

THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL ELEMENTS IN THE  
SUMERIAN TEMPLE HYMNS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE  
TO THE KESH TEMPLE HYMN

By

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I, Wilhelmus Johannes Coetser, declares that *The Natural and Cultural Elements in the Sumerian Temple Hymns with Special Reference to the Kesh Temple Hymn* is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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07 February 2022

DATE

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## SUMMARY

The Sumerian Temple Hymns are a genre that hymns temples seen as cosmic houses in ancient Sumer. The concept of a normal house lay behind the thought process that leads to the building of temples. The ancient people of Mesopotamia used this concept of the house as a metaphor called the building- and filling topos. The metaphor of the house lay behind the building of the great temples. This could be understood from the architecture in structures such as the temple platforms, the monumental nature of the temple and the sacred furniture. All of this can be deduced from the study of archaeology. Ancient Mesopotamians utilized the same concept in the literature. Literature such as the Kesh Temple Hymn therefore, expressed in literature exactly what the archaeology informs us that the ancients built in brick and mortar.

## KEY TERMS

An, Enlil, Enki, Kesh Temple, Cosmic House, Egal, Monumental, Axis Mundi, Heaven, Temple Platform, Sumerian Temple Hymns, Moon, Sun, Stars, Gods and Goddesses, Ninḫursag, Nintu, Magur Boat.

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# CHAPTER 1

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 ABSTRACT

*The House understood as a metaphor forms the heart of the research. It is shown to be an ontological metaphor. The house as a container for living is similar to the concept of the ancient Mesopotamian building- and filling topos. I combine the ancient topos with the modern metaphor to produce an amalgamated whole. The amalgamated metaphor is applied consequently and methodologically to the research.*

### 1.2 INTRODUCTION

The house forms the central theme of the research in this work. The metaphor of the house forms an ancient concept in human history. Dating back to at least the Pre-Pottery-Neolithic, (PPN hereafter) the house formed a core concept in ancient human society (Russell et al 2014: 109; Carter et al 2015: 97; Hofmann & Smyth 2013: 1; Bickle et al 2016: 410; Ur 2014: 2).

The house is an overarching theme that includes later concepts of the cosmic house, the dwelling of the gods (Schneider 2011: 68, 70). "Houses - temples- were built for them [the gods] so that they might dwell with men as members of the human community (my brackets) (Jacobsen 1963: 475). The house was a microcosm of the larger cosmos that surface early in the construction of monumental buildings, such as those found at Göbekli Tepe c. 9000 BC (Chauvin 1994: 91).

The house found expression in archaeology, as the remains of human activity, and in ancient literature. This research is an attempt to bring the house, as archaeology and literature together in one coherent whole. The philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900 - 2002) forms the theoretical basis for the methodology. Gadamer's philosophy is essential to understanding the past within the limitations imposed by the human condition i.e. the past is forever lost to us (Gadamer 2004: XXI).

Gadamer discusses the problem of interpretation in great depth. Hermeneutic interpretation is like a conversation during which meaning emerges (Gadamer 2004: 385). He points out the limitations of the scientific method for the interpretation of humanities in the past and points the way forward out of the morass modern methodologies of history left us in (Gadamer 2004: XXI). Gadamer's (2004) philosophy presents the scholar with an interpretation framework that connects the past to the present to a certain extent. Gadamer's philosophy allows the scholar to establish the foundation of the house as a conceptual metaphor (Gadamer 2004: 415).

The house, as a conceptual metaphor, forms a model with which the scholar can combine archaeological and literary sources into one coherent whole. As a conceptual metaphor, the house presents the possibility to interpret archaeological and literary sources as a metaphor. This interpretation is possible because of the human condition: humans built the houses that became archaeological ruins; and humans wrote the literature about such houses. The house as a metaphor has its origin in human consciousness that humans expressed physically in building houses and in writing texts about such houses (Vagle 2014: 36; Cameron & Low 1999: 8).

The house, as a conceptual metaphor, allows one to play between the archaeological remains and ancient texts about houses (Gadamer 2004: 102). This research focuses on the origin of the house, which can only be archeologically attested for the earliest periods. Text only came later during the historical period. Archaeology is the only source of the prehistoric period and must be folded into the later texts dating from the historical period. The house, as a conceptual metaphor allows one to combine the two different sources into a coherent whole.

The study first considers the archaeology of the temple. The study begins in Mesopotamia with the Ubaid period. Time and space do not permit a complete discussion of all the prehistory of Mesopotamia. The Kesh Temple Hymn is the text chosen as the literature under consideration in this research. The Kesh Temple Hymn is very suitable as a subject for the study of the text of the conceptual metaphor, the house, since its original text dates to the beginning of literature c. 2500 BCE.

The early origins of the Kesh Temple Hymn allow us to peek into time and allows us to study the concept of house as a metaphor at an early stage in literature. It is, as far as is known, the first hymn about temple building. This makes it suitable as the text which will be discussed in the research because the origin of the text goes back to the beginning of literature i.e., when literature came into existence in Mesopotamia c. 2500 BCE.

The Kesh Hymn is the closest diachronically in time to the original tradition. The Kesh Hymn is, therefore, more suitable than later works such as the *'Cylinders of Gudea'* for the study of the ancient metaphor of house building and filling. The study of the conceptual metaphor, the house, ends in southern Mesopotamia during the Old Babylonian Period c. 1800 BCE. Nothing beyond this cut-off date will be considered due to space considerations.

## 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 1.3.1 Question one

To what extent does the archaeology of Sumerian temples reflect the metaphor of the house?

### 1.3.2 Question two

Did the temples incorporate the idea of an axis mundi in the architecture?

### 1.3.3 Question three

To what extent is the metaphor, the house, applicable to the Kesh Temple Hymn?

### 1.3.4 Question four

Is the metaphor of the house equally applicable to literature and archaeology?

### 1.3.5 Question five

Did the ancients see the temple as a cosmic house that fills the universe metaphorically?

## 1.4 THE HYPOTHESIS

**The metaphor of the sacred cosmic house represents a core thought in ancient Mesopotamian religious life.**

Part of Ancient Mesopotamian life was formed around a core theme, the house. This was not an ordinary house, but a cosmic house fit to house the gods. Despite being a cosmic house, ancient temples also functioned in the same manner as aristocratic manor houses (Ragavan 2013: 1; Hundley 2013: 3, 8). They were the household of a particular god or goddess. Such houses provided the gods with their living. The temple served the cult of the god or goddess who owned the house. It was their base of power. The house, as a base of power, brought the divine presence into the human world.

## 1.5 THE SOURCES

### 1.5.1 The Archaeological Sources

Archaeology is a finite resource that depends on the luck of the archaeologist's spade. The data set depends upon what has been found and is available for study. Another limitation of archaeological data is the fact that it under-represents the historical reality. Only a fraction of ancient human lived experience is available for study. An archaeological data set does not provide the scholar with the full picture. It is fragmentary in nature, and the scholar is forced to extrapolate from incomplete evidence (Barrett 2016: 134).

Archaeological resources are chosen within the limits of the metaphor of the house. The other limitation of the archaeological data set is the geographical location. The study of archaeology is limited to ancient Mesopotamia with the focus in southern Iraq. The choice of these locations is part of the limitations of the archaeological data set. One can only study the archaeology of what is available (Barrett 2016: 134).

A diachronically survey follows the different archaeological periods in ancient Mesopotamia. The periods in question are the Ubaid, Uruk-Jemdet Nasr, Early Dynastic Period, the

Akkadian period, Ur III, and ending with the Old Babylonian Period. The luck of the archaeologists' discovery and excavation, limits which sites are chosen for the study. One house from each period is discussed since time and space as well as the limited data set does not permit a wider study.

Sources include books such as the study by Wightman (2007) on the temples of the Ancient Near East; the book by Stein & Rothman (1994) about early chiefdoms is useful for establishing the archaeology of the early conditions during which formal temples came into existence. The doctoral dissertation by Sheen (1982) beginning in the Ubaid period to the end of the Early Dynastic period provided floor plans for many of the temples. Various excavations reports are of great help in reconstructing temples archaeologically.

Some of the Archaeological reports include the one by McGown et al (1967). Other sources by Safar et al (1981) helped in reconstructing the archaeology of the early temples such as those at Eridu. Crawford's (2004) general book of Sumerian history was useful as a general overview of ancient Sumer's diachronic development.

## 1.5.2 The Textual Sources

The house as a theme limits the type of textual sources that can be used for the research. With more than 200 000 Sumerian texts alone that have been excavated, it would take too much time and space to consider all texts about the theme of the house. Since it is the cosmic house that is under scrutiny, temple hymns seem a fruitful avenue of research. The genre of the temple hymns describes ancient temples and the process of building them. The most famous of these, as well as the most detailed, are the Temple Hymn by the ruler of Lagash about the **E Ninnu** Temple of Ningirsu (Jacobsen 1987: 386, 387).

As a description of ancient temple building, temple hymns fill in the archaeology and round it out. The temple hymns as a textual source date from the historical period. Archaeological sources predate the texts of the temple hymns as sources for the theme of the house. The textual sources, however, do not exist in isolation. Textual sources are the end of a long tradition of temple building that we only have mute ruins for in the prehistoric period. The

textual sources give voice to the ruins found by archaeologists (Gadamer 2004: 5, 277, 8, 280).

The most detailed of the temple hymns by Gudea dates from c.2150 BCE. This document describes the building of Ningirsu's temple in detail but is too late for the study. Although the Kesh Temple Hymn dates to the Old Babylonian Period (c.1800 BCE) the original was composed during the so-called Fara period when literature came into being.

The Fara period documents represent the earliest literature found arguably anywhere in the world. One of the documents discovered at Tell Abu Salābīkh (Fara period c.2 500 BCE) was an early copy of the Kesh Temple Hymn. Although it is in a fragmentary condition enough remains of the archaic version to allow scholars to verify the continuity between the archaic and Old Babylonian versions (Biggs 2009: 195). The Kesh Temple Hymn is closer in time to the prehistoric period, for which we only have mute archaeological remains, than the Hymn by Gudea about the **E Ninnu** temple.

The Kesh Temple Hymn represent a closer continuity with the archaeological tradition than the Gudea's Hymn and are thus to be preferred as the main textual source. Two other sources exist for the Kesh Temple Hymn. One is a short archaic version, also found at Tell Abu Salābīkh, and the other is the hymn found in Enĥeduanna's compilation of Sumerian Temple Hymns (Bigg 2009: 195). The sources used for this research for the Old Babylonian version are found in Gragg (1969), in Jacobsen (1987), Wilcke (2006), and The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL) (1998 – 2006).

Biggs (2009) published the Archaic Kesh Temple in which he discusses the original ancient composition. De Shong Meador (2009) published a book in which she discusses Enĥeduanna's Sumerian Temple Hymns which includes a short Hymn to Kesh. Sjöberg & Bergman (1969) published the same texts as De Shong Meador (2009) along with a Sumerian transliteration which proved useful when translations differed so much that I needed to resort to my own translation.

## 1. 6 THE METHODOLOGY

### 1.6.1 The Conceptual Metaphor

Elizabeth Culley (Culley 2008: 68) states that metaphor is a different form of reasoning that could be a source of religious thought. Metaphor approximates the wholly other as found in religion by amassing various concepts in order to grasp the whole (Hundley 2013: 11). The imagery created by art such as metaphor in poetry, as well as images created by other forms of art, allow scholars to track the “symbolic systems” that underpin them (Chavin 1994: 25).

Human ability to think metaphorically is tied to the emergence of complex technology and religion (Hirschman 2002: 317). Thus, human cognition has the fundamental ability to conceptualize the world to various degrees of “[...] specificity and detail [...]” (Woods 2008: 97). As such metaphor could structure religious behaviour (Culley 2008: 68) since consciousness is always of something (Vagle 2014: 36).

In the philosophy of Gadamer language from which we verbalize our conception of the world is in the mind. Therefore Gadamer’s (Gadamer 2004: 386, 422) thought makes it possible to access the human mind through the vehicle of language. Thus, it follows that analysing metaphors allows for an understanding of the culture that produced them (Moser 2000: par 5; Mischer 2013: 13; Cameron & Low 1999: 4). Our humanity binds the past to the present through the vehicle of tradition (Gadamer 2004: 5, 7, 280). This is possible because all humans share the same process for “[...] constructing a scene through cultural models [...]” (Mischer 2013: 14).

This is true of a conceptual metaphor that maps one part onto another part. A definition of conceptual metaphor would be:

- A *conceptual metaphor* is a metaphor (or figurative comparison) in which one idea (or conceptual domain) is understood in terms of another (Norquist 2019)

There are three kinds of different conceptual metaphors. They are:



- Orientational Metaphor
- Ontological Metaphor
- Structural Metaphor

The house is a container in which we project our in-out orientation onto the house. A house has a size, and thus limits its dimensions. This serves to orientate various nebulous concepts such as life in terms of something we know. The metaphor of the house creates boundaries for humans i.e. serves as a point of reference when dealing with life (Lakoff & Johnson 2008: 30). The house is an ontological metaphor.

The ontological metaphor takes physical objects as a point of departure and projects things such as emotion, ideas, entities, substances, and activities onto them (Lakoff & Johnson 2008: 26). One example should suffice: the house is a container for everything needed for a living that is expressed in the ancient building-and filling topos (Van Leeuwen 2010: 399).

The building-and filling topos can be diagrammed as:

- Source domain            the cosmic house
- Target domain            building, filling, existence

When this metaphor is plotted onto a diagram it can be used to interpret archaeological as well as literary data. The Diagram is the method to focus the archaeological data with and to sort the textual data. The diagram allows the merging of the two sets of data into one coherent whole.

## 1.6.2 The Diagram

BUILDING	FILLING	EXISTENCE
Structure	agriculture	axis mundi
Cult	sacrifice	cosmic existence
Status	commensality	seat of power

### 1.6.2.1 Building

The building includes the structure of the house as architecture. As an ontological metaphor, the house includes activities that take place inside the house such as the cult. The structure of the house informs the status of the owner of the house.

### 1.6.2.2 Filling

The filling includes everything needed to make the house a living entity. Without agriculture the house is dead. No sacrifice, which is part of the cult, is possible without something to sacrifice. While feasting takes place inside the house it is not possible without food provisioning. Consumption of food through feasting is an important part of the theme of filling (Renette 2014: 62).

### 1.6.2.3 Existence

Living in the house is part of the existence of the owner. The house means something to the owner that describes the owner such as axis Mundi. The axis Mundi means that this house is not just an ordinary dwelling, but a link between heaven and earth. Cosmic existence is the type of person who resides in the house i.e. it is not an ordinary person but a god or goddess. The house, as a temple, served the god or goddess as his or her cult center. It becomes their seat of divine authority, and thus, their seat of power.

## 1.7 THE LAYOUT

### 1.7.1 INTRODUCTION

It includes the introduction, the research questions, the sources, and the methodology.

### 1.7.2 PART A

Part A is the discussion of the archaeology of the temples of Mesopotamia. The discussion begins with the Ubaid period and encompasses the Uruk, Jemdet Nasr, Early Dynastic, Akkadian and Ur III periods. It concludes with the Old Babylonian period.

### 1.7.3 PART B

Part B is the analysis of the Kesh Temple Hymn. Each of the eight houses of the hymn is divided into is discussed in turn.

### 1.7.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

It is the conclusion where the research questions are answered. The question posed by the hypothesis is answered.

### 1.7.5 BIBLIOGRAPHY

This part is the bibliography.

# PART A

## THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF TEMPLES IN MESOPOTAMIA

### CHAPTER 2

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE ARCHAEOLOGY

##### 2.1 ABSTRACT

*In Part A I discuss the archaeology of the temples of Mesopotamia beginning from the Ubaid period and terminating at the Old Babylonian period. Each temple is described in as much detail as the excavation reports allow. Once the temple has been described, the diagram discussed in the methodology is applied to each temple. A conclusion completes each discussion.*

##### 2.2 CHRONOLOGY OF ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA: UBAID TO OLD BABYLONIAN PERIOD

- All dates are BCE<sup>1</sup>

5000	Ubaid I (Eridu)
	Ubaid II (Haji Mohammed)
4500	Ubaid III
	Ubaid IV
4000	Early Uruk (Tepe Gawra)
3500	Late Uruk/Uruk IV

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<sup>1</sup> Kuhrt generally follows the middle chronology

3000	Uruk III/Jemdet Nasr
2900	Early Dynastic Period I (ED I)
2700	Early Dynastic Period II (ED II)
2600	Early Dynastic Period III (ED III)
2340 - 2159	Akkadian Period
2119 - 2004	Ur III Period
2017 - 1763	Isin-Larsa Period
1792 - 1595	Old Babylonian Period

(Kuhrt 1995: 22, 45, 63, 79 and 99)

## 2.3 INTRODUCTION TO ARCHAEOLOGY

The house as a human built structure became more common from the Neolithic Period onwards. The concept of the house, as a cosmic space seems to have been present from the beginning. It has been pointed out that house formed an integral part of the ancient's conception of the cosmos. "[...] In the Neolithic, people constructed exemplars of the cosmos above ground [...]" (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2009: 85). The concept of the house as an example of the cosmos, served as the perfect backdrop for the creation of monumental houses that served the gods. The monumental temple was just seen as a large house that served as the estate of the god. The temple was also intimately linked to divine presence (Hundley 2013: 3, 8)

The temple in the Ancient Near East (ANE) was a visible manifestation of the invisible order behind the natural world that took the form of monumental buildings. The earliest temples in Mesopotamia date to the Ubaid period mostly built as rectangular buildings aligned to the cardinal points (Lundquist 1983: 4). Later periods would see huge temples built upon platforms so that they dominated the skyline. Their monumental nature assured the people of the presence of the gods in their midst (Jacobsen 1970: 9, 10).

It was in the temple, called sacred space or cosmic centres, that humans negotiated a deal with the gods: they would take care of the god's needs in the hope that the god would then reciprocate (Averbeck 1987: 127; Hetherington 1993: 45; Jacobsen 1963: 475). The temple was cosmic space housing the gods that provided stability to society by serving as models for humans to copy. They served as the wellspring of various aspects like:

- Religion
- Philosophical questions
- Political organization
- Social stratification and social order
- Fertility in nature and society

Without the god present in the holiest part of the temple in human society could not function properly (Hundley 2013: 211). It was their anchor in an insecure world that was always threatened by the forces of chaos held at bay only by the gods' possession of the tablets of destiny and the all-important **Me**<sup>2</sup>. **Me** was the means through which chaotic nature was brought under control making urban civilization possible. Walton describes **/Me/** as the functions that underlie creation. Only when something was named did it have existence and function that describes its being. **Me** or 'control attributes' as Walton (Walton 2006:188) called it, kept chaos at bay and gave an order to the world of both humans and gods (Linssen 2004: 19).

**Me** described the functions of the gods that underlie society and nature (Averbeck 2003: 761, 762). Divine power to function in his or her sphere of influence rested upon the god's possession of the appropriate **Me's**. In other words, **/Me/** both described and limited the god's power (Walton 2006: 98).

"[...] Control attributes are standing orders [...]" (Walton 2006: 99). Only if the gods functioned within the order provided by **/Me/** could civilization function properly since they

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<sup>2</sup> Me is a plural inanimate noun referring to the powers of properties of the gods (Schneider 2011: 47). It represents the order willed by the gods in primeval times (Clifford 2007: 12)

were bound to the cosmic phenomena encapsulated in **/Me/** (Walton 2006: 103) A better definition of **/Me/** is “[...] a kind of bureaucratic decrees of the divine world, existing there as a kind of blueprint controlling the nature of absolutely everything that can be found to exist in the human world [...]” (Øiseth 2007: 37).

Without **/Me/** civilization was doomed to destruction. When the **/Me/** was threatened, such as when it was stolen by the Anzu; it spelled disaster for the human populations in the cities. Without **/Me/** the gods could not function in their various attributes causing civilization to collapse. This could result in primordial chaos (read untamed nature) swallowing the land destroying the basis of human life in the process. Possession of the Tablets of Destiny would have allowed the Anzu complete power over the cosmos (Merling 1987: 40).

The **/Me/** of the god had to be protected at all costs. This was done by providing him with a monumental house that had cosmic dimensions (Walton 2006: 112, 123, 127). Here he lived protected from the profane eyes of the common horde. When the god was content, he functioned in his ‘control attributes’ thus allowing society to function properly. The sight of the monumental temple did indeed provide a feeling of security that was vital to the well-being of society. The doctrinal mode of religion was suited to such a society that relies upon clergy and authoritative texts such as myth (Whitehouse & Hodder 2010: 123). Such frequent low arousal rituals served to bind society together.

This meant that religious buildings expressed the ideals and thoughts of the ruling elite as a visible reminder of their power. The hierarchical system during the Ubaid was the chiefdom about which Stein has the following to say. He points out that the association between irrigation, the socio-economic differentiation, and the first temples suggest that ritual was crucial in maintaining the economic differences (Stein 1994: 44). This was true for all the periods in Mesopotamia after the Ubaid period.

The imagistic mode of religion, with the emphasis upon high arousal infrequent rituals, could not have functioned as the bond that kept a socio-economically differentiated society together. People living in an urban society needed the stability brought by the doctrinal mode of religion (Whitehouse & Hodder 2010: 123).

The doctrinal mode placed real power in the hands of the religious and secular elite which was cemented and expressed in social stratification. Some scholars thought that this meant that the temple was the sole owner of land during this early stage; however, it had since been pointed out that this theory was mistaken. Communal and private ownership did indeed exist along with temple owned land (Foster 1981: 226, 230; Morris 1986: 57).

The temple was intricately connected to the chief's role in these early villages and his source of authority (Stein 1994: 42). In this early period, the temple functioned as a communal storehouse that made it the focus of the village's survival from season to season. Along with the focus upon survival was the god who was responsible for the blessings to the people. This focus on the cult was used as a tool by the elite to help with the unification of the villages into the early cities like Uruk (Rothman 2004 a: 76).

Rothman demonstrated his point at the hand of excavations at Tepe Gawra. Level XI/XA c. 4 000 BCE shows a difference in what he calls "[...] a hierarchy of control [...]" (Rothman 2004 a: 86) before and after the building of the temple. After the temple was built, we found that the houses were not only smaller but showed signs of specialization like weaving and woodworking shops. This specialization would reach its height when cities formed along with more intense social stratification and a focus on the cult.

The economic role of the temple would endure right into the historic period with an important economic role in the life of the city. The temple took part in diverse activities such as manufacturing textiles, lending out both land and cash, and underwriting merchant ventures (Schneider 2011: 6). The authority of the god was the new focus of life in the early cities with the cult being the center of religious life (Rothman 2004: 82; Van de Mieroop 1997: 10, 11).

With this spilling over into the social organization you had the pattern that would endure for more than three thousand years. The aquatic nature of life in the southern marshes would also leave an impression on the cult. According to Oppenheim, the first temples were constructed of reeds (Oppenheim 1944: 54). We also find that traces of this watery past would remain within the cult as the use of reed huts in certain cultic rites and altars made of reeds. Life in Mesopotamia hinged upon the control and manipulation of water resources like irrigation agriculture. The canals formed convenient highways for boats that proved to



be the beginning of a whole theme in the religion of Mesopotamia that would be called the 'journeys of the gods' (Qualls 1981: 1,4).

Jacobsen suggested that the study of the main metaphors could prove fruitful for understanding the religion of the ANE (Jacobsen 1976: 3, 4). Jacobsen suggested that the presence of the gods could be invoked by poetry since "[...] word pictures, too, created the corresponding reality [...]" (Jacobsen 1976: 13). The temple was such a metaphor or as Laos states: the result of experienced reality expressed as a symbol (Laos 2015: 4). In this case, it is a symbol expressed as a monumental building. In essence, as we have previously discussed, the temple was the totality of the cosmos in a metaphorical sense (Øiseth 2007: 17, 18). As a monumental construction, it was the focus of the community and a visible reminder of the permanent presence of the god within the city boundaries (Hundley 2013: 3).

He/she lived in the temple which was a monumental house. The house served the gods' needs for both food and shelter. This house was the home of his family and servants. The temple as a house was one of the main metaphors of ancient Mesopotamia. The study of central metaphors of religion is of basic importance to understanding the ancient world (Jacobsen 1976: 4). The study of the temples and temple literature is the study of the metaphor of the house. A better understanding of the metaphor of the house would provide insight into Mesopotamian sacred life and thoughts since it is one of the central metaphors in their conception of the cosmos (Jacobsen 1976: 3, 4).

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

Humans need shelter from the elements. In prehistory, they would use what nature provided in the form of caves and overhanging cliffs. Sometime in the past humans learned to build shelters. The house became the focus of their day-to-day life in such a manner that it was conceptualized as a metaphor. The metaphor included all those humans needed to live such as shelter, food, warmth, and clothes. It included ambiguous ideas such as religion, the meaning of existence, and life. Ancient Sumerians transposed the metaphor of the house into a core sacred theme. The metaphor of the house became one of the central

metaphors of Sumerian religion. It has been pointed out previously that such central metaphors are especially useful in the study of ancient cultures.

The diagram becomes useful in shifting the different ideas the ancient Mesopotamians had about the concept of the house. With the diagram, it becomes possible to plot the evolution of the metaphor of the house over time. Not much detail is possible for the periods covered by the archaeology, but more detail becomes available when texts become available. The text in question chosen for this study, the Kesh Temple Hymn, contains detailed information about the concept of the house.

## CHAPTER 3

# TEMPLES IN THE UBAID PERIOD: ERIDU

### 3.1 ABSTRACT

*Excavators found a long sequence of prehistoric temples of Eridu beginning in the Ubaid period and spanning time until c. 2000 BCE. In turn, all the temples of the prehistoric period from temple XVII until the last temple of the Ubaid period, temple VI, are discussed. It is shown that all these temples are built to be increasingly complex and elaborate. Important innovations such as the incorporation of previous temples in the foundations of subsequent temples are pointed out. The importance of the innovation of the temple platform is pointed out. The discussion ends with the last temple shown to belong to the Ubaid period namely temple VI.*

### 3.2 THE DISCUSSION OF ERIDU

In the Sumerian King List, it reads that when kingship was lowered from heaven it came first to Eridu (Pritchard 1950: 265). Eridu was the home of the god Enki, whose temple was called **e.u<sub>6</sub>.nir** or **é. abzu** (house of the watery deep) (George 1993:25). Eridu presented excavators with a treasure trove of information. They found, beneath the Ur III ziggurat, fourteen prehistoric temples built upon each other in a sequence. Temples XVIII to VI belong to the Ubaid period (Oates 1960: 33). The earliest temples were probably built of reeds thus leaving no remains (Oppenheim 1944: 54).

The habit of superimposing temples upon each other was done to preserve the foundations from defilement and to preserve them as relics (Oates 1960: 45; Oppenheim 1944: 58). Some of the temples preserved the remains of fish that would have been offerings to the gods. It has been suggested that this god might have been Enki (Kramer & Maier 1989: 3; Oates 1960: 33; Palmer 2012: 112; Wightman 2007: 7; Van Buren 1948: 103).

### 3.2.1 Temple XVIII

Built upon virgin soil this level was not a temple. Excavators found four brick walls parallel to each other about three meters long. These walls were built of rectangular liben bricks. No other structures dating to this level were found (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 86).

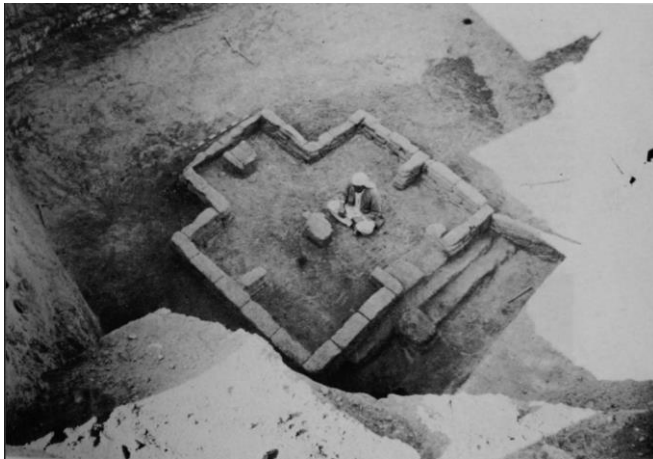


Figure 1: Temple XVI of Eridu

### 3.2.2 Temple XVII

This building is the first in a series of fourteen temples found at the site in the opinion of the excavators. Built of liben brick like the four walls of level XVII, this building contains a cella<sup>3</sup> that was 2,80 meters square. In the middle of the southwestern and north-western walls, excavators found a projection of half a brick in thickness. In the center of the room, they found a pedestal 20 cm tall. The southern corner contained an oven that was about 1.30 meters round (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 86; Wightman 2007: 7).

3.2.3. Temple XVI  
Temple XVI was built on top of temple XVII and incorporated much the same layout. The walls were built of liben bricks that were plastered. The cella was larger than XVII's one spanning 2.10 × 3.10 meters. In the middle of the room was a pedestal that contained

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<sup>3</sup>The Cella is the sanctuary or most holy part of the temple with access to it strictly controlled (Hundley 2013: 50)

traces of fire and ash. A small 1.00 × 1.10 meters recess in the northwest wall contained a pedestal of 24 cm built of liben bricks. In the southeast and northwest of the room, excavators found single brick projections that supported the ceiling beam. The door was found slightly off-centre in the southeaster wall. On the left-hand side of the doorway excavators found the remains of another pedestal. Painted pottery was found near the doorway. The oven or kiln was found in the southern corner. East of south excavators also discovered a narrow wall (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 88; Wightman 2007: 7).

### 3.2.4 Temple XV

Excavators discovered two complete and two fragmentary walls forming a rectangular structure. On the northwest side, parallel to this structure they found another wall at 0.5 meters. All structures consisted of liben bricks, some of which had been hand moulded. The handmade bricks were indented upon the upper surface with five holes made with knuckles that would have served as the key for mortar.

The northeast and southeast walls were built using these bricks. To strengthen the structure these walls were supported by buttresses. The doorway was on the southwestern wall. On the inside rebates flanked the doorway. The normal oven or kiln was discovered outside on the north-eastern side. When the life of this temple was over the ancients backfilled the whole structure with liben bricks (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 88, 90; Wightman 2007: 7).

### 3.2.5 Temple XIV

The platform that was created when XV was filled in was meant for Temple XIV.

Unfortunately, the excavators found no remains of this temple. This left temples XVII and XVIII as the next levels.

### 3.2.6 Temple XVII and XVIII

Excavators found two occupation levels that they designated as temples XVII and XVIII.

Nothing was found of the actual remains of these temples. It is speculated that the temples fell outside the area of the sounding in the northwest. Archaeologists followed a tunnel dug

by ancient treasure hunters and found liben walls on the same level as temple XVII (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 90).

### 3.2.7 Temple XI

This is the first temple archaeologists are sure was built upon a platform. The platform the temple was built upon was later extended by building a skeleton of walls filled with rubble swallowing the original ramp. The original ramp lay in the southeast and was 1.00 meters high 4.50 meters long by 1.20 meters wide. The walls of the temple were built with liben brick of  $52 \times 27 \times 7$ cm square liben brick. The outer wall evidenced recessed niche architecture typical of later temple architecture.

A large part of the temple lay outside the area of excavation. Despite that the excavators found a cella of  $4.50 \times 12.60$  meters square. Three chambers guarded the southeast side of the temple. One of these chambers was elongated into a corridor running southeast. It ended in a blocked off doorway. The second of the three rooms were small measuring only 1.70 meters square. The last room was the largest and contained evidence of burning and ash. This ash and evidence of burning was found upon a 15 cm high platform located in the middle of the room (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 94).

### 3.2.8 Temple X

Temple X was rebuilt on the same plan as temple XI with minor changes. This temple too was built upon a platform exactly like the preceding temple. This platform, just like the preceding one, was extended by eight meters. The façade of the temple was contingent on the platform. Excavators found it difficult to trace the walls. This endeavour was especially difficult in the southwestern corner. The corridor in the south-eastern corner was extended in this temple from before in temple XI. The small square recess in the southwest contained a liben podium. In this temple, the larger room did not contain an offering table (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 94, 96).

### 3.2.9 Temple IX

The cella of temple IX measured  $10 \times 4.10$  meters square with the altar located on the southwestern wall. On the opposite end of the altar were the main doors. This temple continued the tradition of the three rooms as previous temples. The rooms were in a corridor behind the altar. The southwest façade was built up of recessed niche and buttress architecture with the entrance from the platform from this same side. The recess in the southeast façade formed a porch from which a door led to the cella. On the opposite side of this door, excavators found a brick bench. They found a smaller excrescent (irregular) chamber like those found in previous temples. The larger of the excrescent chambers boasted two doorways into the cella and to the terrace. The southeast face of the platform was battered (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 96, 100).

### 3.2.10 Temple VIII

The walls of this temple were 70 cm thick and built upon a new plan. Unfortunately, a large part of this temple lay outside of the excavated area, but it did include the cella. The cella contained an altar of  $20 \times 30 \times 20$  cm altar flanked by two rebated walls. Opposite of this altar was the doorway. In the northeastern end excavators found an offering table with the same dimensions as the altar. This offering table evidenced burning and ashes. Excavators found a bench in the southern corner. One approached the sanctuary through an anteroom (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 100 – 102).

In the northwest and southeast side small chambers projected into a portico. The portico framed the doorway into the temple. A false doorway in the southeast produced a tortoise vessel filled with fish bones. In the southeast one found three excrescent rooms, some with doorways that could only be accessed from the platform side. In the western corner excavators found two small rooms. The archaeologists could reconstruct rooms in the north and east as well. Buried beneath the pavement of the cella excavators found clay nails that measured  $30 \times 40$  cm (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 100 – 102).

### 3.2.11 Temple VII

This temple did not differ much from the previous one. Built upon a platform of 1.5 meters the false door was missing. The stairway was in the southeast of the façade in the center of the platform. The stairs set a precedent that was the first of its kind excavated anywhere. It was built with seven threads and eight risers that were laid flat and plastered. In the west three threads projected beyond the end of the platform while two small parapets supported the tops level with the fourth thread (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 104).

The doorway into the temple was closed off when the temple was abandoned.

Unfortunately, the northeast and northwest sides of the temple could not be traced by excavators. On the left of the stairs, excavators found one chamber with a door jamb and pivot stone on the south-eastern side. The entrance to the altar and cella was through the south corner. Inside the cella excavators found the altar to be 85 cm high as well as an offering table of 60 cm. They found fish bones liberally sprinkled upon the pavement (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 104).

### 3.2.12 Temple VI

A Liben brick of 120 cm was used to fill temple VII as the platform for temple VI. Temple VI contained a stairway like that of temple VII. In the northern corner, excavators found a wall that was standing 2 cm tall. Here they found an archaeological sealed layer filled with artifacts. The pottery found here informed excavators that this temple was the last one dating to the Ubaid period. The cella was quite large at 14.40 × 3.70 meters. Entrance into the cella was possible from small vestibules at either end.

Excavators found recesses in the north-eastern wall and a low bench (for votive statues) in the southern corner. Behind the altar, excavators found vestigial remains of doors as well as in the north-eastern end. In the northeast excavators found a proscenium (stage like) opening with a podium of mudbrick measuring cm 1.60 × 90 × 65 square. Set into the pavement off-center behind this podium, excavators found an oval basin made of clay and plastered.



The podium was used as an offering bench. Excavators found the remains of fish and small animals upon it (Kramer & Maier 1989:3; Oates 1960:33; Palmer 2012:112; Wightman 2007:7). The bones and ash extended all over the north-eastern end of the cella. The fish bones were found on top of the podium as well as beside the basin. In the room adjoining the cella, excavators found the remains of burned fish bones and ash that extended into the cella. The floor was filled with pottery and complete vessels. Excavators found a double chamber with unusual pottery sherds.

These sherds were painted with triangular openings in them. They were the so-called censor type of pottery. Another mudbrick pedestal was found here with an adjoining door that led to the cella. The entrance was located on the north-eastern side. This temple was also filled in (Lloyd, Safar & Mustafa 1981: 104 – 111; Wightman 2007: 9). This is the last temple at Eridu that dates to the Ubaid period.

## 3.3 ANALYSIS OF ERIDU

### 3.3.1 BUILDING

#### 3.3.1.1 Structure

The successive levels found at Eridu informs one about the development of the idea of the temple. The first structure was a simple affair meters  $2.10 \times 3.10$  square. The last cella (Temple VI) measured  $14.40 \times 3.70$  meters square. Temple XI was the first temple to incorporate a platform. This feature was followed by all subsequent temples and would evolve into the true ziggurat.

#### 3.3.1.2 Cult

The cella featured from the very first temple built at Eridu. The first temple contained an altar, and this was true of all the temples that followed. Offering altars were common as well as ovens or kilns. The remains of ash on some of the offering tables hinted at cultic practices.

### 3.3.1.3 Status

Temple VI contained unusual censor type pottery that hinted at special status to these temples. The main confirmation of the status of the temples was the fact that each preceding temple, with few exceptions, was contained in the foundations of the next temple.

## 3.3.2 FILLING

### 3.3.2.1 Agriculture

The remains of fish bones and that of small animals found in Temple VI hints at fishing and trapping.

### 3.3.2.2 Sacrifice

Temple VI possessed the best proof of sacrifice. Burning upon the altar along with the bones of fish and small animals could only be the remains of sacrifice. This evidence is strengthened by the mass of burnt fish bones found in the chamber adjoining the cella. The oval basin was filled with fish bones which also strengthen the argument.

### 3.3.2.3 Commensality

The excavators suggested that the fish were eaten before being disposed of in temple VI. This hints at feasting.

## 3.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 3.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

The temple of verticality is confirmed by the practice of building temple XI and all subsequent temples upon platforms. The alignment of the temples to the cardinal directions suggests that the ancients looked to the cosmos for inspiration. This supports the idea of the Axis Mundi.

### 3.3.3.2 Cosmic relations

No evidence was found to imply that the cella's served the needs of different gods. There is good reason to believe that the temples served the cult of the god Enki.

### 3.3.3.3 Seat of power

The historic temples served the cult of Enki. The fish offerings found at some of the temples hint strongly that Enki was the god served in all the prehistoric temples (Van Buren 1948:103).

## 3.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain        the house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	Increasingly complex temple structure, presence of altar, specialized pottery
<b>Filling</b>	Fishing and trapping, eating fish, fish bones and ash
<b>Existence</b>	A platform, single cella, historical seat of Enki

### 3.4.1 Conclusion

The structure of the series of the temple shows an increase in complexity over time. At Eridu, the evolution of the temple from simple one-room structures to the later monumental buildings can be observed. Its purpose as a sacred structure is confirmed by

the presence of altars, ovens, and hearths, as well as the remains of sacrifices. Its cultic nature is hinted at by specialized pottery. It would become an enduring theme in ancient Mesopotamia.

The god worshiped here is thought to be Enki, since he is historically attested at Eridu. The sequence of temples into prehistory makes Enki's worship something of deep antiquity. The cosmic realm of Enki, the Abzu, is contained in the name of the temple **é. abzu** (house of the watery deep) (George 1993: 25).

Temple XI is the first temple to be built upon a temple platform which elevated the sacred precinct above the mundane. This would become a common practice in subsequent periods to show axially (Hundley 2013: 74, 80). The platform placed the temple on a pedestal making it visible for long distances. Axiality, described as the Axis Mundi in the diagram, became part of temple architecture in the Ubaid period at Eridu.

## CHAPTER 4

# THE TEMPLE IN THE URUK-JEMDET NASR PERIOD: THE WHITE TEMPLE

### 4.1 ABSTRACT

*Here I discuss the White temple at Uruk and show that it was rebuilt for a long period. The same plan was used for most of this time with small differences. Unique to the temple complex dedicated to the god An was the huge temple platform that was the remains of many superimposed temples. At the end of its life, this temple was backfilled ceremoniously.*

### 4.2 DISCUSSION OF THE WHITE TEMPLE

The 25-meter-high platform was continuously rebuilt over a long period. The platform is the remains of eight temples built and rebuilt on the same spot for over one thousand years. Our temple, the White Temple, was built at the end of this period. The White Temple marks the watershed between the Uruk and Jemdet Nasr periods (Crawford 2004: 78). This platform is called the Anu ziggurat despite not being a true ziggurat. The first temple was built c. 4000 BCE and the site remained in continuous use until c. 3000 BCE. (Wightman 2007: 11).

The platform evidenced 14 phases of building activity. One accessed the platform via a ramp and paired staircase. Throughout the history of the site the entrance to the platform remained in the northeast corner. Built into the platform were conduits for rainwater that prevented erosion. Excavators only dug up four of the temples built upon the platform. The temples are labelled E to B. All the temples share a similar floor plan of a central hall flanked by subsidiary rooms. You would enter through a broad vestibule into the cella that ran northeast to southwest. The subsidiary chambers were on the long sides. All the walls were decorated with recessed niche panelling (Charvát 2002: 126; Wightman 2007: 11).

