kunstmann, *De babylonische Gebetsbeschwörung* and Mayer, *Untersuchungen zur Formensprache der babylonischen "Gebetsbeschwörungen."*

⁶³⁰ On the *bīt salā mē* in the context of similar rituals, see: Christopher Frechette, "The Ritual-Prayer Nisaba I and its Function," *JANER* 11 (2011): 70-93; Michaël Guichard and Lionel Marti, "Purity in Ancient Mesopotamia: the Paleo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian Periods," in *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the Ancient Mediterranean World and Ancient Judaism* ed. Christian Frevel (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 47-114; Eckart Frahm, "Rising Suns and Falling Stars: Assyrian Kings and the Cosmos," in *Experiencing Power, Generating Authority: Cosmos, Politics, and the Ideology of Kingship in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, ed. Jane A. Hill, Philip Jones, and Antonio J. Morales (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 97-120.

much of the missing material:⁶³¹

šuilla to the Pleiades, Lines 68-78 from the *būt salā mē* ritual text:

68 en₂ at-tu-nu zappu(mul.mul) šar-ḥu-tu₄ šá mu-[š]i-t[i]
69 nam-ru-ti šá ilānī(diġir)^{meš} rabûti(gal)^{meš} zappu(m[u]l.mu[l])
70 a-na ḥul-lu-qu lem-nu-ti ib-nu-ku-nu-ši^d a-num :
ina šá-ma-me šum(ʾmu¹)-ku-nu^d Sebettu(imin.bi) zappu(m[ul.mul])
71 [za-'n]u ki-li-lu muššāri(^{na4}muš.gir₂) ra-ki-ʾsu¹ me-sír-r[i]
72 [xxx] x-su-ti šá til-le-e mu-šam-qí-tum bu-li[m]
73 [mu-pa-áš-š]i-šu šēri(edēn) da-li-ḥu tâmāti(a.ab.ba)^{meš}
74 [xxx]-ʾx¹ ʾx-x-tum¹ ʾgaš-ru-tum¹ mārī(dumu)^{meš d} a-nim
75 [xxxx] ʾx¹-ku-nu-ši
76 [x x a-na da-ra-a-ti dā]-ʾlī¹-lī-ku-nu lud-lu[l]
77 ʾki¹-m[a mē(a)^{meš} nāri(17)] ʾeš-šu-ti¹
 ṭi-ʾru-du¹ ʾla¹-bi-ru-ti tu₆-e[n₂]
78 ka inim-ma šu-il₂-la₂ mul-mul-kam

68 Incantation: You are the splendid Pleiades of the night,
69 The luminous Pleiades of the great gods,
70 Anu created you to destroy the wicked,
 In heaven your name is "Seven," the Pleiades,
71 [the ones decora]ted with the serpentine headdress, fastened with the
 belt,
72 [girded with the]...of the weaponry that slays wild beasts,
73 [pacif]iers of the desert, roilers of seas,
74 [...] powerful scions of Anu,
75 [...] to you.
76 I shall [forever] sing your praises!
77 As the fresh [water of a river] expelled the old!
78 It is the wording of (the incantation): *šuilla* to the Pleiades.

The connections are detailed in full: the Sebettu (^dimin-bi) are the Pleiades (*zappu* (mul-mul)) and the Pleiades are the Sebettu. The importance of the astral representation is further stressed – the Sebettu are described in a manner that clearly references their identity as stars, introduced first as "luminous," *namrū*. They exist in heaven and are explicitly linked to the night, connecting the deity's astral representation to their nocturnal activities.

References to the significance of the connection between the Pleiades and the Sebettu

⁶³¹ I thank Enrique Jimenez for sharing his notes on this unpublished text with me: my transliteration and translation follow his.

recur throughout other incantation texts. This link, however, is not simply a substitution of one term for the other; instead, the astral role of the Sebettu directly informs their behavior in texts. This relationship was already in effect when considering the position of the Sebettu as the seven figures referenced in the Lugalbanda cycle of literary texts and in the text of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A and B*.⁶³² The significance of the equation of the Pleiades with the Sebettu, as well as a number of astral representations of other divinities, can furthermore be seen in the first millennium incantation below.⁶³³

anāku nubattu ahāt ^dMarduk: I am the Vigil, the Sister of Marduk

1 en₂ a-na-ku nu-bat-tu a-ḥa-at ^dmarduk
2 ^dza-ap-pi e-ra-an-ni ^dba-a-lum ú-lid-an-ni
3 ^dLuhūša(lu₂.huš.a) ana li-qu-ti-šu (var: kal-lu-ti-šu) il-qa-an-ni
4 anašši(il₂)^{-šī} ubāni(šu.sī)^{meš}-ia ina bi-rit ^dza-ap-pi u ^dba-li a-šá-kan
5 ul-te-šib ina pa-ni-ya ^diš-tar be-el-tum a-pi-lat ku-mu-ú-a
6 šeš ^dMarduk ama ud-15-kam ad iti
7 it-ti-ya lip-šu-ru ka-la ta-ma-a-ti
8 ma-mit at-muú la tu-qar-ra-ba rem-nu-ú ^dMarduk
9 ka inim-ma nam-erin₂ bur-ru-da-kam₂ (var: pa-áš-ru)
 (var: ka inim-ma ellaĝ-šumelu)

1 Incantation: I am the vigil, the sister of Marduk,
2 The Pleiades conceived me, Mars sired me,
3 Luhuša took me for his adopted child (var: daughter-in-law),
4 I raise my fingers and I set them between the Pleiades and Mars,
5 I make Ištar sit before me; the lady, the one who answers (for me),
6 (My) brother is Marduk, (my) mother is the fifteenth of the month, and the
 first of the month is (my) father,
7 May the entire sea release me,
8 May it not approach the oath that I swore; merciful Marduk.
9 It is the wording of an incantation of the left kidney

This incantation could, at the very least, be called difficult.⁶³⁴ At first glance, it identifies a number of astral elements – or even specific times of the night – the Vigil, the Pleiades, and

⁶³² See Jeffrey L. Cooley, "Early Mesopotamian Astral Science in the Myth of Inana and Šukaletuda," 75-98.

⁶³³ See the published edition to this text in Stol, "The Moon as Seen by the Babylonians." The text above generally follows Stol's edition with changes that reflect work completed on the text with Daniel Schwemer at Würzburg.

⁶³⁴ In his edition of the text, Stol begins his commentary with the apt warning: "Frankly, I do not understand this text at all." See Stol, "Moon as Seen by Babylonian," 253.

Mars. Beyond that, the text references deities who would also have had prominent astral representations. Its listing of deities suggests a potential order by which this ritual should have been performed, as seen in the line: "I raise my fingers and set them between the Pleiades and Mars, I make Ištar (Venus) sit before me." There are a number of different tools for creating a digital map of the celestial phenomena that would be present in the heavens from a particular place and time, and their use may shed greater light on when the incantation would have been performed.⁶³⁵

Familial relationships, as articulated in the incantation above, are not the only avenue by which the Sebettu may be connected to other deities. As the Sebettu are increasingly invoked in conjunction with other deities, they are also called upon together with other figures to protect the practitioner, as seen in the following text, "May the Sebettu and the Twins Stand with Me":

22 lu₂-kiĝ-ĝi₄-a diĝir gal-gal-e-ne e₂-e me-en
 23 ur-saĝ^d nin-urta igi-ĝu₁₀-ta al-ĝub
 24 ^dimin-bi igi-ĝu₁₀-ta al-ĝub
 25 ^dmaš-tab-ba eĝir-ĝu₁₀-ta al-ĝub
 26 [niĝ₂]-na ki-aĝ₂-ĝa₂ ma-ra-ab-šum-mu sila₄-gu₁₀ mu-un-da-ru-us₂

22 The messenger of the great gods, the...
 23 The warrior, Ninurta, stands before me,
 24 The Sebettu stand before me,
 25 The Maštab (twins) stand behind me,
 26 He[?] gave the the beloved incense; my lamb, he has *bound* it.⁶³⁶

Here, the format of these invoked deities resembles those invoked during an e₂-gal-kur-ra incantation, which stands as one of the few that are intended to have an effective result, designed to affect the outcome of legal cases and benefit one individual at the expense of another. In those texts, the individual on whose behalf it was performed was also surrounded by

⁶³⁵ Among these resources, see the Aladin sky atlas, maintained by the University of Strasbourg: <http://aladin.u-strasbg.fr/>. A more user-friendly tool (particularly for a relative newcomer to astronomy) can be found in John Walker's Your Sky interactive online planetarium and mapping site (<https://www.fourmilab.ch/yoursky/>), which allows one to create an image of the night sky for a particular location from any point in time.

⁶³⁶ See UET 6/2 22-26. I first worked through this text with Dahlia Shehata and owe much to her insight on it.

protective deities and figures, a trio set before, behind, and to the side. A fragmentary tablet from Sultantepe, where the Sebettu (^dimin-bi) stand behind (eĝir-ĝu₁₀) the practitioner demonstrates a similar situation.⁶³⁷ Unfortunately, the two lines preceding the Sebettu's appearance on the tablet do not preserve the respective deities summoned to the stand before the practitioner, and the bilingual nature of the text presents other problems.⁶³⁸

The Sebettu are clear companions for the warrior god Ninurta, but the presence of the divine twins, ^dmaš-tab-ba (in Akkadian, *kilallān* or *māšum*), is a more curious connection, which may find its roots in the presentation of stars and constellations in astral catalogs such as Astrolabe B and Mul-Apin, where the Twins can follow the Pleiades. They are, additionally, not the only occurrence of divine or demonic twins within this incantation, as it is preceded by another, shorter incantation, comprising four lines and invoking several different deities, among them the ^dkūbū. The tablet as a whole contains several excerpts from different incantations, as the preceding section is taken from a section of the *muššu'u* ritual.⁶³⁹ Both these four lines and the incantation of seven lines which follows them, however, appear unconnected with the ritual.

The presence of both *kūbū*, in this section above, and the divine twins – ^dmaš-tab-ba – point to the same underlying connection to the Sebettu. The *kūbū* is often representative of a much more demonic presence than the less-referenced ^dmaš-tab-ba.⁶⁴⁰ *Kūbū* also features in personal names from this and earlier periods, suggesting a similarly protective, or at least not

⁶³⁷ The text in question is *STT* 176.

⁶³⁸ Namely, in the rendering of ^dSebettu as diĝir^{meš} *si-bit-ti* in the corresponding Akkadian line, which has led to a discussion of how the ^dimin-bi should be interpreted: "Note the translation of diĝir-imin-bi by diĝir-meš *si-bit-ti* which should finally convince everyone of the reading *ilū sibitti* long ago advocated by Landsberger, instead of *Sibitti*." See Erica Reiner and M. Civil, "Another Volume of Sultantepe Tablets," *JNES* 26 (1967): 184.

⁶³⁹ See Barbara Böck, *Das Handbuch Mussu'u "Einreibung": Eine Serie sumerischer und akkadischer Beschwörungen aus dem 1. Jt. v. Chr.* vol. 3 of *BPOA* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2007).

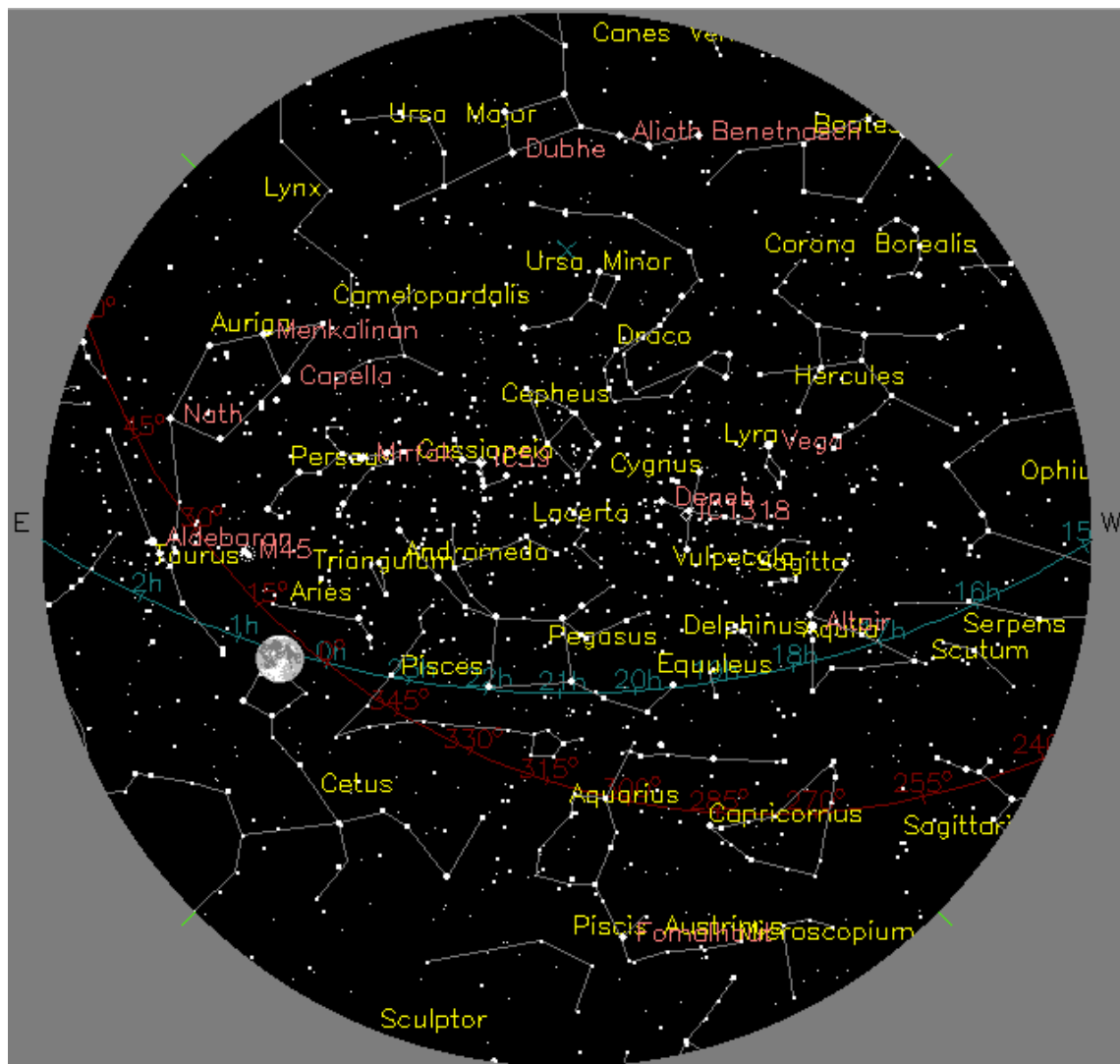
⁶⁴⁰ On *kūbū*, see: Römer, "Dämonischen Gotte ^dKūbu(m)," 310-319, JoAnn Scurlock, "Baby-snatching Demons, Restless Souls, and the Dangers of Childbirth: Medico-magical Means of Dealing with some of the Perils of Motherhood in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Incognita* 2 (1991): 137-85.

entirely antagonistic, aspect to their nature. Without such complexity, their presence in personal names – wherein they must act to the benefit of the particular individual – would be impossible.

7.3.2. Threatening the Moon

Our previous depiction of the motions of the Pleiades sketched out the actions of the star cluster only in very broad strokes. To consider the greater nuance of their astral significance, it is necessary to use an equally nuanced – and specific – example. To that end, we can consider a very particular reconstruction of an equally particular sky over Babylon, as seen below:

Figure 5: Skymap from Babylon



The map above is linked to the modern, Gregorian, calendric date of October 1, 700 BCE, 20:45 local time.⁶⁴¹ The Pleiades constellation, M45, can be found in the east, above the moon and in close proximity to the star Aldebaran (later called "the follower," given its tendency to follow the Pleiades) and the Taurus constellation. The later association, between the Sebettu and Taurus, is itself represented in the textual corpus, through a reference to the Sebettu as the bristle, or mane, of the Taurus constellation.⁶⁴² The Pleiades, as discussed, appear prominently in the winter but are also a fixture during the spring and summer months, with their noted horizon-hopping behavior occurring closely following the start of the Mesopotamian new year. Uncovering the full ramifications of how particular motions of the Pleiades, in connection with the astral representations of other deities or supernatural figures, requires first an exacting reading of ritual texts and incantations, in order to examine the particular deities with whom they interact and the capacities in which such interactions occur. Following that, we can see how these relationships may – or may not – correspond to actual astral movements during the year.

October is one of the months where the Pleiades are best represented in the sky above Mesopotamia, with the Pleiades tracking across nearly the entire night sky. In particular, the close connection between the moon and the Pleiades at this time can be seen as a progression depicted by taking snapshots of the sky in two-hour increments from the starting time of October 1, 700 BCE, 20:45, as represented in the sky map above, to close with a view of the sky at just before dawn at 05:45 (the full range of sky maps can be found in the Appendix to this chapter). In doing so, it becomes clear that the Pleiades appear in close conjunction to the moon, and follow it throughout their nightly procession.

It should be noted that though Babylon is used as the example for this particular instance,

⁶⁴¹ Map generated via John Walker's program "Your Sky," found online: <https://www.fourmilab.ch/yoursky/>

⁶⁴² As discussed in Lambert, *Oracle Questions*, in a *tamītu* text (No. 26) wherein the Pleiades are called the bristles, or mane, of Taurus. This text is also discussed in Chapter Four.

the same behavior is observed from the site of Aššur. The Pleiades appear slightly before the moon from the northern city, losing, in some sense, the appearance of following, or pursuing, the moon. However, if anything, they track even more closely to the moon from this more northern location, and the connection between them and the moon proves to have a direct effect on their role in texts.

Thus, though the particular actions of the Sebettu in Tablet XVI of the incantation series Udug Hul have already been discussed in the previous chapter, these events and their actions must be revisited in light of this particular astral behavior. Tablet XVI of Udug Hul, as a whole, presents the general arc of the Pleiades threatening society and civilization. Their raucous, unbridled behavior cannot be contained and ultimately threatens the divine realm itself, as they encroach upon the moon, causing an eclipse.⁶⁴³

Although the text presents a number of descriptions of the Sebettu – including the presentation of their individual epithets at the very beginning on the tablet – the focus during the text is truly on the astral implications of the Sebettu. Indeed, their actions within the text are embedded in the context of the larger sweep of celestial mechanics: the movements of the moon and planets, the timing of eclipses, and the observed paths of constellations in the sky. The cosmic order of heaven is described, with the Sebettu detailed as not only whirling about the base of heaven, but also, "circling furiously in front of the crescent moon" (dub-sag-ta u₄-sakar ^dsuen-na šur₂-bi ba-an-dib-be-eš / *ina ma-ḥar* ^dnanna-ri ^d30 ez-zi-iš il-ta-nam-mu-u).⁶⁴⁴ They appear to threaten it during the lunar eclipse and their evil is given free reign during the resultant darkness: "they are always disturbed at night and seeking trouble" (ḡi₆-ba ur₄-ur₄-ra-meš niḡ₂-hul-a kin-kin-na-meš / *ina mu-ši it-ta-na-ar-ra-ru šú-nu le-mut-tú iš-te-*

⁶⁴³ See Wee, "Grieving for the Moon" who further presents the actions of the Sebettu during this section of the text and the subsequent lunar eclipse as representative of royal guilt and the substitute king ritual.

⁶⁴⁴ Udug Hul, Tablet XVI: 30.

né-'u-ú šú-nu).⁶⁴⁵

The lack of moonlight – and thus, the absence of the moon god himself – facilitates the increased trouble and mayhem that the Sebettu cause. Sîn is described as "cruelly darkened in heaven" (*an-na su-mu-ug-a-bi gig-ga / ina šamê(an)^e mar-ši-iš i'-ad-ru*).⁶⁴⁶ This eclipse seems a source of turmoil and grief for the gods, as both Šamaš and Adad have been defeated, presumably by the antagonistic Sebettu, who appear in the narrative of the incantation. The final accounting of the crimes of the Sebettu against the moon-god is recited by Anu and Enlil for the other gods as follows:

Udug Hul, Tablet XVI: 110-113:

- 110 ^dsuen-na an-ša₃-ta su mu-ug-[ga]-ge-eš
 ^d30 *ina qé-reb šamê(an)-e ú-šá-di-ru*
111 aga-a-ni [x x x-sig₃]-sig₃-ge-eš
 *a-ga-šú iš-ḫu-tu*⁶⁴⁷
112 saĝ-keš₂-a-ni [x x x x]-eš
 ti-iq-ni-¹šú¹ [ú-paṭ-ti]-ru
113 muš₃-a-ni [ki-aĝ₂-ĝa₂ x x x x x x]
 zi-mu-šú r[am-tu] uk-ki-il
- 110 They have darkened Sîn in the midst of heaven,
111 They have torn off his corona,
112 They have stripped off his adornments,
113 They have darkened his beloved face.

