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Composite Beings in Neo-Babylonian Art

By

Constance Ellen Gane

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Near Eastern Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor David Stronach, Chair

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Professor Marian Feldman

Professor Dilia Angelova

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Abstract

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An examination of all the extant, provenanced depictions of composite beings, *Mischwesen*, in Neo-Babylonian iconography sheds important new light on the worldview of the last great Mesopotamian civilization. The types of hybrids that are portrayed include such disparate forms as the *apkallu* and the genius in human form, as well as creatures based on bulls, lions, canines, winged quadrupeds, fish, birds, scorpions, and snakes. Each composite being is analyzed in terms of its physical components, its context within scenes, its historical development, and its interpretation in NB texts.

Within the hierarchical cosmic community, some lower deities and sub-divine beings appear in composite form. These play a key role in the cosmos by interacting with gods, with each other, with humans, and with natural animals. Their behavior parallels dynamics found in natural life, such as in competition, conflict, predation, protection, and in the service of others who are more powerful. In hybrids the capabilities of natural animals and humans are heightened by the selective addition of features derived from other species. There is no consistent correlation, however, between the strength of a natural creature and the relative power of the superhuman being that it symbolizes, or between its physical complexity and its placement in the cosmic hierarchy. In fact, the transcendence of high gods is often emphasized by their simple representation through attribute animals in natural form.

Portrayals of composite beings often express the need for protection from malevolent powers by beneficent beings, some of whom can be accessed only through human mediators, such as ritual functionaries. Special relationships between supernatural beings and elite humans, especially the king, make such humans indispensable and therefore support their roles in the existing social order. It appears that the choice of a particular being portrayed on a given object could be influenced by factors such as its owner's profession, religious and/or political affiliations, and especially by the apotropaic function(s) of specific composite beings.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to

My husband
My precious friend and companion
Roy Gane

And my daughter
My golden ray of dancing light
Sarah Gane Burton

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology (Liverpool)
Abb.	Abbildung
<i>AfO</i>	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i> (Berlin/Graz)
AfOB	Archiv für Orientforschung; Beiheft
<i>AHw</i>	<i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> . W. von Soden. 3 vols. Wiesbaden, 1965-1981
Akk.	Akkadian
AMD	Ancient Magic and Divination
<i>AMI</i>	<i>Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran</i> (1929-1930)
<i>Anatolia</i>	<i>Anatolia. Revue annuelle d'archéologie</i> (until 1961/62), Journal of the Institute for Research in Near Eastern Civilizations and Languages (1963), Anadolu (since 1964, Ankara 1956ff.)
<i>AnOr</i>	<i>Analecta orientalia. Commentationes scientificae de Rebus Orientis Antiqui</i> (Rome)
AnOr	Analecta orientalia
<i>AnSt</i>	<i>Anatolian Studies. Journal of the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara</i>
AO	tablets in the collections of Louvre Museum, Paris
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS	American Oriental Series
AS	Assyriological Studies
Ash.	Ashmolean Museum
AUWE	Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka. Endberichte
B	Bottom (lower) tablet
BA	From the collection of the British Museum
<i>BA</i>	<i>Beiträge zur Assyriologie (und semitischen Sprachwissenschaft)</i> (Leipzig)
Bab.	Babylon
BaF	Baghdader Forschungen
<i>BaM</i>	<i>Baghdader Mitteilungen</i> (Berlin)
BCSMS	<i>Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies, Bulletin</i>
<i>BiAr</i>	<i>The Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BM	British Museum
br.	Brother of
<i>CAD</i>	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Chicago, 1956-
<i>CAJ</i>	<i>Cambridge Archaeological Journal</i>
<i>CANE</i>	<i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i>
CBS	Tablets from the collections of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
<i>COS</i>	<i>Context of Scripture</i> . Edited by W. W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden, 2003.

CRR <i>A</i>	<i>Compte rendu, Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale</i>
DDD	<i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> . Edited by K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P. W. van der Horst. 2d ed. rev. Leiden, 1999
ED	Early Dynastic period
Enc <i>Ir</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i>
ETCSL	Electronic Corpus of Sumerian Literature. Online: http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/
Farbabb.	Farbabbildungen (German; English: “color images”)
GCBC	Tablets from the Goucher College Babylonian Collection
Gilg.	Gilgamesh
HSM	Tablets from the Harvard Semitic Museum collection
IDD	<i>Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East</i> . Electronic Pre-Publication ed. Edited by J. Eggler. Leiden. Online: http://www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/idd/
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i> (Jerusalem)
ILN	<i>Illustrated London News</i> (London)
Iraq	<i>Iraq. British School of Archaeology in Iraq</i> (London)
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
J <i>AOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
J <i>BL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
J <i>CS</i>	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
J <i>Sem</i>	<i>Journal for Semitics</i>
KAR	Keilschrifttexte us Assur religiösen Inhalts
KJV	King James Version
MA	Middle Assyrian period
NA	Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Assyrian period
NB	Neo-Babylonian, Neo-Babylonian period
NASB95	New American Standard Bible Update, 1995
NCBT	Sigla of tablets in the Newell Collection of Babylonian Tablets
NJPS	<i>Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text</i>
OB	Old Babylonian period
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis (Fribourg)
OEANE	<i>Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East</i> . Edited by E. M. Meyers. 5 vols. New York, 1997
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
Or	<i>Orientalia</i> (NS)
Or <i>Ant</i>	<i>Oriens antiquus. Rivista del centro per le antichità e la storia dell'arte del vicino oriente</i> .
PBS	Publications of the Babylonian Section, University of Pennsylvania
ePSD	<i>The Electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary</i> . Online: http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/index.html
PTS	Tablets in the collections of Princeton Theological Seminary
RA	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i> (Paris)

RAI	Proceedings of the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale; Compte rendu de la Rencontre assyriologique internationale (aka CRRRA, CRRAI, Rencontre)
RAI 45	<i>XLV^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale</i> . 2 Vols. Part I: Historiography in the Cuneiform World. Part II: Seals and Seal Impressions. Edited by W. W. Hallo and I. J. Winter. Helsinki, Finland, 2nd-6th July 2001
<i>RLA</i>	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> . Edited by Erich Ebeling et al. Berlin, 1928-
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAACT	State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization
UE	Ur Excavations
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i> (Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn)
Ur III	Ur III period
VA	tablets in the collections of Staatliche Museen, Berlin
VAT	tablets in the collections of Staatliche Museen, Berlin
<i>VAMZ</i>	<i>Vjesnik arheoloskog muzeja u Zagrebu/The Journal of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb</i>
W	west; field numbers of tablets excavated at Warka
WOO	Wiener Offene Orientalistik
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der deutschen Orientgesellschaft
YBC	Tablets in the Babylonian Collection, Yale University Library
YOSBT	Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts
<i>ZA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i> (Leipzig/Berlin)

LIST OF CHRONOLOGICAL PERIODS

Late Uruk Period	c. 3500-3000	BC
Early Dynastic Period	c. 2900-2300	BC
Early Dynastic I	c. 2900-2750	BC
Early Dynastic II	c. 2750-2600	BC
Early Dynastic III	c. 2600-2300	BC
Fara Period		
Akkadian Period	c. 2330-2190	BC
Ur III Period	c. 2112-2004	BC
Old Babylonian Period	c. 2000-1600	BC
Isin-Larsa	c. 2000-1800	BC
Kassite Period	c. 1600-1155	BC
Middle Assyrian Period	c. 1350-1050	BC
Neo-Assyrian Period	c. 930-612	BC
Neo-Babylonian Period	626-539	BC
Achaemenid (Early Persian) Period	c. 550-331	BC
Hellenistic Period		
Seleucid (Hellenistic) Period	323-63	BC
Macedonian Dynasty	333-312	BC

LIST OF KINGS (SELECTED)

<i>Ur</i>		
Shulgi	2095-2047	BC
<i>Isin</i>		
Enlil-bāni	1861-1837	BC
<i>Old Babylonian</i>		
Hammurabi	1792-1750	BC
Nebuchadnezzar I	1126-1104	BC
<i>Hittite</i>		
Muršili II	1330-1295	BC
<i>Kassite</i>		
Agum-kakrime (Agum II)	c. 1595	BC
<i>Neo-Assyrian</i>		
Ashurnasirpal II	884-859	BC
Shalmaneser III	858-824	BC
Shamshi-Adad V	823-811	BC
Adad-nirari III	810-783	BC
Shalmaneser IV	782-773	BC
Assur-dan III	772-755	BC
Assur-nirari V	754-745	BC
Tiglath-Pileser III	744-727	BC
Shalmaneser V	726-722	BC
Sargon II	721-705	BC
Sennacherib	704-681	BC
Esarhaddon	680-669	BC
Ashurbanipal	668-627	BC
<i>Babylonian</i>		
Nabû-apla-iddina	c. 860-850	BC
Marduk-zākir-šumi I	c. 854-819	BC

Neo-Babylonian

Nabopolassar	625-605	BC
Nebuchadnezzar II	604-562	BC
Evil-Merodach	561-560	BC
Neriglissar	559-556	BC
Labashi-Marduk	556	BC
Nabonidus	555-539	BC

Achaemenid

Cyrus II	538-530	BC
Cambyses II	529-522	BC
Bardiya	522	BC
Nebuchadnezzar III	522	BC
Nebuchadnezzar IV	521	BC
Darius I	521-486	BC
Xerxes I	485-465	BC
Bel-shimanni	482	BC
Shamash-eriba	482	BC
Artaxerxes I	464-424	BC
Xerxes II	424	BC
Darius II	423-405	BC
Artaxerxes II Memnon	404-359	BC
Artaxerxes III Ochus	358-338	BC
Arses	337-336	BC
Darius III	335-331	BC

Greek

Alexander the Great	336-323	BC
Antiochus I	281-261	BC

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This study investigates the contribution of iconographic depictions of composite beings, commonly referred to by the German term *Mischwesen*, toward an understanding of the worldview of the Neo-Babylonians. This important aspect of their art provides access, albeit limited, to Babylonian ideology.

Unlike previous scholarly treatments of Mesopotamian supernatural hybrids, this study focuses on all extant, provenanced composite beings of a single period. Focusing on a narrow one-period corpus facilitates the possibility of identifying correlations between emblematic visual elements and evidence for the perspectives of those who produced and viewed them, namely, the Neo-Babylonians.

The Neo-Babylonian Empire lasted from 626 to 539 BC. However, the present cultural research follows Edith Porada's chronological framework for the iconography of NB material, which begins about 1000 BC and extends just past the fall of the Babylonian Empire in the sixth century BC.¹

This study gathers and builds on several branches of previous scholarship, such as publications of examples of NB composite beings that provide the data for this research, general investigations of such depictions over their entire history, textual and lexical sources that elucidate aspects of such beings, and explorations of methodology relevant to interpretation of such emblematic art.

Previous works have exposed a number of key concepts applicable to NB composite beings (see further in "Literature Review" below). Most basic is the function of such portrayals as metaphors for supernatural beings, with hybrid body parts representing various attributes. Also foundational is the principle that a symbolic depiction should be appropriate to its referent (in this case a supernatural being) and the function of the object on which it is portrayed. Another significant concept is the *occultization* of some primordial personalities represented by mixed beings.

Any attempt to draw immutable conclusions in this area of research is fraught with inherent limitations. First, the extant NB set of data is only a partial representation of all the hybrids

¹ Edith Porada, "Suggestions for the Classification of Neo-Babylonian Cylinder Seals," *Or* 16 (1947): 145-165, pls. III-VIII.

produced during this period, and does not include items that have been destroyed, remain undiscovered, or are at least inaccessible to scholars. In particular, it is important to avoid making arguments from silence.

Second, even if all NB composite beings were available, they did not comprise or belong to a thoroughly unified or consistent system.² Rather, the NB repertoire of hybrid creatures results from complex accretions over millennia. Therefore, we should be cautious about making generalizations. Nevertheless, in this study I will explore patterns emerging from the data that will illuminate the place of composite beings in the cosmic community. This will shed light on the nature of the cosmos and the degree to which its elements are interconnected in the worldview of the Babylonians, as reflected in their iconography.

1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of scholars have already correlated Mesopotamian iconography with cuneiform texts to identify and illuminate composite beings over a wide range of periods in terms of their historical development, association with deities, and impact on humans within ancient systems of religion and mythology. The present research draws heavily on their work, but uniquely focuses on basically synchronic, tightly controlled, comprehensive analysis of the iconographic repertoire of hybrid beings in a narrow slice of time and space.

Mesopotamian composite beings have been the focus of several formative works. One of the most influential scholars in the field has been Frans A. M. Wiggermann. In his *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (1992), he examines the identities and histories of those Mesopotamian supernatural creatures mentioned in the Neo-Assyrian texts K 2987B+ and KAR 298. Regarding this partial representation of all Mesopotamian hybrids, Wiggermann summarizes: “The texts treated are rituals for the defence of the house against epidemic diseases, represented as an army of demonic intruders. The gates, rooms, and corners of the house are occupied by prophylactic figures of clay or wood, that the texts describe in detail.”³ As he points out, these figures described in the texts have been discovered in archaeological excavations, providing a significant link between text and material remains. Although Wiggermann’s monograph is difficult to navigate (due to the nature of its organization), it has been the backbone of much of my research.

An important systematic treatment of composite creatures by Wiggermann is his 1997 *RLA* article titled “Mischwesen. A. Philologisch. Mesopotamien.”⁴ Here he provides numerous textual, philological, and archaeological examples of most of the known Mesopotamian creatures, and clarifies terms for categories. Modern scholarship identifies distinct categories

² Cf. Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (trans. Teresa Lavander Fagan; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 26-28. A. Leo Oppenheim states, “A systematic presentation of Mesopotamian religion cannot and should not be written” (*Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964], 172).

³ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (CM 1; Groningen: Styx & PP, 1992), xii. (This is a second edition of Wiggermann’s dissertation, originally published as *Babylonian Prophylactic Figures: The Ritual Texts* [Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1986].)

⁴ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A. Philologisch. Mesopotamien,” *RLA* 8:222-246.

of subdivine (but superhuman) creatures. Those that walk on all fours, like quadruped natural animals, are identified as monsters while those that walk on two legs, like humans, are designated as demons. Dragons, which belong to a separate class, are hybrid creatures that are essentially snakes.⁵ According to Wiggermann, monsters are neither gods nor demons.⁶ Although their names are occasionally written with the divine determinative, they usually do not wear the horned crown of divinity. They are not included in god-lists, not found in the list of “evil spirits” (*utukkū lemnūti*), and not mentioned in medical texts as demons of diseases.⁷

When a monster is associated with an anthropomorphic deity, it operates in the same field of action or part of nature as that of the deity. Whereas the deity functions in the entire domain of his or her rule, the monster’s activity is limited to only part of the god’s realm. Thus, a monster that is associated with a deity as its attribute creature represents part of the divine nature or a particular aspect of the divine function of the god.⁸ Wiggermann observes that after a developmental period, during which Mesopotamian gods and monsters evolved, they eventually settled into “complementary” opposition in which “the gods represent the lawfully ordered cosmos, monsters represent what threatens it, the unpredictable.”⁹

Wiggermann’s 2007 article, “Some Demons of Time and Their Functions in Mesopotamian Iconography,” in *Die Welt der Götterbilder*, updates research on a number of the hybrid creatures under discussion in the present study.¹⁰

The 1992 illustrated dictionary written by Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*,¹¹ has provided an initial launching point for dealing with the maze of interrelated deities, demons, and composite creatures of ancient Mesopotamia. While the work is far from exhaustive and does not provide references for its sources, it has proven to be a valuable guide through the daunting complexities of the topic.

A number of works by Green are formative in the study of composite creatures. He has written numerous articles, among which the most significant are his 1984 article, “Beneficent

⁵ Cf. Joan G. Westenholz, ed., *Dragons, Monsters, and Fabulous Beasts* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004), 11.

⁶ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:231.

⁷ Cf. Chikako E. Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia: A Contextual Approach* (WOO 1; Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik der Universität Wien, 2002), 39.

⁸ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:226.

⁹ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:226.

¹⁰ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, “Some Demons of Time and Their Functions in Mesopotamian Iconography,” in *Die Welt der Götterbilder* (ed. Hermann Spieckermann and Brigitte Groneberg; Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 376; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

¹¹ Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (ill. Tessa Richards; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992).

Spirits and Malevolent Demons: The Iconography of Good and Evil in Ancient Assyria and Babylonia,”¹² and his 1997 *RLA* article on “Mischwesen. B. Archäologie.”¹³

In 2003, Paul-Alain Beaulieu published *The Pantheon of Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian Period*.¹⁴ This work provides a systematic, period-specific treatment of NB religion at the ancient site of Uruk.

One of the most important current resources is *Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East*, edited by Jürg Egger, which is still under development, but available in electronic pre-publication form.¹⁵ Its production is a research project of the History of Religions Chair of the University of Zurich, Switzerland, in collaboration with Brill Academic Publishers. I have gained much from this rich and high quality resource as far as it goes, but *IDD* treatment of many of the composite creatures discussed in my study is still pending.

The 2004 catalogue accompanying the exhibition titled “Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts in the Bible Lands Museum, Jerusalem” and compiled by Joan Goodnick Westenholz illustrates the formation and function of hybrid creatures in the ancient Near East and the classical world. The catalogue, following the format of the exhibition, is divided into four main areas: “creatures of the sea, creatures of the earth, creatures of the air, and the battles of the gods and mortals against the monsters.”¹⁶ The treatment of selected composite beings is detailed, but limited to the examples specific to the exhibit.

A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East, edited by Billie Jean Collins (2002),¹⁷ focuses on animals found in Anatolia, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran, and Syro-Palestine, with particular attention to the native fauna; animals in art, literature, and religion; and the cultural use of animals. The volume is more a historical narrative of human relations with animals than a history of animals in the ancient world. As such, it provides insights into rationales behind selection of certain animals to represent particular characteristics of divine or sub-divine beings. Collins builds on the work of E. Douglas Van Buren, whose formative study, *The Fauna of Ancient Mesopotamia as Represented in Art* (1939),¹⁸ focuses on forty-eight animal species, but without discussing their significance.

¹² Anthony Green, “Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons: The Iconography of Good and Evil in Ancient Assyria and Babylonia,” *Visible Religion* 3 (1984): 80-105.

¹³ Anthony Green, “Mischwesen. B. Archäologie,” *RLA* 8:246-264.

¹⁴ Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk During the Neo-Babylonian Period* (CM 23; Leiden: Brill, 2003).

¹⁵ Jürg Egger, ed., *Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East*, Electronic Pre-Publication ed., n.p. [cited 11 July 2012]. Online: <http://www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/idd/index.php>.

¹⁶ Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 9.

¹⁷ Billie Jean Collins, ed., *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (Handbook of Oriental Studies 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002).

¹⁸ E. Douglas Van Buren, *The Fauna of Ancient Mesopotamia as Represented in Art* (AnOr 18; Rome: Institutum Biblicum, 1939).

Composite creatures are found on various cosmic levels. For that reason, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, by Wayne Horowitz (1998; rev. 2011),¹⁹ has informed the present study, especially with regard to the “Babylonian Map of the World” and *Enuma Elish* texts, which mention a significant number of mixed beings found in the NB iconographic repertoire.

Regarding Sumero-Babylonian religion in ancient Mesopotamia, two foundational studies are Wilfred Lambert’s essay on “The Historical Development of the Mesopotamian Pantheon: A Study in Sophisticated Polytheism” (1975)²⁰ and Thorkild Jacobsen’s trail-blazing book titled *The Treasures of Darkness* (1976).²¹ Since these publications appeared, still others have contributed to a greater understanding of the complexities of Mesopotamian religion, with its thousands of named gods and demons, but a comprehensive, systematic understanding still eludes modern scholarship.

Of particular importance to the methodological framework of the present research are the works of two scholars, Chikako E. Watanabe and Mehmet-Ali Ataç. Watanabe’s *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia: A Contextual Approach* (2002), drawing upon her doctoral dissertation (University of Cambridge, 1998), aims “to examine how animals are used as ‘symbols’ in Mesopotamian culture and to focus on what is intended by referring to animals in context.”²² The scope of her investigation is limited to the symbolic aspects of two natural animals, the lion and bull, and two composite creatures, the Anzu bird and the horned lion-griffin. Watanabe’s narrow but deep analysis provides an excellent paradigm for study of Mesopotamian iconographic creatures in general.

Watanabe maintains that “the best way to interpret meanings belonging to the past is to pay close attention to the particular contexts in which symbolic agents occur.”²³ She does this through application of an approach known as the *interaction view* of metaphor, also called the theory of metaphor, developed by Max Black. According to Watanabe, this approach aims to interpret the meanings of objects, whether occurring in figurative statements or iconographic representations, from within the contexts of their original functions, “by examining their internal relationships with other ideas or concepts expressed within the same contextual framework.”²⁴ As she points out, “the treatment of symbolic phenomena on a superficial level” does “not explain the function of symbolism.”²⁵

¹⁹ Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 8; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998).

²⁰ Wilfred G. Lambert, “The Historical Development of the Mesopotamian Pantheon: A Study in Sophisticated Polytheism,” in *Unity in Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (ed. Hans Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 191-200.

²¹ Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

²² Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia*, 1.

²³ Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia*, 5.

²⁴ Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia*, 5; cf. xiv.

²⁵ Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia*, xiii.

Watanabe observes that the names of animals mentioned in ancient texts generally carry meaning beyond references to the natural creatures themselves.²⁶ When a creature is repeatedly found in a specific context, this context provides a link or clue to the meaning attached to it.

Watanabe's treatment of composite creatures, the Imdugud/Anzu and the horned lion-griffin, in Chapter 5 of her work provides a case study for analysis of similar mixed beings. Each composite creature is derived from two or more species, with each animal part embodying a concept associated with the given animal's natural behavior. Thus, for instance, a winged, human-headed lion possesses attributes that include human intelligence, leonine power and ferocity, and eagle wings to provide swiftness and access to the realm of the sky. Watanabe finds that "the study of these animals provides a model for the way in which the characteristics of two or more animals are integrated into one animal body, as a result of which multiple divine aspects, perceived in one deity, are effectively conveyed by a single symbolic animal."²⁷

Wings are a frequent physical component of Mesopotamian composite creatures. Watanabe maintains that when animals that are ordinarily wingless are portrayed with wings, the intent in some cases may be to represent the constellation that is symbolized by that creature.²⁸ Constellations of stars were understood by the Babylonians as images of "earthly objects projected onto the evening sky."²⁹ Additionally, wings could personify the abstract concepts of wind or the flying of time.³⁰ While wings often belong to the realm of the gods, they can also be associated with night, death, and evil.³¹

Mehmet-Ali Ataç published *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art* (2010) as an extension of his Harvard University doctoral dissertation (2003).³² This groundbreaking work "is as much about ancient Mesopotamian philosophy as it is about ancient Mesopotamian art."³³ Ataç decodes NA palace reliefs in light of written and representational mythological traditions, and in the process, he develops a particular method of iconographic interpretation that could be applied to other periods and cultures of the ancient Near East.

Ataç acknowledges the surface socio-political significance of the reliefs, which serve as imperial propaganda. However, he maintains that expression of a deeper meaning, which

²⁶ Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia*, 1.

²⁷ Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia*, 7.

²⁸ Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia*, 40.

²⁹ Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia*, 39.

³⁰ Cf. Hope B. Werness, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Animal Symbolism in Art* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 433.

³¹ Cf. Werness, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Animal Symbolism in Art*, 434.

³² Mehmet-Ali Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Also important to this discussion are Ataç's other works including: "Visual Formula and Meaning in Neo-Assyrian Relief Sculpture," *The Art Bulletin* 88, no. 1 (2006): 69-101 and "Time and Eternity' in the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud," in *Assyrian Reliefs from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II: A Cultural Biography* (ed. Ada Cohen and Steven E. Kangas; Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2010), 159-180.

³³ Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art*, xvii.

was conceived and understood by an elite caste of priestly scholars, may be a core function of the palatial art. He finds that the iconography reveals the roles of the king in the areas of military-political leadership (*regnum*) and priesthood (*scacerdotem*), and further hypothesizes that these two aspects of Assyrian kingship, encoded in the language of an archaic cosmos, are portrayed in the reliefs at the direction of the informed court scholars in collaboration with master craftsmen. Combination of these aspects produces a complex philosophical rhetoric, in which there is decorum, or appropriateness, in the correspondence between iconographic elements and their conceptual referents.

Ataç's close treatments of prominent motifs in the NA palace reliefs—primordial *apkallu* and Tiamat's army of hybrid monsters created to fight Marduk—concentrate on semantic and semiotic aspects of these creatures as they relate to the king. Ataç identifies the concept of occultization, or hiddenness, of the primordial *apkallu* sages, who taught the wisdom of civilization to humans in an archaic cosmos, where gods and humans enjoyed close and natural interactions. After the great Flood, the crucial wisdom of the *apkallu* was accessible, especially to the king, through the priestly scholars, for whom the artistic motif of the *apkallu* may have been self-referential, in order to support their indispensable role and influence in the court as channels of wisdom.

As noted by Ataç, there is a transition during the Neo-Assyrian period (c. 930-612 BC) between the royal decorative programs of Ashurnasirpal II (884-859 BC) and the kings who follow him. He notes that the mystical-mythological content of the palace reliefs in the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud that depict antediluvian sages or *apkallu* serves as visual referents to a primordial past. However, palace reliefs of subsequent NA kings shift the emphasis in the mythological content from the *apkallu* to the composite beings associated with the cosmic battle between Tiamat and Marduk as found in *Enuma Elish*.³⁴ Although NB palace reliefs, with the exception of the throne room façade of the Southwest Palace of Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 BC), have not survived, have not been found, or may never have existed so as to provide a point of comparison, the mystical-mythological repertoire found on the NA palace reliefs is found to varying degrees in the iconography of the later Neo-Babylonian period (626-539 BC).

1.2 METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

Tight methodological controls facilitate the development of conclusions that are as solid as possible under the circumstances, given the limitations of the available data. The first area of control concerns the delineation of the primary data set: extant provenanced NB iconographic attestations of composite beings. I have endeavored to identify all the published examples, but realize that additional items relevant to this study may be in museums and private collections, or still under the ground.

³⁴ Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art*, 144, 172.

The second area of control is to limit the scope of the project to an investigation that addresses its aim, namely, to better understand how depictions of NB composite beings related to ideology. Full understanding is impossible, but glimpses into Babylonian perceptions of reality on various levels may be grasped through the broken lens of material remains, including visual representations. Primary analysis of NB iconographic examples will be selective, in order to identify aspects that contribute to our grasp of the worldview behind it. For example, creatures shown in a scene on a seal or a plaque along with the composite being under investigation will be considered only insofar as they form the context for interpreting that hybrid.

The third area of control is to examine the primary data in logical ways that can yield conclusions that address the aim of the research. To this end, each type of composite creature that is attested in the corpus of NB provenanced objects will be analyzed through the following successive steps:

1. *Overall Description of NB Examples:* General description of provenanced NB attestations of the type of composite being.
2. *Physical Components of the Composite Being:* Analysis of the physical morphology of the hybrid, along with its dress and posture, in order to make a preliminary assessment of its qualities in comparison with those of the natural creatures represented among its components.
3. *Context of the Composite Being within Scenes:* Analysis of any NB iconographic scenes in which a hybrid appears with other beings, creatures, or symbols in order to determine how the composite being in question functions in relation to those elements within the internal context of the composition. Note that orientations of protagonists and objects in a scene on a seal are discussed in terms of how they were meant to appear in an impression of that seal.
4. *Interpretation by NB Texts:* Analysis of the way in which our understanding of the composite being is informed by any extant NB text that refers to it, especially on an object that depicts it.
5. *External Context:* Consideration of material objects (e.g., seals, plaques, figurines, tablets, walls, etc.) on which portrayals of the hybrid occur, taking into account their locations (e.g., an entrance to the city of Babylon) and uses (e.g., apotropaic), in order to gain information concerning the ideological function of the creature.
6. *Historical Background:* An overview of the historical heritage of the composite being in Mesopotamian iconography, as witnessed by ancient art and texts, in order to clarify the diachronic ideological context of the NB form of the creature. The overall approach of the present study is synchronic, focusing on assessment of the NB corpus of composite beings in relation to other expressions of ideology during this period, especially in the intertwined areas of religion and politics. However, it is recognized that NB concepts associated with a given hybrid were shaped by longstanding traditions (including myths) concerning it, and comparing NB examples with data from other periods can be instructive.

7. *Conclusion*: Summary of the ideological contribution of the composite being, based on a synthesis of the above analyses.

This order of steps prioritizes evidence that is closest to the primary data itself, only turning at the end to more distant contexts. The logic of this approach is roughly analogous to that of lexicography and textual exegesis, which seek to determine the meanings of words, expressions, and literary units by analyzing that which defines them, i.e., their usage within particular settings. Only secondarily does further research turn to broader contexts, such as diachronic linguistic or literary developments.

1.4 NEO-BABYLONIAN SOURCES FOR THE RESEARCH

Neo-Babylonian iconographic and textual sources for the research were discovered at a number of locations in Babylonia, on various kinds of objects, and in several genres of texts. The following is a brief introduction to these ancient sources in terms of their provenance, their value as objects, and the places where they appear in texts:

1. *Provenance*: Iconographic examples dating to the Neo-Babylonian period were found primarily in Uruk, Babylon, Nippur, Sippar, and Ur. A few come from Borsippa, Kish, Dilbat, and the Diyala region.

2. *Objects*: As expected, most iconographic examples are glyptic: cylinder and stamp seals, as well as impressions on tablets from such seals. A number of additional examples are found on or in the form of amulets, as figurines, and as glazed brick reliefs on the monumental Ishtar Gate.

Because so much of the material for the present study is glyptic in nature, it is helpful to include a general note on seals and sealings here at the outset. In the ancient Near East during all periods, cylinder and stamp seals were owned and used by a variety of individuals and served various functions, especially to mark ownership of objects.³⁵ Clay impressions of seals are primarily found on tablets, but also on bullae affixed to jars, doors, and other objects, such as boxes and baskets.³⁶ The primary purpose of sealing a tablet is clear in all periods: to confer validity on the tablet and its contents. The identity of the individual sealer was secondary. It appears that format (stamp versus cylinder), style, and imagery were most frequently a matter of personal preference. Specific cultural significance of the details of a given scene in the context of a particular sealing is usually obscure.³⁷

Recently, Irene Winter has presented significant insights into the meaning of iconography on NB cylinder seals in her 2010 book titled *On Art in the Ancient Near East: Vol. I, Of the First*

³⁵ Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum Press, 2005), 113.

³⁶ Cf. Clemens D. Reichel, "Seals and Sealings at Tell Asmar: A New Look at an Ur III to Early Old Babylonian Palace," in RAI 45.2 (ed. William W. Hallo and Irene J. Winter; Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2001), 108.

³⁷ Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* (AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999), 35-37; Collon, *First Impressions*, 113.

Millennium B.C.E. Here she discusses a number of different genres of seals, including the “official state seal.”³⁸ Winter acknowledges: “What remains elusive are the socio-cultural mechanisms governing the association of particular motifs with particular offices or individuals.”³⁹ However, she does find that certain motifs may correspond to specific NB administrative posts or “domains of activity.”⁴⁰ In reference to the official state seal, and regarding seals in general, she points out the dual identity of a given seal “as object (*seal*) and product (*sealing*),” and observes that “the seal represents and thereby constitutes the *sign* of its owner, so the sealing is the mark of and thereby constitutes the *sign* of the seal.”⁴¹ Thus, to the extent that the seal “represents the seal-holder’s place and authority as a token, the act of sealing carries, and the resultant impression serves as an index of the full authority of that place and authority held by the seal-owner.”⁴²

In addition to validating a transaction and identifying a witness, a seal could also serve an amuletic purpose: A seal bearing the image of a supernatural being invokes the power of that being to protect the owner of the object. This would have been true both for the document sealed as well as for the rightful owner of the seal, who would have worn the apotropaic object on his person.⁴³

During the Neo-Babylonian period, the relationship between office and imagery remains inconclusive, although some patterns are discernable on seals owned by notaries.⁴⁴ Both cylinder and stamp seals are extensively employed during the Neo-Babylonian period. However, stamp seals become more common, probably due to the increased use of papyrus and other writing materials, which were rolled, tied with a string, and sealed with a stamp seal impressed upon a bulla pressed into the secured string. At times a cylinder seal is used as a stamp seal, i.e., stamped (rather than rolled) on a tablet or bulla.⁴⁵

During the Late Babylonian period (at the transition between NB and Persian dominance), sealings on the Eanna temple tablets from Uruk and in the Murashu archive from Nippur

³⁸ Irene J. Winter, *On Art in the Ancient Near East: Vol I, Of the First Millennium B.C.E.* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 34/1; Leiden: Brill, 2010), see esp. ch. 3, “*Le Palais imaginaire: Scale and Meaning in Neo-Assyrian Cylinder Seals*,” 109-162. This chapter was originally published in *Images as Media: Sources for the Cultural History of the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean (1st Millenium BCE)* (OBO 175; ed. C. Uehlinger; Fribourg: University Press, 2000), 51-88.

³⁹ Winter, *On Art in the Ancient Near East*, 136. However, among some seals belonging to eunuchs, Winter finds a “weak correlation” between the deity represented on the seal and theophoric elements in the name of the owner.

⁴⁰ Winter, *On Art in the Ancient Near East*, 137.

⁴¹ Winter, *On Art in the Ancient Near East*, 145.

⁴² Winter, *On Art in the Ancient Near East*, 145.

⁴³ Collon, *First Impressions*, 113.

⁴⁴ Cf. Heather D. Baker and Cornelia Wunsch, “Neo-Babylonian Notaries and Their Use of Seals,” in RAI 45.2 (ed. William W. Hallo and Irene J. Winter; Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2001), 197-213. For a discussion of seals in the succeeding period, cf. Erica Ehrenberg, “Sixth-Century Urukanean Seal Impressions at Yale,” in RAI 45.2 (ed. William W. Hallo and Irene J. Winter; Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2001), 185-195; see esp. 187. Also attested is the use of NB seals in the Arabian Peninsula, but whether these were primarily status symbols or used for judicial or economic purposes is not clear (D. T. Potts, “Cylinder Seals and Their Use in the Arabian Peninsula,” *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 21, no. 1 [2010]: 38).

⁴⁵ Baker and Wunsch, “Neo-Babylonian Notaries and Their Use of Seals,” 208.

provide little information regarding the sealers.⁴⁶ At Nippur, an individual retains his personal seal even if he changes his position. However, a noticeable pattern can be seen on the tablets from the Ebabbar temple at Sippar, indicating that both seal type and imagery seem to be affiliated with specific offices in the temple archive. Worship scenes are preferred by the office of the *šangû* (priest), while contest scenes are favored by the office of the *qīpu* (a trusted representative of the king).⁴⁷

During the Neo-Babylonian period, impressions of seals with the *mušbuššu* motif appear on a variety of legal and economic documents, temple transactions and royal grants, and letters. However, correlations between the snake-dragon scene, the role of the owner of a given seal, and the contents of tablets impressed with this scene are not readily evident.

3. *Texts*: A number of inscriptions shed light on the NB perception of supernatural composite beings. These include building inscriptions, letters, and royal inscriptions. Two texts—*Enuma Elish* and “The Babylonian Map of the World”—are particularly significant for this study because they refer to several kinds of hybrids.

Enuma Elish, the Epic of Creation, was recited during the Babylonian New Year Festival (the Akitu Festival).⁴⁸ It celebrates the exaltation of Marduk, the city-god of Babylon, as the supreme deity of the Mesopotamian pantheon. Marduk is awarded this elevated position after he saves the younger gods who are threatened with extinction by their mother goddess, Tiamat. After Marduk’s victorious battle, he orders the universe, establishes Babylon as its center, and creates humanity to serve the gods.

Of particular interest in the epic narrative is Tiamat’s creation of eleven terrifying monsters, which she employs as weapons against Marduk:

She deployed serpents, dragons, and hairy hero-men,
Lion monsters, lion men, scorpion men,
Mighty demons, fish men, bull men,
Bearing unsparing arms, fearing no battle.
Her commands were absolute, no one opposed them,
Eleven indeed on this wise she created.⁴⁹

After Marduk ensnares Tiamat’s brood of monsters in a net, he kills her and uses her carcass as raw material to form the universe. However, Marduk does not kill the monsters. Instead,

⁴⁶ Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 33-34.

⁴⁷ John D. A. MacGinnis, *Letter Orders from Sippar and the Administration of the Ebabbara in the Late-Babylonian Period* (Poznan: Bonami, 1995), 170; Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 36.

⁴⁸ The date of composition of *Enuma Elish* has not been firmly established, but it may have been during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I (1126-1104 BC) at a time of Babylonian nationalistic revival (Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* [Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2005], 436).

⁴⁹ *Enuma Elish* II:28-32 in Foster, *Before the Muses*, 446-447; cf. Philippe Talon, ed., *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enuma Elish* (SAACT 4; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2006), 38, 82.

he pardons them and enlists them into his service. Most of the eleven appear among the composite creatures in NB iconography.

A second text that is repeatedly referenced in the following chapters is “The Babylonian Map of the World” or “Mappa Mundi” (BM 92687, Ill. 4.5),⁵⁰ which dates to the late eighth or seventh century BC and is probably from Sippar.⁵¹ The tablet on which it appears is unique in that it features both a bird’s-eye view diagram of the earth’s surface on an international scale, with Babylon at the center, as well as related texts both on the obverse and the reverse.

According to the text on the obverse of the tablet, Marduk settles “ruined gods . . . inside the Sea”:

- 1'.] [.
- 2'.] . the rui[ned] cities [.]
- 3'. [. . the vas]t [Sea] which Marduk sees. The bridge in[side her?]
- 4'. [. . .] . and the ruine[d] gods which he set[tled] inside the Sea
- 5'. [. . . .] . . are present; the viper, sea-serpent, great dragon, anzu-bird, and scorp[on-man]
- 6'. [. . moun]tain goat, gazelle, zebu, [p]anther, bull-m[an]
- 7'. [. .]ion, wolf, red-deer, and hye[na],
- 8'. [monk]ey, female-monkey, ibex, ostrich, cat, chameleon,
- 9'. [. . .] beasts which Marduk created on top of the res[tl]ess Sea,
- 10'. [. . U]tnapištim, Sargon, and Nur-[D]agan the King of Buršaha[nda],
- 11'. [. . w]ings like a bird, which/whom no one can com[prehend.]⁵²

Although the context of the list of monsters is uncertain, due to the fact that parts of the first few lines are lost, the text seems to refer to the distant past. The “ruined cities” may be ancient sites, which have long since lost their names and significance. Lines 3’-4’ are probably a direct reference to *Enuma Elish*, in which case the “ruined gods,” whom Marduk settles “inside the Sea” (Line 4’), most likely include some of the eleven monsters created by Tiamat and captured by Marduk.⁵³ Compare *Enuma Elish* VI:151-154, where Marduk is praised as “the healing god, who mended all the ruined gods,” “who gave life to the dead gods.”

⁵⁰ “Map of the World,” BM, n.p. [cited 10 June 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/m/map_of_the_world.aspx.

⁵¹ Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 20, 26.

⁵² Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 23.

⁵³ Foster, *Before the Muses*, 444; Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 33-34.

1.5 TYPES OF COMPOSITE BEINGS

Types of supernatural composite beings attested in provenanced NB iconography and therefore discussed in the present study include the following:

Apkallu: The “sages,” who brought wisdom, civilization, and the secret arts of magic to humanity, are the human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*, the fish-cloaked *apkallu*, and the bird-of-prey-headed, winged *apkallu*.

Genius: Winged or wingless figures in human form, possibly covered by the broad term *aladlammû*, are frequently found engaged in contests with other natural or supernatural creatures.

Bovine: Three forms of bull composite beings are significant during this period, the bull-man known as *kusarikku* (GUD₄.ALIM), the human-headed winged or wingless bovine identified as *aladlammû* (^dALAD.^dLAMMA.MEŠ), and the winged bull, whose name is unknown.

Lion: Supernatural lion creatures are amply represented by the winged or wingless human-headed lion (sphinx), the dog-humanoid (“Mad Dog”) known as ^(d)*ur(i)dimmu* (UR.IDIM), the lion-demon ^dUgallu (U₄-GAL), the cruel and invasive lion-demoness Lamashtu, and the lion-dragon, whose Akkadian name is unknown

Canine: The wild nature of Pazuzu, a powerful canine demon portrayed as a grotesquely complex amalgamation of creatures, is frequently harnessed against Lamashtu.

Winged Quadrupeds: The winged ibex(?) and an unidentified winged creature are found in a variety of contexts.

Fish: Fish-based composite beings, aside from the fish-cloaked *apkallū* (see above), include the merman known as *kulullū* (KU₆.LÚ.U₁₈.LU), the goat-fish called *suburmašū* (SUḪUR-MAŠ), and an unidentified fish quadruped(?).

Bird: Aside from the griffin-demon (bird-of-prey-headed *apkallu*), creatures of the sky include the bird-griffin (*kuribu*?) and the lion-headed eagle (*anzū*).

Scorpion: The scorpion is represented in the scorpion-man, labeled *girtablullū* (GÍR.TAB.LÚ.U_x[GIŠGAL].LU).

Snake: Serpentine composite creatures include the snake monster, known as *bašmu* (MUŠ-ŠÀ-TUR), and the prominent snake-dragon, known as *mušbuššu* (MUŠ.ḪUŠ).

1.6 CONFIGURATION OF CHAPTERS

Following the present introduction to the study, subsequent chapters investigate composite beings in NB iconography in the order listed above under “Types of Composite Beings.” Each chapter begins with an introduction to the hybrid creature and any sub-types of it, followed by a general historical overview (in ch. 2 on the *apkallu*) or a discussion of the primary natural non-human creature (in chs. 3 and following). Then specific iconographic examples of each type or sub-type are analyzed through application of the methodological steps listed above, leading to conclusions that are synthesized in the general conclusion to the chapter. The final chapter of this work further synthesizes the individual chapter conclusions into an overall picture of the ideological significance of composite beings in NB iconography.

2. *APKALLU*

In Mesopotamian iconography, an *apkallu* is primarily a mythical sage, usually in the form of a composite being. Three main types of beings represent such supernatural sages in Mesopotamian iconography and texts: (1) the human-figured, sometimes winged *ūmu-apkallu*,¹ (2) the fish-cloaked *apkallu*, and (3) the bird-headed, winged *apkallu*.² Although these are distinct physical types, they are united in terms of function, and they are therefore discussed together in this chapter.

Stephanie Dalley observes: “The three types are identified from ritual texts and labels on figurines, but because the evidence is uncommon and sometimes ambiguous there are uncertainties. Change over time may also account for some difficulties.”³ Uncertainties can appear, for example, (1) where single objects often held by sages (e.g., a bucket, sprig, or cone) appear in the hands of figures who lack other characteristics of *apkallu*, (2) where winged or wingless human figures could represent either *apkallu* or genius (hero) beings, or (3) where a wingless figure could represent either a supernatural *apkallu* in human guise or an ordinary human being.⁴

The last of the areas of uncertainty just mentioned is related to two factors that blur the distinction between humans and supernatural beings. First, the kind of *apkallu* referred to as *ūmu-apkallu* is an anthropomorphic figure of human descent that usually has wings, but can appear wingless. A winged *ūmu-apkallu* is clearly supernatural, but a wingless one can look like an ordinary human. Second, Mesopotamian tradition assimilated the human Adapa to the supernatural U’an, also known by the Greek name, Oannes, with the result that the human and supernatural natures were blended in one personality (see further below).⁵

Scholars often differentiate between beings of identical appearance by taking into account the behaviors in which they are involved, which indicate their roles. A winged anthropomorphic figure that may be classified by its physical morphology as either an *ūmu-*

¹ On the meaning of this Akkadian designation, see further below.

² Stephanie Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 1; Frans A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (CM 1; Groningen: Styx & PP, 1992), 46; Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (ill. Tessa Richards; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 17-18, 83; cf. Erica Reiner, “The Etiological Myth of the ‘Seven Sages,’” *Or* 30 (1961): 1-11.

³ Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 4. On identification of *apkallu* figures by correlation with texts, see, e.g., Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 74-75.

⁴ Cf. Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 4.

⁵ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 74; Jonas C. Greenfield, “Apkallu,” *DDD*, 73.

apkallu or a genius can plausibly be identified as one or the other on the basis of its activity, as indicated by its posture and context. For example, such a figure would most likely be a genius if it is portrayed as fighting in a contest scene because an *apkallu* does not engage in such activity (see further below). The relationship between these two classes of beings is further discussed in Chapter 3.

For the Neo-Babylonian period, the three kinds of *apkallu* are attested on cylinder and stamp seals and sealings, which complement information from cuneiform texts regarding their physical form and function. A number of clay *ūmu-apkallu* figurines also date to this period. The provenanced NB examples will be discussed below after a survey of the historical background to the *apkallu* in general.

2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO *APKALLU* IN GENERAL

In third-millennium-BC texts, the Sumerian expression AB.GAL denotes the profession of a priest or an exorcist.⁶ Sumerian incantation texts use the term with reference to a mythical sage at the court of the god Enki. The Akkadian term for such a sage or cultic expert is *apkallu* (or *abgallu*) a loanword from the Sumerian AB.GAL (also written AB.GA.AL or NUN.ME).⁷ The word *apkallu* covers the following semantic range: a wise man or expert, (a mythical) sage, a type of priest or exorcist, or a diviner.⁸ Usage of *apkallu* applies not only to mythical beings and humans, but also to gods. Cuneiform sources apply the epithet “sage of the gods” to the deities Ea, Damkina, Gula, Enlil, Adad, Marduk, Nabu, and Gerra.⁹

⁶ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 76; Raymond R. Jestin, *Nouvelles tablettes sumériennes de Šuruppak au Musée d'Istanbul* (Paris: Librairie A. Maisonneuve, 1957), 16; “apkallu,” *CAD* 1.2:173.

⁷ See “apkallu,” *CAD* 1.2:171; cf. “apkallu(m),” *AHW* 1:58; Uruk Text W20030, 7 translated by Johannes Jacobus Adrianus van Dijk (“Die Inschriftenfunde,” in *XVIII. vorläufiger Bericht über die von dem Deutschen Archäologischen Institut und der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft aus Mitteln der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft unternommenen Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka* [ed. Heinrich J. Lenzen; Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1962], 44); Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 76.

⁸ See *eršu* which means “wise,” in “eršu A,” *CAD* 4:314. An *apkallu* can be described by the adjective *mudû*, which can mean “knowing (something or somebody), expert in a specific craft, wise, competent, learned, knowledgeable, expert” (“mudû,” *CAD* 10.2:165; cf. Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 188 n. 1; Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 1; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 46; “apkallu,” *CAD* 1.2:171-173). An *apkal šamni* (NUN.ME Ì+GIŠ) is a diviner (apparently literally an expert in lecanomancy): *mār bārī* NUN.ME Ì+GIŠ *zēru dārū piri? Enmeduranki*, “the diviner, apkallu of the oil, of eternal lineage, descendant of Enmeduranki” (Heinrich Zimmern, *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion* [Assyriologische Bibliothek 12; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1901], no. 24, Übersetzung); cf. “apkallu,” *CAD* 1.2:171; “apkallu(m),” *AHW* 1:58.

⁹ *Apkallu* is used as a divine epithet of Nudimmud/Ea in a NA text in which Esarhaddon (680-669 BC) states that Ea (NUN.ME) gave him wisdom (Rykle Borger, *Die Inschriften Assarhaddons Königs von Assyrien* [AfOB 9; Osnaburg: Biblio-Verlag, 1967], 82 line 11). Of Enlil it is said: *at-ta* NUN.ME DINGIR.MEŠ, “you are the sage of the gods” (Simo Parpola, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh* [SAACT 1; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997], 111, XI:180; cf. “apkallu,” *CAD* 1.2:171; Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 1).

Another commonly used term for sage from the Old Babylonian period (c. 2000-1600 BC) onward is *ummānum/ummānum* (*um-man-nu; u₄-ma^d-a-nūm*).¹⁰ This word could denote a craftsman or an artisan; an expert or a specialist; an artist, scholar, or moneylender.¹¹

As noted by Ataç in reference to the *Warka King List*, there is a demarcation between the antediluvian *apkallu* and the postdiluvian *ummānu*, both of whom served as advisors to the human king.¹² He identifies the Flood as a point of apparent cosmic shift, after which human enjoyment of familiarity with supernatural beings in a spiritually superior age was replaced by a state of hiddenness or “occultation” of the supernatural realm.¹³ Ataç suggests: “The relationship between the *apkallu*s and the *ummānu*s is hence such that it is as if the former initiated the latter into their respective expertises and professions, and in turn, the latter became the ‘masters of truth’ in their own generations and perhaps even guided kings along the path of wisdom and moral conduct.”¹⁴ If so, after direct royal access to the supernatural *apkallu* was disrupted by the Deluge, the postdiluvian *ummānu*, human court scholars who were heirs to the tradition of the *apkallu*, provided indirect access to their wisdom.¹⁵

With reference to the *apkallu* as mythical sages, Babylonian tradition records in Uruk Text W20030,7 (Neo-Assyrian period)¹⁶ and other sources¹⁷ that seven supernatural *apkallu* sages lived before the Deluge (see further below).¹⁸ A Sumerian temple hymn states that the seven *apkallu* came from Eridu (= Eridug),¹⁹ the city of Ea/Enki, whose domain was the watery Apsu.²⁰ In the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, the Seven Sages are also said to have built the walls of Uruk.²¹

¹⁰ In Uruk Text W20030, 7 (van Dijk, “Die Inschriftenfunde,” 44, 48); “ummānu(m),” *AHW* 3:1413; “ummiānu(m),” *AHW* 3:1415-1416; “umānu(m),” *CAD* 1.2:104.

¹¹ “ummiānu(m),” *AHW* 3:1415-1416.

¹² Mehmet-Ali Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 150.

¹³ Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art*, 154.

¹⁴ Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art*, 155.

¹⁵ Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art*, 151.

¹⁶ In Uruk Text W20030, 7 (van Dijk, “Die Inschriftenfunde,” 44).

¹⁷ *Erra and Ishum* (I:147; 8th cent. BC) translated by Luigi Cagni, *The Poem of Erra* (Malibu: Undena, 1977). Borossus (4th cent. BC), in his *Babyloniaca, Book I*, (now extant only in secondary sources) describes the creation of the world and how humans learned about it. He mentions Seven Sages, three of whom are identified by name, who teach humans the crafts and skills of civilization: Oannes, Annedotos, and Odakon (Gerald Verbrugghe and John M. Wickersham, *Berosos and Manetho, Introduced and Translated: Native Traditions in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996], 17, 44, 71; Stanley M. Burstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berosus* [Malibu: Undena, 1978], 160-161).

¹⁸ For discussion of possible parallels to the Mesopotamian *apkallu* in Genesis 6:1-4; Proverbs 9:1; Jubilees 4:17; 7:39 see Anne D. Kilmer, “The Mesopotamian Counterparts of the Biblical Nēpīlīm,” in *Perspectives on Language and Text: Essays and Poems in Honor of Francis I. Andersen’s Sixtieth Birthday, July 28, 1985* (ed. Edgar W. Conrad and Edward G. Newing; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1987), 39-43; Greenfield, “Apkallu,” *DDD*, 74; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 163, fig. 328.

¹⁹ “abriqqu,” *CAD* 1.1:62.

²⁰ Eridu is the first city mentioned in the Sumerian King List, which was probably first compiled c. 2100 BC with later copies c. 1800-1600 BC (“The Sumerian King List: Translation,” The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, n.p.

Two of three texts that preserve the myth of “The Twenty-One ‘Poultices’” reinforce the identity of the *apkallu*’s abode at Eridu and Apsu.²² The late Assyrian text LKA 146, obv. 5 states: “Nudimmud (Ea/Enki) became angry and summoned ‘the seven *apkallu* of Eridu.’”²³ However, the parallel Late Babylonian text BM 33999:5 recounts: “Nudimmud became angry and summoned ‘the seven *apkallu* of the *Apsu*.’”²⁴ Hence, both the deity Ea/Enki/Nudimmud and the *apkallu* are known to have their abode in the city of Eridu and the watery Apsu. The eighth-century-BC Babylonian myth of *Erra and Ishum* recounts that Marduk was angered by the *apkallu* and permanently banished them to stay in the Apsu.²⁵

Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian texts indicate that antediluvian, legendary kings had *apkallu* sages as their personal advisors.²⁶ In the Sumerian Flood Story, Ziusudra, the last *apkallu* before the great Flood, was also the last antediluvian king of Shuruppak.²⁷ In the later Akkadian accounts of the Flood story, the same *apkallu* was known as Atrahasis (“Extremely Wise”) or Ut-napištim (“He Found Life”).²⁸

Texts recording historical periods after the Flood describe several humans of renown and exorcists as sages (*apkallu*).²⁹ For example, in the letter SAA 10, 174, Marduk-šum-ušur, the chief diviner of Ashurbanipal (668-627 BC), addresses him thus: “The god Ashur, in a dream, called the grandfather [Sennacherib, 704-681 BC] of the king [Ashurbanipal], my lord, an *apkallu*. (Therefore) the king, lord of the kings, is the offspring of an *apkallu* and of Adapa. You have surpassed the wisdom (*nēmequ*) of the Apsu and of all scholarship

[cited 21 May 2012]. Online: <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section2/tr211.htm>; cf. W. G. Lambert and A. Millard, *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1969], 15). Ataç points out that the Apsu is a component of the greater Mesopotamian Netherworld (Mehmet-Ali Ataç, “The ‘Underworld Vision’ of the Ninevite Intellectual Milieu,” *Iraq* 66 (2004): 67-76, esp. 68.

²¹ *Gilgamesh* I:19, XI:318; see Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 164. Here “sage” is expressed *mun-tal-ki*, lit. “counselor” (Parpola, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh*, 3, 71, 63, 113). The Seven Sages are not to be confused with the Seven who may be identified with the *Sebittu*/IMINBI = “Seven gods,” “Seven demons,” “seven dots” = the Pleiades, who function as guides through the mountain passes, as in *Bilgamesh and Humava* (see Tomislav Bilić, “A Note on the Celestial Orientation: Was Gilgamesh Guided to the Cedar Forest by the Pleiades?” *VAMZ* 40, no. 1 [2007]: 11-14).

²² W. G. Lambert, “The Twenty-One ‘Poultices,’” *AnSt* 30 (1980): 77-83.

²³ Lambert, “The Twenty-One ‘Poultices,’” 78, 79.

²⁴ Lambert, “The Twenty-One ‘Poultices,’” 78, 79.

²⁵ In another instance, Adad is angered by the *apkallu* (“zunnu” as “rain” [“zunnu A,” *CAD* 21:161]). In the myth *Erra and Ishum* (I:147) the sages are called *ummānum*, “craftsmen” (Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 291).

²⁶ See Uruk Text W20030, 7 (van Dijk, “Die Inschriftenfunde,” 44-45); Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 1.

²⁷ Old Babylonian from Nippur, c. 1700 BC, preserved as a bilingual text in the library of Ashurbanipal. See Daniel A. Foxvog, “Mesopotamian Literature and Documents” (unpublished, Berkeley, 2001), 96-98; Parpola, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh*, 146; Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 1; cf. Thorkild Jacobsen, “The Eridu Genesis,” *JBL* 100 (1981): 513-529.

²⁸ Lambert and Millard, *Atra-Hasis*, 32; Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 1; cf. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 328. *Atrahasis* Tab. III, c. 1635 BC Babylonian. *Gilgamesh* Tab. XI, largely derived from *Atra-hasis*; OB Akkadian, c. early 2nd mill. BC.

²⁹ Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 45.

(*ummânūtu*).³⁰ Among the distinguished individuals who are described as *apkallu* were one or more semi legendary kings, such as Enmerkar, and other prominent royal personages, such as Shulgi (2095-2047 BC), Enlil-bāni of Isin (1861-1837 BC), Hammurabi (1792-1750 BC), Nebuchadnezzar I (1126-1104 BC), Sennacherib and his wife Naqia, Esarhaddon (680-669 BC), Ashurbanipal, and a seventh-century-BC queen of Arabia.³¹

Iconographic representations of the *apkallu* appear to be a first-millennium-BC development. Such physical depictions are most frequently found on palace reliefs or in glyptic art. Additionally, *apkallu* could take the form of colossi flanking entrances to palaces, apotropaic clay figurines, or foundation figurines, or their likeness could be etched into amuletic plaques or carved on ivory.³² Although an *apkallu* figure is generally male and bearded, some unbearded sages, whose garments differ from those of the bearded ones, may provide female iconographic examples of *apkallu*.³³

During the first millennium, representations of *apkallu* sages were prominently associated with the king in NB palaces, particularly that of Ashurnasirpal II in his throne room at Nimrud. Here *apkallu* figures were positioned in strategic locations at entrances to palace rooms and on wall reliefs. The royal throne was situated in front of a relief portraying antithetical *apkallu* flanking a tree of life.³⁴ Ataç interprets these palace depictions as evoking the ideal model of kingship that was believed to exist during the antediluvian age, when royal power was supported by unmediated access to powerful and wise supernatural *apkallu*

³⁰ Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “The Social and Intellectual Setting of Babylonian Wisdom Literature,” in *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel* (ed. R. J. Clifford; SBL-Symposium 36; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 16; Simo Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars* (SAA 10; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1993), 136-137; cf. Leroy Waterman, *Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire* (4 vols.; Humanistic Series 17-20; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1931), 3.923:8; “apkallu,” *CAD* 1.2:172. See also *liblibbu* as “offspring” and “descendant” (“liblibbu,” *CAD* 9:179-180).

³¹ Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 1; Daniel D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), 117; Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien*, 53; Sidney Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts Relating to the Capture and Downfall of Babylon* (London: Methuen & Co., 1924), 76. In an undated bull inscription, Sennacherib states concerning himself: “Ea provided a spacious womb, and granted (me) keen understanding, like that of apkallu Adapa’s (*šun-na-at apkallu A-da-pā*)” (Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib*, 117, V:4; “apkallu,” *CAD* 1.2:171). Esarhaddon refers to the 7th-cent.-BC queen of Arabia as “Apkallatu [fem. form of *apkallu*], the queen of the Arabs” (Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien*, 53 IV:4; cf. under “b” as personal name” in “apkallatu,” *CAD* 1.2:171). In a NA text, Ashurbanipal says: “I understood the work of the chamberlain Adapa, the hidden treasure of all the art of tablet-writing.” This implies that Adapa invented writing and may be the reason why Sennacherib calls himself Adapa (Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, 76).

³² Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 5.

³³ Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 2.

³⁴ Irene J. Winter, “Art in Empire: The Royal Image and the Visual Dimensions of Assyrian Ideology,” in *Assyria 1995* (ed. Simo Parpola and R. M. Whiting; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 361, fig. 2. In his chapter on “Fertilization and Purification,” Ataç analyzes the configuration and meaning of the *sacred tree* in relation to kingship. Here the connection between art and myth is discernible in portraying the military role of the king and his priestly role as the connecting link between the gods and the people of the land, contributing to the maintenance of the cosmic order (Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art*, 159-166; cf. Samuel M. Paley, *King of the World: Ashur-nasir-pal II of Assyria 883-859 B.C.* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn Museum, 1976), 101, fig. 17a.

beings, even though postdiluvian royal access to their instruction was actually attainable only through an elite class of priest-scholars.³⁵

By contrast with the throne room of Ashurnasirpal II, in which antithetical *apkallu* flanked a tree of life and the enthroned king, the throne room of the NB king Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 BC) was decorated with a row of antithetical lions on the outer façade flanking the entrance from the Central Court. The lions on the right stride to the left and the lions on the left stride to the right. Viewed from the Central Court through the entrance, the monarch on his throne, the central focal point of the composition, appeared to be flanked by the opposed pairs of lions striding toward him from the right and the left. In this setting the lion, the animal of Ishtar, occupied the visual position where Ashurnasirpal had *apkallu*.³⁶ I find that this context indicates that Nebuchadnezzar and his image-makers did not place as high a priority on the monarch's connection with the archaic *apkallu*.³⁷

As mentioned above, several Mesopotamian (including Babylonian and Assyrian) kings were characterized as *apkallu*, implying that they were sources of creativity, wisdom, and power to sustain and protect their subjects. However, no extant text indicates that Nebuchadnezzar II or any other NB monarch was an *apkallu*, and the special connection between kings and sages (whether human or mythical) is not otherwise expressed during this period. Nevertheless, the fact that a considerable number of NB iconographic *apkallu* figures are extant indicates that such supernatural sages continued to be relevant in other spheres of life during this period.

³⁵ Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art*, esp. 159-166.

³⁶ The Babylonian throne room was on a straight-axis approach off the Central Court. One central and two side entrances led into the throne room through an outer façade, 56 meters long, on which was an enormous mural of glazed bricks depicting the striding lions, palmettes, and floral elements. Within the throne room, the throne was set in a niche against the back wall directly opposite the central entrance. Thus anyone approaching the king would see him seated in the distance framed by the mural on the outer wall (Joan G. Westenholz, "Babylon: Place of the Creation of the Great Gods," in *Royal Cities of the Biblical World* [ed. Joan G. Westenholz; Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 1996], 211; Joachim Marzahn, *The Ishtar Gate: The Processional Way: The New Year Festival of Babylon* [Mainz: Zabern, 1994], 32; cf. Joachim Marzahn, "Koldewey's Babylon," in *Babylon* [ed. Irving L. Finkel and M. J. Seymour; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009], 53, fig. 35).

³⁷ Ataç points out that after Ashurnasirpal II, *apkallu* were progressively replaced in Assyrian palaces by another group of primordial supernatural beings: Tiamat's hybrid monsters that were defeated by Marduk in his struggle against chaos, according to the Babylonian cosmogonic myth *Enuma Elish*, which Sargonid Assyrian monarchs attempted to assimilate to NA culture (*The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art*, 172-182).

2.2 HUMAN-FIGURED *ŪMU-APKALLU*

2.2.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

In all probability, the *ūmu-apkallu* should be identified with the human-figured *apkallu*,³⁸ sometimes described by scholars as a genius. If this identification is correct, the *ūmu-apkallu* is the only sub-category of *apkallu* that has its own distinguishing term.³⁹

The human-figured *ūmu-apkallu* is quite well attested in provenanced NB iconography. A number of depictions are glyptic: six examples of the four-winged type, and five sealings of a wingless human-figured *apkallu* on five different NB tablets from Sippar that probably were impressed with the same seal.⁴⁰ Also extant are eight unpublished wingless *ūmu-apkallu* figurines of baked clay, now in the British Museum.

2.2.1.1 HUMAN-FIGURED *ŪMU-APKALLU* WITH FOUR WINGS

Three cylinder seals, one stamp seal and two stamp impressions on tablets provide glyptic examples of the *ūmu-apkallu* (Ills. 2.1-2.6).

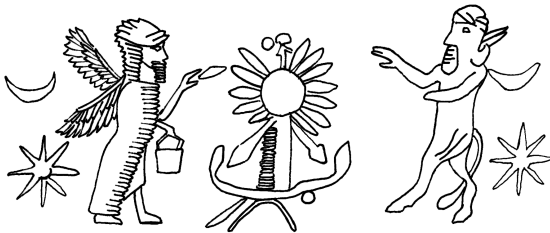


Illustration 2.1. Four-winged human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*. NB cylinder seal: CBS 8933 (Nippur)

Source. Adapted from Beatrice Wittmann, “Babylonische Rollsiegel des 11.-7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.” *BaM* 23, (1992), 247, no. 117.

³⁸ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 187-188, no. 14.

³⁹ Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 2; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 46, 74-75.

⁴⁰ Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* (AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999), 94. On a 7th-cent.-BC bronze breastplate, a wingless *ūmu-apkallu* faces right toward a winged *ūmu-apkallu*, which is facing left. To the left of this winged figure is a fish-cloaked *apkallu*. The breastplate, now housed in Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum, is discussed in Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 3.



Illustration 2.2. Four-winged human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*. NB cylinder seal: VA 7738 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Anton Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1988), 147, no. 686.

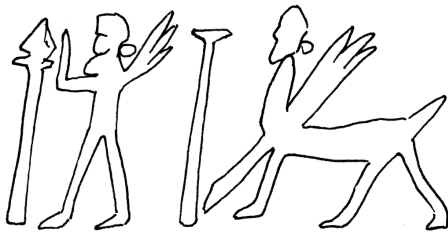


Illustration 2.3. Four-winged human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*. NB cylinder seal: CBS 14366 (Nippur)

Source. Adapted from Leon Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians from Their Seals in the Collections of the Museum* (2 vols.; PBS 14.1-2; Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1925), pl. XXXIII, no. 654.



Illustration 2.4. Four-winged human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*. NB stamp seal: VA 6950 Bab 41132 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Liane Jakob-Rost and Iris Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum* (2d ed.; Mainz: Zabern, 1997), no. 216.



Illustration 2.5. Four-winged human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: BM 56251 (Sippar)

Source. Adapted from Terence C. Mitchell and Ann Searight, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Stamp Seals III: Impressions of Stamp Seals on Cuneiform Tablets, Clay Bullae, and Jar Handles* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), no. 348.



Illustration 2.6. Four-winged human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: BM 66789 (Sippar)

Source. Adapted from John D. A. MacGinnis, *Letter Orders from Sippar and the Administration of the Ebabbara in the Late-Babylonian Period* (Poznan: Bonami, 1995), no. 3.

2.2.1.2 WINGLESS HUMAN-FIGURED *ŪMU-APKALLU*

Five stamp seal impressions of a wingless human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*, each found on a separately provenanced NB tablet from Uruk, appear to be produced from the same stamp seal (Ills. 2.7-2.11). Ehrenberg identifies the slit-robed figure as a “human-*apkallu*” (*ūmu-apkallu*), rather than a worshiper before emblems, on the basis of his function, as indicated by his stance, which is the same as that of a fish-*apkallu*.⁴¹



Illustration 2.7. Wingless human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: GCBC 534 (Uruk)

Source. Adapted from Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* (AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999), pl. 24, no. 190.



Illustration 2.8. Wingless human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: GCBC 585 (Uruk)

Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 24, no. 193.

⁴¹ “In them, a human-*apkallu*, or sage, holding a cone in the raised arm and a bucket in the lowered arm, approaches a spade standard. Like the fish-*apkallu* discussed under nos. 67-72, the human-*apkallu*, carrying the same implements, also performs purification or exorcism rites. The *apkallu* is clad in a slit-robe with no kilt beneath it. While it is not common, human-*apkallu* can minister to cultic objects in first millennium glyptic. The impression recalls no. 212, showing a *Mischwesen* tending to a spade-standard” (Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 27).



Illustration 2.9. Wingless human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: PTS 2488 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 24, no. 189.



Illustration 2.10. Wingless human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: YBC 3953 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 24, no. 191.



Illustration 2.11. Wingless human-figured *ūmu-apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: YBC 6942 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 24, no. 192.

The British Museum contains eight baked clay anthropomorphic figurines that it classifies as *ūmu-apkallu*. Four come from Babylon, two from Sippar, and one each from Dilbat and Borsippa. They portray a bearded male holding a “flowing vase with both hands.”⁴² Unfortunately, graphics of these figurines are not available.

2.2.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE HUMAN-FIGURED *ŪMU-APKALLU*

The first-millennium-BC *ūmu-apkallu* has the form of a human being and may be winged, with two or four wings, or wingless. He is always shown in profile and occasionally kneels.⁴³ His hair falls to his shoulders. He usually has a long beard flowing down to his chest, but

⁴² I am grateful to Nigel Tallis (British Museum Middle East Curator of Assyrian and Babylonian artifacts, other than cuneiform tablets, dating from 1500-539 BC) for providing me with this information (personal communication by e-mail 21 September 2009). The eight *ūmu-apkallu* figurines in the British Museum are: BM Reg. no.: 1880,1112.1902 (Babylon), BM Reg. no.: 1880,1112.1903 (Babylon), BM Reg. no.: 1880,1112.1904 (Babylon), BM Reg. no.: 1881,1103.16 (Babylon), BM Reg. no.: 1882,0323.5101 (Dilbat), BM Reg. no.: 1882,0323.5188 (Borsippa), BM Reg. no.: 1882,0918,A.43 (Sippar), BM Reg. no.: 1883,0118,AH.2603 (Sippar).

⁴³ Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 2; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 74.

beardless examples are attested outside the Neo-Babylonian period.⁴⁴ He wears a plain slit-robe that reaches almost to his ankles, and may wear sandals or be barefoot.

The *ūmu-apkallu* usually wears a headband adorned with rosettes, in which case he is of human descent, or a crown having one to three pairs of horns, signifying his divinity.⁴⁵ The *ūmu-apkallu* described in NB text VAT 8228 = KAR 298 (Wiggerman's Text II) appears to be human because he does not wear the horned tiara of deity and nothing else in the text identifies him as divine. Rather, he is an anthropomorphic sage who wards off evil and preserves life through incantations.⁴⁶

2.2.3 CONTEXT OF THE HUMAN-FIGURED *ŪMU-APKALLU* WITHIN SCENES

The ritual behavior, including orientation and stance, of the provenanced NB human *ūmu-apkallu* are typical of *apkallu*-type beings: He stands in profile and raises one forearm; the palm of his hand is oriented downward, and with it he usually grasps a *mullilu* cone or sprinkler.⁴⁷ His other hand is lowered and usually holds a *banduddû* bucket.⁴⁸

The scenes described below depict the *ūmu-apkallu* associated with the tree of life, winged bull-man, human-headed winged lion, *marru* spade-standard of Marduk, stylus of Nabu, star of Ishtar, and crescent of Sin.

