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SUMERO-AKKADIAN INTERCONNECTIONS:  
RELIGIOUS IDEAS

THE RELIGIOUS ideas and practices current in Mesopotamia — or rather Lower Mesopotamia, the region which in the course of time came to be known as Sumer and Akkad — throughout the third and the early part of the second millennium B.C., are known to us primarily from documents written in the Sumerian language. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that by and large these religious ideas and practices were originated and developed by the Sumerians<sup>1</sup>, or rather by their theologians and sages, their priests, poets and scribes. Since, however, the Semites too lived in Mesopotamia throughout the millennia, often side by side with the Sumerians, it is not unreasonable to assume *a priori* that they left an indelible impress on Sumerian religious thought and deed. It is the purpose of this paper to sift and analyze the various aspects of Mesopotamian religion in order to try to identify and isolate at least a few of its Semitic ingredients and components. In view of the nature of our sources, which for the period under discussion are so overwhelmingly one-sided and weighted on the side of the Sumerians, the conclusions drawn in this paper with regard to the Semitic role in the development of the religion of Mesopotamia, cannot but be based largely on inference and surmise, on conjecture and hypothesis. Even so they may turn out to be of appreciable value, especially if one or another of them should “spark” a protracted discussion and constructive scholarly debate, leading to a more tangible and definitive evaluation of Sumero-Semitic religious interrelationships.

Before proceeding with our subject, however, it is essential to clarify, at least to some extent, the identity of the Semitic peoples in Lower Mesopotamia who, in one way or another, came in close contact with the Sumerians. The first — and admittedly the most hypothetical group — are those nameless Semites, who presumably came into the region early in the fourth millennium B.C. and, after intermingling with the non-Semitic population already established there, helped to transform its peasant-village culture into an urban state<sup>2</sup>. The second group of

<sup>1</sup> The Sumerians referred to throughout this study are of course not pure Sumerians, either by blood or culture; they are a Sumerian speaking people which was no doubt the product of the fusion of at least three distinct ethnic elements, in which the Sumerian speaking group proved to be the dominant component.

<sup>2</sup> For details, cf. for the present “New Light on the Early History of Mesopotamia,” *AJA*, 52: 156-164.

Semites were probably the Martu; they may have come into Mesopotamia early in the third millennium B.C.<sup>3</sup> from an Arabian mountain district known as Martu, a name which gave the Sumerians their word for “west.”<sup>4</sup> The third wave of Semites into Mesopotamia were the Akkadians, or rather the group of tribes and clans to whom the name Akkadian became attached after the founding of their capital Agade, by their great leader and king, Sargon. These “Akkadians” may have penetrated the more northerly parts of Lower Mesopotamia considerably before the time of Sargon, but became influential in Sumer itself in the time of the Dynasty of Akkad<sup>5</sup>. Finally there are the Amurru, the Semitic people who settled in Martu after the Martu had descended into Mesopotamia — hence their name is written with the logogram MAR.TU — who infiltrated into Lower Mesopotamia as soldiers, mercenaries, and conquerors and who gradually succeeded in “Semitizing” all of Lower Mesopotamia by wiping out many of the Sumerians and absorbing the remainder<sup>6</sup>.

Let us now turn to the various aspects of the religion of Mesopotamia as known to us primarily from Sumerian sources, in order to try to isolate some of the probable, or possible, Semitic traces. Starting with the pantheon, we note that it consists of hundreds of deities, the vast majority of which have Sumerian names, and are therefore presumably of Sumerian origin. Less than two years ago, Jean Bottéro published a detailed and searching study concerned with identifying the Semitic deities in this pantheon<sup>7</sup>, but could list only thirteen<sup>8</sup> for the pre-Sargonic period,

<sup>3</sup> These are the Martu mentioned in the poem “Lugalbanda and Enmerkar” in a rather difficult passage which may be tentatively transliterated and translated as follows (for the text, cf. *WB* 162 ii 11-14, and iii 35-38 = *OECT* I plates 6 and 8):

*mu-ninnu-uš hu-mu-dù mu-ninnu-uš hu-mu-dì*

*ki-en-gi-ki-uri-nigin-na-a-ba*

*mar-tu lù-še-nu-zu hu-mu-zi*

*bàd-unu<sup>ki</sup>-ga gu-mušen-na-gim edin-na hé-ni-lá-lá*

Fifty years had gone (?), fifty years had passed,

In all of Sumer and Akkad

The Martu, who know not grain, rose;

They hover over the walls of Erech, like flocks(?) of birds.

(Note that the first line may perhaps be translated literally: “Up to fifty years it has been done, up to fifty years it has gone.” This is part of a message which Lugalbanda is to carry from Enmerkar to Inanna of Aratta (cf. last *HBS*): and it is repeated later when Lugalbanda delivers the message.)

