

The Revival of the Anu Cult and the Nocturnal Fire Ceremony at Late
Babylonian Uruk

Culture and History of the Ancient Near East

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The Revival of the Anu Cult and the Nocturnal Fire Ceremony at Late Babylonian Uruk

By

Julia Krul



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*dedicated to the memory of
Jarich Oosten*



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attempting by means of analysis to fathom the social worlds and symbolic systems which they reflect. It is not merely a turn of phrase, but a sincerely felt truth that without him this book could never have become what it is now.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations in this book follow those listed in Volume U/w of the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (2010) and at http://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/abbreviations_for_assyriology.

Other abbreviations:

Tr. = translation

Tr. and tr. = transcription and translation

BCHP = I. Finkel and R.J. van der Spek, *Babylonian Chronicles of the Hellenistic Period* (in preparation; preliminary text editions at www.livius.org/babylonia.html).

Moore, *Michigan Coll.* = Moore, E.W. 1939: *Neo-Babylonian Documents in the University of Michigan Collection* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press)

Peiser, *Verträge* = Peiser, F.E. 1890: *Babylonische Verträge des Berliner Museums in Autographie, Transcription und Übersetzung herausgegeben und kommentiert von F.E. Peiser. Nebst einem juristischen Excurs von J. Kohler* (Berlin: Wolf Peiser)

SEG = Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum

SWU = Freydank, H. 1971: *Spätbabylonische Wirtschaftstexte aus Uruk* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag)

Introduction

During the last decades, the image of Babylonia after its conquest by Alexander the Great in 331 BC has radically changed from that of a decadent, dying world into that of prospering—though at times war-torn—cities where dynamic, innovative scholarship and science thrived, the cuneiform literary tradition and the ancient religious cults continued to be practised, and the elite families navigated successfully between Babylonian, Aramaic and Greek cultural spheres.¹ The largest and most important city of southern Babylonia was Uruk, which once more became the influential local capital that it had been three millennia earlier. Recent studies have clearly outlined the distinction between on the one hand Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid Uruk, when the Eanna, the temple of the goddess Inanna/Ištar, was the centre of religious and economic life, and on the other hand late Achaemenid, Seleucid and Parthian Uruk, when the god Anu and his spouse Antu had become the city's patron deities. During the latter period, cultic worship, scholarly activity and temple-related legal affairs were moved to the new sanctuaries, Anu's Bīt Rēš and Ištar's Irigal. New publications and editions of different collections of source texts and archaeological finds from primarily Seleucid Uruk continue to appear, alongside various articles that shed more light on the historical background of Anu's rise to supremacy, on the 'antiquarian' interests that influenced the development of the new city cults, on the interaction between the ruling families of Uruk and the Seleucid court, and on the policy of different Seleucid kings towards the temple organisation and economic administration of Babylonian cities.

Among the texts both professionally and illegally excavated from the archives and libraries of Seleucid Uruk is a small number of prescriptive ritual texts for the cultic worship of Anu and Ištar. They contain detailed, step-by-step

1 A comprehensive history of Hellenistic Babylonia remains a desideratum. The still indispensable, classic overview of sources pertaining to Babylonian history and culture in the Seleucid period is Oelsner 1986. The history of Seleucid Iran is discussed in Bickerman 1983 and Plischke 2014; Kuhrt/Sherwin-White 1987 and 1993 are respectively a collection of articles and a monograph on the Seleucid empire, with a special focus on the ancient Near East. For the city of Babylon in the Hellenistic period, see Boiy 2004; for a brief introduction to Hellenistic Uruk, see Clancier 2011, Kose 2013a and 2013b and the articles by Frahm, Pedde and Lindström in the latter volume. Articles on the transition from Achaemenid to Macedonian rule in the ancient near East are collected in Briant/Joannès 2006. Recent introductions to the Seleucid and Parthian Near East include Joannès 2004, 226–260; Austin 2005; Grajetzki 2011.

instructions in the second and third person for the performance of particular aspects of the daily offerings, monthly celebrations and yearly festivals, written by and for specific types of priests. Together with several similar works as well as a number of so-called cultic commentaries related to the city of Babylon, those texts are the only currently available sources about the exact performance of the rites of worship in first-millennium Babylonian temples. That makes them of immense value to the study of ancient Near Eastern religious history. Still, although the sanctuaries of Seleucid Uruk are discussed in various publications which focus on their architectural style and layout, the prebendary system of their priestly personnel,² and the lives, scholarly occupations, and genealogy of various individuals employed by the temples, the religio-historical analysis of the cultic rituals that took place in the Bīt Rēš and the Irigal has mostly remained restricted to cursory remarks in footnotes and brief discussions in the context of studies with a different subject.³

That apparent lack of academic focus is not due to the significance of the sources, but to their condition. Most of the ritual tablets from Seleucid Uruk are broken or even fragmentary and they only offer insight into a small portion of the entire yearly cultic calendar: various aspects of the daily meals for all the gods, both half-yearly *akītu* festivals that focused on Anu, another *akītu* festival focused on Ištar, a nocturnal ceremony in the Bīt Rēš involving torches and bonfires and a non-regular citywide ritual against the evil effects of a lunar eclipse. The tablet describing the daily meals also contains a list of regular cultic activities throughout the year (e.g. ‘clothing ceremonies’ (*lubuštū*) or ‘lighting of braziers’ (*kinūnū*)), but, like the surviving cultic calendars and prebendary sale deeds, that list gives no more information about those activities than their names.⁴

2 The term ‘prebend’ is the conventional Assyriological translation of *giš.šub.ba / isqu* (‘allotment’), defined by Van Driel (2003–2005, 518–519) as “the customary function-related income of the Mesopotamian institutional clergy in combination with a task in the cult of the gods, in which the degree of direct contact with the divine was of special importance”. Prebends could be bought and sold like other commodities, but only those who fulfilled very specific purity requirements were allowed to perform the associated duties. Failing to meet those requirements meant that one needed to hire a replacement, even though one could still derive an income from the prebend and join the temple’s council of prebend owners.

3 Exceptions include several reconstructions of the city’s cultic calendar (McEwan 1981, 169–182; Linssen 2004 *passim*) and pantheon (Beaulieu 1992; Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 136–143), as well as the occasional use of the Urukian material for more general studies of daily temple worship in Mesopotamia (e.g. Oppenheim 1977, 183–198) and of the spring *akītu* festival in particular (e.g. Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 42–47 and *passim*; Cohen 2015, 402–407).

4 A new edition of the Uruk temple rituals was recently published by Marc J.H. Linssen (2004),

Another complication is that we possess very few similar texts from other cities with which the Uruk ritual texts could be compared, nor have any sources survived from Uruk itself which could reflect the rituals' historical reality. With the exception of a small handful of documents, no administrative archive from either the Bīt Rēš or the Irigal has yet been unearthed, so it is not possible to connect the ambiguous, normative and deliberately archaising content of the ritual texts to dated records of cultic activities that have actually been performed.⁵ For the Neo-Babylonian period, with which the Hellenistic material should first and foremost be compared, the situation is reversed: the archives of the Eanna have yielded many thousands of administrative records, but not a single source that reveals more than a glimpse of how exactly the cultic ceremonies in the Ištar temple were performed.⁶ Finally, the only other prescriptive ritual texts from first-millennium BC Babylonia that have been preserved are from or related to the city of Babylon; with the exception of the *akitu* festival, the celebrations and processions they describe are all unique and, it seems, unconnected to the cult practice at Seleucid Uruk.⁷

Yet the situation is not quite as bleak as it may appear. Several of the Uruk ritual tablets are relatively complete and although the entire text may not have been preserved, the instructions they provide form a consistent whole. The rituals they describe were to be performed during a short period of time, of which the beginning and the end are demarcated in the respective ritual texts, which

who added the prescriptive texts for the *akitu* festival from Babylon and a number of texts found at Uruk which describe temple-related occasional rituals: the creation of a new cultic kettledrum, building rituals for renovating the temple and rites repelling the evil portended by omens observed in the temple. All the texts in the latter group can be shown to have belonged to an older, interregional tradition and were thus neither specific to Uruk nor to the Hellenistic period. The remainder of Linssen's book presents an overview of the cultic calendars of Babylon and Uruk in the Hellenistic period and strictly descriptive summaries of the different religious rites.

- 5 The recently published collection of prebendary sale deeds from Seleucid Uruk (Corò 2005) offers a wealth of information about the city's pantheon, the cultic calendar and the individuals involved in the cult practice, but sheds no light on the festivals described in the texts edited by Linssen.
- 6 The only Neo-Babylonian ritual text from Uruk, LKU 51 (Beaulieu 2003, 373–377), though a very valuable document, is in bad condition and written in an extremely concise style. It provides a cultic calendar for the entire year and gives only brief sketches and summaries of the activities per month.
- 7 See Çağırğan 1976; Çağırğan/Lambert 1991–1993; George 2000. The only other richly detailed and informative text on ancient Near Eastern cultic practices is the book of Leviticus in the Hebrew Bible.

means that their temporal scope is accounted for. Moreover, the information offered by those texts is precise enough to allow a detailed, comprehensive reconstruction of the rituals in question, which can form a solid basis for a more thorough investigation. One of those rituals is the nocturnal fire ceremony (TU 41),⁸ which lasted one entire night every year, starting with the first night watch and ending 40 minutes after sunrise the next morning. That ceremony is the subject of the present study, which will provide an extensive analysis of it and present an interpretation of its *Sitz im Leben*.

As tools for undertaking such an analysis, there are more possibilities than a comparison with ritual instructions or administrative records related to the regular cult practice in (Late) Babylonian temples. The entire corpus of Mesopotamian ritual texts is many times larger; it comprises substantial collections and lengthy cycles of incantations and their accompanying rites for a broad variety of purposes, including but not limited to purification, healing and exorcism of persons and spaces, the aversion of evil portended by a negative omen, induction and transformation of objects and buildings into the divine realm, appeasement of angered deities and the ablution and re-investiture of the Assyrian and Babylonian king during regular festivals as well as crisis situations.⁹ Despite the different contexts in and for which they were composed, those rituals display a remarkable similarity with regards to the materials, locations, participants and ritual actions involved and much of their framework is constituted by a shared set of fundamental principles.¹⁰ Most of the texts, though the products of long processes of development, date to the first

8 Linssen 2004, 245–251.

9 Publications and studies of ancient Mesopotamian ritual texts and incantations are manifold and a comprehensive bibliography cannot be given here. Essential text editions include Abusch 2015; Abusch/Schwemer 2011–2016; Çağırğan 1976; Çağırğan/Lambert 1991–1993; Farber 2014; Frankena 1953; Geller/Vacín 2016; George 2000; Heeßel 2002; Linssen 2004; Maul 2000; Reiner 1956, 1958; Schramm 2008; Starr 1983; Walker/Dick 2001. Useful introductory articles are Farber 1995; Sallaberger 2006–2008b; Schwemer 2011 (and cf. p. 436 ‘Further Reading’); and the various contributions on ancient Mesopotamia in Johnston 2004.

10 Important monographies and articles that provide, or even focus on, an analysis of the underlying system include Abusch 2002; Abusch/Van der Toorn 1999; Ambos 2004, 2013b; Berlejung 1998; Farber 1989b; Groneberg 1997; Maul 1994; Oppenheim 1966; Pongratz-Leisten 1994; Reiner 1995; Schwemer 2007; Scurlock 2005; Tsukimoto 1985; Van der Toorn 1985; Wiggermann 1992; Zgoll 2006. The University of Heidelberg has started a series of editions of unpublished scholarly texts from Assur, of which the first is Maul/Strauß 2011. Recent edited volumes with a comparative approach to (ancient) rituals which include essays on the ancient Near East are Ambos et al. 2004; Ambos/Verderame 2013.

millennium BC. Many were found in the libraries of Seleucid Uruk and testify to the continued knowledge and practice of such rituals during that period. They were compiled and performed by the same experts who were responsible for the regular worship in the temple, and the cultic ceremonies are for the greater part shaped by the same features and composed in the same ritual 'language'.¹¹ Thus, they can be meaningfully compared to Mesopotamian rituals of various other types, and it can safely be assumed that the functionality and effectivity of their composite elements were understood by the participants in the same way. Once such parallels within the sphere of Mesopotamian ritual literature have been established, it also becomes fruitful to look at comparable phenomena in other cultures belonging to or in contact with ancient West Asia, such as Israel, Egypt, Greece, and India. Finally, an assessment can be made of the cosmological and sociopolitical significance of the ritual's performance in its own space and time through a careful application of anthropological models and aspects of ritual theory.

The present study will begin with an overview of the historical context in which the text known to Assyriologists as TU 41 found its way to clay. It is a unique document and its editorial history cannot be traced, but the ceremony for which it provides instructions was part of the Anu cult and was performed in and around the *Biṭ Rēš*. Therefore the first step towards a better understanding of it must be to examine all the available evidence about the Anu cult as a whole. In Chapter 1, the chronological development and historical setting of Anu's rise to supremacy at Uruk during the late Achaemenid and early Seleucid period will be traced in detail, focussing especially on the changes and innovations that took place with respect to the 'long sixth century' BC.¹² This includes the intellectual climate at Uruk that emerges in the sources from the late Achaemenid period onwards, the political relationships between the Urukean city officials and the Seleucid court, the evidence through which we can trace the first cultic activity related to Anu and Antu, the different building phases of the city's new temples, and the new pantheon and cultic calendar. Chapter 2 will explore the theological and cosmological concepts that have influenced the cult and pantheon of Hellenistic Uruk and examine their literary expression in the Urukean sources.

11 For the concept of ritual 'syntax', introduced by Frits Staal, and its applicability to ancient Near Eastern rituals see Hays 2013.

12 612–484 BC; see Jursa 2010, 4–5.

Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 will focus on the nocturnal ceremony itself. Chapter 3 will deal with the acquisition and publication history of TU 41, review its treatment in previous academic studies and offer a new translation of the text. In Chapter 4, the ceremony's temporal framework will be determined by means of the available evidence about the date on which it was performed each year: presumably the 16th of ʾEḫētu (month x), which was either the next or the second-to-next full moon after the winter solstice. This will include a discussion of the significance of that day and month for Mesopotamian religion and specifically for first-millennium BC Babylonian temple cults. Chapter 5 will then present a detailed analysis of the nocturnal ceremony. Starting out from the text, the ceremony will be divided into smaller clusters of individual rites and activities which can arguably be grouped together on the basis of shared conditions such as the time of their performance, the location and the participants involved. Each of those sets of activities will be compared with their occurrence in other Mesopotamian ritual literature and, secondarily, in sources from other cultures, and on the basis of that evidence an interpretation will be offered of their meanings and purposes as perceived by the compilers of the ritual text.

Finally, in Chapter 6, the acquired evidence from the previous chapters will be synthesized and analysed. A model will be proposed for the nocturnal festival's internal structure which comprises as its core what I call the "fire ceremony"—the kindling of the torch atop the Anu ziqqurrat, the offering rites taking place there, the procession of the torch down into and then around the Bīt Rēš, the lighting of bonfires throughout the city, and finally the participation of the Urukian citizens through dining and singing—as well as an outer framework of introductory and concluding rites that were performed on certain (or all) other nights as well: the night vigil (*bayātu*), meals for all the city gods, the 'well-being of the temple' ceremony (*šalām bīti*), and the closing and later celebratory reopening of the sanctuary gates (*dīk bīti* and *pīt bābi*). The defining aspects of the fire ceremony will then each be examined for their cosmological and sociological significance. These are 1) the central role of fire and the contrast between darkness and light; 2) the extensive use of purifying and exorcistic rites; 3) the three-tiered division and implied hierarchy between a) the Bīt Rēš, its divine residents and priestly personnel, b) the other temples of Uruk with their gods and priests, and c) the rest of the city and its inhabitants; and 4) the midwinter date. I will separately discuss the question whether or not the ceremony was also the occasion for interaction with the dead, which is very likely but for which there is no direct evidence. As I will argue, the combination of fire symbolism, an important exorcistic element, and a calendrical setting related to the winter solstice strongly points to an interpretation of the

fire ceremony as a yearly renewal festival, during which first the temples and then the entire city of Uruk were cleansed of supernatural pollution and the presence of Anu in his temple was celebrated as a bright star illuminating the darkness. Further, the ritual underscoring of the aforementioned divine and human hierarchy served as an ideological tool for the priesthood of Anu, whose members derived from the traditional Urukian nobility, to (re-)establish their cult as the central source of spiritual well-being for the citizens of Uruk and themselves as the indispensable mediators between the city's patron god and his subjects. As the only known Babylonian renewal festival that took place during the winter—the other two being the *akītu* festivals around the spring and autumn equinox—and one of the few religious celebrations with such an active involvement of non-priestly participants, it remains a unique phenomenon in ancient West Asian religious history and many questions it raises must for now be left unanswered.

A few remarks on the use of terminology in this book: I use 'religion' and 'religious' to refer to a belief system which, in ancient Mesopotamia, involved the notion of a divine realm and divine beings dwelling within it, with whom human beings stood in a particular relationship that entailed, among various other aspects, the human duty to provide those divine beings with regular nourishment, shelter, and expressions of worship. 'Cult' and 'cultic' refer to the sphere of activity in which those duties were fulfilled, primarily in a sanctuary dedicated to a specific deity. Since the present study focuses on the cult of a particular deity, the word 'rite' will indicate a discrete act that was aimed at fulfilling those duties or aiding their fulfilment, such as sprinkling water to purify a location, slaughtering a sacrificial animal, presenting a meal to a deity in her cella, or singing a hymn. Naturally, the boundaries that define one 'single' activity are fluid and must be examined per individual case. I use the words 'ritual' and 'ceremony' as synonyms to refer to longer sequences of rites that together form an integrated whole with the same purpose or purposes.¹³ Somewhat arbitrarily, a 'ritual' becomes a 'ritual cycle' when it lasts longer than one entire day or one entire night. Finally, a 'temple' or 'temple complex' is the entire cluster of rooms and courtyards within a sacred precinct, including workshops and storage rooms, whereas a 'sanctuary', such as the Anu-Antu sanctuary in the Bit Rēš, is purely the inner sanctum in which the main deities of that temple dwelled, which was separated from the rest of the temple by an entrance gate

13 See §5.1.2 for a more precise definition of 'ritual' that takes Mesopotamian terminology into account.

and a courtyard that lay in front of it. A 'shrine' is either the same as a sanctuary, or a small place of worship not integrated into a larger temple complex. Finally, 'theology' and 'theological' indicate a system of ideas regarding the identities and characteristics of, and relationships between, deities and divine aspects of the cosmos, e.g. mythical realms and temples, which is distinct from other forms of religious thought through the intellectual effort that gave it shape, evident from the explicit reflection upon those ideas in the sources.

Regarding the historical background of the material under discussion, the 'Neo-Babylonian period', and consequently the adjective 'Neo-Babylonian' for textual finds and the information derived from them, refer to the abovementioned long sixth century BC; in the case of Uruk, everything after 484 BC will be called 'Late Babylonian' (or more specifically 'Late Achaemenid', 'Seleucid' etc.). Where other Babylonian cities such as Babylon and Borsippa are concerned, it is difficult to date non-administrative cultic texts on the basis of their content and palaeography more precisely than to the second half of the first millennium BC, especially since the pantheon and cult practices of those cities did not—as far as we are aware—undergo such a radical transformation as those of Uruk did after 484 BC. Those texts will therefore also be referred to as 'Late Babylonian', since 'Neo-Babylonian' is more narrowly defined. For third- and second millennium dates, I will use the middle chronology. All dates are BC unless otherwise specified.

For proper names, I will use the conventional Assyriological spelling that is the most recognizable to the non-Assyriologist; e.g. Inanna, not Inana(k); Uruk, not Unug or Erech; Sennacherib, not Sîn-aḥḥē-erība etc. I spell Akkadian words in *cursive* and Sumerian words expanded, except for words that have become conventional Assyriological terminology (e.g. namburbi, šu-ila, balaḡ). These are of course subjective issues and lead at times to seemingly arbitrary decisions. Finally, copies of all the Uruk ritual texts can be found through their conventional publication code (TU 38, BRM IV 6 etc.) and the new editions by Marc Linssen have now been in print for more than ten years. Thus, I will not refer to them by the page numbers on which they can be found in Thureau-Dangin's *Rituels accadiens* (1921), and would like to express my hope that my colleagues will also finally refrain from doing so.

The Historical Background of the Anu Cult

For an understanding of the Anu cult as it existed at Uruk during the late Achaemenid and Seleucid period, it is necessary to take into account the millennia of divine worship at Uruk that preceded it—a history of which the Hellenistic priests of Anu were well aware and which influenced their religious convictions in different ways. During most of that period, the city's main deity was the goddess Inanna/Ištar. Since that was no longer the case in Seleucid times and she is not the main subject of this book, a brief summary of the history of her cult will suffice here. The primary focus will be on the development of Anu's role in the local pantheon and his significance for the city of Uruk throughout the centuries.

1.1 A Brief Religious History of Uruk

Uruk is one of the oldest Mesopotamian cities.¹ It was founded in the late Ubaid period (ca. 4500–4000 BC) and gave its name to the Uruk period (ca. 4000–3100 BC), during which it was the main force of urbanisation in southern Mesopotamia. The city possessed two separate sacred districts, which may originally have been independent settlements: the western Kullaba, the precinct of the elevated sanctuary called by archaeologists the “White Temple”, and the eastern precinct of the Eanna, the main temple of Inanna (Akk.: Ištar), goddess of war, sexual love, and the concomitant human passions. The connection between Uruk and Inanna goes back to very early times. Texts from the late fourth millennium point to four different manifestations of the goddess worshipped at Uruk, including “Inanna of the morning” and “Inanna of the evening”, which indicates that a fundamental part of her identity from the very beginning was the association between her and the planet Venus.²

The White Temple dates to the Uruk IV period (3500–3100 BC), but the terrace had possessed monumental architecture since the late Ubaid period. In

1 See for the most recent, comprehensive and accessible overview of the early history of Uruk—and some aspects of the later periods, including a richly illustrated chapter by Arno Kose on the Hellenistic period—Crüsemann et al. 2013, and for a more in-depth study Liverani 2006 [1998].

2 Beaulieu 2003, 104.

its last building phase, it consisted of 21 different construction layers and was 15 metres high. Directly beside the White Temple terrace lay what the excavators call the “Old Terrace”, an area of 173,6×200,5 meters, which dates to Uruk III (3100–2900 BC) or IV. No building remains from either of those periods have been found on it.³ The White Temple may have been dedicated to Inanna’s (great-grand)father, the sky god and divine allfather An (Akk.: Anu), who appears in later sources as a member of the Uruk pantheon. However, although the White Temple terrace is conventionally referred to as the “Anu ziqqurrat” in archaeological publications, no material finds from that site can be connected to him. Neither can his presence in the archaic texts be determined with complete certainty, because of the ambiguity of the cuneiform sign AN, which can also be read as ‘heaven’ and ‘god’ (dingir).⁴ If An was already worshipped at Uruk during the Uruk period, he may also have shared the Eanna, the ‘House of Heaven’, with Inanna.

From the Early Dynastic period (ca. 2900–2330 BC) onward, both An and Inanna are attested as divine residents of Uruk. By that time, Inanna had become the city’s most important deity and the Eanna the primary temple complex of Uruk, in which An seems to have received offerings as well. His consort during that period appears to have been the creation goddess Namma, mother of Enki.⁵ The cohabitation of Inanna and An within the Eanna continued until the early second millennium. Literary and administrative texts from the Ur III period (2112–2004 BC) present a close relationship between the active, “dynamic” goddess Inanna and the king, her en-priest, but continue to mention An as a passive, yet still present patron deity of the city and of the Eanna. Royal inscriptions from the early Old Babylonian period (2004–1792 BC) also acknowledge both An and Inanna and hail the Eanna as the dwelling place of both deities.⁶ The Old Babylonian version of the ‘Epic of Gilgameš’ even describes the Eanna as exclusively the “dwelling-place of Anu”,⁷ which in the Standard Babylonian version has been replaced by “dwelling-place of Anu and Ištar”.⁸

Different Sumerian-language literary texts from the third and early second millennium, including several of the hymns composed by Enheduanna, daughter of Sargon of Akkad (r. 2334–2279 BC), allude to a mythological tradition

3 Heinrich 1982, 35–45, 61–67; Eichmann 2007, 409 ff.

4 Beaulieu 2003, 105.

5 Neumann 1981, 78–80; Frayne 1997, 423.

6 Beaulieu 2003, 106–108; Richter 2004, 281–283, 297–299.

7 Pennsylvania Tablet II 60 (George 2003, 174).

8 SB ‘Gilgameš’ I 217 (George 2003, 550–551 with note 40).

according to which the Eanna was originally the temple of An; however, Inanna's power began to overshadow his and she usurped his temple and throne, or intimidated him into giving them to her.⁹ Thus *Innin Šagurra* 106–108:¹⁰

Great An feared your precinct and was frightened of your dwelling-place.
He let you take a seat in the dwelling-place of great An and then feared
you no more, saying: “I will hand over to you the august royal rites and the
great divine rites.”

In his study of the texts in which that mythological tradition is reflected, Jan van Dijk has interpreted *Ninmešarra* 86–87 along the same line:¹¹

You have indeed stolen the Eanna temple from An, you have not feared
An the king.

Most clearly, Inanna's seizing control of the Eanna and bringing it from heaven down to earth is described in a literary composition, probably meant for a performance in the cult of Inanna and An, of which the oldest manuscripts are dated to the Old Babylonian period.¹² Also known as ‘Inanna and An’, it was dubbed ‘Inanna raubt den großen Himmel’ by Van Dijk, but Annette Zgoll in her newest edition suggests the title ‘Inana holt das erste Himmelshaus auf die Erde’.¹³ The text, though very incomplete, recounts how Inanna sets her mind to “capturing the great heavens”¹⁴ and tells her brother Utu that “the House of Heaven [Eanna] should be captured from An [or: heaven]”.¹⁵ She then travels by boat to the Eanna and, with the help of Utu and a divine fisherman named Adagbir, seemingly succeeds at pulling the temple down from the sky. It tum-

9 Beaulieu 2003, 111–115.

10 ¹⁰⁶ an gal-e mūš-za ní-bí-te ki-tuš-zu im-mi-ḥu-luḥ ¹⁰⁷ ki-tuš-an-gal-la-ke₄ dūr ba²-e²-ġar su nu-mu-e-da-zi-zi ¹⁰⁸ ġárza maḥ ġárza gal-g[al] šu-zu ga-mu-un-si (tr. and tr. Sjöberg 1975, 188).

11 ⁸⁶ an-da é-an-na ḥa-ba da-an-kar ⁸⁷ an-lugal-da ní ba-ra-ba-da-te (Van Dijk 1998, 10; this translation Beaulieu 2003, 113). Zgoll (1997, 11 and 395–400) and the ETCSL edition consider the subject of the sentence to be not Inanna, but Lugal-Anne, Enḫeduanna's political enemy who features prominently in the hymn.

12 Zólyomi 2000.

13 Van Dijk 1998, 12; Zgoll 2015.

14 an-gal kar-re-dè ġéstug-ga-ni ba-an-gub (Van Dijk 1998, 13: 27–30).

15 an-da é-an-na ḥa-ba da-k[ar-X] (ibid. 13: 44).

bles into the reed beds below. An is greatly upset, since establishing such a heavenly abode on earth has made Inanna greater than himself, but eventually he accepts what has happened and ordains a glorious destiny for the Eanna. In Zgoll's interpretation, the story is a prototypical founding myth of a Sumerian temple, which were considered to have been created in heaven before having been brought to earth by divine means.¹⁶

Allusions to myths concerning Inanna acquiring or laying claim to the Eanna also appear in first-millennium texts. On Tablet 16 of the great exorcist's handbook *Udug-Ĥul/Utukkū Lemnūtu*, in a passage describing the division of power in heaven, we find the line "Ištar took up residence with (Lord) Anu in the pure abode and plotted for the rulership of heaven".¹⁷ A list of mythical antediluvian sages which is attested in two different scholarly texts states that during the reign of Enmerkar, the legendary king of Uruk and grandfather of Gilgameš, the sage Nungalpiriggal brought Ištar down into the Eanna.¹⁸ None of these traditions, however, is easy to reconcile with the earliest textual evidence available from Uruk, which already refers to the Eanna as Inanna's abode and indicates that she was the patron goddess of Uruk from at least the late 4th millennium onward. Rather, the literature describing her attainment of supreme power may be considered a form of praise, a reflection of theological speculations on her astral nature—the prominence of the planet Venus in the sky—and perhaps of later historical developments.¹⁹

16 Zgoll forthcoming. She points out that the text shifts stylistically from an emphasis on Inanna's stealing and "taking away" the Eanna from heaven/An to a positive and in retrospect legitimate "fetching" of the Eanna to earth.

17 ^{32d}*inanna-ke₄ an-da ki-tuš kù mu-un-ri nam-lugal-la an-na-šè ir-pag mu-un-ak | diš-tar it-ti da-nim šar-ri šub-tú kù-ti ir-mi-ma ana lugal-ut an-e i-kap-pu-ud* (Geller/Vacín 2016, 508; my tr.). The line seems a bit out of place in that context and may have been inserted on the basis of another source. Geller translates "Ištar, with the consent of Lord Anu, occupied the holy residence and was plotting against the rule of heaven"; he suggests the line may be a corrupted quote of 'Inanna and Ebiḫ' 116 (Attinger 1998, 174).

18 SpTU II 8, obv. I 14–15; BaM Beiheft 2 89: 8–9; see also § 2.3.4.1. Some scholars translate the line in question with Ištar as the subject and Nungalpiriggal as the object (cf. Van Dijk 1962, 45; Lenzi 2008, 142). In terms of both grammar and content, that is a less likely reading, since in *bīt mēseri* it forms a literary parallel with the actions of the three other human *apkallū*, some of which involve deities, but never as the primary actor: Piriggal-nungal angers Adad, who then stops the rain for three years; Piriggalabzu annoys Ea in the Apsû; Lu-Nanna drives a dragon out of an Ištar temple (cf. Reiner 1961, 4; Van Dijk 1962, 49 note 120; Borger 1974, 192; Van Dijk 1998, 10).

19 Beaulieu 2003, 114–115.

In the later Old Babylonian period, after the southern Babylonian revolt in the tenth and eleventh regnal year of Hammurabi's successor Samsuiluna (1739–1738 BC), the priests of Uruk retreated to Kiš and took the city cults with them.²⁰ Textual records dated to this period from the palace of *Sîn-kāšid* at Uruk and from Kiš mention a ^d*inanna*, but also the compound *an-dinanna*, both names sometimes supplemented by *-unug^{ki}* (“of Uruk”) in the sources from Kiš. An is not attested by himself. Scholarly opinions are divided as to whether the compound *An-dInanna* refers to the deities An and Inanna together or to a particular manifestation of Inanna alone. The second option would mean that there is no mention whatsoever of An in the later Old Babylonian sources related to Uruk, which is unlikely. Nonetheless, the sign compound *an-dinanna* may in some cases have been used as a frozen form to denote only Inanna.²¹

During the Middle Babylonian period, the Urukean priests were able to return the cults of Uruk to their native city. To that period dates a literary composition known to scholars as ‘The Exaltation of Ištar’, which again describes Ištar’s rise to power, but this time on Anu’s initiative: he selects her as his spouse, elevates her to the status of his first wife Antu, and offers her all his royal prerogatives.²² From that period onwards, Babylonian and Assyrian royal inscriptions related to Uruk almost completely cease to mention Anu.²³ The Eanna, on the other hand, remains present in the sources as the main sanctuary of Uruk and Ištar acquires the title “Lady-of-Eanna”. The temple was rebuilt by the Kassite kings *Karaindaš* and *Kurigalzu I* (late fifteenth—early fourteenth century).

After their inscriptions follows a long gap in the textual record. The next evidence for a restoration project of the Eanna is an inscription of *Marduk-apla-iddina II* from the end of the eighth century.²⁴ However, according to several Neo- and Late Babylonian literary sources, the statue of Ištar had been abducted some time during the eighth century by a destructive king—allegedly either *Eriša-Marduk* or *Nabû-šuma-iškun*—and replaced by a goddess who “did not belong” in Uruk.²⁵ The goddess dwelling in the Eanna is referred to

20 Charpin 1986, 403–415; Pientka 1998, 179–187 & 375–388.

21 Beaulieu 2003, 109–110.

22 Hruška 1969.

23 The only exception is the ‘Donation of Kurigalzu’, an alleged building inscription of king *Kurigalzu I* in which the Eanna is described as the residence of Anu and Ištar. Some scholars believe, however, that the text is a forgery from a later period (Beaulieu 2003, 117).

24 *Ibid.* 115–117.

25 *Ibid.* 129–138.

in the seventh- and early sixth-century administrative texts as “Ištar”, but also as “Bēltiya”, traditionally an epithet of Zarpanītu, the spouse of Marduk, patron god of Babylon. For that reason, Paul-Alain Beaulieu proposes that the unwelcome new goddess may have been a form of Ištar-of-Babylon who was syncretised with Zarpanītu. The kings of Babylon may have exchanged Ištar-of-Uruk with her in order to extend the supremacy of Marduk over the ancient southern city and deal a blow to the local identity of Uruk’s citizens.²⁶ The original statue—or a renewed version—was not brought back to Uruk until the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (see below); from that moment onwards, the Urukian sources refer to Ištar almost exclusively as “Lady-of-Uruk”, as if to emphasize that now the true, proper Ištar was meant, who belonged at Uruk and protected the city.

Uruk was an important city to the Neo-Assyrian kings and maintained good relations with them. Sargon II, Esarhaddon, and Aššurbanipal all contributed extensively to the maintenance of the Eanna and the Ištar cult. After Aššurbanipal had conquered Elam, he returned the statue of the goddess Nanāya to Uruk, which had been carried off by the Elamites.²⁷ Moreover, the White Temple terrace was renovated for the first time since its decay in the late fourth millennium and rebuilt into a stepped ziqqurat. Since a building inscription of Esarhaddon commemorating the renovation of the Eanna was found in one of the ziqqurat walls, it is assumed that the building’s reconstruction was supervised by that king.²⁸ During the Neo-Assyrian period, the Old Terrace was also provided with a new mantle which followed the orientation of the original Sumerian construction. No trace of the buildings erected there, which we may suspect formed the ‘Tieftempel’ to the ziqqurat, remains today;²⁹ thus it is again uncertain whether or not those religious buildings were dedicated to Anu. Still, it is probable that they were, since the Seleucid Anu-Antu temple and its ziqqurat were later built in the exact same location.³⁰

During the Neo-Assyrian dominance, Assyrian troops and officials were probably stationed at Uruk and may have introduced a cult for the god Aššur.³¹ In that period, Aššur’s name was often written ^dan-šár. The primordial god Anšar was traditionally considered to be the father of Anu, but is also equated

26 Ibid. 76–77.

27 Scurlock 2006, 455.

28 Kose 1998, 427 Lfd. Nr. 73 (ed. Leichty 2011 no. 139).

29 Ibid. 107–109, 187. Falkenstein (1941, 9) and Heinrich (1939, 30) believe that Esarhaddon’s constructions on the Old Terrace remained unfinished.

30 See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2 and below.

31 Beaulieu 1997; id. 2003, 331–333.

with Anu himself in the standardized god list *An = Anum* (18).³² A small independent shrine for a ^dan-šár is attested at Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian and early Achaemenid period and a Neo-Babylonian legal document mentions persons with an Assyrian background involved in that cult. According to Beaulieu, the name ^dan-šár in those cases should be interpreted as the god Aššur. He proposes that the cult of Aššur was installed at Uruk by a Neo-Assyrian king and that it found acceptance among the citizens of Uruk through the equation of Aššur with Anšar/Anu. According to him, the cult persisted even after the end of Assyrian dominance and may have contributed to, or at least have been an aspect of the gradually growing popularity of Anu (see below). It must be noted, however, that it remains unclear when the worship of Aššur at Uruk first began. The introduction of the cult may also have taken place after the fall of the Neo-Assyrian empire. Further, the priests of Uruk may have accepted the cult of the *numen loci* of the city of Aššur more easily if he was equated with the ancient deity Anšar, but there is no evidence that they also understood that syncretised figure as a form of Anu. Equation of divine fathers and sons from different historical layers of cosmogonic myths is a typical aspect of the kind of theological speculation we see in *An = Anum*, but the same conceptions were not necessarily the basis of those deities' temple cults. In any case, the Neo-Babylonian text corpus from Uruk shows that, by that time, ^dan.šár and Anu were worshipped separately from each other in small sanctuaries in the city.³³

Like the Assyrian kings, the Neo-Babylonian dynasty also supported the cult of Ištar, but they exercised a strict control over the organisational affairs of the Eanna.³⁴ Nebuchadnezzar II claims in his inscriptions that he returned the original statue of Ištar from Babylon to Uruk, reinstated the proper cultic rites and renovated her temple, a feat which is also commemorated in an inscription by Nabonidus.³⁵ The god Anu was no more than a minor deity at Uruk during that period, worshipped at a small, independent sanctuary.³⁶ It was probably the intent of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty to keep the cult of Anu small and insignificant, since they—with the exception of the last king, Nabonidus—strove to impose the supremacy of their own patron deity Marduk upon all the cult centres of Babylonia. According to the Marduk theology, developed during the late second to early first millennium and expressed primarily in the

32 That equation also occurs in several colophons from Hellenistic Uruk; cf. Frahm 2002, 86–88.

33 Beaulieu 2003, 330–333.

34 Kleber 2008.

35 Beaulieu 2003, 129–131.

36 *Ibid.* 330.

mythological poem *Enūma Eliš*, the young warrior god had replaced Anu and Enlil as king of the gods after his victory over the primordial monster Tiamat. In some mythological traditions, Marduk had even vanquished Anu, Enlil and Ea, consigned the latter two to the netherworld and brutally killed Anu himself.³⁷ In cult practice, Marduk's superiority over Anu and Enlil was asserted during the great *akītu* festival at Babylon, when the divine symbols of the latter deities were covered during the recitation of *Enūma Eliš*.³⁸ In the context of that religious program, the worship of Anu could only be tolerated up to a certain limit in any part of the empire, since it would have been a sign that the power of Marduk of Babylon was not absolute.³⁹ Ištar, on the other hand, played an important role in the pantheon of Babylon as Bēlet-Bābili, Marduk's mistress, so it was considered appropriate that her cult be supported elsewhere as well, as long as it remained closely connected to that of Marduk. Thus, a symbol of Marduk was set up in the Eanna and priests from northern Babylonia were settled at Uruk to supervise and control the temple organisation on behalf of the Babylonian court.⁴⁰

1.2 The Development of the Late Babylonian Anu Cult

1.2.1 *Uruk under the Achaemenid Empire*

When the Persian king Cyrus the Great invaded Babylonia, Nabonidus moved the statues of several deities of Uruk, including Ištar, together with the gods of a number of other cities and a part of their priesthood to Babylon.⁴¹ Once Cyrus had conquered Babylon and established his rule over Mesopotamia, the gods and priests of Uruk were sent back to their own city. A fragment of a building inscription from the Eanna points to reconstruction activity on the temple in the new king's name.⁴² Nevertheless, Cyrus' primary interest in the cultic practices of Mesopotamia was for the royal ideology that could be expressed through them. He and his son Cambyses participated only once in the *akītu* festival at Babylon, during which Cambyses was handed the sceptre of kingship in

37 Livingstone 1989, no. 37: 19', 32'–34'; 38: 8–26; 40: 1–14.

38 RAcc 127–154 + BM 32485 (Linssen 2004, 219–220) 280–284.

39 For the enduring religious conflict between Babylon on the one hand and Nippur and Uruk on the other, see Scurlock 2012.

40 Beaulieu 2003, 75–77; Kessler 2004.

41 Beaulieu 1993a; Zawadzki 2012.

42 Beaulieu 1989b.

the sanctuary of Nabû ša ḫarê.⁴³ Interestingly, either Cambyses or, more probably, Cyrus himself participated in the ceremony dressed in “Elamite”, i.e. Persian garments, which is often interpreted by modern scholars as a display of cultural hegemony which the priests of Babylon may have considered offensive.

During the chaotic period surrounding the accession of Darius I, two Babylonians using the names Nebuchadnezzar III and IV organised revolts, which Darius put down. The extent of his response is not entirely clear, but he appears to have replaced temple officials in cities like Sippar and Borsippa with people from Babylon. Towards the end of his reign, the temples seem to have become more autonomous and insofar as a royal representative (*qīpu*) was still present, that function was fulfilled by persons from local priestly families.⁴⁴ At the same time, Darius ignored the duties which the king of Babylonia was expected to perform. Instead of participating in the *akītu* celebrations, he held court at Susa each year at the beginning of spring and summoned officials from northern Babylonian cities there to fulfil labour and tax duties.⁴⁵ Because of those yearly meetings, the officials and their families were able to forge a close network, which is visible in their archives through a steady increase in marriages and business transactions among them over the course of three generations.⁴⁶ Although no general financial crisis is discernible in the sources pertaining to the early Achaemenid period, a letter from Borsippa shows that in the last years of Darius or perhaps the first year of Xerxes, all prebendary payments from the Ezida temple were interrupted by a royal official. That intervention had great repercussions for the economic and social well-being of the priestly class.⁴⁷ In 484 BC, the second year of Xerxes, the northern Babylonian ‘network of resistance’ revolted twice more.

Again the insurgences were unsuccessful, however, and Xerxes quickly retaliated. It is still debated whether or not he deliberately destroyed Babylonian (temple) buildings,⁴⁸ but he certainly uprooted the entire social layer responsible for the uprising by dismissing all members of those families from their religious and administrative offices. That development is reflected in the abrupt ending of the archives of the affected temples and families in or shortly after

43 ‘Nabonidus Chronicle’ III 24–28; cf. George 1996, 379–385 and Zgoll 2006, 24–25.

44 M. Jursa, ‘Xerxes: the Case of Sippar and the Ebabbar Temple’, lecture at the workshop ‘Xerxes and Babylon’, Leiden, January 16–17, 2014.

45 Waerzeggers 2010b; Jursa 2013.

46 C. Waerzeggers, ‘The Network of Resistance’, lecture at the 58th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, July 17, 2012; ead. 2014, 102, 107.