Temple E was in the southwest of the platform. E took the form of the central hall with subsidiary chambers as discussed above. The doors were covered with bitumen and decorated by three wide copper belts. Bitumen coated post holes were found on either side of the doorway. A path made from limestone blocks led from the doorway to the ramp and staircase (Charvát 2002: 126).

The ground plan of temple C was like temple E. Temple C was built in the northwest part of the platform. Initially, temple C was constructed of palm trunks set on a subsidiary platform of its own. The second temple of palm logs was built on the same spot, also with doorways in the western and eastern walls. In the final phase, a full central hall temple like the rest was built on this spot. Excavators found cylinder seals during this phase (Charvát 2002: 126, 127).

Temple B was set in the southwest part of the platform. The walls and floors were coated with gypsum which gave its name to this temple: the White Temple (Crawford 2004:78). The floor of this temple consisted of bricks laid down upon a floor sealed with bitumen. Excavators also found cavities for pivot stones to fit the revolving doorways. In the northeast, excavators found two rooms filled with shelves of conifer wood. Each of the corners north, south, west, and east sported staircases although the northern staircase remained unfinished. Two windows allow light into the cella (Wightman 2007: 12; Charvát 2002: 127).

In the east corner of the temple, excavators found a pit filled with animal bones, probably the remains of sacrifices. Excavators also discovered bones of large felines, a lion and a leopard. At the painted temple of Uqair excavators found large cats, probably leopards, painted on the altar<sup>4</sup>. The White Temple and Tell Uqair temple were close in time and hints at the use of such remains in the context of the cult (Crawford 2004: 78).

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<sup>4</sup> Iconography on seals portray two felines guarding the entrance to the gates of the gods' temple (Merling 1987:203)

In the northern end of the central hall, excavators found a podium. In the middle of this was an altar with a fire-stained surface. Running from the edge of the platform southeast and southwest were two bitumen lined canals that met in a sump located in the central hall. In the central part of the terrace, excavators found a huge fire pit of 2.2 × 2.7 meters squared. The only objects found were a few cylinder seals. Temple B was backfilled with large bricks at the end of its life (Charvát 2002: 127; Wightman 2007: 13).

## 4.3 ANALYSIS OF THE WHITE TEMPLE

### 4.3.1 BUILDING

#### 4.3.1.1 Structure

This temple possessed stairwells that gave access to the roof which hints at a second story. The floor plan remained the same throughout with a central hall flanked by subsidiary chambers. Two windows that allow light into the cella were a feature of the Eridu temples.

#### 4.3.1.2 Cult

The altar with the remains of fire upon it hints at ritual activities. Outside of the temple was the fire pit that tells the same story. The two canals lined with bitumen that emptied into a sump is evidence of libations. The temple was ceremoniously backfilled at the end of its life. The bones of large predatory feline's hint at their use in the cult by analogy to the Tell Uqair painted altar.

#### 4.3.1.3 Status

The cylinder seals found in the temple were status objects.

### 4.3.2 FILLING

### 4.3.2.1 Agriculture

No evidence was found of agriculture.

### 4.3.2.2 Sacrifice

The animal bones found in the eastern corner were very probably the remains of sacrifices.

### 4.3.2.3 Commensality

No evidence was found for feasting.

## 4.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 4.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

The height of the platform of 25 meters hints at an obsession with the vertical axis.

### 4.3.3.2 Cosmic relationship

The only hints of cosmic relationships were found in the two windows that gave light to the cella.

### 4.3.3.3 Seat of power

Numerous temples rebuilt in the same spot over a thousand years means that the White Temple was considered a seat of power.

## 4.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain the house

Target domain



<b>Building</b>	Central hall plan, an altar with fire remains, bones of large predatory felines, cylinder seals
<b>Filling</b>	No agriculture, animal bones, no feasting
<b>Existence</b>	Platform height, cella windows, the seat of power for An for 1000 years

#### 4.4.1 Conclusion

The central hall of the temple contained an altar and the remains of animal bones. Ash on the altar hints at a sacred observance in the temple. Combined with the bones of large felines, the paintings of which decorated the altar at Tell Uqair, the temple was a sacred space (Van Buren 1946: 500). Despite the animal bones no evidence of feasting was found. The bones do hint at a sacrifice.

The openings into the cella hint that influence moved into and out of the shrine. The temple was built and rebuilt for 1000 years; a continuity of worship comparable only to Eridu. The god worshipped historically was An, the father of the gods. At 25 meters high the platform was the highest of its kind. The Anu ziggurat was probably the forerunner for the true ziggurat. The White temple continues the tradition of axuality observed at Eridu.

# CHAPTER 5

## THE EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD: TELL ASMAR

### 5.1 ABSTRACT

*Tell Asmar served as the home of one god, probably Abu, for a long period. The archaeological sequence remained the same for a considerable period. In turn, I discuss the Archaic Shrines beginning with the first Shrine. Shrine I through to IV possessed the same basic layout of a single indirect approached shrine with an attending courtyard. This changed with the advent of the Square Temple which possessed three shrines that served various gods. I discuss the numerous objects found in all the layers. Of special interest are the objects found in close association with the altar in Shrine I of the Square Temple. Votive offerings in the form of statues of worshippers are one of the spectacular discoveries of the Early Dynastic Period.*

### 5.2 DISCUSSION OF TELL ASMAR

The Abu Temple found at Tell Asmar was located to the west of the northern palace. Abu Temple was first discovered in the second season of excavations on 21 December 1932 (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 156). The archaeologists uncovered four superimposed temples dating to the Early Dynastic period (ED). The Square Temple was the most elaborate of the four buildings excavated. Archaeologists assigned the temple complex to the god Abu, based on an inscription on a copper bowl discovered nearby in the Northern Palace (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 156; Sheen 1982: 115; Evans 2007: 607). The inscription on the bowl reads as follows:

“To Abu has **Lugal-kisala (k)-si**, the son of **HAR: TU** presented [this]” (Sheen 1982: 115; Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 298)

Sheen (Sheen 1982: 115) has argued that this is not sufficient evidence that the temple was dedicated to Abu. Abu Temple may have housed the shrines of different deities. Based on

the bowl and other artifacts found with it resembled the objects found at the commentary of Ur, dating it to Early Dynastic III (ED III) (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 156). Evans (2007: 599, 600) formulates a complex argument about dating that is not relevant to our purpose. It is enough to acknowledge Evans' objections and keep in mind that the entire complex is firmly dated to the Early Dynastic Period.

It does not suit the purpose of the research to complicate our investigation with a complex argument about dating. The beginning of the investigation starts with the earliest shrine and works backwards in time until arriving at the Early Dynastic III shrine. Evans's (Evans 2007: 599, 600) questions will have to wait for another time.

### 5.2.1 Earliest Shrine

Four building periods characterized the Archaic Shrine (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 158). The earliest of the four Archaic Shrines had an irregular shape. It consisted of two rooms: a cella and an anteroom. The entrance to the cella was controlled by the anteroom. The cella contained a simple altar against the western wall. The brickwork was in the Riemchen style (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 158; Sheen 1982: 115; Dittman & Selz 2015: 76).

### 5.2.2 Earliest Shrine – objects found

- Archaeologists found cylinder seals and the fragments of a mace head. Excavators found pottery in both rooms (Sheen 1982: 115)

### 5.2.3 Archaic Shrine I

This shrine contained most of the features that would be found in subsequent shrines. The entrance was through the forecourt from the northwest corner through a vestibule. The vestibule was flanked by a slightly larger room that the excavators thought may have been used by a porter (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 162). At the southern end of the forecourt was a small circular platform of about 30 cm. The excavators describe this feature as an offering table. Near to the so-called offering-table was a doorway that led to a 'lobby' behind which was the shrine (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 162; Sheen 1982: 116).

The cella was 9 × 3.5 meters long. It contained a hearth in the center that was found filled with ashes. The altar stood on the eastern end. The altar consisted of a broad shelf with a raised step in front of it. The step was flanked by two higher steps on either side. This altar formed the base plan for all future altars. Next to the altar, to the south, was a doorway that led to a small room described as a sacristy. The only differences of the secondary occupation of Shrine I was the resetting of the north wall and a change of entrance (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 162; Sheen 1982: 116).

### 5.2.4 Archaic Shrine I – objects found

Archaeologists found several objects in the cella. They include:

- fragments of a pottery drain
- two animal bones
- a gaming piece (Sheen 1982: 116)

### 5.2.5 Archaic Shrine II

This Shrine was like Archaic Shrine I. The occupation level rose nearly one meter by this time. In this construction, the vestibule and adjoining chamber (for the porter) disappeared. In its place was a rectangular recess built into the forecourt. Another circular offering table in almost the same spot was found. The hearth inside the cella was retained. The altar was like that of Shrine I. The step, in front of the altar was more imposing than the one of Shrine I, while the step to the south was missing (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 163; Sheen 1982: 116, 117).

### 5.2.6 Archaic Shrine II – objects found

- nine pottery vessels
- mace head (Sheen 1982: 116, 117)

## 5.2.7 Archaic Shrine III

In the opinion of the excavators, this period was an important occupation level. Shrine III featured several innovations from before. The whole shrine was rebuilt on the same basic plan as the previous buildings. The entrance to the building remained on the northwest side. You entered from a cul-de-sac that led to two intercommunicating rooms. The entrance of the temple used the same plan as Archaic Shrine I. It consisted of a vestibule and a 'porter's room' (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 165; Sheen 1982: 117).

Two circular offering tables were placed in the forecourt, with one being larger than the other. The entrance to the shrine possessed a stone pivot allowing the room to be closed off. The shrine consisted of the cella with two rooms communicating with it. As expected, the hearth was in situ in the usual place. The altar was in better preservation than previous ones allowing for more detail to be discovered (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 165; Sheen 1982: 117).

Plaster was found on the top of the altar. It sloped down to the northwest corner where a chase was embedded. The chase would have allowed libations to drain into a pottery jar set next to the altar for this purpose. Libations originally were a fertility rite that became a ritual in later periods (Watanabe 1992: 94). No steps existed in front of the altar but had two in the south and one to the north. Next to the altar was the entrance to a side room like previous shrines (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 165; Sheen 1982: 117).

## 5.2.8 Shrine III – objects found

### 5.2.8.1 Temple entrance

- Painted pottery was found at the entrance to the temple (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 165; Sheen 1982: 117)

### 5.2.8.2 Room adjoining shrine

- Fine jar with incised handle (Lloyd & Delougaz 1942: 167)

- Fragments of a pot with a single lug (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 165; Sheen 1982: 117)

### 5.2.8.3 The cella

- Sawn of antler (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 167; Dittman & Selz 2015: 83)

### 5.2.8.4 Side room beside the altar

- 660 solid foot Calix fragments of earthenware (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 167; Dittman & Selz 2015: 83)

The earthenware was deliberately ritually broken and deposited on the floor. The excavators explain that the gods and statues in the Square Temple held drinking vessels and propose that the earthenware found in the altar room were drinking vessels that were ritually broken (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 167; Dittman & Selz 2015: 83).

## 5.2.9 Archaic Shrine IV A and IV B

This shrine was completely rebuilt and differed from the plan from previous ones. The entrance doorway was walled off. In front of the west wall, a small replica of the main altar was built.

This small altar possessed a shallow step and measured 1 × 0.5 meters. Past the altar was the forecourt. The shrine consisted of the cella and two rooms as before. The altar was divided into two successive shelves each about 30 cm apart. The step to the south stopped a little short of the wall creating a recess.

In the southern corner of the altar was a small earthenware jar to drain libations. This jar sat on a lip that was part of the Shrine III period altar. This lip abutted the step to the south. East and northeast of the temple. Excavators found three buildings on this level and partially excavated two others (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 167; Sheen 1982: 118).

## 5.2.10 Shrine IV A and IV B – objects found

### 5.2.10.1 Adjoining rooms on east and northeast side

- A baking oven in the largest room
- Incised pottery
- Fine jar with incised handle (Lloyd & Delougaz 1942: 167)

## 5.2.11 Archaic Shrine IV C

The plan changed once more. You now passed through three vestibules to reach the shrine. The last vestibule before the shrine had a rough pavement on its eastern end. The pavement was partially composed of kiln baked bricks and large pottery shards. The excavators understood this as an ablution room like the one found in the later Square Temple. Inside the cella, the altar was roughly square with a step to the south. It was covered with white gypsum plaster.

A large new room from the west could be entered by a doorway adjoining the temple entrance. A second doorway opposite this was fitted with a pivot stone. South of the building excavators traced a long corridor. In the southwest they found an irregularly shaped room fitted with a hearth built into a corner. The other rooms on the eastern and the north-eastern side was similar to that found previously (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 167 – 170; Sheen 1982: 118 – 119).

## 5.2.12 Shrine IV C – objects found

### 5.2.12.1 The antechamber

- Two mace heads
- Animal amulets
- Cylinder seals
- Shards of a crystal vessel (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 167 – 170; Sheen 1982: 118 – 119)

### 5.2.12.2 The cella

- Shards of the alabaster vessel found near the altar (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 170; Sheen 1982: 118 – 119)

### 5.2.13 Predecessor to the Square Temple

This temple evidenced some of the elements of the subsequent Square Temple, but the excavators found it difficult to trace the walls. In this shrine the cella faced north instead of to the south as was the case for the Archaic shrines. Excavators determined that the building consisted of a shrine and central courtyard with small rooms to the east and south. North of the main entrance was another room. In the middle of the courtyard was the familiar circular offering table. The entrance to the shrine from the courtyard was flanked by two buttresses.

The remains of the altar were incorporated into a previous (Shrine IV C) one. Both altars possessed a bitumen lined chase in the northeast corner for libations. The circular bitumen lined through seemed to have been the end of the chase, where the waste would have been disposed (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 172; Sheen 1982: 120; Evans 2007: 611).

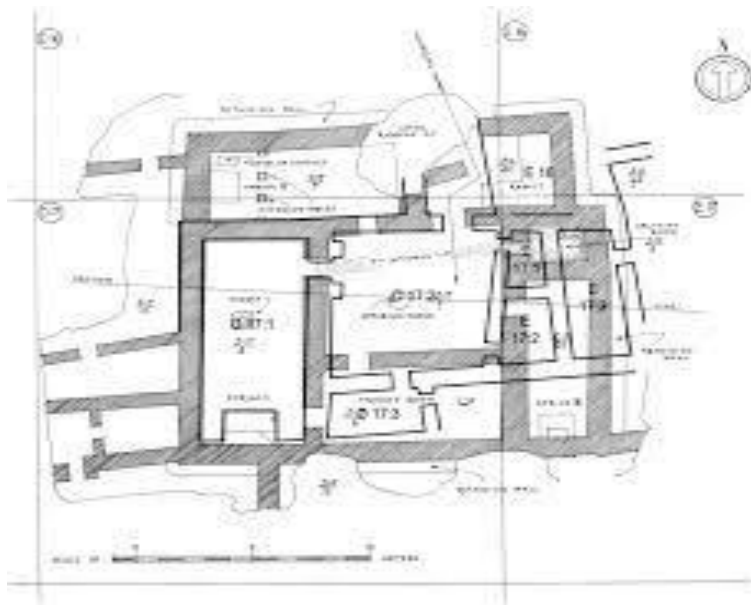
### 5.2.14 Predecessor of the Square Temple – objects found

- Four figurines
- Pottery (Dittman & Selz 2015: 85)

### 5.2.15 The Square Temple

Excavators identified three building phases for the Square Temple I thought III. The temple contained three shrines numbered I through III. The entrance to each shrine, as can be seen in the picture, lay in the long walls. This means that the temple forced a bent-axis approach to the altars. The rooms were built around a square courtyard. In the southeast corner of the courtyard, they found the remains of a broken earthenware water cistern. You entered the temple through a small vestibule (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 171 – 191; Sheen 1982: 120 – 121).





**Figure 2: Square Temple Tell Asmar**

On the left-hand side, as you entered the temple, was a small room lined with a baked brick floor lined with bitumen. This was the ablution room. A path made of bitumen led from this room directly to the western cella. The room sloped to the northeast corner towards a rectangular sink of 90 × 60 cm and 50 cm deep (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 171 – 191; Sheen 1982: 120 – 121).

One of the rooms was entered off the central courtyard but is also opened up into Shrine I. This room did not contain any altars. Instead, the room had a baking oven that had seen use at the east end of the room. Excavators also found one storage jar that possessed horizontal flutings. Part of the floor bore traces of a reed mat which led the excavators to explain this room as the priest quarters (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 171 – 191; Sheen 1982: 120 – 121).

Shrine I, on the right of the picture above, was the largest shrine of all. The walls of the cella seemed to have been covered with a greenish-white paint made of gypsum. The altar was in the south wall situated more to the west to account for the doorway leading into the priest quarters. Excavators found several objects that must have fallen from the altar of cult significance. The altar had a bitumen lined slot in the east face for libations. When

excavators broke down the altar to excavate the walls, they found that it contained a box filled with objects (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 171 – 191; Sheen 1982: 120 – 121).

About 1 meter in front of the altar, excavators found a brazier that must have had ritual function. They also found the remains of pottery. On the northern side of the brazier, excavators found the remains of a hearth.

Shrine II is in the northwest corner of the building. The cella abuts the shrine I and share a wall. Excavators found the altar in the southwest corner of the room. This altar possessed a unique feature. About 1 meter in front of the altar was a line of four pedestals. Two of them were larger than the other with a square form. The other two were on three quarters their size and abutted the walls on either side. The same gypsum 'paint' was used in this shrine as was found in the shrine I (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 171 – 191; Sheen 1982: 120 – 121).

Speculation on the purpose of the pedestals led excavators to believe that they should be understood as offering tables. When excavators tried to trace the corner of the wall between the altar and the pedestals, they found a hoard of statues to the right of the altar<sup>5</sup>. The excavators report that they found fragments of similar statues in the other two cellas.

Cella III was the smallest of all three shrines. The excavators found the altar in good condition built against the southern wall. The altar was 40 cm high with a pedestal upon it of about 13 cm. In the corner between the altar and the eastern wall the remains of the head of the statue were found (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 171 – 191; Sheen 1982: 120 – 121; Evans 2007: 609 – 613).

## 5.2.16 The Square Temple – objects found

### 5.2.16.1 The Central court

- Broken pottery
- Limestone plaque carved with figures in relief

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<sup>5</sup> The votive statues would have been used in cult and ritual (Garcia-Ventura & Lopez-Bertran 2010: 743, 744)

- Eye of a statue (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 171 – 191; Sheen 1982: 120 – 121)

### 5.2.16.2 Priest's room

- Fragments of sculpture
- Broken pieces of veined marble and alabaster vessels
- Amulet of Anzud
- Beads and ornaments (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 171 – 191; Sheen 1982: 120 – 121)

### 5.2.16.3 Shrine I

- Beads made of translucent stone fallen from the altar
- Fragments of a mother of pearl inlay (altar)
- Carved amulets (altar)
- Stamp seals (altar)
- Cylinder seals (altar)
- Bones of small animals, birds, and fish
- Bronze mirror
- Limestone statues with rams' heads and mace heads (top shelf of the altar)
- Shards of crystal and stone bowls (cavity inside altar)
- Cylinder seals (cavity in the altar)
- Stone bird vase (cavity in the altar)
- Stone beaker (cavity in the altar)
- Goddess figurine (cavity in the altar) (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 171 – 191; Sheen 1982: 120 – 121)

### 5.2.16.4 Shrine II

- Slate plaque south of the altar
- Mace head
- Hoard of statues

- Statue of a god
- The stature of a goddess
- Eight standing males
- One standing female
- One kneeling male (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 171 – 191; Sheen 1982: 120 – 121)

### 5.2.16.5 Shrine III

- Head of statue deliberately broken (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 171 – 191; Sheen 1982: 120 – 121)

## 5.3 ANALYSIS OF ABU TEMPLE

### 5.3.1 BUILDING

#### 5.3.1.1 Structure

Tell Asmar's Abu temple was rebuilt many times, but the initial construction remained the same for a considerable period. From the Archaic Shrine right through to Shrine IV the layout consisted of a cella, and anteroom accessed from a courtyard. This changed when the Square Temple came into existence. Built around a courtyard the Square Temple now consisted of three cellas that could only be accessed from the courtyard. None of the sequences of Abu Temples could be accessed directly. In all cases of the sequence of temples, you needed to pass through a courtyard or vestibule or anteroom to access the cella.

#### 5.3.1.2 Cult

Indications of cult abound right through the sequence of temples. All the temples possessed altars. The courtyard normally possessed an offering table. In some instances, the altar proved to be hollow and filled with objects. The most spectacular discovery was the statues

that were found in a hole next to the altar in cella II of the Square Temple. Another indication of the cult was a brazier found about 1 meter in front of the altar in cella I. This cella was also the site of a trove of artifacts found in direct association with the altar.

Various altars possessed a bitumen lined chase that would have allowed libations to run downward into a pottery jar, usually set into the floor. Ablution rooms for ritual cleansing were found in Shrine IV through to the Square Temple. A so-called goddess statue was found inside the cavity of the altar along with several other objects. On top of the altar, excavators found limestone statues with ram's heads. A bronze mirror found in the cella led excavators to speculate that this Cella served a mother goddess. The three cellas found in the Square Temple were so different from each other that they must have served different cults.

### 5.3.1.3 Status

Access to the cella was restricted with various portals and doorways. One could not directly access the cella. In the Square Temple, one of the rooms' openings of the courtyard seems to have been the priest's room. This room contained evidence of domestic use such as a well-used oven and the impression of a reed mat on the floor.

## 5.3.2 FILLING

### 5.3.2.1 Agriculture

No evidence of agriculture was found inside the sequence of temples except in the derivative sense. There were several hearths, but the best example of food preparation came from the so-called priest's room in the Square Temple. This room possessed a well-worn oven. Shrine IV A and IV B contained a baking oven. Animal bones were found in Shrine I.

### 5.3.2.2 Sacrifice

Animal bones were found in Shrine I. Inside shrine III excavators found a sawn-off piece of antler. The best evidence for sacrifice was the bitumen lined chases installed on the altars for the pouring of libations.

### 5.3.2.3 Commensality

There is no evidence of feasting.

## 5.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 5.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

A line of four pedestals was found inside Shrine II of the Square Temple right in front of the altar.

### 5.3.3.2 Cosmic relationship

The Square Temple served different gods that were grouped inside one temple. This suggests cosmic relationship.

### 5.3.3.3 Seat of Power

The statues found in Shrine II of the Square Temple were votive offerings placed inside the temple by worshipers. The image would have served as a kind of permanent prayer. The statues, therefore, supplicated the gods permanently for the health and wellbeing of the worshipers.

## 5.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain      the house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	An indirect approach, bitumen lined chase, priest room
<b>Filling</b>	Oven, animals bones, no feasting
<b>Existence</b>	Pedestals, combined shrines, votive offerings of praying statues

### 5.4.1 Conclusion

The shrine evolved from simple to complex. Tell Asmar expanded from a single cella to the Square Temple that served the needs of several gods. Access to the temple was indirect with evidence of ritual in bitumen lined chases for pouring libations through to animal bones hinting at a sacrifice.

The priest room within the temple is evidence of professional clergy. He would have served the various gods in the different shrines. The objects found inside altars and the votive statues discovered in cella II is evidence that this was sacred space. The votive statues give us a glimpse into the religious life of ancient people. They projected the ancient peoples' worship onto the gods even though laity were not being allowed to enter the sacred presence.

The presence of bitumen lined chases is informative about cult activities such as libations practiced over a long period. The abolition room built as part of the temple over time from Shrine IV to the Square temple is evidence of lustration practices. Purpose building such rooms meant that lustration and ritual cleansing was considered vital to the correct functioning of the temple.

The temple probably served various gods instead of a single god or goddess. It seemed to be a multi-purpose structure that hints about a complex theology. The importance of the status of the temple is indicated by the priests' room. The gods needed a full-time servant to see to their needs. The votive statues that were found are part of cult and ritual in the local

community (Garcia-Ventura & Lopez-Bertran 2010: 743, 744). The temple served the needs of the community. Correct patterns of worship seemed to be important to the local people.



## CHAPTER 6

# THE EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD: TELL AL UBAID

### 6.1 ABSTRACT

*Not much remains of the temple at Tell al 'Ubaid. I show that this temple is remarkably similar to the Temple Oval at Khafaje. The temple was decorated in an archaic style from the third millennium with mosaic cones. The Anzud above the façade is a unique feature that belongs to this temple. The presence of the Anzud links the temple of Ninḫursag to the concept of the cosmic tree.*

### 6.2 THE DISCUSSION OF TELL AL UBAID

The temple at Tell al 'Ubaid did not survive but enough remains so that the excavators could form a coherent picture of the site. Tell al 'Ubaid was like the Temple Oval at Khafaje possessing a similar oval enclosure. Phases discovered at the temple date to Early Dynastic III B (ED II B) and the Ur III period. The focus will be on the ED III B temple. Based on an inscription found at the site it was determined that the temple belonged to the goddess Ninḫursag (Sheen 1982: 174; Wightman 2007: 21).

The main feature of the temple was the oval enclosure of 80 × 65 meters like the one found at Khafaje. Inside the oval was a rectangular platform of 34 × 23 meters with the corners oriented to the cardinal points. The platform was a little off-centre to the oval enclosure (Delougaz 1938: 4; Sheen 1982: 174).

The entrance to the temple through the oval was not in the expected place. Excavators found the entrance to be in line with an earlier ramp. On the south side of the terrace, excavators found a brick-built drain but could not trace its origin (Delougaz 1938: 4). The entrance to the platform was via stairs set against the southeast side of the platform with another secondary platform in the northwest corner (Sheen 1982: 174; Wightman 2007: 21).

One traverses a ramped passage through a double enceinte from the foot of the main staircase to enter a partly walled courtyard. It is in this area where many elements of the façade were excavated. The façade of the temple has one interesting and illuminating feature. This is the Anzu frieze found there that was probably placed over the top of the façade. The plaque was made of copper and wood (Wightman 2007: 21).

The ED III B building was built with a distinctive red brick. Not much remains of the ED III B temple. The platform was built upon two courses of limestone. Upon this was the lower course built of baked brick with normal mudbrick on top of this. It was estimated that the platform would have been six meters high. In the eastern corner, excavators found a wall running north and south with a two-meter-wide door in it. Facing east the wall was flanked by a panelled buttress on one side with a recessed panel on the other side (Sheen 1982: 174; Delougaz 1938: 5).

In the south corner, underneath an Ur III building, excavators found the foundations of another building. The pavement in front of the platform showed three occupation levels. On the level of the earlier foundations, excavators found clay cones. By this time this form of decoration was archaic. The whole façade of the building was decorated with buttresses and recessed niche panelling (Delougaz 1938: 5; Sheen 1982: 174).

Excavators found numerous objects in the debris. At the foot of the façade, excavators found the famous Anzud plaque placed between antithetically placed stags. Copper bulls were also excavated, some of them still fixed to bricks which indicate that they were wall mounted. Other objects found include shell inlays and feline heads, pottery sickles, and a cylinder seal dated to the Jemdet Nasr period (c. 2900 BCE). The shell inlay consisting of triangles, lozenges, and flower petals in pink, grey, and white were used in wall friezes (Sheen 1982: 175; Delougaz 1938: 6, 7).

The Anzud<sup>6</sup> probably decorated the top of the façade of the temple. Sheen argued that the bulls did not adorn the outside of the temple but the inside (1982: 176). The feline heads and the bulls argue for similar decorations to that found at Tell ‘Uqair. Inside the cella at Tell ‘Uqair, excavators found paintings of bulls on the walls as well as felines guarding the altar (Van Buren 1946: 500). In a subsidiary temple the excavator also found scenes of cows being milked. The presence of the wall-mounted bulls and feline heads found argues that a similar decoration was displayed at Tell al ‘Ubaid as was found at Tell ‘Uqair (Sheen 1982: 176; Wightman 2007: 21).

The animal frieze along the lower part of the façade is interesting since the research indicates that Ninḥursag was also considered to be the mother of all wild animals, life and death (James 1960: 77; Alban 2003: 4; Adair 2008: 28). The Anzu plaque’s position above the façade of the temple is significant since the lion-headed eagle’s normal place was at the top of the cosmic tree.

The ancients may have seen the temples of Ninḥursag as a tree sanctuary, with the eagle in the top and the serpent at the bottom of the tree among the roots. That this may be the case is suggested by one of the Sumerian Temple Hymns, TH 39. This hymn sings about Ninḥursag temple at **HI.ZA**.

498. “[...] Your root is like.... snake [...]”

499. “[...] Your holy foundation you (?) have made shining [...]” (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 46, 47)

Two other translations of this verse suggest that this verse should be understood as a serpent resting among the roots of a tree:

“[...] May the crown bring joy to your platform. May your roots glisten like an immense saḡkal snake in your holy foundations [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.1)

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<sup>6</sup> Bird with a lion's head (Amar 2002: 111)

“[...] May the crown of Nintu bring joy to your site, your hidden root is the great snake sleeping [...]” (De Shong Meador 2009: 225)

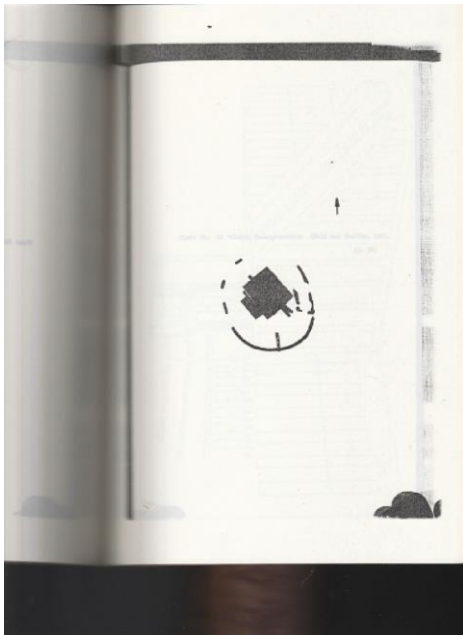


Figure 3: Plan of Tell al 'Ubaid

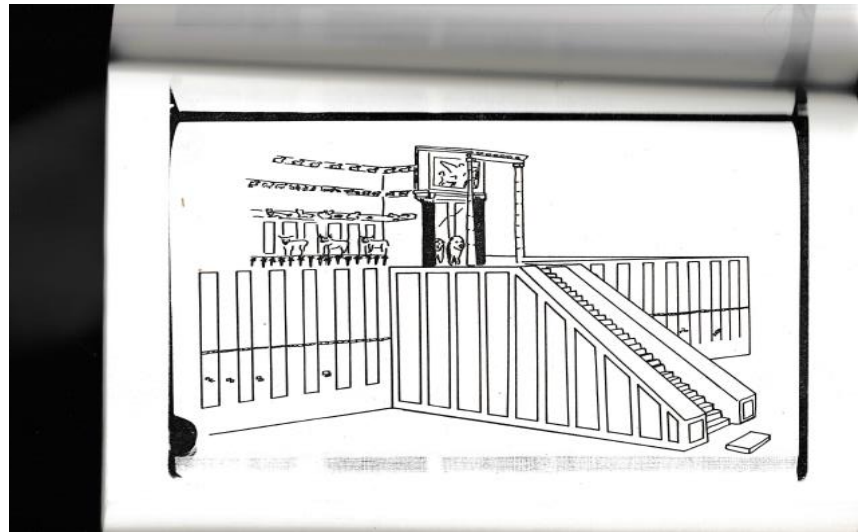


Figure 4: Façade of Tell al 'Ubaid



Figure 5: Anzu above façade at Tell al 'Ubaid

If the Anzu was above the façade as excavators claim it would form the picture of the world tree. The concept of the cosmic world tree may underlie the construction of the temple. It points to a strong concept of a vertical axis. The temple was 'rooted' in the Abzu with a vertical axis in the heavens as was the case also in the Cylinders of Gudea (Øiseth 2007: 69, 70)

## 6.3 ANALYSIS OF TELL AL UBAID

### 6.3.1 BUILDING

#### 6.3.1.1 Structure

Not much remains of the structure of Tell al 'Ubaid. The main feature is the oval enclosure similar to that found at Khafaje. Some foundations were found but not enough to trace the building. The temple was built of red brick and stood upon a platform. The Anzu decorated the top of the façade making a conception of the temple as a tree sanctuary possible.

#### 6.3.1.2 Cult

Without tracing the actual cella not much can be said. The presence of wall-mounted bulls and feline heads make it possible to suggest that they adorned the cella like that found at Tell 'Uqair.

#### 6.3.1.3 Status

Mosaic cones found at the site indicate that this temple was decorated in an archaic style. This may have indicated the age and reverence felt towards this ancient goddess.

### 6.3.2 FILLING

#### 6.3.2.1 Agriculture

Agriculture is indicated by the presence of clay sickles found at the site.

#### 6.3.2.2 Sacrifice

No indications of sacrifice were found.

#### 6.3.2.3 Commensality

No indications of feasting were found at the site.

## 6.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 6.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

The Anzu above the façade indicated the vertical axis. Ancients may have viewed the temple as a tree sanctuary since the Anzud was normally found at the top of the world tree.

### 6.3.3.2 Cosmic relationships

There are no indications of any relationships.

### 6.3.3.3 Seat of power

The temple was indicated in inscriptions as belonging to Ninḫursag. It was one of her seats of power.

## 6.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain     the house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	Oval temenos, wall mounted bulls, mosaic cones
<b>Filling</b>	Clay sickles, no sacrifice, no commensality
<b>Existence</b>	Anzud plaque, no cosmic relations, Ninḫursag's temple

### 6.4.1 Conclusion

The oval temenos link the Tell al 'Ubaid temple with similar temples at Khafaje. The mosaic cones found at the site are archaic by this period and must have been deliberately added for prestige. The wall-mounted bulls and feline heads found at the site continue the theme

found at the White Temple. The wall-mounted bulls and presence of felines tell of the practices of the cult. Temples in literature are frequently compared to bulls. The felines are part of the tradition found at Tell Uqair as well as the White Temple. At Tell Uqair the felines decorated the altar (Van Buren 1946: 500). Along with the bulls they may have served an apotropaic purpose.

Agriculture is hinted at with the discovery of clay sickles, but no evidence of feasting were found. The feline heads served a cultic purpose other than sacrifice (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2009: 83, 100, 107; Johnson 1988: 100, 106). The oval temenos link this temple with the temples in the Diyala Region. Some of the features such as the mosaic cones were deliberate archaic features. This probably indicated reverence for the antiquity of the goddess of the temple, Ninḫursag.

The presence of the plaque with the Anzu (d) is telling. This mythological animal usually was found at the top of the cosmic tree and was normally associated with Ningirsu. The two stags found placed in an antithetical position facing the Anzud may belong to the sphere of influence of Ninḫursag. Temple Hymn TH 39 tellingly places a serpent at the roots of Ninḫursag's temple at **HI.ZA**. The serpent located at the roots of the temple in TH 39 at **HI.ZA**, and the Anzud at the top of the façade at Tell al 'Ubaid; suggests that the temples of Ninḫursag were seen in terms of the cosmic tree (De Shong Meador 2009: 225; Wightman 2007: 21).

# CHAPTER 7

## THE AKKADIAN PERIOD: TEMPLE OF ENLIL AT NIPPUR

### 7.1 ABSTRACT

*Archaeologists did not excavate many temples dating to the Akkadian Period. I discuss one of the few remains found underneath the Ur III temple of Enlil in Nippur. It is shown that the remains of numerous floors found underneath the Ur III temple do date to the Akkadian period. This is confirmed by several Akkadian period brick inscriptions of Akkadian kings. Textual sources, such as the 'Cursing of Agade', inform the reader that a temple to Enlil did indeed exist in this period. Excavators believe that the remains of the temple should be found underneath the ziggurat. I show that the levels discussed were probably sacred to Enlil, and part of the temple complex.*

### 7.2 THE DISCUSSION OF THE AKKADIAN TEMPLE OF ENLIL

The existence of a temple to Enlil in the Akkadian period is not in doubt. The temple of Enlil is mentioned in the lament The Cursing of Agade (ETCSL translation: 1998 – 2006: 57 – 65). The lament tells the story of how Akkadian king Naram-Sin (2254 – 2219 BCE) displeased the god Enlil by trying to rebuild the Ekur temple without divine permission. He lost the kingship as a result and the Akkadian Empire came to an end. Excavators found various levels underneath the Ur III period temple built by the Sumerian king Ur-Nammu (2112 – 2095 BCE).

In the opinion of the excavators the remains of the Akkadian Period Enlil temple lay underneath the nearby ziggurat of Enlil (McGown, Haines, & Hanson 1967: 4). Excavators unearthed various levels underneath the Ur III period temple, going down 2.25 meters in room 13. They found various layers with some being as little as 10 – 20 cm apart. They interpreted this succession of layers as the remains of a courtyard sacred to Enlil. The excavators identified two layers called VII and VI that were not designated as cultural levels.



Level VII contains six floors while level VI has four floors (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 3).

### 7.2.1 Level EN VII

Floors 6, 5 and 4 were excavated in room 13 in the southwestern half of the room. The floor of well-packed dirt proved even and level. This is not the case with floor 3 which slopes down to the southwestern corner of room 13. Floor 3 dips in the middle of room 13. Floor 2 was excavated only in the north-eastern half of room 13. Floor 1 was raised over a bed crumbling unbaked bricks that raised it 75 cm above floor 2. An ash-filled depression was found in floor 1 near the center of room 13 which was 10 – 20 cm deep (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 3).

### 7.2.2 Level EN VI

This level was not limited to room 13 and was excavated in a wider context. These floors also yielded a lot of artifacts. The lowest level of VI is on floor 4. We will begin with that floor.

### 7.2.3 Floor 4

Floor 4 was uncovered in more than one room and was the lowest level excavated. Excavators found lots of ash deposits on floor 4. The heaviest concentrations of ash were found in rooms 9, 16, and 17. In-room 18 excavators found the remains of a wall built of unbaked Plano-convex bricks  $17 \times 27 \times 6$  cm in volume. Next to the wall, they found a door socket made of gypsum. The turning surface was slightly worn (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 3, 4).

The other feature of floor 4 is a series of drains that were excavated. The earliest drain was found in room 18 in the southeast corner of the room. It may have belonged to a higher level. The drain was built of different brick types. The builders used Plano-convex bricks, baked bricks as well as broken square bricks and gypsum for its construction. One of the broken square bricks was an inscription of Akkadian king Naram-Sin (2254 – 2219 BCE) (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 3, 4).

The second drain sloped downward northeast from room 16 to room 18. This drain cut into the drain previously discussed at the southwestern end. The drain was paved with brick and had two sides. It measured  $42 \times 42 \times 7$  cm wide. The two sides were built two courses high of broken half bricks (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 3, 4).

A third drain cut into the previous drain at the southwestern end. Like the previous drain, this one extended over room 16 to room 18. The drain was built with Plano-convex brick that had been baked. The bricks measured  $21 \times 27 \times 7$  cm. The bottom of the drain was paved with bricks laid end to end. The sides were formed by bricks standing vertically on their ends. The drain was covered with unbaked Plano-convex bricks of which only a few remain (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 3, 4).

### 7.2.4 Floor 3

On this floor, excavators exposed the remains of a wall built of unbaked Plano-convex bricks on the south-eastern side of room 13. The bricks measure  $17 \times 26 \times 4.5$  cm. The remains of two walls were found in room 9. The wall in the northeast was built of bricks that measure  $21 \times 24 \times 6$  cm. In the southwest corner was the other wall. Here excavators found a baked brick inscription of Naram-Sin (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 4).

### 7.2.5 Floor 2

Floor 2 consists of two layers that are close to each other. The floors are designated 2a, and 2b to avoid confusion. Floor 2b has a heavy concentration of ash in the northwest corner. Street 20 has a fire pit at the northwest end where excavators found a clay tablet with the plan of a house incised upon it. Floor 2b in room 14 contains many shallow fire pits filled with ash and debris. The fire pits of floor 2b in room 14 were found underneath a floor of unbaked bricks each 46.5 cm square. This floor is designated floor 2a (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 4).

Excavators found a structure on floor 2a in the northern part of room 13. The structure was the rectangular and measured  $1.15 \times 1.90 \times 0.10$  meters. This structure was slightly concave in the middle and covered with mud plaster. The vertical sides were covered with

bitumen. In the southern part of the room 13 excavators found a stamped brick with the name Lugalnigba written upon it. In the south corner of the room 13 excavators discovered a pavement built with gypsum (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 4).