The eclipse that the Sebettu cause is considered an attack on the moongod himself. In attacking Sîn, and so causing the lunar eclipse, it follows that the Sebettu are capable of changing, if not destabilizing, the entire cosmic order of the universe. In doing so, and in claiming such abilities, they present themselves as a preeminent threat – one that may attack even the divine realm. Indeed, the text is quick to stress their ability to do so as it further describes the Seven as those

⁶⁴⁵ Udug Hul, Tablet XVI: 42-43.

⁶⁴⁶ Udug Hul, Tablet XVI: 58.

⁶⁴⁷ The Sumerian of this and the subsequent two lines is fragmentary, with the latter halves of each line unpreserved. The Sumerian of these lines is thus primarily reconstructed from the better preserved Akkadian lines.

who "go first, in order to commit murder – in the broad heaven, the dwelling of Anu, the king, they are ready to do evil, they are without rival." The chaotic nature of the Sebettu – present even in their astral representation – is so inherent that they are always capable of causing great harm. Here, the text has chosen to explain a set of observed astral phenomena – the close proximity of the Sebettu and the moon during the winter and the observed lunar eclipses that invariably fell within that same time frame, at the frequency of roughly one observable lunar eclipse possibility a decade, with the Sebettu realizing this potential for violence against the moongod himself.

As stated, this stands as one rather specific example of how the behavior of the Pleiades, particularly in light of its interaction with the astral representations of other deities, may be represented directly in texts. It is, however, hardly the only avenue by which the astral representation exerts its influence on the Sebettu's more anthropomorphic (and more outwardly chaotic and demonic) forms. At the heart of the entire arc of the attestations of the Sebettu as they are discussed throughout their broad chronological span, one of the most pressing questions has consistently been why so chaotic, and thus, by their very nature, mutable, an entity is so often restricted, bound, and defined.

In the case of the Sebettu, the influence of the eminently predictable realm of celestial mechanics may well be at work. Given that the influence of the Pleiades can be seen in some of the earliest references to the Sebettu, tracing as far back as the Sumerian literary texts from the Old Babylonian period, it is clear that the two are interconnected from some of the earliest appearances of the Sebettu as more anthropomorphic figures. We may see this astral influence permeate the behavior of the Sebettu themselves: they are as far-ranging as their astral counterparts that were inherently connected to the horizons; they belong in the *kur* that lies outside the borders of the homeland (or *kalam*) of Mesopotamia; they are distant and fierce but

behave in predictable patterns, reflecting ever-reliable celestial movements. If anything, these two natures work together to define the Sebettu, functioning not in conflict but in concert .

7.4. Iconography: Animal-Human Hybrid Representations of the Sebettu

The iconography associated with the Sebettu falls into two major categories: anthropomorphic – or rather, theriomorphic animal-human hybrid – figures, and the astral representation of the Pleiades.⁶⁴⁸ The first, and less consistent of the two, can be found in the theriomorphic groups of seven that are principally found on Lamaštu amulets, though also referenced in apotropaic incantations.⁶⁴⁹ Demons are notoriously lacking in iconographic representations – the famous exceptions to this list being, of course, the demon Lamaštu and Pazuzu, both of which possessed iconography that was extensively represented and immediately recognizable.⁶⁵⁰ Lamaštu and Pazuzu, were hardly a typical demons: the former was once a deity, and her own demonic status is at odds with that of the host of demons that originated as creations of the Netherworld. The latter stands as a chaotic but overwhelmingly apotropaic figure used to counteract the former. The Sebettu, similarly atypical demons, are connected to a group of seven animal-headed figures, often holding weapons in one raised hand and depicted in a line. For example, we see the following line of theriomorphic figures on a Neo-Assyrian plaque against the demoness Lamaštu:

⁶⁴⁸ On anthropomorphic representations of deities, see: Tally Ornan, "In the Likeness of Man: Reflections on the Anthropocentric Perception of the Divine in Mesopotamian Art," 93-151 in *What is a God: Anthropomorphic and Non-Anthropomorphic Aspects of Deity in Ancient Mesopotamia*, ed. Barbara Nevling Porter (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009).

⁶⁴⁹ See Wiggermann, *Protective Spirits*.

⁶⁵⁰ Wiggermann, "Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu."

Figure 6: Seven Figures on AO 7088:⁶⁵¹



Several of these animals are more easily identified than others. From left to right in this procession stands an ibex or similar horned animal, two birds, most likely a vulture followed by an eagle, a bear, based upon the shape of the ears, a wolf, for similar reasons; a ram, and, at the close, a lion. This is not the only row of seven chimerical figures to appear in the context of Lamaštu plaques, as we see similar group on the second register of the obverse of AO 22205, arguably the most well-known of the group of Lamaštu plaques to modern scholarship:

Figure 7: Neo-Assyrian Lamaštu Plaque, AO 22205:⁶⁵²



Here, we are presented with a different ordering of seven, as well as a potentially different composition of the animals utilized in their creation. The figures are rendered in less

⁶⁵¹ Photograph by author.

⁶⁵² Photograph by author.

detail than on AO 7888, likely thanks to the medium, but the majority are still identifiable. The line, from left to right, presents a lion, followed by two animals which may include another felid, with a wolf at the middle of the seven figures. We progress to firmer ground, with another ibex creature (the lack of curled horns appears to exclude a ram); a raptor; and, in closing, a snake-headed figure, most likely of the category of terrifying serpents associated with the Sebettu.

This particular plaque also indicates the presence of divinities in its uppermost register, where a row of symbols for particular deities can be clearly seen. Though a full gamut of divine symbols is displayed, the latter two on the extreme right fall most in line with what is also depicted on cylinder seals. The crescent moon, representing the moongod Sîn, is positioned next to the Pleiades constellation of the Sebettu, in a fashion that is similar to the row of divine symbols commonly seen on *kudurru* stele. If, then, the row of Seven immediately below this register are also representative of the Sebettu, or at least intended to invoke them, this plaque would represent the Seven in two forms: as a row of chimerical, but ultimately anthropomorphic, figures and as their astral representation the Pleiades.

The structure of the plaque as a whole provides greater context to the role the Seven play within it. Considering the entire obverse, we see four unequal registers, with the bottom register occupying roughly half of the entire space of the plaque. The largest register, it details the inherently dislocative function of the exorcism, as Lamaštu is sent out of the city, and thus away from the patient, and into the wilderness. Pazuzu stands on the far left driving away Lamaštu, who is herself set upon a donkey that rides atop a raft, indicative of how Lamaštu will be sent not only away from the city, but through the desert, marsh, and finally across the river that serves as the final barrier before she enters the Netherworld. Once there, the threat she poses will finally be neutralized.

The top half features three smaller registers: the uppermost contains the aforementioned divine symbols, with the head and forepaws of Pazuzu curving around above the edge of the plaque from behind. The rest of his rampant body dominates the reverse. The second register is occupied by the seven theriomorphic figures, already discussed, while the third includes a scene depicting the patient directly. Here, the patient is on a bed, flanked by two fish-cloaked sages, who are administering to him.⁶⁵³ On the right side of this register, furthermore, we see three figures – two lion-men facing each other and a third, bearded, man who appears entirely human. The stance of these three figures echoes those taken by the seven theriomorphic figures in the register above, with one arm raised in a posture of attack. Furthermore, they echo, if not replicate exactly, the larger *mischwesen* figures found on the walls of Neo-Assyrian royal palaces, which fulfilled a similar apotropaic function, if on a larger scale.⁶⁵⁴ Another parallel occurs in the private sphere, where our seven figures mimic the seven "weapon-men" figurines utilized in the incantation to bless and protect a new house against the approach of an enemy, discussed in the previous chapter.

7.5. Seals and Sealings: the Sebettu on Personal Seals

Although the group of seven monstrous figures discussed in the preceding section is relatively rare, the associations between the Sebettu and the Pleiades are a widespread artistic occurrence. They appear on *kudurrus*, on incantation plaques, and (in what is by far the largest category) on personal cylinder and stamp seals. The seven dots of the Pleiades are found on a wide array of cylinder seals from Mesopotamia and its surrounding lands: a list of the numerous

⁶⁵³ On sages, see: Alan Lenzi, "The Uruk List of Kings and Sages and Late Mesopotamian Scholarship," *JANER* 8 (2008): 137-65.

⁶⁵⁴ On palace figures, see: Mehmet-Ali Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

seals representing the Pleiades utilized in this study is provided in Appendix A.

There are several methodological considerations that must first be surmounted, or, at the least, considered when drawing from the glyptic evidence. As cylinder seals almost always lack archaeological context, approximate dates and places of origin are assigned based on stylistic criteria. While this process is not without occasional uncertainty, it remains the best means by which to include evidence from unprovenanced seals. When locations and dates for these seals can be confidently ascribed, especially taken in conjunction with excavated material, we are provided with a wealth of information concerning the use of the images found on seals, and how these images migrated across both chronological and geographic borders. In sum, cylinder seals allow us to track the changes and migrations of imagery, as well as their more individualized use, across time and space in Mesopotamia.

As there is no single encyclopedic database for cylinder seals from the ancient Near East, the cylinder seals considered here were collected by working through the available publications of cylinder seals in both public and private holdings. The corpus, containing over 200 cylinder and stamp seals featuring the Sebettu, was collated into a database for analysis, which allowed for trends and patterns to emerge.⁶⁵⁵ It should be noted, however, that the collection does not comprise an absolutely encyclopedic survey of every possible cylinder seal, nor does it aim to. Such an effort would be, first of all, impossible, given the number of cylinder seals in private collections, and secondly, beyond this study's current scope. Instead, by covering such a wide range of sources, it was possible to create a representative sample – a cross-section, as it were – of the presence of the Sebettu in cylinder seals from the ancient Near East.

⁶⁵⁵ The particular collections consulted in creating this database are listed at the front of Appendix A.

7.5.1. Examining Basic Motifs

The Pleiades appear on a wide variety of seals, covering a broad span in both the chronological and geographical sense. However, as a majority of seals are from a first millennium context, I will examine two Neo-Assyrian seals as examples to analyze the basic program of motifs that frequently appear alongside the Pleiades: BM 129538 (Figure 13) and BM 89770 (Figure 14). Both of these seals are found in the collections of the British Museum, and though unprovenanced (as is the case with most cylinder seals), they demonstrate typical features of seals produced in the heartland of the Neo-Assyrian empire, or in adjacent area heavily influenced by the core, not the periphery.

Upon these two seals we see a number of motifs that are commonly represented across the broad corpus of Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals. In both cases, the Pleiades are immediately identifiable and placed in the context of ritual scenes. The first includes the recognizable figure of the goddess Gula enthroned to the far left, accompanied by a dog, one of her ritual animals and the frequent identifying feature of the goddess in art. The two figures before her may be less certainly identified, though one is clearly presented as a worshipper and the other has clearer connections to a ritual context, wearing a robe of lion's skin featuring a still attached head mid-roar. The scene is accentuated with divine symbols: set between the two figures are the spade of Marduk and staff or stylus of Nabû, while the winged sun disc rises above them. The Pleiades occupy a typical position for astral phenomena, set high in the upper field of the scene and accompanied by the crescent moon, symbolizing Sîn, with four additional stars set in a vertical line. The second seal also depicts two individuals seated on either side of a table, upon which rests a fish and, above that, a single star. A servant attends the figure on the right, waving a fly-whisk, and the field is populated with a variety of motifs: a rhombus, crescent moon, winged disc, and the seven dots of the Pleiades, set unusually low in the scene.

7.5.2. Western Roots: Glyptic Evidence

The textual evidence, as collected and discussed in the previous chapters, has presented the Sebettu as a group of figures that command a range of varied qualities. There have been underlying questions, however, as to the very origin of the Sebettu themselves, and where their earliest roots lie. The connections between the astral representation of the Seven and their textual sources is clearly rooted in the early Sumerian texts, but this alone does not explain the origin of figures that are, from their very beginning, described as peripatetic. The Neo-Assyrian material complicates this matter even further as the Sebettu are first described as the gods of the West in an inscription belonging to Aššur-bēl-kala, and then associated with the Western campaigns of certain rulers in the period, appearing most often in the curse sections of treaties with lands to the West. Added to this already tangled mass is the repeated connection of the Sebettu and Narunde. The confusion of textual sources further identifies the more demonically-aligned qualities of the Seven with the liminal extremes of Mesopotamian mental geography.

All of this evidence paints a picture of the Sebettu as a concept created from contradictions: found in the east and west, at home in liminal locations, and yet ultimately identified with the homeland and its armies. These are, however, all articulations of the Sebettu in literary texts and in the royal – and thus state – sphere. Considering the Sebettu on a more personal level through glyptic imagery, particularly in light of the early connections between the Sebettu and their astral representation as the Pleiades, stands as another means by which to gauge not only their public image but also the spread of the Sebettu themselves.

The majority of the seals featuring the Pleiades are, particularly in the Neo-Assyrian period, linked to the first millennium either by archaeological context or stylistic dating, but there are earlier examples to be found. Of the seals currently under review, nearly twenty can be

dated to the second millennium, with varying degrees of certainty. Those that are dated to the second millennium are an eclectic mix of images, several of which use uncharacteristic imagery to depict the Pleiades, which otherwise appear in a predictable formation of two horizontal rows of three dots with one lone dot to comprise the full set of seven. This representation is clearly maintained in the Neo-Assyrian material as the Pleiades rarely deviate from this appearance on the seals of that period.

That being said, the origins of the earlier seals provide another strand of evidence for the existence of the Pleiades – and thus the Sebettu – outside the heartland of Mesopotamia. We see this trend in the following two seals, among the earliest conclusively dated seals featuring the Pleiades.

Figure 8: Early Middle Assyrian Cylinder Seals



Cat. No. 175
Morgan Library, Acc. 964



Cat. No. 176
Morgan Library, Acc. 990

Both of these seals, from the collection of the Morgan Library, can be dated between 1600-1350 BCE. They are, in composition and iconography, quite similar; both seals are made of hematite, featuring the Pleiades, crescent moon and sun, and an ankh between two figures. They both, furthermore, reference the connection between the Sebettu and the moon-god Sîn, a theme that remains prevalent through the first millennium B.C.E. Moreover, both of these cylinder seals come from the western periphery of Syria as evidenced, in part, by their clear Egyptian

influence.

Looking further west, a cylinder seal of Levantine origin features the Pleiades alongside a presentation scene.⁶⁵⁶ This seal also continues the theme of placing the Pleiades in connection with the crescent moon. Other, less certain, attestations of the Sebettu can be found on seals such as a Mitanni example from the British Museum⁶⁵⁷ or a seal excavated at the Syrian site of Hama, which shows Hurrian stylistic influence.⁶⁵⁸ The western appearances continue with several 14th c. B.C.E. seals from the site of Alalakh in modern-day Turkey, one of which is shown below:

Figure 9: Second Millennium Cylinder Seal from Alalakh



Cat. No. 6
Ashmolean Museum 1939.545

Here we see another atypical presentation of the Sebettu as two orthogonal lines of three and four dots that meet between two figures flanking a staff topped by a winged disc and a lone figure carrying a sword. These early occurrences of the Pleiades, although much smaller in number than their first millennium counterparts, contribute to the claim of a western origin for the motif. This pattern corroborates the early associations between the Pleiades and the far western territories, such as in the Middle Assyrian inscription of Assur-bēl-kala that has already been discussed.

⁶⁵⁶ Moore Coll L.55.49.68 (Cat. No. 139); Eisen identifies this seal as second millennium from the Levant. The identification is somewhat uncertain as it displays many characteristics of first millennium seals.

⁶⁵⁷ Cat. No. 50; BM 89640

⁶⁵⁸ Cat. No. 84; Danish National Museum, No. 5B 311

The motif of the Seven continues in the glyptic art of the west into the first millennium B.C.E. These two examples from the Damascus Museum clearly show the more expected motif of the Seven as two parallel lines of three with a single ending dot that by this period has become standardized. The first shows the Pleiades alongside a pointed star in the sky above a hunting scene featuring an archer. The second contains the well-known scene of two figures flanking an Assyrian Sacred Tree, topped by a winged disc. Here the Pleiades are also shown in conjunction with an eight-pointed star.

Figure 10: Cylinder Seals from Damascus Collections:



Cat. No. 81
Damascus No. 1557



Cat. No. 80
Damascus No. 141

While these examples show the continuity of the Seven in the western glyptic into the first millennium, the pattern of distribution changes dramatically as the motif is enthusiastically adopted into the glyptic of the Neo-Assyrian heartland. As the full listing of cylinder seals featuring the Pleiades found in Appendix A demonstrates, the Pleiades were a common enough element in the first millennium to be well distributed across Mesopotamia.

Of seals featuring the Pleiades, the vast majority are found in the first millennium, with most of those in turn found within the center, or core, of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, where the Seven become one of the most common motifs. In this period we also see the spread of this iconography through Assyria to the eastern reaches of Mesopotamia, although occurrences are scarce. The Pleiades can be found on a cylinder seal from Persepolis, currently in the Museum

of Geneva:

Figure 11: Cylinder Seal from Persepolis, Geneva No. 1874/0.1



Cat. No. 86
Geneva No. 1874/0.1

This seal preserves the pairing of the Pleiades and the crescent moon, by this time a usual partnership, and even echoes the previously discussed hunting motif. Given the presence of astral associations between the Sebettu and the far eastern and western horizons, it is fitting that the distribution of seal iconography echoes these distant, if not entirely liminal, geographical associations.

7.5.3. Sebettu and Sîn: Grouping Symbols

The close proximity between the Pleiades and Sîn during the winter months is echoed in cylinder seals as the two are often grouped together. The following seals may be considered as representative examples:

Figure 12: Sebettu and Sîn on Seals



Cat. No. 135
Metropolitan Museum: 74.51.4368



Cat. No. 114
Marcopoli Collection: 215



Cat. No. 131
Metropolitan Museum: 1987.96.11



Cat. No. 64
British Museum: 119426

Here, we see a close association between the Pleiades and the crescent moon, representing Sîn. To be sure, as a recognizable astral body, the Pleiades were one means of marking the night sky in seals, which the moon, also visible during the day, could not. And yet, their close and continued pairing suggests a more meaningful relationship. They are often the only astral elements present, although they may sometimes be accompanied by a single large star. While there are other means of representing deities symbolically, such as the staff of Nabû, the constant choice of these astral representations, to the exclusion of other options, speaks to a deliberate grouping. The two also appear in close proximity, to the point where the crescent moon of Sîn

may be placed directly below the Pleiades, acting as a base and half-encircling the group of seven stars.

The presence of the moon and the Pleiades signifying night time scenes may further connect these seals with rituals performed specifically under the night sky for the gods of the night. In one such example, particular ritual objects would be left in the open for the gods represented by specific constellations to see and consecrate. On seals depicting scenes of a ritual or offering, the appearance of the Pleiades and crescent moon may indicate actions performed under the night sky and under the watchful eye of these astral deities.

These seals, prolifically represented in the first millennium, were highly personal objects, emblematic of the degree to which the Sebettu had infiltrated not just the official religion, but also daily life and common use. The Pleiades were certainly a recognizable astral body, but given the personal nature of cylinder seals, elements were not randomly or haphazardly placed. If we, as we can and should, rely upon the planned and deliberate nature of the composition of cylinder seals, this corpus comprises an essential snapshot of the integration of the Sebettu into common use. As cylinder seals were directly linked to an individual, even worn for presumably apotropaic purposes, repeated divine aspects could not be anything other than benevolent. At their core, the astral elements of the Sebettu as attested in the omen texts and in glyptic imagery represent a fundamental and foundational aspect of the character of the Sebettu themselves, one tied to their early attestations in Mesopotamia and inexorably bound to the observable, natural patterns of the night sky.