47 Jursa 2013, 7–10.

48 See for a summary of the current debate *ibid.* 1–2.

the year 484 BC.⁴⁹ As a replacement for the rebels, Xerxes appointed members from Babylonian families who were more loyal to his rule. The city of Uruk had not participated in the revolts, but the Urukean private archives demonstrate the same wholesale replacement of cultic personnel that must have taken place in all major Babylonian cities.⁵⁰ Many of the families involved in the management of and worship at the Eanna had been of northern Babylonian descent, probably having been installed in those functions under the Neo-Babylonian dynasty. Their names carried northern Babylonian theophoric elements such as Bēl/Marduk and Nabû. After 484 BC, such names vanish almost entirely from Urukean documents. Instead, one either finds names with no theophoric element at all, or with Ištar, Nanāya and Šamaš, who remained important local deities, or, most notably, with Anu.⁵¹ Names with the theophoric element Anu can be traced back in the texts from Uruk to the early Neo-Babylonian period, but their number is relatively small. However, from the second year of Xerxes onward, they steadily increase in number until they finally completely dominate the Urukean textual record.⁵²

Thus it seems that at Uruk, Xerxes' intervention led to the rise in power of a local group of families who had a special personal connection with the god Anu. It is very well possible that they were the descendants of an elite group which had been allied with the Neo-Assyrian court and had not welcomed the Neo-Babylonian kings, their religious policy, or the northern Babylonian priests who were settled at Uruk to supervise the cult of Ištar. Although, as we have seen, Inanna/Ištar's role as patron goddess of the city dated back to the Sumerian period, her cult during the eighth through sixth centuries was closely connected to that of Marduk and thereby to the political power exercised by the

49 Waerzeggers 2003/4; Oelsner 2007a; Baker 2008a; Scurlock 2012, 375; Jursa 2013; id. 2015.

50 The temple archive of the Eanna does end abruptly, but earlier (Dar 2 = 521/20 BC) and was deposited due to internal affairs (Jursa 2005, 138). Nonetheless, it is well possible that the living archive from Dar 2 to Xer 2 was removed from the Eanna for safety and stored elsewhere in Uruk, from whence it has not yet been excavated.

51 Kessler 2004. (For some remaining Bēl- and Nabû-elements in the Urukean onomasticon, see Boiy 2011 and note, interestingly, the young *āšipu* of the Ekur-zākir family, Bēl-aḫa-iddin, scribe of SpTU I 69 and III 91.)

52 Oelsner 1978, 103; 1981; 1994; Stolper 1990, 561–562; Beaulieu 1992, 54–55. Note especially SpTU v 299 and 300, which date to Xer 6 and 9 respectively and mention in total nine individuals with an Anu-name who belong to three generations (Beaulieu, 'Uruk Before and After Xerxes', lecture at the Leiden 2014 'Xerxes and Babylon' workshop). Those people were of course born a few decades earlier, which clearly points to an increase in the devotion to Anu at Uruk already during the Neo-Babylonian empire.

Babylonian royal court. To reinforce their sense of independence and superiority over Babylon, the Urukean priestly families chose instead to consider Anu the city's true divine father.⁵³

Like Inanna/Ištar, Anu's archaic roots at Uruk were frequently described and alluded to in the literary and religious texts which the sons of priestly families read during their scribal education; moreover, the remains of his ancient temple still stood in the middle of the city and local traditions probably ascribed those ruins to his worship in Sumerian times. Thus, a revival of the cult of Anu also meant an assertion of the venerable antiquity of the city of Uruk as compared to Babylon and the cult of Marduk. Since the control of the Neo-Babylonian kings over the Urukean cultic affairs prevented the followers of Anu from creating a more extensive cult for him than in a small, insignificant shrine, they opted instead for naming their children after him as a clear marker of their adopted identity. With the revolts of 484 BC and Xerxes' subsequent retaliation, the role of the Eanna as the main temple complex and economic centre of Uruk was at an end. The new priestly elite seized the opportunity to develop a city cult which focused primarily on Anu and his spouse Antu and only secondarily on Ištar and Nanāya.

Late Achaemenid texts from Babylonia pertaining to temple administration or to specific historical events are relatively scarce. It is therefore difficult to determine where and how religious activity took place at Uruk directly after the collapse of the organisation of the Eanna, or by which in-between phases the worship of Anu developed into the flourishing cult which we encounter in the sources from the Seleucid era. The political significance of Uruk as a regional centre does not seem to have diminished during the late fifth and early fourth century. Under Darius II, it was the city where newly recruited soldiers were stationed; for that reason, Joachim Oelsner considers the city to have been "eine Art 'Unterzentrum'".⁵⁴ In 407 BC the gates of Uruk appear to have been barricaded, but it is not clear against whom or to what purpose.⁵⁵

1.2.2 *Scholarship at Uruk*

One thing that does become apparent in the sources from the later Achaemenid period onwards is that Uruk was an important centre of scholarly research. The theological fundamentals of the new Anu cult were established in a dynamic intellectual environment, of which one important aspect was the increasing

53 Beaulieu 1992, 67–68 and id., 'Uruk Before and After Xerxes'.

54 Ebeling 1952, 209; 12, 16; Oelsner 2001, 487.

55 Stolper 1990, 571–572.

interest in astrology and astronomy that characterised Late Babylonian scholarship and science.⁵⁶ The latter development will certainly have played a role in the increasing worship of Anu;⁵⁷ after all, Anu was the god of the heavens and presided over one-third of the starry firmament, the “path of Anu”, while the two other paths traditionally belonged to Enlil and Ea.⁵⁸ Since the worship of stars and planets specifically played a large role in the yearly nocturnal ceremony which is the main focus of the present study, we need to take a closer look at the astrological and astronomical research with which the main participants in that ritual regularly occupied themselves. Considering that the changes in the Babylonian astral sciences—to which the scholars of Uruk contributed significantly⁵⁹—took place over the course of several centuries, we will step out of our chronological framework for a moment and take the entire second half of the first millennium into account. This subchapter will only offer the information necessary to understand the various scholarly occupations of the Anu priests and the cultural context of a possible ‘astral’ dimension to the Anu cult. That dimension itself and the pertaining evidence will be examined in a later chapter and in more detail in a forthcoming article.⁶⁰

1.2.2.1 Celestial Science and Divination

Over the course of the first millennium BC, the discipline of astrology emerged as the primary form of divination in Mesopotamia and became more widely and regularly practised than extispicy, even though the latter was still employed to confirm the meaning of significant celestial omens. As a result, the observation and calculation of the behaviour of heavenly bodies became one of the most important occupations of Assyrian and Babylonian scholars.⁶¹ That

56 Cuneiform texts are characterised as “astronomical” by modern scholars when they describe or predict the motions and attributes of stars, planets and constellations without making an explicit connection between those phenomena and events happening on earth (this includes the *Astronomical Diaries*, which imply but never address that connection). Texts that do make such a connection are dubbed “astrological”.

57 Rochberg 1993, 33–35; ead. 2004, 226–236; Frahm 2002, 91; Beaulieu 2004, 315.

58 Horowitz 1998, 243–258.

59 See Britton 1993 and Beaulieu/Britton 1994.

60 § 5.4.5; Krul forthcoming a.

61 See Brown 2000, who argues that during the later Neo-Assyrian period a paradigm shift took place from the notion that celestial phenomena could be interpreted as portents of earthly events in the future to the realization that the behaviour of the moon and planets itself could be predicted through observation and calculation (which would thus lead to more accurate divination of the future).

development is clearly discernible in the correspondence between the Neo-Assyrian kings and the divination- and ritual experts employed at their courts, who used their insight into the messages from heaven to guard the well-being of the king and to determine the correct dates for ritual performances and cultic festivals. After the fall of the Neo-Assyrian empire, the astral sciences continued to be practised in Babylonia, presumably also at the royal court, although the evidence for that period is meagre. Eventually all astrological and astronomical research came to be performed at the temples of the different cities. When exactly and under which circumstances that change occurred cannot be determined on the basis of the extant sources, but it is likely that it was connected to the Persian conquest in 539 BC, since from that moment onwards the kings of Babylonia no longer required the aid of Babylonian diviners.⁶²

Neo- and Late Babylonian astronomy is divided by modern scholars into observational and mathematical astronomy, i.e. respectively record keeping of past movements of celestial bodies and mathematical calculations to predict their behaviour in the future.⁶³ The latter type developed roughly around 500 BC, together with zodiacal astrology, which included birth horoscopy and astral medicine. Over the course of the Achaemenid period, those new disciplines became part of the expertise of the *tuṣṣar Enūma Anu Enlil* ('scribe of the celestial omen series *When Anu and Enlil*'), who in the Neo-Assyrian period had been primarily responsible for interpreting astrological omens and supervising the correct rituals against negative events portended by the stars.⁶⁴ An Achaemenid-era administrative text from Babylon shows that no less than fourteen *tuṣṣarrū Enūma Anu Enlil* worked at the Esagil at Babylon and received regular food rations for their service.⁶⁵ A legal document from the same temple dating to the Parthian period demonstrates that persons of that title were still employed there; moreover, the latter text makes clear that the duties of the *tuṣṣarrū Enūma Anu Enlil* involved both observational and mathematical astronomy. Also, it suggests that they were responsible as a team for performing all forms of astronomical and astrological research.⁶⁶ Evidence shows, however, that many scholars at Babylon and Uruk were trained in the celestial sciences

62 Assertions about aspects of cuneiform culture taking place "only at the temples" in the Late Babylonian period, even when it is historically plausible, must be made while keeping in mind that our view on that period is distorted, because the temples are the only institution from which we *have* any sources.

63 For the mathematical astronomical texts see now Ossendrijver 2012.

64 Rochberg 2000 and ead. 2004, 219–236.

65 YBC 11549; Beaulieu 2006.

66 CT 49 144; Rochberg 2000, 370–375.

and possessed tablets belonging to those disciplines without referring to themselves as *tušar Enūma Anu Enlil*. Thus, the term appears to have indicated a sector of activities rather than a distinct professional title.⁶⁷

An important example of a text group belonging to the category of observational astronomy, which as a whole makes up the bulk of the extant Neo- and Late Babylonian astronomical sources, are the so-called Astronomical Diaries. First attested in the seventh century BC and deriving primarily from the city of Babylon, the Diaries combine precise observations of astronomical and meteorological phenomena with records of noteworthy events on earth such as market prices, the level of the Euphrates, unusual behaviour of animals, the performance of cultic rites and festivals and the developments and effects of wars, e.g. movements and fighting of troops, sieges of cities, famine and disease.⁶⁸ The Diaries clearly served the discipline of astronomy, since the astronomical data gathered in them were used for predicting lunar and planetary movements as well as developing new predictive models and methods. Concerning astrology, the Diaries never explicitly address the relationship between the observed events in heaven and those on earth and modern scholars are in debate about the extent to which they served a divinatory purpose. Yet many of the observations correspond to protases—celestial and meteorological phenomena, strange appearances and behaviour of animals, cultic performances—as well as apodoses—market prices, war, disease—of omen handbooks, especially the aforementioned *Enūma Anu Enlil*. In any case, it is clear that the Diaries are the products of an intellectual climate in which interpreting celestial phenomena as portents about the future and perfecting mathematical models for understanding and predicting lunar and planetary behaviour were equally valued.⁶⁹

67 Note also that, despite the fact that the temple seems to have been the primary employer of the *ṭ. EAE* and those duties were fulfilled by members of the elite priesthood, it was never a prebendary function. The reason is probably that all prebends were related to the personal handling of sacred materials—foodstuffs for the divine meal, construction materials for the temple, the clothing and jewellery of the divine statue etc.

68 Sachs/Hunger 1989–1996 (hereafter: AD). For the usefulness of the data in the Astronomical Diaries to the ancient historian, see e.g. Van der Spek 1993 and id. 2000 (and other works by the same author).

69 Rochberg 2011, 629–633.

1.2.2.2 The Šangû-Ninurta and Ekur-zākir Tablet Collections

The same climate was present at Late Babylonian Uruk. Although we have very limited evidence of Diaries being composed there,⁷⁰ the pursuit of all the celestial sciences by the scholars of Uruk is evident from the large number of astronomical and astrological texts both illegally and professionally excavated there. The earliest text corpus derives from a house on the eastern edge of the site Uruk-Warka, in grid square Ue XVIII 11 (hereafter: U18).⁷¹ There, the archaeologists of the German Archaeological Institute (hereafter: DAI) discovered the tablet collection of two successive families of *āšīpu*:⁷² firstly, Šamaš-iddin of the Šangû-Ninurta family and his sons Rimût-Anu and Anu-iqšur, whose tablets are dated to around 400 BC,⁷³ and secondly Iqīša and his son Ištar-šuma-ēreš, descendants of Ekur-zākir. Insofar as Iqīša's tablets can be dated, they date to 322–316, probably even to 301 BC—i.e. a century later than the previous occupants of the house.⁷⁴

The 'libraries' of both families comprised an extensive corpus of literary, theological, astrological-astronomical, divinatory and medical texts, the standardized handbooks necessary for the profession of *āšīpu* as well as new commentaries to those works. It is important to point out that most of the tablets from U18 were not copied and collected as a personal or professional reference library; they are the products of the advanced scribal training that was offered

70 Only one Diary is attested with certainty from Uruk (AD -463; BaM Beiheft 2, 84) and one other may also derive from there (AD -99; BM 140677).

71 Clancier 2009, 30–33 and see Pedersén 1998, 207 plan 98. The excavations took place during the 27th, 29th and 30th campaign of the DAI between 1969 and 1972.

72 The *āšīpu* was a ritual specialist whose activities included healing, divination, purification and exorcism and can generally be characterized as the interpretation and restoration of disbalances between the human and the divine realm. Some scholars argue that in late Babylonian sources the Sumerogram for that occupation,¹⁴ maš.maš, should be read *maš-maššu*, not *āšīpu* (Frahm 2002, 83); however, the *āšīpūtu* prebend is attested in syllabic writing (e.g. BRM II 16 obv. 3 (*a-ši-pu-ú-tú*) (ed. Corò 2005, 146–147)).

73 Oelsner 1983, 248–249; id. 2000, 798.

74 Frahm 2002, 81. The tablet collections of the Šangû-Ninurta and Ekur-zākir families correspond to 'Uruk 9' and 'Uruk 10' in the system of Pedersén (1998, 212). For an overview of the tablets belonging to the Šangû-Ninurta and Ekur-zākir families according to their colophons, those from U18 that cannot be assigned to either family and their various textual genres, see Clancier 2009, 387–400 (ordered by publication) and 400–406 (ordered by genre). A number of the illegally excavated scholarly texts which were probably stored in the Bit Rēš (see below) also belonged to Iqīša, which means it is important to distinguish between his 'library', i.e. the collection found at U18, and the complete corpus of tablets in his possession (Clancier 2009, 44–46).

at the ‘*āšīpu* house’. The attested members of the Šangû-Ninurta and Ekur-zākir families all went through a period of apprenticeship before they attained the status of proficient scholar and began to teach others in turn. The tablets in their possession reflect both those stages of their career. Thus, the content of the tablet collection may to a certain extent give an impression of the personal scholarly interests of for example Anu-ikšur or Iqīša, but it primarily reflects the curriculum that they considered essential for their pupils.⁷⁵

The Šangû-Ninurta and Ekur-zākir tablets clearly demonstrate that the Babylonian written cultural heritage continued to be transmitted after the fall of the Neo-Babylonian empire. Moreover, they show that Late Babylonian ritual experts were trained to reflect with criticism and an innovative perspective upon their own professional literature, as well as on a broader spectrum of scholarly subjects.⁷⁶ The same scholars who practised the scribal art by copying lexical lists and literary classics also studied rituals and incantations, medicine, divination, and astronomy. Concerning the celestial sciences specifically, the Šangû-Ninurta collection contains copies of *Enūma Anu Enlil*, tablets dealing with observational as well as mathematical astronomy and texts pertaining to zodiacal astrology.⁷⁷ In other words, Šamaš-iddin, Anu-ikšur and the junior scribes they instructed were already familiar with all the forms of research that characterized the Babylonian astral sciences during the last centuries of the first millennium.⁷⁸ Iqīša’s collection likewise contained astronomical texts and innovative works on astrology.⁷⁹ Still, the combined tablet collection of U18 as a whole is composed for the greatest part of teaching material for cuneiform, the Sumerian language, and the profession of the *āšīpu*.

75 Clancier 2010, 11–15.

76 Oelsner 2000, 798; Frahm 2002, 85.

77 SpTU IV 161 and v 243 (Ossendrijver, ‘The Reign of Xerxes and the Development of Babylonian Science’, Leiden 2014 ‘Xerxes and Babylon’ workshop).

78 It is interesting to note that two of Šamaš-iddin’s tablets, both containing sections of the ritual cycle *bīt rimki*, are designated in the colophon as “property of the Eanna” (SpTU III 66 and IV 127). That demonstrates that the Eanna originally possessed a temple library with ritual and scholarly texts, which has for the most part been lost to us. Also, in spite of the cultic changes that had taken place since the collapse of the Eanna organisation, it was not (yet) considered inappropriate to copy that temple’s name from the colophon of an older tablet. The phrase does not appear on any of Šamaš-iddin’s sons’ or later tablets.

79 Frahm 2002, 90–91.

1.2.2.3 The Scholarly Tablets Stored in the Bīt Rēš

During the campaign of 1959–1960, a collection of 158 tablets was discovered in the Bīt Rēš, the monumental new temple built for Anu and Antu in the early Hellenistic period (see below). The tablets were found in grid square Le XVI 3, in a plastered room close to the southeastern ‘Grand Gate’ (ká.gal) which had first served as an additional gateway, but was later closed off from the outside.⁸⁰ The site had been plundered in the early twentieth century and was probably already disturbed in antiquity, since only eight tablets were found in storage, whereas the rest lay broken and scattered across the floor of the room.⁸¹ For the greater part, the tablets found in Le XVI 3 are of a scholarly, religious or literary nature and bear colophons that mention members of the Sîn-lēqe-unninni family as owners and scribes, of whom the best known is Anu-bēlšunu the elder (fl. ca. 230–175 BC).⁸² Further, a small number of texts deals with the private affairs of the Sîn-lēqe-unninni family. The tablets all date to the short period of ca. 190–160 BC. Since the collection does not include teaching material of the type found at U18 and nearly all the scholarly tablets are related to the profession of *kalû*,⁸³ Philippe Clancier concludes that the tablets belonged to the professional library of the *kalûs* of the Bīt Rēš.⁸⁴ In the Hellenistic period, that office had become the hereditary privilege of the Sîn-lēqe-unninni family, just as the function of *āšipu* came to be fulfilled primarily by Ekur-zākirs, such as Iqīša. Thus it stands to reason that the library in the Bīt Rēš belonged exclusively to the Sîn-lēqe-unninnis and that they also used the room to store some of their contracts and letters.

By far the largest amount of scholarly tablets from Uruk was not officially excavated, but surfaced on the antiquities market after illicit digs in the early twentieth century. Most of the astronomical texts, which form the bulk of that group, were published by Otto Neugebauer in his *Astronomical Cuneiform Texts* (1955), although a part still awaits publication. The religious, scholarly, and literary texts from Uruk that were acquired by the Louvre in Paris and the Musées

80 Van Dijk 1962. The collection is ‘Uruk 4’ in the system of Pedersén (1998, 209–210) and ‘Rēš B’ or ‘Sîn-lēqe-unninni B’ according to Jursa (2005, 139–140). Copies of the tablets have been published in Van Dijk/Mayer 1980.

81 Clancier 2009, 36–37.

82 Pearce/Doty 2000. Of the fourteen scholarly tablets bearing his name, eight are astronomical.

83 The *kalû* was a ritual expert who specialised in the performance of Emesal prayers, the ritual creation of instruments for those performances and overseeing the restoration of dilapidated temples and broken cultic objects, of which the temporary impurity—which could anger the gods—had to be neutralised through prayer (see § 5.1.2).

84 Clancier 2010, 16.

Royaux du Cinquantenaire in Brussels were published by François Thureau-Dangin in *Tablettes d'Uruk à l'usage des prêtres du Temple d'Anu* (1922),⁸⁵ while those that ended up in Yale have appeared in *Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan* Vol. IV (1923), edited by Albert T. Clay. As indicated by their colophons, the tablets from all three collections belonged to members of the Sîn-lêqe-unninni as well as the Ekur-zākir families. On the astronomical tablets, not only the same families, but also the same individuals appear, and those persons are also attested on a fourth group of tablets excavated close to the Bīt Rēš in 1912–1913. At least one join exists between one of the latter (U 126) and an illegally excavated astronomical tablet (TU 22; published together as ACT 100). For those reasons and because the area in Le XVI 3 shows clear signs of disturbance by clandestine excavations, modern scholars generally assume that the Urukean tablets acquired on the antiquities market and those found in 1912–1913 were originally also stored in the Bīt Rēš in the vicinity of the *kalû* library. The earliest tablets among them date to the early Seleucid period, whereas the Sîn-lêqe-unninni collection is dated to the first half of the second century BC, which means that the Bīt Rēš libraries were probably in use for the entire duration of the temple's existence—unless the astronomical texts were only moved there at a much later date than when they were copied.

1.2.2.4 The Network of Urukean Scholars

On the basis of the names of the scholars attested on the astronomical tablets from Uruk, Mathieu Ossendrijver has reconstructed their professional and educational network between ca. 252 and 162 BC.⁸⁶ Each colophon mentions both a “scribe” (*qāt* PN₁, “by the hand of PN₁”) and an “owner” (*tuppi* PN₂, “tablet of PN₂”), which in Ossendrijver's view indicates a teacher-student-relationship and reflects the educational context of the tablets' production. On the basis of the preserved dates, a career of apprenticeship and subsequent professional activity can thus be established for each attested individual.⁸⁷ Eleanor Robson has undertaken a similar study to reconstruct the professional relationships of the scholar Šamaš-ētir//Ekur-zākir⁸⁸ and his family members across five

85 See § 3.1.

86 Ossendrijver 2011a and -b; schematic of the network in English on 2011a, 216 and in German on 2011b, 641.

87 See also Pearce/Doty 2000, 340–341.

88 It has become standard practice in Assyriological publications on the first millennium BC to render personal names in the format PN₁/PN₂/PN₃//PN_x, where PN₂ is the biological father (and PN₃ the grandfather etc.) and PN_x is the remote ancestor whose name marked the kinship among all his descendants (i.e. the ‘surname’).

generations (ca. 214–176 BC).⁸⁹ The results of Robson's and Ossendrijver's research clearly show the close collaboration between four of the major elite families at Seleucid Uruk—Sîn-lêqe-unninni, Ekur-zâkir, Aḥ'ûtu and Ḥunzû—and confirm that many scholars who were active in the celestial sciences also fulfilled priestly functions in the temples of Uruk,⁹⁰ such as *āšīpu*, *kalû* and *aḥu râbu* (Sum. ¹úšeš.gal, 'big brother', usually translated as 'high priest').⁹¹

Several interesting sociopolitical connections emerge as well. For example, Anu-balāssu-iqbi//Aḥ'ûtu, who fulfilled the important political offices of *rab ša rēš âli* ('head of the temple administration')⁹² and *paqdu ša bīt ilāni* ('temple delegate') and was at the top of the socioeconomic hierarchy at Uruk, owned one astronomical text written by his son Tanitti-Anu and two scholarly tablets written by the *āšīpu* Nidinti-Anu//Ekur-zâkir. His second son, Anu-bēlšunu, in turn owned a tablet written by his namesake, the aforementioned Anu-bēlšunu senior of the Sîn-lêqe-unninni family. Thus, the Aḥ'ûtu's were active as scholars as well as politicians and maintained good relationships with the two most important priestly families of Seleucid Uruk. Another interesting figure who appears in this old boys' network is Anu-aḥa-ušabši/Kidin-Anu//Ekur-zâkir, who was both *āšīpu* and *aḥu râbu* of the Anu-Antu-temple and also called himself *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Enlil*. He was not only the owner of two scholarly and two astronomical-astrological texts copied for him by his sons, but also of four tablets related to the worship of Anu which are all dated to the pivotal 250s–240s BC. We will return to him and Anu-balāssu-iqbi below.

1.2.3 *The Earliest Building Phases of the Bīt Rēš*

Let us first continue the chronological reconstruction of the Anu cult. The clearest evidence for the historical development, geographical scope, and practical performance of the cult is offered by the archaeological remains of the

89 Robson 2007.

90 See also Rochberg 2000, 366–367.

91 Earlier transcriptions of Babylonian ritual texts have rendered this word as *urigallu*, which still occasionally appears in (esp. non-Assyriological) descriptions of the great *akītu* festival at Babylon, where the *aḥu râbu* played an important role. The office seems not to have been an exclusive one in Hellenistic Uruk, contrary to the Neo-Babylonian period (cf. Waerzeggers 2010a, 45–46), because at least three different individuals from the same generation call themselves *aḥu râbu* in the sources from Seleucid Uruk: Anu-aḥa-ušabši/Ina-qibīt-Anu/Anu-uballiṭ//Ekur-zâkir, Šamaš-ēṭir/Ina-qibīt-Anu/Šibqat-Anu//Ekur-zâkir, and Anu-aḥa-iddin/Nidinti-Anu/Anu-bēlšunu//Ekur-zâkir (Ossendrijver 2011a, 216).

92 See note 133 below.

monumental temple of Anu and Antu, the *Īt Rēš*, as well as by the building inscriptions commemorating its renovation.⁹³ However, the excavation methods used by Julius Jordan in 1912–1913 make it difficult to gain detailed insight into its exact stratigraphy.⁹⁴ In the eastern corner of the *Īt Rēš*, remnants of buildings were found which were probably houses connected to temple offices at the Eanna that fell out of use after 484 BC.⁹⁵ The oldest element of the *Īt Rēš* itself, or perhaps better said the oldest version of it, is a temple complex built across the northeastern side of the Old Terrace, which the excavators call the “*Schiefer Trakt*”. It contained three courtyards (Hof III and IV and *Osthof XI*) and a sanctuary in typically Babylonian style (rooms 69–70–71), with antecella, corridor to the cella, cella and cult niche for a statue, perhaps for Anu.⁹⁶ Its orientation corresponds to the houses which it replaced and which in turn were oriented along the same axis as the Eanna. The *Schiefer Trakt* probably formed a unity with another structure which possessed a central gate; the two parts of the building were later separated by a thick wall when the western half was incorporated into the temple complex built in 244 BC (see below). As a whole, the *Schiefer Trakt* must date to the (early) Seleucid period, since both sides contain bricks with triangle stamps that have so far only been attested for buildings from the Seleucid era.⁹⁷

The first large-scale monumental building project at Seleucid Uruk was probably the renovation of the Anu *ziqqurrat*. Again the construction work cannot be dated exactly; only the last regnal year of Esarhaddon (669 BC), the building’s previous renovator, can be taken as an absolute *terminus post quem*. However, it is very likely that the next phase of renovation work on the *ziqqurrat* did not begin before the early Seleucid period, because its north-western façade cuts through an older water canal made of bricks bearing the

93 See Figures 1 and 2. In the sources, the temple’s name is written *é*sag and *é*re-eš, but also merely *re-eš* in divine and personal names with the temple name as an element, which suggests that the building was simply called ‘*Rēš*’ and that the sign *é* should be read as a determinative (Falkenstein 1941, 4). Thus, many modern scholars refer to it as “the *Rēš* temple”. Nonetheless, I prefer to say “*Īt Rēš*”, because it is more in keeping with the Assyriological tradition of including the element *é* (‘house/temple of ...’) in transcriptions of Sumerian temple names: Eanna, Esagil, Ezida etc.

94 Kose 1998, 93. The stratigraphy of the new temple for *Ištar*, the *Irigal*, is even more difficult to determine and thus cannot be used as a reference for comparison (ibid. 198).

95 Ibid. 109; Baker, ‘The Babylonian temples: continuity, change and politics’, lecture at the Leiden 2014 ‘Xerxes and Babylon’ workshop; see also Baker forthcoming.

96 See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2.

97 Kose 1998, 114 fig. 64, 134–135.

typical Seleucid triangle stamp.⁹⁸ Arno Kose assigns the ziqqurrat to construction phase 2 η , which is the one directly after that of the Schiefer Trakt (2 θ). A probable *terminus ante quem* is 251 BC, since the high shrine of the ziqqurrat, the Ešarra, is mentioned in a hymn to Anu dated to that year (see below).⁹⁹ Measuring approximately 105 m², the Seleucid Anu ziqqurrat was the largest ever built in Mesopotamia in terms of length and breadth, only comparable in size to the Middle-Elamite temple tower at Al-Untaš (modern Čoga Zanbil). It followed the alignment of the Neo-Assyrian mantle, which was in turn based upon the orientation of the archaic Old Terrace. The walls of the lowest level were between 11.5 and 15 m. high and perpendicular, unlike the tapering walls of older ziqqurrats; the central staircase extended from the southeastern façade, with two additional ones approaching it along either side of the wall, and two other staircases ran parallel to the building's northeastern and southwestern flank. Nothing is known about the number or shape of the higher levels.¹⁰⁰

During the same building phase, a smaller and a larger courtyard (Hof XI^{III} and IX) with two shrines and four "rooms with a cultic purpose" connected to the latter were developed in the area between the ziqqurrat and the Schiefer Trakt. Both shrines had an antecella (rooms 105 and 111), a cella (rooms 110 and 112) and a cult niche. A postament for a divine statue was found in room 112.¹⁰¹ One can only guess which two deities were housed in those new shrines, but they may well have been Ištar and Nanāya, the second most important goddess of the Eanna in the Neo-Babylonian period, who were waiting for the construction of their own new temple, the Irigal.¹⁰² Other likely candidates are Enlil and Ea, considering their close connection with Anu in older Babylonian religious traditions,¹⁰³ or possibly Sîn and Šamaš, the moon- and sun god who were prominent members of the panthea of all Babylonian cities and who would remain residents of the Bīt Rēš in its final two building phases. In addition to those two courtyards, another one was created to the northwest of them (Hof XI^{IV}), in the middle of which a small new sanctuary for Anu and Antu

98 Ibid. 135.

99 BRM IV 8: 11–12 (Cohen 1988, 729 and see below pp. 33–34).

100 Kose 1998, 137–138, 140–141. For a more detailed history of the Anu ziqqurrat and scholarly theories concerning the possible shape of its higher levels and their cultic use, see § 5.4.1–2.

101 See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2.

102 Most scholars choose to render that name as the more neutral variant Ešgal; for my considerations, see below.

103 Note also Iqīša's focus on that group of three gods in the protective clauses of his colophons (see below).

was built. Only traces of that building remain today, since it was later replaced by a much larger structure. Finally, walls to support and improve the Old Terrace were added along the Terrace's southeastern flank, extending towards the ziqqurat, and around its western corner, probably in preparation for the building project of Anu-uballiṭ-Nikarchos (see below).

1.3 The Anu Cult during the Seleucid and Parthian Period

Under the rule of the Seleucid dynasty, southern Babylonia flourished economically and gradually emancipated itself from the north. Uruk, which developed into a regional capital, entered a new and last era of wealth and prosperity and once again filled the city walls that had been erected around it during the third millennium. That economic development was partly due to the extensive trading activity of the southern Babylonian cities in the Persian Gulf,¹⁰⁴ and partly to the elaborate system of canals around Uruk and its hinterland, the construction of which had already started in the Neo-Babylonian period.¹⁰⁵ Also, like other important—primarily Anatolian—religious centres, Uruk may have enjoyed a special status among the cities of Babylonia.¹⁰⁶ The habitation pattern was now primarily concentrated in the northern and eastern parts of the site's total circumference, which means that the relative location of the main sanctuaries had been moved from the centre to the western border of town.¹⁰⁷ Land sale contracts from Hellenistic Uruk show a great number of new city districts and gates, whose names hardly overlap with the topography of Neo-Babylonian Uruk.¹⁰⁸

1.3.1 *Early Textual Evidence for the Anu Cult*

Where the text sources are concerned, the earliest post-Neo-Babylonian textual evidence for an organisational structure surrounding the god Anu at Uruk already dates from one generation after the revolts against Xerxes. An unpublished promissory note from the reign of Artaxerxes I (465–424 BC) deals with an amount of barley which is “the property of Anu” and will be repaid “by the measuring standard (*gišmašīhu*) of Anu”.¹⁰⁹ The document not only mentions

104 Leisten 1986, 335–336.

105 Kose 2013a, 324–325.

106 Joannès 2004, 244–245.

107 See Pedersén 1998, 207 plan 98, Baker 2005, 35 and ead. forthcoming.

108 Baker, ‘The Babylonian temples: continuity, change and politics’ (Leiden 2014 lecture).

109 YBC 11632 (Tattannu archive, which is attested between Darius I and Artaxerxes I and thus

four individuals with Anu-names, but also three members of the Ḫunzû and Ekur-zākir families, which would become part of the elite of Hellenistic Uruk. A similar text from year 33 of Artaxerxes I or II—but probably also I—mentions dates from the “orchard of Anu” and involves six more individuals bearing an Anu-name.¹¹⁰ A tablet of Emesal prayers also dated to Artaxerxes I invokes Anu, but still calls him “he of the shrine Eanna”.¹¹¹ A sale contract for barley from year 8 of Darius II (416 BC) is signed by an Anu-zēr-iddin, “scribe of Anu”, which suggests employment at a temple or sanctuary.¹¹² Finally, the scholars Šamaš-iddin and Anu-ikšur call themselves *āšīpus* of “the district of Anu” (i.e. Uruk), demonstrating their religious and patriotic sentiments.¹¹³

Sources from the early Seleucid era are already much more extensive and informative. Iqīša states in a colophon that he is a “temple enterer (*ērib bīti*) of Anu and Antu”.¹¹⁴ The documents in his library include a contract recording his possession of a brewer’s prebend for a temple in the city and his payment to someone else to take over that task.¹¹⁵ He also possessed a copy of the ‘Exaltation of Ištar’ made by a certain Ištar-šuma-ereš, son of Balāṭu, who describes himself as “singer of Emesal prayers (*kalû*) of Anu and Antu”.¹¹⁶ All three sources point to a regular and well-organised cult for Anu during Iqīša’s

makes a dating under Artaxerxes II unlikely); discussed by Beaulieu during his lecture ‘Uruk before and after Xerxes’ (Leiden 2014). His edition of the text is forthcoming and I quote it here with his kind permission.

110 Kessler 1984a, 269–270.

111 TU 56 obv. 6 (èš é-an-na-ta); Gabbay 2013, 111.

112 SpTU V 289, 20; Joannès 2006, 118.

113 That Anu was already the patron deity of Uruk during Anu-ikšur’s lifetime, i.e. around 400 BC, is also shown by his invocation of Anu and Antu in the standard protective clause that appears at the end of most Urukian colophons “he who fears DN will respect / not remove [this tablet]” (*pāliḫ DN lišaqir / lā itabbal*; cf. SpTU I 33, 51, 126; II 8; III 90; V 241, 242, 248, 254). Quite frequently, however, Anu-ikšur and his father invoke Anu and Ištar (SpTU I 39, 45, 48, 49; III 69, 84) and on one medical tablet Gula (SpTU I 47). Iqīša usually invokes the traditional divine triumvirate Anu, Enlil and Ea, as well as Adad and his spouse Šala. For the meaning of these clauses in the context of Babylonian notions of *Geheimwissen* and intellectual property, see Stevens 2013.

114 SpTU I 94, 56.

115 SpTU I 128. Hunger reads the name of the temple als *é reš??*, which has led Kose to claim (Kose 1998, 186; id. 2013a, 326) that the name Bīt Rēš is first attested in 317 BC, the date of the document. However, the sign after *é* does not resemble either *sag* or *re* (R1), though it might be *ré* (URU).

116 SpTU II 28:19.

lifetime, involving those priestly functions—temple enterer, brewer, *kalû*—which were the most necessary as well as the most prestigious. The temple where they performed their duties was probably still a relatively small sanctuary, perhaps the one inside the Schiefer Trakt or already the one in Hof XIV.¹¹⁷

The earliest unambiguous attestation of the name *Bit Rēš* itself is in the ritual text TU 38. According to its colophon, that tablet was written during the first half of the second century BC, but was based on an older copy dating back to “the reign of Seleukos and Antiochos”, i.e. either the co-regency of Seleukos I and Antiochos I (292/1–281/0 BC) or of Antiochos I and his son Seleukos (280/79–267/6 BC).¹¹⁸ The circumstances surrounding that earlier copy and its alleged discovery in Elam are disputed,¹¹⁹ but there is no reason to doubt either of the copying dates themselves. However, TU 38 is a composite text, based at least in part on Neo-Babylonian material which was altered to reflect the Seleucid situation,¹²⁰ and the only version available today is the late copy from the 2nd century BC. Thus, the names of the *Bit Rēš* and other temples and deities of Seleucid Uruk may have been added some time between that period and the ‘copying in Elam’ a century earlier. More reliable is an administrative document dated to 253/2 BC, which records the delivery of different fabrics that were hung at the “exit gate over the crossbeams of Anu and Nanāya”, decorated the statue of Nanāya and “the dais, the postament, the tiaras and the crossbeams of Anu and the diadem and the (...) of Nanāya”, were granted to the “sanctuary of Antu” and “spread out inside the *Bit Rēš*”.¹²¹ At that time, apparently, Nanāya lived in the same temple as Anu; such was perhaps the situation until the Irigal had been completed.¹²²

Finally, three documents pertaining to the Anu cult which mention the *Bit Rēš* date to 252/1 BC (SE 61), clearly a productive year for the cult’s development. Another one was copied or composed in the following year. The first group consists of a ritual text describing the *akītu* festival in month VII (BRM IV 7); a hymn to Anu, to be performed during that same festival (BRM IV 8); and an historical

117 Interestingly, a few land sale contracts from the early Hellenistic period also still refer to arable land as “the property of the Lady-of-Uruk”, i.e. of Ištar as she was known at Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian period (OECT 9 I: 4, TCL 13 234: 7).

118 Linssen 2004, 172.

119 See § 2.3.4.5.

120 Waerzeggers 2010a, 115–118.

121 Beaulieu 1989a, 69–70.

122 Alternatively, the Nanāya mentioned in this document may have been a different manifestation of the goddess who resided in the *Bit Rēš* instead of the Irigal.

text in which king Šulgi of the Third Dynasty of Ur is portrayed as an evil ruler who changed the ordinances of the Anu cult and accordingly met with an unhappy fate.¹²³ The text dating to 251/50 BC is a bilingual hymn to the sun god Šamaš, to be performed in the early morning by priests beginning their work in the workshop for cultic objects (*bīt mummi*).¹²⁴ According to their colophons, all four tablets were stored in the Bīt Rēš and were owned by the same person, whose sons had made the copies: Anu-aḥa-ušabši/Kidin-Anu//Ekur-zākir, who describes himself as a *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Enlil*, an “*āšipu* of Anu and Antu”, and a “high priest (*aḥu rabū*) of the Bīt Rēš”.¹²⁵ He must have played an important role during this formative period of the Anu cult, although how and to what extent remains difficult to assess.

The hymn to Anu for the *akītu* festival is particularly important for the dating of the various sanctuaries of Uruk which are enumerated in it and for which the *terminus ante quem* of their construction can thus be established at 252/1 BC.¹²⁶

Lord, Great An, you are exalted
 Lord of Uruk, you are exalted
 Lord of the Bīt Rēš, lord of the Enamenna, you are exalted
 Lord of the Ešarra, lord of the high shrine, you are exalted
 Lord of the Irigal, lord of the palace of heaven and the netherworld, you
 are exalted
 Lord of the Eanna, lord of the Eulmaš,¹²⁷ you are exalted

123 SpTU 1 2, a.k.a. the ‘Šulgi Chronicle’; see § 2.3.4.4.

124 W 18828 (Falkenstein 1959, 36–37).

125 Another tablet belonging to the collection of that priest is K 3753 (ed. McEwan 1981, 174–178), a fragmentary calendar text which combines astronomical events with cultic celebrations and is dated to SE 65 (248/7 BC).

126 ^{a+5} umun an-gal-e za-e maḥ-me-en / *be-lu* ^{d60} gal-ú at-ta ši-ra-at ^{a+6} umun-unug^{ki} za-e maḥ-me-en / *be-lu* ú-ruk at-ta ši-ra-at ^{a+7} umun-é-re-eš umun-é-nam-en-na za-e maḥ-me-en / *be-lu* é re-eš *be-lu* é.nam.en.na at-ta ši-[ra-a]t ^{a+8} umun-é-šár-ra umun-bára-maḥ za-e maḥ-me-en / *be-lu* é.šár.ra *be-lu* bá.ra.maḥ at-ta ši-ra-at ^{a+9} umun-é-èš-gal umun-é-gal-an-ki-a za-e maḥ-me-en / *be-lu* éš.gal *be-lu* é.gal an-e u ki-ti at-ta ši-ra-at ^{a+10} umun-é-an-na umun-é-ul-maš za-e maḥ-me-en / *be-lu* é.an.na *be-lu* é.ul.maš at-ta ši-ra-at ^{a+11} umun-é-an-ki-ke₄ umun-é-giš-ḥur-an-ki-a za-e maḥ-me-en / *be-lu* é.an.ki.ke₄ *be-lu* é.giš.ḥur.an.ki.a at-ta ši-ra-at ^{a+12} za-e lugal-me-en za-e m[aḥ-me-e]n / at-ta šar-ri at-ta ši-ra-at (Cohen 1988, 729; Gabbay 2014, 226 argues that, though similar in style to a balaḡ, this is probably an original Hellenistic composition, made up of quotes from earlier balaḡs).

127 The Eulmaš was the temple of Inanna/Ištar at Ulmaš in Agade, well-known from various

Lord of the Eanki, lord of the Egišḫurankia,¹²⁸ you are exalted
 You are king, you are exalted

The ritual text for the *akītu* festival also mentions the Enamenna (‘House of Lordship’, Anu’s shrine in the Bīt Rēš), the Grand Gate (ká.maḥ), a ceremonial gate through which Anu left and re-entered his temple during processions, and the *akītu* house outside the city gates.¹²⁹

1.3.2 *Building Initiatives by Local Officials*

In 244 BC, one Anu-uballit/Anu-ikṣur//Aḥ’ûtu, who possessed the additional Greek name Nikarchos and had been appointed *šaknu* (‘governor’) of Uruk, supervised the construction of an enormous temple complex of unbaked mud-bricks directly upon the archaic Old Terrace, where a sanctuary for Anu of unknown size already stood. Not much of those building phases of the Bīt Rēš remains today, because already in 201 BC the entire complex was replaced with a new temple of baked brick. Still, Nikarchos’ work is known to us in some detail from a clay cylinder with his own building inscription. The cylinder belongs to the Yale Babylonian Collection and was probably deposited in the Bīt

cultic and literary texts, and of Annunītum at Sippar-Annunītum (George 1993, nos. 1168–1169). A temple of the same name is mentioned in an undated, fragmentary Emesal prayer to Ištar (IV R² 19 no. 3; Maul 1988, 353: 7’–8’). According to George (ibid. no. 1170), the latter is identical to the sanctuary mentioned in the hymn under discussion and hence a “shrine of Anu and Ištar at Uruk”, but Maul asserts that the prayer refers to the temple of Inanna/Ištar at Agade. Still, a shrine named Eulmaš clearly existed at least at Late Babylonian Uruk, since it also appears—in broken context—at the beginning of the Seleucid ritual text for the *akītu* festival for Ištar (TU 42+ obv. 4’).