2.2.3.1 CONTEXT: HUMAN-FIGURED *ŪMU-APKALLU* WITH FOUR WINGS

Cylinder seal CBS 8933 from Nippur (Ill. 2.1) depicts a central tree of life (or sun[?]) with a winged *ūmu-apkallu* in profile on the left, facing the tree, and a bull-man in profile on the right, also facing inward toward the tree.⁴⁹ Here the bull-man is not in the familiar atlas pose; rather, he mirrors the stance of the *ūmu-apkallu*. In the terminal behind the bull-man is the crescent of Sin above the eight-pointed star of Ishtar.

The *apkallu* has four wings of equal length, with carefully detailed feathers. The hair of the figure is also feathered, and falls in curls to his shoulders. He wears a long beard to the chest. The slit-robe worn by the *apkallu* has a heavy fringe beginning at the neck and running along the edge of the robe to the feet and along the hem. The figure raises his right hand,

⁴⁴ Beardless human-figured *apkallu*, presumably female figures, are found in 8th-cent.-BC Carchemish and are common in 7th-cent.-BC Urartu (Dalley, "Apkallu," *IDD*, 2).

⁴⁵ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 74.

⁴⁶ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 46.

⁴⁷ See "mullilu," *CAD* 10.2:189; "mullilu(m)," *AHW* 2:670-671.

⁴⁸ See "banduddû," *CAD* 2:79-80; "banduddû(m)," *AHW* 1:102.

⁴⁹ The multiple rays emanating from the tree are more reminiscent of a radiating sun than the branches of a tree.

palm downward, with which he grasps a *mullilu* cone or sprinkler.⁵⁰ He extends his lowered left hand to hold a *banduddû* bucket.⁵¹

Cylinder seal VA 7738 from Babylon (Ill. 2.2) depicts a striding, four-winged human *apkallu* facing right, with his right hand raised before a central tree. On the right and facing left toward the tree is a bearded, human-headed two-winged lion, slightly rampant toward the tree. Above the wing of this sphinx is a crescent moon. Behind the *apkallu* is a pedestal consisting of six vertical posts. A *marru* (spade-standard of Marduk) and double-wedged stylus (symbol of Nabu) surmount the pedestal.⁵² Above the *marru* and stylus is an eight-pointed star. The scene has an awkward distribution in that none of the figures or the pedestal base are on the baseline, but rather appear to float in the air.

A worship scene on cylinder seal CBS 14366 from Nippur (Ill. 2.3) has two figures oriented to the left. On the left of the scene, a nude four-winged *apkallu* reaches forward to grasp the *marru* spade-standard of Marduk in one hand, while lifting his other hand over it. He has long hair, a beard, and a fillet about his head. Behind the *apkallu* is a bearded, two-winged human-headed lion that strides toward a tall emblem, perhaps the stylus of Nabu.

Chalcedony stamp seal VA 6950 from Babylon (Ill. 2.4) has a schematic single figure on the face of the seal. A four-winged *ûmu-apkallu* stands in profile facing to the right. One arm is raised and holds an unidentifiable object. The other arm is lowered and also holds an unidentifiable object (probably a bucket). The creature maintains the posture and gesture typical of the *apkallu*.

Two stamp seal impressions, BM 56251 and BM 66789 (Ills. 2.5-2.6), on tablets from Sippar show the four-winged *ûmu-apkallu* in profile facing to the left. In both examples, the arms are in the typical *apkallu* gesture with one arm raised and one arm lowered. The scenes are only partially preserved and do not include the hands.

2.2.3.2 CONTEXT: WINGLESS HUMAN-FIGURED *ÛMU-APKALLU*

The scene that would have appeared on the original NB stamp seal from Uruk can be reconstructed from its five impressions (Ills. 2.7-2.11). It shows a wingless human-figured *ûmu-apkallu* facing right in profile. He raises his right hand, palm downward, with which he grasps a *mullilu* cone, and he extends his left hand to hold a bucket. The *apkallu* has shoulder length curly hair and a long beard. He wears a simple long slit-robe and stands before a low pillared pedestal surmounted by a *marru*, the spade-standard of Marduk.

⁵⁰ See “mullilu,” *CAD* 10.2:189; “mullilu(m),” *AHW* 2:670-671.

⁵¹ See “banduddû,” *CAD* 2:79-80; “banduddû(m),” *AHW* 1:102.

⁵² See “marru,” *CAD* 10.1:287-290; “marru(m),” *AHW* 2:612.

2.2.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

There are no NB textual sources that specifically mention the *ūmu-apkallu*. However, some texts from this period refer to the *apkallu* in general. Certain of these texts use this term to glorify Marduk, the city-god of Babylon, as wise. Column I, line 4 of the Nabonidus Cylinder speaks of the creation of Nabonidus (c. 555-539 BC) by Marduk, the *apkallu* (written NUN.ME) of the gods.⁵³ Column II, line 8 describes “Marduk, whose word is reliable, lord, wise one among the gods.”⁵⁴ A NB letter from a king, discovered at Kuyunjik (Bu. 89-4-26, 310) includes a prayer for his welfare that contains the words, “Marduk, the king of heaven and earth, the wise ruler (*apkallu*; written NUN.ME) of the deep (Apsu).”⁵⁵

“A Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus” (BM 38299) recalls Adapa, who in earlier literature was an *apkallu* of Eridu and instructor of wisdom, along with everything necessary for civilization. This text dates to the reign of Cyrus II (559-530 BC) at the time of the transition from the Neo-Babylonian period to the Achaemenid period (c. 550-331 BC). It is understood to be Persian propaganda that portrays Nabonidus as a heretic who denounces the existence of Adapa, along with that of the divine vizier, Mummu: “Ea did not fashion Mummu, Anu did not know the name of Adapa” (II:2-3). Column V of the “Persian Verse Account” associates Adapa with wisdom: “The crescent of Anu and Enlil which Adapa fashioned make to pass over him, the food of wisdom ” (lines 12-13).⁵⁶

Disbelief in Mummu by the Babylonian king would be serious because this would imply that he did not accept *Enuma Elish*, in which Mummu plays a role. *Enuma Elish* features the elevation of Marduk, the city god of Babylon, to kingship over the other deities, and therefore was recited at the Babylonian New Year Festival (the Akitu Festival), in which the king was supposed to play a prominent role. So, at least according to the Persians, who were courting the favor of the Babylonian populace, Nabonidus was fundamentally disloyal to Babylon and unfit to rule.⁵⁷

⁵³ CBS 16108. Leon Legrain translates: “Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, the great . . .” and “the perfect prince, created by the leader (AB.GAL)” (*Royal Inscriptions and Fragments from Nippur and Babylon* [Philadelphia: Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, 1926], 46-47, pls. XXXIII-IV, no. 80 (PBS 15 80 I:4, II:8)).

⁵⁴ Translation from “apkallu,” *CAD* 1.2:171 (“wise one” translates *ap-kal-lum*). Cf. “apkallu(m),” *AHW* 1:58.

⁵⁵ British Museum: Kuyunjik no. bu. 89-4-26, 310 (Letter no. 1169), obv. line 7. “apkallu,” *CAD* 1.2:172; “apkallu(m),” *AHW* 1:58; Carl Bezold, *Catalogue of the Cuneiform Tablets in the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum* (5 vols.; London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1889), 1931. The cuneiform text is found in Robert F. Harper and Leroy Waterman, *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters: Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum* (14 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1892), 11:1296-1297 (no. 1169), 1306. A translation for Letter no. 1169 is found in Waterman, *Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire*, 2.310-11; and Robert H. Pfeiffer, *State Letters of Assyria: A Transliteration and Translation of 355 Official Assyrian Letters Dating from the Sargonid Period (722-625 BC)* (AOS 6; Baltimore: Furst, 1935), 139-140.

⁵⁶ Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, 27-97, pls. V-XI.

⁵⁷ Cf. Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, 68; Thomas G. Lee, “Propaganda and the Verse Account of Nabonidus’ Reign,” *BCSMS* 28 (1994): 31-37.

“A Persian Verse Account” witnesses to the continued importance of the *apkallu* Adapa in Babylonian religion during this late period. It also implies that because Nabonidus rejected Adapa, the source of wisdom for civilization, the monarch’s worldview was that of a barbarian who was not worthy of ruling civilized Babylon.

2.2.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

Provenanced NB examples of the *ūmu-apkallu* are found on three cylinder seals, one stamp seal, seven seal impressions, as well as on eight figurines.

TABLE 2.1. HUMAN-FIGURED *ŪMU-APKALLU* WITH FOUR WINGS

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
2.1	CBS 8933	mid 7th cent	Nippur	Cyl	
2.2	VA 7738	9th-7th cent	Babylon	Cyl	
2.3	CBS 14366	600-400	Nippur	Cyl	
2.4	VA 6950 Bab 41132	NB	Babylon (Al Hillah)	Stamp	
2.5	BM 56251	NB	Sippar	Impr	D: Letter
2.6	BM 66789	NBN	Sippar	Impr	D: Letter order for oil for silver workers

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, NBN=Nabonidus, Stamp=Stamp Seal, Cyl=Cylinder Seal, Impr=Impression, D=Document.

TABLE 2.2. WINGLESS HUMAN-FIGURED *ŪMU-APKALLU*

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
2.7	GCBC 534	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: Administrative transaction concerning iron spades delivered to the <i>šākin tēmi</i>
2.8	GCBC 585	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: List of workmen at the disposal of PN
2.9	PTS 2488	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: List of six people assembled for the guard of the temple door.
2.10	YBC 3953	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: Lease of a field (dialogue document); witnessed
2.11	YBC 6942	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: Woman gives away her children as temple slaves (dialogue document); witnessed

Note: NBN=Nabonidus, Impr=Impression, D=Document.

Scant information remains regarding the objects on which the four-winged *ūmu-apkallu* appear: only their approximate dating, the cities at which they were found (Nippur, Babylon, and Sippar), and the fact that two seal impressions are on tablets containing letters, one of which orders oil for silver workers.

Additional information regarding the eight baked clay figurines of wingless *ūmu-apkallu* from the British Museum is unavailable. They may have been foundation figurines or used in exorcism rituals (see further below). However, more data is preserved regarding external contexts of the other wingless *ūmu-apkallu*. The five stamp seal impressions from Uruk were found on tablets in the archive of the Eanna Temple of Ishtar and date to the reign of Nabonidus. The contents of these tablets are administrative and/or economic. Particularly

poignant is a tragic transaction addressed to Eanna officials and witnessed by an official of Uruk, by which a widow who cannot care for her two young sons, due to the death of her husband and a famine, gives them to the service of the temple for life (YBC 6942; Ill. 2.11).⁵⁸

It is interesting to relate the uses of the *ūmu-apkallu* depictions just described to Ataç's interpretation of such beings in the throne room reliefs at the NB palace of Ashurnasirpal II. Ataç emphasizes that the *apkallu* (including those depicted anthropomorphically) were believed to be in direct contact with humans in the distant past during the antediluvian age, but since the Flood, such access to them was withdrawn. However, according to Ataç, wisdom from the *apkallu* continued to be transmitted via a class of elite scholars who identified themselves and maintained power as the exclusive heirs to the ancient source of supernatural wisdom.⁵⁹

This raises the question: Why would an *ūmu-apkallu* be portrayed on a seal used to verify documents such as those listed above? Ehrenberg points out: "Seal impressions on tablets . . . carry supplemental associations gleaned from the texts. In the most informative cases, the content of the tablet reveals the seal's owner, the owner's office, and the date of the seal's use. The relevance of the seal's imagery can thus occasionally be deduced."⁶⁰

Unfortunately, the identity of the individual who owned the seal that was impressed on the five extant tablets from the Eanna temple of Ishtar in Uruk is unknown. Even among the few seal impressions from the Eanna archive "that can be linked to a particular functionary, no patterns of correlation between office and imagery can be detected," according to Ehrenberg, who continues: "Seal selection must have been a matter of personal preference or now impenetrable cultural determinants."⁶¹ Nevertheless, Ehrenberg recognizes that those who sealed the Eanna tablets were "working within the temple bureaucracy."⁶² The connection between the five tablets and the temple is explicit in the contents of some of them, which mention temple personnel guarding the temple door, as witnesses to a transaction, and as addressees. If the owner was a temple official, as the evidence indicates, why would it be appropriate for his seal to display an *ūmu-apkallu*, evoking the *apkallu* tradition?

If Ataç is right that portrayal of *apkallu* by scholars at the palace of Ashurnasirpal II was implicitly self-referential, due to the "occultation" of the *apkallu* themselves and continuation of their role by a priestly elite, could not the same be true of the NB sealings from Uruk? If there was at least some kind of general correlation between the identity of the

⁵⁸ Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 93-4; cf. R. P. Dougherty, *Records from Erech, Time of Nabonidus (555-538 BC)* (New York: AMS, 1983), 44.

⁵⁹ Ataç, *The Mythology of Kingship in Neo-Assyrian Art*, 200-201.

⁶⁰ Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 2.

⁶¹ Erica Ehrenberg, "Sixth-Century Urukian Seal Impressions at Yale," in *RAI 45.2* (ed. William W. Hallo and Irene J. Winter; Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2001), 187.

⁶² Ehrenberg, "Sixth-Century Urukian Seal Impressions at Yale," 187.

seal's owner and its depiction of the *ūmu-apkallu*, it could be suggested that this imagery represented its owner as one who belonged to an elite and authoritative priestly profession entrusted with custodianship of the *apkallu* tradition.

2.2.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In Mesopotamian literature, the *ūmu-apkallu* were antediluvian sages who served as the mythological founders of exorcism,⁶³ and whose cities were Ur, Nippur, Eridu, Kullab, Kesh, Lagash and Šuruppak.⁶⁴ Wiggermann translates the *ūmu* of *ūmu-apkallu* as “day,” thus personifying day or weather. He speculates: “The name of the last *apkallu* before the flood, *ūmu ša ana šagši balāta inamdinu*, “day that gives life to the slain,” could conceivably be a learned interpretation of the name of the last king of Šuruppak before the flood *zi-ud-sū-ra*.”⁶⁵

Dalley proposes an alternative explanation of *ūmu-apkallu*: The Akkadian term “*ūmu-apkallu* may be an extension of *apkallu* in which *ūmu* refers to Oannes, the first sage, as an *ummiānum*.”⁶⁶ Oannes was also known as Adapa, son of Ea and priest in Eridu.⁶⁷ Berossus, a Chaldean priest of Bel (Marduk) dwelling in Babylon and born during or before the reign of Alexander the Great (336-323 BC), credits Oannes with bringing the arts and skills of civilization to mankind.⁶⁸

The human-figured *ūmu-apkallu* appears to have joined the Assyrian iconographic repertoire in the first millennium BC.⁶⁹ During the reign of Ashurnasirpal II, examples of the *ūmu-apkallu* usually appear to have only two wings. Those dating to the time of Sargon II (721-705 BC) possess either two or four wings, while those from Sennacherib's reign have four wings.

During the first millennium BC, the *ūmu-apkallu* may appear alone or with either the fish-cloaked *apkallu* or the bird-of-prey *apkallu*.⁷⁰ The human *apkallu* is rarely associated with a particular deity and is seldom seen with other non-*apkallu* composite beings. He is

⁶³ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 75.

⁶⁴ Text III 162; see O. R. Gurney, “Babylonian Prophylactic Figures and Their Rituals,” *AAA* 22, no. 1-2 (1935): 89-91; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 75.

⁶⁵ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 74-75. On *ūmu* as “day” (unit of time) or “storm” (mythical being or demon, i.e., personifying weather), see “ūmu,” *CAD* 20:138-155; cf. “ūmu(m),” *AHW* 3:1418-1420.

⁶⁶ Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 2; In Uruk Text W20030, 7 (van Dijk, “Die Inschriftenfunde,” 44-45); Reiner, “The Etiological Myth of the ‘Seven Sages,’” 1-11.

⁶⁷ Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 317; cf. W. G. Lambert, “A Catalogue of Texts and Authors,” *JCS* 16 (1962): 55-77.

⁶⁸ Berossos (F1) in Verbrugge and Wickersham, *Berosos and Manetho*, 44. The much later work of Berossos found in excerpts from his *Histories* gives background to the understanding of the *apkallu* during the Hellenistic period. Verbrugge conceivably lays out the relationships between the early Mesopotamian kings and the *apkallu* (p. 71).

⁶⁹ Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 5.

⁷⁰ Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 2.

commonly found in an antithetical, mirror-image setting on either side of a stylized sacred tree, which is often surmounted by a winged disk. This scene is frequently seen in NB palace reliefs. Occasionally, a single human-figured *apkallu* stands before an enthroned king.⁷¹

Groups of six or more clay figurines of human *apkallu* have been discovered in brick foundation boxes at Assur, Nimrud, and Nineveh. According to ritual texts, such figurines were also often made of *e'ru* wood, known for its magical powers.⁷² The native Mesopotamian *e'ru* is a “cornel” or “dogwood” tree, producing a hardwood primarily used for making tough sticks,⁷³ but also associated with healing properties.⁷⁴ *E'ru* wood is described as ^{gis}HUL.DÚB.BA GIŠ NAM.TI.LA, “mace that hits evil, wood of life.”⁷⁵ As Wiggermann points out,

. . . the designation of the material of the *ūmu-apkallu* reveals something of their character: they chase evil away, and procure life. Probably relevant is the “mystical” commentary ^{gis}TUKUL MA.NU: VII *u₄-mu* ^{gis}TUKUL ^dAMAR.UTU, “the mace of *e'ru*: the seven *ūmu*-demons, the mace of Marduk.” Here “the mace of cornel” may refer to the seven *ūmu-apkallu* holding an *e'ru* stick or mace in their right hands. In straight-forward ritual contexts “mace of cornel” is rather an alternative designation of the *e'ru* (stick/mace) itself.⁷⁶

Magical use of *e'ru*-sticks is attested as early as the Old Babylonian period.⁷⁷ Such a cornel stick was placed at the head of the bed of a sick person or at the head of a threatened king in order to ward off evil.⁷⁸ An exorcist also held an *e'ru*-stick in his left hand, imitating Marduk.⁷⁹ The object was believed to put evil to flight, protect the exorcist against forces of evil, and purify the body.

In text VAT 8228 = KAR 298, *ūmu-apkallu* figurines fashioned of *e'ru* wood are said to be buried at the head of a sick person's bed.⁸⁰ In Wiggermann's Text III, such figurines are

⁷¹ Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 2-3.

⁷² Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 65.

⁷³ See “e'ru,” *CAD* 4:320; “e'ru(m),” *AHW* 1:247.

⁷⁴ *E'ru* is *cornel* wood, examples of which are bunchberry and dogwoods. For the healing function of *cornel* wood, see Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 114.

⁷⁵ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 65.

⁷⁶ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 65.

⁷⁷ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 62.

⁷⁸ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 81.

⁷⁹ See “e'ru,” *CAD* 4:319.

⁸⁰ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 46, 102-103.

buried at the “gate of the bedroom.”⁸¹ However, material remains of wooden *ūmu-apkallu* figurines have not been preserved.⁸²

An *ūmu-apkallu* could grasp with his right hand an *e’ru*-stick “charred at both ends” as an attribute symbol.⁸³ This stick serves as a magical weapon (*kakku*) wielded by agents for the divine authority of the celestial deity Anu.⁸⁴ An incantation for an *e’ru*-stick contains the words: “The *cornel* tree, the link with heaven, the *cornel* tree, the link with the house of An, its roots are in darkness, its crown is the table of heaven.”⁸⁵

Kilmer notes connections between the magical weapon in Marduk’s hand on a NB seal,⁸⁶ in a further seal impression on a third-century-BC Babylonian astrological tablet,⁸⁷ and the *e’ru*-stick.⁸⁸ She suggests that these depictions of Marduk rescuing the moon from a lunar eclipse by wielding a club or stick against an attacking serpentine demon or dragon correlate with a reference to the *e’ru*-stick in the so-called “Eclipse Myth,”⁸⁹ a late NB (7th cent. BC) bilingual (Sumero-Akkadian) text concerned with the cause of lunar eclipses: “The mighty *e’ru*-wood club—set up a Tumult at his head!” (Tab. 16, line 201).

As already stated, “the weapon of *e’ru*-wood = the seven demons, the weapon of Marduk.”⁹⁰ The fact that the magical *e’ru*-stick, the weapon with which Marduk struck the head of the dragon (see above), figuratively refers here to the Seven Demons, indicates that the high god was viewed as using demons to fight other malevolent powers.

Rather than grasping an *e’ru*-stick, an *ūmu-apkallu* could hold a *banduddû* bucket.⁹¹ Such an implement is found in ritual contexts dating back to the Kassite period (c. 1600-1155 BC), where its contents are used to “cleanse and exorcise heaven and the netherworld.”⁹² Text KAR 298:13 concerning the bird-headed *apkallu* (see below) implies that the bucket

⁸¹ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 116.

⁸² Dalley, “Apkallu,” *IDD*, 3.

⁸³ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 46.

⁸⁴ See “e’ru,” *CAD* 4:319; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 60, 68.

⁸⁵ *VAS* 17 18; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 83.

⁸⁶ NA cylinder seal VAT 7847 (Staatliche Museum, Berlin) in Edith Porada, *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections I: The Collection of the Pierpoint Morgan Library* (The Bollingen Series 14; Washington D.C.: Pantheon Books, 1948), pl. CI, no. 688E.

⁸⁷ Seleucid tablet VAT 7851 (Staatliche Museum, Berlin) in Ernst F. Weidner, *Gestirn-Darstellungen auf babylonischen Tontafeln* (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte 254, bd. 2; Vienna: Böhlau in Kommission, 1967), 38, pl. 2.

⁸⁸ Anne D. Kilmer, “A Note on the Babylonian Mythological Explanation of the Lunar Eclipse,” *JAOs* 98, no. 4 (1978): 372-374. Kilmer includes translation of the relevant portions of tablet 16.

⁸⁹ Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 123-124.

⁹⁰ See “e’ru,” *CAD* 4:319; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 65.

⁹¹ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 74.

⁹² *Šurpu* VIII:41 in Rykle Borger, “Šurpu II, III, IV und VIII in ‘Partiur,’” in *Wisdom, Gods and Literature* (ed. Andrew R. George and Irving L. Finkel; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 83; “banduddû,” *CAD* 2:79-80; “banduddû(m),” *AHW* 1:102.

contains a purgative substance: “seven *apkallu*-figurines of clay, they have bird faces and wings, in their right hands they carry the purifying implement, in their left the bucket.”⁹³

2.2.7 CONCLUSION

The human-figured *ūmu-apkallu* is well-attested in NB glyptic art and also in the form of apotropaic figurines. Glyptic scenes depict the *ūmu-apkallu* associated with the tree of life, the winged bull-man, the human-headed winged lion, the *marru* spade-standard of Marduk, the stylus of Nabu, the star of Ishtar, and the crescent of Sin. The iconographic representations of these supernatural elements presumably were believed to magically protect the seals, sealings, sealed objects or documents, as well as the seal’s owners (see Introduction).

As attested in the Neo-Assyrian period, the apotropaic power of the *ūmu-apkallu* is especially linked to his association with Marduk, who uses the supernatural being as his mace. Whether the *apkallu* is rendered in clay, stone, or *e’ru* wood, this supernatural being plays a significant role in protecting individuals. The association between the human-figured *ūmu-apkallu* and Marduk continues, at least in glyptic iconography, into the Neo-Babylonian period.

Texts from the Neo-Assyrian period describe the *ūmu-apkallu* as a beneficent power against malevolent threats, whether evil in general or sickness in particular. He is also a source of wisdom, both for the individual and for the king. Although textual explanations for the role of the *ūmu-apkallu* in the Neo-Babylonian period are lacking, his presence in provenanced NB iconography testifies to the continuing value placed by the Babylonians upon the ancient tradition according to which human *apkallu* sages are sources of wisdom (including craftsmanship), exorcism, divination, and protection. Thus, the Neo-Babylonians viewed the *ūmu-apkallu* as enhancing well-being in a wide range of areas, which modern interpreters could identify as fitting into the categories of religion, politics, law, technology, health, and individual and national security.

The evidence presented here raises a question: Why would antediluvian *apkallu*, whose direct contact with ordinary humans had ceased long before, according to some mythic traditions (see above), be so prominent and valued for their ongoing dynamic contributions to various aspects of life during the first millennium BC? Two possible answers present themselves: First, the evidence for ongoing dynamic beneficence of *apkallu* could indicate an alternative view, deviating from that of the myths, that these beings did maintain direct contact with humans after the Flood. Second, the power of the *apkallu* was mediated in such an effective way by the heirs to their tradition that it was as if the *apkallu* themselves were present.

⁹³ Cf. “banduddū,” *CAD* 2:79-80.

2.3 FISH-CLOAKED *APKALLU*

2.3.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

A mythological creature that is part human and part fish and that also maintains the posture of the *apkallu*, is known as the fish-cloaked *apkallu*. Eleven provenanced NB seal impressions of fish-cloaked *apkallu* are preserved on clay tablets from Uruk. The impressions appear to have been produced by five seals in which one seal is represented by the impression shown in Ill. 2.12, a second by Ills. 2.13-2.15, a third by Ill. 2.16, a fourth by Ill. 2.17, and a fifth by Ills. 2.18-2.22.



Illustration 2.12. Fish-cloaked *apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: PTS 3236 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 8, no. 67.



Illustration 2.13. Fish-cloaked *apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: NBC 4595 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 9, no. 70.

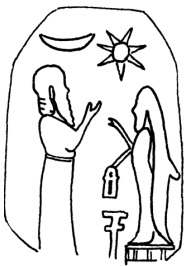


Illustration 2.14. Fish-cloaked *apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: YBC 3858 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 9, no. 68.



Illustration 2.15. Fish-cloaked *apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: YBC 4038 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 9, no. 69.



Illustration 2.16. Fish-cloaked *apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: YBC 6914 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 9, no. 71.

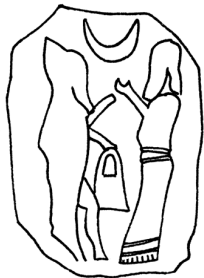


Illustration 2.17. Fish-cloaked *apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: YBC 3594 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 9, no. 72.



Illustration 2.18. Fish-cloaked *apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: GCBC 921 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 25, no. 194.



Illustration 2.19. Fish-cloaked *apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: NBC 4933 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 25, no. 197.



Illustration 2.20. Fish-cloaked *apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: PTS 2866 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 25, no. 198.



Illustration 2.21. Fish-cloaked *apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: W 3949w (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 25, no. 196.



Illustration 2.22. Fish-cloaked *apkallu*. NB stamp seal impression: YBC 9604 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 25, no. 195.

2.3.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE FISH-CLOAKED *APKALLU*

The fish-cloaked *apkallu* is part human and part *purādu*-fish, “carp.” He has a human body and a bearded human face, with a fish head on top of his human head. The rest of the fish’s

body, with caudal and dorsal fins, hangs down his back.⁹⁴ His legs and feet can be those of a goat or bull. Combining human intelligence with human and fish capabilities of terrestrial and aquatic survival and locomotion, the supernatural being is amphibious, with access both to the dry land and to the watery Apsu.

2.3.3 CONTEXT OF THE FISH-CLOAKED *APKALLU* WITHIN SCENES

All of the provenanced NB representations of the fish-cloaked *apkallu* are found in ritual scenes, each of which has an antithetical arrangement. Six of these examples (Ills. 2.12-2.17) show a worshiper on one side (usually the left) and an *apkallu* on the other, as the object of worship. The *apkallu* stands on a low pillared pedestal in three of these examples (Ills. 2.13-2.15). Each of the five glyptic scenes from Uruk (Ills. 2.18-2.22), which appear in the eleven impressions that were most likely produced by five seals, portray an *apkallu* on either side of a central object.

In impression PTS 3236 (Ill. 2.12), a bearded worshiper faces right and raises his forearm before a fish-cloaked *apkallu*, who faces left. The worshiper has a long beard, hair to his shoulders, and wears a long robe. The *apkallu* raises a forearm and lowers his other hand to hold a bucket. In the field above the *apkallu* is a crescent above a six-pointed(?) star.

The second scene is found on three seal impressions: NBC 4595, YBC 3858, and YBC 4038 (Ills. 2.13-2.15). A bearded worshiper wearing a long belted robe faces right and raises his right forearm, palm upward. He stands before a fish-*apkallu*, who stands on a low pillared pedestal and faces left. The *apkallu* wears a long robe cloaked by a fish skin that has a dorsal fin on the back and ends in a tail. He raises his right(?) forearm with his palm forward as if to hold the expected cone (which is not visible) and lowers his left(?) arm to hold a bucket above an altar(?) or a two-tiered offering stand. In the field above the *apkallu* there is a seven-pointed star, while above the worshiper there is a crescent.

On impression YBC 6914 (Ill. 2.16), a bearded worshiper, facing right, raises his right forearm. He has a long beard, hair to his shoulders, and wears a long robe that is fringed at the bottom. He stands before a fish-*apkallu* facing left. The *apkallu* wears a long robe cloaked by a fish skin that has a dorsal fin on the back and ends in a tail, and he raises one forearm. In the field between the worshiper and the *apkallu* is a six-pointed(?) star. A winged disk appears above the star, at the top of the scene.

The fourth example, impression YBC 3594 (Ill. 2.17), depicts the worship scene in reverse, with the *apkallu* on the left and the worshiper on the right, facing each other. The bearded worshiper, facing left, raises his left forearm, palm upward. He has a long beard, hair to his shoulders, and wears a long belted robe with two horizontal bands and a fringe at the bottom. He stands before a fish-*apkallu*, who faces right. The *apkallu* is cloaked in a fish

⁹⁴ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 82.

skin that ends in a tail. He raises his left(?) forearm and lowers his right(?) arm to hold a bucket. The extended bare leg and foot of the *apkallu* is that of a goat or bull. In the field at the top of the scene is a crescent.

The reconstructed scene in stamp seal impressions GCBC 921, NBC 4928, PTS 2866, W3949w, and YBC 9604 (Ills. 2.18-2.22), depicts two fish-cloaked *apkallu* flanking a central tree. They face one another, and each raises one forearm and lowers the other, which holds a bucket. The figures wear slit-robe fish-cloaks that fall to the ankles. The tree is fanciful and rises from a central stem that “sprouts upcurled bracket-like tendrils.”⁹⁵ Above the tree is a large seven-pointed star rendered like a rosette.

2.3.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

None

2.3.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

All of the eleven provenanced examples of the fish-*apkallu* are found in sealings on tablets from the Eanna Temple of Ishtar at Uruk, where they validate transactions or communications.

⁹⁵ Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 95.

TABLE 2.3. FISH-CLOAKED *APKALLU*

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
2.12	PTS 3236	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: Account of <i>mešpati</i> delivered to herdsman
2.13	NBC 4595	AM	Uruk	Impr	D: Record of legal dispute concerning status of temple slave; witnessed
2.14	YBC 3858	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: List of <i>errēšu</i> farmers at disposal of PN SO: Sîn-iddin(?), the <i>qīpu</i> of Eanna
2.15	YBC 4038	AM	Uruk	Impr	D: Account of barley traded for wool SO: Sîn-iddin(?), the <i>qīpu</i> of Eanna
2.16	YBC 6914	AM	Uruk	Impr	D: List of cattle at disposal of PN
2.17	YBC 3594	NB	Uruk	Impr	D: Letter-order to allot dates to PN
2.18	GCBC 921	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: Account of 296 sacrificial sheep put at the disposal of various people over one year SO: Ninurta-šar-ušur(?), the <i>qīpu</i> of Eanna(?)
2.19	NBC 4933	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: Letter concerning silver SO: Ninurta-šar-ušur(?), the <i>qīpu</i> of Eanna(?)
2.20	PTS 2866	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: Short note on receipt of cows SO: Ninurta-šar-ušur(?), the <i>qīpu</i> of Eanna(?)
2.21	W 3949w	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: Fragmentary tablet SO: Ninurta-šar-ušur(?), the <i>qīpu</i> of Eanna(?)
2.22	YBC 9604	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: List of sheep put at disposal of PN, a shepherd of sacrificial sheep (""SIPA SA.DU ₁₁) SO: Ninurta-šar-ušur(?), the <i>qīpu</i> of Eanna(?)

Note. NB=Neo-Babylonian, AM=Amēl-Marduk, NBK2=Nebuchadnezzar II, Impr=Impression, D= Document, SO=Seal Owner

As noted above, the impressions appear to have been produced by five seals. Seven of the impressed tablets date to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II, three to the reign of Amēl-Marduk (561-560 BC), and one is Late Babylonian. Names of two seal owners are preserved, both of whom were temple officials bearing the title *qīpu* (i.e., “trustee”) of Eanna: Sîn-iddin(?) and Ninurta-šar-ušur(?). Ninurta-šar-ušur(?) served at least during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, to which the five impressions of his seal are dated, and the career of Sîn-iddin(?) definitely crossed over to the reign of Amēl-Marduk, as attested by his impressions dating to both these reigns.

There do not appear to be specific correlations between the examples of glyptic fish-*apkallu* imagery discussed above, the contents of the sealed documents on which they are found, and/or the official roles of the seal owners. However, all of these sealings are found on documents relating to transactions archived at the Eanna Temple of Ishtar at Uruk. As suggested in the previous section on *ūmu-apkallu*, it seems appropriate that *apkallu* figures, in this case the fish-*apkallu*, have a significant presence in scenes on seals belonging to temple officials.

2.3.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Fish-cloaked *apkallu* appear in Kassite iconography. Early depictions show the figure wearing a fish-skin cape, which reaches to the ground. During the ninth century BC, the fish-skin cape terminates in a fish-tail just below the figure's waist. However, in the eighth century BC and following, the fish-skin once again reaches the ground.

Neo-Assyrian apotropaic representations of the fish-cloaked *apkallu* are found as palace and temple sculptures, at doorways, as figurines buried under floors in groups of seven, and depicted on magical plaques.⁹⁶ Such usages accord with the fact that fish-cloaked *apkallu* were believed to be magically protective. Unlike some other composite guardian figures, this being is never aggressive.⁹⁷

In the Neo-Babylonian period, numerous forms of fish-cloaked *apkallu* are attested in glyptic art. Examples from the Achaemenid period (c. 537-331 BC) appear to be copied from Assyrian palace sculpture, while those dating from the Seleucid period (323-31 BC) may portray Oannes, as presented by Berossus.⁹⁸

According to Black and Green, in some instances fish-cloaked *apkallu* may have been exorcist priests, dressed in the bodies of fish or in costumes that imitated the carp.⁹⁹ However, as Wiggermann points out, texts indicate that the fish-cloaked *apkallu* were not fish-garbed priests, but mythological figures consisting of both human and fish elements. Moreover, Wiggermann does not believe that the fish-cloaked *apkallu* were regarded as divine, since their names do not carry the expected divine determinative (DINGIR, represented in transliteration by a superscript "d" preceding a name, such as the lion-headed demon, the ^dUgallu). So he suggests that the horns on their heads are actually fish gills.¹⁰⁰

In mythic lore, as discussed above, the antediluvian *apkallu* are sages and priests. A form of these supernatural beings, whose traditions are reflected in myths concerning the Seven Sages,¹⁰¹ is said to be that of the *purādu*-fish, "carp."¹⁰² Thus, in Tablet 1 of the eighth-

⁹⁶ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 83.

⁹⁷ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, "Mischwesen. A. Philologisch. Mesopotamien," *RLA* 8:242-243.

⁹⁸ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 82-83. Regarding fish-cloaked *apkallu* in the Persian period, see, e.g., David Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 69, fig. 35, pls. 59, 60a; David Stronach, "Pasargadae," in *The Cambridge History of Iran: Volume 2, The Median and Achaemenian Periods* (ed. Ilya Gershevitch; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 844; David Stronach, "Pasargadae," *OEANE* 4:251-252; David Stronach, "Anshan and Parsa: Early Achaemenid History, Art and Architecture on the Iranian Plateau," in *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Persian Period: Conquest and Imperialism 539-331 BC* (ed. John Curtis; London: British Museum, 1997), 44-45, figs. 18, 19.

⁹⁹ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 33-34, 83.

¹⁰⁰ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 76.

¹⁰¹ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 83.

¹⁰² The term *purādu* is used "as [a] manifestation of the mythological sages" ("purādu," *CAD* 12:516; cf. "purādu[m]," *AHW* 2:880).

century-BC Babylonian myth *Erra and Ishum*, Marduk laments regarding the *apkallu*: “Where are the Seven Sages of the Apsu, the holy carp, who are perfect in lofty wisdom like Ea their lord, who can make my body holy?”¹⁰³

According to Uruk Tablet W 20030,7, the names of the seven antediluvian sages were U’an (written U₄-^dAN or U₄-^d60), U’anduga, Enmeduga, Enmegamma, Enmebulugga, Anenlilda, and Utu ’abzu.¹⁰⁴ Like the *ūmu-apkallu* (see above), the fish-*apkallu* had cities: Eridu, Bad-tibira, Larak, and Sippar.¹⁰⁵ The most famous sage was Adapa, the priest of Ea at Eridu. In the Adapa Myth, he is tricked by Ea into not accepting the bread and water of life offered to him by Anu. As a result, he loses an opportunity to gain immortality and is sent back to earth while Anu howls with laughter.¹⁰⁶

It appears that U’an, later read in Greek as Oannes, and Adapa were originally two different sages living at approximately the same time,¹⁰⁷ but the identity of Adapa was eventually assimilated into that of U’an/Oannes.¹⁰⁸ The building inscription W20030,7 of Anu-uballit for the Resh temple at Uruk combines the two names: “The Resh temple, built at the time of Oannes (U₄-^d60)-Adapa.”¹⁰⁹ Berossus also identified Adapa as Oannes.¹¹⁰ By the first millennium BC, the *apkallu* Adapa had become a hero of antediluvian culture and an archetypal figure of wisdom. As such, he was sometimes invoked in magic and incantations.¹¹¹ However, no temples for him as a god are attested.¹¹²

Berossus describes the *apkallu* in his *Babyloniaca* (c. 280 BC).¹¹³ According to him, Ea sent an *apkallu* from the Apsu to teach mankind the arts (Sumerian *me*) of civilization long before the great Flood:

¹⁰³ Translated by Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 292. On “the holy carp,” see Reiner, “The Etiological Myth of the ‘Seven Sages,’” 1-11; cf. “purādu,” *CAD* 12:516; “purādu(m),” *AHW* 2:880.

¹⁰⁴ In Uruk Text W20030, 7 (van Dijk, “Die Inschriftenfunde,” 44-47, 54); see also Verbrugge and Wickersham, *Berosos and Manetho*, 17, 71; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 163.

¹⁰⁵ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 75.

¹⁰⁶ This myth is found on fragmentary tablets discovered at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt (15th or 14th cent. BC) and tablets from Assur (late 2nd mill. BC) (Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 183).

¹⁰⁷ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 76.

¹⁰⁸ See Uruk Text W20030, 7 (van Dijk, “Die Inschriftenfunde,” 45); Verbrugge and Wickersham, *Berosos and Manetho*, 17, 71.

¹⁰⁹ Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk During the Neo-Babylonian Period* (CM 23; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 327 n. 15; translation based on van Dijk, “Die Inschriftenfunde,” 47.

¹¹⁰ Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk*, 327.

¹¹¹ Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk*, 327; Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 182.

¹¹² Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk*, 325.

¹¹³ Verbrugge and Wickersham, *Berosos and Manetho*, 17, 43-44, 71; Burstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 13. Berossus’ *Babyloniaca* was written in an attempt to explain his Babylonian culture to the Greeks, and was dedicated to Antiochus I (281-261 BC). The original work has been lost but is preserved to some extent in the works of Polyhistor (1st cent AD, which has also been lost, but is quoted by Eusebius), Josephus (1st cent. AD), Abydenus (2nd cent. AD) and most completely by Eusebius in his *Chronica* (4th cent. AD) (Burstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 10-11).

In the first year a beast named Oannes appeared from the Erythraean Sea [probably the Persian Gulf or possibly the Indian Ocean] in a place adjacent to Babylonia. Its entire body was that of a fish, but a human head had grown beneath the head of the fish and human feet likewise had grown from the fish's tail. It also had a human voice. A picture of it is still preserved today. He [Berossus] says that this beast spent the days with the men but ate no food. It gave to the men the knowledge of letters and sciences and crafts of all types. It also taught them how to found cities, establish temples, introduce laws and measure land. It also revealed to them seeds and the gathering of fruits, and in general it gave men everything which is connected with the civilized life. From the time of that beast nothing further has been discovered. But when the sun set this beast Oannes plunged back into the sea and spent the nights in the deep, for it was amphibious. Later other beasts also appeared.¹¹⁴

Following this description, Berossus provides a detailed enumeration of other fabulous creatures that were formed in water, when everything was darkness and water. This description seems to be based on *Enuma Elish*, which was probably originally composed around the twelfth century BC and was still in circulation during the Seleucid period.¹¹⁵

2.3.7 CONCLUSION

Neo-Babylonians continued to venerate mythical fish sages, who conveyed the basic arts of civilization to the human race. The fish-cloaked *apkallu* are integrally connected with the divine Ea, god of the Apsu and of wisdom.

Provenanced NB seal impressions portray a worshiper before a fish-cloaked *apkallu* figure in six examples. When the *apkallu* stands upon a low pillared pedestal, he must be the object of adoration offered by the worshiper in front of him (Ills. 2.13-2.15), and he is probably also the object of worship when a worshiper stands in front of him but the pedestal is lacking (Ills. 2.12, 2.16-2.17). This iconographic evidence indicates that in some contexts the fish-cloaked *apkallu* is regarded as worthy of profound respect offered by a lower being, and may even be treated as divine.

¹¹⁴ Burstein quoting Eusebius on the reconstructed text of Berossus (*The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 13-14).

¹¹⁵ Verbrugge and Wickersham, *Berossos and Manetho*, 17, 43-44; Burstein quoting Eusebius on the reconstructed text of Berossus (*The Babyloniaca of Berossus*, 14 n. 10).

2.4 BIRD-OF-PREY-HEADED, WINGED *APKALLU*

2.4.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

The bird sage in the form of a bird-of-prey-headed, winged *apkallu* is also referred to in the scholarly literature as a griffin-demon, the god Nisroch, or a genie.¹¹⁶ Although NB attestations of this hybrid being are frequent, the only extant NB examples of the bird-of-prey-headed, winged *apkallu* are two such creatures found together with bull-men (Sumerian GUD.ALIM; Akkadian *kusarikku*; discussed in ch. 4) on a damaged red chalcedony cylinder seal discovered in a pearl deposit in the area of Amran, Babylon (VA Bab 1510; Ill. 2.23).

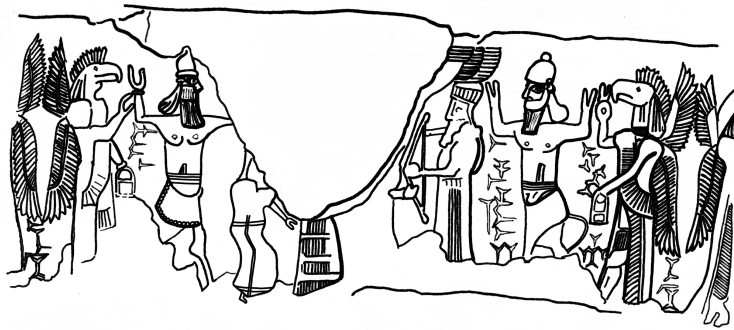


Illustration 2.23. Bull-men and *apkallu*. NB cylinder seal: VA Bab 1510 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Anton Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, no. 600.

By association with other seals found in the same pearl deposit, this one probably dates to the ninth-eighth centuries BC. The careful modeling of the seal and its attention to detail sets it apart from other NB objects of its kind and likely indicates that its style was borrowed from NB glyptic art.¹¹⁷

2.4.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE BIRD-OF-PREY-HEADED, WINGED *APKALLU*

On the cylinder seal from Babylon (VA Bab 1510), each of the two bird-headed *apkallu* has a human body and a bird's (probably eagle's) head and wings.¹¹⁸ He stands upright, with one leg forward, and wears a short kilt covered by an elaborate slit-robe made of feathers. The creature's prominent bill is hooked, his head is covered by a vertical line of crested feathers,

¹¹⁶ Wiggermann, "Mischwesen. A," *RLA* 8:243; Dalley, "Apkallu," *IDD*, 3.

¹¹⁷ Anthony Green, "Mischwesen. B. Archäologie," *RLA* 8:252-253.

¹¹⁸ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 101; Green, "Mischwesen. B," *RLA* 8:252.

and his two wings are in profile—likely indicating that he possesses four wings. As is typical for this late period, the upper wings are shorter than the lower ones.¹¹⁹

The presence of human and bird features in the bird-of-prey-headed, winged *apkallu* indicates that this supernatural being is at home on land or in the sky. When it attests four wings, moreover, its flight capability is accentuated, perhaps implying that it could reach realms of the sky beyond the reach of natural birds. Although the composite being does not have a human head, it is regarded as wise (see below), and although its head is that of a bird-of-prey, it is beneficent.

2.4.3 CONTEXT OF THE BIRD-OF-PREY-HEADED, WINGED *APKALLU* WITHIN SCENE

Much of the scene on VA Bab 1510 (Ill. 2.23) is damaged, with the upper portion of the center completely destroyed. Nevertheless, some portions remain recognizable. In the middle of the scene under a winged sun disk, a figure (divine[?]) stands. Only the lower third of the figure's long robe is visible. Another figure, a god(?) stands (or sits[?]) in front of this person. Only the lower portion of the figure's robe and one out-stretched hand is visible. Behind these two figures is a stooped person (a prisoner[?]). Before the god(?) is a standing king facing left. He holds a reversed bow in his left hand and his right hand is raised in greeting. With his extended hand, the god(?) also grasps the bow that the king is holding.

The scene is bound on either side by two bull-men in an atlas stance facing inward toward the center. Behind these are two winged bird-headed griffin *apkallu*, one on either side. These creatures each hold implements of (ritual[?]) purification: a *mullilu* purifier in one hand and a small *banduddû* bucket in the other. It is possible that the scene is one of judgment, with the bull-men fulfilling a judicial role as the attendants and supporters of Shamash, the god of justice (see further in ch. 4).¹²⁰ If so, purification by sprinkling performed, or at least represented, by the *apkallu* accompanies the judgment.¹²¹

What could be the function of such purification in this context? Could it be to clear the status of an innocent person who is accused, or to ensure or vindicate a wise verdict that accords with the norms of justice mandated by Shamash? Without certainty that the scene portrays judgment, and without more information about the intended object(s) of

¹¹⁹ Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum Press, 2005), 83.

¹²⁰ Joan G. Westenholz, ed., *Dragons, Monsters, and Fabulous Beasts* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004), 27; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 49.

¹²¹ Tallay Ornan, "Expelling Demons at Nineveh: On the Visibility of Benevolent Demons in the Palaces of Nineveh," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 87-88. Cf. Matthew 27:24, where Pilate as judge washes his hands to symbolically express his cleansing from guilt in condemning Jesus.

The bird-headed *apkallu* may have two or four wings and is frequently found in an antithetical position. In the Neo-Assyrian period, such an *apkallu* may be depicted with a long, high crest with two ringlets falling onto the shoulder or with three curls on top of the head. During this period, its clothing is generally similar to that of the human-figured *ūmu-*apkallu** and the fish-cloaked *apkallu*.¹²⁶

Wiggermann's reconstructed Text I (Neo-Assyrian period) concerning the topic "to block the entry of the enemy in someone's house" describes the purpose and creation of the bird-of-prey-headed *apkallu*:

[Column I]

[144] when you make the statues, creatures of Apsu,

[158] [As soon as] you have recited this, you shall speak before Šamaš as follows:

[statues] of Ea and Marduk, repelling the evil ones,

160 [to] be placed in the house of NN son of NN [to] expel the foot of evil,

I [pinch off] their clay before you <in> the clay pit.

170 seven statues of sages whose clay is [mixed] with [wax,] furnished with [wings] and the face of a bird, holding in their right hands a cl[eaner,]¹²⁷ in their left hands¹²⁸ a bucket;¹²⁹ they are clad in white paste, and endowed with feathers by hatchings in the wet paste; — you shall make.¹³⁰

Like representations of the fish-garbed *apkallu*, which also portrayed the Seven Sages,¹³¹ clay foundation figurines of bird *apkallu* were buried in groups of seven or more to protect houses and palaces.¹³² The "cleaner" (Akkadian, *mullilu*), in this case a cone, was held in the right hand of the *apkallu*, who served as a cultic functionary to perform ritual purification. In other iconographic contexts, an individual holding such a cleaner could be a human king or priest.¹³³ The *banduddû*, a bucket likely containing a purifying substance, also appears in other ritual contexts. In the Šurpu Incantation texts (Middle Assyrian period), the *banduddû* is employed to "cleanse and exorcise heaven and the netherworld."¹³⁴

¹²⁶ Dalley, "Apkallu," *IDD*, 3.

¹²⁷ See "mullilu," *CAD* 10:189; "mullilu(m)," *AHW* 2:670.

¹²⁸ The *apkallu* are also described as holding their left hand to their breast ("irtu," *CAD* 7:184).

¹²⁹ GIS.BA.AN.DU8.DU8-i ("banduddû," *CAD* 2:80).

¹³⁰ The reconstruction of Text I is based on numerous fragments (Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 13-15).

¹³¹ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 101; Green, "Mischwesen. B," *RLA* 8:252-253.

¹³² Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 101; Green, "Mischwesen. B," *RLA* 8:252-253; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 13-15; Dalley, "Apkallu," *IDD*, 4.

¹³³ See "mullilu," *CAD* 2:80; "mullilu(m)," *AHW* 2:670.

¹³⁴ Šurpu VIII:41 ("banduddû," *CAD* 2:79-80; "banduddû[m]," *AHW* 1:102).

On reliefs and seals, antithetical bird-of-prey-headed *apkallu* often stand on either side of a sacred tree, royal figure, plant, or deity. The bird *apkallu* is also found with the human-figured *apkallu*, or with a hero whose hair often falls into four or six large curls, who holds a sacred tree.¹³⁵

2.4.7 CONCLUSION

Participation of bird-headed *apkallu* in a ritual of purification as part of a scene that also involves a king, a deity, attendant bull-men, and a prisoner seems to indicate complex dynamics of a judgment, which could call for superhuman wisdom, protection from evil influences, (moral/ethical) purity, and safeguarding the reputation and interests of the king. In any case, the activity of the hybrid birds in this scene is typical of *apkallu* in general. Although the avian sage is a secondary kind of *apkallu*, its function in the Babylonian period is firmly grounded in hoary traditions of wise mythical beings, who assist humans in various ways.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The *apkallu* beings consist of human (with or without wings), fish, or bird figures that are united by posture and function rather than by their physical makeup. According to Mesopotamian literary tradition, they are originally supernatural mythical sages who taught humans the knowledge and expertise necessary for civilization, including skills necessary for dealing with the supernatural realm through ritual and exorcism. By extension, gods and notable human individuals can be spoken of as *apkallu* in the sense that they too are privy to wisdom and the protections that go with it.

Although few NB texts provide information regarding the *apkallu*, this category of being is solidly represented in the iconographic repertoire of the period, showing that the sage continued to serve as an important member of the constellation of supernatural personalities that was viewed as positively affecting life in Babylonia. This is not surprising, given that the *apkallu* were believed to be comprehensive sources and patrons of civilization, which was epitomized at Babylon.

¹³⁵ Dalley, "Apkallu," *IDD*, 4.

3. GENIUS

The so-called “genius,” or “genie,” is a supernatural being in human form that is generally, but not always, supplemented by two or four powerful wings.¹ Several different types of genii are attested in art. Some wear the horned headdress of divinity, presumably signifying that they are regarded as minor deities. The genius does not seem to have a unique name, but possibly falls under the broad Akkadian term *aladlammû* (Sumerian loanword from ^dALAD[KALxBAD].^dLAMMA[KAL]), a term also used to refer to human-headed bulls and lions.²

Scholars tend to employ the terms “genius” or “genie” broadly and loosely with reference to several apotropaic figures. In the present study, the genius is more narrowly defined as a supernatural winged or wingless being in human form, not including the human-*apkallu*, known as *ûmu-apkallu*.

The physical morphology of the genius, as portrayed in iconography, is like that of the *ûmu-apkallu*: Both are anthropomorphic and may be wingless or winged, with two or four wings. Scholars such as Wiggermann distinguish between them on the basis of their different functions, as indicated by their respective postures and contexts.³ The *ûmu-apkallu* is always depicted in profile and engaged in service activity that could be ritual. He generally has one hand raised and the other lowered, with the upraised hand holding a cone or sprig and in the lowered hand a bucket. Sometimes he carries an offering, such as a lamb. By contrast, the genius is generally in a frontal orientation, most often grappling in a contest scene.

The similarity in appearance between the genius and the *ûmu-apkallu* raises the question: Could they represent one ontological category that performs different types of functions, just as members of the human race or of a single animal species can engage in more than one kind of activity? Several factors are relevant to this discussion. First, ontologically distinct divine, semi-divine, sub-divine, and ordinary human beings can all be represented anthropomorphically. So the fact that the human-*apkallu* and the genius are both depicted anthropomorphically does not necessarily mean that they belong to the same ontological category.

¹ The term is derived from Latin *genius*, pl., *genii* (Anthony Green, “Mischwesen. B. Archäologie,” *RLA* 8:262).

² Green, “Mischwesen. B,” *RLA* 8:262; cf. “aladlammû,” *CAD* 1.1:286-287, giving the overall meaning of this term as “bull colossus with human head;” Cf. C. Nils Ritter, “Human-Headed Winged Bull (‘Aladlammû),” *IDD*, 1.

³ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A. Philologisch. Mesopotamien,” *RLA* 8:224-225; Green, “Mischwesen. B,” *RLA* 8:247.

Second, the group of functions performed by the human-*apkallu* are the same as those of other *apkallus*, who are depicted differently with fish cloaks or bird-of-prey heads. This could be taken to mean that different types of supernatural beings are united by performing the same kinds of functions. Alternatively, perhaps symbolic art represents one type of being in different ways to emphasize his various attributes.

Third, as noted above, some geniï wear the horned headdress of divinity, but others do not. This seems to imply that the “genius” category includes at least two ontological types: a divine genius, which would therefore be ontologically distinct from an *apkallu* of human descent, and a sub-divine genius. On the other hand, perhaps the genius is regarded as a minor deity, whether this is artistically explicit (with the horned headdress) or not.

The above discussion has identified some options, but deciding between them may not be crucial. Anyone who has studied a Mesopotamian language written in cuneiform would not be surprised by possibilities that a given graphic symbol could have multiple referents and different symbols could mean the same thing, with referential functions determined by contexts. What modern westerners would regard as inconsistent, messy, and unnecessarily complicated was perfectly acceptable and even desirable, at least to some Mesopotamians, in the areas of writing and religious art, which were generally crafted by a skilled elite.

Returning to the specific question of the relationship between the genius and the *ûmu-apkallu*, it seems uncertain whether or not they comprise distinct ontological categories. However, clear bifurcation of their functions suggests that they constitute two groups of supernatural personalities. While it is not out of the question that a given individual being could carry out a variety of activities, it appears that we are dealing here with what would be regarded in the human realm as differences of profession. In Mesopotamia, a ritual officiant and a fighter ordinarily would be two different professionals: a priest and a soldier, respectively. If this kind of analogy applies to supernatural sociology, the human-*apkallu* and the genius would at least be different individuals.

Until this point in the discussion, it has been assumed that ontology has to do with material or quasi-material physical essence that is distinct from function. But this is a modern western assumption. It could be easier to account for the data in the present study if Mesopotamians viewed ontology primarily in terms of function within the cosmic order, as assigned by the higher gods. Such ontology would only secondarily involve material insofar as it affected function.⁴

From a functional perspective, the physical composition and properties of a human-*apkallu* in relation to that of a genius, which modern analysts would take into account to ascertain boundaries of species (such as ability to interbreed and affinity of genomes), may be relatively unimportant. An *apkallu* is an *apkallu* because he functions as such, whether he

⁴ On assigning of functions by high gods, see, e.g., *Enuma Elisb.* John H. Walton argues that ANE peoples viewed cosmic ontology in terms of function (*Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011], esp. ch. 3).

looks like an ordinary human, a human with wings, or has a fish cloak or a head like that of a bird-of-prey. A genius is a genius because of his *profession*, whether he is a lesser god or less than a god, and winged or wingless. If he can be called an *aladlammû*, along with human-headed bulls and lions, it is because he shares their *aladlammû* function.

3.1 WINGED HUMAN FIGURE, THE SO-CALLED GENIUS

3.1.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

There are thirty provenanced NB glyptic depictions of the winged genius. No geniî that are wingless or in the round, or texts that specifically mention this being, are attested for this period. Of the thirty examples, three show the genius as the only iconographic motif (Ills. 3.1-3.3).



Illustration 3.1. Genius. NB stamp seal: BM 120245 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from “Stamp-Seal,” BM, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=364606&partid=1&IdNum=120245&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx.

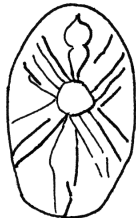


Illustration 3.2. Genius. NB stamp seal: VA 6965 Bab 38913 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Liane Jakob-Rost and Iris Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum* (2d ed.; Mainz: Zabern, 1997), no. 211.



Illustration 3.3. Genius. NB stamp seal: VA Bab 1561 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Jakob-Rost and Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum*, no. 213.

Five scenes show the genius in contest, or at least demonstration of dominance, with one other creature. Six complete examples of the most common contest scene, the central hero flanked by opposing creatures on either side, are complemented by an additional twelve partially preserved representations that are most likely similar scenes of a central hero with two opponents. One complex scene depicts a contest scene with two central genii overcoming opposing creatures. Rarely is a genius found in a worship scene: We have only three possible examples of this.

3.1.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE WINGED GENIUS

The physical components of the winged genius (including a fully human body with wings, clothing and headdress) are the same as those of the *ūmu-apkallu* (see ch. 2). The two kinds of beings are differentiated only by their posture and what they hold in their hands, which indicate their distinctive roles or functions (see above).⁵

3.1.3 CONTEXT OF THE WINGED GENIUS WITHIN SCENES

Most provenanced NB scenes with the genius and other iconographic elements portray him in contest against one or two opponents. A few examples depict the genius in a worship context.

3.1.3.1 OVERCOMING ONE CREATURE

In five scenes, all on cylinder seals (Ills. 3.4-3.8), a winged genius heroically subdues, or at least assumes a posture of dominance over, one animal or fantastic creature. The winged hero is usually—but not always—portrayed in a partly frontal pose. His head and feet are turned in the same direction, whether to the right or to the left. Both arms are raised and outstretched to grasp either a front or hind hoof of the enemy creature. The hand of the hero stretched behind him usually grasps a scimitar or sickle.

⁵ This differentiation is often unclear in the scholarly literature, which is inconsistent and often ambiguous in discussion of winged human figures, who are variously regarded as the winged hero genius, *apkallu* (“sage”), or *aladlammu*. See, e.g., Julian E. Reade, “Assyrian Architectural Decoration: Techniques and Subject-Matter,” *BaM* 10 (1979): 17-49; Anthony Green, “Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons: The Iconography of Good and Evil in Ancient Assyria and Babylonia,” *Visible Religion* 3 (1984): 80-105; Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:222-246; Green, “Mischwesen. B,” *RLA* 8:246-264; Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (ill. Tessa Richards; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 86, 88; Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum Press, 2005), 77.



Illustration 3.4. Genius: Contest scene against one opponent. NB cylinder seal: Ash. Mus. no. 1925.114 (Kish)
Source. Adapted from Briggs Buchanan, *Cylinder Seals* (vol 1 of *Catalogue of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Ashmolean Museum*; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), no. 581.

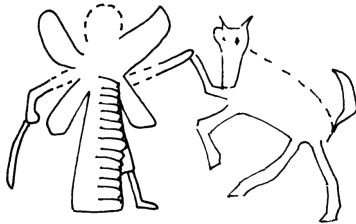


Illustration 3.5. Genius: Contest scene against one opponent. NB cylinder seal: BM 140750 (Ur)
Source. Adapted from Dominique Collon, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Cylinder Seals V: Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Periods* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), pl. XXVI, no. 315.

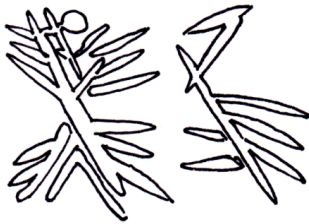


Illustration 3.6. Genius: Contest scene against one opponent. NB cylinder seal: VA Bab 1540 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Anton Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsigel: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1988), no. 720.



Illustration 3.7. Genius: Contest scene against one opponent. NB cylinder seal: W 20629,1 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Beatrice Wittmann, "Babylonische Rollsigel des 11.-7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.," *BaM* 23 (1992): 250, Taf. 23.



Illustration 3.8. Genius: Contest scene against one opponent. NB cylinder seal: W 21937 (Uruk)
 Source. Adapted from Wittmann, "Babylonische Rollsiegel des 11.-7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.," 250, Taf. 27.

A cylinder seal impression, Ash. Mus. no. 1925.114 from Kish (Ill. 3.4), depicts a four-winged genius facing to the right. This hero wears a high crown, his hair falls to the shoulders, and he has a long beard. With his right arm stretched behind him to the left, he grasps what seems to be a long scimitar. With his left hand, he grasps the right forepaw of a rampant, winged human-headed lion. The sphinx has a long beard and hair to the shoulders. Between the feet of the hero and the sphinx there appears to be a rhomb. Behind the hero and the creature on either side is a tree with four branches and a central spire. In the upper field, on the left between the hero and the tree, is the crescent of Sin. Also in the upper field, but on the right between the creature and the tree, there is a dot, or perhaps a star.

On an alabaster cylinder seal, BM 140750 from Ur (Ill. 3.5), a four-winged genius faces right toward his opponent. The fact that the design is very worn makes it difficult to describe, but it appears that the hero holds a large scimitar behind his back in his lowered right hand. With his left hand, which he stretches forward, he grasps the foreleg of a rearing animal, possibly a bull or goat.⁶

The scene on a glazed cylinder seal, VA Bab 1540 from Babylon (Ill. 3.6), is wheel-cut in linear style. A genius with four wings and a round cap faces right towards a large bird, which faces left towards the genius.

On a modelled carnelian cylinder seal, W 20629,1 from Uruk (Ill. 3.7), a four-winged genius is shown confronting a massive lion, which is rendered in detail, with careful attention to his full mane and open, snarling jaws. While the right hand of the hero grips a scimitar, his left hand grasps the right forepaw of the lion.⁷ Between the genius and the lion is the *marru* of Marduk, surmounting a low stand. The hero's hand grasping the lion's paw is directly above the point of the spade, above which is the crescent of Sin. Directly above the tip of the lion's curled tail is the eight-pointed star of Ishtar. In the terminal, a palmate breaks the scene. The

⁶ To the left, behind the animal are traces of what may be a crescent standard and a plant. However, the seal is too worn for accurate reading. "Cylinder-seal," BM, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=1432039&partid=1&searchText=140750&fromADBC=ad&toADBC=ad&numpages=10&orig=%2fsearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database.aspx¤tPage=1.

⁷ Beatrice Wittmann, "Babylonische Rollsiegel des 11.-7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.," *BaM* 23 (1992): 250, no. 23.

hero is dressed in a long slit-robe over a short kilt. His flowing hair falls to the shoulders and he has a long beard.

The scene on cylinder seal W 21937 from Uruk (Ill. 3.8) is unusual. On the left is a four-winged genius in a splayed stance. He faces toward the right and wields what appears to be a sickle, or perhaps a lightning bolt. With his left hand, he grasps the right paw of a winged, human-headed lion that is rampant and faces left. The left paw of the sphinx rests on an *Aryballos* vessel, from which streams of water issue. The hero is dressed in a long feathered slit-robe over a short kilt. The hair of the genius is feathered, as are his four wings. He lacks a beard. The head of the sphinx is bearded and his hair is tied in a knot at the back of his neck. The sphinx's tail curls over his back. Above the wing of the sphinx is the crescent moon of Sin.

3.1.3.2 OVERCOMING TWO CREATURES

Most commonly, a central winged genius subdues two creatures. All six of the provenanced examples of this motif derive from cylinder seals. In five cases, the original cylinder seal is extant (Ills. 3.9-3.13), but in one case, only an impression survives (Ill. 3.14). A number of partial scenes, primarily in impressions on tablets, probably fit into the present category, but because it is not clear whether the hero vies with one or two opponents, these have been placed in a separate section below (3.1.4). The following complete scenes show the hero flanked by two antithetical rampant animals or fantastic creatures. The hero's stance and the fact that his extended hands grasp the forelegs of each of the flanking creatures indicate that he is engaged in combat.



Illustration 3.9. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB cylinder seal: Ash. Mus. no. 1929.240. Kish V660 (Kish)
Source. Adapted from Buchanan, *Cylinder Seals*, 118, pl. 43, ill. 661.

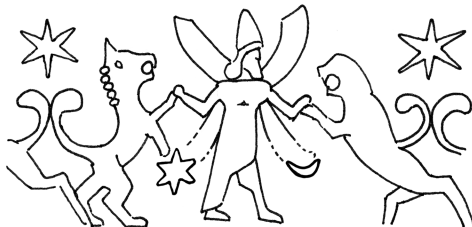


Illustration 3.10. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB cylinder seal: Ash. Mus. no. 1929.262. Kish V662 (Kish)
Source. Adapted from Wittmann, "Babylonische Rollsiegel des 11.-7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.," 247, Taf. 221.



Illustration 3.11. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB cylinder seal: CBS 14387 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Wittmann, "Babylonische Rollsiegel des 11.-7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.," 247, no. 109.



Illustration 3.12. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB cylinder seal: VA 6938 (Bab 36292) (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum Press, 2005), no. 372.

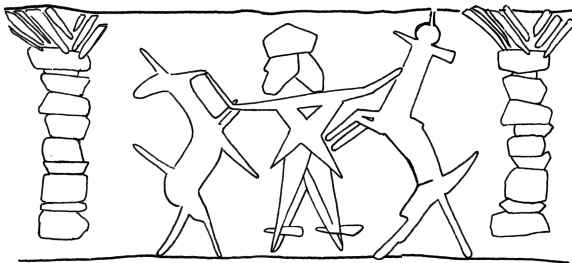


Illustration 3.13. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB cylinder seal: VA 6974 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, no. 736.



Illustration 3.14. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB cylinder seal impression: NCBT 809 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* (AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999), pl. 22, no. 178.

An agate cylinder seal from Kish, Ash. Mus. no. 1929.240. Kish V660 (Ill. 3.9), depicts a vigorous contest scene in which a central winged genius grapples with other composite beings on either side. The genius has four wings of equal length and faces left. With each outstretched hand he grasps the foreleg of one of his opponents. He wears a kilt to the knee, covered by an ankle-length fringed robe. His hair falls in curls to his shoulders, and he has a long beard. On his head is a rounded, feathered cap or crown. The creature to the left of the hero is a two-winged, human-headed lion, possibly female, since it has no beard. Its hair falls in curls to its shoulders, and it stands upon its two hind legs, which are exceptionally those of a bird-of-prey and terminate in talons. With its forelegs it grapples with the hero. The creature to the right of the hero is a bird-headed griffin. Its body faces left toward the hero, but its head is turned back over its shoulder, as if trying to escape. This hybrid animal also has two wings and stands upon its two hind legs, which terminate in bird-of-prey claws. It employs its forelegs to struggle with the hero.

The scene on the cylinder seal labeled Ash. Mus. no. 1929.262 from Kish (Ill. 3.10) is much worn as a result of corrosion. However, it is still possible to make out a central four-winged genius flanked by two rearing lions and the fact that the hero grasps the forepaws of the lions with his outstretched hands. Between the hero and the lion on the right is a crescent and between the hero and the lion on the left is a star. A further six-rayed star stands above each of the curled tails of the lions.

The well-preserved carnelian cylinder seal CBS 14387 from Nippur (Ill. 3.11) has a contest scene depicting a central four-winged genius similar to that of Kish V660, above. The hero grasps a forepaw of each of the winged human-headed lions on either side of him. Both creatures face the hero, who looks to the left. Above the wingtip (in profile) of the sphinx, there is a crescent moon of Sin. A rhomb filler motif occupies the space between the foot of the genius and that of the sphinx on the left. Between the genius and the creature on the right, there would also appear to be three dots.

An exquisitely modeled chalcedony cylinder seal, VA 6938 (Bab 36292) from Babylon (Ill. 3.12), depicts a central genius grasping two lions, which turn their heads back toward him. His four wings are of equal length, as is customary in the Neo-Babylonian period. His hair and beard are short and curly. He wears a short kilt and a round cap. The winged hero faces right, but with his legs in a wide stance. In each outstretched hand, he holds a lion by one of its hind legs.

A wheel-cut agate cylinder seal, VA 6974 from Babylon (Ill. 3.13), shows a four-winged hero in a frontal pose, who faces left. He has hair to his shoulders and a short beard, and he wears a round cap. In each outstretched hand, he grasps a caprine by the neck. Each of the animals has its head turned back over its shoulder. The animal on the right is taller than the hero, while the one on the left is shorter. On either side of each caprine is a towering palm tree.