<sup>4</sup> In all probability, too, the Sumerian word for slave *arad* derives from (*m*)*art(u)*. A similar semantic development is represented by another Sumerian word for slave, *šubur* which probably originated from the ethnic name *šubur* (the word *šubur* is used as a substitute for *arad* in the Sumerian poem “Gilgameš, Enkidu, and the Nether World,” cf. for the present note 15 in my article “Death and the Nether World” to appear in the forthcoming Woolley Memorial Volume).

<sup>5</sup> For fuller details, cf. I. GELB in *MAD* II, pp. 1-26, and *OAI* pp. 169-174, where all the relevant source material is cited and analyzed.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. now the detailed studies in EDZARD: *Die Zweite Zwischenzeit Babylonien*, and in KUPPER, *Les nomades en Mésopotamie au temps de rois de Mari*.

<sup>7</sup> The study is entitled “Les divinités sémitiques anciennes en Mésopotamie” (to be abbreviated in this paper as DSAM) and forms part of a symposium entitled *Le Antiche Divinità*

and an additional seven for the Sargonic era. Even for the following Amurrite period, he could find very few Semitic deities, less than a score, in fact. Moreover, the large majority of these Akkadian and Amurrite deities never played a major role in the Mesopotamian pantheon<sup>9</sup>. All in all, therefore, it would seem that the Semitic gods, that is gods bearing Semitic names, while by no means uninfluential, hardly had a predominant position in Mesopotamian religious thought and practice. There are, however, two Semitic deities who, unless I am very much mistaken, were incorporated and integrated quite early into the pantheon under Sumerian names, and who proved to be of outstanding importance in Mesopotamian myth and cult, in spite of the "foreign" taint which seems to have clung to them throughout the centuries. The two deities to which I refer are Inanna and Enki.

The name Inanna, to judge from its original form *nin-an-na*, "Queen of Heaven,"<sup>10</sup> is actually an epithet, and it may therefore be assumed to cloak, as it were, the original name of the goddess. And since there is no doubt whatever that Inanna was identified by the Akkadians with their own goddess Ištar — a comparison of the mytho-epic and hymnal literature of the Sumerians and Babylonians proves this beyond all doubt — it seems not unreasonable to conclude that she is the goddess who was adopted and integrated into the Sumerian pantheon under the name Inanna<sup>11</sup>. This is perhaps the reason why she was felt to be more

*Semitiche* sponsored by the Centro di Studi semitici of the University of Rome. The conclusions reached in this study are based primarily on an investigation of the proper names which was made possible as BOTTÉRO is careful to note, by I. GELB's comprehensive, fundamental, and painstaking contributions to the study of Old Akkadian.

<sup>8</sup> At least one of these thirteen is by no means certain, however. Thus, Apsum (cf. DSAM pp. 34-6), is hardly likely to turn out to be a Semitic word. In the first place the Akkadian word is *apsû*, with a long final vowel, which could only result from a contraction of two vowels, a well known feature of Sumerian loan-words into Akkadian (cf. such words as *asû* from Sumerian *azu*, *palû* from Sumerian *bala*). Moreover, the word *ab-zu* contains the root *ab* which is also found in the Sumerian word for "sea," *a-ab-ba*, literally "the semen of the father" (cf. e.g. POEBEL: ZA 37: 258), and this is hardly likely to be more than a coincidence. Note, finally, that the *zu* of *ab-zu* is not comparable to the *zu* of <sup>d</sup>EN.ZU, which is to be read <sup>d</sup>zuen, a word which can hardly be thought of as containing a Sumerian participle *zu* to know.

<sup>9</sup> To quote BOTTÉRO, DSAM p. 55: "mais il faut signaler que la très grande majorité restera au second plan dans le panthéon traditionnel de Mésopotamie."

<sup>10</sup> For a different interpretation, cf. JACOBSEN: ZA 57: 107-8, note 32.

<sup>11</sup> As is well known, many of the Sumerian names of deities consist of epithets, and not a few of these may turn out to cloak more original names. Thus, to take an obvious example, it is hardly likely that the name Šušinak, — that is (*nin-šušān-ak*, "the Lord of Šušān" — was the original name of that all-important Elamite deity; in all likelihood it was no more than an epithet given the deity by the Sumerian theologians which in time gained such wide currency that it was used in Elam as well as Mesopotamia. Similarly names such as Ningirsu, Ninurta, Ninisinna, Ninšubur, Ninazu, etc. etc. are probably epithets substituted for the more original names of these deities; in case of Ninurta and Ningirsu, for example, the more original name of the god may be Pagibilsag (cf. SLTN Nos. 61 and 62, and the comment in the Introduction, p. 22), while Ninisinna is probably none other than the goddess Bau (cf. Bi Or 11: 172, note 17). The Sumerian men of letters, themselves, tried to explain the origin of some of these epithets, as for example, when the authors of *lugal-e u<sub>3</sub>-me-lam-bi-nir-gál* (cf. for the present HBS pp. 172-174; a detailed study of the poem as restored from close to a hundred published and unpublished pieces is now being prepared by Eugen BERGMANN of the Pontifical Biblical Institute) explain