128 The Eanki and the Egišḫurankia also seem to be names of sanctuaries for Ištar. In a late Babylonian cultic calendar, a Bēlet-Eanki is mentioned directly after Ištar of Uruk and Ištar of Agade (BRM IV 25: 24) and an Eanki is listed as a temple for Ištar in the ‘Canonical Temple List’ (George 1993, 17: 378). The Egišḫurankia was the temple of Bēlet-Ninua (i.e. Ištar of Nineveh) at Aššur and Babylon, known from different Babylonian topographical texts, royal inscriptions of Esarhaddon and the aforementioned cultic calendar (George 1993, no. 409). Granted, the same name appears once in *Tintir* (II 18’) as a seat (without é) of Anu in the Ubšukkinnaku at Babylon; nonetheless, the evidence about the Eulmaš, the Eanki and the Egišḫurankia taken together leads to the conclusion that in the hymn to Anu, where they are addressed directly after the Irigal and the Eanna, they are all meant to refer to places of worship for Ištar, over which Anu had gained authority through his rise to supreme power at Uruk.

129 BRM IV 7: 1, 2, 24, 28, 40, 41 (Linssen 2004, 209–210). See § 5.2.1 for an extensive discussion of the sacred rooms and courtyards of the Bīt Rēš.

Rēš, although no information about its precise findspot has been recorded.¹³⁰ The inscription reads as follows:¹³¹

Month Nisannu, year 68 of the reign of Seleukos; Anu-uballiṭ, son of Anu-ikṣur, descendant of Aḥ'ūtu, governor of Uruk, to whom Antiochos, king of the lands, granted the second name Nikarchos, has built to completion the Bīt Rēš, the house of Anu and Antu; the Grand Gate, (which is) the large gate, the station of Papsukkal, the entrance to the Bīt Rēš; the Great Gate, the station of Nuska—two gates which open towards the northeast; the Gate of Plenty, which brings in the produce of the mountains; altogether three gates which open outward; seven courtyards surrounding the courtyard in which the Dais of Destinies is set; the enclosure wall of the Bīt Rēš, the workshops, the shrines of the great gods and their courtyards. He made doors of fragrant wood and installed them in their doorposts. He surrounded the temple with a battlement. He fashioned a golden bolt and a golden crown and placed them on the outside of the Grand Gate. He built it to completion for the lives of Antiochos and Seleukos, the kings. On day 8 of Nisannu, he led Anu and Antu inside and in the Enamenna, their sanctuary, he let them sit down upon their seats for all eternity. He established *ginû-* and *sattukku-*offerings within, just as it used to be.

The following major construction phase of the Bīt Rēš was supervised by another Urukian public official with a Greek secondary name: Anu-uballiṭ~Kephalon.¹³² He was also a member of the Aḥ'ūtu family, the head of the city administration (*rab ša rēš āli*) and overseer (*šatammu*) of the temples

130 YOS I 52; Falkenstein 1941, 4 note 7: “Die Inschrift ist gewiß bei Ausgrabungen im Anu-Bezirk gefunden worden.”

131 ¹ itⁱ bār mu.š.8.kám ¹ si-lu-ku lugal ^{1d} 60-din-īṭ dumu šá ^{1d} 60-ik-šur a ¹ šeš-‘u-ú-tú ² ^{1a} gar-nu šá unug^{ki} šá ¹ an-ti-i’-i-ku-su lugal kur.kur^{mes} ³ ¹ ni-ki-qa-ar-qu-su mu-šú ša-nu-ú iš-kun-nu ⁴ é re-eš é ^d 60 à an-tu₄ ká’.maḥ ká.gal man-za-za ^d pap.sukkal ⁵ né-re-bu é re-eš ká.gal man-za-za ^d Nuska ká né-re-bu ⁶ ‘₂ ká^{mes} šá a-na id-di ^{tu15} kur.ra bad-ú ⁷ ká.ḥé.en.gál.la ká mu-še-ri-ib¹ (text: i) ḥi-šib kur-i ⁸ pap ₃ ká^{mes} šá a-na ká-an-na bad-ú ⁷ é.tur₃^{mes} ⁹ id-di é.tur₃ šá bára.nam^{mes} ina lib-bi šub-ú¹⁰ é.bàd é re-eš é dul-lu^{mes} é pa-pa-ḥi^{mes} šá dingir^{mes} gal^{mes} ¹¹ ú é.tur₃^{mes} šú-nu dù-uš-ma ú-šak-lil ¹² gišⁱg^{mes} iš-ši i-ri-šú du₁₀.ga dù-uš-ma ina sip-pi^{mes} šú ú-ret-ti ¹³ ki-il-li-é nigin-mi ¹⁴ sik-kur kù.gi aga kù.gi dù-uš-ma ina ká.maḥ a-na ká-an-na gar-nu ¹⁵ a-na bul-ṭu šá ¹ an-ti-i’-i-ku-su ¹ si-lu-ku lugal^{mes} dù-uš-ma ú-šak-lil ¹⁶ itⁱ bār u₄.8.kám ^d a-nù à an-tu₄ ku₄-ma ¹⁷ ina é.nam.en.na é pa-pa-ḥi ina šub-ti-šú-nu ¹⁸ a-na da-ra-a-tú ú-šib-bi gi-nu-ú sat-tuk-ku ¹⁹ ki-ma maḥ-ri-ima ú-kinⁱⁿ-ni qé-reb-šú (Falkenstein 1941, 4–5; my tr.).

132 Following Monerie 2014, I write double names separated by a swung dash (~).

of Uruk.¹³³ His work on the Bīt Rēš, finished in 202 BC, is also recorded in a cuneiform building inscription of which three different versions of respectively thirteen, fifteen and eighteen lines are attested.¹³⁴ The inscriptions were stamped and in some cases inscribed on many of the bricks used for the walls of the Bīt Rēš. They were found in situ and in layers of debris in and around the temple complex. Unfortunately, the bad quality of the bricks makes the inscription difficult to decipher. The authoritative edition was made by Adam Falkenstein, with significant improvements later provided by Van Dijk; a new edition of the bricks is in preparation by Claus Ambos.¹³⁵ The longest variant of the inscription reads:¹³⁶

Anu-uballit, whose second name is Kephalon, son of Anu-balāssu-iqbi, head of the city administration of Uruk. The Enamenna (var.: the foundations of the Enamenna), sanctuary of Anu, and the Egašananna, the dwelling (var.: sanctuary) of Antu, (both) of the Bīt Rēš, which Oannès-Adapa once(?) built, I have now¹³⁷ (...) demolished. In the month

- 133 The title *rab ša rēš āli* has been interpreted by Joannès (1988) as a strictly temple-related office. Monerie (2012, 348) points out that the documentation from Seleucid Uruk makes a distinction between *rab ša rēš āli ša Uruk*, which was the function Kephalon fulfilled, and *rab ša rēš āli ša bīt ilāni*, to which it changed only between 168 and 155 BC. For Kephalon bearing the title *šatammu*, see Clancier/Monerie 2014, 236–237 (AO 6498: 2’); the latter is another indication that the function of *rab ša rēš āli ša Uruk* extended beyond temple-related duties.
- 134 Kose 1998, 170; see *ibid.* 423–539 for an overview of the bricks and brick fragments and their finding spots.
- 135 Falkenstein 1941, 6–7; Van Dijk 1962, 47; Ambos forthcoming.
- 136 My tr.; the following reconstruction combines the collated transcriptions by Ambos of bricks w.101.a-b, Ph.W.36(= w.27?) and w.471, which he generously shared with me (supplements and variations derived from bricks w.290, w.435, w.1361 and w.13185):¹¹ d60-din-*it šá šum-šú* ² *šá-nu-ú* ¹ *ki-ip-lu-[un-nu]* ³ a *šá* ^{1d}60-din-su-e ^{1u}gal ⁴ ^{1u}sag iri *šá unug^k[i é.nam.en.na]* (var.: *te-me-en é.nam.en.na*) ⁵ *pa-pa-ḥa* ^d60 ^u’ *é.[gašan].’d* ^{1’}60 (var.: *é.gašan.an.na / é.gašan.na*) [’] *é* (var.: *é pa-pa-ḥa*) [*šá*] ⁶ [*an-t*] ^u4 *šá* [*é.sag šá l’-na² maḥ²-ri²*] ⁷ ^{1u}4. ^d60 DA X X ME² E² *i-’pu¹-[uš]* ⁸ *en-na a-ga-a x x x-di-[la]-x* (var.: *l’-te²-ni-i²-ma*) ⁹ [*aq*]-*qur-ma ina* ^{1ti}NE.ZAG.GAR ^u4.2.k[am] ¹⁰ mu.1.me.10.kam *a-na* [’] *muḥ¹-ḥi* [*bul-tu šá*] ¹¹ *an-ti-i²-ku-su lugal* (var.: *lugal kur.kur*) *ina muḥ¹-ḥi* ¹² *te¹-me-en-na-šú-nu sumun* ^{meš}.*tu*4 *dagal* ¹³ *ù im.babbar.ra².meš.šú-nu* ^{AD²-du} ¹⁴ *dù-uš-ma x-x-ta-nu ú-šak-lil* ¹⁵ *giš²eren ta kurmaḥ²-x-x ša-du-ú* ¹⁶ *dan-nu giš²-am²-ma ú-šal-lil-šú-nu-tú* ¹⁷ *giš²ig².meš² giš²eren dan-nu-tú* [...] ¹⁸ x x (x) *tú* [...]
- 137 Reading *enna agâ* with AHW 219 as “jetzt gerade” and not “genau dieses”, as does Falkenstein 1941, 7. A temporal meaning fits the immediate context of the broken sentence. With “now”, i.e. the time in which he lives rather than any particular day, Kephalon emphasizes

Nisannu,¹³⁸ on day 2, in the 110th year, for the life of Antiochos the king (var.: king of all the lands), my(?) lord, I have expanded their ancient foundations and their gypsum (...). I have built to completion the (...). I have brought cedar logs from the mighty mountain Maḥ-(...) and built them a roof. Doors(?) of magnificent cedars (...).¹³⁹

Nikarchos and Kephalon took upon themselves the role traditionally fulfilled by the Babylonian king, i.e. to contribute to the maintenance of temple buildings and to commemorate those deeds in an inscription. Thereby they placed themselves in a long Mesopotamian tradition of governors who undertook renovation projects and composed building inscriptions for kings who were unable or unwilling to involve themselves personally.¹⁴⁰ Their choice of materials for the inscriptions also fit the traditional pattern: in Kephalon's case stamped bricks that were used in the construction of the temple itself, and in the case of Nikarchos a clay cylinder, probably also encased in the temple wall. The clay cylinder was the medium *par excellence* for first-millennium Babylonian royal inscriptions, but already in the early Neo-Babylonian period two cylinders were produced with building inscriptions by private individuals.¹⁴¹

Nikarchos' cylinder was the last of its kind. Its only precedents after 539 BC are the Cyrus Cylinder from Babylon and the cylinder of Antiochos I from Borsippa, both assertions of royal authority in a local style by the (co-)creator of a new empire. By contrast, neither Antiochos II (261–246 BC), nor Seleukos II (246–225 BC), nor Antiochos III (223–187 BC) assumed direct responsibility for the building projects at Uruk by means of an inscription, although they are still noticeably present in the inscriptions composed by the two governors. In

the distance between the ancient times in which the mythical Oannès founded the Bit Rēš and his own day in which he undertook the renovation of that building. That connection establishes him as Oannès' heir as *Bauherr* (see § 2.3.4.1).

- 138 The scribe has mistakenly rendered the month name as ^{iti}NE.ZAG.GAR, with which he could either have meant ^{iti}bár.zag.gar, Nisannu (month I), or ^{iti}ne.ne.gar, Abu (month V). Nisannu is more likely, since as the first month of the year and thus the occasion of the spring *akitu* festival, it was the most fortuitous time to consecrate a new temple building and introduce its divine inhabitants into it (cf. the Nikarchos inscription cited above). The month Abu, on the other hand, was associated with drought and death.
- 139 Falkenstein reconstructs lines 17–18 as ¹⁷gišig^{meš} gišeren *dan-nu-tú ina ká šá pa-pa-ḥi-šú-nu* ¹⁸ú-re-et-ti, "I installed doors of magnificent cedars in the gates to their sanctuaries".
- 140 Cf. Schaudig 2010, 142–143 (first-millennium Babylonia); Blocher 2001, 301–304 (Neo-Assyrian period); Fitzgerald 2010, 45–47 (Old Babylonian period).
- 141 Frame 1995, nos. B.6.14.2001 and B.6.15.2001.

both cases the temple was dedicated to the kings' lives and well-being. Moreover, Nikarchos and Kephalon both had a Greek as well as a Babylonian name, and Nikarchos claims that his Greek name was granted to him by the king—probably Antiochos II—himself. That points to close communication between him and the Seleucid court, rather than utter disinterest on the part of the rulers, but also to a remarkable degree of autonomy in the role of city- or temple administrator during this period.¹⁴²

The ambiguous message conveyed by the inscriptions of Nikarchos and Kephalon raises the question of the political factors that played a role in the two last renovation phases of the Bīt Rēš, and in particular of the extent of Seleucid involvement in the temple organisation of Hellenistic Uruk. Those subjects are still heavily debated by Assyriologists and ancient historians, especially because there is very little evidence to support any theory. The sociopolitical relations at Uruk are not the main subject of the present study, but since the Anu cult was part of that larger historical whole, it will be useful to briefly consider the issues involved.

1.3.3 *Seleucid Religious Patronage in Babylonia*

The Seleucid empire was, like most large empires, in its core a military organisation which controlled strategic geographic points like trade routes, offered protection to vassal kings and exacted tribute in return. Since the royal household was always on campaign with the army, there was no single capital or centrally located administration. The kings held court wherever they arrived and ruled indirectly through elaborate networks of friendship and kinship with local governors and elite families. Further, they established a system of city patronage by paying personal visits to regional cult centres, participating in religious festivals during those visits, and providing financial support for cultic activities and temple renovation projects.¹⁴³

One of the cities that seems to have received such attention was Babylon. As crown prince, Antiochos I (co-ruler 291–281, king 281–261 BC) ceremoniously entered the old Babylonian capital and brought offerings to Šin;¹⁴⁴ on another occasion, he cleared away the debris of the Esagil and brought a Babylonian offering and an “offering in Greek style” on its ruins.¹⁴⁵ As king, he renovated both the Esagil and the Ezida, the temple of Marduk's son Nabû at Borsippa.

142 However, as Clancier and Monerie point out, the Seleucids did maintain a close control over local tax payment (2014, 190–191, 210); see also below.

143 Strootman 2011, 68–71.

144 'Antiochos and Šin Chronicle' (BCHP 5) obv. 6–13.

145 'Ruin of Esagila Chronicle' (BCHP 6) obv. 4'–8'.

That feat was commemorated in the form of a traditional building inscription in Babylonian language and script, the so-called Antiochos or Borsippa Cylinder (see below).¹⁴⁶ Further, king Seleukos III (225–223 BC) ordered offerings to be brought in his absence on the occasion of the great *akītu* festival at Babylon,¹⁴⁷ while Antiochos III participated in the festival himself upon his return from Bactria and later brought offerings in the temples of Babylon and Borsippa, just months before his death.¹⁴⁸

Until the late 1980s, the abovementioned evidence, and in particular the Borsippa Cylinder, have been interpreted as examples of how the Seleucids adopted local traditions in order to conform to ancient West Asian kingship ideology, in which temple building and the maintenance of local cults had always played an essential role.¹⁴⁹ More recently, scholars have proposed that it was not merely a strategy of adaptation, but also of careful incorporation of existing cultural patterns into a unique Seleucid ideological framework. The religious patronage of the Seleucid kings seems to have focused specifically on local gods and goddesses who they could equate with their own dynastic deities Zeus, his daughter Artemis, and especially his son Apollo, who was associated with the reigning king.

In a number of recently published articles on the subject, the argument is put forward that the Borsippa Cylinder subtly hints at the identification of Nabû with Apollo and that it is therefore a product of cultural entanglement and negotiation between imperial and local authorities, rather than an example of unaltered continuity of ancient Babylonian traditions.¹⁵⁰ The issue is further complicated by the lack of evidence regarding the dissemination and intended audience of the Cylinder's content;¹⁵¹ also, since Antiochos I grew up in Babylonia and the Cylinder is a unique document, his religious policy should

146 Kuhrt/Sherwin-White 1991.

147 'Seleucus III Chronicle' (BCHP 12) obv. 3'–8'.

148 AD -204; -187 rev. 7'–13', 17'–18'.

149 Kuhrt/Sherwin-White 1991, 85–86.

150 The text makes repeated use of the Sumerogram *ibila*, indicating the Babylonian word *aplu*, 'son/heir'; in the Late Babylonian dialect, it will have been pronounced as *apal*, which arguably evokes Apollo both in sound and meaning (Teixidor 1990, 72–73; Dirven 1999, 128–146; Erickson 2011; Strootman 2013, 87–90; Beaulieu 2014; Stevens 2014; Kosmin 2014).

151 Clancier/Monerie 2014, 193–195. Although many Assyrian and Babylonian royal building inscriptions contain political messages about contemporary situations and have evidently been composed in different versions for different cities (cf. e.g. Porter 1993, 95–117), most Assyriologists remain sceptical that they were intended for any other place than the temple foundations and for any other audience than future kings and the gods.

not be regarded as representative for a general Seleucid attitude towards local cults. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the Seleucids' imperial ideology was a blend of traditional values from different cultural backgrounds and their own newly developed identity markers, rather than a faithful adoption of the language and symbols of the various peoples with whom they interacted.¹⁵² As we shall see below, a hybrid identity also became characteristic of the local elites who interacted with the Seleucid court.

In the case of Uruk, there are no sources that can positively confirm that any Seleucid king extended his religious patronage to the cults of Anu, Antu, Ištar, or Nanāya.¹⁵³ Still, most scholars believe that the massive building projects undertaken at Hellenistic Uruk, i.e. the extensive renovation of the Bīt Rēš, the Anu ziqqurrat, the Irigal, possibly also the *akītu* houses and the restructuring of the Eanna ziqqurrat (see below) could not have been achieved without some form of financial support by the Seleucid court.¹⁵⁴ Three arguments are generally put forward to support that hypothesis. Firstly, it must have been an extremely costly undertaking, for which even the prosperity of Uruk during that period may not have been sufficient. However, in his recent study of the economy of Hellenistic Babylonia, Julien Monerie argues on the basis of the low sale prices of prebends in mid- and late third century Uruk that prebend owners did indeed provide the primary funding for the building projects, just as they had been obligated to do during the Neo-Babylonian period.¹⁵⁵ Especially in the case of Kephalon's renovations, the steep drop in prebend prices during that time suggests a heavy financial burden for the priestly community and little support from outside.

Secondly, as described earlier, several Seleucid kings rebuilt temples and participated in the offering rites and festivals of Babylon and Borsippa; in other parts of the empire they also actively supported local cults.¹⁵⁶ Unfortunately,

152 Strootman 2013.

153 One interesting exception is the repeated claim in one of the ritual texts for the spring *akītu* festival, KAR 132, that the towboat in which several deities are transported is a "gift of the king" (1 obv. 6, 16, 24; Linssen 2004, 201). It remains unclear at present whether that phrase was copied from a Neo-Babylonian text and thus reflects a gift of the Neo-Babylonian king to the Eanna, or expresses wishful thinking on the part of the Hellenistic scribe, or actually refers to a donation of a boat by a Seleucid ruler to the Bīt Rēš.

154 Kuhrt/Sherwin-White 1991, 85; Kuhrt/Sherwin-White 1993, 154–155 (drawing a parallel with British imperial involvement in the temples and cults of India); Downey 1988, 45; Oelsner 2007b, nr. 16; Lenzi 2008, 158; Monerie 2012, 331; Baker 2013, 56–57.

155 Monerie 2013, 419–427.

156 Strootman 2007, 289–298, 305–314.

there is only a handful of attestations of such religious patronage in Babylonia, which means that they can be interpreted in two opposite ways: as exemplary of a regular, continuous pattern, or rather as exceptional activities to balance politically precarious situations.¹⁵⁷ As at Uruk, there is ample evidence of private persons at Babylon making donations for clearing away the debris of the Esagil, renovating the temple, and maintaining the cult.¹⁵⁸

Finally, it is sometimes suggested that Anu was equated with Zeus.¹⁵⁹ The authors who make that suggestion do not clarify whether they mean that the Seleucids made such an equation themselves and thus had a reason to invest in the cultic changes at Uruk, or that the Urukean priest-scholars convinced their new kings of the similarity between the two gods in the hope of receiving funds for the temple renovations, or even that they genuinely believed that Anu and Zeus were the same. As discussed earlier, the growing devotion to Anu at Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian period was first and foremost an expression of local pride and independence in response to the imposed Marduk cult, which the Neo-Babylonian kings used as a political control strategy. The notion of a specifically Urukean identity, connected to the millennia-old cult of a local god, remained essential and was further elaborated in the Hellenistic period.¹⁶⁰ At the same time, however, the priests of Uruk will certainly not have been blind to the universal appeal of a god who ruled the entirety of the heavens.¹⁶¹ That quality made him comparable with the divine overlord of their previous imperial rulers, Ahura Mazda, who seems to have been viewed as a sky god by the empire's non-Persian subjects.¹⁶² If Anu was on a par with Ahura Mazda and Zeus as allfather and lord of the heavens, Uruk's cosmological importance—from their own point of view—within the broadly expanded boundaries of first the Achaemenid and then the Seleucid empire would greatly increase. That universalistic ambition is clearly expressed in the final lines of the 'Uruk Prophecy', which places Uruk at the centre of a new world order as the seat of an imperial dynasty faithful to Anu and his cult.¹⁶³

Nonetheless, we simply lack any evidence that the temple administration of Hellenistic Uruk made the conscious effort of suggesting the identification of

157 Cooper 2008, 104–105; Baker 2013, 56–57.

158 CT 49, 5–6; Stolper 1993, 68–70; Jursa 1997 no. 51; Boiy 2004, 110–111 (reign of Alexander the Great); AD -321 B rev. 14'; -273 rev. 34'–38'; -181 C rev. 11–12; *passim* in -105; -103 A 13'.

159 E.g. McEwan 1981, 187–188 (with some reservations); Robson 2011, 561; ead. 2013, 51.

160 See Chapter 2.

161 Berlejung 2009, 86; see also § 1.3.8.1.

162 Kuhrt 1987, 151; Frahm 2002, 101–104.

163 Frahm *ibid.* 103; see for the 'Uruk Prophecy' § 2.3.4.3.

Anu with Zeus to the imperial authorities, similarly to the scribes of the Bor-sippa Cylinder. As for the Seleucids themselves, even if Antiochos I was indeed inspired to rebuild the Esagil and Ezida because he equated Nabû with Apollo, he must have been at least as motivated by his efforts to consolidate the empire through friendly diplomatic relations with the cities in its economic heartland. His successors Seleukos II and Antiochos III, under whose reigns the temples of Uruk were transformed into impressive monumental structures, were busier fighting wars than building temples.¹⁶⁴ Only when Antiochos III returned from Bactria in 204 BC and celebrated the spring *akītu* festival in Babylon, he brought back with him an enormous amount of war booty and tribute. Some of those treasures may have been invested in Kephalon's renewal of the temples of Uruk, but that remains speculation.

1.3.4 *Local Representatives of the King at Uruk*

Even if the sources remain silent regarding the extent of the Seleucids' involvement in the renewal of the Bit Rēš and the Irigal, the evidence does allow us to reconstruct the relationship between the Seleucid court and the Urukean leading families.¹⁶⁵ The clearest source is Anu-uballit~Nikarchos' proud claim that his Greek name was given to him by king Antiochos II, which at least shows that he considered himself to be on very good terms with the royal household. That relationship is confirmed by his function as *šaknu* ('governor'), which made him a direct intermediary between the king and the people of Uruk. Although the exact meaning of *šaknu* in the Hellenistic period is not well understood, Nikarchos' role as royal delegate apparently involved rebuilding the Bit Rēš and the Irigal in the king's absence. In fact, temple organisation may well have been his sole realm of responsibility. We have no records of the administration and governance of the rest of the city, since they were written in Aramaic and/or Greek on leather scrolls and have not survived. Thus, the extent of power of the local officials who we encounter in the cuneiform sources remains unclear.¹⁶⁶ Still, it is certain that they were not completely left to their own devices; the Seleucids directly monitored the taxation of various commodity sales, which

164 The rebuilding of the Bit Rēš under Nikarchos in 244 BC took place during the Third Syrian War between Seleukos II and Ptolemy III. It is even possible that the project had originally been initiated or at least supported by Antiochos II, with whom Nikarchos had had such pleasant personal contact, but that Antiochos' death and the outbreak of the war had interrupted that support and had possibly even delayed the finishing of the building project.

165 See recently on this topic Boiy/Mittag 2011; Monerie 2012; Clancier/Monerie 2014, 204–210.

166 Monerie 2012, 338–339.

were to be registered with the local *chreophylax*.¹⁶⁷ The latter seated in the *bīt šarri* or *basilikon*, a Seleucid fiscal institution which also employed a *dioiketes* and which at Uruk housed an archive for legal documents written in Greek on leather.¹⁶⁸

Under Antiochos III, the wealthy Aḥ'ûtu family was able to seize control over the most important offices in the Urukean temple organisation, which may have granted them power in other sectors of the city administration as well. For several generations, they kept those offices within the family, thus establishing a local oligarchy with dynastic traits. The oldest member of that family, who is attested in two documents from 221 BC, is Anu-balāssu-iqbi//Aḥ'ûtu.¹⁶⁹ As we have seen earlier, he was also a scholar and scribal tutor to an apprentice from the Ekur-zākir family. Instead of *šaknu*, he possessed the two titles *rab ša reš āli ša Uruk* ('head of the temple administration of Uruk') and *paqdu ša bīt ilāni* ('temple deputy'). He passed on those two offices to his sons Anu-uballiṭ~Kephalon and Anu-bēlšunu, who, together with the temple bookkeeper (*ganzabarru ša bīt ilāni*) and unofficially also their brother Timokrates, recreated the type of 'triumvirate' that had been in charge of the temples in the Neo-Babylonian period.¹⁷⁰ Their duties, as can be deduced from legal documents, were to maintain and renovate the temples, safeguard the correct performance of cultic duties, and appoint fields and unbuilt house plots in the temples' possession to their employees and dependent workers. Kephalon took the first of those tasks upon himself, which resulted in the transformation of the Bīt Rēš and the Irigal into their most monumental form.¹⁷¹

Apart from the building inscription describing his work on the Bīt Rēš, Kephalon decorated the new cella of Ištār in the Irigal with a row of glazed bricks that bore the Aramaic inscription "Anu-uballiṭ, whose second name is Kephalon" twice on each brick. The row ran along the wall of the cult niche of the Ištār cella, behind the postament on which the divine statue stood.¹⁷²

167 Ibid. 329–330 with further literature.

168 Kose 2013a, 325–326.

169 Although he and Anu-uballiṭ~Nikarchos were both members of the Aḥ'ûtu family, it has thus far not been possible to determine their kinship more precisely.

170 Monerie 2012, 334–335.

171 See Kose 2013b, 335 figs. 59.3 and 59.4. The sons of Kephalon and Anu-bēlšunu, Anu-balāssu-iqbi~Diophantos and Anu-uballiṭ, again inherited their father's functions. Under Antiochos IV, the Aḥ'ûtu's lost their influence to the Ḥunzû's and finally local government at Uruk became more restricted altogether (Monerie 2012, 333–339, 346–348; Clancier/Monerie 2014, 220–223).

172 Kose 1998, 226 and Tf. 113.

It was quite a remarkable act of self-confidence to decorate not just the Ištar sanctuary, but the very cult niche of the goddess with nothing but his own name—no mention of the king or even the briefest dedication to Ištar herself. Moreover, it was the first time that an inscription was made in such a sacred location, inaccessible to all but the highest members of the priesthood.¹⁷³ Like Anu-uballiṭ–Nikarchos before him, who wrote his building inscription on a clay cylinder in the traditional style of first-millennium kings of Babylonia, Kephalon seems to have considered himself not merely as a representative, but even as a surrogate for the Greek overlords on a local scale.

The inscription also clearly demonstrates the complexity of Kephalon's ethnicity and self-representation. It offered the reader his traditional Babylonian name and the one he probably used when moving in the circles of the royal court,¹⁷⁴ but it was written in the language that he—and all the inhabitants of Uruk—spoke in everyday life.¹⁷⁵ He and Nikarchos belonged to those members of the provincial elite who adopted a double or even triple identity to express their loyalty to the crown and mark their distinction from the local community. When they were in contact with the Seleucid authorities, they made sure to adopt an attitude of respect and subordination, but in their own cities they could pose as local rulers.¹⁷⁶

The last document dealing with Kephalon's work as *Bauherr* is a cuneiform inscription in which he asks Šamaš, Adad, Zababa, and Sadarnunna to reveal their opinion regarding the creation of the Ištar statue through the behaviour of a bird.¹⁷⁷ In line 5–6, he refers to himself as “Anu-uballiṭ, whose second name is Kephalon and whom the people call [x]-pitu”. If, as is likely, that last name was Aramaic, we find here another clear indication that Kephalon moved between

173 Kose 2013a, 327.

174 Unlike Nikarchos, Kephalon had not received his Greek name from the king, but had probably either been given it at birth, or selected it himself. In either case, it is certainly not a coincidence that Kephalon (Κεφάλων), derived from the Greek word for ‘head’ (κεφαλή), has the same meaning as Rēš, the name of Uruk's main temple. He is chronologically the first of nine attested Urukean individuals bearing the name Kephalon, of whom those with attested clan affiliation were all members of the Alḫ'ūtu family (Monerie 2014, 146–148).

175 Monerie 2012, 342; see for questions of ethnicity in Hellenistic Babylonia also Van der Spek 2009.

176 Strootman 2011, 66; Baker 2013, 52–56. Baker proposes that Nikarchos and Kephalon were among the persons buried in the prestigious Macedonian style burial mounds excavated just to the north of Uruk, dated to the mid-third century; Kose (1998, 21–22) also suspects that the occupants of the graves were local Urukeans rather than people of Macedonian descent.

177 McEwan 1980, 65–66.

three different cultural spheres. In other words, he was “a trilingual individual who spoke Akkadian (and even Sumerian) to his gods and his colleagues, Aramaic to his children and Greek to his tax collector”.¹⁷⁸ Kephalon will also have spoken Greek to his in-laws, since he had married a woman called Antiochis, daughter of Diophantos, a Seleucid official or Greek merchant living in the neighbourhood. Diophantos was probably an affluent man himself, as is suggested by a purchase of part of a prebend by Kephalon’s son Anu-balāssu-iqbi—Diophantos for twenty to thirty times the amount usually encountered in prebend sale deeds from that period.¹⁷⁹

Perhaps the combined assets of Diophantos and the Aḥ’ūtu’s were enough or nearly enough to finance the rebuilding of the temples and ziqurrats of Uruk. In fact, although Kephalon dedicated his reconstruction of the Bīt Rēš to the life of Antiochos III, probably acquired the king’s approval and may have persuaded him to contribute some of his war spoils to the project, his building activities at Uruk primarily appear to be a classic example of euergetism—a wealthy citizen and powerful politician asserting his social status and prestige by generously donating to a public cause.¹⁸⁰ His inscriptions in the Irigal were not deposited to be found by later generations, but so conspicuously placed that the temple enterers of the Iṣtar sanctuary were always reminded of the names of their benefactor: a Greek name, which demonstrated that his political influence extended to the level of the royal court, and a Babylonian name, which showed that he was still one of their own. He even added a frieze with a Greek inscription along the top of the sanctuary wall and the two central gates of the Bīt Rēš, an otherwise traditionally Babylonian building (see below).

In that context, finally, we may reconsider Kephalon’s choice for bird divination to learn the will of the gods regarding the Iṣtar statue. As a less popular form of divination, ornithomancy is attested in Mesopotamia from the early second millennium onwards. Thus, Gilbert McEwan interprets Kephalon’s use of it as a conscious choice for a venerable Babylonian tradition, even as an act of resistance against “foreign influence”.¹⁸¹ However, ornithomancy was a popular method for predicting the future in ancient Greece, probably more so than

178 Westenholz 2007, 293, paraphrasing Geller 1997, 45.

179 BRM II 55; Monerie 2012, 340–341. For Kephalon’s family tree, which includes many other Greek names, see Doty 1988, 100, to which Anu-balāssu-iqbi should be added as the Babylonian name of Diophantos junior (cf. Corò 2012, 157: 3).

180 In the Hellenistic Greek cities, euergetism was an essential factor in the local economy and benefactors were publicly praised and honoured for their generosity (Billows 2003, 211–213).

181 McEwan 1980, 69.

it had ever been in Mesopotamia.¹⁸² Furthermore, if it had been Kephalon's intention to resort to a typically Babylonian form of divination, he would have chosen astrology, for which Uruk was a centre of expertise and which was regarded in the Greco-Roman world as a Babylonian invention.¹⁸³ Instead, we may surmise that releasing a bird to divine the proper features of Ištar was another strategy of Kephalon to integrate the different cultural aspects of his life at Uruk and his role as chief temple administrator of an ancient city in the heartland of the Seleucid empire.

1.3.5 *The Construction and Renovation of the City's Temples*

Now that we have considered the political background of the building projects undertaken in the third century BC, we can look more closely at the archaeological evidence for the main temples of Uruk in the Hellenistic period and the renovation work undertaken by Anu-uballit~Nikarchos and Anu-uballit~Kephalon. Since the text of TU 41 includes references to many gates, courtyards and other features of the Bīt Rēš, it is especially important to understand the temple layout during its different building phases, both for the reconstruction of the processional movements during the ceremony and for the dating of the tablet.

1.3.5.1 The Bīt Rēš

The temple complex of Nikarchos (construction phase 2ε) was in essence traditionally Babylonian in lay-out and decoration style, even though it was remarkably large: 210×162 meters, nearly five times as large as the Esagil in Babylon. Nikarchos began by surrounding the area with a wall which incorporated the Schiefer Trakt, Südhof 1X, Hof XI11 and XIV and the existing shrines in or adjacent to those courtyards. The thus enclosed space covered most of the Old Terrace, but left out a strip of land to the northwest and the southeast and extended beyond the Terrace in the northeastern direction.¹⁸⁴ Nikarchos replaced the Anu-Antu-sanctuary with a much larger one, so that nothing remained of Hof XIV except a passageway (Hofgang 117) leading around the back and the northwestern side of the sanctuary to the front gate. Between Hof XIV, the Schiefer Trakt and the new northwestern wall, he created four

182 In the Hellenistic period, copies of Hesiod's *Works and Days* circulated together with the poetic divination treatise *Ornithomanteia* (Johnston 2008, 7 and 128–130). At the Neo-Assyrian court, on the other hand, expert 'bird watchers' (*dāgīl iššūri*) had to be imported from Northern Syria and Anatolia (Radner 2009, 226–227).

183 Rochberg 2010, 143–144.

184 See Kose 1998, 95 fig. 33 and id. 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2.

large new courtyards (Nordhof II, Hof V, Mittelhof VI and Westhof VIII). Those courtyards were surrounded predominantly by sanctuaries, both single cellae and shrines with a cella, a corridor and an antecella, as well as several archival rooms where clay tablets were stored together with parchment rolls (29a–d, 25–26, 55, 82, 89). An immense courtyard in the middle of the entire complex, Mittelhof VI, connected that new northwestern flank of the building with the southeastern corner, the Schiefer Trakt and the new Anu-Antu-sanctuary.¹⁸⁵ Osthof XI in the Schiefer Trakt remained a courtyard with a cultic function, but Hof III and Südhof IX and the rooms surrounding them were transformed into workshops.

Finally, Nikarchos created the three gates he mentions in his inscription: one in the northwestern wall, a large gate on the northern side of the northeastern wall, and another one on the southern side of that wall. In addition, a passageway (later reduced to Torgasse 79b) was made in the southeastern wall, which Kephalon would later transform into a monumental fourth gate. The two gates on the eastern side of the temple complex are traditionally interpreted as Nikarchos' Grand Gate (ká.maḥ, with the station of Papsukkal in rooms 23–24) and Great Gate (ká.gal, with the station of Nuska in room 39), from which it would follow that the northwestern gate was the third one mentioned by Nikarchos, the Gate of Plenty (ká.ḥe.en.gal.la). An older, fifth gate already existed between the two gates in the northeastern wall, which led to Hof III and IV in the Schiefer Trakt. None of the gates was particularly monumental in style.¹⁸⁶

In a recent study on the cultic topography and spacial organisation of the Bīt Rēš, Heather Baker proposes to identify the southeastern passageway as the Gate of Plenty, despite its having been of modest proportions after the Nikarchos building phase, because the description “which brings in the produce of the mountains” is better suited for a gate on the eastern side of the building.¹⁸⁷ However, that would mean—as Baker acknowledges—that Nikarchos does not mention the significantly larger northwestern gate in his inscription at all. Baker identifies the latter as the Main Gate (ká.sag), which is known from

185 For the current debate on where to locate the Grand Courtyard, the Ubšukinnaku, the Dais of Destinies and other features of the Bīt Rēš which are mentioned in the text sources, see § 5.2.1.

186 Kose 1998, 144–149.

187 Baker 2013, 22. Indeed the mountains were always in the east in the southern Babylonian perspective, but the phrase need not be interpreted so literally. There may have been practical reasons to deliver large quantities of produce via the northwestern gate, which was not connected to a city quarter, but to lower-lying farmland and an old main canal (Kose 2013b, 336). “From the mountains” may simply mean “from distant regions”.

the ritual text describing the nocturnal ceremony.¹⁸⁸ Finally, she points out on the basis of recent archaeological finds that Nuska's shrine at the Great Gate cannot have been room 39, which was not directly accessible from the gate, but rather room 118, which lay to the right of the gateway, like the shrines at the other major gates of the *Bit Rēš* and *Irigal*.¹⁸⁹

Kephalon's version of the *Bit Rēš*, the one which has remained until today, is reminiscent of the *Esagil* at Babylon, which has led several scholars to conclude that it was modelled on the latter.¹⁹⁰ Kephalon completely replaced the *Anu-Antu-sanctuary* of *Nikarchos* with a new building of baked bricks.¹⁹¹ It was larger than *Nikarchos*' version and blocked the passageway between *Mittelhof VI* and *Hofgang 117*, which could now only be accessed via *Hof XIII* and the *Pure Gate* (*ká.sikil.la*) behind the *Anu* cella (room 12).¹⁹² Although there is evidence that *Antu* had already possessed her own cella in an earlier version of the sanctuary (see above), it is likely that her dwelling place was now expanded into a complete shrine with cella, corridor, antecella, a side room accessible via the antecella and a private courtyard (rooms 16–17–18 and *Hof 1a*). Kephalon's inscription is the first source which provides its name, *Egašananna* ('House of the Lady of Heaven'); older sources all refer to the *Enamenna* as the sanctuary of both *Anu* and *Antu*. Kephalon probably also added *Antu*'s bedroom, the *Enukusi* ('House of the Golden Bed'), which according to *Falkenstein* was either side room 18 or possibly room 15 between the cellae of *Anu* and *Antu*.¹⁹³ He applied a decorative frieze of glazed tiles along the top of the sanctuary's wall, directly underneath the roof gutter.¹⁹⁴ As mentioned before, such a frieze is not typical for Babylonian architecture and more reminiscent of Dorian and Ionian temples. Yet the motifs depicted on the tiles were traditionally Babylonian: lions, lion-griffins, seven-pointed stars and rosettes.¹⁹⁵ The frieze tiles along the southwestern façade of the building also bore a Greek building- or votive inscription, albeit in such small letters that it was not readable for someone standing underneath.¹⁹⁶ Further, Kephalon rebuilt the *Gate of Plenty* and the *Great Gate* in a more monumental style and replaced the southeastern

188 TU 41 rev. 12.

189 Baker 2013, 23.

190 See § 2.3.1.

191 See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2.

192 TU 41 obv. 34; see § 5.5.7.

193 *Falkenstein* 1941, 26.

194 See Kose 2013b, 335 fig. 59.4.

195 Kose 1998, 162–169.

196 Kose 2013b, 337 and fig. 59.8.

passageway with the massive new Main Gate, adding the same frieze to the latter two with which he had decorated the Anu-Antu-sanctuary.¹⁹⁷ Finally, he newly paved *Mittelhof* VI and placed fourteen postaments—for divine statues?—in the western corner of the courtyard.¹⁹⁸

1.3.5.2 The Anu Ziqqurrat

Since the late fourth millennium, the district at Uruk named Kullaba had possessed a terrace with a temple at the top, dubbed ‘the White Temple’ by its excavators. No positive evidence exists that it was dedicated to An, but it is very likely, because the worship of An at Uruk is attested as early as the Uruk IV period and the district of Kullaba is consistently referred to in Sumerian literature as the dwelling place of An.¹⁹⁹ The White Temple formed a visual contrast with Inanna’s temple, the Eanna, which was built on the ground level and expanded horizontally. Centuries later, during the reign of Ur-Namma in the early Ur III period, a ziqqurrat was built beside the Eanna as well. Both ziqqurrats were probably no more than two storeys high.²⁰⁰

With the decline of Uruk that set in after the fall of the Ur III dynasty, the Kullaba terrace deteriorated and was not reconstructed again until almost a millennium and a half later. Esarhaddon used the conical stump of the old ziqqurrat as the core of a new one and built a new mudbrick mantle around it. During the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, when the Eanna formed the centre of the Urukean city cult and Anu was only worshipped as a minor deity, his ziqqurrat was allowed to crumble again. Finally, in the Seleucid period,²⁰¹ it was rebuilt once more as the temple tower and high shrine (*bára.mah*) accompanying the *Bit Rēš*.²⁰² The Hellenistic builders used bad quality bricks and sloppy build-

197 See Figure 3.

198 Kose 1998, 173–176.

199 Beaulieu 2003, 103–115.

200 Kose 1998, 140. The first stepped ziqqurrats were built in the Ur III period and were only two levels high. Ziqqurrats with four levels and more did not develop until the Middle Babylonian period. The first ziqqurrat that may have had a total of seven storeys is that of Sargon II in *Dur Šarrukīn*, later followed by those in Babylon and Borsippa as they were rebuilt by Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II.