7.6. Seals and Sky Maps

Two Neo-Assyrian Seals Featuring the Pleiades



Figure 13: Neo-Assyrian Cylinder Seal

Cat. No. 67

Dimensions: 22.5 mm x 14 mm

British Museum: 129538



Figure 14: Neo-Assyrian Cylinder Seal

Cat. No. 55

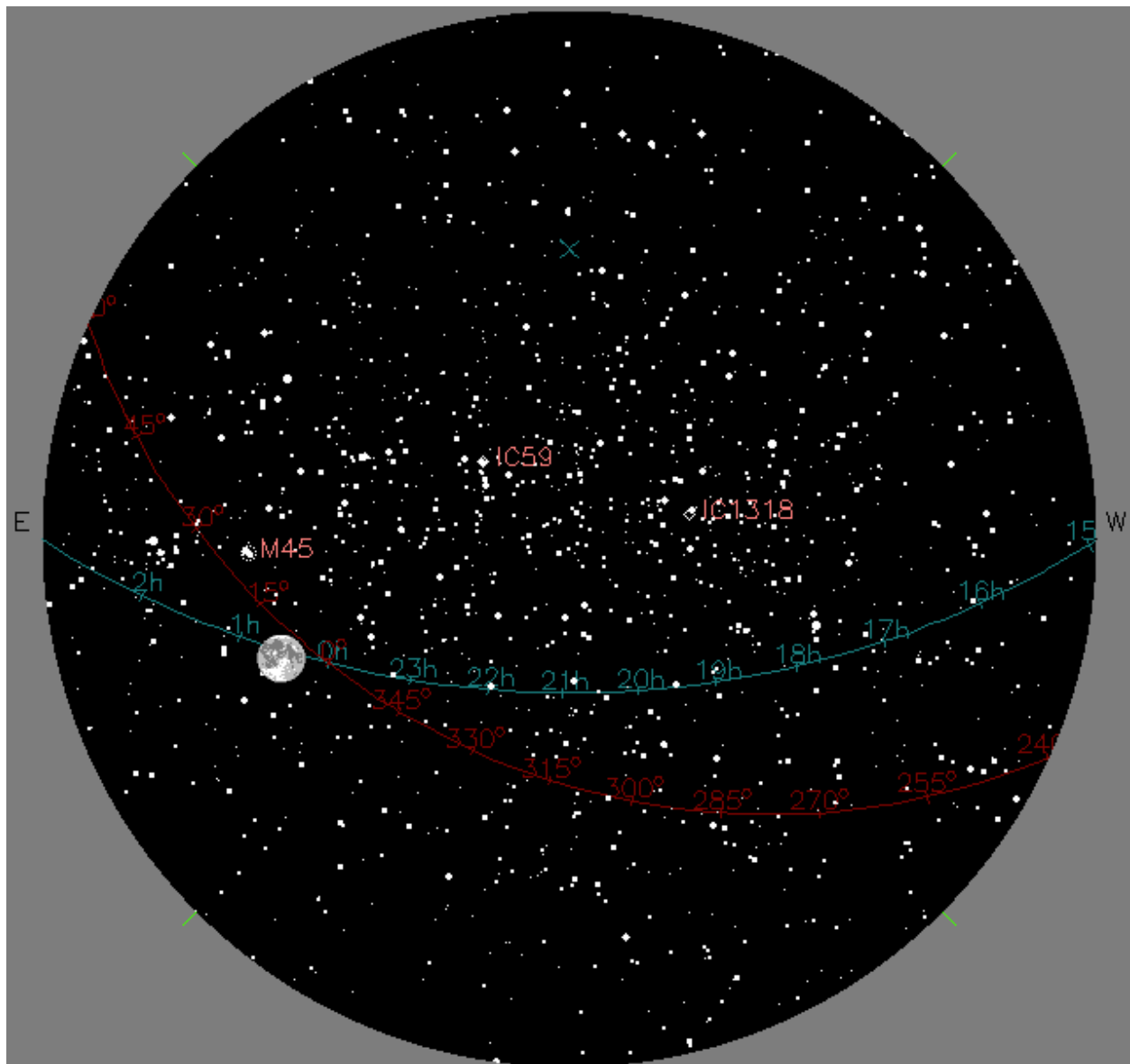
Dimensions: 29.5 mm x 14 mm

British Museum: 89770

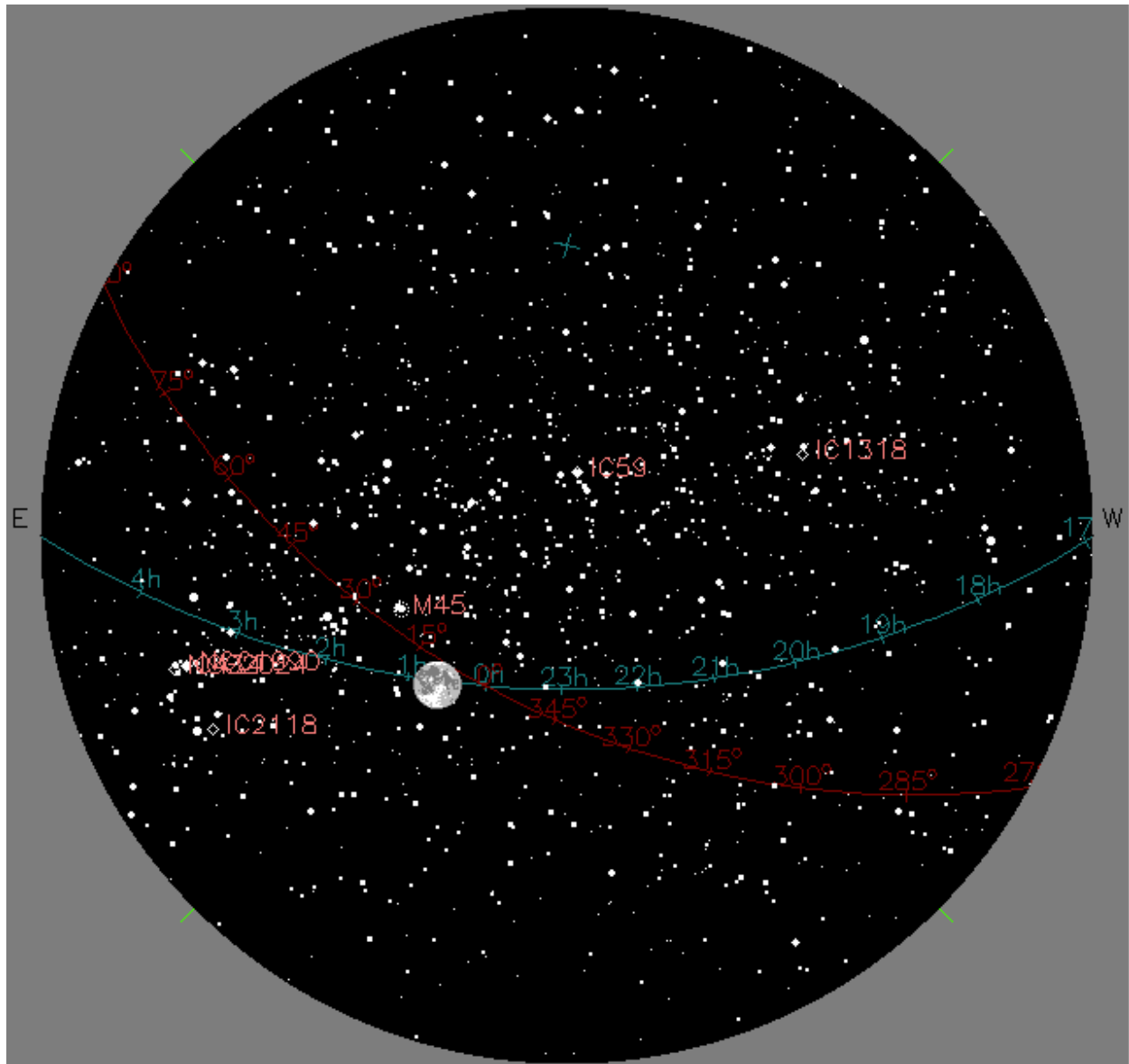
The following maps record the observable night sky from the site of Babylon, beginning at October 1, 700 BCE 18:45 local time and continuing until October 2, 05:45 local time, or just before sunrise. Note the relationship and positioning of the Pleiades star cluster, M45, in relation to the moon in each of these instances. For ease of view, the first map will feature the fully labeled sky, but successive maps have removed all labels save for deep sky objects of magnitude 2.5 or brighter, to preserve the labeling of the Pleiades (M45).

This circular star chart represents the Northern Hemisphere of the sky. It features numerous constellations, each outlined with white lines and labeled with its name in a stylized font. Key constellations include Ursa Major at the top, Ursa Minor below it, and various others like Perseus, Cygnus, and Sagittarius. Stars are depicted as white dots of varying sizes, with some labeled by name (e.g., Dubhe, Merak, Vega). The chart also includes celestial coordinates, with right ascension marked along the bottom and declination marked along the sides. The ecliptic and celestial equator are shown as curved lines. The background is a deep blue, and the overall design is clean and educational.

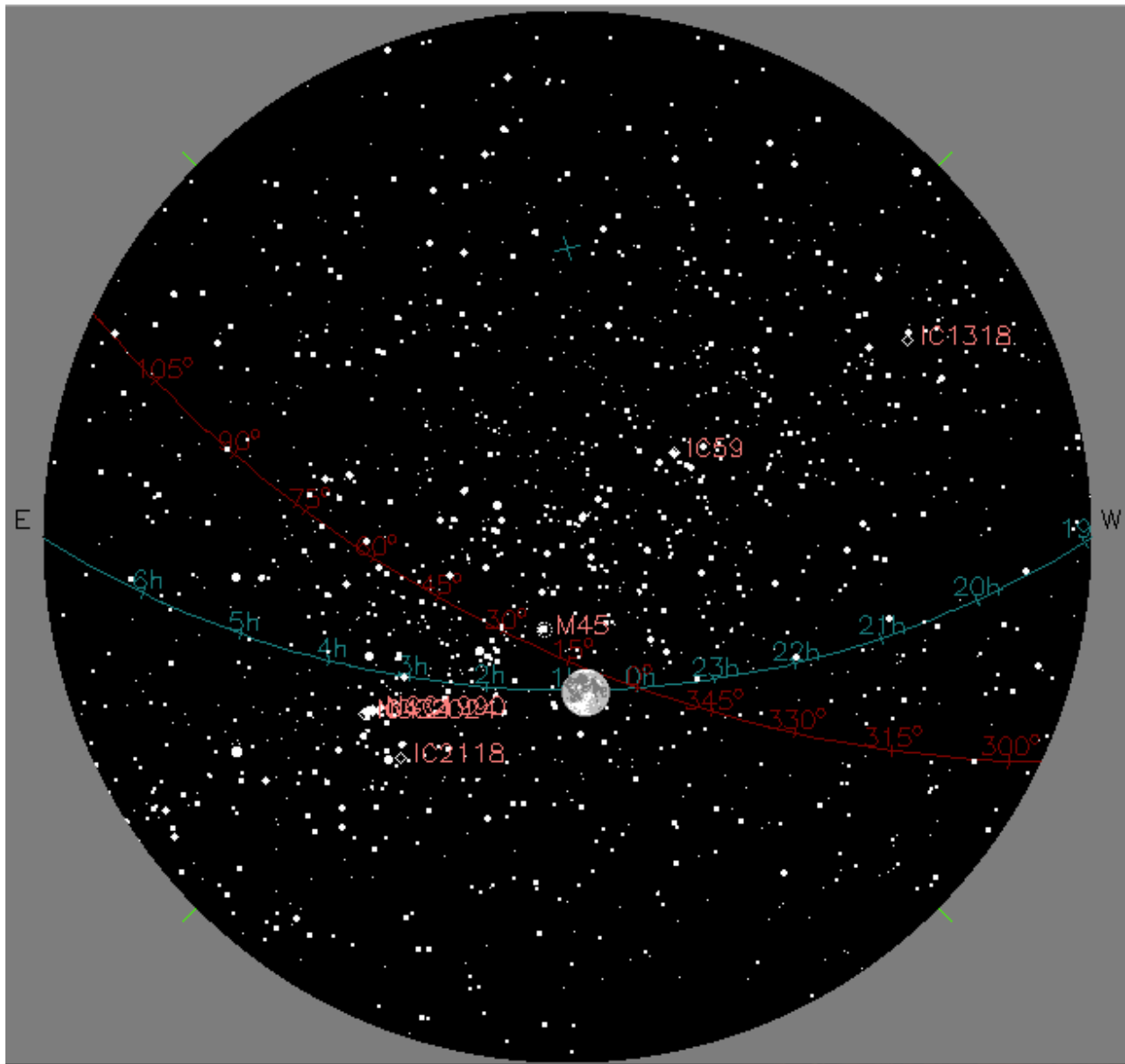
October 1, 20:45



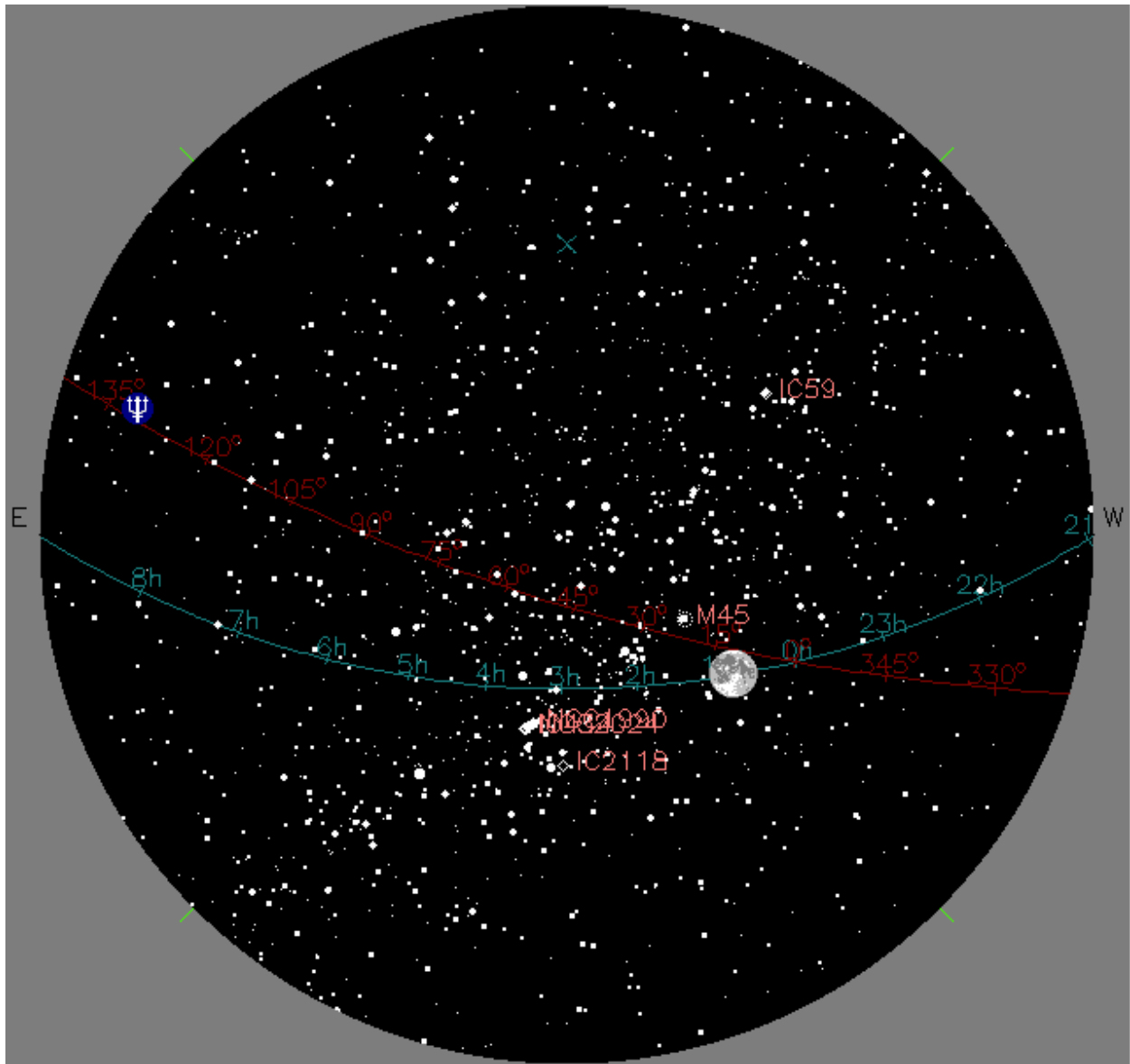
October 1, 23:45



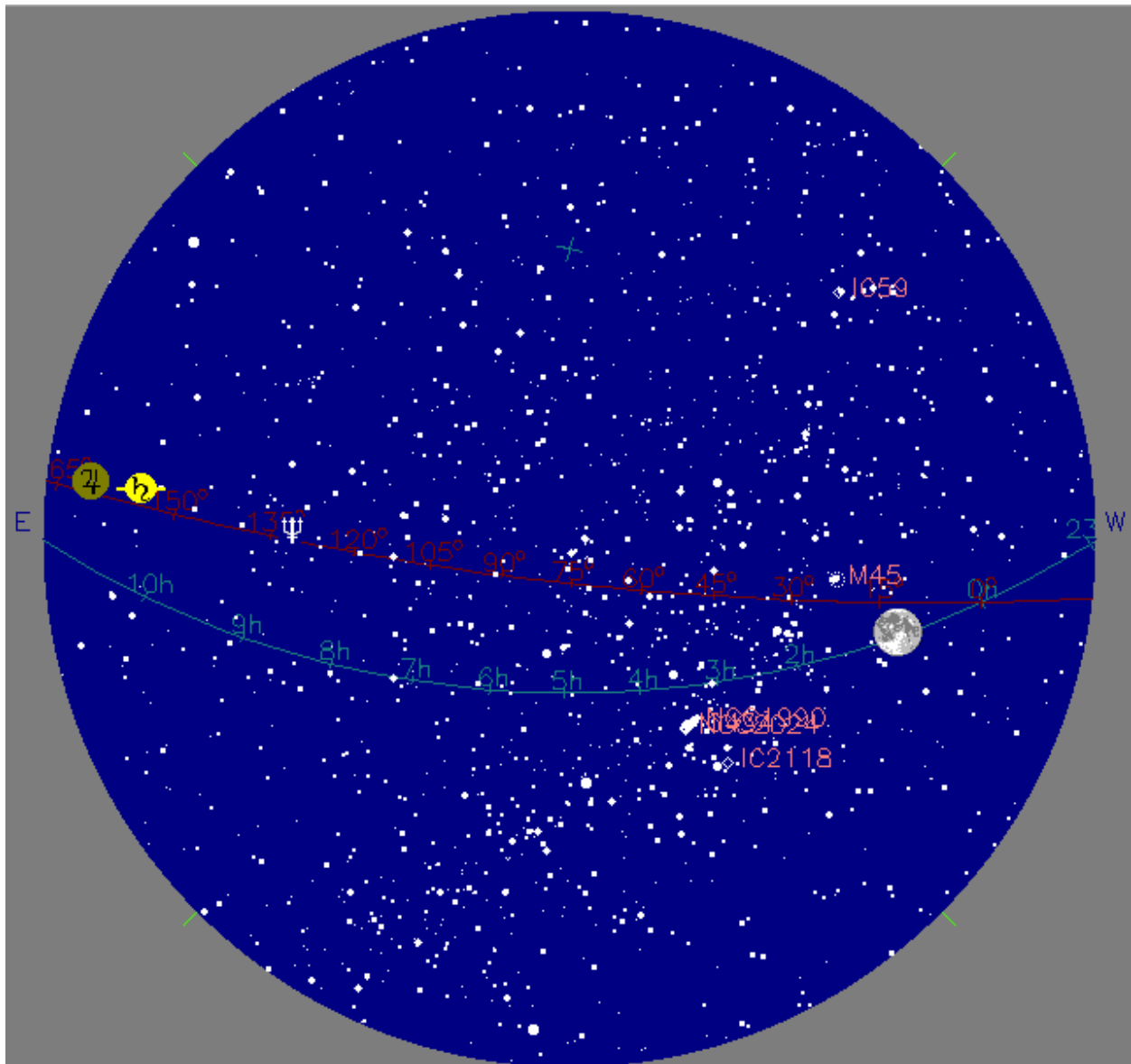
October 2 00:45



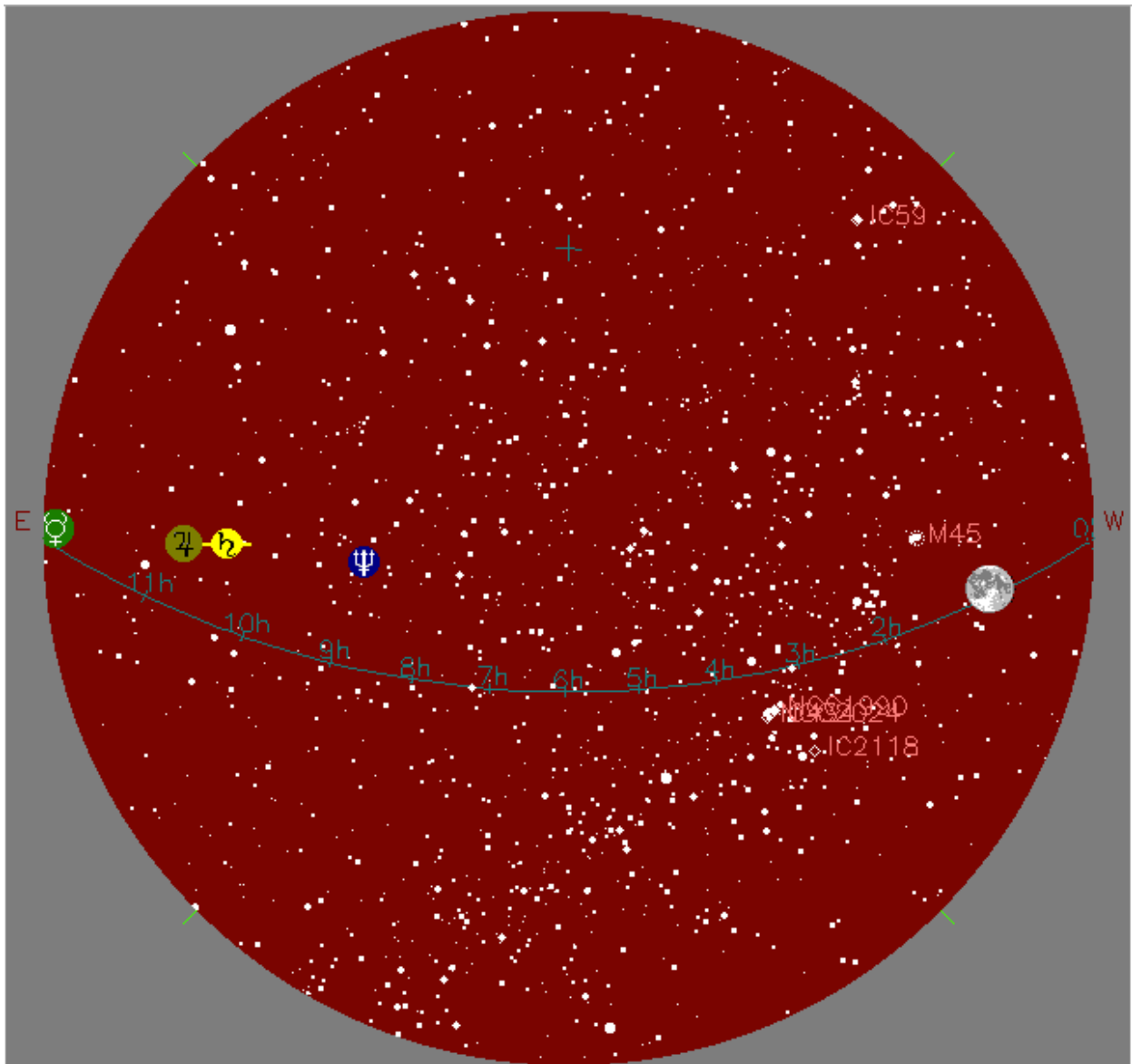
October 2 02:45



October 2 04:45



October 2 05:45



Chapter Eight: Conclusion – Concerning Demons

*I would suggest, then, that the monsters are not an inexplicable blunder of taste; they are essential, fundamentally allied to the underlying ideas of the poem, which give it its lofty tone and high seriousness.*⁶⁵⁹