The floor in room 17 was associated with two rectangular fire pits  $1.65 \times 1.80 \times 0.50$  meters in size. Each of the fire pits contained a free-standing libn that was oval-shaped. At the bottom of the fire pit excavators found vertically set bricks measuring  $55 \times 9$  cm in size. Debris and ash filled the pit. The libn stone was burnt red orange in fire (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 4).

## 7.2.6 Floor 1c

Floor 1c was the highest floor in most of the rooms excavated and were found 8 – 10 cm below the temple footing. In rooms 13 and 19 excavators found patches of matting on the floor while rooms 9 and 13 produced traces of bitumen on the floor. Various rooms such as 14, 17, 20 and 22 were paved with baked bricks each  $38.5 - 40$  cm square. This pavement was set upon a foundation of broken baked bricks (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 4).

Excavators found four bricks inscribed by Naram-Sin in room 14. Two more broken bricks in room 14 contained inscriptions of Sharkalishari (2217 – 2193 BCE)<sup>7</sup> the son of Naram-Sin. Room 17 produced seven stamped bricks of Naram-Sin. The unpainted yellow bricks were laid in an alternating pattern with red-painted bricks. Red painted bricks mixed with unpainted ones were used indiscriminately in the south-eastern part of street 20 (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 4).

Bricks inscribed with the name of Naram-Sin were found in front of the ziggurat. The pattern of bricks stamped with the name of Naram-Sin with bricks stamped with the name of Sharkalishari below it continued in the south corner of the temple substructure. The

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<sup>7</sup> Such bricks celebrated kings building temples (Hameeuw, Gorris & Tavenier 2015: 91)

inscribed brick of Sharkalishari was broken just like those found in room 14. The wall associated with the paving was built of bricks (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 4).

## 7.2.7 Floor 1a and 1b

Floor 1b was found to be flush with the top of the temple footing. Excavators only found this floor in a few places. Street 20 of level 1b was covered by straw-tempered plaster that rose above the temple footing in the western corner. In-room 13 excavators found a patch of bitumen in the northern part of the room. The bitumen patch touched the footing of the temple curling slightly up at the edge of the footing. It formed a vertical face 30 cm deep. In the north-eastern part of room 13 floors 1a, and 1b were separated into several layers that lay close to each other. Floor 1a, like floor 1b in street 20, was covered by straw-tempered plaster (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 4).

## 7.2.8 Objects in EN VII

### 7.2.8.1 Floor 5

- Baked clay T tubes (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 20 – 22)

### 7.2.8.2 Floor 3

- Bronze pin (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 20 – 22)

## 7.2.9 Objects in EN VI

### 7.2.9.1 Floor 4

- Cylindrical clay object
- Bronze nail
- Bronze strip
- Bronze sheeting
- Baked clay animal figurine
- Bronze chisel

- Akkadian tablet fragment
- Two triangular stone inlays
- Clay sealing
- Baked clay cube
- Bronze tweezers
- Four coloured clay pendants (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 20 – 22)

### 7.2.9.2 Floor 3

- Fragment of Akkadian clay sealing showing a man with foot upon an inverted lion
- Inset of shell eye in lapis lazuli
- Bead threaded upon fragment of bronze wire
- Akkadian tablet fragment
- Bronze nail
- Flint blade
- Mathematical tablet
- Five crudely made clay lamps
- Green stone object (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 20 – 22)

### 7.2.9.3 Floor 2a and b

- Circular red stone inlay
- Potsherd
- Bronze chisel
- Two Triangular shell inlay with loop perforation in the back
- Akkadian clay sealing fragment showing two crossed lions
- Clay sealing fragment of bull man holding inverted animal
- Akkadian tablet fragment
- Limestone eye inset
- Two truncated shell inlays
- Triangular shell inlay

- Fragmented tablets
- Bronze nails
- Bronze staff head
- Stone bowl fragment
- Baked clay sickle blade
- Bird shaped stone bead
- Bronze strip
- Two crudely shaped clay lamps
- Shard of large plate
- Clay bottle stopper
- Tablet fragment
- Clay sealing
- Bronze pin (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 20 – 22)

### 7.2.9.3 Floor 1 c

- Bowl
- Akkadian tablet fragment
- Tablet fragment (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 20 – 22)

### 7.2.9.5 Floor 1a and 1b

- Bronze harpoon
- Akkadian tablet fragment
- Lexical tablet fragment (McGown, Haines & Hanson 1967: 20 – 22)

## 7.3 ANALYSIS OF THE ENLIL TEMPLE IN NIPPUR

### 7.3.1 BUILDING

#### 7.3.1.1 Structure

Excavators did not find any structures except for several drains and fire pits. Fragments of walls hint at a structure, but nothing was recovered. Excavators interpreted the various

floor levels as an open courtyard that was sacred to Enlil. Numerous brick inscriptions do hint at building activity but too little remains to form a coherent whole.

### 7.3.1.2 Cult

Nothing was found that could be understood as cultic objects except for the painted bricks that were patterned alternatively with Naram-Sin brick inscriptions. The pattern formed reminds of the colourful patterns formed with cone mosaics in some Early Dynastic temples.

### 7.3.1.3 Status

Various objects found on the floors could be considered status objects. The remains of clay sealings meant that some persons had the authority and status to own seals. Several inlaid objects would have belonged to persons of high status such as the god Enlil. Numerous bronze tools suggest workers that would have held a lower status.

## 7.3.2 FILLING

### 7.3.2.1 Agriculture

Excavators found a clay sickle that is an agricultural tool. Other than the sickle nothing else suggests the practice of agriculture.

### 7.3.2.2 Sacrifice

Numerous fire pits, as well as deposits of ash, were found.

### 7.3.2.3 Commensality

Excavators found no evidence of feasting.

## 7.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 7.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

Nothing was found to suggest verticality.

### 7.3.3.2 Cosmic relationship

Nothing was found that hints at cosmic relationships.

### 7.3.3.3 Seat of power

Not enough evidence remains to declare the floor levels as a seat of Enlil.

## 7.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain      the house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	Drains and fire pits, brick inscriptions, clay sealings
<b>Filling</b>	Clay sickle, no bones, ash deposits
<b>Existence</b>	No verticality, no relationships, not a seat of power

### 7.4.1 Conclusion

The floor levels excavated date to the Akkadian reign of Naram-Sin and Sharkalishari. Nothing of the temple remains, and it is not certain where it was located. The remains found were part of the sacred area dedicated to Enlil. Various features hint at a sacred activity such as the drains and fire pits filled with ash.

The brick inscriptions were part of ancient Mesopotamian building activity. Kings would place such brick inscriptions to inform future kings of their building activities. The brick inscriptions are proof of sacred building activity even though no architectural remains were found. The clay sickles hint at agricultural activity, but no bones were found suggesting sacrifice or feasting.



Since nothing remains of the temple, not much can be said about the theme of the house in this period. The presence of the inscribed brick does tell a story of kings who wanted to be remembered for their building activity. It was part of their service to the gods to build sacred buildings. The many brick inscriptions that were dug up is evidence of substantial building activity. Even though no remains of a temple were discovered one must have existed somewhere in the vicinity.

## CHAPTER 8

# THE UR III PERIOD: INANNA TEMPLE IN NIPPUR

### 8.1 ABSTRACT

*The Inanna temple was found with its archive intact which provides scholars with deep insight into the otherwise invisible inner workings of the temple. I discuss the archaeology of the temple and show how access was restricted between the Northeast and Southwestern parts. The tablets include the accounts of the temple as well as its dealings with other temples. One can see the livelihood of the people dependent on the temple for an income reflected in economic tablets.*

### 8.2 THE DISCUSSION OF THE INANNA TEMPLE

Excavations at the Inanna temple revealed a history spanning three thousand years from the Parthian period to the Early Dynastic II/III period. The archaeologists reached the bottom of the Tell at water level dated to the Proto-literate period c. 3500 – 3000 BCE. They found seven levels classed as temples with the Ur III temple being level IV (Hanson & Dules 1962: 75, 76). The Ur III period temple was large measuring 100 × 60 meters on a northwest to a southeast axis.

The main entrance pierced the northwest wall. Two subsidiary entrances in the southwest wall faced where the canal would have been. Access to the temple was restricted in the north-eastern part with no entrance from outside the temple to this area. You could only access the north-eastern part through a narrow corridor running southwest called locus 16. The only other entrance ran from the southern part of the temple. Running from locus 137 in the southeast courtyard a narrow corridor allowed access into the north-eastern part of the temple. Locus 125 opened to the north from the courtyard (locus 137) and ran through locus 13 to enter locus 1 in the restricted section. Doors at locus 126 and 135 controlled access into this part of the temple (Zettler 1991: 102; Zettler 1992: 90).

#### 8.2.1 The Southwestern Section

The cella of the temple was in this area. It was the public face of the temple. The whole section is based on two large courtyards called loci 28 and 118. The two doorways on this side replicated the main doorway. Both doorways were recessed and decorated with double-stepped niches. Excavators found

foundation deposits underneath the brickwork on both sides of the doors, including the main entrance. The deposits indicated the line to the cella (Zettler 1991: 102).

Several small rooms surround the courtyard (locus 28). Room 16 which provided access to the north-eastern side of the temple ran from the courtyard into the eastern part of the temple. As previously noted, a doorway controlled this access. A series of interconnecting rooms, loci 38, 89, 117, 88, allowed access to the southernmost courtyard locus 118. This courtyard (locus 118) communicated with the eastern part of the temple through 126, 135 and 125 allowing access to courtyard locus 137. To the south of the courtyard, locus 118 excavators were prevented by a poor state of preservation to find much except a few rooms, loci 130, 141, 142 and 143 (Zettler 1991: 103).

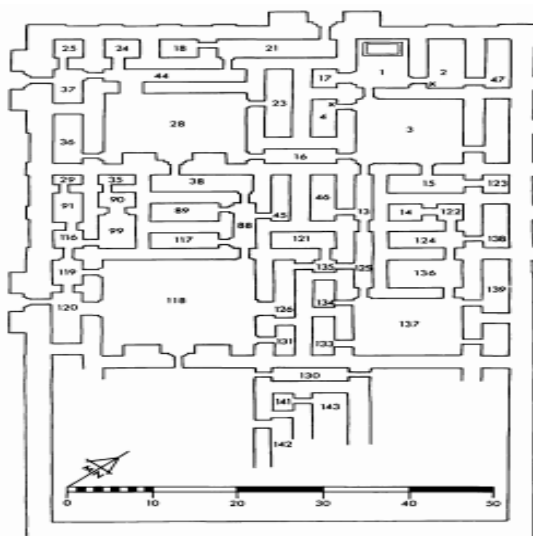


Figure 6) The Inanna Temple at Nippur

## 8.2.2 The North-eastern Section

This area was the administrative heart of the temple. The center of the north-eastern part was the courtyard locus 3. You could reach this courtyard through only two passages. As mentioned, locus 16 ran from courtyard locus 28 to courtyard locus 3. The passage ran roughly west to east. The second access to the northeast was through the corridor running roughly south to north beginning in locus 137 running through 125 and 13 to end in locus 3 (Zettler 1991: 103).

The locus 3 courtyard was the center of nine rooms. Loci 1, 17, 2 and 47 served as the chancery and magazines of the temple. To the south, loci 15 and 123 served as the principal

reception rooms. Excavators found a foundation deposit in the brickwork of locus 3 and 15. Part of the foundation was destroyed by a Parthian excavation that Zettler suggested destroyed the second foundation deposit. The two deposits would have flanked the doorway coming from locus 13. It meant that this doorway was considered important entrances to this restricted part of the temple (Zettler 1991: 102).

On the northern side of courtyard 3, loci 1 was located. Its size of 6 × 9 meters suggested that it was open to the sky. Excavators found 20 tablets on various floors in this location. It is suggested to be the main administrative office. This theory is supported by a find in the northwest end of the room of a mud-brick rectangular structure. It was lined with bitumen and partially roofed. Excavators suggested that it was the recycle bin for clay.

This structure contained fragments of clay sealing and broken tablets that support locus 1 as administrative in nature. The structure was later closed and replaced with a clay jar lined with bitumen. Going east from locus 1 one entered locus 2 where excavators found lots of tablets. They surmise that locus 2 must have been the archive of the temple (Zettler 1991: 102).

Opening from locus 137 going north was a courtyard 136 with associated rooms 124, 14 and 122. In the opinion of Zettler, these rooms served the chief administrator and his family as residence<sup>8</sup>. Zettler points out several domestic features in locus 136 to support his theory. The courtyard contained an oven, fireplace and trash pit. The trash pit revealed a trove of artifacts. They found several clay figurines, a clay plaque incised with an erotic scene, and about fifty school tablets. Pottery jar shard made up part of the fill with more than one hundred fragmentary clay sealings (Zettler 1991: 105).

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<sup>8</sup> Zettler divided the rooms into 136 (courtyard), 124 (reception room), 14 and 122 (retiring rooms) (Zettler 1991: 105)

## 8.2.3 The Tablets

Excavators found 1160 tablets, many of them in secondary contexts. Some of them contained the inscription "é dInanna" (house of Inanna) which indicated that the temple belonged to that goddess. Personal names found on some of the sealing's matched names found on the tablets. Three tablets recorded the capital available to the temple over a period of three years. They are 4 NT 191, 4 NT 218 and 5 NT 464 (Zettler 1991: 106).

One of the tablets was dated to a king of the Ur III dynasty: Amar Suen (2046 – 2019 BCE). The tablets list various commodities such as grain and beer. The three tablets mentioned list the following:

List of expenditures of festivals

- Rations
- Seed
- Fodder
- Wages

Tablet 4 NT 197 dating over a period of twelve months list the temple stock of barley and wheat as 294 944 sila<sup>9</sup>. The grain was part of the temples' real property and came from two sources. From the temples' fields goods are given under the bala tax system of the Ur III Empire. The temple owned at least seven or eight fields that were named. The tablet dates to Amar Suen year 9. Other than grain the temple owned animals and conducted business with merchants. Their relationship with some of the merchants was so important that the temple provided a wedding gift for the merchant Lugal-user's daughter (Zettler 1991:106 – 107; Van Driel 1995: 396; Zettler 1992: 115).

Some of the other tablets mention other aspects of the temple economy. 4 NT 192 mentions the textile production of the temple that would have been carried out by female

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<sup>9</sup> A sila is 0.842 liters (Halloran 1996 - 2019: 32)

workers and male and female children. The same tablets mention milling which was also a female job. Tablets 6 NT 432 and 6 NT 455 mention wages paid to agricultural workers, while 6 NT 432 mention gardeners. The texts 6 NT 643 and 6 NT 622 name fields leased out to people (Van Driel 1995: 398 – 401; Zettler 1992: 124, 138).

## 8.3 ANALYSIS OF THE INANNA TEMPLE

### 8.3.1 BUILDING

#### 8.3.1.1 Structure

Unfortunately, excavators could not excavate the temple's cella, but they did deduce that the temple was divided into two parts. The north-eastern part contained the magazines and administrative elements of the temple. Access to this area was strictly controlled. The cult area was in the south.

#### 8.3.1.2 Cult

Despite the cella not being excavated the trove of tablets found tells us that the chief administrative officer needed to see to the needs of the cult.

#### 8.3.1.3 Status

The position of chief administrator could be inherited by family members, often father to son.

### 8.3.2 FILLING

#### 8.3.2.1 Agriculture

The tablets mention that the temple engaged in agriculture. They mention workers, seed and fodder which meant land and herds of animals. The provision for gardeners supports this.

#### 8.3.2.2 Sacrifice

The tablets mention offerings for the temple.

### 8.3.2.3 Commensality

Feasting is mentioned in the tablets.

## 8.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 8.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

Not enough was found to indicate the vertical axis in the temple.

### 8.3.3.2 Cosmic relationship

The temple belonged only to Inanna. As far as excavators could deduce no other gods were mentioned. The chief administrator lived inside the temple.

### 8.3.3.3 Seat of power

The temple was one of Inanna's seats. This temple would have been important simply because it represented her in the city of Nippur, the Vatican of ancient Mesopotamia.

## 8.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain      the house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	Restricted access, no cella, administration positions could be inherited
<b>Filling</b>	Land and herds as well as agricultural workers, sacrifice, and feasts planned for
<b>Existence</b>	No vertical dimension, only Inanna's temple, her seat in Nippur

## 8.4.1 Conclusion

The Inanna temple in Nippur is a good example of the building- and filling topos as work in practice. The tablets allow a glimpse into the functioning of the temple. The temple saw to the provisions of the cult, paid rations to workers, owned fields and herds, as well as engaged in commerce.

Textile production on an industrial scale formed part of the temple economy. Professional clergy and administrators, as well as ordinary people, served the temple. Part of the income of the temple derived from the state while the rest came from the temples' resources.

Inanna's temple had a large economic footprint in the city of Nippur.

Cult activities formed part of the expenses tabulated in various texts. Tellingly access to the temple was strictly controlled. People could not move freely around the temple as they wished. Certain parts were more accessible than others. The chancelry along with the stores was heavily restricted. Some of the rooms seemed to have belonged to the main temple administrator. He lived and worked in the temple.

The administration of the temple was inherited by the same family. The line of succession was often father to son. Various family members held privileged positions in the temple or received usufruct of some kind. The temple owned agricultural lands that produced enough to help the temple meet some of its needs. Mentions are made of herds of animals and orchards as well as trading with certain merchants.

Feasting is mentioned in the texts, planned for and funded by the temple. A lot of people depended upon the temple for their livelihood. Most of them received payment out of the temple's income. As part of the royal obligations, the temple received some of its income from the king.



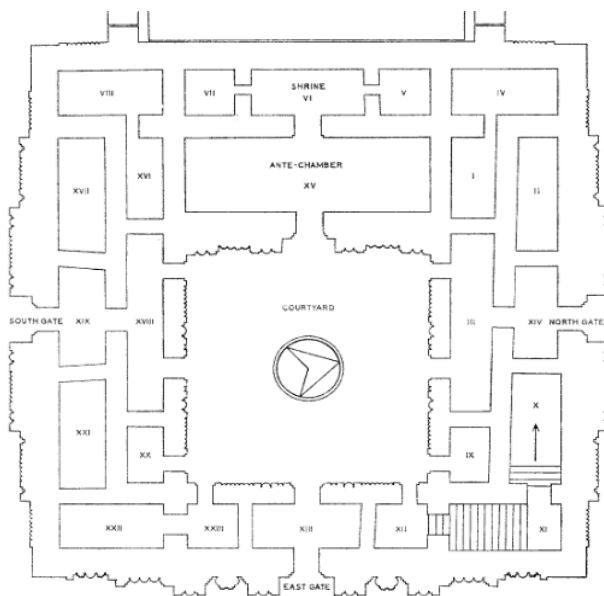
# CHAPTER 9

## THE OLD BABYLONIAN AND ISIN-LARSA PERIOD: TELL AL RIMAH

### 9.1 ABSTRACT

*Tell al Rimah was difficult to excavate. Working back from the later phases it is shown that the cella was unique in having a floor of black plaster. It is also shown that the cella faced east and the structure was rebuilt several times. It is speculated that the goddess of the shrine may have been Ishtar. Various documents were found to date the various phases of the temple to Assyrian kings. The other unique feature of Tell al Rimah that one discus is the widespread use of the barrel vault technique.*

### 9.2 THE DISCUSSION OF TELL AL RIMAH



**Figure 7: Tell al Rimah**

The site of Tell al Rimah was excavated in 1964 by the British School of Archaeology and University Museum of Philadelphia. Excavators made three soundings called A, B, and C. Sounding A was located on the north shoulder of the Tell. Sounding B was where they found

the temple and ziggurat. Sounding C was lower on the tell 100 meters northwest. Khabur style pottery found at the site dates Tell al Rimah to the early 2nd millennium BC. The temple was 42 meters square a side and remains up to 15 meters high (Oats 1965: 62, 69; Wightman 2007: 39; Carter 1964: 44).

The main feature of the temple was the courtyard that one entered from the east through an impressive gate system. The east gate consisted of an inner and outer gate separated by a long gate chamber. To get to this impressive gate one had to climb up by ramp or stairs from the lower east. The north side of the courtyard possessed two doorways that led to the upper terrace. They were in the Northwest corner and the middle of the façade. Since the façade was very regular, excavators postulated the third door in the northeast corner (Oats 1965: 62, 69; Wightman 2007: 39; Carter 1964: 44).

Opposite the eastern gate, another doorway pierced the western face of the temple. Beyond this doorway lay the antechamber that guarded the shrine. Excavators did not excavate the shrine. At the back of the antechamber, excavators found the doorway leading to the shrine. It was located on the western side of the antechamber. The whole structure was built of mud brick 33-34 squares by 10 cm. Excavators exposed a pavement built of 38 cm square bricks in the northwest corner of the courtyard. It was paved over with larger 49 cm square blocks (Oats 1965: 62, 69; Wightman 2007: 39; Carter 1964: 44).

Here they found small square fine calcite blocks of  $33 \times 16 \times 9.5$  cm that may have adorned the façade. The most impressive architectural feature of the temple is a series of barrel vaults built of mud bricks laid on radially. Only one survived east of the Northgate chamber. It is 3.8 meters wide by 5 meters high. Both sides of the façade were decorated with elaborate recessed niche panelling. The doorway of the antechamber was set in a recess ornamented with double reveals. The walls of the main façade are broken up by columns carved to look like palm trees. The whole was plastered with black coloured plaster that may have been bitumen (Oats 1965: 62, 69; Wightman 2007: 39; Carter 1964: 44).

Excavators could only unearth the cella during the second season of excavations. The picture of the temple became much clearer. The earliest phase III of the temple was

followed by a time of the collapse of the structure. This period is dated to Šamši-Adad (1852 – 1819 BCE). The collapse and subsequent rebuilding made it impossible to retrieve the remains of the Phase III cella. Excavators had to estimate the form of the cella based upon subsequent periods (Oats 1966: 122 – 124).

The cella was remodelled during Phase II which dates to the Middle Assyrian period (Carter 1964: 44). During this phase, ancient builders inserted abutments as the supports of an east-west axis barrel vault into the north and south walls. The collapse of the vault made investigations of Phase III impossible and dangerous. Excavators found that Phase II c used the original Phase III doorway. In Phase II c the doorway was now 2.50 meters higher than the original floor. Elsewhere excavators established that Phase III was built upon the bare tell. The temple did not possess a mud-brick foundation as was usual. A single course of mudbricks served the purpose of levelling the floor of the temple. This oversight would lead to structural problems in the future (Oats 1966: 124; 129).

The Phase II cella had a dais with a projecting step running the length of the western wall. This dais was almost destroyed by a trench dug from Phase I level to retrieve a slab of Mosul marble that was placed upon the Phase I dais. The floor of the cella was covered with black plaster that did not continue into the white ante chamber. The walls and roof of the cella were painted white. In the southwest corner of Phase I's cella excavators found a tablet dating to Shalmaneser I (1265 – 1235 BCE) (Oats 1966:124 -125).

The ante chamber was divided to create a new room in the north of the chamber. The entrance to the room, designated room 16, was through a vaulted doorway. This room was roofed with another barrel vault. It is not clear how the ante chamber was roofed since at 6 meters wide it was too far for a barrel vault. The offering table was built of mud brick and measured 1.00 × 0.80 meters long. The mud bricks of this structure were mixed with stone fragments. The offering table was covered with a limestone slab (Oats 1966:126 -127).

On the northern side of the courtyard excavators reached Phase III in Room III. They found that the floor had been raised two times. The earliest floor was plastered black just like the cella. In the opinion of the excavators this meant that Room III would have had cultic

significance. It may have been a secondary cella. Several buildings on the south side of the courtyard encroached upon the ante chamber by the time of Phase I. In the debris of the south courtyard excavators found over one hundred tablets stored in a broken jar. They contain the business records of Abu-ṭāb and his son Shamash-ittiya (Oats 1966: 127 – 131).

### 9.2.1 Objects found

- Old Babylonian seal near gate chamber
- Khabur style pottery
- Hundreds of glazed quartz frit beads
- Miniature nursing mother
- Pendants of a fly and frog and hedgehog
- Four capsules – one a woman's head with stamp seal on the base of the rampant headed lion
- Two-cylinder seals in Mitannian style
- Many beads of glass
- Plaque with a nude female in relief
- Pendant of Humbaba
- Bone needle 13.4 cm decorated with woman's head
- Thirty tablets in a clay jar
- Quartz-faience rosettes
- Piriform sand core vessels
- Glass mosaic in black, white, green and yellow
- Glass base stock on the floor of the temple anteroom
- Marine and land animal shells
- Lead ingot of 1820 grams
- Bronze weapon points and domestic artifacts
- Semi-precious stone beads
- Stone wheels
- Gold disc with eight radial rays

- Stone sculpture of male and female figures
- Mosul marble slab carved with a striding genius
- Bearded male torso (Oats 1965: 75; Carter 1964: 44 - 59)

## 9.3 THE ANALYSIS OF TELL AL RIMAH

### 9.3.1 BUILDING

#### 9.3.1.1 Structure

Built upon the surface of the Tell without foundations meant that the structure of the temple was architecturally unsound. It bedevilled the excavations to the extent that the earliest surface could only be found in a few places. The cella faced the east gate directly with the dais at the back of the west wall of the cella. The façade was heavily decorated with recessed niche panelling and columns. Of interest in the use of smaller columns carved to represent palm trees decorating the façade. The barrel vaults found here are an unique feature.

#### 9.3.1.2 Cult

The black floor of the cella and Room III had cultic significance. The slab of Mosul marble was so important that a tunnel was dug from Phase I to retrieve it from its place on the dais of Phase II. The face of Humbaba found carved in stone in the temple served an apotropaic purpose.

#### 9.3.1.3 Status

Many artifacts were found in the temple as well as unique carvings such as the Humbaba. The façade was very well crafted to impress. It appears that calcite blocks adorned part of the façade.

### 9.3.2 FILLING

### 9.3.2.1 Agriculture

There was no evidence found of agriculture.

### 9.3.2.2 Sacrifice

The only bone found was a carved needle. There is no evidence for sacrifice except the presence of the offering table.

### 9.3.2.3 Commensality

No evidence of feasting was found.

## 9.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 9.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

The temple did not have a foundation terrace but made abundant use of the column. This indicates verticality. The use of carved palm trees indicated the same theme of verticality.

### 9.3.3.2 Cosmic relationship

The presence of nude females on plaques as well as the bone needle prompted the excavators to speculate that the temple belonged to Ishtar. Unfortunately, they could not present a solid argument for the thesis. The presence of Room III that had the same black painted floor as the cella supports the idea that more than one god or goddess was worshipped at the temple.

### 9.3.3.3 Seat of power

Since the owner of the temple remains unknown it cannot be established as the seat of power for any deity. It may have belonged to Ishtar.

## 9.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain the house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	No foundations, black painted floor, impressive façade, barrel vaulting
<b>Filling</b>	No agriculture, offering table, no feasting
<b>Existence</b>	Palm trees and columns, two cellas, identity of owner unknown,

### 9.4.1 Conclusion

The theme of verticality is emphasized by the decorations rather than the architecture. The palm tree featured extensively in the architecture of the temple emphasizing the vertical axis as a theme. The black floor indicated the sacred status of the cella in which it was found. Some features of the temple, such as the slab of Mosul marble, was considered so important that it was dug out of a preceding level of the temple to be used in the later period.

Unique to the temple was the carved face of the Humbaba found at the site. The identity of the owner of the temple could not be established but the presence of a bone needle and nude female plaques hints at a goddess rather than a god being worshipped in the temple. The presence of two cellas may have meant that more than one deity was worshipped at the temple.

No evidence could be found of agriculture or feasting. The status of the temple is reflected in the impressive reliefs and other decorations. The barrel vaulting is a unique feature. This architectural feature took a lot of trouble and time as well as skill and effort to put in place. The builders demonstrated knowledge of more than one vaulting technique. The importance of the cult is demonstrated with the tunnels dug into earlier layers to extract important objects such as the Mosul marble slab.

This indicated a continuity of tradition. The later people could only be dug down for such an object if they knew it was there, and where to look for it. The object had a significance that spanned generations. That significance must have been cultic in nature.



# PART B

## THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE OF THE METAPHOR THE HOUSE

### CHAPTER 10

#### PRACTICAL WISDOM AS GENRE

##### 10.1 ABSTRACT

*Wisdom in Mesopotamia is a wide concept and beyond the scope of the research. In this short section on wisdom, one explores the concept of wisdom as a practical skill (**phronesis**) rather than the traditional literature such as proverbs. This chapter discusses the concepts of Greek **Sophia** and Hebrew **Hōkām**, as well as their Sumerian and Akkadian equivalents **nēmequ** and **nam-ku-zu**. It is shown that building sacred structures needed divine permission and a plan before construction could begin.*

*The second part of this chapter deals with the building-and filling topos. It is shown that this topos was part of the wisdom genre, in the sense of practical wisdom or **phronesis**. It took wisdom to build a temple and fill it as the home of a god/goddess. Ancient Mesopotamians encapsulated this process in short proverb sayings which even made its way into the Hebrew Bible. Building a temple was considered proof of divine favour while at the same time showcasing the builder's practical wisdom.*

##### 10.2 PRACTICAL WISDOM IN MESOPOTAMIA

Permission to build a temple needed to be sourced from the gods. The gods provided the plan along with the permission to build. "In Mesopotamia building was a matter of divine command and agency, and human imitation of the divine wisdom in building" (Van Leeuwen

2007: 74). The human king would complete the work under the divine plan. In the Hebrew Bible God showed the plan for the Tabernacle to Moses on the mountain before he built it (Ex. 36: 1). Long before the Hebrew Bible was written this pattern was part of Sumerian literature such as the Kesh Temple Hymn. In the Incipit of the Kesh Temple Hymn, the goddess Nisaba writes down the orders and plan for the temple given by the god Enlil (Van Leeuwen 2007: 74; Gragg 1969: 169).

Denning-Bolle (1987: 219, 220) analysed various words used for wisdom in the different traditions and found that they included the concept of skill for a particular craft. She uses the example of Hebrew **Hōkām** and Greek **Sophia**. In the Bible, for example, God calls two men up for the task of building the tabernacle, namely Bezaleel and Oholiab to work with craft (Ex. 31: 1-6; Ex.35: 25). Both are described as wise. The Hebrew word for wisdom in this passage confirms this interpretation:

H2451

חכמה

chokmâh

khok-maw'

From H2449; wisdom (in a good sense): - skilful, wisdom, wisely, wit (Meyers 2012)

Denning-Bolle also affirms that the word **Sophia** in Greece carried the meaning of technical skill especially before the fifth century BC “This might include knowledge of *carpentry*, music and singing, divination, and *ship-wright skills* (my italics)” (Denning-Bole 1987: 219, 220).

The word **Phronesis** in Greek philosophy expresses the concept of wisdom which can be both theoretical and practical. As practical wisdom **Phronesis** can also be understood as a kind of knowledge that is rooted in skill (Dottori 2009: 3).

Denning-Bole points out that this concept of practical wisdom was true of the Akkadian people as well. The Akkadian language have ‘**mūdū**’ (the one who knows, an expert in a craft), ‘**emqu**’ (skilled, experienced, educated), ‘**apkallu**’ (sage or type of priest), ‘**nēmequ**’

(often used in connection with cultic skill) which was an essential element of wisdom (Denning-Bole 1987: 220).

The Sumerian word **nam-ku-zu** (pure, sacred knowledge) argues for a wisdom setting in the cult. In the case of the Sumerian sage Ziusudra, it was precisely his cultic skill that eventually saved him. Ziusudra proved his wisdom by surviving the deluge. His cultic wisdom also translated into technical skills such as boat building. The boat that Ziusudra built allowed him to survive the deluge while at the same time Ziusudra's skill in boat building was proof of his wisdom. By surviving the deluge, he was the source of further wisdom in Mesopotamian tradition after the flood (Denning-Bole 1987: 218; Beaulieu 2007: 6 ).

### 10.3 THE BUILDING-AND FILLING TOPOS

"[...] Through wisdom a house is builded; and by understanding it is established. And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precocious and pleasant riches [...]" (Prov. 24: 23-4).

Ancient house building of big houses or temples was understood as grounded in the Divine Wisdom of creation which gave life, order and meaning to the cosmos (Van Leeuwen 2007: 67; Van Leeuwen 2010: 399). The Sumerians viewed temples in terms like estates in which numerous economic activities took place (Lambert 1990: 117). As such "[...] Things are built with the wisdom that the deity gave the builder, with an insight into the norms and structures of the cosmos pertaining to their building activities - norms that the Sumerians called **me** or **geshur** [...]" (Van Leeuwen 2010: 414).

According to Van Leeuwen ancient house building was a binary process that was founded on the wisdom of house building and filling. It included 1) design, gathering materials and workers, construction and completion, and 2) filling the house with contents and provisioning it (Van Leeuwen 2007: 68; Van Leeuwen 2010: 400). In a Mesopotamian context, we find that the god Enki also acted with wisdom in provisioning Enlil's temple. "The Ekur, the house of Enlil, he packed with goods and fills above and below with waters" (Van Leeuwen 2007: 70).

The best Sumerian example of the building- and filling topos is found in the *Cylinders of Gudea*. The *Cylinders* describe how the Gudea reacted to a vision of the gods to build the E ninnu temple for the god Ningirsu. He does so with wisdom as we read in the first few lines: “[...] The ruler as a man of *great perception* was lending an ear (my italics) [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 389). Gudea was showing his great wisdom by listening to the fount of wisdom, which was the gods (Jacobsen 1987: 386, 387; Van Leeuwen 2007: 71; Van Leeuwen 2010: 403).

When Gudea saw a vision that he did not understand he set off to inquire of the gods. Going by boat he set course to Ninâ to consult the goddess Nanshe. She was the diviner of the gods who could lay out the dream for him. On the way to Ninâ he stopped over and inquired of the goddess Gatumdag, to no avail. Once he arrived in Ninâ he laid out his dream to the goddess Nanshe (Jacobsen 1987: 386, 387).

Nanshe revealed to him that his dream was a command by his tutelary god, Ningirsu, to construct the **E Ninnu** temple for him. The second goddess in his dream is of a woman who consults a lapis lazuli tablet. This woman, Nanshe revealed to him, was the goddess Nidaba, who was searching out the most auspicious time to begin building.

“[...] surely my sister Nidaba, she will have announced to you the holy star<sup>10</sup> above for building the house [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 394).

This very esoteric stuff was the purview of the gods that were being revealed to Gudea. The vision was Gudea’s authority to build the house. The goddess Nanshe also showed Gudea the most auspicious time to build the temple.

“[...] May with the laying of the foundation of my house, abundance come [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 402).

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<sup>10</sup> The star Nidaba announces is the heliacal rising of the star that marked the beginning of the month suitable for building. This was Aldebaran in Taurus in the months July/August (Jacobsen 1987: 394) being revealed to a human. This wisdom of the gods is expressed very early on in the *Cylinders of Gudea*.

The king built the house before filling it with abundance. The abundance which the house provided was best expressed with feasting. The culmination of the building of the **E Ninnu** is amply demonstrated by the feast held at the end to welcome the gods to their new home (Jacobsen 1987: 387). Commensality in the temple could only be possible if the temple had been properly filled with abundance. Renette said it best: “[...] The practice of feasting is ubiquitous in human societies throughout history and in the present day: commensality and the preoccupation with food and drink is a central part of human nature [...]” (Renette 2014: 62).

Divine wisdom became human wisdom. The king then proves his wisdom by mobilizing his entire city to build the temple. The building is done in tempo with the necessary cultic events to prepare and purify the ground. Once that has been done, he mixes the first brick and lays it (Jacobsen 386, 387, 393, 395, 404).

“[...] The ruler purified the city, and carried hither fire from it,

the ones sexually unclean, the horrors, the [...]

he expelled from the city [...]

Toward the brick-mould sheds

he had an (omen) kid lay down,

and the brick was revealed by the omen [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 404).

It was all done following the needs of the gods. The god Ningirsu needed a new house and relied upon the king to build and provision it for him. Once the shell of the house had been built Gudea had to fill with abundance.

“[...] From its honey-water (well) mouths offered blessings,

its food portions were the establishers of gatherings the gods,

brining in the cream, bringing in the milk,

from its cow barn,

and the great griddle cakes, great horns,

from its huge ovens,

and set for its knives,

that consume oxen, consume sheep [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 423).

The king in his wisdom had to provide the abundance to fill the temple in obedience to the wisdom of the gods. Only once that was done could the owner of the house move in.

“[...] The warrior Ningirsu entered the house, the owner of the house had come [...]”

(Jacobsen 1987: 429).

The king had proved his wisdom to all by completing the temple and filling it with what it needed to function. The abundance of the temple was the abundance of the land, the abundance of all. The ancients had a metaphorical conception of the cosmos where the structure of the temple was a microcosm of the macrocosm (Van Leeuwen 2007: 68; Van Leeuwen 2010: 399).

Knowledge of the divine world was simply assumed and rarely explicitly stated. Instead, they used metaphors as expressions of reality as Buccellati also notes. “[...] knowledge of the divine world is simply assumed as obvious, without transcendental revelation and without theological reasoning [...]” (Buccellati 1981: 37). Van Leeuwen notes that ancient Mesopotamians had a metaphorical concept of the cosmos as a house, in line with the ancient concept of the House of the fathers. The resident god or goddess was the head of the household (Van Leeuwen 2007: 68, 81; Van Leeuwen 2010: 400).

The metaphor of house building- and filling presupposed the whole of what it meant to have a house. Even part of the metaphor denoted the whole which included a reality far beyond the shell of a house. The building- and filling topos included the supporting structures of the

house such as agriculture, roads, towns, social structures, among others. The concept of House was a metaphoric domain that included the whole of the cosmos in it (Van Leeuwen 2007: 68, 73; Van Leeuwen 2010: 404).

In the most ancient building- and filling text of them all, the Kesh temple hymn, the topos holds. A few examples would suffice to illustrate the building-filling topos in the Kesh Temple Hymn. Enlil sits inside his temple at the beginning of the hymn, before going out to look at his domain. His domain reacts to the gaze of the god (Gragg 1969: 167).

6. “[...] The four corners of heaven became green for Enlil like an orchard [...]” (Gragg 1969: 167).

The “[...] four corners of heaven [...]” presupposes a structure that has corners. This is true of buildings. “[...] there is an easy symbolic interaction of house as dwelling place (**E.GAL** or big house) and as cosmic realm [...]” (Van Leeuwen 2010: 402). The four corners of heaven metaphorically symbolize the cosmos as a house (Van Leeuwen 2007: 67, 70; Van Leeuwen 2010: 399, 402). The concept of the cosmos as a house lies behind the language used in verse 6 of the Kesh Temple Hymn (Gragg 1969: 167).

Abundance follows the god Enlil’s fructifying gaze. The land became like an orchard for Enlil. It is among this abundance that Kesh eagerly lifts its head for Enlil in worship and receives praise. The Kesh temple can now be built as part of the cosmic domain of Enlil. It is a little house inside a large one, the micro-genre to the macro. This is the wisdom of Enlil that he bestows on Kesh. Van Leeuwen has pointed out that part of the metaphor supposes the whole of the building-and filling topos (Van Leeuwen 2007: 72, 73; Van Leeuwen 2010: 399).

One important aspect of the building- and filling topos was expressed in the control of the waters. Cosmologically the waters act as a fructifying agent to bring life to humans and gods. Such an important part of the cosmological order had to be carefully controlled. In Mesopotamia, this was the duty of the god of wisdom, Enki. He was the one who controlled the “[...] the bolt, the bar of the sea [...]” (Van Leeuwen 2007: 70;). The control of the waters ensured abundance to the fields thus filling the house with the produce of agriculture (Van Leeuwen 2007: 70; Van Leeuwen 2010: 401, 402).

In the human sphere corralling the waters was the duty of the kings. It was on their hydraulic abilities that the livelihood of the Sumerian city-states depended (Van Leeuwen 2007: 73). Its importance is wonderfully expressed in the introduction of the Cylinders of Gudea where we read:

“[...] Enlil’s heart was moved to overflow,

the heart was moved to overflow,

the towering flood wave,

with sparkle laden and awesome glory,

Enlil’s heart, the very river Tigris,

was moved to bring sweet waters [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 388).

Without water, there could be no life. The control of water rested in the hands of the gods and brought life to humans.

To manage waters and to build houses, both large and small, was practical wisdom (**phronesis**). Practical wisdom such as was needed to build and fill the house was part of how ancient sages such as Adapa were conceptualized. Practical wisdom empowered the sages, such as Adapa, to build civilization. Such practical wisdom was needed to build the Kesh Temple (Forster 1974: 345).

The completion of the building project in the Kesh temple hymn was announced triumphantly. At the heart of the verse lies the Sumerian verb **du**. It has been suggested that this word **du** might also be applied or understood as giving birth to casting or sculpting statues (Morris 1992: 29).