or less an intruder into the Sumerian pantheon, and why we find the theologians trying to justify, explain, and bolster her presence in it by composing hymns concerned with her "exaltation" such as those published in RA 11: 141-158 and RA 12: 73-87<sup>12</sup>. Perhaps, too, we find a reflection of this need for reassurance of her rather insecure and enigmatic position, of her "inferiority complex" as it were, in the myth "Enki and the World Order"<sup>13</sup> where, after a long passage describing how Enki had appointed numerous deities to take charge of the various natural phenomena and cultural activities vital for the welfare of man and god, the poet introduces a bitter complaint by Inanna, the burden of which is that she has been slighted and neglected, and singled out for prejudicial treatment, that she is a "second class citizen," as it were, when compared to such other goddesses as Nintu, Ninisinna, Ninmug, Nidaba, and Nanše. Enki is put on the defensive by Inanna's plaint, and he tries to pacify her by pointing out that she does have a number of special insignia and prerogatives — "the crook, staff, and wand of shepherdship," oracular responses in regard to war and battle; the weaving and fashioning of garments; certain kinds of music and song; unlimited attractiveness, or as the poet puts it, "one whose admirers do not weary to look at." And indeed in both cult and literature Inanna is certainly a high favorite<sup>14</sup>.

As for the time in which Ištar may have been first adopted and integrated into the Mesopotamian pantheon under the Sumerian name Inanna, the indications are that this occurred very early. The sign used regularly for her name Inanna

the name *Ninhursag* "Queen of the Mountain" as given by Ninurta to his mother *Ninmah*, in the following words:

O lady, because you would come to the Kur,  
O *Ninmah*, because for my sake you would enter the inimical land,  
Because you have no fear of the terror and battle surrounding me,  
Therefore, of the hill which I, the hero have heaped up,  
Let its name be *Hursag*, and you be its queen.

(Actually the name *nin-mah*, too, is an epithet which may stand for *ki* the more original name of the goddess, cf. JCS 2:46, and note 14. It has even occurred to me that the puzzling and enigmatic name *Marduk* (cf. DSAM p. 57 ff.) might perhaps be nothing other than the epithet (*nin*)-*martu-k* "Lord of Martu" (not to be confused, however, with <sup>a</sup>*mar-tu*, which is not a genitive) — just as *Šušinak* is "Lord of Šušān" — and thus cloaks an original Semitic deity stemming from days long before the Amurru infiltrated into Sumer and Akkad.)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. perhaps also Inanna's hymn of self-glorification published by ZIMMERN in VS X No. 199, and translated by FALKENSTEIN in SAHG No. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. for the present HBS pp. 94-97, a detailed study of this myth which consists of over 450 lines pieced together from II tablets and fragments will appear in a forthcoming fascicle of WJZ.

<sup>14</sup> For the literary compositions revolving about Inanna, cf. my "Sumerian Literature: A General Survey" to appear in the forthcoming "Festschrift" for William Foxwell Albright. Additional proof of Inanna's Semitic origin may be adduced from the fact that she is conceived as the daughter of the moon-god *Nanna-Sin*, and as the sister of the sun-god *Utu-Šamaš*, both of whom may originally have been Semitic rather than Sumerian deities. Inanna, herself, as a hymn such as SRT No. 1 and its duplicates — cf. SAHG No. 18 — show, is the goddess of the Venus-planet, and thus belongs to the astral deities, which seem to be rather characteristic for the worship of the ancient Semites (cf. e.g. DSAM p. 49).

is found in the semi-pictographic tablets from Warka<sup>15</sup>. It is also found in pre-Sargonic Mari, in a Semitic inscription in which the reading of the name is uncertain, although the fact that the name Ištar is practically always written syllabically as *eš-dar*, would seem to point to the reading Inanna, even in Mari<sup>16</sup>. Inanna is the favorite deity of Enmerkar and the *en* of Aratta, according to the Sumerian epic tales<sup>17</sup>, and this too might point to her early adoption in the Sumerian pantheon.