On the cylinder seal impression NCBT 809 from Uruk (Ill. 3.14), a four-winged genius with a frontal torso strides to the right. Both arms are extended outward, bent upward at the elbows to grasp the foreleg of a rampant two-winged bird-griffin on the right and the horn

of a rampant two-winged bull on the left. The genius has a long beard and long hair to his shoulders, and he wears a slit-robe. The winged griffin on the right faces left. It extends its left forearm toward the hero's chest and grapples against his hand with its right forearm. The winged bull facing right raises its right foreleg toward the hero's shoulder, bends its left foreleg downward, tucks its chin to its chest, and raises its tail over its back (visible at the far right). In the terminal is a winged disk hovering above a crescent that appears over a nine(?) -pointed star.⁸

3.1.3.3 ANTITHETICAL CONTEST SCENES WITH TWO CENTRAL GENII OVERCOMING OPPOSING CREATURES

An exceptionally complex scene on VA 7737 (Ill. 3.15) from Babylon, Merkes, features alternating four-winged genii and four-winged human-headed bulls, while two opposed winged bird-griffins are recumbent beneath the standing figures. The picture bursts with vigorous movement as the two identical genii engage in a struggle with the two human-headed bulls.⁹ The whirling winged figures grasp each other's hands, as if in a dance, but they are actually fighting.¹⁰



Illustration 3.15. Two Genii: Contest scene against two opponents. NB cylinder seal: VA 7737 (Babylon, Merkes)
Source. Adapted from Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, 68, no. 610.

The genii and the winged human-headed bulls have long hair and beards, and they wear elaborate, tall, feathered crowns. The genii are garbed in ornate slit-robcs. The scene from left to right depicts a composite bull facing left (a repeated image of the composite bull on the far right), a genius and a composite bull, face right, and the two such beings on the right face left. Each of the four has his hands raised and grasps the hands of the beings on either side of him.

⁸ Erica Ehrenberg identifies this creature as a bird-griffin. However, it may be a lion-demon because its body is that of a lion; only its head, wings, and tail are those of a bird. Alternatively, it may be a variant of the *anzû* or *asakku* demon (*Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* [AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999], 27, 90, pl. 22, no. 178).

⁹ Edith Porada identifies these creatures as lion demons ("Suggestions for the Classification of Neo-Babylonian Cylinder Seals," *Or* 16 [1947]: 153), but their bovine tails indicate that they are human-headed bulls.

¹⁰ Porada, "Suggestions for the Classification," 153, fig. 10.

The two recumbent winged bird-griffins face each other below the feet of the genius and bull that are facing right. Their forepaws are leonine, their heads and necks are covered with crested feathers, and they have wings in profile. Their bird beaks are closed and each of them raises an opposing paw toward the other, while touching claws with the paws closest to the viewer.¹¹

3.1.3.4 PARTIAL SCENES

A number of partial scenes provide additional support for the popularity of these various graphic themes, especially contest scenes with a genius as a central hero. However, on rare occasions, the genius is found in a worship scene.

3.1.3.4.1 PARTIAL CONTEST SCENES

Twelve partially preserved glyptic scenes impressed on tablets witness to the popularity of the contest scene with a central winged genius as hero (Ills. 3.16-3.27).¹² It is not possible to reconstruct these scenes, but what is preserved suggests that the majority were contests that involved a central genius flanked by two antagonists, as implied by outward extension of the hero's arms on either side. Illustrations 3.16 and 3.17 appear to show struggle against only one opponent.

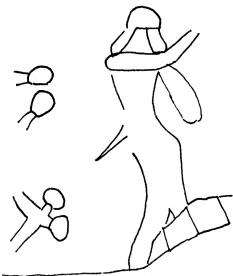


Illustration 3.16. Genius: Contest scene against one opponent. NB partial impressions: BM 62606 (Abu Habbah/Sippar)
Source. Adapted from John D. A. MacGinnis, *Letter Orders from Sippar and the Administration of the Ebabbara in the Late-Babylonian Period* (Poznan: Bonami, 1995), pl. 7, no. 29.

¹¹ Anton Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1988), 68 n. 2, no. 610; Collon, *First Impressions*, no. 365; Porada, "Suggestions for the Classification," 153, fig. 10.

¹² Two additional impressions do not have published graphics: (1) BM 49711 (Abu Habbah/Sippar), a stamp seal impression (Terence C. Mitchell and Ann Searight, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Stamp Seals III: Impressions of Stamp Seals on Cuneiform Tablets, Clay Bullae, and Jar Handles* [Leiden: Brill, 2008], 117, 311, no. 287) and (2) BM 92725, labeled only "impression," which leaves unclear whether it was produced by a stamp or cylinder seal (Mitchell and Searight, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum*, no. 319; J. N. Strassmaier, *Inschriften von Nabonidus, König von Babylon [555-538 v. Chr.]* [Babylonische Texte 7; Leipzig: Eduard Pfeiffer], 1889).



Illustration 3.17. Genius: Contest scene against one opponent. NB partial impressions: BM 66067 (Abu Habbah/Sippar)
Source. Adapted from MacGinnis, *Letter Orders from Sippar*, pl. 38, no. 146.



Illustration 3.18. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB cylinder sealing: AO 6783 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 21, no. 173.



Illustration 3.19. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB cylinder sealing: AO 6784 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 22, no. 176.



Illustration 3.20. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB sealing: BA 74366 (Abu Habbah/Sippar)
Source. Adapted from Terence C. Mitchell and Ann Searight, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Stamp Seals III: Impressions of Stamp Seals on Cuneiform Tablets, Clay Bullae, and Jar Handles* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), no. 316a.



Illustration 3.21. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB sealing: BA 75734 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Mitchell and Searight, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals*, no. 306c.



Illustration 3.22. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB sealing: BM 56701 (Abu Habbah/Sippar)
Source. Adapted from Mitchell and Searight, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals*, no. 351.



Illustration 3.23. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB sealing: GCBC 304 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 21, no. 171.

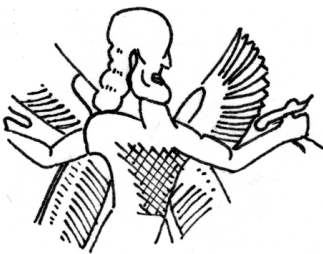


Illustration 3.24. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB sealing: PTS 2372 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 22, no. 174.



Illustration 3.25. Genius: Contest scene against two opponents. NB sealing: YBC 16216 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 22, no. 175.



Illustration 3.26. Genius. NB cylinder sealing: W 18209,34 (Baghdad) (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 21, no. 172.



Illustration 3.27. Genius. NB cylinder sealing: NCBT 809 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 22, no. 177.

3.1.3.4.2 PARTIAL WORSHIP SCENES

Three possible examples of genii in worship scenes are found in sealings from Sippar. In two instances, in BM 100739 (Ill. 3.28) and in BM 83527 (Ill. 3.29), the genius appears to be seated. Note that in this latter example (BM 83527), such a being is the recipient of a worshiper's adoration. A third sealing, BM 65015 (Ill. 3.30), shows a worshiper before a genius who is maintaining a posture generally found only in contest scenes. His stance is a frontal and his arms are outstretched as if to grasp an opponent in each hand. The scene is not complete, and the opponents, if they existed, are not preserved.

If supernatural genii can receive worship, which indicates that they can be treated as deities, they are similar in this regard to the fish-cloaked *apkallu* (ch. 2, sect. 2.3.3). However, the seated or contest postures of genii differ from the poses of *apkallu* (e.g., holding a bucket) when worshipers venerate them. This indicates that the function of receiving veneration is in addition to, rather than replacing, distinctiveness of supernatural personality associated with normal functions that also appear in other contexts.



Illustration 3.28. Genius. NB sealing: BM 100739 (Abu Habbah/Sippar)
Source. Adapted from MacGinnis, *Letter Orders from Sippar*, pl. 38, no. 184.



Illustration 3.29. Genius: Worship scene. NB partial impressions: BM 83527 (Abu Habbah/Sippar)
Source. Adapted from MacGinnis, *Letter Orders from Sippar*, pl. 34, no. 123.

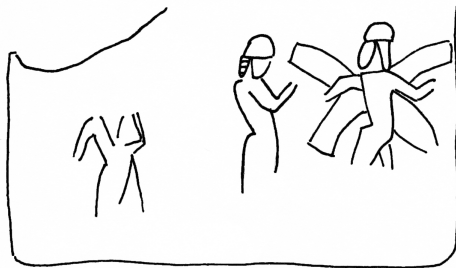


Illustration 3.30. Genius: Worship scene. NB partial impressions: BM 65015 (Abu Habbah/Sippar)
Source. Adapted from MacGinnis, *Letter Orders from Sippar*, pl. 8, no. 30.

3.1.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

None

3.1.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

All thirty provenanced NB examples of the genius are found in glyptic iconography. Of these, fifteen are on seals (twelve cylinder and three stamp) and fifteen are only represented in impressions. The seals and impressions date from the eleventh-sixth century BC, with the majority dating to the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar II and Nabonidus. The iconography comes from six sites: Nippur (1), Ur (1), Kish (3), Sippar (7), Babylon (8), and Uruk (10).

TABLE 3.1. SINGLE GENIUS

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type
3.1	BM 120245	NB	Babylon	Stamp
3.2	VA 6965 Bab 38913	NB	Babylon	Stamp
3.3	VA Bab 1561	NB	Babylon	Stamp

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, Stamp=Stamp Seal.

TABLE 3.2. GENIUS OVERCOMING ONE CREATURE

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type
3.4	Ash. Mus. no. 1925.114	8th-7th cent.	Kish	Cyl
3.5	BM 140750	Late 8th cent.	Ur	Cyl
3.6	VA Bab 1540	9th-8th cent.	Babylon	Cyl
3.7	W 20629,1	11th-10th cent.	Uruk	Cyl
3.8	W 21937	11th-10th cent.	Uruk	Cyl

Note: Cyl=Cylinder Seal.

TABLE 3.3. GENIUS OVERCOMING TWO CREATURES

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
3.9	Ash. Mus. no. 1929.240	Late 8 th -7 th cent.	Kish	Cyl	
3.10	Ash. Mus. no. 1929.262	8 th -7 th cent.	Kish	Cyl	
3.11	CBS 14387	8 th -7 th cent.	Nippur	Cyl	
3.12	VA 6938	8 th -7 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl	
3.13	VA 6974	NB	Babylon	Cyl	
3.14	NCBT 809	NB	Uruk	Impr	D: List of jugs

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, Cyl=Cylinder Seal, Impr=Impression, D=Document.

TABLE 3.4. TWO GENII OVERCOMING CREATURES

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type
3.15	VA 7737	1 st mill. Early half	Babylon, Merkes	Cyl

Note: Cyl=Cylinder Seal.

TABLE 3.5. PARTIAL CONTEST SCENES

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
3.16	BM 62606	NBN	Sippar	Impr	D: Letter order for oil to repair boats
3.17	BM 66067	NBN	Sippar	Impr	D: Letter order for dates
3.18	AO 6783	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: List of payments in barley to Eanna; witnessed SO: Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin, descendant of the weaver C: NA ₄ KIŠIB ^{1d} NĀ-ŠEŠ.ME-MU A ^{1u} UŠ.BAR Seal of Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin, descendant of the weaver
3.19	AO 6784	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: Legal proceedings before Eanna authorities concerning cattle belonging to the temple and entrusted to herdsmen SO: Nabû-mukīn-zēri, the <i>šatammu</i> of Eanna C: NA ₄ KIŠIB ^{1d} NĀ-DU-NUMUN ^{1u} ŠĀ.TAM É.AN.NA, Seal of Nabû-mukīn-zēri, <i>šatammu</i> of Eanna
3.20	BA 74366	NBN	Sippar	Impr	D: Receipt
3.21	BA 75734	NBN	Babylon	Impr	D: Letter
3.22	BM 56701	NB	Sippar	Impr	D: Letter
3.23	GCBC 304	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: Receipt of beer by PN for goldsmiths
3.24	PTS 2372	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: Protocol before Eanna authorities obliging certain prebenders to deliver pastries and honey for the cultic meal SO: Madanu-aḥḥē-iddin(?), the overseer of the brewers of Eanna
3.25	YBC 16216	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: Exchange of land for various metals and wool; witnessed SO: Madanu-aḥḥē-iddin, the overseer of the brewers of Eanna C: NA ₄ KIŠIB ^{1d} DI.KUD-PAP.ME-MU ^{1u} UGULA SIRAŠ.MEŠ, Seal of Madanu-aḥḥē-iddin, overseer of the brewers
3.26	W 18209,34	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: Economic text
3.27	NCBT 809	NB	Uruk	Impr	D: List of jugs

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, NBK2=Nebuchadnezzar II, NBN=Nabonidus, Impr=Impression, D=Document, SO=Seal Owner, C=Caption.

TABLE 3.6. PARTIAL WORSHIP SCENES

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
3.28	BM 100739	NBN	Sippar	Impr	D: Letter order for dates from the Ebabbara in exchange for sheep
3.29	BM 83527	NBN	Sippar	Impr	D: Letter order for dates
3.30	BM 65015	NBN	Sippar	Impr	D: Letter order for dates

Note: NBN=Nabonidus, Impr=Impression, D=Document.

The fifteen impressions on tablets have additional external contexts consisting of the documents that they certify, which in some cases include captions identifying the owners of the seals. These documents are all economic, dealing with transactions involving transfer of

commodities (including for a cultic purpose) or ownership of land, mainly to or from the Eanna temple in Uruk or the Ebabbara temple in Sippar.

Three seal owners from Uruk are identified: Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin, descendant of a weaver; Nabû-mukīn-zēri, *šatammu* of Eanna; and Madanu-aḥḥē-iddin, overseer of the brewers of Eanna. The *šatammu* was a high-ranking temple official who supervised the final decisions of the temple's legal and administrative transactions.¹³ This may explain why his seal certified the record of what appears to be an important case: "Legal proceedings before Eanna authorities concerning cattle belonging to the temple and entrusted to herdsmen."

It is interesting that the seal of "the overseer of the brewers of Eanna" was impressed on a tablet containing a "protocol before Eanna authorities obliging certain prebenders to deliver pastries and honey for the cultic meal." Obviously a temple overseer of brewers would be responsible for production of beverages utilized in ritual meals offered to the gods, but here such an official (or at least his seal) is also involved with incoming supplies of luxury food items for these meals.

The seal impressions of the three named individuals each feature a four-winged genius in contest. As was indicated in the Introduction, such an evocation of the supernatural realm through the depiction of composite beings and divine symbols reinforces the magically protective function of seals and seal impressions, and reminds humans that they are accountable for behaving in a correct fashion with regard to sealed documents. Portrayal of the vigorous winged genius as a supreme martial artist would imply that he was eminently capable of taking to task anyone who violated the agreed intent of a record witnessed with his likeness.

3.1.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Contest scenes are attested in Near Eastern iconography as early as the fourth millennium BC. From the Middle Assyrian period onward, the human protagonist or hero can be winged.¹⁴ Male and female genii are common and found in a variety of contexts in both NA and NB iconography. However, as noted above, the genius does not seem to have a unique name, but possibly falls under the broad Akkadian term *aladlammû*, a term also used to refer to human-headed bulls and lions.

3.1.7 CONCLUSION

Within the corpus of provenanced NB examples of the genius, such a being may be depicted alone, with one or two natural or fantastic creatures in contest scenes, or in worship scenes. Divine symbols portrayed in these contest scenes include the winged disk of Shamash, the crescent of Sin, the star of Ishtar, the spade of Marduk, and the tree of life.

¹³ Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 12.

¹⁴ Collon, *First Impressions*, 193, 197.

Creatures opposing the genius in contest scenes include the winged bull, the bull-man, the ibex, the bird griffin, the natural lion, and the human-headed winged lion (or sphinx). Although these scenes show contest in action, with the final outcome yet to be determined, the genius always appears to be getting the upper hand, in spite of the apparent superior physical strength of some of his opponents. The success of this being, who looks like a human except for the addition of his wings (if present), correlates with the high value placed on human elements in NB iconography (see Appendix).

Although the genius is most frequently attested as aggressive in fighting against animals, in the NB examples it shows no aggression toward humans. In fact, in some worship scenes it is the object of human adoration.

4. BOVINE

Bovines (mainly bulls but sometimes cows) are prominent in ancient Near Eastern art, including the extant iconography of the Neo-Babylonian period. In addition to natural ancient bovines, which could include aurochs or bison, three distinct bovine composite beings, all male, are found in NB art. The secondary literature refers to such creatures as the bull-man, the human-headed bull, and the winged bull. This chapter begins by considering the natural bovine and then turns to an analysis of the supernatural bovines.

4.1 THE NATURAL BOVINE: *KUSARIKKU* (GUD₄.ALIM)

The so-called *wild bull* that roamed ancient Mesopotamia was probably identified by the Sumerian term GUD₄.ALIM and the Akkadian *kusarikku*.¹ The wild cattle of the ancient Near East may have been aurochs (*Bos primigenius*, Ill. 4.1), which are now extinct, but were the probable ancestors of all modern cattle.² The aurochs was an impressive beast, standing over six feet tall at the shoulder and armed with enormous horns.³ Alternatively, some scholars believe that the ancient wild cattle were more likely bison or wisent (*Bison bison caucasicus*).⁴

The wild bovine was portrayed in Mesopotamian iconography since pre-historic times (pre-3500 BC) in natural, mythological, and religious contexts.⁵ Depictions of this natural animal are found in the round, in relief, and in glyptic art well into the Achaemenid period.

¹ Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (ill. Tessa Richards; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 49; Frans A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (CM1; Groningen: Styx & PP, 1992), 174-177. *Kusarikku* (GUD₄.ALIM) is probably the original name for the extinct bison (“*kusarikku*,” *CAD* 8:584). This term was used for the bull-man and also possibly for the human-headed bull (Frans A. M. Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A. Philologisch. Mesopotamien,” *RLA* 8:242; cf. Henri Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals* [London: Macmillan & Co., 1939], 161; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 48-49). The Akkadian term *alu* (gu₄.an.na=e-lu-u) refers to the bull as a mythological being and is a different creature (“*alû B*,” *CAD* 1.1:377).

² Allan S. Gilbert, “The Native Fauna of the Ancient Near East,” in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Billie Jean Collins; Handbook of Oriental Studies 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 15.

³ P. H. J. Maas, “Aurochs—*Bos primigenius*,” n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.petermaas.nl/extinct/speciesinfo/aurochs.htm>; Anthony Green, “A Note on the Assyrian ‘Goat-Fish,’ ‘Fish-Man’ and ‘Fish-Woman,’” *Iraq* 48 (1986): 26.

⁴ Joan G. Westenholz, ed., *Dragons, Monsters, and Fabulous Beasts* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004), 26; Gilbert, “The Native Fauna of the Ancient Near East,” 15.

⁵ Amir Harrak, “Guardians of the Gate: The Assyrian Winged Colossi,” *BCSMS* 34 (1999): 27.

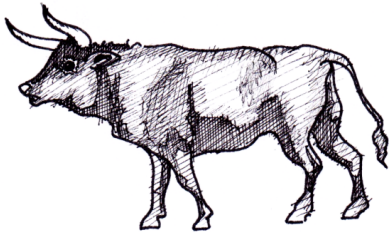


Illustration 4.1. Natural bovine: Aurochs (*Bos primigenius*)

Texts as early as the Early Dynastic II period (c. 2750-2600 BC) describe Marduk as the “bull-calf” of the sun god, Shamash (UTU).⁶ In the Old Babylonian period, the crescent moon could be understood as the horns of a bull that functions as the attribute animal of Sin (NANNA-SUEN).⁷

The natural bull is associated with storm deities as early as the Old Babylonian period, and possibly earlier.⁸ The bull especially functions as the attribute animal of the storm god Adad (ISHKUR). Roiling thunderclouds are referred to as the “bull-calves” of ISHKUR.⁹ Bovines are often found in the same contexts as aspects of storms connected with the storm god, such as forked lightning bolts and thunderclouds.

While the bull is often depicted as the mount of an anthropomorphic god, such as Shamash,¹⁰ the animal also appears in contexts where no such deity is depicted. In such cases, it is rendered in association with the forked thunderbolt or another divine symbol.

Representations of the natural bovine are extant in the round as apotropaic guardian figures at entrances to palaces or other monumental buildings. In these contexts, the creature is not the attribute animal of a particular deity; rather, it functions as a protective demon to ward off evil.

In the Neo-Babylonian period, the natural bull is prominent in both texts and reliefs. Three of the texts are examined here. First, Nebuchadnezzar II records in the so-called East India House Inscription (III:36-64) discovered in Babylon (BM 129397) how he elaborately adorns the cellas of Nabu and Sin (here referred to as Nana) in the Ezida temple at Borsippa. Twice he mentions bulls in connection with gates:

⁶ W. G. Lambert, “The Historical Development of the Mesopotamian Pantheon: A Study in Sophisticated Polytheism,” in *Unity in Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (ed. Hans Goedicke and J. M. Roberts; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 191-200.

⁷ G. Colbow, “More Insights into Representations of the Moon God in the Third and Second Millennium B.C.,” in *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations* (ed. Irving L. Finkel and Markham J. Geller; CM 7; Groningen: Styx, 1997), 25-26.

⁸ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 47.

⁹ Anthony Green, “Ancient Mesopotamian Religious Iconography,” *CANE* 3:1843. Adad’s symbol is the forked lightning bolt and his representative, apotropaic animals were variously the lion-dragon, the lion-griffin, or the bull (cf. 3:1843).

¹⁰ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:227.

36. Borsippa the city of his abode 37. I beautified, and 38. Ezida, the Eternal House, 39. in the midst thereof I made. 40. With silver, gold, precious stones, 45. copper, *mismakanna*-wood, cedar-wood, 42. I finished the work of it. 43. The cedar of the roofing 44. of the cells of Nebo 45. with gold I overlaid. 46. The cedar of the roofing of the gate of Nanâ, 47. I overlaid with shining silver. 48. The bulls, the leaves of the gate of the cell, 49. the lintels, the bars, the bolt, 50. the door-sill, *Zarirû*-stone. 51. The cedar of the roofing 52. of its chambers (?) 53. with silver I made bright. 54. The path to the cell, 55. and the way to the house, 56. (was of) glazed (?) brickwork. 57. The seat of the chapel therein 58. (was) a work of silver. 59. The bulls, the leaves of the gates, 60. with plates of bronze (?), 61. brightly I made to glisten. 62. The house I made gloriously bright, and, 63. for gazings (of wonder), 64. with carved work I had (it) filled.¹¹

Later in the same inscription (V:56-VI:21), Nebuchadnezzar describes his construction work in Babylon and his embellishment of that capital city. Here he fabricates bulls and “dreadful serpents” of bronze, and stations them at the gates of the city walls (called *Imgur-bel* and *Nimetti-bel*) to make the entrance “unapproachable” to any incursion of evil:

Column V

56. Of *Imgur-bel* 57. and *Nimitti-bel* 58. the portals, on both sides, 59. through the raising 60. of the causeway of Babylon 61. had become low 62. in their entries: 63. those portals 64. I pulled down, and

Column VI

1. over against the water their foundation 2. with bitumen and burnt brick 3. I firmly laid, and 4. with burnt brick (and) gleaming *uknû* stone, 5. whereof bulls and dreadful serpents 6. were made, the interior of them 7. cunningly I constructed. 8. Strong cedar beams 9. for the roofing of them 10. I laid on. 11. Doors of cedar 12. (with) plating of bronze, 13. lintels and hinges, 14. copper-work, in its gates 15. I set up. 16. Strong bulls of copper, 17. and dreadful serpents, standing upright, 18. on their thresholds I erected: 19. those portals, 20. for the gazings of the multitude of the people, 21. with carven work I caused to be filled. 22. As an outwork 2 for *Imgur-bel*, 23. the wall of Babylon, unapproachable.¹²

It is only from the textual evidence that we know of the giant bull and serpent statues stationed at the gates of Babylon. The gigantic guardian *lamassus* of limestone uncovered in Assyria have no extant parallels in Babylonia. This may be because the Babylonian counterparts in the round were made of metal, whether due to the scarcity of stone in the

¹¹ “The India House Inscription of Nebuchadrezzar the Great,” translated by C. J. Ball in *Records of the Past: Being Translations of the Ancient Monuments of Egypt and Western Asia* (ed. A. H. Sayce; 2d ser., London: Bagster & Sons, 1890), 110, II:38-65 [cited 24 May 2012] Online: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/rp/rp203/rp20325.htm>.

¹² “The India House Inscription,” 115, VI:1-23.

region or to preference for a brilliant metallic appearance. The metal objects have not survived, as they were presumably broken in pieces or melted down for recycling after Babylon was conquered.¹³

A second royal inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II (CBS 9), known as the “University Museum Cylinder,” describes in elaborate detail the bronze bulls “clothed” in gold and bulls made of silver that he placed at the Ezida temple in Borsippa (col. I):

(36) In Borsippa I restored Ezida the righteous house beloved of Marduk for Nabu the illustrious son . . . (52) As for the six rooms adjoining the shrine of Nabu I adorned their cedar roof with bright silver . . . (55) I fabricated huge bulls in bronze and I clothed them with a coating of gold and adorned them with precious stones and I placed them on the threshold of the shrine gate. The threshold, the fetter, the bar, the doorwings, the lintel, the knob(?), the lock, the bolt of the shrine gate I plated with shining gold. . . (60) I covered with clear silver the cedar wood of the roof of the Dara gate through which goes and comes the son of the lord of the gods . . . (62) I fabricated huge bulls of silver and I placed them on its threshold. This gate where through goes and comes the son of the lord of the gods Nabu, when he rides in procession into Babylon, I let shine like the day. . . (65) Bulls of shining silver I planted as ornament on the threshold of the gates of Ezida.¹⁴

In the same text, the Babylonian monarch states that he put monumental bronze bulls at the gates of Babylon (II:1-2):

(1) In Babylon the city of the great lord Marduk I completed the great walls Imgur-Bel and Nimitti-Bel. (2) On the threshold of their gates I placed huge bronze bulls and dread inspiring dragons.¹⁵

Bull imagery in extant NB iconography is best exemplified in relief on the walls of the famous Ishtar Gate at the entrance of sixth-century-BC Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar II describes the construction of this structure in his “Dedicatory Inscription” on a glazed brick panel of the gate:

Both gate entrances of *Imgur-Ellil* and *Nemetti-Ellil* following the filling of the street from Babylon had become increasingly lower. Therefore, I pulled down these gates and laid their foundations at the water-table with asphalt and bricks and had them made of bricks with blue stone on which wonderful bulls and dragons were depicted. I covered their roofs by laying majestic

¹³ Cf. 2 Kings 25:13, describing how the troops of Nebuchadnezzar broke up large bronze objects belonging to the temple in Jerusalem and carried the valuable metal to Babylon.

¹⁴ Leon Legrain, *Royal Inscriptions and Fragments from Nippur and Babylon* (Philadelphia: Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, 1926), 38-40.

¹⁵ Legrain, *Royal Inscriptions and Fragments*, 40.

cedars length-wise over them. I hung doors of cedar adorned with bronze at all the gate openings. I placed wild bulls and ferocious dragons in the gateways and thus adorned them with luxurious splendor so that people might gaze on them in wonder.¹⁶

The colossal guardian bulls and dragons in the round from the Ishtar Gate have not survived, but those rendered in glazed-brick relief are preserved and exhibited at the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (e.g., Ill. 4.2). Remnants of unglazed reliefs from the gate structure remain *in situ* in Babylon.¹⁷

“The Babylonian Map of the World” (BM 92687, Ill. 1.1),¹⁸ which has already been mentioned in the introduction, dates to the late eighth or seventh century BC and is probably from Sippar.¹⁹ In this text, exotic animals and the “ruined gods” are placed by Marduk “inside the Sea” and “on top of the restless Sea.” The bison or bull-man is found among those in the latter area (“on top”).²⁰ Here the natural bison or perhaps the bull-man (the Akkadian word may refer to either the natural or supernatural creature) is included in a mythological context in connection with hybrid supernatural creatures.

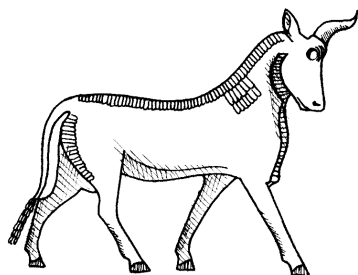


Illustration 4.2. Natural Bovine: Bull of Adad. NB glazed brick relief: VA Bab 1976 (Ishtar Gate, Babylon)

¹⁶ Joachim Marzahn, *The Ishtar Gate: The Processional Way: The New Year Festival of Babylon* (Mainz: Zabern, 1994), 17.

¹⁷ The closest parallel to the NB natural bull on glazed brick, as portrayed on the Ishtar Gate, is found at Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad) on the NA panel of glazed brick flanking the entrance to Sargon II's palace temples. See Julian E. Reade, “The Khorsabad Glazed Bricks and Their Symbolism,” in *Khorsabad, le palais de Sargon II, roi d'Assyrie* (ed. Annie Caubet; Paris: La documentation Française, 1995), 225-251.

¹⁸ “Map of the World,” BM, n.p. [cited 10 June 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/m/map_of_the_world.aspx.

¹⁹ Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 8; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 26.

²⁰ Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 23.

4.2 BULL-MAN: *KUSARIKKU* (GUD₄.ALIM)

4.2.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

The bull-man takes over the name of the natural bovine: Sumerian GUD₄.ALIM, the Akkadian equivalent of which is *kusarikku*.²¹ The *kusarikku* is solidly attested in the Neo-Babylonian period on two cylinder seals (Ills. 4.3-4.4), five seal impressions (Ills. 4.5-4.9), and on the Sun-god Tablet Collection, which consists of a tablet and two plaster casts of the head of this tablet, which were placed within a lidded coffer (Ills. 4.10-4.13).

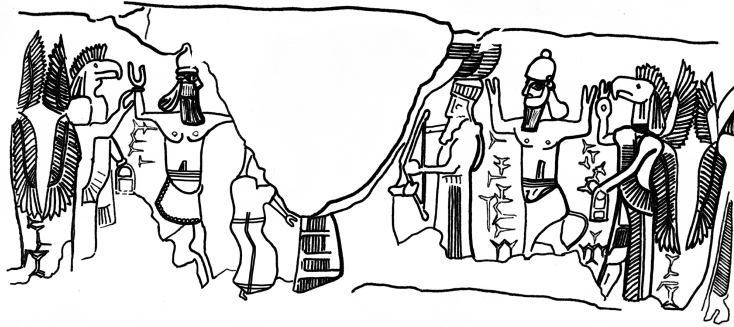


Illustration 4.3. Bull-man (*kusarikku*): Judgment or worship scene. NB cylinder seal: VA Bab 1510 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Anton Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1988), 67, 140, no. 600.

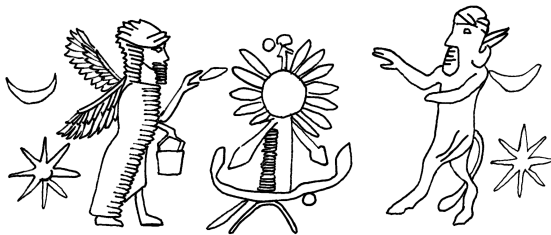


Illustration 4.4. Bull-man (*kusarikku*). NB cylinder seal: CBS 8933 (Nippur)

Source. Adapted from Beatrice Wittmann, "Babylonische Rollsiegel des 11.-7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.," *BaM* 23, (1992): 247, no. 117.

²¹ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 49. GUD₄.ALIM/*kusarikku* is probably originally the name for the extinct bison (see above). On the etymological development of the Sumerian name of the bull-man, see Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 227.

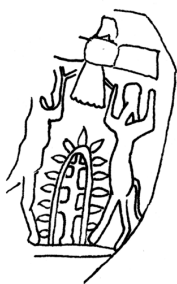


Illustration 4.5. Bull-man (*kusarikku*). NB seal impression: YBC 11425 (Uruk)

Source. Adapted from Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* (AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999), 28, 96, pl. 25, no. 199.



Illustration 4.6. Bull-man (*kusarikku*). NB seal impression: BM 56290 (Sippar)

Source. Adapted from Terence C. Mitchell and Ann Searight, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Stamp Seals III: Impressions of Stamp Seals on Cuneiform Tablets, Clay Bullae, and Jar Handles* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), no. 349.

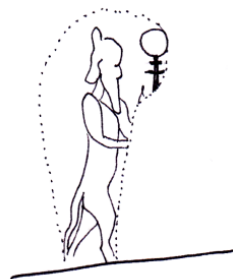


Illustration 4.7. Bull-man (*kusarikku*). NB seal impression: BM 32871 (Babylon)

Note. BM 32871 = Nbn 85 (Babylon. Egibi-Archiv)

Source. Adapted from Cornelia Wunsch, *Das Egibi-Archiv, I. Die Felder und Garten* (ed. Tzvi Abusch et al.; 2 vols.; CM 20A-B; Groningen: Styx, 2000), no. 241.

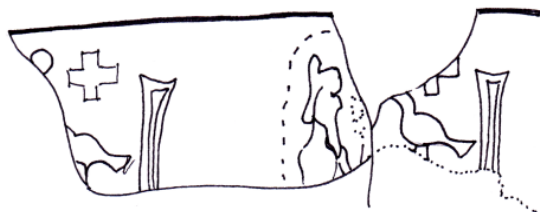


Illustration 4.8. Bull-man (*kusarikku*). NB seal impression: BM 34447 (Babylon. Egibi-Archiv)

Source. Adapted from Wunsch, *Das Egibi-Archiv, I. Die Felder und Garten*, no. 241.



Illustration 4.9. Bull-man (*kusarikku*). NB seal impression: Baker fig. 4.2 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Heather Baker and Cornelia Wunsch, “Neo-Babylonian Notaries and Their Use of Seals,” in RAI 45.2 (William W. Hallo and Irene J. Winter; Bethesda: CDL, 2001), fig. 4, seal 2.

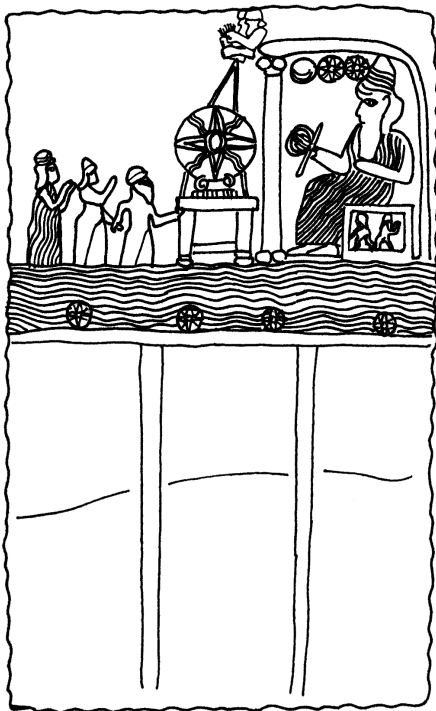


Illustration 4.10. Sun-god tablet collection. NB text: BM 91000 (Sippar)

Note: Tablet and original inscription by Nabû-apla-iddina (c. 860-850 BC); additional inscription by Nabopolassar (625-605 BC); reburied by Nabonidus (555-539 BC).

Source. Adapted from “The Sun God Tablet,” BM, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=282224&partId=1&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no_provenance_search.aspx&numpages=10&idNum=1881,0428.34.a¤tPage=1.

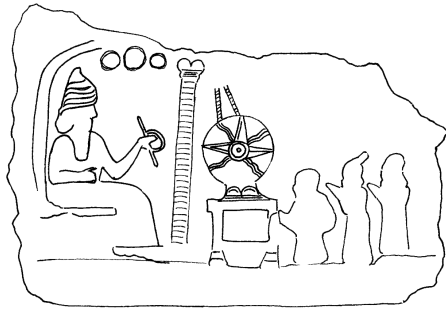


Illustration 4.11. Sun-god tablet collection. NB text: BM 91001 (Sippar)

Note: Original plaster cast of BM 91000 by Nabû-apla-iddina.

Source: Adapted from “Cover,” BM, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=369175&partid=1&IdNum=91001&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_number_search.aspx.

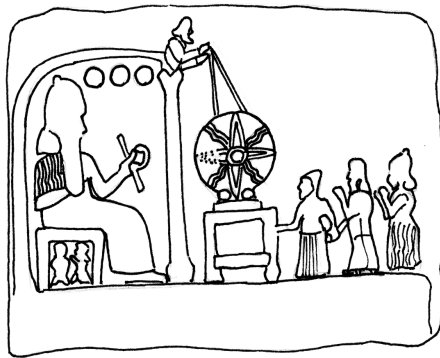


Illustration 4.12. Sun-god tablet collection. NB text: BM 91002 (Sippar)

Note: Plaster cast of BM 910001 with inscription of Nabopolassar on back.

Source: Adapted from “Cover,” BM, n.p. [cited 22 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=282832&partid=1&IdNum=91002&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_number_search.aspx.

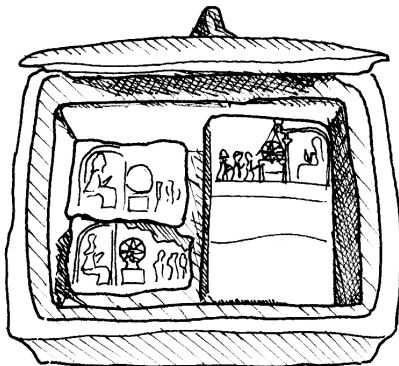


Illustration 4.13. Sun-god tablet collection: Box/coffer. NB text: BM 91004 (Sippar)

Note: Box has inscription on sides by Nabopolassar. Items BM 91000, BM 91001, and BM 91002 were found inside.

Source: Adapted from “Box,” BM, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=369177&partid=1&IdNum=91004&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx.

4.2.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE BULL-MAN

The bull-man has a human head and torso, but taurine horns, lower body and legs.²² The composite being stands upright like a human, but is often depicted in an atlas pose supporting the sun, the winged sun disk, or the throne of the sun god Shamash.²³ The strength of the natural bull combined with the intelligence of the human mind gives this creature superior powers.

On VA Bab 1510 (Ill. 4.3), two bull men wear horned tiaras, indicating that they are regarded as divine. Their hair falls to their shoulders and they have ornate curly, chest-length beards. They are bare-chested, with pronounced pectoral muscles testifying to their brawn, which is needed for supporting the sun disk, to which their arms are raised. Each has a rope belt tied around his lower waist, an ornate dagger held in place by the belt, and has a short, beaded kilt wrapped around his hips.

4.2.3 CONTEXT OF THE BULL-MAN WITHIN SCENES

Cylinder seal VA Bab 1510 (Ill. 4.3) has been discussed in Chapter 2 (see on Ill. 2.23). Here two bull-men in an atlas pose face inward toward the center. The bull-man on the right supports the tip of a barely visible winged sun disk with his upraised right hand. His left hand is also raised, but does not support anything. The bull-man on the left maintains the same posture. It appears that the function of these bull-men is to attend and support the sun god Shamash, represented by the disk.²⁴

Combination of imagery associated with Shamash, the god of justice, with portrayal of a stooped figure, possibly depicting a prisoner, suggests that the scene represents some kind of judgment.²⁵ If so, the bull-men play a supporting role in this event.

Cylinder seal CBS 8933 from Nippur (Ill. 4.4), reflecting Assyrian influence, depicts a central tree of life (or sun[?]) with a winged *ūmu-apkallu* in profile on the left, facing the tree and a bull-man in profile on the right, also facing inward toward the tree.²⁶ Here the bull-man is not in the familiar atlas pose; rather, he mirrors the stance of the *ūmu-apkallu*. In the

²² Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 48-49.

²³ Representations of natural and monstrous creatures frequently supported cultic or royal furniture in the ANE. In the Hebrew Bible, 1 Kings 7:23-25 describes the cultic basin set in front of Solomon's temple: "Now he [Solomon] made the sea of cast *metal*. . . It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing south, and three facing east; and the sea *was set* on top of them, and all their rear parts *turned inward*" (NASB95). Centuries later in 586 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed Jerusalem, this laver was part of the booty taken to Babylon. Jeremiah 52:20 states that in the booty were the "two pillars, the one sea, *and* the twelve bronze bulls that were under the sea, *and* the stands, which King Solomon had made for the house of the LORD—the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weight" (NASB95).

²⁴ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 179; Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 27; Tallay Ornan, "Expelling Demons at Nineveh: On the Visibility of Benevolent Demons in the Palaces of Nineveh," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 85.

²⁵ Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 27.

²⁶ The multiple rays emanating from the tree are more reminiscent of a radiating sun than of tree branches.

terminal behind the bull-man, the crescent of Sin stands above the eight-pointed star of Ishtar.²⁷

Two sealings, YBC 11425 from Uruk and BM 56290 from Sippar (Ills. 4.5-4.6), and one cylinder seal, VA Bab 1510 from Babylon (Ill. 4.3), portray bull-men in the atlas pose. Their upraised arms support the winged disk of Shamash, below which is a stylized tree of life.

Three sealings from Babylon (BM 32871, BM 34447, Baker fig. 4.2) appear to be from the same seal (Ills. 4.7-4.9). They show a bearded bull-man in profile facing right, holding the standard of Shamash before other symbols. To the right of the standard are three symbols stacked vertically: at the top is a cross, in the middle a perched bird, and at the bottom a snail. To the right of these is the stylus of Nabu.

The scene on tablet BM 91000 (Ill. 4.10) and its plaster cast BM 91001 (Ill. 4.11), dating to the reign of Babylonian king Nabû-apla-iddina (c. 860-850 BC), and a replica of the ninth-century-BC plaster cast made in the seventh century BC by Nabopolassar (625-605 BC) (BM 91002, Ill. 4.12), portray the king Nabû-apla-iddina being led by the priest Nabû-nadin-shum and the goddess Aa into the presence of Shamash. In front of Shamash is a massive solar disk, which rests upon an altar. The disk is suspended by ropes held by attendant deities, whose upper bodies extend from the roof of the Ebabbara shrine in which Shamash sits enthroned. In the field above Shamash (within the shrine) is the lunar disk of Sin, the solar disk of Shamash, and Venus, the eight-pointed star of Ishtar. The seated deity wears a horned headdress and holds the rod and ring of kingship in his right hand.

Two opposed bull-men in profile, with their backs to each other and facing the viewer, support the deity's throne, which is located on what appear to be mountains. The bull-men are bearded and wear horned crowns. They hold the supporting pillars of Shamash's throne as he follows his solar path, emerging from the mountains and moving across the dome of the heavenly ocean, on which the entire scene rests.²⁸ The bull-men serve two functions in this scene. First, just as they support the winged disk of the sun god in other contexts (cf. Ills. 4.3-4.5), so in this scene they support the actual throne of the sun god. Second, by their very presence they presumably guard the area around the god.

In all of the provenanced NB attestations of the bull-man, he either supports the throne or the winged disk of the sun god Shamash, or carries the sun god's standard. The bull-man may fill a number of roles, including: a beneficent apotropaic power to ward off evil; a part of the support system for Shamash, god of justice; the attendant of Shamash, holding the sun god's standard. In some instances, the bull-man is horned as a minor deity.

²⁷ For seal impressions depicting bull-men in the atlas pose see Ills. 4.5 and 4.6 below.

²⁸ "The Sun God Tablet," BM, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=282224&partId=1&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx&numpages=10&idNum=1881,0428.34.a¤tPage=1. For discussion regarding the sun god's nocturnal activities, see Wolfgang Heimpel, "The Sun at Night and the Doors of Heaven in Babylonian Texts," *JCS* 38 (1986): 127-151.

4.2.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

Some of the most significant NB iconographic examples of the *kusarikku* appear in the “Sun-god Tablet Collection” (Ills. 4.10-4.13).²⁹ The tablet in this collection, BM 91000, contains a lengthy inscription, as well as three captions in the scene at the head of the tablet, which are duplicated on two plaster casts (BM 91001, Nabû-apla-iddina; copy BM 91002, Nabopolassar). The tablet and casts were placed in a coffer (BM 91004, Nabopolassar), which also bears an inscription: “Image of Shamash, the lord of Sippar, who dwells in Ebabbara.”³⁰ None of these texts mention the bull-men, but they illuminate the context of the scene in which the bull-men participate.

The main inscription on the tablet (BM 91000) dates to the reign of Nabû-apla-iddina and records his renovation and re-endowment of Ebabbara, the temple of Shamash in Sippar. This is supplemented by a secondary inscription added two centuries later during the reign of Nabopolassar, in which this monarch affirms that he too refurbished the Ebabbara.

The three captions at the head of the tablet read:

1. Above Nabû-apla-iddina: “Image of Shamash, the great Lord who dwells in Ebabbara, which is in Sippar.”³¹ This explicitly identifies the sun-god and his temple.
2. Adjacent to Shamash: “Headdress of Shamash; rod of two.”³² This affirms the ruling status of Shamash by referring to his crown and rod, which identify him as a divine monarch. In this conceptual framework, the bull-men holding up the throne of Shamash support his rule. The fact that these powerful supernatural beings are subservient to him underscores his power.³³

²⁹ “The Sun God Tablet,” BM, n.p.

³⁰ “Box,” BM, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=369177&partid=1&IdNum=91004&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx.

³¹ “The Sun God Tablet,” BM, n.p.

³² *Agû (ilu)šamaš muš-ši* MIN. “The Sun God Tablet,” BM, n.p.

³³ Cf. Ezekiel 1 and 10, where YHWH is enthroned above cherubs that are composite beings with four faces each: human, lion, bull, and eagle.

3. Above the canopy over the enthroned Shamash: “Sin, Shamash, and Ishtar are set opposite the (cosmic) Apsû inside the divine judge.”³⁴ Here the divine astral triad, represented by their symbols under the canopy that features a depiction of Shamash, the god of justice/judgment, are described in a cosmic context.³⁵ They (their symbols) are “inside the divine judge,” which correlates with the fact that they are within the canopy containing Shamash, which is the place of judgment. This implies that Sin and Ishtar participate with Shamash in judgment, at least as divine witnesses.

The one being judged is the human king (Nabû-apla-iddina, with whom Nabopolassar later identifies himself by adding his own name in an inscription on BM 91002, Ill. 4.12). He is led before Shamash for judgment by a priest and goddess (see sec. 4.2.3). The fact that the tablet commemorates good deeds performed by the king for the benefit of the god (restoring his temple and offerings) indicates that the judgment affirms the righteousness of the king.

Compare the fact that the Babylonian king was brought before the image of Marduk by his priest on the fifth day of the Babylonian New Year (Akitu) Festival of Spring and confessed his innocence and good deeds so that the god would reaffirm his rule for the coming year.³⁶ However, the scenario on the Sun-god Tablet differs in that the king directly approaches only the sun disk representing Shamash, not the anthropomorphic image of the deity himself, which is enclosed in his canopy. This emphasizes the numinous transcendence of Shamash. Neo-Babylonian iconography of Marduk implies his transcendence even more strongly: There is no anthropomorphic depiction of Marduk with any human being; he is only represented by symbols when portrayed with humans.

4.2.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 4.1. BULL-MAN

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
4.3	VA Bab 1510	9 th -8 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl	I: ʾTI- [] ʾMU.Ḫ [] (ʾAN.SA.BIʾ [] šá [])
4.4	CBS 8933	mid 7 th cent.	Nippur	Cyl	
4.5	YBC 11425	NB	Uruk	Impr	D: Letter (or letter-order) concerning barley and birds as offerings to Shamash
4.6	BM 56290	NB	Sippar	Impr	D: Account
4.7	BM 32871	NBN	Babylon	Impr	D: Economic Text SO: Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, descendant of Suḫāya
4.8	BM 34447	NB	Babylon	Impr	D: Economic Text SO: Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, descendant of

³⁴ “The Sun God Tablet,” BM, n.p.

³⁵ Cf. Psalm 29:10, where YHWH sits enthroned as king at the Flood (*mabbûl*).

³⁶ English translations include those of Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 1993), 446-447; Julye Bidmead, *The Akitu Festival: Religious Continuity and Royal Legitimation in Mesopotamia* (Gorgias Dissertations 2; Near Eastern Studies 2; Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias, 2004), 77-78. The text dates to the Seleucid period, but likely reflects earlier tradition. The ritual is reminiscent of investiture scenes on the Laws of Hammurabi stele and the palace painting of Zimri Lim at Mari. Both of these date to the Old Babylonian period.

4.9	Baker fig. 4.2	NER, 3 rd yr.- NBN, 8 th yr.	Babylon	Impr	Suḫāya D: Transfer of real estate. Sealing of a notary SO: Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, descendant of Suḫāya
4.10	BM 91000	860-850	Sippar	Text	D: Records the restoration of the temple by Nabû-apla-iddina, king of Babylon
4.11	BM 91001	860-850	Sippar	Cover	C: “Headdress of Shamash; rod of two”
4.12	BM 91002	625-605	Sippar	Cover	D: List of articles for Shamash
4.13	BM 91004	625-605	Sippar	Box/ coffer	C: <i>ṣal-lam</i> ^d <i>Šamaš bēl Sippar</i> ^{kl} <i>a-šib-bi É-babbar-ra</i> , “Image of Shamash, the lord of Sippar, who dwells in Ebabbara”

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, NER=Neriglissar, NBN=Nabonidus, Cyl=Cylinder Seal, Impr=Impression, D=Document, SO=Seal Owner, C=Caption, I=Inscription on Seal.

Cylinder seal VA Bab 1510 (Ill. 4.3) has been discussed in Chapter 2 (see on Ill. 2.23). The sealing of YBC 11425 from Uruk (Ill. 4.5) is found on a letter (or letter-order) concerning barley and birds as offerings to Shamash. BM 56290 from Sippar (Ill. 4.6) is an accounting document. Three sealings assumed to be from the same seal are found on tablets from Babylon, which are also economic (Ills. 4.7-4.9). The owner of the seal of all three of these sealings is the well-known notary of the Egibi family, Kabti-ilāni-Marduk, descendant of Suḫāya.³⁷

The exceptional discovery of the Sun-god Tablet Collection (Ills. 4.10-4.13) was found in the ruins of the Ebabbar temple of Shamash in Sippar.³⁸ The limestone tablet has a scene sculptured in relief at the head of the tablet. Nabû-apla-iddina had a plaster cast made of the relief portion of the tablet and buried it with the limestone tablet. While it was thought that the plaster cast was a cover to protect the scene on the tablet, it is now believed that the cast was made in case the scene on the tablet head was damaged, in which case it could be correctly reconstructed.³⁹

Nearly two hundred years later, during renovations of the Shamash Temple in Sippar, Nabopolassar discovered Nabû-apla-iddina’s tablet and original plaster cover cast, which was broken. He reburied the foundation tablet and its original plaster cast in a newly made clay box with a lid, and added a second plaster cast of the relief of the limestone tablet, adding an inscription of his own on the reverse of this second cast.⁴⁰

I find that the history of the Sun-god Tablet Collection illustrates the conservative way in which Babylonian iconography was transmitted and received: older depictions, including

³⁷ Heather Baker and Cornelia Wunsch, “Neo-Babylonian Notaries and Their Use of Seals,” in RAI 45.2 (ed. William W. Hallo and Irene J. Winter; Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2001), 202-211.

³⁸ “Box,” BM, n.p.

³⁹ “The Sun God Tablet,” BM, n.p.

⁴⁰ “The Sun God Tablet,” BM, n.p.

those of composite beings, were highly respected and regarded as having ongoing relevance for later generations. They were not to be discarded or treated as obsolete.

4.2.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The bull-man (*kusarikku*) originated from the natural bison that roamed the hilly flanks of the Mesopotamian lowlands.⁴¹ He was at home in the mountains and associated with other fabulous beasts.⁴²

The bull-man is extant in iconography by the Early Dynastic II period as the protector of flocks and herds.⁴³ In glyptic art of this period, bull-men appear in contest scenes, whether depicted alone, in pairs, or in threes as they struggle against wild animals or humans. Early Dynastic III period (c. 2600-2300 BC) glyptic scenes portray the bull-man fighting Lahmu, the hero with curls. This contest became the most common theme of Akkadian period (c. 2330-2190 BC) glyptic art.

Also on Akkadian period seals, the bull-man is shown as an adversary to the sun god, UTU:⁴⁴ With rebellious mountain gods, he fought against UTU, who was the supervisor of the distant regions, along with INANNA.⁴⁵ However, during the Akkadian period, the bull-man's association with UTU is transformed into a master-servant relationship, so he becomes a protective figure at significant entrances.⁴⁶

By the Old Babylonian period, the bull-man's close relationship to UTU is indicated by his logogram: GUD.DUMU.UTU, "bison-son of Utu."⁴⁷ Also during the Old Babylonian period and into the Kassite period, he continues as the attendant of UTU, now called Shamash, carrying the standard of the god. At times he also bears the standard of the moon god, Sin.⁴⁸ However, also during the Kassite period, the *kusarikku* (bull-man), is the enemy of Ninurta/Ningirsu, a storm god, who defeats him at sea.⁴⁹

According to Kassite text 5R 33 iv 54, the early Kassite king Agum-Kakrime (c. 1595 BC) inlaid a series of hybrid beings, including the bull-man, in precious stones on the doors of Marduk's temple.⁵⁰ The bull-man and several other creatures mentioned by Agum-Kakrime

⁴¹ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 174.

⁴² Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 227.

⁴³ Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, 171.

⁴⁴ Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, 161.

⁴⁵ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 227.

⁴⁶ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 226.

⁴⁷ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 176.

⁴⁸ Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, 171.

⁴⁹ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 177 n. 18.

⁵⁰ *Agum-kakrime* III:13, IV:50-51, 54 in Henry C. Rawlinson and Theophilus G. Pinches, *A Selection from the Miscellaneous Inscriptions of Assyria and Babylonia* (The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia 5; London: Harrison & Sons, 1909), 33; Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 274 n. 9; cf. "kulullu," *CAD*

show up in the twelfth-century-BC myth *Enuma Elish* among the brutal, ruthless posse of eleven hybrid beings created by Tiamat to execute vengeance on Marduk.⁵¹

By the end of the Kassite period, the bull-man is represented as an apotropaic demon. The creature frequently appears in the atlas pose and is the forerunner of the lion-demon.⁵² During the Neo-Assyrian period, he is loosely associated with Shamash (cf. above) by holding the sun god's standard or supporting his winged disk (either alone or as one of a pair).⁵³ However, texts more frequently refer to the bull-man as warding off evil and danger at portals of buildings.⁵⁴ In such contexts, monumental sculptures of him may flank gateways and doors, or he may be represented by foundation deposit figurines, often found in pairs.⁵⁵ In either case, the bull-man protects the premises, but he is not necessarily associated with any particular deity.

Bull-men in an atlas pose appear in NA contexts very similar to that of the bull-men found on the Sun-god Tablet from Sippar (704-681 BC; BM 91000; Ill. 4.10). Two NA reliefs from the Southwest Palace at Nineveh depict Sennacherib seated upon his *nemēdu* throne, which is supported by several miniature bull-men in an atlas pose.⁵⁶ The diminutive size of these apotropaic creatures parallels that of a small (height 35 cm) bronze figurine of a bull-man in an atlas pose found at Tell Mahuz near Kirkuk.⁵⁷ Portrayal of the human king like the god Shamash on the Sun-god Tablet, having his throne supported by such composite beings, artistically asserts Sennacherib's possession of a divine aspect.

During the Neo-Babylonian period, the bull-man continues to be represented in glyptic art and associated with Shamash. The taurian-humanoid is also attested in the subsequent Achaemenid period.⁵⁸ In terms of astral identity, the horns of the bull-man appear in the night sky as the constellation Taurus.⁵⁹

8:527. Agum-kakrime (Agum II) is the Kassite king who seized the throne of Babylon after it was sacked by the Hittites in 1595 BC (cf. Ran Zadok, "Kassites," *Enclr*, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kassites>).

⁵¹ Barbara Feller and Geraldine Saherwala, eds., *An den Ufern von Babylon: Mesopotamien und die Bibel* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 2000), 15; Philippe Talon, ed., *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enuma Elish* (SAACT 4; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2006), 38, 82; Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 237.

⁵² Wiggermann, "Mischwesen. A," *RLA* 8:230; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 227.

⁵³ Gustavus A. Eisen, *Ancient Oriental Cylinder and Other Seals with a Description of the Collection of Mrs. William H. Moore* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), no. 92.

⁵⁴ Wiggermann, "Mischwesen. A," *RLA* 8:230; Erich Ebeling, "Dämonen," *RLA* 2:112.

⁵⁵ Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 27.

⁵⁶ A relief in the Southwest Palace at Nineveh, room XXXVI, shows Sennacherib enthroned at Lachish. His throne is supported by three courses of miniature bull-men in an atlas pose (Ornan, "Expelling Demons at Nineveh," 85, fig. 1; Paul Collins, *Assyrian Palace Sculptures* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008], 94-95). A second relief is found in the same palace, in room XLVIII, and also shows Sennacherib enthroned. In this scene the king's throne is supported by two courses of miniature bull-men in an atlas pose (Ornan, "Expelling Demons at Nineveh," 85, fig. 2; Richard D. Barnett, Erika Bleibtreu, and Geoffrey Turner, *Sculptures from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh* [London: British Museum Press, 1998], pl. 58, no. 529).

⁵⁷ Ornan, "Expelling Demons at Nineveh," 85.

⁵⁸ For example, a fish-cloaked *apkallu* followed by a bull-man is found on a relief in Palace S at Pasargadae (David Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963* [Oxford:

4.2.7 CONCLUSION

The NB bull-man continued functions exhibited in earlier periods. These include guarding against intrusion by malevolent forces and attending the sun god Shamash by supporting his throne and winged disk. Because Shamash is the god of justice, the bull-man plays a subordinate role in the administration of justice.⁶⁰ Additionally, the bull-man can be associated with an *apkallu*, who performs a purification ritual in what appears to be a judicial context.⁶¹

4.3 HUMAN-HEADED BOVINE: *ALADLAMMŪ* (^DALAD.^DLAMMA.MEŠ)

4.3.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLE

The human-headed bovine, may be identified by the Sumerian term ^DALAD.^DLAMMA.MEŠ, for which a proposed Akkadian reading is *aladlammû*. This term is related to the earlier *lamassu* (LAMA), which refers to a beneficent protective female deity, whose corresponding male deity is *šēdu* (ALAD).⁶² The word *aladlammû* can also denote a human-headed lion, namely a sphinx.⁶³

From the Neo-Babylonian period, only one extant cylinder seal from Babylon depicts a creature that may be identified as a human-headed bovine: VA 7737 (Ill. 4.14).

Clarendon, 1978], 69, fig. 35, pls. 59, 60a-b; cf. David Stronach, "Pasargadae," in *The Cambridge History of Iran: Volume 2, The Median and Achaemenian Periods* [ed. Ilya Gershevitch; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], 844; David Stronach, "Pasargadae," *OEANE* 6:252).

⁵⁹ Wiggermann, "Mischwesen. A," *RLA* 8:230. This is known in the Kassite period from the Nebuchadnezzar I *kudurru* found at Nippur and discussed by V. S. Tuman in "Astronomical Dating of the Nebuchadnezzar Kudurru found in Nippur in February, 1896," in *Language, Literature and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reiner* (ed. F. Rochberg-Halton; AOS 67; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987), 282.

⁶⁰ Cf. Ezekiel 1, where composite beings support the enthroned YHWH, who is on the way to judge Judah (cf. chs. 9-11).

⁶¹ For a discussion of supernatural creatures actively involved in purification rites and other cultic functions associated with palace activities, cf. Ornan, "Expelling Demons at Nineveh," 87-88.

⁶² Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 115.

⁶³ See Daniel Foxvog, Wolfgang Heimpel, and Anne D. Kilmer, "Lamma/Lamassu. A. I. Mesopotamien. Philologisch," *RLA* 6:447; Nils C. Ritter, "Human-headed winged bull ('Aladlammû)," *IDD*, 1. The *CAD* entry on "aladlammû" (*CAD* 1.1:286) gives the overall meaning of *aladlammû* as "bull colossus with human head." The winged genius may also fall under the broad Akkadian term *aladlammû* (cf. Wiggermann, "Mischwesen. A," *RLA* 8:262).



Illustration 4.14. Human-headed bovine (*aladlammū*) and genii: Contest scene. NB cylinder seal: Berlin VA 7737 (Babylon, Merkes)

Source. Adapted from Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, no. 610.

4.3.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE HUMAN-HEADED BOVINE

The human-headed bovine has a human head that may be bearded if it is male. Its body is that of a bovine and it may be either winged or wingless. Before and after the Neo-Babylonian period, the human-headed bovine stands on all fours like a bovine. However, the one NB example shows a more human composite being that stands upright and has human forearms and hands. As with the bull-man, human intelligence and manual dexterity adds to the strength of the natural bull, giving the human-headed bovine superior capability.

4.3.3 CONTEXT OF THE HUMAN-HEADED BOVINE WITHIN SCENE

The vigorous contest scene on VA 7737 (Ill. 4.14) shows identical four-winged genii in conflict with two four-winged human-headed bulls, as already discussed in Chapter 3 (3.1.3.3; Ill. 3.15). The human-headed bulls do not stand on all fours, as would be expected. Rather, they stand upright in a pose similar to that of the bull-man (*kusarikku*, see above). I would suggest that the upright stance and human arms and hands of the human-headed bulls in the context of this scene could represent an emulation of or assimilation to the characteristics of the genii in order to be their adequate or effective combat counterparts.

4.3.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

On a clay prism (Constantinople no. 7834) found in the western part of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar II gives credit to his beneficent *šēdu* and *lamassu* for helping him bring those who were destructive and unjust under subjection to Babylon.⁶⁴ In Esagila Tablet K 1.12, Neriglissar (559-556 BC) refers to the *bāb lamassi rabi*, “Gate of the Great *Lamassu*.”⁶⁵ Earlier, Nebuchadnezzar II states that this gate and three other gates were adjacent to each other in the Etemenanki complex south of the Esagila temple of Marduk, the city god of

⁶⁴ Eckhard Unger, *Babylon: Die Heilige Stadt nach der Beschreibung der Babylonier* (2d ed.; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970), 283, 287.

⁶⁵ Unger, *Babylon*, 183.

Babylon.⁶⁶ So it is clear that the *šēdu* and *lamassu* were viewed as playing an important apotropaic role in Neo-Babylonia. However, it is not clear from these texts of Nebuchadnezzar II and Neriglissar whether or not the *šēdu* and *lamassu* to which they refer are protective human-headed bulls or beneficent protective deities in human form.⁶⁷

4.3.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 4.2. HUMAN-HEADED BOVINE

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type
4.14	VA 7737	NB	Babylon	Cyl

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, Cyl=Cylinder Seal.

The extant cylinder seal VA 7737 (Ill. 4.14) is a finely crafted and valuable object made of chalcedony and was found in the Merkes area of the city of Babylon.

The scene on this seal suggests a possible political statement by the elite personnel that commissioned the creation of this particular cylinder seal. As noted above, before and after the Neo-Babylonian period, the human-headed bovine stands on all fours like a bovine. However, the one NB example, which is discussed here, presents the human-headed bull as a more human composite being that stands upright and has human forearms and hands. The apparent decline and near disappearance of the human-headed bovine in the Neo-Babylonian period suggests a calculated avoidance on the part of the Babylonians of this very popular NA iconographic motif. As we will see in the next chapter (see sect. 5.2.6), winged lions, another highly visible and public NA composite being, found in both monumental and minor NA art forms, is missing altogether in NB iconography. I suggest that here is a politically motivated dissociation and distancing from at least two of the major NA apotropaic beings that may have come to symbolize the power and authority of the NA Empire.

4.3.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The human-headed bull is extant as an apotropaic minor deity or demon as early as the Early Dynastic period (c. 2900-2300 BC). Iconographic representations of this composite being are found in all periods down to that of the Achaemenids. The human-headed bull is best known from the monumental renditions carved in the round during the Neo-Assyrian and Achaemenid periods.⁶⁸ The Achaemenids frequently represented it because they were particularly fond of borrowing the robust imagery of the once all-powerful Assyrians.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Unger, *Babylon*, 183.

⁶⁷ Unger, *Babylon*, 183.

⁶⁸ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 51. For a discussion on NA winged human-headed bulls, see Tariq A. Madhloom, *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art* (London: University of London, Athlone, 1970), 94-98. According to Dominique Collon, "The Assyrian guardian figure combines divine authority (the horned head-dress) with human

Ancient Mesopotamians of various periods linked a plethora of terms with the human-headed bull, causing a complex maze of interpretations. Sumerian terms include LAMA, ALAD, ^dALAD.^dLAMMA.MEŠ, and GUD₄-ALIM. Akkadian terms are *lamassu* (equivalent to LAMA), *šēdu* (equivalent to ALAD), *aladlammû* (proposed reading of ^dALAD.^dLAMMA.MEŠ),⁷⁰ *apsasû*,⁷¹ *apsasîtu*,⁷² *kusarikku* (equivalent to GUD₄-ALIM).⁷³ To further complicate matters, some of these terms may also apply to the human-headed lion (see ch. 5). Modern scholarly literature generates additional confusion through conflicting attributions scattered throughout secondary sources. While the English term *sphinx* is generally used to denote a human-headed lion, some authors also use it for the human-headed bull.⁷⁴ In the present study, a sphinx is only a human-headed lion, which is discussed in Chapter 6.

Regarding the term LAMA (later Akkadian *lamassu*), during the Early Dynastic period it referred to a beneficent protective female deity believed to be human in form,⁷⁵ while ALAD (later Akkadian *šēdu*) was the male version of the same deity.⁷⁶ This creature is variously shown to be a guardian, escort, goddess, or human-headed bull.⁷⁷ During the Old Babylonian period, beneficent *šēdu* and *lamassu* are mentioned by Hammurabi in the epilogue to his laws as *šēdum* ^d*lamassum ilû ēribût Esagil*, “the gods who enter the Esagil temple” of Marduk in Babylon.⁷⁸

Unger points out that in this text, *šēdu* and *lamassu* are deities (possibly human-headed bovines[?]) who enter the temple precincts, and at the same time they seem to be personified as the “wall of Esagila.” He compares the fact that at the city of Babylon, the city walls

intelligence, an eagle’s wings and the power of either a lion or, as here, a bull with five legs (two when seen from the front and four from the side, with a cuneiform inscription between them), symbolising the strength of the Assyrian Empire that controlled the Near East for three centuries” (“Mesopotamia,” n.p. [cited 15 May 2012]. Online: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/cultures/mesopotamia_gallery_09.shtml).

⁶⁹ See Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations*, 74–76; Michael Roaf, “The Art of the Achaemenians,” in *The Arts of Persia* (ed. F. W. Ferrier; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 39.

⁷⁰ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 115.

⁷¹ According to Black and Green, the winged female human-headed bovine or lion, corresponding to the male *aladlammû*, is *apsasû*, earlier known as the female *lamassu* (*Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 115). However, *CAD* renders *apsasû* as the male counterpart to the female *apsasîtu* (“apsasû,” *CAD* 1.2:193; cf. Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk During the Neo-Babylonian Period* [CM 23; Leiden: Brill, 2003], 379). John Russell suggests a connection between *apsasû/apsasîtu* and the winged human-headed lion colossi uncovered in the NA palaces at Nineveh (*Sennacherib’s Palace without Rival at Nineveh* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991], 99, 181–183).

⁷² “Female human-headed cow” (Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:225).

⁷³ The idea that the human-headed bull was the *kusarikku* (Benno Landsberger, *The Fauna of Ancient Mesopotamia* [Rome: Pontificium institutum biblicum, 1960], 93) has found little acceptance, while the term is now known to apply to the bull-man (Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:255; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 49, 51).

⁷⁴ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 168.

⁷⁵ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 115.

⁷⁶ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 115.

⁷⁷ Foxvog, Heimpel, and Kilmer, “Lamma/Lamassu. A,” 448–450.

⁷⁸ Col. 48, lines 39–58, translated by Martha T. Roth (Martha Tobi Roth, Harry A. Hoffner, and Piotr Michalowski, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* [Writings from the Ancient World 6; Atlanta: Scholars, 1995], 135).

Imgur-bel and Nimetti-bel, the Ishtar Gate, Urash Gate, and the districts of the city were all considered “gods.”⁷⁹

During the Neo-Assyrian period and following, human-headed bulls and lions are generally identified as *aladlammû* (earlier known as *šēdu* [male]).⁸⁰ It appears that this term *aladlammû* (possibly related to LAMA/*lamassu*) is used to designate the winged human-headed bull and lion colossi that guarded the gateways of Assyrian palaces and temples.⁸¹

The benevolent, apotropaic function of the *aladlammû* is inherent in its name, which is derived from two Sumerian words: ^dALAD, “protective or guardian deity,” and ^dLAMMA, “guardian deity.”⁸² However, a malevolent aspect of what may also be a human-headed bull surfaces in text VAT 8228 = KAR 298 (Wiggermann’s Text II). This NA text was written by Kišir-Aššur, an exorcist of the temple of Ashur, who lived during the reign of Ashurbanipal (Line 1 reads: “to prevent the *šēdu*-demon from approaching and to block the entry of the enemy in someone’s house.”⁸³ Here the *šēdu*-demon is an evil enemy to be repelled. Wiggermann points out: “If *šēdu* is correctly identified with the human-headed bull, we may recognize the evil *šēdu* in the human-headed bull chased by *apkallu*, gods, and composite beings on Neo-Assyrian seals.”⁸⁴ It appears that when the human-headed bull is apotropaic for the benefit of gods and humans, the enemies it wards off may include some of its own kind.

Whereas the human-headed bull is lavishly attested in NA and Achaemenid iconography, its only expression in provenanced NB iconography is our one unparalleled contest scene, in which the creature stands and moves like a human (VA 7737, Ill. 4.14).