201 Kose 1998, 135 argues that, although formally the last building phase of the ziqqurrat can’t be dated more precisely than between 680 B.C. (the accession year of Esarhaddon) and 244 B.C. (the final year of the building project of Anu-uballit–Nikarchos), it is likely that the construction took place in the early Seleucid period, since its northwest façade cuts through an already existing water canal made of bricks bearing the typical Seleucid triangle stamp.

202 See for a discussion of the high shrine and its possible layout and function § 5.4.1.

ing methods and nothing of the structure survives today except for the base level, which with its approximately 105 m² makes it the largest Mesopotamian ziqqurrat in terms of length and breadth. The original height of that platform, however, is estimated at no more than 10 meters, whereas that of Marduk's Etemenanki in Babylon was more than 30 meters high; further, the ziqqurrat as a whole cannot have possessed as many stories as the ones that were built in the Neo-Babylonian period.²⁰³

1.3.5.3 The Irigal

The new temple for Iṣtar and Nanāya, the Irigal, also acquired its final, most monumental shape and size under the supervision of Anu-uballiṭ-Kephalon. Measuring 198 × 205 meters, it was even larger than the Bīt Rēš. Because of its sheer size, the debris mound of more than 10 meters high which covers it and the relatively small amount of excavation work performed on it, its construction history is even more difficult to determine than that of the Bīt Rēš. Also, again only the temple complex built by Kephalon and later Parthian additions have survived until today.

A *terminus ante quem* for the existence of the name Irigal can be deduced from the occurrence of the personal name Ina-Irigal-ramat in a legal document from 301/300 BC (SE 11).²⁰⁴ Furthermore, it has been established that the Kephalon building phase was preceded by at least two phases, the earliest of which rests upon layers of debris containing earthenware and terracotta objects dated to the Neo- to Late Babylonian period. Thus, construction work on the Irigal probably did not begin until the Achaemenid period.²⁰⁵ The evidence that Kephalon was responsible for the largest version of the Irigal is provided by the two sources discussed earlier: the row of glazed bricks with his name written in Aramaic which ran along the wall of the Iṣtar cella, and the cuneiform tablet with his request for a divine message regarding the creation of the Iṣtar statue. Pieces of a life-size wooden statue have indeed been found inside the main cella.²⁰⁶ Its postament in the main cella was built directly on top of the previous one, even though Kephalon's temple lay 6,10 m. above its predecessor.²⁰⁷

The Irigal was built directly across from the Anu ziqqurrat. Its northwestern façade ran parallel to the ziqqurrat's southeastern façade at a distance of

203 Kose 2013b, 333.

204 OECT 9 2 obv. 2, 13, rev. 3.

205 Ibid. 214–215.

206 Ibid. 227–228.

207 Kose 2013a, 327.

61–62 meters, and its northwestern main entrance lay on the same axis as the temple tower's central staircase.²⁰⁸ The area where it was built was probably already hallowed ground, considering the antiquity of the Ištar cult which was being moved there and the general Mesopotamian tradition of building new or reconstructed sanctuaries directly on top of older ones, which would ensure that the site was already sacred and had not been tainted by secular use.²⁰⁹ Kephalon's Irigal was very similar in lay-out to his version of the Bit Rēš, except that the main courtyard was divided in two by an additional wall, the inner sanctum had four shrines instead of two and the overall number of courtyards was smaller. As we learn from one of the ritual texts, the sanctuary of Nanāya was called Eḫilianna, 'Heavenly Pleasure House', and her bed chamber Eḫilikuga, 'Pure (or: Bright) Pleasure House'.²¹⁰ The inner sanctuary was decorated with glazed blue bricks and adorned with the same frieze as the Anu-Antu-sanctuary.²¹¹

1.3.5.4 The *akītu* House

Half a kilometer outside the city walls of Uruk lay an architecturally eclectic building of 140 square meters, whose function was at least partly a religious one.²¹² It contained several shrines, including one with offering hearths and material remains of offerings, and its outer walls were decorated with niches, as is typical for Babylonian sacred structures. Because of those features and its location outside the city walls but close to the Royal Canal, it has been tentatively identified as an *akītu* house, the building to which a major Mesopotamian deity travelled with his/her retinue during an *akītu* festival and from which s/he returned several days later in a festive procession.²¹³ If that identification is correct, it is the only Babylonian building of that type of which the remains have been discovered, and it is not similar in layout to the one at Aššur.²¹⁴

The building's primary excavation was conducted by Heinrich Lenzen and Adam Falkenstein during the 1954–1955 campaigns of the DAI.²¹⁵ It consists of

208 Kose 1998, 197–198.

209 Falkenstein 1941, 34–35. The Bit Rēš was built on the remains of the Old Terrace for the same reasons (see § 2.3.1).

210 TU 39 obv. 4 (Linssen 2004, 184).

211 Kose 1998, 227–228.

212 Ibid. 277–289.

213 Ibid. 286.

214 Miglus 1993, 205.

215 See for an overview of the excavation history Kose 1998, 277–281.

an enormous courtyard, surrounded by three composite sanctuaries and a large number of interconnected rooms which have been interpreted as either offices or houses, perhaps for the temple personnel who stayed at the *akītu* house during the days that the gods resided there. The excavators have been able to distinguish three building phases which cannot be dated, but which point to an extended period of use, probably going back into Achaemenid or even Neo-Babylonian times.²¹⁶ However, Lenzen argues that the final building phase dates to the (early?) Seleucid period because of the building's exceptional size, comparable only to the Bīt Rēš and the Irigal, the floor plan which combines the varied elements into a unified whole, and the similarity of the sanctuaries to the Anu-Antu-sanctuary in the Bīt Rēš. Several graves dating to the late Seleucid or early Parthian period indicate that the building lost its original purpose around the same time as Uruk's other main temples, if not already before.²¹⁷

The great *akītu* festivals of first-millennium Babylon, Borsippa and Uruk—and presumably other Babylonian cities—were seasonal ('New Year') celebrations, taking place around the vernal and autumnal equinox, i.e. in months I and VII. Central to each festival was the journey of the city's patron deity to the *akītu* house outside the city walls, from which s/he returned several days later with great pomp and circumstance. That ritual cycle is usually interpreted as a reenactment of the deity's first entering and settling in the city in primordial times—in other words, a calendrical renewal festival.²¹⁸ Moreover, the spring *akītu* of Marduk at second-millennium Aššur and Nippur and first-millennium Babylon was the occasion for the annual reinvestiture of the king, the gods' determination of the world's destiny for the coming year, and at Babylon also the celebration of Marduk's triumph over Tiamat.²¹⁹

However, by the first millennium BC, most Mesopotamian cities held more than two *akītu* festivals a year, sometimes even several in one month, and for more deities than just the city's tutelary god or goddess. The main function of an *akītu* in this period seems to have been, as mentioned, a reenactment and celebration of that particular deity's settlement in his/her earthly abode. This means that in most if not all cases, those deities also each possessed their own *akītu* temple, or at least their own shrine inside a central *akītu* house. Neo-Babylonian sources from Uruk already mention *akītu* houses for the goddesses

216 Miglus 1993, 207.

217 Kose 1998, 289.

218 For the historical background and layers of religious and political meaning of the *akītu* festivals, see most recently and comprehensively Zgoll 2006; for the half-yearly nature of the festival, see Ambos 2013b.

219 Cohen 2015, 313–314, 389–394.

Ištar and Ušur-amāssu, as well as “the *akītu* house of the steppe/countryside” (*akītu ša edin*), which may be identical with either of the other two, or the central complex that housed them both.²²⁰

Where the Hellenistic period is concerned, the Urukean ritual texts describe both the spring and autumn *akītu* festivals for Anu as well as one for Ištar in an unknown month.²²¹ A prebend sale deed unambiguously mentions two *akītu* houses among the city’s main temples:²²²

(...) his *kurummatu* rations and 1/9th of his shares in the *šamma*nda meat of the bull of the Irigal, the Bīt Rēš, the *akītu* house of Anu and the *akītu* house of Ištar (...)

The tablet dates to 235 BC (SE 78), which means that both sanctuaries already existed at Uruk before the major building project of Anu-uballit–Kephalon. According to one of the ritual texts, the *akītu* house of Anu was called Bīt Ikrībī, ‘House of Prayer’.²²³ Another prebend sale contract from 160 BC (SE 153), however, mentions only one *akītu* house:²²⁴

(...) his treasury enterer’s and goldsmith’s prebend pertaining to the temples of Uruk, i.e. in the Irigal, in the Bīt Rēš and in the *akītu* house (...)

Since no other structures have so far been discovered which may have fulfilled the same function,²²⁵ it is unclear how we should interpret this discrepancy: were there originally two separate *akītu* houses of which one fell out of use? If so, which one remained? It is conceivable that after the cultic reorganizations under Kephalon (see below) the larger one of the two—perhaps the one

220 Linssen 2004, 72 note 351 with further lit.

221 TU 39–40, TU 42+AO 8648+AO 8649, TU 43, KAR 132, BRM IV 7 (Linssen 2004, 184–214, 238–244).

222 ² šuk.ḫi.a-^rsu⁷ ù g-^u’ḫa.la.šú šá ina ^{uz}ušá-am-ma-an-da^{meš} ³ šá gu⁴ ^ršá⁷ ^éiri¹².gal ^ére-eš ^éa-ki-tu⁴ šá ^d60 u ^éa-ki-tu⁴ ⁴ šá ^dr^{ina}na⁷ (YOS 20 39 obv. 2–4); see also BiMes 24 2 obv. 6 (SE 108), VS 15 19 obv. 3 (SE 109), and BRM 1 98 // CM 12 7 obv. 3 (SE 122), where there is mention of “the *akītu* houses” (^éa-ki-tu⁴^{meš}). BiMes 24 1 obv. 3 mentions solely the “*akītu* house of Ištar” (^éa-ki-tu⁴ šá ^dr^{ina}na).

223 BRM IV 7 obv. 24 (Linssen 2004, 210).

224 ² giš.šub.ba-šú^{1á}[k]u⁴ ^ré ad.ḫal-ú-tú⁷ [u]^rlú⁷kù.[dim-ú-tú]³ [šá]^rik-kaš⁷-ši-du-a-šú ina ^émeš dingir^{meš} šá unug^{ki} šá ^rina⁷ [^éir]i¹².gal ina ^ésag u ^éa-[ki-tu⁴] (OECT 9 60 obv. 2–3 (Corò 2005, 346)).

225 Downey 1988, 35–38.

that has been excavated—was designated as *akītu* house for both Anu and Ištar, whose *akītu* festivals never coincided anyway.²²⁶ More probably, however, the “*akītu* houses” of Anu and Ištar had always been different sanctuaries inside the excavated building beyond the city walls, which in fact housed several semi-independent complexes with cultic, domestic, and organizational functions. Peter Miglus points to different architectural similarities between the building and the Egipar, the palace for the priestesses of the god Sîn at Ur rebuilt by king Nabonidus in 554/53 BC.²²⁷ He categorizes the building as halfway between palace and temple and proposes that it had an autonomous organisation and housed a permanent staff.²²⁸ That description is at least compatible with an institution known from a Hellenistic legal document as the ‘palace in the steppe/countryside’ (é.gal edin), where the goddess Bēlet-šēri (‘Lady of the Steppe’) resided.²²⁹ If that was the same as the Neo-Babylonian ‘*akītu* house in the countryside’, its palace-like features may have been designed to accommodate the king, should he ever deign to participate in the *akītu* festival as he was officially supposed to.²³⁰

Finally, a possible feature of the *akītu* house at Seleucid Uruk was a sacred date palm orchard (^gi^skiri₆ *ħallatu*), of which the cultivation was connected to an unnamed prebend attested in legal documents.²³¹ Denise Coquillerat has shown that *ħallatu* gardens typically lay outside the walls of first-millennium Assyrian and Babylonian cities and close or adjacent to the premises of an *akītu* complex and/or the canal leading to it from the city, and may thus have been associated with the former in terms of sacred topography.²³² When excavating what may have been the *akītu* house outside Uruk, Lenzen identified a green

226 It is unlikely that Ištar’s *akītu* festival simply ceased to be celebrated, since the long prescriptive text for its performance was probably copied or composed together with the other Urukean ritual texts after the reorganizations of the late third century BC (see below).

227 Miglus 1993, 208–209.

228 Ibid. 210–211.

229 BRM II 12 obv. 2 (Corò 2005a, 412). For an overview of the cult of Bēlet-šēri at Late Babylonian Uruk and an analysis of her role in that pantheon, see Krul forthcoming b.

230 Cf. the ritual instructions for the *akītu* festivals from Seleucid Uruk (TU 39–40 (Linszen 2004, 184–196); KAR 132 (ibid. 201–208)), which feature the king as a prominent participant. These texts only present an ideal version of the festival, since, as we have seen, there is no evidence that any Seleucid king ever came to Uruk in person to participate in a cultic event.

231 BiMes 24 12 (Corò 2005a, 369–370); BRM II 4, 12 (ibid. 408–409, 412–413); BM 105198 (ibid. 425–426); BM 109942 // 30119 (ibid. 422–425); BM 109943; TCL 13 244 // BM 109944 (ibid. 417–419); VS 15 4 (ibid. 410–411); WZJ 19, 905–912.

232 Coquillerat 1973–1974.

area around the building, divided into squares, as the “*akītu* gardens”.²³³ However, the prebendary sale contracts from Seleucid Uruk pertaining to the *hallatu* orchard never associate it with the *akītu* house, but rather with the temple of Bēlet-šēri—named ‘the countryside palace’ in one source, and later identified by means of its proper name, *é.dūr.sag.ga.ni*.²³⁴ Still, as argued above, the contracts may in fact be referring to one and the same area, which comprised the *hallatu* gardens, the *akītu* house with the festival residences of Ištar and later Anu, and finally, from the late Achaemenid period onward, also Bēlet-šēri’s shrine.

1.3.5.5 The Eanna

The Eanna, Ištar’s original temple, was also renovated in the Seleucid period, but the changes cannot be connected to a particular date or to any Urukean individuals responsible for them. The outer enclosure of the sanctuary was rebuilt and the outer façade of the enclosure wall decorated in a style typical for Babylonian religious architecture. Mostly the Neo-Babylonian walls and shrines around the easternmost court were still standing in Seleucid times and the main base of a Middle Babylonian Ištar sanctuary in that same court shows bricks with Seleucid triangle stamps. Changes with a non-religious purpose were also made, as is demonstrated by the ruins of the Ningišzida shrine inside the Eanna. First erected in the Ur III period, it was renovated by Marduk-apla-iddina II; later construction levels have been dated by Ludwig and Lenzen to Sargon II, Nebuchadnezzar II and Nabonidus.²³⁵ In the Seleucid period, the shrine was transformed into an elevated terrace or a corner bastion, where several Hellenistic- and Parthian-era cuneiform tablets have been found.²³⁶

Most importantly, the temple tower of the Eanna was completely rebuilt and changed from a single structure into a three-tiered stepped ziqqurrat of circa sixteen meter in height, with the two lower levels built around the older tower and its original top forming the highest level. That remarkable development makes the impression that the builders strove to render the temple complex more ‘typically Babylonian’ in appearance.²³⁷ The new, lowest level completely filled the original ziqqurrat court and the ground-level sanctuary of Ištar and Nanāya was buried beneath it. This monumental embellishment of the Eanna

233 Kose 1998, 277–278.

234 BM 109943; BM 109944 // TCL 13 244; BiMes 24 12.

235 Kose 1998, 269–270.

236 Ibid. 270, 273, 276.

237 Downey 1988, 32–34.

may be an indication that the temple retained its function as a religious complex, although Kose suggests that the ziqqurat became associated with the Irigal instead.²³⁸

1.3.6 *Consolidating the Cultic System*

From the archaeological and textual evidence just discussed, it becomes clear that the temple cults of Late Babylonian Uruk continued to develop throughout their existence, and that the centuries during which Anu was the city's patron deity should not be regarded as a homogeneous period in terms of pantheon and cult practice. Most importantly, it was only around the turn of the second century BC that the primary sanctuaries of Uruk had become such massive temples that they could accommodate dozens of divine residents and host festivals and ceremonies on the scale described in the ritual texts. Many more gods and goddesses could now, and probably did, take up residence in the Bīt Rēš and the Irigal, which means that henceforth the routine of their daily offerings would take place there. The courtyards and monumental gates of the new temple complexes allowed all those deities to gather together and move around in festive processions; likewise, the availability of more storage spaces and workshops presumably called for a redistribution of their use among the temple functionaries. In short, we may expect a certain reorganization of the cults to have taken place at Uruk around this time—or rather a settling of the system into what will have been perceived as its proper, ultimate form.

Indeed the Urukean corpus of prebendary sale contracts attests to several changes and developments around the last decades of the third century BC. The prices of nearly all prebends, which had been rising steadily since the middle of the century, dropped radically around 215 BC and only began to climb up again after 200 BC.²³⁹ Furthermore, the deities to whom the prebendary services pertained are grouped differently in the texts than before, which points to a reorganization of the rotary system of temple worship. The period 215–200 BC, or at least the second half of it, corresponds directly to the temple renovations under Anu-uballit–Kephalon, which according to his building inscriptions were finished in 202 BC and will have taken five or six years to complete at the very least.²⁴⁰ A similar, though somewhat slighter drop in prebend

238 Kose 2013a, 326.

239 McEwan 1981, 112; Monerie 2013, 419 (with graph). An exception is the prebendary service in the sacred orchard and sanctuary of Bēlet-šēri, of which the price climbs and falls only slightly during that period and continues to fall in the first half of the second century BC; a probable explanation for this will be given below.

240 Monerie 2013, 426.

prices can be observed in the years 250–240 BC, when the earlier temple renovations under Anu-uballit–Nikarchos took place. As Julien Monerie has convincingly argued, prebend ownership may have become less attractive during those two periods because prebendary priests were required to lend financial support to the building projects, just as they had been in Neo-Babylonian times.²⁴¹

Regarding the changes in the daily patterns of worship, Monerie has shown that the groups of gods were in fact rearranged twice, once during the period 215–205 BC and once afterwards. For example, until ca. 215 BC, the treasury enterer's and goldsmith's prebend (*ērib bīt pirištūtu & kutimmūtu*) pertained to Anu, Antu, Ištar, Nanāya, Bēltu-ša-Rēš, and either Bēlet-šēri or Šarraḫītu;²⁴² between ca. 215 and 205 BC the associated prebendary duties were split up into two services, one before Anu, Enlil (who was originally grouped together with Ea and others), Ištar, Nanāya, and Bēltu-ša-Rēš, and the other before Antu, Bēlet-šēri, Papsukkal, and Šarraḫītu;²⁴³ and finally, after ca. 205 BC, all the aforementioned deities formed a single group of recipients, which now also included Ea.²⁴⁴ Presumably, then, preparations for Kephalon's building project necessitated a temporary division of the prebendary task force into two teams which were each supervised separately. After the new Bīt Rēš and Irigal had been finished, the administration of the Bīt Rēš (re)integrated the daily worship at the different temples and shrines of the city into a single system. A sale deed of the *ērib bīt pirištūtu & kutimmūtu* prebend from 160 BC, already quoted earlier, clearly demonstrates the latter:²⁴⁵

(...) his treasury enterer's and goldsmith's prebend pertaining to the temples of Uruk, i.e. in the Irigal, in the Bīt Rēš, and in the *akītu* house—that prebend which is before Anu, Antu, Enlil, Ea, Papsukkal, Ištar, Bēlet-šēri, Nanāya, Bēltu-ša-Rēš, Šarraḫītu and the gods of their sanctuaries (...)

The other prebends seem to have undergone the same development; however, the entirety of permutations of the groups of divine recipients in the Urukean

²⁴¹ Monerie 2013, 424–426; cf. Waerzeggers 2010a, 337–345.

²⁴² E.g. OECT 9 33 (Corò 2005, 334–335) and 44 (ibid. 348–350); the latter two goddesses are omitted by Monerie in his discussion.

²⁴³ E.g. OECT 9 42 (ibid. 352–354).

²⁴⁴ E.g. OECT 9 60 (ibid. 346–348).

²⁴⁵ See note 224; ⁴ giš.šub.ba mu^{mes} šá ina igi ^d60 an-tu₄ ^rdé-a' ^dpap.sukkal ⁵ d^dinanna ^dgašan.edin ^dna-na-a ^dgašan šá sag ^dšar-ra-a-'hi-tu₄ ¹ u dingir^{mes} ^ré¹-šu-nu (Corò 2005, 346–347).

legal documents remains to be examined and will yield more insight into the cultic reforms around 200 BC.

Considering that at least under Kephalon the substantial rebuilding of the *Bit Rēš* and the *Irigal* entailed a revision and perhaps expansion of the daily cultic routine, the *Sitz im Leben* of the extant ritual texts becomes clearer and more meaningful. Although it is still unclear why the Mesopotamian cuneiform corpus comprises so few temple rituals, festivals, and ceremonies, this seems at least partly due to the fact that such information was usually only recorded in writing when the rituals had changed significantly with respect to the routine that the participants had known and orally transmitted for centuries. The relative abundance of ritual texts from Hellenistic Uruk may therefore well be related to the cultic innovations that took place there during that period.²⁴⁶ We have already observed that the earliest available cult-related tablets date to the years directly preceding the renovations under Nikarchos, and that they were all commissioned by one of the highest-ranking priests at that moment, Anu-aḥa-ušabši//Ekur-zākir.²⁴⁷ Of the remainder of the extant instruction tablets for periodical rites of worship, the three with intact colophons were all copied by the same scholar: Šamaš-ēṭir/Ina-qibīt-Anu/Šibqāt-Anu//Ekur-zākir.²⁴⁸ He was a consecrated *āšipu* by 195/94 BC (118 SE), and his scribal education must therefore have taken place around 200 BC, just before or after the completion of Kephalon's construction work.²⁴⁹ We may therefore presume that he was closely involved or even played a leading role in the composition of the collection of ritual tablets for the *Bit Rēš* that comprised TU 38, TU 39–40, TU 41, and originally many more. In fact, as we will see further on, the nocturnal ceremony in the form in which it survives today and thus the tablet TU 41 itself must certainly have been created after Kephalon's renovations were finished.²⁵⁰ In short, the copying of the ritual texts from Seleucid Uruk and perhaps even the design of the rituals as we know them may well have gone hand in hand with the two phases of temple redesign.

1.3.7 *The Regular Cult Practice at Seleucid and Early Parthian Uruk*

The textual evidence about the daily cult practice and regular festivals at Seleucid Uruk consists primarily of two types of texts: the prescriptive ritual texts, which offer step-by-step instructions to various priests about how to proceed

246 Berlejung 2009, 85; Gabbay 2014, 122.

247 BRM IV 7 and BRM IV 8 (both 252/51 BC); W 18828 (251/50 BC); K 3753 (248/7 BC); see above.

248 TU 38 (Linssen 2004, 172–183) and TU 39–40 (ibid. 184–196).

249 For an overview of Šamaš-ēṭir's colophons, cf. Robson 2007, 440–445.

250 See § 3.1.

during particular cultic ceremonies,²⁵¹ and the legal contracts which record the sale of prebends and the disbursements of offering leftovers to which the prebend holder was entitled, including a brief indication of the days and divine recipients of those offerings.²⁵² Only a small amount of administrative texts have been found, but several do offer a glimpse of activities taking place and goods being stored at the Bīt Rēš.²⁵³

Of the ritual texts from Seleucid Uruk, only a handful give insight into the daily, monthly and yearly cultic activities that took place in the city during that period; the others pertain to the activities of the *kalû* priest and their content is not specific to Uruk or its cults.²⁵⁴ Several documents deal with parts of the *akītu* festivals in Nisannu and Tašrītu (TU 39–40, 42+ and 43, KAR 132, and BRM IV 7), one provides a description of a nocturnal fire ceremony (TU 41), one is a calendar for the performance of Emesal prayers (TU 48), and one presents detailed instructions for the preparation of the gods' four daily meals (TU 38). To those sources can be added a fragmentary cultic-astrological calendar (K 3753),²⁵⁵ and two broken prescriptive texts, one with clothing instructions for certain priests and the king (w 18728), and one containing a hymn to Šamaš to be sung by priests starting their work at the workshop for cultic objects (*bīt mummi*) in the early morning (w 18828).²⁵⁶

The prebendary sale deeds also give dates for various monthly and yearly offerings to particular deities. Finally, TU 38 provides a list of the different types of regular, non-daily cultic events that took place at Uruk:²⁵⁷ travels of the gods to other cities, *guqqû* offerings,²⁵⁸ *eššešu* celebrations,²⁵⁹ clothing ceremonies (*lubuštu*),²⁶⁰ purification rites, night vigils (*bayātu*),²⁶¹ brazier festivals (*kinūnu*),²⁶² divine marriages (*hašādu*)²⁶³ and offerings provided by the *kāribu*

251 Most recent edition in Linssen 2004, except for two already published by Falkenstein (1959).

252 Most recent edition in Corò 2005; copies of additional tablets in Doty/Wallenfels 2012.

253 Oelsner 1986, 146–156; Beaulieu 1989a, 57–60; Weisberg 1991; Wallenfels 1998.

254 Mayer 1978; Van Dijk/Mayer 1980; Linssen 2004, 252–320.

255 McEwan 1981, 174–178.

256 Falkenstein 1959, 36–44.

257 TU 38 obv. 35–38, rev. 35–38.

258 See Linssen 2004, 163–164.

259 See *ibid.* 45–51 and § 4.3.

260 See *ibid.* 51–56.

261 See *ibid.* 56–58 and § 4.2.

262 See *ibid.* 87 and § 5.5.4.2.

263 See *ibid.* 70–71.

citizens and by the king.²⁶⁴ Unfortunately, we lack the administrative documents which might have provided us the exact dates of those events. Also, it must be pointed out again that the Seleucid kings did not regularly participate in Babylonian temple rituals; there is no evidence that they ever came to Uruk for such an occasion, which means that at least one aspect of the *akitu* festivals cannot have been carried out the way it is described in the texts.²⁶⁵ The same may be the case for other elements of the different cultic rituals, although, as will be argued below, the texts possess enough Hellenistic features that they cannot be dismissed as completely anachronistic.

The cultic calendar of Seleucid Uruk that can be pieced together on the basis of the existing documents has been described in detail by Marc Linssen and will not be repeated here.²⁶⁶

1.3.8 *The City Pantheon*

1.3.8.1 Anu and Antu

The patron deities of Uruk during the Seleucid period were Anu and his spouse Antu. Traditionally, Anu was lord of the heavens and shared rulership with Enlil and Ea over the other gods and humankind. Together, they also ruled the starry sky, which was divided into the ‘paths’ of Anu, Enlil and Ea.²⁶⁷ As divine allfather, Anu was associated with the primordial ancestors of the gods, a complex and ambiguous group whose theogony coincided with, or brought about, the creation of the universe.²⁶⁸ In various mythological and scholarly texts, Anu and Enlil are described as the offspring of several generations of those divine beings; at the same time, Anu is partially equated with them, in particular with his father Anšar.²⁶⁹ In several god lists, such as *An = Anum*, and in some litanies of god names in first-millennium incantations,²⁷⁰ Anu and Antu are the very first deities in the list of primordial ancestors and are even equated with each other.²⁷¹ Anu’s close relationship to that oldest

264 See *ibid.* 161–162 and § 5.7.4.

265 That was in fact already the case in the Neo-Babylonian period; the king was not always able to come to Babylon for the festival and there is no attestation of a Neo-Babylonian king celebrating it in any other city.

266 Linssen 2004, 23–87; overview on pp. 88–89.

267 Horowitz 1998, 115–116, 156–166, 169–177.

268 Lambert 2013, 405–426.

269 *Ibid.* 422.

270 See e.g. Ebeling 1953, 381: 5 ff. (“Gattung 11”): Anu—Antu followed by Anšar—Kišar, Duri—Dari, Laḫma—Laḫama, Alala—Belili etc.

271 E.g. *An = Anum* 1 1–3: “An = Anum; An = Antum; An-Ki (‘Heaven and Earth’) = Anum and Antum” (Litke 1998, 20).

generation of gods also finds expression in the mythological tradition according to which Marduk gained rulership not by slaying a monster, but by vanquishing his elders.²⁷² Anu's death at the hands of Marduk gave him the additional aspect of a netherworld deity.²⁷³

With the revival of Anu's cult at Uruk, local scholarship attributed an even greater cosmic authority to the venerable sky-god than he had previously known. In an uranography composed in 216/15 BC (SE 97), not just the stars of the path of Anu, but all the heavenly bodies and constellations are described as subordinate to him, thereby positioning him as the lord of the entire firmament.²⁷⁴ Several other scholarly and ritual texts, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, expand upon the universal character of Anu and Antu's divine rulership. Moreover, the divine couple was now associated with two circumpolar stars, called Great Anu and Antu of Heaven, which received offerings and other rites of worship separately from their earthly counterparts in the ziqqurrat shrine appropriately named Ešarra, 'House of Heaven' or 'House of the Universe'.²⁷⁵ The extension of Anu's divine authority to encompass the entirety of the heavens was the core development of the Urukean religious reforms—providing the city's scholarly elite with a patron god of the celestial sciences, and endowing a unique local deity with universal qualities that could parallel those of the imperial god Marduk and later perhaps also Ahura Mazda and Zeus.²⁷⁶

1.3.8.2 Deities Attested in the Legal Documents

The most important source for the entire pantheon of Late Babylonian Uruk is the corpus of prebendary sale contracts. Each of those documents includes a list of deities before whom the duties associated with the prebend (or prebends) in question were to be performed. Depending on the nature of the

272 Livingstone 1989, no. 37: 19', 32'–34'; 38: 8–26; 40: 1–14; cf. Lambert 2013, 208–209.

273 E.g. in KAR 307: 23 (Lambert 2013, 245), Antu is described as making funerary offerings (*kispu*) to Anu.

274 MLC 1866 (see Beaulieu et al. forthcoming and Krul forthcoming a).

275 See § 2.2.1, 5.4.4 and Krul forthcoming a. In the lore of the *kalû*-priests of Seleucid Uruk, the netherworld aspect of both Anu and Antu also still played an important role (O 175 *passim*; Livingstone 1986, 187–204, and see also the sophisticated new analysis in Gabbay 2014, 124–139). However, it is unclear whether this was *kalûtu*-specific theology or a more general element of the understanding of the two deities at Uruk during that period (*contra* Leick (1991, 5), who states without further nuance that “the theologians” of Seleucid Uruk “identified the sky-god with chthonic deities”).

276 Berlejung 2009, 86.

prebend, gods and goddesses could be included in or left out from the contract, or even, as we have seen, split up into different groups, but they are always listed in exactly the same order:²⁷⁷

- Anu and Antu
- Enlil
- Ea
- Šîn
- Šamaš
- Adad
- Marduk
- Papsukkal and his consort Amasagnudi
- Ištar
- Bēlet-šēri
- Nanāya
- Bēltu-ša-Rēš
- Šarraḫītu

Paul-Alain Beaulieu has argued that this order is based on that of the canonical god list *An = Anum* and that it expresses the divine hierarchy within the Hellenistic Urukian pantheon.²⁷⁸ However, that would mean that Ištar (position 10), for example, had become less important than Marduk (position 8), which would be surprising in the light of Uruk's recent emancipation from the political influence at Babylon and the fact that Ištar's local cult was as old as the city itself. Uri Gabbay has recently pointed out that the list is also divided by gender and comprises in its entirety first all the major male deities, then all the major female deities of Uruk. The only exception is Antu, who is always listed directly after Anu and before all the other deities, which proves her continued inseparable association with her spouse.²⁷⁹ This division into two sections probably reflects contemporary cultic practice, since the city's

277 See e.g. OECT 9 61 obv. 6–7 (Corò 2005a, 263–264) for the entire list excluding Amasagnudi, who is only mentioned in two contracts pertaining to her and Papsukkal alone (BRM II 29 obv. 4; TCL XIII 242 obv. 5; Corò 2005a, 363–367).

278 Beaulieu 1992, 59–60. For the influence of *An = Anum* on the composition of the pantheon, see § 2.1.

279 Cf. Gabbay 2014, 205 with note 92. As seen above, during the period when Anu and Antu were divided over two groups, she was listed first of her group, followed by Papsukkal and then the other female deities. Likewise, a *lišlim*-formula preceding a ritual text evokes Anu and Antu together before Enlil and Ea (BaM Beiheft 2, 12: header).

gods and goddesses were also grouped by gender during processions and in the litanies of *šu-ila* prayers.²⁸⁰ It shows that the Hellenistic Urukian priesthood did not arrange their pantheon into a single hierarchical system, but into two separate ones. *Ištar* ranked first among the goddesses of the city and was in all likelihood seen as the most important deity of Uruk after Anu and Antu.

The continued significance of *Ištar* and *Nanāya* is also strongly suggested by the sheer size of the *Irigal*, which surpassed that of the *Bit Reš* itself, and the fact that both temples were transformed into such monumental complexes around the same time. The onomastic record, furthermore, shows a continued popularity of the theophoric elements *Ištar* and especially *Nanāya* in personal names—at least among those individuals attested in the cuneiform documents.²⁸¹ The yearly *akītu* festival for *Ištar* and her entourage is remarkably similar to the spring and autumn *akītus* of Anu described in two other ritual texts.²⁸² Moreover, during one of the latter, *Ištar* was to be fetched from the *Irigal* by the king himself to join the divine gathering, which again suggests that she had a special status within the city pantheon.²⁸³ Other cultic texts support that hypothesis. The instructions for the four daily divine meals (TU 38) mention not only Anu and Antu, but also *Ištar* and *Nanāya* by name before moving on to “the other gods”;²⁸⁴ also, the calendar of Emesal prayers (TU 48) lists Anu and different manifestations of *Ištar* and *Nanāya* as the intended audience for the performances. Finally, the fact that the ‘Exaltation of *Ištar*’ and various hymns to her were still copied by Urukian scholars points to their continued interest in that goddess—although especially the ‘Exaltation of *Ištar*’ will also

280 Gabbay 2014, 204–207 and 224–225. For processions of deities grouped by gender at Hellenistic Uruk, see § 5.2.3.

281 The HBTIN Names Glossary (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/hbtin/qpn-x-people>; accessed 14-09-2017) shows that the three most frequently attested personal names are *Nidintu-Anu* (1403 times), *Anu-uballit* (993 times), and *Nanāya-iddin* (942 times). It must be noted that the amounts of attestations of specific names in the Glossary are much higher than the number of historical individuals bearing those names, since many attestations in fact pertain to the same person, across texts as well as within a single source. However, since that discrepancy holds true for all the recorded names, the differences between the amounts still roughly reflect the relative distribution of the names in terms of usage.

282 TU 42 + AO 8648 + AO 8649 (Linssen 2004, 238–244); *akītus* of Anu: TU 39–40 (Linssen 2004, 184–196) and KAR 132 (ibid. 201–208).

283 KAR 132 I obv. 23–30. Needless to say at this point, the king probably never actually did so.

284 TU 38 obv. 17–18, 23–24, 30; rev. 1–2 (Linssen 2004, 173–174).

have played a role in their reconstruction of Uruk's religious history and the primacy of the Anu cult.²⁸⁵

The other male deities of the late Urukean pantheon who were included in the standard lists of temple service were, as we have seen, Enlil, Ea, Šin, Šamaš, Adad, and Marduk—all major gods who were worshipped throughout Babylonia. Šamaš of Larsa was of old an important local god at Uruk and in the Hellenistic period the cults of Larsa were probably still controlled by the Urukean temple administration.²⁸⁶ The continued cult of Marduk at Late Babylonian Uruk shows that political resentment towards Babylon did not result in a total abandonment of its patron deity.²⁸⁷ Papsukkal was introduced as the vizier of Anu and primary guardian of the Bīt Rēš.²⁸⁸ The goddess listed directly after Ištar was not Nanāya but Bēlet-šēri, the scribe of Ereškigal, queen of the netherworld. She was also newly introduced and dwelled in a sanctuary of her own outside the city called é.dúr.sag.ga.ni,²⁸⁹ which, as discussed above, was surrounded by a date orchard and probably part of the *akītu* complex. The establishment of her cult was probably partly motivated by classical incantations like *Maqlū* where she works together with Anu and Antu to banish evil witches, but it may also have been a response to popular demand. As a mediator in matters of life and death, Bēlet-šēri was especially popular outside of the traditional priestly elite.²⁹⁰ Bēltu-ša-Rēš already had a cult at Neo-Babylonian Uruk and was well in place as eponymous protective goddess of the Bīt Rēš.²⁹¹ Finally, the introduction of the cult of Šarraḫītu is not immediately explainable and requires further research.

A deity who doesn't occur in the standard god list of the legal documents, but whose prebend sales were recorded separately, is the healing goddess Gula.²⁹² According to those texts, in which she is also called Bēlet-balāṭi and Bēlet-māti,²⁹³ she resided in a sanctuary called Egalmaḥ, which lay next to the Eanna.

285 See § 2.3.1.

286 Monerie 2013, 332; note, however, the predominance of Greek names among the witnesses in a legal document from Larsa (OECT 9 26; Clancier/Monerie 2014, 223–224).

287 Gabbay 2014, 216 note 81.

288 Beaulieu 1992; see § 5.2.2.1.

289 BiMes 24 12 obv. 3; BM 109944 // TCL 13 244 obv. 3 (Corò 2005a, 369–370, 417–419).

290 See Krul forthcoming b for a complete study of Bēlet-šēri's cult at Uruk.

291 For her Neo-Babylonian cult, cf. Beaulieu 2003, 216–226. The origin of her name remains unclear, considering that no sanctuary by the name of (Bīt) Rēš is attested for that period.

292 Oppert 5 obv. 8 (Corò 2005a, 379); BRM II 36 obv. 6 (ibid. 396; read ^dme.me, not ^danu igi; cf. McEwan 1981, 76 note 216); BM 105188 obv. 15 (ibid. 387).

293 Cf. Beaulieu 2003, 312–313.

Another distinct group of deities recorded in the prebendary contracts are the “gods of the sky”;²⁹⁴ these were probably the seven heavenly bodies, which we also encounter as recipients of offerings in the ritual texts (see below).²⁹⁵ Finally, the sale contract of a workshop (*bīt qāti*) in the *Bit Rēš* describes it as adjacent to the shrine of Nergal, god of pestilence, chaos, and death, and one of the most widely venerated deities of Mesopotamia during the first millennium BC.²⁹⁶ Both he and Gula were already worshipped at Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian period.

1.3.8.3 Deities Attested in the Ritual Texts

The second group of sources providing information about the deities worshipped at Seleucid Uruk are the ritual texts. Karlheinz Kessler has pointed out that, unlike the prebend texts, the rituals may have been at least partly copied from older originals and may not accurately reflect the pantheon of Uruk in the Hellenistic period.²⁹⁷ That is certainly true, but as argued before, the reasons for copying those texts were probably contemporary changes in the cultic ordinances, not merely the need for preservation or scribal exercise. Moreover, each of the ritual texts clearly shows revisions or additions that can only have been made in Hellenistic times. For example, the text describing the *akītu* festival for Ištar features Papsukkal, Nuska and Usmû acting as a trio, which is also the case for the other Seleucid-period ritual texts, but not compatible with the Neo-Babylonian evidence.²⁹⁸ Likewise, the chariot of Anu and another cultic object named ‘Anu’s throne’ play a role in the ritual;²⁹⁹ they were obviously introduced after Anu’s ascent as patron god of Uruk and are not attested in the inventory of the city’s Neo-Babylonian temples. Finally, nearly all of the minor goddesses mentioned in the text as Ištar’s companions are directly derived from the canonical god list *An = Anum*, which was used extensively by the priests of Seleucid Uruk for their revision of their city’s pantheon (see below). Thus, whether or not the festival was ever celebrated the way it is described in the text, the priests at least went through the trouble of adapting that description to their own religious programme. In short, we may reasonably consider the Urukean ritual texts as reliable sources for the contemporary pantheon, if not unequivocally for the actual cultic practice.

294 Opper 2 obv. 3 (Corò 2005a, 156); *ibid.* 4 rev. 2’–3’ (*ibid.* 375); OECT 9, 51 obv. 8–9 (*ibid.* 383).

295 See also § 5.4.4.

296 vs 15 48 obv. 6 (Falkenstein 1941, 14; Baker 2013, 27).