Like Inanna, the name Enki, too, is an epithet<sup>18</sup>, which may have been substituted by the Sumerian theologians for a Semitic deity — in this case, the god Ea<sup>19</sup>. As pointed out in an earlier study<sup>20</sup> it seems rather strange that the epithet *en-ki* “Lord of the Earth” should be given to a deity who is primarily the god in charge of waters rather than of the earth. The title “Lord of the Earth” seems to point to an effort on the part of the Sumerian theologians to make him a rival of Enlil who “had carried off the earth” after heaven had been separated from it, and would therefore presumably be the real “Lord of the Earth.”<sup>21</sup> This rivalry between Enki and Enlil seems to be further corroborated by the “Golden Age” passage which, it may be, tells of Enki’s putting an end to Enlil’s universal sway over the world and its inhabitants<sup>22</sup>. In the myth “Enki and the World Order,” mentioned earlier, we find Enki boasting time and again of his powers and prerogatives although admittedly he is second to Enlil, a “little Enlil;”<sup>23</sup> not unlike Inanna, he too seems rather unsure of his position. All of which may point to the conclusion that Enki was not a “native” to the Sumerian pantheon, but rather a “foreign” deity whose supporters were gradually gaining the upper hand, but who

<sup>15</sup> Cf. FALKENSTEIN: ATU p. 59.

<sup>16</sup> Mari, in spite of the fact that its inhabitants were no doubt Semites in the pre-Sargonic period, seems to have been quite “Sumerianized” as far as culture and religion goes, to judge from their temple architecture and statues; from the fact that a “singer” of Mari who was important enough to have a statue of himself dedicated in the temple, bears the good Sumerian name *ur-nanše*; and finally, from the fact that the scribes of Mari had already borrowed the Sumerian script, and therefore must have been “Sumerian-educated.”

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, (University Museum Monograph, 1952) and HBS p. 204.

<sup>18</sup> Note that the two leading deities of the Sumerian pantheon, An and Enlil, are not designated by epithets consisting of genitive complexes (*en-lil*, it must be borne in mind means “Lord Air,” not “Lord of the Air,” although why his name could not have been just *lil* is not clear).

<sup>19</sup> Ea is in all probability not a Sumerian name as suggested in DSAM p. 37. If the meaning were *é-a* “house of water,” the name would of course need be a genitive *é-a(k)* and this is most unlikely, although this cannot be proved absolutely, since we have no Sumerian texts which furnish us with criteria for deciding whether or not the name had a final *-k* (on the other hand the suggestion in DSAM p. 55, note 1, that the name Annunitum is the Semitized form of an adjective derived from the Sumerian *a-nun-na*, “semen of the prince” is certainly incorrect since the Akkadian form of *a-nun-na(-k)* would have been *anunnakītum*). Nor does the suggestion that *é-a* means “in the water” seem very likely; this would be a rather strange pattern for the formation of a Sumerian proper name.

<sup>20</sup> JCS 2: 55-6.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. for the present SM p. 37-8, and note 37.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* lines 135-156; the closing lines of this passage are quite fragmentary, and so our surmise must remain uncertain for the present.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. also the Enki hymn, CT XXXVI plates 31-32 and FALKENSTEIN: ZA 49: pp. 112-117.

never felt quite sure of their ground<sup>24</sup>. As for the time when Ea was first adopted into the Sumerian pantheon under the name Enki, it may have been quite early in the third millennium; his name is found in the Jemdet Nasr documents, and the god plays an important role in the poem "Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta."

So much for the Semitic deities who may turn out to have played a greater role in the religion of Mesopotamia than had been suspected. On the other hand, when it comes to the systematization and organization of the Mesopotamian pantheon, it is hardly likely that Semitic influence made itself felt to any marked degree. For in the first place, the pantheon, as already noted, is overwhelmingly Sumerian from the point of view of numbers. Moreover, it is the three Sumerian deities An, Enlil and Ninḫursag who were the leaders of the Mesopotamian pantheon<sup>25</sup>; the gods who seem to have been of Semitic origin — Ea-Enki, Sin-Nanna, Šamaš-Utu, Ištar-Inanna — are second in rank. Finally, *a priori* there seems to be little likelihood that it was the Semites, rather than the Sumerians who classified, arranged, and systematized the pantheon. For this is a rather tedious and monotonous, intellectual task which presupposes a disposition to speculation and reflection, scholarship and learning, order and logic, patience and perseverance, all of which is much more in line with the psychological characteristics of the Sumerian schoolmen, scribes and archivists than with the spirited, impatient, mercurial, and emotional type of mentality characteristic of Semitic nomads, who only gradually and probably not without considerable reluctance and antipathy, "succumbed," as it were, to urban culture and what is usually described as "higher civilization."