4.3.7 CONCLUSION

The paucity of NB iconographic attestations of the human-headed bull, found only in one glyptic contest scene, may simply be due to accidents of excavation or lack thereof. However, I suspect that the absence of usual forms of this previously ubiquitous composite being may reflect a change in emphasis from that of the Neo-Assyrian period. Whereas the (now defeated) Assyrians relied on giant *lamassu* figures (representing minor deities not necessarily affiliated with any major deities) for the protection of entrances to palaces and

⁷⁹ Unger, *Babylon*, 164 n. 1; personification of physical realia is evident from the TIN.TIR.KI tablets.

⁸⁰ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 51.

⁸¹ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 115.

⁸² Rykle Borger, *Babylonisch-assyrische Lesestücke* (2d ed.; AnOr 54; Rome: Pontificium institutum biblicum, 1979) 239; “alad [SPIRIT],” *ePSD*, n.p.; “lamma [DEITY],” *ePSD*, n.p.; Erica Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 85.4; Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1995), 119. The relationship between this human-headed bovine (*aladlammû/apsasû*) and the two types of “Bull-of-Heaven” is unclear (Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:223).

⁸³ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 42; cf. Wiggermann’s NA Text IV (Purification of a new house), in which an incantation is recited to keep a *šēdu* demon away from someone’s house (p. 125).

⁸⁴ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 95.

temples, the Babylonians placed the natural bull of Adad and the dragon of Marduk in this role. The latter personally provide apotropaic potency of much greater magnitude because the Babylonians viewed them as supreme over the cosmic realm. As I suggested above, I see here a politically motivated NB dissociation and distancing from the major NA apotropaic beings that may have come to symbolize the power and authority of the NA Empire.

4.4 WINGED BULL (AKKADIAN TERM UNKNOWN)

4.4.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

The Sumerian and Akkadian names of the winged bull are unknown. Three extant NB cylinder seals depict this being. Two are from Babylon (Ills. 4.15-4.16) and one is from Ur (Ill. 4.17). The scene on a seal impression from Uruk (Ill. 4.18) also includes a winged bull.



Illustration 4.15. Winged bull: Hunting scene. NB cylinder seal: VA 6936 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, no. 706.



Illustration 4.16. Winged bull. NB cylinder seal: VA Bab 1544 (Babylon, Amran)
Source. Adapted from Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, no. 726.



Illustration 4.17. Winged bull: Chase scene. NB cylinder seal: U. 18357 (Ur)
Source. Adapted from Leon Legrain, *Seal Cylinders* (UE 10; London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1951), pl. 36, no. 599.



Illustration 4.18. Winged bull: Contest scene. NB sealing: NCBT 809 (Uruk)
 Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 22, no. 178.

4.4.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE WINGED BULL

This hybrid creature has the body of a bull and the wings of an eagle, which transforms the powerful earth-bound bull into a swift creature with access to the supernatural domain. The composite being may be either striding or rampant.

4.4.3 CONTEXT OF THE WINGED BULL WITHIN SCENES

The winged bull is depicted in scenes of aggression, whether facing a hunter as his prey, or in a contest with a hero, in which case the bull is rampant. The four extant NB glyptic examples represent different types of scenes.

On seal VA 6936 from Babylon (Ill. 4.15), made of blue clay, a prancing winged bull is pursued by a hunter (wearing a horned tiara[?]) armed with a bow and arrow. Between the hunter and the bull is a small tree composed of five sprigs, and just below the jaw of the bull is a stylus, the symbol of Nabu. Another stylus is above the bull's rump. Above the bull's wing (in profile) is a five-pointed star and a crescent.

Seal VA Bab 1544 from Babylon (Ill. 4.16), made of glazed composition, shows a different type of scene, in which a winged bull gallops to the right, toward a four-branched tree. The scene of seal U. 18357 from Ur (Ill. 4.17) is oriented to the right and portrays a winged bird-griffin with donkey-like ears attacking a winged bull. Above the haunches of the griffin is a stylized palm tree and over its wing is a crescent. Between the griffin and the winged bull is a four-pointed star.⁸⁵

Sealing NCBT 809 from Uruk (Ill. 4.18), already discussed in Chapter 3 (sect. 3.1.3.2; on Ill. 3.14), illustrates a contest scene in which a genius grasps the horn of a rampant two-winged bull on the left and the foreleg of a rampant two-winged bird-griffin on the right. On the impression, three celestial symbols serve as fillers: The winged disk of Shamash hovers above the crescent moon of Sin, which in turn is above the multi-rayed star of Ishtar.

⁸⁵ Leon Legrain, *Seal Cylinders* (UE 10; London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1951), no. 595.

In the scenes described above, the winged bull is portrayed as an aggressive, powerful creature, often associated with a tree, the crescent of Sin and the star of Ishtar. Although the creature may be an aggressor, it tends to be on what appears to be the losing side: It is assaulted by other monstrous creatures, the object of a hunter's aim, and grapples with a superior winged hero in a contest scene.

4.4.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

None.

4.4.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 4.3. WINGED BULL

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
4.15	VA 6936	9 th -8 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl	
4.16	VA Bab 1544	9 th -8 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl	
4.17	U. 18357	NB	Ur	Cyl	
4.18	NCBT 809	NB	Uruk	Impr	D: List of jugs

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, Cyl=Cylinder Seal, Impr=Impression, D=Document.

The cylinder seals are made from a variety of materials, including clay (VA 6936; Ill. 4.15), glazed composition (VA Bab 1544; Ill. 4.16), and carnelian (U. 18357; Ill. 4.17). The impression is found on an economic tablet regarding a list of jugs (NCBT 809; Ill. 4.18).

4.4.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Winged animals, including the winged bull, are attested in glyptic art from the Old Babylonian period onward, and they occur with increasing frequency during the Kassite and subsequent Neo-Assyrian periods. However, little is understood about the identity or function of the winged bull, and the secondary literature passes lightly over this fantastic creature.⁸⁶ This may be partly due to the fact that no associations of the winged bull with a specific deity are attested.

4.4.7 CONCLUSION

The winged bull is a fearsome creature equipped with the powerful body of a bull and the expansive wings of a bird-of-prey. However, it tends to be portrayed as a loser or victim in scenes that show other supernatural individuals to be superior in determining the outcome of confrontation. The relative inferiority of the winged bull in the cosmic community could explain why it does not appear alone on NB seals or sealings to magically protect them.

⁸⁶ For instance, Wiggermann acknowledges the existence of winged bulls among other winged composite beings, but offers no details or further identification ("Mischwesen. A," *RLA* 8:241).

The reason for the relative inferiority of the winged bull is unclear. Perhaps it was associated with the wild bull (*kusarikku*) of the hinterlands, which was dangerous to humans and perceived as a threat to civilization, or as a formidable game animal.⁸⁷ As such, it would provide a convenient object of attack or sparring partner in iconographic scenes intended to aggrandize other inhabitants of the cosmos. If somebody needs to win, somebody else must lose.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The corpus of attested bovine-human composite beings in NB iconography is limited. Derivate forms include bull-men that generally serve as attendants of a god, the human-headed bull in contest, and the winged bull in contest or as prey. While the latter two kinds of creatures do not appear to be associated with any particular deity, the bull-man supports the winged disk and throne of Shamash and carries his standard.

The most striking difference between NB bovine iconography and that of the preceding and following periods shows up in the context of monumental architecture: The Neo-Assyrians and Achaemenids often placed huge sculptures of apotropaic human-headed bulls at entrances to important installations, but the Neo-Babylonians seem to have preferred natural bulls in such locations. To the Neo-Babylonians, the natural bull, prominently featured on the brick reliefs of the Ishtar Gate, may have appeared much stronger than the huge Assyrian colossi because of their direct association with the divine Adad.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Cf. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 174.

⁸⁸ David Stronach, personal communication.

5. LION

Mesopotamian fascination with the lion has long found expression in natural and fantastic iconographic representations of this animal in a variety of media. In fact, the first composite being attested in Mesopotamian iconography is an eagle with a lion's face (Sumerian ANZUID); later Akkadian *anzû*) that originated in the Late Uruk period (c. 3500-3000 BC).¹

A number of distinct provenanced composite beings incorporating leonine elements date to the Neo-Babylonian period.² These include the winged or wingless human-headed lion; lion-demon (^dUgallu); lion-demoness (Lamashtu); lion-dragon, also called lion-griffin (*asakku*[?]); lion-headed eagle (*anzû*; see ch. 9); and bird-griffin, also referred to as the eagle-headed lion (*kuribu*[?]; see ch. 9). The lion-humanoid (^d*urildimmu*) has been reidentified by Ellis to be the dog-humanoid (^d*urildimmu*) and it will be discussed in Chapter 6.³

This chapter commences with descriptions of the natural lion, including the lion-headed emblem (^dUgallu) and the double lion-headed emblem (^dUrigallu), followed by an analysis of the NB leonine composite beings.

5.1 NATURAL LION: ASIATIC LION (*PANTHERA LEO PERSICA*)

The powerful Asiatic lion (*panthera leo persica*) was a dangerous force of nature in ancient Mesopotamia.⁴ It was common in the entire region until the third millennium BC, after which it continued to freely roam in Assyria and the Middle Euphrates region, but was no longer a threat in southern Mesopotamia.⁵

¹ Nick Veldhuis, *Religion, Literature, and Scholarship: The Sumerian Composition Nanše and the Birds* (CM 22; Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2004), 32. Veldhuis calls this the Early Sumerian period, but I am referring to it as the Late Uruk period, following the terminology used by the British Museum.

² These do not include, e.g., the lion-fish with a lion head and fish body (significance unknown), which is extant on seals from the Old Babylonian period (Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* [ill. Tessa Richards; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992], 121), but unattested in the NB period.

³ Richard S. Ellis, "Well, Dog My Cats! A Note on the *uridimmu*," in *If a Man Builds a Joyful House: Assyriological Studies in Honor of Erle Verdun Leichty* (ed. Ann K. Guinan et al.; CM 31; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 111-126.

⁴ See, e.g., the following online dictionary articles from *The Electronic Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary* relevant to "lion" in Sumerian texts: "piriĝ [LION] (205x: ED IIIa, ED IIIb, Old Akkadian, Lagash II, Ur III, Old Babylonian) wr. piriĝ; piriĝ3; bi2-ri-iĝ3; ^{bes}piriĝ; piriĝ2 'lion; bull, wild bull' Akk. *lû; labu; nešû; rimu piriĝ*" ("piriĝ [LION]," *ePSD*, n.p.). "Ug [LION] (23x: Old Babylonian, 1st millennium) wr. ug; ug₆([PIRIG×ZA]) 'lion; a mythical lion; a large cat' Akk. *mindinu; nešû; ūmu*" ("ug [LION]," *ePSD*, n.p.).

⁵ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 118. The Asiatic lion ranged from northern Greece across Southwest Asia to central India, disappearing from northern Iraq by the 1850s. Although still numerous in the Shat-al Arab in the early

The lion, along with the bull, possesses strength and vigor associated with rulership. Therefore, these animals occupy the highest stratum of creatures associated with the divine realm.⁶ The roaring of the lion and the bellowing of the bull, which can be perceived as evocative of thunder,⁷ were regarded as the manifestations of gods in action.

The ferocious, dominating lion became a metaphor for warlike kings and for fierce deities in the upper echelons of the cosmic hierarchy.⁸ Among the deities associated with the lion are Ninurta, Ninlil (MULLISSU), Ningirsu, Damgalnuna (DAMKINA), and especially Ishtar (INANNA).⁹

TABLE 5.1. NATURAL LION

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
5.1	VA 6938	8 th -7 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl	
5.2	Va Bab 4765	NBK2	Babylon	Relief	
5.3	HSM 890.4.8	NBN	Babylon	Cyl	D: Trial and judgment before the royal court of justice at Babylon O: Bēl-ētir, judge C: NA4 [KIŠIB] IdEN-KA[R-ir] lúDI.KUD
5.4	VA 10355	NB	Babylon	Cyl	
5.5	GCBC 59	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: Receipt of beer by PN for animal feeders O: Bēl-nādin-apli(?)
5.6	GCBC 650	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: Too badly preserved to be assessed.
5.7	NCBT 2289	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: Receipt of cakes and goats by PN

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, NBK2=Nebuchadnezzar II, NBN=Nabonidus, Cyl=Cylinder Seal, Impr=Impression, D=Document, SO=Seal Owner, C=Caption.

Lion imagery reaches back to the beginnings of art forms in Mesopotamia (cf. above) and maintains a prominent position in that region for a continuous two-thousand-year period. Accompanying a vigorous proliferation of mythical composite beings and demons in Early Dynastic period iconography, there were also cylinder seals depicting natural lions guarding entrances to buildings, as well as small stone figures of lions in the round. In the Ur III period (c. 2112-2004 BC) lion statues guarded the gates of buildings belonging to Gudea of Lagash.¹⁰ From Iran, we already have an example from the Susa C period (c. 3000 BC) of a

1870s, the Asiatic lion had disappeared from these southern marshlands by 1918. Today on the verge of extinction, the Asiatic lion's last home in the wild is in the Gir Forest in Gujirat, India ("Asiatic Lion," n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.asiaticlion.org/>).

⁶ Margaret Cool Root, "Animals in the Art of Ancient Iran," in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Billie Jean Collins; Handbook of Oriental Studies 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 198.

⁷ Catherine Breniquet, "Animals in Mesopotamian Art," in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Billie Jean Collins; Handbook of Oriental Studies 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 64, 158.

⁸ Breniquet, "Animals in Mesopotamian Art," 64, 157.

⁹ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 119.

¹⁰ Amir Harrak, "Guardians of the Gate: The Assyrian Winged Colossi," *BCSMS* 34 (1999): 33; Tariq A. Madhloom, *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art* (London: University of London, Athlone, 1970), 100-105.

natural lion standing upright,¹¹ which became the posture of certain leonine composite beings (see below).

Colossal lion guardians in the round flanked the ninth-century-BC entrance to the Neo-Assyrian temple of Ishtar at Nimrud. Representations of natural lions are also seen in elaborate column bases that appear in a relief that depicts the façade of Sennacherib’s palace at Nineveh.¹²

The natural lion is well-attested in NB glyptic iconography.¹³ One of the finest examples has two lions in contest with a winged genius (VA 6938 Bab 36292, Ill. 5.1; for discussion, see ch. 3, sect. 3.1.3.2, on Ill. 3:12).

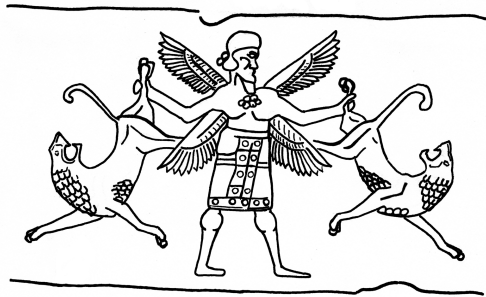


Illustration 5.1. Winged genius against two natural lions: Contest scene. NB cylinder seal: VA 6938 (Bab 36292) (Babylon, Merkes)

Source. Adapted from Anton Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rolliegel: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1988), 74, no. 735.

The best-known lion imagery in NB iconography is on the magnificent glazed brick reliefs lining the Processional Way and on the throne room façade of the Southern Palace in sixth-century-BC Babylon (Ill. 5.2). In both of these locations, rows of natural lions stride in profile, emphasizing their apotropaic function. Thus, on the outer façade flanking the entrance to the throne room from the Central Court, the lions stride from the left and from the right toward the entrance through which an individual must pass to reach the king on his

¹¹ Edith Porada, *The Art of Ancient Iran* (New York: Crown, 1965), 35, fig. 11.

¹² Harrak, “Guardians of the Gate,” 26. The concept of lions guarding or attending the king is noted in the biblical text. A description of Solomon’s throne states: “Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory and overlaid it with refined gold. There were six steps to the throne and a round top to the throne at its rear, and arms on each side of the seat, and two lions standing beside the arms” (1 Kings 10:18-19 NASB95; paralleled in 2 Chronicles 9:17-18).

¹³ The natural lion is also mentioned in a mythological context in “The Babylonian Map of the World” (BM 92687, Ill. 1.1), where it is placed by Marduk “on top of the restless Sea,” see Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 8; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 26; “Map of the World,” BM, n.p. [cited 10 June 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/m/map_of_the_world.aspx.

throne. On the reliefs lining the Processional Way, the lions pace northward, away from the Ishtar Gate and toward anyone approaching it.¹⁴

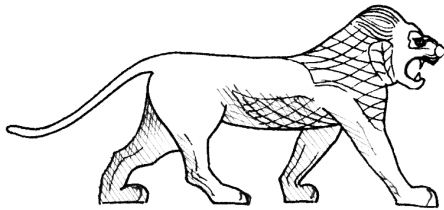


Illustration 5.2. Lion. NB glazed brick relief: VA Bab 4765 (Ishtar Gate, Babylon)

The methods of presenting lions at Babylon in the Neo-Babylonian period show striking similarities to those that were employed earlier in eighth-century-BC NA glazed brick panels, where such panels flank entrances to the palace and temples at Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad). Like the glazed brick reliefs at Babylon, they depict processions of animals, including lions and bulls. As on the Babylonian throne room façade, borders of rosettes run above and below the mighty beasts.

Occasionally in NB iconography, a divine lion-headed emblem, depicting only the head of a natural lion on a sickle, surmounts an altar in a scene of worship (Ills. 5.3-5.4). In both of the extant provenanced examples, the lion sickle appears in front of a worshiper, whose right hand is raised in adoration. Also in both, there is an oblong object on a second altar, surmounted by a crescent, between the worshiper and the lion sickle.

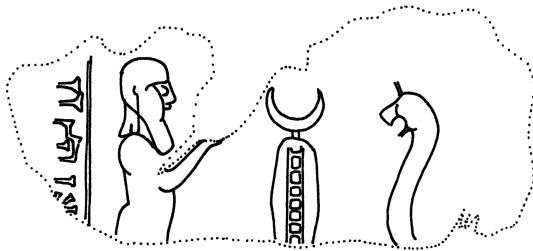


Illustration 5.3. Lion sickle. NB cylinder sealing: HSM 890.4.8 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *Legal and Administrative Texts from the Reign of Nabonidus* (YOSBT 19; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 7, pl. L, no. 5, text 101.

¹⁴ Joachim Marzahn, *The Ishtar Gate: The Processional Way: The New Year Festival of Babylon* (Mainz: Zabern, 1994), 9. Natural lions are also depicted in NB glyptic iconography. See also discussion in ch. 2, sect. 2.1, above on Nebuchadnezzar II's palace throneroom façade.

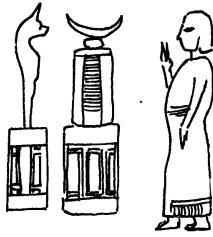


Illustration 5.4. Lion sickle. NB cylinder seal: VA 10355 (Babylon[?])

Source. Adapted from Evelyn Klengel-Brandt, ed., *Mit Sieben Siegeln Versehen: Das Siegel in Wirtschaft Und Kunst Des Alten Orients* (Mainz: Zabern, 1997), 89, Abb. 87.

The lion-sickle is primarily associated with the divine power of death and secondarily to deities when they exhibit their ability to inflict death. This symbol appropriately represents Nergal, god of the underworld, but may also be associated with Ishtar, Shamash, Ninurta, and Zababa when these deities exercise their divine power to destroy, often by instigating war.¹⁵ The lion sickle may also be a variant representation of ^dUgallu, the divine lion-demon (see below), although this is not definitive.¹⁶

The double lion-headed emblem, also known as the lion mace, is composed of two adorsed lions on a crescent that surmounts a staff.¹⁷ Three exemplars of this iconographic motif, which was popular during the Neo-Babylonian period, are shown here (Ills. 5.5-5.7).

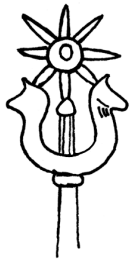


Illustration 5.5. Lion mace. NB stamp impression: GCBC 59 (Uruk)

Source. Adapted from Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* (AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999), pl. 2, no. 12.



Illustration 5.6. Lion mace. NB stamp impression: GCBC 650 (Uruk)

Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 14, pl. 1, no. 1.

¹⁵ Elizabeth C. Stone, "Chariots of the Gods in Old Babylonian Mesopotamia (c. 2000-1600 B.C.)," *CAJ* 3, no. 1 (1993): 88.

¹⁶ Stone, "Chariots of the Gods," 88, 90.

¹⁷ Paul-Alain Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk During the Neo-Babylonian Period* (CM 23; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 353.



Illustration 5.8. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx): Scene of aggression. NB cylinder seal: VA 12888 (Uruk, NB house)
Source. Adapted from Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, no. 611.



Illustration 5.9. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx): Contest scene. NB cylinder seal: Ash. Mus. no. 1929. 240. Kish V660 (Kish)
Source. Adapted from Briggs Buchanan, *Cylinder Seals* (vol 1 of *Catalogue of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Ashmolean Museum*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), no. 661.



Illustration 5.10. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx): Worship scene. NB cylinder seal: VA 7738 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, 147, no. 686.

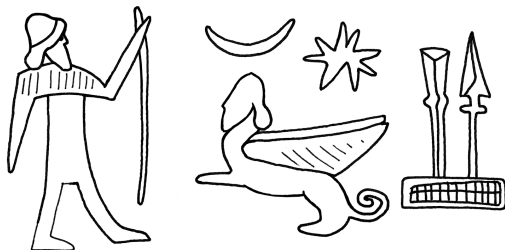


Illustration 5.11. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx): Worship scene. NB cylinder seal: VA 6942 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, 71, 147, no. 685.



Illustration 5.12. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx): Scene of aggression. NB cylinder seal: Ash. Mus. no. 1925.114 (Kish)
Source. Adapted from Buchanan, *Cylinder Seals*, no. 581.



Illustration 5.13. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx): Worship scene. NB cylinder seal: Baghdad W 21937 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Wittmann, "Babylonische Rollsiegel des 11.-7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.," *BaM* 23 (1992): 250, Taf. 27.



Illustration 5.14. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx): Contest scene. NB cylinder seal: CBS 14387 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Wittmann, "Babylonische Rollsiegel des 11.-7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.," 247, no. 109.



Illustration 5.15. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx): Worship scene. NB cylinder seal: CBS 14328 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Leon Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians from Their Seals in the Collections of the Museum* (2 vols.; PBS 14.1-2; Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1925), pl. XXXIII, no. 653.

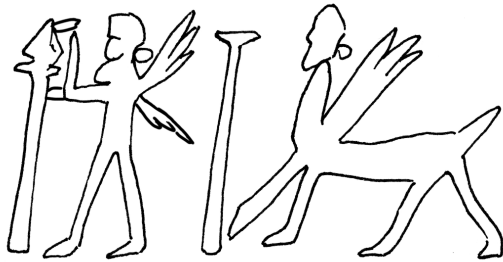


Illustration 5.16. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx): Worship scene. NB cylinder seal: CBS 14366 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *The Culture of the Babylonians*, pl. XXXIII, no. 654.



Illustration 5.17. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: VA Bab 1642 Bab 13931 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Liane Jakob-Rost and Iris Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum* (2d ed.; Mainz: Zabern, 1997), no. 336.

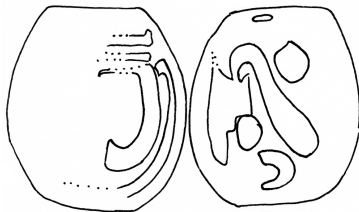


Illustration 5.18. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: U. (CBS. 35.1.26) (Ur)
Source. Adapted from Leon Legrain, *Seal Cylinders* (UE 10; London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1951), pl. 38, no. 692.



Illustration 5.19. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB seal impressions: BM 64650 (Sippar)
Source. Adapted from Terence C. Mitchell and Ann Searight, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Stamp Seals III: Impressions of Stamp Seals on Cuneiform Tablets, Clay Bullae, and Jar Handles* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 118, no. 291.



Illustration 5.20. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: VA Bab 2380 Bab 39851 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Jakob-Rost and Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum*, no. 338.

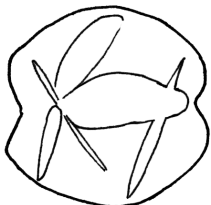


Illustration 5.21. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: VA Bab 1582 Bab 6484 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Jakob-Rost and Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum*, no. 346.

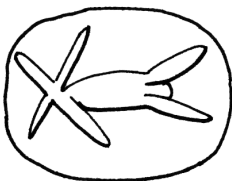


Illustration 5.22. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: VA Bab 1647 Bab 13976 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Jakob-Rost and Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum*, no. 346.



Illustration 5.23. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: VA Bab 4086 Bab 33128 (Babylon, Merkes)
Source. Adapted from Jakob-Rost and Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum*, no. 341.

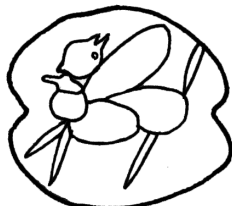


Illustration 5.24. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: VA Bab 1586 Bab 6488 (Babylon, Amram)
Source. Adapted from Jakob-Rost and Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum*, no. 342.

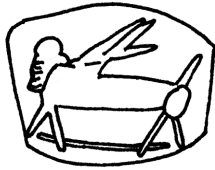


Illustration 5.25. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: VA Bab 2381 Bab 67214 (Babylon, Merkes)
Source. Adapted from Jakob-Rost and Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum*, no. 343.



Illustration 5.26. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: VA Bab 1640 Bab 15188 (Babylon, Adad Temple)
Source. Adapted from Jakob-Rost and Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum*, no. 344.



Illustration 5.27. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: CBS 6034 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *The Culture of the Babylonians*, pl. XXXIV, no. 718.

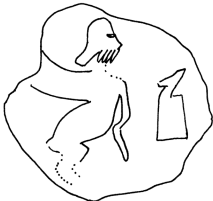


Illustration 5.28. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: CBS 12451 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *The Culture of the Babylonians*, pl. XXXIV, no. 722.



Illustration 5.29. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: U. . (P.) (Ur)²³
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *Seal Cylinders*, pl. 38, no. 666.

²³ This is the museum number given by Leon Legrain, *Seal Cylinders* (UE 10; London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1951), no. 666.

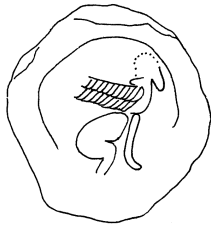


Illustration 5.30. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: U. 17399 (Ur)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *Seal Cylinders*, pl. 38, no. 667.



Illustration 5.31. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: U. 16167 (Ur)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *Seal Cylinders*, pl. 38, no. 675.

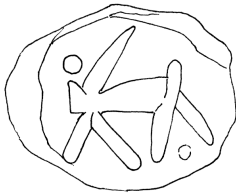


Illustration 5.32. Winged human-headed lion (sphinx). NB stamp seal: U. 17732 (Ur)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *Seal Cylinders*, pl. 38, no. 676.

5.2.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE HUMAN-HEADED LION

The winged or wingless human-headed lion has the body, legs, and tail of a lion, and a human head that is bearded if it is male. When the creature is winged, it exhibits the powerful wings of a bird-of-prey. A combination of human intelligence and the strength of a lion, generally with the addition of massive wings, produces a magnificent, composite being of superior capability. Rarely its rear legs can be those of a bird-of-prey, terminating in talons.

5.2.3 CONTEXT OF THE HUMAN-HEADED LION WITHIN SCENES

Whether depicted within a scene or alone, the human-headed lion usually exhibits vigorous movement. Cylinder seal VA 7738 from Babylon (Ill. 5.9) was already discussed in Chapter 2 (sect. 2.2.3.1; on Ill. 2.2). It depicts a bearded, human-headed winged lion facing left and slightly rampant toward a tree, before which an *apkallu* raises his right hand. Other elements of the scene include a crescent moon, a pedestal, a *marru* (spade-standard of Marduk), a double-wedged stylus (of Nabu), and an eight-pointed star (of Ishtar).

A similar scene is found on a limestone cylinder seal, VA 6942, also from Babylon (Ill. 5.11). In the far left of the scene, a man facing right holds in his left hand a tall staff. In front of him is a bearded, human-headed, winged lion in a semi-pouncing posture. Above the sphinx's head is a large crescent moon, and above his wing is an eight-pointed star. Behind the sphinx is a low pedestal created by a double row of hatch markings. The pedestal supports the *marru* of Marduk and the stylus of Nabu. As on VA 7738, neither the figures nor the pedestal are on the baseline, but rather appear to float in the air.

The worship scene on cylinder seal CBS 14366 from Nippur (Ill. 5.16) was discussed in Chapter 2 (sect. 2.2.3.1; on Ill. 2.3). A bearded, winged human-headed lion strides behind a winged *ūmu-apkallu* toward a symbol that may be the stylus of Nabu. The human-figured *apkallu* grasps the spade of Marduk.

Cylinder seal CBS 14328 from Nippur (Ill. 5.15) shows a winged human-headed lion with a horned(?) miter and a pointed beard. The creature stands before an unusual tree with one of its forepaws upraised. The tree has three double curved branches with fruits at the ends of the branches.

The scene on chalcedony cylinder seal VA 12888 from Uruk (Ill. 5.8) is rendered in profile. Two naked human heroes (not genii) stand facing each other on either side of two facing winged human-headed lions. Both heroes have feathered hair down to their shoulders, and long curly beards extending to their chests. Each raises one arm to brandish a mace over his head while his other hand grasps an upraised hoof of a winged bird-griffin. The hero on the right grasps the left front foot of one griffin, while the hero to the left holds the left hind foot of the other creature. The griffin facing right has its head turned back over its shoulder toward the hero on the left. Each hero places one foot on the back of the winged human-headed sphinx in front of him. Each sphinx raises its front paw to touch that of the opposing sphinx.

Cylinder seal impression, Ash. Mus. no. 1925.114 from Kish (Ill. 5.12), discussed in Chapter 3 (sect. 3.1.3.1; on Ill. 3.4), depicts a four-winged hero who grasps the right forepaw of a rampant, winged, bearded human-headed lion. Other elements include a rhomb, a tree with four branches and a central spire, the crescent of Sin, and a dot that could be a star.

The unusual scene on cylinder seal W 21937 from Uruk (Ill. 5.13) was discussed earlier in Chapter 3 (sect. 3.1.3.1; on Ill. 3.8). It shows a winged, bearded, rampant human-headed lion with its right paw grasped by a genius and its left paw on an *Aryballos* vessel, from which water flows. The scene also includes the crescent moon of Sin.

An agate cylinder seal from Kish (Ash. Mus. no. 1929.240. Kish V660; Ill. 5.9), also discussed in Chapter 3 (sect. 3.1.3.2; on Ill. 3.9), portrays a contest between a central winged genius and two other composite beings. Grappling with him on his left is a winged but beardless human-headed lion that stands upon its hind legs, which terminate in talons. To the right of the hero is a bird-headed griffin.

Carnelian cylinder seal CBS 14387 from Nippur (Ill. 5.14), discussed in Chapter 3 (sect. 3.1.3.2; on Ill. 3.11), similarly shows a contest between a central genius and two hybrid creatures on either side of him, both of which are winged human-headed lions. Additional graphic elements include a crescent moon of Sin, a rhomb, and what appear to be three dots.

Additional NB stamp seals and impressions of stamp seals present a wide variety of individual winged human-headed lions. Some are carefully modeled, but most are schematic and roughly rendered.

5.2.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXT

None

5.2.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

Provenanced NB winged human-headed lions are extant only in glyptic iconography:

TABLE 5.2. WINGED OR WINGLESS HUMAN-HEADED LION (SPHINX)

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
5.8	VA 12888	Early half of 1 st mill.	Uruk	Cyl	
5.9	Ash. 1929.240 KishV660	8 th -7 th cent.	Kish	Cyl	
5.10	VA 7738	9 th -7 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl	
5.11	VA6942	9 th -7 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl	
5.12	Ash. 1925.114	NB	Kish	Cyl	
5.13	W 21937	11 th -10 th cent.	Uruk	Cyl	
5.14	CBS 14387	NB	Nippur	Cyl	
5.15	CBS 14328	NB	Nippur	Cyl	
5.16	CBS 14366	NB	Nippur	Cyl	
5.17	VA Bab 1642 Bab 13931	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
5.18	U. (CBS. 35.1.26)	NB	Ur	Stamp	
5.19	BM 64650	NBK2	Sippar	Impr	D: Sealing on tablet. Manumission of slave.
5.20	VA Bab 2380 Bab 39851	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
5.21	VA Bab 1582 Bab 6484	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
5.22	VA Bab 1647 Bab 13976	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
5.23	VA Bab 4086 Bab 33128	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
5.24	VA Bab 1586 Bab 6488	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
5.25	VA Bab 2381 Bab 67214	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
5.26	VA Bab 1640 Bab 15188	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
5.27	CBS 6034	NB	Nippur	Stamp	
5.28	CBS 12451	NB	Nippur	Stamp	
5.29	U. . (P.)	NB	Ur	Stamp	

5.30	U. 17399	NB	Ur	Stamp
5.31	U. 16167	NB	Ur	Stamp
5.32	U. 17732	NB	Ur	Stamp

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, NBK2=Nebuchadnezzar II, Stamp=Stamp Seal, Cyl=Cylinder Seal, Impr=Impression, D=Document.

Only one of these examples is accompanied by additional information: Seal impression BM 64650 (Ill. 5.19) certifies the manumission of a slave in Sippar during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II.

5.2.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Kassites were especially attracted to winged creatures and depicted several such animals, including fantastic lions and bulls.²⁴ A number of winged lions appear on Kassite period boundary stones (*kudurrus*).²⁵ Winged lions and bulls are frequently attested in glyptic art from the NA and Achaemenid periods (cf. discussion in ch. 4), but little is understood concerning their identity or function, including their associations with specific deities.

As already mentioned in the previous chapter (sect. 4.3.5), no winged lions (without additional features, such as those of a human) are known in NB art.²⁶ Scholars routinely refer to NB (simple) winged lions as extant, but they gloss over details and fail to provide specific references as support.²⁷ Just as striking is the subsequent renaissance and popularity of the winged lion in Achaemenid Persia, where numerous forms of this creature are portrayed.²⁸

Apparently the Neo-Babylonians preferred the more complex type of winged or wingless lion with a human head. This fantastic creature had appeared as an apotropaic minor deity or demon as early as the Early Dynastic period. From that time on, depictions of leonine composite beings continue through all periods down to Achaemenid times.²⁹

²⁴ Harrak, "Guardians of the Gate," 29.

²⁵ Ursula Seidl, *Die Babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs: Symbole Mesopotamischer Gottheiten* (OBO 87; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag, 1989), 27, Abb. 3; p. 39, Abb. 9, no. 63; p. 40, Abb. 9, no. 63.

²⁶ Note may be taken of one biblical attestation, with reference to the first of four great beasts in Daniel 7: "The first was like a lion but had eagles' wings. As I looked on, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted off the ground and set on its feet like a man and given the mind of a man" (Daniel 7:4 NJPS). This transformed composite being represents the first of four great kingdoms (7:17), i.e., the NB kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar II (cf. 2:37-38).

²⁷ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, "Mischwesen. A. Philologisch. Mesopotamien," *RLA* 8:241.

²⁸ On NA influence reflected in Achaemenid art see David Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961 to 1963* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 74-76; Michael Roaf, "The Art of the Achaemenians," in *The Arts of Persia* (ed. F. W. Ferrier; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 39.

²⁹ For a well-known representation of a winged human-headed lion in a glazed brick relief from Susa, see Oscar White Muscarella, "157 Confronting Sphinxes" in *The Royal City of Susa: Ancient Near Eastern Treasures in the Louvre* (ed. Prudence O. Harper et al.; New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), 228-230, pl. 157.

Human-headed lions and bulls are best known from monumental exemplars carved partly in the round that guarded major entrances during the Neo-Assyrian and Achaemenid periods.³⁰ Colossal bulls are more numerous, but lions also protected prominent entrances, such as those at palaces belonging to Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud and Sargon II at Dur-Sharrukin.³¹

Neo-Assyrian building inscriptions identify the apotropaic bull and lion colossi as ^dALAD.^dLAMMA.MEŠ, probably read *aladlammû* in Akkadian (see ch. 4). Sometimes the human-headed lion was also referred to as a *kuribu*,³² a term that often identifies the winged cherub, whose wings can symbolize the winds.³³

No colossal human-headed winged lions of NB date are attested in the round or in textual references (cf. the discussion in ch. 4). In the glyptic repertoire, however, representations of the winged or wingless human-headed lion are surprisingly common, by contrast to those of the human-headed bull, which are almost non-existent for this period (VA 7737 is one possible example; Ill. 4.14). With the rise of the Achaemenid Empire, monumental representations of the human-headed lion and bull resurface as prominent apotropaic elements in palatial architecture.

5.2.7 CONCLUSION

The addition of eagle's wings to the natural lion transforms this top predator into a formidable supernatural creature. Provenanced examples of the NB winged human-headed lion (or sphinx) are frequently found as solitary motifs or as part of larger scenes, but only in glyptic iconography. This creature appears in an unusually wide variety of postures: standing, striding, seated, recumbent, rampant, and serving as a footstool. Scenes containing the being most frequently have to do with either worship or contests.

Our understanding of this hybrid creature is limited by the fact that its Sumerian or Akkadian name is unknown. Therefore, we lack links to historical or mythological textual contexts that could provide information concerning it, including its possible affiliation with a particular deity or its associations with one or more specific facets of divine power. Neither do scenes in which this composite being occurs reveal an association with any specific deity. Rather, it is almost always found with a hero or winged genius, as well as with a variety of

³⁰ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 173, 184.

³¹ Madhloom notes three types of NA winged human-headed lions: (1) the “normal type” that has a lion’s body and human head that is found primarily at entrances to the Southwest Palace at Nimrud; (2) the “winged human-headed lion with human torso” that has the a human torso, arms, and head added to a lion’s body found at the northern entrances of the throne room in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud; and (3) the “couchant winged human-headed lion” that is a seated, beardless, winged human-headed lion found at Entrance a of the Southwest Palace at Nimrud (Madhloom, *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art*, 98-99).

³² Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:255.

³³ For example, “50 silver images of cherubs (and) winds” are placed in a temple of Sin (Steven William Cole and Peter Machinist, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Priests to Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal* [SAA 13; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1998], no. 28; Eckhard Unger, *Babylon: Die Heilige Stadt nach der Beschreibung der Babylonier* [2d ed.; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970], 173).

divine symbols, such as the crescent of Sin, the spade of Marduk, the stylus of Nabu, the tree of life, or the star of Ishtar.

5.4 LION-DEMON: U₄-GAL/^DUGALLU

5.4.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

The lion-demon is called U₄-GAL, literally “Big Day,” in Sumerian.³⁴ In Akkadian, during the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods, it is ^dUgallu, “Divine Big Weather Creature.”³⁵ This composite being is essentially a storm demon,³⁶ since both the Sumerian and Akkadian terms personify days of death and destruction by an “act of god.”³⁷ In the Neo-Babylonian period, there are two extant provenanced examples of the lion-demon. One is found on a sealing, PTS 3236, from Uruk (Ill. 5.33)³⁸ and the second is on an plaque, VA Bab 33683, from Babylon (Ill. 5.34).³⁹



Illustration 5.33. Lion-demon. NB sealing: PTS 3236 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 29, 101, pl. 27, no. 213.



Illustration 5.34. Lion-demon with Pazuzu. NB plaque: VA Bab 33683 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Nils P. Hessel, *Pazuzu: Archäologische und philologische Studien zu einem altorientalischen Dämon* (AMD 4; Leiden: Brill, 2002), no. 15.

³⁴ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:242.

³⁵ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 121; Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:242.

³⁶ See “ugallu,” *CAD* 20:26.

³⁷ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:242.

³⁸ Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* (AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999), 29, 101, pl. 27, no. 213.

³⁹ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (CM 1; Groningen: Styx & PP, 1992), 63-64, 169-172.

5.4.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE LION-DEMON

The lion-demon has a leonine head, donkey ears, human body, and bird feet. Like the natural lion from Iran of the Susa C period (see above), the composite being stands upright like a human. It raises one hand, which usually holds a dagger, and lowers the other hand, which grasps a mace. A short kilt is usually wrapped around the demon's waist, but the upper torso is bare. When the creature appears naked, it has a curled lion's tail.⁴⁰ The lion-demon has the advantage of a powerful leonine body coupled with the capabilities of a man, including the ability to use his human hands to wield weapons against his opponents.

5.4.3 CONTEXT OF THE LION-DEMON WITHIN SCENES

On NB sealing PT 3236 from Uruk (Ill. 5.33), the lion-demon appears in his typical pose, with a dagger in his upraised right hand and a mace in his left. He faces off against a smiting antagonist, who is probably divine and may be Lulal, "the Smiting God." Both figures wear short kilts.⁴¹

The upper two registers of plaque VA Bab 33683 from Babylon (Ill. 5.34) are preserved. In the top register, six smiting demons (possibly evil *utukku*) stride to the right. In the second register from the top, an elaborate, winged Pazuzu, known as "king of the evil wind demons" (see ch. 6 on Pazuzu), is flanked on the left by a lion-demon and on the right by the divine smiting figure, Lulal.⁴² Apparently Pazuzu, along with the lion-demon and Lulal, are driving away evil. This scene is more fully discussed in Chapter 6 (sect. 6.2.3).

5.4.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXT

None

5.4.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 5.3. LION-DEMON: U₄-GAL/^DUGALLU

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
5.33	PTS 3236	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: Account of <i>mešḫati</i> delivered to herdsman
5.34	VA Bab 33683	NB	Babylon	Plaque	I: Standard Akkadian incantation inscription

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, D=Document, I=Inscription.

The NB seal impression that shows a lion-demon (^DUgallu) in the act of striking (Ill. 5.33) validates an economic document: an account of *mešḫati* (measured area[?]) given to a

⁴⁰ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 119.

⁴¹ Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 29, 101, pl. 27, no. 213.

⁴² Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 63-64, 169-172.

herdsman.⁴³ The external context of the plaque (Ill. 5.34) will be discussed in Chapter 6 (sect. 6.2.5). The object, including the scene depicted on it and its inscription, was intended to be apotropaic, invoking the power of Pazuzu and his associates, including the lion-demon, against evil forces.

5.4.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The lion-demon as such emerges during the Old Babylonian period. Old Babylonian glyptic representations of the creature show it holding a man upside down by one leg. Here the composite being appears to be the assistant of the scimitar-brandishing Nergal, the god of the netherworld, as a cause of disease.⁴⁴

Depictions of the lion-demon are found on Kassite *kudurrus*, and frequently appear during the Neo-Assyrian period on palace orthostat reliefs, and as clay figurines placed in houses or buried in foundation deposits.⁴⁵ During this period, the composite being seems to shift its affiliation from Nergal to Lulal, the Smiting God, and its role becomes apotropaic, for protection against evil demons and sickness.

Dramatically illustrating an apotropaic role of the lion-demon, a NA bronze plaque (Louvre AO 2491) shows two of these hybrids, among other composite beings, present at what seems to be an exorcism of the demoness Lamashtu from a sick man by Pazuzu (see further below).⁴⁶

The apotropaic function of the lion-demon continues into the Neo-Babylonian period (see above).⁴⁷ The creature is also attested in the Achaemenid period, during which it is found, for example, on a relief that once adorned an entrance in Palace S at Pasargadae.⁴⁸ The latest examples of the lion-demon date to the Seleucid period.⁴⁹

Related to the lion-demon and its apotropaic function is the minor deity La-tarak.⁵⁰ NA clay figurines of these beings were discovered in foundation deposit boxes inside two corners of the open court within the Halzi Gate at Nineveh during the 1989 season of the University of

⁴³ Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 29, 101, pl. 27, no. 213. Regarding *mešpati*, see “miših̄tu,” *CAD* 10.2:122.

⁴⁴ Anthony Green, “Mythologie. B. I. In der mesopotamischen Kunst,” *RLA* 8:251.

⁴⁵ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 119-121. Cf. a 12th- or 11th-cent.-BC golden bowl from northwestern Iran that portrays lion demons (Porada, *The Art of Ancient Iran*, 93, pl. 22b).

⁴⁶ Louvre AO 2491: “Fragment of a Plaque Designed to Ward off Lamashtu,” Musée du Louvre, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_not_frame&cidNotice=26746&langue=en; Anthony Green, “Myths in Mesopotamian Art,” in *Sumerian Gods and Their Representations* (ed. Irving L. Finkel and Markham J. Geller; CM 7; Groningen: Styx, 1997), 143.

⁴⁷ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 121.

⁴⁸ Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations*, 68, fig. 34.

⁴⁹ Anthony Green, “The Lion-Demon in the Art of Mesopotamia and Neighbouring Regions,” *BaM* 17 (1986): 141-254, Taf. 2-41; Anthony Green, “A Note on the ‘Lion Demon,’” *Iraq* 50 (1988): 167-168.

⁵⁰ Texts as early as the Late Uruk period mention La-tarak, possibly equated at that time with Lulal, who was believed to protect against witchcraft. La-tarak may be identified with an iconographic figure that is lion-headed with a human body, and cloaked in a lion’s pelt (Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 116).

California, Berkeley, Archaeological Expedition to Nineveh, directed by David Stronach.⁵¹ In the northeast corner was a lion-headed, human-bodied figurine, identified by Stronach as La-tarak. The guardian figure is covered with black paint, wears a long lion's pelt, and carries a whip.⁵² The southwest foundation box contained a blue painted humanoid figurine representing the god Lulal (or possibly Meslamta-ea).⁵³ The locations of these magical objects conform to the instructions in the NA text VAT 8228 = KAR 298 (Wiggerman's Text II), according to which Lulal is to be buried "in the back corners of the courtyard" (VAT 8228, IIR 13) and La-tarak is to be buried "in the front corners of the courtyard" (VAT 8228, IIR 14).⁵⁴

5.4.7 CONCLUSION

During the Neo-Babylonian period, the lion-demon continues to be characterized by aggressive and apotropaic behavior. As expected, he fights against the Smiting God, who may be Lulal.

5.5 LION-DEMONESS: —/LAMASHTU

5.5.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

Six provenanced amuletic plaques depicting Lamashtu date to the Neo-Babylonian period (Ills. 5.35-5.39). Five of these come from Uruk and one from Babylon. The one plaque from Babylon is carved with careful attention to detail and modeling, but it is broken. Four plaques from Uruk are complete, but rendered in a cursory manner. A detailed plaque from Uruk is broken, so its entire scene is not preserved. It is unfortunate that the plaques rendered with superior craftsmanship (Ills. 5.35 and 5.39) are the broken ones.

⁵¹ The area supervisor at the Halzi Gate, who excavated the foundation boxes under the direction of David Stronach, was Roy Gane, my husband.

⁵² David Stronach, "Notes on the Fall of Nineveh," in *Assyria 1995* (ed. Simo Parpola and R. M. Whiting; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 316; David Stronach and Stephen Lumsden, "U. C. Berkeley's Excavations at Nineveh," *Biblical Archaeologist* 55, no. 4 (1992): 231; David Stronach, "When Assyria Fell: New Light on the Last Days of Nineveh," *Mār Šipri* 2, no. 2 (1989): 2; cf. Diana Pickworth, "Excavations at Nineveh: The Halzi Gate," *Iraq* 67 (2005): 307.

⁵³ For a brief discussion on the identity of this figurine, see Pickworth, "Excavations at Nineveh: The Halzi Gate," 305-307.

⁵⁴ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 49, 52.



Illustration 5.35. Lamashtu. Plaque: BM 104891 (Babylon) Basalt

Source. Adapted from “Amulet,” BM, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=282828&partId=1&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx&numpages=10&idNum=Rm-IV.467¤tPage=1.



Illustration 5.36. Lamashtu. Plaque: BM Reg. no. 1851,0101.18 (Uruk) Serpentine

Source. Adapted from “Amulet,” BM, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=369098&partid=1&idNum=1851%2c0101.18&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx.



Illustration 5.37. Lamashtu. Plaque: W 5874 (Uruk)

Source. Adapted from Klaudia Limper, *Uruk: Perlen, Ketten, Anhänger; Grabungen 1912-1985* (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Abteilung Baghdad 2; Mainz: Zabern, 1988), 45-6, 69; 193 (F 483); Taf. 29, no. 169.



Illustration 5.38. Lamashtu. Plaque: W 20969/10 (Uruk)
 Source. Adapted from Limper, *Uruk*, 45-6, 90, 193 (F 482); Taf. 55, no. 334b.

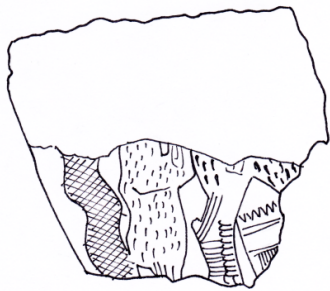


Illustration 5.39. Lamashtu. Plaque: W 19440 (Uruk)
 Source. Adapted from Andrea Becker, *Uruk: Kleinfunde 1, Stein* (AUWE 6; Mainz: Zabern, 1993), 4, no. 4, Taf. 1.4.

5.5.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF LAMASHTU

Lamashtu is a female demon with the head and mane of a lioness, although she occasionally has the head of a bird. Her teeth and upright ears are like those of a donkey, and she has furry but human-shaped body and legs. The back of her head, neck, upper body, and arms can be spotted like a leopard. Her heavy breasts are bare, her humanoid hands are stained with blood, and she has long fingers and fingernails. Her arms and hands can be shown in a splayed position. Her legs terminate in claws of a bird-of-prey. She lacks wings and walks upright like a human or kneels.⁵⁵

Lamashtu's frightful hybrid physical morphology befits her diabolical character as a denizen of the netherworld who terrorizes human habitations with supernatural prowess. Her gruesome form capitalizes on the predatory might of a lioness, with her dexterity enhanced by human hands that enable her to efficiently interfere with humans in their environment. Her talons are perfect tools for snatching prey.

⁵⁵ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, "Lamaštu, Dochter van Anu," in *Zwangerschap en geboorte bij de Babyloniërs en in de Bijbel* (ed. Marten Stol; Leiden: Ex Oriente Lux, 1983), 95-116; Frans A. M. Wiggermann, "Lamaštu, Daughter of Anu, a Profile," in *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting* (ed. Marten Stol; CM 14; Groningen: Styx, 2000), 217-253.

5.5.3 CONTEXT OF LAMASHTU WITHIN SCENES

The basalt plaque BM 104891 from Babylon (Ill. 5.35) is a fascinating and complex piece. In addition to its scene featuring Lamashtu, an imitation inscription is incised on the object. Lamashtu stands in a striding pose, facing right, on a recumbent donkey that also faces right. Details of her heavy jowls, forward pointing ears, and gruesome face are carefully rendered. In her outstretched hands she grasps two enormous, wriggling snakes. The upper part of her body, neck, back of her head, and arms are clearly spotted like a leopard. She wears a belt decorated with hatched chevrons. Tucked into the belt, toward her back on the left, the head of a crocodile pokes out. Her lower legs, above her clawed feet, are wrapped in horizontal bands. From her hairy chest dangle two heavy breasts, from which two young animals suckle: a puppy on the left and a piglet on the right. In lieu of a human infant, these nurse on her poisonous milk until she is able to snatch a baby away from its mother.

In the spaces around the monstrous demon, two legs of a donkey (or possibly two bundles of her clothing) stand upright in front of her forward left leg. Between the piglet and the snake on the right is a vessel for oil and a stick(?), and between her spread legs is her comb. In the crook of her forward elbow is the lamp of Nusku, which shines its light at night as she searches for her victims.⁵⁶ Because this intricately wrought plaque is broken, additional details are lost.⁵⁷

Similar to the scene just described is another high quality depiction of the demoness on plaque W 19440 from Uruk (Ill. 5.39). However, only a small fragment from the lower portion of the plaque has survived, showing parts of Lamashtu's legs with her comb between them. To her left is a partially preserved puppy, no doubt suckling from one of her breasts, which are no longer visible. To the far left, part of a snake can still be seen. On the reverse of this plaque is a neatly inscribed Akkadian incantation, of which six lines are preserved.⁵⁸

The plaque BM Reg. no. 1851,0101.18 from Uruk (Ill. 5.36) is rendered in a crude manner on serpentine stone, with little attention to details of form and style.⁵⁹ The central scene shows Lamashtu striding toward the left, but with her head turned back over her shoulder. Her arms and hands are outstretched in a splayed position. Just behind her left leg sits a dog with pointed ears. In front of her right foot, which is stepping forward, is a sketch of a centipede. A spindle points toward her abdomen, and a comb with tines pointed downward is at her back. An incised chevron pattern, perhaps an imitation inscription representing an

⁵⁶ Lamashtu's accoutrements can include the following: comb, spindle, fibula, lamp, oil container, shoes and sandal, bundle of fabric, different containers, donkey leg, and centipede (Walter Farber, "Lamaštu," *RLA* 6:442).

⁵⁷ "Amulet," BM, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=282828&partid=1&IdNum=104891&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_number_search.aspx.

⁵⁸ W 19440—HD—Md 15-4 (Uruk). Andrea Becker, *Uruk: Kleinfunde. 1, Stein* (AUWE 6; Mainz: Zabern, 1993), 4, Taf. 1, no. 4.

⁵⁹ Becker, *Uruk*, 4, Taf. 1, no. 6.

incantation, borders the four edges of the scene.⁶⁰ On the reverse of the plaque is a pseudo-cuneiform inscription.

Steatite plaque W 5874 from Uruk (Ill. 5.37) was found in the area of the Eanna temple among the bricks of the ruined ziggurat. The crude, amateurish scene etched on stone shows Lamashtu in frontal pose with her head turned to the right, both arms outstretched, and a prominently displayed pubic triangle. To the right of Lamashtu's elbow is a vertical comb, and below this elbow is a spindle that points to her body. On the left of the scene is a dog pictured vertically, as though walking upward on the left side of the plaque. On the back of the plaque is an imitation cuneiform inscription.⁶¹

Plaque W 20969 (Ill. 5.38) is also rendered in an unusually crude manner, with little attention to detail of form or style. The central scene shows Lamashtu striding toward the left, with her arms and hands outstretched in a splayed position. Just behind her back left leg sits a dog with pointed ears. In front of her right foot, which is stepping forward, is the sketch of a centipede. A spindle points toward her pubis and a comb with tines pointed down is at her back. An imitation inscription is on the reverse of the plaque.⁶²

Very little can be said about the small plaque W 19961 from Uruk, which is not included among the drawn illustrations in the present study. It is almost unintelligible and seems to have only a single, crudely engraved Lamashtu on it. This plaque has no inscription.⁶³

5.5.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

Of the six plaques, four carry pseudo-cuneiform inscriptions, one has six lines of an incantation, and one has no inscription at all.

⁶⁰ "Amulet," BM, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=369098&partid=1&IdNum=1851%2c0101.18&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx; Becker, *Uruk*, 4, Taf. 1, no. 6.

⁶¹ Becker, *Uruk*, 4, Taf. 1, no. 5; Farber, "Lamaštu," *RLA* 6:439-446.

⁶² W 20969/10—IM 66821 (Uruk). Klaudia Limper, *Uruk: Perlen, Ketten, Anhänger; Grabungen 1912-1985* (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Abteilung Baghdad 2; Mainz: Zabern, 1988), 45-46, 90, 193 (F 482); Taf. 55, no. 334b; Becker, *Uruk*, 4, Taf. 1, no. 1.

⁶³ W 19113—IM 102028 (Uruk). Becker, *Uruk*, 4, Taf. 1, no. 2.

5.5.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 5.4. LION-LEMONESS: —/LAMASHTU

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
5.35	BM 104891	800-550	Babylon	Plaque	I: Pseudo-cuneiform inscription
5.36	BM Reg no. 1851,0101.18	800-550	Uruk	Plaque	I: Pseudo-cuneiform inscription
5.37	W 5874	NB(?)	Uruk	Plaque	I: Pseudo-cuneiform inscription
5.38	W 20969/10 W 19961 IM 102028	NB NB	Uruk Uruk	Plaque Plaque	I: Pseudo-cuneiform inscription
5.39	W 19440	NB	Uruk	Plaque	I: Incantation

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, I=Inscription on object.

Five of the six plaques come from the city of Uruk and one is from Babylon. These objects serve as plaques to ward off the destructive power that they portray, namely the invasive, baby-snatching demoness Lamashtu.

5.5.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Pazuzu and Lamashtu were the demons most commonly known and feared in Mesopotamia during the first millennium BC.⁶⁴ Both of these composite beings were gatekeepers of the netherworld, but their roles evolved in different directions. Pazuzu, further discussed in Chapter 6, was a monstrous male canine demon with both malevolent and benevolent attributes. Cuneiform texts identify Lamashtu as a daughter of the high god Anu.⁶⁵ So in terms of origin, she was a high-ranking and therefore exceedingly powerful divine being, not an ordinary demoness. Quintessentially malevolent, she was cast out of heaven because of her wicked craving to eat the flesh of babies, drink their blood, and gnaw on their sinew and bones.⁶⁶

Lamashtu originated as a divine personality rather than as a mere personification of evil. She wantonly destroys because of her inherently evil character, not because she inflicts punishment for sin or takes orders from a higher power.⁶⁷

Lamashtu is said to have slipped into the home of a pregnant woman, whose belly she would try to touch seven times in order to kill the fetus. She would also wait for a baby to be born

⁶⁴ Anthony Green, “Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons: The Iconography of Good and Evil in Ancient Assyria and Babylonia,” *Visible Religion* 3 (1984): 81.

⁶⁵ Anthony Green, “Ancient Mesopotamian Religious Iconography,” *CANE* 3:1827-1831, 1856.

⁶⁶ Farber, “Lamaštu,” *RLA* 6:444-445. Cf. Isaiah 14:12-15, taunting a “king of Babylon” (called “Shining One, Son of Dawn” in v. 12, which KJV translated as “Lucifer”) who has fallen from heaven and is condemned to go down to Sheol (the Hebrew place of the dead) because of his hubris in challenging the Most High God. In Revelation 12:7-9, an evil dragon, representing Satan, wars against God and is cast out of heaven with his army of angels, i.e., demons.

⁶⁷ Walter Farber, “Lamaštu—Agent of a Specific Disease or a Generic Destroyer of Health?” in *Disease in Babylonia* (ed. Irving L. Finkel and Markham J. Geller; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 145.

and then attempt to kidnap and devour it.⁶⁸ Belief in the ubiquitous Lamashtu reflected the real and prevalent danger of miscarriage and infant mortality in ancient times, especially from mysterious causes, such as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).⁶⁹ However, Farber maintains that Lamashtu is not an agent of a specific disease, such as typhoid fever.⁷⁰

Countering the cruel Lamashtu is the powerful apotropaic force⁷¹ of Pazuzu, the watchdog demon, who especially protects pregnant women, fetuses, and newborns from sudden death,⁷² but who also can fight against harmful demonic attacks on behalf of any person afflicted by illness. Thus, a NA bronze plaque, now in the Louvre, portrays Pazuzu forcing Lamashtu away from her human victim and back into the netherworld.⁷³ This plaque contains five registers that may preserve memory of part of a lost myth⁷⁴ or an exorcism ritual against Lamashtu.⁷⁵ The complex of scenes has been the object of extensive study and is partially understood from comparison with such composite beings on Assyrian palace reliefs and apotropaic foundation figurines.⁷⁶

The first (uppermost) register presents symbols of the great gods. In the second register are seven lion-headed (possibly *utukku*) demons. The third register, probably representing the terrestrial region, shows a sick man on a bed flanked by two *apkallu* functioning as exorcism priests. Behind the *apkallu* on the right stand two lion-demons (*ugallu*), facing each other. Behind them on the far right is the Smiting God.

According to Farber, ritual activities to counter Lamashtu do not have the therapeutic purpose of healing an individual, such as the man shown on the plaque, from a specific disease.⁷⁷ Lamashtu's random but calculated terrorism causes general destruction for which there is no cure. Therefore, rituals against Lamashtu can only be prophylactic and apotropaic.⁷⁸

⁶⁸ Wiggermann, "Mischwesen. A," *RLA* 8:253. Cf. Revelation 12:4, where a red dragon with seven heads and ten horns waits in front of a woman in labor to devour her child as soon as it is born.

⁶⁹ Elizabeth Ann R. Willett, "Infant Mortality and Family Religion in the Biblical Periods," *DavarLogos* 1, no. 1 (2002): 30; Farber, "Lamaštu—Agent of a Specific Disease," 144.

⁷⁰ Farber, "Lamaštu—Agent of a Specific Disease," 137-145.

⁷¹ Eva A. Braun-Holzinger, "Apotropaic Figures at Mesopotamian Temples in the Third and Second Millennia," in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (ed. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn; AMD 1; Groningen: Styx, 1999), 152.

⁷² Green, "Mythologie. B," *RLA* 8:578.

⁷³ Green, "Mythologie. B," *RLA* 8:577.

⁷⁴ Green, "Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons," 81; cf. Green, "Mythologie. B," *RLA* 8:577.

⁷⁵ Green, "Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons," 82.

⁷⁶ Green, "Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons," 82.

⁷⁷ Contrast Numbers 21:6-9, where the deity YHWH directed Moses to make a bronze statue of a poisonous snake so that anyone bitten by such a serpent could live (as a divine miracle) if they looked at the statue. This iconographic representation served a therapeutic purpose.

⁷⁸ Farber, "Lamaštu—Agent of a Specific Disease," 142.

On the fourth register, Lamashtu kneels on her attribute animal, a donkey. She grasps snakes in both outstretched hands and suckles a piglet and a puppy, one on each breast. The donkey kneels in a boat, the bow and stern of which are shaped like a lion's head and a bull's head, respectively. Behind Lamashtu, Pazuzu drives her before him into the netherworld. The fifth register shows fish swimming in water, which is probably the river to the netherworld.

The apotropaic composite beings depicted on the plaque—*apkallu*, *utukku*(?), *ugallu*, and Pazuzu (as well as the Smiting God[?])—are apparently enlisted to expel the deadly Lamashtu, who is threatening an individual's life. Two aspects are especially significant: (1) Lamashtu can attack anyone (here an adult man), not just a baby, and (2) an individual human can be affected by a sizeable number of supernatural beings, who battle for and against his well-being.⁷⁹

Mesopotamian representation of malevolent demons also took the form of figurines, which are described in exorcism ritual texts. However, these objects themselves were destroyed as part of the ritual process, with the result that archaeologists have never found one.⁸⁰ On the other hand, ceramic and wooden figurines of protective deities or benevolent demons have been discovered, including in deposits at ordinary houses. Equivalent apotropaia found in sacred precincts are often made of metal.⁸¹

5.5.7 CONCLUSION

The divine demoness Lamashtu is the most invasive and feared of Mesopotamian supernatural beings. Thus, it occasions no surprise that there are a number of extant NB plaques to counter her destructive power. Most of these apotropaic objects portray Pazuzu without Lamashtu in order to magically deploy his demonic strength against her, apparently without the danger of arousing her force through an iconographic representation of her. It is significant that whereas apotropaic figurines of Pazuzu abound (see ch. 6), there is no extant NB example of Lamashtu depicted in the round.

There are several provenanced NB depictions of Lamashtu on plaques with imitation inscriptions. Several of these are crude, and their lack of artistic quality and lack of actual writing could be due to any combination of at least three factors: (1) illiteracy and lack of artistic ability on the part of the one who produced the object, (2) haste in production to meet an emergency, and/or (3) fear of provoking the demoness with an overly realistic rendering.

Iconography counteracting Lamashtu attests to the real apprehension of Babylonians regarding the dangers of illnesses, the scientific causes of which they did not understand. While Lamashtu could threaten anyone, she specialized in the demise of unborn and newly born babies.

⁷⁹ Cf. Daniel 10; Ephesians 6:12.

⁸⁰ Braun-Holzinger, "Apotropaic Figures," 149.

⁸¹ Braun-Holzinger, "Apotropaic Figures," 150.

An interesting question arises: Does the prolific usage of these amuletic plaques during the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods reflect an especially high incidence of infant mortality, or at least concern about infant mortality, during these centuries? Willett argues that the preoccupation with infant mortality does in fact reflect such a concern.⁸² She points out that most women had a very short lifespan, about 30 years, and the period of their greatest vulnerability to death was during the childbearing years. Other major causes of death were famine, disease, and warfare. From 1150-650 BC, the average births per female was 4.1, with survival of only 1.9 infants. These statistics improved from 650-300 BC, with 4.6 births per female, with survival of 3.0.⁸³ According to Willett, the statistics for Mesopotamia during this period are comparable to those of Palestine, where an average of thirty-five percent of children died before age 5, and fifty percent died before age 18.⁸⁴

Although infant mortality was reduced during the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods, the proliferation of Pazuzu amulets during these years would seem to reflect a continuing major concern to protect mothers and children from Lamashtu. The concern was not simply for the well-being of women and their babies, but also for the preservation of family lines that could be threatened with extinction.⁸⁵

5.6 LION-DRAGON

5.6.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

The lion-dragon is sometimes referred to as a lion-griffin.⁸⁶ Provenanced NB examples of this composite being include a cylinder seal and a stamp seal impression (Ills. 5.40-5.41).



Illustration 5.40. Lion-dragon. NB cylinder seal: BM 119328 (Warka/Uruk)

Source. Adapted from Dominique Collon, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Cylinder Seals V: Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Periods* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), pl. V, no. 64.

⁸² Willett, "Infant Mortality and Family Religion," 27-28.

⁸³ Willett, "Infant Mortality and Family Religion," 28.

⁸⁴ Willett, "Infant Mortality and Family Religion," 29.

⁸⁵ Karel van der Toorn, "Magic at the Cradle: Reassessment," in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (ed. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn; AMD 1; Groningen: Styx, 1999), 147; Walter Farber, "Magic at the Cradle: Babylonian and Assyrian Lullabies," *Anthropos* 85 (1990): 139-148.

⁸⁶ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 121; Anthony Green, "Mischwesen. B. Archäologie," *RLA* 8:258, fig. 25; Wiggermann, "Mischwesen. A," *RLA* 8:243-244, fig. 25.



Illustration 5.41. Lion-dragon. NB seal impression: BM 57362 (Abu Habbah/Sippar)
Source. Adapted from Mitchell and Searight, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals*, no. 356.

5.6.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE LION-DRAGON

The lion-dragon has the head, torso, and front legs of a lion and the hind-legs, talons, wings, and usually tail of a bird of prey.⁸⁷ However, sometimes it has the tail of a lion or scorpion, with ears of a donkey or horns.⁸⁸ The composite being's wide-open mouth sometimes spews out a stream of water.⁸⁹

5.6.3 CONTEXT OF THE LION-DRAGON WITHIN SCENES

A chalcedony cylinder seal, BM 119328 from Uruk (Ill. 5.40), shows a bird-griffin and a lion-griffin rapidly moving toward the right. In this dynamic scene, it is unclear which composite being is pursuing the other. Both winged creatures have lion forepaws and hind legs terminating in the oversized talons of a bird of prey. The bird-griffin has the upright ears of a donkey. Above the head of the lion-griffin is the lower part of the crescent of Sin, and above its shoulder is the lower half of the eight-pointed star of Ishtar.⁹⁰

A stamp seal impression (Ill. 5.41) of the lion-demon is found on the reverse of an inscription from Sippar. The creature is advancing to the right, with its head turned back over its shoulder. Its left paw is raised toward a winged disk, likely of Shamash,⁹¹ in which the head and shoulders of a supporting figure are seen rising from the left wing. Two orbs appear in the field above the lion-demon's shoulders.

⁸⁷ The winged and horned lion with the forepaws of a lion and the hind claws and tail of a bird-of-prey depicted on a relief of glazed bricks found at Susa is a variation of the lion discovered at Babylon (Michael Roaf, "The Art of the Achaemenians," 35, pl. 13). Interestingly, this Persian creature portrays some of the same features found in a NA depiction of a dragon, possibly thought to be the Anzu bird. This winged dragon also has the forepaws of a lion, the hind claws of a bird-of-prey, and the head of a lion with horns. But instead of a lion's tail, it has a bird's tail.

⁸⁸ Green, "Mischwesen. B," *RLA* 8:258, fig. 25.

⁸⁹ Wiggermann, "Mischwesen. A," *RLA* 8:223.

⁹⁰ "Cylinder Seal," BM, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=282831&partId=1&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx&nmpages=10&cidNum=1928,0211.31¤tPage=1.

⁹¹ The winged disk is a symbol of Ashur in NA iconography, but in this NB context, it is more likely that of Shamash, the sun god (Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 121).

5.6.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXT

None

5.6.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXTS

TABLE 5.5. LION-DRAGON

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
5.40	BM 119328	NB	Uruk	Cyl	
5.41	BM 57362	NB	Sippar	Impr	D: Receipt

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, Cyl=Cylinder Seal, Impr=Impression, D=Document.

Both of our provenanced NB examples are glyptic. One depiction of the lion-dragon is on a cylinder seal of semi-precious stone (chalcedony) from Uruk. The other is a stamp seal impression on a tablet from Sippar on the reverse of a receipt document.