297 Kessler 2006, 279.

298 TU 42+ rev. 5’.

299 TU 42+ rev. 7’, 9’, 29’.

TU 41, which was certainly copied or composed after 200 BC,³⁰⁰ presents us with several other divine residents of the Bīt Rēš: Nuska, Usmû, Pisangunug, Bēlet-ili, the Daughters of Anu and the Daughters of Uruk. As will be argued below, Nuska, the vizier of Enlil, Usmû, the vizier of Ea, and Pisangunug, “herald of Kullaba”, served as guardians of the Bīt Rēš alongside Papsukkal.³⁰¹ Bēlet-ili, a mother goddess with a long mythical tradition and history of worship throughout ancient Mesopotamia, shared a courtyard with Sîn, Šamaš, and Adad, around which their shrines were probably grouped.³⁰² From TU 38 we learn that the shrines of Šamaš and Sîn also housed their respective sons, the animal gods Šakkan and Ningublaga.³⁰³ That same passage mentions Ereškigal together with Bēlet-šēri; however, the *bīt* ^dEreškigal—a cemetery?—was neither in Bēlet-šēri’s sanctuary nor close to the shrine of her spouse Nergal, but in the Market Gate District.³⁰⁴ The Daughters of Anu and of Uruk were two pairs or groups of not otherwise named female deities, who probably represented the unmarried daughters of Anu’s household and thus in all likelihood also resided in the Bīt Rēš.³⁰⁵ Further, both TU 41 and TU 38 attest to the regular worship of the stars Anu and Antu of Heaven and the other seven heavenly bodies—the sun, the moon, and the planets Nebēru (Jupiter), Dilbat (Venus), Šiḫṭu (Mercury), Kayamānu (Saturn), and Šalbatānu (Mars).³⁰⁶

The *akītu* texts, finally, provide the reader with a long list of all the divine and human participants in the festive processions. The main prescriptive text for the *akītu* of Anu in month VII, TU 39–40, primarily details activities inside the Bīt Rēš and we may therefore assume that the deities mentioned all resided there, as long as there is no reference to their arrival from somewhere else. Apart from the ones already discussed above, these are: Lugalbanda and Ninsun, the deified father and divine mother of Gilgameš;³⁰⁷ Kusibanda, the goldsmith god;³⁰⁸ Kusu, the purification deity, acting in a group with Nuska and

300 See § 3.1.

301 See § 5.2.2 and § 5.6.4.

302 TU 41 rev. 21–22.

303 TU 38 rev. 40–41.

304 BRM II 54 // BiMes 24 28 obv. 2–3; w16405d (unpubl.; Falkenstein 1941, 51).

305 See § 5.2.3.

306 TU 41 obv. 14–31; TU 38 rev. 29–34; see Krul forthcoming a.

307 First attestation in the text: TU 39 obv. 6. In the following discussion, only the first mention of each deity in the source text in question will be noted.

308 TU 39 obv. 10. Formerly read Guškinbanda, he was the “Ea of the goldsmith” (Walker/Dick 2001, 23 note 67).

Usmû;³⁰⁹ Šala, the spouse of Adad, Ninurta, and Palil (^dIGI.DU), a form of Nergal, “rising and emerging from their shrines” together with Adad, Sîn, Šamaš, Pisangunug, Lugalbanda, and Ninsun;³¹⁰ Aya and Bunene, the wife and son of Šamaš, acting together with Šamaš as part of a larger unidentified group;³¹¹ and Šubula, a son of Nergal, in the broken next line.³¹² Adad, Sîn, Šamaš, Ninurta, Pisangunug, Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû, Kusu, Lugalbanda, and Ninsun are later mentioned as a group again,³¹³ which strengthens the suspicion that they were among the core residents of the Bit Rēš, together with Bēlet-īli. The document’s catchline gives Eḫenunna, ‘House of Abundance’, as the name of Adad’s shrine and informs us that Mišāru, the personified Justice, also dwelled there.³¹⁴

KAR 132, the prescriptive text for the *akītu* of Anu in—presumably—month I, also begins with activities inside the Bit Rēš and then moves on to the public procession to the *akītu* house. We hear of cultic objects carried in the procession: the “divine symbols, sun disks, and chariots”.³¹⁵ Later on, the chariots are identified as those of Anu, Ninurta, Šamaš, and the constellation Chariot (^{mul}gigir), among other gods whose names are broken off.³¹⁶ Among the gathered male deities, we encounter the warrior gods Šulpae, Meslamtaea and Lugalirra; Alammuš, the vizier of Sîn and counterpart of the latter’s son Ningublaga;³¹⁷ the fire god Girra; the major northern Babylonian god Zababa of Kiš; and the lord of the wilderness, Amurru.³¹⁸

To the assembled goddesses, the text adds Sadarnunna, the spouse of Nuska; Ninirigal, an ancient Urukean goddess probably reinvented as protectress of the Irigal;³¹⁹ Ašrātu, the spouse of Amurru; and Šarrat-šamē, ‘Queen of the Heavens’, a manifestation of Ištar.³²⁰ In the Irigal, we find among Ištar’s companions the Daughters of Eanna; Ninsianna, the manifestation of Ištar as the

309 TU 39 obv. 18.

310 TU 39 obv. 20–21.

311 TU 40 rev. 15.

312 TU 40 rev. 16; cf. Michalowski 2012.

313 TU 39 rev. 17–19.

314 TU 39 rev. 26. Mišāru was associated with both Šamaš and Adad and also resided with the latter in the Esagil in Babylon; cf. Krebernik 2006–2008, 354–356.

315 KAR 132 I obv. 5–6: ^{giš}tukul^{meš} ^dutu^{meš} [ù] ^{giš}gigir^{meš}.

316 KAR 132 III rev. 4–9.

317 KAR 132 I obv. 9–11. While Meslamtaea and Lugalirra formed the constellation ‘Great Twins’ (^{mul}maš.tab.ba gal.gal), the ‘Little Twins’ (^{mul}maš.tab.ba tur.tur) were Alammuš and Ningublaga (Mul.Apin I i 6; cf. Krebernik 1993–1995b, 365).

318 KAR 132 I obv. 11–13.

319 See for third- and second millennium BC attestations of her Conti 1993.

320 KAR 132 I obv. 14–16.

planet Venus; Ninigizibarra, Ištar's cultic lyre (*balaĝ*);³²¹ Ninmeurur, a servant of Ištar already known from the Old Babylonian period;³²² Išartu, the personified Legal Order and feminine counterpart of Mišāru;³²³ (Nin-)Šagepada, possibly to be equated with a goddess from the Ur III period;³²⁴ and the not otherwise attested Abeturra and Šarrat-parakki.³²⁵ Later on, these ladies are joined by Bau,³²⁶ while the gods now also include ẖendursanga, the “night watchman”, who was associated with Šamaš, Nergal and the latter's vizier Išum,³²⁷ and Nergal's seven divine soldiers known collectively as the Sebeti.³²⁸ We encounter the goddess Ušur-amāssu, one of the major deities of Neo-Babylonian Uruk, in the company of the otherwise unknown Ninurbu; Ninimma, the spouse of Kusibanda;³²⁹ and Šilamkurra, a daughter of Ninsun according to *An = Anum* (v 4).³³⁰

Finally, after the arrival of the divine procession at the *akītu* house, the golden quivers of Anu and Antu join the ranks of the cultic objects.³³¹ Alammuš and Ningublaga are followed by “the Twins”, a word written first in Sumerian and then again in Akkadian (^dmaš.tab.ba ^dtu-ma-mu), so those are probably an epithet of the pair just mentioned, not a third group of divine twins.³³² A few lines later might be mention of Sirsir, the boatsman/divine boat of Ea and Marduk; near the end of the tablet, Išum is mentioned, and may here be identical with ẖendursanga.³³³

TU 42+, lastly, offers instructions for the *akītu* festival for Ištar. It is to a great extent similar or even identical to KAR 132, but it contains many additional divine names, including several deities who were already worshiped at Neo-Babylonian Uruk: the mythical sage Adapa;³³⁴ Urkayītu, ‘She of Uruk’, probably

321 *An = Anum* IV 73 (Litke 1998, 153); cf. Gabbay 2014, 103–109.

322 Cavigneaux/Krebernik 1998–2000a.

323 Krebernik 2006–2008, 356.

324 Cavigneaux/Krebernik 1998–2000b.

325 KAR 132 I obv. 27–29.

326 KAR 132 II obv. 5.

327 Edzard 1972–1975; George 2015.

328 KAR 132 II obv. 11–12.

329 Ninimma had a long and complex history; she had begun as a Nisaba-like scribe of Enlil with aspects of vegetation and growth and later became equated with Gula, adopting her healing qualities (Focke 1998–2000). In late Urukian *kalū* theology, she was one of the seven children of Enmešarra (Livingstone 1986, 190, 200).

330 KAR 132 II obv. 14; Krebernik 2010b.

331 KAR 132 III rev. 8.

332 KAR 132 III rev. 12.

333 KAR 132 IV rev. 24.

334 TU 42+ obv. 3'; Beaulieu 2003, 326–327.

originally an epithet of Ištar;³³⁵ Kilili and Barirītu, two female demons controlled by Ištar;³³⁶ Bēlet-Eanna of Udannu, a local form of Ištar venerated in a nearby town;³³⁷ Kanisurra, a goddess from the entourage of Nanāya;³³⁸ and possibly Annunītu, an important goddess of Sippar.³³⁹ Further, we encounter a number of maidservants of Ištar listed in *An = Anum*: Šilabat, Igarluti, Kabilusig, Ada, and Esapar, the “five translators of Ištar”;³⁴⁰ Ninsigaranna, another balaĝ of Ištar;³⁴¹ and Ninḥenunna, En(me)uranna and d^šEŠ.AN.TUR.³⁴² Finally, the text lists several less clearly identified deities such as the two divine high priests (2 d^šeš.gal);³⁴³ Lama-edin, ‘Protective Spirit of the Wilderness’, whose sanctuary is mentioned;³⁴⁴ Lamasigga, ‘Good Protective Spirit’, perhaps of the Irigal;³⁴⁵ and the unknown Galgamunasummu.³⁴⁶ Connected to the sanctuary of Lama-edin were four *urmaḥlulûs* (‘lion men’); the word is not given a divine determinative in the text, but they may nonetheless have been the same divine beings as the ^d*urmaḥlulûs* attested at Neo-Babylonian Uruk.³⁴⁷ Likewise, the “mighty woman of the Bīt Rēš” (munus šá sag kal-tú) is not designated as a deity and may have been either a cultic actor or a semidivine figure; the latter is more likely, since she is listed among a large number of gods and goddesses.³⁴⁸

A last, obscure and fragmentary ritual text is K 7353, which combines a Middle Babylonian cultic calendar with Hellenistic astrological theology.³⁴⁹ The information it provides on cultic events is thus at least partly much older than

335 TU 42+ obv. 6': *áš-ka*-[...], which are the first two signs of the various writings of the name Urkayītu; cf. Beaulieu 2003, 255–265.

336 TU 42+ obv. 9'; cf. CAD B 111; Lambert 1976–1980; Beaulieu 2003, 219–220.

337 TU 42+ obv. 13'; Beaulieu 2003, 289–295.

338 TU 42+ rev. 12'; Beaulieu 2003, 316–319.

339 TU 42+ rev. 12'; Beaulieu 2003, 311.

340 TU 42+ obv. 12'; *An = Anum* IV 137–141: 5 inim bal-bal ^dinanna.ke₄ (Litke 1998, 158).

341 TU 42+ rev. 10'; *An = Anum* IV 74 (ibid. 154).

342 TU 42+ obv. 13'; *An = Anum* IV 97–98, 160 (ibid. 155, 160); cf. Krebernik 2010a.

343 TU 42+ rev. 2'.

344 TU 42+ obv. 10'; perhaps this is meant here as a name for Bēlet-šēri. See also Foxvog/Heimpel/Kilmer 1980–1983, 451.

345 TU 42+ obv. 11'; see also Lambert 1980–1983 for the little known cult of a deity named Lamasigga.

346 TU 42+ obv. 7'.

347 TU 42+ obv. 10'; Beaulieu 2003, 367–368.

348 TU 42+ rev. 4'.

349 Ed. McEwan 1981, 174–178. Much of the cultic content is similar or identical to Astrolabe B; see in more detail Krul forthcoming a.

the Seleucid period and not specific to Uruk, but apart from the added astrological elements, it may also have been updated in religious terms by its latest copyist, Anu-aba-uṭēr/Anu-aḥa-ušabši//Ekur-zākir. The only deities mentioned in the text which are not also encountered in other Urukean ritual texts are Ningal, the spouse of Sîn, and the Ištar-like goddess Išḫara, seemingly resident in the sanctuary of Bēlet-īli.³⁵⁰

1.3.8.4 Deities Attested in Personal Names

The final source for the cults of Seleucid and early Parthian Uruk are the theophoric elements in the names of the city's inhabitants. Personal names are among the very few relatively reliable sources for the religious sentiments of individuals and the local presence of certain gods and worshipping practices; however, such conclusions must be drawn with caution, since namegiving was influenced by numerous other, non-religious factors, such as immigration and the practice of papponymy. Nonetheless, the occurrence of a certain deity in more than one theophoric name attested at Uruk does increase the likelihood of his/her local worship, especially if that deity also occurs in the ritual texts. Since I will discuss the onomasticon of Seleucid Uruk and its implications about local cults in detail in a forthcoming article, only the results will be presented here.³⁵¹

The most frequently attested gods and goddesses in the Late Urukean onomasticon are also known from the legal documents and their cults thus require no additional proof. These are Anu and Antu, Ištar, Nanāya, Papsukkal, Bēlet-šēri, Enlil, Ea, Sîn, Šamaš, Adad, Marduk,³⁵² and Nergal.³⁵³ Secondly, deities

350 McEwan reads \acute{e} *de-lit* dingir^{meš} *diš-ḥa-[ra]* as “the temple of the mistress of the gods Išḫara”, but “the sanctuary of Bēlet-īli” seems to me a more straightforward reading and in keeping with the other ritual texts from Uruk.

351 Krul forthcoming c. My primary source for this study were the HBTIN Names Glossary (<http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/hbtin/qpn-x-people>) and the 2016 HBTIN database at the Berkeley Prosopographic Services (<http://berkeleyprosopography.org/corpora/corpus?id=163>), both curated by Laurie Pearce. For caveats concerning the use of those data, see note 281.

352 A small number of texts contain names with the theophoric elements Bēl (‘Lord’) and Bēltiya (‘Lady’). In the Neo-Babylonian period and generally in Babylonian literature, these titles referred to Marduk and his spouse Zarpanītu. However, considering the limited importance of those two deities at Late Babylonian Uruk, it is not unlikely that in that context such names refer to Anu and Antu (cf. the Neo-Babylonian use of Bēltu for Ištar; Beaulieu 2003, 123).

353 Not attested among the currently known Urukean names are Gula, Amasagnudi, Bēltu-ša-Rēš, and Šarraḥītu.

attested in the ritual texts who also occur in personal names at Uruk are Šala, Bunene, Ninurta, and Bau (the latter attested only once). Finally, we encounter quite a few deities in the onomasticon who are not attested in other sources: the important northern Babylonian gods Nabû and Madānu, whose cults were already present at Uruk in the Neo-Babylonian period;³⁵⁴ the netherworld god Ningišzida, whose shrine inside the Eanna was restructured for a non-religious purpose under the Seleucids;³⁵⁵ d_{AMA}.ARḪUŠ, possibly a form of Gula who occurs mainly in the names of the cuneiform-literate elite; the otherwise unknown d_{ŠEŠ}.EŠ; the Elamite Šušinak; the West Semitic divine names Ilaḥa and Baraqa; and the Egyptian/“pan-Hellenistic” Isis. There is no sufficient proof for a (continuing) cult for any of these deities at Seleucid Uruk, but the non-Babylonian gods and goddesses do attest to the city’s cultural and religious diversity.

1.3.8.5 Summary

All in all, the sources provide us with the following list of deities who were certainly, probably or possibly worshipped at Seleucid Uruk. As discussed, we may consider the evidence in the legal documents beyond doubt, that in the ritual texts very likely, and that of the personal names only reliable insofar as they are corroborated by the contracts and/or ritual texts.

Name	Legal texts	Ritual texts	Onomasticon	Cult at NB Uruk
Anu	×	×	×	×
Antu	×	×	×	×
Anu and Antu of Heaven		×		
Papsukkal	×	×	×	
Amasagnudi	×	×		
Ištar	×	×	×	×
Nanāya	×	×	×	×
Bēlet-šēri	×	×	×	
Bēltu-ša-Reš	×	×		×
Šarraḫītu	×	×		
Enlil	×	×	×	×
Ea	×	×	×	×

354 Beaulieu 2003, 342–344.

355 Kose 1998, 270, 273, 276; see §1.3.5.5.

(cont.)

Name	Legal texts	Ritual texts	Onomasticon	Cult at NB Uruk
Sîn	×	×	×	×
Ningal		×		
Ningublaga		×		
Alammuš		×		
Šamaš	×	×	×	×
Aya		×		×
Bunene		×	×	×
Šakkan		×		
Adad	×	×	×	×
Šala		×	×	
Mišāru		×		
Marduk	×	×	×	×
Nabû			×	×
Gula / Bēlet-balāti / Bēlet-māti	×	×		×
Nergal	×	×	×	×
Šubula		×		
Ninurta		×	×	×
“gods of the sky” (= sun, moon, and five planets)	×	×		
Nuska		×		×
Sadarnunna		×		
Usmû		×		×
Kusu		×		
Pisangunug		×		
Bēlet-īli		×		
Ereškigal		×		×
Daughters of Anu		×		
Daughters of Uruk		×		
Lugalbanda		×		×
Ninsun		×		
Kusibanda		×		
Palil/ ^d IGI.DU		×		×
Šulpae		×		
Meslamtaea		×		×
Lugalirra		×		×

Name	Legal texts	Ritual texts	Onomasticon	Cult at NB Uruk
Girra		×		
Zababa		×		×
Amurru		×		×
Ašrātu		×		
Ninirigal		×		
Šarrat-šamê		×		
Daughters of Eanna		×		
Ninsianna		×		
Ninigizibarra		×		
Ninsigaranna		×		
Ninmeurur		×		
Išartu		×		
(Nin-)Šagepada		×		
Abeturra		×		
Šarrat-parakki		×		
Bau		×	×	
Ḫendursanga / Išum		×		
Sebeti		×		
Ušur-amāssu		×		×
Ninurbu		×		
Ninimma		×		
Šilamkurra		×		
Sirsir(?)		×		
Adapa		×		×
Urkayītu		×		×
Kilili and Barirītu		×		×
Bēlet-Eanna of Udannu		×		×
Annunītu(?)		×		×
Šilabat, Iḡibarluti, Kabilusig, Ada, Esapar		×		
Ninḫenunna, En(me)uranna and ^d ŠEŠ.AN.TUR		×		
Kanisurra		×		×
Lama-edin		×		
divine <i>urmaḫlulûs</i> (?)		×		×
Lamasigga		×		

(cont.)

Name	Legal texts	Ritual texts	Onomasticon	Cult at NB Uruk
Galgamunasummu		×		
“mighty woman of the Bīt Rēš” (?)		×		
Išhara		×		
Madānu			×	×
Ningišzida			×	×
^d AMA.ARḪUŠ (= Gula?)			×	
^d ŠEŠ.EŠ			×	
Ilaḥa			×	
Baraqa			×	
Šušinak			×	
Isis			×	
divine high priests (^d šeš.gal)		×		
divine symbols (^g štukul ^{meš})		×		(x) ³⁵⁶
sun disks (^d utu ^{meš})		×		
chariots (of Anu, Ninurta, Šamaš, and the constellation Chariot)		×		(x) ³⁵⁷
golden quivers of Anu and Antu		×		(x) ³⁵⁸

If we disregard the cultic objects and the non-Babylonian deities only known from the onomasticon, the table above contains 85 divine beings, of whom 35 (i.e. ca. 40%) are also attested in the administrative documents of Neo-Babylonian Uruk. However, since we do not possess ritual texts from that period with comparable lists of procession participants, some of the minor gods and goddesses listed in the Hellenistic *akītu* texts may also already have been present in the Eanna, without ever being mentioned individually in

356 It is unclear which deities were represented by these symbols; at Neo-Babylonian Uruk, the symbols of Bēl and Nabû were worshiped separately from the gods themselves (Beaulieu 2003, 267–268), but those probably fell out of use after 484 BC.

357 In Neo-Babylonian Uruk, a divine Chariot (^{d(gi)š}gigir), probably of Ištar, was worshiped; it had a shrine of its own and received offerings there (Beaulieu 2003, 295). The cultic paraphernalia of Marduk’s sanctuary also included a chariot (ibid. 269).

358 There may have been a divine Quiver of Ištar at Neo-Babylonian Uruk (Beaulieu 2003, 353).

sacrificial records. In fact, most of the new additions to the Seleucid pantheon—insofar as they were indeed new—can be explained through their roles as spouses, children, viziers, and servants of already existing divine inhabitants of the Bīt Rēš and the Irigal. Anu and Antu were given their Daughters of Anu and of Uruk; Papsukkal was newly introduced as Anu's vizier, together with his wife Amasagnudi; Nuska and Usmû more strongly assumed their roles as viziers of Enlil and Ea,³⁵⁹ and Nuska was joined by his spouse Sadarnunna; Sîn, Šamaš and Adad were joined by their spouses and sons Ningal, Ningublaga, Aya, Bunene, Šakkan, Šala, and Mišāru respectively; Nergal by his son Šubula, his vizier Išum/Ḫendursanga (who was also seen as the son of Šamaš), and his warriors the Sebeti; Lugalbanda by his wife Ninsun; and Amurru by his spouse Ašrātu.

Secondly, a diverse, but by no means obscure group of gods and goddesses was introduced for reasons that—although they remain speculation—also seem relatively straightforward. Pisangunug and Ninirigal had ancient ties to the temples of Uruk;³⁶⁰ Bēlet-īli is described in *An = Anum* as the wife of Anu and equated with both Antu and Ištar;³⁶¹ Bēlet-šēri is closely connected to Anu, Antu, and Pisangunug in ritual incantations;³⁶² and Girra, Kusu, and Kusibanda were important gods of cultic craftsmanship and indispensable in the rituals of both the *āšipu* and the *kalû* priest. Thirdly, most of the other new deities attested in the ritual texts are goddesses who were associated with Ištar, either through a (partial) equation with her, like Ninsianna and Išhara, or because they could be found in god lists and other religious handbooks as part of her extensive entourage.

Finally, the most remarkable and innovative new cult was that for Anu and Antu of Heaven, the astral counterparts of the divine couple of the Bīt Rēš, and for the sun, the moon, and the five planets as the collective “gods of the sky”.³⁶³ That increased focus on astral aspects of the divine may also explain the introduction of Alammuš, who together with Ningublaga could add the astral Little Twins to the Great Twins Meslamtaea and Lugalirra, and of Šulpae, who apart from being the more regular husband of Bēlet-īli was equated in the first millennium BC with Jupiter at its heliacal rising.³⁶⁴

359 See also § 5.2.2.

360 See § 5.6.4.

361 *An = Anum* I 25, 29–31 (Litke 1998, 24–25); for the use of *An = Anum* as a sourcebook by the Urukean priests, see § 2.1.

362 See Krul forthcoming b.

363 See also § 5.4.5 and Krul forthcoming a.

364 Delnero 2012.

This leaves several deities attested in the sources still unexplained or even unidentified, but the overall picture is clear. The pantheon of Seleucid Uruk was large, diverse, and very traditionally Babylonian. Even if we disregard the ritual texts, the legal documents lead to the same conclusion: religious practice at the Bīt Rēš, Irigal, Egalmaḥ and other sanctuaries of Uruk was still polytheistic and focused on a core group of Mesopotamian gods and goddesses, most of whose cults were continuations of those at Neo-Babylonian Uruk. At the same time, as we will see further on, certain scholarly texts from the period engage with the notion of Anu and Antu's equation with or supremacy over all other deities, but such theological works should be considered separately from the daily historical reality of the cultic temple service.

1.3.9 *The Late Seleucid and Early Parthian Period and the Decline of Uruk*

During the course of the second century BC, Seleucid policy towards local self-governance changed and the autonomy of the city and temple administrations of both Babylon and Uruk was severely curtailed. It is generally assumed that Babylon was changed into a Hellenistic polis, henceforth governed by the citizen body, the *politai*, at whose head stood the royally appointed *epistates/paḥat Bābili*. The Esagil lost all jurisdiction over anything other than internal cultic affairs.³⁶⁵ Clancier and Monerie propose that the same happened at Uruk.³⁶⁶ From the reign of Seleukos IV (187–175 BC) onwards, the authority of the *paqdu* and the *rab ša rēš āli* became restricted to the temples and those functions were henceforth designated as *ša bīt ilāni*, 'of the temples'. The *kiništu mār banê*, i.e. the assembly of privileged citizens which seems to have formed the main administrative body at Uruk in the third and early second century BC, was dismantled and replaced by the *kiništu ša bīt ilāni ša Uruk*, 'temple council of Uruk', whose primary function was the close supervision of the correct performance of prebendary duties. The powerful Aḥ'ūtu family lost their monopoly on the highest administrative positions, which fell into the hands of the Ḥunzû family; this, too, may have been a royal intervention aimed at preventing local elites from escaping the crown's control.³⁶⁷

After the last major construction phase of the Bīt Rēš and the Irigal under Anu-uballiṭ-Kephalon, some renovation work on both temples is attested for the late Seleucid and early Parthian period, including the corner towers of the

³⁶⁵ Clancier/Monerie 2014, 210–220.

³⁶⁶ Ibid. 220–223.

³⁶⁷ Ibid. 222.

Īt Rēš.³⁶⁸ In 141 BC, the Parthian army invaded Babylonia. After several unsuccessful attempts by the Seleucid kings to regain control over that province and plunderings in the south by local dynasts who took advantage of the conflict, Babylonia became a definitive part of the Arsacid empire by 125 BC.³⁶⁹ Under Mithridates II (123–88 BC), the Īt Rēš and the Irigal were transformed into one enormous fortress. Shortly after 88/87 BC, the year of Mithridates' death, major parts of the Īt Rēš and the Irigal were destroyed in a fire.³⁷⁰ Historians have long dated that catastrophe to around 141 BC, i.e. during or directly after the first Parthian invasion, but archaeologists have now been able to move that date to more than 50 years later. Moreover, the publication of a prebend sale deed from 108 BC has shown that temple business continued as usual under the first decades of Parthian rule.³⁷¹ An Astronomical Diary dated to 100 BC may derive from Uruk, and the city is mentioned in several Diaries from Babylon dated to the first century BC.³⁷²

After the fire, the Īt Rēš, the Irigal and the Eanna were once more rebuilt as fortresses and their walls and gates were renovated. The Anu-Antu-sanctuary remained a ruin, but a small, late Parthian-period temple was built against its southeastern façade and a new cultic postament was placed between two older ones in one of the shrines (room 95).³⁷³ That points to a continued use of certain parts of the building as places of worship, though presumably not of Babylonian deities. Houses were built inside the Īt Rēš and on and around the Anu ziqqurat.³⁷⁴ A deposit of bronze coins of Gotarzes II (40–51 AD) was found in the ruins of the Īt Rēš on top of the debris blocking the passage between Mittelhof VI and room 2, which suggests that life at Uruk continued in some form until at least the middle of the first century AD. A few decades later, the city seems to have regained some level of prosperity and a large new temple was constructed in the south, presumably by Dollamenes who had been brought there from Adiabene by Vologases I (51–78 AD).³⁷⁵ It has an eclectic, partly Romanising style and was dedicated to a not otherwise

368 Kose 1998, 122.

369 Joannès 2004, 234–235.

370 Kose 1998, 133.

371 Kessler 1984b.

372 Oelsner 2005, 34. A diary from 83 BC mentions that the king (Gotarzes I) was in Uruk in the spring of that year, but the context is too fragmentary to interpret (AD -82 A obv. 20').

373 Kose (1998, 64–65) suggests the small temple may have been a synagogue.

374 Ibid. 125–133. A golden ring with a female figure was found in one of the houses; cf. Kose 2013a fig. 57.8.

375 Westenholz 2007, 300.

known god named Gareus, according to a Greek inscription dating to 111 AD that was found at the site.³⁷⁶

Recently, an astronomical almanac found at Uruk has been reedited by Hermann Hunger and Teije de Jong and dated to 79/80 AD.³⁷⁷ That makes it the latest known cuneiform tablet, a status which was long attributed to a text in the same genre from Babylon dated to 75 AD.³⁷⁸ More importantly, if the date is correct, it would mean that not only cuneiform writing, but also the celestial sciences were practised at Uruk in some organised form for a much longer period than has been believed until now. After the late first century AD, however, there are no more remains of Babylonian culture that can be attributed to the site of Uruk-Warka. Generally, the cuneiform script and Babylonian cultural traditions are believed to have declined rapidly and finally disappeared between the second and third century AD with the conquest of Mesopotamia by the Sassanians.³⁷⁹

376 Kose 1998, 291–335; SEG 18: 596; Meier 1960. See Pedersén 1998, 207 plan 98 and Crüsemann et al. 2013 fig. 35.8, 57.3 and 65.3.

377 SpTU 1 99, excavated from the uppermost layer of U18; Hunger/De Jong 2014.

378 Sachs 1976.

379 Joannès 2004, 236. For a lively discussion on how to determine the end of Babylonian culture, which for example lived on much longer in the worship of several Mesopotamian deities, but not in the use of cuneiform, see Geller 1997 and the response by Westenholz 2007; see also the sophisticated contribution by Dirven 2014.

Theological and Ideological Aspects of the Anu Cult

The previous chapter provided an overview of the historical development of the Anu cult and the sources that reflect its practical organisation. We will now look at the evidence for the theological considerations that shaped the new pantheon and cultic worship at Uruk, and the legitimisation strategies employed by the cult's priest-scholars for their new religious programme.¹

2.1 Antiquarian Theology

As we have just seen, the pantheon of Uruk was not only altered after 484 BC with respect to Ištar's replacement by Anu as the city's patron deity, but it underwent an extensive transformation. Many deities were newly introduced, others abandoned. A striking aspect of those changes was what Paul-Alain Beaulieu has dubbed "antiquarian theology": gods and goddesses were revived who had not been actively worshipped at Uruk in many centuries, and the priests made use of theological handbooks dating back to the second millennium BC to find such deities and learn about their attributes and relationships.² Beaulieu has demonstrated that the priests of Anu primarily made use of the god lists *An = Anum* and *An = Anu ša amēli* to determine the most important gods of the new pantheon.³ The servant god Papsukkal, who was a relatively important divine messenger and gatekeeper in different Assyrian and Babylonian cities, but had never worshipped at Uruk before, was introduced as Anu's vizier because he is equated in *An = Anum* with the original vizier of An, Ninšubur.⁴ The obscure goddess Amasagnudi, listed in the same section of *An = Anum* (I 46) as Papsukkal's consort, was reunited with her spouse. Another example are the many minor goddesses who, according to the ritual texts,⁵

1 The topics in this chapter are also the subject of a thorough study by Angelika Berlejung (2009).

2 Beaulieu 1992, 68.

3 Beaulieu 1992, 55–60.

4 *An = Anum* I 41–42 (Litke 1998, 26); see § 5.2.2.1.

5 TU 42+ obv. 12'–13'; 25'; rev. 10'–13'; KAR 132 II obv. 7.

accompanied Ištar during her *akītu* processions and who, as mentioned earlier, are all listed in *An = Anum* among the lesser deities and servants of Ištar: Nini-gizibarra and Ninsigaranna (*A = A* IV 73–74), Šešantur (IV 97), En(me)uranna (IV 98), Šilabat, Igi-barluti, Kabilusig, Ada, and Esapar (IV 137–141). Whether or not they already served Ištar in the Eanna cannot be determined, since they are not mentioned in the administrative texts on which the study of the pantheon of Neo-Babylonian Uruk depends. Still, it is more likely that the priests of Uruk perused *An = Anum* to find every single one of Ištar's divine subjects and thus provide her with as grand and complete a retinue as possible for her festive induction into the Irigal.⁶

The familiarity of the scholars of late Babylonian Uruk with *An = Anum* and their interest in it is further demonstrated by the fact that several tablets of the compendium have been found in the tablet collection of the Šangû-Ninurta family. More specifically, several references to it occur in the colophons of Anu-ikšur. He and his son Anu-ušallim enjoyed replacing the names Anu and Antu with the names of the primordial deities with whom Anu and Antu are equated in *An = Anum* and other obscure, archaic gods and goddesses. With those little 'rebuses', they could demonstrate both their proficiency in cuneiform writing and their intimate knowledge of the theological associations established in the classical god list. Moreover, they emphasized the profound antiquity of Anu and Antu themselves and, indirectly, the subordination of Ištar and Marduk to them, since the latter belonged to a younger divine generation.⁷ These references to *An = Anum* suggest that Anu-ikšur, and probably his father and brother as well, were directly involved in the development of the new Anu pantheon and its underlying theological structures.⁸

Playful spellings of divine names are not found in the tablets of Iqīša, but his contribution to the Anu cult clearly speaks from several works in his possession.⁹ Like the esoteric colophons just described, several of Iqīša's texts are typical examples of Babylonian 'hermeneutics', which usually involved speculative or mystical interpretations of the different logograms in Sumerian divine and

6 It is important to keep in mind, however, that *An = Anum* may have been a significant, but certainly not the only source for the pantheon of Seleucid Uruk. The worship of certain deities will also have been influenced by sociocultural and demographic factors, such as the presence of nomadic tribes and traders from other parts of the Near East and, most importantly, the influence of West-Semitic and Hellenistic culture on late first-millennium Babylonia.

7 Berlejung 2009, 79–80.

8 Farber 1989a, 239–240; Frahm 2002, 86–88.

9 Frahm 2002, 90.

temple names and literary passages.¹⁰ It appears that one of Iqīša's interests—or one of the assignments he enjoyed giving to students—was to excerpt passages referring to Anu from existing theological works, rituals, and incantations and to combine them into new reference texts. SpTU III 109 is a list of deities, partly compiled from passages in *An = Anum* and partly written in the style of that work, which gives an overview of several gods of battle and medicine, most of whom were either equated or closely related to each other in Sumerian religious tradition. Their connection to Uruk is established via the first two deities on the list, Lugalbanda and Ninsun, the deified father and divine mother of Gilgameš. Both they and nearly all the other gods on the list—Gula, Lugalirra and Meslamtaea, Zababa, Pisangunug, Bēlet-šēri—are attested as members of the pantheon of Seleucid Uruk.

A second, similar text, SpTU IV 132, is a fragmentary list of children and servants of Anu, several of whom are again derived from *An = Anum*.¹¹ Interestingly, and perhaps in accordance with Iqīša's astrological interests, "the exalted Šiḥṭu" (^dgu₄.ud, the planet Mercury) is one of the deities listed as Anu's son.¹² Thirdly, SpTU III 72 is a compilation of quotes not only from *An = Anum*, but also from the exorcistic ritual series *Maqlū*, *Šurpu*, *Lamaštu*, and *Utukkū Lemnūtu* as well as several 'hand-raising' (šū-ila) prayers. All those quotes form parallel, identical or nearly identical pairs of phrases, of which one addresses or refers to Anu (and sometimes Antu), the other Enlil (and sometimes Ninlil). The entire compilation appears to have been made for the purpose of demonstrating the similarity and equality between the two gods and the two divine couples respectively.¹³ A final text belonging to the Anu-theology corpus, though not from the Ekur-zākir collection, is a speculative exegesis of various ceremonial names and epithets of Antu, strongly reminiscent of the fifty divine names of Marduk and their explanations at the end of *Enūma Eliš*.¹⁴ Like the latter, the list serves to demonstrate the complexity and universal authority of the goddess.¹⁵ The only manuscript currently

10 George 1993, 49 note 51 with further literature.

11 SpTU IV 132: 15–16 (^dLugalanna, ^dKataranna, ^dAntasurra, ^dKigula) = *An = Anum* 1 77–78, 80–81; together with a fifth deity. the constellation ^{mml}ikū, they form the "5 cultic musicians of Anu".

12 SpTU IV 132: 14.

13 Farber 1989a, 233–236. SpTU III 63 and SpTU I 178, the latter of which was written by an Enlil priest, may also have belonged to this syncretistic study (Frahm 2002, 89 note 71).

14 MLC 1890 (ed. Beaulieu 1995).

15 Beaulieu 1995, 88.

available was copied in 225 BC by a member of the Sîn-lêqe-unninni family, but the text may have been composed earlier.

2.2 Henotheistic Tendencies?

Joachim Oelsner has argued that the extremely high percentage of Anu-names in the Hellenistic Urukian onomasticon, which far exceeds the popularity of local patron deities in Neo-Babylonian naming trends, may point to henotheistic tendencies in Hellenistic Babylonia—a preference for the city’s tutelary deity in the personal piety of the inhabitants and perhaps also a greater focus on him/her in the cult.¹⁶ As we have just seen, the priestly nobility of Uruk—who almost exclusively dominate the available sources—indeed endeavoured to establish Anu, or the divine couple Anu-Antu, as an all-encompassing divine principle. However, such speculative theology was by no means a new phenomenon, but had been an important aspect of Assyrian and Babylonian scholarship for many centuries. Moreover, it remained restricted to a small layer of the intellectual elite.¹⁷

Furthermore, the predominance of the local main deity in the onomasticon of Late Babylonian cities should be seen as part of a broader development away from the previous “Babylonisation” of local expressions of worship and towards favorisation of local temples and cults.¹⁸ Like the emergence of the Anu cult, these changes had not only a religious but also a political dimension, having been catalysed by the fall of Babylon as the centre of political power in Babylonia between 539 and 484 BC.¹⁹ Uri Gabbay has shown that at Uruk and various other Babylonian cities during the late Achaemenid and Hellenistic period, the standard litanies in the Emesal prayers of the *kalû* priests were replaced with the names of local deities and sanctuaries.²⁰ At Uruk specifically, the names of Anu and Uruk were first added to the existing litanies, various goddesses

16 Oelsner 1994, 493. He observes similar developments at Kiš and Cutha, although the amount of sources from those cities is too small to be certain.

17 Compare the syncretistic hymns and other speculative texts which describe all major Mesopotamian deities as mere aspects of one single god, such as Marduk, Ištar, or Ninurta (Lambert 1975; id. 2003–2004; Foster 2005, 692, 713–714; Beaulieu 1995, 188–189). For a discussion of heno- or even monotheistic speculations centred on the god Aššur, see Parpola 2000 and the response by Porter (2000).

18 Gabbay 2013, 117–118; id. 2014, 209–218.

19 See § 1.2.1.

20 Gabbay 2014, 218–227.

were replaced by Inanna/Ištar, and Marduk and Nabû were changed into Enlil and Ninurta. In the third century BC, when the new temples of Uruk had been completed, the “bridge” via Enlil was skipped and Marduk and the Esagil were directly replaced by Anu and the Bīt Rēš.²¹

Finally, in terms of cultic practice, the supremacy of Anu at Seleucid Uruk was far from unchallenged by other important deities, Ištar and Nanāya in particular. The daily and monthly offering cycles for all local deities continued at Uruk as they had throughout Babylonia for many centuries. As pointed out earlier, the third most popular name at Uruk after Nidintu-Anu and Anu-uballit was in fact not an Anu-name, but Nanāya-iddin.²² The juxtaposition of the Bīt Rēš/Ešarra and the Irigal with their respective divine residents, both in their architectural alignment and in the ritual texts, does not point to a city religion exclusively centred on Uruk’s two tutelary deities, but rather to a dualistic theology according to which Anu and Antu ruled the heavens and Ištar the netherworld (see below).²³

2.3 Anchoring the Cult in the Historical and Mythological Past

The diligence with which the scholars of late Achaemenid and Seleucid Uruk studied classical religious and ritual texts for the creation of the Anu pantheon was not only born of a respect for the millennia of religious tradition reflected in those sources; it was also a necessary strategy to legitimize the very late addition of a completely new cultic and theological system to that tradition. In ancient Mesopotamia, as in the entire ancient world, innovation and change were not considered positive developments in themselves, but were only accepted if they were anchored in the past—if it could be demonstrated that the new practice or concept in fact had ancient roots and was not newly introduced, but merely revived.²⁴ A well-known letter from a Neo-Assyrian priest to his king expresses in no uncertain terms how a recently developed ritual was valued by those expected to perform it:²⁵

21 Cf. BaM Beiheft 2 21: 6–12; Gabbay 2013, 109–112. The replacement of Marduk by both Anu and Enlil in Emesal prayers from the late Achaemenid period may be connected to the scholarly collaboration between Uruk and Nippur; see § 2.3.2.

22 Cf. Chapter 1 note 281.

23 See § 2.3.1.

24 Berlejung 2009, 72–73; see also <http://www.ru.nl/oikos/anchoring-innovation/anchoring-innovation/>.

25 obv. 4' [iti x x] 5' ud.16.kám ina sa-^rḫar²¹ [ud-me ^d15] 6' ina šà [ká.]gal ra-^rbīⁿ-te tal-[lak x x]

In [the month of ...], on the 16th day, in the even[ing, Ištar] will g[o] through the great gate [and] descend into the cana[l ...]. There is a ritual [*he* will perform]. She will then come up from the canal, go under the gate of the temple of Nabû, and take a seat in the shrine's gate. [Th]ere is a [ritual] *he* will perfo[rm]. She will then go d[own] from the shrine's gate in[to the ...] of the palace which faces the [...] of the drinking place. He will fin[ish] 3 libation jars. This is not a ritual; this is nothing. It is not ancient—your father introduced [it].

The priests of Seleucid Uruk themselves were no aliens to those notions. While they made use of forms of literary propaganda which may strike the modern reader as wilfully deceptive, their striving to prove that Anu had in fact been worshipped at Uruk in the earliest days of Mesopotamian civilization was sincere. In order to establish a continuity—partly invented, partly factual—between the Anu cult as they had created it and various stages in the religious history of their ancient city, they employed a number of different methods. Firstly, as already discussed above, they adopted deities into the pantheon of Uruk who belonged to Anu's retinue according to time-honoured, authoritative handbooks such as *An = Anum*. Secondly, they sought cultic locations and ceremonial names for such locations that had either been in use at Uruk in earlier periods, or evoked associations with other important Mesopotamian cult centres. Finally, they made explicit claims in various texts about the historical roots of the Anu cult and the priestly families involved in its organisation.