For similar reasons we are not unjustified in assuming that it was the Sumerian thinkers and theologians who evolved the concept of the creative power of the divine word, the notion that all a creating deity had to do was to lay his plans, utter the words "let there be" and "pronounce the name." Even more likely is it

<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the fact that Enki and Inanna are often closely intertwined in the Sumerian myths — in addition to the myths "Enki and the World Order," cf. also "Inanna and Enki: The Transfer of the Arts of Civilization from Eridu to Erech" (HBS pp. 99-103) and "Inanna's Descent to the Nether World" (JCS 5: 1-17) — is not without significance in this direction.

<sup>25</sup> As has been long known from the Lagaš documents, Enlil was deemed to be "the father of the gods," "the king of all the lands" — that is, the leading-deity of all Sumer — at least as early as the 24th century B.C. Just when Enlil's rise to the peak of the pantheon began is uncertain; if the "Tummal" composition is to be trusted (cf. "Gilgameš: Some New Sumerian Data" prepared for the Septième Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale; see now *Gilgameš et sa légende*, Paris 1960, pp. 59-68, esp. 61-63), it was Enmebaraggesi of Kish who first founded Enlil's temple at Nippur, and who, therefore, seems to have raised Enlil to his exalted station. In earlier times, there is reason to believe that it was An who was regarded as the supreme ruler of the pantheon; note, for example, the fact that the name of numerous early Sumerian rulers contained the element *-an-*; that the sanctuary *é-an-na* seems to have existed before Erech itself, had been built (cf. e.g. AS 11: p. 85, note 108), and that An was considered by the Sumerian theologians to be the father of Enlil. As for Ninḫursag's high rank in the pantheon, cf. especially PBS IV p. 24 ff.

that it was the Sumerians who originated the theological concept designated by the word *me* <sup>26</sup>. Not only is the word probably of Sumerian origin but the analytical and inventory-like approach reflected in the process of isolating, enumerating, and listing the more than one hundred *me*'s corresponding more or less to what is known today as culture traits and complexes, would seem to reflect Sumerian rather than Semitic thought and speculation <sup>27</sup>.

In the matter of cosmogony, there are quite a number of significant differences between the Sumerian and Semitic, or rather *Babylonian* ideas. Thus we find that while both the Sumerian and Babylonian thinkers conceived of a primeval sea as the originator of the universe, they differed on its composition; the Babylonians thought of it as consisting of two elements, one male and one female, while the Sumerians seem to know no such dichotomy. Moreover, the universe according to the Sumerians, consisted originally of a united heaven and earth, probably in the form of a mountain which the air-god Enlil separated preparatory to the creation of man, animals and plants, and the establishment of civilization. There may be a vague reflection of the Sumerian idea of the separation of heaven and earth in the splitting in two of Tiamat's corpse by Marduk <sup>28</sup>, but in all other respects the Babylonian version differs widely from the Sumerian <sup>29</sup>. There is also a marked difference between the Sumerian and Babylonian ideas about the creation of man, at least as far as concerns the "stuff" from which he is fashioned. According to the Sumerians man was created from clay while according to the Babylonians he was fashioned of the blood of a slaughtered god <sup>30</sup>. On the other hand, both the Sumerians and Babylonians believed that man was created primarily for but one purpose: to serve the gods, supply them with food, drink, and shelter, and thus free them from labor and drudgery <sup>31</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. last, G. R. CASTELLINO in *Studia Biblica et Orientalia*, pp. 25-32.

<sup>27</sup> For the list of *me*'s, and the myth in which it is imbedded, cf. SM pp. 64-68. It may perhaps be significant that the two major protagonists of this myth are Inanna and Enki, the two deities who may turn out to be of Semitic origin. Enki, it should be noted, is merely the *custodian* of the *me*'s which were entrusted to him by Enlil (cf. HBS p. 94 and SAHG p. 110).

<sup>28</sup> Note, however, that the bilingual KAR 4, which dates presumably from the same time as *Enûma-eliš*, begins with the statement that "heaven had been separated from earth," which indicates that some of the early Sumerian cosmogonic notions were still current in Babylonia at a late date.

<sup>29</sup> For the *Enûma-eliš* version of the creation of the universe, cf. now René LABAT in *Studia Biblica et Orientalia*, pp. 205-215. In connection with the comparative study of Sumerian and Babylonian cosmogony, it is important to bear in mind that as yet we have no Sumerian myths concerned explicitly with the creation of the universe, and that what little is known about this subject is deduced primarily from the introductory passages of two poems which have little or nothing to do with cosmogony (cf. SM pp. 37-41). However, even if, as it is not unreasonable to assume, a Sumerian cosmogonic myth should turn up in the course of time, it is hardly likely that it will correspond to the *Enûma-eliš* version to any marked degree.

<sup>30</sup> For the implication of the *Enûma-eliš* version of the creation of the man from the blood of the evil and rebellious Kingu, cf. last LABAT, *o.c.* p. 307.