Although this work has focused upon the particular role and significance of the Sebettu, the arguments found within have larger consequences when applied to the role of demons and monsters as a whole in Mesopotamia. The quote fronting this section is taken from J.R.R. Tolkien's essay, "Beowulf: the Monster and the Critics," a work that stands as one of the first works on the methodology of monster theory, and for that, still significant despite its brevity. In his treatment of the subject, Tolkien put forth the concept that the monstrous figures found within a work – in this case, the epic poem of *Beowulf* – were not throwaway additions or ornamentations, but rather an integral feature of the work itself, without which the narrative would fall apart. This treatment, and the decades of ensuing discussion, have elevated monsters to full-billing as antagonists, and allowed Grendel to be recast as the necessary foil for the protagonist.⁶⁶⁰

The developing field of monster study may have allowed monsters and demons to be treated as elements of greater importance, or, at the least, to be considered as something other than accessories to the narrative. There are complications with this line of inquiry, most arising when considering the different connotations surrounding the conceptions of monsters and demons in any number of different texts and periods. For example, although the word "demon"

⁶⁵⁹ J.R.R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics," vol. 22 of *Proceedings of the British Academy* (London: Humphrey Milford Amen House, 1936): 19.

⁶⁶⁰ See Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995).

may be employed as a term for supernatural creatures in a Biblical, Medieval, or Mesopotamian context, each of these contexts finds decidedly different creatures fall under the same term.

Beyond the idea that monsters are necessary to any story in which they appear, the more fundamental methodology of the developing field of monster theory has proven a framework for both contrast and comparison for the Sebettu in particular and the monsters of Mesopotamia in general. For example, monster theory sketches out the idea that a monster or a demon is created in response to a specific fear or cultural moment.⁶⁶¹ Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, for example, published in 1818, remains a product of, and response to, the advances of science prior to the beginning of the Victorian era and concerns and the fears of what those advances might be capable of.⁶⁶² If monsters and demons are products of particular societal conditions, or responses to equally specific fears, they remain anchored to their cultural and temporal contexts.

The Sebettu do not appear simply as antagonists in a literary text, the role Tolkien most readily ascribed to monsters. Nor do they embody a response to any one particular fear. In their long history of attestations, they wear a number of distinct and different hats; they occupy the space of terrifying, chaotic, and unpredictable monsters in one text, only to shift to being utilized as warriors of the state and members of the divine pantheon in another. While we do see a certain chronological progression in these roles, the two positions also existed contemporaneously, particularly in the later periods, without apparently presenting any major theological hurdles. In considering the Sebettu in Mesopotamia, it is useful to break up their attestations in texts (as well as art) into a series of conditions and questions – a narrative with its own contributing factors and an immense cast of characters who come into play in different acts, to occupy the stage

⁶⁶¹ See Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript*.

⁶⁶² *Frankenstein* was first published anonymously in 1818, to be later republished under Mary Shelley's name in 1822. See Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*. Norton Critical Edition, 2nd edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2012), which follows the original 1818 text.

themselves.

In this regard, it is perhaps easiest to start at the ending. The final stage of the Sebettu's presence in Mesopotamia is their fully-fledged incorporation into the divine pantheon in the Neo-Assyrian period. As such, they were represented not only in state texts (as one of any number of deities who operated on behalf of the king), but they also functioned protectively in incantations clearly employed in personal, household use. The latter indicates the spread of their utilization beyond the simple confines of state-controlled avenues and that alone is evidence of the wider acceptance of the Seven.

If that, then, is the ending, the supporting questions focus on how (and perhaps why) the Sebettu were able to transition from demonic entities to protective spirits. How much of their own nature is reflected in the benevolent and malevolent actions they assume, and do these opposing actions form an insurmountable contradiction in the nature of the Sebettu? How do the Sebettu begin to transition from antagonistic acts to more benevolent ones – and how (or against whom) is there violence directed during this shift? Where, and how, does the cult of the Sebettu begin to develop and to what end is it employed by the Neo-Assyrian period?

Although this study has focused primarily upon the Sebettu, it still aims to consider the Seven in light of the wider context of demons, monsters, and supernatural beings as a whole. In other words, it aims to examine whether the behavior of the Sebettu is atypical, and possibly unique, or if it should be considered as one expression of the overall flexibility inherent in demonic beings in this social and historical context. In this regard, the evidence from a consideration of the overall roles and characteristics common to other demons in Mesopotamia – notably the *udug* and *lama* – make a clear case for the latter of the two options. The *udug* and *lama* occupy a range of benevolent and malevolent roles in texts, even functioning in both roles

within the same text.

Though the Sebettu display features that fall in line with those of other supernatural figures, particularly those who serve to directly aid the exorcist, or *āšipu*, in incantations (or, conversely, serve as his antagonist by directly threatening the patient), they are not entirely cut from the same cloth. As this study has, at this point, well demonstrated, Mesopotamian religion in general, and demons in particular, are creatures that defy most attempts at categorical convention. We could term them the exceptions that prove the rule, but that would imply, quite falsely, that there was a rule to prove in the first place. Regardless, the loosely held set of conventions that govern the Sebettu and their behavior does not align itself to those associated with these other supernatural figures. Instead, in light of the Sebettu's inclusion in the divine pantheon, even when they are acting more unequivocally demonic – as in the Uduḡ Hul incantation series – the Sebettu track more closely to figures such as Huwawa, the Guardian of the Cedar Forest. Similarly monstrous and powerful, he is also tasked with the protection of the Forest and provides a combative foil for Gilgamesh.

The figure of Huwawa also acts as a bridge to the next of our framing questions – how are the Sebettu transitioned from demonic to divine, from malevolent to benevolent? In this, they had considerable assistance from entrenched literary tropes governing the subordination, and subsequent use, of monstrous beings by higher powers. While the utilization of the Sebettu might have been possible without these pre-existing tropes to draw upon, their position in well circulated literary texts certainly expedited and facilitated the process. The theme of controlling monstrous creatures through subjugation, as explored in texts such *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* and the later *Enūma eliš*, proves to be one of the major foundational premises of the cult of the Sebettu, as well as of their use in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions.

In the second millennium, attestations of the Sebettu, however, are patchwork, and we are, to a degree, at the mercy of chance in regard to what records have survived. The Old Babylonian literary texts, well attested and circulated, relate the key characteristics of the Sebettu as overwhelmingly destructive fighters, capable of cataclysmic destruction if unchecked. Despite that, the literary texts put them readily at the service of other, higher Mesopotamian gods. Their nature is first and most firmly established in these texts (for example, in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa*, *Lugalbanda in the Wilderness*, and the *Hymn to Hendursaĝa*) and these beneficial traits are solidified when the cult to the Seven begins to develop in Kassite-period Babylonia. The exact transition between literary text and cultic beginnings is, unfortunately, difficult to exactly trace, as we jump from one period to the other in regard to our attestations, thanks to a gap of several hundred years wherein no references to the Sebettu are preserved. This gap in our textual evidence, however, can be partially filled by examining other types of evidence, namely the iconographic representations of the Sebettu on cylinder seals. They are furthermore discussed in their own right, as they also serve as an important avenue by which the Sebettu are represented in a beneficial, apotropaic light. Cylinder seals, highly personal objects, would not, by nature, have antagonistic, demonic figures upon them, and the further use of the Sebettu (even in their astral representation of the Pleiades) speaks to an overall continuity of use as well as a rising popularity. The textual references have only to catch up, so to speak, with these artistic conventions, and the temple to the Sebettu dedicated by Ḫašmar-gašū outside of Kassite-period Nippur is emblematic of this trend. The Sebettu were, at this point, referred to in the same divine space as other more established gods, as evidenced by the similarity between this dedication and that to the temple of Enlil, whose divinity and nature had long been established. The cult, as it were, may begin in the south, but quickly spreads to the north, possibly as a result of Tukulti-

Ninurta I's sack of Babylon. While I hesitate to suggest that the Sebettu were the victims of Middle Assyrian godnapping, the fact remains that the cult in Assyria is only demonstrated in textual sources following his destruction of the south. When Tukulti-Ninurta I returns to the his own capital, he is quick to build and dedicate a temple to the Sebettu, who received immediate admission into the group of the "great gods of Assyria."

Despite their destructive nature as demons, the Sebettu remain defined by their mastery of the martial arts and also their far-ranging, ultimately liminal qualities, which can be attributed to both their demonic and astral natures. The latter of the two was closely linked to appearances of the Pleiades on the far eastern and western horizons, recorded in star catalogues from the late second millennium onwards. Utility is then perhaps the watchword which governs the use of the Sebettu: they are, if harnessed, eminently employable figures, far-ranging and fearsome warriors who could be unleashed upon one's foes, or simply range about the frontier of the empire as the initial vanguard of any military assault. Certainly, it is this role that they take within the text of *Erra*, where they are so at home in the countryside (the eden or *seru*) that their weapons begin to rust for, as they put it, "want of a slaughter." If they are not actively utilizing their abilities as warriors, their own nature is denied and begins to decay. In this sense, utilizing the Sebettu as agents against one's foes serves the dual purpose of attacking the enemies of Assyria whilst also ensuring that the Sebettu are kept well entertained and do not, subsequently, destroy the homeland in their boredom. Like high-energy, working dogs (if at times rabid ones) the Sebettu must be constantly given a task. To be sure, there is more danger in their inactivity than in that of a sheepdog, as the desolated cities of the homeland, as described in Tablet XVI of the Uduḡ Hul texts, are somewhat more extreme than a shredded couch. All the same, the analogy holds, and given the constant campaigning of the Neo-Assyrian empire, it would not have had a difficult

time providing the Sebettu with ample exercise, as it were.

However, while the Neo-Assyrian kings were quick to seize upon the Sebettu in their royal inscriptions, the fact remains that they were more favored under certain kings than others. The popularity of the Sebettu in this period is to some extent a function of the stability and aggressive imperialism of each ruler. Those who found themselves on shakier ground were more leery of employing figures that could, potentially, bite the kingly hand that feeds. Instead, particularly in light of the more recent accession of the Sebettu to the pantheon, these rulers – such as Aššurnāṣirpal II and Adad-nerari III – turned to more established, less potentially problematic divine warriors: namely, Ninurta. Ištar, unsurprisingly, could and did come with her own problems. All the same, the use of the Sebettu increases as we progress down the line of Neo-Assyrian kings, and their own traits are embellished along the way. They are, increasingly, described as archers and the vanguard of battle, which is to say, the initial attack. Archery, as well, would highlight the far-ranging aspect of the Sebettu's martial abilities and provide further artistic verification of the king's military might, given his frequent depictions armed with bow and arrow. These qualities are corroborated by the only excavated temple to the Sebettu, dedicated by Sargon II and found between the gate of the city wall of Khorsabad and the gate of the citadel that lay most directly in its path. In other words, the Sebettu were placed outside of the citadel, where all the other temples to the major gods were found, but were kept as watchdogs on a chain between the two main entry points to the city and the citadel. Not only could they not start trouble of their own, but they stood as the first line of defense, positioned ideally in this liminal space to which they were best accustomed.

Given how readily the Sebettu were utilized by the kings, it is no surprise that this use became increasingly popular in the non-state sphere, as if the kingly use had made the household

use of the Seven permissible. As such, we see that the first millennium is host to a number of incantations which feature the Sebettu in apotropaic roles. These roles, however, also call upon their martial qualities. The Sebettu feature in a text which prevents the entry of an enemy into a personal residence, thus performing, if on a much smaller scale and through the use of buried figurines, the same essential function that is demonstrated by their temple at Khorsabad. This increasing personal use is also demonstrated by the increased popularity of the image of the Sebettu on cylinder seals in the first millennium, particularly those found within the heartland of Assyria. To focus on this feature, however, requires diverging slightly to a more pointed discussion of the astral nature of the Sebettu, as this served as a fixed quality from their very inception.

The astral imagery of the Sebettu – namely, their representation as the Pleiades star cluster – plays a critical role in the utilization and character of the Seven throughout the long history of their attestations in Mesopotamia. Firstly, it is important to recognize that the astral imagery of the Sebettu, and thus their connection to the Pleiades constellation, is well represented from early periods. Indeed, this imagery is found embedded in the behavior and descriptions of the Sebettu in Old Babylonian Sumerian literary texts and repeats itself in other sources until it fully emerges, alongside the full flowering of celestial representations, in the first millennium.

The early dates of these celestial references, though comparatively fewer than those found in the first millennium, remain critical in establishing that the behavior of the Sebettu – as far-ranging, liminal, and chaotic entities – is, from their inception, or very close to it, connected to the observable patterns of the Pleiades star cluster. The Pleiades appear on the farthestmost horizons and are even used to mark these points. They behave in predictable and repeated

patterns of observable movement and yet suddenly move from one horizon to another, privileged with greater freedom of movement and not bound by the same restrictions that govern non-divine beings.

The predictability of the stars may seem, at first, contradictory to the more chaotic behavior of demons, but even demonic figures must be defined, limited, and commanded. To return to a central question I introduced in a much earlier chapter, this conundrum can be considered in terms of Jonathan Z. Smith's phrasing: "why is it that the demonic, associated with the marginal, the liminal, the chaotic, the protean, and the unstructured, appears cross-culturally as so rigidly organized a realm?"⁶⁶³ To be certain, the Neo-Assyrian kings and greater empire that most utilizes the Sebettu rely upon a long-established tapestry of subjugation and subsequent control, but the presence of established celestial patterns enables yet another level of potential predictability and thus protection from the ever-unpredictable Sebettu. Beyond that, texts make clear reference to particular behavior of the Pleiades – such as their constant, dogged, accompaniment, if not pursuit, of the moon during certain periods of the year – as a consequence and reflection of the chaotic, and thus dangerous, behavior of the Sebettu. Thus, they are blamed in Tablet XVI of Uduḫ Hul as directly causing a lunar eclipse and threatening the moon god himself. The observable behavior of the Pleiades works to explain certain understood actions of the Seven and the threat that they, even in the first millennium, continue to pose.

Beyond the textual references to the Pleiades, we see an sizeable quantity of evidence through appearances of the star cluster on cylinder seals. When these attestations are considered together with the long and, by the Neo-Assyrian period, entrenched, connection between the Pleiades and the Sebettu, the prolific number of seals speaks to the spread of the Seven alongside their visible astral representation. The Pleiades are a commonly utilized astral element on these

⁶⁶³ Jonathan Z. Smith, "Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," 437.

seals, employed for scenes of rituals and offerings, more mundane pastoral or hunting depictions, or isolated as one of the few motifs on smaller stamp seals. The star cluster had a clear prominence in the Mesopotamian conception of the night sky, a significance that can be seen in its constant presence in glyptic art. Moreover, the presence of the Pleiades was enough to invoke the night sky as a whole and they stood as one of the most identifiable astral elements on seals, next to the crescent signifying the moon (and the god Sîn which it represented). Unsurprisingly, the Pleiades were almost always located alongside the moon on cylinder seals. Although the Sebettu may not have attained the same rank and prominence as the more recognized and entrenched state gods in the first millennium, their representation as the Pleiades had no such restrictions.

Considering the textual and artistic evidence as one unified whole, we can see a clear picture emerge: a picture of the Sebettu as, on the one hand, fearsome and terrifying demonic warriors, who posed a credible threat to the very nature of civilization. On the other hand, they were also harnessed, ultimately useful, entities, allies who could be set against one's foes. I would thus return at the very close of this study to Tolkien's own words, as quoted at the beginning of this conclusion. The Sebettu are not an "inexplicable blunder of taste." Instead, their ferocity, and even unpredictability, is required to set them as worthy adversaries to the caliber of enemies that they may be called upon to defeat. Furthermore, as they are subjugated and thus controlled by the state, their overwhelmingly fearsome qualities, the unchecked and violent nature which serves as their most recognizable trait, speaks to the power of those who control them. Even if that control is only ever tenuous and amounts to little more than being able to point a terrifying storm in the direction of one's enemies, the storm is still terrifying, still fearsome, and any modicum of control, regardless of its degree, is an accomplishment of the

highest order.

Appendices

Appendix A: Seals Concerning the Sebettu/Pleiades

The following collections of cylinder seals were consulted in creating the database of cylinder seals featuring the Pleiades. Note that seals with the Pleiades were not found in every collection, but all were consulted.

Amiet, Pierre. "Les intailles orientales de la collection Henri de Genouillac," <i>Cahiers de Byrsa</i> 7 (1957): 35-73.
Amiet, Pierre. <i>La glyptique susienne des origines à l'époque des Perses-Achemenides: 2 Vols.</i> Paris: Mémoires de la Délégation Archéologique en Iran 42 et 43, 1972.
P Amiet, Pierre. <i>Corpus des cylindres de Ras Shamra – Ougarit II: Sceaux-cylindres en hématite et pierres diverses.</i> Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1992).
Buchanan, Briggs. <i>Early Near Eastern Seals in the Yale Babylonian Collection.</i> New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
Buchanan, Briggs. <i>Catalogue of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Ashmolean Museum, Vol. I and II.</i> Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.
van Buren, Douglas. <i>The Cylinder Seals of the Pontifical Biblical Institute vol. 21 of AO.</i> Rome: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum, 1940.
Collon, Dominique, "Nimrod, the Mighty Hunter, and his Descendants: Contest Scenes on Cylinder Seals," in <i>Seals and Sealing in the Ancient Near East</i> , ed. Joan Goodnick Westenholz, 23-38. Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 1993.
Collon, Dominique. <i>The Alalakh Cylinder Seals.</i> London: British Archaeological Reports, 1982.
Collon, Dominique with contributions by C.B.F. Walker and M. Sax. <i>Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Cylinder Seals III. Isin/Larsa and Old Babylonian Periods.</i> London: British Museum Press, 1986.
Collon, Dominique. <i>First Impressions – Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East.</i> London, British Museum Press, 1987.
Collon, Dominique, with contributions by C.B.F. Walker and M. Sax. <i>Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Cylinder Seals V. Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian Periods.</i> London: British Museum Press, 2001.
Delaporte, Louis. <i>Catalogue des cylindres, cachets, et pierres gravées de style orientale, Musée du Louvre.</i> Vol. 1: <i>Fouilles et missions.</i> Paris: Ernst Leroux, 1920; Vol. 2: <i>Acquisitions.</i> Paris: Ernst Leroux, 1923.
Delaporte, Louis. <i>Cylindres orientaux du Musée Guimet.</i> Paris: Ernst Leroux, 1909.