2.3.1 *Modelling Temples and Temple Names on Venerable Cultic Locations*

The existence of a cult for Anu at Uruk during earlier phases of the city's history was not a flight of fancy of Seleucid-era scholars. As summarized in the previous chapter, the worship of An/Anu is attested at Uruk since the Early Dynastic period. Although modern archaeologists have not been able to prove whether or not the White Temple and the Old Terrace were originally dedicated to him, it is clear that they were considered as such by the citizens of and visitors to Uruk in later periods. Uruk had flourished under the rule of the Ur III dynasty, but after the dynasty's demise, the two terraces had fallen into decay. During the next 1300 years, they had turned into an impressive ruin mound on the western

⁷ *tu-ra¹-ad ina šà ħi-ri-[te x x]* ⁸ *dul-lu i-ba-áš-ši [e-pa-áš]* ⁹ *ta ugu ħi-ri-te ta⁻¹la¹-[ka]* ¹⁰ *ina šap-la ká.gal ša é^apa¹¹ tal-lak ina ká¹ suk-ki tu⁻¹šab¹² [dul-lu i]-ba¹-áš-ši e-pa-[áš]* ¹³ *ta ká suk-ki ina¹ šà¹ [x x x]* ^{rev. 1} *ša é.gal ša pa⁻¹an¹ [x x x]* ² *ša maš-qe-e tu-[ra-ad²]* ³ *pa-gi-li ú-gam-[mar]* ⁴ *la dul-lu la me-me-e⁻¹ni¹* ⁵ *la-a la-bi-ru šu⁻¹ú¹* ⁶ *ad-ú-ka us-se-li [x x]* (Cole/Machinist 1998, no. 135: obv. 4⁻¹-rev. 6).

side of the city, which, as impressive ruins do, developed more and more symbolic value over time. They became a *lieu de mémoire*, a geographical node of local associations with the historical and mythical past and a projection plane for contemporary sentiments concerning that past.²⁶

In Sumerian literary compositions, which all Late Babylonian scholars read as part of their higher education, An and Inanna are plainly described as residing at Uruk together, but later stories tell of the venerable sky god transferring his power to his granddaughter.²⁷ Since Iqīša possessed a copy of the ‘Exaltation of Ištar’, we may assume that those myths were also still known to and studied by the scholars of Late Babylonian Uruk. In their eyes, Anu had clearly been the city’s original patron deity, and where else could his dwelling have stood but on that immense, abandoned sacred precinct? Already Esarhaddon considered the Anu ziqqurrat worthy of reconstruction and it is hard to imagine to which other god he may have wanted to dedicate it. In any case, the building of the Bīt Rēš directly on the remains of the Old Terrace is tangible evidence that the Seleucid-era Urukian priests believed that those ruins belonged to Anu.²⁸

Apart from the fact that the Anu temple was founded on existing sacred ground, the lay-out of the Bīt Rēš and the ceremonial names for several of its features were carefully chosen to correspond to those of other major cult centres of Babylonia.²⁹ The most important—but certainly not the only—inspiration appears to have been the Esagil, the temple of Marduk in Babylon.³⁰ Susan Downey has demonstrated that the general layout of the Anu-Antu sanctuary follows that of the Esagil and two other temples at Babylon, the Emaḥ of the goddess Ninmaḥ (Bēlet-īli) and the unidentified Temple z.³¹ Textual sources confirm that those similarities are not accidental. A tablet in the library of Iqīša, dubbed by Andrew George ‘The Bricks of Esagil’, lists the number of bricks used

26 Ambos 2013a, 59–63. For the analytical concept *lieu de mémoire*, see Nora 1984–1992; for its application in the field of ancient history, see Hölkeskamp/Stein-Hölkeskamp 2006.

27 See §1.1.

28 Ambos (2013a, 61–63) points out that, like the modern archaeologists, the people of Uruk may also have found cuneiform tablets from the fourth and third millennium BC on the ruin mound. In the first millennium, the archaic cuneiform script was believed to date from the mythical time before the flood, as Aššurbanipal states in one of his inscriptions (Streck 1916, 256: 18).

29 I thank Claus Ambos for discussing several nuances of this issue with me.

30 George 1995, 194–195; 1996, 374.

31 Downey 1988, 38–39. The greatest difference between the Bīt Rēš and the Esagil is that the latter possessed only one large courtyard, whereas the Bīt Rēš had seven large ones as well as a number of smaller ones. That grand lay-out style may have been inspired by the Eanna.

for various architectural features of the Esagil.³² Further, another important Urukian scholar who was active between 231 and 185 BC, Anu-bēlšunu senior of the Sîn-lēqe-unninni family,³³ made a copy for his scribal tutor of the so-called ‘Esagil Tablet’, an overview of the idealised schematics of two outer courtyards, the ziqqurat, and the ziqqurat shrine of the Esagil.³⁴

It is unlikely that the priests of the Anu cult were interested in literature concerning the cult or the temple of Marduk unless they had a specific practical purpose for it. Indeed, four of the names of gates of the Bīt Rēš occur on the ‘Esagil Tablet’ (lines 12–15): the Grand Gate (ká.maḥ), the Great Gate (ká.gal), the Gate of Plenty (ká.ḥe.en.gal.la) and the Pure Gate (ká.sikil.la). The Grand Gate and the Gate of Plenty offered access into the temple complex from the northeastern and western side respectively, just as in the Esagil, but the location of the other two gates differed completely from their namesakes at Babylon.³⁵ In addition to the names of the gates, the *akītu* house of Anu was called Bīt Ikribi, a direct Akkadian translation of the name of Marduk’s *akītu* house, the Esiskur.³⁶ Finally, the Bīt Rēš possessed an Ubšukinnaku, a divine assembly for the half-yearly gathering of the members of the pantheon to discuss the fate of the world, and a Dais of Destinies, upon which Anu and several other major deities were seated for that occasion.³⁷ The courtyard in the Bīt Rēš most likely to have been the Ubšukinnaku is *Mittelhof VI*, which means that it lay directly to the east of the Anu-Antu-sanctuary proper and that the lay-out of the temple complex was in that respect identical to that of the Esagil.³⁸

Such borrowing of names and features from another major temple was not unique to Uruk and Babylon respectively, but a recurring practice in Mesopotamia when a sanctuary was built for a god who had risen to supremacy over—at

32 SpTU IV 220 (George 1995, 195–197).

33 About that scholar, his grandson, and the Sîn-lēqe-unninni’s in general, see Pearce/Doty 2000; Beaulieu 2000.

34 TU 32; George 1992, 109–119; see § 5.4.1.

35 The Great Gate of the Bīt Rēš was in the northeastern wall below the Grand Gate, whereas at the Esagil it was located inside the Bēl-Bēltīya-sanctuary, between the Courtyard of Bēl and his antecella; the Pure Gate, in turn, was a passageway between Anu’s cella and the Anu ziqqurat at the Bīt Rēš, only accessible to temple enterers, whereas at Babylon it was the gate which provided entry into the entire sacred precinct of Marduk, which comprised the Esagil, the Marduk ziqqurat Etemenanki, several spacious courtyards and sanctuaries to other deities (George 1992, 85–91; see for the Pure Gate § 5.5.7).

36 BRM IV 7 obv. 24; George 1993, no. 993.

37 See § 5.6.5.

38 See also § 5.2.1.

least—his local pantheon and whose authority over more ancient divine leaders had to be emphasized. The Esagil itself, as well as the Ešarra (‘House of the Universe’), the temple of the god Aššur in the city of Aššur, were in turn modelled on the Ekur, the venerable temple at Nippur of Enlil, king of the Sumerian pantheon.³⁹ The Ekur had possessed the original Ubšukkinnaku (Sum. ub-šu-unkin-na) and the name Ešarra belonged to a part of the Ekur, as well as to a cosmic abode of Enlil described in mythological texts.⁴⁰ In the famous passage in *Enūma Eliš* where Marduk splits the carcass of Tiamat in two to create heaven and earth, he proceeds to settle Anu in the upper layer of heaven and to create a lower layer called Ešarra in the sky for Enlil, as a mirror image of Ea’s “great sanctuary” (èš.gal.la) in the subterranean Apsû.⁴¹

In Sumerian literature, the Ekur is described as the earthly counterpart of Enlil’s divine palace in heaven and thus as the centre of the world, which was later also propagated for the temples of Aššur and Marduk. By adopting elements from the Ekur, they would become the new Ekur and take over the latter’s status and authority. In Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian literature, the Esagil of Marduk was “the equal of the Apsû” and his ziqqurrat Etemenanki “the equal of the Ešarra”, the latter having become by that time a synonym for heaven as a whole.⁴² The same ideological development took place at Seleucid Uruk. The adoption of ceremonial topographical names from Babylon and other Mesopotamian cities for the temple of Anu should not be seen as an “acknowledgment of E-sagil as the supreme manifestation of the earthly abode of the king of the gods”,⁴³ but as a strategy to transfer that very status to the Bīt Rēš. For the same reason, the name Ešarra was given to Anu’s ziqqurrat sanctuary. No copies of *Enūma Eliš* have been found at Seleucid Uruk, which is understandable given the likely disinterest of the local priesthood in literary exaltations of Marduk; still, it is remarkable and perhaps not a coincidence that the new temple of Ištar was called Ešgal/Irigal (èš/iri₁₂.gal.la), a name which evokes both the term ‘great sanctuary’ and a name for the netherworld (Irkalla, written iri₁₂.gal, iri₁₁.gal, urugal or úrugal).⁴⁴ Together, the Ešarra of the sky

39 George 1995, 194–195.

40 George 1993, no. 1034.

41 *Enūma Eliš* IV 143–146 (Lambert 2013, 94); cf. Livingstone 1986, 79–81.

42 Lambert 2013, 199–200.

43 George 1995, 194.

44 The primary indication that the name of the Ištar temple should be read Irigal and not Ešgal is the Uruk ritual text KAR 132, which (1 obv. 23) provides the temple’s name (written èš-gal-la) with the gloss iri₁₁-gal. A sanctuary of the same name existed at late third-/early second-millennium Uruk (Conti 1993); it was connected to (or possibly part of) the

god Anu atop the ziqurrat and the Irigal of Ištar, a goddess closely associated with the netherworld, may have been considered a representation in sacred architecture of the totality of the universe.

2.3.2 *Scholarly Exchange with Nippur and Dēr*

The scholars of Seleucid Uruk not only possessed topographical texts related to Babylon, but also to Uruk itself and other cities. At U18, the site which has yielded the tablet collections of the Šangû-Ninurta and Ekur-zākir families, the ‘Uruk Shrine List’ was found, a list of shrines in the Eanna copied from a tablet from Babylon.⁴⁵ Another explanatory list of shrines of—probably—Ištar was found in the library of the *kalûs* in the Bīt Rēš itself.⁴⁶ Further, Iqīša possessed a copy of the ‘Nippur Compendium’, a collection of esoteric knowledge ranging from obscure epithets of the divine inhabitants of Nippur and hermeneutical explanations of the names of the city’s sanctuaries to lists of demons, festivals, and connections between deities and birds, directions of the wind, and days of the month.⁴⁷ Finally, he was probably also the owner of a list of gardens and other localities of the city of Dēr found at the site of his tablet collection.⁴⁸

The fact that the last two texts deal with the cities Nippur and Dēr is not a coincidence. A number of other texts—all with lexical and divinatory subjects—which have been found in grid square U18 belong to the stratigraphical layer of Iqīša’s library, but according to their colophons they were written at Nippur. Several other Late Babylonian tablets, which were acquired on the antiquities market but were arguably discovered at Uruk, also have colophons naming scribes from Nippur.⁴⁹ In one of his colophons, Iqīša states that he has made the copy himself from “an old wax table from Nippur”.⁵⁰ Eckart Frahm has shown that the texts which, according to their colophons, originated at Nippur were written by several priests of the Ekur who were both *āšipu* and brewer, just like a group of scholarly texts from Nippur itself that are now in the Louvre (although the latter were written by different individuals). Iqīša himself also fulfilled both those prebendary functions at the Anu sanctuary. Frahm

Eanna and associated with the protective goddess Ninirigal, “mother of Kullaba”, who also appears in the ritual texts from Hellenistic Uruk (Krul 2013, 65–67).

45 SpTU I 136 (George 1992, no. 25).

46 W 20030/20 (George 1992, no. 31).

47 SpTU II 29 (George 1992, no. 18).

48 SpTU IV 185.

49 Frahm 2002, 93.

50 SpTU II 34 rev. 28–30.

argues that he had good connections with his colleagues at Nippur and may have travelled there in order to exchange knowledge and copy tablets, or have them copied for him.

Friendly contact between the priests of Uruk and Nippur is not a surprising phenomenon, because both cities were considered venerable centres of the ancient Sumerian religious tradition. Also, they shared the fate of having been allies with the Neo-Assyrian empire in different phases of the latter's history and having opposed the supremacy of Marduk and Babylon. What's more, the compilation made by (or for) Iqīša of quotes from various texts to demonstrate the similarity between Anu and Enlil (SpTU III 72, see above) even makes the impression that Iqīša, perhaps assisted by the scholars at Nippur, endeavoured to develop a syncretism between their two gods.⁵¹ The same is suggested by the Emesal prayers from Uruk dated to Iqīša's time which replace Marduk and Babylon with both Anu/Uruk and Enlil/Nippur, as if they were a product of priestly collaboration between the two cult centres.⁵²

A similar intellectual relationship may have existed between the scholars at Uruk and those at Dēr, a city on the eastern side of the Tigris. As mentioned, one of the texts found in U18 was a topographical text related to Dēr; an Emesal prayer also discovered in that findspot was written by a scribe from Dēr.⁵³ Together with four more texts acquired on the antiquities market, they constitute the only known Late Babylonian cuneiform documents from that city. All seem to have belonged to the same priestly family, with which Iqīša may have been in contact.⁵⁴

The patron deity of Dēr was the chthonic god Ištaran, who had both netherworld- and astral connotations. He had originally belonged to a group of deities dubbed by Frans Wiggermann "transtigradian snake gods",⁵⁵ together with whom he is listed in *An = Anum* (v 213–295). In the late Babylonian period, both he and Anu were associated with the constellation Hydra (^{mu}1^{mu}š).⁵⁶ His close connection with Anu is most clearly expressed by the variant spelling of his name ^dan.gal / ^danu rabû, 'great Anu', and the scribes in the colophons of the six texts just mentioned bear names with the theophoric element Anu as well as Ištaran.⁵⁷ Thus, though the evidence is not as clear as in the case of Anu

51 Frahm 2002, 89–94.

52 Gabbay 2014, 222–223.

53 SpTU IV 125.

54 Oelsner 1995.

55 Wiggermann 1997.

56 Walker/Hunger 1977, 30: 9.

57 The name Ištaran evokes an association with the name Ištar and may have developed

and Enlil, the scholars of Uruk and Dēr may have worked on establishing the similarities or even a syncretism between Anu and Ištaran. According to Frahm, such striving toward religious unity between Uruk, Nippur and Dēr may have had a political dimension as well, since Dēr had also been under direct control of the Neo-Assyrian empire and the three cities may have been allies during that period.⁵⁸

2.3.3 *The Name Bīt Rēš*

As just described, the names and lay-out of various sacred locations at Seleucid Uruk harked back to an old and widespread Mesopotamian tradition, but the origins of the name Bīt Rēš itself are still somewhat unclear. One would expect that it was also somehow derived from sources dealing with a much earlier chapter in the history of Uruk, but the evidence that a sanctuary named *é rēš* or *é-saĝ* already existed at Uruk before the Hellenistic period is meagre at best. The clearest indication is the goddess Bēltu-ša-Rēš who was worshipped at Neo-Babylonian Uruk.⁵⁹ She belonged to the closest companions of Ištar and lived with her in the Eanna. Together with the other residents of that temple (Ištar, Nanāya, Gula, ⁴IGI.DU, Ušur-amāssu and Urkayītu), she was included in the pantheon of Seleucid Uruk and moved into the Irigal. Her name suggests that she was the protective deity of a sanctuary named Rēš; however, no such building is attested in the Neo-Babylonian sources. The small sanctuary that Anu possessed during that period is always simply referred to in the sources as *é a-nu*, “the temple of Anu”.

Apart from Bīt Ikribi, the name of the primary *akītu* house at both Seleucid Uruk and Babylon, Bīt Rēš is the only attested temple name written in Akkadian instead of Sumerian. That has led Adam Falkenstein to argue that it cannot have been derived from a sanctuary existing before the first millennium, because Sumerian ceremonial temple names were a millennia-old Mesopotamian tradition and Uruk lay in what was originally the heartland of Sumerian culture.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, one could assume that it was taken from a temple named E-sag,

under the influence of that association, even if the etymological relationship between the two remains a matter of dispute (some scholars believe that it derives from a non-Semitic name *Štaran or *Štran; cf. Litke 1998, 194 note 287 with further literature).

58 Frahm 2002, 98.

59 See Beaulieu 2003, 216–226. Her name is written *gašan šá sag*, *gašan šá reš-šú* and *gašan šá re-eš-šú* in Neo-Babylonian documents and *gašan šá sag*, *gašan šá e-sag* and *gašan šá re-eš* in the Seleucid documents.

60 Falkenstein 1941, 4.

which for unknown reasons eventually became translated into Akkadian and spelled syllabically. In that case, the only possible candidate is a temple E-sag for the divine Lugalbanda, who is described in Late Babylonian texts as the “king of Kullaba” or even “Enlil of Kullaba”.⁶¹ The temple is attested in the district Kullab at Babylon,⁶² but not in Uruk itself. It is referred to in a Neo-Babylonian legal document as the *bīt rēš akītu*, which George interprets as the “starting point of the *akītu*”. Since that designation does not fit the known route of the procession to the *akītu* house at Babylon, he suggests that it may instead derive from the function of a Lugalbanda-temple of the same name at Uruk.⁶³ That is not very likely, since an *akītu* procession always began at the temple of the patron deity of a particular city; at Seleucid Uruk, that was the Bīt Rēš, but that is no indication that the same sanctuary had originally belonged to Lugalbanda.

More convincing is the proposal by Beaulieu and Ambos to interpret the name Bīt Rēš as ‘house of the beginning’, referring to the ancient times in which—according to first-millennium Urukian scholars—it was originally constructed (see below).⁶⁴ If that name was not invented in the Seleucid period, but given to the new sanctuary which Esarhaddon built on the Old Terrace, it could explain the existence of the goddess Bēltu-ša-Rēš at Uruk during the Neo-Babylonian period. As one of Ištar’s companions, she continued to be worshipped after the fall of the Neo-Assyrian empire, while the cult of Anu himself was greatly reduced in importance and moved to a small shrine outside of the Eanna precinct.⁶⁵ Through the cult of Bēltu-ša-Rēš and perhaps through an oral tradition which has been lost to us, the knowledge that the Anu temple on the Old Terrace had once been called (Bīt) Rēš remained alive at Uruk and was duly implemented when the worship of Anu took new flight a century and a half later.

2.3.4 *The Textual (Re)construction of the Cult’s History*

Apart from the new temples, their names and architectural styles, the priests of Uruk sought to establish continuity between the new Anu cult and the city’s famous historical and mythological past through the production of a number of texts of different genres. Those documents not only link Anu, the Bīt Rēš,

61 Falkenstein 1941, 33.

62 George 1993, no. 953.

63 VAS V 5, 4; George 1993, no. 940.

64 Beaulieu 2004, 317; Ambos 2013a, 63.

65 See § 1.1.

the Irigal and the cultic rites performed in those temples to ancient origins, but also provide at least one of the priestly families themselves with a long and illustrious history.

2.3.4.1 The Legacy of Oannès

The first text to be discussed here is the cuneiform building inscription of Anu-uballit-Kephalon.⁶⁶ In lines 6–7, he says: “the Bit Rēš, which Oannès-Adapa built, I have now demolished”. That statement refers to an Assyrian and Babylonian mythological tradition of the late second and the first millennium BC. According to that mythology, seven sages (*apkallū*), of whom *Um/wanna (Greek: Oannès) was the first and most important, had lived before the Flood and had originally possessed the ritual expertise which had later been transmitted down to Mesopotamian scholars (*ummânū*) and become their professional domain.⁶⁷ The *apkallus* were creatures of Enki/Ea, the god of wisdom and sweet water who resided at the ancient city of Eridu, and they had the appearance of fish with human heads and feet. During the course of the first millennium, the knowledge attributed to them and in particular to their leader Oannès grew to include other scholarly crafts besides the performance of ritual, such as divination and literature. Oannès came to be considered the author of several omen handbooks and literary works.⁶⁸

The notion of the *apkallus* as the original founders of the city of Uruk and its main architectural features is already present in the Standard Babylonian ‘Epic of Gilgameš’:⁶⁹

Go up on the wall of Uruk and walk around,
survey the foundation platform, inspect the brickwork!

66 Translated in full in the previous chapter, §1.3.2.

67 Cf. Lenzi 2008, note 3 with further literature; De Breucker 2012, 359–361. In several first-millennium texts, among which the Kephalon inscription, the name Oannès is combined with Adapa, another sage, ritual expert and priest of Ea with a different mythological background. The two may have become equated at a certain point, or the name Adapa may have become an epithet meaning “the sage” (Michalowski 1980, 78; Streck 2003–2005, 1–2).

68 Lambert 1962, 64 I: 5–7; Streck 2003–2005, 1–2; Rochberg 2010, 216–217; De Breucker 2012, 306–309.

69 ¹⁸ *e-li-ma ina' ugu bàd šá unug^{ki} l' (text: IM)-tal-lak¹⁹ te-me-en-nu hi-iṭ-ma sig₄ šu-ub-bu²⁰ šum-ma sig₄-šú la a-gur-^rrat²¹ u uš-šú-šú la id-du-ú 7 ^rmun¹-tal-ku (SB ‘Gilgameš’ I 18–21, addressing the listener; repeated—addressed to the boatsman Ur-šanabi—in XI 323–326; tr. George 2003, 539).*

(See) if its brickwork is not kiln-fired brick,
and if the Seven Sages did not lay its foundation!

Thus, by the time the Late Babylonian Anu cult was developed, it was a centuries-old and—considering the popularity of ‘Gilgames’ throughout the ancient Near East—a well-established notion that Uruk itself had been built in a primeval era by Oannès and his colleagues. Furthermore, in Hellenistic Babylon, a description of Oannès was included in a chapter on the origins of Babylonian culture in the Greek historiographical work *Babyloniaka*, attributed to a Babylonian priest called in Greek Berossos. According to the *Babyloniaka*, Oannès had taught humankind everything that was necessary to lead a good life: not only the esoteric knowledge of the priest-scholars that allowed them to contact the gods and interpret divine messages, but also writing, agriculture, architecture, cultic worship, law, measuring land and ruling a state. After him, nothing new was ever invented.⁷⁰ In short, by the Hellenistic period, Oannès had become the mythological embodiment of the beginning of Mesopotamian civilization, which since then had always remained the same. Thus, by claiming that Oannès was the one who had originally built the Bīt Rēš, Kephalon established a continuity of the temple’s history from his own age back to the dawn of time. He had created nothing new—he had merely restored what had already existed since the world had come into being.

Apart from the growing significance of the figure Oannès and the knowledge attributed to him, the *apkallu* tradition developed another important aspect during the first millennium. Several ritual and literary texts allude to the idea that the arcane lore and literary expertise brought into the world by the *apkallus* had been transmitted in an unbroken line to the *ummânû*, the human scholars. Consequently, the *ummânus* were the direct intellectual heirs and worldly counterparts of the mythical *apkallus*, and their scholarly authority was founded in the divine origin of their craftsmanship. Alan Lenzi calls this the “mythology of scribal succession”.⁷¹

That brings us to another text from Uruk which deals with the historical background of the Anu cult and especially with that of the priestly families responsible for it: the so-called ‘Uruk List of Kings and Sages’.⁷² The tablet on which it is written was discovered in the *kalû* library of the Bīt Rēš and was both copied and owned by Anu-bēlišunu junior of the Šin-lēqe-unninni family, an important

70 De Breucker 2012, 224.

71 Lenzi 2008, 143–153.

72 BaM Beiheft 2 89; first edition Van Dijk 1962; most recent edition Lenzi 2008.

Urukian scholar who was active during the first half of the second century BC.⁷³ It presents a list of partly mythological, partly historical Mesopotamian kings, from seven antediluvian kings via Enmerkar and Gilgamesh down to Nebuchadnezzar (I?) and Esarhaddon. Alongside each king, a wise advisor is listed: for the antediluvian kings, these are the seven mythical sages, and for all the other kings, these are human *ummânu*.⁷⁴ Thus, though relying on an older tradition, the List of Kings and Sages is the first text in which the transition of scholarly wisdom and authority from *apkallu* to *ummânu* is presented explicitly and anchored in an historical timeframe. Further, the text not only treats the profession of *ummânu* as derived directly from divine forerunners, but also as distinct from the role of the king, yet indispensable for the proper exercise of kingship. The message is that a king cannot rule without a scholar by his side. Such claims were frequently and eloquently made by the scholars at the Neo-Assyrian court, who already traced the origins of their profession back to the primeval *apkallus*; however, in the List of Kings and Sages, that ideology is backed for the first time by a systematic presentation of the ‘evidence’. Moreover, such claims acquired a new significance in Seleucid Babylonia, where the scholars, ritual experts, and diviners no longer worked at the royal court, but in the temple, and the king’s interest in their work was not self-evident anymore.

In short, one of the reasons for the priests of Seleucid Uruk to compose the List of Kings and Sages was to legitimize their own activities—including the development of the Anu cult—by demonstrating the antiquity and divine origins of their profession. It also provides Kephalon’s claim about Oannès with a more solid background, since in the List of Kings and Sages Oannès is again the first of the *apkallus*. In fact, the first section of the List is based on an older text, which also provided the blueprint for Berossos’ discussion of the seven sages: a passage from the exorcistic ritual series *bīt mēseri*.⁷⁵ In both the *bīt mēseri* passage and the List of Kings and Sages, the seven antediluvian sages have the same names and are listed in the same order. Also, both texts make the same statement about the first human sage, Nungalpiriggal: he brought Ištar down into the Eanna.⁷⁶ After that, however, the List—in a rather broken passage—

73 Pearce/Doty 2000.

74 Another passage from the *Babyloniaka* (De Breucker 2012, F3a–d) presents a slightly less explicit, but similar notion: the six sages who followed Oannès are listed together with the kings during whose reign they appeared from the sea.

75 SpTU II 8, obv. 1 1–29; BaM Beiheft 2 89: 1–9; Van Dijk 1962, 47; De Breucker 2012, 374. The Late Achaemenid scholar Anu-iḫsur possessed a copy of it and perhaps his Hellenistic colleagues did too, though none has been found until now.

76 Lenzi 2008, 161; see § 1.1 for a discussion of the mythological tradition surrounding Inanna/Ištar and her rise to supremacy at Uruk.

has some more to say about Nungalpiriggal: he fashioned a bronze cultic lyre (*balaĝ*), which was placed before Anu. In other words, according to the List of Kings and Sages, the first human sage was already a faithful servant of Anu, who, we may deduce, had lived in the Eanna before Ištar was brought down into it from heaven. Thus, the existing *apkallu* mythology was expanded by the compilers of the List of Kings and Sages for the sake of demonstrating the antiquity of the Anu cult.

The other human sages on the List are all legendary scholars, many of whom we know through the Neo-Assyrian 'Catalogue of Texts and Authors', in which they are accredited with the authorship of important scholarly and literary compositions.⁷⁷ Again, their names were carefully selected in accordance with the ideological programme of the Anu priests.⁷⁸ The first *ummânu* mentioned directly after Nungalpiriggal is none other than *Šîn-lêqe-unninni*, who is listed in the Catalogue of Texts and Authors as the author of the 'Epic of Gilgameš'.⁷⁹ According to the List of Kings and Sages, he was also the sage at king Gilgameš' court.⁸⁰ It is, of course, not a coincidence that *Šîn-lêqe-unninni* also happened to be the clan ancestor of Anu-bêlšunu, the scribe and owner of the List of Kings and Sages itself. In fact, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the *Šîn-lêqe-unninni*'s were one of the most important priestly families of Seleucid Uruk and its members specialized in the profession of Emesal singer (*kalû*). They had already been active as *kalûs*, scribes, astronomers and overseers of livestock at the Eanna in Neo-Babylonian Uruk, and during the Seleucid period they came to monopolize the function of *kalû* in the Anu cult. Clearly, then, by projecting *Šîn-lêqe-unninni* himself back to the court of king Gilgameš as the latter's learned advisor, his Hellenistic descendants provided themselves with a millennia-old legitimation of their high social status at Seleucid Uruk, their scholarly and cultic activity and their perceived role as the heirs and keepers of a venerable intellectual tradition, which, like the *Biṭ Rēš*, went back to the beginning of history.⁸¹

Finally, in the very last line of the List of Kings and Sages, not a king and a sage are listed, but only, after several broken signs, a single name *'ni-qa-qu-ru-su'-û*. Van Dijk has interpreted that name as (*Anu-uballit-*) *Nikarchos*, the

77 Lambert 1962, 64–67.

78 That also counts for the different kings mentioned in the list, but it would go too far to elaborate on them in the current context.

79 Lambert 1962, 66: VI 10.

80 BaM Beiheft 2 89: 12.

81 Beaulieu 2000.

governor of Seleucid Uruk who supervised the first major renovation phase of the Bīt Rēš. That reconstruction is generally accepted, but it is still a matter of some debate why Nikarchos was included at the bottom of the list, whether he was imagined in the role of ‘king’ or ‘sage’ and whether it means the text was composed during his lifetime, or rather in the mid-second century BC, when the only extant copy of it was made.⁸² Those questions cannot be resolved here. What is important is that the List of Kings and Sages represents a final development in the “mythology of scribal succession”, because it establishes a direct connection between the Babylonian scholars and the divine source of their wisdom, and that it has been compiled or edited to weave that long sequence of kings, sages and scholars together with a mythologized history of the Anu cult—from Nungalpiriggal’s lyre for Anu via Sîn-lēqe-unninni’s advisory role to Gilgameš down to Nikarchos, rebuilders of the Bīt Rēš, as the only Hellenistic individual on the list. It is likely that the text as we know it was composed by a member of the Sîn-lēqe-unninni family, considering the prominence it gives to their illustrious ancestor. Finally, we may observe that by placing Nikarchos alone at the end, the List of Kings and Sages expresses the notion that the relationship between rulers and advisors was different under Seleucid rule than it had been throughout history. There was no kingship in the traditional sense anymore, only the authority of the highest local administrator.⁸³ Unfortunately, as long as we have only one copy of the text which is broken in the very line that could have revealed its historical context, every interpretation will remain speculative.

2.3.4.2 Proper and Improper Royal Behaviour towards the Anu Cult

The subject of kings and the extent of their involvement in the cults of Uruk brings us to three texts of another genre, which have been excavated in grid square U18 from the house of the *āšīpus* Šamaš-iddin and Anu-ikšur of the Šangû-Ninurta family (ca. 400 BC) and Iqīša//Ekur-zākir (ca. 300 BC). Each text presents an account of history which focuses on the attitude of particular kings towards Uruk and the Anu cult.

82 Van Dijk 1962, 52; Lenzi 2008, 163–165; Monerie 2012, 350.

83 It would be very fruitful to compare the loss of indigenous kingship and its effect on elite and religious culture in Hellenistic Babylonia to the same situation in Greco-Roman Egypt; cf. Van den Hoven 2014 for an example of a coronation ritual that was radically transformed when it could no longer be guaranteed that the king would participate.

2.3.4.3 The Uruk Prophecy

The first is the so-called ‘Uruk Prophecy’ (SpTU 1 3), one of the five Akkadian literary texts which have been designated ‘prophecies’ by modern scholars.⁸⁴ They all describe a series of reigns of unnamed kings, expressed in the form of predictions, and classify each reign as either positive or negative, with subsequent effects on the well-being of the land and the people. Thereby they present a schematic view of history in which kings have the final responsibility for the fate of the world and cycles of terror and neglect are followed by eras of prosperity. The last prediction is always of a final *Heilszeit* which will be heralded by a particular event contemporary to the text’s composition. Thus, the prophecies are usually interpreted as *vaticinia ex eventu* of historical situations and as a legitimation for the event—or sentiments regarding that event—which is predicted in the final section. In the case of the Uruk Prophecy, that event is the establishment of the Anu cult at Uruk.

Only the reverse of the tablet is decipherable and the colophon is missing, but it is thought to have belonged to the tablet collection of the Šangû-Ninurta’s.⁸⁵ If that assumption is correct, the text as we know it was a product of the late fifth century BC and belonged to the first stages of the development of the Anu cult. The Uruk Prophecy has been edited and translated a number of times and different suggestions have been put forward for its interpretation.⁸⁶ It will suffice to provide a summary here.

The Prophecy describes eleven kings in total. The information about king 1 is too fragmentary to read, except that he appears to be from the Sealand dynasty. King 2 is evil, which in the Uruk Prophecy is consequently described as “he will not provide justice for the land, he will not make the right decisions for the land”.⁸⁷ Among his various transgressions, which leave Uruk in ruins, king 2 “will take away the old protective goddess (dIama) from Uruk and make her dwell in Babylon. He will make a protective goddess not belonging to Uruk dwell in her sanctuary and dedicate to her people not belonging to her.” Kings 3–8 are likewise evil and not specified further, except for king 8 who “will take the property of the land of Akkad (i.e. Babylonia) to the land of Subartu (i. e. Assyria)”. King 9, again evil, is also particularly powerful: “he will rule the four quarters of the world; at the mention of his name the world

84 The others are ‘Prophecy A’, the ‘Marduk’ and ‘Šulgi’ prophecies and the ‘Dynastic Prophecy’; see Beaulieu 1993d, 41 with further literature.

85 Clancier 2009, 71.

86 See Scurlock 2006, 449–452 with further literature.

87 Translations are based on Beaulieu 1993d, 43–44.

will tremble". Finally, the good king 10 will arise. He "will permanently establish the rites of Anu in Uruk. He will take away the old protective goddess of Uruk from Babylon and make her dwell in Uruk, in her sanctuary. He will dedicate to her people belonging to her. He will rebuild the temples of Uruk. He will restore the sanctuaries." Then his son, king 11, "will arise in Uruk and rule the four quarters. He will exercise [ruler]ship? and kingship in Uruk. His dynasty will endure forever. [The king]s of Uruk will exercise rulership like the gods."

Since none of the kings is identified in the text itself, various scholars have attempted to relate their descriptions to known historical events. Such a reconstruction depends for a great part on whether one assumes that kings 1–10 actually succeeded each other directly as rulers of Babylonia, or that the Uruk Prophecy gives a more abstract summary of the time that has passed since king 1, in which for instance kings 4–8 (summed up in the text with "ditto, ditto, ditto, ditto, ditto") represent unsympathetic dynasties rather than historical individuals. Of particular interest is the "protective goddess" whose statue was taken away to Babylon by king 2 and replaced by an unwelcome foreign deity, but eventually returned to her proper sanctuary by king 10. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the statues of Ištar and Nanāya both seem to have been removed from Uruk at a certain point and returned during the course of the first millennium.⁸⁸ According to an inscription by Aššurbanipal, he discovered Nanāya in Elam—where, he states, she had been brought from Uruk 1635 years earlier—and he brought her back to the Eanna with her companions Ušur-amāssu and Urkayītu.⁸⁹ Further, Nebuchadnezzar II claims to have reinstated the "original cultic characteristics and venerable rites" of Ištar-of-Uruk and to have returned the "guardian god" of Uruk and the "protective goddess" of the Eanna on that occasion.⁹⁰

Those last claims may simply refer to the traditional *topos* in royal inscriptions of bringing a cult back in proper shape. Nebuchadnezzar certainly did much renovation work on the Eanna. Yet according to an inscription by Nabonidus, Ištar had indeed been abducted by the eighth-century king Erībamarduk and replaced by an inappropriate goddess, but she had been restored in her former glory by a unnamed king,⁹¹ whom Beaulieu believes to be

88 §1.1.

89 Streck 1916, 58: 107–124; *ibid.* 220: 21–35; Scurlock 2006, 455.

90 Langdon 1912, 92: 54–55; Beaulieu 2003, 129.

91 Schaudig 2001, 51–176: III 11'–39'. The text (*ibid.* 40'–43') even goes on to call her "Ištar, the lady of Elam, the princess who dwells in Susa"—if that line is not in fact a change of subject and a reference to a different deity. What follows is broken.

Nebuchadnezzar II. The words used in Nabonidus' inscription to describe the abduction of Ištar by Erība-Marduk recur almost literally in a Late Babylonian text from Uruk (SpTU III 58) describing the many terrible misdeeds of another eighth-century-king, Nabû-šuma-iškun.⁹² Beaulieu, combining that evidence with the sudden change in the names used for Ištar in the Eanna records from the second half of Nebuchadnezzar's reign onwards, concludes that the evil king 2 in the Uruk Prophecy is probably Nabû-šuma-iškun and king 10 must then be Nebuchadnezzar II, who brought Ištar back where she belonged. That would make the evil and terrifying king 9 Nebuchadnezzar's father Nabopolassar, who is also accused of misdemeanor towards the cults of Anu in another Seleucid-period text from Uruk (see below).⁹³ JoAnn Scurlock, on the other hand, asserts that the abducted goddess featured in the Uruk Prophecy as well as in the Nabonidus inscription and SpTU III 58 is Nanāya, and that the good king 10 who brought back the "protective goddess of Uruk" must therefore be Aššurbanipal.⁹⁴

In the current context it is important to point out that the Uruk Prophecy is an expression of wishful thinking by Urukeans who were not only concerned about statues of goddesses residing there, but also had a stake in the cult of Anu, which according to the Prophecy would be "established permanently" by king 10. The only first-millennium king who, as far as we know, actually made such an attempt was Esarhaddon (681–669 BC), who rebuilt the Anu ziqqurat and probably also a temple for Anu on the Old Terrace.⁹⁵ Thus, we could argue that the description of king 10 refers to him. It is easily conceivable that the image he propagates of himself in his inscriptions as saviour and restorer of the glory of Babylonia is reflected in the Uruk Prophecy as "he will rebuild the temples of Uruk, he will restore the sanctuaries". The prediction of the return of the protective goddess under his reign can also be explained in various ways. One or more absent goddesses may indeed have been returned by Esarhaddon rather than Aššurbanipal; letters from his envoy Mār-Issar state that statues of Nanāya and Ušur-amāssu were being fashioned for induction into Uruk and were almost ready.⁹⁶ Another option is that an earlier version of the Uruk Prophecy was

92 'The Crimes and Sacrileges of Nabû-šuma-iškun' (SpTU III 58): 31–38. Like the Uruk Prophecy, that text is known from a Hellenistic copy excavated in the *āšipu* house at U18. See for an extensive edition and commentary Cole 1994.

93 Beaulieu 1993d, 46–47.

94 Scurlock 2006, 455.

95 See § 1.1.

96 Porter 1993, 61–62.

in fact written during the reign of Esarhaddon and expresses the wish for the return of Nanāya and Ištar, both of whom were still missing at the time. Also, it would not be unsuitable from a Babylonian point of view to describe Esarhaddon's father Sennacherib or his grandfather Sargon II as someone who ruled all four quarters of the world and at the mention of whose name the world trembled.

In any case, regardless of the identity of the goddess and the various kings mentioned in the text, the ultimate purpose of the (Late Babylonian version of the) Uruk Prophecy was to demonstrate that a good king who took proper care of Uruk would also ensure the continuing existence of the Anu cult. The final king II and his dynasty are a product of pure fantasy: kings whose seat of kingship would be at Uruk, who would rule the four quarters of the world with Uruk as its centre—something which had not happened since the third millennium BC. It is not a statement to be taken literally, but a fanciful description of the *Heilszeit* that would begin once the worship of Anu at Uruk had been properly established. Beaulieu speculates that a translation of the Prophecy or a summary of its contents was brought to the attention of Antiochos I, the only Seleucid king who is attested as having rebuilt temples in Babylonian cities, as a petition to extend his patronage to Uruk.⁹⁷ Experts on the composition of the tablet hoard from grid square U18 now assign the tablet with the Uruk Prophecy to the Šangû-Ninurta collection and thus to the late Achaemenid period. That makes it more likely that it was written by and for the circle of scholars who were breathing life into the Anu cult without any royal support and began to develop literature that, like the later Uruk List of Kings and Sages, would demonstrate that the unfolding of history ultimately and inevitably led to the proper worship of Anu at Uruk.

2.3.4.4 The 'Šulgi Chronicle' (SpTU I 2)

Another, comparable text from U18, the 'Šulgi Chronicle' (SpTU I 2), focuses more specifically on a single king from a distant past: Šulgi, the second ruler of the Third Dynasty of Ur (ca. 2100–2050 BC). According to the tablet's colophon, the text was copied for Anu-aḫa-ušabši/Kidin-Anu//Ekur-zākir, *āšipu* of Anu and Antu and 'high priest' (*aḫu rabû*) of the Bīt Rēš, by his son Anu-balāssu-iqbi in 251 BC, a year in which three other documents pertaining to the Anu cult were also copied for the same priest. It begins and ends with a 'catchline' referring to Ur-Namma, Šulgi's predecessor, and Amar-suen, Šulgi's successor,

97 Beaulieu 1993d, 49–50; see § 1.3.3.

respectively, which suggests that the text was part of a longer series describing the exploits of the kings of the Ur III dynasty and perhaps other historical figures. Jean-Jacques Glassner regards it as a chronicle text.⁹⁸

According to the text, Šulgi rebuilt the city walls and the temple of Šin at Ur and strengthened the foundations of the city. He also conquered several kings of the land Subartu and plundered the enemy lands. Apart from those commendable feats, however, he worked together with the famous blind scholar Lu-Nanna to “remove the property of the Esagil and Babylon as booty” (obv. 7) and “improperly disturb the rites of Anu (ġarza ^dAnūtu), the regulations (giš.ħur^{meš})⁹⁹ of Uruk and the secret wisdom of the scholars (*niširti* ^lummāna)” (obv. 13–14). Together they “composed untruthful stelae and insolent tablets regarding the purification rites of the gods and left them (for posterity)” (obv. 16–17). Finally, in the last fragmentary lines, “Anu the king, whose decisions are grand, regarded him with anger” and “(for?) his grave misdeeds [...] covered his body [with ...]” (obv. 18–20).

The text is full of anachronisms: in Šulgi’s time, Babylon was still an insignificant town and Šulgi would hardly have been interested in the Marduk sanctuary or its property. Likewise, although An was one of the gods worshiped at Uruk in the late third millennium BC, the primary deity whose cultic ordinances Šulgi would have changed, should he have had the intention of doing so, was Inanna. Furthermore, the Ur III kings, who considered themselves direct kinsmen of Gilgameš, in fact treated Uruk with care, undertook large-scale renovations of the city’s monumental architecture and supported its scribal culture. Thus, the purpose of the Šulgi Chronicle is not to give an accurate rendering of history, but to convey an ideological message: kings who meddled with the cults of Marduk and Anu and altered the ritual texts were evil and would ultimately perish. The bad ruler who disturbs the cultic worship of Marduk and meets with an unhappy end is a recurring motif in Babylonian literature of the late second and the first millennium. Šulgi is cast in that role in two other literary texts: the so-called ‘Weidner Chronicle’, a school text in the form of a letter which circulated widely in first-millennium Babylonia,¹⁰⁰

98 Glassner 2004, no. 48; my tr. below. See Waerzeggers 2012 for a new classification of the so-called ‘Babylonian Chronicles’, which form two separate groups from different cities and periods.

99 The word giš.ħur/*ušurtu*, ‘design’, can refer to a design for a building or the street plan of a city, but also to rules, regulations and the designs the gods have for a person or place, i.e. its fate.