- **du** to build, erect, make, to plant, to apply, affix, make fast build onto, to detain, hold back, to dive in, insert (Foxvog 2010: 13)



The announcement that the Kesh temple is completed was built around this versatile word. Bottéro mentions that /**du**/ could mean ‘to go’, ‘to build’, and ‘to free’ among others (Bottéro 1987: 69). It is in the sense of ‘to build’ that the poet uses the word /**du**/, verse 118.

118. “[...] The temple is built. Its abundance is good [...]” (Gragg 1969: 174)

The Sumerian reads as follows: “[...] **é al-dù giri-zal-bi al-dù** [...] (my italics)” (Gragg 1969:174). The word /**du**/ are used here to indicate both the concept of a building as well as abundance. The importance of the word /**du**/ can be seen in a completely different genre, namely in Royal inscriptions. It is with this genre that the building and filling topos began as proverb-like verses (Van Leeuwen 2007: 74).

Kings proved their wisdom by building big houses. The kings expressed their practical wisdom in the previously mentioned verses. One of the forms such texts took was the brick inscriptions found in the foundations of structures built by kings. A lot of these inscriptions have been found that were built around the word /**du**/ (Hayes 1990: 31).

In the brick inscription of Ur-Nammu (2112 – 2095 BCE) we have the verb **mu-na-du** that parse as **mu na (n) du ø** with **mu** being the first-person singular pronoun acting as a ventative to indicate the agent Ur-Nammu (Hayes 1990: 31). He is the agent that built (**du**) the temple of the god Nammu. As we know he did more than merely build it, he also filled it. When Gudea built his house, he expressed the wish that it might be filled with abundance. Since he laid the foundation, it meant that the house would be filled as well. To build /**du**/, was also to fill since part supposed the whole (Van Leeuwen 2007: 68, 73; Van Leeuwen 2010: 404).

This interpretation is supported by a much later inscription of the Assyrian King, Esarhaddon’s mother Naqi a-Zakutu, who wrote: “[...] That house I built, I completed. With splendour I filled it [...]” (Van Leeuwen 2007: 71, Van Leeuwen 2010: 403). Her words beautifully echo the quote from Proverbs at the beginning of this chapter.

The Kesh temple hymns stand chronologically at the beginning of this process. It was one of the earliest forms of the wisdom literature where this topos occurs. It was certainly fully developed by the time of the Old Babylonian version, but traces of it can be found already in the archaic version translated by Biggs (2009), which means that it was a very ancient tradition (Biggs 2009: 200).

Line 14 of the Archaic version of the Kesh temple hymn reads: “[...] Kesh temple, foundation of the country, fierce ox of [...]” (Biggs 2009: 200). Once again, the part supposes the whole. The foundation of the temple includes the whole building, thus meaning that this is the first part of our topos, namely building. Unfortunately, the ancient version of the hymn is very broken making the analysis difficult. Line 22 reads “[...] good temple, built in a good place [...]” (Biggs 2009: 201) which utilizes the word /**du**/. Line 188 also utilizes the word /**du**/ with the Sumerian reading: “**é al-dù giri (KA) –zal bi al-du<sub>10</sub>** [...]” (Biggs 2009: 203).

- **Du<sub>10</sub>** to be good, pleasing, enjoyable, sweet, to enjoy, relish (Foxvog 2010: 12)

It is immediately apparent that the Old Babylonian version used **dù** instead of **du<sub>10</sub>**, however, the meaning is similar. Biggs translates the verse as “[...] the temple has been built; it has been built with rejoicing [...]” (2009: 203). The archaic words bring a sense of fulfilment, rejoicing and feasting to mind. One other line deserves consideration. Line 36 reads: “[...] whose foundation (**temen**) fills the **abzu** [...]” (Biggs 2009: 201).

The temple was laid down in the fructifying waters of the underworld, thus bringing the life of sweet waters to the temple. You cannot speak of the Abzu without thinking about the god of the sweet waters, Enki, and his well-developed link with fertility (Van Leeuwen 2007: 69; Van Leeuwen 2010: 401, 402). This is also true of the goddess of the temple, Nintu, who as birth goddess embodied fertility in her person (Jacobsen 1987: 382).

The building- and filling topos was an ancient metaphor that included the idea of construction and providing the house with all it needed to function. The concept of building and filling in the ancient world is best expressed as practical wisdom or **phronesis**. The ancient concept of building and filling presupposed that permission and a divine plan had been granted (Van Leeuwen 2007: 74). Once the ancient people built a house, they also

ensured that it had the means to survive. This meant that the house needed food, water, people, and. The building- and filling topos presuppose the whole of what the ancients understood under the rubric house. A house was far more than just a mere building. In the mind of the ancient Mesopotamians, a house was a living entity (Van Leeuwen 2007: 68, 73; Van Leeuwen 2010: 404).

## 10.4 CONCLUSION

The house building-and filling topos presupposed divine plans and permission before the soil was turned. The completed house was a self-supporting entity with provision for food, water, shelter, and servants as well as the necessary luxuries. Building such houses was done by kings to showcase their practical wisdom and reverence for the gods. The building-and filling topos is similar to the Greek term **phronesis** and should be understood as practical wisdom. The gods needed to approve plans to build the temple. They typically did this by providing the builder with a divine plan according to which the temple must be built, often through a dream or a vision. The king could then start the building project.

Building temples took practical skills as well as a fine knowledge of the cult. The king needed to know when, how and why he had to build a temple. If the king misunderstood the gods' disaster could result. Knowing how to approach the gods took cultic wisdom. Building their temples took practical wisdom. Thus, the king showcased his magnificence and wisdom in a very practical sense.

# CHAPTER 11

## INTRODUCTION TO THE KESH TEMPLE HYMN

### 11.1 ABSTRACT

*The Kesh Temple hymns form part of a very ancient corpus of literature discovered during the Fara Period c. 2500 BC. It dates to the beginning of literature. The text survived into the Old Babylonian Period where it was used as a school text. In the general introduction, I discussed the origin of the hymn. The sources of the composite document are mentioned. Four translations used for the research are briefly discussed. I conclude with a brief look at the differences between the archaic and Old Babylonian Kesh Temple Hymn.*

### 11.2 THE SOURCES OF THE KESH TEMPLE HYMN

The location of Kesh remains unknown. It is known that it was close to Adab. Gragg (1969) mentions several inscriptions that speak of Kesh other than the temple hymns which we already considered in some detail. Kesh is mentioned from an early period already.

- Kesh is mentioned in proto-literate sealing's found at Ur
- Mentioned in texts from Fara (c.2500 BCE)
- Text AbST 66 from Tell Abū Salābīkh (c.2500 BCE) mentions the city ŠÚ.AN<sup>ki</sup> which he suggests may be Kesh
- It is mentioned on Ennatum's stele of Vultures
- Proper names like 'lugal-kèš<sup>ki</sup>' contain Kesh as part of the name during the Early Dynastic period
- During the Akkadian period, Kesh is only mentioned as part of the names
- Kesh is mentioned in the Cylinders of Gudea A XXVII – "[...] The temple whose...purifies kèš and Aratta [...]"
- A votive inscription by Ur III king Ur- Nammu "[...] For his lady Ninḫursag (Ur-Nammu) built her beloved kèš [...]"

- An economic text from the sixth year of Amar-Suen “[...] Two silver rings, ten gin apiece, for Ninḫursag the lady of kèš [...]”
- during the Old Babylonian period, it is mostly mentioned in literary compositions
- Codex Hammurabi III 30 – 32 have “[...] Who establishes the outlines of kèš [...]”
- The Kesh temple hymn (Gragg 1969: 160, 161)

The antiquity of the sanctuary at Kesh can easily be determined from this list. We find mention of the Kesh temple from the proto-literate period until the Old Babylonian period. Gragg (1969) does not mention the Kesh temple after the Old Babylonian period. For this study, we will stop at the Old Babylonian period since the Kesh hymn is not attested after this time. Gragg also mentions that the shrine at Kesh seemed abandoned after the time of Hammurabi in favour of Adab (Gragg 1969: 164).

The Kesh temple hymn contains a **zà-mí** or praise song sung in honour of the Kesh temple and its goddess Ninḫursag in its incipit and conclusion. This hymn is old, dating to the Fara (c. 2500 BCE) period. Tablets found at Fara and Tell Abū Salābīkh, which included the Kesh Temple Hymn, represent an early stage in the evolution of cuneiform (Bottéro 1987: 70). This archaic Kesh Temple Hymn was translated by Biggs (2009). The Old Babylonian version of the hymn is attested by thirty-six copies the most of which come from Nippur. Three copies of the hymn were found at Ur while one came from Susa. Seven copies or fragments are of uncertain provenance (Gragg 1969: 157).

Gragg (1969) goes on to discuss the variants of the Kesh temple hymn tradition. The best text, called A, is in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore. This was written onto a prism translated by Langdon (1923). Langdon (1913) also translated another text of the hymn. This one is called the Ashmolean Prism called B. Other texts have been translated by the following scholars:

- Langdon (1914) - text C
- Langdon (1917) - text F
- Radau (1909) - text E
- Poebel (1914) - text R

- Barton (1918) - text I
- Chiera (1924) - text S
- Chiera (1929) - text JJ
- Chiera (1934) – GH
- Scheil (1929) – Q
- Genouillac (1930) - text D
- Gadd (1963) – texts VWX (Gragg 1969: 157)

There remain several untranslated texts. Nine remain in the Philadelphia Museum while the Nippur excavation of (1951 – 1952) excavated seven new tablets. Four unpublished texts are to be found in the Yale collection. One of these, text FF, not only contains the whole composition, but it is in a better state of preservation than text B (Gragg 1969: 157).

As regards to the tradition of the texts Gragg (1969) informs us that A seems to be a different tradition than the texts following B. He goes on to say that where A differs from B the Ur texts follow B. This is also true of most of the texts from Nippur. One tablet, D, contains variants that Gragg (1969) suggests is the result of a scribe either lacking expertise or because of geographical location did not know or follow the tradition. The Yale texts (GGHHII) follow the Nippur text. FF on the other hand has several unique traits and may be more recent (Gragg 1969: 157, 158).



Figure 8: The Kesh Temple Hymn

The picture above is a text of the Kesh temple hymn that is being kept in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore. The three complete texts, A, B and FF, have several similarities. Each text consists of eight numbered strophes which all end in a three-line refrain. The refrain goes as follows (Gragg 1969: 168 - 176).

“[...] One great as its hero Keš– has any man been (this) worthy?

One great as its hero Aššir – had any mother ever borne him?

One great as its lady Nintu – who has ever seen him [...]” (Gragg 1969: 168)

This verse is followed by a numbered line “**é 1 kam-ma**” or whatever the number that strophe is (Gragg 1969: 168).

Modern translations of the composite Kesh hymn text include some of the following:

- Gragg (1969)
- Jacobsen (1987)
- Electronic Text Corpus of the Sumerian Language (ETCSL 1998 – 2006)
- Wilcke (2006)

I chose the text by Gragg (1969) as the basic text since he includes the Sumerian as well as a commentary. It will be filled in with help from Jacobsen (1987) and the ETCSL (1998 – 2006) as well as Wilcke (2006).

### 11.3 THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ARCHAIC AND OLD BABYLONIAN KESH HYMN

According to Jeremy Black, Sumerian poetry should be the oldest readable poetry in the world (Black 2006: iix). The Kesh temple hymn had an aural in character with its use in the cult as performance poetry. The poetry served to anchor the present in the past (Vogelzang & Vanstiphout 1992: 9). Its aural and poetic character is indicated by such stylistic devices as parallelism, repetition, similes, metaphor and metonymy (Alster 1996: 1; Russo 1992: 49; Black 1992: 23; Ehrlich 2009: 20 - 22). The hymn would have been recited at special

occasions such as the inauguration of a cult statue; the New Year's festival or even before the river ordeal (Alster 1992: 24, 38; Vogelzang & Vanstiphout 1992: 38).

Grasping the hymn's metaphors would be essential to understand the description of the temple. Understanding the metaphors enables the scholar to come to grips with the rituals performed in the temple. The important rituals for the study of the Kesh Temple Hymn would be the construction and consecration rituals. Thus, the incipit is crucial for understanding the initiation of the temple building process. House seven depicts the consecration of the temple (Averbeck 1987: 123).

During the Old Babylonian period, the Kesh temple hymn was a part of the so-called Decad which comprised ten compositions that were used for didactic purposes in scribal schools (Delnero 2012: 11; Tinney 1999: 159). The schools, called Eduba, dated to the Old Babylonian period (Lieberman 1975: 159). The Old Babylonian version had its antecedent in the ED IIIa period. It was found at Tell Abū Salābīkh dating to the Fara period. This document already has the characteristic that we also find in the Old Babylonian version. The text is divided into different houses that are divided by a two-line refrain (Delnero 2012: 13, 98).

"[...] One as great as its hero Ašgi-has any mother ever borne such a one [...]" line 55 in (Biggs 2009: 202).

The Archaic Kesh temple hymn seems in the words of Alster "[...] to describe the temple in terms of a huge mountain, higher than others and reaching from the subterranean ocean to the top of the sky, but seemingly also as a replica of the starry sphere, its 'traits' (**mùš**) being said to be suspended in the midst of the sky [...]" (Alster 1976:112). It gives an early illustration of one of the essential characteristics of many of the Sumerian Temple hymns, namely that the temple is said to have cosmic dimensions. I already touched upon the cosmic dimensions of the temple but will continue the investigation of this topos later.

The archaic Kesh temple hymn can be classed as a temple hymn along with other temple hymns that were discovered at Tell Abū Salābīkh. These hymns stand in the same tradition as the later Collection of Sumerian temple hymns. Despite being contemporary with the



Kesh temple hymn, they did not survive into the Old Babylonian period although their existence might have inspired the compilation of Enheduanna (Biggs 1974:45). There are some differences between the two versions.

Line seven read as follows in the archaic version:

“[...] **keš ki sag-il mu-na-ni-in-gal** [...]” Old Babylonian

“[...] *keš men-gim/ sag mu-gal* [...]” Archaic Version (my italics)

“[...] He wore Kesh like a crown on his head [...]” is written in the archaic version (Biggs 2009: 200).

The first line of the Sumerian text comes from the Old Babylonian version and is translated as “Keš lifted its head for him” line 7 (Gragg 1969:167). The ETCSL (1998 – 2006) reads “[...] Keš was positioned there for him with head uplifted [...]” (ETCSL translation 1998 – 2006: t. 4.80.2). Jacobsen has “[...] Kesh was there raising the head unto him [...]” (Jacobsen 1987:378), and finally we have Wilcke (2006) who reads as “[...] *Keš bot ihm dort das gekrönte Haupt dar* ([AbS: +], ein Gebirge, einen wohlgefälligen, zu betonen den [...])” (Wilcke 2006:221).

The other difference was found in line 107 that Biggs interpreted to read:

“[...] **é lugal/ kiš-ki/ bur an-ma-gub** [...]”

“[...] In the temple the king (archaic version: the king of Kish) put a stone bowl in place [...]” (Biggs 2009: 202).

Gragg interpreted this line as the “[...] the lugalburra-priest stepped up to the temple [...]”

(Gragg 1969:174) while the ETCSL translated this as: “[...] In the house the king places stone bowls in position [...]” (ETCSL translation 1998 – 2006: t. 4.80.2.). This translation is confirmed by Wilcke (2006) who has: “[...] Haus trat der König (von Kish “) zu den Prunkgefäßen [...]” line 107 (2006:227). Jacobsen has “[...] the kings bring stone jars [...]” (1987:384). The name of the King, who placed the bowl in the Kesh temple as the king of Kish, was dropped out during the Old Babylonian Period. Essentially the text remained

unchanged for a period of about eight hundred years (ca. 2 500 – 1 800 BCE) with small differences.

## 11.4 THE OLD BABYLONIAN VERSION

The Old Babylonian version begins with the praise song sung by Enlil. This praise consists of lines 13-124 (Biggs 2009: 197). It concludes with the invitation to enter the temple in lines 118-132 and to worship the lady of the temple. The hymn is divided into eight sections or houses that are divided by a refrain as I have already indicated (Gragg 1969: 158, 159).

Each section or one of the eight houses describes a different aspect of the temple. The first house “[...] **é 1 kam-ma** [...]” begins the introduction of Kesh by the chief god Enlil and is the start of the praise song. The second house describes the cosmic dimensions of the temple while the third house continues in the same vein with different metaphors. The fourth house describes the inside of the temple and its complexity while the fifth section deals with the gods who live there (Gragg 1969:158,159).

The sixth house deals with the different parts of the temple like its cella while part seven is singing about the cult personnel. It concludes with an invitation to approach the temple in the last section (Gragg 1969:158,159). This is the final form of the Hymn as we have it from the Old Babylonian period.

The hymn consists of 132 lines in Gragg’s (1969) composition while the ETCSL (1998 – 2006) has 134 lines. The text from Gragg (Gragg 1969: 176) also includes an extra section with 14 lines. This extra section sings of the glory of the great gods and mentions me, or control functions of the temple. I will combine lines from the ETCSL (1998 – 2006) with Gragg only in the case of this extra section to complete the full 18 lines.

## 11.5 CONCLUSION

The translation by Gragg (1969) is suited as the basic text for the research. While Wilcke (2006) and the ETCSL (1998 – 2006) include the Sumerian Gragg’s translation comes complete with a commentary. This could prove useful in the case of difficult texts that need to be clarified.



# CHAPTER 12

## THE INCIPIT OF THE KESH TEMPLE HYMN

### 12.1 ABSTRACT

*Enlil is the one who permits the building of the Kesh Temple. As such he is the focus of the temple. This praise song is the heavenly template of the temple recorded and sealed by the scribe goddess Nisaba. Writing the Hymn down makes it official. It is the unalterable word of Enlil.*

### 12.2 THE INCIPIT

1. **“Ege-nun-e <sup>[nám-nun-e]</sup> nám-nun-e é-ta nam-ta-ab-è”**

1. “[...] The exalted prince, the exalted prince, came out of the temple [...]”

2.” **“En-líl ege-nun-e <sup>[nám-nun-e]</sup> é-ta nam-ta-ab-è”**

2. “[...] Enlil, the exalted prince, came out of the temple [...]” (Gragg 1969: 167)

Religion is described as ‘collective’ behaviour which has social and political implications (Bottéro 1987: 202, 203). This made the Mesopotamian temple the center of the human world (Øiseth 2007: 69). Ancient Mesopotamians saw the temple as the necessary source of everything needed for life and existence. It served the community in providing quality of life and was the source of its wellbeing (Averbeck 1987: 132; Bottéro 1987: 212; Hundley 2013: 3, 8). The hymn uses a system of symbols that is true of all religions (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2009: 25).

The hymn places us in the world of the gods. At the heart of the temple was the cult statue which upon occasion would leave the temple (Horowitz 2004: 46; Bottéro 1987: 225). The exalted prince came out of his temple. Line 2 informs us that this exalted prince is the god Enlil, the king of the gods. Enlil is important in Sumerian theology. He is the king of the gods

(Wilcke 2006: 202; Wang 2011: 96; Bottéro 1987: 234). Gragg (1969) used the word **ege-nun** that other scholars render as **nam<sub>2</sub>**. The word **nam<sub>2</sub>** should be understood as ‘lord’ (Wang 2011: 95).

The temple that Enlil came out of was his temple – the **Ekur** or Mountain House. This temple was the bond of heaven and earth (Amar 2002: 157). It should be understood as reflecting the mythological outlook of an early period (Wang 2011: 94). The lord that came out of the temple did so for a purpose. Enlil had a clear goal in mind when he left his temple. His purpose would come to fruition when the Kesh Temple Hymn is sung. The song that Enlil sings would bring the Kesh Temple Hymn into existence.

### 3. “Ege-nun-e <sup>[nám-nun-e]</sup> **nam-lugal-la é-ta nam-ta-ab-è**”

3. “[...] The exalted prince came out of the temple in kingship [...]” (Gragg 1969: 167)

The princely lord that came out of the house is identified as a king (**lugal**). The phrase ‘**nam-lugal-la**’ in this verse deserves more comment. In this case, the adjective ‘**nam**’ should be understood as giving the meaning kingship to the noun **Lugal**. The phrase ‘**nam-lugal-la**’ can be diagrammed as **nam.lugal.a (k)** which would be a genitive formation. It can also be diagrammed as **nam.lugal.a** which would turn this phrase into a locative construction (Wang 2011: 95). Wilcke is of the opinion that one should understand this construction as a genitive (Wilcke 2006: 203).

The ETCSL renders this verse as a locative with the meaning ‘in kingship’. “[...] The princely lord came forth royally from the house [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 – 2006). In this rendering the locative /a/ would translate **nam.lugal.a** as in kingship, thus the rendering of the ETCSL as coming forth royally from the house. Jacobsen goes in his own direction. He renders this verse as: “[...] decided to bring the princely offices and kingship out from the house [...]” (1987: 378). Gragg (1969) also understood this phrase as a locative as we can see from his rendering. Wilcke translated this as: “[...] Die Fürstlichkeit führte ihn für das Königtum aus dem Haus heraus [...]” (Wilcke 2006: 220).

Most of the translations understand this verse as the locative ‘in kingship’. The phrase ‘in kingship’ is an expression of the character of Enlil as the king of the gods. He comes forth from the Ekur temple in the power of his kingship. Enlil is exercising his kingship when he comes out of his temple. This means that what follows in the Kesh Hymn is Enlil exercising his power as king of the gods. Enlil came out of his temple to exercise his kingship. The next six lines detail Enlil’s exercise in kingship. The first thing Enlil does is to direct his gaze upon the land. The word the poet chose to use is illuminating (Gragg 1969: 167).

#### 4. “En-líl-le kur-kur-ra igi mi-ni-ib-il-il-l”

4. “[...] Enlil directed his gaze upon all the land [...]” (Gragg 1969: 167)

The poet chose to use one of the epithets of Enlil, ‘**kur-kur-ra**’ instead of the normal **kalam** which one would expect. There is a distinction here between the homeland /**kalam**/ and the eastern mountains /**kur**/ (Michalowski 2010: 148). The word **kur-kur-ra** can be understood as a reference to all the temples in the land<sup>11</sup>. Øiseth agrees that the use of the word **kur** can be understood as a metaphor for the temple. The word **hur-sag** was used in similar fashion to **kur** as a metaphor for temples (Øiseth 2007: 77, 79). The poet chose this word to emphasize the connection Enlil has with the mountains which could be understood as a metaphorical reference to temples under his rule. Enlil’s connection with mountains is very well known. One of Enlil’s epithets is **kur-gal** or Great Mountain (Wang 2011: 134; Øiseth 2007: 82).

Enlil's temple is called a Great Mountain. This is also found in the Cylinders of Gudea where the **Eninnu** temple is described in similar fashion (Øiseth 2007: 77). Thus **kur-kur-ra** could be understood as a survey of all the temples in his domain. He is not just the king of the land of Sumer, but also the ruler of all the temples. Wilcke understands this verse to mean that we are at the mythological beginning of the universe (Wilcke 2006: 203).

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<sup>11</sup> Personal communication to me by Dr. Willem McLoud

5. **“En-líl-ra kur ní-ba mu-na-íl-íl-l’”**

5. “[...] To Enlil the land lifted itself [...]” (Gragg 1969: 167)

Enlil’s gaze draws an immediate response. The land /**kur**/ lifts itself to him. Since the word **kur** means mountains, one should understand this verse as ‘the mountain lifted itself.’ The next verse expounds upon this thought. The mountain that lifted itself to Enlil was the totality of the cosmos.

6. **“An-ub-da limmu dEn-líl-ra kiri<sub>6</sub>-gim mu-na-sig<sub>7</sub>”**

6. “[...] The four corners of heaven became green for Enlil like an orchard [...]”

(Gragg 1969:167)

The first part of this verse /**an-ub-da limmu**/ is a specific epithet. It came into use during the Akkadian period where it was used to describe the kings of that Empire (Michalowski 2010: 153). This concept of /**an-ub-da limmu**/ was of Akkadian formulation but the concept is far older than the Akkadian period. It can be seen by the temples that were coordinated to the cardinal directions from the earliest periods of prehistory (Lundquist 1983: 4). This phrase translates as the ‘four corners of heaven’ that became green for Enlil like an orchard. This phrase makes Enlil the ruler of the universe, the king of all. His gaze lifted all the lands towards him while making it green like an orchard at the same time.

7. **“Kèš<sup>ki</sup> sa men mu-na-ni-ib-ál’”**

7. “[...] Keš lifted its head for him [...]” (Gragg 1969: 167)

Kesh responds to Enlil’s gaze by lifting its head. This gesture indicates that Kesh offered its services (Jacobsen 1987: 378). Kesh does the same as all the other mountains by lifting itself at Enlil’s gaze. The Kesh temple is an Axis Mundi, a mountain that links heaven and earth (Michalowski 2010: 158; Amar 2002: 10, 10; Øiseth 2007: 69). By lifting its head Kesh moves vertically up into heavens thereby linking earth and heaven. Enlil sees this action on the part of Kesh and the king of the gods responds favourably (Gragg 1969: 167).

8. “**Kèš<sup>ki</sup> kur-kur-ra sa íl-bi**”

8. “[...] When Keš lifted its head for him [...]”

9.” **En-líl-le Kèš<sup>ki</sup>-a zà-mí àm-ma-ab-bé**”

9. “[...] Enlil spoke the praises of Keš[...]” (Gragg 1969: 167)

The Kesh Temple lifted its head among all the mountains. Enlil saw the willingness of the Kesh Temple and responded in kind. Enlil spoke a **zà-mí** or praise song about the Kesh Temple.

- **zà-mí/me**      praise (an OB hymn type, a hymn of praise) (Foxvog 2010: 62)

The term **zà-mí** is characteristic of the Kesh Temple hymn, as well as the Sumerian Temple Hymns. Early hymns from Tell Abū Salābīkh include the so-called **zà-mí** hymns. The term **zà-mí** is not a designation of the genre (Wang 2011: 98; Wilcke 2006: 204). The **zà-mí** is a praise song that Enlil sings for the Kesh Temple in response to the temple lifting its head. Enlil’s praise song is his permission for the building of the Kesh Temple. Enlil’s **zà-mí** creates the blueprint of the temple; provides the divine plan for the temple (Gragg 1969: 167).

10. “**Nisaba nu-ka dili-bi-im**”

10. “[...] Nisaba was its princely arbiter [...]”

11. “**Inim-bi-ta sa-gim im-da-an-sur**”

11. “[...] With its words she wove it intricately like a net [...]”

12. “**Dub-ba šar-šar šu-šè al-ğá-ğá**”



12. “[...] Written on tablets it was held in her hands [...]” (Gragg 1969: 167)

Nisaba/Nidaba was the scribe goddess of the ancient Sumerian Pantheon<sup>12</sup>. She wrote down the **zà-mí** that Enlil sang for the Kesh Temple. Wilcke calls this an oral literary production (Wilcke 2006: 205). He means that the Kesh Temple Hymn was meant to be sung, but writing it down legitimizes it as literature as well. Jacobsen notes that Nisaba is pictured with a tablet on her knee in the *Cylinders of Gudea* (the longest Temple Hymn), where she consults the stars suitable for building the **Eninnu** Temple (Jacobsen 1987: 394).

Once Enlil sang his praise song Nisaba was the one who formally wrote it down. This is an official act. The divine plan of the temple has been provided by the gods. Humans can now proceed to build the temple. The importance of the divine plan cannot be overstated for the building of holy places like temples. In the *Cylinders of Gudea*, the king receives the vision of the temple from his god Ningirsu. The king (Gudea) undergoes several cultic acts to make sure he heard the god correctly before the temple is built (Jacobsen 1987: 388 – 403).

The Kesh Temple will now be built by the command of the king of the gods Enlil. He spoke the praise song and thus commanded the building of the Kesh Temple. Nisaba wrote down Enlil’s words, making the building of the temple official. Kesh Temple will be built!

## 12.3 ANALYSIS OF THE INCIPIT

### 12.3.1 BUILDING

#### 12.3.1.1 Structure

The incipit is the introduction to the world of the gods that begins inside the Ekur temple of the god Enlil. Enlil leaves the temple in the first two lines of the hymn. Enlil’s purpose is cultic. He plans to build another temple.

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<sup>12</sup> Nidaba/Nisaba was the goddess of writing, numbers, wisdom, learning as well as of grasses and reeds (Øiseth 2007: 33)

### 12.3.1.2 Cult

The opening lines of the hymn place it in mythic space. The king of the gods Enlil is inside his temple before leaving it. What follows is also part of the world of the gods. The mountains lift themselves to the god. In a certain sense, time goes back to the beginning of creation with these words (Wilcke 2006: 202).

### 12.3.1.3 Status

The incipit begins with the person with the highest status in the Sumerian pantheon. Only the father of the gods, An, ranks above Enlil. Nisaba, the scribe goddess, is also mentioned. She is below Enlil in rank but is a goddess with the important function of writing down the praise song sung by Enlil.

## 12.3.2 FILLING

### 12.3.2.1 Agriculture

The four corners of heaven became green like an orchard. The whole of the universe is a garden. Enlil creates a paradise for the Kesh Temple. Fortunately, this paradise does not contain a serpent.

### 12.3.2.2 Sacrifice

The incipit does not mention sacrifice.

### 12.3.2.3 Commensality

Feasting is not mentioned in the incipit.

## 12.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 12.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

The incipit mentioned the four corners of heaven. These are cosmic dimensions. The use of the word lift in verses 5, 7 and 8 indicate verticality. The Sumerian temples were also the local Axis Mundi (Michalowski 2010: 158).

### 12.3.3.2 Cosmic relationship

The king of the gods Enlil enters a relationship with the Kesh Temple. He acknowledges the Kesh Temple's willingness to serve by singing a praise song. This praise song is formally written down by the scribe goddess Nisaba, thus making the relationship between Enlil and the Kesh Temple official.

### 12.3.3.3 Seat of power

The Kesh temple is not a seat of power for either of the gods mentioned in the incipit.

## 12.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain      the house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	Ekur is left by Enlil, genesis of creation, king of the gods acts
<b>Filling</b>	Paradise, no sacrifice, no feasting
<b>Existence</b>	Four corners of heaven, Enlil's praise song for Kesh, not the seat of Enlil or Nisaba

### 12.4.1 Conclusion

Everything begins when the king of the gods Enlil leaves his temple. As he gazes over his domain the universe responds to him with Kesh lifting its head in willingness to serve. This

willingness moves Enlil into singing a praise song. The praise song is the description of the temple Kesh and is the divine plan for building the temple. The goddess of writing, Nisaba, writes the praise song down on a tablet making it official.

The Kesh temple may now be built according to the divine plan. In Sumerian thought, this was an act of creation situated in mythic time. The temple that would be built is a cosmic entity that would be a local Axis Mundi or bond between heaven and earth. The goddess of the temple would serve creation through her control function (**me**) of birth-giving (Bottéro 1987: 237). This was a cosmic duty that included the totality of the cosmos. Without her me of birth-giving, nothing would be born in the human or divine realms.

The four corners of heaven are a theme of importance. The four corners pointed at the cardinal directions as a cosmic concept. The four corners were part of the Axis Mundi or the link between heaven and earth. The temple spanned between all four cardinal directions thus metaphorically filling the universe. The temple was a paradise, an entity that was not part of the normal world. It was part of the otherworldly nature of the denizens of the temple namely the gods.

# CHAPTER 13

## THE FIRST HOUSE

### 13.1 ABSTRACT

*The first house is the first strophe of the Kesh Temple Hymn. In the incipit, Enlil introduces the Kesh Temple to the listener. In the first house, Enlil invokes a geographical description. The Kesh Temple faces the northern land of Aratta. The temple is a strong ox and a mountain that embraces the sky. Kesh temple lifts the head proudly. Its feet remain anchored firmly in the underground fresh-water ocean, the abzu. Kesh is a fertile mountain that is green with vegetation.*

### 13.2 THE DISCUSSION OF THE FIRST HOUSE

Wilcke notes that the first house opens the description of the temple of Kesh with a mountain metaphor (Wilcke 2006: 214). The image of the mountain is placed in juxtaposition with the Abzu or underground sweet water lake. Metaphorically the mountain is an image used to describe the temple as something with cosmic dimensions (Amar 2002: 10; Øiseth 2007: 69, 77, 81, 82). In the words of Lundquist: “[...] The temple is the architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain<sup>13</sup> [...]” (Lundquist 1983: 1). In the description of the first house the temple is rooted in the Abzu, which was a cosmic region (Horowitz 1998: 16; Lambert 1980: 58) and (Øiseth 2007: 69, 70) . First house opens with two lines which use the word foundation to convey a sense of rootedness.

#### 13. “É múš-kalam-ma gu<sub>4</sub>-huš-aratta”

13.” [...] House, foundation of the country, fierce ox of Aratta [...]”

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<sup>13</sup> The temple as a cosmic mountain is a controversial subject discussed at length by (Øiseth 2007: 82) with the conclusion that the idea of a cosmic mountain or ‘Weltberg’ fits in with the Sumerian worldview although it cannot be conclusively proven.

14. “É kèš<sup>ki</sup> múš-kalam-ma gu<sub>4</sub>-ḥuš-aratta”

14. “[...] Kesh temple, foundation of the country, fierce ox of Aratta [...]” (Gragg 1969: 167, 168)

These two lines are a classic example of syntactic parallelism at work (Michalowski 1976: 15). The wordplay is the house and temple. Sumerian poetry is also known for its uses of stylistic devices such as puns (Black 1992: 24; Klein & Sefati 2000: 26). The poet’s composition is a temple hymn with the focus on the structure of the temple.

Thus, he introduces the audience to the temple in line 13. The poet wishes to inform his readers that his work is a description of a house. It is not a simple house but a temple. It is not any temple but the Kesh Temple. Thus, he states in line 14 “[...] Kesh temple [...]” This temple is the foundation of the country, the fierce ox of Aratta (Gragg 1969: 167).

We will consider the term **múš-kalam-ma** next. Gragg (1969) renders it as a foundation of the country in verses 13 and 14. One of the most well-known Sumerian words for foundation is **temen** (Dunham 1986: 31). Gragg chose to use the term **múš-kalam-ma** instead (Gragg 1969: 167). Let us look at the way in which other scholars render the words **múš-kalam-ma**.

“[...] doorpost of the country [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 379)”

“[...] platform of the Land [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 – 2006)

“[...] foundation of the country [...]” (Gragg 1969: 168)

“[...] Sternenglanz des Landes [...]” (Wilcke 2006: 221)

This is a bit confusing. Which of the three options should I believe? Is it a doorpost, a platform or a foundation or sternenglanz? It is time to attempt my own translation.

- **kalam** country, nation (normally referring to Sumer,

see Jacobsen, AfO 26, 9) (Foxvog 2010: 30)

- **mùš, múš** countenance, appearance, aspect; halo, aura.

(a kind of crown) (Foxvog 2010: 38)

- **muš<sub>2,3</sub>**: n., face, appearance, aspect; diadem, a city's irrigated, cultivated territory; surface (mu10, 'female', + áš, 'to desire') [MUŠ3 archaic frequency: 284; concatenates 2 sign variants] (Halloran 1996-2000: 47)

When one combines **kalam** with **múš**, one gets the sense of a crown of the country of Sumer. The temple is the crown of the land, or more likely the poet had the temple platform in mind. This platform supported the temple and served as its foundation. In that case, I can agree with both Gragg (1969) and the ETCSL (1998 – 2006) way of rendering the text. Since Jacobsen did not include the Sumerian in his translation, I do not know why he rendered this verse as "[...] doorpost of the country [...]" (Jacobsen 1987: 379).

It would help to look at how other poets used the word **mùš, múš**. It would allow one to get a sense of the meaning. Since we are dealing with a temple hymn, other temple hymns form good comparative material.

"[...] **gar-sag-galam** [...]" (Langdon 1923: 1969)

The translation of this verse is 'Mountain of the Land.' It was taken from the article by Langdon (1923), '*Two Sumerian Hymns from Eridu and Nippur*' published in The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures. In this article, he published this hymn to Enki's temple and another one in honour of Enlil. This serves to provide one with a sense of how the ancient poets used the construction under discussion (Langdon 1923: 174).

"[...] **sib-da-ri kalam-ma** [...]" (Langdon 1923: 174)

In his article, Langdon renders a translation of Enlil as the 'shepherd of the land.' This comes from Langdon's second hymn in his 1923 publication. This hymn is in honour of Enlil

composed by a king he translates as Dungi now known to be Shulgi. We continue this discussion with the help of the Sumerian temple hymns.

"[...] **giš-kéš-da-kalam-ma** [...]" (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 44)

This line in Temple Hymns (TH 36: 457) (dam of the land) shows the now-familiar construction of [.....] **kalam-ma**. The poet used the noun in combination with another word that is like an adjective that modifies a noun. By doing this, he forms a descriptive clause that functions as a simile. Such similes in ancient Sumerian made use of images derived from nature, animals and human culture (Kramer 1969: 2).

One of our verses describes Enlil as the 'shepherd of the land.' All the verses that have been discussed thus far make use of this construction. In the Sumerian Temple Hymns, we find several examples of how the ancient poets used **mùš**, **múš** in similar constructions. The Sumerian Temple Hymns provide another source for the study of the construction under discussion. One should bear it in mind that the Kesh temple hymn and the Sumerian temple hymns stood in a tradition that goes back to the earliest literary forms found at Tell Abu Salābīkh during the Fara period c. 2500 BCE (Black 1992: 24).

"[...] **gi-gù-na-zu mùš-za-gìn** [...]" (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 22)

This verse from Temple Hymn (TH 7: 95) translates as "[...] your **giguna** is a **mùš**-crown (lustrous) like lapis lazuli [...]" (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 22). This verse comes from the short Sumerian temple hymn that describes the same house as the Kesh temple hymns does – the sanctuary of Ninḫursag/Nintu at Kesh. It also proves an important clue on how we should understand our verse. The **giguna** was the temple tower that this verse describes as a crown. The following verse comes from TH 29: 366 (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 38).

"[...] **mùš-zu** [...]" (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 38)

We find this word in TH 29: 366 which the translator left untranslated. The ETCSL translates this line as "[...]An has (.....) your platform [...]" (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.1: 1998 – 2006).



Sjöberg & Bergman opted to translate it with the rendering of a platform. A similar construction is found in TH 39:497 (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 46).

"[...] **mùš-za** [...]" (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 46)

The translation for TH 39: 497 reads: "[...] to your (.....)the crown brings joy [...]" while the ETCSL has "[...] May the crown bring joy to your platform [...]" (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.1: 1998 – 2006). This is not the only use of the word **mùš** in hymn TH 39.

"[...] **lugal ù-tu mùš-zi** [...]" (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 46)

TH 39: 503 reads "[...] the (new) born king, she binds the mùš (around his head) [...]" In this same hymn the poetess uses the normal Sumerian word for foundation which is **temen** (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 46).

"[...] **temen-kù-zu** [...]" (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 46)

TH 39: 499 translates as "[...] your holy foundations you have made shining [...]" This verse concludes the survey. It is time to collate the information we have gathered. Our phrase is **mùš-kalam-ma**. Since the poet did not use the word **temen**, I believe that we can discount Gragg's (1969) rendering of "[...] foundations of the country [...]" (Gragg 1969: 167).

That leaves us with the other options of a doorpost, platform, and sternenglanz. In none of these verses did any of the poets use **mùš** in the sense of doorpost. They used it in connection with the **giguna** of the temple platform. To refresh our memory, we read once more: "[...] **gi-gù-na-zu mùš-za-gìn** [...]" (your giguna (platform) is a **mùš**-crown (lustrous) like lapis lazuli) (Gragg 1969: 167) . In this verse, the poetess compares the platform of the Kesh temple with a **mùš** crown. Most of the other verses discussed utilize **mùš** in the same fashion and understand it like a crown.

**Mùš** should be understood as a crown. I render **mùš-kalam-ma** as:

- The crown of the land

Crown refers metaphorically to the temple platform or the **giguna** (Jacobsen 1987: 383). The platform is the crown of the temple, the crown of the land. Since the crown sat on the head, the temple was the head of the land. I, therefore, understand the first two verses as follows:

- temple, crown of the land, the fierce ox of Aratta
- Kesh temple, the crown of the land, fierce ox of Aratta

The poet describes the Kesh temple as a crown of the land. This is a conceptual metaphor that brings a ruler into play. In English, we have the saying: a crowned head meaning a ruler. In the Kesh temple hymn, the poet likens the Kesh temple not only to a crown but to the crown of the land (**múš-kalam-ma**). This forms the conceptual metaphor:

Source domain      crown

Target domain      land, ruler

The poet maps the crown onto the land to show a ruler. The Kesh temple is the ruler over all the land. As a crowned head, the temple rules the land of Sumer. The metaphor establishes the foundation of the Kesh temple. The foundation of the Kesh temple is its position as a ruler. The temple is a crowned head. The rest of the hymn proceeds from this base that the temple is a ruler. The person who handed Kesh the crown is the god Enlil. In the incipit, Enlil speaks the praise of Kesh (Gragg 1969: 167).