Delaporte, Louis. <i>Catalogue des Cylindres Orientaux et des Cachets Assyro-Babyloniens, Perses et Syro Cappadociens de la Bibliothèque Nationale</i> . Paris: Erenst Leroux, 1910.
Doumet, Claude. <i>Sceaux et Cylindres Orientaux: La collection Chiha: Preface de Pierre Amiet</i> vol. 9 in <i>OBOA</i> . Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 1992.
Dunand, M. <i>Fouilles de Byblos, Vol. 1: 1926-1932; Vol. 2 : 1933-1938</i> . Paris, 1937-38, 1950-58.
Eisen, Gustavus A. <i>Ancient Oriental Cylinder and Other Seals with a Description of the Collection of Mrs. William H. Moore</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940.
Frankfort, Henri. <i>Cylinder Seals: A Documentary Essay on the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East</i> . London: Macmillan & Co., 1939.
Frankfort, Henri. <i>Stratified Cylinder Seals from the Diyala Region</i> , vol. 52 of <i>OIP</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago, 1955.
Forte, E. Willaims. <i>Near Eastern Seals: A Selection of Stamp and Cylinder Seals from the Collection of Mrs. William H. Moore</i> . New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976.
Hammade, Hamido. <i>Cylinder Seals from Collections of the Aleppo Museum: Seals of Unknown Provenance</i> . London: British Archaeological Reports, 1987.
Keel-Leu, Hildi and Beatrice Teissier, <i>The Ancient Near Eastern Cylinder Seals of the Collections "Bible+Orient" of the University of Fribourg</i> , Vol. 200 of <i>OBO</i> . Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004.
Kühne, Hartmut. <i>Das Rollsiegel in Syrien: Zur Steinschneidekunst in Syrien zwischen 3300 und 300 vor Christus</i> . Tübingen: Altorientalisches Seminar der Universität Tübingen, 1980).
Legrain, Leon. <i>The Culture of the Babylonians from their Seals in the Collections of the Museum</i> . Philadelphia: Publications of the Babylonian Section, 1925.
Matthews, Donald. <i>Principles of Composition in Near Eastern Glyptic of the later second millennium B.C</i> . Freiburg: Vandenhoeck + Ruprecht, 1990.
Menant, Jaochim. <i>Catalogue des Cylindres Oreintaux du Cabinet Royal des Medailles de la Haye</i> . Paris: Kessinger Publishing, 1878.
Merrillees, Parvine H. with contributions by C.B.F. Walker and M. Sax. <i>Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum, Cylinder Seals VI. Pre Achaemenid and Achaemenid Periods</i> . London, British Museum Press, 2001.
Merrillees, Parvine H. <i>Cylinder and Stamp Seals in Australian Collections</i> . Victoria: Deakin University Archaeology Research Unit, 1990.
Merrillees, Parvine H. <i>Ancient Near Eastern Glyptic in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia</i> . Goteborg: Paul Aströms Förlag, 2001.
Møller, Eva. <i>Ancient Near Eastern Seals in a Danish Collection</i> . Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1992.
Moortgart, A. <i>Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel</i> . Berlin: Mann, 1940.
Noveck, Madeline. <i>The Mark of Ancient Man-Ancient Near Eastern Stamp Seals and Cylinder Seals: The Gorelick Collection</i> . New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1975.
von der Osten, Hans Henning. <i>Ancient Oriental Seals in the Collection of Mr. Edward T. Newell</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934.
von der Osten, Hans Henning. <i>Ancient Oriental Seals in the Collection of Mrs. Agnes Baldwin Brett</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936.
von der Osten, Hans Henning. <i>Altorientalische Siegelsteine Sammlung Han Silvius von Aulock</i> . Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1957.
Pittman, Holly and Joan Aruz. <i>Ancient Art in Miniature: Near Eastern Seals from the</i>

<i>Collection of Martin and Sarah Cherkasky</i> . New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987.
Porada, Edith. <i>Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections: The Collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library</i> . Washington, D.C: Pantheon Books, 1948.
Ravn, O.E. <i>A Catalogue of Oriental Cylinder Seals and Seal Impressions in the Danish National Museum</i> . Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet, 1960.
Teissier, Beatrice. <i>Ancient Near Eastern Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection</i> . Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
Vollenwender, Marie Louise. <i>Catalogue raisonne des sceaux cylindres et intailles</i> . Geneva: Musee d'Art et d'Histoire de Geneve, 1967.
Williams, Ellen Reeder. <i>The Archaeological Collection of the Johns Hopkins University</i> . Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984.

Catalogue of Seals

The catalogue of seals is presented in the following format:

Catalogue Number
Museum, Accession Number
Medium
Site/Provenance
Period
Dimensions (Height x Diameter)
Description
Inscription
Publication

Where a field is not known or included in the seal (such as with its site/provenance or inscription), it is omitted entirely from the seal's entry.

Cat. No. 1
Australian Institute of Archaeology in Melbourne
Black Serpentine
Neo-Assyrian, 7th c.
43 x 16 mm
Description: Archer riding on chariot with two horses in harness leaping forward; Pleiades above.
Publication: Merrillees, *Seals in Australian Collections*, No. 1

Cat. No. 2
Aleppo Museum, M. 694
Hematite
Neo-Assyrian, 8th c.
22 x 11 mm
Description: Winged man flanked by two gazelles; Pleiades in field above.
Publication: Hammade, *Cylinder Seals from the Aleppo Museum*, No. 271

Cat. No. 3
Aleppo Museum, M. 6013
Steatite
Neo-Assyrian, 8th c.
21 x 9 mm
Description: Large quadruped in field with Pleiades above; seven dots presented in unusual configuration.
Publication: Hammade, *Cylinder Seals from the Aleppo Museum*, No. 266

Cat. No. 4
Aleppo Museum, M. 6062
Agate
Neo-Assyrian, 7th c.
16 x 13 mm
Description: Bull-man setting an offering before the king; in field are crescent, star, and Pleiades.
Publication: Hammade, *Cylinder Seals from the Aleppo Museum*, No. 272

Cat. No. 5
Aleppo Museum, M. 6381
Black Steatite
Neo-Assyrian, 8th c.
22 x 11 mm
Description: Two human figures facing each other, potentially worshippers or a ritual scene. In field, spear of Marduk, sacred palm tree, and Pleiades.
Publication: Hammade, *Cylinder Seals from the Aleppo Museum*, No. 265

Cat. No. 6
Ashmolean Museum, 1939.545
Steatite
Site: Alalakh
Middle Assyrian, 14th c.
22 x 10 mm
Description: Two male figures flanking staff with winged disc atop; third figure before a stylized tree; seven dots in loose arrangement, possible Pleiades.
Publication: Collon, *Cylinder Seals from Alalakh*, No. 109

Cat. No. 7
Berlin Antikensammlung, SA 206
Chalcedony
Neo-Assyrian, 8th c.
42 x 16 mm
Description: Worshippers facing each other with winged disc, crescent, and Pleiades above.
Publication: Klengel-Brandt, *Mit Sieben Siegeln versehen*, fig. 157

Cat. No. 8
Bibliothèque Nationale, Delaporte No. 322
White Chalcedony
Neo-Assyrian, 8th c.
28 x 13 mm
Description: Central warrior figure flanked by two rampant winged bull-men, grasping one of their forelegs in each hand. Small caprid between them. In field, lozenge, Pleiades.
Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 322

Cat. No. 9
Bibliothèque Nationale, Delaporte No. 323

White Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

31 x 15 mm

Description: Seal quite worn. Central warrior figure flanked by two beasts: winged bull-man and griffin, each rampant with one foreleg seized by the warrior. Possible crescent above, Pleiades in vertical arrangement between the figures.

Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 323

Cat. No. 10

Bibliothèque Nationale, Delaporte No. 340

Cornaline

Neo-Assyrian

24 x 12 mm

Description: Worshipper before altar with lozenge, fish, and crescent atop staff set upon it. Across from altar, reclining ibex. Pleiades and star above.

Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 340

Cat. No. 11

Bibliothèque Nationale, No. Delaporte 350

28 x 12 mm

Neo-Assyrian

24 x 12 mm

Description: Three worshipper (two on left, one on right) flanking altar with cup and other objects atop it and winged disc above. Many objects in field: star, crescent, and Pleiades above; lozenge, fish, bull's head, and staff below.

Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 350

Cat. No. 12

Bibliothèque Nationale, No. Delaporte 353

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

16 x 14 mm

Description: Worn or recut seal. Top half of three figures – possibly a seated deity and worshipper, with another deity with nimbus behind. Sun, crescent, and Pleiades above.

Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 353

Cat. No. 13

Bibliothèque Nationale, Delaporte No. 354

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

55 x 18 mm

Description: God holding scepter standing atop resting animal. Worshiper and another deity approaching, facing to the left, with a small tree between the two. Winged disc with small deity within it above the two. In field, star and Pleiades.

Inscription: Worn: Seal of ^dAššur-bel-ušur... officer of the land of *Ia-a*...

Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 354

Cat. No. 14
Bibliothèque Nationale, Delaporte No. 355
White Chalcedony
Neo-Assyrian
42 x 17 mm
Description: Deity atop griffin with worshipper approaching, another deity (on platform) at his back. Scorpion man stands third. In field, lozenge, star, crescent, Pleiades, and spade of Marduk.
Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 355

Cat. No. 15
Bibliothèque Nationale, Delaporte No. 357
Rose Jasper
Neo-Assyrian
35 x 16 mm
Description: Worshipper flanked by two deities, each with nimbus of stars. Tree before rightmost deity. In field, star, lozenge, fist, and Pleiades in 3-3-2 configuration
Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 357

Cat. No. 16
Bibliothèque Nationale, Delaporte No. 359
Agate
Neo-Assyrian
21 x 11 mm
Description: Deity standing atop resting bull, worshipper before him and spade between them. Behind deity, staff and rampant winged bull-man. In field, crescent, Pleiades, and star.
Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 359

Cat. No. 17
Bibliothèque Nationale, Delaporte No. 378
Pale Rose Jasper
Neo-Assyrian
22 x 10 mm
Description: Two rampant rams facing a sacred tree with Pleiades in 3-3 arrangement with the last globe centrally set beneath the two rows. Star behind each ram.
Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 378

Cat. No. 18
Bibliothèque Nationale, Delaporte No. 548
Chalcedony
Neo-Assyrian
14 x 13 x 8 mm
Description: Stamp seal with large star and the Pleiades.
Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 548

Cat. No. 19

Bibliothèque Nationale, Delaporte No. 549

Agate

Neo-Assyrian

28 x 18 x 11 mm

Description: Stamp seal with crescent, staff, star, and Pleiades.

Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 549

Cat. No. 20

Bibliothèque Nationale, Delaporte No. 551

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

22 x 18 x 10 mm

Description: Stamp seal with worshipper before large crescent and the Pleiades, small staff or sword at his back.

Publication: Delaporte, *Cylindres Orientaux de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, No. 551

Cat. No. 21

Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem, 424b

Chalcedony

Middle Assyrian

Description: Crescent, star, and Pleiades

Publication: Collon, "Nimrod, Mighty Hunter," Fig. 15

Cat. No. 22

Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem, 487a

Chalcedony

Middle Assyrian

Description: Crescent moon, star, and Pleiades

Publication: Collon, "Nimrod, Mighty Hunter," Fig. 28

Cat. No. 23

British Museum, 18249

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 9th c.

14.5 x 33.5 mm

Description: Two bearded worshipper extending their left hands, right hands touch tassel hanging down from a canopy, under which are the spade of Marduk, resting atop a *mušhuššu*. Also stylus of Nabû, fish, rhombus, star, and Pleiades. Small deity below Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 257

Cat. No. 24

British Museum, 89113

Carnelian

Neo-Assyrian, late 8th c.

26 x 11.5 mm

Description: Beardless worshipper wearing robe; approaching him another figure, with sword at waist, standing atop charging griffin-lion. In field, crescent, star, stylus of Nabû, Pleiades, two lozenges.

Inscription: NU ^dDIM. Meaning (and reading) uncertain, possibly owner of seal.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 290

Cat. No. 25

British Museum, 89139

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

42 x 16.5 mm

Description: Worshipper facing deity, probably a goddess, wearing a horned head-dress and bearing a sword and mace. Deity stands atop griffin, with Pleiades behind her.

Inscription: Seal of Bel-Mushallim: whosoever removes this seal, may Šamaš remove him.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 256

Cat. No. 26

British Museum, 89164

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

40 x 19 mm

Description: Goddess with horned headdress and sword at waist next to sigil of Marduk. Another similar deity on opposite side with worshipper facing pair. Pleiades, crescent moon, and winged sun disc overhead. Parallel to seal of Shalmaneser IV.

Inscription: Seal of Tariba-Ištar. Whoever wears this, may he keep in good health.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 252

Cat. No. 27

British Museum, 89331

Blue Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

40 x 18.5 mm

Description: Cow suckling calf beneath winged disc, looking back at leaping gazelle. Behind them, a figure astride a leaping horse and a standing worshipper. In field, winged disc, star, crescent, staff, spade, and Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 215

Cat. No. 28

British Museum, 89334

Blue Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, early 7th c.

39.5 x 17 mm

Description: Worshipper facing deity atop reclining animal; another, similar deity at his back. In field, lozenge, caprid, star, crescent, and Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 279

Cat. No. 29

British Museum, 89339

Grey-Brown Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, early 7th c.

21.5 x 11.5 mm

Description: Bearded worshipper before goddess bearing mace; another deity behind her. In field, Pleiades, spade of Marduk, crescent, rhombus, and star.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 250

Cat. No. 30

British Museum, 89351

Grey-Brown Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

43 x 16 mm

Description: Beardless worshipper before god, another deity behind, with rays behind him. In field, tasseled spade of Marduk, crescent, star, and Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 245

Cat. No. 31

British Museum, 89380

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

38 x 18.5 mm

Description: Worshipper stands facing a seated bearded god, who wears a horned headdress. Between them is a low table with offering. Behind god another figure, winged. In field, crescent, rhombus, and Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 137

Cat. No. 32

British Museum, 89382

Grey-Brown Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian 7th c.

26.5 x 13 mm

Description: Worshipper at left before incense burner; winged and nude goddess before tree; Pleiades, crescent moon, and star overhead.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 156

Cat. No. 33

British Museum, 89403

Hematite

Middle Assyrian, Late 10th c.

53 x 21 mm

Description: Winged bull paces towards a tree, behind it a kneeling archer. Above a god in a winged disc between two human-headed goat-fish. In field, crescent, Pleiades, fish, and star.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 17

Cat. No. 34
British Museum, 89406
Rock Crystal
Neo-Assyrian
25 x 12 mm
Description: Bearded worshipper before goddess with a sword at her waist. Another, similar deity figure alongside. In field, rhombus, goat, and stylus of Nabû, Pleiades.
Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 244

Cat. No. 35
British Museum, 89443
Dark red Soapstone
Neo-Assyrian
Findspot: Sherif Khan
36.5 x 13.5 mm
Description: Linear style with a winged disc above a tree, flanked by figures, each with a raised hand. In field, Pleiades and chevron border. Tin-bronze pin preserved in seal (total height 46 mm).
Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 151

Cat. No. 36
British Museum, 89470
Agate
Neo-Babylonian
30 x 12 mm
Description: Priest with knife before altar with a fish resting atop it; axe and double mace; star, crescent moon and Pleiades overhead.
Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 147

Cat. No. 37
British Museum, 89478
Carnelian
Neo-Assyrian
22.5 x 10 mm
Description: Two worshippers with raised hands, cow suckling a calf. In field, Pleiades in vertical arrangement, crescent moon, and star.
Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 219

Cat. No. 38
British Museum, 89571
Grey-Blue Chalcedony
Neo-Assyrian
44 x 19.5 mm
Description: Bull-man facing god with staff between them; rampant bull with backwards-facing neck. In field, crescent, fish, star, and Pleiades in vertical arrangement.
Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 213

Cat. No. 39

British Museum, 89575

Grey-Blue Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 8th/7th c.

37.5 x 15 mm

Description: Man with raised hands facing winged bull. Winged disc above worshipper, crescent, star, and Pleiades above.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 200

Cat. No. 40

British Museum, 89584

Serpentine

Findspot: N 1083

Neo-Assyrian, 8th-7th c.

35.5 x 12 mm

Description: Attendant wearing a robe stands facing a seated deity, raising one hand with ring in another. Worn caprid behind seated deity. Pleiades in vertical arrangement.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 129

Cat. No. 41

British Museum, 89590

Jasper

Neo-Assyrian

44 x 19.5 mm

Description: Worshipper before seated, bearded figure. An attendant with a fan stands behind the seated figure. A table is between the worshipper and seated figure. In field, star, spade, crescent, Pleiades in vertical arrangement, two small deities.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 213

Cat. No. 42

British Museum, 89595

Quartz

Findspot: Nimrud (N 1096)

Neo-Assyrian, 8th c.

31 x 12 mm

Findspot: Excavated, though findspot unknown

Description: Warrior holding a horned animal by the leg with his left hand a bow held in his right hand. In field, winged disc, crescent, Pleiades in vertical arrangement.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 321

Cat. No. 43

British Museum, 89597

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, early 7th c.

26 x 12 mm

Findspot: Nimrud, South East Palace

Description: Bearded worshipper striding towards a deity. The chair is high-backed and ornamented with five drill-holes. In the field, the Pleiades, winged disc, spade of Marduk, crescent, star, rhombus.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 136

Cat. No. 44

British Museum, 89600

Green and Black Serpentine

Middle Assyrian, late 10th c.

40 x 15 mm

Description: Bearded sphinx attacks wild goat with a plant in front of it. In the field, the Pleiades, crescent, and an incomplete rhombus. Chevron borders at top and bottom of seal.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 67

Cat. No. 45

British Museum, 89602

Carnelian

Findspot: Nimrud, South-East Palace (N 1087)

Neo-Assyrian

17 x 8.5 mm

Description: Winged and beardless figure wearing a tall, feather-topped headdress. Facing the figure a bearded worshipper. Pleiades between the two.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 242

Cat. No. 46

British Museum, 89608

Serpentine

Findspot: Nimrud, South-East Palace (N 1108)

Neo-Assyrian

23.8 x 11.5 mm

Description: Two winged human-headed bird hybrids (griffins), one with scorpion's tail, stride to the left. Above them is a star and between them the Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 70

Cat. No. 47

British Museum, 89617

Limestone

Findspot: Nimrud (N 1118)

Neo-Assyrian

29 x 12.5 mm

Description: Linear style seal: spade of Marduk atop a scorpion-tailed *mušhuššu*. A bearded god and seven or eight globes in standard Pleiades arrangement.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 225

Cat. No. 48

British Museum, 89619

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

33 x 15 mm

Description: Bearded worshipper (possibly the king) wearing a robe and facing a deity seated on a chair adorned with stars. Between them rests a tall incense burner, above which are a crescent and the Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 133

Cat. No. 49

British Museum, 89620

Serpentine

Findspot: Nimrud (N 1120)

Neo-Assyrian

25 x 11.5 mm

Description: Linear style seal. Bearded figure in fringed robe reaching towards cow that suckles her calf while being mounted by a bull. In the field, crescent, seven-rayed star, and the Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 214

Cat. No. 50

British Museum, 89640

Chalcedony

Findspot: Nimrud, South East Palace (N 1142)

Late Mitannian

21 x 11 mm

Description: Figure to the left carries an animal with a goat before them; Pleiades, scorpion.

Publication: Access via online database.

Cat. No. 51

British Museum, 89656

Serpentine

Findspot: Nimrud, South East Palace (N 1213)

Neo-Assyrian

39 x 14 mm

Description: An attendant wearing fringed robe grasping a bird by the neck, standing facing similar figure seated on a stool with bull's feet. Between the figures a cauldron on ring-stand, above are the Pleiades and crescent.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 121

Cat. No. 52

British Museum, 89730

Serpentine

Find spot: Nineveh

Neo-Assyrian

16 x 8 mm

Description: Wedges or stylus of Nabû, tasseled spade of Marduk both atop box-stand. Bearded worshipper turned to the right, another faces left. Pleiades rest above a fish.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 261

Cat. No. 53

British Museum, 89731

Material

1500-1000 BC

27.5 x 10 mm

Description: Quadruped resembling a horse or a bull rears up towards an archer, aiming an arrow at it. On either side of animal's head are a star and inverted crescent. Before it are the Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 24

Cat. No. 54

British Museum, 89763

Carnelian

Neo-Assyrian, 8th c.

28 x 13 mm

Description: Enkidu and Gilgamesh subduing Humbaba; worshipper to the side. Spade and stylus of Nabû between him and combat scene. Pleiades above, seal bordered by two lines, top and bottom.