100 Grayson 1975, no. 19; see Waerzeggers 2012, 289 with further literature.

and the ‘Chronicle of Early Kings’, a Neo-Babylonian text from Borsippa with a collection of anecdotes about ancient kings which are partly based on the Weidner Chronicle.¹⁰¹

Thus, the notion of Šulgi’s impious behavior towards certain cults is not an invention from Seleucid Uruk, but the ‘Šulgi Chronicle’ adds two new elements which make it unique. Firstly, Šulgi’s ultimate fate is described as something with which Anu “covered his body” (*zumuršu ulabbiš*). That element of the story has been interpreted as a possible forerunner to the Hellenistic Jewish legend of king Nabonidus who was afflicted with a skin disease until he acknowledged the superiority of the Jewish God.¹⁰² In fact, the entire character of Šulgi in the Šulgi Chronicle is probably a thinly disguised Nabonidus, since the only divine cult he does treat with respect is that of Sîn, which fits the text neatly into the Persian-Hellenistic narrative about Nabonidus’ religious obsession with the moon god.¹⁰³ Further, and more importantly in the current context, the Šulgi Chronicle is the only text in the genre which not only presents Marduk, but also and especially Anu as the god whose rites of worship must be respected by every king. Like the Uruk Prophecy and TU 38 (see below), it uses the words *paraš* (*ĝarza*) *Anūtu* to describe the rites and regulations of the Anu cult, a literary phrase that can also mean more generally the offices of supreme godhead.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, like the Uruk List of Kings and Sages, it lays special emphasis on the importance of scholars, their esoteric knowledge and the correct transmission of ritual texts, for which they were responsible. Thus, the priests of Uruk who composed or at least edited the Šulgi Chronicle created a modified version of the widely known ‘evil-Šulgi’-narrative, and added it to their collection of documents that provided an ideological foundation for the Anu cult and for their self-perception as the keepers of its ritual lore.

2.3.4.5 TU 38

The last text that can be considered one of the building blocks of the ideology created around the Hellenistic Anu cult, and which has received the most attention from modern scholars, is TU 38, one of the illegally excavated tablets

101 Grayson 1975, no. 20A; Waerzeggers 2012, 292. For the literary tradition around the figure of Šulgi after the Old Babylonian period, see also Neumann 2014, 46 note 85 with further literature.

102 Described in the Qumran-text *The Prayer of Nabonidus* (4Q242) and reflected indirectly in Daniel 4 and 5; cf. Beaulieu 2007, 138–139.

103 Cavigneaux 2005, 70–71.

104 See § 5.1.2.

that probably derive from a storeroom in the Bīt Rēš. It contains sets of instructions for the preparation and presentation of the four daily divine meals for “Anu, Antu, Ištar, Nanāya and the (other) gods living in Uruk”,¹⁰⁵ The text is divided into three main sections (drinks, cereal products and meat), written in somewhat different styles, and ends with a number of shorter sections describing various exceptional rules and taboos. The instructions are clearly based on multiple sources from different periods; for example, the types and amounts of bread, cakes and other cereal products to be served daily to the gods of Uruk (obv. 21–50) are very similar to those described in the temple archives from Neo-Babylonian Borsippa.¹⁰⁶ Thus, at least part of the tablet may have been copied from texts related to the daily worship in the Eanna and rewritten to include Anu and Antu as the recipients of the food.¹⁰⁷ The special rules and taboos, such as the daily and monthly offerings to the sun, moon and five planets (rev. 29–34) and the food regulations for Bēlet-šēri and Ereškigal (rev. 42) are almost certainly Hellenistic; neither those heavenly bodies nor those goddesses are attested as recipients of offerings in Neo-Babylonian Uruk.

For the ideological background of the Anu cult, it is the colophon of TU 38 (rev. 43–50) which is of particular interest:¹⁰⁸

Hand of Šamaš-ēṭir, son of Ina-qibīt-Anu, son of Šibqat-Anu. (Copied from a) writing board containing the cultic ordinances of Anuship, the sacred purification rites and the rites of kingship, including the divine purification rites of the Bīt Rēš, the Irigal, the Eanna and all the sanctuar-

105 TU 38 obv. 23–24, 49–50.

106 Waerzeggers 2010a, 115–116.

107 On the reverse of the tablet, not just the major deities, but also the main temples of Seleucid Uruk are enumerated: “Anu, Antu, Ištar, Nanāya and the (other) gods living in the Bīt Rēš, the Irigal and the Ešarra, the high shrine on the ziqurrat of Anu” (TU 38 rev. 1–2; rev. 13–14, omitting Ištar and Nanāya). In the second-to-last section (rev. 35–39), the Eanna is suddenly mentioned as well. It is the only textual evidence from the Seleucid period that implies the continued use of the Eanna as a sanctuary and may very well be a leftover from an earlier version of the text.

108 ⁴³ qāt^{1d}utu-sur a šá¹ina-qi-bit-^{d60} a šá¹šib-qát-^{d60} ⁴⁴ gis^{da} garza ^{d60}-ú-tú šu.luh.ḫa kù^{mes} sak-ke-e lugal-ú-tu a-di šu.luh.ḫa dingir.ra šá é re-eš eš.gal ⁴⁵ é.an.na ù é^{mes} tir.an.na^{ki} al-ka-ka-at lú^{mes}maš.maš^{mes} lú^{mes}gala^{mes} u lú^{mes}nar^{mes} ù dumu^{mes} um-man-nu ⁴⁶ nap-ḫar-šú-nu šá egir lú^{PA}P² a-na ma-še-e ma-la šá^{lú}šaman.mal.lá kul-lu₄ ki-i pi-i ṭup-pi^{mes} ⁴⁷ šá^{1d}ag-a-uru lugal kur tam-ti ta qé-reb unug^{ki} iš-lu-lu-ma i-nu-uš^{1ki} din-^{d60} ⁴⁸ lú^{mes}unug^{ki}-a ⁴⁸ lú^{mes}maš.maš^{d60} u an-tu₄ ^{lú}ša.bal.bal^{1é}.kur-za-kir^{lú}šeš.gal-i šá é.sag ṭup-pi^{mes} mu^{mes} ⁴⁹ ina kur elam.ma^{ki} ip-pal-lis-ma ina bala-e^{1se}-lu-ku u¹an-ti-i-ku-su lugal^{mes} ⁵⁰ iš-ṭur-ú-ma a-na qé-reb unug^{ki} ú-bi-il (my tr.).

ies of Uruk; the ritual activities of the *āšīpus*, the *kalūs*, the musicians and the craftsmen, all of those who are subordinate to the [...], except for¹⁰⁹ everything concerning the apprentices, in accordance with the tablets that Nabopolassar, king of the Sealand, took away¹¹⁰ from Uruk. At that time, Kidin-Anu the Urukean, the *āšīpu* of Anu and Antu, the descendant of Ekur-zākir, the *aḫu rābu* of the Bīt Rēš, examined the aforementioned tablets in the land of Elam. During the reign of Seleukos and Antiochos, the kings, he copied them and brought them back to Uruk.

Both of the priests mentioned are well-known from the scholarly circles of Seleucid Uruk. The scribe, Šamaš-ēṭir//Ekur-zākir, is attested in the first half of the second century BC, which means our copy of the text can be dated to that same period. He was a pupil of Anu-uballit//Nidinti-Anu//Ḫunzû and the teacher of Anu-aba-utēr/Anu-bēlšunu (senior)//Sîn-lēqe-unninni. At the height of his career he was an *āšīpu* of Anu and Antu, an *aḫu rābu* of the Bīt Rēš and a *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Enlil*.¹¹¹ As a scribe he also copied the ritual text for the autumn *akītu* festival (TU 39–40) and wrote the cuneiform copy of a sale contract of a share in the *gerseqqūtu* prebend in 194/93 BC.¹¹² The six attested tablets copied for him by his pupil Anu-aba-utēr all treat aspects of mathematical astronomy.¹¹³

If an earlier copy of the text was indeed made during the coregency of Seleukos I and Antiochos I (SE 20–31, i.e. 292/1–281/0 BC) or the coregency of Antiochos I and his son Seleukos (SE 32–45, i.e. 280/79–267/6 BC) by a Kidin-Anu//Ekur-zākir, then it is very likely that he was the father of Anu-aḫa-ušabši/Kidin-Anu//Ekur-zākir. The latter also bore the titles *āšīpu* of Anu and Antu, *aḫu rābu* of the Bīt Rēš and *ṭupšar Enūma Anu Enlil*; we have encountered him several times before as the owner of various texts pertaining to the Anu cult that are all dated around 250 BC, among which the just discussed Šulgi Chronicle.¹¹⁴ All in all, the colophon clearly demonstrates the depth of the involvement of the Ekur-zākir family in the ritual practice as well as in the forging of the ideological framework of the Hellenistic Anu cult.

109 Lit. “to forget” (*ana mašē*); cf. Thureau-Dangin 1921, 86 and CAD M I 399b, and note Linssen’s somewhat misleading “not to mention” (Linssen 2004, 179).

110 Lit. “plundered” (*išluluma*).

111 See § 1.2.2; for a thorough reconstruction of Šamaš-ēṭir’s scholarly activities and personal network, see Robson 2007.

112 VS 15, 32, dupl. HSM 913.2.181 (Wallenfels 1998, no. 6; Corò 2005, 196–197).

113 Neugebauer 1955, nos. 171 F, 163 H, 600 L, 601 M, 651 O, 803 N.

114 Linssen 2004, 172.

Although Kidin-Anu may have examined and copied tablets during the reigns of Seleukos and Antiochos that eventually led to the compilation of TU 38, most scholars agree that his claim to have discovered the originals in Elam is less than likely and probably constitutes a *pia fraus*—another subtle rewriting of history to provide the Anu cult with an ancient, venerable background and conceal the innovations that contributed to its Hellenistic format.¹¹⁵ If there is any truth to the story, the tablets in question will certainly not have had the exact same content as TU 38, which presents Anu and Antu as the most important deities of Uruk and the Bit Rēš and the Irigal as the city's main sanctuaries. Furthermore, it is too much of a coincidence that the priesthood of Uruk would endure the loss of their essential ritual tablets for three centuries and only found the opportunity to copy them in Susa after the fall of the Persian empire, even though they had probably maintained good relations with the Achaemenid court, especially after 484 BC. Finally, the “land of Elam” had been Assyria's and Babylonia's powerful neighbor for millennia and the Elamites had carried off people and property from Mesopotamian cities on numerous occasions, as well as the other way around; ancient monuments like the Stele of Narām-Sîn and the Codex Hammurabi still stood in Susa in the late first millennium BC and were only removed from there by modern treasure hunters.¹¹⁶ Thus, if someone like Kidin-Anu wanted to claim that he had rediscovered antiquities which had been lost for centuries, it was only too convenient to state that they had been in Elam during that time.

The depiction of Nabopolassar as an evil king who plundered Uruk and removed the ritual tablets fits the legitimation narrative employed in the Uruk Prophecy and the Šulgi Chronicle: the Anu cult was not newly created, but properly reinstated after it had been disrupted by a bad ruler in the nearby or distant past. The choice for Nabopolassar might be explained by the fact that he was the founder of the Neo-Babylonian empire, which had brought an end to the good relations between Uruk and Assyria. The rise of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty had meant the imposition of the worship of Marduk on the Eanna and the reduction of the Anu cult, against which—in Beaulieu's reconstruction—the local priestly families had counterreacted by adopting Anu as their personal deity. Beaulieu also points to a passage in one of the Neo-Babylonian chronicles from Borsippa, according to which Nabopolassar “returned to Susa the

115 E.g. Beaulieu 1993d, 47–50; id. 2004, 315–316; Lenzi 2008, 160; Waerzeggers 2010a, 115.

116 Harper/Amiet 1992. The colophon of a sixth-century copy from Sippar of the prologue of the Codex Hammurabi states that the scribe copied the text directly from the monument at Susa (Fadhil 1998).

gods of Susa whom the Assyrians had carried off and settled in Uruk".¹¹⁷ Perhaps the gods of Susa, or deities that Nabopolassar had considered as such, had become so important to the Urukeans that the event had permanently damaged Nabopolassar's reputation among the local elite.¹¹⁸

As emphasized at the beginning of this chapter, the documentation that was developed by the scholars of Hellenistic Uruk to provide the Anu cult with a respectable background should not be regarded as pure invention of tradition, completely detached from 'actual' historical circumstances. The choice of the local priestly elite for Anu as their patron deity and eventually as the supreme lord of their pantheon was partly motivated by the very antiquity of his cult at Uruk, for which various forms of evidence were still available, from Sumerian literary compositions to the ruin mound of the White Temple and the Old Terrace. Furthermore, it might be more accurate to see texts like the Uruk List of Kings and Sages and the colophon of TU 38 as part of a much longer 'tradition of invention' that was fundamental to the cultures of Mesopotamia—the continuous, careful recreation of the past and its relationship to the present by weaving each change and innovation into the multi-patterned fabric of history.

117 Grayson 1975 no. 2, 16–17.

118 Beaulieu 1993d, 47. Scurlock, taking a step further, assumes that one of the gods that had been brought from Susa to Uruk by the Assyrians was Nanāya. The Elamites, having become convinced that she was their own native goddess, demanded her back from Nabopolassar in return for their help in overthrowing the Assyrian empire. To compensate Uruk's loss, Nebuchadnezzar installed a statue of "Ištar of Elam, the princess who dwells in Susa" in the Eanna (cf. the Nabonidus inscription quoted above), which only aggravated the situation (Scurlock 2006, 454–456; ead. 2012, 372). For the worship of the goddess Nanāya at Susa, see Goodnick Westenholz 1997, 79–80; Ambos 2003, 248–255; Drewnowska-Rymarz 2008, 159–162.

The Tablet (AO 6460) and the Text (TU 41)

3.1 Publication History

TU 41 (AO 6460) is a single-column, two-sided tablet, 15 cm in height and 9,5 cm in width. It was acquired by the Louvre on the antiquities market in 1913 as part of a large collection containing tablets AO 6449–6496, which had been illegally excavated at Uruk-Warka in the early twentieth century. From its contents, a nocturnal temple ritual, it is clear that TU 41 derives from Uruk and was related to the cultic worship in the city's most important temple during the Hellenistic period, the Bīt Rēš. Several features of the ritual itself also point unmistakably to the Seleucid era, as will be shown below. One of the short sides of the tablet is broken off, so the colophon is missing. Still, a guess can be ventured as to its scribe and/or owner. Of the temple ritual texts from Uruk of which the colophons are still intact, the texts related to the regular temple cult were all copied by members of the Ekur-zākir family and owned by them and the Ḫunzû's.¹ Together, those two families were mainly responsible for the profession of *āšipu* at Seleucid Uruk.² On the other hand, the occasional temple rituals,³ such as the kettledrum-, building-, and eclipse rituals, were in the possession of the *kalûs* of the Sîn-lēqe-unninni family. Thus, TU 41 was probably also copied and perhaps owned by a descendant of Ekur-zākir. The likeliest candidate is Šamaš-ēṭir//Ekur-zākir, who also copied TU 38 and TU 39–40 in the context of his work as *āšipu* and *aḫu rābu* of Anu and Antu. If the tablet was written a generation earlier, it probably belonged to Anu-aḫa-ušabši/Kidin-Anu//Ekur-zākir, another *āšipu* and *aḫu rābu* of the Bīt Rēš who owned many texts pertaining to the Anu cult, among which BRM IV 7. As argued earlier, the entire process of entrusting the instructions for the temple rituals to clay may in fact have been occasioned by the expansions and renovations of the Bīt Rēš and the Irigal under Anu-uballit~Nikarchos and Anu-uballit~Kephalon.⁴ It is generally assumed that the Bīt Rēš possessed a temple

1 TU 38, TU 39–40 and BRM IV 7. TU 39–40 was written for Anu-uballit/Nidinti-Anu//Ḫunzû; the colophon of TU 38 does not mention the owner.

2 One descendant of Gimil-Anu is also attested as “*āšipu* of Anu and Antu” (Oelsner 2000, 800).

3 See for the categorization of Mesopotamian rituals § 5.1.2.

4 See § 1.3.6.

library and that all the illicitly excavated tablets from Hellenistic Uruk, including the ritual texts, were originally stored there.⁵

Not only the probable findspot of the tablet, but also the locations and divine figures that feature in the ritual itself show that it was written and probably also composed in the Seleucid period. Two of the ritual's most central elements—the processions into and around the temple—focus on the gatekeeper deities, primarily Papsukkal, who was introduced into Anu's royal household as his vizier and had not been part of the pantheon of Uruk before.⁶ The cellae, courtyards and gates of the Bīt Rēš described in the text correspond to the lay-out of the temple complex after at least its first renovation phase, the project undertaken by Anu-uballit~Nikarchos which was finished in 244 BC. Little of what Nikarchos built can be reconstructed today, because it was replaced almost entirely during the next renovation project supervised by Anu-uballit~Kephalon and finished in 201 BC, but there are several indications that the latter date is in fact the ritual's *terminus post quem*. The Egašananna, the elaborate shrine for Antu with a cella, a bedroom and a courtyard of its own⁷ was probably developed under Kephalon. Moreover, the Main Gate, through which Usmû and probably also Pisangunug and the Torch ceremonially re-entered the Bīt Rēš after their circumambulation of it,⁸ had been an unimpressive passageway until Kephalon transformed it into a monumental gate.⁹

A copy and first edition of what was then still known as AO 6460 were published by François Thureau-Dangin in his classic *Rituels accadiens* (Paris 1921), in which he categorizes the ritual under “Le rituel du temple d’Anu” and dubs it simply “une cérémonie nocturne dans le temple d’Anu”.¹⁰ The book being purely a text edition, Thureau-Dangin offers no comments on the content of the ceremony, except for drawing attention to the central role of the night vigil (*bayātu*). A year later, his copy of the tablet appeared as no. 41 in his publication of all the then-known religious and scholarly texts from Seleucid Uruk, *Tablettes d’Uruk à l’usage des prêtres du Temple d’Anu au temps des Séleucides* (TCL 6, Paris 1922, known henceforth as TU or TCL 6). That book consisted almost entirely of the Louvre collection discussed above and a few tablets acquired separately by the Louvre and the Musées Royaux du Cinquantenaire at Brussels, some in the same year and some in 1920. Thureau-Dangin remarks

5 See § 1.2.2.

6 Beaulieu 1992, 68.

7 TU 41 obv. 6–8.

8 TU 41 rev. 11–12.

9 See § 1.3.5.1.

10 Thureau-Dangin 1921, 118–125.

there that the tablet contains a “fragment du rituel du mois de [?]” and that it may have belonged to the same collection as no. 39, one of the tablets describing the *akītu* festival in month VII. A German translation of TU 41 by Erich Ebeling was published soon after in Hugo Gressmann’s *Altorientalische Texte zum Alten Testament*, for which he followed that of Thureau-Dangin to the letter, save for a few small corrections.¹¹

In 1941, Adam Falkenstein combined archaeological and textual sources for his book on the topography of Seleucid Uruk, which goes well beyond that particular subject and offers reflections on many aspects of the cults of Seleucid Uruk that are still relevant today. The chapter on the Anu ziqqurrat includes a translation of the section of TU 41 dealing with the activities on the ziqqurrat (obv. 14–34), which again differs from those of Thureau-Dangin and Ebeling in a few details.¹² Falkenstein adds the remark that the offerings to Great Anu and Antu of Heaven, as described in TU 41 and TU 38 rev. 32–34, prove “daß in der Spätzeit auf der Ziqurrat des Anu der Kult den obersten Gottheiten in ihren astralen Erscheinungsformen gewidmet war”.¹³ Moreover, he uses the many topographical indications in the ritual text as evidence for his reconstruction of the layout of the Bīt Reš.¹⁴

The first English translation of TU 41 appeared in James B. Pritchard’s 1952 *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (ANET) and was made by Abraham Sachs.¹⁵ Sachs’ readings differ in certain places quite strongly

11 Gressmann 1926–1927, 316–319. Ebeling translates *bīt papaḥa* (obv. 9) poetically with “das Allerheiligste”; he reads *sippê* (obv. 10) as “Türfüllungen”, where Thureau-Dangin is still unsure; he translates *bayāt ibāt* (obv. 13) very neutrally with “man übernachtet”; he reads *paramāḥu* (obv. 14), which Thureau-Dangin leaves untranslated, as “großes Throngemach”; he reads *Anu rabû ša šamê* (obv. 15) as a superlative, “Anu, der größte der Himmel”. He translates *kima maḥrimma* in rev. 24 with “wie früher”, which seems to imply not earlier that night, but at an earlier point in history. He reads ^dšA (i.e. Usmû) not as “Ša” but as “Ara” and leaves the priestly terminology mostly untranslated, where Thureau-Dangin finds corresponding Catholic terms: “der Maḥḥu-Priester” for *lumahḥu* (obv. 28; Thureau-Dangin: “pontife suprême”); “Der Ober-erib-bīti-Priester” for ^lerib bīti rabû (obv. 33; Thureau-Dangin: “archiprêtre”); “die šangû-Priester” for ^lšangû (rev. 14; Thureau-Dangin: “pontifes”) etc.

12 Falkenstein reads the poetic phrases in obv. 16–17 as a single hymnic incipit, interprets the “good oil” (i-giš dūg-ga) in obv. 29 as “Olivenöl” and recognizes that izi ki-a ^da-engur (obv. 30) should be read “Schwefelfeuer”.

13 Falkenstein 1941, 29.

14 Ibid. 10–26.

15 Pritchard 1969, 338–339.

from those of both Thureau-Dangin and Ebeling.¹⁶ Much more recently, Marc J.H. Linssen included a new transcription and translation of and commentary to TU 41 in his recent *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon*.¹⁷ He also added a summary of the ritual, which he regards primarily as an important source on the *bayātu* and the *šalām bīti* ceremony.¹⁸ Further, he draws attention to the appearance of what he calls “the ‘you’-figure” in obv. 17–27, which is not attested in the other texts describing annual festivals.¹⁹ Finally, Arno Kose offers an extensive summary of the ritual in his recent museum catalogue article on the history and archaeology of the Bīt Rēš.²⁰ The summary is based on Thureau-Dangin’s edition of TU 41 and serves to demonstrate the “cultic connections” between the different rooms and areas of the temple complex.

The only extensive analysis of the entire ritual has been undertaken by Giuseppe Furlani in his 1940 *Riti babilonesi e assiri*.²¹ The first section of his chapter on what he calls “la festa del fuoco sacro” is an interpretative summary of the ritual which contains, besides the inevitable outdated research, many profound and accurate insights into the ritual’s structure, its core elements and their symbolic value. Those observations will be discussed where they are relevant in Chapters 5 and 6. The second half of Furlani’s analysis consists of an attempt to demonstrate the formal and historical parallels between the nocturnal ritual at Seleucid Uruk and the ceremony of the Paschal candle, particularly the Miracle of the Holy Fire at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the subsequent distribution of that Fire to other Orthodox communities.²²

Apart from the abovementioned text editions and summaries of TU 41 and Furlani’s treatise on the subject, nearly all scholarly reflection on the content of the ritual has remained restricted to short descriptions, remarks and footnotes in articles dealing with other subjects: “eine religionsgeschichtlich sehr interessante Nachtfeier aus Anlaß des Aufleuchten des Anu- und Antugestirns”;²³

16 He reads *ana pāni idaggal* (obv. 1) not as “he waits for”, but “he pays his respects to”; the *āšīpu* as the subject of *bayāt ibāt* (obv. 13); *ina panišu* (rev. 1, 4) not as “before it [i.e. the torch]”, but “in his/her presence” [i.e. Anu and Antu respectively]; and ^uzu^zag-lu (*imittu*, rev. 7) not as “shoulder”, but as “thigh”.

17 Linssen 2004, 245–251.

18 Ibid. 122–124.

19 Ibid. 124.

20 Kose 2013b, 338–339.

21 Furlani 1940, 137–149.

22 Furlani 1940, 149–158.

23 Ebeling 1928, 117.

“beachte die interessante Fackelprozession in Uruk (...) die wohl auch katharischen Zweck hatte”;²⁴ “the eve of an *eššešu* festival (...); apparently an exuberant greeting of the city’s temples in anticipation of the feast-day ahead”;²⁵ “the late Babylonian bonfire festival of Anu during the course of which the deity was lured down from the night sky to take residence in his temple and city”;²⁶ “the ritual for purifying the temple”;²⁷ “das Fest zum Erscheinen Anus”;²⁸ “the use of fire suggests disinfection and decontamination (...); in the case of the Uruk ritual it might have also provided the households with fire”;²⁹ “a major festival (...) in which the central act was the lighting of bonfires throughout the city” (...) “a variation on the theme of the brazier festival—the ensuring of warmth during the cold winter months.”³⁰ These quotes illustrate the variety of possible interpretations of the ritual’s different aspects; none of them are mutually exclusive and all will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. The only recent exception to the brevity of most scholars’ remarks is Beate Pongratz-Leisten’s 1994 book on the *akītu* processions in first-millennium Babylonia and Assyria. She devotes a brief section of one chapter to a reconstruction of the procession of the Torch, Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû, and Pisangunug around the *Bit Rēš* (rev. 2–14).³¹

In short, many Assyriologists appear to have developed their own opinion of the nocturnal ceremony’s *Sitz im Leben*, but thus far no research project has been devoted to a detailed, comprehensive analysis of all its different elements. That analysis will be undertaken in the present study. Below, a transliteration and translation of TU 41 will be presented, with comments in footnotes where my reading deviates from that of Linssen or my translation requires clarification. Chapter 4 will investigate at which time of the year the ritual possibly took place, since the seasonal setting of a cultic ceremony can already offer important clues as to its overall religious and social function. As we will see, the evidence strongly points to the conclusion that the nocturnal ceremony took place in the middle of winter and was connected to the winter solstice.

24 Id. 1957, 2.

25 George 1992, 222 note 3.

26 Scurlock 2002b, 401.

27 Joannès 2004, 242.

28 Sallaberger 2006–2008b, 424.

29 Pongratz-Leisten 2006–2008, 101.

30 Cohen 2015, 440.

31 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 45–47.

In Chapter 5, the ritual text will be examined line by line in order to establish which various individual cultic acts and participants can be distinguished and to offer an explanation of their role in the ritual. We will seek that explanation on the basis of their immediate textual context, parallels in other Mesopotamian ritual texts and iconography, and—in a few cases—comparisons with similar phenomena in other ancient cultures. This study of the ceremony on the level of its ritual components will then allow the reconstruction of an explanatory model for TU 41 as a whole, which will be discussed at the start of Chapter 6: a yearly recurring fire ceremony embedded in the framework of a night vigil which was held regularly during the winter months and which entailed various offerings and other rites—e.g. the ceremonial closing and reopening of the temple gates—that were not specific to the fire ceremony itself.

The remainder of Chapter 6 will be devoted to an analysis of the most important religious and sociopolitical features of the fire ceremony: the nocturnal and midwinter setting, the fire and light symbolism, the central role of exorcism and purification, the focus on Anu as lightbringer and protector of Uruk, and the hierarchy established by the order in which the fire was distributed from the Bīt Rēš to the other temples and then the private houses of Uruk. The possible participation of ghosts, which one would expect but which is not explicitly mentioned in the source text, will be discussed separately. All taken together, these key elements will allow for the conclusion that we are dealing with a seasonal renewal festival, which at Seleucid Uruk must have fulfilled a function that the *akītu* festivals could not.

3.2 Transliteration, Translation and Commentary

obv.

1. *ina muḫ-ḫi* [...] [*a-n*] *a pa-ni* ^{giš}níg.gidru *i-dag-gal ki-ma* [...]
2. ^{giš}níg.gidru *ù še-e-nu zi*^{meš}-*nim-ma dingir*^{meš} *ù innin*^{meš} *ki-ma maḫ-ri-*
[im-ma]
3. *ina pa-ni-šú* *ù egir-šú gin-ak a-na kisal.maḫ* *e*₁₁^{meš}-*ma a-na* ^{d60}lá-aš
4. ^{lú}maš.maš ^{giš}níg.gidru *ú-ḫab*^{ab}-*ma ku₄-ma ina šub-ti-šú tuš-ab* ^dpap
.sukkal ^dnuska
5. *ù* ^dša *ina kisal* ^{d60}*ina muḫ-ḫi šu-bat*^{meš} *tuš-ab* *ù še-e-nu* ^ddumu.sal^{meš}
^{d60}
6. *ù* ^ddumu.sal^{meš} *unug*^{ki} *gur-ru*^{meš}-*nim-ma še-e-nu a-na é.nir* *é* ^{giš}nú
kù.g[i]
7. *šá an-tu₄ ku₄-ma ina muḫ-ḫi gir.gub.bu iš-šak-kan* ^ddumu.sal^{meš} ^{d60}

8. ù ^ddumu.sal^{meš} unug^{ki} ina kisal an-tu₄ ina muḫ-ḫi šu-bat^{meš} tuš-ab
geštin ù ì.giš òg.gā
9. iš-te-niš ḫe.ḫe-ma ina ká é pa-pa-ḫa a-na ^d60 an-tu₄ ù dingir^{meš} dù.a.bi
i-naq-qa
10. sip-pi^{meš} šá ká é pa-pa-ḫa ^{giš}ig^{meš} ù ká^{meš} ú-lap-pat níg-na-qa^{meš} kù.gi
11. ú-mál-le-e-ma sískur gu₄ ù udu.níta a-na ^d60 an-tu₄ ù dingir^{meš} dù.a
.bi bal-[qí]
12. kin.sig šá li-lat a-na ^d60 an-tu₄ ù dingir^{meš} dù.a.bi i-qar-rub
13. [u]l du₈-ár ba-a-a-at i-ba-at ká ul ut-ta-dal a-na dingir^{meš} ma-la ina kisal
14. [aš-b]a nap-tan i-qar-rub ina en'.nun.usan ina ú-ru bára.maḫ ziq-qur-
ra[t]
15. šá é re-eš ki-ma šá mul ^d60 gal-ú šá an-e it-tap-ḫa an-tu₄ gal-tu₄ šá an-e
16. ina ^{mu}mar.gíd.da it-tap-ḫa a-na tam-šil zi-i-mu bu-un-né-e mul šá-ma-mi
17. ^da-num lugal it-ta-ša-a ḫa-lam ba-nu-ú ^{giš}banšur kù.gi a-na ^d60 u an-tu₄
18. šá an-e tu-kan-nu a^{meš} šu^u a-na ^d60 ù an-tu₄ šá an-e il-ši-ma
19. ^{giš}banšur ta-rak-kás uzu gu₄ uzu udu.níta ù mušen^{hi-a} ta-rak-kás kaš
reš-tu-ú
20. a-dí geštin šur.ra tu-kan-nu gurun ^{giš}kiri₆ dù.a.bi tu-šar-ra-aḫ
21. ^{giš}eren.sig ù zì.mad.gá ina muḫ-ḫi níg-na-qa kù.gi ta-sar-raq-ma
22. ma-aq-qu-ú kù.gi geštin šur.ra ta-naq-qa ina muḫ-ḫi 7 ^{giš}banšur maḫ
kù.gi
23. a-na ^dsag.me.gar ^ddil-bat ^dgu₄.ud ^dgenna ù ^dšal-bat-a-nu ^d30
24. ù ^dutu ki-ma šá in-nam-mar a^{meš} šu^u il-ši-ma ^{giš}banšur ta-rak-kás
25. uzu gu₄ uzu udu.níta ù mušen^{hi-a} ta-rak-kás kaš reš-tu-ú a-di geštin
šur.ra
26. tu-kan-nu gurun ^{giš}kiri₆ dù.a.bi tu-šar-ra-aḫ ina muḫ-ḫi 7 níg-na-qa
kù.gi
27. zì.mad.gá ù lu-uk-šú ta-sar-raq-ma ma-aq-qu-ú kù.gi geštin šur.ra
28. ta-naq-qa lú-maḫ šá ^{tú}gíb-lá rak-su gi.izi.lá gal-ú šá šim.ḫi.a
29. su-un-nu-uš ì.giš òg.gā sal-ḫu ù ka.luḫ.ù.ud.da šu-pu-uš
30. ina izi.ki.a ^díd i-qa-dam-ma a-na tar-ši ^{giš}banšur i-tar-ra-aš-ma
31. šu^u-su a-na ^da-nù gal-ú šá an-e il-ši-ma mul ^d60 e-tel-lu ša-ma-mi
32. naq-bit i-qab-bi ^{giš}banšur maḫ duḫ-ár-ma a^{meš} šu^u il-ši
33. ^{lú}ku₄.é gal-ú šu^u gi.izi.lá ina ^{lú}maš.maš^{meš} ^{lú}gala^{meš} ù ^{lú}nar^{meš}
34. ta ziq-qur-rat dib-bat-am-ma ká.sikil.la šá ku-tal pa-pa-ḫa ana kisal
.maḫ ku₄-ma

rev.

1. it-ti ki.zálag.gā a-na ^d60 lá-aš ^{du}gḫa-ru-ú ina igi-šú ib-bat-ta-qa
2. naq-bit i-qab-bi ^{lú}ku₄.é gal-ú šu^u gi.izi.lá ^dpap.sukkal ^dnuska ^dša

3. ù^dmes.sag.unug^{ki} dib-bat-ma a-na é pa-pa-ḥa an-tu₄ du-ak.meš-ma
4. a-na an-tu₄ lá-aš^{duḡ}ḥa-ru-ú ina pa-ni-šú ib-bat-ta-qa^dpap.sukkal
5. ^dnuska^dša ù^dmes.sag.unug^{ki} it-ti gi.izi.lá ana ub-šu-ukkin-na-ki
6. è^{meš}-nim-ma ina da bára nam^{meš} gu₄ ina pa-ni-šú-nu im-maḥ-ḥa-aš
izi.ḥa.mun
7. ta gi.izi.lá ina ub-šu-ukkin-na-ki in-nap-pa-aḥ^{uz^u}zag.lu gu₄ a-di kuš-šú
8. it-ti-ir-ma¹⁵ u 2.3 šá ab-ri-i i-lap-pat^dpap.sukkal^dnuska^dša
9. ù^dmes.sag.unug^{ki} it-ti gi.izi.lá ta ub-šu-ukkin-na-ki ká.maḥ
10. a-na su-ú-qa è^{meš}-nim-ma^dmes.sag.unug^{ki} ina pa-ni-šú^dpap.sukkal^dnuska
11. ù^dša it-ti-šú du-ak.meš-ma é nigin[!] (text: DIB)-ú gur-ru^{meš}-nim-ma
12. ^dpap.sukkal ina ká.maḥ^dnuska ina ká.gal ù^dša ina ká.sag
13. ^{lú}ku₄-é ta gi.izi.lá izi.ḥa.mun ina pa-ni-šú-nu ú-šá-aš-ba-at-ma
14. a-di zálag tuš-ab^{lú}sanga^{meš} šá é^{meš} dingir^{meš} tir.an.na^{ki} šá-niš^{lú}ku₄-
é dingir^{meš} dù.a.bi
15. nu-úr ta gi.izi.lá i-qád-du-ú-ma a-na é dingir^{meš}-šú-nu il-ši-ma
16. šá-lam é ip-pu-uš izi.ḥa.mun ina ká é dingir^{meš}-šú-nu i-nap! (text: ŠAB)-
pa-aḥ
17. ^d60 uš-ta-pa-a ina nap-ḥar kur.kur ù it-ta-ša-a ṣa-lam ba-nu-ú naq-bit i-
qab-bu-ú
18. gi.izi.lá ù^dmes.sag.unug^{ki} gur-ru-nim-ma a-na kisal an-tu₄ ku₄-ma
19. a-na an-tu₄ lá-aš^{lú}maš.maš ina a^{meš} dug_a.gúb.ba kaš sag ga geštin u
ì.giš
20. gi.izi.lá ú-na-{an}-aḥ^dmes.sag.unug^{ki} du-ak-ma ina ub-šu-ukkin-na-
ki
21. a-di na-ma-ri tuš-ab^dim^d30^dutu ù^dbe-let dingir^{meš} ina kisal
22. a-di na-ma-ri tuš-ab un^{meš} kur ina é^{meš}-šú-nu izi.ḥa.mun i-nap-pa-aḥ
23. sískur qé-re-e-ti a-na ^d60 an-tu₄ ù dingir^{meš} dù.a.bi i-naq-qu-ú
24. naq-bit ki-ma maḥ-ri-im-ma i-qab-bu-ú^{lú}en.nun uru ina su-ú-qa^{meš}
25. ù sila.lím.ma izi.ḥa.mun i-nap-pa-aḥ ká.gal^{meš} unug^{ki} a-di na-ma-ri
26. ul uḥ-ḥi-ir^{lú}en.nun ká-gal^{meš} gi`uri.gal^{meš} 15 ù 2.3
27. šá ká.gal^{meš} ú-zaq-qa-pu ab[!] (text: NAB)-ri a-na na-ma-ri ina ká.gal^{meš} i-
nap-pa-a[ḥ]

-
28. ud.17.kám 10 uš u₄-mu egir kur-ḥa^dutu ká ina pa-ni^d60 u an-tu₄ bad-
te-ma ba-a-a-a[t]
29. du₈-ar nap-tan gal-ú šá še-rim a-na ^d60 an-tu₄ ù dingir^{meš} dù.a.bi i-qar-
ru-ub
30. gal-ú du₈-ma tar-den-nu i-qar-ru-ub níg-na-qa^{meš} kù.gi ú-mál-le-e-ma
sís[kur]

31. gu₄ ù udu.níta bal-*qí*^{1ú} nar^{mes} *i-za-am-mu-ru* e.lum gu₄ sún.na iš-š[*ak-kan*]³²
32. *ina* igi dingir^{mes} dù.a.bi níg-na-qa^{mes} ú-mál-le-e-ma sískur gu₄ ù udu .níta ba[l-*qí*]
33. šu¹¹ ^dim ^d30 ^dutu ^dmes.sag.unug^{ki} ù ^dbe-let dingir^{mes} *ina* šid-di [...]

obv.¹ On the [...] he will wait for³³ the Staff, just as [...] ² The Staff and the Shoe will rise and the gods and goddesses ³ will go before and behind them³⁴ respectively, just like before. They will proceed down to the Grand Courtyard and take up position facing Anu.³⁵ ⁴ An *āšipu* will purify the Staff, which will then go inside and take up its seat. Papsukkal, Nuska ⁵ and Usmû will take up their seats in the Courtyard of Anu. The Shoe, the Daughters of Anu ⁶ and the Daughters of Uruk will turn around;³⁶ the Shoe will enter (l. 7) the Enir, the ‘House of the Golden Bed’ ⁷ of Antu, and be placed on a footstool there. The Daughters of Anu ⁸ and the Daughters of Uruk will take up their seats in the Courtyard of Antu.

He (the *āšipu*?) will mix (l. 9) wine and good oil ⁹ and make a libation for Anu, Antu and all the gods at the gate to the sanctuary. ¹⁰ He will smear the door-

32 For this reconstruction, see Gabbay 2008, 426.

33 The phrase *ana pani*, litt. ‘before’, may give *daġalu* ‘to await’ the added nuance of ‘to wait attentively, facing the direction from which the awaited person/object will arrive’, i.e. ‘be on the lookout for’; thus we may expect that the Shoe, if it is indeed the subject of this line, was already turned towards the place where the Staff would enter the Shoe’s location.

34 The suffix *-šu* ‘him/it’ should probably be read as a mistake for *-šunu* ‘them’, since the Staff and Shoe are the subjects of the first part of that sentence. The probable order of the gods going in front of the two divine objects and the goddesses behind them is discussed in § 5.2.3.

35 Both CAD T 212b and AHW 1326b suggest that a priest is the subject of *itarraš* ‘he takes up position’, but that is unlikely, since no priest has been mentioned in the previous lines and the text is not that ambiguous about the subjects of the various activities. Also, in the rest of the text it is exclusively the divine objects which take up position facing deities and never the priests. Save for being ‘taken by the hand’ on occasion, the deities and cultic objects are described as if they move around autonomously. Thus, I agree with the other translators that the singular verbal form is a mistake and should be read as a plural, as occurs a number of times in this text (cf. Linssen 2004, 249).

36 I follow Thureau-Dangin’s reading of *iturrūnimma* as “s’en retourneront” (and Ebeling’s “kehren um”), i.e. the statues are turned in a different direction to proceed from the Courtyard of Anu into the Courtyard of Antu. I prefer this interpretation over Linssen’s “will return”, which suggests that they were somewhere else in the meantime. (Moreover, instructions about the precise positioning of the statues was clearly considered necessary; cf. the many instructions in this text for deities to take up position facing Anu or Antu.)

frames of the gate to the sanctuary, as well as the doors and gates (inside the sanctuary), and fill (l. 11) the golden incense burners.¹¹ A sacrifice of a bull and a sheep will be brought before Anu, Antu and all the gods.¹² The evening meal will be presented to Anu, Antu and all the gods.¹³ It will not be cleared away. The night vigil will be held the rest of the night. The gate will not be bolted.

To the gods, as many as are in the courtyard,¹⁴ a meal will be presented. During the first night watch, on the rooftop of the high shrine of the Bit Rēš ziqqurrat,¹⁵ as soon as the star Great Anu of Heaven has risen and Great Antu of Heaven¹⁶ has risen in Ursa Maior, (there will be a performance of the hymns) ‘Like the Beautiful Glow of the Stars of Heaven,¹⁷ Anu, the King’³⁷ (and) ‘The Beautiful Image Has Come Out’.³⁸ You will set down (l. 18) a golden table for Anu and Antu¹⁸ of Heaven. You will lift up water towards Anu and Antu of Heaven for (washing) their hands¹⁹ and set the table. You will present (a meal of) beef, mutton and various birds. You will put down (l. 20) beer of the best quality²⁰ as well as ‘pressed wine’. You will create a sumptuous arrangement with all kinds of garden fruits.²¹ You will sprinkle cedar needles(?) and *mašḫatu*-flour on the golden incense burners²² and libate ‘pressed wine’ from a golden libation vessel.

On seven large golden tables you will place³⁹ (l. 24) water²³ for Nebēru (Jupiter), Dilbat (Venus), Šiḫṭu (Mercury), Kayamānu (Saturn) and Šalbatānu (Mars), Sîn²⁴ and Šamaš, at the appearance of each, for (washing) their hands and you will set the table.²⁵ You will present (a meal of) beef, mutton and various birds. You will put down (l. 26) beer of the best quality as well as ‘pressed wine’.²⁶ You will create a sumptuous arrangement with all kinds of garden fruits. On seven golden incense burners²⁷ you will sprinkle cedar needles (?) and *mašḫatu*-flour and you will libate (l. 28) ‘pressed wine’ from a golden libation vessel.