<sup>31</sup> For the extant Sumerian myths or mythological passages concerned with the creation of man, see SM pp. 68-72; for the Babylonian versions, see especially Alexander HEIDEL: *The*

Now while Babylonian thinking about the origin of the universe and the creation of man does seem to diverge considerably from that of the Sumerians, the question is, how significant is this divergence for reconstructing, assessing, and evaluating the religious ideas of the pre-Babylonian Semites whether they lived in Arabia, Syria, or Mesopotamia. To me it seems hardly likely, for example, that the nomadic Amurru who infiltrated into Mesopotamia during and following the time of Ur III, brought with them any of the cosmogonic ideas and beliefs evidenced in either Enûma-eliš or in any of the other Babylonian creation texts. It seems much more likely that as the Amurru became sedentary and urbanized in the course of the centuries, as they became *Babylonians*, in other words, their priests and poets took over some of the Sumerian cosmogonic assumptions and opinions and modified and developed them in accordance with their own persuasion, conviction, imagination, and invention. Just why these Babylonian thinkers and poets retained certain of the Sumerian views and ideas and discarded others; just why they modified them in the way they did; where they got their new cosmogonic views and beliefs — all this we have no way of knowing at present, but it is hardly likely that they came from an original stock of thoughts and ideas current among the Semitic peoples of pre-Babylonian days.

So, too, the moral and ethical ideals of the Babylonians, as evidenced, for example in the Hammurabi Code or in their hymnal and wisdom literature, go back primarily to their Sumerian rather than Semitic legacy. It was the Sumerians who had developed over the centuries practically all the ethical qualities and moral virtues known to the Babylonians; we actually have the written evidence in the form of contemporary documents from about 2300 B.C. on<sup>32</sup>. Even the notion of a personal god with its corollary implications for man's guilt, suffering, and submission, was no doubt a Sumerian development; the personal gods of a number of Sumerian rulers are attested by name from Eannatum down<sup>33</sup>. It is of course, not impossible that the "unspoiled" and unsophisticated Semitic nomads like the Amurru had moral virtues which may have been purer and nobler, more intuitive, sensitive, and impassioned, than those of the urbanized, erudite, reflective, and cult-ridden Sumerians whose land they infiltrated and conquered; but this is hardly perceivable in our extant Babylonian sources.

*Babylonian Genesis.* It is not at all impossible that sooner or later there may turn up Sumerian versions of the creation of man corresponding more closely to the known Babylonian versions; neither the Sumerian nor the Babylonian myths which have come down to us are "canonical" in the sense that the Old Testament became "canonical" over the centuries. While it is true that both the Sumerian and Babylonian poets and theologians were restricted to a limited number of accepted, fundamental dogmas and beliefs, they nevertheless had considerable creative leeway when it came to particular details.

<sup>32</sup> For details cf. JEAN: *La Religion Sumérienne* pp. 213-238, and HBS pp. 104-113.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. now HBS pp. 114-118; *Studia Biblica et Orientalia* pp. 194 and 197.

The same holds true for Mesopotamian ideas about death and the Nether World. In a study entitled "Death and the Nether World According to the Sumerian Literary Texts," to appear in the forthcoming volume of *Iraq* dedicated to the memory of Sir Leonard Woolley, I tried to sift, collect, analyze and summarize the Sumerian ideas about death and the world beyond, which, needless to say, were neither clear, precise, nor consistent. To quote from the conclusions in this article, the Sumerians believed that in general the Nether World was the huge cosmic space below the earth corresponding roughly to heaven, the huge cosmic space above the earth. The dead, or at least the souls of the dead descended into it presumably from the grave, but there also seemed to be special openings and gates in Erech, as well as no doubt in all the important city centers. There was a river which the dead had to cross by ferry, but it is nowhere stated where it was situated in relation to the earth or the Nether World. There was a palace with seven gates where Ereškigal held court, but it is uncertain where it was supposed to be located. The Nether World was ruled by Ereškigal and Nergal who had a special entourage of deities, including seven Anunnaki, and numerous unfortunate sky-gods as well as a number of constable-like officials known as *gallé*. All these, except the *gallé*, seemed to need food, clothing, weapons, vessels of various sorts, jewels, etc., just like the gods in the sky or mortals on earth. The dead seemed to be arranged in a hierarchy, just like the living, and no doubt the best "seats" were assigned to the dead kings, and high priestly officials. There were all kinds of rules and regulations in the Nether World, and it was the deified Gilgameš who saw to it that the denizens of the Nether World conducted themselves properly. Although in general one has the feeling that the Nether World was dark and dreary, this would seem to be true only of "daytime;" at "night" the sun brought light to it, and on the last day of the month it was even joined by the moon. The deceased were not treated all alike; there was a judgment of the dead by Utu and to a certain extent even by Nanna, and if the judgment was favorable, presumably the dead man's soul would live in happiness and contentment, and have all its "heart desires." Be that as it may, all the indications are that the Sumerians loved life and clung to it with a dogged tenacity. On the numerous votive objects which they dedicated to the gods, the Sumerians state frankly and openly that they do so for their own life and or for the life of those dear to them. The royal hymnal prayers practically all contain special pleas for a long life. The vain and pathetic quest for eternal life was a favorite theme of the Sumerian bard and inspired the most exalted literary work of the Ancient Near East, the Epic of Gilgameš. All of which is hardly compatible with rosy hopes of a blissful life in the Nether World, even if only for the good and deserving. By and large, the Sumerians were dominated by the conviction that in death the emasculated spirit descended to a dark and dreary beyond where "life" at best was but a dismal, wretched reflection of life on earth.