Inscription: (Seal) of Ninurta-ahu-usur

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 338

Cat. No. 55

British Museum, 89770

Chalcedony

Findspot: Babylon

Neo-Assyrian

29.5 x 14 mm

Description: Syrian influenced-seal. Two figures sit atop stools facing each other with a table between them. They drink from shallow cups, one attended to by servant with fan. In field, winged disc, star, crescent, lozenge, and Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 149

Cat. No. 56

British Museum, 89775

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

24.5 x 13.5 mm

Description: Seal half preserved, depicts possible chariot hunt. Small bull beside larger bull, head of horse (of chariot?) preserved. Pleiades, four of the seven preserved.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 95

Cat. No. 57

British Museum, 89861

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 8th-7th c.

22 x 18.5 mm

Description: Palm tree flanked by astral symbols and two worshippers. In field, crescent, star, and Pleiades. Seal bordered by lines.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 223

Cat. No. 58

British Museum, 95476

Chalcedony

Late Babylonian

25 x 13 mm

Description: Goddess wearing headdress with star atop it, armed with sword at her waist, bow at her back. On another dais, facing, rests a bearded god. Worshipper faces the deities. In field, spade of Marduk, Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 248

Cat. No. 59

British Museum, 99406

Pale green serpentine

Neo-Assyrian, 8th-6th c.

40 x 14.5 mm

Description: Warrior facing left between two rampant griffins, reaching towards throat of one, holding staff against another. In field, Pleiades, rhombus, wedge, and large fish.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 342

Cat. No. 60

British Museum, 102495

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

31.5 x 15.5 mm

Description: Winged, bearded and kneeling genie, flanked by fish-cloaked figure and two robed male figures. Winged disc, incense burner, tasseled spade, stylus, and Pleiades in field.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 203

Cat. No. 61

British Museum, 103239

Carnelian

Neo-Assyrian, 7th c.

33 x 13.5 mm

Description: Tree flanked by worshippers, rhombus, fish; disc, crescent moon, and Pleiades overhead.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 168

Cat. No. 62

British Museum, 104499

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, late 8th c.

26 x 13 mm

Description: Tree flanked by two worshippers, one wearing a fish-robe. Dog crouches to the right of worshippers. In field, winged disc with deity within, crescent, rosette, and then Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 174

Cat. No. 63

British Museum, 116142

Serpentine

Findspot: Karkamiš

Neo-Hittite (found in Late Hittite context)

17.5 x 13.5 mm

Description: Horned reptile, part of head visible and facing crescent. Behind it bearded god and four of the Pleiades. Chevron border.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 286

Cat. No. 64

British Museum, 119426

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

34.5 x 15 mm

Description: Bearded god aiming arrow at rampant lion-griffin. Deity seated on throne with crouching dog underfoot. In field, crescent, stars, Pleiades, and two lines bordering seal.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 232

Cat. No. 65

British Museum, 123349

Serpentine

Findspot: Karkamiš

Neo-Assyrian

31.5 x 14 mm

Description: Only upper part of seal survives; horse drawing chariot. In field, rhombus, winged disc, and Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 97

Cat. No. 66

British Museum, 126064

Chalcedony

Findspot: Al Mina (MNN. 1)

Neo-Assyrian, early 8th c.

37 x 17 mm

Description: Complicated seal. Presentation scene, worshipper with a kid and protective lama figure. Central deity a large figure with raised arms from which rivers flow that end in pomegranates. His arms flank winged disc of Aššur. Small scene details goddess in architectural feature flanked by winged genii. In field are ankh, bull head, Pleiades, two small astral deities

surrounded by rosette and nimbus of lines, respectively. Also in field spade of Marduk and stylus of Nabû.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 204

Cat. No. 67

British Museum, 129538

Carnelian

Neo-Assyrian

22.5 x 14 mm

Description: Goddess Gula seated on chair set atop dog with worshipper facing her. Spade of Marduk and stylus of Nabû between worshipper and lion-cloaked figure. In field, four stars, crescent, winged disc and Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 234

Cat. No. 68

British Museum, 129544

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

39 x 16.5 mm

Description: Two figures flanking architectural element with figure crouching within. In field, winged disc, star, Pleiades, bird, and three lozenges.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 206

Cat. No. 69

British Museum, 130699

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

39 x 16.5 mm

Description: Two figures flanking tree, one wearing fish cape. Behind him, plant, reclining caprid with spade and stylus atop its back. In field, large rosette, crescent, winged disc with figures within, and Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 157

Cat. No. 70

British Museum, 134640

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

22 x 20 mm

Description: Worshipper before seated figure with altar between them. Figure wearing fish-cape behind worshipper. In field, Pleiades and star.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 125

Cat. No. 71

British Museum, 134768

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

39.5 x 12 mm

Description: Archer attacking rampant winged-bull man. Crescent, star and Pleiades above.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 27

Cat. No. 72

British Museum, 134836

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian, 10th-8th c.

43 x 16 mm

Description: Archer kneeling and attacking charging bull. In the field, crescent, winged disc, bird, star, and Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 20

Cat. No. 73

British Museum, 140396

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

35.5 x 15 mm

Description: Seal very worn. Worshipper flanking tree; crescent moon and six dots of the Pleiades in a vertical arrangement.

Findspot: N 1135

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 126

Cat. No. 74

British Museum, 140794

Jasper

Neo-Assyrian

33 x 16.5 mm

Description: Worshipper with monstrous creature, likely a *mušhuššu* with the spade of Marduk and stylus of Nabû resting on its back. In field, a crescent, star, fish, rhombus, and the Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No. 280

Cat. No. 75

British Museum, 140849

Leaded tin-bronze

9th-7th c.

34 x 16.5 x 6.5 mm

Description: Stamp seal. Bearded figure in a fringed robe. Winged disc above couchant gazelle and star, Pleiades set alongside.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum*, Vol. 5, No.

Cat. No. 76

British Museum, 141742

Serpentine

Findspot: Nimrud, Burnt Palace, Rm. 23 (ND 3211)

Neo-Assyrian

20 x 11.5 mm

Description: Linear style. Two wild goats leaping towards each other. In field with crescent, wedge, and Pleiades.

Publication: Collon, *Catalogue of the Seals in the British Museum, Vol. 5*, No. 186

Cat. No. 77

Chiha Collection, 152

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 9th c.

26 x irregular diameter, varies between 13 and 15 mm

Description: Two figures on chariot; one an archer attacking bull in mimicry of hunting scene. Border of curving lines mimicking guilloche pattern on top and bottom. Crescent, star, and Pleiades above.

Publication: Doumet, *La collection Chiha*, No. 152

Cat. No. 78

Chiha Collection, 155

Red Agate

Neo-Babylonian, 6th c.

36 x 15 mm

Description: Highly abstract linear style, two figures flanking sacred tree. Star and Pleiades to left.

Publication: Doumet, *La collection Chiha*, No. 155

Cat. No. 79

Chiha Collection, 297

Faience

14th c.

17 x 7 mm

Description: Late Mitanni style seal with horned goat before plant; number of fish in background. Star, crescent, and Pleiades with lozenge in center of arrangement above.

Publication: Doumet, *La collection Chiha*, No. 297

Cat. No. 80

Damascus, No. 141

Brown-gold Agate

Findspot: Syria

Neo-Assyrian

26 x 12 mm

Description: Worshippers flanking sacred tree with winged disc above. Fish and ibex set below star and Pleiades in vertical arrangement.

Publication: Kühne, *Das Rollsiegel in Syrien*

Cat. No. 81

Damascus, No. 1557

Steatite

Findspot: Syria

Neo-Assyrian

26 x 12 mm

Description: Caprid crouching between plants with archer on other side; star and Pleiades above.

Publication: Kühne, *Das Rollsiegel in Syrien*

Cat. No. 82

Danish National Museum, No. 3433

Alabaster

Middle Assyrian c. 1250

56 x 32 mm

Description: Sealing: Striding winged bull and bull; human figure carrying worn and unidentifiable object. Crescent, star, and Pleiades above

Publication: Ravn, *Cylinder Seals in the Danish National Museum*, No. 171

Cat. No. 83

Danish National Museum, No. 8607

Alabaster

Neo-Assyrian c. 750 BC

31 x 15 mm

Description: Central figure with lifted arms, each seizing the neck of a bird. Birds are held aloft, heads turned backwards away from figure. In field: crescent, two lozenges, and Pleiades.

Publication: Ravn, *Cylinder Seals in the Danish National Museum*, No. 154

Cat. No. 84

Danish National Museum, No. 5B 311

Steatite

Findspot: Riis, Hama

Hurrian, 3rd Syrian group (Hama F), 1200-1075 BC

21 x 8 mm

Description: Linear style seal. Man attacking striding animal; globes scattered, uncertain Pleiades

Publication: Ravn, *Cylinder Seals in the Danish National Museum*, No. 107

Cat. No. 85

Geneva, No. 1385

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

25 x 10.5 mm

Description: Archer attacking two winged creatures: griffin and winged human-headed bull, in combat with each other. Star, crescent moon, and Pleiades above

Publication: Vollenweider, *Catalogue raisonne des sceaux cylindres*, No. 70

Cat. No. 86

Geneva, No. 1874/0.1

Chalcedony

Findspot: Persepolis
Late First Millennium
40.5 x 19 mm
Description: Two deities atop pedestals flanking two worshippers; one standing, one kneeling. *Mušhuššu*-dragon atop pedestal with spade of Marduk atop its back. In field, winged disc, crescent, stars, caprid, and Pleiades.
Publication: Vollenweider, *Catalogue raisonne des sceaux cylindres*, No. 75

Cat. No. 87
Geneva, No. 1881/0.18
Dark Green Stone (unidentified)
Nineveh
Neo-Assyrian
35 x 13 mm
Description: Worn seal. Worshipper before winged figure. Crescent moon and Pleiades in vertical arrangement.
Publication: Vollenweider, *Catalogue raisonne des sceaux cylindres*, No. 67

Cat. No. 88
Geneva, No. 1881/0.19
Grey Stone (unidentified)
Nineveh
Neo-Assyrian
15 x 8 mm
Description: Two worshippers flanking star, crescent, and lozenge. In field also fish symbol and Pleiades in vertical arrangement.
Publication: Vollenweider, *Catalogue raisonne des sceaux cylindres*, No. 76

Cat. No. 89
Hans von Aulock, No. 182
Red Chalcedony
Neo-Assyrian
16.5 x 11.5 x 8 mm
Description: Stamp seal with crescent moon and Pleiades in vertical arrangement opposite staff.
Publication: von der Osten, *Siegelsteine Sammlung Han Silviu von Aulock*, No. 182

Cat. No. 90
Hans von Aulock, No. 323
Unidentified stone
Neo-Assyrian
48.5 x 18 mm
Description: Man with beast and ostrich-bird; crescent moon, star, and Pleiades above.
Publication: von der Osten, *Siegelsteine Sammlung Han Silviu von Aulock*, No. 323

Cat. No. 91
Hans von Aulock, No. 324

Red Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

28. x 14 mm

Description: Two worshippers before sacred tree; spade and staff; star, crescent moon, Pleiades above.

Publication: von der Osten, *Siegelsteine Sammlung Han Silviu von Aulock*, No. 324

Cat. No. 92

Hans von Aulock, 328

Milky White Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

11 x 8.5 mm

Description: Simple seal, no central figures. Field marked with hatch marks with uncertain Pleiades.

Publication: von der Osten, *Siegelsteine Sammlung Han Silviu von Aulock*, No.

Cat. No. 93

Hans von Aulock, 331

Hematite

Findspot: Aleppo

Neo-Assyrian

11 x 8.5 mm

Description: Possible pastoral scene: animal in field, with star and Pleiades above.

Publication: von der Osten, *Siegelsteine Sammlung Han Silviu von Aulock*, No. 331

Cat. No. 94

Haye, M. 60

Green Serpentine

Findspot: Elam

Old Assyrian

24.5 x 12 mm

Description: Possible presentation or offering scene in linear Elamite style; seated deity in robe set before altar with attendant with Pleiades above. Smaller figure approaches before unidentified element.

Publication: Menant, *Cylindres Orientsaux de la Haye* No. 143

Cat. No. 95

Los Angeles Museum of Art, M. 76.174.414

Yellow Chalcedony

Old Assyrian

29 x 12 mm

Description: Archer astride animal attacking fleeing beast; spade and staff to far left. Winged figure to the right of archer. Single star and Pleiades above.

Publication: Moorey, *The Heeramanek Collection of Ancient Near Eastern Art*, No. 1223

Cat. No. 96

Musée du Louvre, AM 457

Hematite

Neo-Assyrian

24 x 11 mm

Description: Two worshipper flanking figure. Three registers to their right: reclining sphinx (to) border, three figures all facing left. In field, Pleiades and crescent.

Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 924

Cat. No. 97

Musée du Louvre, AO 1161

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

30 x 14 mm

Description: Deity with nimbus of rays behind him, facing right. Worshipper before him, facing another deity atop horned animal. In field, crescent, star, Pleiades.

Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 680

Cat. No. 98

Musée du Louvre, AO 1162

White Jasper

Neo-Assyrian

24 x 12 mm

Description: Archer attacking winged, horned animal; rampant, looking backwards to archer. In field, fish symbol; winged disc, star, Pleiades in vertical configuration.

Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 645

Cat. No. 99

Musée du Louvre, AO 1510

Brown Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian (?)

42 x 18 mm

Description: Two gods, one farthest to left with nimbus, other with emanating rays, bearded and with headdress. Both atop winged griffin-creatures. Worshipper facing both deities. In field, star, winged disc, Pleiades.

Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 681

Cat. No. 100

Musée du Louvre, AO 1511

Red Jasper

Neo-Assyrian (?)

41 x 16 mm

Description: Archer attacked griffin-monster in field of hatch-marks to suggest foliage. In field, star, crescent moon, winged disc, and Pleiades.

Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 651

Cat. No. 101

Musée du Louvre, AO 1520

Green Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

20 x 11 mm

Description: Simple, linear style seal. Central star or rosette with two creatures flanking it, possibly bird but identification uncertain. Seven dots in vertical arrangement, possible Pleiades.

Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 691

Cat. No. 102

Musée du Louvre, AO 1567

White Jasper

Neo-Assyrian

26 x 12 mm

Description: Worshipper before two deities: each holding a scepter in their left hands. Before worshipper a small figure, waist-height.

Inscription: Manum, son of Paridum, servant of the god Amurru.

Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 372

Cat. No. 103

Musée du Louvre, AO 1908

Cornaline Rose

Neo-Assyrian

31 x 14 mm

Description: Two worshippers flanking sacred tree with winged disc above. Small altar to the back of the worshippers. In field, star, crescent, and Pleiades.

Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 669

Cat. No. 104

Musée du Louvre, AO 2393

Hematite

Neo-Assyrian

23 x 12 mm

Description: Two worshippers before deity. Small figure, waist-height, between the two worshippers. In field, crescent, dots of possible Pleiades (only five visible).

Inscription: ^dAdad, ^dŠala

Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 302

Cat. No. 105

Musée du Louvre, MN 130

Serpentine

Findspot: Nimrud (N 8379)

Neo-Assyrian

36 x 13 mm

Description: Seated deity with worshipper approaching. High altar between the two figures, with bird atop it. Linear style. Seven dots of Pleiades in irregular arrangement.

Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 688

Cat. No. 106
Musée du Louvre, MN 132
Brown Limestone
Findspot: Nimrud (N 8395)
Neo-Assyrian
24 x 8 mm
Description: Winged genii figure flanked by two creatures – bull-man and singe-horned equid. In field, star, crescent moon, seven globes in possible Pleiades above (arrangement typical but only five are visible).
Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 654

Cat. No. 107
Musée du Louvre, MNB 1199
Chalcedony
Neo-Assyrian
27 x 14 mm
Description: Two bird-men figures flanked central deity, who wears a headdress. Seal obscured by damage: in the field, fish, lozenge, and Pleiades.
Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 687

Cat. No. 108
Musée du Louvre, MNB 1910
Brown Chalcedony
Neo-Assyrian
34 x 16 mm
Description: Man kneels between two winged sphinx-figures that flank him. In the field, star, lozenge, and Pleiades.
Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 664

Cat. No. 109
Musée du Louvre, AO 7217
White Chalcedony
Neo-Assyrian
41 x 18 mm
Description: Two gods standing on beasts, each holding ring in their left hands. Worshipper set between them, facing right. In field, spade of Marduk, tall staff, winged disc, star, crescent, Pleiades.
Publication: Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres: Musée du Louvre*, No. 686

Cat. No. 110
Marcopoli Collection, No. 131
Hematite
C. 1750-1600 BC
20 x 8 mm

Description: Seal worn. Four figures, possibly two pairs of worshipper and deity. One holds a staff with seven globes, another seven globes in sky as possible Pleiades.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 131

Cat. No. 111

Marcopoli Collection, No. 164

Composite stone

Neo-Assyrian, 10th-8th c.

33 x 12 mm

Description: Standing archer attacking winged, horned beast that stands in a thicket. In field, crescent, Pleiades, and fish.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 164

Cat. No. 112

Marcopoli Collection, No. 186

Marble

Neo-Assyrian, 10th-8th c.

15 x 8.5 mm

Description: Chimera-monster with body of bird and tail of scorpion striding left, towards crouching caprid. In field, crescent and Pleiades.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 186

Cat. No. 113

Marcopoli Collection, No. 209

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian, 10th-8th c.

25 x 9.5 mm

Description: Animal orchestra: seated horse drinks through tube with an altar before it. On the other side, are a second horse (with possible clappers) and dog, playing a harp. In field, crescent, lozenge, rosette, and Pleiades.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 209

Cat. No. 114

Marcopoli Collection, No. 215

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian, 10th-8th c.

34 x 10 mm

Description: Two worshippers before a deity with ax at his belt, striding forward. In field, spade of Marduk, staff, crescent, rosette, and Pleiades.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 215

Cat. No. 115

Marcopoli Collection, No. 216

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian, 8th c.

35 x 13 mm

Description: Seal is worn. Two worshippers stand before winged figure, with short staff between them. In field, star, Pleiades, and crescent. Emanating rays behind deity.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 216

Cat. No. 116

Marcopoli Collection, No. 218

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian, 10th-8th c.

15 x 21mm

Description: Seal only half-preserved (lower half missing). Worshipper with ring in right hand approaches seated deity, with stars lining his chair. In field, bird, crescent, rosette, and Pleiades.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 218

Cat. No. 117

Marcopoli Collection, No. 222

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian, 10th-8th c.

28 x 10 mm

Description: Worshipper seated on stool resting atop animal, worshipper facing him, with small figure before him. In field, fish, lozenge, star, crescent, and Pleiades.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 222

Cat. No. 118

Marcopoli Collection, No. 236

Marble

Neo-Assyrian, 8th c.

35 x 15 mm

Description: Deity astride standing animal before offering table with worshipper opposite, another deity atop animal behind worshipper. In field, crescent, star, spade, bull's head, and Pleiades.

Inscription in Aramaic.

Inscription: Seal of El-Amar

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 236

Cat. No. 119

Marcopoli Collection, No. 237

Carnelian

Neo-Assyrian, 8th c.

19 x 11 mm

Description: Worshipper before a deity in a nimbus standing opposite each other, with an offering table between them. In field, staff and spade atop animal, lozenge, crescent, and Pleiades.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 237

Cat. No. 120

Marcopoli Collection, No. 240

Chert

Neo-Assyrian, 8th c.

27 x 13 mm

Description: Two figures flanking sacred tree with winged disc atop it. One is a human worshipper and the other a scorpion-man. In field, crescent, star, and Pleiades.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 240

Cat. No. 121

Marcopoli Collection, No. 241

Carnelian

Neo-Assyrian (c. 800-700 BC)

20 x 8 mm

Description: Two worshippers flanking a sacred tree with winged disc atop. In field, star, crescent, and Pleiades in vertical arrangement.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 241

Cat. No. 122

Marcopoli Collection, No. 243

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian (c. 800-700 BC)

18 x 8.5 mm

Description: Two worshippers flanking a sacred tree with winged disc atop. In field, lozenge, crescent, and the Pleiades.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 243

Cat. No. 123

Marcopoli Collection, No. 251

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 7th c.

21 x 10 mm

Description: Worshipper before winged disc atop staff with rays. In field, tasseled staff with crescent atop it, lozenge, and Pleiades in vertical arrangement.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 251

Cat. No. 124

Marcopoli Collection, No. 252

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 7th c.