Line 14 is the first line of Enlil's praise. Enlil is the one that calls Kesh the 'crown of the country' and thus crowns the Kesh temple. Kesh temple rules in the land by the authority of the king of the gods, Enlil. The second part of verses 14 and 15 is the geographical detail. The location of Kesh is important. Close to Adab, Kesh is a northern town that functioned as the premier temple of Ninḥursag. We assume this northern location when the poet brings Kesh into association with the land of Aratta. Aratta is in the north beyond the Zagros Mountain range. We read about this land in the stories told about the king Enmerkar of the first Dynasty of Uruk (Jacobsen 1987: 281, 284).

The epic, *'Enmerkar and the land of Aratta'*, echoes the language used in our text. The opening line of that text reads: "[...] in that fierce bull of a city [...]" We can compare it with our opening line 13, which reads "[...] fierce ox of Aratta [...]" In the epic's case it describes the city of Uruk, the Kullab, which was originally a separate town that became part of the city of Uruk (Jacobsen 1987: 280). In the story, a messenger from king Enmerkar went up into the Zubi Mountains to deliver the message to the king of Aratta (Jacobsen 1987: 281, 284).

Jacobsen also notes that sometimes the ancients decorated the foundation platform of one of the stage towers with horns. We should understand the description 'ox of Aratta' in the same terms as used in the epic *Enmerkar and the land of Aratta* for the city of Uruk-Kullab. It is a metaphor that describes the town as a living entity. It is an ox. The ox is powerful, like a bull fertile, and dangerous. Yet this powerful animal answers to humans (Jacobsen 1987: 379).

The Kesh temple is the ox of Aratta. Because of the Kesh temple's northern location, the temple looks down on the land of Sumer. The Kesh temple is like an ox facing south. It is the crown of the land that faces south towards the land of Sumer. From its position in the north, the Kesh temple can guard the land of Sumer.

Marsal mentions the animal metaphor used as a conceptual metaphor which gives us:

Source domain      animals, animal behaviour, animal characteristics

Target domain      people, especially the ruler, the gods (Marsal 2018: 16)

In verses 13 and 14 the poet maps the animal metaphor onto a geographical description. The poet describes the temple's northern location as the Ox of Aratta. The metaphorical mapping of the temple as an ox is a geographical description to show the location of the temple. It locates the Kesh temple in the north towards the land of Aratta (Jacobsen 1987: 284).

15. "Ḫur-sag-da-mú-a an-da gú-lá-a"

15. Growing up like a mountain, embracing the sky

16. “É-kur-da-mú-a kur-ra sag-íl-bi”

16. “[...] Growing up like Ekur when it lifts its head in the land [...]” (Gragg 1969: 167, 168)

This brings us to the next two verses. We structure the core of these two verses around a simile. Kramer stated that Sumerians used similes that utilized concepts such as nature, animals, and human structures (Kramer 1969: 2). Edzard suggests that the metaphor of the temple as a mountain with its head in the sky while their foundations reach into the Abzu is “[...] ...authentically Mesopotamian [...]” (Edzard 1987: 13).

The mountain forms the core of the simile. The poet chose to use nature for his simile.

Marsal developed the following conceptual metaphor:

Source domain      up/down

Target domain      good, goodness, bad, badness (Marsal 2018: 7)

In her assessment, up is good and down is bad. She gives an example of this metaphor in action.

“[...] He made it (=the temple) high like a mountain and made its head touch heaven [...]”

Inscription to Warad-Sîn (Marsal 2018: 7)

This metaphor Marsal mentioned was built around a word **/sukud/** which means height in Sumerian (Marsal 2018: 7). The similarity with our verse about the mountains is obvious, yet I do not believe that the domain is the same. The poet uses another word as the core of his simile in verses 15 and 16, namely **da-mú-a**. Both Gragg (1969: 167) and the ETCSL (1998 – 2006) translate this word with growing. This word is the source domain.

Source domain      organic growth

The word **da-mú-a** suggests organic growth. One must bear in mind that the poet has the growth of a mountain in mind with his verse. At the same time, the verse contains the word lift. The meaning of the word lift in Sumerian is:

- **íla, íli, íl:** n., carrier. v., to lift, carry; to deliver; to bring; to endure; to support; to carry forward (in accounting); to be high; to shine (**íl-i** in marû) (Halloran 1996 – 2000: 19)

The word **íla** suggests that the domain is up and down with the meaning; up is good. The word growth is like this since it also utilizes the concept of verticality. In ancient Sumerian thinking, this aspect of verticality included the idea of the Axis Mundi. Sumerians understood the idea of Axis Mundi as one of the fundamental concepts of the temple (Michalowski 2010: 158; Øiseth 2007: 69).

The temple linked heaven and earth. One of the conceptual metaphors used by Sumerians was based on nature, more specifically on plants (Marsal 2018: 23). The plant metaphor is not, however, utilized in verses 15 and 16. Another conceptual metaphor lies behind these two verses, namely human culture. The temple lifts its head and embraces the sky. A human image sat in the poet's mind when he crafted this verse. The target domain of the image should be understood as applied to the temple since temple building should also be understood as an act of creation (Clifford 1994: 26).

Target domain      the temple

Below is the dictionary meaning of the word grows:

- Grow – to increase in size, number, strength or quality
- Sprout – to produce new leaves or buds, to appear, to develop (Hornby 2000: 525, 1156)

The temple lifts its head. Here is the moment of creation when the temple comes organically into being. The temple also embraces the sky. The increase in size vertically is what the poet had in mind here. He wished to emphasize the vertical dimension of the

temple with these vivid metaphors. The temple lifts the head and embraces the sky. The temple is cosmic in its being since it can touch the realm of the gods, the sky (Lundquist 1983: 6; Øiseth 2007: 69). It is a cosmic mountain (Lundquist 1983: 1; Amar 2002: 10).

The temple grows up like a human and reaches for the sky. It lifts its head in the land. It is a proud creature that has a crown on its head. Here one refers to the previous verses (13 and 14) where the temple platform is the crown of the land. We find a crown on the head of a king. The poet begins with the application of the metaphor for growth already in verses 13 and 14. A crown sits on the head of a king or ruler. Behind the phrase, **múš-kalam-ma** hides the concept of a crowned head, a royal. This analysis suggests that translating **múš** as a crown was the correct choice. The poet builds this metaphor into the structure we find in verses 15 and 16 (Gragg 1969: 167).

- The temple is like a human growing tall enough to embrace the sky.

The poet had the monumental nature of the temple in mind. He likens it to something massive such as a mountain (Lundquist 1983: 1). This adds to the target domain.

Target domain – mountains

It looks like mountains touch the heavens; therefore, the poet uses this image. The temple is so large that it touches the heavens. This superbole describes the massive structure's monumental nature (Clifford 1972: 12, 13). In the final analysis the complete metaphor is:

Source domain – organic growth

Target domain – human, mountain, temple

This brings us to another application of the metaphor the poet must have had in mind. This is the temple he compares the Kesh temple to the Ekur. The verse uses syntactic parallelism to build up the idea. It also puns on the concept of mountain with the juxtaposition of two words both with the meaning of mountain. These two words are **Hur-sag** and **É-kur**. These same two words are found in the Cylinders of Gudea used in the sense of a vertical axis (Øiseth 2007: 69, 70). **Hur-sag** (mountain) puns on **É-kur** which means 'Mountain House'

and was the temple of Enlil. The Kesh temple embraces the sky in verse 15 while the É-**kur** lifts the head. The poet has the concept of the cosmic axis in mind with this pun (Lundquist 1983: 3; Klein & Sefati 2000: 26; Clifford 1972: 12, 13; Øiseth 2007: 69, 70).

The mountain house was the temple of the king of the gods, Enlil. In the hymn to the Ekur, we find that the incipit states:

- "[...] The great house is as great as a mountain [...]" (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.4: 1998 – 2006)

Here the wordplay is upon house and mountain. The temple of Enlil is a great mountain. Since the name of the temple of Enlil translates as mountain house, we can see the domain the poet used. Mountain is part of the growth metaphors' target domain. In verse 7 we have the verse "[...] Keš lifted its head for him [...]" (Gragg 1969: 167). In verse 16 the verse reads "[...] when it (Ekur) lifts his head in the land [...]" (Gragg 1969: 167). Kesh acknowledged the superiority of the Ekur and its master in verse 7.

The Kesh temple grows up like the Ekur when it lifts the head in the land. The head (platform) wearing the crown spoken of in verses 13 and 14 is the crown of the land. This is a royal gesture speaking of kingly power. The temple majestically lifts its head like the Ekur, the prime temple, the house of the king of the gods Enlil. The temple is large. The poet understands this not as we modern people would; that it is a large building (Lambert 1990: 117). He had the function of the temple in mind. This temple is the house of a goddess. It has a cosmic function (Hundley 2013: 3).

This cosmic function expresses itself in the word for the sky; **-an**. The Sumerian reads **an-da** in verse 15. This is the word for heaven (**an**) combined with **-da**, the comitative which means 'towards the sky.' It embraces the sky. Kramer said it best: "[...] The cosmic spheres and entities represented in Sumerian imagery are heaven, earth and sea, and the heavenly bodies, moon, sun and stars [...]" (Kramer 1969: 3). The word sky should be understood as heaven, the home of the gods (Horowitz 1998: xii). The poet uses cosmic language in verse 15. The same is true for verse 16. The Ekur was a cosmic house (Hundley 2013: 3).

17. “**Abzu-gin ri-a ħur-sag-bi sig<sub>7</sub>-sig<sub>7</sub>-ga**”

17.” [...] Springing up like the Abzu, making its mountain green [...]” (Gragg 1969: 168)

In this verse, we have the juxtaposition deep to the mountain. In the ‘*Cylinders of Gudea*’ where we have something similar. The **Eninnu** temple is depicted in this text as rooted in the Abzu with its head rising towards heaven (Øiseth 2007: 69, 70). It echoes the language of line 16 where the **Ekur** raises its head in the land (Lundquist 1983: 3). Once again, we have multiple translations. Let us look:

“[...] Springing up like the Abzu [...]” (Gragg 1969: 168)

“[...] {Rooted in the abzu} {(2 mss. have instead:) Colourful as the abzu} [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 – 2006)

“[...] Opalescent like the deep [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 379)

“[...] Wie der Süßwasserozean bunt gefärbt [...]” (Wilcke 2006: 221)

Once more different scholars rendered this verse differently. Both the ETCSL (1998 – 2006) and Gragg (1969) used the same basic text with the meaning 'rooted in the Abzu'. Two manuscripts rendered it as 'colourful', which are Jacobsen (1987) and Wilcke (2006). The basic text of the research is the text by Gragg (1969). His Sumerian reads:

“**Abzu-gin ri-a ħur-sag-bi sig<sub>7</sub>-sig<sub>7</sub>-ga**” (Gragg 1969: 168)

The first part of the sentence is simple. The construction **abzu-gin** means 'like the abzu'. This is the easy part. The other easy word is **ħur-sag-bi** which translates as “[...] it’s a mountain [...]”. The word **ħur-sag** is a play on the name of the goddess. **Nin-ħur-sag** means:

- **nin** – lady
- **ħur** – mountain
- **sag** – head



The name of the goddess is a genitive construction of Ninḫursaġa and should be understood as Ninḫursag (ak) which means the lady of the head mountain. One could also understand the construction to mean 'lady of the mountain of the gods' (Black et al 2004: 140). The poet deliberately uses the word **ḫur-sag** as a pun on the name of the goddess (Klein & Sefati 2000: 26). The poet creates the juxtaposition of two concepts, namely mountain and abzu through the pun (Øiseth 2007: 69, 70, 81). Let us look at the word **ri-a** first.

- **ri**: v., to throw, cast; to place, pour, put into; to place upon or against (with **-ši-**); to be located; to touch; to moor a boat; to break open; to expel, remove, throw away, sweep away (with **-ta-**); to emit; to beget:
- to blow (said of a storm); to inundate; to exchange; to take; to gather, glean; to plan something
- hamtu form, **ri-g** is marû form, **ri-ri-g** is plural; cf., rig) [**RI** archaic frequency: 1].
- adj., far. demonstrative affix, that, those; regarding that (where the reference is to something outside the view of the
- speaker - over yonder). (Halloran 1996 – 2019: 14)

The verb **sig<sub>7</sub>** will be considered next:

- **sig<sub>7</sub>, se<sub>12</sub>(-g), sa<sub>7</sub>(-g)**: v., to let live; to create; to live; to dwell; to complete; to be/make pleasant or beautiful; to garden; to pull out weeds; to tear out; to complain (in meanings 'to live', plural stem of **til**) (**si**, 'upright stalks' + **ég**, 'to water') [**SIG<sub>7</sub>** archaic frequency: 61].
- adj., pale, sallow; green, yellow (Halloran 1996 – 2019: 27)

This difficult verse has been rendered as follows:

- rooted like the abzu making its mountain beautiful

This verse is a description of the temple. The poet conveys rootedness. The temple has its roots in the underworld<sup>14</sup>, the cosmic sweet water ocean called the **Abzu** (Horowitz 2009: xii; Black et al. 2004: 27). Since the temple has a stable root, it makes its mountain beautiful. I believe that the poet refers here metaphorically to the foundations of the temple. Metaphorically the temple has its foundation in the underworld-abzu (Lindquist 1983: 3, 4; Øiseth 2007: 69, 70). The concept is of the temple being built from the root on upwards towards the heaven transposing comic layers (Lundquist 1983: 18).

The poet continues his mountain imagery. Line 15 and 16 also contained the mountain as an image. In verses 15 and 16, he describes the temple metaphorically as a mountain that has been anthropomorphized into having human characteristics. It embraces the sky; it lifts the head. Verse 17 draws on that same idea. Rooted in the abzu; it makes its mountain beautiful. He draws on the image of water bringing life to the soil (Lundquist 1983: 18).

The mountain covered with green living things is probably what he had in mind when composing this verse. It makes the mountain beautiful. With this, one returns to an earlier conversation. The poet plays with the word **hur-sag**, using it as a pun on the name of the goddess, Ninḫursag. He uses this pun already in verse 15 where he anthropomorphizes the mountain. I believe that he has the goddess in mind with these verses. She hides behind the image of the mountain; therefore, the mountains embrace the sky and lift its head (Gragg 1969: 167, 168).

The metaphor of the anthropomorphized mountain describes the temple as a person. This is not the last time the poet will work in a veiled reference to the goddess of the temple. He does so in verses 28 – 30. We will look at that later. The temple is one in being with the goddess (Hundley 2013: 3). She completes the temple, and without her presence it is nothing. To conclude: the temple is an anthropomorphic mountain, the goddess in disguise,

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<sup>14</sup> The Abzu is called the “holy mound” which Lindquist contends is evidence that the temple is a mountain that sprang from the Abzu (Lindquist 1983: 15)

doing human things. It embraces the sky; it lifts its head, and it makes the mountain beautiful (Gragg 1969: 167, 168).

## 13.3 ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST HOUSE

### 13.3.1 BUILDING

#### 13.3.1.1 Structure

The crown of the land refers to a ruler who would live in a palace. A palace is a monumental building. A crown is something prominent and known to all. No crown can exist in secret; all can see it. Since the crown is a metaphor for the ruler, he needs subjects. The ruler cannot rule if the subjects do not know and acknowledge the crown. Structurally the metaphor crown refers to the monumental nature of the temple. The temple is as visible as a crown on the head of a ruler. Mountain, as a metaphor in the next three verses, conveys the same though. The temple is of a monumental size which allows the poet to compare the temple to mountains. The Kesh temple is a monumental structure that touches the heavens.

#### 13.3.1.2 Cult

The Kesh temple received a crown from the king of the gods, Enlil. The poet goes as far as comparing the Kesh temple with the temple of Enlil, the Ekur (mountain house). He uses anthropomorphic language mapped onto the image of an organic growing mountain to describe the temple with. Behind it hides a person which should be understood as the goddess of the temple. While one cannot make the categorical statement that Ninḥursag-Nintu is that person, but I can suggest that it may be the case here. As the goddess of the temple, she is the reason they built it. The temple is the house of her cult, and the Kesh temple is where she rules as the goddess.

#### 13.3.1.3 Status

The Kesh temple is the 'crown of the lands' that reigns over all the land of Sumer. As a ruler, the temple has sovereign status in the land. The Kesh temple received its status as a ruler

from the king of the gods, Enlil. The temple can, because of Enlil's permission, embrace the sky; lift its head in the land. The temple is a sovereign.

## 13.3.2 FILLING

### 13.3.2.1 Agriculture

The poet makes no overt mention about agriculture. The first house only mentions the ox as part of an epithet to describe the temple with. The temple is the ox of Aratta. I do not believe that the poet meant for this verse as a reference to agriculture, but he draws on the animal metaphor. The animal metaphor is a geographical description and not a description of agriculture.

### 13.3.2.2 Sacrifice

The first house does not mention sacrifice anywhere. The ox of Aratta is used as an animal metaphor to describe a geographical location. The ox is not a sacrificial victim.

### 13.3.2.3 Commensality

The first house does not mention feasting.

## 13.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 13.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

The source domain of the conceptual metaphor, growth, maps it onto a mountain to give the mountains organic characteristics. The mountain becomes human in so much that it can embrace the sky; and lift the head. Growth is perpendicular to the vertical. The poet's language clarifies that the mountains touch the sky and embrace it. The temple grows upwards into the sky and touches the domain of the gods. The temple is a cosmic axis.

### 13.3.3.2 Cosmic relationship

The temple receives a crown from the king of the gods, Enlil. Enlil allows the temple to become a mountain that touches the sky; that can lift its head in the land. Enlil enters a

relationship with the Kesh temple that allows the temple to grow and become tall. The anthropomorphic mapping of human characteristics onto the temple gives it personality. Kesh temple is no longer just an inanimate object but a person with a crown of the head.

### 13.3.3.3 Seat of power

Kesh temple wears a crown that rules over all the lands. It is the seat of a powerful goddess. As the seat of the goddess Ninḥursag-Nintu the Kesh temple functions as her seat of power.

## 13.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain      house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	House is a Mountain, cult of Ninḥursag, the Crown of the land
<b>Filling</b>	No agriculture, ox is a geographical description, no feasting
<b>Existence</b>	The temple embrace the sky, receives power from Enlil, seat of power of the goddess Ninḥursag

### 13.4.1 Conclusion

The first house maps human characteristics onto nature. The temple is a mountain that embraces the sky. The temple is a mountain that lifts the head into the sky. The temple is the crown of the land. The temple is described as an anthropomorphic being that is tall enough to reach the sky. This being not only touches the sky but is rooted in the Abzu (underworld). The temple is an Axis Mundi that reaches from the heavens to the underworld. It is the bond between heaven and earth.

Despite the natural metaphor, the poet does not mention agriculture or sacrifice. The ox of Aratta is a geographical description to indicate the northern latitude of the Kesh Temple.

The first house does not mention feasting, but it is an Axis Mundi. No feasting is described but the temple is the seat of the divine. The goddess is not mentioned by name, but the word **Hur-sag** is a pun on the name Ninḫursag. She is implicitly present in the background although she is not mentioned explicitly.

The use of the mountain as the first metaphor is not by chance. The word **Hur-sag** means head-mountain. The name Ninḫursag means Lady-head-mountain. The goddess is associated with the northern Zagros mountains in myth. The use of the geographical indicator “[...] ox of Aratta [...]” focuses the attention on the north. Aratta was located beyond the Zagros mountains in Sumerian myth. The poet focuses one’s attention on the mountains of the north where the goddess Ninḫursag had her being. She is the lady of the mountains.

The Kesh Temple is the Crown of the Land. It is an important cult center that belongs to an important goddess. The goddess Ninḫursag is the lady of the temple. She is the one that animates the temple with her presence and gives it life.

# CHAPTER 14

## THE SECOND HOUSE

### 14.1 ABSTRACT

*The Second House locates the Temple in a good place. The poets describe the temple with nautical metaphors such as the temple as a boat floating in the heavens. More metaphors follow with the temple's unity with the sky as subject. It ends with an oracle granted by Nintu after which the temple is seen as fruitful.*

### 14.2 THE DISCUSSION OF THE SECOND HOUSE

22. “É-du<sub>10</sub> ki-du<sub>10</sub>-ga dù-a”

22. “[...] Good temple, built on a good place [...]”

23. “é-kèš ki-du<sub>10</sub>-ga dù-a”

23.” [...] Keš temple, built in a good place [...]” (Gragg 1969: 168, 169)

The temple under discussion is the Kesh Temple. The name Kesh means:

- **kešda, kešdr?** **kéš-**(d): n., knot; taboo; inhibition (**ki**, 'place', + **šita** 'to bind')  
[KEŠ2archaic frequency: 6]
- v., to bind, wrap, tie; to join; to fasten; to harness; to snatch (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 60)

The Kesh Temple is the ‘place to bind’ or the place where the knot was tied. The concept of **dur-an-ki** (bond of heaven and earth) seems to be somewhat like the meaning of the name Kesh. **Dur-an-ki** was the name for the ziggurat of Enlil in Nippur (Black et al 2004: 74; Øiseth 2007: 82). The name for Kesh as ‘knot’ or ‘place to bind’, ‘taboo’ and ‘inhibition’ brings this concept of the ‘bond of heaven and earth’ to mind (Amar 2002: 157). It was a secret place where something was bound. This may refer to Ninḫursag’s control attribute of birth-giving or paritition (Black et al 2004: 140).

The temple was a 'good' house, built on a 'good' place. The goddess Nisaba functions in a manner like Wisdom in the Hebrew Bible. She is the one who consults the stars to establish the good place where the temple should be built. We read in the Bible that Wisdom was present when God did something like Nisaba (Black et al 2004: 143; Jacobsen 1987: 393, 394; Øiseth 2007: 33).

"[...] When He prepared the heavens I (wisdom) was there: when He set a compass on the face of the depth [...]" Prov. 8: 27.

Similarly, we find in the Sumerian Temple Hymns that Nisaba is laying out the heavens on the ground:

"[...] She consults a tablet of lapis lazuli,

She gives advice to all lands,

The true woman, the holy lye plant born of the.... reed,

She measures off the heaven,

She places the measuring cords on the earth [...]" TH 42 (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 49).

Nisaba's purpose was to measure the dimensions of the temple. She was the one who wrote down the plan of the Kesh Temple as Enlil sang it to her. Nisaba wove Enlil's words 'like a net' and wrote it up on a tablet. Nisaba<sup>15</sup> fulfils the same general role as Biblical wisdom. She determined the good place where the Kesh Temple was built. Nidaba consults the tablet of stars in the *'Cylinders of Gudea'* to establish the auspicious day for building the **E ninnu** Temple. It makes sense that TH 42 calls this a tablet of lapis lazuli since the blue stone could easily be interpreted as a metaphor for the starry heaven (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 49; Jacobsen 1987: 393, 394; Øiseth 2007: 33; 91).

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<sup>15</sup> Nisaba or Nidaba is the same goddess.



It is the opening act, so to say, in the actual construction of the temple. The Kesh Temple is built in a good place. Building the temple took skill (**techne**) that was gifted divinely to humans. It all began with a display of arcane skills. Nisaba is the one who writes down the poem while weaving it as a net, which Jacobsen understands as Nisaba creating the Kesh Temple Hymn as a poem in verse 10 - 12. Later in the text, in verse 38, she performs the divination to establish the temple in a good place (Jacobsen 1987: 378, 380).

24. **“Má-gur<sub>8</sub> nun-gin an-na diri-ga”**

24. “[...] Like the pure Magur boat, floating in the sky [...]” (Gragg 1969:168, 169)

The poet begins the Second House with a series of similes that draw on the domain of sailing so well known in Sumer. Boats sailing on the river and canals were a common and everyday sight. The temple is the ‘pure Magur<sup>16</sup> boat’ which floats in the sky. The Magur boat is also associated with the moon-god in the myth ‘*Nana-Suen’s Journey to Nippur*’ (Ferrara 1973: 84).

The poet wants his listeners to look up into the domain that belongs to the gods alone - the sky. The similes that use the boat as images are structured in such a way as to invoke the new moon and the fertility theme associated with it. The image of the ox and breeding bull helps to strengthen the fertility theme. The moon was the god Nanna/Suen who was strongly associated with the bull (Van Dijk 2011: 161).

The boat is drifting, gliding, sailing downstream in the sky. The ancient Sumerians knew of just such a boat that floated in the sky, which was, of course, the moon. As Jacobsen noted the new moon in the Orient resembled the typical Sumerian horn-shaped boat floating on the rivers and canals. This is a direct reference to the moon lying on its back like a boat. Jacobsen explains that the horns of the moon and the ox also refer to the headdress worn by the En priest (Jacobsen 1987: 379.).

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<sup>16</sup> The Magur boat was a crescent-shaped vessel (Kramer & Maier 1989: 59)

The moon-god was, as all Mesopotamians would have known, born in the underworld (Jacobsen 1987: 168). The waxing and waning of the moon were a cyclic movement of life and death, as well as of agricultural fertility. The Magur boat features in the myth of Nanna/Suen's journey to Nippur. Once Nanna/Suen had arrived at Nippur he received the blessing of his father Enlil, who provided Ur with an abundance of crops. Nanna/Suen received the carp flood, speckled barely, fresh reeds, wild goats among other things and long life (Wagensonner 2010: 219; Qualls 1981: 3; Black et al 2004: 135).

The sailing metaphor brings another aspect of the Sumerian world to the fore. Water was essential to life and a symbol of the water-god Enki, who lived in Eridu. Enki was associated with the abzu or the sweet waters of the underworld. The moon-god's home, Ur, was geographically close to Eridu. The temple with its footing in the Abzu recalls the image of the temple as a huge boat sailing on the cosmic waters of the Abzu<sup>17</sup>, also Jacobsen (Jacobsen 1987: 416, 436).

The word /**nun**/ should be considered next. It is translated as princely in verse 24 which can mean:

- **Nun** prince, noble, master or as an adjective great, noble, fine, deep (Halloran 1996-2000: 38).

The Magur boat is not any boat, it is a princely boat in which the moon god sailed to Nippur (Ferrara 1973: 203 - 20; Hall 1985: 338, 340). The Magur boat in which the moon god sailed to Nippur could be understood as a metaphor for the crescent shape of the waxing moon (Qualls 1981: 3; Jacobsen 1987: 379). The poet needed to exalt the Kesh temple and to introduce us to the cosmic aspect of the house of Ninḫursanga. She was a goddess, and her home had cosmic dimensions, hence the description. The temple moved in the cosmic waters of heaven unlike the mundane boats of the poet's world. The temple was not a

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<sup>17</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Willem McLoud for bringing this to my attention.

normal boat, but a heavenly one. It sailed among the stars, the gods of the ancient Mesopotamians (Gragg 1969: 168, 169; Jacobsen 1987: 416, 436).

25." **má-gur<sub>8</sub> kù-gin ká-si ri-a**"

25. "[...] Like the pure Magur boat, provided with a.... gate... [...]" (Gragg 1969:168, 169)

Jacobsen offers an alternative translation for this verse that quite frankly makes a lot more sense than the others.

25. "[...] Like a holy barge set with seat and horns [...]" (Jacobsen 1987: 379)

Jacobsen mentions in a footnote in his translation of the Kesh hymn that the 'seat' and 'horns' refer to the shape of the temple. The horns with the square building in between made the temple look like a boat sailing in the sky (Jacobsen 1987: 379). With this verse, the poet returns to the image of a boat sailing in the sky. The adjective describing the boat differs from the previous one used namely /**nun**/. In verse 25 the poet uses the word /**kù**/ which is the short form of /**kug**/ which means:

- **Kug** To be sacred, holy, to sanctify (Foxvog 2010: 33).

The Kesh Temple is a holy boat that floats in heaven. As the house of a goddess, the adjective /**kù**/ suits since the Kesh Temple was her sacred seat. The poet makes it quite clear that the domain where this took place was in heaven (Gragg 1969: 168).

26. "**Má-an-na-gin mùš-kur-kur-ra**"

26. "[...] Like the boat of heaven, foundation of all the landscape [...]" (Gragg 1969:168, 169)

Jacobsen's translation is the better one for this verse. His translation reads the words /**mùš-kur-kur-ra**/ as "crown of the mountains" (Jacobsen 1987:379). Jacobsen is supported by Foxvog which reads:

- **mùš** countenance, appearance, aspect, halo, aura, (*a kind of crown*)

(Foxvog 2010: 38).

My rendering of this verse would be:

- Like the boat of heaven, the lordly crown of the mountains.

The poet returns with the image of the mountains. He bleeds over from one domain to the other one. In this, he associated the boat of heaven, the moon, with the northern mountains which it crowns. Here we can clearly see the image of the moon hanging over the mountains of Aratta (Gragg 1969: 167).

Source domain        the boat, sailing, waters

Target domain        the Kesh Temple

In a previous verse in this text, verse 13, we read: “[...] Temple, foundation of the country, fierce ox of Aratta [...]” (Gragg 1969: 167). Jacobsen believed the Kesh temple was the guard against the northern mountains. The reference is a pun on the name of the goddess Ninḥursag who was strongly associated with the northern mountains (Black et al 2004: 140; Jacobsen 1987:379).

The poet cleverly plays on this well-known aspect of the goddess by placing the heavenly barge (the moon) in juxtaposition with the mountains to the north. This poem is not the only place where we see this association of the goddess with the northern mountains. In the myth Lugalbanda and the Thunderbird, we read of Anne (Ninḥursag) (Jacobsen 1987: 322).

“[...] When the bird observed the proprieties

When it has embraced its wife

When it has made the Thunderbirds’ wife

And the Thunderbirds young

Sit down to a festive meal

And has brought from her foothills,

Anne, queen of the council [...]”

(Jacobsen 1987: 322)

In this myth, Anne (Ninḫursag) is a guest of the Anzu whose home was the tree in the northern mountains. Anzu invited Anne to a feast as a member of the council of the gods. She is a part and parcel of those northern mountains as her name also suggests. The barge sailed from its inception in Ur, the home of the moon-god in the south, all the way north to the mountains of Aratta to crown the hills from which she drew her name. This was also the direction that the moon-god made in the Magur-boat in his yearly pilgrimage to Nippur (Black et al 2004: 135, Qualls 1981: 3; Ferrara 1973: 203 - 205).

The poet paints the picture of a journey whose direction is north, the true home of the goddess. This is also the reason why the temple is in the north. She is part of the north, and in association with both the eagle and the serpent. In this, she takes on the same role as Lilith who was also associated with both cosmic animals in the myth *‘Gilgamesh and the Huluppu*

*tree’* (Kramer 1938: 5).

27.” **U<sub>5</sub>-bàn-da-gin peš-ta sur-sur-ra**”

27. “[...] Cabin of the Banda boat which shines from the beaches [...]”

(Gragg 1969:168, 169)

The word translated as shine in this verse reads **/sur-sur-ra/** in the Sumerian. The word means:

- **sur** to press out (liquids), squeeze, extract; to plait, twist together (rope); to wipe away; to oppress, suppress; to draw a boundary, mark off, demarcate, delimit, divide

(Foxvog 1969: 49)

In this verse, the poet tries to express the idea of a journey that starts. This can be seen in the use of the ablative **/ta/** in the word **peš-ta** (away from the bank). The word **/sur/** is

better understood as divide, demarcate, boundary than shine. The temple is starting its journey into the cosmic waters by moving away from the bank. The newly constructed temple is a boat on a journey. He uses the metaphor of movement to indicate the cosmic movement taking place in the temple. The temple accommodated both vertical and horizontal movement between different planes (Hundley 2013: 211; Øiseth 2007: 69; Edzard 1987:37).

Jacobsen's rendering of this verse is to be preferred. He renders the verse as:

"[...] Like a well-braced boat cabin having moved off from the bank [...]"

(Jacobsen 1987: 379)

Ancient iconography suggests that the curved prow and stern of ancient Sumerian boats provided the source for the poet's verse. As can be seen from the figure below such boats commonly held a cabin in the middle (Frankfort 1939: Plate III).



Figure 9: Typical Sumerian Boat

The context of the rest of the strophe argues against the rendering of **/sur-sur-ra/** as 'shine'. The poet is drawing on the image of a boat beginning its journey by unmooring and moving away from the bank. The new temple is on a cosmic journey to a new location. This is a cosmic location in the northern mountains where the goddess had her true being (Qualls 1981: 3; Jacobsen 1987: 322).

28. "É **gu<sub>4</sub>-gin ur<sub>5</sub>-ša<sub>4</sub> nindá-gin gù-nun-di**"

28. "[...] House, roaring like an ox, bellowing like a breed bull [...]" (Gragg 1969:168, 169)

The thought of the ox brings up the idea of its crescent-shaped horns as well. It has the same shape as the boat and the new moon. We have already mentioned that verse 25 uses the word horn to describe the shape of the temple silhouette. Van Dijk notes that from at least the Early Dynastic period a horn was used to denote divinity (Van Dijk 2011: 131). The temple is described by the simile as an ox.

According to Jacobsen the roaring refers to the music and chanting at the temple (1987: 379). Wilcke discusses the herds of cattle that would have been present at the temple (Wilcke 2006: 214). As we have already noted the bull was strongly associated with the moon god. One cannot help to think of the bull in terms of fertility as well. The horns of the bull were seen as a metaphor for the new moon which in Mesopotamia lay horizontally on its back (Van Dijk 2011: 161).

This fact would have been known to the poet when he composed these verses. It should surprise no one that he brings in the bull in the house dealing with the sky. It also served a dual purpose. One was to refer to the music in the temple as Jacobsen suggested but it could also refer to the breeding bull's mating calls. This ties in neatly with the control attribute of the goddess of the temple namely birth-giving (Jacobsen 1987: 379).

The metaphor under consideration is the animal metaphor. Marsal illustrates this well:

Source domain        animals, animal behaviour, animal characteristics

Target domain        people (esp., the ruler), the gods (Marsal 2018: 16)

The target domain Marsal suggest should be slightly adapted to include:

Source domain        animals, animal behaviour, animal characteristics

Target domain        people (esp., the ruler), the gods, the temple

The target domain for the animal metaphor of 'the gods' is particularly useful since the goddess Ninḫursag was intimately linked to her temple. We have an association between the goddess Ninḫursag and the bull as found in her temple at Tell al 'Ubaid. A frieze of bulls

decorated the face of the temple made of copper (Van Dijk 2011:45). Above the façade of the temple was a depiction of the lion-headed eagle the Anzud. In the same al 'Ubaid temple a limestone plaque was found where the Anzu was attacking a bull (Van Dijk 2011: 77).

The Anzu should be interpreted as the summer sun in full power (Hartner1965: 13). Hartner's main conclusion is that the ancient myth of lion-bull combat should be understood as an indicator of the spring equinox (Hartner1965: 16). The Ubaid plaque found at Tell al 'Ubaid should also be understood in similar cosmic terms. We find a depiction of the Anzu holding lions, stags, and ibexes in its claws on the silver vase of Entemena of Lagash (Hartner 1965: 11). This was an astronomical depiction of the Winter solstice (Hartner 1965: 9).

Texts like *Lugale* make it abundantly clear that the Anzu lived in the branches of the cosmic tree. If he represented the sun, as Hartner asserts, then the sun was assaulting the bull in the plaque. It does make sense however in accordance with Hartner's interpretation when you take the sun as the object of the solstice. The seasons of the solstice or equinox are represented by animals (Hartner1965: 16).

If the bull represented the spring equinox and the Anzu the summer sun in full power, then one can understand it as a fertility symbol. The plaque, if Hartner is correct in his reconstruction, means that the Anzu/bull plaque from 'Ubaid can be understood as a reference to spring and the planting season. It could be an early variation of the lion-bull combat theme (Hartner1965: 16; Wightman 2007: 21).

In the myth '*Lugal E*' the goddess Ninḫursag is described by her various names which emphasizes her role in fertility.

- Nintur lady birth hut
- Ninnagarsha womb carpenter<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> It is the power she has to form the embryo in the womb (Jacobsen 1987: 255)



- Aruru the one who lets the water out<sup>19</sup> (Jacobsen 1987: 255)

As mentioned previously in the myth *‘Lugalbanda and the Thunderbird’* the goddess Ninḫursag is mentioned in association with a feast along with the eagle or thunderbird (Anzu) (Jacobsen 1987: 322).



Figure 10: The Lion-Bull Combat

## 29. “É šà-bi-ta lipiš-kalam-ma”

29. “[...] Temple, in whose interior is the vital-centre of the country [...]”

The interior of the temple was the domain of the goddess of the temple, Nintu/Ninḫursag. Jacobsen translates this verse as “[...] inside the innermost of the House is the heart of the country [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 380). He believed that the ‘innermost of the House’ and ‘the back room’ referred to the quarters of the goddess (Jacobsen 1987: 380).

- **Lipiš** heart, strong emotion, anger, courage (Foxvog 2010: 35)

The best rendering for the verse “É šà-bi-ta lipiš-kalam-ma” is as Jacobsen translated it. Nintu/Ninḫursag was the heart of the country (Jacobsen 1987: 380). Her function as the goddess of birth-giving (paritutu) is described here. This is confirmed in the next verse.

## 30. “A-ga-bi-ta zi-ki-en-gi-ra”

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<sup>19</sup> Refers to the amniotic fluid (Jacobsen 1987: 255)

30. “[...] In whose back in the life of Sumer [...]” (Gragg 1969:168, 169)

Once more Jacobsen’s translation is to be preferred here. When we study the glossary, we find that the word /**zi**/ can have different meanings.

- **Zi** life, breath, throat (Foxvog 2010: 63)

**Zi** as life or breath seems to be the best way to render this word. The sentence “**a-ga-bi-ta zi-ki-en-gi-ra**” is best translated by Jacobsen: “[...] Inside its back room is the life’s breath of Sumer [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 380).

If one replaces life /**zi**/ with understanding the word as breath something interesting happens. One of the epithets of the goddess Nintu/Ninḫursag is: “[...] builder of that which has breath [...]”. The poet is punning on a well-known aspect of the goddess namely her ability to give life or breath to the new-born.

31. “**É eb-gal an-né ús-sa**”

31. “[...] Temple, great shrine, reaching the sky [...]” (Gragg 1969:168, 169)

The next four verses have been built around the word **ús-sa** which Halloran translates as:

- **Ús-sa** reaching, abutting (Soosaar 1999: 34)

The main part of each sentence is the phrase /**an-né**/ which forms the core of each sentence. This word parses as:

- **An** sky, heaven; the sky god An (Foxvog 2010: 6)
- **Né** indicates near-deixis ‘this one here’ (Foxvog 2010: 35; Halloran 1996 – 2019: 13)

The phrase **an-né** means: “In the sky”. The near deixis of the temple is in the sky. The construction /**an-né**/ informs the listener of the poem that the domain of the Kesh Temple is the sky. The Kesh Temple is reaching for the sky. Not only does the temple reach for the

sky – the Kesh Temple abuts the sky. The Kesh Temple is a great shrine that reaches for the sky. The true home of the Kesh Temple is in the sky (Foxvog 2010: 6, 35).

This was made abundantly clear to the audience in verses 24 through 26. In these verses, the temple is a heavenly boat that sails in the sky. It is the moon that floats high above in heaven. The Kesh Temple is the Boat of Heaven. Now the poet informs the audience that the Kesh Temple is a great shrine that reaches for and abuts the sky. The conceptual domain for verses 31 to 35 is the heavens.

Source domain            heavens, sky

Target domain            the Kesh Temple

In ancient Sumer, the sky was divided into three parts. The highest part of the heavens was the Upper Heaven where the father of the gods, An, resided (Horowitz 1998: 4; Black et al. 2004: 30). The Middle Heavens belonged to the Igigi gods. The Third Heaven belonged to the stars (Horowitz 1998: 4). The poet speaks in verse 31 to 35 about the third heaven where the stars reside. This is the realm where the moon is a part of the starry heavens. In verses 24 to 26, the poet etched the image of the Temple as the moon in front of our eyes. This indicates that the poet has the starry dome of heaven in mind or the Third Heaven (Horowitz 1998: 4).

The Kesh Temple is transposed into the sky. Sky in ancient Sumerian thought was the cosmic domain of the gods. The heavens were the home of the gods. The very word used in verse 31 – 35 /an/ means sky, but it is also the name for the father of the gods. The poet aims us into the sky. The Kesh Temple was a cosmic domain that served the supernatural needs of the gods of Sumer. The Kesh Temple was a cosmic house (Jacobsen 1976: 17, 18).