Now if one compares all this with the Babylonian ideas about death and the Nether World, as analyzed and sketched, for example, in Bottéro's *La religion babylonienne*, p. 99-107, it is clear that by and large, these are little more than a continuation of Sumerian thought and tenet. And indeed it could hardly be otherwise, since the nomadic Semites, the forefathers of the Babylonians, gave little thought to the world beyond, as is evident from the oft-quoted "anthropological" passage in the Martu tale which characterizes the god Martu, and hence the people of which he was the eponym as:

A tent-dweller [buffeted (?)] by wind and rain, [he utters (?) not (?)] prayers,  
 With the weapon he [makes (?)] the mountain his habitation,  
 Contenti[ous](?) to excess, he turns (?) against the "lands," knows not to bend the knee,  
 Eats uncooked meat,  
 Has no house while he lives,  
 Is not brought to burial when he dies.<sup>34</sup>

The above quoted passage is of some significance for the Mesopotamian temple and cult practices which were primarily Sumerian in character throughout. A nomadic people such as the Martu which, as our poem states, built no houses to live in, could hardly have played a significant role in the growth and development of the numerous, varied, and complex cult-practices centering about large sanctuaries with their ziggurats, shrines, chapels, kitchens, storerooms, and priestly dwellings. Moreover, as is well-known, even the Babylonian temples usually bear Sumerian names, and the words designating the offices of all their more important clergy, are of Sumerian origin. And while it is certainly true, as was said above in connection with Sumero-Babylonian cosmogony, that the Babylonian priests and theologians modified many of the Sumerian cult-practices and introduced a number of new ones, it is hardly likely that these changes and innovations harked back to the religious customs of the tent-dwelling, free-wandering Semitic nomads<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. SEM 58 iv 24-29 which may be tentatively transliterated as follows:

*za-lam-gar-ti* IM-IM-šèĝ-[ĝá]... *siskur-siskur*-[nu-ĝá-ĝá]  
*hur-saĝ* vištukul-e *ki-tuš*-[a-ni...]  
*du<sub>x</sub>*(?) (= LÚ.NE)-dirig *kur-da mu-un-ba-al-la dūg-gam-nu-zu-àm*  
*uzu-nu-šèĝ<sub>6</sub>-ĝá al-kú-e*  
*u<sub>4</sub>-ti-la-na é nu-tuku-a*  
*u<sub>4</sub>-ba-ug<sub>x</sub>*(= BAD)-a-na *ki-nu-túm-mu-dam*

<sup>35</sup> In fact on the present evidence, it is far from clear just how, where, and in what language the Mesopotamian Semites performed their religious rites even after they had become settled city dwellers alongside the Sumerians. To take the case of Sargon the Great, for example, we may perhaps assume that as "cupbearer" of Urzababa of Kish he attended services in the Sumerian temple conducted in the Sumerian language. But was that also true when he became king himself, and built the city of Agade as his capital? To be sure, its main temple bears what seems to be a Sumerian name, *ul-maš*, and its tutelary deity is designated by the Sumerian name Inanna. But when Sargon dedicates his statues and steles in the most Sumerian of Sumerian temples, the Ekur of Nippur, he (as well as his successors Rimuš and Maništušu) has them inscribed both in Sumerian and Akkadian and *primarily in the latter*, which indicates of course that Sargon (as well as his successors) were quite conscious of their Semitic origin and background.

Finally, turning to Mesopotamian religious literature, we find that Babylonian myths — and as yet we have no Semitic myths earlier than the Old Babylonian period — derive largely from Sumerian prototypes<sup>36</sup>. At least two of them — “Ištar’s Descent to the Nether World” and the “Flood” story as told in the Epic of Gilgameš, are well-nigh identical with known Sumerian originals. But even those for which no Sumerian counterparts have as yet been recovered contain mythological themes and motifs which reflect Sumerian sources, not to mention the fact that most of the deities to which they refer, are part of the Sumerian pantheon. So, too, none will deny the close dependence of the Babylonian hymnal compositions on their Sumerian predecessors. In the case of the hymns and myths there are, however, a number of significant differences between the Sumerian and Babylonian creations, particularly in imagery and style, and these may well reflect some of the psychological characteristics and aesthetic sensibilities common to all the Semitic peoples<sup>37</sup>.