5.6.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The lion-dragon enters the iconographic repertoire of Mesopotamia during the Akkadian period and continues through the Neo-Babylonian period. It is variously associated with the composite being Asakku (ASAG) and the Anzu bird (IMDUGUD), as well as the deities Adad (ISHKUR), Ashur, and Sin (NANNA-SUEN).⁹² A variant NA form of the lion-dragon on a rock relief at Maltai, where it is horned with a scorpion tail, graphically illustrates the attribution of this creature to Ashur, Sin, and Adad, each of which surmounts a lion-dragon.⁹³

Precise identification of the lion-dragon is not consistent throughout its history, but several correlations are possible.⁹⁴ Already by the Ur III period, it is the mount of Adad (ISHKUR), a storm-god, and is called in Sumerian U₄(GAL) (Akkadian *ūmu* [*rabū*]), “(Big) Day,” implying that the composite being may have had some connection with violent weather (cf. the lion-demon, above).⁹⁵ The same creature may also be identified as U₄-KA-DUĪ-A (Akkadian *kadubhū* or *ūmu nā’iru*),⁹⁶ “Roaring Day,” namely the “roaring (weather-beast)” of Ishkur. This probably designates a demon that typically lowers its head to the ground and spews out torrents of water from its gaping mouth.⁹⁷

⁹² Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 121.

⁹³ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 121.

⁹⁴ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:243.

⁹⁵ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:223, 244.

⁹⁶ See “malāhu A,” *CAD* 10.1:150.

⁹⁷ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:244; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 185. Cf. Revelation 12:15, where an evil serpentine dragon spews a destructive flood of water from its mouth in a failed attempt to destroy a woman after she has given birth to a child.

Sometime after the Ur III period, the lion-dragon was replaced by the bull as the creature of the god Ishkur. At this time, the iconographic lion-dragon appears to have developed into a bird-tailed representation of what may be the mythical eagle known as Anzu (see ch. 9). Precisely when the lion-dragon was linked to the *anzû* is not known.⁹⁸

Representations of the lion-dragon (described by the generic Akkadian term *ušumgallu*, “dragon”) flanked the throne of the storm god Ninurta in his temple at Nimrud. Here a lion-dragon attacked by a god wielding thunderbolts was carved in relief on stone orthostats.⁹⁹ In this context, the creature may represent the *asakku* (ASAG = A₂-SAG₃) demon¹⁰⁰ who was regarded as responsible for diseases.¹⁰¹ The *Lugale* myth establishes the connection between the *asakku* and Ninurta: “(Anu) made (the earth) give birth to the *asakku*-demon for Ninurta,¹⁰² the fearless warrior” (*Lugale* I:27).¹⁰³ According to the myth, Ninurta defeated the monstrous *asakku*, so this may be what was illustrated on the orthostats at Nimrud.¹⁰⁴

5.6.7 CONCLUSION

Provenanced NB examples of the lion-dragon portray it associated with celestial symbols: the crescent of Sin, the star of Ishtar, and the winged disk, likely of Shamash. Earlier in its history, the lion-dragon could be associated with various sky deities (Adad, Ashur, Sin, and Ninurta) and composite beings (Asakku and Anzu). Connections with the storm gods Adad and Ninurta reinforce the characterization of the lion-dragon in terms of severe weather, which is possibly expressed in some text designations of the composite being. The significance of the lion-dragon’s participation in a chase scene on a NB seal is unclear.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Leonine composite beings are prominent during the Neo-Babylonian period, and generally accord with the existing legacy of such creatures in terms of physical morphology and function. These hybrids take a variety of forms, mainly combining lion elements with components of humans and/or birds-of-prey to elevate unambiguously the king of beasts to the level of a supernatural being. However, conspicuously missing from the NB iconographic repertoire is the simple winged lion, which is abundantly attested in the preceding Neo-Assyrian period and in the following Achaemenid period. I have suggested

⁹⁸ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:244.

⁹⁹ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:223, 244.

¹⁰⁰ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 121; Green, “Mischwesen. B,” *RLA* 8:258, fig. 25; Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8: 243-244, fig. 25; “asakku(m),” *AHW* 1:73.

¹⁰¹ Unger, *Babylon*, 163-164; In Sumerian, ASAG refers to (1) a demon and (2) a disease. ASAG comes into Akkadian as *asakku*, “an evil demon” (“*ušumgal* [DRAGON],” *ePSD*, n.p.).

¹⁰² The *asakku*-demon is worshipped in Babylon for whom seven altars are set up in seven cellas; cf. Unger, *Babylon*, 119, 121.

¹⁰³ J. J. A. van Dijk, *Lugal ud me-lám-bi Nir-gál: le récit épique et didactique des Travaux de Ninurta, de Déluge et de la Nouvelle Création* (Leiden: Brill, 1983); see also “asakku A,” *CAD* 1.2:325.

¹⁰⁴ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 36.

that this omission in the NB repertoire reflects a reaction against the ideology of the Neo-Assyrians, as expressed in their iconography. In other words, the winged lion, like the winged human-headed bull, carried too much NA conceptual baggage.

Some lion composite beings are demons, but others are also deities. Like other composite beings, most of the leonine hybrids can be either malevolent or beneficent as apotropaic figures. But the divine demoness Lamashtu is undiluted evil, without a redeeming feature, and hated even by other gods. While fantastic lions can be associated with a wide variety of gods, some of whom they serve as guardians of entrances, Lamashtu is completely a law unto herself, taking orders from nobody.

6. CANINE

Two composite beings with canine affiliations are found in provenanced Neo-Babylonian iconography, Pazuzu and the dog-humanoid (^[d]*urfidimmu*).

The fierce canine-headed composite being Pazuzu enjoyed a surge of popularity in Mesopotamian iconography during the middle of the first millennium BC. A leading denizen of the netherworld, he was believed to control cold winds to inflict damage with them or to provide protection from them. He also protected mothers and children from the evil demon Lamashtu.

The dog-humanoid (^[d]*urfidimmu*) was originally identified as a lion-humanoid, but has been reidentified by Ellis to be a dog-humanoid.¹ The dog-humanoid appears for the first time in the Neo-Babylonian period as a fully developed creature whose name is written with the divine determinative: ^dUrdimmu.

After briefly considering the natural dog in Mesopotamian iconography, this chapter will investigate NB attestations of Pazuzu and the dog-humanoid (^[d]*urfidimmu*).

6.1 NATURAL DOG

Two common breeds of dog (Akkadian *kalbu*),² which descend from the wolf (*Canis lupus*), appear in ancient Mesopotamian iconography: the mastiff, with small droopy ears, and the *Canis familiaris Studer*, with small pointed ears and a curly tail (Ill. 6.1).³ Current research at Van University in eastern Turkey suggests that the modern Kangal Dog of Anatolia may trace its heritage back to the mastiff depicted on Babylonian terracotta plaques.⁴ These dogs

¹ Richard S. Ellis, “Well, Dog My Cats! A Note on the *uridimmu*,” in *If a Man Builds a Joyful House: Assyriological Studies in Honor of Erle Verdun Leichty* (Edited by Ann K. Guinan et al.; CM 31; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 111-126; Cf. Frans A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (CM 1; Groningen: Styx & PP, 1992), 172-174.

² See “kalbu,” *CAD* 8:68.

³ Dominik Bonatz, “Dog,” *IDD*, 1.

⁴ “Kangal Koepgi: The Kangal Dog of Turkey,” n.p. [cited 14 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.kangalkoepgi.org/breed-history.html>; Tamar Yilmaz, “Kangal: A Galatian Canine?” n.p. [cited 14 May 2012]. Online: http://www.galloturca.com/galatians_files/kangals.htm. A selection of examples of the mastiff are: The California Museum of Ancient Art, LA, Plaque 10 Old Babylonian mastiff walking right (1800-1600 BC) and Terracotta Dog 9 of seated mastiff (1800-1600 BC) (“An Exhibition of Ancient Mesopotamian Art: A Gathering of the Gods—The Power of Mesopotamian Religion,” n.p. [cited 14 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.cmaa-museum.org/meso10.html>). A polished black limestone statue of a large mastiff comes from Persepolis, Iran, and is now on loan to the British Museum (Dianne Cutlack, “World of Ancient Persia Remembered at the British Museum,” n.p. [cited 14 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.culture24.org.uk/art/art30535?media=print>). Old Babylonian plaque of man restraining mastiff, now in the British Museum Reg. no. 1850,0630.1; BM 91911 (“Plaque,” BM, n.p. [cited 14 May 2012]. Online:

may be the “Indian Hound” used by the Persian king, Xerxes I (485-465 BC), and referred to by Herodotus (c. 484-425 BC).⁵

TABLE 6.1. NATURAL DOG

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
6.1	W 20969/10 IM 66821	NB	Uruk	Plaque	D: Pseudo-cuneiform inscription
6.2	BM 104891	800-550	Babylon	Plaque	D: Pseudo-cuneiform inscription

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, D=Document.



Illustration 6.1. Seated natural dog (lower right). NB plaque: W 20969/10—IM 66821 (Uruk)

Source: Adapted from Klaudia Limper, *Uruk: Perlen, Ketten, Anhänger; Grabungen 1912-1985* (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Abteilung Baghdad 2; Mainz: Zabern, 1988), Taf. 55, no. 334b (Uruk).

Dogs are attested in a number of domestic and religious contexts in ancient Mesopotamia.⁶ They generally carry a religious function when they are depicted in the form of figurines, whether buried or as votive offerings, rendered on *kudurrus*, or in glyptic iconography. In monumental art, on the other hand, the dog is always in a secular setting, such as a hunting scene.⁷ Aside from its negative association with the netherworld demoness, Lamashtu (see

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=388879&partid=1&IdNum=91911&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_number_search.aspx.

⁵ Herodotus, *Histories*, I:197, VII:169. The 17th-cent.-AD writer and historian Evliya Çelebi describes what may be the same breed in the ceremonial parades of an elite Ottoman force, the Janissaries, in which guard dogs were displayed by their keepers. These dog-handlers “lead in double or triple chains large dogs, the size of asses, and as fierce as lions, from the shores of Africa, the names of which are Palo, Matchko, Alabash, Salbash, Turaman, Karaman, Komran, Sarhan, An, Zerkeh, Wejan, Yartan, Wardiha, Geldiha, Karabash, Alabarish, and Boreh. These dogs are covered with rich cloths, silver collars, and neck-rings, and a circle of iron points round the neck. Some of them are clad all in armour. They assail not only wolves, which enter the stables and folds, but would even attack dragons and rush into fire. The shepherds watch with great care the purity of the breed. They give for a leap from such a dog one sheep and for a samsun or shepherd’s dog of the true breed, five hundred sheep. These dogs are descended from the shepherd’s dog which went into the cave in company with the Seven Sleepers. They chase the eagle in the air, the crocodile in the rivers, and are an excellent breed of well-trained dogs” (“Kangal Kopegi,” n.p.).

⁶ Bonatz, “Dog,” *IDD*, 1; Allan S. Gilbert, “The Native Fauna of the Ancient Near East,” in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Billie Jean Collins; Handbook of Oriental Studies 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 26.

⁷ Bonatz, “Dog,” *IDD*, 4.

below), the dog's reputation—if one can assess this from iconography—seems to be positive and beneficial.⁸

Depictions of dogs in religious contexts are extant from the early Old Babylonian period onward. Initially they were generally associated with Gula, the goddess of healing. Kassite period figurines of humans and dogs have been found in sanctuaries of this deity.⁹ Dogs were also given ceremonial burials as found in Gula's dog temple at Isin (c. 1000 BC), which has yielded some thirty-three dog burials.¹⁰

During the second millennium BC, dogs show up in a variety of cultic scenes. Since they are frequently rendered as filler motifs, their function is sometimes unclear. The dog may be the attribute animal of, or at least associated with, a number of different deities, including Enlil, Ea, Marduk, Ninkilim, Ishtar, and the demoness Lamashtu. A dog may be rendered sitting, enthroned, recumbent, standing, nursing, or suckling. However, the dog is never considered a divine being.

By the first millennium, the dog is once again primarily associated with the goddess Gula.¹¹ The practice of burying figurines of dogs within sacred precincts continues into the Neo-Babylonian period. In a royal inscription dating to 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II states that under the sublime foundations of the gates of the temple of Gula in Babylon he buried two gold dogs, two silver dogs, and two bronze dogs whose limbs were strong and whose bodies were massive.¹²

Often, scenes in which dogs appear are not readily understandable. However, where the context is recognizable, the role of the canine falls into one of several categories, including possession of magical healing powers, embodiment of fertility, and association with the netherworld. As mentioned above, the dog is frequently associated with the healing goddess, Gula, whose title *azugallatu* means "great physician."¹³ Because the dog accompanies Gula in healing ritual scenes, it is thought that in such contexts the animal possesses magical healing powers.¹⁴

By contrast, the dog is also associated with Lamashtu, the baby-snatching, fever-inflicting netherworld demoness, who receives offerings of black dogs from worshipers. The

⁸ Bonatz, "Dog," *IDD*, 4.

⁹ Eva A. Braun-Holzinger, "Apotropaic Figures at Mesopotamian Temples in the Third and Second Millennia," in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* (ed. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn; AMD 1; Groningen: Styx, 1999), 150.

¹⁰ JoAnn Scurlock "Animals in Ancient Mesopotamian Religion" in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Billie Jean Collins; Handbook of Oriental Studies 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 369; Paula Wapnish and Brian Hesse, "Dogs," *OEANE* 2:166-167.

¹¹ Bonatz, "Dog," *IDD*, 2-3.

¹² Stephen H. Langdon, *Die Neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* (trans. Rudolf Zehnpfund; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1912), 164, B VI:20-24.

¹³ Bonatz, "Dog," *IDD*, 3.

¹⁴ Scurlock, "Animals in Ancient Mesopotamian Religion," 369.

depictions of the dog that may be best-known, due to their strangeness, are the plaques depicting Lamashtu suckling a piglet at one breast and a puppy at the other (Ill. 6.2).¹⁵ Association of swine and dogs with the netherworld can be attributed to the fact that in ancient times they roamed around as scavengers, consuming waste and excrement.¹⁶



Illustration 6.2. Lamashtu suckling piglet and puppy. NB plaque: BM 104891 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from “Amulet,” BM, n.p. [cited 8 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=282828&partId=1&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no_provenance_search.aspx&numpages=10&idNum=Rm-IV.467¤tPage=1.

6.2 CANINE-HEADED DEMON: PAZUZU

6.2.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

Pazuzu was a prominent demonic figure during both the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods. His complex character is both malicious and protective. Because he is simultaneously evil and good, he wields exceptional power over his sphere of influence. Fifteen provenanced examples of Pazuzu date to the Neo-Babylonian period, including twelve amulets, two plaques, and one mold. Most of the amulets are formed in the shape of Pazuzu’s head. Eleven such amulet heads are known from Mesopotamia: three from Uruk (Ills. 6.3-5), seven from Babylon (Ills. 6.7-6.13, 6.16), and one from Nippur (Ill. 6.15). These would have been worn around the neck or on the hip of the person seeking protection. Two plaques depicting Pazuzu include one from Babylon (Ill. 6.16) and another from Nippur (Ill. 6.17). Two ceramic molds for making Pazuzu amulets have been discovered, one from Ur with an inscription (Ill. 6.6) and one from Nippur (Ill. 6.14).

¹⁵ Scurlock, “Animals in Ancient Mesopotamian Religion,” 362.

¹⁶ Bonatz, “Dog,” *IDD*, 3.

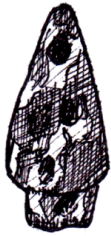


Illustration 6.3. Pazuzu. NB amulet: W 24757 (Uruk)
Source: Adapted from Limper, *Uruk*, Taf. 34, no. 206

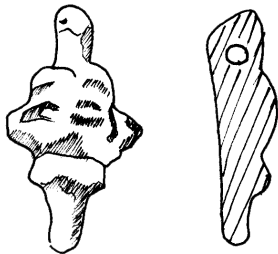


Illustration 6.4. Pazuzu. NB amulet: W 20561 (Uruk)
Source: Adapted from Limper, *Uruk*, 45 F 480, Taf. 34, no. 207.

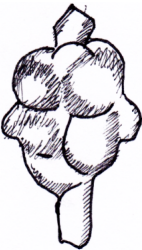


Illustration 6.5. Pazuzu. NB amulet: W 24280/IM 102002 (Uruk)
Source: Adapted from Limper, *Uruk*, 45 F 481, Taf. 34, no. 208.

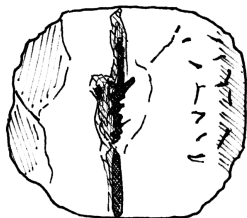


Illustration 6.6. Pazuzu. NB amulet-mold: BM Reg 1933,1013.228 (Ur)
Source: Adapted from “Amulet-Mould,” BM, n.p. [cited 14 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=369089&partid=1&IdNum=1933%2c1013.228&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no_provenance_search.aspx.

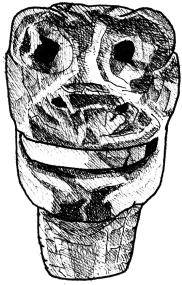


Illustration 6.7. Pazuzu head. NB amulet: BM 93036 (Babylon)

Source: Adapted from Nils P. Hessel, *Pazuzu: Archäologische und philologische Studien zu einem altorientalischen Dämon* (AMD 4; Leiden: Brill, 2002), no. 86.

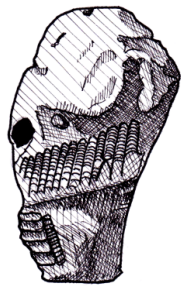


Illustration 6.8. Pazuzu head. NB amulet: VA Bab 569 (Babylon, Merkes)

Source: Adapted from Hessel, *Pazuzu*, no. 119.



Illustration 6.9. Pazuzu head. NB amulet: VA Bab 571 (Babylon, Merkes)

Source: Adapted from Hessel, *Pazuzu*, no. 121.



Illustration 6.10. Pazuzu head. NB amulet: VA Bab 586 (Babylon, Merkes)

Source: Adapted from Hessel, *Pazuzu*, no. 122.



Illustration 6.11. Pazuzu head. NB amulet: VA Bab 588 (Babylon, Merkes)
Source: Adapted from Hessel, *Pazuzu*, no. 124.



Illustration 6.12. Pazuzu head. NB amulet: VA Bab 590 (Babylon, Merkes)
Source: Adapted from Hessel, *Pazuzu*, no. 125.

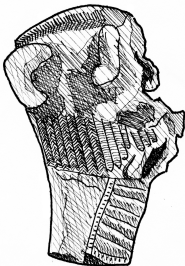


Illustration 6.13. Pazuzu head. NB amulet: VA 6958 (Babylon, Merkes)
Source: Adapted from Hessel, *Pazuzu*, no. 126.

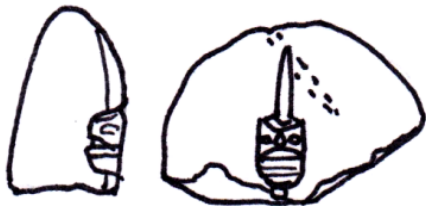


Illustration 6.14. Pazuzu head: NB amulet-mold: IM, no reg. number (Tell Nuffar/Nippur)
Source: Adapted from Hessel, *Pazuzu*, no. 45.



Illustration 6.15. Pazuzu head. NB amulet: IM 55876 (Tell Nuffar/Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Hessel, *Pazuzu*, no. 137.



Illustration 6.16. Pazuzu. NB plaque: VA Bab 33683 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Hessel, *Pazuzu*, no. 15.



Illustration 6.17. Pazuzu. NB plaque: IM 55875 (Tell Nuffar/Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Hessel, *Pazuzu*, no. 44.

6.2.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF PAZUZU

Pazuzu is a distinctive amalgamation of anthropomorphic and theriomorphic elements. The canine head of the monstrous creature is rectangular in shape and his neck is elongated.¹⁷ Among ancient Mesopotamian canines, he most closely resembles that of a mastiff. He has canine jaws with bared teeth and at times a protruding tongue, as well as enormous, round, sunken eyes surrounded by heavy wrinkles. In addition to his canine features, he has animal-like horns, possibly modeled on those of a gazelle,¹⁸ and human elements, including the ears and a cropped beard. The shoulders and arms are either human or canine, usually terminating in claws, but sometimes in hands. The body is canine with protruding ribs. He has human or animal (mainly bird) thighs and legs, and talons of an avian raptor. Always male, Pazuzu is ithyphallic, sporting a *penis erectus* that terminates in the head of a snake. He also possesses a scorpion's tail and two pairs of powerful wings.¹⁹

While other Mesopotamian demons may share common iconographic characteristics with Pazuzu, only this grotesque creature has the bulged out body and exaggerated erection.²⁰ Because the iconography of this composite being is distinctive and consistent, it is relatively easy to identify him, even without an accompanying inscription.²¹

Regarding capabilities implied by his physical morphology, the hideous Pazuzu is built on a powerful and fierce mastiff, with massive jaws and teeth that suggest formidable biting and crushing ability. An impressive array of additional capacities are added by amalgamation with other creatures. These include the abilities of a bird of prey to fly (thus connected with winds, see below) and to snatch prey. Human capabilities are indicated by the ears, which imply human comprehension, and hands for manual dexterity, when these are present. The presence of horns, which are often features of supernatural beings, implies further fighting power. Both the scorpion tail and the serpentine phallus imply the resource of venom, with the tail to sting on the outside of a victim and the phallus to penetrate orifices and inflict internal harm.²² Such invasiveness is a common characteristic of demons, who are believed to be able to enter a home by squeezing between small cracks in the walls, slip in under the door, or enter through a window.

6.2.3 CONTEXT OF PAZUZU WITHIN SCENE

One of the two provenanced plaques displays a graphic context for Pazuzu. The upper two registers of this plaque from Babylon (VA Bab 33683, Ill. 6.16) are preserved. In the upper register, six smiting demons (possibly evil *utukku*, see below) stride to the right. Below this

¹⁷ Nils P. Hessel, *Pazuzu: Archäologische und philologische Studien zu einem altorientalischen Dämon* (AMD 4; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 11.

¹⁸ Joan G. Westenholz, ed., *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004), 29.

¹⁹ Nils P. Hessel, "Pazuzu," *IDD*, 1; Anthony Green, "A Note on the 'Scorpion-Man' and Pazuzu," *Iraq* 47 (1985): 76.

²⁰ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 21.

²¹ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 81.

²² Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 81.

top register, an elaborate, winged Pazuzu is flanked on the left by the lion-demon, ^dUgallu, and on the right by the smiting figure, Lulal.²³ The scene is not unique, but finds parallels in the preceding Neo-Assyrian period (see below). All of the composite beings on the plaque are in the smiting pose, which is indicative of driving out an encroaching evil force. The composite beings surrounding Pazuzu may also be needed to contain or control and direct the power of this formidable demon.²⁴

6.2.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

The definitive identification of Pazuzu in iconography is based on NA and NB figures inscribed with the incantation, GÁ.E PA.ZU.ZU (Sumerian) or *anāku* ^d*Pā-zu-zu* (Akkadian), “I am Pazuzu.”²⁵ Texts that mention Pazuzu include incantations (written on Pazuzu heads, statuettes, or amulets), as well as letters and omens.²⁶ No texts that mention Pazuzu date earlier than the seventh century BC. The oldest securely dated text is a letter dating to 669 BC and the latest text is from the end of the fourth century BC.²⁷

Four of the provenanced NB Pazuzu objects have inscriptions on them. These are two amulet Pazuzu heads from Babylon (VA Bab 569; Ill. 6.8; and VA 6958; Ill. 6.13), a fired clay mold from Ur (BM Reg. 1933,10113.228; Ill. 6.6), and a plaque from Babylon (VA Bab 33683; Ill. 6.16).

The inscription on VA 6958 (Ill. 6.13) is an incantation that reads:

- 1 You, [the] strong, who climbs the mountain,
- 2 who presents itself to all the winds, the evil,
- 3 whose rise is wild, sharp and angry.
- 4 to the so and so, the son of the so and so, every evil might not approach [him],
- 5 every evil might not come up (to him). Either . . .
- 6 or . . . [of] the death (or) [of] the life.
- 7 Incantation formula.²⁸

The inscription on VA Bab 569 (Ill. 6.8) reads:

I am *Pazuzu*, the son of *Ḫanbu*,
King of the evil *Lilû*-Wind Demons,

²³ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 63-64, 169-172.

²⁴ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 68-69.

²⁵ See “pazūzu,” *CAD*, 12:314; Hessel, “Pazuzu,” *IDD*, 1. For a list of textual sources for inscriptions on Pazuzu, see Rykle Borger, “Pazuzu,” in *Language, Literature and History: Philological and Historical Studies Presented to Erica Reimer* (ed. F. Rochberg-Halton; ASO 67; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987), 15-32.

²⁶ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 30.

²⁷ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 30.

²⁸ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 110, no. 126.

I ascended to the mighty mountains that quake.
 The winds, in whose midst I proceeded,
 Were directed towards the west,
 I alone have broken their wings.²⁹

The translation of the inscription on the mold (BM Reg. 1933,10113.228; Ill. 6.6) is not available, but from the two NB texts just cited, it is clear that the Pazuzu of this period is identical to that of the Neo-Assyrian period (see below), with no apparent further development. Pazuzu is at home in the mountains. He is in control of the evil winds (that is the cold, wintery, northeasterly winds) so that he can make them rage or cease (break their “wings” or “arms”) at will, thereby harming or helping animals and humans.³⁰ He has a mercurial temperament that is wild, sharp, and angry. He is king of the evil *lilû* demons: the demons who haunt deserts and open country, who are also associated with Lamashtu,³¹ and who terrorize pregnant women and infants.³²

6.2.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

As in the Neo-Assyrian period, the beneficent power of Pazuzu is invoked by numerous first-millennium-BC NB representations of the composite being. These may take the form of amulets, figurines, or plaques to be worn by persons or strategically placed in homes.

TABLE 6.2. PAZUZU

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
6.3	W 24757	NB	Uruk	Amulet	
6.4	W 20561	NB	Uruk	Amulet	
6.5	W 24280	NB	Uruk	Amulet	
	IM 102002				
6.6	BM Reg 1933,1013.228	800-500	Ur	Amulet- mold	I: Inscription
6.7	BM 93036	800-500	Babylon	Amulet	
6.8	VA Bab 569	NB	Babylon	Amulet	I: Standard Sumerian and Akkadian bilingual incantation inscription
6.9	VA Bab 571	NB	Babylon	Amulet	
6.10	VA Bab 586	NB	Babylon	Amulet	
6.11	VA Bab 588	NB	Babylon	Amulet	
6.12	VA Bab 590	NB	Babylon	Amulet	
6.13	VA 6958	NB	Babylon	Amulet	I: Standard Akkadian incantation inscription
6.14	IM no. Hessel 45	NB	Nippur	Amulet- mold	

²⁹ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 110, no. 119; 59, lines 102-109. I follow the English translation of Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 29.

³⁰ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 66. Cf. Hessel’s discussion on the translation of the Sumerian PA. Instead of the word being translated in the bilingual text with the expected *kappu*, “wings,” the word is rendered by the rarer term *iziru*, “arm” (Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 110, no. 119 [VA Bab 569]).

³¹ Markham J. Geller, *Evil Demons: Canonical Utukkū Lemnūtu Incantations* (SAACT 5; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2007). Many of the *utukkū lemnūtu* incantations group Lamashtu with the *lilû* demons.

³² Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (ill. Tessa Richards; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 118.

6.15	IM 55876	NB	Nippur	Amulet	
6.16	VA Bab 33683	NB	Babylon	Plaque	I: Standard Akkadian incantation inscription
6.17	IM 55875	NB	Nippur	Plaque	

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, I= Inscription on Seal.

Frequently only the head of Pazuzu, representing the whole demon (*pars pro toto*),³³ was rendered and worn by a pregnant mother as a pendant, either on the neck or the hip.³⁴ NB provenanced Pazuzu heads discussed here are made from bronze, lapis lazuli, hematite, alabaster, jasper, and terracotta. Braun-Holzinger suggests that the material of an apotropaic object may have been relevant to its function and carried magical significance.³⁵

6.2.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Pazuzu, one of the most ferocious of Mesopotamian demons, emerges fully developed in the iconographic repertoire of the eighth century BC.³⁶ The composite being is unusual in that only his complex expression is attested in art and it lacks clear antecedents.³⁷ Pazuzu was immensely popular during the Neo-Assyrian period and especially the Neo-Babylonian period, but continued in the Achaemenid period and is even attested into the Seleucid period.³⁸ However, it is not clear if the later Achaemenid and Seleucid exemplars were in fact produced during those periods, or if older NA and NB objects were reused during such later times.³⁹

The majority of iconographic attestations come from Babylonia, which may have been the homeland of Pazuzu. However, figurines, amulets, and texts also come from Nimrud, Nineveh, and Khorsabad, as well as farther east from Susa, Tepe Nush-i Jan, and Luristan.⁴⁰ The most popular representation of the demon in all periods is the amulet in the form of the demon's head including the neck. These were made from a variety of materials, including bronze, gold, copper, clay, faience, stone, or bone.⁴¹

Sumerian and Akkadian lack a specific word for "demon." The negative aspects of Pazuzu accord well with the English definition of a "demon," but he is also beneficent, occupying an intermediary position between humans and the divine.⁴² He is not an ordinary demon, and can even be regarded as a deity: An inscription on the reverse of a well-known NA plaque

³³ Hessel, "Pazuzu," *IDD*, 2.

³⁴ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 147-148; Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 79.

³⁵ Braun-Holzinger, "Apotropaic Figures at Mesopotamian Temples," 151.

³⁶ See "pazuzu," *CAD* 12:314; "pazuzu," *AHW* 2:852; Eckhard Unger, "Dämonenbilder," *RLA* 2:113-115. Green counters the theory that Pazuzu was extant in "an early or proto-Pazuzu" form as early as c. 1800 BC, maintaining that it is not until the NA period that the monster is manifest in art ("A Note on the 'Scorpion-Man' and Pazuzu," 75).

³⁷ Possible influence may have stemmed from the Egyptian Bes (Hessel, "Pazuzu," *IDD*, 3; Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 21-22).

³⁸ Hessel, "Pazuzu," *IDD*, 3.

³⁹ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 30.

⁴⁰ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 36.

⁴¹ Hessel, "Pazuzu," *IDD*, 3.

⁴² Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 4.

(MNB 467) that dates to the seventh century BC reads: “I am the god *Pazuzu*, son of the god *Hanbu*, king of the evil wind demons.”⁴³

In both Assyrian and Babylonian literary texts, Pazuzu controls the frigid and debilitating northeasterly winds,⁴⁴ which blow down from the northern Zagros Mountains, destroying vegetation, harming animals, and causing sickness, especially head illnesses, in humans.⁴⁵ Standard inscription B (31-47) reads:⁴⁶

31 Incantation: You, [the] strong, who climbs the mountain,
32 who presents itself to the winds
33 the angry wind, whose rise is wild,
34 [the] sharp, [the] furious, who walks in wild wrath,
35 who yells at the parts of the world, who desolates the high mountains,
36 who dries up the swamp, who lets his reed dry up.
37 He presented itself to the forest (and) knocked down its trees.
38 He ascended to the garden (and) ripped off its fruit.
39 He ascended to the river (and) poured out ice.
40 He descended to the mainland (and) covered it with white frost.
40a He hit the young man (and) inclined his shape (with that), he leaned on
the young woman and pushed her lap.
40b When you are in your labor, the parts of the world tremble.
41 He bowed (down) to the well (and) poured out ice.
42 He descended to the mainland (and) covered it with white frost.
43 Pain of men, sickness of men, suffering of men, the house that I enter,
you don't enter, the house that I approach, you don't approach, the
house that I come up to, you don't come up to.
44 by An and Antum, by Enlil and Ninlil,
45 by Ea and Damkina
46 by heaven and by the earth are you conjured (and) and you shall be
conjured.

Because of Pazuzu's terrifying dominance of the evil wind demons, whom he controls at will, both supernatural and human beings hold him in fear and awe, and humans call upon his force for protection against other demons. Although humans invoke him on their behalf, his appearance and name remain terrifying and dangerous. Apparently for this reason, Pazuzu is often surrounded by lesser demons, such as ^dUgallu, Lula, and the smiting demons

⁴³ Nadja Wrede, “Katalog der Terrakotten der archäologischen Oberflächenuntersuchung (Survey) des Stadtgebietes von Uruk,” *BaM* 21 (1990): 264-265.

⁴⁴ Hessel, “Pazuzu,” *IDD*, 1. Hessel understands Pazuzu to be the wind demon of the north, i.e., the cold destructive winds of winter (“Pazuzu,” *IDD*, 1). Keel follows the incorrect notion that Pazuzu was responsible for the hot, southern winds that come out of Arabia (Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997], 79-80).

⁴⁵ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 68-69.

⁴⁶ Wrede, “Katalog der Terrakotten,” 265; Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 60-61.

(*utukku*), who curb the outbreak of his mighty potency and protect those who are invoking it.⁴⁷

While the netherworld demon Pazuzu controls and is identified with winds that bring sickness and destruction, he is above all the archenemy of the most feared Babylonian demon: Lamashtu, who is also a netherworld deity. Neutralization of her malignancy required a nemesis who was equal to the task as her counterpart. Although the home of Lamashtu is in the mountains,⁴⁸ she is associated with fever⁴⁹ and with the blistering hot southwest wind of the Hamsin.⁵⁰ For humans, Pazuzu's chief role is his apotropaic function⁵¹ to protect young women, especially if they are pregnant,⁵² and young children, especially the newborn, from Lamashtu.⁵³

Although a few incantation texts mention Pazuzu in the same context with Lamashtu, it is NA plaques that reveal how he is petitioned by the sick, by pregnant women, and by young mothers on behalf of their children, for protection against Lamashtu. The NA plaque (MNB 467), which illustrates an exorcism, displays the clearest relationship between Pazuzu and Lamashtu. Here Pazuzu drives Lamashtu away from the sick and into the netherworld.⁵⁴ This motif, portrayed only in first millennium BC art, appears to represent an otherwise lost myth.⁵⁵

The identity of the six smiting demons on a NB plaque, (VA Bab 33683; Ill. 6.16), is clarified by comparison with seven similar demons on the second register of a NA cast copper/bronze plaque now in the Louvre (MNB 467), which some tentatively identify with the seven evil demons labeled the *utukkē* (plural of *utukku*).⁵⁶

6.2.7 CONCLUSION

The composite elements of Pazuzu represent the fact that his abilities far exceed those of an ordinary dog. Just as the natural dog could be both beneficial and harmful in ancient Mesopotamia, the roles of the canine hybrid Pazuzu are both malevolent and beneficent, only much more so. As a malefic being, he is the evil underworld supervisor of the harmful,

⁴⁷ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 68-69.

⁴⁸ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 85.

⁴⁹ On fevers, see Marten Stol, "Fevers in Babylonia," in *Disease in Babylonia* (ed. Irving L. Finkel and M. J. Geller; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1-39.

⁵⁰ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 68-69; Marten Stol and Frans A. M. Wiggermann, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting* (CM 14; Groningen: Styx, 2000), 231 n. 98, 236.

⁵¹ Braun-Holzinger, "Apotropaic Figures at Mesopotamian Temples," 152.

⁵² Anthony Green, "Mythologie. B. I. In der mesopotamischen Kunst," *RLA* 8:578.

⁵³ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, "Mischwesen. A. Philologisch. Mesopotamien," *RLA* 8:253; Green, "Mythologie. B," *RLA* 8:577.

⁵⁴ Hessel, *Pazuzu*, 74.

⁵⁵ Green, "Mythologie. B," *RLA* 8:577.

⁵⁶ Anthony Green, "Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons: The Iconography of Good and Evil in Ancient Assyria and Babylonia," *Visible Religion* 3 (1984): 81, ill. 2.

violent winds from the northeast that bring sudden cold, destruction, and sickness. Conversely, his power over those winds enables him to protect against them.⁵⁷ Accordingly, humans employ magical objects portraying Pazuzu to ward off his onslaughts and to invoke his aid.

During the Neo-Babylonian period, as in the preceding Neo-Assyrian period, an individual who acquired the symbol of a demon, such as Pazuzu, was regarded as possessing access to the power of that supernatural being. Thus, if the demon approached the person with malicious intent, the symbol would neutralize the attack by reflecting the malevolent energy of the demon back onto itself.⁵⁸ On the other hand, if the demon approached the individual as a beneficent or protective force, the symbol would draw this benefit to its owner. This is why apotropaic items, such as amulets and figurines of demons, were placed in homes, temples, palaces, or worn by persons,⁵⁹ and were utilized both by common individuals and exorcists.⁶⁰

Ancient Mesopotamians invoked Pazuzu not only for defense against frigid winds, but even more for protection against Lamashtu, the evil demoness who especially threatened babies and pregnant women. It appears that Pazuzu could deploy his cold winds as an antidote to fever caused by the hot winds brought by Lamashtu.

6.3 DOG-HUMANOID (“MAD CANINE/LION”): ^(D)UR(I)DIMMU (UR.IDIM)

6.3.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLE

The dog-humanoid is known in Akkadian as *urdimmu* (or *uridimmu*) “mad dog/lion,” a loanword from Sumerian UR.IDIM.⁶¹ Sometimes the Akkadian term is preceded by the divine determinative, indicating that the creature is a deity: ^dUrdimmu.⁶² This correlates with the fact that he can be depicted wearing a horned cap, the insignia of divinity. There is only one provenanced NB example of this composite being in an impression of a stamp seal from Uruk.⁶³

The dog-humanoid (^(d)*ur[i]dimmu*) was originally identified as a lion-humanoid. However, recently Ellis has re-examined the creature and shown the composite being to have the lower body, haunches, tail and genitalia of a canine.⁶⁴ This composite being is not to be confused

⁵⁷ Anthony Green, “Ancient Mesopotamian Religious Iconography,” *CANE* 3:1827-1831, 1844-1845.

⁵⁸ Green, “Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons,” 81.

⁵⁹ Erich Ebeling, “Apotropaeen,” *RLA* 1:121.

⁶⁰ Braun-Holzinger, “Apotropaic Figures at Mesopotamian Temples,” 152.

⁶¹ See “urdimmu,” *CAD* 20:214; “uridimmu,” *AHW* 3:1429; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 50-51.

⁶² See “urdimmu,” *CAD* 20:214; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 172.

⁶³ Paul-Alain Beaulieu mentions a NB lion-humanoid from Uruk, but does not provide the museum number or an illustration (*The Pantheon of Uruk During the Neo-Babylonian Period* [CM 23; Leiden: Brill, 2003], 355).

⁶⁴ Ellis, “Well, Dog My Cats! A Note on the *uridimmu*,” 111-126; cf. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 172-174.

with the lion-centaur, called in Akkadian *urmablullû*, “lion-man.” This composite being has the upper body of a man and human arms, but the body and four legs of a lion, so it possesses a total of six limbs and walks on all fours.⁶⁵

6.3.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE DOG-HUMANOID

The dog-humanoid is human above the waist and stands upright. He is canine below the waist, where one of his elements consists of a curled dog’s tail. His hair falls to his shoulders and his beard is long. He wears a headdress that has a prominent high point at the back. A combination of canine strength with human intelligence and dexterity gives him the advantages of both species.

6.3.3 CONTEXT OF THE DOG-HUMANOID WITHIN SCENE

The dog-humanoid impressed by stamp seal PTS 2567 (Ill. 6.18) is preserved above the knee and faces right. He lowers his right arm and raises his left arm to grasp a tall *marru* (spade-standard) of Marduk with both hands, the way in which guardian figures in Mesopotamian art typically hold door-posts with both of their hands.⁶⁶ What could be a ring-standard with pendant tassels is behind him. The meaning of this object is uncertain. Ehrenberg suggests: “Perhaps it is related to circular disk-standards, often marked with internal cross or star motifs, which can serve as sun symbols in Mesopotamian art.”⁶⁷ If it is a ring-standard symbolizing the sun, it evokes the sun-god Shamash. Alternatively, the object could represent a doorpost where the dog-humanoid stands guard.⁶⁸



Illustration 6.18. Dog-humanoid (Urdimmu): Worship scene. NB stamp seal impression: PTS 2567 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* (AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999), 29, 100, pl. 27, no. 212.

⁶⁵ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 181, 188, fig. 8; Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:172, 181; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 119.

⁶⁶ Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* (AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999), 29, pl. 27, no. 213.

⁶⁷ Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 29, pl. 27, no. 213.

⁶⁸ Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 29, esp. n. 139, pl. 27, no. 213.

6.3.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXT

During the Neo-Babylonian period, the dog-humanoid's name is consistently written with the divine determinative: ^dUrdimmu, indicating his divine status. The dog-humanoid is first attested as a fully developed divine being in texts from NB Uruk, which indicate that he could receive offerings as a deity. Thus, text YOS 17, 345 from this site, dating to the twelfth year of Nebuchadnezzar II, is an administrative note regarding sacrificial sheep presented for the Eanna temple of Ishtar and the temple of Marduk, as well as for the deities Nusku, ^dUrdimmu, and ^dKakkabti.⁶⁹ Other texts from Uruk record offerings to the divine ^dUrdimmu, consisting of salt, barley, and oil. Articles of clothing are also supplied for this god, including colored waistbands (Cincinnati 20), wool (YBC 7436), and specialized garments (PTS 3230).⁷⁰

Text YBC 6937, dating to the forty-first year of Nebuchadnezzar II, records the donation of a field to ^dUrdimmu: “to the dog-man, his lord, for the preservation of his life” (YBC 6937:12).⁷¹ This field was located by the gate of Amurru at Uruk and was probably intended for use in the cult of ^dUrdimmu, who presumably guarded the gate.⁷² The inscription indicates that this dedication of real estate to the cult was intended to influence the deity to preserve the life of the donor from evils, perhaps including enemies who could seek to invade through the gate and harm him.

As a god, ^dUrdimmu could receive prayers. In letter YBC 11322, the sender ends his message with the formulaic postscript: “Now, daily do I pray to the Divine *Urdimmu* on behalf of my fathers.”⁷³ This is the first textual correlation to NB glyptic scenes in which a worshiper stands with raised hand before a supernatural composite creature. Glyptic examples of the fish-man (*kulullu*) and the bird-man with a scorpion tail receiving a worshiper's prayer have been found, but thus far there are no examples of the divine ^dUrdimmu in that iconographic setting.⁷⁴

A text from Uruk from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (YOS 17, 255) mentions a gate flanked by statues of ^dUrdimmu.⁷⁵ ^dUrdimmu is further attested at Uruk in two theophoric

⁶⁹ David B. Weisberg and Raymond Philip Dougherty, *Texts from the Time of Nebuchadnezzar* (YOS 17; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 345 (cuneiform transcription of YOS 17, 345); Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “Lion-Man: *Urdimmu* or *Urdimmu*?” *Nouvelles assyriologiques brèves et utiles* 121 (1990): 1-5. Weisberg and Dougherty interpret the designation ^dKakkabti as meaning: “Divine Star-Shaped Branding Iron” (*Texts from the Time of Nebuchadnezzar*, 345; cf. Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk*, 93, 353 [transliteration and translation of YOS 17, 345]; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 172-174; “urdimmu,” *CAD* 20:215).

⁷⁰ Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk*, 361; cf. David B. Weisberg, *Neo-Babylonian Texts in the Oriental Institute Collection* (OIP 122; Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2003), 102-103, Text 71 (A 5330), pl. 31.

⁷¹ See “urdimmu,” *CAD* 20:214. Beaulieu translates as follows: “. . . has donated to the Divine *Urdimmu*, his lord, for the preservation of his life, a portion of his field . . .” (Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk*, 367).

⁷² Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk*, 363-366, pls. 30, 31.

⁷³ Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk*, 367.

⁷⁴ Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk*, 367, with a number of examples provided in n. 49.

⁷⁵ Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk*, 363.

personal names. *Urdimmu-ilū'a*, “the Divine *Urdimmu* is my personal god,” was the name of a leather worker in a few texts. The name Ina-šilli-Urdimmu, “Under the Protection of the Divine *Urdimmu*,”⁷⁶ was borne by more than one person, including an individual whose family members served as door-keepers in the Eanna temple. This name is attested in texts ranging from the reign of Nabonidus to that of the Achaemenid monarch Darius I (521-486 BC).⁷⁷

6.3.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 6.3. DOG-HUMANOID (“MAD DOG/LION”): ^(*)UR(I)DIMMU (UR.IDIM)

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
6.18	PTS 2567	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: Account of dates

Note. NBK2=Nebuchadnezzar II, Impr=Impression, D=Document.

The NB sealing of the dog-humanoid is found on a tablet that records a commodity account regarding dates. So the sealing presumably contributes to the validation of the account.

6.3.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Nothing is known about the early mythology of the dog-humanoid. A third-millennium-BC Sumerian text mentions a constellation by the name UR.IDIM (Akkadian *urfildimmu*), which may have also designated the composite being. Iconographic depictions of the dog-humanoid are extremely rare, with only a handful of attestations from the Kassite and Neo-Assyrian periods.⁷⁸

In *Enuma Elish*, the *urdimmu* is one of Tiamat’s eleven composite beings who become trophies of Marduk⁷⁹ and who are stationed at the gate of the Apsu as a reminder of his victory (*Enuma Elish* V:73-76). Beaulieu maintains that the mythical sanctuary in the Apsu was the model after which the earthly temple of Marduk, the Esagila in Babylon, was patterned.⁸⁰ Iconographic representations of the dog-humanoid continue to guard major gates and doors into the early Achaemenid period.⁸¹ The theme of protecting entryways also appears in ritual texts, including one that refers to foundation figurines buried under a gate.⁸²

⁷⁶ Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk*, 358-359; Beaulieu, “Lion-Man,” 4.

⁷⁷ Beaulieu, *The Pantheon of Uruk*, 358-359; Beaulieu, “Lion-Man,” 4.

⁷⁸ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:250-251.

⁷⁹ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 173.

⁸⁰ Cf. Hebrews 8:5, where the New Testament states that the Israelite sanctuary was a copy and shadow of a preexisting heavenly reality.

⁸¹ As at Palace S in Pasargadae. See, e.g., David Stronach, “Anshan and Parsa: Early Achaemenid History, Art and Architecture on the Iranian Plateau,” in *Mesopotamia and Iran in the Persian Period: Conquest and Imperialism 593-331 BC* (ed. John Curtis; London: British Museum, 1997), 35-53.

⁸² Beaulieu, “Lion-Man,” 4.

Neo-Assyrian ritual texts closely link ^dUrdimmu to Marduk and his consort, Šarpanītu. Thus, a magical text prescribes a ritual on behalf of a sick man, which involves making an *urdimmu* figure of cedar to be inscribed: “You are Marduk the expeller of evil, chase away sorcery.”⁸³ The text also calls for offerings and prayers to Marduk and Šarpanītu. It appears that the dog-humanoid is invoked to intercede “with Marduk and Šarpanītum, his masters” on behalf of the ailing individual because he is the gate-keeper of these deities, and therefore the one who repels evil and protects life.⁸⁴

A NA relief in the North Palace at Nineveh that depicts a bull-legged figure has been identified by Russell as the *urdimmu*.⁸⁵ This composite creature is one of the latest to be definitely identified in iconography.

As a protective figure, the dog-humanoid is sometimes shown paired with the bull-man (on which see ch. 4). In such contexts, he may be affiliated with Shamash,⁸⁶ of whom the ring-standard in our example may be a symbol (see above sect. 6.3.3).

6.3.7 CONCLUSION

The one provenanced NB example of the dog-humanoid shows him in a cultic context with the spade symbol of Marduk, the city-god of Babylon. He primarily seems to serve Marduk as a guardian against evil, and he mediates with the god and his consort on behalf of persons in need of healing and life. As an attendant, the creature may also be associated with Shamash. Inclusion of the dog-humanoid among the gods of NB Uruk represents an elevation in his status. During this period, ^dUrdimmu continues to function as a guardian or attendant for higher gods, but he also receives worship expressed through offerings and prayers.

6.4. CONCLUSION

The two canine-based composite beings found in provenanced NB iconography, Pazuzu and the dog-humanoid, ^dUrdimmu, are both divine beings. These hybrids are based on two different common breeds of natural dogs that appear in ancient Mesopotamian iconography. Pazuzu, with his massive head and liberal jowls is based on the hunting mastiff, while the dog-humanoid, ^dUrdimmu, is derived from the guard-dog, with small pointed ears and a curly tail.⁸⁷

⁸³ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 173.

⁸⁴ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 173-174.

⁸⁵ John M. Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace without Rival at Nineveh* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 179-186; Tallay Ornan, “Expelling Demons at Nineveh: On the Visibility of Benevolent Demons in the Palaces of Nineveh,” *Iraq* 66 (2004): 89-90; Green, “Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons,” 88 n. 23.

⁸⁶ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 122.

⁸⁷ Ellis, “Well, Dog My Cats! A Note on the *urdimmu*,” 116-117.

The grotesque Pazuzu has no physical affinity with the human form, except for his upright posture, and he is the most complex of all NB composite beings (see Appendix). He is also among the most powerful of demons. I would suggest that the combination of his great power and distance from human characteristics correlates with his wild and often malevolent disposition, which would explain the possibility that several lesser supernatural beings may be required to curb his powers when he uses them for beneficent purposes. His furious nature makes him the ideal guardian against the vicious Lamashtu demoness.

By contrast with Pazuzu, the dog-humanoid, ^dUrdimmu, includes a substantial human component. In spite of the etymology of ^dUrdimmu's name ("mad dog/lion"), this NB lower deity benefits humans as their guardian, and they worship him as a respected member of the cosmic community.

7. WINGED QUADRUPEDS

Neo-Babylonian iconographic representations of certain winged quadruped composite beings do not fit into any of the other categories analyzed in the present study. These include hybrids based on the ibex—an otherwise natural ibex with wings, and a winged ibex-man—and an unidentified rampant winged quadruped with a human head. This chapter will first introduce the natural ibex, which is most likely the type of caprine depicted in the ibex(?) scenes, and then turn to an examination of the individual related hybrids.

7.1 NATURAL IBEX

The genus *Capra* (goats and ibexes) is composed of up to nine species. Five of these are ibex, of which the Alpine ibex (*Capra ibex*) and Nubian ibex (*Capra nubiana*) are the most likely to have inhabited parts of the ancient Near East.¹ Faunal evidence for the existence of the ibex in the ancient world has been difficult to assess, as it is impossible to distinguish between the remains of a domestic goat and those of an ibex. The only diagnostic remain is the animal's horn, which is a rare find.² However, according to the research of Bar-Yosef and Belmaker, focusing on pre-historic evidence, the Alpine ibex ranged across the Mediterranean and Arabian regions, while the wild goat (*Capra aegagrus*) roamed the Iranian plateau, and the West Caucasian tur (*Capra caucasica*) flourished in the Caucasus region.³

The Nubian ibex is the most likely species to have made its home in ancient Mesopotamia. The smallest of its genus, it is the best adapted for survival in arid regions with sparse vegetation. Generally these *Caprinae* inhabit rocky mountains, remote gorges, steep cliffs, and

¹ Allan S. Gilbert, "The Native Fauna of the Ancient Near East," in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Billie Jean Collins; Handbook of Oriental Studies 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 13-14; Francesca Parrini, James W. Cain III, and Paul R. Krausman, "*Capra ibex* (Artiodactyla: Bovidae)," *Mammalian Species* 830 (2009): 1-12; John Sippl, "*Capra ibex*," n.p. [cited 15 May 2012]. Online: http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Capra_ibex.html; S. Aulagnier et al., "*Capra ibex*," The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, n.p. [cited 15 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/42397/0>.

² Zohar Amar, Ram Bouchnick, and Guy Bar-Oz, "The Contribution of Archaeozoology to the Identification of the Ritually Clean Ungulates Mentioned in the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 10 (2010): 2-24; S. Aulagnier et al., "*Capra ibex*," n.p.; P. U. Alkon et al., "*Capra nubiana*," The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, n.p. [cited 15 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/3796/0>.

³ Ofer Bar-Yosef and Miriam Belmaker, "Early and Middle Pleistocene Faunal and Hominins Dispersals through Southwestern Asia," n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: <http://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/4270472>. There are conflicting reports of the current status of ibex in the Middle East. According to IUCN statistics in 1997, the only members of the *Caprinae* family that still inhabit Iraq are the wild goat (*Capra aegagrus*) and the Armenian mouflon (*Ovis orientalis gmelini*). It is possible that some Nubian ibexes may be alive in a wildlife breeding station in Iraq (David M. Shackleton, ed., *Wild Sheep and Goats and their Relatives* [Gland: IUCN, 1997], 12, 55-56, 76). However, other studies suggest that scattered modern habitats of the surviving Alpine ibex stretch from central Europe south to northern Ethiopia and east to Central China (Sippl, "*Capra ibex*," n.p.).

outcrops. Vulnerable to predators, they tend to keep to the highest, most inaccessible regions during the day and to return to lower levels at twilight to feed and drink.⁴

Impressive horns of the male and female Nubian ibex are used by members of both genders for territorial defense, fighting, and reproductive selection. The success of a male in warding off competitors and breeding with a herd of females is in direct proportion to the size of his horns and the strength of his body.⁵

The ibex was revered for its medicinal properties in ancient times, although it is uncertain how early they were understood. In the Mesopotamian context, seals depicting the ibex may have served as amulets to ward off poisonous snakes.⁶ From medieval through modern times, the animal was hunted and exploited to near extinction for the secretions produced in its stomach, which are a natural antidote to certain poisons, particularly that of the viper.⁷

In ancient Ugaritic iconography, the goddess Anat is often flanked by goats or ibexes.⁸ As the “mistress of animals,” she ensured the continued health and reproduction of the herd, which she then enjoyed hunting. In light of the fact that the ibex secretes a substance that is anti-venomous, it is interesting that Anat is also occasionally flanked by snakes.⁹

Ibexes or goats on either side of the sacred tree of life is well attested in both Syro-Palestinian and Mesopotamian iconography.¹⁰ Although the motif is not entirely understood, Keel has suggested that it represents bestowal of a blessing, with the creatures acting as “undifferentiated numinous symbols of power.”¹¹

Iran is the most prolific source for ibex iconography in the ancient Near East.¹² Here, the animal is portrayed in a wide variety of poses and artistic expressions from the early pre-historic period down through the Achaemenid period, and continuing into the art of present day Iran.¹³ Some seal impressions found on Achaemenid Fortification tablets show gods and

⁴ Jan Tomsen and Link Olson, “*Capra nubiana*,” n.p. [cited 24 May 2011]. Online: http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Capra_nubiana.html; cf. Margaret Cool Root, “Animals in the Art of Ancient Iran,” in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Billie Jean Collins; Handbook of Oriental Studies 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 185. In present-day Iran, in fact, ibex are still to be seen in or near the eastern part of the Elburz range (David Stronach, personal communication).

⁵ Tomsen and Olson, “*Capra nubiana*,” n.p.

⁶ Root, “Animals in the Art of Ancient Iran,” 184.

⁷ Root, “Animals in the Art of Ancient Iran,” 184.

⁸ Oded Borowski, “Animals in the Religions of Syria-Palestine,” in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Billie Jean Collins; Handbook of Oriental Studies 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 410.

⁹ Borowski, “Animals in the Religions of Syria-Palestine,” 410.

¹⁰ Borowski, “Animals in the Religions of Syria-Palestine,” 410.

¹¹ Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), fig. 219.

¹² See, e.g., Parvane H. Merrillees, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum: Cylinder Seals VI. Pre-Achaemenid and Achaemenid Periods* (London: British Museum Press, 2005), pl. VIII, nos. 20 (102549), 22 (89685); pl. IX, nos. 19 (89462), 21 (89768, Babylonian[?]).

¹³ Root, “Animals in the Art of Ancient Iran,” 191-192.

humans protecting ibex from predators.¹⁴ That the creature was protected in this way makes sense at least partly in view of its value to humans as food and as a source of protection from snakes, and also to gods as sacrifices. However, although the ibex is at times protected by the gods and by man, it is also depicted as an opponent in contest scenes.¹⁵

7.2 WINGED IBEX(?)

7.2.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

There are four provenanced NB examples of winged quadrupeds that are probably ibex, two on stamp seals and two on cylinder seals.

7.2.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE WINGED IBEX

Adding wings of a bird-of-prey to an ibex conveys the impression that this naturally agile creature is even swifter. With wings, it becomes a special composite creature with access to the supernatural realm. The winged ibex would not necessarily be expected to fly in the air, but in any case, its wings are a transformational element that enhances the ability of a terrestrial creature.¹⁶

A prancing winged ibex(?) in profile is found on a duck-shaped stamp seal from Babylon (VA Bab 1556 Bab 6512; Ill. 7.1) that provides a rare NB example of this kind of creature. The animal faces left, has a long neck, and holds its head high. It has two large horns, wings that are undifferentiated in profile, and a short tail. The creature appears to be standing on or behind three horizontal lines (perhaps representing a fenced compound).

Another prancing, winged ibex(?) with a long neck, also facing left, appears on a NB cylinder seal, CBS 14352 from Nippur (Ill. 7.2). Its neck is vertical and its tail is flung up. Very long horns are undifferentiated in profile, but all four legs are shown, with one raised to indicate motion. Only the stubby left wing is visible.



Illustration 7.1. Winged ibex(?). NB stamp seal: VA Bab 1556 Bab 6512 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Liane Jakob-Rost and Iris Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum* (2d ed.; Mainz: Zabern, 1997), no. 350; Friedrich Wetzel, Erich F. Schmidt, and Alfred Mallwitz, *Das Babylon Der Spätzeit* (WVDOG 62; Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1957), S. 40, Nr. 55.

¹⁴ Root, “Animals in the Art of Ancient Iran,” 192.

¹⁵ For Achaemenid examples of natural and winged ibex in contest scenes, see Merrillees, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals*: natural ibex—pl. VIII, no. 20 (102549); pl. IX, no. 21 (89768); winged ibex—pl. VIII, no. 18 (89483); pl. XVII, no. 40 (129566).

¹⁶ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A. Philologisch. Mesopotamien,” *RLA* 8:241; Joan G. Westenholz, ed., *Dragons, Monsters, and Fabulous Beasts* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004), 32.



Illustration 7.2. Winged ibex(?). NB cylinder seal: CBS 14352 (Nippur)

Source. Adapted from Leon Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians from Their Seals in the Collections of the Museum* (2 vols.; PBS 14.1-2; Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1925), pl. XXXIII, no. 641.



Illustration 7.3. Winged ibex(?). NB cylinder seal: U. 18357 (Ur)

Source. Adapted from Leon Legrain, *Seal Cylinders* (UE 10; London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1951), pl. 36, no. 599.

The scene of U. 18357 from Ur (Ill. 7.3), oriented to the right, portrays a rampant winged ibex(?). The caprine's visible eye is enormous, conveying a sense of terror, undoubtedly due to the fact that it is fleeing from a winged griffin (see further below).

The addition of a man's head to an ibex vastly augments its mental acumen. A pristinely preserved seventh-century-BC stamp seal from Mesopotamia (BM 113200; Ill. 7.4), probably from Babylon, features such an ibex(?)-man having a human head with curly hair, and a beard down to his shoulders. He stands upright in a pose similar to that of the bull-man (see ch. 4). However, unlike the bull-man's atlas pose, the ibex-man has his forelegs bent at the knees so that his hooves point downward. The creature has a prominent ibex-like horn in profile, but instead of the stubby tail of an ibex, he has a long tail like that of a bull. Around his waist is a cloth belt. Two individual wings, proceeding from his back shoulders, are fairly small in proportion to his body.



Illustration 7.4. Ibex(?)-man. NB stamp seal: BM 113200 (Babylon[?])

Source. Adapted from "Stamp-Seal," BM, n.p. [cited 15 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=318485&partId=1&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no_provenance_search.aspx&numpages=10&idNum=1915,0109.2¤tPage=1.

7.2.3 CONTEXT OF THE WINGED IBEX WITHIN SCENES

The winged ibex(?) on CBS 14352 (Ill. 7.2) is flanked by two *marru* symbols of unequal size, each of which represents the spade of Marduk. So in addition to its horns, agility, and speed enhanced by wings, the creature may be protected by that powerful deity.¹⁷

A winged bird-griffin with donkey-like ears attacks a rampant winged ibex(?) on U. 18357 (Ill. 7.3). Both creatures are oriented to the right. Above the haunches of the griffin is a stylized palm tree, and over its wing is a crescent. Between the griffin and the winged ibex(?) is a four-pointed star.

The standing ibex(?) -man in the skillfully executed scene on BM 113200 (Ill. 7.4) has his upraised forelegs, with hooves pointing downward, poised over a symbol that appears to be a variation of an Egyptian *ankb*, which is rare in Mesopotamian iconography. One would expect the upper part of the *ankb* to be in the shape of a loop or globe. However, here it is an upside down triangle, which provides a flat surface on top like that of a cultic stand.¹⁸ The *ankb* is known as the key of life, and its shape is the Egyptian hieroglyphic sign for “eternal life.”¹⁹ Above and in front of the ibex(?) -man’s forehead is a crescent moon, the common Mesopotamian symbol of the moon god Sin.

The fact that the hybrid creature stands before a divine symbol is noteworthy. Elsewhere in Mesopotamian iconography, such an arrangement usually represents worship by a human being. Only in rare instances is the worshiper a supernatural composite being.²⁰

¹⁷ The protection of the ibex by a god, such as Marduk, is plausible in light of Ugaritic (Anat) and Achaemenid (Ahuramazda) examples of deities protecting creatures (Root, “Animals in the Art of Ancient Iran,” 169-209).

¹⁸ The British Museum database identifies this creature as a “winged ibex-man,” and the object over which it is poised as an “ankh-shaped stand” (“Stamp-Seal,” BM, n.p. [cited 15 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=318485&partId=1&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no_provenance_search.aspx&numpages=10&idNum=1915,0109.2¤tPage=1).

¹⁹ Mehmet-Ali Ataç, “Visual Formula and Meaning in Neo-Assyrian Relief Sculpture,” *The Art Bulletin* 88, no. 1 (2006): 88. The *ankb* in the scene is compositionally and conceptually analogous to the tree of life in NA and NB iconography. See, e.g., reliefs at the Northwest Palace (Panels 3-8, Room F) of the NA king Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud (S. M. Paley and R. Sobolewski, *The Reconstruction of the Relief Representations and their Positions in the Northwest-Palace at Kalhu, II*. [BaF 10; Mainz: Zabern, 1987], pl. 6) and a 7th-cent.-BC NB cylinder seal (CBS 8933) from Nippur (Beatrice Wittmann, “Babylonische Rollensiegel des 11.-7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.,” *BaM* 23 [1992]: 247, no. 117; Leon Legrain, *The Culture of the Babylonians From Their Seals in the Collections of the Museum* [2 vols.; PBS 14.1-2; Philadelphia: University Museum, 1925], no. 598).

²⁰ For a fairly similar example of a composite being standing before a divine symbol, see an unprovenanced NB stamp seal in which a bull-man (without wings) stands before the spade of Marduk. Above the bull-man is a crescent, and a rhomb is on the other side of the Marduk symbol (Hans Henning von der Osten, *Ancient Oriental Seals in the Collection of Mr. Edward T. Newell* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934], pl. 31, fig. 475). Cf. a seal from Babylon, dating to the reign of Nabonidus that shows a bull-man (also without wings) standing before an *ankb*-shaped symbol that is surmounted by a globe and has a cross-shaped lower portion. On the other side of the *ankb* are four additional divine symbols (Heather D. Baker and Cornelia Wunsch, “Neo-Babylonian Notaries and Their Use of Seals,” in *RAI 45.2* [ed. William W. Hallo and I. J. Winter; Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2001], 205, fig. 4, seal 2). Cf. worship of the deity YHWH by supernatural beings (*seraphim*) in Isaiah 6:2-4.

7.2.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXT

None.

7.2.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 7.1. WINGED IBEX(?)

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
7.1	VA Bab 1556 Bab 6512	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
7.2	CBS 14352	NB	Nippur	Cyl	
7.3	U. 18357	NB	Ur	Cyl	
7.4	BM 113200	NB	Babylon	Stamp	I: <i>lbaqšt bt ‘bd yrḥ</i> , “Belonging to Baqqashat, daughter of ‘Ebedyerah” (Hebrew)

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, Stamp=Stamp Seal, Cyl=Cylinder Seal, I=Inscription on Seal.

The ibex(?)—man (BM 113200; Ill. 7.4) is engraved on the side of a conoid stamp-seal made of blue-grey chalcedony. The base of the object has a palaeo-Hebrew inscription that clearly identifies its owner, who was presumably well-to-do: “Belonging to Baqqashat daughter of ‘Ebedyerah.” If the woman was Jewish, it is strange that her father’s name meant “Servant of the Moon(-god)” and that she would own a valuable object that invokes only non-Yahwistic supernatural powers. However, the name “Baqqashat” has two parallels on Ammonite seals. This indicates the possibility that she may have been Ammonite, although the artisan commissioned to produce the seal was trained in Hebrew palaeography.²¹

In any case, the facts that the seal exhibits syncretistic iconography, with Egyptian and Mesopotamian elements, combined with Northwest Semitic writing, make it a distinctly international artifact.

7.2.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before and during the Old Babylonian period, wings appeared on creatures that are naturally found in the air, or are related to the storm god, Adad (IŠKUR), and to manifestations of weather.²² After the Old Babylonian period, other kinds of winged creatures developed and continued through the Neo-Babylonian period. These include wild goats, as well as antelopes and ibexes, such as those discussed in this chapter.

²¹ For a discussion on the patronymic of the seal owner and her own name, see A. Lemaire, “Les critères non-ikonographiques de la classification des sceaux nord-ouest sémitiques inscrits,” in *Studies in the Iconography of Northwest Semitic Inscribed Seals* (ed. Benjamin Sass and Christoph Uehlinger; OBO 125; Fribourg: Academic, 1993), 1-28; Jeffrey H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions* (Harvard Semitic Studies 31; Atlanta: Scholars, 1986); Ran Zadok, “Die nichthebräischen Namen der Israeliten vor dem hellenistischen Zeitalter,” *UF* 17 (1985): 387-398.

²² Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:222-246, 241; Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 32.

7.2.7 CONCLUSION

Ibexes (and antelopes) have horns for protection, but their primary defense against predators is their agility and speed in fleeing. Iconographic addition of wings to such creatures indicates enhancement of speed for additional protection and a connection to the supernatural realm. Although we lack Sumerian and Akkadian names identifying winged ibex composite beings, their appearance in scenes on seals with divine symbols reinforces their supernatural nature.

7.3 UNIDENTIFIED WINGED HUMAN-HEADED QUADRUPED

7.3.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

A seal impression on a NB tablet shows an unidentified winged quadruped with a human head.



Illustration 7.5. Unidentified quadruped. NB impression: BM 75650 (Abu Habbah/Sippar)

Source. Adapted from Terence C. Mitchell and Ann Searight, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Stamp Seals III: Impressions of Stamp Seals on Cuneiform Tablets, Clay Bullae, and Jar Handles* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), no. 320.

7.3.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE UNIDENTIFIED WINGED HUMAN-HEADED QUADRUPED

Impression BM 75650 (Ill. 7.5) from Abu Habbah (Sippar) portrays a winged, human-headed quadruped that is rampant to the right. The creature is male, with a long beard to the chest and shoulder-length hair. The tail drops downward like that of a bull, and the creature is ithyphallic. Both forelegs are raised in combat.

The winged human-headed quadruped may be a human-headed bull, not uncommon to the period (see ch. 4). However, the creature has not been identified with certainty. Nevertheless, it is clear that this is a potent being with human intelligence and avian swiftness.

7.3.3 CONTEXT OF THE UNIDENTIFIED WINGED HUMAN-HEADED QUADRUPED WITHIN SCENE

The winged quadruped appears in a contest scene. It is successfully combating an opponent, of which the impression preserves only a foreleg in the grasp of the quadruped. It is unclear

why a combatant would have an erect phallus. Perhaps sexual virility was associated with fighting strength.

7.3.4. INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

None.

7.3.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 7.2. UNIDENTIFIED QUADRUPED

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
7.5	BM 75650	NBN	Sippar(?)	Impr	D: Receipt for dates

Note: NBN=Nabonidus, Impr=Impression, D=Document.

The tablet upon which the seal is impressed records a receipt for dates.²³ The seal would have been used by its owner in other contexts, so we cannot assume any specific correlation between the iconography of the seal and the particular content of this tablet. But in general terms, depiction of this combative composite quadruped would have invoked supernatural authority as witness to the identity of the owner and verified the transaction between human beings.²⁴

7.3.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On the historical development of winged composite creatures, see above (sect. 7.2.6) on the winged ibex and ibex-man. Contest scenes are extensively attested throughout the history of Mesopotamian glyptic iconography.²⁵ During the Neo-Assyrian and Achaemenid periods, contests are generally composed of a central hero flanked by two opponents. However, analogous NB scenes typically show only one opponent.²⁶

7.3.7 CONCLUSION

The unidentified winged composite creature clearly represents a powerful supernatural being, which combines human wisdom and bull(?) strength with virility (bull or human[?]), as well as wings providing access to the supernatural domain. Therefore, this scene is appropriate for the apotropaic function of the seal.

²³ "Tablet," BM, n.p. [cited 15 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=798731&partid=1&IdNum=75650&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_number_search.aspx.

²⁴ Cf. Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum Press, 2005), 113, 119.

²⁵ Collon, *First Impressions*, 193, 197.

²⁶ Collon, *First Impressions*, 197.

7.4 CONCLUSION

The creatures analyzed in this chapter are non-predatory quadrupeds whose defense against predators would be improved by the addition of components possessed by other kinds of natural animals, such as wings.²⁷ Two of the creatures analyzed in this chapter have human heads, showing that they are more intelligent than natural animals, and therefore better able to outwit their enemies.

Wings symbolize the ability of terrestrial creatures to transcend natural limitations imposed by their species. As Plato put it, “The wing is the corporeal element which is most akin to the divine, and which by nature tends to soar aloft and carry that which gravitates downwards into the upper region, which is the habitation of the gods.”²⁸ In Mesopotamia, wings on a creature that is naturally non-avian may indicate that the composite being is a divine, semi-divine, or demonic being.²⁹

²⁷ Cf. Psalm 55:7, “I said, ‘O that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and find rest’” (NIPS; v. 6 in other English versions).