32. “É zi-da-gal an-né ús-sa”

32. “[...] Great, true temple, reaching the sky [...]”                    (Gragg 1969:168, 169)

Verse 32 is the parallelism of verse 31. The great shrine of the Kesh Temple is the great true Temple. The home of this true temple is the sky. In verse 32 the poet builds upon the metaphor of in the sky. His Kesh Temple is in the sky.

- **Zi (-da)** adj. right, upright, true, faithful, good; n. right

(Hand or side) (Foxvog 2010: 63)

Marsal points out the Sumerian conceptual metaphor of up and down. She has the following to say about the subject:

Source domain            up, down

Target domain            good, goodness, bad, badness            (Marsal 2018: 7)

If up is good, then down is bad. One cannot apply this conceptual metaphor to verses 31 and 32. It is true that up is good, but down is not necessarily bad. While she correctly worked out the metaphor one cannot apply it to our verses. Verse 31 and 32 use a different conceptual domain that imagines the heavens as cosmic spheres where the gods live and function. The gods also lived in the underworld. The god Bel shut 600 Anunnaki<sup>20</sup> away in the Lowest Earth (Horowitz 1998: 18).

The source domain for verses 31 – 35 is the sky. The poet draws the audience up into heaven with him. He is pointing at something that would have been familiar to his own time’s audience. The sky was the home of the gods. It was the cosmic realm where you could find the truth. The Kesh Temple was the ‘great true temple’, the house of truth (Gragg 1969: 169).

33. “**É men-gal an-né ùs-sa**”

33. “[...] Temple, great crown, reaching the sky [...]”            (Gragg 1969:168, 169)

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<sup>20</sup> [1] The Anunnaki may previously have been heaven gods (Horowitz 1998: 18; Black et al. 2004: 34)

The temple, as a great crown, stretches upwards to reach the sky. The temple was already at home in the sky. The idea of a crown is defined as the headdress of a sovereign worn on the head. Horns were associated with deities (Van Dijk 2011: 34, 35, 131). The crown of the temple would have been the horns worn on top of the temple (Jacobsen 1987: 379). The idea of horns built into the temple has archaeological support (Van Dijk 2011: 33).

The Sumerian word **/men/** always meant crown in the pre-Sargonic period and was associated with the divine. It was often used along with the adjective **/gal/** as in our line: “**é men-gal an-né ús-sa**” in line 33 (my italics) (Asher-Greve 1995/1996: 184, 185). She explains that this was the common word used for divine crowns. This supports Jacobsen’s proposition that it should be understood as bucrania affixed to the temple (Jacobsen 1987: 379). The purpose would have been to demonstrate the divine nature of the temple.

The temple was a crown in the sky. Kesh Temple was the home of a goddess and wore the horns of divinity like a crown. The crown worn by the temple is indicated by the next verse. While it may have been the horns, as Jacobsen suggested, the poet clarifies his thought in the next verse (Jacobsen 1987: 379).

34. “**É <sup>d</sup>tir-an-na an-né ùs-sa**”

34. “[...] Temple, rainbow, reaching the sky [...]” (Gragg 1969:168, 169)

The natural habitat of the rainbow is the sky where it arches over heaven like a crown. The image that the poet wished to invoke is obvious. The temple is like a rainbow which may have referred to a domed roof with brilliant colouring (Jacobsen 1987: 380). The poet may refer to the previous verse as well. The crown of the temple may also refer to the rainbow.

The home of the rainbow was the sky. It arched over heaven with godly splendour. This is also indicated in the Sumerian word for rainbow **/<sup>d</sup>tir-an-na/** which has the determinative (**dingir**) denoting that the following name is that of a divine person. This verse builds on the crown metaphor to strengthen the motif of the temple as moored in heaven. It has been suggested that the rainbow was the source of the concept of the dragon (Blust 2000: 519).

The temple was crowned by a heavenly dragon fanciful as it seems. Sumer relied on the flood of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers for their crops and was reliant upon the rains over the northern plains. The ancient Sumerians conceptualized this truth with the image of the Anzu or thunderbird, whose wings were the rainclouds and whose voice was the thunder symbolized as a lion's head. The god Ningirsu is described in just such terms in the cylinders of Gudea IV: 10 -20 (Jacobsen 1987: 386 - 444).

35. “**É mûš-bi an-šà-ga lá-a**”

36. “**Te-me-bi abzu-a si-ga**”

35. “[...] Temple, whose platform is suspended from heaven's midst [...]”

36. “[...] Whose foundation fill the Abzu [...]” (Gragg 1969:168, 169)

The temple is suspended /**la**/ (read moored) in heaven and at the same time fills the abzu.

- **lá** hang, be suspended (Halloran 1996 – 2019: 31)

Here the poet is returning to the cosmic view of the temple, as encompassing the whole of creation. It was used previously in verse 17, where it was combined with the mountain metaphor.

When we read verse 35 the word for platform in Sumerian is /**mûš-bi**/ that Foxvog translates as:

- **Mûš** kind of crown (Foxvog 1967: 38)

This word was dealt with extensively in the discussion for the first house. It was proposed in the first house that / **mûš**/ should be understood as meaning a crown. The word / **bi**/ is the possessive suffix /its/ (Foxvog 2009: 32). Jacobsen's translation is to be preferred: “[...], whose lordly crown is worn (up) in heaven's midst [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 380). This refers to verse 33 and the rainbow metaphor. It also links this verse with the nautical metaphor that was used to construct the preceding four verses.

The metaphor under consideration is a variant of the nautical metaphor discussed previously. The conceptual metaphor for verses 31 - 15 is:

Source domain            heaven, sky

Target domain            Kesh Temple, crown, rainbow, the gods, truth

Verse 35 should be considered in conjunction with verse 36: “[...] Whose foundations fill the Abzu [...]” (Gragg 1969:168, 169). The Kesh Temple is a cosmic boat that floats upon the cosmic sweet water ocean. This ocean was the domain of the god Enki, as have been noted previously (Jacobsen 1987: 416, 436; Lambert 1997: 5).

The word / **te-me-bi**/ translates as ‘its foundation’. The next part of the sentence is / **abzu-a**/ which breaks down to:

- **Abzu** (**ab**>sea + **zu**>to know) underground freshwater ocean

(Horowitz 2009: xii; Black et al. 2004: 27; Halloran 1999 – 2019: 50)

- **A** locative case            (Foxvog 2009: 33)

The meaning of this phrase / **abzu-a**/ is: “[...] in the underground fresh-water ocean [...]” (my rendering). The foundation of the temple is in the Abzu or Apsu. The temple floats upon the waters of the Abzu, as Dr Mc Loud suggested in a private conversation with the author. His surmise makes a lot of sense in the light of the nautical metaphor used in verses 24 – 27. Dr Mc Loud’s suggestion is supported by Jacobsen. The temple is indeed seen as a boat that needed to be moored to a stake set in the Abzu to prevent the temple from drifting away (Jacobsen 1987: 416, 436).

The temple is a cosmic construction that fills all the layers of the cosmos. This is suggested by various verses such as 6. “[...] The four corners of heaven became green for Enlil like an orchard [...]” or by 15. “[...] Growing up like a mountain, embracing the sky [...]”. Another

verse that suggests this is: 16. “[...] Growing up like Ekur when it lifts its head in the land [...]”. The use of the word / **an-né**/ ‘towards heaven’ as the construction around which verses 31 – 34 was built also suggests a cosmic conception of the temple (Lundquist 1983: 1,12, 15, 17; Clifford 1972: 15; Øiseth 2007: 68, 69).

It could be understood as the temple floating upon the Abzu while at the same time sailing through the heavens. The poet had the heavenly bodies in mind that sails in heaven, but since the temple was anchored in the earth, he also had the Abzu in mind. The temple floats upon the underground freshwater ocean, the Abzu, which is a cosmic domain. The whole should be understood in cosmic terms (Lundquist 1983: 4, 19; Clifford 1972: 15; Jacobsen 1987: 416, 436).

The conceptual metaphor of up and down as good and bad, does not work out as Marsal suggests in this instance (Marsal 2018: 7). This domain does not work because the poet used the word **temen**. This Sumerian word means:

- **Temen** perimeter, foundations, foundation-charter, foundation-platform, a figure made on the ground with ropes stretched between pegs, excavation (often written **te-me-en**) (Halloran 1996 – 2019: 68)

The word conveys a sense of rootedness. The Kesh Temple was rooted in the Abzu. Its foundations rested in the underground sweet water ocean. The idea that the poet wishes to convey is the idea of the temple being fastened with foundation pegs to the Abzu (Dunham 1986: 52; Jacobsen 1987: 416, 436). The Kesh Temple roots go deep. It is fastened to the Abzu and is securely rooted. The temple is built upwards from the Abzu into the heavens (Lundquist 1983: 19; Clifford 1972: 14; Øiseth 2007: 69).

### 37. “**Gizzu-bi kur-kur-ra du<sub>6</sub>-la**”

37. “[...] Whose shadow covers all the lands [...]” (Gragg 1969:168, 169)

In the myth of *‘Lugalbanda and the Anzu’* bird we find the following description:

“[...] In those days did Enki’s noble “eagle tree,”



Poised like a storm cloud

Atop the carnelian foothills, Inanna's eye paint,

Jowl-like bearing bristles

*Have its shadow cover*

*The mountain heights like cloth,*

*Veil them like a linen sheet [...]"* (my italics) (Jacobsen 1987: 323)

The word used for all the lands in the Sumerian is / **kur-kur-ra**/ which were part of one of Enlil's epithets. Enlil is called the king of all the lands /**lugal kur-kur-ra**/. The normal word for the land of Sumer is /**kalam**/. The word /**kur-kur**/ usually means foreign mountain lands. The verse is wordplay upon the well-known epithet of Enlil **Kur-gal** meaning 'Great Mountain'. Previously it has been suggested that **kur-kur-ra** could be understood as meaning all the temples under Enlil's gaze<sup>21</sup> (Wang 2011: 134).

The Kesh Temple is cosmic in nature (Clifford 1972: 15; Øiseth 2007: 69). Its shadow covers all the lands outside of the Sumerian area of influence as well as the land of Sumer. The concept of a world tree that covers all the lands with its shadow is not limited to Sumerian myth (Walton 2006: 175). it is also in the Bible:

"[...] Therefore was his (the tree) stature exalted above all the trees of the field...the whole multitude of nations lived under his shadow [...]" Ezekiel 31: 6b – 7b.

The idea of a cosmic entity, which could be a tree or the Kesh Temple having the cosmic stature to cover all the lands with its shadow, seems to have been widely known in the ancient world. "[...] Another conception in the ancient world is that a great tree stood in the center, sometimes referred to as a world tree...Its roots are fed by the great subterranean ocean and its top merges with the clouds, and thus binds together the heavens, the earth and the netherworld [...]" (Walton 2006: 175).

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<sup>21</sup> Suggested to me in a conversation by Dr Willem McLoud

Walton (Walton 2006: 175) is supported by Amar (Amar 2002: 157) who states that both kings and temples were metaphorically described as the Cosmic Tree. As has been shown the concept lived in the world view of Sumer and ancient Israel. The thought expressed by the poet is that Kesh protects all the lands with its shadow. It will cover all the lands with its shadow and shelter them. They could live safely in the shadow cast by the temple, and it will protect them (Walton 2006: 175).

The concept of such a cosmic tree may have been linked to the concept of the **/temen/** or foundation which may have been a mast or a pole. This mast or pole linked heaven and earth and may go back to the foundation pegs used in constructing temples (Jacobsen 1987: 416, 436). The term **/temen-an-ki/** may mean that one should see the cosmic tree linking heaven and earth behind the description of temen (Dunham 1986: 59, 60; Eisenberg 2001:110). The name for the temple of Kesh (place and to bind) suggests a similar concept.

38. “É an-né ki-gar-ra <sup>d</sup>en-líl-le zà-mí du<sub>11</sub>-ga”

39. “Ama <sup>d</sup>nin-tu-ra eš-bar-kin du<sub>11</sub>-ga”

38. “[...] Temple, founded by An, praised by Enlil [...]”

39. “[...] Divination for which was performed by Nintur [...]” (Gragg 1969:168, 169)

In verse 38 the poet refers to the permission to build the Kesh Temple. The temple was founded by the god An. The god, An, occupied the highest heaven and was the father of the gods (Black et al. 2004: 30; Horowitz 1998: 4). The god An, founded the temple while Enlil sang the praise song. Enlil’s praise song is a description of the plan of the temple given by the gods. Such a plan was given to Gudea when he was ordered to build the E ninnu temple for the god Ningirsu (Jacobsen 1987: 389 - 396). In Exodus 25: 9 God commands Moses to build the Tabernacle according to the plan shown to him on the mountain.

The permission to build the temple depended upon the performance of divination. The goddess of the temple performed the divination. Nintu received a positive answer when she performed the divination. Her question would have been: may the temple be built or not?

An approved the building of the temple once mother Nintu received the positive answer. Enlil was the one who showed the plan and Nisaba was the one who made it official by writing it down (Jacobsen 1987: 389 - 396).

40. “É kèš<sup>ki</sup> gurun-na sig<sub>7</sub>-ga”

40. “[...] Keš temple, green in its fruit [...]”The Kesh Temple is fruitful. It is green in its fruit. The conceptual metaphor that hides behind this verse is:

Source domain      blooming, fruitfulness, organic growth

Target domain      the Kesh Temple

The Kesh Temple is a place where the goddess Nintu/Ninḫursag will live and exercise her power or me. She is the source of the temple’s fruitfulness. Kesh will bloom with power that blesses humans with its abundance. Kesh is green with fruit (Gragg 1969: 169).

## 14.3 ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND HOUSE

### 14.3.1 BUILDING

#### 14.3.1.1 Structure

The structure of the Kesh Temple is mentioned in verses 29 – 31. The diagram is as follows:

29. Interior

30. Back

31. Shrine

In verses 22 and 23 the poet tells his audience that the Kesh Temple was built in a good place. All of this is the language of architecture. The poet reassures his hearers that the Kesh Temple has been built and that it brings forth goodness in the land.

### 14.3.1.2 Cult

The cult is mentioned in verses 31, 37 - 39. The verse that contains the word shrine already presupposes a cult. The temple was founded by the god An, which was an act of cult. Enlil praised the Kesh Temple and mother Nintu gave the temple an oracle. The oracle was one of the most important acts of the cult in ancient Sumer.

### 14.3.1.3 Status

The status of the Kesh Temple is one of the main themes in this strophe. Kesh Temple is highly exalted in status. This is described in verses 29 – 37 through words like the true temple, great shrine, crown, rainbow and the like. All of this indicates that this temple was important. It was not a simple shrine, but a great shrine.

## 14.3.2 FILLING

### 14.3.2.1 Agriculture

Verses 28 and 40 contain descriptions of the practice of agriculture. In verse 26 one reads about two domestic animals: the ox and the breed bull. The ox was primarily a draft animal, but they used the breed bull to increase the stock. In verse 40 we read that the temple is green in its fruit. The mention of fruit presupposes agriculture and brings the image of orchards to mind.

### 14.3.2.2 Sacrifice

The second house does not mention sacrifice.

### 14.3.2.3 Commensality

Verse 28 mentions the roaring of the ox and the breed bull. This may be a reference to the music inside the temple, but it is not sufficient to conclude that feasting took place.

## 14.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 14.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

The word *temen* may contain the idea of a cosmic tree within its formulation. Various other verses also support the theme of the Axis Mundi. They are:

24. Magur boat

25. Magur boat

26. Boat of heaven

31-34. Reaching for the sky

35. Suspended from heavens midst

36. Foundations fill the Abzu

37. Shadow covers all the lands

The Magur boat is the moon floating in the sky, as well as the boat of heaven. Vertical language is implied by the four-verse construction (31 – 34) of reaching for the sky. To be suspended from heaven also implies a vertical axis. The foundation that fills the Abzu contains the word *temen* that may have been understood as the cosmic tree. Sumerian myth as well as the Bible supports the theme of a tree tall enough that its shadow covers all the lands.

### 14.3.3.2 Cosmic existence

The temple's interior is the vital centre of the country (verse 29). In the back of the temple is the life of Sumer (verse 30). One can easily understand these two verses as referring to the cella, the living quarters of the goddess Nintu/Ninḫursanga. Kesh Temple is the home of the goddess, her house.

### 14.3.3.3 Seat of power

It is suggested that the goddess resides inside the temple, but not explicitly stated.

## 14.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain        the house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	Shrine, oracle, crown
<b>Filling</b>	Ox, bull, fruit, no sacrifice, music
<b>Existence</b>	Cosmic tree, interior, seat of power

### 14.4.1 Conclusion

Structural language such as interior, shrine, and the back describes the architecture of the temple. The structural language presupposes a functioning temple where acts of cult such as reading oracles take place. The filling is indicated by words such as fruit, ox, and bull.

Here the poet draws on agricultural language to describe the temple with. The roaring of the bull in the second house may be a reference to music made by bull horns. Music may indicate feasting, but that interpretation is not certain.

The word **temen** may indicate the cosmic tree, and as such functions as an Axis Mundi. In the previous house, the mountain metaphor served the same purpose of emphasizing the cosmic axis. Another way that serves to describe the cosmic axis or Axis Mundi is the mention of the word shadow. The shadow of the temple covers all lands. In Sumerian myth as well as the Bible the cosmic tree cast just such a shadow. The description of the shadow of the temple covering all the lands should be taken as an oblique reference to the cosmic tree. It has been shown that both kings and temples could metaphorically be described as the Cosmic Tree.

The meaning of the name Kesh may be the reason why the poet has the cosmic tree in the back of his mind. It is the place that binds. One takes this to mean that heaven and earth are joined at the Kesh temple. The goddess of the temple is mentioned explicitly. Nintur performs the oracles of the Kesh temple. It is her seat of power.

The Kesh Temple is the shrine of the goddess. It is her home described in terms of the ancient cosmic view expressed by the theme of the tree. The cosmic tree served as a metaphor to describe the cosmos metaphorically.

# CHAPTER 15

## THE THIRD HOUSE

### 15.1 ABSTRACT

*The third house begins with a description of the above and below. The temple is twice the volume above than it is below. This is followed by a series of animal metaphors. The temple is a stag below, a bison above. Throughout the strophe, the poet continues with the apposition above and below. The animal metaphor is followed by a cosmic description of the sun and moon. Weapons are next with the temple compared to the axe and mace. The strophe ends with the temple being described as a spring. It ends with the description that the temple is threefold.*

### 15.2 THE DISCUSSION OF THE THIRD HOUSE

45. “É an-šè 600 gána ki-šè 300 gána”

46. “É an-šè gána ki-šè 5 gána”

45. “[...] House, six hundred cubic iku above (ground), three hundred cubic iku below (ground) [...]”

46. “[...] House, ten cubic iku above ground, five cubic iku below [...]” (Gragg 1969: 169, 170)

Third House begins with architectural language which describes the structure of the temple. The Kesh Temple is described in terms of volume, with the top being twice that of the bottom. Verses 45 and 46 are structured around two Sumerian words / **an-šè - ki-šè**/ (Gragg 1969: 169). The words mean:

- **An** heaven
- **Ki** earth



- Šè terminative (Halloran 1996 - 2019: 6, 12 and 16)

The words have been translated by Gragg (1969) as above / **an-šè**/ and below / **ki-šè**/. Wilcke renders the word as 'to heaven' and 'to earth' which is a good translation of the terms (Wilcke 2006: 222). He has something to tell us about the meaning of the numbers in the text. Accordingly, to him, the 600 **gána** works out to 19.400.000 m<sup>3</sup>. This corresponds to a 19, 4 m high wall. The 300 **gána** would be half that. The 10 **gána** works out to 1/60 of the initial volume of 600 (Wilcke 2006: 215).

Jacobsen is of the opinion that the numbers detail the volume of the structure above and below the ground. The 600 and 300 **gána** in verse 45 would deal with the whole temple. The 10 and 5 **gána** would be for the volume of the temple above and below on the foundation terrace (Jacobsen 1987: 380). The ETCSL have 10 and 5 **šar** for line 45 and 10 and 5 **bur** for line 46 respectively (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 - 2006). Two different aspects of the temples are being referred to here.

In this house, we have the opposition **an-šè/ki-šè** in lines 45-52. Only the last line of this house before the refrain does not have this opposition. It does have the word **an-šè** (top) in it. The poet is contrasting the top and bottom of the temple with each other. Jacobsen is of the opinion that this refers to the foundation fill against the volume of the temple at the surface (Jacobsen 1987: 380, 381). This contrast of top against bottom is then filled with various similes and metaphors.

The opposition **an-šè/ki-šè** completes the circle of description thus filling the full measure of the temple. It is like the concept of **an-ki** on which this is based in my interpretation. The temple fills both the top and bottom of the cosmos as Jacobsen translates it (Jacobsen 1987: 38, 381). In the ETCSL (1998 – 2006) one reads 'upper end 'against 'lower end' (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 - 2006) lines 45 - 57.

At the core of the wordplay in the opposition **an-šè/ki-šè** is the Sumerian word /**an**/ and /**ki**/. Together they form the word **an-ki**. This word is a fundamental construct in Sumerian thought since it means the totality of the cosmos i.e., heaven and earth (Halloran 1996 – 2019: 78). The poet did not choose these figures of speech randomly. They had a cultically

significant meaning. “[...] ...no picture or symbol is chosen at random – most if not all the symbols, comparisons or figures of speech always appear to have some deeper or culturally significant connotation, that relate directly to the object in question [...]” (Øiseth 2007: 18).

In this house, the poet discusses the temple terms of above and below. The use of the words /an/ and /ki/ in the construction /an-šè/ki-šè/ means it should be considered that the poet is speaking in cosmic terms. The temple is part of the “[...] structure of the universe [...]” (Clifford 1972: 15) also (Øiseth 2007: 69, 77, 80; Averbek 1987: 194).

The volume in the first two verses could then be understood in cosmic terms. The temple fills the known universe. The numbers become significant when one thinks in this way. The heavens are twice the volume of the underworld. This is true of both sets of numbers. The temple fills the cosmos (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2009: 65; Clifford 1972: 15).

The temple is completed both in the visible and invisible spheres. It is above ground, and it is below ground. That which is visible above ground supersedes that which is below ground. This is as it should be. Heaven is above earth in the dominating position. It has twice the volume of the underworld. At the same time, the underworld is the source of the fructifying waters of the Abzu (Lundquist 1983: 5, 6; Clifford 1972: 15; Øiseth 2007: 83).

47. **“É an-šè alim ki-šè lu-lim”**

47. “[...] Temple, at its top bison, at the bottom a stag [...]”

48. **“É an-šè šeg<sub>9</sub>-bar ki-šè dàra-maš”**

48. “[...] Temple, at its top a wild ram, at its bottom a deer [...]”

49. **“É an-šè šg<sub>9</sub>-bar-da-a ki-šè”**

49. “[...] Temple, at its top a many-colored wild ram; at its bottom a beautiful deer [...]”  
(Gragg 1969: 169, 170)

In the next few lines (47-49) animal metaphor is used to express the same idea as the opening two lines. Various animals are described as the top as opposed to another that stands for the bottom. One animal represents the structure of the temple and the other the foundation. If one understands this as cosmic descriptions one animal stands for the heavens and the other for the underworld. They form heraldic pairs in opposition to one another as are commonly found in the Uruk period glyptic art (Frankfort 1939: 17).



**Figure 11: Uruk Period Cylinder Seal**

In the picture above is well known from Susa in Elam. Unfortunately, seals from Uruk itself are fragmentary. Elam is too far south to conclude that it influenced the original poet. It is also true that we cannot know for certain when the hymn was originally composed. This leaves one other option. The lion-headed eagle is often depicted above antithetical stags (Frankfort 1939: 17).

The eagle was depicted in such a fashion above the Façade of the Ninḫursag temple at 'Ubaid between two stags (Wightman 2007: 21). As goddess of birth giving Ninḫursag possessed a chthonic aspect that fits in with line 47 that places the stag at the bottom, or in the cosmic interpretation, in the underworld (Gragg 1969: 169, 170).

The bison represents the superstructure of the temple, while the stag does the same for the foundations. When one looks at the verses there is a clear progression with the animal metaphor. The top is described variously as an animal, a wild animal, and finally as a many-colored wild animal. The progression is less visible with the bottom where we have the list of animals only twice ending with beautiful deer. This is true for both Gragg and the ETCSL

texts. Jacobsen translates progression for both top and bottom ((ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 - 2006; Gragg 1969: 169, 170; Jacobsen 1987: 381; Wilcke 2006: 222).

- **Top**>bison, wild ram, many-coloured wild ram vs. **bottom**>stag, deer, beautiful deer (Gragg 1969: 169, 170)
- **Top**>bison, wild sheep, dappled wild sheep vs. **bottom**>stag, deer, beautiful deer (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 - 2006)
- **Top**>bison, mouflon, piebald mouflon vs. **bottom**>stag, wild billy goat, graceful wild billy goat (Jacobsen 1987: 381)
- **Top**>wisent, wild sheep, wild sheep vs. **bottom** deer, Capricorn, Capricorn

(Wilcke 2006: 222)

The ETCSL (1998 – 2006) translation has another line of animal metaphors that we will discuss later. For now, we will note that there is a logical progression in all the above verses.

The structure of those animals on the top:

Bison	wild ram	many-coloured wild ram	(Gragg)
Bison	wild sheep	dappled wild sheep	(ETCSL)
Bison	mouflon	piebald mouflon	(Jacobsen)
Wisent	wild sheep	wild sheep	(Wilcke)

The bottom shows a similar progression:

Stag	deer	beautiful deer	(Gragg)
Stag	deer	beautiful deer	(ETCSL)
Stag	wild billy goat	graceful wild billy goat	(Jacobsen)
Deer	Capricorn	Capricorn	(Wilcke)

It is clear, however, that the poet plays with a progression of some sort. The ETCSL (1998 – 2006) translation adds a fourth line of animal metaphor. This line will be discussed below.

All the translators agree that the first animal on top is the Bison in verse 47. In verses 48 and 49 all translators agree on the wild sheep as the animal representing the temple on top.

Wilcke believes that the animals are a metaphor for the colour of the paint of the temple

(Wilcke 2006: 216). The animal metaphor serves the same purpose as the volume of the temple did. The first animals stood for the heavens, while the second line of animals represented the underworld (Gragg 1969: 169, 170).

The stag is preferred as the animal for the bottom by three translations with only Wilcke dissenting with a deer. The animals in verses 48 and 49 are split between the translators with Gragg and the ETCSL preferring deer and the other two goats. All the animals still represent the bottom or should be understood as standing metaphorically for the underworld (Gragg 1969: 169, 170).

Source domain      **an-ki**

Target domain      volume, various animals, weapons, the sun and moon, mountain, spring

The extra line in the ETCSL for the third house:

50. “É an-šè muš-gu<sup>mušen</sup>-gin<sub>7</sub> sig<sub>7</sub>-ga ki-šè u<sub>5</sub><sup>mušen</sup>-gin<sub>7</sub> a-e šu<sub>2</sub>-a”

50. “[...] House, at its upper end green as a snake-eater bird, at its lower end floating on the water like a pelican [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2:1998 - 2006)

The difference is immediately obvious. Previously we had dealt with cattle, deer and sheep/goats, all hooved animals. In this verse, we are dealing with birds. We can now add these animals to the list to see what we have.

- Snake-eater bird vs. Pelican

In line with the conceptual metaphor **an-ki** (heaven and earth), the snake-eater bird is an image for the heavens, while the pelican represents the underworld. The snake eater bird reminds of the myths of ‘*Etana*’ where the Anzu eats the young of the serpent. In the Sumerian myth, the Anzu occupies the top of the world tree and represents heaven (Horowitz 1998: 43 - 67). The pelican is a water bird that floats upon the water bringing the image of the Abzu to mind. The Abzu is located inside the underworld (Horowitz 1998: XII).

50. “É an-šè utu-gin è-a ki-šè iti-gin-bàra-ga”

50. “[...] Temple, at its top rising as the sun, at its bottom setting as the moon [...]” (Gragg 1969: 169, 170)

Jacobsen and the ETCSL translate this verse differently. Jacobsen has “[...] rising like the sun above, spread like moonlight below [...]” (1987:381) while the ETCSL translates it as: “[...] House, at its upper end rising like the sun, at its lower end spreading like the moonlight [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 - 2006).

- **Bàra** spread out upon (Foxvog 1967: 9)

The sun rules the daylight. It is bigger than the moon and fills heaven. The moon is smaller, but it is another heavenly body. Sumerian theology informs one that the sun is the god Utu, while the moon is the god Nanna/Suen. The moon god<sup>22</sup> is the ruler of the night and by analogy, the moon represents the underworld in verse 50. Both gods are radiant. The sun radiates the temple with light during the day while the moon does the same during the night (Gragg 1969: 170).

51. “É an-šè utúg-sul ki-šè <sup>giš</sup>tùn-àm”

51. “[...] Temple, at its top a heroic mace, at its bottom an axe [...]” (Gragg 1969: 169, 170)

In the Ninurta Myth ‘*Lugale*’ we have the following description of a mace.

“[...] Javelins he held cradled in the arm, the mittu-mace opened (in a snarl) maw at the mountains [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 240)

In this same myth Ninurta’s main weapon, Sharur, acts like a person. It calls its lord to arms against the mountains.

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<sup>22</sup> The moon was conceived on the goddess Ninlil in the underworld by Enlil (Shushan 2009: 80)

“[...] Sharur was calling to its owner from on high saying [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 236)

A whole speech is placed within the mouth of the weapon. It sings the praises of the god and tells of his coming victory. Sharur even acted as a spy reporting to his lord on enemy deliberations. Then the weapons give high praise indeed to his lord. He calls him the mace of the god, An (Jacobsen 1987: 242).

“[...] Ninurta, (warrior-) king, An’s mace, drawing not back the first raised against the foe [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 242)

In the end, victorious he rinsed his weapons in water.

“[...] The lord rinsed belt and weapon in water, rinsed the mittu-mace in water [...] (Jacobsen 1987: 250)

In the end, he sentenced the rebels, and a feast was held in his honour. The mace was the weapon of the gods, but it was also the humble arm of the ordinary soldier. Yet it was sung in epic and myth, given human-like characterizations, and even eulogizes its master. We will stop here with the mace (Jacobsen 1987: 250).

The axe is next.

In the text, *‘Gilgamesh and Aka’* Jacobsen have this intriguing comment about an axe.

“[...] May the carpenter put back the thongs on the implements of battle [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 350)

Accordingly, to him, the thongs in question were the bindings that bound the axe head to the haft. The thongs binding the axe head to the shaft would be taken off when the weapons were stored to prevent them from drying out and cracking. If the straps cracked the weapon would have been useless (Jacobsen 1987: 350).

Jacobsen translates verse 51 as “[...] noble mesu tree above, a sappy cedar below [...]” (1987: 381) He differs from Gragg (1969) and the ETCSL (1996 – 2006) who keep the weapons.

In the text ‘*Gilgamesh and Aka*’, war is described between king Aka and Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh wins the support of the young men to go to war and subsequently defeats Aka. This is just one of the stories that feature Gilgamesh and his use of weapons. It is difficult to understand why the mace represents the top of the temple and the axe the bottom. One reason may be that the mace was associated with the gods. Many mace heads were found inside the temple of Tell Asmar’s cella, some of them in association with the altar (Delougaz & Lloyd 1942: 171 – 191; Sheen 1982: 120 – 121).

52. “É an-šè kur-ra-àm ki-šè idim-ma-àm”

52. “[...] Temple, at its top a mountain, at its bottom a spring [...]” (Gragg 1969: 169, 170)

The choice of images in this verse is easier to understand. A mountain belongs to the top since its peak touches the heavens. The spring brings the Abzu into mind. The poet used the juxtaposition of mountains and spring before (Gragg 1969: 168). We read:

17. “[...] Springing up like the Abzu, making the mountain green [...]” (Gragg 1969: 168)

17. “[...] {Rooted in the abzu} {(2 mss. have instead:) Colourful as the abzu}, verdant like the mountains [...]” (ETCS translation: t.4.80.2)

17. “[...] Opalescent like the deep, green like the hills [...]” (Jacobsen 1987:379)

52. “[...] Temple, at its top a mountain, at its bottom a spring [...]” (Gragg 1969: 170)

52. “[...] House, at its upper end a mountain, at its lower end a spring [...]” (ETCS translation: t.4.80.2)



52. “[...] House, mountain above ground, below, the springs of the deep [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 381)

The mountain imagery goes deeper than a mere metaphor. It is a theological statement about the function of the temple. Kesh temple is a shrine of the goddess of birth giving. As such it links heaven and earth together. “[...] ...the vivid ‘surface’ mountain and mountain range imagery and the reference to the heavens have deeper meanings. They describe the cosmic function of the shrine [...]” (Edzard 1987: 15). This deeper meaning of the cosmic function of the temple is in the poet’s mind when he describes the architecture of the temple with such vivid imagery.

53. “É an-šè 3 kam-bi na-nam”

53. “[...] Temple, at its top it is indeed threefold [...]” (Gragg 1969:170)

53. “[...] House, at its upper end threefold indeed [...]” (ETCS translation: t.4.80.2)

Jacobsen omits this verse because it was a “[...] secondary elaboration of a rubric that had strayed into the text [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 381).

This verse falls outside the **an-ki** metaphor by not making use of the juxtaposition of heaven and earth. It only mentions the top of the temple with the puzzling statement that the temple is threefold. The threefold might indicate the nature of the otherworld since it was hidden. The path could not be easily accessed by mere mortals. This was the realm of the gods. The path to the top (read heaven) was twisted: threefold! It might also be understood as a reference to the three main cosmic realms<sup>23</sup> filled by the temple’s structure (Horowitz 1998: XII, Clifford 1972: 15).

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<sup>23</sup> Heaven, earth and the underworld (Horowitz 1998: XII)

## 15.3 THE ANALYSES OF THE THIRD HOUSE

### 15.3.1 BUILDING

#### 15.3.1.1 Structure

The description of the volume of the temple indicates the structure of the temple as a complete building. The various other metaphors build upon this structure using the juxtaposition above and below.

#### 15.3.1.2 Cult

While cult is not explicitly mentioned, nuances of it may be understood. The reference to the mace as a cultic object in verse 51 is one example.

#### 15.3.1.3 Status

The status of various objects, animals, and gods is an important theme in the third house. The top is larger than the bottom in volume. The bigger animals are on top. The mace is the cult weapon of choice while the mountain is larger than the spring. The subtle commentary seems to indicate that top, life in the day, is to be preferred to life in the underworld.

### 15.3.2 FILLING

#### 15.3.2.1 Agriculture

Despite the mention of animals in the third house, it should not be understood as a reference to agriculture. The animals have cosmic significance.

#### 15.3.2.2 Sacrifice

No mention of sacrifice in the third house.

#### 15.3.2.3 Commensality

Feasting is not mentioned.

## 15.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 15.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

The temple fills the cosmos in the third house. It is the main theme. Part of the cosmos is the concept of the Axis Mundi.

### 15.3.3.2 Cosmic existence

The sun and moon mentioned in verse 50 were conceptualized by the Sumerians as gods. The radiant gods of the Sumerian pantheon fill the Kesh temple with light above as well as below.

### 15.3.3.3 Seat of power

The temple is the seat of Ninḫursag-Nintu, and it fills the cosmos.

## 15.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain      the house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	Volume, bison, stag, mace, bigger and smaller
<b>Filling</b>	No agriculture, mountain, spring, no feasting
<b>Existence</b>	Temple fills the cosmos, radiant gods, it is a cosmic house

### 15.4.1 Conclusion

The structure of the temple is the main theme of the third house. The use of volume by the poet in the first two verses indicates how one should understand the rest of the metaphors. When the poet uses animals, such as the bison and the stag, he is still referencing the

structure of the temple. The bison is above, and the stag is below. The mace is above and the axe below. The sun is above and the moon below.

In the poets' mind, these perplexing metaphors adequately describe the structure of Kesh temple. The key to understanding house three is in the construction of **an-šè** and **ki-šè**. The construction, meaning above and below, is based on the compound word **an-ki** which means the totality of the cosmos or the entire universe. Theologically the Kesh Temple fills the cosmos so completely that it contains heavenly bodies such as the sun and moon inside its structure. It should be remembered that the moon and sun are gods in Sumerian theology.

Kesh temple is a cosmic house. The animal metaphor does not indicate filling but is an architectural language. They describe the cosmic nature of the temple. Weapons such as the mace and the axe indicate the presence of gods and heroes in the temple. Cosmologically these beings can traverse the layers of the cosmos, yet they are inside the Kesh temple making the temple synonymous with the totality of the cosmos. Using structural language, the poet indicates a theological truth. The Kesh temple fills all the layers of the cosmos which consists of heaven, earth and the underworld; it is the cosmos in a certain sense.

# CHAPTER 16

## THE FOURTH HOUSE

### 16.1 ABSTRACT

*The poet introduces the temple as a city. The city is the residence of the heroes who cast oracles inside the temple. The temple herds oxen and sheep for sacrifice and omens. It is purified with cedar oil and the rulers bring the temple tribute. The temple has a crown that touches the sky. The temple is a metaphorical mountain.*

### 16. THE DISCUSSION OF FOURTH HOUSE

58. **“Uru<sup>ki</sup> ga-àm šà-bi a-ba mu-zu”**

58. “[...] Indeed, indeed it is a city<sup>24</sup>, who knows its interior [...]”

59. **“É-keš uru<sup>ki</sup> ga-àm šà -bi a-ba mu-zu”**

59. “[...] The Kesh temple is indeed a city, who knows its interior [...]”

60. **“Šà -bi ur-sag-ur-sag-e-ne mu-un-si-sá-e-ne”**

60. “[...] Into its interior the heroes go straightway [...]”

61. **“Eš-bar-kin du<sub>11</sub>-gaš-gal mu-un-du<sub>7</sub>-du<sub>7</sub>”**

61. “[...] They accomplish perfectly it's oracles [...]” (Gragg 1969: 171)

Lines 58 and 59 mentions a city using the Sumerian word **Uru<sup>ki</sup>**. **Ki** is a determinative indicating that the word preceding it is a place or location. In this case it is a city. Although the Kesh Temple was located inside a city it has not yet been found. Mesopotamia was primarily an urbanized society (Kramer 1963: 1). Located theologically in the center of the world each city belonged to a god or goddess to which the fortunes of the city were closely

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<sup>24</sup> Mesopotamia was the most urbanized ancient civilization (Van De Mieroop 1997: 3)

tied. Decline in the fortune of the city was interpreted to mean that the deity abandoned the city. The close connection of the deity to the city can be seen in the two verses under discussion. The poet does not distinguish between the city and the Kesh temple. They are one (Van de Mieroop 1997: 1,2, 16, 18, 20 and 21).

The fourth house opens with a rhetorical question. The poet asks: who knows the interior of the Kesh Temple? He answers his own question in verse 60. The heroes know the interior of the temple of Kesh. They are the ones who accomplish the oracles of the temple. It is not overtly specified who the heroes are, but the refrain mentions Ashgi as a hero. Biggs (Biggs 1971: 1) informs us that Ashgi disappeared from common knowledge by about the Ur III period, which means that any mention of him in a text must date at least to that period.

The refrain has the following line about the god Ashgi or Aššir:

“[...] One great as Kesh – has any man been this worthy [...]”

“*One great as its hero Aššir* – has any mother ever borne him [...]”

One great as its lady Nintu – who has ever seen him [...]” (Gragg 1969: 170)

Jacobsen rendered verses 58 and 60 completely differently. He has:

“[...] it is, too, a storm cloud, is too a storm cloud. Who can know its heart [...]”? (Jacobsen 1987: 381).

He renders the word / šà/ with its alternative meaning of heart. I do not fundamentally disagree with him in his translation since the word can mean heart.

- **Šag<sub>4</sub>, šà:** n., intestines; gut; *heart*; stomach; abdomen; entrails; content; womb; body; *interior*, midst, inside; bed of a river; will, volition; mood; meaning, significance (grain/excrement + water/urine +chamber) [ŠA3 archaic frequency: 137; concatenates 6 sign variants] (Halloran 1999-2019: 27)

The meaning of the word /šà/ will crop up in the fifth house where it also appears in the context of the heroes. For instance, line sixty has its equivalent in line seventy-six:

60. **“Ša-bi ur-sag-ur-sag-e-ne mu-un-si-sá-e-ne”**

76. **“Šà-bi ur-sag-ur-ur-sag-e-ne ši-mu-un-nín-si-sa”**

76. “[...] inside it warrior priests set things to right [...]” (my italics) (Gragg 1969: 172)

The heroes in line sixty as well as in line 76 rush into the temple or into its heart if Jacobsen is to be believed. The ETCSL omits verse 61 completely. Wilcke understands the word hero (**ur-sag**) as warrior in this context (Wilcke 2006: 224). In the fifth house two other verses contain the word /šà/.