To sum up our tentative conclusions with regard to Sumero-Semitic contacts in Mesopotamian religious thought and practice, these are:

1. The Mesopotamian pantheon, though predominantly Sumerian shows considerable Semitic penetration and influence going back to the first half of the third millennium B.C.

2. The systematization of the Sumerian pantheon, on the other hand, much of which goes back to about 2500 B.C., was an intellectual achievement of the Sumerian theologians and priests. So, too, were such concepts as the *me* and the creative power of the divine word.

Similarly in order to keep the conquered Sumerian cities under their control, Sargon and his successors appointed their Akkadian kin to the higher administrative posts and garrisoned them with all-Akkadian troops (for references cf. JACOBSEN: ZA 57, 137) so much so that economic documents written in the Akkadian language begin to appear all over Sumer, all of which would hardly endear them to the Sumerians. In fact it seems not unlikely that there was considerable friction and hard feeling between the Sumerians and the Semitic speaking and kin-conscious Akkadians who, during the period of the Sargonic Dynasty, were striving to become the lords and masters of Sumer (for a different view cf. JACOBSEN: JAOS 59, 485-495), a rather intolerable situation which may explain in part the desecration and destruction of the Ekur at Nippur by Naram-Sin, as described with such bitterness and chagrin by the author of “The Curse of Agade” (cf. for the present HBS pp. 228-232). All of which makes it rather unlikely that the Semitic speaking Akkadians worshipped side by side with their Sumerian “subjects” in their temples where the services must certainly have been conducted in the Sumerian language and in accordance with long standing Sumerian tradition. Which brings us back to our original query: How, where, and in what language did the Akkadians perform their religious rites?

<sup>36</sup> For a brief summary of the extant Sumero-Akkadian mythological material, cf. the forthcoming volume of essays *Mythologies of the Ancient World* to be published as an Anchor Book by Doubleday and Co. of New York.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. now especially FALKENSTEIN’s and VON SODEN’s introductory remarks to SAHG. FALKENSTEIN’s suggestion (p. 32, top) that as in the case of Sumerian art, the Sargonic Akkadians must have had considerable influence on Sumerian literature, is not borne out for example by the loosely organized, rambling, repetitive, and long-winded compositions inscribed on the Gudea Cylinders.

3. In the matter of cosmogony there are a considerable number of significant differences between Sumerian and Babylonian tenets and beliefs, but these are probably due to later Babylonian invention and innovation, rather than to early Semitic influence. By and large it was the Sumerians who were responsible for the cosmogonic thought current in Mesopotamia, as well as for the moral and ethical ideals, the ideas about death and the Nether World, the more important cult practices, and mythological motifs, although there was considerable late Babylonian innovation and modification of all these aspects of Mesopotamian religion.

4. In case of the Mesopotamian religious literature we do find definite indications that the Babylonian writers, though heavily dependent on their Sumerian predecessors, have preserved a number of stylistic features characteristic of the poetic temper and imagination of the early Semites. These may perhaps go back to the oral literature of the illiterate, nomadic Amurru who infiltrated Sumer from about 2000 B.C. on. It is more likely, however that they hark back to the written literary works of the Akkadians which, to judge from the votive inscriptions of the Sargonic dynasty, may well have existed in considerable numbers, and which, once recovered, will no doubt prove to be quite revealing for all aspects of Sumero-Semitic religious contacts.

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EIN ZENTRALES PROBLEM  
DES ALTMESOPOTAMISCHEN RECHTES:  
WAS IST DER CODEX HAMMU-RABI?

SEIT ihrer Entdeckung gilt die Inschrift der in Susa gefundenen Stele des Hammu-rabi als ein Gesetzbuch. Sie muß auf ihren Herausgeber Scheil<sup>1</sup> deutlich und eindeutig den Eindruck eines Gesetzbuches gemacht haben und nach ihm anscheinend ebenso auf alle, die ihren 1902 veröffentlichten Text oder Scheils Übersetzung lasen. Dem Referenten ist nicht bekannt, daß Scheils offenbar allgemein akzeptierte Meinung jemals wissenschaftlich begründet worden wäre. Begründet oder nicht, sie blieb nicht ohne Folgen. Der Codex Hammu-rabi, wie die Inschrift seit ihrer Veröffentlichung heißt, wurde als Gesetzbuch behandelt, inter-

<sup>1</sup> V. SCHEIL: DPM 4, 1902, S. 11 ff.