²⁸ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 246 (Translated by B. Jowett in *The Dialogues of Plato* [2 vols.; New York: Random House, 1937], 1:251).

²⁹ Hope B. Werness, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Animal Symbolism in Art* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 434.

8. FISH AND COMPOSITE BEINGS OF THE SEA

Among the sea creatures depicted in extant Neo-Babylonian iconography are four distinct categories: (1) the fish-cloaked *apkallū*; (2) the merman, *kulullū* (KU₆.LÚ.U₁₈.LU); (3) the goat-fish, *suburmašū* (SUḪUR-MAŠ); and (4) possibly a fish quadruped(?). Since the *apkallū* was discussed in Chapter 2, the present chapter examines the other three categories after preliminary consideration of the natural Mesopotamian fish, particularly the carp.

8.1 NATURAL FISH

Current research identifies forty-four native and thirteen exotic species of freshwater fish in Iraq today.¹ Among these, the most common belong to the *Cyprinidae* family, the most populous family of fish in the world. Their physical size varies, depending upon the species, from 0.4 inches to 6 feet in length.²

There are many references to fish in cuneiform texts but ancient faunal remains and lexical entries for fish in Sumerian and Akkadian texts do not provide adequate data for precise identification with modern species.³ Nevertheless, it is clear that *purādu* (SUḪUR.KU₆) refers to one or more varieties of carp, which flourish in the rivers of Iraq and comprise several species of the *Cyprinidae* family (e.g., Ill. 8.1). Carp can grow to be large—the modern record for bighead carp is 45 kg, 100 lb.)—and powerful, with strong tails propelling them at quite high speeds.⁴

Fish, especially carp, were a dietary staple for ancient Mesopotamians. Fish also played a significant role in rituals, especially offerings to the water god, Enki (Ea). Because Enki was the god of wisdom, and fish were associated with him, they came to symbolize wisdom and

¹ Brian W. Coad, “Freshwater Fishes of Iraq,” *Pensoft Series Faunistica* 93, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: http://www.briancoad.com/Iraq/Checklists_Iraq.htm.

² Rhett Butler, “Cyprinids,” n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: <http://fish.mongabay.com/cyprinids.htm>.

³ Benjamin R. Foster, “Animals in Mesopotamian Literature,” in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Billie Jean Collins; *Handbook of Oriental Studies* 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 273; Allan S. Gilbert, “The Native Fauna of the Ancient Near East,” in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Billie Jean Collins; *Handbook of Oriental Studies* 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 43.

⁴ “Asian Carp,” United States Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Library, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/aquatics/asiancarp.shtml>.

intelligence. In glyptic iconography, filler motifs of fish appear throughout Mesopotamian history, and offerings of fish placed on tables or altars are found in Neo-Assyrian glyptic art.⁵

TABLE 8.1. NATURAL FISH

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
8.1					Picture of common carp
8.2	VA Bab 4374	NB	Babylon	Figurine	I: Omen text: "If a fish lacks a left fin(?), a foreign army will be destroyed. The 12 th year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon."

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, I= Inscription on object.

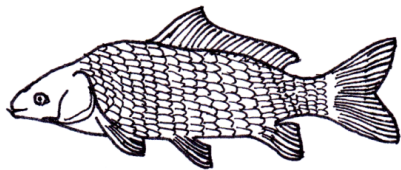


Illustration 8.1. Common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*)

A bronze model of a dogfish from Babylon (Ill. 8.2), dating to c. 592 BC, is inscribed with an omen that concerns an anomaly. The fish has two fins on its right side, but only one fin on the left.⁶ The inscription reads:

If a fish lacks a left fin(?), a foreign army will be destroyed. The twelfth year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon.⁷

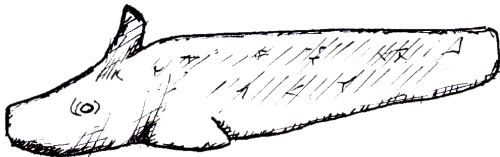


Illustration 8.2. Natural fish. NB oracular dogfish: VA Bab 4374 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Olaf M. Tessmer, "Bronze Fish with an Oracle Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II, Babylon, 592 BC, 8.2 x 2.5 cm," Vorderasiatisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: http://www.smb.museum/smb/babylon/show_text.php?page_id=6&child_id=0&slide_id=3&lang=en.

⁵ Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (ill. Tessa Richards; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 82.

⁶ Olaf M. Tessmer, "Bronze Fish with an Oracle Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II, Babylon, 592 BC, 8.2 x 2.5 cm," Vorderasiatisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: http://www.smb.museum/smb/babylon/show_text.php?page_id=6&child_id=0&slide_id=3&lang=en.

⁷ Irving L. Finkel, "Uncovering Life at Babylon," in *Babylon* (ed. Irving L. Finkel and M. J. Seymour; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 95.

8.2 MERMAN: *KULULLŪ* (KU₆.LÚ.U₁₈.LU)

8.2.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

Extant provenanced renderings of *kullullû* (KU₆.LÚ.U₁₈.LU), “merman”⁸ or “fish-man,”⁹ are very rare during the Neo-Babylonian period. There is only one secure example on a cylinder seal, VA Bab 1541 from Babylon (Ill. 8.3). A possible second example is a fish-tailed(?) hunter on another NB cylinder seal from Babylon (VA Bab 1542, Ill. 8.4). The tail on this creature appears to be that of a fish, but its identification is uncertain.

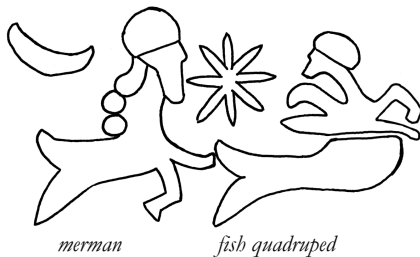


Illustration 8.3. Merman (*kullullû*). NB cylinder seal: VA Bab 1541 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Anton Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1988), no. 725.

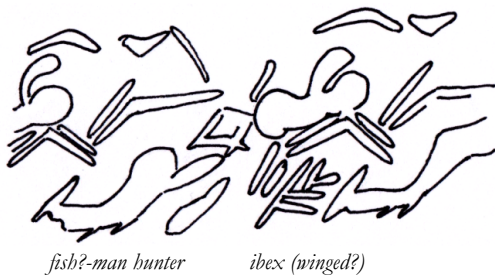


Illustration 8.4. Merman (*kullullû*). NB cylinder seal: VA Bab 1542 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, no. 708.

8.2.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE MERMAN (*KULULLŪ*)

During the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods, the merman usually has the head, arms, and torso of a man, but the lower body and powerful tail of a fish, namely, the *purādu* (SUḪUR.KU₆), “carp.”¹⁰ The human head may be either bearded or clean-shaven. At home in

⁸ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (CM 1; Groningen: Styx & PP, 1992), 182; Frans A. M. Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A. Philologisch. Mesopotamien,” *RLA* 8:243.

⁹ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 51.

¹⁰ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 131-132; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 183; Erich Ebeling, “Fisch,” *RLA* 3:66-68; “*purādu*,” *CAD* 12:516.

the domain of Enki, the god of water and wisdom, this aquatic creature is thereby loosely associated with wisdom and intelligence (see above), capabilities that are radically heightened by possession of a human head. When the merman also possesses human arms and hands, he acquires abilities of skillfulness (including archery; see below) that these imply. In VA Bab 1541 (Ill. 8.3), the human arms and hands are replaced by the forelegs and hooves of a goat. This could enhance the creature's mobility, but sacrifices the dexterity of human hands. The inclusion of goat features makes the monster similar in this respect to the *suburmašû*, goat-fish (see below).

8.2.3 CONTEXT OF THE MERMAN (*KULULLÛ*) WITHIN SCENES

NB cylinder seal VA Bab 1541 (Ill. 8.3) portrays a merman (*kulullû*) with the forelegs of a goat chasing another fish-tailed creature or fish-quadruped. Thus, although a wise being (in this case the merman) would generally be thought to engage in peaceful pursuits, he may also be aggressive. It is possible that this merman is warding off an unwanted creature, in which case his function would be apotropaic, in accord with the apotropaic function of monolithic fish-men positioned at gates of NA temples and palaces.¹¹

A possible second NB example depicts a unique merman(?) on cylinder seal VA Bab 1542 (Ill. 8.4). Here the creature is a fish-tailed(?) archer pursuing a winged ibex(?) that is in flight. Once again, a fish-man, if that is what he is, exhibits aggressive behavior. In this case, however, holding a bow and chasing a game animal indicate hunting, rather than protecting a given space from incursion.

8.2.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYONIAN TEXTS

A fragmentary text, BM 74119 from NB Sippar, mentions the *kulullû* along with the *suburmašû* (goat-fish; see below) in what appears to be a building ritual for a palace and a shrine.¹² Here foundation figurines of the merman appear to serve the purpose of attracting prosperity (into royal or sacred precincts) and repelling enemies (including demons) from them (see further below). Neo-Babylonian interest in these two creatures in this context corresponds to the equivalent role of the same composite beings in analogous NA ritual prescriptions (see *KAR* 289).¹³

¹¹ Anthony Green, "A Note on the Assyrian 'Goat-Fish,' 'Fish-Man' and 'Fish-Woman,'" *Iraq* 48 (1986): 25-26.

¹² BM 74119 = Wiggermann Text IV/1, discovered by Hormuzd Rassam (Erle Leichty and Albert Kirk Grayson, *Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum VII: Tablets From Sippar 2* (London: British Museum Publications, 1987), 381; "Tablet," BM, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=795424&partid=1&IdNum=74119&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx.

¹³ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 119, 129-130.

8.2.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 8.2. MERMAN: *KULULLŪ* (KU₆.LÚ.U₁₈.LU)

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type
8.3	VA Bab 1541	9 th -8 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl
8.4	VA Bab 1542	9 th -8 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl

Note: Cyl=Cylinder Seal.

The two cylinder seals that display the only extant NB depictions of *kulullû* are both wheel-cut and drilled. Their surfaces are worn, so their scenes are blurred. The inexpensive materials of the seals (VA Bab 1541, glazed composition; VA Bab 1542, ceramic) and their relatively crude artistic renderings suggest that these objects were owned by individuals of lower status.

8.2.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Mesopotamian fish symbolism often appears in association with Enki, the source of wisdom, crafts, and magic. Sometimes the god is depicted with streams of water, containing fish, issuing from his shoulders.¹⁴ Fish imagery in glyptic contexts is also common, although without any connection to streams of water. In such instances, fish and other aquatic creatures may serve as a more generalized evocation of the subterranean world of the Apsu, whose chief deity is Enki.

The *kulullû*, “merman,” is attested in the iconography of Mesopotamia from Akkadian times (c. 2330-2190 BC) down to the Achaemenid period, except that no examples are yet known from the Middle Assyrian period. The creature continues into the Seleucid period, and still occurs in medieval European art.¹⁵

The *kulullû* does not symbolize a specific deity. However, because his home is in the watery Apsu, the domain of Enki, he is often connected with that deity,¹⁶ as in the following text:¹⁷

*rēšu rēš kissugi ina rittišu amēlu . . . mesirra rakis [išt]u rēšišu ana mesirrišu
amēlu ištu mesirrišu pagru SUḪUR.KU₆ šumšu ku-lu-ul-lu šūt DN*
the head is the head of a *kissugu* . . . –fish, according to his hands he is a
human being, he wears a belt, from his head to his belt he is a human being,

¹⁴ Anthony Green, “Ancient Mesopotamian Religious Iconography,” *CANE* 3:1843; Erich Ebeling, “Enki (Ea),” *RLA* 2:374-379.

¹⁵ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 131-132.

¹⁶ Green, “A Note on the Assyrian ‘Goat-Fish,’ ‘Fish-Man’ and ‘Fish-Woman,’” 26; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 131-132; Anthony Green, “Beneficent Spirits and Malevolent Demons: The Iconography of Good and Evil in Ancient Assyria and Babylonia,” *Visible Religion* 3 (1984): 86.

¹⁷ Erich Ebeling, “Ea,” *RLA* 2:258.

from his belt on, the body is a *purādu*-fish, his name is *kulullû*, he belongs to Ea.¹⁸

Here the merman's body is a "*purādu*-fish," i.e., a carp. This is the same species manifested in the *apkallu*, who are also associated with Enki (cf. ch. 2).¹⁹

The merman is often depicted holding a vase, from which streams of water issue,²⁰ reminiscent of streams flowing from Enki (see above). In the Old Babylonian period, the *kulullû* often appears with the *suburmašû*, or "goat-fish," which occupies the same watery habitat and is also associated with Enki and flowing streams.

In *Enuma Elish* (I:143; II:29), the *kulullû* is one of the eleven composite beings that Tiamat creates to fight against her rebellious progeny.²¹ Following Marduk's victory over Tiamat, these creatures, including the merman, become loyal to and are associated with Enki and his son, Marduk, as reflected by the fact that Marduk stations statues of them at the "Gate of the *Apsû*" (*Enuma Elish* V:75), located in the shrine of Enki in Babylon.²² In this context, the mermen serve as guards to ward off evil forces that could trespass on the premises of the god.

Additional examples of apotropaic mermen are found in some other texts and extant iconography. An inscription of the Kassite king Agum-kakrime (5R 33 iv 54), c. 1595 BC, refers to *kulullû* and other creatures that were rendered in precious stones and inlaid in the doors of Marduk's temple.²³ Stone figures of mermen guarded gates of temples and palaces, especially during the Neo-Assyrian period. Texts referring to such images indicate that some of them were gilded, and that monumental stone sculptures of goat-fish flanked the outer gate of the Temple of Nabu in Nimrud.²⁴ A pair of monumental mermen dating to Sargon II flanked the entrance to the Temple of Ezida at Nimrud.²⁵ Mermen are also found in stone reliefs from Sargon II's palace at Khorsabad, as well as on a worked bronze band from the

¹⁸ See "kulullu," *CAD* 8:527. Regarding *kissugu*, the meaning is unknown (W. G. Lambert, "Kulullu," *RLA* 6:324).

¹⁹ See Tablet 1 of the 8th-cent.-BC Babylonian myth *Erra and Ishum*, where Marduk laments: "Where are the Seven Sages of the Apsu, the holy carp, who are perfect in lofty wisdom like Ea their lord, who can make my body holy?" (Translated by Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 292; cf. "purādu," *CAD* 12:516).

²⁰ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 184.

²¹ *Enuma Elish* I:143 (II:29, III:33, III:91); "kulullu," *CAD* 8:526-527.

²² Lambert, "Kulullu," *RLA* 6:324.

²³ *Agum-kakrime* IV:54 in Henry C. Rawlinson and Theophilus G. Pinches, *A Selection from the Miscellaneous Inscriptions of Assyria and Babylonia* (The Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia 5; London: Harrison & Sons, 1909), 33; "kulullu," *CAD* 8:527.

²⁴ Green, "A Note on the Assyrian 'Goat-Fish,' 'Fish-Man' and 'Fish-Woman,'" 25.

²⁵ Tariq A. Madhloom, *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art* (London: University of London, Athlone, 1970), 99-100.

Nabu Temple at Khorsabad.²⁶ Other texts, from the reign of Sennacherib, list bronze representations of *kulullû* with *suburmašû*.²⁷

A stone altar from Nineveh depicts a *kulullû* on one side and a *suburmašû* on the other, providing small scale examples of these creatures.²⁸ Texts also refer to small *kulullû*-shaped figurines. For instance, a NA ritual text from Ashur (KAR 298 = VAT 8228, also known as Wiggermann's Text II Rev. 6-7) prescribes an apotropaic ritual to prevent demonic incursion into a house.²⁹ In this procedure, a *kulullû* foundation figurine is smeared with bitumen and dressed in white paste, after which it is buried "in the middle of the . . . room, in the gate to the roof, downstairs" (cf. similar treatment of a *suburmašû* figurine, cited below).³⁰ Such figurines were usually buried in pairs, consisting either of two *kulullû* or a merman with a goat-fish. The fact that such figurines were not buried along the edges of buildings or in entrances, where they would be more protected, may explain why so few have been uncovered in excavations.³¹

According to the same ritual text (Text II rev. 6-7), an inscription is to be carved into the sides of the *kulullû* figurine, which would read: "come down abundance of the mountain, enter intercession and compliance."³² So at least during the Neo-Assyrian period, the merman was viewed as beneficent, with the capacity to bestow prosperity and divine protection on specified buildings.³³

Images of mermen and other creatures (serpents, snake-dragons, lion-demons, scorpion-men, and bison) were located in several places in the great Esagila temple of Marduk in Babylon during the Neo-Babylonian period.³⁴ The text *Šurpu* VIII:6-9 mentions the presence

²⁶ Anthony Green, "Neo-Assyrian Apotropaic Figures," *Iraq* 45 (1983): 93.

²⁷ OIP 2 145:19, also KAV 74:8, cited in "parakku A," *CAD* 12:146; cf. OIP 2 145:20, cited in "purādu," *CAD* 12:517.

²⁸ Green, "A Note on the Assyrian 'Goat-Fish,' 'Fish-Man' and 'Fish-Woman,'" 25; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 146; Green, "Neo-Assyrian Apotropaic Figures," 93.

²⁹ VAT 8228 = KAR 298 = Text II Rev. 6-7 in Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 52, 86.

³⁰ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 52.

³¹ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 52.

³² Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 53. Earlier O. R. Gurney rendered the text: "(6) Clay statues of the Fish-man which are anointed with bitumen and cla[d in] gypsum, on their arms write: '. . . (7) enter obedience and favour!', bury in the middle of the house [in] the 'gate of the roof,' underneath" ("Babylonian Prophylactic Figures and Their Rituals," *AAA* 22, no. 1-2 [1935]: 31-96).

³³ Cf. Dessa Rittig, *Assyrisch-babylonisch Kleinplastik magischer Bedeutung vom 13.-6. Jh. v. Chr.* (München: Uni-Druck München, 1977), 9.1.2; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 44, 53.

³⁴ BM 45619 I:38-42: Nebuchadnezzar II, see Paul R. Berger, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften: Königsinschriften des ausgehenden babylonischen Reiches (626-539 a.Chr.)* (AOAT 4/1; Kevelaer: Burtzon & Bercker, 1973), 322. *Agum-kakrime* IV-V in Rawlinson and Pinches, *A Selection from the Miscellaneous Inscriptions of Assyria and Babylonia*, 33; Andrew George, "A Tour of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon," in *Babylon* (ed. Irving L. Finkel and M. J. Seymour; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 55; Lambert, "Kulullu," *RLA* 6:324.

of *kulullû* in the temple of Marduk, whom they and the other creatures serve,³⁵ apparently in an apotropaic role.

8.2.7 CONCLUSION

The carp flourishes in the fresh waters of Mesopotamia, which ancients viewed as the domain of Enki, the god of wisdom. The formation of a carp composite being with a human upper body and head adds human capabilities, most notably intelligence and skillfulness, to the aquatic mobility of a fish. When such a merman possesses goat forelegs and hooves, as in the primary NB example (VA Bab 1541; Ill. 8.3), these features seem to emphasize the terrestrial side of amphibious mobility, which expands the creature's effective domain.

Participation of the merman in a mythic battle (in *Enuma Elish*) indicates that this kind of hybrid could function as a formidable supernatural warrior. Accordingly, such a creature could serve the gods, especially Enki and his son Marduk, and effectively protect divine and human domiciles.³⁶

8.3 GOAT-FISH: *SUḪURMAŠŪ* (SUḪUR-MAŠ)

8.3.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLE

In Akkadian, the goat-fish is known as *suḫurmašû* (from Sumerian SUḪUR.MAŠ, which combines SUḪUR [Akkadian *purādu*], “carp,” with MAŠ, “goat”). Therefore the compound designation literally means “carp-goat.”³⁷ Only one extant provenanced NB stamp seal (from Babylon) depicts a *suḫurmašû*, “goat-fish”: VA Bab 1674 Bab 13351 (Ill. 8.5).

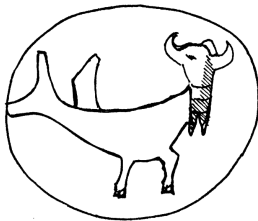


Illustration 8.5. Goat-fish (*suḫurmašû*). NB stamp seal: VA Bab 1674 Bab 13351 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Liane Jakob-Rost and Iris Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum* (2d ed.; Mainz: Zabern, 1997), no. 358.

³⁵ In this text, *kulullû* are linked with the minor deities Nādin-mê-qātē and Mukīl-mê-balāṭi (Wilfred G. Lambert, “Two Notes on Šurpu,” *Archiv für Orientforschung* 19 [1959-60]: 122). Cf. Lambert, “Kulullu,” *RLA* 6:324.

³⁶ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 131-132; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 52.

³⁷ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:243; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 93; “*suḫurmašû*,” *CAD* 15:351-352; “*suḫurmāšu*,” *AHW* 2:1055.

8.3.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE GOAT-FISH

The bearded *suburmašû* has two goat horns, stands on two legs terminating in hooves, and is oriented to the right, with its goat face in frontal view. The creature terminates in a flicked-up goat-tail (or dorsal fin[?]) and a fishtail. The combination of fish and goat elements implies that the creature is amphibious.

8.3.3 CONTEXT OF THE GOAT-FISH WITHIN SCENE

On the only extant example (stamp seal VA Bab 1674 Bab 13351; Ill. 8.5), the *suburmašû* stands alone, without accompanying beings or symbols.

8.3.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXT

The fragmentary ritual text BM 74119 from NB Sippar references the *suburmašû* and *kulullû*, apparently in the context of an apotropaic building ritual for a palace and a shrine (see above).³⁸

8.3.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 8.3. GOAT-FISH: *SUḪURMAŠŪ* (SUḪUR-MAŠ)

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type
8.5	VA Bab 1674 Bab13351	NB	Babylon	Stamp

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, Stamp=Stamp Seal.

The scaraboid seal is made of glazed composition. It is perforated lengthwise so that it can be worn by a person as an apotropaic amulet.

8.3.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As with a number of other composite beings, the identity of the *suburmašû* has been securely established by correlating inscriptions with small sculpture figures (technically known in the literature by the German term, Kleinplastik).³⁹ It is extant from the Sumerian period through the Hellenistic period. According to Sumerian texts, the *suburmašû* was originally a natural aquatic creature,⁴⁰ suggesting that it may have developed from sightings of seals (marine mammals).⁴¹ However, over time, it came to be rendered in iconography as a

³⁸ BM 74119 = Wiggermann Text IV/1, discovered by Hormuzd Rassam (Leichty and Grayson, *Catalogue of the Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum VII*, 381; "Tablet," BM, n.p.).

³⁹ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 143.

⁴⁰ According to Joan G. Westenholz, ed., *Dragons, Monsters, and Fabulous Beasts* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004), 21.

⁴¹ Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters, and Fabulous Beasts*, 21.

composite carp-goat. This is an interesting example of how culture can mutate a natural phenomenon, likely perceived as mysterious, into something supernatural.⁴²

Both in texts and in iconography, the goat-fish is closely associated and often paired with another marine hybrid, the merman, *kulullû*. In iconography, the goat-fish can also be placed next to the ram-headed staff of Enki.⁴³ Like the *kulullû*, the *suburmašû* is at home in the cosmic waters of the Apsu, the domain of Enki. While the *kulullû* is loosely associated with this deity, the *suburmašû* is more closely connected to him⁴⁴ and is described as the “lofty, purification priest” of the Apsu.⁴⁵ Although the goat-fish is not named in *Enuma Elish* as one of Tiamat’s composite beings,⁴⁶ he is identified as one of twelve monstrous creatures who accompany Marduk.

During the Kassite period, goat-fish are portrayed in relief on *kudurru* stones as supernatural witnesses or guardians of property boundaries. In the round, they serve as orthostat guardian figures and foundation figurines (see below).⁴⁷ During the Neo-Babylonian period, apotropaic statues of goat-fish, as well as snake-dragons and sphinxes, stood guard at entrances of Marduk’s Esagila temple in Babylon.⁴⁸

Of special interest is a NA text from Ashur (*KAR* 298), which directs that a *suburmašû* figurine be made of clay, smeared with bitumen, clad in (white) gypsum, assigned the attribute of “a [(stick of) *cor}nel*” (rev. 4), and buried *ina MÚRU MUD ina MÚRU TÛR*, “in the middle of the drain (*uppu*) in the middle of the courtyard” (rev. 5; cf. similar treatment of a *kulullû* figurine, cited above).⁴⁹

The *suburmašû* possesses magical, beneficial, and apotropaic qualities.⁵⁰ *KAR* 289 (rev. 5) calls for an inscription on the sides of a clay *suburmašû* figurine to read: *er-ba taš-mu u ma-ga-ru*, “enter intercession and compliance.” So in this context the creature’s primary role is to attract divine beneficence and goodwill to the building in which the figurine is buried.⁵¹

⁴² Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters, and Fabulous Beasts*, 21.

⁴³ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 93.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., “goatfish (on) the great socle of Ea,” “aširtu,” *CAD* 1.2:439; “mum,” *CAD* 10.2:194.

⁴⁵ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 184.

⁴⁶ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 184.

⁴⁷ Ursula Seidl, *Die Babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1968); Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 178; VAT 8228 = *KAR* 298 = Text II rev. 4 in Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 86.

⁴⁸ George, “A Tour of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon,” 55.

⁴⁹ *KAR* 298 (Wiggermann Text II 24.17), which augments details given in K2987B and associated texts, compiled by Wiggermann as Text I, (*Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 53, 102, 103; cf. “pašāšu,” *CAD* 12:248). Anne D. Kilmer translates this phrase: “inside the drain . . .,” literally, “in the middle of the drain(-pipe)” (personal communication).

⁵⁰ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 86; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 93; Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters, and Fabulous Beasts*, 21.

⁵¹ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 53.

The apotropaic function of the goat-fish is further evidenced by a ritual for the substitute king in text BM 121052 (Wiggermann Text VI) from the library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh. Here *suburmašû* and other creatures oppose evil and invite good, as evidenced by words to be inscribed on the wooden statues: *ši-i*, “go out (evil),” and *er-ba*, “enter (good).”⁵² Texts assert that a goat-fish, like an exorcist, imitates Marduk by holding an *e’ru*, “cornel(-stick),” in his left hand. The stick is a weapon used to strike the “evil one” (see ch. 2).⁵³ However, no figurine of a *suburmašû* has been found in which the creature actually has hands and holds such a weapon.⁵⁴

As early as the third millennium BC, the *suburmašû* appears in the night sky as a constellation in the celestial path of Enki.⁵⁵ During the Hellenistic period, the same creature belongs to the Zodiac under the name *capricornus*, the “horned fish.”⁵⁶

8.3.7 CONCLUSION

Apparently at home in both marine and terrestrial environments, the goat-fish, like the merman, is associated with Enki and can function as a mythical warrior and a supernatural apotropaic power.

8.4 FISH QUADRUPED(?)

An unusual marine creature depicted on cylinder seal VA Bab 1541 (Ill. 8.3; see above) could be either an unidentified quadruped-fish or a goat-fish.⁵⁷ If the latter, it is the *suburmašû* and would belong in the discussion above regarding that composite being. However, the creature’s back-turned head would be an exceptional posture for a goat-fish, and the head may be human, in which case it would be a kind of *kulullû*, merman. The creature has arms, like a merman, but unlike goat-fish. In the scene, the fish-tailed creature is chased by a merman (for discussion, see sec. 8.2.3).

TABLE 8.4. FISH QUADRUPED(?)

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type
8.3	VA Bab 1541	9 th -8 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl

Note: Cyl=Cylinder Seal.

⁵² Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 141-142.

⁵³ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 69. Cf. two *suburmašû* figurines holding sticks/staves (*baṭtu*) in AMT 101,2 III:8, cited in “našû,” *CAD* 11.2:88.

⁵⁴ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 84.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., a NA text: ABL 1134 r. 3 (NA, coll. Sollberger), cited in “akāšu,” *CAD* 1.1:265. Cf. Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 155-157.

⁵⁶ See “*suburmašû*,” *CAD* 15:351; Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:230; Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 21.

⁵⁷ Anton Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1988), 72-73, 149, no. 725.

8.5 CONCLUSION

Great bodies of water, including the Persian Gulf and the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, played a major role in ancient Mesopotamian life. Therefore, supernatural aquatic creatures could be expected to inhabit marine habitats in the polytheistic mythic and religious systems of this region. Amalgamation of carp-fish elements with human and quadruped (goat) components heightens the capabilities of a marine creature. A human head, torso, arms, and hands enhance intelligence, dexterity, and fighting ability, and goat legs add terrestrial locomotion.

The powers of the composite being transcend the sum of its parts because it belongs to the supernatural realm, specifically in the domain of Enki (the god of wisdom), serving him and his son Marduk. In NB iconography, including use of figurines in rituals, these aquatic hybrids can serve beneficent and apotropaic functions, such as guarding human and divine residences against demons and enemies, and inviting beneficence.

Attestations of fish-based hybrids are fairly rare in NB iconography. Given the frequency of winged creatures in their art, the Neo-Babylonians seem much more interested in the realm of the sky than in the Apsu (see Appendix).

9. BIRDS AND WINGED COMPOSITE BEINGS

Winged composite beings composed of bird elements and other animal or human features are well attested throughout the ancient Near East. These fabulous beasts may have wings (e.g., genius, griffin, sphinx, scorpion-man, human-headed bull and lion, natural lion and bull, ibex, and various other quadrupeds), bird heads and beaks (e.g., griffin), and/or claws or talons (e.g., griffin, snake-dragon, and scorpion-man).

In this chapter, we will deal with composite beings that are primarily avian in physical composition (not including the bird-of-prey-headed *apkallu*, which was already discussed in ch. 2). These include the bird-griffin (*kuribu*?) and lion-headed eagle (*anzû*). As background to investigation of composite avian creatures and elements in Mesopotamian iconography, the natural bird and its role will be considered first.

9.1 NATURAL BIRD

A wide variety of avian species inhabit Mesopotamia, including birds of prey.¹ Several of these species, including ostriches, are depicted in ancient Mesopotamian art.²

Sumero-Babylonian religion was concerned with all aspects of the cosmos, including the sky, which is accessible to birds. From early times, Mesopotamian iconography associated birds with gods and goddesses to imply that these divine beings were not land-bound, but had access to the sky. Early attestations of creatures with wings depicted from the fourth millennium BC through the second millennium BC seem to be confined to natural birds that are associated with gods, whose function is related to the sky, such as the storm-god Adad (ISHKUR). As early as the Uruk period (c. 3500-3000 BC), a long-necked bird depicted on top of a standard appears to be associated with a seated goddess.³ In the Kassite period, a walking bird became the attribute creature of a god; a bird with a back-turned head and another bird on a high perch or standard, depicted on *kudurrus*, were associated with Kassite deities; and according to captions inscribed on *kudurrus*, Papsukkal, divine vizier of

¹ For ancient and modern species of birds in Mesopotamia see Allan S. Gilbert, "The Native Fauna of the Ancient Near East," in *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (ed. Billie Jean Collins; Handbook of Oriental Studies 64; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 32-37; cf. Laura Erickson, "Birds of Iraq Photo Gallery," n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.lauraerickson.com/bird/Places/Iraq/IraqBirdsGallery.html>; Jonathan, "Birding Babylon," n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: <http://birdingbabylon.blogspot.com>.

² Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (ill. Tessa Richards; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 43.

³ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 43.

the great gods, was represented by a bird.⁴ During the Neo-Assyrian period, a bird on a low perch was identified as the symbol of Ninurta, the sky war god.⁵

In the poetic account of a dream experienced by a NA prince (possibly Ashurbanipal), bird wings, feathers, and talons are linked to death because these elements belong to demons in the netherworld.⁶ Compare the description of the (dead) inhabitants of the netherworld in the Akkadian composition, “The Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld”: “They are clothed like birds in garments of feather” (line 10).⁷

Seal impression NCBT 1168 from Uruk and seal VA 6977 Bab 41075 from Babylon are exemplars of natural bird iconography dating to the Neo-Babylonian period (Ills. 9.1-9.2).

TABLE 9.1. NATURAL BIRD

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
9.1	NCBT 1168	NB	Uruk	Impr	D: Letter-order to allot dates and mustard
9.2	VA 6977 Bab 41075	NB	Babylon	Stamp	I: AN.KIB

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, Stamp=Stamp Seal, Impr=Impression, D=Document, I= Inscription on Seal.



Illustration 9.1. The natural bird: Worship scene. NB stamp sealing; NCBT 1168 (Uruk)

Source. Adapted from Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* (AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999), pl. 9, no. 73.

⁴ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 43. For Papsukkal’s identity as the son of Sin and “vizier of the great gods,” see “Ishtar’s Descent,” lines 81, 83 in Pirjo Lapinkivi, *The Neo-Assyrian Myth of Ishtar’s Descent and Resurrection* (SAACT 6; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2010), 31.

⁵ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 43.

⁶ It is thought that “Kummayya,” the prince who has this dream, may be Ashurbanipal (Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 43; “The Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Crown Prince” in Alasdair Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea* [Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989], 68-76). This poem is the earliest known description of a demon-infested netherworld, which finds its most lurid expressions millennia later in the medieval Roman Catholic hell. For the combination of demons and birds in the New Testament, see Revelation 18:2: “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird” (NASB95). This passage likely alludes to Isaiah 13:21 concerning destroyed Babylon: “But beasts shall lie down there, And the houses be filled with owls; There shall ostriches make their home, And there shall satyrs dance” (NJPS).

⁷ Lapinkivi, *The Neo-Assyrian Myth of Ishtar’s Descent and Resurrection*, 28, line 10; cf. the same words in “Nergal and Ereshkigal” (Standard Babylonian Version), translated by Stephanie Dalley, *COS* 1.109:4.



Illustration 9.2. The natural bird: Worship scene. NB stamp seal: VA 6977 Bab 41075 (Babylon)
 Source. Adapted from Liane Jakob-Rost and Iris Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum* (2d ed.; Mainz: Zabern, 1997), Taf. 4, no. 237.

The seal impression on Ill. 9.1 depicts a worshiper before a pedestal surmounted by a recumbent bird with a large upraised wing. Above the hand of the worshiper is a winged disc. On Ill. 9.2, an altar is surmounted by a rooster between the worshiper (on the left) and the scorpion-man (on the right). Above the bird is the crescent of Sin. This scene is more fully discussed in Chapter 10.

From the mid-second millennium BC on, non-avian creatures were often depicted with wings, feathers, and talons. Whether or not the wings were regarded as enabling these composite beings to fly, they transformed beasts that were otherwise land-bound into supernatural composite beings.⁸ If such hybrids were malevolent demons, it was possible for gods to harness and redirect their powers for apotropaic purposes against incursions of evil.⁹

9.2 BIRD-GRIFFIN: *KURĪBU*(?)

9.2.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

The Sumerian and Akkadian names of the bird-griffin (or eagle-headed lion) are unknown. Some scholars have tentatively identified the monster with the Akkadian term *kuribu* and/or they have identified *kuribu* with the biblical Hebrew *ḵrûḇ*, “cherub,”¹⁰ but this linkage is not solidly established (see further below).¹¹ Scholarly terminology is not consistent with

⁸ Joan G. Westenholz, ed., *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004), 32.

⁹ Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 32.

¹⁰ E.g., Frans A. M. Wiggermann, “Mischwesen A. Philologisch. Mesopotamien,” *RLA* 8:243; Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 33; “kuribu,” *CAD* 8:559.

¹¹ D. N. Freedman and M. P. O’Connor, “*Ḫrûḇ*,” *TDOT* 7:308-309, 314-318. Freedman and O’Connor point out that several kinds of composite beings “might be identified as cherubim, . . . there is no single persuasive identification of the cherubim” (7:318).

reference to this creature.¹² In this study, the designation *bird-griffin* specifically refers to a composite being that combines avian and leonine features.¹³

The bird-griffin was a popular iconographic motif during the Neo-Babylonian period, frequently rendered in glyptic art. Nineteen provenanced examples date to this period, all of which are in glyptic contexts, whether on stamp or cylinder seals or as impressions on inscriptions.

9.2.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE BIRD-GRIFFIN

Bird-griffins vary, but their common denominator is the combination of avian and leonine elements. The creature is winged or wingless, with the head, neck, and chest of a bird, usually an eagle.¹⁴ Its head is typically crested with feathers and its beak is sometimes partly open to show a curling tongue. Occasionally it has large ears, like those of a donkey. Most of its body is that of a lion. The composite being has four legs, generally leonine but sometimes avian, terminating in massive talons or, rarely, paws (with claws) of a lion.¹⁵ Its tail is that of a bird. The beast may be shown recumbent or seated on its haunches.¹⁶

With the torso of a lion, the creature is much more formidable than a natural bird. When it is part eagle, this super-bird combines components of supreme avian and terrestrial predators, with beak and talons or claws for tearing and grasping, and a powerful leonine body. Large ears may imply acute hearing capability. Whether the monster can fly or not, wings supply an impression of speed greater than that of a natural lion.¹⁷

Below are five NB provenanced examples of the bird-griffin as the only iconographic element (Ills. 9.3-9.7).¹⁸

¹² D. N. Freedman and M. P. O'Connor, "*K'rûb*," *TDOT* 7:308-309, 314-318; Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 33; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 99, 101; Anthony Green "Mischwesen. B. Archäologie," *RLA* 8:256-257.

¹³ The word *griffin* usually refers to a creature that has the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion. However, because a griffin may at times have the head of a lion instead of a bird head, more specific terms are sometimes employed to differentiate these creatures from each other by use of the terms *bird-griffin* or *lion-griffin*. Examples of this type of differentiation are found in the British Museum Data Base (e.g., "Cylinder Seal," BM, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=282831&p_artid=1&IdNum=119328&orig=%2fsearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_number_search.aspx), as well as by scholars such as Mehmet-Ali Ataç (e.g., "'Time and Eternity' in the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud," in *Assyrian Reliefs From the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II: A Cultural Biography* [ed. Ada Cohen and Steven E. Kangas; Hanover, N. H.: University Press of New England, 2010], 166).

¹⁴ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 99, 101; Green "Mischwesen. B," *RLA* 8:256-257.

¹⁵ For example, VA Bab 2173 Bab 38384 (Ill. 9.3) shows the monster from a splayed perspective with four avian legs terminating in talons.

¹⁶ Cf. Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 101.

¹⁷ Cf. a lion and a leopard with wings in Daniel 7:4, 6.

¹⁸ The forms of the creature vary widely: None of these appear to represent the same style (except perhaps CBS 2602 and CBS 14364, both from Nippur). Also see BM 116597 (Ur, temple of Sin) ("Stamp-Seal," BM, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid



Illustration 9.3. Solitary bird-griffin. NB Stamp seal: VA Bab 2173 Bab 38384 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Jakob-Rost and Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum*, no. 348.

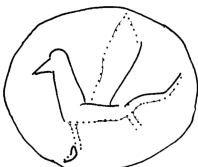


Illustration 9.4. Solitary bird-griffin. NB stamp seal: CBS 2602 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Leon Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians from Their Seals in the Collections of the Museum* (2 vols.; PBS 14.1-2; Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1925), pl. XXXIV, no. 721.



Illustration 9.5. Solitary bird-griffin. NB stamp seal: CBS 13138 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *The Culture of the Babylonians*, pl. XXXIV, no. 723.



Illustration 9.6. Solitary bird-griffin. NB stamp seal: CBS 14364 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *The Culture of the Babylonians*, pl. XXXIV, no. 724



Illustration 9.7. Solitary bird-griffin. NB impression: BM 66337 (Sippar)
Source. Adapted from John D. A. MacGinnis, *Letter Orders from Sippar and the Administration of the Ebabbara in the Late-Babylonian Period* (Poznan: Bonami, 1995), pl. 38, no. 147.

=369139&partid=1&IdNum=1923%2c1110.198&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no_p
rovenancesearch.aspx).

9.2.3 CONTEXT OF THE BIRD-GRIFFIN WITHIN SCENES

Most of the bird-griffins are found within a variety of scenes. Among the most common are contest scenes (Ills. 9.8-9.13), in which the creatures may be antithetical (Ills. 9.8, 9.10 and 9.13), and chase scenes (Ills. 9.14-9.18), and scenes in which the hybrids are adorsed (Ills. 9:19).

9.2.3.1 CONTEST SCENES

In well-attested expressions of the bird-griffin, the monster engages in combat with a human hero or a genius, or observes a contest scene. Six examples involve contests in these ways (Ills. 9.8-9.13).



Illustration 9.8. Bird-griffin: Contest scene. NB cylinder seal: BM 122987 (Ur, North Harbor)

Source. Adapted from Dominique Collon, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Cylinder Seals V: Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Periods* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), 247, 348, no. 350, pls. XXIX, XLIII.



Illustration 9.9. Bird-griffin: Contest scene. NB cylinder seal impression: NCBT 809 (Uruk)

Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 27, 90, pl. 22, no. 178.



Illustration 9.10. Bird-griffins: Contest scene. NB cylinder seal: VA 7737 (Babylon, Merkes)

Source. Adapted from Anton Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1988), 68, n. 2, no. 610.



Illustration 9.11. Bird-griffin: Contest scene. NB impression: VAT 18855 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 27, 93, pl. 24, no. 188.



Illustration 9.12. Bird-griffin: Contest scene. NB cylinder seal: VA 12888 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, no. 611.



Illustration 9.13. Bird-griffin: Contest scene. NB cylinder seal: BM WA 89567 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Collon, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum*, no. 301.

Cylinder seal BM 122987 from Ur (Ill. 9.8) shows an antithetical contest scene, in which a human hero faces left between two rearing griffins(?). Both griffins are in profile, oriented toward the hero, but looking back over their shoulders, as if attempting to reorient themselves in order to escape from him. Behind the griffins and below their wings is a horizontal rhomb. The creatures are not identical: The one on the right seems to have two horns or ears and a short stubby tail, while the one on the left has tall ears like those of a donkey and a long tail like that of a bull or lion. The hero has a long beard and long hair to his shoulders, and he wears a slit-robe over a kilt.¹⁹

¹⁹ Dominique Collon, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Cylinder Seals V: Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Periods* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), pls. XXIX, XLIII, nos. 347, 348, 350; “Pin/Cylinder Seal,” BM, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=1432991&partid=1&IdNum=1931%2c1010.55&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx; Beatrice Wittmann, “Babylonische Rollsiegel des 11.-7.

Cylinder seal NCBT 809 from Uruk (Ill. 9.9), discussed in Chapter 3 (sect. 3.1.3.2 on Ill. 3.14), features a genius grasping the foreleg of a rampant two-winged bird-griffin on the right and the horn of a winged bull on the left. The winged griffin extends its left forearm towards the hero's chest and grapples against his hand with its right hand.²⁰

The complex scene on VA 7737 from Babylon, Merkes, (Ill. 9.10), also discussed in Chapter 3 (sect. 3.1.3.3 on Ill. 3:15), shows two recumbent, opposed winged bird-griffins below two genii struggling against winged human-headed bulls. The bird-griffins raise front paws toward each other while touching claws with the other front paws closest to the viewer.

Stamp seal impression VAT 18855 from Uruk (Ill. 9.11) shows a bird-griffin(?) that is rampant to the left and extends both of its forearms. The creature looks back over its shoulder toward the right. Only the upper body is preserved on this ancient sealing.²¹

Chalcedony cylinder seal VA 12888 from Uruk (Ill. 9.12) renders a scene in profile. Two naked human heroes stand facing each other on either side of two facing sphinxes. Each hero places one foot on the back of the sphinx in front of him. Each sphinx raises its front paw to touch that of the opposing sphinx. Both heroes have feathered hair to their shoulders and curly, long beards to their chests. Each raises one arm to brandish a mace over his head, while the other hand grasps an upraised left limb of a rampant winged bird-griffin suspended between them, above the sphinxes. The hero on the right grasps the left forefoot of the griffin, while the hero to the left holds the left hind foot. The griffin is oriented toward the right, but its head turns back over its shoulder toward the hero on the left.²²

On BM WA 89567 from Babylon (Ill. 9.13) a human hero in frontal pose faces right and grasps a rearing bird-griffin's forepaw. Between the two figures is a stylized plant. Above the wing (showing only one wing in profile) of the bird-griffin is an eight-pointed star. In the terminal behind the creature is a rhomb above a crescent. The bearded hero also appears to hold a curved sword in his lowered right hand. He is bare-chested and wears a split-skirt over a kilt. The griffin's head is that of a bird-of-prey, with spiked feathers on the top of its head and down the neck, but its ears are like those of a donkey. The body, haunches, and forepaws are leonine, but the hind legs terminate in oversized bird-of-prey talons, and the tail is that of a bird.²³

Jahrhunderts v. Chr." *BaM* 23 (1992): 224, 276, nos. 91, 162, 165, 168; Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum Press, 2005), 373; Leon Legrain, *Seal Cylinders* (UE 10; London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1951), no. 609.

²⁰ Ehrenberg identifies this creature as a bird-griffin. However, it is possible that it is a lion-demon because its body is that of a lion. Only its head, wings, and tail are those of a bird. Alternatively, it may be a variant of the *anzû* or *asakku* demon (Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* [AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999], 27, 90, pl. 22, no. 178).

²¹ Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 27, 93, pl. 24, no. 188.

²² This NB scene, in which two identical, naked heroes engage in contest for a creature, has no parallel in NA iconography (Edith Porada, "Suggestions for the Classification of Neo-Babylonian Cylinder Seals," *Or* 16 [1947]: 153, fig. 11).

²³ Collon, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum*, no. 301.

9.2.3.2 CHASE SCENES

The bird-griffin appears in several chase scenes, whether as the pursuer or as the one fleeing. Below are five examples of this, all of which are from cylinder seals (Ills. 9.14-9.18).



Illustration 9.14. Bird-griffin: Chase scene. NB cylinder seal: U. 16656 (Ur)

Source. Adapted from Leon Legrain, *Seal Cylinders* (UE 10; London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1951), pl. 35, no. 595.

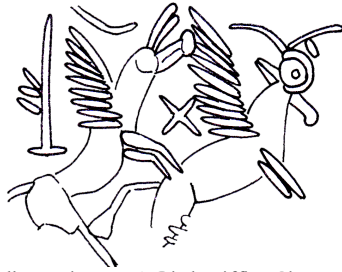


Illustration 9.15. Bird-griffin: Chase scene. NB cylinder seal: U. 18357 (Ur)

Source. Adapted from Legrain, *Seal Cylinders*, pl. 36, no. 599.



Illustration 9.16. Bird-griffin: Chase scene. NB cylinder seal: U. (CBS. 16320) (Ur)

Source. Adapted from Legrain, *Seal Cylinders*, pl. 36, no. 600.



Illustration 9.17. Bird-griffin: Chase scene. NB cylinder seal: U. 18180 (Ur, Rajeibeh)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *Seal Cylinders*, pl. 36, no. 603.



Illustration 9.18. Bird-griffin: Chase scene. NB cylinder seal: BM 119328 (Warka/Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Collon, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum*, pl. V, no. 64.

The lively scene on U. 16656 from Ur (Ill. 9.14), oriented to the left, shows a winged bird-griffin in hot pursuit of a fleeing antelope. The griffin's ears look like the horns of the antelope, but they are probably quasi-asinine ears. The head and neck of the griffin are crested. Above the griffin is a double crescent, and, according to Legrain, a "winged sun-disk" hovers above the creature's outstretched hind legs. Above the antelope's back is a six-pointed star.²⁴

The scene of U. 18357 from Ur (Ill. 9.15) is oriented to the right and portrays a winged bird-griffin with donkey-like ears attacking a winged caprine, perhaps an ibex. Above the haunches of the griffin is a stylized tree, and over its wing is a crescent. Between the griffin and the winged ibex(?) is a four-pointed star.²⁵

Oriented to the right, the scene of U. (CBS. 16320) from Ur (Ill. 9.16) depicts a winged bird-griffin with exaggerated donkey ears pursuing an ibex, which looks back over its shoulder at the pursuer (Ill. 9.16 shows the sequence reversed). Above the griffin's wing is a crescent over a trefoil.²⁶

The scene on U. 18180 from Ur, Rajeibeh, (Ill. 9.17), oriented to the left, is somewhat unclear. It appears that a winged bird-griffin is pursuing another avian creature, whether a

²⁴ Legrain, *Seal Cylinders*, no. 599.

²⁵ Legrain, *Seal Cylinders*, no. 595.

²⁶ Legrain, *Seal Cylinders*, no. 600.

bird-griffin or an ostrich. Above the fleeing animal is a crescent, which is below a sphere. Below the belly of the same creature is what Legrain identifies as a “sun-disk,” which is over two dots.²⁷

Cylinder seal BM 119328 from Uruk (Ill. 9.18) shows a bird-griffin and a lion-griffin rapidly moving toward the right. In the dynamic scene, it is unclear which is pursuing the other. Both creatures have lion forepaws and hind legs terminating in oversized talons of a bird of prey. The bird-griffin has the upright ears of a donkey. Above the head of the lion-griffin is the lower part of a crescent, and above its shoulder is the lower half of an eight-pointed star.²⁸

9.2.3.3 ADORSED

There is one possible example of antithetical bird-griffins in an incomplete impression of a cylinder seal, used as a stamp seal, on a tablet containing a cuneiform document: VAT 18519 from Uruk (Ill. 9.19). In this impression, a bird-griffin(?) is rampant to the right, with its right leg extended. The head and feet of the creature are not preserved. Behind and to the left of the griffin is an adorsed creature, of which only the wingtips were impressed on the tablet.²⁹



Illustration 9.19. Adorsed bird-griffins. NB cylinder impression: VAT 18519 (W7461j) (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 27, 93, pl. 24, no. 187.

9.2.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

None.

9.2.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXTS

The NB bird-griffins discussed above are depicted on seals (mainly cylinder seals but also stamp seals) and seal impressions.

²⁷ Legrain, *Seal Cylinders*, no. 603. CBS 13138 (Nippur) shows a bird-griffin with two dots below its beak.

²⁸ “Cylinder Seal,” BM, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=282831&partId=1&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx&nmpages=10&idNum=1928,0211.31¤tPage=1.

²⁹ Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, 27, 93, pl. 24, no. 187.

TABLE 9.2. BIRD-GRIFFIN: *KURĪBU*(?)

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
9.3	VA Bab 2173 Bab 38384	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
9.4	CBS 2602	NB	Nippur	Stamp	
9.5	CBS 13138	NB	Nippur	Stamp	
9.6	CBS 14364	NB	Nippur	Stamp	
9.7	BM 66337	NBN	Sippar	Impr	D: Letter order

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, NBN=Nabonidus, Stamp=Stamp Seal, Impr=Impression, D=Document.

TABLE 9.3. BIRD-GRIFFIN IN CONTEST SCENES

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
9.8	BM 122987	8 th -7 th cent.	Ur	Cyl	
9.9	NCBT 809	NB	Uruk	Cyl	D: List of jugs
9.10	VA 7737	Early half 1 st mill.	Babylon	Cyl	
9.11	VAT 18855	NBK2	Uruk	Cyl	D: Economic text
9.12	VA 12888	Early half 1 st mill.	Uruk	Cyl	
9.13	BM WA 89567	9 th -6 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl	

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, NBK2=Nebuchadnezzar II, Cyl=Cylinder Seal, D=Document.

TABLE 9.4. BIRD-GRIFFIN IN CHASE SCENES

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type
9.14	U. 16656	NB	Ur	Cyl
9.15	U. 18357	NB	Ur	Cyl
9.16	U. (CBS. 16320)	NB	Ur	Cyl
9.17	U. 18180	NB	Ur	Cyl
9.18	BM 119328	NB	Uruk	Cyl

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, Cyl=Cylinder Seal.

TABLE 9.5. BIRD-GRIFFIN ADORSED

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
9.19	VAT 18519	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: Receipt

Note: NBK2=Nebuchadnezzar II, Impr=Impression, D=Document.

The manufacture of the seals varies greatly in terms of the quality of craftsmanship and the value of the materials employed. Impressions are placed on economic tablets that record commodities and sales. We can assume that functions of the bird-griffin in these glyptic contexts are similar to those of other kinds of composite beings.

9.2.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The bird-griffin may have emerged in Syria during the second millennium BC. The creature becomes common in the iconography of Mesopotamia and other parts of the ancient Near

East by the fourteenth century BC.³⁰ Later the term *kurību*, which may designate the bird-griffin in some instances, appears in Standard Babylonian (early to mid-1st mill. BC) and NA texts.³¹

Although the Mesopotamian bird-griffin appears with other creatures of various gods, its specific associations and functions in relation to particular deities are uncertain. According to Madhloom, winged griffins guarded the sacred tree where their purpose was apotropaic, but in other contexts they are shown to be aggressive killers, possibly depicted in the act of repelling evil spirits.³² Much of the uncertainty of these creature's function would disappear if we were sure that the word *kurību* means "bird-griffin." If this tentative identification³³ is correct, two texts of Esarhaddon illuminate the function of the bird-griffin. These texts characterize the *kurību* as a divine apotropaic guardian figure (with the Akkadian divine determinative) during the Neo-Assyrian period. The first reads: "I had fashioned (for the entrance of the Ishtar temple in Arbela) lion (representations), *anzû* (represented as) shouting, *laḫmu*-monsters ^d*ku-ri-bi* (of silver and copper)."³⁴ The second is as follows: "I placed (at the entrance of the cella of Ashur) *laḫmu*-monsters and *kuribus* made of reddish gold facing each other."³⁵

In a vision experienced by a NA crown prince, the head of Namtartu, wife of Namtar (vizier of the netherworld), is like that of a *kurību*. Here Namtartu is closely associated with death: "[Na]mtartu, his female counterpart, had the head of a protective spirit [*kurību*], her hands and feet were human. Death had the head of a dragon, his hands were human, his feet []."³⁶ This evidence could be taken to correlate with the fact that the bird-griffin was linked to death and funerary rites in the West.³⁷

Also in NA texts, *kuribus* (or "cherubs") are associated with winds: "50 silver images of cherubs (and) winds" are placed in a temple of Sin.³⁸

Whether or not the semantic range of the term *kurību* includes the bird-griffin, the word is polyvalent.³⁹ It can designate other creatures or beings, such as the human-headed lion, also

³⁰ Green, "Mischwesen. B," *RLA* 8:256.

³¹ See "kurību," *CAD* 8:559.

³² Tariq A. Madhloom, *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art* (London: University of London, Athlone, 1970), 105.

³³ Wiggermann "Mischwesen. A," *RLA* 8:243; "kurību," *CAD* 8:559; cf. Eckhard Unger, *Babylon: Die Heilige Stadt nach der Beschreibung der Babylonier* (2d ed.; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970), 173, 184.

³⁴ Rykle Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs Von Assyrien* (AfOB 9; Osnaburg: Biblio-Verlag, 1967), 33, line 10; see "kurību," *CAD* 8:559.

³⁵ Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs Von Assyrien*, 87, line 24; "kurību," *CAD* 8:559.

³⁶ Benjamn R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2005), 835.

³⁷ Green, "Mischwesen. B," *RLA* 8:257.

³⁸ Steven William Cole and Peter Machinist, *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Priests to Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal* (SAA 13; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1998), no. 28. Regarding gold and silver work on the temple of Sin, see Unger, *Babylon*, 173.

called a sphinx (see ch. 5, sect. 5.2),⁴⁰ and, apparently, a divine being identified as ^dKāribu, “the god who blesses.” The ^dKāribu stood guard at one of the many gates in the Esagila temple complex in Babylon, known as the “Well-being” or “Salvation Gate,” which was situated next to Marduk’s chapel, called Ekua.⁴¹

9.2.7 CONCLUSION

The bird-griffin combines features of creatures that excel in moving on land and in the sky. Wings add speed to the powerful body of a lion, a top terrestrial predator. When bird components (head, beak, and talons) are those of an eagle, they add aspects of a supreme avian predator.

Since bird-griffins are equipped for physical prowess, it is not surprising that they play aggressive roles in contest and chase scenes, or that they could be effective guardian figures, a role that would be established if it were certain that *kurību* in texts refers to bird-griffins. Texts also associate the *kurību* with wind and the underworld region of death. Aside from Akkadian terminology to designate the bird-griffin, another key element of its identity remains elusive: its affiliation with any particular deity.

³⁹ See “kurību,” *CAD* 8:559. Some scholars relate the Akkadian word *kurību*, “bird-griffin”(?) to *kāribu/btu*, which is a participle/adjective of the verb *karābu*, “to pray, to consecrate, bless” (“karābu(m),” *AHW* 1:449a; cf. “karābu,” *CAD* 8:192-8). Thus *kāribu/btu* can refer to “a person performing a specific religious act” or “a deity represented as making a gesture of adoration” (“kurību,” *CAD* 8:216). *Kāribu/btu* may be identified as an intercessory priest, a tutelary spirit (also *kurību*), or a sculpted mythical gatekeeper (see “karābu(m),” *AHW* 1:449a, 453a, 510b). Wiggermann suggests that the word *kurību* is related to the Semitic word *gārib*, “raven,” rather than to the Akkadian word *karābu* (“Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:243). Although there is no consensus on the etymology of the Akkadian *karābu*, it is the cognate of the biblical *kerub*, “cherub,” which is mentioned some ninety-one times in the Hebrew Bible. In the biblical context, cherubim are found as guardians of a sacred tree (1 Kings 6:29-35; Ezekiel 41:18-25), of a garden (Genesis 3:24; Ezekiel 28:14, 16), of a throne (1 Kings 6:23-27; 2 Chronicles 3:12-13), or bearers of a throne (Ezekiel 10:20; 1 Samuel 4:4; T. N. D. Mettinger, “Cherubim,” *DDD*, 191). For further discussion on cherubim in the ANE, see Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 125, 141-144, 169; Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 33.

⁴⁰ Otherwise known as *aladlammū/apsasu* (m.) and *apsasītu* (f.) (see ch. 4; Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:222-246, 255).

⁴¹ See “kurību,” *CAD* 8:216; Unger, *Babylon*, 274-275. Andrew George describes Marduk’s temple: “Esagil was huge: 86 by 79 metres, with gateways 9 metres high and walls 4 metres thick. Nebuchadnezzar lavished attention on the cult-rooms: there were gold, silver and gemstones everywhere, and great doors and beams of Lebanese cedar. Throughout the temple were images of strange monsters—serpents and dragons, lion-demons and scorpion-men, bison and mermen; statues of dragons and goat-fish and sphinxes stood guard at its entrances” (“A Tour of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon,” in *Babylon* [ed. Irving L. Finkel and M. J. Seymour; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009], 55). In “apsasū,” *CAD* 1.2:193, def. 1.b, the word is used “as a mythological animal,” but in “baštu,” *CAD* 2:143 *apsasū* is translated as “sphinx.”

9.3 LION-HEADED EAGLE: ANZŪ (ANZUD)

9.3.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLE

Whereas the bird-griffin discussed above can be an eagle-headed lion, the composite being considered in the present section is a lion-headed eagle. This mythological eagle is known in Akkadian as *anzû*, a loanword from Sumerian⁴² ANZUD, “eagle” or “mythological eagle.”⁴³

One provenanced example of what appears to be the *anzû* bird is on cylinder seal VA Bab 647 from Babylon, probably dating to the ninth century BC, but dated by some to the seventh-sixth centuries BC (Ill. 9.20).⁴⁴ Alternatively, the creature may be an *asakku* lion-dragon.⁴⁵ The reason for the ambiguity is the fact that the seal portrays only the front part of the monster; the rear part of its body is behind the foreground figure of Adad. If the body is that of an eagle, it is the *anzû*, but if the body is leonine, it is the *asakku*.



Illustration 9.20. Adad with *anzû*. NB cylinder seal: VA Bab 647 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Chikako E. Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia: A Contextual Approach* (WOO 1; Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik der Universität Wien, 2002), fig. 60.

⁴² See “anzû,” *CAD* 1.2:153-154.

⁴³ Written ANZUD₂^{MUŠEN}; ANZUD^{MUŠEN}; AN.IM^{MUŠEN} (“anzud [EAGLE],” *ePSD*, n.p.). On the name of the creature and the meaning of this designation as “Heavy Cloud,” “Fog,” or “Mist,” see Frans A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (CM 1; Groningen: Styx & PP, 1992), 185; Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:243; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 107, 121; Green, “Mischwesen. B,” *RLA* 8:258; Niek Veldhuis, *Religion, Literature, and Scholarship: The Sumerian Composition Nanše and the Birds, With a Catalogue of Sumerian Bird Names* (CM 22; Leiden: Brill/Styx, 2004), 29-36, 219.

⁴⁴ For the 9th-cent.-BC dating, see Collon, *First Impressions*, 131. For the 7th-6th-cents.-BC dating, see Chikako E. Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia: A Contextual Approach* (WOO 1; Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik der Universität Wien, 2002), figs. 53-57; Evelyn Klengel-Brandt, ed., *Mit Sieben Siegeln Versehen: Das Siegel in Wirtschaft und Kunst Des Alten Orients* (Mainz: Zabern, 1997), xi, Farbabb. 22.

⁴⁵ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 107.

9.3.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE LION-HEADED EAGLE (*ANZŪ*)

Like the bird-griffin, the *anzû* combines components of the eagle and the lion, paramount predators that move in the sky and on land. Fusion of these two aggressive killers in the *anzû* results in a terrifying monster equipped with powerful leonine head, jaws, and sometimes (including in Ill. 9.20) forepaws, plus eagle wings and talons for speed and snatching prey, respectively (not visible in Ill. 9.20).

9.3.3 CONTEXT OF THE LION-HEADED EAGLE (*ANZŪ*) WITHIN SCENE

The scene on cylinder seal VA Bab 647 (Ill. 9.20) shows Anzu as one of Adad's creatures. Adad, a storm-god, stands in the foreground facing right, but with a frontal torso. His right arm is upraised and holds a forked lightning bolt. His left arm is extended, and he holds a second forked lightning bolt that extends upward from his hand. Below his hand, the lightning bolt becomes two tethers that extend downward and attach to two creatures, much smaller than himself, that are recumbent at his feet and also face toward the right. Closest to the foreground is a winged lion-headed dragon with a pronounced mane, which may be an *anzû* bird. The second tethered creature is unclear, but may be a *mušbuššu*. Both the deity and the creatures are supported by a plinth covered with scales, which may represent mountains.

Adad is garbed in an ornate robe embellished with symbols. His bodice displays the four-pointed orb of Shamash, a second orb with a single central dot, and what appears to be a breastplate in the shape of a ziggurat. From this breastplate extends a pendant with three large disks. The highest of the three disks shows a four-pointed star in an orb. Four small orbs fill the open fields of the star/sun of Shamash. The middle disk presents the eight-pointed star of Ishtar. The lowest disk has a six-pointed star with small orbs in the space between the six points. Adad wears at least three bracelets on each forearm and a high, feathered crown. His hair falls to his shoulders and his square beard is curly and long.

Adad is a sky deity associated with other celestial gods, as emphasized by the symbolism just described. So it is appropriate that the *anzû*, which has access to the sky, would belong to and be controlled by him. The fact that the god dwarfs the mighty bird, which is reduced to a subservient role along with another tethered creature, indicates a wide disparity of relative power and importance that glorifies Adad and his domination.

9.3.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

Cylinder seal VA Bab 647 (Ill. 9.20) bears two separate inscriptions. The original inscription, which probably dates to around the ninth century BC, is as follows: "The seal of the god Adad." A secondary dedicatory inscription was added later, probably by Esarhaddon. Adding another layer to the function of the seal, it reads: "The property of Marduk . . . of the

Esagila. To the great lord, his lord, Esarhaddon, king of the universe, king of Assyria, has given (this seal) for his life.”⁴⁶

The seal may have been brought to Assyria as tribute when Sennacherib conquered Babylon. Later, Esarhaddon, who was obsessed with atoning for his father’s sacrilegious offense of destroying the sacred city of Babylon in 689 BC, reconstructed the city. It is likely that Esarhaddon returned the seal to Babylon while the city was being restored.⁴⁷ Although the seal belonged to the powerful storm-god Adad, who was served by Anzu, the king now placed the object under the custody of Marduk, the national deity, at his temple. In this way, the glyptic depiction of Anzu became indirectly associated with Marduk.

In Mesopotamia, restoration of a sacred object to its home carried important implications, as observed by Kuhrt concerning the return of a divine statue:

The image was, at times, also inscribed with a message and the name of the Assyrian king who was bringing it back. The restored divinity thus only flourished back in its local shrine by the grace of the Assyrian monarch; it owed its renewed life to him, so in future it would help and bless him.⁴⁸

It appears that the same dynamics would have applied when seal VA Bab 647 was returned. Esarhaddon dedicated the seal to Marduk “for his life,” which meant that he asked for reciprocal benefit from the god. In this particular historical context, these words could also imply his need for the city god of Babylon to spare him, son of the Assyrian destroyer, from retribution for inherited responsibility.⁴⁹

This seal is unusual in that it belongs to two separate categories: (1) a god’s (Adad’s) own personal seal and (2) a votive seal dedicated by the worshiper (in this case Esarhaddon) to a deity (Marduk). While ancient Near Eastern personal seals of gods are rare (see also VA Bab 646 in ch. 11, Ill. 11.8), votive seals are well attested. Seals owned by or dedicated to gods are typically larger than those belonging to humans. They are generally made of precious materials, such as lapis lazuli, and set in gold fittings.⁵⁰ The fact that seal VA Bab 647, which already bore an inscription, was again inscribed by an Assyrian king and dedicated to a second Babylonian god exemplifies the Assyrians’ deep respect for Babylonian culture and religion.

⁴⁶ Collon, *First Impressions*, 131, 134; see discussion under no. 563.

⁴⁷ Watanabe, *Animal Symbolism in Mesopotamia*, 135.

⁴⁸ Amélie Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000-330 BC* (2 vols.; London: Routledge, 1995), 513.

⁴⁹ For the venerable ANE belief in inherited royal blameworthiness, see also the “Plague Prayers of Muršili II” (translated by Gary Beckman in *COS* 1.60), in which the Hittite king Muršili II (1330-1295 BC) pleads with the gods to remove a devastating plague on his land that he regards as divine punishment for his father’s unjust killing of Tudḫaliya, which sacrilegiously violated an oath. In the Bible, the concept of inherited royal responsibility (here from one dynasty to the next) in a case involving murder and sacrilegious oath violation also appears in 2 Samuel 21.

⁵⁰ Collon, *First Impressions*, 131, 133, 170, nos. 563 (VA Bab 647), 785 (VA Bab 646).

The *anzû* bird is placed by Marduk “on top of the restless Sea” in the account accompanying “The Babylonian Map of the World,” BM 92687 (Ill. 1.1).⁵¹ See introduction for discussion of this text.

9.3.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 9.6. LION-HEADED EAGLE: *ANZÛ* (ANZUD)

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
9.20	VA Bab 647	9 th & 7 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl	SO: original owner unknown; 2nd owner: Esarhaddon I: Votive seal: Original inscription (c. 9 th cent. BC): “The seal of the god Adad.” Inscription added later (prob. by Esarhaddon, 680-669 BC): “The property of Marduk . . . of the Esagila. To the great lord, his lord, Esarhaddon, king of the universe, king of Assyria, has given (this seal) for his life.”

Note: Cyl=Cylinder Seal, SO=Seal Owner, I=Inscription on Seal.

Cylinder seal VA Bab 647, belonging to Adad and later secondarily dedicated to Marduk, is unusually large and was found with a similar cylinder seal, VA Bab 646 (Ill. 11:8), also dedicated to Marduk. Both seals are made of lapis lazuli and are exquisitely carved in relief, not intaglio.⁵² So although these valuable objects were regarded as seals of gods, they did not function for making impressions.

9.3.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

One of the oldest of ancient Near Eastern composite beings,⁵³ the *anzû* bird is well attested in Sumerian personal names as early as the Fara period (c. 2600-2300 BC).⁵⁴ Originally a monstrous lion-headed eagle,⁵⁵ the *anzû* was later represented in iconography by the lion-dragon (*asakku*), also called the lion-griffin.⁵⁶ As already mentioned in Chapter 5, precisely when the first association was made between the lion-dragon and the *anzû* is not known (sect. 5.6.6).⁵⁷ Sometime after the Ur III period, Adad (ISHKUR) replaced his attribute creature, the lion-dragon, with the bull. At this point, the lion-dragon appears to have

⁵¹ Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 8; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 26.

⁵² Julian E. Reade, “Tablets at Babylon and the British Museum,” in *Babylon* (ed. Irving L. Finkel and M. J. Seymour; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 74-80, 96, figs. 78, 79; Klengel-Brandt, *Mit Sieben Siegeln Versehen*, xi, 99-100, Abb. 99, Farbabb. 21.

⁵³ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:243.

⁵⁴ Veldhuis, *Religion, Literature, and Scholarship*, 32.

⁵⁵ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:243.

⁵⁶ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:243.