74. **“É pirig ù-tu šà-bi ur-sag sù-ud”**

74. “[...] House giving birth to lions, its heart a warrior, inscrutable [...]”

75. **“È-kèš<sup>ki</sup> pirig ù-tu šà-bi ur-sag sù-ud”**

75. “[...] House Kesh giving birth to lions, its heart a warrior, inscrutable [...]” (my italics) (Gragg 1969: 172)

In verses 74 and 75 Gragg understood the word /šà/ to mean heart. In the same house (house five) Gragg renders the word šà/ to mean interior in verse 77.

77. **“<sup>d</sup>nin-ḥur-sag-gá ušum-gal-àm šà im-mi-in-tuš”**

77. “[...] Ninḥursag, like a great dragon, sits (in its) interior [...]” (Gragg 1969: 172)

In house four and house five the poet plays with the word interior/heart /šà/, and the word hero /**ur-sag**/. In house five verses 74 and 75 he plays with the word hero and lion, using it almost interchangeably. The hero /**ur-sag**/ is also a lion /**piriḡ**/. The heroes are lions who enter the heart of the temple (Gragg 1969: 170, 172).

This discussion of the meaning of /šà/ will be continued in the analysis of house five. The conclusion on the use of the word /šà/ in the analysis of house four is: for the moment Gragg’s rendering of verses 58 – 60 with /šà/ understood and rendered as ‘interior’ is

accepted. The next verse under consideration is 61. The heroes inside the temple perform oracles (Gragg 1969: 170).

The oracles were probably performed using extispicy (reading the liver of animals for omens) (Reiner 1960: 24). Jacobsen renders this verse with “[...] Inside it warrior (priests) set things to right, perform with great correctness the divinations [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 381). For Jacobsen, the heroes are the priests serving in the temple performing cultic rites like extispicy. His explanation is plausible enough to agree with him. Verse 61 probably does refer to priests called heroes (**ur-sag**). The question will come up once again in the analysis of house five. Now we will leave this question with Jacobsen’s interpretation now (Jacobsen 1987: 381)

62. “É gu<sub>4</sub>-du<sub>7</sub>-du<sub>7</sub>-dam gu<sub>4</sub> àm-ma-gur-re”

62. “[...] (At) the temple unblemished oxen are gathered in herds [...]”

63. “É gu<sub>4</sub>-šar-a al-kú-e”

63. “[...] The temple consumes many oxen [...]”

64. “É udu- šar-a-àm al-kú-e”

64. “[...] The temple consumes many sheep [...]” (Gragg 1969: 171)

Verses 62 – 64 mention unblemished oxen gathered in herds near the temple. The next two verses are rendered that the temple consumes many oxen, and many sheep. When we read Jacobsen, he renders verses 63 and 64 as:

“[...] The house is consuming hundreds of oxen [...]” “[...] The temple is consuming hundreds<sup>25</sup> of sheep [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 381)

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<sup>25</sup> According to Jacobsen the original Sumerian reads 3600 which he rendered as hundreds (Jacobsen 1987: 381)



Now it looks as if he agrees with Gragg, with the difference that Gragg said many sheep while Jacobsen understood it as hundreds. The ETCSL followed Gragg in his rendering of verses 63 and 64 (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2:1998 - 2003). Wilcke produced something different from the others to the extent that it will have to be discounted. This may not be Wilcke's fault but the poor English from German translation I have at my disposal (Wilcke 2006: 224).

The temple consuming hundreds of animals probably refers to sacrifice. That is why the herds of oxen in verse 62 must be unblemished. Only ritually pure animals would have been fit for the table of a goddess such as Ninḫursag/Nintu. These three verses are an example of the human habit of anthropomorphizing their environment. The temple consumes (eats) animals like humans (Hirschman 2002: 317).

Verse 61 should be considered considering verses 60 and 61. To perform the oracle (extispicy) the heroes would need animals as described in verses 62 – 64. In the texts found at the Inanna temple in Nippur texts inform us about the fodder stored to feed such herds (Van Driel 1995: 398). The animals would have been the source of the kidneys and other body parts used in extispicy. This would have been part of the rituals of preparing the temple for service (Reiner 1960: 24).

#### 65. “Eren x-ma- àm gú-bi luḫ-luḫ-ḫa”

65. “[...] Its cedars are.... their.... are purified [...]” (Gragg 1969: 171)

The ETCSL does not render this verse mentioning that the line is fragmentary. Jacobsen has “[...] It is..... its ‘head’ is washed [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 381). Wilcke (Wilcke 2006: 224) is not much help either. To understand the meaning of verse 65 better we should look at the dictionary. The keyword is **luḫ**.

- **luḫ, làḫ**: to be clean, fresh; to clean; to wash; to sweep (**la**, 'youthful freshness', + **ḫe**, 'to mix') (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 29)
- (**ḡiš, šim**) **erin, eren**: cedar; to anoint with cedar-oil [**ERIN** archaic frequency: 105] (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 55)

The thought seems to be something (an altar?) that is washed or anointed with cedar oil. This would be a ritual action where the 'head' (altar?) is anointed with cedar oil. This ritual action would cleanse the temple to prepare it for service. It is difficult to tell since the line is damaged in the original document (Jacobsen 1987: 381).

**66. “Bára-bára-e-ne gú-ne àm-ma-gál-le-ne”**

66. “[...] Those who sit on thrones bow their necks [...]” (Gragg 1969: 171)

The preparations for the temple are nearing completion. The heroes have entered the heart of the temple and completed the oracles. The 'head' (altar?) may have been anointed with cedar oil. The Kesh Temple is ready to receive the goddess. It is time for human rulers to prove their respect. In Jacobsen's rendering of the verse, the rulers are contributing tribute to the temple (Jacobsen 1987: 381).

**67. “<sup>giš</sup>taškarin-da men an-da gùr-ru”**

67. “[...] boxwood three bearing its crown to the sky [...]”

**68. “<sup>giš</sup>asal-gin an-da tál-tál sal-la”**

68. “[...] Like a poplar...spreading out to the sky [...]” (Gragg 1969: 171)

These two verses continue from the previous one. Verse 66 mentions the rulers who bow their necks before the throne. Verse 67 places a crown on the boxwood tree. Jacobsen renders this verse beautifully as: “[...] It wears a crown (to vie) with the boxwood tree [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 382). It is like the poplar tree “[...] spreading out to the sky [...]” (Gragg 1969: 171).

These two verses contain regal imagery. The trees are anthropomorphized into regal persons who stand tall enough to touch the sky (Hirschman 2002: 317). These two verses make use of the word /**an-da**/ which means:

- **An** sky
- **Da** to the side of (comitative case) (Halloran 1996 - 2019: 6, 9)

The trees touch the heavens. In other words, the Kesh Temple is the one touching the sky since these two verses are metaphors describing the temple.

- People are plants

Source domain        plants, trees

Target domain        people        (Marsal 2018: 23)

Marsal (Marsal 2018: 23) mentions that trees are a metaphor of scale and verticality. This conceptual metaphor works for verses 67 and 68 since the tree is anthropomorphized i. e. it wears a crown (Jacobsen 1987: 382). The poet emphasizes the vertical dimension of the temple. He did so previously in various ways. The word **temen** may contain the thought of the world tree in its conception (Halloran 1996 – 2019: 68). The name of the temple (Kesh) may be an analogy of the concept **dur-an-ki** (bond of heaven and earth). The temple is tall. It touches the sky. The temple has a cosmic vertical aspect (Black et al 2004: 74).

#### 69. “**Ḥur-sag-da an-da sig<sub>7</sub>-sig<sub>7</sub>-ga**”

69. “[...] Like the Mountains green as the sky [...]” (Gragg 1969:171)

Verse 69 continues with the word **/an-da/** which means toward the sky. The mountain metaphor should be understood as another metaphor to indicate verticality (Øiseth 2007: 83; Edzard 1987: 13). The temple is in the sky Kesh temple is a cosmic entity. Jacobsen brings this verse directly into connection with the goddess Ninḥursag/Nintu (Jacobsen 1987: 382). Her name does mean ‘Lady Head Mountain’. The temple of the goddess is green like the mountains from which the goddess takes her name. It is fruitful just as she is. Jacobsen’s translation makes more sense than Gragg’s (Jacobsen 1987: 382).

“[...] It is greening (to vie) with the hills [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 382)

The hills in Jacobsen’s understanding of the text would be the goddess of the temple. She is the green hills. Ninḥursag is the one that makes the temple fruitful.

## 16. 3 THE ANALYSIS OF THE FOURTH HOUSE

### 16.3.1 BUILDING

#### 16.3.1.1 Structure

The temple is described as a city that is a complicated structure. The poet speaks of the inside of the temple. Metaphors of verticality are used to indicate the monumental nature of the temple.

#### 16.3.1.2 Cult

House four mentions oracles, the herds of pure oxen and sheep kept by the temple, as well as the anointing of the 'head' (altar?) of the temple with cedar oil.

#### 16.3.1.3 Status

Royal persons bow their heads before the temple and provide tribute.

### 16.3.2 FILLING

#### 16.3.2.1 Agriculture

Herds of oxen and sheep are mentioned.

#### 16.3.2.2 Sacrifice

The oracles (if extispicy) would have required the sacrifice of animals. The temple consumes hundreds of oxen and sheep.

#### 16.3.2.3 Commensality

Feasting is not explicitly mentioned.

## 16.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 16.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

Metaphors of verticality mention the temple as trees and a mountain.

### 16.3.3.2 Cosmic relations

In Jacobsen's rendering of the last verse, he understands the hills to be a reference to Ninḫursag as a goddess.

### 16.3.3.3 Seat of power

The temple is powerful enough to force a respectful response from kings.

## 16.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Target domain      the house

Source domain

<b>Building</b>	The temple is a city, cedar oil, oracles, crown
<b>Filling</b>	Herds of pure animals, consumes animals, no overt feasting
<b>Existence</b>	Trees and mountain metaphors, the hills is Ninḫursag, kings reference the temple with tribute, expicy is mentioned

### 16.4.1 Conclusion

The temple is one with the city. The fate of the city is intimately tied to the fate of the deity. If the deity leaves the city, it will lead to its decline. The anointing with cedar oil is probably a ritual action where the altar was purified. The oracles are a ritual of divination that would have used the entrails of the animals mentioned, called extispicy. Ritually pure animals would have been needed for that. The animals would have been sacrificed.

The mention of mountains builds on the long-standing pun on the goddess's name. Once more the vertical aspect is mentioned, this time using trees. As Marsal (2018) pointed out, trees are a measure of scale and verticality. The word /šà/ should be understood in the same context as heroes. Heroes such as Gilgamesh possessed the ability to travel through cosmic planes i.e. *'The Epic of Gilgamesh'* (Foster 2001: xxi, 67, 68; Noegel 2005: 239 - 241).

The Kesh Temple is a power in the land. Specifically, the power belongs to the goddess. Kings respond to her power by gifting the temple with tribute. The king's bringing tribute is part of that tradition.

# CHAPTER 17

## THE FIFTH HOUSE

### 17.1 ABSTRACT

*The temple gives birth to lions; it is a warrior. The warrior-priests function inside the temple. Ninḫursag the goddess sits like a dragon inside the Kesh Temple. Nintu serves the Sumerian world in her capability as a birth goddess. With the goddess live her husband and son. She is served by her high officials.*

### 17.2 THE DISCUSSION OF THE FIFTH HOUSE

74. **“É pirig ù-tu šà-bi ur-sag sù-ud”**

74. “[...] House giving birth to lions, its heart a warrior, inscrutable [...]”

75. **“È-kèš<sup>ki</sup> pirig ù-tu šà-bi ur-sag sù-ud”**

75. “[...] house Kesh giving birth to lions, its heart a warrior, inscrutable [...]”

76. **“Šà-bi ur-sag-ur-ur-sag-e-ne ši-mu-un-nín-si-sa”**

76. “[...] Inside it warrior priests set things to right [...]” (Gragg 1969: 172)

The role of goddesses in the Divine sphere reflected the biological, social and cultural roles women played in real life (Chavalas 2014: 28). In verses 74 - 75 the theme is birth giving. This represents the vital aspect procreation plays in maintaining civilization (Gragg 1969: 172).

All four of these verses have the word /šà/ in common. In the Sumerian, the word /šà/ has been indicated using my italics. The discussion leftover from the fourth house will now be completed. In the fourth house, the meaning of the word /šà/ was rendered as two possibilities although it does have many different meanings. The possible meanings for

these verses are heart and interior. None of the other renderings makes sense in the context of the use of /šà/ in the text (Halloran 1999 - 2019) .

The poet used the word /šà/ in a very ambiguous manner in his text. I believe that this was a deliberate ploy by the poet. The word /šà/ is being used by the poet to pun on two concepts namely heart and interior (Klein & Sefati 2000: 26).

The pun of /šà/

- Interior
- Heart

The heart must be inside a person if you want to live. The temple could not exist without its heart. Without the heart inside the temple, which would be the goddess Ninḫursag, the temple could not exist. Gragg's and Jacobsen's rendering of the first three verses is to be preferred (Gragg 1969: 171, 172; Jacobsen 1987: 382). The temple is giving birth, and its heart is a warrior.<sup>26</sup> The warrior in question would be the goddess Ninḫursag. She possesses the heart of a warrior. As a warrior giving birth one would expect the results to be lions. The Sumerian word translated as lion means:

- **Piriḡ** (3): lion (poetic); light (**bar**<sub>6/7</sub>, 'to shine', + **niḡ**, 'thing') [PIRIG archaic frequency: 103; concatenation of 5 sign variants].
- **Píriḡ**: bright (Halloran 1996- 2019: 64)

**Piriḡ** is a poetic form of the word for lion. Another form of the word for lion is **ur-maḡ**

(Carnivorous beast + mighty) (Halloran 1996 – 2019: 155). The warrior heart of the temple births lions. This means that the word for a warrior of hero /**ur-saḡ**/ (young man + first, in

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<sup>26</sup> Jacobsen makes the note that the warrior priests of the temple would be in tune with the warrior heart of the temple (Jacobsen 1987: 382)



front) should be understood to stand in a relationship with the poetic word for lion (Halloran 1996 – 2019: 155).

It follows that a lion should be understood as a poetic description of a hero, which reminds of the verses 58 – 60. These verses play upon the same word /ur-sağ/ (hero or warrior). The warrior heart of the temple gives birth to lions which are simply a metaphor for a hero. This brings us to verse 76. The poets' build-up to his final revelation of the warrior heart<sup>27</sup> of the temple. The poet informs us that the warriors (lions) are now inside the temple. They are in the heart of the temple. It is time to meet the heart of the temple (Gragg 1969: 171, 172).

77. **“<sup>d</sup>nin-ḥur-sag-gá ušum-gal-àm šà im-mi-in-tuš”**

77. “[...] Ninḥursag, like a great dragon, sits (in its) interior [...]”

78. **“<sup>d</sup>nin-tur-ra ama-gal-la tu-tu mu-un-gá-gá”**

78. “[...] Nintu, the great mother, brought about its birth [...]” (Gragg 1969: 172)

In verses 77 and 78 the poet introduces the heart of the temple. The heart of the temple is the goddess Ninḥursag/Nintu<sup>28</sup>. Verse 77 continues using the pun /šà/ playing with the heart and interior. The heart of the temple is the goddess who gave birth to lions. The lions enter the temple to be with their mother. In lines 74 and 75, our poet is playing with another word which is the word /tu (d)/<sup>29</sup> (Halloran 1999 -2019: 24).

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<sup>27</sup> The warrior-priests perform divinations inside the temple just like the oracles in house four verse 61 (Jacobsen 1987: 382)

<sup>28</sup> The god or goddess lived in the temple surrounded by her family and court (Bottéro 1987: 69)

<sup>29</sup> The goddess Nintud may have had a form that aided in the casting of statues built around /dú/ (Jacobsen 1987: 408)

- **tud, tu, dú:** to bear, give birth to; to beget; to be born; to make, fashion, create; to be reborn, transformed, changed (to approach and meet + to go out) (Halloran 1999-2019: 24)

This time the pun is upon the meaning of the name of the goddess Nintu (Klein & Sefati 2000: 26). She is the goddess whose control function (**me**) is parturition (birth-giving). In the archaic **zà-mí** hymns found at Fara (c. 2500 BCE) one hymn was found singing about Nintu. In a certain sense, Nintu is giving birth to the temple (Biggs 2009: 196 & Biggs 1974: 48).

**“Kèš sig<sub>4</sub> – tu-tu/ É-tu <sup>mušen</sup>-gùn - tur / Ama <sup>d</sup>nin-tu zà-mì”**

“[...] Kesh, the brick of birth giving, the temple of the young multicoloured dove, to the mother Nintu praise [...]” (Biggs 2009: 196 & Biggs 1974: 48).

“[...] You lay down the brick of Bēlet ilī<sup>30</sup>. On the brick of Bēlet ilī you scatter a scatter-offering (of grain) [...]” Tul. No. 27 in (Dick 1999:109)

In Egypt women historically gave birth while crouched with both feet planted upon bricks or pots (Roth & Roehrig 2002: 130). The upturned basins (or bricks) are called **Magūr** which reminds of the Magur boat used in Nanna-Suen’s procession to Nippur (Ferrara 1973: 203 - 205; Hall 1985: 338, 34). The god Enki also sailed in the Magur boat (Kramer & Meier 1989: 43, 81). Similarly, the foetus is called a **gi**- boat being steered through the water of the amniotic fluid in a childbirth incantation (Faber 1984: 314). The Sumerians had drinking vessels called **Tilimda** which are described as Magur boats (Kramer & Meier 1989: 59).

Table of Meanings for mother goddess names

Nin mah	magnificent queen
Nintud/Nintu	queen of the birthing hut

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<sup>30</sup> Birth goddess Dingir-maḥ also known as Nintu and Ninḥursag (2500 BCE)

The goddess Ninḫursag<sup>31</sup> sits in the interior of the temple. Jacobsen renders verse 77 as “[...] Ninḫursaġa, uniquely great, acts as midwife [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 382). The ETCSL agrees with Gragg while Wilcke has his own translation. Verse 77 informs one that Ninḫursag is like a dragon. A dragon is also a form of serpent (Ogden 2013: 2, 3). Dragons related to the gods from an early period (Hornblower 1933: 80).

Indeed, the serpent as a symbol of the goddess is of deep antiquity (Lemming & Jake 1994: 10; Alban 2003: 5). As Van der Westhuizen (Van der Westhuizen 2007: 771) notes the term ‘dragon’ was used as a metaphor and eventually became a symbol. In this case dragon is a metaphor of the goddess Ninḫursag<sup>32</sup>. Let us look at the meaning of the Sumerian word used as a metaphor for the goddess. This word is **Ušumgal**:

- **Ušum, ušu**: n., dragon, composite creature (uš<sub>11</sub>, 'snake venom', + am, 'wild ox').  
adj., solitary, alone.
- **Ušumgal**: lord of all, sovereign; solitary; monster of composite powers, dragon  
(ušum, 'dragon', + gal, 'great') [**UŠUMGAL** archaic frequency: 21] (Halloran 1999 –  
2019: 70)
- **Ušum**: serpent
- **ušumgal(GAL+UŠUM)**: ušum-gal great serpent, "dragon" (poetic)  
(Foxvog 2010: 61)

Ninḫursag, like a great serpent<sup>33</sup>, coils inside the temple. She is uniquely great (Jacobsen 1987: 382). It has been suggested that the woman/serpent hybrid represents a powerful

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<sup>31</sup> Ninḫursag and Nintu were names for the same goddess. The only time a distinction is made is when Ninḫursag is referred to as part of her role in the cosmic triad An, Enlil, and Ninḫursag (Jacobsen 1987: 382; Kramer 1961: 81)

<sup>32</sup> She is also called Aruru with epithets such as ‘builder of that which has breath’, Carpenter, Coppersmith and Lady Potter (Alban 2003: 157)

<sup>33</sup> A dragon is often depicted as a real animal such as a snake (Van Der Westhuizen 2007: 780)

female divine element in the ancient world including Mesopotamia (Dexter 2010: 32; Alban 2003: 4, 5). Ninḫursag is associated with the serpent but what about her aspect as Nintu<sup>34</sup>? Does Nintu have any serpent-like qualities? The answer to that question is yes.



Figure 12: Ninḫursag

In Thompson's text *'The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia'* we find the following intriguing description of Nintu.

"[...] The head has a fillet and a horn

She wears head ornaments; she wears a fly.

She wears a veil; the fist of man

She is girt about the loins

Her breast is open.

In her left arm she holds a babe sucking her breast

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<sup>34</sup> Nintur, as the midwife of the gods has the power to confer their insignia of office upon them (Jacobsen 1976: 44)

Inclining towards her right arm

From her head to her lions

The body is that of a naked woman;

*From the loins to the sole of the foot*

*Scales like those of a snake are visible.*

Her navel is compressed of a circlet;

Her name is Nintu, a form of the goddess Maḫ [...]” (my italics) (Thompson 1904: 149; Merling 1987: 259)

This description is pre-figured in a kouthroupas (mother with child) statue found in Ur, Eridu and Tell al ‘Ubaid, dating to the Ubaid (c. 5000 – 4000 BCE) period<sup>35</sup>. The figure is that of a snake woman holding a baby in her left arm, letting it suckle her left breast (Johnson 1988: 136).



**Figure 13: Ubaid Period Kouthroupas Statue**

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<sup>35</sup> The bird/snake woman appears early in the iconography of the ancient world including Mesopotamia (Dexter 2010: 32)

It has been suggested that Mesopotamian glyptic art that represents a kourotrophic scene may be linked to the mother goddesses, including Ninḥursag (Budin 2011: 191 - 194). At Halicar something like the Ubaid Period kouthroupas figure is found. Dating to c. 6000 BCE this time the kouthroupas figure is of a female with elongated eyes holding a leopard cub to her chest like a child like the Ubaid kouthroupas figure (Johnson 1988: 103). The snake god in Mesopotamia is often depicted with an anthropomorphic body with the lower body as a snake<sup>36</sup> like the description of Nintu as well as the kouthroupas figure above (Wiggerman 1997: 44).

It has been suggested that the theme of death in Shamanism is linked to the idea of a cosmic birth often likened to a return to the womb. The association of female figures with the underworld is of deep antiquity (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2009: 114, 128).

The similarities in intriguing but no direct links can yet be made between the Ubaid figure and the description of Nintu in Thompson. The Ubaid figurine possibly depicts a shaman being initiated into the other world. Something like the Ubaid figure depicted above is found in ethnography (Eliade 1964: 40).

This is an account of the initiation of a shaman of the Avan Samoyed recorded by A. A. Popov as recounted by Eliade. “[...] He remembered having been carried into the middle of a sea. There he heard his sickness (that is, smallpox) speak, saying to him: “From the lords of the water you will receive the gift of shamanizing. Your name as a shaman shall be *Huottarie* (diver)”. Then the Sickness troubled the water of the sea. The candidate came out and climbed a mountain. There he met a naked woman and began to suckle at her breast. The woman, who was probably the Lady of the Water, said to him: “You are my child; that is why I let you suckle at my breast” (Eliade 1964: 40).

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<sup>36</sup> The snake is linked with the chthonian realm (Wiggerman 1997: 44, 47)

It is suggested that the practice of shamanism influenced of Sumerian myths at their roots. “[...] Certain themes of shaman narratives are strikingly similar to themes of Sumerian and Akkadian myths. The World Tree, the Cosmic Eagle and a Serpent often feature in a shaman’s attainment of his otherworldly goal, as they do in the story of Inanna and the halub tree, in the myth of Lugalbanda and in the legend of Etana...One might suppose that shamanism was indigenous in northern Asia and extremely ancient, so that in some way it influenced Mesopotamian’s myths at their very roots [...] (Dalley 1998: 173 -175).

The persistence of shamanism in complex societies is supported by other scholars such as Winkelmann. “[...] The innate aspects of human ritual therapeutic processes found in shamanism persisted, however, in these more complex societies [...]” (Winkelmann 2008: 44). Further investigation into the practice of shamanism is beyond the scope of this work.

At Ninḫursag’s temple at Tell Al ‘Ubaid excavators found the plaque of the Anzud depicted between two stags that hung above the façade of the temple. The normal place for the lion-headed eagle was at the top of the world tree. At the bottom of the world tree, a serpent lurked among the roots. The Sumerian Temple Hymn TH 39, discussed in the study of the Tell al ‘Ubaid temple, suggests that the concept of the world or cosmic tree lies behind the theological concept of Ninḫursag’s temples (Horowitz 1998: 43 - 67; Wightman 2007: 21; Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 46; Dunham 1986: 59, 60; Eisenberg 2001:110, Dalley 2009: 189-202).

The image of the world tree with an eagle (Anzu) in the branches and the serpent in the roots is told in three Sumerian myths previously mentioned. In the discussion of House Two, it was proposed that the word **temen** may contain the image of the world tree inside it. This image of the tree, the serpent at the roots, and the eagle in the top of the branches may have been a fundamental metaphor in the Sumerian understanding of the cosmos. It may have structured their concept of the temple as fundamentally being a cosmic axis (world tree) with the serpent at the roots and the eagle at the top (Walton 2006: 175; Horowitz 1998: 43 - 67; Wightman 2007: 21; Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 46; Dunham 1986: 59, 60; Eisenberg 2001:110; Dalley 2009: 189 - 202).

Symbolically the serpent would represent /ki/ and the eagle /an/. Together they would form the composite word /an-ki/ which have been shown to mean the totality of the cosmos (Clifford 1994: 15). The three, serpent and eagle would represent the totality of the cosmos. Ninḫursag and Nintu, as birth goddesses, have a chthonic (underworld) aspect which means the serpent-like aspects suit their characters (Johnson 1988: 136; James 1960: 54, 77). Like the serpent at the root of the tree, they created new life inside the womb, for which the underworld was a metaphor. We read the following incantation about childbirth.

“[...] The woman about to give birth steered the **gi**-boat through the water,

Pure Inanna steered the **gi**-boat through the water,

Ninḫursag steered the **gi**-boat through the water [...]” (Faber 1984: 314)

The water depicted in the incantation is the waters of the Abzu. It is the waters of the underworld. The underworld may have been conceived as a womb. This is certainly the case in the Hebrew Bible where Ps. 139 has the following to say.

“[...] For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb...My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth [...]” Ps. 139: 13, 15.

A similar concept is found in Ancient Egypt. Opening the mouth, a practice originating from cleaning the mouth of an infant of mucus, formed part of the funerary rites. By opening the mouth, the ritual enables the new-born dead to breathe in the afterlife. “[...] Therefore, “the hand in the mouth” (DA*t rA*) in Ancient Egypt could also refer to that gesture done in the Opening of the Mouth ceremony by the *sem* priest in the New Kingdom and maybe the embalmer in the Old Kingdom for symbolizing the new birth of the deceased [...]” (Valdesogo 2021: 72).

Infant burials took place inside jars, and the small corpses were placed under the floors of houses with the heads almost always placed at the opening of the jar (Ilan 1995: 133, Zorn 1997: 214, 215; Budin 2011: 194). The jars may have invoked the image of the womb and the concept of rebirth (Budin 2011: 185, 193, 194, 195; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2009: 114,



128). This practice can be found in Ancient Egypt too where some infants were buried in jars (Petkov 2014: 43).

As the goddess of birth-giving, Nintu and Ninḫursag would have been deeply involved in such a rebirth. The word **/tu (d)/** contains the meaning ‘to be reborn’ in its formulation and forms part of the name Nin-**tu** (Halloran 1996 - 2019: 24). As goddesses with a chthonic aspect, Ninḫursag/Nintu would have been deeply involved in such conceptions. “[...] As birth-givers women had long been associated with the fruit-bearing earth [...]” (Lemming 1994: 19).



Figure 14: Jar Burial

79. **“<sup>d</sup>Šul-pa-è-a ensi-ke nam-en mu-un”**

79. “[...] Šulpae, the ruler, ... lordship [...]”

79. **“<sup>d</sup>aš-šir ur-sag mezem mu-un-kú-e”**

79. “[...] Aššir, the hero, consumes [...]”

81. **“<sup>d</sup>urù-maš nimgir-gal-eden-na mu-un-da-an”**

81. “[...] Urumaš, the great herald of the plains [...]” (Gragg 1969: 172)

The next three verses mention the male gods of the Kesh temple. Šulpae and Aššir or Ashgi as he was also known, were the husband and son of Ninḫursag respectively (Jacobsen 1987: 382). The ETCSL restored verse 79 as: “[...] Šul-pa-e the ruler acts as lord [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 – 2006). Wilcke names Šulpae as the en-priest of the Kesh Temple while saying that Ashgi eats the first fruits there (Wilcke 2006: 224).

The Sumerian words in verse 29 /**nam-en**/ can be restored to mean En-ship. The /**en**/ was the high priest of the temple, and it seems as if Šulpae served his wife in such a capacity. Šulpae is named as the husband of Ninḫursag that was suitable for her because he was a god of the wildlands (De Shong Meador 2009: 183). His son was associated with Ninḫursag from an early period. Biggs, in his study on Ashgi, made the following points (Biggs 1971: 1).

Ashgi or Aššir’s name was written <sup>d</sup>ŠÁR× DIŠ-gi/gi<sub>4</sub> that Biggs restored as **AŠ-ŠIR-gi**. This name is found in one of the short hymns from Tell Abū Salābīkh (Biggs 1971: 1). It reads: “**Adab nir-nun-GÍD/AN: NI: AB: SU/ <sup>d</sup>ŠÁR× DIŠ-gi (variant gu<sub>4</sub>) zà-mí**”. The translation is: “[...] Adab, the noble (?),..., Ašširgi praise [...]” (Biggs 1971: 1). Biggs notes that Ašširgi was one of the prominent gods of Adab (Biggs 1971: 1). De Shong Meador agrees with him but notes that Adab bowed the head to Kesh in submission (De Shong Meador 2009: 181).

The other point to consider is the poet calling Ashgi a hero (**ur-sag**). Calling Ashgi a hero links him with the hero of verses 74 – 76. The word used in the Sumerian is the same in all cases. The refrain mentions that Ashgi is a hero between every house. Ashgi fell out of favour during the Old Babylonian period and is not mentioned in texts from that period (Biggs 1971: 1).

## 82. “É lu-lim gu<sub>4</sub>-e àm-ma-gur-re”

82. “[...] At the temple stags are gathered in herds [...]” (Gragg 1969: 172)

Urumaš was the /**nimgir-gal-eden-na**/ which translates as ‘great herald or bailiff of the plains. Jacobsen calls him the ‘great high constable’ and renders verses 81 and 82 as. “[...] Urumaš, the great high constable.... with him in the desert is rounding up stags and oxen for the house [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 382). Gragg missed /**gu<sub>4</sub>**/ which is the word for oxen when

he rendered his verse (Gragg 1969: 172). The ETCSL follows him in their translation while Wilcke calls the animals' stags and deer (Wilcke 2006: 224).

Jacobsen's translation is to be preferred. Urumaš the high constable is rounding up herds of stags and oxen for the Kesh temple. The purpose of the herds would have been for sacrifice. Urumaš would have been responsible for this valuable resource. Urumaš served the goddess as an officer in her service. As such he would have owed her his loyalty. He was her bailiff (Jacobsen 1987: 382).

## 17.3 THE ANALYSIS OF THE FIFTH HOUSE

### 17.3.1 BUILDING

#### 17.3.1.1 Structure

The text mentions the 'heart' of the 'house' punning it as inside the house. The heart of any Mesopotamian temple would have been the cella. Inside the warrior-priests set things to right, which means that they served inside the temple.

#### 17.3.1.2 Cult

The temple gives birth to lions. Ninḫursag's temple is the temple of the goddess of birth-giving. Verse 78 mentions this explicitly. Birth-giving was the cultic function or the control aspect of the goddess.

#### 17.3.1.3 Status

The heart of the temple was sacred enough that only heroes could enter.

## 17.3.2 FILLING

### 17.3.2.1 Agriculture

Herds of stags and oxen are gathered for the use of the temple.

### 17.3.2.2 Sacrifice

Sacrifice is not mentioned.

### 17.3.2.3 Commensality

Ashgi eats the first fruits.

## 17.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 17.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

The serpent-like nature of the goddess of the temple brings the topos of the world tree in mind as a cosmic axis.

### 17.3.3.2 Cosmic relationship

Ninḫursag/Nintu's husband and son are mentioned as well as her bailiff.

### 17.3.3.3 Seat of power

It is explicitly said that Nintu sets birth-giving going. She functions within the bounds of her control attribute (me) of birth-giving. The Kesh Temple is her seat of power.

## 17.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain      the house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	Heart + interior, birth giving, heroes enter
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<b>Filling</b>	Herds of stags and oxen, no sacrifice, Ashgi eats first fruits
<b>Existence</b>	Serpent character of goddess, family mentioned, Kesh was the main cult centre for birth giving

### 17.4.1 Conclusion

Once more the word /šà/ (interior, heart) is important. Kesh temple gives birth to heroes. They are lions. One of the heroes is the god Ashgi, which is mentioned in the refrain. The heart of the temple i. e. its goddess is the one to give birth to the heroes. She is performing her function or /me/ or birth-giving. She gives birth to heroes.

In her aspect as Nintu and Ninḫursag, the goddess possesses serpent-like qualities that link her with the chthonic (underworld) sphere. As serpent-like creatures, they would have been seen as like the serpent at the roots of the world tree. The underworld was very probably seen as a womb, and it makes sense for the goddess to have a chthonic character.

If the analyses are accepted, it means that the heroes are birthed in the underworld. Their very inceptions are supernatural. This may be an echo of shamanistic practices where the shaman travels through the layers of the cosmos and is birthed into the other world. The goddess would have facilitated this 'birth'.

The plaque of the Anzu with the bird placed above two antithetical stags may be a combination of the upper world (the Anzud) and the underworld (stags). The plaque may have stood for the symbol of the world tree and the cosmic axis.

# CHAPTER 18

## THE SIXTH HOUSE

### 18.1 ABSTRACT

*The temple is like the sun standing above the foundation. A prince plays for the temple while the temple is the vital heart of the land. Kesh temple contains the life of Sumer, it is a lion lying on its paws. It possesses a gate where justice is heard; the door is like a mountain. The cella fills the universe. Its tower is supported by genii. The temple is like the shrine of Ur, the gate of Kesh.*

### 18.2 THE DISCUSSION OF SIXTH HOUSE

87. “É utu-gin ki-gal-la gub-ba”

87. “[...] Temple like the sun standing over the foundation [...]”

88. “Am-babbar-gin eden su<sub>8</sub>-g[a]”

88. “[...] Like white bulls standing about on the plain [...]” (Gragg 1969: 172, 173)

These two verses describe the Kesh temple in terms of radiance. Verse 87 compares the temple to the sun standing on its foundation. Verse 88 uses the word /**babbar**/ as an adjective to describe the temple as pure white bulls standing on the plain.

- **Babbar** (2): bright; white; the rising sun (reduplicated **bar**<sub>6</sub>, 'bright, white') [UD archaic frequency: 419] (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 51)

The temple is radiant which may have referred to whitewash covering the walls (Jacobsen 1987: 383). In the ETCSL these verses are: “[...] House positioned over its foundations like a storm, like white bulls standing about on the plain [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 – 2006). Jacobsen renders it as “[...] House standing on the socle like the rising sun goring like

a white aurochs in the desert [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 383). Wilcke compares the temple to a storm demon on a pedestal and white animals in the steppe (Wilcke 2006: 224).

It should be remembered that the sun is the god <sup>d</sup>Utu. He is the deity that rules the day with light. In the morning, the sun would exit the underworld where he remained at night through the eastern gate. As the dome of heaven turns, he would leave the world through the western gate (Huxley 1997: 191, 192). In the *‘Epic of Gilgamesh’* the hero is described as racing with the sun in order to get to the gate first or risk being immolated (Foster 2001:68, 69).

Describing the temple as a white animal to indicate radiance is found in the Sumerian Temple Hymns. We read: “**Èš é-babbar nindá-babbar**” which translates as: “[...] Shrine Ebabbar, white pure-bred steer [...]” in TH 13: 170 (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 27). In TH 13 the poet is referring to the temple of the god Utu in Larsa (Sjöberg & Bergman 1969: 27).

The Kesh temple is radiant with light. It looks like the sun standing on its platform. In the same hymn, the temple of the sun god is called a ‘shining bull’ in the ETCSL (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.1: 1998 – 2006).

Source domain      light, radiance

Target domain      sun, white bulls

#### 89. “**É nun-e ki-gar-ra tigi-da ár-ra**”

89. “[...] temple founded by the prince who with tympanum in praise [...]” (Gragg 1969: 172, 173)

Most of the translations agree with Gragg’s rendering. The temple was founded by a prince and praised with a **tigi** instrument. The **tigi** is not just an instrument but denotes a genre as well. The **tigi** to Enlil by the Ur III king Ur-Nammu was composed to commemorate the building work this king had done at Enlil’s Ekur temple. Part of the **tigi** composition reads: “[...] He instructed the shepherd Ur-Namma to make the Ekur rise high [...]” (ETCSL translation: 1998 – 2006: 7-19).

Verse 89 does not specify who the prince in question may be. We are left in the dark and can only speculate for answers. Composed in the unknown past the Kesh Temple Hymn is too ancient for us to even accurately guess who it may have been. The prince saw to it that a tigi (tympanum) played music to honour the founding of the temple (Gragg 1969: 173).

90. “É šà-bi-ta zi lipiš-bi kalam-ma”

90. [...] Temple at whose interior is the vital centre of the country [...]

91. “A-ga-bi-ta zi ki-en-gi-ra”

91. “[...] At whose back is the life of Sumer [...]” (Gragg 1969: 172, 173)

The word /šà/ is being used in the sense of interior in Gragg’s translation (Gragg 1969: 173). Jacobsen rendered verse 90 with: “[...] Inside the innermost part of the house is the heart of the country [...]” (Jacobsen 1987:383). The ETCSL has: “[...] House in whose interior is the power of the Land, and behind which {is the life of Sumer} {(some mss. have instead:) it is filled with life [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 – 2006). Wilcke similarly understands verse 90 to Jacobsen (Wilcke 2006: 225). The temple is a center that is a focus point for the life of the ancient people (Øiseth 2007: 69).

According to Jacobsen's version it is understood that heart and life go hand in hand (Jacobsen 1987: 383). A person without a heartbeat is dead. In verse 90 the temple was anthropomorphized as has been noted elsewhere in the text. The word **lipiš** can mean the following:

- **Libiš, lipiš**: courage; anger; core, heart; family (Akk. **libbu** 'heart') (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 61)

The word /lipiš/ makes the most sense in the context of verse 90 if it is translated with heart. The word /šà/ is being used in the sense of interior but one remembers that it can be understood as heart too. Kesh Temple contains the heart of the country, which would be the cella and the goddess who makes it her home (Gragg 1969: 173).



In the Sumerian Temple Hymns, we read the following verse about the Kesh Temple.

“[...] Respected Keš, your interior is a deep interior while your exterior is tall [...]” TH 7: 90  
(ETCSL translation: t.4.80.1: 1998 - 2006)

In De Shong Meador’s version of TH 7 we read that: “[...] Inside is a womb dark and deep, your outside towers over all [...]” (De Shong Meador 2009: 68). Understanding the interior of the Kesh Temple as a womb is logical when one considers the control function (**me**) of the goddess which is birth-giving. Verse 91 builds upon verse 90 continuing the thought of the heart as life. The back [1]<sup>37</sup> of the temple is the life of Sumer (Gragg 1969: 173).

The life of Sumer is the goddess Ninḫursag/Nintu in her function as a birth goddess. No one could be born in the ancient Sumerian civilization without the goddess functioning in her capacity as a birth goddess. She was the life of Sumer (Alban 2003: 4).

92. **“ká-bi-ta pirig šu-ba ná-a”**

92. “[...] Whose gate is a lion laying on its paws [...]”

93. **“Ká-bi-ta un-gal inim-gar-ra”**

93. “[...] At whose gate is a ruler who decide cases [...]”

94. **“É ig-bi-ta kur-gal gaba nu-gi-gi”**

94. “[...] Temple at whose door is the great mountain without adversary [...]”

95. **“g<sup>iš</sup>sag-kul-ta am-gal-la du<sub>7</sub>-a”**.

95. “[...] At whose bolt is a great unblemished bull [...]” (Gragg 1969: 172, 173)

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<sup>37</sup> According to Jacobsen the heart of the house or the back was the living quarters of the female member of the house (Jacobsen 1987: 380)

“[...] Together, ritual practice and temple topography provide evidence for the conception of the temple as a reflection or embodiment of the cosmos [...]” (Ragavan 2013: 1). In Raghavan’s (Ragavan 2013:201) thought the gate of a temple served as a portal between the mundane world of humans and the world of the gods. Moving from one part of the temple via the gate to another part meant, in essence, a transition from one part of the cosmos to another part. Gates were so important that offerings were made to them since entering the gate changed the status of the person doing so (Ragavan 2013: 202, 210, 212, 213; May 2014: 77). Such gates were minor deities with some even named after the main gods (De Jong Ellis 1988: 119; May 2014: 80).