19 x 10 mm

Description: Worshipper before pole with crescent atop, Pleiades in vertical arrangement. In field, winged disc, fish, and lozenge.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 252

Cat. No. 125

Marcopoli Collection, No. 416

Hematite

1920-1840 BC

18 x 9 mm

Description: Seated figure before an altar, another figure opposite. On altar are two monkey, and a reclining caprid above them. In field, Pleiades in vertical arrangement.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 416

Cat. No. 126

Marcopoli Collection, No. 594

Chert

1450-1300 BC

14 x 8 mm

Description: Seated figure drinking, with table before him. In field, reclining caprid, tree, potential Pleiades in unusual arrangement.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 594

Cat. No. 127

Marcopoli Collection, No. 633

Hematite

1450-1300 BC

18 x 9 mm

Description: Animal in central field with unidentified animal pursuing it, Pleiades arrangement of dots below.

Publication: Teissier, *Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection*, No. 633

Cat. No. 128

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1970.183.2

Glass, Egyptian Blue

Neo-Assyrian, 9th-8th c.

25 x 13 mm

Description: Complex hunting scene; two figures on a chariot, one shooting a rampant unicorn/gazelle, the other driving the chariot. Above, star, crescent moon, and Pleiades.

Publication: Unpublished; image available online through museum catalogue

Cat. No. 129

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985.192.15

Agate

Neo-Assyrian, 9th-8th c.

35 x 15 mm

Description: Deity with halo behind; two gods with worshipper facing with hand upraised. A large disembodied hand is below a single star and a crescent is set on a tasseled staff on a stand. Pleiades and star above.

Publication: Pittmann, *Ancient Art in Miniature*, No. 64

Cat. No. 130

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985.192.7

Carnelian

Neo-Assyrian, 8th-7th c.

29 x 14 mm

Description: Ištar with weapons and nimbus behind stands before a worshipper. Another deity, male, stands atop a platform underneath an architectural element. In the field, rhombus, star, and Pleiades.

Publication: Pittmann, *Ancient Art in Miniature*, No. 65

Cat. No. 131

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987.96.11

Stone

Neo-Assyrian, 9th-8th c.

d. 39.1 mm

Description: Two worshippers flank a deity riding atop a resting animal. The deity raises one hand and holds a scepter in the other. In the field, star, crescent, tasseled spade, and Pleiades.

Publication: Unpublished; image available online through museum catalogue

Cat. No. 132

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987.96.9

Stone

Neo-Assyrian, 9th-8th c.

d. 31 mm

Description: Worshipper with staff of Marduk, two winged and horned animals facing each other with fish set between them; star and Pleiades overhead. Hatch marks on bottom border, line border on top.

Publication: Unpublished; image available online through museum catalogue

Cat. No. 133

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 65.163.41

Ceramic

Findspot: Hasanlu

Neo-Assyrian, 9th c.

d. 29 mm

Description: Surface is worn; tree with Pleiades in vertical alignment and animals between trees; star overhead.

Publication: Marcus, *The Seals and Sealings from Hasanlu*, No. 79

Cat. No. 134

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 74.51.4333

Steatite

Neo-Assyrian

d. 19.1 mm

Description: Characteristic Pleiades grouping with only six globes; star present and birdman seen. Orientation of seal uncertain, Cypriot in origin.

Publication: Unpublished; image available online through museum catalogue

Cat. No. 135

Metropolitan Museum of Art, 74.51.4368

Faience

Neo-Assyrian

11.9 x 20.1 mm

Description: Stamp seal; crescent moon on pillar etched with horizontal lines, star and Pleiades to each side.

Publication: Unpublished; image available online through museum catalogue

Cat. No. 136

Moore Collection, L.55.49.125

Agate

Neo-Assyrian

28 x 10 mm

Description: Two groups: seated individual before sacred tree set atop a high support with winged creature above, fish below. Figure standing on bull facing spade of Marduk held by a horned lion; star and Pleiades in 2-3-2 arrangement

Publication: Eisen, *Seals in Collection of Mrs. William H. Moore*, No. 90

Cat. No. 137

Moore Collection, L.55.49.150

Agate

Neo-Assyrian

25 x 12 mm

Description: God with nimbus behind him and worshipper before him, who is flanked by staff and spade. Scorpion-man on other side of deity. Crescent and Pleiades above.

Publication: Eisen, *Seals in Collection of Mrs. William H. Moore*, No. 84

Cat. No. 138

Moore Collection, L.55.49.189

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

15 d. mm

Description: Two worshippers before god with nimbus behind him, fish symbol; winged disc, crescent moon, Pleiades in vertical arrangement above.

Publication: Eisen, *Seals in Collection of Mrs. William H. Moore*, No. 83

Cat. No. 139

Moore Collection, L.55.49.68

Felsite

Neo-Assyrian

50 x 18 mm

Description: Levantine seal; two archer flanking two stags, one above (rampant) and one, larger, below, flanked by plants. Row of triangles on top and bottom of seal. Pleiades, crescent, and star above.

Publication: Eisen, *Seals in Collection of Mrs. William H. Moore*, No. 74

Cat. No. 140

Moore Collection, L.55.49.85

Lapis Lazuli

Neo-Assyrian

40 x 15 mm

Description: God (Ea) holding a staff and ring, seated on throne supported by goat-fish animal. Worshipper and altar facing him; priest in fish-robe carrying a pail behind him. Above: bird winged disc, star, and Pleiades.

Publication: Eisen, *Seals in Collection of Mrs. William H. Moore*, No. 82

Cat. No. 141

Morgan Library, No. 621

Black Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

29.5 x 13 mm

Description: Standing archer taking aim at a stag, with a fish set between the two. In field, three wedges, star, crescent, and Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 621

Cat. No. 142

Morgan Library, No. 623

Burnt Clay

Neo-Assyrian c. 800

25 x 13 mm

Description: A monster with a bull's head and scorpion body attacked from behind by an archer; a plant between figures suggesting thicket or vegetation. In field, crescent, Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 623

Cat. No. 143

Morgan Library, No. 627

Black Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

30 x 11.5 mm

Description: Dragon approaching or attacking ram, which flees. In field, Pleiades, crescent, three scattered wedges.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 627

Cat. No. 144

Morgan Library, No. 635

Black Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

15.5 x 9 mm

Description: Bull charging at large rosette with Pleiades above. Lines bordering the seal on top and bottom.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 635

Cat. No. 145

Morgan Library, No. 653

Black Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

37 x 16.5 mm

Description: Man plowing a field with his ox, plants emerging from the ground. In field, star, crescent, and Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 653

Cat. No. 146

Morgan Library, No. 660

Brown-Black Steatite

Neo-Assyrian, early 9th c.

40 x 16 mm

Description: Horse-drawn chariot with charioteer, crescent moon and Pleiades above, standing bull underneath the horse. The scene echoes those on Aššurnāṣirpal II royal reliefs.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 660

Cat. No. 147

Morgan Library, No. 684

Grey-Green Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

d. 13 mm

Description: Goddess with ring and worshipper both standing and facing a god holding an ax. In field, crescent, Pleiades, stylus with star atop it.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 684

Cat. No. 148

Morgan Library, No. 690

White Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 9th – 8th c.

20 x 11 mm

Description: Lion-griffin rampant with archer attacking and striding over winged bull; another figure kneeling, holding winged sun disc. Pleiades set above.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 690

Cat. No. 149

Morgan Library, No. 691

Carnelian

Neo-Assyrian, 9th – 8th c.

39 x 18 mm

Description: Worshipper facing god with stylus set atop dragon; goddess with scepter on lion-monster. Pleiades and stars set above, two small deities in the nimbus of the stars.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 691

Cat. No. 150

Morgan Library, No. 693

White Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 9th – 8th c.

32.5 x 16 mm

Description: Worshipper with a bird facing god wielding mace who rests on a raised platform. Between them stands a tasseled spade, and behind the deity a rampant caprid. Another worshipper faces a goddess atop a platform who holds a ring. Above, Pleiades, star, and crescent.
Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 693

Cat. No. 151

Morgan Library, No. 694

Pink-White Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 9th – 8th c.

34 x 16 mm

Description: Goddess holding ring and scepter, seated on a high-backed throne studded with stars. Across another deity holding axe standing atop resting animal. Between them a worshipper, who raises his hand to figure on the right. In the field, Pleiades, winged disc, tasseled spade, and crescent.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 694

Cat. No. 152

Morgan Library, No. 695

Brownish Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 9th – 8th c.

32 x 14 mm

Description: Goddess on ring set behind god bearing mace, both atop platform and both facing worshipper. In field, tasseled spade, ibex, rhombus, crescent moon, star, and Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 695

Cat. No. 153

Morgan Library, No. 696

Greyish Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 9th – 8th c.

33 x 16 mm

Description: Goddess bearing bow and sword and holding a ring stands atop platform, facing worshipper. In field, rhombus, stylus, ibex, tasseled spade, winged disc, and Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 696

Cat. No. 154

Morgan Library, No. 697

Ivory-Yellow Chert

Neo-Assyrian, 9th – 8th c.

32 x 15.5 mm

Description: Bull-Man, goddess armed with bows, sword; worshipper, facing god with rays projecting from behind him. Pleiades, crescent, and tasseled spade above.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 697

Cat. No. 155

Morgan Library, No. 698

Ivory-Yellow Chert

Neo-Assyrian, 9th – 8th c.

d. 13 mm

Description: Worshipper stands before goddess with nimbus behind her, crescent atop staff and god in a winged sun disc. Above, the Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 698

Cat. No. 156

Morgan Library, No. 700

Yellow Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 9th – 8th c.

39 x 18 mm

Description: Goddess with ring seated on chair ornamented with stars, facing worshipper with table or altar between them. In field, winged disc, rhombus, and Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 700

Cat. No. 157

Morgan Library, No. 701

Brown Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 9th – 8th c.

20 x 8.5 mm

Description: Worshipper set before flaming altar to which a goddess is sitting; Pleiades above.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 701

Cat. No. 158

Morgan Library, No. 702

Carnelian

Neo-Assyrian, 9th – 8th c.

24 x 12 mm

Description: Two rampant griffin-monsters flanking each other with worshipper between them; Pleiades, crescent moon, and star above. According to catalogue, inscription in South Arabic.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 702

Cat. No. 159

Morgan Library, No. 703

Carnelian

Neo-Assyrian, 8th – 7th c.

17 x 10 mm

Description: God bearing ax facing a worshipper, a staff between them. Two caprids facing each other, in field, Pleiades and star.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 703

Cat. No. 160

Morgan Library, No. 704

Orange Chert

Neo-Assyrian, 7th – 6th c.

d. 13 mm

Description: Two worshippers flanking deity with nimbus, standing atop a dragon. In field, crescent, star, and Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 704

Cat. No. 161

Morgan Library, No. 705

Milky Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 7th – 6th c.

32 x 18 mm

Description: Two worshippers flanking deity with nimbus who appears above a tree. In field, rhombus, Pleiades, and tasseled spade on a stand.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 705

Cat. No. 162

Morgan Library, No. 707

White Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 7th – 6th c.

29 x 18.5 mm

Description: Ibex and worshipper flanking tree with a winged sun disc above it. In field, star, crescent, rhombus, fish, and Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 707

Cat. No. 163

Morgan Library, No. 709

White Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 7th – 6th c.

20 x 11 mm

Description: Tree set atop knoll; winged disc above. Worshipper faces tree with Pleiades above. In field, star, crescent, table with rhombus and fish atop it.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 709

Cat. No. 164

Morgan Library, No. 711

White Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 7th – 6th c.

30 x 13 mm

Description: Worshipper before crescent set atop stand with tassels; star and fish above and below outstretched hands; rhombus, cross set atop globe, winged dusc above stylus and spade; Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 711

Cat. No. 165

Morgan Library, No. 716

Milky Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 7th – 6th c.

15 x 8 mm

Description: Tree with winged sun disc above, bull approaching. In sky: star, crescent, rhombus, Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 716

Cat. No. 166

Morgan Library, No. 718

Unidentified stone

Neo-Assyrian, 7th – 6th c.

15 x 10 mm

Description: Tree, possibly, table with single star and indiscriminate Pleiades above.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 718

Cat. No. 167

Morgan Library, No. 725

Milky Chalcedony

Late Middle/Early Neo-Assyrian, 10th – 8th c.

35 x 16 mm

Description: Archer attacking griffin with crescent, star, and winged sun disc; rhombus and two pairs of wedges in field. Pleiades set above in an arc.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 725

Cat. No. 168

Morgan Library, No. 726

Brown Chert

Neo-Assyrian, 10th – 8th c.

47 x 17 mm

Description: God and worshipper grasping respective streams falling from winged disc set atop a tree. In field Pleiades (above the worshipper), star, crescent, two unreadable cuneiform signs.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 726

Cat. No. 169

Morgan Library, No. 731

Milky Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 10th – 8th c.

41 x 17 mm

Description: Kneeling worshipper with hand reaching towards tree, crescent moon, star, fish in field. Pleiades above in atypical 2+5 configuration.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 731

Cat. No. 170

Morgan Library, No. 733

White-Brownish Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, 10th – 7th c.

26 x 10 mm

Description: Two bird-men facing each other, rhombus between them. Pleiades and crescent moon above.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 733

Cat. No. 171

Morgan Library, No. 750

Dark Grey Chert

Neo-Assyrian, 7th c.

24 x 9 mm

Description: Winged hero with sword attacking griffin, rhombus set immediately before griffin.

In field, crescent, Pleiades, and sitting dog.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 750

Cat. No. 172

Morgan Library, No. 751

Reddish Marble with prominent grey vein

Neo-Assyrian, 7th

27 x 12 mm

Description: Genie figure on one knee, raising hand towards winged disc, facing stag that is grasped by a warrior wielding a sword. Above, crescent and Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 751

Cat. No. 173

Morgan Library, No. 771

Black-Grey Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, late 8th c.

27 x 15 mm

Description: Genie flanking date palm; tree with god; winged disc with kneeling figures flanking and bull-men. Crescent moon, star, and Pleiades above.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 771

Cat. No. 174

Morgan Library, No. 774

White Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian, late 8th c.

34 x 16 mm

Description: Goddess with ring before tree with winged disc atop it. On other side of tree, god wielding ax followed by worshipper with four star adorning robe. In field, fish, crescent, Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 774

Cat. No. 175

Morgan Library, No. 964

Hematite

1600-1350 BC

23 x 11 mm

Description: Syrian seal, god with spiked helmet, wielding mace and holding ax. Bull and worshipper, solar disc, crescent, star, Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 964

Cat. No. 176

Morgan Library, No. 990

Hematite

1600-1350 BC

27 x 14 mm

Description: Late Syrian seal, worshipper before deity holding two snakes. Egyptian ankh, sun disc, crescent, Pleiades. Nude female embracing figure.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 990

Cat. No. 177

Morgan Library, No. 1027

Hematite

1350-1200 BC

10.5 x 9 mm

Description: Syrian seal, enthroned goddess facing worshipper; seven dots in loose rosette shape, uncertain Pleiades.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 1027

Cat. No. 178

Morgan Library, No. 1028

Hematite

1350-1200 BC

25 x 12 mm

Description: Mitanni-style seal with seven dots in a loose rosette (uncertain Pleiades). Seated goddess holding staff, adorned with rosette.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 1028

Cat. No. 179

Morgan Library, No. 1048

Dark Green Jasper

1350-1200 BC

20 x 11 mm

Description: Seal with Mitanni and Nuzi style elements, nine globes in loose Pleiades arrangement; sun-disc standard set between griffin and antelope-like animal with wings.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 1048

Cat. No. 180

Morgan Library, No. 1058

Brown Hematite

1350-1200 BC

20 x 10 mm

Description: Nuzi style seal; winged bird-headed demon, fish flanking it. Winged disc and Pleiades above lion.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 1058

Cat. No. 181

Morgan Library, No. 1094

Dark Green Steatite

2000-1800 BC

25 x 13 mm

Description: Potentially uncertain authenticity. Worshipper bearing cup facing figure drinking from vessel. Pleiades, crescent, and single star above.

Publication: Porada, *Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, No. 1094

Cat. No. 182

Newell Collection, 409

Red Marble

Neo-Assyrian

23 x 11 mm

Description: Unicorn-figure and man; crescent and Pleiades above. Seal very worn.

Publication: von der Osten, *Seals in the Newell Collection*, No. 409

Cat. No. 183

Newell Collection, 413

Steatite

Neo-Assyrian

19 x 12 mm

Description: Worshipper, crescent moon and Pleiades overhead. Seal very worn.

Publication: von der Osten, *Seals in the Newell Collection*, No. 413

Cat. No. 184

Newell Collection, 415

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

18 x 9 mm

Description: Walking horned animal; crescent moon, star, Pleiades above.

Publication: von der Osten, *Seals in the Newell Collection*, No. 415

Cat. No. 185

Newell Collection, 446

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

28 x 12 mm

Description: Deity with cylindrical headdress, six-pointed star; crescent moon, rosette, winged disc, and Pleiades overhead. Two sitting ibex facing each other in lower left.

Publication: von der Osten, *Seals in the Newell Collection*, No. 446

Cat. No. 186
Newell Collection, 447
Diorite
Neo-Assyrian
23 x 13 mm
Description: Bearded god with man facing him; star, crescent, and Pleiades above. Seal worn.
Publication: von der Osten, *Seals in the Newell Collection*, No. 447

Cat. No. 187
Newell Collection, 504
Hematite
Neo-Babylonian
22 x 11 x 16 mm
Description: Stamp seal, tree with crescent and Pleiades above.
Publication: von der Osten, *Seals in the Newell Collection*, No. 504

Cat. No. 188
Newell Collection, 520
Milky Chalcedony
Neo-Babylonian
19 x 4 x 23 mm
Description: Stamp seal, staff with seven globes.
Publication: von der Osten, *Seals in the Newell Collection*, No. 520

Cat. No. 189
Pontifical Biblical, IB. SA 89
Pale Rose Quartz
Neo-Assyrian (?)
21 x 11 mm
Description: Ibex flees from archer, crescent before and eight-pointed star and Pleiades behind it. Archer in chariot pursuing animal, taking aim.
Publication: van Buren, *The Cylinder Seals of the Pontifical Biblical Institute*, No. 66

Cat. No. 190
Pontifical Biblical, IB. SA 106
Bituminous Limestone
Neo-Assyrian (?)
32 x 14 mm
Description: Worn seal. Bearded deity stands to the right, left hand grasps foreleg of winged monster, right hand worn away. Winged disc atop spade of Marduk, Pleiades above winged monsters.
Publication: van Buren, *The Cylinder Seals of the Pontifical Biblical Institute*, No. 75

Cat. No. 191
Pontifical Biblical, IB. SA 108
Milky Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian (?)

29 x 15 mm

Description: Deity (Marduk) enthroned, hound or lion seated before him. Worshipper and figure in lion-robe flank spade, staff, and winged disc. In field, 3 stars and Pleiades.

Publication: van Buren, *The Cylinder Seals of the Pontifical Biblical Institute*, No. 103

Cat. No. 192

University of Pennsylvania, CBS 1051

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

27.5 x 15 mm

Description: Marduk pursuing and shooting at a winged griffin-creature. He is armed with two quivers, an axe (possibly sword?) in his belt, and his belt is lined with six stars. To the far left, a worshipper stands. In field, crescent, star, rhombus, and Pleiades.

Publication: Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians from their Seals*, No. 610

Cat. No. 193

University of Pennsylvania, CBS 1052

Black Diorite

Neo-Assyrian

26.5 x 12 mm

Description: Ištar with nimbus of rays behind her, with one hand lifted. She bears a quiver and bow. Across from her stands a worshipper, and between them a tall altar burning incense or charcoal. In field, spade of Marduk, Pleiades.

Publication: Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians from their Seals*, No. 580

Cat. No. 194

University of Pennsylvania, CBS 1096

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

16.5 x 7 mm

Description: Palm tree and a lion seizing a caprid. In the field, sun disc, eight-pointed star, and Pleiades.

Publication: Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians from their Seals*, No. 602

Cat. No. 195

Vorderasiatische Museum, 596

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

VA 511 mm

Description: God with raised hand atop bull, worshipper before and another deity holding a ring at his back. In field, crescent, tasseled spade, stylus, lozenge, winged disc with deity inside, staff, rampant ibex, and bird.

Inscription: (Seal) of Adad-ušur, the "great" of Mannukīma-Aššur

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 596

Cat. No. 196

Vorderasistische Museum, VA 508

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

37 x 17 mm

Description: God facing worshipper. Deity holds a ring with a nimbus behind him. Scorpion man and *mušhuššu* with stylus and spade atop its back. In field, winged disc, star, crescent, the Pleiades, lozenge, and fish.

Inscription: Seal of Nisannā'a

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 598

Cat. No. 197

Vorderasistische Museum, VA 10114

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

33 x 16 mm

Description: Deity with nimbus behind him, flanked by worshipper and scorpion man with a winged disc above. In field, reclining caprid, tasseled spade, staff, lozenge, crescent, and the Pleiades.

Inscription: (Seal) of Kabili

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 599

Cat. No. 198

Vorderasistische Museum, VA 4220

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

29 x 12 mm

Description: Seated deity holding ring; chair adorned with globes. Before deity, standing deity with nimbus behind and worshipper facing. In field, tasseled spade, crescent, and Pleiades.