⁵⁷ Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:244.

developed into a bird-tailed representation of what may be the mythological Sumerian *anzû* bird. In Mesopotamia, the *anzû* also appears in the night sky as a constellation.⁵⁸

A number of Sumerian myths reveal the character, function, and power of the *anzû*. The birth of the bird on Mt. Sharshar was accompanied by dust storms, high winds, and gushing water (*Anzû* I:36-39).⁵⁹ Initially it seems to have been a personification of an atmospheric condition (storm, cloud, fog, or mist), so that the flapping of its wings were regarded as causing whirlwinds and sandstorms.⁶⁰ As a manifestation of demonic force associated with thunderstorms, the bird is further described: “When *Anzû* saw him, he shook with fury at him, he ground his teeth like a cyclone, he enveloped the mountain with his horrible glow, he roared like a lion, seized with passion” (*Anzû* II:36-39).⁶¹

Several myths portray the *anzû* bird in a positive light. In “Ninurta and the Turtle,” the “chick *anzû*” leads Ninurta to the Apsu, where Enki dwells.⁶² In the tale of “Lugalbanda,” the *anzû* bird grants Lugalbanda extraordinary powers to conquer the mountainous people of Aratta. The tale “Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld” tells of the *anzû* settling its young in a tree.⁶³

However, the *anzû* also had a dark side. Early on, he was associated with Enki (Ea),⁶⁴ who commissioned him to guard his temple and the Tablets of Destiny. But in the Akkadian myth of Anzu,⁶⁵ the great bird coveted and stole the crucial tablets. Ningirsu (alternatively Ninurta) was dispatched to retrieve the stolen items. He defeated Anzu and recovered the tablets (*Anzû* III:21-23).⁶⁶

⁵⁸ For identification of the *anzû*-star with the “Horse-star,” see Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 35. For possible identification of the *anzû* with the “Giant” Aquarius see Wiggermann, “Mischwesen. A,” *RLA* 8:230.

⁵⁹ Amar Annus, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzû: Introduction, Cuneiform Text, Transliteration, Score, Glossary, Indices and Sign List* (SAACT 3; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001), x, 3, 19.

⁶⁰ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 107.

⁶¹ Annus, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzû*, 23; Foster, *Before the Muses*, 477.

⁶² Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 173. For cuneiform text and translation, see “Ninurta and the Turtle: Composite Text,” *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: <http://www-etcs.orient.ox.ac.uk/section1/c163.htm>; “Ninurta and the Turtle: Translation,” *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: <http://www-etcs.orient.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr163.htm>.

⁶³ “Gilgamesh, Enkidu and The Nether World,” *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*, n.p. [cited 17 May 2012]. Online: <http://etcs.orient.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcs.cgi?text=c.1.8.1.4&display=Crit&charenc=gcirc&lineid=c1814.1.36>.

⁶⁴ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 173.

⁶⁵ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 107.

⁶⁶ Annus, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzû*, xii, 13, 27; Ignace Gelb, Piotr Steinkeller, and Robert Whiting, *Earliest Land Tenure Systems in the Near East: Ancient Kudurrus* (2 vols.; OIP 104; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1991), 63; Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 218. Gianni Marchesi, “Who Was Buried in the Royal Tombs of Ur? The Epigraphic and Textual Data,” *Or* 73 (2004): 189 n. 203; Bendt Alster, “Contributions to the Sumerian Lexicon,” *RA* 85 (1991): 1-5.

According to a seventh-century-BC text, “Acrostic Hymn to Marduk,” the NA king Ashurbanipal glorifies Marduk as the one “who struck the pate of Anzu.”⁶⁷ Again, the mythical bird is regarded as an evil antagonist who must be conquered by a beneficent deity.

In iconography, the *anzû* first appears on cylinder seals of the Uruk period (c. 3500-3000 BC) and is common during the Early Dynastic period. On the “Stela of the Vultures,” the *anzû* is connected to Ningirsu.⁶⁸ Artistic representations of the bird monster continue into the Neo-Sumerian/Ur III period, but they seem to disappear after this.⁶⁹ The *anzû* reemerges in iconography during the Old Babylonian period. By the Neo-Assyrian period, a monster combining bird and lion elements may be a continuation of the *anzû* motif, or it may be the Asakku (Asag) lion-dragon.⁷⁰

9.3.7 CONCLUSION

Composed of eagle and lion elements, the *anzû* bird is a formidable, ferocious composite being. Myths portray him as aggressive and possessing supernatural strength and speed. He is linked to violent atmospheric conditions. Although the *anzû* can engage in beneficial behavior, including guarding activity, he is more frequently viewed as devious and attempting to usurp divine powers. Therefore, gods are constrained to oppose and overcome him.

9.4 BIRD FIGURE

Stamp seal VA Bab 1645 Bab 15487 from Babylon, Amran (Ill. 9.21), is made of blue-grey stone and portrays an unparalleled bird figure. In the scene, a fantastic creature (perhaps a rooster[?]) sits on a chair facing left, with one leg in front of the other. Its head is a whirl of feathers, not showing a face. The bird figure is dressed in feathers and holds a small bird in one upraised hand. It appears as though his legs terminate in heeled boots, but they are probably bird talons. A three-pronged plant on a pedestal stands to the left in front of the seated creature.



Illustration 9.21. Bird figure. NB stamp seal: VA Bab 1645 Bab 15487 (Babylon, Amran)

Source. Adapted from Jakob-Rost and Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum*, no. 233.

⁶⁷ Foster, *Before the Muses*, 822.

⁶⁸ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 107.

⁶⁹ Green, “Mischwesen. B,” *RLA* 8:254, fig. 14.

⁷⁰ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 107.

TABLE 9.7. BIRD FIGURE

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type
9.21	VA Bab 1645 Bab 15487	NB	Babylon	Stamp

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, Stamp=Stamp Seal.

9.5 CONCLUSION

Addition of wings transforms a land-bound creature, such as a lion (in the case of the NB bird-griffin) into one capable of transcending its natural domain. Whether or not such a bizarre hybrid can fly, it becomes supernatural, with access to the realm of the gods. This realm could be on land, where a terrestrial creature would be at home, in the sky, where we would expect bird imagery, or in the netherworld, due to association of bird feathers with death. The bird-griffin, which combines a leonine body with a bird-of-prey head, is a vigorous and aggressive hybrid that uses its formidable energy in various ways, including contests, chases, and possibly guarding.

Addition of a lion head to an eagle (morphologically opposite to the bird-griffin), which already has access to the sky, produces the fearsome *anzû* bird, in which top predators of two cosmic domains are combined. This is the zoological equivalent of an army tank that can fly like a fighter jet. The monstrous *anzû* is also crafty, but its behavior incurs the wrath of gods who are more powerful and ultimately defeat it.

10. SCORPION

Artistic representations of scorpions are not uncommon in Mesopotamian iconography, although they are more prevalent in the western iconography of Palestine and especially of Transjordan.¹ The scorpion-man has scorpion and human compositional elements, and he sometimes appears with the addition of wings. This chapter will first consider the natural scorpion and then turn to an analysis of NB iconographic representations of the scorpion-man.

10.1 NATURAL SCORPION

Modern Iraq is home to numerous kinds of scorpions, primarily from the family *Butbidae*. Among these venomous arthropods are some of the world's deadliest species, including the *Hemiscorpius lepturus*. This is the most dangerous scorpion known to man, and there is no antidote for its sting. Its hemolytic venom can cause severe external and internal ulcers, resulting in the death of about seventy-five percent of those stung.² Little wonder that these small, fearsome creatures were associated with extraordinary powers in ancient times.

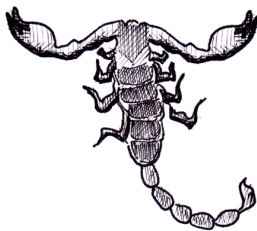


Illustration 10.1. Natural Scorpion (*Hemiscorpius lepturus*).

The scorpion's nocturnal or diurnal behavior and the way in which it gives birth are distinctive. For example, the female scorpion has a long gestation period of several months to over a year, the young develop as embryos, and when the mother gives birth, she often catches the young in her arms, arranged as a basket.³

¹ Jürg Egger, "Scorpion," *IDD*, 5.

² Jan O. Rein, "Scorpions in Iraq," n.p. [cited 21 May 2012]. Online: http://www.ntnu.no/ub/scorpion-files/scorpions_iraq.php. Currently, about 1400 recognized species are known worldwide.

³ Dawn H. Gouge and Carl Olson, "Scorpions," University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, n.p. [cited 21 May 2012]. Online: ag.arizona.edu/pubs/insects/az1223.pdf.

In ancient Mesopotamia, such behavior gave rise to the association of the scorpion with fertility and reproduction, so that the creature was viewed as contributing to life, renewal, and procreation. Consequently it could symbolize marriage.⁴ The scorpion was often regarded as exuding a numinous power, independent of any particular divine being. Thus, scorpions were used in medicinal formulas and ointments, and referred to in protasis and apodosis formulas of omens.⁵ In the night sky the scorpion is represented in the constellation Scorpio, which appears in astrological omens.⁶

The scorpion was occasionally associated with a deity, especially the goddess Ishkhara (often identified with Ishtar and Astarte), who was associated with fertility and so often depicted naked in a frontal pose. Ishkhara was further linked to war and extispicy.⁷ She was known to enforce oaths, including those of nuptial agreements, and in this role she used the venom of the scorpion to inflict illness on those who violated these binding obligations.⁸ Perhaps a conditional self-imprecation calling for a scorpion to punish violation of the marriage oath was sufficient deterrent to ward off the sting of infidelity, at least for some people.

The Akkadian word *aqrabu* (= *zu-qa-qi-pu*; Sumerian GÍR.TAB) denotes “scorpion.”⁹ Sumerian GÍR.TAB.LÚ.U_x(GIŠGAL).LU, probably to be read in Akkadian as *girtablullû*,¹⁰ combines GÍR.TAB, “scorpion,” with LÚ.U_x(GIŠGAL).LU, “untamed man.” Originally the term *girtablullû* referred to a natural scorpion, but already by the third millennium BC it developed into a designation for a monstrous creature.¹¹

10.2 SCORPION-MAN: *GIRTABLULLÛ* (GÍR.TAB.LÚ.U_x[GIŠGAL].LU)

10.2.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

Seven NB provenanced examples of scorpion-men are extant. Two are on stamp seals (Ills. 10.2, 10.6), two are on cylinder seals (Ills. 10.3, 10.7), and three are in impressions of stamp seals on cuneiform tablets (Ills. 10.4-10.5, 10.8).

⁴ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (CM 1; Groningen: Styx & PP, 1992), 149.

⁵ See “zuqaqīpu,” *CAD* 21:165.

⁶ Hermann Hunger and David E. Pingree, *Astral Sciences in Mesopotamia* (Handbook of Oriental Studies 44; Leiden: Brill, 1999).

⁷ Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (ill. Tessa Richards; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 110.

⁸ Egger, “Scorpion,” *IDD*, 1-2.

⁹ See “aqrabu,” *CAD* 1.2:207.

¹⁰ See “aqrabu,” *CAD* 1.2:207; “zuqaqīpu,” *CAD* 21:164.

¹¹ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 147, 180.



Illustration 10.2. Scorpion-man (*girtablullû*): Worship scene. NB stamp seal: VA 6977 Bab 41075 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Liane Jakob-Rost and Iris Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum* (2d ed.; Mainz: Zabern, 1997), Taf. 4, no. 237.



Illustration 10.3. Scorpion-man (*girtablullû*): Worship scene. NB cylinder seal: VA 3884 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Evelyn Klengel-Brandt, ed., *Mit Sieben Siegeln versehen: Das Siegel in Wirtschaft und Kunst des Alten Orients* (Mainz: Zabern, 1997), 12, Abb. 12.



Illustration 10.4. Scorpion-man (*girtablullû*): Worship scene. NB stamp seal impression: PTS 2241 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* (AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999), pl. 10, no. 76.



Illustration 10.5. Scorpion-man (*girtablullû*): Worship scene. NB stamp seal impression: BM 78995 (Sippar[?])
Source. Adapted from Terence C. Mitchell and Ann Searight, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Stamp Seals III: Impressions of Stamp Seals on Cuneiform Tablets, Clay Bullae, and Jar Handles* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), no. 359.



Illustration 10.6. Scorpion-man (*girtablullû*). NB stamp seal: VA 7542 Bab 38607 (Babylon, Merkes)
Source. Adapted from Jakob-Rost and Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum*, no. 333.



Illustration 10.7. Scorpion-man (*girtablullû*). NB cylinder seal: CBS 14329 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Leon Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians from Their Seals in the Collections of the Museum* (2 vols.; PBS 14.1-2; Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1925), pl. XXXIII, no. 652.



Illustration 10.8. Scorpion-man (*girtablullû*). NB impresson: BM 60431 (Sippar)
Note. Only the wing and scorpion tail are visible. The scorpion is oriented toward the right.
Source. Adapted from John D. A. MacGinnis, *Letter Orders from Sippar and the Administration of the Ebabbara in the Late-Babylonian Period* (Poznan: Bonami, 1995), pl. 26, no. 96.

10.2.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE SCORPION-MAN

Monstrous creatures with scorpion attributes are found in a variety of distinct forms.¹² Their common denominators are scorpion and human compositional elements.¹³ An additional avian component is almost invariably present.

In Mesopotamian iconography in general, there are three distinct kinds of scorpion-people: Type I is an upright two-legged scorpion-man with human body, legs, head, and upraised

¹² Anthony Green, "A Note on the 'Scorpion-Man' and Pazuzu," *Iraq* 47 (1985): 75-82, pls. VII-XV; "girtablilu," *AHW* 1:291; Joan G. Westenholz, ed., *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004), 24-25.

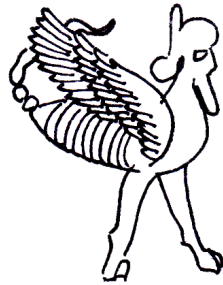
¹³ I disagree with Westenholz who maintains that scorpion-people always share three compositional elements: human, scorpion, and avian. There are numerous examples of scorpion-men without any bird-like features, particularly in the earlier 3rd and 2nd mill. BC, and scorpion-fish-men are found on Kassite seals (see Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 169, fig. 134).

arms; Type II is a two-legged scorpion-man with posture like that of a bird; and Type III is a four-legged scorpion-man.

The provenanced NB examples of scorpion-men all belong to Type II, except for at least one specimen that may belong to Type III. There are no provenanced NB examples of Type I.¹⁴



Type I
2 legs arms up
no NB



Type II
2 legs with or without arms
NB (no arms)



Type III
4 legs
1 NB(?)

The examples discussed below are winged scorpion-bird-men with human heads, scorpion bodies and tails, and legs and feet of a bird-of-prey. They do not have forearms. All have curly, shoulder-length hair, full beards, and at least two wear the horned crown of divinity.

Cylinder seal CBS 14329 (Ill. 10.7) depicts two opposing scorpion-men.¹⁵ The position of the two visible legs of the creature on the right could suggest that a quadruped is depicted with two of its four legs masked from view. Equally, the creature on the left could also be a quadruped. Two legs are clearly visible, but a third possible leg (which could imply a fourth) may instead be some kind of symbol. So this creature may be a four-legged scorpion-man (Type III, above), but lack of clarity in the image precludes any solid identification.

10.2.3 CONTEXT OF THE SCORPION-MAN WITHIN SCENES

On provenanced NB seals and sealings, the scorpion-bird-man almost always appears in a ritual context, either in front of a Babylonian worshiper or before an altar.

Four scenes depict the scorpion-man facing a worshiper whose hand is raised. On stamp seal VA 6977 (Ill. 10.1), an altar is surmounted by a rooster between the worshiper (on the left) and the scorpion-man (on the right). Above the bird is the crescent of Sin. Behind the worshiper's back is an inscription (see below). Cylinder seal VA 3884 (Ill. 10.3) depicts a

¹⁴ Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 24-25.

¹⁵ Leon Legrain, *The Culture of the Babylonians from Their Seals in the Collections of the Museum* (2 vols.; PBS 14.1-2; Philadelphia: University Museum, 1925), pl. XXXIII, no. 652.

worshiper on the right facing a scorpion-man, who stands on the left. In the worshiper's upraised right hand is what appears to be a stylus.

The scenes on seal impressions PTS 2241 and BM 78995 (Ills. 10.4-10.5) show the worshiper on the left, facing the scorpion-man to the right. Above the head of the scorpion-man on BM 78995 is the crescent of Sin, and behind the worshiper's back is a hand pointing down.

In the scenes with worshipers, the person consistently stands before the scorpion-man with his hand uplifted in adoration. The creature is not a deity per se, so it appears that it is the attribute creature of a deity, most likely Shamash (UTU).¹⁶ However, if it is not an attribute creature of a deity, perhaps it receives adoration as a superior being from a member of the cosmic community that is of a lower rank.

Two seals are engraved with antithetical scorpion-men facing each other. On the circular stamp seal VA 7542 (Ill. 10.6) from Babylon, two scorpion-men of Type II flank a tall crescent-topped object. Above the latter object hovers a winged disk. The scorpion-men are both winged and appear to be wearing conical crowns(?). Cylinder seal CBS 14329 (Ill. 10.7) depicts two opposing scorpion-men, who are not identical (see above).¹⁷ Above the poised tail of the creature on the right is the crescent of Sin, and below its tail is a six-pointed star of Ishtar.

10.2.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

According to the text of the "The Babylonian Map of the World" (BM 92687, Ill. 1.1), Marduk places the *girtablullû*, "scorpion-man," in the area "on top of the restless Sea."¹⁸

The short text on stamp seal VA 6977 (Ill. 10.2) contains the two Sumerian signs AN.KIB, the meaning of which is obscure. AN means "heaven" or "date spadix," and KIB denotes "bird," "object," or "wheat."¹⁹

¹⁶ Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 25.

¹⁷ Legrain, *The Culture of the Babylonians*, pl. XXXIII, no. 652.

¹⁸ Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 8; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 26.

¹⁹ "an [SKY]," *ePSD*, n.p.; "an [SPADIX]," *ePSD*, n.p.; "kib [WHEAT]," *ePSD*, n.p.; "kib [BIRD]" *ePSD*, n.p.; "kib [OBJECT]," *ePSD*, n.p.

10.2.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 10.1. SCORPION-MAN: *GIRTABULLŪ* (GÍR.TAB.LŪ.U_x[GIŠGAL].LU)

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
10.2	VA 6977 Bab 41075	NB	Babylon	Stamp	I: AN.KIB
10.3	VA 3884	6 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl	
10.4	PTS 2241	NB	Uruk	Stamp	D: Bulla
10.5	BM 78995	NB	Sippar	Impr	D: Impression on tablet with contract
10.6	VA 7542 Bab 38607	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
10.7	CBS 14329	NB	Nippur	Cyl	
10.8	BM 60431	NBN yr. 6 – CAM yr. 3	Sippar	Impr	

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, NBN=Nabonidus, CAM=Cambyses, Stamp=Stamp Seal, Cyl=Cylinder Seal, Impr=Impression, D=Document, I=Inscription on Seal.

Scorpion-men are featured on stamp and cylinder seals. The fine quality and attention to detail exhibited by the seal carvings of all NB provenanced examples of the *girtablullû* suggests that the seals were owned by elite individuals. The fact that the most intricate example VA 6977 (Ill. 10.2) is accompanied by an inscription, which is rare in such a context, tends to support this supposition.

10.2.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



Type II
VA 7542 Bab 38607 (Ill. 10.5)



Type III(?)
CBS 14329 (Ill. 10.6)

Figuring prominently in medicinal formulas, omen and astrological texts, and as a symbol of fertility, the natural scorpion lays the foundation for the significance of scorpion-people. Evolution of the natural scorpion into a *girtablullû*, scorpion-man (see above), derives from “a mythological scorpion manipulating heavenly bodies with its pincers. The pincers became

hands and a head was added, the essentials of the human upper body of the scorpion-man.”²⁰

The scorpion-man appears in Mesopotamian iconography as early as the Early Dynastic III period, where he is found in the inlay plaque from a sounding box found in the Royal Cemetery at Ur.²¹ The hybrid is occasionally found in the subsequent Akkadian and Ur III periods. However, he is not a common iconographic element until the late Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods. Especially popular in Assyria, they have been found in a number of contexts: as molded figures on opposing sides of a pottery bowl, in the round as monoliths and foundation figurines, or as copper or bronze furniture fittings, and even in embroidery on garments.²²

As indicated above, there are three basic types of scorpion composite beings in Mesopotamian iconography, with some variations within the categories. In Type I, the scorpion-man stands upright like a human²³ and has the body, head, and arms of a man, a snake-headed phallus, wings of a bird (but not always), scorpion legs terminating in avian talons, and a scorpion tail. He may be raising his hands, palms upward, in the position of supporting or manipulating an object, such as the winged sun-disk. Alternatively, he may have his hands raised, as if in adoration, most likely in worship of Shamash. This type of scorpion-man is found as early as the third millennium BC, but is most popular from the Neo-Assyrian period through the Seleucid period.²⁴

Type II is a scorpion-bird-man.²⁵ It has the upper torso and head of a human, the rounded body, haunches, and tail of a scorpion, and the feet of a bird of prey. This compact creature, which looks more like a plump bird than a scorpion, may or may not have human arms and hands. When it does, it usually holds a drawn bow and arrow. It may or may not have wings.²⁶ This second genre of scorpion-men appears in the late second millennium BC, and can be found in the Kassite, Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Seleucid periods. Its time of greatest popularity extended from the Neo-Assyrian period through the Seleucid period. Type II was the prevalent scorpion-man during the Neo-Babylonian period, as reflected by the fact that almost all of the provenanced representations under discussion in this study belong to this category (see above).

²⁰ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 180.

²¹ Richard L. Zettler and L. Horne, *Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1998), 55-56.

²² Green, “A Note on the ‘Scorpion-Man’ and Pazuzu,” 75; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 161.

²³ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 161, fig. 131.

²⁴ Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 25.

²⁵ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 113, 161, fig. 90.

²⁶ Scorpion-men in Type II are the same as those in Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 113, fig. 90. Examples have been found in Kassite, NA, NB, and Seleucid periods (pp. 113, 161, figs. 82, 90, 113, 131). Black and Green are not sure if this type is a *girtablullû* or not (p. 161). However, Wiggermann includes it among the various types of *girtablullû* (*Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, line drawing 12). Also, see Evelyn Klengel-Brandt, “Siegelabrollungen aus dem Babylon der Spätzeit,” *OrAnt* 8 (1969): 333.

Type III is less common. This scorpion-man walks on all fours,²⁷ has the head of a human, body and stinger-tail of a scorpion, legs and feet of either a bird or a scorpion, and avian wings.

Scorpion-people are not necessarily associated with any particular deity. When they are, it is usually with the sun god, Shamash, whose (winged) disk they support with their uplifted human hands or scorpion claws.²⁸ As seen above (sect. 4.2.3), the Bull-man (*kusarikku*) performs a similar function and may also be associated with Shamash.

A number of texts from various periods illuminate the varied functions of scorpion-people and venues in which they appear. As attendants of Shamash, a scorpion-man and scorpion-woman are said to guard Mt. Mashu, “Twin,” the cosmic gate through which the sun rises and sets.²⁹ The intrepid Gilgamesh encounters this fantastic GÍR.TAB.LÚ.U₁₈.LU couple as he travels to Uta-napišti, hero of the deluge, in search of eternal life:

To Mashu’s twin mountains he came,
 which daily guard the rising [sun,]
whose tops [support] the fabric of heaven,
 whose base reaches down to the Netherworld.

There were scorpion-men guarding its gate,
 whose terror was dread, whose glance was death,
whose radiance was fearful, overwhelming the mountains—
 at sunrise and sunset they guarded the sun.

Gilgamesh saw them, in fear and dread he covered his face,
 then he collected his wits, and drew nearer their presence.
The scorpion-man called to his mate:
 ‘He who has come to us, flesh of the gods is his body.’³⁰

Several glyptic examples dating to various periods illustrate Shamash emerging through the cosmic gate depicted as the space between the twin mountains of Mt. Mashu.³¹ The scorpion-couple who protect this cosmic gate of the rising and setting of the sun inspire terror, their glance having the power of death. Gilgamesh himself cowers in their presence.

²⁷ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 161, fig. 131.

²⁸ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 180.

²⁹ For gate as a cosmic locality, see “bābu,” *CAD* 2:22, def. 1e; Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 152.

³⁰ *Gilgamesh* IX:38-53: Simo Parpola, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh* (SAACT 1; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 101; Andrew George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1999), 101. Cf. *Gilgamesh* IX ii 6: “the scorpion-man monsters watch its (the sun’s) gate” (translation from “bābu A,” *CAD* 2:22) or more simply, “the scorpion-men guard its gate” (translation from “našāru,” *CAD* 11.2:35); and *Gilgamesh* IX ii 15, where “his female answers the scorpion-monster” (translation from “apālu A,” *CAD* 1.2:163).

³¹ Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum Press, 2005), nos. 103, 299, 761.

In *Enuma Elish* (I:134-44), the scorpion-man is one of Tiamat's eleven composite beings, created in her salty waters to combat Marduk. After capturing the creatures, Marduk conscripts them into his service as apotropaic beings,³² stationing statues of them at the "Gate of the *Apsû*" (*Enuma Elish* V:75), located in the shrine of Enki (Ea) in Babylon.³³

During the Neo-Assyrian period, scorpion composite beings provide aggressive protection against malevolent demons. Texts prescribing rituals of protective magic call for fashioning likenesses of these and other beneficent composite beings from wood. Seventh-century-BC examples have been uncovered at the Urartian city Teišebaini (modern Karmir Blur).³⁴ While no material representations of the scorpion-woman have been found to date, her importance is substantiated by textual references.³⁵

As protective forces, scorpion-people are invoked to safeguard palace and temple gates. In a NA ritual text, of which four manuscripts are known (including K2987B+; Wiggermann Text I MS A), an exorcist prescribes formation and placement of several foundation figurines, among which are a male and female pair of scorpion-people.³⁶ The composite beings are to be fashioned from clay, dressed in yellow paste, and buried "in the gate to the roof, upstairs" to ward off evil demons and illnesses.³⁷ This gate probably symbolizes the place in the sky where the scorpion-people guard the entrance and exit of celestial bodies.³⁸

This text provides the only known indication that it was sometimes appropriate for two *girtablullû* figurines to be buried together.³⁹ In such an instance, scorpion-people were clearly well-intentioned toward humans.⁴⁰ The same text explicitly states their apotropaic function: Such representations of creatures manufactured from clay are called *binût apsê*, "creatures of Apsu" (I:144), and they are the *šalmû sâkip lemnûti ša Ea u Marduk*, "the statues repelling the evil ones, of Ea and Marduk" (I:160-161). They are placed in a house "to expel the foot of evil" (I:165-166).⁴¹ Perhaps, the two figurines represent the two mythological scorpion-people guarding the gates of the rising sun in *Gilgamesh* IX:38-53 (see above).

³² *Enuma Elish* I:143, II:29, III:33, III:91; Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 25; "kulullu," *CAD* 8:526-27.

³³ W. G. Lambert, "Kulullu," *RLA* 6:324.

³⁴ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 161.

³⁵ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 161.

³⁶ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 1.

³⁷ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 52.

³⁸ Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 25.

³⁹ The text, VAT 8228 = KAR 298 = Wiggermann Text II, dates to the reign of Ashurbanipal and was written by Kišir-Aššur, an exorcist of the temple of Ashur (Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 52).

⁴⁰ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 52, 102-103. Unlike the other small figurines (Kleinplastik) in this prescriptive text, the *girtablullû* and *mušbuššu* are the only creatures for which the text does not prescribe inscriptions (Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 143).

⁴¹ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 87.

10.3 CONCLUSION

Combining human intelligence and aerial mobility with the lethal sting of a scorpion, a winged scorpion-man was a terrifying creature, as highlighted by Mesopotamian literature. In NB iconography, this supernatural composite being continued to enjoy the popularity that it had gained during the preceding Neo-Assyrian period. The primary expression of the NB scorpion creature is that of Type II: the scorpion-bird-man. Type I, the upright scorpion-man, often shown in the act of supporting a winged disk, was well-attested in previous periods. Until the present, however, provenanced examples of this variety have not been recovered from any NB context. Perhaps this is because the winged disk, which usually represents Shamash, could also be the symbol of Ashur, the national deity of the Assyrians, the longtime arch-enemies of the Neo-Babylonians.⁴²

The NB emphasis on the *girtablullû* with Type II physical morphology is complemented by the fact that during this period, such a scorpion-man is generally placed in a ritual context, whether giving or receiving adoration. This is not surprising, since such worship scenes in which deities are usually represented by their symbols or attribute animals comprise the most common format of NB glyptic iconography in general.

So why would the supernatural scorpion-man both give and receive adoration? On the one hand, it is appropriate for the creature to give worship to a god, represented by his/her symbol. On the other hand, the scorpion-man can be a guardian servant of a god, such as Shamash, so adoration of the scorpion-man would implicitly be directed toward the deity, perhaps invoking the god to deploy the composite being to protect the worshiper.

⁴² For notes on the winged disk, see Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 182, 185-186.

11. SNAKE

Snakes have been potent denizens of Mesopotamia since the dim horizon of early history. Several types of serpentine composite beings are found in Neo-Babylonian iconography. One is the malevolent *bašmu*. Far more frequently attested is the *mušbuššu*, a snake-dragon that can be either malevolent or beneficent and that appears in a wide variety of forms and contexts, such as small figurines, on reliefs, and on numerous cylinder and stamp seals and seal impressions. The most famous renderings of the *mušbuššu* are on the glazed brick reliefs of the Ishtar Gate. According to textual sources, monumental *mušbuššu* once stood as enormous guardian figures at the entrance of the Ishtar Gate (see below).

This chapter investigates the function of serpentine composite beings in NB iconography by first considering the characteristics of natural snakes in Mesopotamia and then by examining snake-dragons in Mesopotamian iconography to clarify reasons for the special artistic use of such creatures during this period.

11.1 NATURAL SNAKE

Six deadly poisonous snakes are native to modern Iraq (e.g. Ill. 11.1). The small saw-scaled viper (*Echis carinatus sochureki*) alone is responsible for more deaths annually than any other reptile species in the world. These venomous species dwell in the desert and are nocturnal or crepuscular (active at dawn or dusk), with minimal daylight activity. They become more active during and immediately after desert rains, especially at night. In the heat of the day, desert snakes are usually either underground, hidden under rocks, or in shaded spaces of human occupation.¹

TABLE 11.1. NATURAL SNAKE

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
11.1					Picture of Desert Horned Viper
11.2	BM 104891	800-550	Babylon	Plaque	D: Pseudo-cuneiform inscription
11.3	CBS 14354	NB	Nippur	Cyl	

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, Cyl=Cylinder Seal, D=Document

¹ Dean Alessandrini, "Venomous Snakes in Iraq," n.p. [cited 24 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.reptilechannel.com/snakes/venomous-snakes/venomous-snakes-iraq.aspx>.

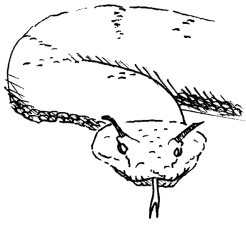


Illustration 11.1. Desert horned viper (*Cerastes cerastes*).

Rendered in ancient Mesopotamian iconography as natural creatures or in the supernatural realm (e.g., Ills. 11.2-11.3), snakes have been associated both with gods and with goddesses. For example, attested from the Uruk period in the fourth millennium BC down to the thirteenth century BC is the motif of two serpents entwined together, as if plaited.² During the time of Gudea of Lagash, this motif may be associated with his patron god, Ningișzida. In the Kassite period, the natural snake is identified on a *kudurru* as symbolizing the minister (possibly Nirah) of Ištaran, city god of Der.³ The divine demoness Lamashtu is frequently depicted grasping a writhing snake in each of her hands, as can be seen on NB plaque BM 104891 (Ill. 11.2) from Babylon (discussed in ch. 5, sect. 5.5.3; on Ill. 5.35).

Glyptic representations of the natural snake are fairly common during the Neo-Babylonian period. For example, an archer hunting a horned viper, rendered on seal CBS 14354 (Ill. 11.3) from Nippur, is a dynamic scene that involves the natural creature.⁴

This kind of snake, the mildly venomous horned viper, is found in many contexts in Mesopotamian iconography, mythology, and literature. Three types of horned vipers belonging to the genus *Cerastes* are commonly found in the Middle East. These small reptiles are nocturnal and terrestrial, often burying themselves in the sand to ambush their prey, with only their eyes and supraorbital horns protruding out of the sand. The unusual horns⁵ are each a single long, spinelike scale, which can fold back into an indentation.

² Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London: British Museum Press, 2005), 15. A distinctive repertoire of snake imagery is found on chlorite vessels and handled weights that date to the Early Dynastic and Akkadian periods. These objects belong to the Intercultural Style and are found in the region between the Euphrates and Indus Rivers and from the Oxus in the north to the Persian Gulf. Examples are found in Joan Aruz, *Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 325-339. Seal impressions depicting men, snakes, and rosettes date to the Early Dynastic I period (c. 2900-2750 BC). A lid decorated with intertwined snakes comes from Girsu (modern Tello), Ningișzida temple Ur III, ca. 2097-1989 BC (Aruz, *Art of the First Cities*, 55, 442).

³ Jeremy A. Black and Anthony Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (ill. by Tessa Richards; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 167.

⁴ Other provenanced NB exemplars of the natural snake include cylinder seals CBS 14356 and CBS 14358, both from Nippur, in Leon Legrain, *The Culture of the Babylonians from Their Seals in the Collections of the Museum* (2 vols.; PBS 14.1-2; Philadelphia: University Museum, 1925), 313, pl. XXXIII, nos. 648-649; and cylinder seal U. 7912 from Ur (dating either to the NA or NB period) in Leon Legrain, *Seal Cylinders*, (UE 10; London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1951), 43, pl. 36, no. 606.

⁵ Not all so-called horned vipers actually have horns (Alessandrini, "Venomous Snakes in Iraq," n.p.).



Illustration 11.2. Lamashtu holding a snake. NB plaque: BM 104891 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from “Amulet,” BM, n.p. [cited 24 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=282828&partId=1&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no_provenance_search.aspx&numpages=10&idNum=Rm-IV.467¤tPage=1.

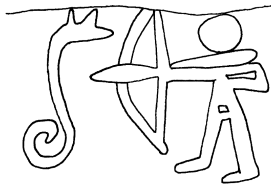


Illustration 11.3. Natural horned viper: Hunting scene. NB cylinder seal: CBS 14354 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Leon Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians from Their Seals in the Collections of the Museum* (2 vols.; PBS 14.1-2; Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1925), pl. XXXIII, no. 646.

In the Akkadian language, the horned viper was known as *bašmu* (Sumerian MUŠ-ŠÀ-TUR; alternatively MUŠ-ŠÀ-TÛR), which appears as a magically protective creature on Kassite *kudurrus* and Neo-Assyrian seals, and in the form of foundation figurines.⁶ Akkadian *bašmu* refers either to the natural horned viper or to a mythical horned viper⁷ with forelegs, i.e., the hybrid snake-monster (see below).⁸ The term can also denote specific mythical composite beings, including the Sumerian UŠUM and MUŠ-ŠÀ-TUR (see below).

⁶ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 167.

⁷ “ušum [SNAKE] . . . wr. ušum ‘first and foremost; noble; snake’ Akk. *ašaredu*; *bašmu*; *gīt mālu* . . . Akk. *ašaredu*; *bašmu* ‘(mythical poisonous) snake; horned viper’; *gīt mālu* ‘perfect, ideal?’” (“ušum [SNAKE],” *ePSD*, n.p.).

⁸ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts* (CM; Groningen: Styx & PP, 1992), 166.

11.2 SNAKE-MONSTER: *BAŠMU* (UŠUM OR MUŠ-ŠÀ-TUR)

11.2.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

A provenanced NB example of the snake-monster, a kind of snake-dragon (Akkadian *bašmu*; Sumerian UŠUM or MUŠ-ŠÀ-TUR), is found in the lower register of a plaque from Uruk (W 15273 - IM 19189; Ill. 11.4).⁹

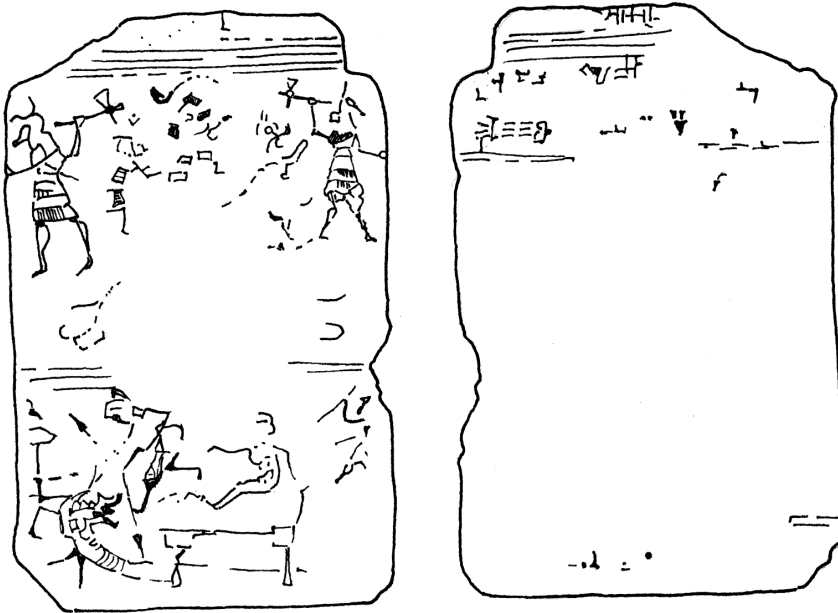


Illustration 11.4. *Bašmu*. NB plaque: W 15273 - IM 19189 (Uruk)

Source. Adapted from Frans A. M. Wiggermann, "Some Demons of Time and Their Functions in Mesopotamian Iconography," in *Die Welt Der Götterbilder* (ed. Hermann Spieckermann Brigitte Groneberg; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 106, fig. 2.

11.2.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE SNAKE-MONSTER

The body of the snake-monster (*bašmu*) resembles that of a horned viper from the genus *Cerastes*, only wider and larger than a natural snake. On his head are two vertical, spinelike horns, which are more pronounced than those of the natural viper. With the addition of two legs and feet to the natural snake, the composite being's locomotion is enhanced, making him more adept at getting to his prey.

⁹ Andrea Becker, *Uruk: Kleinfunde. 1, Stein* (AUWE 6; Mainz: Zabern, 1993), 5, no. 2; Frans A. M. Wiggermann, "Some Demons of Time and their Functions in Mesopotamian Iconography," in *Die Welt der Götterbilder* (ed. Brigitte Groneberg, Hermann Spieckermann; Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 376; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 107-108; G. Wilhelm, "Ein neues Lamaštu-Amulett," *ZA* 69 (1979-1980): 34-40.

11.2.3 CONTEXT OF THE SNAKE-MONSTER WITHIN SCENE

The plaque from Uruk (W 15273 - IM 19189; Ill. 11.4) has two registers on the obverse, containing badly damaged scenes. On the outer edges of the scene in the upper register are two lion-headed demons (^dUgallu), one each on the left and the right.

The lower register shows a desperate situation. A man seated on a bed is gesticulating with one arm. In front of him, another person fights off a ghastly snake-monster, which is partly under the tormented man's bed, whence it rears its head. The snake's mouth is opened wide, and two forelegs support the creature as he twists his head backward toward the man sitting on the bed. The aggressive advance of the *bašmu* toward the man is blocked by the second figure, who is probably a human exorcist.¹⁰ The fight is intense, and the monster has broken the spear of the leaping exorcist.

11.2.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

The remains of two or more incantations are on the reverse of the plaque from Uruk (Ill. 11.4), but so little of them is preserved that they do not help to interpret the scene. However, it is likely that one of the inscriptions would have been the frequently attested Standard Babylonian *ša maldi eršiya* ("the one on the edge of my bed") incantation from the *Hulbazizi* incantation series,¹¹ which is to be recited by a tormented person while on his bed:

Incantation: something that comes from under my bed made me shrink for fear, and gave me terrible dreams; on the command of Ninurta, the foremost son, the beloved son, and on the command of Marduk, who lives in the Esangil in Babylon, it must be handed over to Pedu, the chief gate-keeper of the netherworld. You, door and bolt, you must know: I now fall under the protection of (these) two (divine) lords.¹²

The commands of Ninurta and Marduk may be represented by the lion-demons, ^dUgallu, who stand on either side of the upper register of the plaque.¹³ The "something that comes from under my bed" is the demonic, unnamed evil represented by the *bašmu*, which brings terrifying dreams to the victim.¹⁴

The fact that the source of terror is not named in incantations with such scenes is significant. It appears that naming it would have been dangerous, perhaps invoking the evil that the

¹⁰ Wiggermann, "Some Demons of Time," 108.

¹¹ Wiggermann, "Some Demons of Time," 109.

¹² Incantation *ša maldi eršiya* (*Hulbazizi* no. 60), translated by Frans A. M. Wiggermann in Marten Stol and Frans A. M. Wiggermann, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: its Mediterranean Setting* (CM 14; Groningen: Styx, 2000), 246; cf. Wilhelm, "Ein neues Lamaštu-Amulett," 34-40; H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon: A Sketch of the Ancient Civilization of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1962), 303.

¹³ Cf. discussion on the identification and function of the lion-demon in Wiggermann, "Some Demons of Time," 109.

¹⁴ Becker, *Uruk*, 5, no. 2; Wiggermann, "Some Demons of Time," 108.

amuletic plaque was supposed to ward off. So the dynamics seem similar to vaccinations today: A weakened representation of the evil protects, but too vigorous a serum would bring on the sickness that the vaccination is designed to prevent.¹⁵

11.2.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 11.2. SNAKE: *BAŠMU* (UŠUM OR MUŠ-ŠĀ-TUR)

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
11.4	W 15273-IM 19189	NB	Uruk	Plaque	I: Incantation

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, I=Inscription on Seal

As mentioned above, the obverse of the plaque has two registers that contain badly damaged scenes. The middle of the obverse, including the lower middle of the upper register and the upper middle of the lower register, is not preserved. The reverse of the plaque has traces of two or more incantations.

The purpose of such an amuletic plaque was to magically protect the individual who wore it.¹⁶ Apotropaic efficacy of the NB object is visually and verbally expressed by an elaborate depiction of an exorcism from the source of nightmares, believed to be supernatural, along with incantations that would be applicable in such a situation.

11.2.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Snakes and snake-dragons are a significant component of early Mesopotamian lore. The Sumerian term UŠUM (Akkadian *bašmu*), which can refer to a generic “snake” or to a mythical serpentine composite creature, is attested as early as the reign of Gudea of Lagash (c. 2130 BC). The mythical *bašmu* lurks among the bizarre group of dead hybrids that were apparently slain by the warrior god Ningirsu in the Early Dynastic tale of the Slain Heroes.¹⁷

The *bašmu* is included among the eleven composite creatures that Tiamat created to fight against the younger gods (*ba-aš-mu*, *Enuma Elish* I:141).¹⁸ Reflecting high Mesopotamian respect for the potency of snakes, four out of Tiamat’s eleven creatures are snakes or snake-dragons bred in her fertile waters: *mušmaḫḫu*¹⁹ (seven-headed dragon), *ušumgallu*²⁰ (gigantic

¹⁵ Wiggermann, “Some Demons of Time,” 109.

¹⁶ Sheila Paine, *Amulets: Sacred Charms of Power and Protection* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 2004), 10.

¹⁷ Jeremy Black, “The Slain Heroes—Some Monsters of Ancient Mesopotamia,” *BCSMS* 15 (1988): 19-25.

¹⁸ Benjamin R. Foster, *Before the Muses: An Anthology of Akkadian Literature* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 2005), 444; Philippe Talon, ed., *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enuma Eliš* (SAACT 4; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2006), 38, 82, I:133-143.

¹⁹ The hybrid snake known as *mušmaḫḫu* (Sumerian MUŠ.MAḪ: MUŠ, “snake,” and MAḪ, “great”), developed in the Early Dynastic period (2900-2300 BC) (“ušumgal [DRAGON],” *ePSD*, n.p.). According to *ePSD*, *mušmaḫḫu* is not designated as the Hydra, but simply as a “mythical creature,” a “great snake.” The mythical dragon has seven long snake

serpent), *bašmu* (serpent composite being); the constellation Hydra²¹), and *mušmahḫu* (furious snake; snake-dragon).

When another snake-dragon, the *mušḫuššu*, became Marduk's attribute animal in the first millennium BC, the *bašmu* took its place as the attribute animal of those gods whom the *mušḫuššu* previously served as their attribute creature.²²

When *bašmu* denotes the legless creature MUŠ-ŠÀ-TUR, Wiggermann suggests that it represents the "Birth Goddess Snake," identified as the horned snake, which correlates with the serpent found among the small sculptures (Kleinplastik).²³ Like the UŠUM/*bašmu*, the female composite being MUŠ-ŠÀ-TUR/*bašmu* is attested as early as the time of Gudea, but little is known about her.²⁴

Bašmu can also refer to the constellation Hydra²⁵ (Latin for "Water Snake") in the southern sky, the largest of the constellations.²⁶

To summarize, the Akkadian term *bašmu* may refer to (1) the horned viper, (2) the Sumerian UŠUM, which can be either the generic natural snake or the mythical horned viper with

necks and heads, and it is also one of Tiamat's eleven composite beings ("mušmahḫu," *CAD* 10.2:277-278; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 164-165, no. 135). It is one of the terrifying serpents with sharp teeth and merciless fangs(?); whose veins are filled with venom instead of blood ("mušmahḫu," *CAD* 10.2:278). Possibly the seven-headed Hydra among the Slain Heroes killed by the warrior god Ningirsu (or Ninurta), the *mušmahḫu* is found in mythological texts and depicted in iconography ("mušmahḫu," *CAD* 10.2:278). This creature is not extant in the NB period.

²⁰ The *ušumgallu* (Sumerian Û.ŠU.GAL), like *ušum*, is a versatile composite being, which may be a specific monstrous creation or a generic creature of terror (Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 167). It is a mythical creature whose name means "great dragon, snake" (ED Lu A 98; "ušumgal [DRAGON]," *ePSD*, n.p.). The *ušumgallu* is an efficient killer machine that terrifies even the gods (Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 167). It is referred to in Sumerian texts from ED IIIa, ED IIIb, Lagash II, and OB. Its last mention in a Sumerian text is in a 1st-mill.-BC Early Dynastic recension of Lexical Series A. One of the composite beings of the sea, the *ušumgallu* is described in a 3rd-mill.-BC text as "roaring in the flood" (Joan Goodnick Westenholz, ed., *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts* [Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004], 25). Tiamat cloaked such ferocious dragons, rendered GAL.UŠUM.[MEŠ] in *Enuma Elish* I:141, with fearsome rays and gave them mantles of radiance that made them godlike, so that whoever looked upon them would collapse in utter terror (Foster, *Before the Muses*, 444; Talon, *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth*, 38, 82, I:133-143). Although the *ušumgallu* is not attested in NB texts or contexts, it is marginally relevant to this discussion because on occasion it is replaced by *mušḫuššu* as the dragon of Nabu. A number of texts showing this relationship are referenced by Wiggermann (*Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 167).

²¹ See "bašmu," *CAD* 2:141.

²² Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 168.

²³ Dessa Rittig, *Assyrisch-babylonisch Kleinplastik magischer Bedeutung vom 13.-6. Jh. v. Chr.* (München: Uni-Druck München, 1977), Abb. 53, 54.

²⁴ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 168.

²⁵ See "bašmu," *CAD* 2:141.

²⁶ "The Constellations," n.p. [cited 24 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.cosmobrain.com/cosmobrain/res/constellations.html>; "Hydra," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, n.p. [cited 24 May 2012]. Online: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/278111/Hydra>.

forelegs, and (3) the Sumerian mythical serpent called MUŠ-ŠÀ-TUR, possibly the “Birth Goddess Snake.”²⁷

11.2.7 CONCLUSION

The *bašmu* snake-monster on a NB plaque (Ill. 11.4) is the lone exemplar from this period. It has only one other parallel, which dates to the Neo-Assyrian period.²⁸ The NB plaque presents a rare iconographic rendering of the *bašmu* as a malevolent demon, one of the few evil composite beings attested in Mesopotamian iconography. By contrast, the *bašmu*'s usual function in previous periods was to serve various deities as an attribute animal, the metaphysical potency of which was known, for example, from *Enuma Elish*.

Assessment of the function of the NB plaque should take into account a number of factors: a dynamic portrayal of the hybrid as malevolent; its immediate context in a scene of exorcism, which conceivably occurs at night because the human victim is on his bed; the depiction of apparently apotropaic lion-headed demons (^dUgallu) in an adjacent scene; and incantations on the reverse side of the plaque that likely invoke the authority of powerful gods, represented by the lion-headed demons, to banish the frightful beast. The combination of these factors, informed by comparison with analogous amuletic objects and incantations against nocturnal terrors, indicates that the plaque was intended to magically facilitate the expulsion of an evil demon, which may have been associated with a nightmare, or some other unnerving cognitive experience.

Within the framework of the plaque's function, it appears that the picture of the malevolent snake-monster heightens the targeting of the evil represented by the *bašmu* so that it can be driven away through the mediation of an exorcist and the friendly divine powers who cooperate with him.²⁹

11.3 SNAKE-DRAGON: MUŠḪUŠŠU (MUŠ.ḪUŠ)

11.3.1 OVERALL DESCRIPTION OF NEO-BABYLONIAN EXAMPLES

The snake-dragon, *mušḪuššu* in Akkadian (Sumerian MUŠ.ḪUŠ), is the most widely attested iconographic motif of the Neo-Babylonian period. The most impressive and well-known examples are, of course, the glazed-brick reliefs of the Ishtar Gate (Ill. 11.5), which is named after the Goddess Ishtar of Agade, whose temple is just inside the city gate in the residential area (Merkes). On the great gate, repeated rows of snake-dragons, the attribute animal of

²⁷ Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 166-168.

²⁸ Walter Farber, “Dämonen ohne Stammbaum: Zu einigen mesopotamischen Amuletten aus dem Kunsthandel,” in *Essays in Ancient Civilization Presented to Helene J. Kantor*. (ed. Albert Leonard Jr. and Bruce Beyer Williams; SAOC 47; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1989), 103-104.

²⁹ Cf. the biblical narrative of Numbers 21, where God commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent, at which Israelites who had been bitten by lethal vipers could look in order to live.

Marduk, are found alternating with rows of natural bulls, which represent Adad, the storm-god.

Two small bronze figurines represent the snake-dragon in the round (Ills. 11.6-11.7). The *mušbuššu* is rendered in provenanced glyptic iconography on three cylinder seals, seven stamp seals, and eight seal impressions on tablets containing economic texts and records of business at the temple (Ills. 11.8-11.22, 11.24-11.26). One of the cylinder seals engraved with the *mušbuššu* may have been hung around the neck of a divine statue (Ill. 11.8). The hybrid also appears on a tablet that records a royal grant (Ill. 11.23).

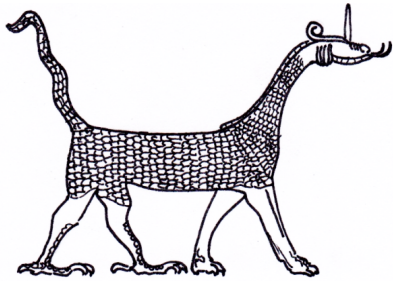


Illustration 11.5. *Mušbuššu*. NB glazed brick relief: VA Bab 4431 (Babylon, Ishtar Gate)

11.3.2 PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF THE SNAKE-DRAGON

The *mušbuššu*, whose name means “furious” or “fearsome snake,”³⁰ is a demon whose serpentine and leonine elements combine to form a magnificent being. The lethal capability of a venomous snake is augmented by the strong body shape of a lion and rapid mobility provided by four legs and predatory feet. The front legs and paws are leonine, but in the rear, the legs are disproportionately large and have the talons of a bird-of-prey.³¹ Thus the swift, powerful, poisonous, and clawed snake-dragon is armed to the teeth (or rather, fangs), a predator on steroids.

The snake-dragon’s head (including forked tongue), neck, and raised tail, are like those of the desert horned viper (Ill. 11.1). These parts are covered with keeled scales, as is the lion-shaped body. The composite being may have curled ears, which curl either backward or forward. Vertical, spinelike horns on its head are often much longer than those of the natural viper, making them potentially formidable weapons.

Most iconographic attestations of the *mušbuššu* are in profile and could give the impression that the snake-dragon possesses only one horn, like that of a unicorn. However, small examples in the round confirm that it has two horns.³² These include the bronze head of a

³⁰ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, “*Mušbuššu*,” *RLA* 8:456.

³¹ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 166.

³² Joan Oates, *Babylon* (rev. ed.; London: Thames & Hudson, 1986), 176 n. 124.

mušbuššu that originally embellished a sixth-century-BC article of furniture found at Babylon, Al Hillah (AO 4106; Ill. 11.6), and a bronze figurine of a complete, recumbent *mušbuššu*, which dates to the eighth-sixth centuries BC and comes from the Diyala region (BM 129388, Ill. 11.7).

[This unique dragon head (Ill. 11.6), preserved from mid-neck up, has two tall horns and curled ears.³³ The eyes and the central recess between them were probably inlaid with precious stones. The tongue is broken, but the iron stub that fastened it remains in the mouth.



Illustration 11.6. *Mušbuššu*. NB furniture decoration: AO 4106 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from H. W. F. Saggs, *Babylonians: People of the Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 166, no. 81; Joan Oates, *Babylon* (rev. ed.; London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 176, no. 124.

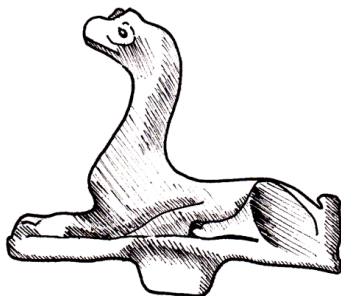


Illustration 11.7. *Mušbuššu*. NB figurine: BM 129388 (Diyala)

Source. Adapted from “Figure,” BM, n.p. [cited 24 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=369134&partId=1&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no_provenance_search.aspx&numpages=10&idNum=1938,0514.1¤tPage=1.

11.3.3 CONTEXT OF THE SNAKE-DRAGON WITHIN SCENES

Twenty-two provenanced artifacts provide examples of the *mušbuššu* within scenes. A pair of exceptional lapis lazuli cylinder seals belonging to Marduk (VA Bab 646, Ill 11.8) and Adad (VA Bab 647, Ill. 11.9), respectively, date to the early Neo-Babylonian period (9th cent.

³³ Andrew George, “A Tour of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon,” in *Babylon* (ed. Irving L. Finkel and M. J. Seymour; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 54, fig. 36.

BC).³⁴ The seals were found together in a Parthian house on Al Hillah, between the Esagila and Etemmenanki. Both are votive seals that are unusually large, carved in exquisite detail, and include both scenes and inscriptions (see further below).³⁵



Illustration 11.8. Marduk with *mušbuššu*. NB seal: VA Bab 646 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Evelyn Klengel-Brandt, ed., *Mit Sieben Siegeln Versehen: Das Siegel in Wirtschaft und Kunst des Alten Orients* (Mainz: Zabern, 1997), 100, Abb. 99.



Illustration 11.9. Adad with *anzû* and *mušbuššu*(?) NB seal: VA Bab 647 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Klengel-Brandt, *Mit Sieben Siegeln Versehen*, Farbabb. 21.

³⁴ Irving L. Finkel, “Uncovering Life at Babylon,” in *Babylon* (ed. Irving L. Finkel and M. J. Seymour; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 96.

³⁵ Evelyn Klengel-Brandt, ed., *Mit Sieben Siegeln Versehen: Das Siegel in Wirtschaft und Kunst Des Alten Orients* (Mainz: Zabern, 1997), 99.

The personal seal of Marduk (VA Bab 646, Babylon; Ill. 11.8), city god of Babylon, depicts the god and his recumbent sacred animal, the *mušbuššu* dragon. Marduk is garbed in an ornate robe covered with divine symbols.³⁶ He holds his left hand, which grasps the rod and ring of kingship, against his right breast. His lowered right hand holds a scimitar. The *mušbuššu*, recumbent at his feet, has two prominent horns and ears, a curled and hissing tongue, and is covered with a heavy coat of scales. Along the dragon's neck is a mane. Both the deity and the creature are supported by a plinth evoking water, presumably representing the Apsu, which reflects the close connection between Marduk, the *mušbuššu*, and the sea.³⁷

The larger personal seal of Adad (VA Bab 647, Babylon; Ill. 11.9), the storm god, similarly portrays the deity garbed in an ornate robe embellished with divine symbols.³⁸ His right arm is upraised and holds a forked lightning bolt. His left arm is extended and holds tethers to two recumbent creatures at his feet. The tethers originate in a forked lightning bolt above the god's hand and continue downward from his hand to the animals. The creature closest to Adad is a winged lion-headed dragon, which may be the *anzû* bird. Along the dragon's neck is a pronounced mane. The second tethered creature is unclear, but may be a *mušbuššu*. Both the deity and the creatures are supported by a plinth covered with rises, which may represent mountains.

The most common iconographic motif in the Neo-Babylonian period is the worshiper before sacred objects/beings.³⁹ The motif becomes prevalent only during this period. Represented especially on stamp seals, but also on cylinder seals and on a royal tablet (Ill. 11.23), it is generally regarded as characteristic of NB glyptic art.⁴⁰ The composition is

³⁶ The bodice and sleeves are covered with the eight-pointed star of Ishtar. Two striding, opposing horses adorn his wide belt. Around his neck, the deity wears a pendant with three large disks. The highest of the three disks is a multi-faceted design consisting of sixteen outer sections and eight inner sections. The middle disk has a star-like design that terminates in five almond-shaped elements. The lowest disk depicts a whorl of three bulls that are similar in form to those found on the Ishtar Gate. On Marduk's wrists, he wears a bracelet in the form of a rosette. His high, feathered crown is covered with circular designs and fronted with a single rosette.

³⁷ Marduk has a close connection with the watery realm called the Apsu. In *Enuma Elish*, he is conceived and born in the Apsu. The name of his attribute animal, the snake-dragon, is found in the name of a mythological river in the Apsu: "House-of-peace-where-the-*mušbuššu*-gathers-eggs/gemstones" (W. G. Lambert, "The Twenty-One 'Poultices,'" *AnSt* 30 [1980]: 78:1, 80:12-13). According to a Nebuchadnezzar II building inscription (VAB 4 86 II:18-19), the foundations of the Ishtar Gate (which portrays the *mušbuššu*) are located in the Apsu (Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1998], 35-36, 312). In "The Babylonian Map of the World," the *mušbuššu* is settled inside the sea (see "Introduction," Ill. 1.1). For additional evidence linking Marduk to the sea, see "tāmtu," *CAD* 18:156, def. 3.

³⁸ The bodice has the four-pointed orb of Shamash, a second orb with a single central dot, and what appears to be a breastplate in the shape of a ziggurat. From this breastplate extends a pendant with three large disks. The highest of the three disks is a four-pointed star in an orb. Four small orbs fill the open fields of the star/sun of Shamash. The middle disk has the eight-pointed star of Ishtar. The lowest disk has a six-pointed star with small orbs in the space between the six points. Adad wears at least three bracelets on each forearm. He wears a high, feathered crown. His hair falls to his shoulders and his square beard is curly and long.

³⁹ The second most common glyptic motif is the contest scene featuring a genius grappling with one or more antagonists (on which see ch. 3, sect. 3.1.3).

⁴⁰ Edith Porada, "Suggestions for the Classification of Neo-Babylonian Cylinder Seals," *Or* 16 (1947): 163.

simple, with few components, and the figures often appear to float in space without any baseline. The scene can be elegant, but it is often crude or schematic.⁴¹

The worship scene generally depicts the worshiper standing before a pedestal (usually columned) that supports a recumbent *mušbuššu*, which faces the worshiper. Upon the back of the *mušbuššu* is the spade of Marduk or both that object and the stylus of Nabu. These symbols represent the respective deities, of whom Marduk is preeminent, as shown by the fact that when the spade and stylus appear together, the spade is in front, closest to the worshiper.

During the Neo-Babylonian period, the *mušbuššu* serves as the attribute creature of Marduk and often of Nabu. So it is appropriate that the symbols of both can ride on the hybrid creature in tandem. Further supporting the supremacy of Marduk is the fact that although his symbol can appear alone on the back of the *mušbuššu* during this period, Nabu's stylus is never portrayed alone, but always with Marduk's spade. This is in contrast to depictions on Kassite *kudurrus*, in which a single stylus of Nabu on the back of a *mušbuššu* is common.⁴²

Four provenanced examples show the worshiper standing on the right, facing the dragon on the left (Ills. 11.10-11.13).



Illustration 11.10 *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB stamp impression: NCBT 366 (Uruk)

Source. Adapted from Erica Ehrenberg, *Uruk: Late Babylonian Seal Impressions on Eanna-Tablets* (AUWE 18; Mainz: Zabern, 1999), pl. 7, no. 57.

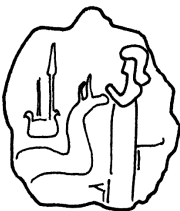


Illustration 11.11. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB stamp seal: VA Bab 1622 Bab 25907 (Babylon, E of Ishtar Gate)

Source. Adapted from Liane Jakob-Rost and Iris Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum* (2d ed.; Mainz: Zabern, 1997), 293.

⁴¹ Cf. C. R. Wason, "The Drill Style on Ancient Gems," *AAA* 23, no. 1-2 (1936): 51-55.

⁴² E.g., VA Bab 4375, VA 3031, VA 209 in Ursula Seidl, *Die Babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs: Symbole Mesopotamischer Gottheiten* (OBO 87; Friburg: Universitätsverlag, 1989), Abb. 9, no. 63; Abb. 22, no. 103; Abb. 23, no. 108.



Illustration 11.12. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB stamp seal: CBS 14314 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians*, pl. XXXIV, no. 688.



Illustration 11.13. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB stamp seal: VA Bab 2522 Bab 3622 (Babylon)
Source. Adapted from Jakob-Rost and Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum*, 294.

Ten provenanced examples depict the worshiper on the left facing the snake-dragon on the right (Ills. 11.14-11.23). Cylinder seal BM 89324 (Ill. 11.22) from the SE Palace in Babylon includes scenes from two different periods: A ritual worship scene dates to the Neo-Babylonian period and a combat scene was added in the Achaemenid period, probably during the reign of Darius I. According to Merrillees, the later carving probably dates to c. 520 BC.⁴³

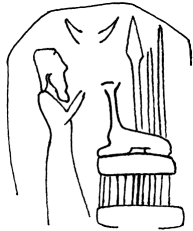


Illustration 11.14. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB sealing: NBC 4826 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 7, no. 58.

⁴³ Parvine H. Merrillees, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum: Cylinder Seals VI. Pre-Achaemenid and Achaemenid Periods* (London: British Museum Press, 2005), 59.



Illustration 11.15. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB sealing: YBC 3953 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 7, no. 59.



Illustration 11.16. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB sealing: YBC 6942 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 7, no. 60.



Illustration 11.17. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB sealing: NBC 4855 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 7, no. 61.



Illustration 11.18. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB sealing: YBC 16216 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 7, no. 62.



Illustration 11.19. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB sealing: NCBT 932 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 8, no. 63.

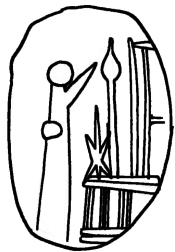


Illustration 11.20. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB stamp seal: CBS 8940 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians*, pl. XXXIV, no. 696.



Illustration 11.21. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB stamp seal: U. 17330 (L. BM. 123002) (Ur)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians*, pl. XXXIV, no. 683.



Illustration 11.22. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB cylinder seal: BM 89324 (Babylon, SE Palace)
Source. Adapted from Klengel-Brandt, *Mit Sieben Siegeln Versehen*, 103, Abb. 104.

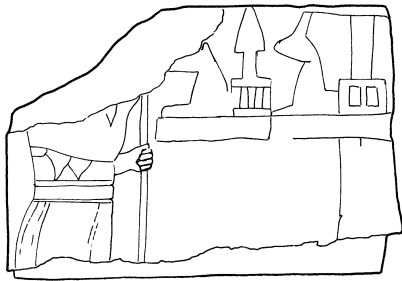


Illustration 11.23. *Mušbuššu*: Worship scene. NB royal tablet: BM 104415 (Borsippa[?] Babylon[?])
Source. Adapted from “Tablet,” BM, n.p. [cited 24 May 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectId=369359&partId=1&orig=%2fresearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx&numpages=10&idNum=1881,0701.10¤tPage=1.

Two provenanced examples show only the dragon with the symbols of Marduk and Nabu on its back (Ills. 11.24-11.25).



Illustration 11.24. *Mušbuššu*. NB stamp seal: CBS 8939 (Nippur)
Source. Adapted from Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians*, pl. XXXIV, no. 708.



Illustration 11.25. *Mušbuššu*. NB stamp impression: NCBT 690 (Uruk)
Source. Adapted from Ehrenberg, *Uruk*, pl. 27, no. 214.

A unique sixth-century-BC rectangular stamp seal, VA Bab 1651 (Ill. 11.26) from Babylon, bears scenes on all four sides: a worshiper standing before the spade of Marduk, the stylus of Nabu, and the crescent of Sin; the forked lightning bolt of Adad; the crescent of Sin on a standard; and, most interestingly, a cultic boat bearing two standing individuals who face the star of Ishtar.⁴⁴ The function of this seal is not known, but the cultic boat may link its use to the New Year Festival, when Marduk and Nabu would each ride in their ceremonial boats to the *akītu* chapel (see further below). The bow and stern of the boat may be the head and tail of the snake-dragon, but the details are not clear enough to be definitive.

⁴⁴ Liane Jakob-Rost and Iris Gerlach, *Die Stempelsiegel im Vorderasiatischen Museum* (2d ed.; Mainz: Zabern, 1997), no. 260; Finkel, “Uncovering Life at Babylon,” 94, fig. 76.

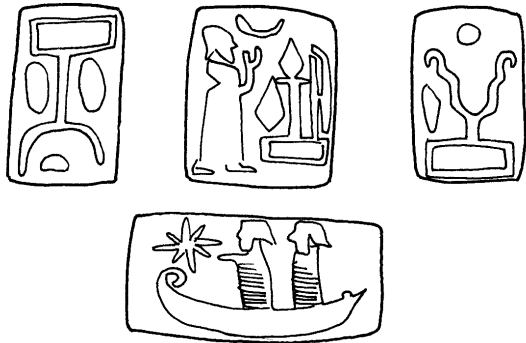


Illustration 11.26. Cultic boat with *mušbuššu*(?) NB rectangular stamp seal: VA Bab 1651 (Babylon)

Source. Adapted from Irving L. Finkel, “Uncovering Life at Babylon,” in *Babylon: Myth and Reality* (ed. Irving L. Finkel, M. J. Seymour and J. E. Curtis; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 94, fig. 76.

Miniature ceramic boats have been found in the Merkes area of the city of Babylon. Some of these have a statue of a recumbent, forward-facing creature, probably a *mušbuššu*, riding in the vessel.⁴⁵ Presumably they were models of the ceremonial boats described by Nebuchadnezzar II (see below), which were used for the New Year Festival.

11.3.4 INTERPRETATION BY NEO-BABYLONIAN TEXTS

“The Babylonian Map of the World” (BM 92687; Ill. 1.1)⁴⁶ sheds light on the early dwelling place of the *mušbuššu*.⁴⁷ In this Babylonian tablet, the “ruined gods” are probably the eleven composite beings of Tiamat defeated by Marduk in *Enuma Elish*. Among these creatures are the viper (*bašmu*) and the great sea-serpent (*mušbuššu rabû*), which Marduk places “inside” (*ina libbi*) the sea.⁴⁸

Other texts also support the concept that the mythical snakes live in the sea.⁴⁹ As mentioned above, there is a close connection between Marduk, *mušbuššu*, and the sea.

The long dedicatory inscription by the Babylonian king Marduk-zākir-šumi I (854-819 BC) on the votive lapis lazuli cylinder seal of Marduk, which portrays him with his *mušbuššu* (VA Bab 646; Ill. 11.8), states that the object was to be set in gold and hung by a gold necklace around Maruk’s neck, indicating that it was to be attached to his statue in his Esagila temple.⁵⁰ This reflects a belief that gods, like humans, needed their own seals.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Robert Koldewey, *The Excavations at Babylon* (trans. Agnes S. Johns; London: Macmillan & Co., 1914), 257-258.

⁴⁶ “Map of the World,” BM, n.p. [cited 10 June 2012]. Online: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/m/map_of_the_world.aspx.

⁴⁷ Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 26.

⁴⁸ Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 23.

⁴⁹ Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, 35-36.

⁵⁰ Friedrich Wetzel, Erich F. Schmidt, and Alfred Mallwitz, *Das Babylon der Spätzeit* (WVDOG 62; Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1957), pls. 43-44; Collon, *First Impressions*, 167; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 129.