Sacrifices would be offered at the gates of temples (Ragavan 2013: 210; May 2014: 78, 81, 84). The offerings would ensure the presence of the gods which would allow humans to enter the presence of the gods and importune judgement from them (De Jong Ellis 1988: 131). In the words of May “...the sacral and ritual function of gates was preconditioned by their liminality...” (May 2014: 86). She points out that rituals at gates would have been accessible to a larger audience due to its public nature (May 2014: 86, 89).

Temple gates were where statues of the gods would pass through on their journeys into the world beyond the temple (May 2014: 89, 90). A change of status takes place when a person passes through the gate of a temple, but a complete discussion of liminality is beyond the scope and purpose of this work (Raghavan 2013: 210).

This space was not left defenceless but fiercely guarded by mythical monsters such as scorpions, lions, eagles and snakes (Ragavan 2013: 208; Hundley 2013: 60, 66). In verse 92 that guardian is a lion<sup>38</sup>lying alertly on its paws. The ETCSL follows Gragg while Jacobsen has: “[...] Its gate is lions resting on their paws; a great nation is settled inside the door leaf of the house; is a great independent country not ever turning tail; Inside it bold is an aurochs, perfect in beauty [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 383). Wilcke generally follows Gragg and the ETCSL.

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<sup>38</sup> Jacobsen notes that this verse breaks the pattern and regards it as unoriginal (Jacobsen 1987: 383)

The gate was a place where jurisprudence took place (De Jong Ellis 1988: 135; May 2014: 78; Lambert 1990: 118). In verse 93 we read that a ruler decides cases at the gate. Verse 94 contains the word **/kur-gal/** which is a well-known epithet of the god Enlil. It means Great Mountain which is how the ETCSL translated it. “[...] House at whose door is the Great Mountain without adversary [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2). The connection between the concept of a mountain and judgement was common. In the words of De Jong Ellis, we read: “A connection between mountains and assemblies is extremely widespread, both in the Ancient Near East and beyond it” (De Jong Ellis 1988: 131).

When a person entered the gate, they found themselves in a different part of the cosmos. They faced the assembly of the gods where judgement took place (Merling 1987: 28). The premier place where such an assembly of the gods met was in Nippur at the temple of Enlil (De Jong Ellis 1988: 132). In Sumerian, this assembly is called **ukkin** while in Akkadian it is called **puhrun**. At the **ukkin** the gods met to decide cases in a pattern that it described as mountains, meals and decisions (De Jong Ellis 1988: 131).

The poet draws on a well-known trope of the assembly of the gods meeting to judge cases in this passage (Merling 1987: 28). Verse 93 explicitly mentions judgement while in verse 94 we find an epithet of the god Enlil, namely **Kur-gal** (Great Mountain). The gods met in judgement at Nippur in the temple of Enlil. The name of Enlil’s temple is **E-kur** (Mountain House) (Øiseth 2007: 81). Only feasting is absent from the trope described by De Jong Ellis (De Jong Ellis 1988: 131) of meals, mountains and decisions.

The poet uses language that draws the attention of his audience to the trope of the assembly of the gods in Nippur which would have been common knowledge to the ancients and applies the trope to the Kesh Temple. The gate-controlled access to the temple. Not everybody had equal access to sacred grounds (Averbeck 1987: 170). Even the bolt of the

temple is special. It is an unblemished bull. The bull served an apotropaic<sup>39</sup> (protective) purpose to prevent the wrong people from entering (Frayne 1982: 511).

#### 96. “Gá-nun gá-ra-bi an-ub ki-ub”

96. “[...] Whose well founded cella is a corner of heaven, a corner of earth [...]” (Gragg 1969: 172, 173)

Entrance through the door leads to the inside of the temple where the unqualified do not have access to the forbidden. Gragg understands verse 96 to be the cella (Gragg 1969: 173). “[...] Its well-stocked storehouse is the corners of heaven and the corners of earth [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 383). The ETCLS read: “[...] Whose well-founded storehouse is a corner of heaven, a corner of earth [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 - 2006). Unfortunately, Wilcke’s translation does not make much sense.

The agreement of the majority is that verse 96 speaks about the storehouse. In the discussion about the Inanna temple of the Ur III period, one showed how such a storehouse looked. Access to it was strictly controlled with doors and corridors. The poet introduces the storehouse with hyperbole. It is the corner of heaven, the corner of the earth. This is a reference to the four cardinal points of heaven or earth. The temple was pointed at the cardinal directions and to celestial bodies like the polar star (Lindquist 1983: 5).

Mesopotamians used stars to determine the cardinal directions (Horowitz 1998: 198). The stars were the corners of heaven and earth by serving as fixed points of reference. In the Hebrew Bible, this same concept is called the Pillars of Heaven/Earth (Job 9: 6, 9; Job 26: 11).

Something similar is found in some Royal inscriptions. The following text comes from an inscription of Shulgi (2094 – 2047 BCE) the second king of the Ur III dynasty. We read the following description of the king: “**Lugal-an-ub-da-limmu<sub>2</sub>-ba**” (the king of the four

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<sup>39</sup> In a text the king Naram-Suen’s year is dated by his placing two Mušḫuššu serpents on a gate for apotropaic purposes like the bull under discussion (Frayne 1982: 511)

quarters) (Hays 1990: 110). The poet used language that was well understood in his time, but obscure for modern people. Ancient Mesopotamians would have immediately made the link with the heavens that moderns missed (Lindquist 1983: 5; Horowitz 1998: 198).

The meaning that the poet tried to convey with his hyperbole is that the cosmos is a house, and that the storehouse of the temple fills the cosmos. The entire universe fits into the Kesh Temple since it is a cosmic structure. The poet used similar metaphors before i.e., in house Three were above and below fills the universe. Verse 96 should be understood as being in the same vein (Clifford 1972: 13; Lundquist 1983: 1; Øiseth 2007: 69, 70).

97. “**Gi-gu-n<sub>4</sub><sup>ki</sup>-na-bi la-ḥa-ma ki-ús-sa**”

97. “[...] Whose **gigunû** the **Lahama** support [...]” (Gragg 1969: 172, 173)

The **gigunû** was the temple tower or platform upon which it was built. Lahama is associated with the god Enki and is described as the fifty **Lahama** of the **Engur** (Abzu). The word Lahama also refers to guardian statues guarding the gateways of temples (Black et al 2004: 114). In Jacobsen’s translation, he calls the **Lahama** “[...] pilasters [...]” (1987: 383). It is possible that the poet refers to two such statues in verse 97 that flanked the gateway of the Kesh Temple. In such a case his meaning is clear. **The Lahama** [1] <sup>40</sup>protected the entrance of the temple from evil. They would have been first the protections of the temple (Jacobsen 1987: 383).

98. “**Bàd-nun-na-bi èš-uri<sup>ki</sup>ka-kéš-da**”

98. “[...] Whose princely wall.... the shrine Ur [...]” (Gragg 1969: 172, 173)

Jacobsen has: “[...] The princely outer wall guarding the house.... is garrisoned [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 383). The ETCSL and Wilcke follow Gragg’s translation. The shrine at Ur belonged to the moon god Nanna. Ur is in the south while Kesh is in the north. In this instance Jacobsen’s translation makes the most sense. The wall around the temple guarded

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<sup>40</sup> Such images of Lahama’s were standard on-stage towers (Jacobsen 1987: 383)

it from profane eyes. Verse 97 spoke about the Lahama guarding the gateway and supporting the terrace. Verse 98 builds upon that to indicate the wall protecting the temple and its shrine (Jacobsen 1987: 383).

## 18.3 ANALYSIS OF THE SIXTH HOUSE

### 18.3.1 BUILDING

#### 18.3.1.1 Structure

The sixth house describes the structure of the Kesh Temple in detail. Important architectural information includes the foundations, the gate, the door, the bolt, the storehouse, the temple terrace, the Lahama guarding the gateway way, and the wall around the temple.

#### 18.3.1.2 Cult

The temple is the heart of the country; it is the life's breath of Sumer. These verses reference the goddess who was the heart of the temple and its life.

#### 18.3.1.3 Status

The gate is a lion lying on its paws; at whose gate is a ruler who pronounces judgment.

### 18.3.2 FILLING

#### 18.3.2.1 Agriculture

The text mentions bulls standing on the plain.

#### 18.3.2.2 Sacrifice

No sacrifice is discussed.

#### 18.3.2.3 Commensality

Feasting is not described but a **tigi** hymn is sung for the temple.

## 18.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 18.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

The text mentions the foundations, the temple terrace as well as the cosmic dimensions of the storehouse.

### 18.3.3.2 Cosmic relationships

No mention is made of cosmic relationships.

### 18.3.3.3 Seat of power

The goddess is the heart of the temple.

## 18.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Target domain      the house

Source domain

<b>Building</b>	Architecture, heart, judge
<b>Filling</b>	Bulls, no sacrifice, music
<b>Existence</b>	Foundations, terrace, four corners of earth and heaven, no relationships, goddess in the cella

### 18.4.1 Conclusion

The structure of the temple is once more under consideration. The sixth house mentions the gate, the door, the bolt, the storehouse, the temple terrace as well as the Lahama guarding the gateway. The bolt of the temple is a bull that serves an apotropaic purpose. The gate is a lion lying on its paws sitting in judgment. This is a reference to the legal function of a temple as a witness in contract making and other legal cases.

The temple is the heart of the country, the life of Sumer. At the core of the temple, its goddess gives it life and purpose. Her presence in the cella is what turns a dead building into a functioning shrine. As the goddess of birth-giving, she is the life of Sumer because without her control function (me) no birth-giving would take place and the land would die.

Music is mentioned but this time a prince is the one making the music. He is playing a tigi for the temple, which is a genre of hymnic praise. The praise is for the marvellous temple whose storerooms are a corner of heaven and a corner of the earth. This is a reference to the cardinal directions which Mesopotamians fixed with the help of the stars. The poet is making a theological statement that the storerooms of the Kesh temple fill the whole cosmos.

He concludes with the terrace of the temple which is supported by the Lahama. The Lahama are mythological beasts that guard the entrance to temples. It emphasizes that Kesh temple is not a normal space but a sacred space.



# CHAPTER 19

## THE SEVENTH HOUSE

### 19.1 ABSTRACT

*The Kesh Temple is holy. The En priests are Anunnaki gods. The priest of the temple begins their cultic functions. Since the temple is built the priests make music for the welcome feast. Ninḫursag takes possession and pours wine for her guests. The temple is completed.*

### 19.2 THE DISCUSSION OF SEVENTH HOUSE

103. “**é-kù KU-bi é-nun**”

103. “[...] The holy temple, whose.... is the holy temple [...]”

104. “**É-kèš-kù KU-bi é-nun**”

104. “[...] The holy temple Kesh, whose....is the princely temple [...]” (Gragg 1969: 173, 174)

With the lines of verses 103 and 104 broken in Gragg’s translation, we turn to other sources such as the ETCSL. “[...] The holy house whose ..... is the shrine, the holy house Keš, whose ..... is the shrine [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2). Wilcke’s translation is not much help with these verses which leaves Jacobsen. “[...] The holy house the proliferator of which is the bedroom [...]” (Jacobsen 1987:384).

Jacobsen’s translation makes sense when one remembers that the control function (**me**) of the goddess is birth-giving. Ninḫursag/Nintu is present in the bedroom (cella) of the house. She is the power that makes the monumental building into a house where a goddess dwell. It is her presence that gives life to the Kesh Temple. The temple is 'house-Kesh-holy' (**É-kèš-kù**) because of her presence inside it (Gragg 1969: 173; Hundley 2013: 3).

The temple served as a microcosm of the heavenly realm (Averbeck 1987: 194). The purpose of the priesthood was to act as intermediaries between humans and the gods. They served according to the heavenly blueprint at the leisure of the gods. The priests served as the link between heaven and earth (Averbeck 1987: 166; Øiseth 2007: 94). The priests acted as proxies for the gods (Hurowitz 1992: 46; Øiseth 2007: 9).

105. “É en-bi <sup>d</sup>a-nun-na-meš”

105. “[...] The temple whose lords are Anunna gods [...]” (Gragg 1969: 173, 174)

All translations agree on verse 105. The en-priests of Kesh Temple are Anuna gods. The following text describes the theogony of the Anuna gods:

“**Ḫur-saĝ an ki-bi-da-ke<sub>4</sub> ud an-ne<sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup>a-nun-na im-tud-de<sub>3</sub>-eš-a-ba**”

“[...] When, upon the hill of heaven and earth, An spawned the Anuna gods [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.5.3.2: 1998 - 2006)

The Anuna gods came into existence on the hill (mountain) of heaven and earth. The father of the gods, An, generated the Anuna gods. Their full name is An-nun-na-ki. Black et al inform us that the name may mean ‘seed of An’ (Black et al 2004: 34). In the earliest period, the Anuna were the heaven gods, only to be replaced by the Igigi in the Middle Babylonian period as heaven gods. At that period, the Anuna became the underworld gods (Black et al 2004: 34; Horowitz 1998: 18).

The Anuna gods are the lords’ /en/ of Kesh Temple. The en-priest was a special type of priest in any Sumerian temple. The en-priest served as the head of the temple and was considered the bridegroom [1] <sup>41</sup>or the bride of the god. It was the purpose of the en-priest to speak the oracles of the gods. The lagar-priest served the opposite role and communicated human desires to the gods. One of the most famous en-priestesses was

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<sup>41</sup> The en-priest would typically serve as the human partner in the hieros-gamos (holy marriage rite) (Jacobsen 1987: 384)

Enḫeduanna who served the moon god Nanna-Suen in Ur as high priestess. The /en/ in front of her name is her title (lord). She was the daughter of the Akkadian king Sargon. The seal of Amam-Eštar depicts the enthronement of the en of Enlil, Tusanapšum who, like Enḫeduanna, was a princess (De Jong 1988: 298, 300).

#### 106. “Nu-èš giri-lá é-an-na-me-eš”

106. “[...] Whose nu-èš priest are the sacrificers of Eanna [...]” (Gragg 1969: 173, 174)

The **Nu-èš**<sup>42</sup> priests are the officers who did the sacrifices of the House of Heaven (**Eanna**) as our text informs us. All four translations agree upon this text’s meaning. The meaning of the word throws some light upon this obscure post (De Jong 1988: 299).

- **nu-èš**: knife bearer - a cultic functionary ('image, likeness' + 'shrine') (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 130)

The **Nu-èš** priest bore the knife; he carved meat (De Jong 1988: 299). It was probably his function to kill the sacrifice in the first place. The meat of the sacrifice would be served to the gods which would have been served twice in a day (Schneider 2011: 103). During the daily meal, the following ritual was followed. A table was placed in front of the god before water was offered for washing. Various liquids for the god’s consumption would be left for the god in this same table. The main dish would have been cuts of meat along with fruits eaten while musicians played music (Schneider 2011: 104).

#### 107. “É-e lugal-bur-ra àm-mi-gub”

107. “[...] The lugalburra priest stepped up to the temple [...]” (Gragg 1969: 173, 174)

There is no such thing as a lugalburra priest. Fortunately, the other translations clear up Gragg’s misunderstanding. “[...] The kings bring stone jars [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 384). The ETCSL has: “[...] In the house the king places stone bowls in position [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 – 2006). Wilcke agrees with the ETCSL and Jacobsen’s renderings (Wilcke

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<sup>42</sup> The **nu-èš** priest was the one who carved and served meat (Jacobsen 1987: 384)

2006: 227). Verse 107 is a reference to a rite called **bur-gi<sup>a</sup>-a** (returning the stone bowl). During this rite, the temple would send a stone bowl to the reigning king who would return it filled (Jacobsen 1987: 384).

108. **“En du<sub>10</sub> šà éše-lá àm-mi-in-lá”**

108. “[...] The good en priest...held the lead rope (?) suspended [...]”

109. **“a-tu-e šibir šu bí-in-du”**

109. “[...] The atu priest held the staff [...]”

110. **“tu-e a-ur<sub>4</sub>-a àm-mi-tum”**

110. “[...] The...brought the gathered waters [...]”

112. **“Enkum-e-ne ara ki-àm-ma-gál-le-eš”**

112. “[...] The enkum bowed down in prayer [...]” (Gragg 1969: 173, 174)

This list of cultic personnel was the heart of the temple rituals. They were the ones who kept the temple functioning in a religious sense (Kramer 1963: 5). The priests mentioned here are:

- En
- Atu
- Tu
- Enkum (Jacobsen 1987: 384)

The rendering of ‘good en priest’ in verse 108 is possible but not certain (Jacobsen 1987: 384). Verse 105 called the en priests Anunnaki gods. Jacobsen’s rendering of verse 108 makes more sense than Gragg’s translation: “[...] The good en priest has on the robe of office [...]” (1987: 384). The other translations split the interpretations between them. The ETCSL follows Gragg (1969: 173, 174) while Wilcke (Wilcke 2006: 227) follows Jacobsen.

- **En:** n., dignitary; lord; high priest; ancestor (statue); diviner [EN archaic frequency: 1232; concatenates 3 sign variants] v., to rule adj., noble (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 6)

If the en priest took on the robe of office the meaning of the verse should be understood as his initiation. The meaning is not clear in Gragg and the ETCSL's renderings of this verse. Jacobsen and Wilcke must have used a different source text. Gragg's rendering means that the En priest engaged in a ritual where he held the lead rope suspended. It is not stated what the lead rope was or how it was used. A possible explanation could be found in the various meanings of the word /**éše**/ (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 20).

- **Éše, éš[ŠĒ]:** rope; measuring tape/cord; length measure, rope = 10 **nindan** rods = 20 reeds = 120 cubits = the side of 1 square iku in area = 1,0,0 [602] fingers; a surface area measure, = 6 iku; leash (can be an adverbial suffix like eš) (eš, 'much', + eš, 'much') [ŠE3 archaic frequency: 152].
- **èše:** a surface measure = 2.16 hectares or 6 iku (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 20)

The **éše-lá** means suspended rope, which could be understood as a measuring cord.

The **en** priest, as the high priest, held the measuring cord suspended (Wiggerman 1995: 1864). He measured something which may have been the temple's surface since /**éše**/ can mean a surface measure. The poet may have been punning on the different homophones of /**éše**/ playing the concept of a measuring rope against /**èše**/ understood as a square surface measure. The **en** priest was measuring the area of his domination (Wiggerman 1995: 1864).

The **atu** priest is depicted holding the staff. All the translations agree on this rendering except a note by Jacobsen. He states that in the earlier versions the **atu** priest stood in front of the loom (Jacobsen 1987: 384).

- **šīšibir, sibir:** n., shepherd's staff ending in a curved end, i.e., a crook; also such a staff used by a god or king as a sceptre (**sipad; šuba**, 'shepherd', + re7, 'to lead; to bear'). adj., slanted, crooked (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 67)

The word /**šibir**/ is a shepherd staff ending in a crook. It is the staff held by the **atu** priest.

This staff could indicate a god or a king as well as a priest. It is a play on the word for

shepherd /**sipad**; **šuba**/. The **atu** represented the metaphor of humans as sheep that needed a shepherd (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 67).

The next priest is the /**tu**/ priest. Jacobsen and the other translations agree on verse 110. The **Tu**<sup>43</sup>-priest was a lustration priest. His function as a lustration priest becomes clear when one looks at the word /**tu**/.

- **A-tu<sub>5</sub>-a**: lustration ('water' + 'to wash' + nominative) (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 74)

The **Tu**-priest would have poured the libations on the altar. During the analysis of the archaeology of Mesopotamian temples the lustration rite was frequently incorporated into the architecture. Often one would find altars with bitumen lined channels ending in pots or jars or drains often coated in bitumen. The liquid poured by the **tu** (libation) priest would have been channelled in this way (Jacobsen 1987: 384).

Jacobsen has a verse that is not present in Gragg's translation. The verse reads: "[...] The **lale** is seated in the holy place [...]" (1987: 384). Wilcke follows Jacobsen in rendering this verse but calling the priest a 'honey priest' (Wilcke 2006: 227). The ETCSL follows Gragg in omitting this verse. The **Lale** is the short form of the word for midwife (Jacobsen 1987: 384).

The **Enkum** priest bowed down in prayer. Once more Jacobsen differs from Gragg. "[...] The **Enkum**-priests are casting spells on the ground [...]" (Jacobsen 1987: 384). "[...] The **Enkum**-priests bow down ..... [...]" (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 – 2006). Wilcke follows Jacobsen (Wilcke 2006: 227). Jacobsen proposes the theory that the **Enkum** were experts in incantations chanted during childbirth (Jacobsen 1987: 384).

113. "**Pa<sub>4</sub>-šeš-e-ne kuš mu-un-sìg-ge-ne**"

113. "[...] The **pašeš** beat on the (drum) skins [...]"

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<sup>43</sup> The **Tu** priest brought waters from the Euphrates and Tigris rivers for cultic purposes (Jacobsen 1987: 384)

114. “É-šub uru-šub-a mi-ni-ib-bé-e-ne”

114. “[...] They recited the é-šub and uru-šub (verses) [...]”

115. “Si-am-ma-ke<sub>4</sub> gúm-ga mi-ni-ib-za”

115. “[...] The bulls horn kept sounding [...]”

116. “<sup>giš</sup>al-gar-sur-ra sùḥ-saḥ<sub>4</sub> mi-ni-ib-za”

116. [...] The good prince played the tympanum [...]” (Gragg 1969: 173, 174)

Music and singing were an integral part of temple worship (Galpin 1937: 1). Part of the ritual of the temple is the musician playing for the god during meals. One musician ‘soothed the heart’ of the god as part of the cultic meal. The **Pašeš** [1]<sup>44</sup> chanted verses while playing on drums (Polin 1954: 7). Accompanying the **Pašeš** was the bull horn, which is metaphorically described as the ‘voice of the bull’ (Galpin 1937: 8; Polin 1954: 9).

118. “É al-dù giri-zal-bi al-du<sub>10</sub>”

118. “[...] The temple is built; its abundance is good [...]”

119. “É kèš al-dù giri-zal-bi al-du<sub>10</sub>”

119. “[...] The Kesh temple is built; its abundance is good [...]”

120. “Nin-bi DID-bi-a mu-un-tuš”

120. “[...] Its lady has taken a seat in its [...]”

121. “<sup>d</sup>nin-ḥur-sag-gá nin-bi DID-bi-a mu-un-tuš”

121. “[...] Ninḥursag its lady has taken a seat in its [...]” (Gragg 1969: 173, 174)

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<sup>44</sup> Set rhythms and patterns mark some poetry as musical in nature (Polin 1954: 5)

The poet announces that the temple has been completed<sup>45</sup>. Its abundance is good.

“[...] The house Keš is built; its nobility is good [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998- 2006).

“[...] The house is built, its delightfulness is sweet [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 385).

Wilcke follows Jacobsen (Wilcke 2006: 227).

Verses 120 and 121 are rendered by Jacobson as: “[...] Its mistress has sat down at its wine [...]” (1987: 385). Jacobsen explains that it was the custom for the senior woman in the house to pour wine for the guests (Jacobsen 1987: 385). In the *‘Cylinders of Gudea’* we find that the inauguration of the temple ended with a feast by the gods, and, presumably by the human staff. The Kesh temple hymn only having the goddess taking her seat in the temple. Significant, however, is the goddess serving wine to her guests.

Although the feast is not built up into an elaborate scene such as found in the *‘Cylinders of Gudea’* it can be inferences from the text that the Kesh Temple was inaugurated with a feast. House seven, when the clergy is inaugurated into their positions suggest a feast like atmosphere with the mention of music. Øiseth suggests that we should understand descriptions such as the clergy taking their positions in House seven as something that happened on both the human and heavenly plains (Øiseth 2007: 92).

In this context House seven describes the rite of Inauguration of the temple. Various acts of cult take place by the order of priests. In the *‘Cylinders of Gudea’* this trope is explored more thoroughly than in the Kesh Temple hymn, yet the theology behind the description of both texts shares similarities. While in the *‘Cylinders of Gudea’* various gods are appointed to positions by Ningirsu, we find the priest similarly appointed in the Kesh Hymn. The goddess is setting her house in order and consummating her new status as goddess of the Kesh temple with a feast (Øiseth 2007: 93).

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<sup>45</sup> Temple building was associated with creation (Clifford 1994: 26)



## 19.3 THE ANALYSIS OF HOUSE SEVEN

### 19.3.1 BUILDING

#### 19.3.1.1 Structure

Everything in house seven takes place inside the structure of the building. House six describes the boundary of the temple, the entrance, but house seven assumes your presence inside the sanctuary.

#### 19.3.1.2 Cult

The priests are described along with their cultic function. They perform cultic rituals like making music.

#### 19.3.1.3 Status

The prince plays music for the temple.

### 19.3.2 FILLING

#### 19.3.2.1 Agriculture

Agriculture is not mentioned in the house.

#### 19.3.2.2 Sacrifice

The **Nu-èš** priest's purpose is to carve the meat of animals that would have been sacrificed.

#### 19.3.2.3 Commensality

The music is part of a feast to celebrate the completion of the temple and the goddess moving into the temple. She pours wine during the welcoming feast for her guests. This event takes place in both the humans as well as the divine sphere of things.

## 19.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 19.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

The Axis Mundi is presumed but not explicitly stated. The **En** priest is Anunna gods, which presume the Axis Mundi as the central cosmic axis.

### 19.3.3.2 Cosmic relationships

The goddess is inside the temple feasting. She is surrounded by her priests who are worshipping her.

### 19.3.3.3 Seat of power

Ninḫursag moved into her new home. This is her seat of power.

## 19.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain      the house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	Inside, priest functions in the cult, prince plays music,
<b>Filling</b>	No agriculture, the <b>Nu-ěš</b> priest, a welcome feast
<b>Existence</b>	Anunnaki gods, the cult functions, Ninḫursag is resident

### 19.4.1 Conclusion

Line 118 and 119 informs one that the temple is built. It is completed and therefore a functioning entity. The next few verses describe the priests that would have begun their cultic function the moment the temple was completed. All the priests are functioning in their cultic capacity. The **en** priest is Anunnaki gods, which focus the mind on the heavens.

The various priest takes up their cultic functions. This is mirrored in both the human as well as Divine sphere. Priests take up stations in the humans' sphere with music and singing while the goddess serves as hostess to her guests, pouring them wine.

A feast is taking place with the goddess taking her seat of power. Acts of cult and sacred music are part of the dedication. The prince plays music. In Jacobsen's rendering, the goddess serves wine to her guests. The reason for the dedication feast is the temple's completion. It now functions as the home of the goddess.

# CHAPTER 20

## THE EIGHTH HOUSE

### 20.1 ABSTRACT

*Man can approach the temple. Man can approach the god Ashgi. Man can approach the goddess Nintu. The temple has been built. Praise to Nintu.*

### 20.2 THE DISCUSSION OF EIGHTH HOUSE

126. **“Uru-šè uru-šè lú te-àm te”**

126. “[...] To the city, to the city, man, approach [...]”

127. **“É-kèš<sup>ki</sup> uru-šè lú te-àm te”**

127. “[...] to the city Kesh, man, approach [...]” (Gragg 1969: 175)

The Kesh Temple is described as a city that man is invited to approach. The temple is the home of a goddess that man is invited to approach. It is the answer to man’s problems, but humans are kept at a distance. Jacobsen understands these verses as: “[...] To the city, to the city clients come seeking clientage [...]” (Jacobsen 1987: 385). Wilcke understands this as an invitation to participate in a cult festival (Wilcke 2006: 228).

“[...] Draw near, man, to the city, to the city - but do not draw near [...]” (ETCSL translation: t.4.80.2: 1998 – 2006). The ETCSL goes its own way with these verses. Draw near to the city, but do not get too close. In this instance, Wilcke's understanding of house eight as a festival is to be preferred. The temple would have been the focus of such a cultic event. Humans would have come from far away to participate. The cultic event is likely the feast described in house seven. The goddess is taking possession of her new home and marking the event with a feast of dedication (Wilcke 2006: 228).

128.” **Ur-sag-bi** <sup>d</sup>aš-šir lú te-àm te”

128. “[...] its hero Aššir, man, approach [...]”

129.” **Nin-bi** <sup>d</sup>nin-tu-ra- šè lú te-àm te”

129. “[...] its lady, Nintu, man, approach [...]” (Gragg 1969: 175)

If the thesis about a public feast is correct these two verses corroborate it. The humans are instructed to approach the gods of the temple. The instruction is to approach the gods. The temple is fully functional. Humans can bring their cases to the gods. They can meet the resident gods of Kesh, the reason for the temple’s existence (Gragg 1969: 175).

130. “**Kèš<sup>ki</sup>-dù-a** <sup>d</sup>aš-šir zà-mí”

130. “[...] (well-) constructed Kesh, Aššir, praise [...]”

131. “**Kèš<sup>ki</sup> zà-SAL-la-am** <sup>d</sup>nin-tu-ra zà-mí”.

131. “Kesh, Nintu, praise”

132. “**É 8 kam-ma**”

132. “[...] The eighth temple [...]” (Gragg 1969: 175)

The Kesh Temple Hymn ends with a praise song for the main gods, Ashgi and Nintu. It is a fitting end for the hymn that started with a praise song and ends with a praise song. Kesh Temple is well built. It is a functional entity that houses the goddess of birth giving. It is her seat of power now where she functions in her control function (**me**). The goddess is finally home (Walton 2006: 98).

## 20.3 THE ANALYSIS OF HOUSE EIGHT

## 20.3.1 BUILDING

### 20.3.1.1 Structure

Kesh is called well built. It is a city.

### 20.3.1.2 Cult

People are invited to meet the gods and take part in the dedication of the temple.

### 20.3.1.3 Status

The Kesh Temple hymn ends with a praise song sung for the gods who owns the temple.

## 20.3.2 FILLING

### 20.3.2.1 Agriculture

No mention is made of agriculture.

### 20.3.2.2 Sacrifice

No mention is made of sacrifice.

### 20.3.2.3 Commensality

Humans participate in the dedication feast of the temple.

## 20.3.3 EXISTENCE

### 20.3.3.1 Axis Mundi

It is not mentioned.

### 20.3.3.2 Cosmic relationship

The goddess, Nintu, and her family move into Kesh Temple.

### 20.3.3.3 Seat of power

Kesh Temple is the seat of the power of the goddess Nintu/ Ninḫursag.

## 20.4 MAPPING THE METAPHOR

Source domain      the house

Target domain

<b>Building</b>	Well built, humans approach the gods, zà-mí (praise song sung)
<b>Filling</b>	No agriculture, no sacrifice, dedications feast
<b>Existence</b>	No axis mundi, home of the goddess and family, it is her seat of power

### 20.4.1 Conclusion

The hymn ends with two praise songs. The first song is for the god Ashgi. The second song and last line of poetry end with a praise song for the goddess of the temple, Nintu. The instruction for humans to approach the temple means that it is now fully functional. Humans can now expect the temple to fulfil its purpose for which it was built since the goddess embraced the Kesh Temple as her home.

# CHAPTER 21

## THE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### 21.1 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

#### 21.1.1 To what extent does the archaeology of Sumerian temples reflect the metaphor of the house.

The temple was constructed around a cella where the divine person resided. In the early period, like Ubaid Eridu, the temple consisted mostly of the cella. In time other parts were added, mostly in the form of a series of subsidiary rooms along both sides of the cella. These rooms served various functions such as housing the cult personnel, as storerooms, or for washing or lustration rites. Domestic features such as ovens and hearth form part of the temple from the first temple at Eridu.

Despite the elaboration of the temples with platforms and decorations, the cella remained the heart of the temple. The temple was the home of the deity, protected from the profane, and secluded from the populace. Documents discovered at the Ur III temple of Inanna, informs one that the temple was the heart of a large estate. Temple economy included lands and orchards, pasture, animal herds, production of textiles, trading and the like.

Artifacts were found that hints at the temple as a household such as sickles, animal bones, storage jars, pottery, fish bones, needles made of bone, decorations such as beads and pendants, as well as cylinder seals. The presence of the cylinder seals informs one that official actions needed to be sanctioned which tells one something about the administration of the temple.

The storage rooms and administration parts of the Inanna Temple in the Ur III period were closed off from the rest of the complex with access strictly regulated. Such temples were complex organizations on par with large aristocratic households. All of this was done to



ensure that the god was properly housed and cared for. The temple was the home of the divine.

### 21.1.2 Did the temples incorporate the idea of an Axis Mundi in the architecture?

The first hint of the concept of the Axis Mundi is found in Temple XI of Eridu in the Ubaid period. For the first time, ancient people introduced the concept of a platform on which the temple was built. The highlight of this type of architecture was found in the Uruk period white temple platform that reached a height of 25 meters. The habit of building temples on platforms would endure through time.

The use of pillars as decoration served to reinforce the concept of verticality, especially the decorations found at Tell al Rimah. The temple of Ninḫursag at Tell al 'Ubaid suggests that the concept of an Axis Mundi served as a central theme in Sumerian thought. The presence of the Anzud above the façade should be understood in the light of myths such as '*Etana*', '*Inanna and the Ḫuluppu tree*', and '*Lugalbanda and the thunderbird*'.

In all these myths, the Anzud is found at the top of the world tree. The text of the Kesh Temple Hymn supports the hypotheses. In the text we have imagery such as mountains, the heavens, the underworld, trees, and the **giguna** or temple platform. Other corroborating evidence can be found in the Sumerian Temple Hymn (TH 39) that speaks of the snake at the roots of the temple at HI.ZA. Behind this image sits the metaphor of the temple as a Cosmic Tree.

The goddess Ninḫursag is described as a dragon or a great serpent. In her form as Nintu she is described as a snake woman in Thompson (1904: 149). In myth, the snake lived at the roots of the tree with the eagle or Anzud in the branches. It seems as if the world tree served as a metaphor against which the temple was understood as a cosmic axis.

### 21.1.3 To what extent is the metaphor, the house, applicable to the Kesh Temple Hymn?

The word /É/ means house but is understood as a temple. The meaning of the word is:

- É: house, household; temple; plot of land [E2 archaic frequency: 649; concatenates 4 signs] (Halloran 1999 – 2019: 3)

One can say that the temple is a house or that the house is a temple. It is also a household. The poet freely used metaphor to describe the temple with, but certain terms inform one that he had a house (hold) in mind.

We already covered the frequent use of the word for House /É/. Other words include gate, door, bar, inside, storeroom, temple platform, foundations, bedroom, the house is built. All of this is structural language suited to architecture or building. The poet mentions herds of animals, such as bulls, sheep and stags associated with the temple and an orchard. Trees are mentioned as well as birth-giving. This is the language of filling. The temple produces heroes, it is the life of summer, and it shades all the lands.

The goddess and her priests fulfil their cultic purpose in the temple. Nintu's role is in her /me/ or control function of birth-giving which she sets going. All of this is the language of existence. The goddess enters the temple and takes residence. It becomes her seat of power!

#### 21.1.4 Is the metaphor of the house equally applicable to literature and archaeology?

It seems to be the case. The archaeology provides evidence of building, filling, and existence. This is true of the texts as well. Existence in archaeology, as well as the texts, is subsumed under the evidence of ritual such as bones of sacrifices, artifacts found inside altars, depictions of ritual and music in the texts. The texts drew on the building- and filling topos as inspiration to produce the text. The building- and filling topos was the guiding principle when the ancients built the temples whose remains, we study. The metaphor of the house is equally applicable to both the archaeology as well as the texts.

### 21.1.5 Did the ancients see the temple as a cosmic house that metaphorically fills the universe?

The answer to this question cannot be filled in with archaeology alone. All we have from archaeology is the probable existence of the Axis Mundi as a concept expressed in architecture. We must turn to the text for the answer. In the Incipit, one reads that the universe has corners. The Kesh Temple is said to be a mountain that touches the sky and has its roots in the underworld (Abzu).

Kesh Temple is described as a boat floating in the sky, like the moon and the sun. Various metaphors build on the compound word **an-ki** which means the totality of the universe. This is the case with house three where the temple is seen as above and below. The cosmic dimensions are assumed but never stated explicitly except through metaphor. The poet uses cosmic language such as the temple rising like the sun and setting like the moon.

The sun and moon, as radiant bodies illuminate the temple above and below. It is said of the temple that its shadow covers all the lands. The temple embraces the sky and fills the underworld. All of this suggests that the ancients conceived of the temple as a cosmic entity. It was the house of a god, and it filled the universe theologically. Physically the theology was expressed with monumental building.

## 21.2 THE FINAL CONCLUSION

The archaeology of the temple pointed out that the temples began as simple shrines that became more and more elaborate over time. The structure of the temple would restrict access to the cella of the temple more and more with various side buildings and antechambers. Decoration became important. The oldest form of this is the recessed niche architecture and the use of murals and mosaic cones. The images of the murals were reflected in the bones of large cats found at some temples. It appeared that they were associated with the altar found in temples. The altar in many cases served to hide installations of various cultic objects such as maces for example. Early on the vertical dimension of the temple became important with the use of the platform.

Decorations with palm trees at Tell Rimah served to emphasize the vertical aspect of the temple. At Tell al 'Ubaid the presence of the Anzud above the façade reinforces the vertical aspect of the temple since the bird, in Sumerian literature, normally lived in the branches of the cosmic tree. The literature strengthens this argument. TH 39 about the temple of HI.ZA informs us that the root of the temple was a serpent. This temple belonged to Ninḫursag and compliments her ophidian (serpent) character. We have a description of the goddess, called Nintu, in which she is also called a snake.

The snake, in Sumerian literature, lived at the bottom of the cosmic tree. I suggest that we should see the goddess ophidian nature as the remains of ancient shamanism. The ophidian nature of the goddess has, I believe in later times, another function. Ancient Mesopotamians viewed the underworld as a sort of cosmic womb.

The literature informs us that the temple possessed cosmic dimensions. House three builds upon this theme. The temple contains heavenly bodies like the sun and moon inside the structure of the temple. The compound word around which the words for above and below are built, **an-ki**, suggests that we are dealing with a theological construction: the temple fills the cosmos completely.

Other lines of thought support this augment. The shadow of the temple covers all lands. Other literature suggests that one should consider this image to be drawn from the concept of the cosmic tree. The temple is a mountain that is rooted in the Abzu. The metaphor the temple embraces the sky argues that we should understand both the Abzu and Heaven as the constituting cosmic dimensions. The temple was the axis between heaven and earth while at the same time filling the totality of the cosmos.

The construction 'the storehouse of the temple is a corner of heaven; a corner of the earth suggests that such a conception of the cosmic dimensions of the temple did exist. The orientations of the temple to the cardinal directions and alignment with the stars meant that theologically ancient Sumerians understood the temple to be one with the cosmos. The cardinal directions were part of the concept of the Axis Mundi.

Several aspects of the Kesh Temple Hymn indicate the filling part of the topos. The temple consumes her of animals as sacrifices. Mentions if made of plants such as trees, and orchards. Another enduring theme is the frequent mention of the underworld freshwater lake the Abzu. The temple's roots stand firmly in the waters of the Abzu. Water is necessary for the temple to flourish and have abundant life. It supports the roots of the temple which may have been visualized as a metaphorical cosmic tree. In house seven the goddess sits down to wine which suggests feasting. House seven also mentions music as part of the cult. This presupposes the presence of cult personnel which is the essence of the topos of filling. Without them present the temple would only be an empty shell.

As a cosmic house, the temple served as the home of the goddess. The Kesh Temple was Ninḫursag/Nintu's seat of power. She takes her position with a feast of dedication on both human and Divine levels. It was now her home where her family and dependants lived and had their being. The temple established her presence in the human world where she served in her capacity as the goddess of birth-giving. Human life depended upon her presence and happiness. The goddess accepting Kesh as her home was the ultimate blessing for humans, as they depended upon her for the birth of the future generations.

I, therefore, suggest that the hypothesis is correct. The concept of the temple as a Cosmic House formed a core trope in ancient Sumerian theology.

# THE PICTURE CREDITS

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## Figure 2

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## Figure 3

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## Figure 4

Sheen, A. 1982. An archaeological analysis of the temples of greater Mesopotamia from the beginning of the 'Ubaid period to the end of the Early Dynastic period. Doctoral Dissertation: University of Oxford.

## Figure 5

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## Figure 6

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Figure 7

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Figure 8

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Figure 9

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Figure 10

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Figure 11

Typical Sumerian boat with cabin online at:

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Figure 12

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Figure 13

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Figure 14

Jar burial online at:

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