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 605

Cat. No. 199

Vorderasistische Museum, VA 7826

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

48 x 19 mm

Description: Two griffins flanking sacred tree with winged disc above and figure to the right. Above, crescent and Pleiades.

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 606

Cat. No. 200

Vorderasistische Museum, VA 4244

Marble

Neo-Assyrian

32 x 12 mm

Description: Archer attacking winged horse; scattered wedges and plant to suggest landscape. In field, crescent, star, Pleiades.

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 640

Cat. No. 201

Vorderasistische Museum, VA Ass 1686

Black, shiny stone

Neo-Assyrian

21 x 11 mm

Description: Row of rampant horses; star, crescent moon, Pleiades in 2-3-2 arrangement.

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 649

Cat. No. 202

Vorderasistische Museum, VA 5191

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

28 x 13 mm

Description: Seated deity with worshipper facing, altar set between them. In field, bird, crescent, star, and Pleiades.

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 654

Cat. No. 203

Vorderasistische Museum, 655

Porphyry

Neo-Assyrian

34 x 13 mm

Description: From Aššur. God seated on high-backed throne ornamented with stars and atop a lion. Worshipper facing deity, with high incense burner between them. In field, spade, stylus, crescent, star, and Pleiades.

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 655

Cat. No. 204

Vorderasistische Museum, VA Ass 1689

Limestone

Findspot: Aššur (No. 5348)

Neo-Assyrian

22 x 13 mm

Description: Seal quite worn. Worshipper approaches deity seated on high-backed throne ornamented by star. Between them, Pleiades, winged disc, and altar.

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 659

Cat. No. 205

Vorderasistische Museum, VA 7865

Serpentine

Findspot: Aššur (No. 9186)

Neo-Assyrian

45 x 16 mm

Description: Three men holding offerings with possible altar between rightmost two and leftmost third. In field, star, crescent, Pleiades, and multiple wedges.

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 672

Cat. No. 206

Vorderasiatische Museum, VA 127

Serpentine

Neo-Assyrian

36 x 16 mm

Description: Man holding the head of a cow suckling two calves while being mounted by a bull.

In field, star, crescent, and Pleiades.

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 682

Cat. No. 207

Vorderasiatische Museum, VA 4996

Blue Frit

Neo-Assyrian

27 x 10 mm

Description: Two griffins facing each other with crescent and Pleiades above.

Publication: Moortgart, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, No. 710

Cat. No. 208

Walters Art Museum, 42.668

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

d. 15 mm

Description: Two sets of worshippers and deities; the two worshippers set back to back and each facing their respective deity, that hold a ring and scepter, respectively. In the field, winged disc, star, Pleiades, crescent, spade, stylus, and small offering table.

Publication: Published in Walter's Art Museum online catalogue, publicly accessible

Cat. No. 209

Walters Art Museum, 42.686

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

d. 11 mm

Description: Worshipper before two deities, each atop a dais. Far left deity hold a ring, the other a scepter. Each is surrounded by a nimbus. In the field, tasseled spade, crescent, Pleiades.

Publication: Published in Walter's Art Museum online catalogue, publicly accessible

Cat. No. 210

Walters Art Museum, 42.705

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

d. 13 mm

Description: Worshipper before deity with nimbus behind him. Behind worshipper, staff and spade on platform, with scorpion-man with raised arms behind it. In field, rhombus, star, crescent, winged disc (obscured by damage), and Pleiades.

Publication: Published in Walter's Art Museum online catalogue, publicly accessible

Cat. No. 211

Walters Art Museum, 42.792

Chalcedony

Neo-Assyrian

Description: Deity seated on a throne resting on the back of a dog. Worshipper holding a bird approaches, another deity standing atop a dog behind him. In field, Pleiades, crescent, star, and tasseled spade.

Publication: Published in Walter's Art Museum online catalogue, publicly accessible

Appendix B: Attestations to the Sebettu

The following sections are organized by the type of text, in the following categories:

- Astrological
- Incantations
- Letters and Correspondence
- Literary Texts
- Medical Texts
- Royal and State Texts: Inscriptions, Decrees, and Hymns:

Within that distinction, texts are organized by date, to the best possible chronological identification.

Attestations to the Sebettu

Astrological:

Date	Language	Text and Tablet; [Citation]
Second Mill.	Akkadian	Astrolabe B [Casaburi, <i>L'Astrolabe B</i>]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Commentary text concerning the Pleiades in the month of Iyyar [SAA 8, no. 275: 6 ff.]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Text concerning the position of the Pleiades in relation to Venus, detailing an enemy and the disruption of the harvest by flood. [SAA 8, no. 282]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Commentary text concerning the Pleiades in the month of Iyyar, the great gods make a favorable decision in the land. [SAA 8, no. 507: r. 1 ff.]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Commentary text concerning the Pleiades and the position of the moon; fragmentary [SAA 8, no. 548]

First Mill.	Akkadian	Mul-Apin [Watson and Horowitz, <i>Writing Science before the Greeks</i>]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Planetary Omens of <i>Enūma Anu Enlil</i> : several attestations - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 3, 68-70 [BM 75228] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 3, 86-87 [82-3-23, 133] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 3, 100-102 [K.35: 5ff.] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 3, 146-147 [Sm.1480+179: 6ff.] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 3, 148-154 [K.137, K.11016] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 3, 169-185 [K.229+7935] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 3, 186-187 [K.3191: 39ff.] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 3, 194-196 [K.42+2081: 3ff.] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 3, 213-224 [K.3601+Rm.103] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 3, 236-242 [ND 4362] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 3, 244-249 [K.2346] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 3, 251 [Rm. 2, 565 – 3'ff.] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 4, 88-91 [91-5-9, 164:15'] - Reiner, <i>Babylonian Planetary Omens</i> , 4, [K.2876 rev.1-17]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Weather Omens of <i>Enūma Anu Enlil</i> : several attestations - CM 43: <i>Weather Omens</i> , 46-47 - CM 43: <i>Weather Omens</i> , 47-55 - CM 43: <i>Weather Omens</i> , 76-82 - CM 43: <i>Weather Omens</i> , 117-120
Neo-Assyrian	Akkadian	Commentary to Neo-Assyrian cultic calendar: "The 19 th day, which they call the silence, is when he vanquished Anu and the Pleiades, the sons of Enmešarra." [SAA 3, no. 40 r. 5ff.]
138 BC	Akkadian	Astronomical text: ^d imin.bi diĝir ^{meš} gal ^{meš} dumu ^{meš} ^d iš-ha-ra-šu-nu / "The Sebettu, the great gods, they are sons of Išhara" [Sp. 131 = BM 34035]

Incantations and Cultic/Ritual Texts:

Date	Language	Text and Tablet; [Citation]
Pre-Sargonic	Akkadian	Reference to an e ₂ -diĝir-si-bi [TSA 12, viii 7]
Pre-Sargonic	Akkadian	Reference to a SA[e ₂]-diĝir-si-bi [TSA 11, vii 13]

Pre-Sargonic	Akkadian	Reference to an ur-diĝir- <i>si-bi</i> [TSA 12, vi 5]
Ur III	Sumerian	Text referencing an offering at the ki diĝir-imin [TDP 2, 767 ii 4; See Richter, <i>AOAT</i> 257, 208ff.]
Old Babylonian	Sumerian	Old Babylonian monolingual version of later Udug Hul series [Geller, <i>Forerunners</i>]
Middle Assyrian	Akkadian	Tākultu text detailing the cult in Aššur together with Narunde [Lambert, <i>MC</i> 13, 24]
Middle Babylonian	Sumerian/ Akkadian	<i>Šurpu</i> : References to the Seven, the great gods, reference to "may the bow-star, the Pleiades" [Reiner, <i>Šurpu</i> : II 166, 182-4; IV 60-66; VIII 27]
Second Mill.	Hittite	Offering list for the spring festival at Mt. Tapala, inclusion of the tutelary deity of the Pleiades: <i>ša</i> ^d 7.7.BI ^d LAMMA [McMahon, <i>Hittite State Cult of Tutelary Deities</i>]
Late 2 nd Mill.	Sumerian	e ₂ -gal-kur-ra text [OrNs 59: 26 ff.]
Late 2 nd Mill.	Sumerian	e ₂ -gal-kur-ra text [VAT 13683 r. 3-8]
Late 2 nd Mill.	Sumerian	Attested in god-list [SLT 122 v. 16, dulp. 124 vii 20]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Street name in Sippar linked to the Sebettu Attested at the following sections: 6: 150, 6:151, 6: 167, 6: 175, 6: 183 [Litke: <i>An=Anum</i>]
First Mill.	Sumerian	Attested in god-list: the ^d imin-bi [Selz, <i>Pantheon</i> , 274]
First Mill. linked to OB	Akkadian	<i>Tamītu</i> text, lists associations between the Sebettu and plague, the god Erra [Lambert, <i>MC</i> 13, no. 36: 243 ff.]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Street name in Sippar linked to the Sebettu [CT 47, 63:19]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Toponym: <i>Bāb-Sebetti</i>

		[MSL 11, 103: 234]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Street of the ^d Sebettu in Babylon [George, <i>Babylonian Topographical Texts</i> , TIN.TIR V, 77-79]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Protection on a house: Specifically directed against enemies approaching a house, discussed as <i>Šēp lemutti ina bīt amēli parāsi</i> [Wiggermann, <i>Protective Spirits</i>]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Incantation providing protection on a newly-build house [Wiggermann, <i>Protective Spirits</i>]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Incantation: reference to the Sebettu standing behind the practitioner [STT 176: 6' f., STT 230 11 f.]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Incantation, citing lines from the Hulbazizi series [ARET 2, 14 obv.]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Incantation: The Sebettu and the Twins Stand with Me [UET 6/2 393: 24]
First Mill.	Bilingual Sumerian/ Akkadian	Udug Hul (Evil Demons) – standard Babylonian exorcistic incantation series [Geller, <i>Evil Demons</i>]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Namburbi: Protection against the malevolence foreshadowed by the presence of the <i>katarru</i> -fungus on the walls of a house [Caplice, "Namburbi Texts in the British Museum: I", 124ff.]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Amulet, protective function including Išum and the Sebettu, linked to the text of <i>Erra</i> [K. 5984; Reiner, <i>JNES</i> 19: 151]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Amulet, protective function including Išum and the Sebettu, linked to the text of <i>Erra</i> [TM 1931-2; Thompson, <i>Iraq</i> 7: 151 ff.]
First Mill.	Akkadian	List of offerings in ritual text: "Before Jupiter...the Pleiades and Išum – before these gods let them make burnt offerings." [SAA 14, 72]
Neo-Babylonian	Bilingual Sumerian Akkadian	Namburbi: Seven braziers lit for the (potential) Sebettu [BM 42273; Matuszak, "Evil Portended by a Lightning Strike," 135-152.]

Neo-Babylonian	Akkadian	Inventory of divine statues, Sebettu included among the sons of Enmešarra; written diġir-meš <i>se-bet-tú</i> [Jursa, <i>AfO</i> 48/49: 79 iii 14']
First Mill.	Akkadian	Namburbi: Incantation citing protection by Išum and the Sebettu [<i>KAR</i> 282 / VAT 11730; Maul, <i>Zukunftsbewältigung</i> , 179]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Apotropaic Zi-pa ₃ -da incantation including the Sebettu [Ebeling, <i>ArOr</i> 31, 379 ff.]
Pre-7 th c. Babylonia	Akkadian	Incantation for protection of the king while on campaign [BM 98561; Schwemer, "Protecting the King of Campaign."]
First Mill.	Akkadian	<i>Šuilla</i> incantation-prayer: Dedicated to the Sebettu, the Pleiades, to be recited during the <i>bīt salā mē</i> ritual
First Mill.	Akkadian	Incantation: <i>anāku nubattu ahāt</i> ^d <i>Marduk</i> : I am the Vigil [Stol, "Moon as Seen by Babylonians."]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Incantation as part of <i>bīt meseri</i> ritual; "The seven kings, and an 8 th sister, Narunde" [<i>AfO</i> 14 144:75]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Inclusion of the Pleiades amongst the gods cited in the Prayer to the Gods of the Night [<i>AfO</i> 14 144:75]

Letters and Correspondances:

First Mill.	Akkadian	List of items in correspondance: Listing of various precious items a ^d imin-bi [<i>SAA</i> 7, no. 129]
Neo-Assyrian	Akkadian	Sargon II, epistolary: "When shall we raise the materials needed for the temple of Išta, the Kidmurri temple, the Sebettu temple, and the temple of Adad-of-the-Rain?" [<i>SAA</i> 1, no. 114]
Neo-Assyrian	Akkadian	Esarhaddon, epistolary: "Furthermore, as regards the priest of the temple of the Sebettu of Nineveh about whom I wrote to the King..." [<i>SAA</i> 10, no 95 r. 18ff.]
Neo-Assyrian	Akkadian	Esarhaddon, epistolary: "[Recite] 3 hand lifting prayers...before the Pleiades."

		[SAA 10, no. 240, 6]
Neo-Assyrian	Akkadian	Epistolary: "...and 6 shekels of silver belonging to the Sebetu and belonging to Nabû-Šarru-Ukin." [SAA 14, no. 89]

Literary Texts:

Second Mill.	Sumerian	City Lament: Zibum Zibum of Enlil [CLAM 356, a+197]
Second Mill.	Sumerian	City Lament: Elum-gu ₄ -sun ₂ -e [CLAM 281, e+181]
Second Mill. (OB)	Sumerian	<i>Hymn to Hendursaĝa</i>
Second Mill. (OB)	Sumerian	<i>Gilgamesh and Huwawa A</i>
Second Mill. (OB)	Sumerian	<i>Gilgamesh and Huwawa B</i>
Second Mill. (OB)	Sumerian	<i>Lugalbanda in the Wilderness</i>
Second Mill. (OB)	Sumerian/Akkadian	<i>Hara Hubullu</i> : "the weapons of the Sebetu (^d imin-bi / ^d si-bit-tú) [MSL 6, 85]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Birdcall Text: "The <i>katīmatu</i> is the bird of the sister of the Divine Seven: its cry is, 'brother, offspring of Anu.'" [Lambert, <i>Birdcall Text</i> , 111-117]
First Mill.	Akkadian	<i>Erra</i> , several attestations as discussed
First Mill.	Akkadian	<i>Anzu</i> Tablet II, 30-31, 148-149
First Mill.	Akkadian	<i>Etana</i> Tablet I: 17: syllabic spelling of Sebetu: ^d se-bet-tum

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Medical Texts:

First Mill.	Akkadian	Medical text: "Wounded on the right kidney, hand of Sebettu" [Scurlock, <i>Diagnoses</i> 19.178; 14.27]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Medical text: "Blood comes form the eyes...hand of Sebettu" [Scurlock, <i>Diagnoses</i> 19.234]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Medical text: "The hand of Sebettu, the hand of the twin-gods" [Scurlock, <i>Diagnoses</i> 3.236]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Medical text: "Hand of the Sebettu, fever" [Scurlock, <i>Diagnoses</i> 9.26]
First Mill.	Akkadian	Diagnoses connected to dropsy [Stol, <i>Diagnosis and Therapy in Babylonian Medicine</i> , 47]

Royal and State Texts: Inscriptions, Decrees, and Hymns:

mid-2 nd Mill.	Sumerian	Hašmar-galšu dedication of temple to the "Sebettu, his lords" (^d imin-bi lugal-meš-a-ni) for the lengthening of his life (nam-ti-la-a-ni-še ₃) [Stephens, <i>YOS</i> 9, 66]
Middle Assyrian	Akkadian	<i>Kudurru</i> of Kadašman-Enlil, c. 1370, invocation of the Sebettu in the curse section against those who break the <i>kudurru</i> [King, <i>Boundary Stones</i> , 24]
Middle Assyrian	Akkadian	Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243-1207): Temple built and dedicated to the Sebettu along with other cult centers to Aššur, Adad, Šamaš, Ninurta, Nusku, and Nergal [<i>RIMA</i> 1, 269-271. Tukulti-Ninurta I: A.0.78.22.]
Middle Assyrian	Akkadian	Aššur-bēl-kala (1074-1056): Inscription on back of nude female torso: "who removes my inscription may the Sebettu, the gods of the West, defeat him on the battlefield" [<i>RIMA</i> 2, 108. Aššur-bēl-kala: A.0.89.10.]

883-859	Akkadian	Aššurnāširpal II: Inscription on a brick lining a well of the temple of the Sebettu [<i>Iraq</i> 15: 149 ff.]
883-859	Akkadian	Aššurnāširpal II: Dedication of the temple of the Sebettu [<i>RIMA</i> 2, 291. Aššurnāširpal II: A.0.101.30.]
858-824	Akkadian	Shalmanesar III: Royal inscription, dedication to the Sebettu: "great gods, noble warriors, lovers of marshes..." [<i>RIMA</i> 3, 153-4. Shalmaneser III: A.0.102.95.]
810-783	Akkadian	Adad-Nerari III: "By Aššur...Ninurta and the Sebettu, all the great gods of Assyria..." [<i>SAA</i> 12, no. 10, r. 8]
810-783	Akkadian	Adad-Nerari III: Decree concerning allocation of offerings: "Of all the incoming votive gifts...100 to the temple of the Sebettu..." [<i>SAA</i> 12, no. 76, 12]
754-745	Akkadian	Aššur-Nerari V: Treaty text with Mati'ilu, King of Arpad: appearance of the Sebettu invoked in the closing lines of the curse formula [<i>SAA</i> 2, no. 2: vi 20]
8 th c.	Aramaic	(Possibly) Aššur-Nerari V: Sefire I treaty: appearance in god lists [Fitzmeyer, <i>Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire</i>]
744-727	Akkadian	Tiglath-Pileser III: Royal Inscription, Mila Mergi rock relief: "Sebettu, mighty lords, who lead my troops, who strike down my enemies." [<i>RINAP</i> 1, 89-92. Tiglath-pileser III: 37]
721-705	Akkadian	Sargon II: Temple at Khorsabad dedicated to the Sebettu: "presented this altar to the Sebettu, the warriors without equal" [Safar, "Temple of Sibitti"]
721-705	Akkadian	Sargon II: Hymn to the goddess Nanaya, linked to Ištar: "the pointed axe, suited to the Sebettu" [<i>SAA</i> 3, no. 4]
704-681	Akkadian	Sennacherib, royal inscription, c. 702-701: "the Sebettu, the supreme gods who stand at the side of the king" [Grayson, <i>AfO</i> 20, 83ff.]
704-681	Akkadian	Sennacherib, royal inscription, dated 690: "the Sebettu, the supreme gods who stand at the side of the king who reveres them (reconstructed from parallel line in above text)"

		[<i>RINAP</i> 3/1, 233-235. Sennacherib: 36]
680-669	Akkadian	Esarhaddon, Succession Treaty: "May the Sebettu, the heroic gods, massacre you with their fierce weapons..." [<i>SSA</i> 2, no. 6: 464ff.]
680-669	Akkadian	Esarhaddon, Treaty with Baal of Tyre: "May the Sebettu, the heroic gods, smite you down with their fierce weapons, May the gods Bethel and Anath-Bethel deliver you to the paws of a man-eating lion" [<i>SSA</i> 2, no. 5]
680-669	Akkadian	Esarhaddon, dated to 22 Du'ūzu (IV) 671: Sebettu in a god list at start of Sebettu [<i>RINAP</i> 4, 191-193. Esarhaddon: 103]
680-669	Akkadian	Esarhaddon, dated after) 671: Sebettu in a god list, stated as those who decree destiny [<i>RINAP</i> 4, 181-186. Esarhaddon: 98]
680-669	Akkadian	Esarhaddon, royal inscription: "The Sebettu, valiant gods, who hold bow and arrow, whose assault with combat and warfare..." [<i>RINAP</i> 4, 103-109. Esarhaddon: 48]
680-669	Akkadian	Esarhaddon, royal inscription: Sebettu in a god list at the beginning of an inscription [Borger, Esarhaddon, <i>AfO Beih.</i> 9, 78ff.]
668-627	Akkadian	Aššurbanipal, acrostic hymn to Marduk and Šarpanitu: "Before you go the valiant Pleiades" [<i>SAA</i> 3, no. 2, r. 4]
Neo-Assyrian	Akkadian	Hymn to Ninurta: "your [Ninurta's] teeth, my lord, are the Sebettu, the ones who strike down evil." [<i>KAR</i> 102, obv. 19; see Annus, <i>The God Ninurta</i>]
Persian	Akkadian	363 BC, 42 nd year of Artaxerxes, Borsippa, Syncretistic Hymn to Ištar: "gathered her share of the seven brothers, despite her youth." [Lambert, <i>AfO</i> 50, 21ff.]

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