The similar seal of Adad, which shows the god with two composite creatures that could be the *anzû* bird and the *mušbuššu* dragon (VA Bab 647; Ill. 11.9), bears two inscriptions. The original text reads: “The seal of the god Adad.” Subsequently, two bracketing lines—“Property of the god Marduk . . . of Esagil”—were added to the original text, so that the fuller inscription is: “Property of the god Marduk. Seal of Adad of Esagil.”⁵² Although the object was the personal seal of Adad, its function was in the polytheistic court of Marduk, where Adad was also represented. The seal was probably taken as booty by Sennacherib when he conquered Babylon, and subsequently returned by Esarhaddon,⁵³ who added the lines: “To the god Marduk, great lord, his lord, Esarhaddon, king of the universe, king of Assyria, has given (this seal) for his life.”⁵⁴

Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions describe artistic representations of the *mušbuššu* in detail. In the building inscription on the Ishtar Gate, Nebuchadnezzar II records his legacy: “I placed wild bulls and ferocious dragons in the gateways and thus adorned them with luxurious splendor so that mankind might gaze on them in wonder.”⁵⁵ Another inscription of the same monarch (BM 129397, Babylon) describes his embellishment of the entrance to Babylon, which is known to be the Ishtar Gate:⁵⁶

Column V

56. Of Imgur-bel 57. and Nimitti-bel 58. the portals, on both sides, 59. through the raising 60. of the causeway of Babylon 61. had become low 62. in their entries: 63. those portals 64. I pulled down, and

Column VI

1. over against the water their foundation 2. with bitumen and burnt brick 3. I firmly laid, and 4. with burnt brick (and) gleaming *uknû* stone, 5. whereof bulls and dreadful serpents 6. were made, the interior of them 7. cunningly I constructed. 8. Strong cedar beams 9. for the roofing of them 10. I laid on. 11. Doors of cedar 12. (with) plating of bronze, 13. lintels and hinges, 14. copper-work, in its gates 15. I set up. 16. Strong bulls of copper, 17. and dreadful serpents, standing upright, 18. on their thresholds I erected: 19. those portals, 20. for the gazings of the multitude of the people, . . .⁵⁷

⁵¹ Finkel, “Uncovering Life at Babylon,” 96.

⁵² Finkel, “Uncovering Life at Babylon,” 96.

⁵³ Finkel, “Uncovering Life at Babylon,” 96.

⁵⁴ Collon, *First Impressions*, 134.

⁵⁵ Nebuchadnezzar II Ishtar Gate Building Inscription in Joachim Marzahn, *The Ishtar Gate: The Processional Way: The New Year Festival of Babylon* (Mainz: Zabern, 1994), 30.

⁵⁶ Julian E. Reade, “Disappearance and Rediscovery,” in *Babylon* (ed. Irving L. Finkel and M. J. Seymour; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 30, fig. 17.

⁵⁷ “East India House Inscription” (BM 129397 V:56-VI:20) from “The India House Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar the Great,” translated by C. J. Ball in *Records of the Past: Being Translations of the Ancient Monuments of Egypt and Western Asia* (ed. A. H. Sayce; 2d ser., London: Bagster & Sons, 1890), 115. [cited 24 May 2012] Online: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/anc/rp/rp203/rp20325.htm>.

Here the “dreadful serpents, standing upright” on the thresholds of the entrance are the monumental *mušbuššu*, presumably made of copper (or another metal) like the “strong bulls.” Directly in front of the Ishtar Gate was a forecourt that connected the front of the Gate to the Processional Way. In excavations of this area, a number of pedestals have been discovered. It is possible that these supported the massive copper creatures described in Nebuchadnezzar’s inscription.⁵⁸

Although the *mušbuššu* is lavishly equipped for combat, the extant iconography does not depict it as actually fighting (unlike the *bašmu*). However, an inscription of Neriglissar states: “I cast seven copper *mušbuššu*—dragons which spatter enemy and foe with deadly venom.”⁵⁹ Notice that the way in which the creature repels the enemy here in order to protect Babylon is by using his basic serpentine weapon of venom (see below).

Nebuchadnezzar II describes his restoration of a number of temples, especially the Esagila of Marduk in Babylon and the Ezida of Nabu in Borsippa. In this context, he recounts his construction and lavish embellishment of two ceremonial boats for transporting Marduk and Nabu, respectively:

I adorned the boat *Udura* on which rides the lord of the gods Marduk, its front and rear, its upper structure, its sides, its deck post and dragon with 14 talents, 12 minehs of shining gold, 750 pieces (?) of marble (?) and bright lapis lazuli and on the surface of the clear Euphrates I let him shine splendid like the stars in heaven and I filled it with jewels for the admiration of all the people. I covered the cabin of the boat of the Ganul canal, the boat of Nabû, and also both sides, with 13 talents, 30 minehs of shining gold and costly precious stones and for the going and coming of the illustrious son, Nabû, who at *Zagmuk* the beginning of the year rides in procession into Babylon, I let it shine like the day.⁶⁰

Here the function of the vessel for Nabu was to transport him at the New Year Festival. The boat of Marduk was to “let him shine splendid” and his boat was to arouse “the admiration of all the people,” presumably during the festival. This stunning display affirmed the power and wealth of the god and his faithful human representative, the king. The dragon on Marduk’s boat was a dazzling *mušbuššu*,⁶¹ which accompanied him as his attribute animal and visually identified the craft as belonging to this god. Since the inscription refers to the dragon along with other constituent elements of the boat, the hybrid creature was likely in the round (cf. miniature ceramic models, above).

⁵⁸ Koldewey, *The Excavations at Babylon*, 38; Marzahn, *The Ishtar Gate*, 20.

⁵⁹ Stephen H. Langdon, *Die Neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* (trans. Rudolf Zehnpfund; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1912), 210, I:26-27.

⁶⁰ CBS 9 II:20-31, translation in Leon Legrain, *Royal Inscriptions and Fragments from Nippur and Babylon* (Philadelphia: Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, 1926), 41-42, pl. XXVII, no. 79.

⁶¹ See “Hollow Clay Barrel” (CBS 9) in Legrain, *Royal Inscriptions and Fragments*, 36-46, pls. IX, XXIV-XXXIII, no. 79.

11.3.5 EXTERNAL CONTEXT

TABLE 11.3. SNAKE-DRAGON: *Mušḫuššu* (MUŠ.ḪUŠ)

Ill. No.	Museum No.	Date BC	Provenance	Type	Additional Data
11.5	VA Bab 4431	NB	Babylon	Relief	
11.6	AO 4106	6 th cent.	Babylon	Furniture decoration	
11.7	BM 129388	8 th -6 th cent.	Diyala	Figurine	
11.8	VA Bab 646	NB	Babylon	Cyl	SO: Marduk-zākir-šumi I (c. 854-819 BC)
11.9	VA Bab 647	NB	Babylon	Cyl	I: Original inscription (c. 9 th cent. B.C.): “The seal of the god Adad.” Inscription added later (prob. By Esarhaddon 680-669 B.C.): “The property of Marduk . . . of the Esagila. To the great lord, his lord, Esarhaddon, king of the universe, king of Assyria, has given (this seal) for his life.” SO: Original unknown, second owner Esarhaddon
11.10	NCBT 366	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: List of PNs summed up as “the team of ten men of Nabû-mukkê-elip”
11.11	VA Bab 1622 Bab 25907	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
11.12	CBS 14314	NB	Nippur	Stamp	
11.13	VA Bab 2522 Bab 3622	NB	Babylon	Stamp	
11.14	NBC 4826	NBK2	Uruk	Impr	D: List of PNs (presumably recipients) with quantities of silver
11.15	YBC 3953	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: Lease of a field (dialogue document); witnessed
11.16	YBC 6942	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: Woman gives away her children as temple slaves (dialogue document); witnessed
11.17	NBC 4855	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: List of craftsmen assigned to the watch in various parts of Eanna
11.18	YBC 16216	NBN	Uruk	Impr	D: Exchange of land for various metals and wool; witnessed; sealing LeE (1 of 5 sealings) on deed of exchange of land for bronze, tin, and blue-colored wool I: [d]PA PAP ZI “O Nabû, preserve my existence” C: NA ₄ KIŠIB ‘DINGIR-ri-man-ni ¹⁴ EN pi-qit-tu ₄ É.AN.NA “Seal of Ili-rēmanni, <i>bēl piqitti</i> of Eanna” SO: Ili-rēmanni, the <i>bēl piqitti</i> of Eanna
11.19	NCBT 932	NB	Uruk	Impr	D: Letter-order to give barley to PN as rations for temple slaves
11.20	CBS 8940	NB	Nippur	Stamp	
11.21	U. 17330 (L. BM. 123002)	NB	Ur	Stamp	
11.22	BM 89324	6 th -5 th cent.	Babylon	Cyl	
11.23	BM 104415	750-650	Borsippa(?) Babylon(?)	Tablet	I: Record of a royal grant
11.24	CBS 8939	NB	Nippur	Stamp	
11.25	NCBT 690	NB	Uruk	Impr	D: List of PN’s
11.26	VA Bab 1651	6 th cent.	Babylon	Stamp	

Note: NB=Neo-Babylonian, NBK2=Nebuchadnezzar II, NBN=Nabonidus, Stamp=Stamp Seal, Cyl=Cylinder Seal, Impr=Impression, D=Document, SO=Seal Owner, C=Caption, I=Inscription on Seal.

The *mušbuššu* appears in a wide variety of NB iconographic contexts, both public and private. These include a city gate, temple entrances and other cultic areas, miniature ceramic ceremonial boats, a tablet recording a royal grant, and seals and sealings. The glyptic contexts include significant votive seals, and impressions accompanying economic and administrative documents, including some pertaining to the temple.

Several external contextual factors clearly identify the *mušbuššu* as the most important composite being of NB iconography. First, this snake-dragon is attested in a far greater variety of external contexts than any other hybrid during this period. Second, NB monarchs devoted more attention to production of special depictions of this hybrid, which were highly visible to the populace, than to representations of any other beings. Third, the snake-dragon is the only hybrid to appear on a provenanced NB tablet that contains a royal document.

The dominance of the *mušbuššu* in NB art correlates with the fact that it was the attribute creature of Marduk, the chief god of Babylonia. At least in contexts accessible to persons other than priests, the Babylonians preferred to evoke the presence of Marduk indirectly by portraying his hybrid animal, rather than the anthropomorphic figure of the god himself. By this step in the direction of aniconism, they emphasized the numinous transcendence of their paramount deity.

The original intended contexts of a miniature bronze *mušbuššu* head and recumbent figurine (Ills. 11.6-11.7) are unknown, so their precise functions remain obscure. However, it appears that wherever these portable objects were displayed, they served as apotropaia to ward off evil forces, whether human or demonic.⁶²

The following sub-sections briefly explore several kinds of special external contexts in which NB snake-dragons are found.

11.3.5.1 GATE (RELIEFS & STATUES)

At the Ishtar Gate, the *mušbuššu* appeared in relief on the walls (extant) and as sculptures in the gate area (according to texts, see above). This city gate served several purposes. As the northern entrance to the inner city of Babylon, it obviously had a defensive military function; the importance of which was heightened by the fact that it was the gate closest to the royal palaces. More importantly, the gate was located on the Processional Way.⁶³

The Ishtar Gate was a principal public location through which processions would pass, including triumphant military processions,⁶⁴ but above all it marked the place where the gods entered Babylon on the climactic eleventh day of the New Year Festival (on Nisannu 11).

⁶² Wiggermann, *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits*, 168-169.

⁶³ The Processional Way leading from the *akitu* chapel, on the northern outskirts of the city, toward the Ishtar Gate was named *Ay-ibur-šabu*, “May the Arrogant not Prevail” (George, “A Tour of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon,” 55).

⁶⁴ George, “A Tour of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon,” 55.

On the eighth day of this festival (Nisannu 8), the deities of the Babylonian kingdom determined a supreme destiny for Marduk, the city god of Babylon, whom they hailed as their king at the Esagila (in accordance with the *Enuma Elish* VII). This united the Babylonian kingdom under the divine rulership of Marduk. Later on the eighth day, the human king led the gods (represented by their images), with Marduk at their head, in an opulent procession from the Esagila to the *akītu* chapel. The route of the procession went either along the Processional Way, including through the Ishtar Gate, to the canal leading to the chapel or in boats up the Euphrates river to the canal and from there to the chapel.⁶⁵ After staying several days and nights at the chapel, the gods returned to the Esagila on the eleventh day (Nisannu 11) via the Processional Way and through the Ishtar Gate. This triumphal entry of Marduk into his city to continue his divine reign over the city and country of Babylon for the coming year constituted the high point of the festival, and was probably the main reason for the elaborate trip of the gods to the *akītu* chapel and back.⁶⁶

Due to its ceremonial function at the New Year, the Ishtar Gate was impressively decorated in order to inspire awe, as Nebuchadnezzar II explicitly states: “I placed wild bulls and ferocious dragons in the gateways and thus adorned them with luxurious splendor so that mankind might gaze on them in wonder.”⁶⁷ There is no evidence that other gates of Babylon were embellished in this way, so it appears that the unique appearance of the Ishtar Gate corresponded to its unique function.⁶⁸

The building inscription on the Ishtar Gate assigns it the name: Ištar-sākipat-tēbīša, “Ishtar Repels her Attackers.”⁶⁹ This identifies Ishtar, goddess of war, as a primary protectress of Babylon at this major entrance, where the city could be vulnerable to hostile incursion. Thus, the inscription links the defensive and religious functions of the gate, which was resplendent with glazed brick reliefs symbolizing supernatural beings who accompanied Ishtar in defending Babylon. These beings were represented by the bull and the *mušbuššu*, attribute creatures of the gods Adad (storm god) and Marduk, respectively. The attribute animal of Ishtar was the lion, depicted in rows on either side of the northern part of the Processional Way, facing those who approach the gate. Therefore, anyone coming into Babylon from the north would receive the overwhelming impression that the city was protected by a divine triad: Ishtar, Marduk, and Adad

Due to the function of the Ishtar Gate on the eleventh day of the New Year Festival when the divine and human king entered the city there, it was known by the epithet, “Entrance of

⁶⁵ Marzahn, *The Ishtar Gate*, 46.

⁶⁶ Cf. Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, Md.: CDL, 1993), 439, 447-451.

⁶⁷ Nebuchadnezzar II Ishtar Gate Building Inscription in Marzahn, *The Ishtar Gate*, 30. Reference is made to these same monumental guardian figures in CBS 9, II:1-4 (“The Museum Cylinder” of Nebuchadnezzar II; see Legrain, *Royal Inscriptions and Fragments*, 41-42, no. 79) and in BM 129397, VI:1-22 (“East India House Inscription” of Nebuchadnezzar II; see “The India House Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar the Great,” translated by C. J. Ball, 115).

⁶⁸ Marzahn, *The Ishtar Gate*, 43.

⁶⁹ George, “A Tour of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon,” 57; Marzahn, *The Ishtar Gate*, 17.

Kingship.”⁷⁰ The gate’s intimidating splendor and apotropaic symbolism would contribute to the stability of the royal, religious, and social orders by projecting the power and legitimacy of Babylon’s divine and human kings. From the perspective of an outsider (such as a modern analyst), this scenario could be viewed as an expression of integrated faith, or as sophisticated royal propaganda serving as an instrument of social engineering.

11.3.5.2 TEMPLE (STATUES)

Just as monumental metal sculptures protected access to Babylon at the Ishtar Gate (see above), apotropaic statues of *mušbuššu*, goat-fish, and sphinxes stood guard at entrances of the Esagila temple. Smaller images of *mušbuššu* and other composite beings (serpents, lion-demons, scorpion-men, bison, and mermen) were located throughout this great temple of Marduk.⁷¹ Similar to the apotropaic statues at the Esagila in Babylon, there were statues of gilded bulls at the gates of the Ezida temple of Nabu in Borsippa.⁷²

11.3.5.3 CERAMIC MODEL BOATS

Koldewey surmises that because the miniature ceramic boats from the Merkes, each containing a creature (probably a *mušbuššu*, see above), could not float on water, they were to be dragged along the ground.⁷³ This could explain why the keel is always flat and why there is a hole in the stem, through which a pulling cord could be passed. Such activity would presumably occur in a ceremonial context, most likely at the New Year Festival to accompany or imitate the conveyance of Marduk and Nabu to the *akitu* chapel in their ceremonial boats (see above).

11.3.5.4 VOTIVE GLYPTIC

The inscription accompanying the depiction of Marduk and his *mušbuššu* on his personal cylinder seal (11.8) states that the cylinder was to be hung around the neck of the god’s statue in his Esagila temple.⁷⁴ This was done for the life of the king.⁷⁵ Thus, the seal functioned as a votive gift to petition the deity for protection, and it also provided the god with his own personal seal.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ George, “A Tour of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon,” 57.

⁷¹ George, “A Tour of Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon,” 55.

⁷² CBS 9, I:54-56 (“The Museum Cylinder” of Nebuchadnezzar II; see Legrain, *Royal Inscriptions and Fragments*, 41-42, no. 79; BM 129397, V:38-65 (“East India House Inscription” of Nebuchadnezzar II; see “The India House Inscription of Nebuchadnezzar the Great,” translated by C. J. Ball, 115.

⁷³ Koldewey, *The Excavations at Babylon*, 258.

⁷⁴ Collon, *First Impressions*, 167; Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 129; Wetzel, Schmidt, and Mallwitz, *Das Babylon der Spätzeit*, pls. 43-44.

⁷⁵ Cf. Ezra 6:10, where King Darius orders that restoration of the temple in Jerusalem should proceed and that sacrificial materials should be provided to the Jews there “so that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of Heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons” (NJPS).

⁷⁶ Finkel, “Uncovering Life at Babylon,” 96, fig. 78.

11.3.6 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The snake-dragon, Akkadian *mušbuššu* (Sumerian MUŠ.ĤUŠ: MUŠ, “snake,” and ĤUŠ, “furious” or “angry”),⁷⁷ is one of the most enduring and popular of the Mesopotamian composite beings. It is found from the Akkadian (c. 2330-2190 BC) through the Hellenistic (323-31 BC) periods.

During its long history, the *mušbuššu* is associated with a variety of deities, but it is also found in contexts where it lacks an apparent connection to any particular divine being. According to *Enuma Elish* I:141, the *mušbuššu* was one of the four snakes or snake-dragons bred in the waters of Tiamat. Subsequently, the creature became linked with chthonic deities of the earth, and later it was associated with the sea.

Mušbuššu was initially associated with the snake god Ninazu, “Lord Healer,” city god of Eshnunna and ruler of the Netherworld during the Akkadian period.⁷⁸ In this context, the dragon was the “angel of death, killing with his venom on the command of his master.”⁷⁹ A Standard Babylonian incantation states that Ninazu himself spits venom.⁸⁰

In the *Labbu* myth, which was partially preserved on a tablet from the library of Assurbanipal, an earlier event is reflected through a mythical battle against a composite being.⁸¹ In this myth, the “Raging One” is ravaging the land, so that both gods and man are terror-stricken.⁸² The name of the attacking creature, *labbu*, means “lion” in Akkadian;⁸³ however, in the text the same creature is also referred to as a MUŠ.ĤUŠ, “Furious-Snake.”⁸⁴ The nation is derailed, everything is in chaos, and kingship is offered by the gods to anyone willing to risk his life to fight against the terrorizing *labbu/mušbuššu*. Tishpak (a snake god of uncertain origin) comes forward, stirs the clouds, creates a storm, and raises his seal. He hurls his seal down upon the composite being and kills him. The blood of the dragon flows for three years, three months, a day, and a night.⁸⁵

After the death of the horrendous hybrid, which was Ninazu’s creature, the (resurrected?!) *labbu/mušbuššu* becomes the attribute animal of Tishpak, the victor, when he takes over

⁷⁷ See “ušumgal [DRAGON],” *ePSD*, n.p.

⁷⁸ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 166.

⁷⁹ Frans A. M. Wiggermann, “Tishpak, His Seal, and the Dragon Mušbuššu,” in *To the Euphrates and Beyond: Archaeological Studies in Honour of Maurits N. van Loon* (ed. O. M. C. Haex et al.; Rotterdam: A. A. Balkema, 1989), 122.

⁸⁰ Wiggermann, “Tishpak,” 122.

⁸¹ Wiggermann, “Tishpak,” 117.

⁸² Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 141.

⁸³ Notice that *labbu*, in “*labbu*” *CAD* 9:24, may be either used as an adjective “raging” or as a noun “lion.” According to Westenholz, some of the earliest examples of the *mušbuššu* have a lion head instead of a snake head (*Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts*, 25).

⁸⁴ Wiggermann, “Tishpak,” 117.

⁸⁵ Wiggermann, “Tishpak,” 117.

Eshnunna from Ninazu. Interestingly, Ningišzida, son of Ninazu and city god of Lagash, also has the *mušbuššu* as his animal.⁸⁶

During the Old Babylonian period, it appears that after Hammurapi conquered the city of Eshnunna, he transferred the snake-dragon from Tishpak to his newly exalted Babylonian god, Marduk. Transfer of the composite being to Marduk was a crucial shift that paved the way for the ultimate elevation of the *mušbuššu* during the Neo-Babylonian period. The royal policy of exalting a specific deity to national dominance, both over the gods and over the land, influenced mythology, which in turn shaped iconography.

From the reign of the Kassite king Melišpak (1185-1170 BC) on, Marduk and his son, Nabu, consistently employ the *mušbuššu* as their divine mount and associated animal.⁸⁷ At the same time, Enlil also claims the *mušbuššu* as his mount. Meanwhile, Tishpak, having lost the *mušbuššu* to Marduk, takes over the *bašmu* as his creature.⁸⁸ Since the *mušbuššu* goes to the god who gains higher status, it appears to be regarded as superior to the *bašmu*. This prioritization may at least partly be based on the fact that the four-legged *mušbuššu* possesses greater capabilities, as implied by its more powerful physical morphology, than the two-legged *bašmu*.

The Kassite period produced numerous *kudurrus* (boundary stones), upon which a fascinating array of creatures and symbols are portrayed, including examples of the *mušbuššu*.⁸⁹ On these, the snake-dragon supports a stand that often carries either Marduk's spade (*marru*) or Nabu's stylus. Later, during the Ninth Dynasty of Babylon (731-626 BC), stone monuments continue to display iconography similar to that of the earlier *kudurrus*. However, a large lapis lazuli cylinder dedicated to Marduk by the Babylonian king Marduk-zakir-šumi I (854-819 BC) presents a magnificent rendition of Marduk himself, standing beside his snake-dragon.

The Assyrians' admiration for Babylonian religion and culture led them to borrow various elements from the Babylonians.⁹⁰ With the rise of Ashur as the Assyrian national deity,⁹¹ they incorporated the *mušbuššu* into their religious repertoire. This was accomplished after

⁸⁶ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 166.

⁸⁷ Wiggermann, "Mušbuššu," 8:459; Wiggermann, "Tišpak," 121.

⁸⁸ Wiggermann, "Tišpak," 121.

⁸⁹ The study of Kassite *kudurrus* is a large topic beyond the scope of this study. Some important works on the topic are: Ursula Seidl, *Die Babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs* (BaM 4; Berlin: Verlag Gebr. Mann, 1968); Seidl, *Die Babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs: Symbole Mesopotamischer Gottheiten*; and Ignace J. Gelb, Piotr Steinkeller, and Robert M. Whiting, *Earliest land tenure systems in the Near East: Ancient Kudurrus* (2 vols.; OIP 104; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1991).

⁹⁰ For a discussion of Assyria's fascination with and borrowing of Babylonian culture, see Grant Frame, "My Neighbour's God: Aššur in Babylonia and Marduk in Assyria," *BCSMS* 34 (1999): 5-22.

⁹¹ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 166.

Sennacherib's final conquest of Babylon, when the snake-dragon was adopted as Ashur's beast.⁹² Again, the "Rolls Royce" of divine mounts went to the victorious god.

Regarding worship scenes, the motif of a worshiper approaching a deity was ancient. In the Old Babylonian period, the worshiper was led to an anthropomorphic god by an intercessory deity. In the Kassite period, the person could directly approach the god. But during the Neo-Assyrian period, when worship scenes became more common on stamp seals after the early ninth century BC, the scene radically changed: The NA trend was to depict the worshiper standing before symbols of the god, rather than before the god in person.⁹³ This created an impersonal atmosphere, reflecting human inability to gain access to the supernatural realm. This sense of remoteness, permeating the glyptic art of Neo-Assyria, paralleled iconographic treatment of the human king, who was indirectly represented on cylinder seals in effigy, rather than in person.⁹⁴

The NB worshiper scene continues the NA trend. Thus, Marduk's spade symbol, rather than the image of Marduk, rides upon the back of his snake-dragon, and the picture is further simplified by depiction of the spade without a tassel. Additional simplification is manifest in NB use of fewer filler motifs than NA glyptic worship scenes, which appeared to continue this aspect of Old Babylonian and Kassite style.⁹⁵

Neo-Babylonia lacked complex and elaborate stone reliefs like those of Neo-Assyria. However, echoes of northern influence on NB art are evident. For example, NB representations of *mušḫuššu* closely parallel depictions in the earlier NA rock reliefs at Maltaï, where snake-dragons support Nabu, Ashur, and Adad.⁹⁶ So just as the Assyrians had borrowed from the Babylonians in their quest for ideological supremacy to match their military dominance,⁹⁷ it seems that the Babylonians borrowed somewhat from the Assyrians as they reasserted their independence and sought to appropriate and redirect effective iconographic strategies developed by their enemies. On the one hand, such borrowing is a kind of compliment, but on the other, it serves a goal of ideological warfare, the dynamics of which parallel military, technological, and economic competition.

⁹² Wiggermann, "Mušḫuššu," 459.

⁹³ Glyptic art of the NA period manifests considerable originality: Its stress on symbolism and mythology exhibits a departure from the glyptic of previous periods (André Parrot, *The Assyrian Arts* [New York: Golden, 1961], 164; Henri Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals* [London: Macmillan & Co., 1939], 195).

⁹⁴ Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, 196, pl. XXXVd.

⁹⁵ Frankfort finds no rationale behind the combination of symbols used on Mesopotamian seals in general and concludes that the seal-cutters were not concerned with the meaning of these symbols, but used whatever was at hand (Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, 200).

⁹⁶ Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 166, no. 31. The glazed brick reliefs of the Processional Way, as well as the striding creatures, are reminiscent of earlier glazed brick reliefs found at Nimrud, Ashur, and Dur Sharrukin. According to John M. Russell, glazed brick fragments have been found in every Assyrian palace (*The Writing on the Wall: Studies in the Architectural Context of Late Assyrian Palace Inscriptions* [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1999], 72).

⁹⁷ With the rise of the NA Empire came Assyrian military domination over Babylon by Tiglath-pileser III (744-727 BC) in 729 BC.

11.3.7 CONCLUSION

The fact that the snake-dragon, the *mušbuššu*, is one of the most popular iconographic motifs during the Neo-Babylonian period comes as no surprise: it is the attribute animal for Marduk, city god of Babylon and national god of Babylonia, as well as the animal of Marduk's son, Nabu, who is centered in Borsippa. The wide distribution of the *mušbuššu* across numerous forms of expression (see above) underlines its importance.

As the attribute animal of Marduk, the *mušbuššu* is a richly evocative presence in royal and public cultic art. Representations of the apotropaic creature in scenes accessible to all levels of society underscores its importance in warding off evil intruders and demonic forces. The *mušbuššu* signifies the divine care of Marduk over his subjects as the “shepherd of the black-head ones.”⁹⁸

As undershepherds of Marduk, Babylonian kings patronize the snake-dragon, embellishing and honoring its depictions. Political ramifications of the king's relationship to Marduk and his attribute animal, the *mušbuššu*, are most transparent in the cultic practices centered around Marduk, especially at the New Year Festival, when human and divine kingship reinforce each other. Undoubtedly this mutual, symbiotic relationship between palace and temple profoundly influenced the common people.

11.4 CONCLUSION

The fangs and venom of snakes contribute deadly capabilities to composite beings that incorporate these serpentine components. Snakes are somewhat limited in locomotion, but elements from other creatures make snake-dragons much more efficient. The resulting fearsome abilities can be deployed in ways that are either malevolent or beneficent, depending on whether the creature is opposed to a given person, being, or group, or is on their side to defend against their enemies. A Babylonian who viewed a depiction of such a creature would be impressed by the capabilities implied by its composite physical morphology, interpreted through the lens of mythology and rituals that express and expand on its metaphysical role and powers.

Two kinds of snake-dragons are attested in NB iconography: *bašmu* and *mušbuššu*. Like the *bašmu*, the frequently attested NB *mušbuššu* is based on the horned viper, genus *Creastes*. However, the *mušbuššu* differs from the *bašmu* in that it has four legs instead of two, its body takes on the mass and size of a lion, and its sharp horns are taller and more pronounced. This makes the *mušbuššu* more powerful and mobile, which may have something to do with the fact that this composite being was elevated in significance during the Old Babylonian period by becoming the attribute animal of Marduk, and this preeminent status continued through the Neo-Babylonian period.

⁹⁸ *Enuma Elish* VI:107 (see Talon, *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth*, 66, 101).

Both the *bašmu* and the *mušbuššu* have the capacity to function either as malevolent or beneficent composite beings. However, the dominant role of the *mušbuššu* in the national religion of Babylonia, epitomized during the New Year Festival, sets this creature apart from all other composite beings during the Neo-Babylonian period. As the creature of Marduk, city god of Babylon and national god of Babylonia, as well as the animal of Marduk's son, Nabu, the *mušbuššu* is a highly visible presence in both royal and public Babylonian cult.

The function of the *mušbuššu* is multifaceted. The snake-dragon assists Marduk in his divine rulership of the land by providing a shield of supernatural protection against human and demonic intruders. The creature also protects the human monarch and his domain because this king is the representative of Marduk on earth. Thus, overpowering references to the *mušbuššu* in both physical and textual contexts fosters a strong sense of stability and superiority in the NB religious and civil order, thereby affirming the secure power and legitimacy of the nation's divine and human rulers.

12. CONCLUSION

This study has sought to illuminate the worldview of the Neo-Babylonians through study of an important aspect of their art: iconographic depictions of composite beings. Unlike previous scholarly treatments of such hybrids, the present work focuses on all extant, provenanced composite beings of a single period—NB culture (from about 1000 BC to just beyond the fall of the Babylonian Empire in the 6th cent. BC).¹ Through comprehensive focus on a one-period corpus, an attempt is made to establish a preliminary understanding of the ideological significance of this corpus to those who produced and viewed it.

Types of hybrids portrayed in NB art include (or are based on) the *apkallu*, genius, bull, lion, canine, winged quadruped, fish, bird, scorpion, and snake. Each is analyzed in terms of its physical components, context within scenes, interpretation by NB texts, external context, and historical background.

12.1 RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION

Patterns emerging from the data (cf. Appendix) illustrate the role of ancient art in affirming a strong degree of interconnectedness within an integrated cosmic community. Modern interpreters would view this community as including both natural or historical and supernatural or mythic elements. However, the ancient Mesopotamians did not perceive impermeable boundaries between the natural (or historical) and supernatural (or mythic) areas of reality as though they belonged to mutually exclusive dimensions. In their worldview, beings and creatures belonging to various parts of the cosmos could interact with each other.

Some lower deities and subdivine beings appear in composite form, with combinations of attributes represented by an amalgamation of physical characteristics. These powerful beings play a key role in the cosmos by interacting with gods, each other, humans, and natural animals, and their behavior parallels dynamics that occur in natural life, such as competition, conflict, predation, protection, and service provided to stronger beings.

Portrayals of composite beings often express the need for protection from malevolent powers by beneficent beings, some of whom can be accessed only through human mediators, such as exorcists and other ritual functionaries. Special relationships between

¹ Following Edith Porada's delineation of the boundaries of NB iconographic material ("Suggestions for the Classification of Neo-Babylonian Cylinder Seals," *Or* 16 [1947]: 145-165, pls. III-VIII).

supernatural beings and elite humans, especially the king, make these humans indispensable and therefore support their roles in the existing social order.

The following sections synthesize results of this study in three areas: (1) the above-mentioned interconnectedness within an integrated cosmic community, (2) the presence of a system of overarching hierarchical functions, and (3) the parameters of choice, in iconographic terms, in choosing to employ one or another composite being.

12.1.1 INTERCONNECTEDNESS WITHIN THE COSMIC COMMUNITY

Neo-Babylonian iconographic attestations of composite beings manifest the bewildering complexity that is characteristic of polytheistic worldviews. But although NB religion is not systematic,² there are some contours of consistency (see below). The overall picture shows a vast and variegated cosmic community inhabited by many kinds of beings and creatures, including gods, subdivine supernatural beings (including demons, monsters, and dragons), humans, and animals (including fish and birds).

The cosmic community is also characterized by a strong degree of interconnectedness between what modern culture regards as the natural world and that which is supernatural. That is to say that the function of any given superhuman personality can develop and realign in terms of interactions with others, even to the point of realigning with a former enemy. The Babylonians believed, not least, that given sectors of the cosmic community could interact with one another in multiple ways. Thus, NB iconography depicts composite creatures representing demons or gods, interacting with gods, each other, humans, and ordinary animals. It is clear, in fact, that hybrids play a key role in affirming connections between different parts of the cosmos.

The modern dichotomy between supernatural and natural domains would have been foreign to the ancient Mesopotamians as well as to other ancient Near Eastern peoples.³ They acknowledged constraints on interactions, due to the perceived limitations of beings or creatures. For instance, an ordinary human could not survive in the sea like a fish or fly in the sky like a bird. Even composite beings, such as *apkallu* sages or the divine Lamashtu, could be restricted or driven to another part of the cosmos by a stronger power. However, access to various cosmic domains was restricted only by one's relative capability, not by division of reality into radically different ontological dimensions. Compare the interconnectedness of the physical universe, to which both Earth and its moon belong, so that travel from one to the other is possible for humans who possess adequate capability in the form of technology.⁴

² A. Leo Oppenheim was of the opinion that "a systematic presentation of Mesopotamian religion cannot and should not be written" (*Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964], 172).

³ Cf. John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2011), ch. 3.

⁴ It is also technology that gives modern humans access to the sky and the sea.

In terms of capability, humans are notable for their cognitive abilities, but many species of animals can do things and move in ways that humans cannot. Composite creatures, in which boundaries between species are crossed, possess superior combinations of capabilities that enable them to transcend boundaries of action and motion available to any one species. But the capabilities and access of boundary-confounding hybrids, even if they are divine, are subordinate to those of higher gods.

Superhuman members of the cosmic community vary in their proximity to humans and their levels of interest in and attitudes toward the human species. But such variations notwithstanding, Babylonians were keenly aware of their lower position in the cosmic hierarchy. Beings whose capabilities far exceeded their own could enter their sphere and radically affect them, and they could not retaliate, protect themselves, or escape to another part of the cosmos. This largely explains why cosmological and supernatural themes are so prominent in NB iconography.

Related to the nature of the cosmos, there are other aspects of interconnectedness in the Babylonian worldview. One is the apparent lack of any distinction between mythical and historical time: Both are regarded as historical although events recounted in myths could be understood as occurring in the remote past. Also relevant is the integration of cultic and wisdom traditions: Thus *apkallu* sages provide both wisdom and magic, elements that are accessible in turn through an elite priestly class.

A further aspect of interconnectedness is the integration of myth, ritual, and iconography, which provides windows into parts (including elements beyond ordinary human vision) of the same world through different modes of expression. For instance, the myth of *Enuma Elish*, which was recited during rituals connected with the New Year Festival, recounts the origin of Tiamat's monsters, some of which re-emerged in subsequent NB iconography as creatures that could play a role in contemporary apotropaic rituals.

To the Mesopotamians, much of the cosmos was mysterious, due to human limitations. Therefore, there was a mystique about natural creatures that had access to domains which humans could not penetrate, such as the watery Apsu. The mystery of natural animals was heightened by mixtures of species in hybrids, a number of which were believed to have originated in the primordial aquatic world, which was mysteriously remote in time and inaccessible in space. Neo-Babylonians continued such traditions, as evidenced by depictions of composite creatures included among Tiamat's monsters; reference to natural and supernatural beings allocated by Marduk to the regions inside and on top of the Sea (on "The Babylonian Map of World"); representations of *apkallu*, who live in the Apsu; and the claim that the foundations of the Ishtar Gate, which displayed the snake-dragon, reached down to the depths of the Apsu.

Depictions of composite beings serve many purposes, but what unites them is the fact that they always evoke and therefore serve as reminders of members of the cosmic community, who are more powerful than ordinary humans. Whatever being is rendered that personality is a window to the whole super-human portion of the cosmic continuum and evokes the

whole, *pars pro toto*.⁵ Thus, a composite being in a seal impression on a document would convey the following meaning: This document is witnessed by super-human members of the cosmic community, who have power over any human who may be tempted to violate its terms.

Neo-Babylonians did not live in an ideal cosmos: They were surrounded by malevolent as well as beneficent supernatural beings. In this unpredictable setting, they suffered from suspicious and superstitious fear of supernatural beings, especially demons who could afflict them. Their fear is reflected in the complex frightfulness of the ways in which they portrayed some hybrid demons.

12.1.2 HIERARCHICAL FUNCTIONS

Members of the NB cosmic community, including composite beings, are differentiated according to their functions, as determined by the high gods. Functions, rather than material, are the primary constituents of their ontology, but genealogical origin can be a significant aspect of one's nature. Functions correlate to capabilities or attributes and operate within the cosmic region(s) that a given being or creature inhabits or to which it has access.

Functions of beings or creatures are hierarchical, in proportion to levels of power and ability to affect other members of the cosmic community. High gods dominate entire cosmic regions. Below them are lesser deities, demons (including deities that function as powerful demons, such as Lamashtu and Pazuzu), and other supernatural beings possessing varying degrees of power.

In the hierarchical cosmic community, there are radical differences of status and power between gods and the supernatural creatures that serve them. As domesticated animals are to humans, many composite creatures are to anthropomorphic gods, assisting them. The general superiority of hybrids to natural animals and humans is displayed through their mixtures, including with humans, which give them supernatural attributes.

Artistic depictions of composite beings can indicate their degrees of power in relation to that of other beings. One way is by showing how they interact; for instance, by who overcomes whom in contest scenes. Also, Pazuzu demonstrates his superiority by successfully driving Lamashtu, the most evil of demons, back into the netherworld.

Worship scenes can also indicate relative status and power because the one worshipped, sometimes represented by an attribute animal, is superior to the worshiper. However, some scenes show the fish-*apkallu* and the genius receiving worship, even though these composite beings are not known to be divine or attribute creatures of a god, and they normally render adoration rather than receive it.⁶ This raises a question regarding the definition of *worship*,

⁵ Compare the fact, on a lower level, that Pazuzu head amulets represented the entire demon *pars pro toto* (ch. 6, sects. 6.2.1 and 6.2.5).

⁶ The fish-*apkallu* is associated with Ea, but he is not the attribute creature of this god.

which modern Westerners tend to restrict to activity directed toward a deity. Should we regard the fish-*apkallu* and the genius as divine in some sense, at least in exceptional cases, or should we more broadly interpret the worship they receive as profound respect for someone who is higher in relative rank and power and who could therefore affect the inferior party, even if the superior is not divine?

The latter dynamic would have a parallel in ancient human society when a person of lower position approaches an individual of higher status or means, even if the latter is not a monarch. Such a parallel reflects the conception that sociology operates somewhat similarly at different levels of the cosmic community. Behaviors of so-called supernatural beings are comprehensible to the extent that they act as humans do.

The physical morphology of iconographic creatures can imply degrees of power in the sense that selective addition of features belonging to other species represent additional attributes that augment the capability of a being. Correspondingly, two of the most powerful demons, Pazuzu and Lamashtu, exhibit a high degree of physical complexity that contributes to their iconographic frightfulness, which is appropriate to their nature. However, there is not a direct correlation between the physical complexity of an artistic symbol of a being and the power of that being. For example, the high gods Ishtar and Adad are evoked at the ceremonial way and the Ishtar Gate of Babylon by a simple lion and bull, respectively, representing their attribute animals. These deities are far more powerful than the lesser gods and demons depicted elsewhere by composite creatures, even highly complex amalgamations. By showing only their attribute animals in simple form, rather than showing the major gods in an anthropomorphic form, the Neo-Babylonians effectively acknowledge the transcendence of the high gods.

Neither is there a direct correlation between the strength of a natural creature and the power of a super-human being symbolized by that creature. For example, the canine Pazuzu is more dominant than beings symbolized by animals that are naturally stronger than dogs, such as lions.

Many NB composite beings have human features, especially heads, indicating a high value placed on human ability, especially intelligence. Wings are also common, valued as they are for locomotion that transcends human capability (see Appendix below). Thus, for example, wings on a bull give the naturally earth-bound creature access to the celestial realm of the gods. The frequency of wings on hybrids suggests a greater NB interest in the realm of the sky than in the domain of water, which is inhabited by less commonly attested fish-based beings.

Patterns emerging from the data reflect decorum in the selection of elements that may be combined in composite beings. For example, wings are found on all types of terrestrial creatures based on human and animal forms, but not on sea creatures (see Appendix). Apparently it was appropriate for a composite being to have access to two of the three domains (sea, land, and sky), but not to all three.

12.1.3 CHOICE OF COMPOSITE BEING TO PORTRAY IN ICONOGRAPHY

From the present study, it appears that a number of factors influenced Neo-Babylonians in their choice of composite beings to depict on particular objects.⁷ First, political affiliation undoubtedly played a major role. It could hardly be an accident that the snake-dragon (*mušḫuššu*) is the most widely attested of NB hybrids. This is the attribute creature of Marduk, the divine king of Babylon, whose support provides legitimacy to the human monarch and his regime. Babylonian symbols of Marduk, also including his spade, dominate NB iconography, supplanting motifs that were common in Neo-Assyria,⁸ such as the winged lion and the winged human-headed bovine that stands on all fours, which are totally absent in the extant NB corpus.⁹ I suggest that such conspicuous omissions likely indicate that the Babylonians distanced themselves from their old enemies, the Neo-Assyrians, who frequently displayed the winged lion and winged human-headed bull, especially at the entrances to their palaces and temples.¹⁰

Such politically influenced selection and prioritization of mythical-religious elements in iconography, including in counterpoint to a competing national ideology, reflects a kind of human manipulation of the mythic realm, or at least the way in which it is perceived. When the Babylonians elevated Marduk, their god, in the supernatural world (rather than another god, such as Ashur), they elevated themselves in the human sphere (rather than other peoples, such as the Assyrians).¹¹ The persuasive effectiveness of this dynamic was reinforced by the belief in interconnectedness within one cosmos, which implies that the cosmological rank of a god necessarily affected his terrestrial (including human) constituency.

The evidence just summarized indicates that some NB iconography functioned as persuasive visual rhetoric. The fact that the Babylonian populace regarded the mythical world as real, as an extension of their own, and therefore capable of profoundly affecting their well-being (see below) made its manipulation through iconography an overwhelmingly powerful political tool, which modern despots would covet. Fear of malevolent supernatural beings and the need for supernatural beneficence and guidance (procured through humans such as exorcists, priest-scholars, or the king) made these elite individuals indispensable and therefore maintained the legitimacy of their power.

⁷ *Contra* Henri Frankfort who finds no rationale behind the combination of symbols used on Mesopotamian seals and concludes that the seal-cutters were not concerned with the meanings of these symbols but used whatever was at hand (*Cylinder Seals* [London: Macmillan & Co., 1939], 200).

⁸ For discussions on Assyrian and Babylonian relations and religious interactions, see articles by Grant Frame: “Babylon: Assyria’s Problem and Assyria’s Prize,” *The Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies Journal* 3 (2008): 21-31; “My Neighbour’s God: Aššur in Babylonia and Marduk in Assyria,” *BCSMS* 34 (1999): 5-22; and “The God Aššur in Babylonia,” in *Assyria 1995* (ed. Simo Parpola and R. M. Whiting; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 55-64.

⁹ See ch. 4, sect. 4.3; ch. 5, sect. 5.2.6. One extant NB cylinder seal depicts a four-winged human-headed bull (Ill. 4.14), but it stands upright and has human forearms and hands.

¹⁰ Instead of the winged lion, it is the natural lion that finds expression in both monumental and minor NB art forms.

¹¹ Cf. the theory of Wilfred G. Lambert regarding the historical setting of the composition of *Enuma Elish*, which elevated Marduk to kingship over the gods: “The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I: A Turning Point in the History of Ancient Mesopotamian Religion,” in *The Seed of Wisdom* (ed. W. S. McCullough; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), 3-13.

Unsubtle iconographic manipulation of anthropomorphic high gods themselves could have been blasphemous and too direct to be credible. By abstaining from direct depiction of such gods, the Neo-Babylonians conveyed an impression of reverence for their transcendence. But they evoked the high gods through their symbols and their creatures, including hybrids, which could be manipulated more easily, thereby indirectly shaping conceptions of the gods with whom they were linked.

Artistic representations of sub-divine beings (especially at the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way of Babylon) projected an aura of stability, with divine oversight safeguarding the nation and its *status quo*—especially for the monarchy and the social and religious elites. Moreover, the hierarchical structure of the supernatural society (see above) implicitly but strongly justified human social hierarchy.

A second major factor that affected NB artistic selection was the malevolent or apotropaic/beneficent function of a certain composite being. A malevolent being, such as the snake-monster (*bašmu*), could be depicted in order to target it and drive it away. On the other hand, a friendly hybrid could be invoked to counteract a particular kind of evil (e.g., invasive demons or human enemies, or sickness), from which freedom or deliverance was desired, or positively bring goodness in the sense of well-being and prosperity. This second factor somewhat overlaps with the political motivation (above) in that the supernatural protection of the nation and its king carried crucial political consequences. However, popular NB use of amulets, plaques, and the apotropaic function of seals, in continuity from Neo-Assyrian usage, were motivated by the general Mesopotamian need of persons and groups (especially households) for protection from malevolent forces.

Probably the most terrifying of these forces was the invasive demoness Lamashtu, whose penchant for baby-snatching (likely expressing fear of sudden infant death syndrome), was particularly feared during the NB period. This explains the prevalence of amulets and plaques invoking the nemesis of the guard-dog demon Pazuzu, who was known to exercise the function of driving the dastardly leonine demoness back into the netherworld where she belonged. If you are threatened by a big cat, you call a big dog!

Other factors that likely influenced NB iconographic choices of composite beings, at least for some producers and sponsors, or purchasers who drove market need for production, include the connection of a supernatural being to one's profession or social status (e.g., *apkallu* on seals of temple officials). The popularity of a particular motif in NB society could also depend on a personal religious attachment to a patron deity or subdivine being,¹² or on an aesthetic preference, as well as on the competence of an artist in rendering a certain motif.

The same factors that influenced the selection of a given composite being would presumably impact aspects of the way in which that creature was depicted. Such aspects could include its

¹² Perhaps the owner of a seal showing a worship scene identified with the worshiper.

posture and position in relation to any other iconographic motifs; the style, artistic quality, and sophistication of the rendering; and the resulting cost of production, which would also be affected by the material and shape of the object on which it was shown (e.g., clay figurine, cylinder seal, etc.).

An apotropaic portrayal could be limited (e.g., showing only the head), so that a beneficent but awesome being (e.g., Pazuzu) would be appropriately invoked, without the danger of magically connecting with its full potency. Thus, an artistic object could serve as a kind of transformer to convert a lethal high-tension wire level of energy into a useful resource. Limited invocation of a malevolent creature, on the other hand (e.g., Lamashtu), could serve the purpose of warding it off, without bringing it too close, analogous to a vaccination.

Such care exercised by the Babylonians underlines the fact that they did not regard their highly emblematic portrayals of numinous beings, including composite creatures, merely as artistic reflections of mythology or encoded religious philosophy. Rather, they saw these visual depictions as magical (i.e., occult) instruments of controlled interaction with unseen but real, dynamic supernatural personalities who were fully capable of radically impacting them. Popular ritual usage of apotropaic figurines, including for the non-elite, confirms belief in the reality of supernatural intervention relevant to actual human life.

It is true that the Neo-Babylonians dramatically reduced their representations of anthropomorphic deities to depictions of their symbols and attribute creatures. The most popular scene found on NB seals is the worshiper before emblems, in which the place of the divine presence is entirely occupied by symbols. The Neo-Babylonians also simplified their iconography by eliminating filler motifs that stood for various supernatural elements. However, these tendencies toward elegant simplicity (cf. the natural bull of Adad and lion of Ishtar at the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way) and presentation of gods as transcendent (a step in the direction of aniconism) do not mean that the Neo-Babylonians viewed the supernatural community as less real than earlier Mesopotamians perceived it. The world of the Neo-Babylonians pulsed with veiled but vibrant cosmic forces that reached everyone, from the king down to the unborn child.

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APPENDIX

PATTERNS OF PHYSICAL MORPHOLOGY AND POSTURE

OF NEO-BABYLONIAN COMPOSITE BEINGS

KEY TO BODY PARTS: **H:** head; **B:** body; **BC:** body covering (fur/scales); **BL:** lower body; **BU:** upper body; **a:** arms with hands; **be:** beard; **e:** ears; **f:** feet; **ff:** front feet; **fh:** hind feet; **h:** horns; **l:** legs; **lf:** front legs; **lh:** hind legs; **ph:** phallus in shape of head; **s:** shoulders; **t:** tail; **te:** teeth; **w:** wings of bird-of-prey; []: *optional (not always)*

KEY TO POSTURE OPTIONS: **K:** kneeling; **Ra:** rampant; **Re:** recumbent; **S2:** standing or moving on 2 legs; **S2t:** standing or moving on 2 legs + tail; **S4:** standing or moving on 4 legs; **Si:** sitting; **Sw:** swimming; []: *optional (not always)*

	BEING	PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION	BODY PARTS									POSTURE OPTIONS		
			Human	Bull	Lion	Dog	Ibex/Quadruped	Fish	Bird	Scorpion	Snake/Reptile		Goat	Donkey
Human	Human-Figured Ūmu- apkallu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> male human figure [optional] two or four wings 	H B						[w]					S2
	Fish-Cloaked Apkallu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> male human figure carp fish head (on top of human head) and body (hanging down back) 	H B					H B						S2
	Bird-of-Prey-Headed, Winged Apkallu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> male human body bird-of-prey's (probably eagle) head and two or four wings 	B						H w					S2
	Winged Human Figure (So-Called Genius)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> male human figure four wings 	H B						w					S2

Bull	Bull-Man: <i>kusarikku</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • male human head and torso • bull's horns, lower body (with legs) 	H BU	h B L													S2
	Human-Headed Bovine: <i>aladlammû</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • male human head and human forearms and hands • bovine body • four wings 	H a	B					w								S2
	Winged Bull	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bull figure • eagle's wings 		H B					w								
Lion	Winged or Wingless Human-Headed Lion (Sphinx)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • male or female human head • lion's body • [optional] wings 	H		B				[w]								S4 Ra Re Si
	Lion-Demon: <i>ugallu</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • male human body • lion's head • <i>bird-of-prey's feet</i> (NB <i>example doesn't show</i>) • donkey's ears 	B		H				<i>f</i>						e		S2
	Lion-Demoness: <i>lamasbtu</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • female human's body shape (neck, upper body, arms can be spotted like leopard) • lioness's fur on body and [usually] head (back of head can be spotted like leopard) • bird-of-prey's feet (talons) and [sometimes] head • donkey's teeth and ears 	B		[H] BC				[H] f						te e		S2
	Lion-Dragon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lion's head, body, front legs • bird-of-prey's hind-legs, feet (talons), wings. • [sometimes] quadruped's horns and tail • [sometimes] donkey's ears 			H B lf			[h] [t]		lh f w					[e]		S4

Dog	Canine-Headed Demon: <i>pazuzu</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • male human ears and beard, and [optional] thighs, shoulders, arms, [sometimes] with hands, and/or legs • dog's head (like mastiff), upper body, and [optional] thighs and legs • horns (like gazelle[?]) • bird-of-prey's feet (talons) and four wings, and [optional] thighs and legs • scorpion's tail • snake-headed penis 	e be [BL] [s] [a] []			H BU [BL] []	h		f w [BL] []	t	ph			S2
	Dog-Humanoid ("Mad Dog"): <i>(a)ur(i)dimmu</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • male human head and torso • dog's lower body (with two legs and tail) 	H BU			BL								S2
Ibex/Quadruped	Winged Ibex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ibex figure • wings 					H B		w					S4
	Ibex-Man	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • male human head • bull's tail • ibex horns and body (with 4 legs) • wings 	H	t			h B		w					S2
	Unidentified Quadruped	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • male human head • bull's tail • unidentified quadruped's body (with 4 legs) • wings 	H	t			B		w					Ra
	Merman: <i>kulullû</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • male human head, torso, and (usually) arms • carp fish's lower body (with tail) • (sometimes) goat's front legs and feet (hooves) 	H BU a					B L				[lf] [f]		Sw
	Goat-Fish: <i>suburmasû</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carp fish's body with tail • goat's head and two legs and tail 						B t					H l t	

	Bird-Griffin: <i>kuribu(?)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lion's lower body, [usually] legs, and [sometimes] feet (paws with claws) bird-of-prey's (generally eagle's) head (with neck), chest, tail, [sometimes] legs, [usually] feet (talons), and [optional] wings [sometimes] donkey ears 			BL [l] [f]					H BU t [l] [f] [w]				[e]	S4 Ra Re Si
Bird	Lion-Headed Eagle: <i>anzû</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lion's head and [sometimes] front feet (paws) eagle's body, hind feet (talons), and wings 			H [ff]					B f w					Re
	Winged Scorpion-Man: <i>girtablullû</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> male human head, upper body, and arms bird-of-prey's legs, feet (talons), and wings scorpion's lower body (with tail) 	H BU a							l f w	B L				S2
Scorpion	Snake Monster: <i>bašmu</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> snake (horned viper's) figure reptile's (lizard's[?]) two legs and feet 										H B l f			S2t
Snake	Snake-Dragon: <i>mušpuššu</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lion's body shape and front legs bird-of-prey's hind legs and feet (talons) snake's (horned viper's) head (with neck), outer body (scales), and tail 			B lf					lh f		H BC t			S4 Re

Below are some of the more noteworthy patterns that can be derived from the table.

1. Humanness

Human-headed composite beings are the most frequent: 11, of which 7 also have human bodies or at least upper bodies. This places a high priority on the intelligence of such beings and makes them partly resemble anthropomorphic gods, to which they are inferior. Thus, anthropomorphic components are superior to animal elements.¹

There is a gradation of humanness among the NB hybrids:

¹ Cf. Genesis 1:26-28; Ezekiel 1.

- Most human, with human head and upper body: Bull-Man, Dog-Humanoid, Merman, and Winged Scorpion-Man
- Less human, with human head only: Human-Headed Bovine and Winged or Wingless Human-Headed Lion (Sphinx)
- Least human, with optional human lower body only: Canine-Headed Demon

Notice that the least human is a demon (Canine-Headed Pazuzu), which is also the most complex (see below).

2. Major Divisions

Major divisions between parts of a given composite being can occur in different places, such as between the head and body or between the upper and lower body. For example, while the Human-Headed Bovine has a male human head and bovine body, the Bull-Man has a male human head and torso but a bull's lower body. Also, while the Winged or Wingless Human-Headed Lion (Sphinx) has a male or female human head and lion's body, the Dog-Humanoid has a male human head and torso but a dog's lower body.

3. Head and Body Mismatch

In five cases, the body-shape of a hybrid has the head of another kind of creature attached to it:

- human head with body of bovine, lion, ibex, and unidentified quadruped, i.e., only large or fairly large terrestrial quadrupeds
- leonine head with body of male human, or with female human body shape (with lion's fur), or with eagle's body, i.e., only human or eagles bodies are mismatched with lion heads
- bird-of-prey's head with body of male human, or with female human body shape (with lion's fur), i.e., only human bodies are mismatched with bird-of-prey's
- snake's head with body of lion that has snake's body covering (scales)
- goat's head with body of a carp

If the body is regarded as the basis of a creature, it would appear that there is something special about the head of a human, lion, bird-of-prey, snake, and goat. In the case of the human, the factor is probably intelligence. In the case of the predators (lion, bird-of-prey, and snake), the factor seems to be the fighting/destructive capability of their mouths (or beak in the case of the bird). But what about the goat? Perhaps its horns are useful for fighting.

Note two points: First, the basic species of a number of composite creatures possess superior strength in the natural world, e.g., the bull and the lion, but there does not seem to be a direct correlation between this factor and the relative fighting prowess of different hybrids. Human-like figures that convey an impression of superior intelligence (e.g., the

Genius) can overcome apparent superior strength. Furthermore, the Canine-Headed Demon can defeat the Lion-Demoness, even though the outcome of a confrontation between a dog and a lion would almost invariably be the reverse in the natural world.

Second, attested NB head-body/body-head combinations (with either head or body of a given creature) are quite limited:

- human combines with bovine, lion, ibex, unidentified quadruped (i.e., large or fairly large terrestrial quadrupeds), and bird-of-prey (eagle)²
- lion combines with bird-of-prey (eagle) and snake
- fish combines with goat

4. Upper and Lower Body Mismatch

The upper body and lower body are from different species in the following cases:

- male human upper body with lower body of bull, lion, fish, or scorpion
- dog's upper body with male human or bird-of-prey's lower body
- bird-of-prey's upper body with lion's lower body

Therefore attested NB upper-lower body combinations are:

- human combines with bull, lion, fish, scorpion, and dog
- dog combines with bird-of-prey
- lion combines with bird-of-prey

Here the human has more flexibility of combination than with body-head combinations. Upper-lower body combinations involving humans include not only with terrestrial quadrupeds (lion, bull, and dog), but also with a ground creature (scorpion) and a sea creature (carp-fish).

Note: A male human upper body combines with the lower body of a bull, lion, fish, or scorpion. These lower bodies supply capabilities beyond that of humans, such as size and strength (bull and lion), special locomotion of swimming in water (fish), or special fighting ability when the lower body has a scorpion's tail.

5. Lower Body and Legs Mismatch

In some cases, the legs of a composite being belong to a different species than its body:

- lion's head and body and front legs, but bird-of-prey's hind legs

² Cf. the four faces of the winged *cherubim* in Ezekiel 1:10: man, lion, bull, and eagle.

- goat's head, fish's body, but goat's (two front) legs

In the following cases when the body is divided between two creatures, the legs do not match the lower body:

- human head and upper body with fish's lower body, sometimes with a goat's front legs
- human head and upper body with scorpion's lower body but bird-of-prey's legs
- bird-of-prey's head and upper body with lion's lower body but sometimes bird-of-prey's legs instead of lion's legs
- snake's head and body but legged reptile's (lizard's[?]) two legs
- snake's head with lion's body shape and front legs, but bird-of-prey's hind legs

Legs that do not match the body or lower body supply greater mobility and/or come with talons providing raptor capability, which is attested with several hybrids, showing that it is highly valued.

6. Legs and Feet Mismatch

Feet of a composite creature usually match its legs, as in the natural world, but there are some exceptions, in which the legs and feet are those of different kinds of creatures:

- lion's head with male human body and legs, but bird-of-prey's feet (talons)
- lioness's or bird-of-prey's head with female human's body shape, but with bird-of-prey's feet (talons)
- lion's head with eagle's body (including legs and talons), sometimes with additional lion's front feet
- dog's head and upper body with dog's, human, or bird-of-prey's lower body and legs, but always bird-of-prey's feet (talons)

Feet of a different kind of creature than the legs are usually talons of a bird-of-prey, supplying special raptor capability. A hybrid that is already a raptor can add a lion's front feet/paws with claws, which supplement its fighting capability.

7. Peripheral Components

In a number of instances, peripheral body components (horns, ears, teeth, beard, body covering, penis, and tail) do not match the body parts to which they are attached:

- Bull-man with male human head, but bull's horns
- Lion-Demon with lion's head, but donkey's ears
- Lion-Demoness with lioness's head, but donkey's teeth and ears, and female human's body shape, but covered with leonine fur

- Lion-Dragon with lion's head, but sometimes horns and donkey's ears, and with lion's body, but bird-of-prey's tail and sometimes scorpion's tail
- Canine-Headed Demon with dog's head, but horns and male human ears and beard, and sometimes with thighs like those of a human, dog, or bird-of-prey, but with scorpion's tail and head of penis shaped like a snake
- Ibex-Man with male human head, but ibex horns, and with ibex's body but bull's tail
- Goat-Fish with fish's body (with tail), but sometimes with goat's tail
- Bird-Griffin with bird-of-prey's head, but sometimes donkey's ears, and with lion's lower body, but bird-of-prey's tail
- Snake-Dragon with lion's body shape, but covered with snake's scales, and with snake's tail

Thus, the following list of peripheral components are mismatched with body parts to which they are attached:

- horns: bull, ibex
- ears: male human, donkey
- teeth: donkey
- beard: male human
- body covering: lioness, snake
- penis: snake (head)
- tail: bull, bird-of-prey, scorpion, snake, goat

Peripheral physical components generally enhance or add capabilities, but sometimes they just seem to evoke the personality and attributes of the whole creature (*pars pro toto*), to which they would belong in the natural world (e.g., a goat's tail).

8. Wings

Wings are frequently attested on composite beings, appearing as at least optional on at least some hybrids in every major category (human, bull, lion, etc.), except for the fish and the snake. Simple addition of wings to an otherwise land-bound creature radically enhances its mobility (adding flight or at least speed), without further physical modification.

In the NB corpus of composite beings, fish and snakes belong to the lower domains; they are not portrayed as having access to the sky or to avian speed. In keeping with a lack of wings on fish, the Fish-Cloaked Apkallu is the only kind of human-based composite being that always lacks wings.

A dog-, ibex/quadruped-, and scorpion-based hybrid always has wings. The fact that humans, bulls, and lions do not always have wings may be because they are capable or powerful enough without them.

Four wings are at least optional on the Human-Figured Ūmu-apkallu, Bird-of-Prey-Headed, Winged Apkallu, the Winged Human Figure (Genius), Human-Headed Bovine, and Canine-Headed Demon. Thus, all composite beings that can possess the enhanced flight capability of four wings also have human elements, to varying degrees of dominance.

9. Levels of Physical Complexity

Variation in physical complexity of composite beings is extreme. Here they are listed in ascending order of complexity:

- Simplest is the Human-Figured Ūmu-apkallu when it has no wings, which appears like a natural male human figure.
- Wings are added to the figure of a man, bull, or ibex; and two legs and feet are added to the figure of a snake.
- A Fish-Cloaked Apkallu has a fish figure that duplicates a human figure.
- Some hybrids combine two creatures, with (but not limited to) a core division between them, whether between the head and body (Bird-of-Prey-Headed Winged Apkallu, Lion-Headed Eagle, Goat-Fish) or between the upper body and lower body (Bull-Man, Dog-Humanoid). Such creatures may or may not have wings.
- Some hybrids combine three creatures, with (but not limited to) a core division between them: Human-Headed Bovine, Winged or Wingless Human-Headed Lion (Sphinx) when it has wings (otherwise, it has the previous level of complexity), Merman, Bird-Griffin, and Winged Scorpion-Man. The Snake-Dragon belongs at the upper end of this level of complexity because it has a body covering that differs from the shape of its body.
- Some hybrids combine four creatures, with (but not limited to) a core division between them: Lion-Demon, Ibex-Man, and Unidentified Quadruped. The Lion-Demoness belongs at the upper end of this category because she has the special complexity of a body covering that differs from the shape of her body. Although the Lion-Dragon can combine five creatures, it lacks a core division because its head and body are both leonine. Also, some species that can be included in the Lion-Dragon are optional, so it is not necessarily so complicated.
- Clearly at the highest level of complexity, the Canine-Headed Demon combines six creatures with (but not limited to) a core division between them. This demon possesses the unique feature of a body part that is shaped like another body part of a different creature (snake-headed penis).

The higher levels of complexity involve core divisions between head and body or between upper body and lower body, with the exception of the Lion-Dragon. Human- and bull-based hybrids tend to be simple, but representations of demons tend to be complex.

In some cases there may be correlation between the relative overall power of a being and its level of physical complexity. Thus, for example, the more complex Canine-Headed Demon can successfully counter the less complex Lion-Demoness, even though she is also a goddess and is part lion. However, the Genius is depicted as overcoming more complex creatures than himself, so relative complexity cannot be the only factor involved in relative fighting effectiveness.

10. Posture

Posture usually correlates with that of natural creatures represented by at least some body parts. The most common posture of NB hybrids is standing on two feet, which is natural for humans and birds. But a variety of other postures are attested, and some beings are shown in several different postures, especially the guardian Winged or Wingless Human-Headed Lion (Sphinx) and Bird-Griffin.

When physical morphology is mixed and ambiguous regarding stance, choice of one or the other stance (two legs or four legs) can emphasize the physical aspect of the composite being correlating with that stance, especially a human aspect. However, in the case of the Goat-Fish, an upright two-legged stance seems to add a human dimension to a hybrid that lacks it in terms of physical morphology.³

The swimming posture of the Merman emphasizes the mode of locomotion appropriate to its aquatic domain. Inexplicably, however, despite the prevalence of wings among NB hybrids and the fact that some of them possess dominant avian features, none of them are depicted flying. This is surprising, since flying would emphasize their access to the sky. Their ability in this regard, or at least their ability to propel themselves with superior speed, is simply implied by their possession of the requisite physical equipment.

11. Similarities between Different Kinds of Composite Beings

There are some interesting similarities between composite beings belonging to different overall categories. For example:

- Human heads appear on beings belonging to several categories: Human, Bull, Lion, Ibex/Quadruped, Fish, and Scorpion. These heads give strong human aspects to their personalities.
- The Bird-of-Prey Headed, Winged Apkallu has a bird-of-prey's head, as does the Bird-Griffin, and sometimes the Lion-Demoness.
- The Lion-Demon, Lion-Dragon, and usually Lion-Demoness have leonine heads, as does the Lion-Headed Eagle. The former three also have bird-of-prey's feet, and the Lion-Dragon also has a bird-of-prey's wings. So there is a close connection between

³ The Snake Monster also has two legs and feet, but of some kind of reptile. It stands not only on these two legs, but also on its serpentine tail.

the lion, the top terrestrial predator, and birds-of-prey, especially the eagle, which is the top avian predator.

- The Fish-Cloaked Apkallu has a fish head and body, in addition to a male human figure, and it stands on two legs. The Merman has another kind of human-fish combination although it swims rather than stands and the Goat-Fish has a human kind of stance although it lacks human body parts. So there are different kinds of linkage between the human realm and that of the sea.
- Scorpion's tails belong not only to the Winged Scorpion-Man, but also to the Canine-Headed Demon and sometimes the Lion-Dragon. On the Canine-Headed Demon, this tail correlates with his snake-headed penis in that both provide venomous penetrating capabilities.
- Other peripheral features that occur across categories include horns of various creatures and donkey's ears.
- The Winged or Wingless Human-Headed Lion (Sphinx) appears in the same poses (standing or moving on four legs, rampant, recumbent, and sitting) as the Bird-Griffin. This seems more than coincidental because they share some physical features—both have a lion's lower body (the Sphinx also has a leonine upper body) and can have optional wings—and both represent guardian figures.

These kinds of similarities across categories, some of which appear to involve similarities of function or sphere, illustrate that the ancient Mesopotamians did not envision composite beings that neatly fit into homogeneous categories. Each was a unique personality that belonged to a hybrid species, possessed a special portfolio of powers, and exhibited varying levels of physical and postural affinity to other members of the supernatural community.

12. Relation to Domain (Sky, Land, and Sea)

The physical components of the NB composite beings belong to natural creatures that pertain to the cosmic domains of sky (birds), land, and sea (fish), with the terrestrial creatures divided between humans, other legged creatures,⁴ and non-legged reptiles that crawl on their bellies (snakes):

Sky: birds
Land: humans
 other legged creatures
 non-legged crawling creatures
Sea: fish

Some members of all basic categories have wings, except those that are fish- or snake-based, a factor that separates snake-based hybrids from those of other terrestrial categories. In other words, only natural creatures with legs are given wings. We should not make too much

⁴ Mainly quadrupeds, but also eight-legged scorpions, and also some kind of legged reptile (lizard[?]), of which two legs are represented in the Snake Monster.

of this based on *silence* regarding wings on fish or snakes, which could be due to accidents of non-discovery. However, if there really were no wings on any NB fish- or snake-based composite creatures, it appears that these low creatures (whether low on the ground or low in the sea) did not have access to the sky. While they could be given legs to facilitate terrestrial locomotion, they could not go higher than that. Perhaps even NB tolerance for physical anomaly had its limits.

The Snake-Dragon does possess a bird-of-prey's hind legs and feet (talons), but the fish-based hybrids lack any bird features at all. So it looks as though upward mixing of physical components is constrained: The fish cannot mix with the bird, and the snake can only have non-flight parts of a bird, but naturally legged land creatures can have wings.⁵ The fact that wings are added to so many earth-based, legged NB creatures indicates the importance of this bird feature, implying special interest in the realm of the sky.

The fact that human heads appear on so many NB hybrids, in all categories except for Dog, Bird, and Snake, suggests that the Human category is special (cf. above) and distinct from other legged terrestrial life. The importance of the human element is reinforced by the prevalence of quasi-human two-legged stances of non-human- and non-bird-based NB composite creatures.

Each of the NB composite beings has features belonging to at least two of the domain categories (including land subcategories). So the point of mixing species is not simply for variety, but to extend the operational/functional (including mobility and/or intelligence) range of a creature. Notice, however, that unless a creature has wings, it is land-bound, even if it has other bird parts, such as head (with bird-of-prey beak) and talons.

A number of hybrids always have features belonging to three of the domain categories (Human-Headed Bovine, Lion-Demon, Lion-Demoness, Ibex-Man, Unidentified Quadruped, Winged Scorpion-Man, Snake-Dragon). Only one, the Canine-Headed Demon, covers four categories, reinforcing its position as the most complex (see above). None of the creatures cover five categories. So the composite beings were complementary, occupying a variety of niches in the cosmic order, with none of them able to cover all bases.

The least attested domain categories are the non-legged land creatures and fish, which in the natural world also lack legs. Perhaps this is because these kinds of creatures are quite limited with regard to how they can affect humans.

⁵ The snake-headed phallus of the winged Canine-Headed-Demon is the only exception to the mixture of snake parts and wings, but this is only a snake part, not a snake-based creature.