37 Note that ‘like’ is a somewhat imprecise rendering of *ana tamšil*, the latter word meaning specifically ‘equal’, ‘counterpart’, ‘mirror image’, but I choose it for the sake of the translation, to let the incipit sound more like the first line of an English song or hymn could be phrased.

38 Falkenstein regards the entire string of title words as a single incipit, whereas Linssen translates ^d*anum lugal ittašâ šalam banū* (obv. 17) as one hymn: “Anu, the king, has risen, the beautiful constellation”. Neither reading can be correct, because *ittāšâ šalam banū* is mentioned separately as a hymn in rev. 17. Moreover, the scribe has left a large space open between the signs *lugal* and *it*. Whether or not *ana tamšil* (...) *lugal* should be read as one or two incipits remains unclear. Thureau-Dangin, Ebeling, Furlani and Sachs connect ^d*anum lugal* to the preceding words.

39 Litt. *tanašši*, ‘you will lift up’.

²⁸ The *lumaḥḥu*-priest, wearing a wrap,⁴⁰ will use sulphur fire to ignite (l. 30) a large torch which has been perforated (l. 29) with all kinds of aromatics,²⁹ sprinkled with good oil and on which the mouth-washing rite has been performed.³⁰ He will place it opposite the table, raise his hands up towards Great Anu of Heaven³¹ and recite the prayer (l. 32) ‘Star Anu, Lord of Heaven.’³² He will clear the large table and lift up water for (Anu of Heaven’s) hands.³³ A senior temple enterer will ‘take the hand of’ (l. 34) the Torch and together with the *ašipū*, the *kalū* and the musicians³⁴ (he will bring it) down from the ziqqurat. (Through) the Pure Gate, which is behind the cella, it will enter the Grand Courtyard^{rev. 1} and at the Place of Brightness it will take up position⁴¹ before Anu. A pot will be breached before him.² He will recite a prayer. The temple enterer will ‘take the hands of’ (l. 3) the Torch, Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû³ and Pisangunug⁴² and they will go into the cella of Antu.⁴ It will take up position before Antu. A pot will be breached before her.⁴³

Papsukkal,⁵ Nuska, Usmû and Pisangunug will go out (of the sanctuary) (l. 6) together with the Torch (and) into the Ubšukkinnaku.⁶ Beside the Dais of Destinies a bull will be slaughtered before them. A brushwood pile⁷ will be kindled with the Torch in the Ubšukkinnaku. (A priest) will remove (l. 8) the right shoulder of the bull along with the hide⁸ and touch the right and left side of

40 For this translation see § 5.5.2.

41 It is probable that *itarraš* here is actually meant as a singular form, since, as discussed before, instructions about taking up position facing certain deities in this text always refer to other deities or cultic objects, not to the priests holding or carrying them. Thus, the subject of rev. 1 must be the Torch.

42 Sachs and Linssen read *gi.izi.lá d pap.sukkal d nuska d ša ū d mes.sag.unug^{ki}* as a genitive construction: “the Torch of Papsukkal, Nuska” etc. I see no reason to translate the line that way, since it does not contain any grammatical markers which would necessitate such a reading; moreover, the textual context even makes it unlikely. The Torch has been created independently on the rooftop of the ziqqurat shrine, brought by means of a procession into the Anu-Antu-sanctuary and is only there joined (temporarily) by the four guardian deities; it would be an odd, out-of-the-blue development to suddenly regard it as *belonging* to those four deities when the text has given no previous indication of such a relationship. Furthermore, the Torch is not subordinate to Papsukkal and his colleagues in terms of importance in the ritual, but is arguably the ritual’s main protagonist. Thus, I prefer to follow Thureau-Dangin and Ebeling and read the list of participants as of equal grammatical status, which is the possessive case dependent on *šū*¹¹ ... *išabbatma*: “he ‘takes the hands of’ the Torch, of Papsukkal, of Nuska” etc.

43 This reading of *-šū* implies that it is a mistake for *-ša*. Whether the Torch or the respective deity is the primary focus of the pot-breaking is difficult to establish and only a difference in nuance, since the rite of breaching the pot in fact involves them both (see § 5.6.3).

the brushwood pile (with it). Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû⁹ and Pisangunug will go out (l. 10) with the Torch from the Ubšukinnaku and (through) the Grand Gate¹⁰ into the street. Pisangunug will go (l. 11) ahead of it and Papsukkal, Nuska¹¹ and Usmû alongside it. They will circle the temple and then return:¹² Papsukkal into the Grand Gate, Nuska into the Great Gate and Usmû into the Main Gate.¹³ A temple enterer will light a brushwood pile before them with the Torch.¹⁴ They will remain there until dawn.

The *šangū* of the temples of Tiranna, alternatively the temple enterers of all the gods¹⁵ will light a fire from the Torch, carry it to their temples¹⁶ and perform the *šalām bīti* ceremony. They will light brushwood piles at the gates of their temples.¹⁷ They will perform the hymns ‘Anu Shines Forth Through All the Lands’ and ‘The Beautiful Image Has Come Out’.¹⁸ The Torch and Pisangunug will turn around, enter the Courtyard of Antu¹⁹ and take up position before Antu. An *āšipu* will extinguish the Torch (l. 20) with water from the ritual water basin, good beer, milk, wine and oil.²⁰ Pisangunug will go into the Ubšukinnaku²¹ and remain there until dawn. Adad, Sîn, Šamaš and Bēlet-īli will remain (l. 22) in the courtyard²² until dawn. The people of the land will light brushwood piles at their homes.²³ They will present a *qerītu*-meal to Anu, Antu and all the gods.²⁴ They will perform hymns as before. The city guard will light (l. 25) brushwood piles in the streets²⁵ and at the crossroads. Until dawn, the great gates of Uruk²⁶ will not be closed(?). The guard⁴⁴ at the great gates will erect (l. 27) reed standards right and left²⁷ of the great gates. Until dawn he will keep brushwood piles burning⁴⁵ at the great gates.

²⁸ On day 17, 40 minutes of daytime after sunrise, the gate (to the sanctuary) will be opened before Anu and Antu and the night vigil²⁹ will be brought to an end. The large morning meal will be presented to Anu, Antu and all the gods.³⁰ The large one will be removed and the second one presented. (A priest) will fill the golden incense burners and bring (l. 31) a sacrifice³¹ of a bull and a sheep. The musicians will play. The hymn ‘Honored One, Wild Ox’ (will be performed).³² (The priest) will fill the incense burners before all the gods and bring a sacrifice of a bull and a sheep.³³ (He will ‘take) the hands’ of Adad, Sîn, Šamaš, Pisangunug and Bēlet-īli (and lead them) between the curtains [...].

44 This must actually be meant as a singular, since the Sumerograms in this text are consequently marked with MEŠ in case of plurality.

45 Litt. *inappah*, ‘he will kindle’.

The Ritual's Calendrical Setting

4.1 Introduction

The only thing we can learn from TU 41 itself about the ritual's temporal setting is that it took place in the night between days 16 and 17 of an unknown month (rev. 28). Also, it was a night on which a night vigil (*bayātu*) was held (obv. 13) and the *šalām bīti* ceremony was performed (rev. 16). Yet one other source may offer additional information about the month in which the nocturnal ceremony took place. TU 38 rev. 32–34 reads:¹

On the 16th day of every month, 10 first-class, fat, pure sheep, perfect of horn and hoof, will be offered as boiled meat to Anu and Antu of Heaven and the seven planets on the occasion of the cleansing of the hands, in the high shrine of the ziqqurrat of Anu, just as on the 16th of ʿĪbētu.

“Just as on the 16th of ʿĪbētu” suggests that on that day something took place which was similar, but not identical to the activities of the 16th day of other months. Perhaps, considering that it was only once a year, it was something more elaborate, more spectacular than on the other occasions. That special event may very well have been the nocturnal ritual described in TU 41.² It consisted of all the elements listed in the passage quoted above—an offering of a meat dish to Anu and Antu of Heaven and the seven planets, including a hand-washing ceremony, which took place on the 16th day on top of the Anu ziqqurrat—but it had many additional, particularly festive features, such as the procession of the Torch and the lighting of bonfires throughout the city.

Below we will examine the cultic significance of both day 16 and the month ʿĪbētu and what we know about their respective roles in the cultic calendar of Seleucid Uruk. First, however, we will look at the Neo-Babylonian, Seleucid and Parthian sources on the night vigil and the additional evidence they may offer about the day and month on which the nocturnal ceremony is likely to have taken place.

1 ³² ud.16.kam šá iti-us-su 10 udu.níta sag-ú-tú ma-ru-tú dadag.ga šá si ù umbin šuk-lu-lu ³³ a-na ^{d6} ù an-tu₄ šá an-e ù ^dudu.idim^{mes} 7-šu-nu a-na sa-al-qa i-na ³⁴ te-bi-ib-tu₄ šu¹¹ i-na bára.maš ziq-qur-rat ^{d6} ki-ma šá ud.16.kam šá ^{iti}ab dú.uš (Linszen 2004, 175; my tr.).

2 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 45; Linszen 2004, 7.

4.2 The Night Vigil (*bayātu*) and Its Occurrences

The Babylonian secular day started and ended at sunset. It was divided into three day watches and three night watches (*maššartu*), varying in length according to the seasons, and twelve standard-length double hours (*bēru*). The cultic day, however, followed a different schedule. It began during the last double hour of the night with the ceremonies for waking the temple (*dīk bīti*) and opening the temple gate (*pīt bābi*).³ During the course of the day, the gods received the first and second meal of the morning, which were then cleared away again, and later the first and second evening meal.⁴

The cultic day could end in two ways: either with or without a night vigil. When there was no night vigil, the cultic day ended with the clearing away of the second evening meal, followed by the closing of the temple gate. When a night vigil was held, the second meal of the evening was not cleared,⁵ probably because the gods were considered to remain awake, just like their personnel. The temple gate was closed and the vigil itself was held as the last cultic event of that day, even though it took place during the night and only ended at dawn after the performing of the *dīk bīti* ceremony.⁶ More precisely, then, one should say the night vigil continued into the next cultic day.

Apart from the Uruk ritual texts TU 39 and TU 41, the *bayātu* is attested in various Neo- and Late Babylonian administrative documents from Uruk, Babylon, Sippar and Borsippa:⁷

3 Linssen 2004, 25–26; McEwan 1981, 169–171. The 2nd–5th day of the *akītu* festival in Babylon were an exception to this: they started 1/3d of a double hour (i.e. 40 minutes) earlier each day, until on the 5th day the priest had to rise 1 double hour earlier than usual (Linssen 2004, 215 ff.). For the *dīk bīti* and *pīt bābi* ceremonies, see § 5.8.1.

4 McEwan 1981, 170 prefers to translate *lilātu* with “afternoon”, i.e. before sunset, not “evening”, i.e. after sunset.

5 TU 39 rev. 9; TU 41 obv. 13.

6 Cf. TU 39 rev. 10–11.

7 This list is based on the one provided by Linssen 2004, 56, to which I have added seven more sources.

Document	Provenance	Period / date on tablet	Calendrical information
LB 1550 ⁸	Uruk(?)	Nbk 2?	4-XI
LB 1575	Uruk(?)	Nbk 3	16-X
BIN 2 129: 5	Uruk	Nbk 19	month XI
UCP 9/1 23: 2-3	Uruk	Nbk 39	17-IX
BIN 1 170: 25	Uruk	Nrgl 3	one month (probably XI), one day (unknown)
YOS 6 39: 31	Uruk	Nbn 3	one month (probably X), one day
AUWE 5 80 rev. 8' ⁹	Uruk	NB; no date	broken context, probably one month, one day
GCCI 2 371: 10	Uruk	unknown king, year 12	one month (probably XI _B), unknown days (mentioned in a list: <i>ginû, guqqû,</i> [...], <i>niqê šarri, bayatānu</i>)
YBC 3927: 1 ¹⁰	Uruk	NB; no date	“the entire year” (mentioned in a list: <i>eššešu,</i> <i>bayatānu, pīt bābi, lubuštu</i>)
SWU 27 rev. 4'	Uruk	NB; no date	month XII (mentioned directly after a list of deities receiving offerings)
SWU 35 rev. 1-2	Uruk	NB; no date	broken, possibly month X (for Ušur-amāssu)
SWU 37 rev. 4	Uruk	NB; no date	broken, possibly month IX
SWU 62 rev. 2	Uruk	NB; no date	broken, but either month X, XI, or XII

8 LB 1550 and LB 1575 are Neo-Babylonian administrative texts in the Liagre Böhl collection (Leiden), which in all likelihood derive from the Eanna archive. They will be published by Cindy Meijer, who kindly provided me with these data in advance.

9 Reconstructed by Gehlken on the basis of BIN 1 170 and YOS 6 39, since all three documents mention a group of bakers with the same personal names. Also, both BIN 1 170 and YOS 6 39, which are very similar in content, deal with the distribution of dates and raisins to said bakers for the production of beer and cakes for different festivities. In both texts the same baker, Nabû-eṭir-balaṭāni, is responsible for the *bayātu*.

10 Cf. Beaulieu 2003, 36.

(cont.)

Document	Provenance	Period / date on tablet	Calendrical information
vs 6 268 rev. 18	Babylon	NB; no date	broken, but either – month III, different days – 11-IX – 21-X or more/all of those (mentioned in a list: <i>sattukku</i> , [...], <i>eššešu</i> , <i>bayatānu</i>)
Peiser, <i>Verträge</i> 107: 5 ¹¹	Babylon	Dar 26	“the entire year” (in the Išhara temple in Šuanna; mentioned in a list: <i>niqê šarri</i> , <i>niqê kārībi</i> , <i>ginû</i> , <i>guqqû</i> , <i>eššešu</i> , <i>bayatānu</i> , <i>šalām bīti</i>)
George 1992, no. 38 obv. 4	Babylon	–	no month or day indicated (mentioned in a list: <i>guqqû</i> , <i>eššešu</i> , <i>šalām bīti</i> , <i>bayatānu</i>)
CT 49 150 rev. 44 ¹²	Babylon	93 BC	16-IX; 3-XI
RT 17 (1895) 31: 2–3	Sippar	–	“the entire year”
Amherst 238 ¹³	Borsippa	Dar 23	29-IX; 16-X; 3-XI (all in the Mār-Bīti temple)
Moore, <i>Michigan Coll.</i> 52: 14	unknown	NB; no date	broken context

In these documents, the *bayātu* is often listed together—though in varying combinations and order—with celebrations we know were held at least once a month, such as the *lubuštu* (clothing of the divine statues), *eššešu* (‘all temples’), *šalām bīti* (‘well-being of the temple’)¹⁴ and *nabrû*¹⁵ ceremonies, as well as the *ginû* and *guqqû* offerings¹⁶ and the offerings of the king and the common

11 Ed. MacGinnis 1991–1992, no. 7.

12 Ed. Van der Spek 1998, no. 13.

13 Cf. Ungnad 1959–1960, 77; Waerzeggers 2010a, 27–28 and 139.

14 Cf. Linssen 2004, 45–55 and 59–61; for the *šalām bīti* ceremony see § 5.7.1.

15 See § 5.5.4.3.

16 Cf. Linssen 2004, 162–164.

worshippers (*kāribu*).¹⁷ Moreover, it was an occasion for which certain foodstuffs were provided, such as bread and butter, Dilmun dates, raisins, sesame, barley, beef and mutton. It seems likely, therefore, that the *bayātu* itself was also a monthly recurring ceremony and that it included offerings to certain deities. We may assume it usually took place together with several of the ceremonies listed above in one longer celebration, just as it was one of the many features of the *akītu* festival at Uruk in month VII.¹⁸ Furthermore, the sources suggest that the *bayātu* took place only once a month, since all documents either list expenses for the entire year, among which several *bayatānu*, or they deal with the expenses for one specific month, in which case always only a single *bayātu* is mentioned. An exception is GCCI 2 371, which gives day 23 of the intercalary month XIIB as date and then lists different *bayatānu*, but the context is broken and may have referred to other months besides month XIIB.

TU 38, the list of daily offerings at Seleucid Uruk, confirms the monthly character of the *bayātu*. It lists the ritual as one of many monthly or even daily occurring ceremonies for which additional foodstuffs would be needed, i.e. apart from those offered to the gods of Uruk during their four daily meals:¹⁹

... the travel provisions for the gods (*šidītu ilāni*), the *guqqû*-offerings, the *eššešu* ceremonies, the opening of the gate ceremonies, the clothing ceremonies, the ritual water basin ceremonies, the night vigils, the brazier ceremonies (*kinūnu*), the rites of divine marriage (*ḥašādu*), the offerings of the *kāribus* and the additional offerings of the king ...

According to TU 39 (rev. 9–11), the *bayātu* was held during the night of day 9 and continued into the morning of day 10 of month VII, Tašritu. If we combine that information with the 16th day mentioned in TU 41 and the data in the administrative texts discussed above, we can determine the following months and days on which the *bayātu* took place in Neo-Babylonian, Seleucid and Parthian Uruk, Babylon and Borsippa:

17 Cf. Linssen 2004, 161–162.

18 TU 39 rev. 9; Linssen 2004, 57; Waerzeggers 2010a, 139. An administrative document from the Bit Rēš confirms that at least a clothing ceremony for Anu and Antu also took place on 16-x (see below).

19 ³⁶ (...) *ši-di-i-tu*₄ dingir^{meš} *gu-uq-qa-né-e* ud.èš.èš^{meš} bad-te ká^{meš} *lu-bu-ša-at* ³⁷ dug a.gúb.ba^{meš} *ba-a-a-at*^{meš} ki.ne^{meš} garza.garza *ḥa-šá-du ka-ri-bi*^{meš} ³⁸ ù tar-di-i-tu₄ lugal (...) (TU 38 obv. 36–38 and rev. 36–38; the travel provisions for the gods are omitted on the reverse; my tr.).

City	Period	Certain	Likely/possible
Uruk	NB	17-IX	16-X
		month XI month XII	4-XI month XIIb
	Seleucid	9-VII (<i>akītu</i> festival) unknown month, day 16	16-X
Babylon	NB		month III month IX month X
		Arsacid	16-IX 3-XI
Borsippa	NB	29-IX	
		16-X	
		3-XI	

From this table a pattern emerges: the night vigil was only observed during the darker months of the year, when the nights were longer than the days. This hypothesis is not backed unambiguously by all the sources, but there is none that speaks directly against it. In RT 17 31, YBC 3927 and TU 38, there is mention of “the entire year”, but in reference to the total of different festivities for which the foodstuffs described in the documents were needed. That does not necessarily mean that the *bayātu* itself also took place during all twelve months of the year. In vs 6 268 there may be mention of a *bayātu* held in month III. The broken text lists a number of different offering ceremonies—the *sattukku* offerings, five occasions of the *eššešu* festival, and the *bayatānu*—and then different days of different months on which those ceremonies took place: month III, day broken until day 29; month IX, day 11, month X, day 21 etc. Since the text does not differentiate further, it may be that the *bayātu* took place on all of those days, including several in month III, or only on the last two months mentioned, i.e. in months IX and X. Considering the rest of the evidence, the latter option is more likely.

What exactly the *bayātu* entailed, other than that it took place during the night and included offerings to specific—or perhaps all—deities, is unknown. It is not likely that the ritual text TU 41 is a description of a regular *bayātu*, as is sometimes assumed.²⁰ If that had been the case, the specific statements in

²⁰ Most recently Pongratz-Leisten 2006–2008, 101.

the text about its beginning (obv. 13) and ending (rev. 28–29) would have been redundant. Moreover, if the entire nocturnal ceremony had been an event of the monthly variety, it would not have been written down in a prescriptive format at all, let alone with the mention of a date. Rather, the *bayātu* in TU 41 should be compared to the *bayātu* held during the night of day 9 of the *akitu* festival in month VII: one cultic event among many that took place in the context of an elaborate ritual cycle spanning several days.²¹ Furthermore, the products offered to the various gods in TU 41 are different from those mentioned in the Neo-Babylonian administrative texts. Anu and Antu of Heaven and the five planets received beer and wine, meat and various kinds of fresh fruit, but not the dates and raisins that recur in many of the Neo-Babylonian documents. The evening meal, which according to TU 38 did include dates, was brought before Anu and Antu and the other gods inside the Bīt Rēš, but that was before the *bayātu* had even started.²²

4.3 Day 16 and the Lunar Cultic Calendar

What can be said about the cultic significance of day 16? Traditionally, the cities of Mesopotamia had lunar cultic calendars based on an ideal model of the moon's phases, according to which the moon was half on day 7 and full on day 15 of every month.²³ This is clearly demonstrated by one of the oldest Mesopotamian monthly festivals, the *eššešu-* or 'all temples' festival, which was originally celebrated monthly on day 1, the day of the first moonlight, day 7, at half-moon, and day 15, at full moon.²⁴ Sources from the Ur III and Old Babylonian period also offer evidence for other monthly festivals taking place on the first, seventh and fifteenth day.²⁵ As the first day of the second half of the month, day 16 also bore cultic significance and is sometimes attested instead of day 15 as a date of ritual activity. For example, the offerings for the (royal) dead during the Ur III period took place on the 1st and 15th of the month, whereas

21 A night vigil was also held during month VII in the temples of the city of Aššur in the early Neo-Assyrian period. A royal decree from 809 BC lists large amounts of foodstuffs for what must have been an elaborate banquet for the gods (SAA XII 69: obv. 18–26).

22 TU 41 obv. 12.

23 The ideal month of 30 days, with full moon on day 15, is also described in *Enūma Eliš* v 12–22 as part of the order of time established by Marduk.

24 Linssen 2004, 45 with further literature. Between the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods, day 25 was added to those monthly occurrences.

25 Steele 2007, 133–134.

in Old Babylonian Mari such rites were performed on the 1st and 16th.²⁶ In the ‘Theogony of Dunnu’, a fragmentary mythological text about several generations of divine rulers, days 1 and 16 of different months are mentioned as dates upon which new divine kings and queens acceded their thrones.²⁷

In the later Assyrian tradition, the dates for the *eššešu* festival changed completely to the 4th, 8th and 17th of the month, with a nocturnal celebration, a *nubattu*, on the eve of the 17th. However, that may not have been the case in Babylonia.²⁸ Different collections of sources show that the cultic calendars of Neo-Babylonian cities were still primarily lunar. According to a calendar text for the performance of Emesal prayers in the temple of Šamaš at Neo-Babylonian Sippar, the performances took place on day 8(!), day 15, day 20, the day sacred to Šamaš, and thus probably also on day 1.²⁹ The broken cultic calendar from Neo-Babylonian Uruk, LKU 51, lists the “duties of the *kalûs* and the musicians” on days 1, 2, 6, 7, 14 and 15 of each month.³⁰ Moreover, a number of sheep was sacrificed each month at Neo-Babylonian Uruk on days 1, 2, 7 and 15, as well as a goat on days 6/7, 13/14, 21/22 and 27/28.³¹ Likewise, a fragmentary Astronomical Diary from Hellenistic Babylon lists days 1, 3, 7, 15 and 16 as the dates for an unspecified ritual.³² At Seleucid Uruk, finally, Emesal prayers were also still performed on days 1/2, 7, 15 and 20 of every month (with additional performances on the 15th of month I, the 14th of month VI(?) and 18th of month VIII).³³ It must be noted that in reality the month could be either 30 days (a “full” month) or 29 days (a “hollow” month), which meant that the moon could be full on days 11–15, and most frequently on days 13 and 14, due to the month length and the irregular motions of the moon itself.³⁴ The priests of the

26 Lambert 2013, 390–391. Funerary rites at Mari sometimes also took place on the 7th/8th and 30th, i.e. at half-moon and dark moon, and even more rarely also on the 4th and 9th, probably during months when the threat of the disruptive presence of ghosts was greater.

27 ‘Theogony of Dunnu’ obv. 20, 24, 36 (ibid. 392). The only known copy is dated to the Neo-Babylonian period, but the contents may be much older.

28 But note the unknown ritual attested performed on “the night of the 17th and the 17th” of month XI at Hellenistic Babylon (AD -229 B obv. 11’).

29 Maul 1999, 303.

30 Beaulieu 2003, 373–375.

31 Robbins 1996, 78–79.

32 AD -229 B rev. 13 (month XII).

33 TU 48; Linssen 2004, 30–34.

34 Traditionally, the first day of a Babylonian month was determined through the first observation of the new moon sickle. If that observation was indeed possible and the moon not obscured by clouds, the occurrence of the full moon fluctuated between days 12 and 15; if the observation was one day too late, the full moon could occur as early as day 11. Day

Babylonian city cults responded to these fluctuations by shifting the dates of cultic events back and forth as needed.³⁵ Thus, the lunar cultic calendar was in itself an ideal model, and in practice it was continuously adapted to the moon's changing behaviour.

Since the cultic calendars of Neo- and late Babylonian cities were clearly still based on the phases of the moon, it is likely that the *eššešu* celebrations continued to fall—or again fell—on the most important days of that ideal cycle. The few sources from Neo-Babylonian Borsippa which refer to the *eššešu* festival mention days 7(?)–8, 19–20 and 24–25 of different months, dates that correspond nicely to the cultic calendars of Neo-Babylonian Sippar and Neo- and late Babylonian Uruk.³⁶ The Neo-Babylonian texts from Uruk that mention the *eššešu* festival list up to 11 occurrences per month, without offering any exact dates; however, that large amount is explained by the fact that in first-millennium Babylonia the *eššešu* festival spanned two consecutive days, as shown by the evidence from Borsippa. The full list was probably days 1–2, 7–8, 14–15/15–16, 19–20 and 24–25 and perhaps one or two additional dates, for instance 14–15–16, during specific months. The prebend sale deeds from Seleucid Uruk mention the *eššešu* days together with the *ginû* and *guqqû* offerings, which again makes it difficult to determine which of the dates listed in the prebend texts refer to which type of cultic event. Moreover, the lists reflect a system of distribution of prebendary duties which did not overlap perfectly with the dates of complete festivals. Nonetheless, if we assume that the dates of the *eššešu* festival at Uruk had remained unchanged during the Achaemenid and into the Seleucid period, that means the nocturnal ceremony described in TU 41 either took place during the last night of such a celebration, or the night directly following it (depending on whether it spanned days 14–15 or 15–16).³⁷ In that case it will not have been a regular *eššešu* festival, but a special celebration which, like the nocturnal ceremony, took place only once a year, perhaps spanning days 14 through 16.

16 is not attested at all (M. Ossendrijver, personal communication). However, J. Steele has argued that by the Seleucid period, month lengths were no longer determined by observation, but calculated in advance (Steele 2007, 143).

35 Beaulieu 1993b.

36 Waerzeggers 2010a, 139–140.

37 This is also suggested by George (1992, 222 note 3), although he assumes that the *eššešu* festival would not precede, but follow the ceremony and take place on day 17, as in the Neo-Assyrian cults.

4.4 Cultic Aspects of the 16th of ʾĪbētu

If the nocturnal ceremony did indeed take place on day 16 of month x, is there any other evidence of that day being a significant date on Uruk's (or generally the Babylonian) cultic calendar? Apart from TU 38, the 16th of ʾĪbētu is mentioned on an administrative record from the Bīt Rēš as the date of a clothing ceremony (*lubuštu*) for Anu and Antu, which suggests an especially festive occasion.³⁸ Further, a prebend mentioned in the sale deed *Iraq 59 no. 38* gave the owner the right to receive part of “the large sheep” which was presumably slaughtered “on the 16th of ʾĪbētu (and?) of [...] before the brushwood pile of Anu”.³⁹ That large sheep may have been sacrificed as part of the ‘bull-and-sheep offering’ which took place at the beginning of the nocturnal ceremony, before the gods’ evening meal was served.⁴⁰ The phrase “before the brushwood pile of Anu” is more problematic. *Iraq 59 no. 38* is heavily damaged in the middle, so it cannot be said with certainty whether “the brushwood pile of Anu” refers to the same ritual or even the same day as the “large sheep”. Moreover, if both phrases indeed refer to the ritual described in TU 41, then they describe two separate events, since the bull-and-sheep-offering took place much earlier in the evening than the kindling of the brushwood piles began (TU 41 rev. 6–7). We can only observe that TU 41 is the only extant ritual from Seleucid Uruk in which the lighting of brushwood piles plays an important role. Moreover, the first of those brushwood piles, which was lit in the Ubšukinnaku, may well have been considered “the brushwood pile of Anu”, since it was the only one burning in his temple, as opposed to the fires that were lit at each of the other temples. It cannot be proven that *Iraq 59 no. 38* refers to the nocturnal ceremony, but the text does clearly mention the 16th of ʾĪbētu as a date of a special yearly offering of a large sheep, which may also have involved a “brushwood pile of Anu”.

More circumstantial evidence is offered by the Neo-Babylonian administrative records from Uruk analysed by Ellen Robbins. The records deal exclusively with the amount of sheep and goats disbursed each day from two types of stables or cattle pens for the daily *sattukku* offerings at the Eanna, as well as certain—but not all—additional festivities that took place on some of those days. In comparison to the regular minimum of nine, the number of sheep increased vastly on certain days and in most cases the number remained the

38 BM 105231: 1–22 (Monerie 2013, 407).

39 Jursa 1997, no. 38, obv. 10–11.

40 TU 41 obv. 11; see § 5.3.3.

same on those particular days for each recorded year. That statistic information has allowed Robbins to recreate an aspect of the cultic calendar of Uruk during the period between the fifth regnal year of Nabonidus and the sixth of Cambyses. One of the dates on which a great amount of additional sheep—between twenty and thirty—was required each year is the 16th of ʾEḫētu.⁴¹ That confirms that day as one of cultic significance both in Neo-Babylonian and in Seleucid Uruk. Unfortunately, Robbins' material does not offer any information about the character of the ceremony that took place that day or whether it changed during the Achaemenid period with the introduction of the Anu cult.

Finally, the 16th of ʾEḫētu is mentioned in scattered sources from other cities and earlier periods. In Neo-Babylonian Borsippa, as mentioned above, it was the date of a night vigil in the temple of Mār-Bīti, which was also performed two weeks earlier (29-IX) and two weeks later (3-XI), and of a festival for Šamaš at his shrine in the countryside, again already performed two weeks before (28-IX) as well as a few months earlier (between 4-VI and 6-VI).⁴² Further, 16-X was the starting date of a festival for Ištar of Nineveh, probably introduced by Sennacherib, on which she “brightened” the Emašmaš.⁴³ The brightness of Ištar in ʾEḫētu is also reflected in the astronomical treatise called ‘Astrolabe B’ by modern scholars, which was compiled during the Middle Assyrian period by a Babylonian scribe, but may have been derived from older sources. According to that text, month X was the month of Ištar’s “awe-inspiring luminosity” (*nam-riṛrū*).⁴⁴ It is unclear whether this refers to the brilliance of the planet Venus, whose periods of visibility fluctuated greatly with respect to the Babylonian calendar across a cycle of ca. eight years and were not connected to any month in particular. It cannot be proven that the nocturnal ritual at Seleucid Uruk was in any way connected with either the Borsippian or the Assyrian ceremonies, which rather demonstrate that the tenth month, called in Assyria Kanūnu, ‘braziers’, was a time of festivals of light throughout Mesopotamia.⁴⁵ According to Astrolabe B, it was also the month of the “grand festival of Anu”, a celebration which is not attested in any other Assyrian or Babylonian sources. A connection between that festival, whatever it may have been, and the nocturnal ceremony at Seleucid Uruk is not impossible, but can only have been established through a conscious choice of the Anu priests to use Astrolabe B—or the cultic traditions it reflects—as one of the guidelines for their cultic calendar.

41 Robbins 1996, 69 and Table 4.

42 Waerzeggers 2010a, 134–137.

43 SAA III 7: 10.

44 KAV 218 a III: 12, 18 (Reiner/Pingree 1981, 152).

45 See § 5.5.4.

4.5 The Winter Solstice

If we assume that ʾṬebētu was indeed the month in which the nightly ceremony was performed, that means that the ritual took place in the middle of the winter—more or less around the time of the winter solstice. Like the ideal 30-day month with full moon on day 15 on which the cultic calendar was based, an ideal year model of $12 \times 30 = 360$ days is attested in pre-Seleucid astronomical cuneiform texts. Within that year, the equinoxes and solstices all fell on the 15th of a month and exactly three months apart. Regarding which months, two different systems appear to have been in use: firstly an older Babylonian system, which is primarily attested in second-millennium texts and re-emerges in the late Babylonian period, and according to which the cardinal phenomena fell on day 15 of months III (summer solstice), VI (autumn equinox), IX (winter solstice) and XII (vernal equinox), and secondly a system attested in Neo-Assyrian texts, according to which all four events occurred one month later, i.e. on the 15th of months IV, VII, X and I.⁴⁶ Accordingly, the celestial divination handbook *Enūma Anu Enlil* XIV Table C assigns the winter solstice to month IX, Kislimu, and offers the comment “night is giving way to day; the days grow longer, the nights shorter”;⁴⁷ but according to early first-millennium astronomical literature such as Mul.Apin ($\pm 1000-750$ B.C.),⁴⁸ the summer solstice ideally took place on the 15th of month IV, Du’uzu, (I ii 42–43) and the winter solstice on the 15th of month X, ʾṬebētu (I iii 7–9). The latter dates are also mentioned in the astronomical section of the difficult commentary text i.nam.giš.ḫur.an.ki.a, which is either derived directly from Mul.Apin or based on the same material.⁴⁹ We know that at least Mul.Apin itself was still in use in the Seleucid period: the Šulgi Chronicle⁵⁰ quotes from it and an uranography dating to

46 Horowitz 1996, 42. Interestingly, the Old Babylonian literary composition ‘Inanna and An’ (Van Dijk 1998) includes an aetiological passage, according to which the variation in the length of days and nights throughout the year was caused by Inanna’s capturing the Eanna and removing it from the sky (see § 1.1). The length of the day and night at the equinoxes are described in the poem as 3 units each, which means that the literary text draws on the same ideal year model as *Enūma Anu Enlil* XIV (Brown/Zólyomi 2001).

47 gi₆ ana ur-ru i-na-pal u₄ meš gi₁d meš gi₆ meš lúgud meš (Al-Rawi/George 1991–1992, 57: 20). In two of the three manuscripts, that comment is connected to the 16th day, i.e. the day after the solstice has—ideally—occurred.

48 Hunger/Pingree 1989, 10–12; Brown 2000, 245.

49 K 2164+2195+3510 rev. 7–8, 19–20; Livingstone 1986, 25–27, 43.

50 SpTU 1 2; see § 2.3.4.4.

SE 97 (214/13 BC) also contains various citations from the text, with additional commentary and excerpts from other sources.⁵¹

During the course of the first millennium, more sophisticated methods for calculating the dates of the solstices were developed.⁵² By the time of the Seleucid period, the astronomers of Uruk were using the so-called 'Uruk scheme', which was based on the recurring 19-year intercalation cycle that they had adopted: SE 76–94, SE 95–112 etc. The scheme was used to calculate the date of the summer solstice, which was then used to determine the dates of the winter solstice and the equinoxes in turn.⁵³ From ca. 350 BC onwards, Babylonian astronomers always calculated the dates of the equinoxes and solstices by means of the Uruk scheme and there is no evidence that they were still empirically observed as well. The Astronomical Diaries from Babylon, which primarily report observed celestial and earthly events, also record dates of the cardinal phenomena which are consistent with the Uruk scheme.⁵⁴ The calculated dates, according to the Uruk scheme, on which the winter solstice 'occurred' within the span of one 19-year cycle fell 7 times in Kislimu, 12 times in Tebētu and covered the range of 13-IX at the earliest and 11-X at the latest; thus never as late as 16-X.⁵⁵

However, it is unlikely that the cities' yearly cultic calendars depended on dates of astronomical events which shifted back and forth on the civil calendar over the course of 19 years. Moreover, even in the late period, Babylonian astronomers still used *Mul.Apin* and related texts for specific purposes—for example, since there were no separate names for each of the individual equinoxes and solstices, one astronomical text refers to "the equinox of month VII" and "the solstice of month X" to indicate the autumn equinox and winter solstice, even though the text as a whole refers to events occurring on the real calendar.⁵⁶ Thus, like the monthly cultic calendars, which were based on an ideal system of the moon's phases and could be adapted to actually occurring deviations from that system, the yearly festivals were probably still based on the ideal year model described in *Mul.Apin*. After all, the half-yearly *akītu* festival was still celebrated in the first weeks of months I and VII because of the

51 MLC 1866 (Beaulieu 1992, 63 and Beaulieu et al. forthcoming).

52 Hunger/Pingree 1999, 199–202; Britton 2002, 30–43.

53 Slotsky 1993, 360–362. A remaining inaccuracy in the scheme was the underlying assumption that the seasons were all of equal length (Britton 2002, 53).

54 Britton 2002, 43.

55 Neugebauer 1975, 362, Table 3; Britton 2002, 44, fig. 7.

56 SpTU V 269, rev. 11–12. For the range of uses for *Mul.Apin* in the late first millennium BC, see Steele forthcoming.

spring and autumn equinox, even though those phenomena would regularly occur in the preceding month.⁵⁷ Likewise, a winter festival may well have been held in the middle of month x on the ideal occurrence of both the full moon and the winter solstice.

The difference between the longest and the shortest day of the year is not as great in the Middle East as it is in regions further north of the equator, and there is very little evidence that the solstices constituted significant events in the cultic calendars of ancient Mesopotamia, which were primarily agricultural in origin. There are, however, a few exceptions, including one from the reign of the Third Dynasty of Ur and one from late Babylonian Borsippa and Babylon. According to a study by Mark Cohen, the great cultic festivals of Ur, city of the moon god Nanna/Sîn, were determined during the Ur III period by the notion of the sun and the moon battling for dominance of heaven throughout the year.⁵⁸ When the sun was longer in the sky, the nights—in which the moon was visible—were shorter and the other way around. At the equinoxes, the two deities were in harmony, which was celebrated in both cases by an *akiti* festival. At the summer solstice, the sun was at its height of superiority over the moon, while at the winter solstice the moon was supreme and the Great Festival of Nanna was held.⁵⁹ Cohen tentatively suggests that the Festival of the Boat of Heaven (*ezem-mâ-an-na*), attested at Ur III-period Uruk and Old Babylonian Larsa, was also connected to the equinoxes and the solstices, since at Uruk it fell in months VII and X and at Larsa in months I and VII.⁶⁰

Where the late Babylonian period is concerned, a cultic commentary dated to 137 BC describes how two goddesses, the Daughters of the Esagil,⁶¹ went from Babylon to Borsippa on the eleventh of Du'uzu; likewise, the Daughters of the Ezida went from Borsippa to Babylon on the third of Kislimu. Those events are explained as follows:⁶²

57 Britton (1993, 68) argues that after 502 BC the older model of months XII-III-VI-IX was consciously readopted so that the *akitu* festivals would always begin on the first full moon after the spring and autumn equinox. However, that development may have had a specific political background and was in any case not universal; as we have just pointed out, the Mul.Apin model also continued to be used (John Steele, personal communication).

58 Cohen 1996, 13–20. The cultic and secular calendar themselves were still lunar, not solar.

59 Sallaberger 1993, 191–193.

60 Cohen 2015, 219–221.

61 For pairs of goddesses called 'Daughters of DN/TN/CN', see § 5.2.3.

62 ⁴ *a-na muḥ-ḫi mi-ni-i ki-i il-la-ka-a' ina* ^{iti}š_u *mu-ši ki-i i[k-ru]-ú* ⁵ *ana ugu ur-ru-ku šá mu-ši dumu.sal*^{mes} *é.sag.il ana é.zi.da it-tal-ka-ni* ⁶ *é.zi.da é mu-ši šu-ú ina* ^{iti}gan *u₄-mu ki-i*

Why do they go? In Du'uzu, when the nights have become short, the Daughters of the Esagil go to the Ezida to lengthen the nights. The Ezida is the temple of the night. In Kislimu, when the days have become short, the Daughters of the Ezida go the Esagil to lengthen the days. The Esagil is the temple of daylight.

The same text associates more half-yearly cultic and mythological events with the solstices. In another section, it is stated that Nergal went down to the netherworld on the 18th of Du'uzu and rose up again on the 28th of Kislimu, being “one” with Šamaš; furthermore, “weeping” is mentioned for the gods Dumuzi and Lugaldukuga in Du'uzu and for Enmešarra in Ṭebētu.⁶³ In both passages, the traditional mythical events of ‘dying gods’ descending to the netherworld at the height of summer and emerging from it again in winter are clearly connected to the occasions of the summer and winter solstice. Another late Babylonian text, a calendar for the cult of Nabû which seems closely connected to the commentary text just discussed, also describes the exchange ritual of the Daughters of the Esagil and the Ezida and mentions the weeping of the goddess Gula for Enmešarra, this time in Kislimu.⁶⁴ It must be noted that both sources clearly originate from the interconnected cultic sphere of the cities Babylon and Borsippa and may not be related to the religious practices at Hellenistic Uruk. Nonetheless, the dates they mention seem to be based on the Uruk scheme rather than on Mul.Apin;⁶⁵ in other words, they reflect the contemporary developments in mathematical astronomy that were taking place at Babylon and Uruk at the same time.

Finally, an astrological-historical commentary dated to the early Hellenistic period and probably also from Babylon mentions a “music festival” (*ezen nam.nar*) on the 17th of the month “Tappatu”.⁶⁶ The previous line in the text states that “because Ninurta rises [...]”, which considering the astrological con-

*ik-ru-ú*⁷ *dumu.sal*^{mes} *é.zi.da ur-ru-ku šá u₄-mu ana é.sag.il it-tal-ka-a'*⁸ *é.sag.il é u₄-mu šu-ú* (BM 34035: 4–8; Livingstone 1986, 255).

63 BM 34035: 33–35, 52–53; Livingstone 1986, 256–257. The rising of Nergal from the netherworld in Kislimu is also mentioned in *Astrolabe B* (KAV 218 a III: 2–3, 8).

64 SBH VIII rev. v 35–47 (Çağırhan 1976, 179–180). For the question of whether the calendar refers to Nabû's cult at Babylon or at Borsippa, see Boiy 2004, 84 with literature.

65 Note that the Daughters of the Esagil and the Ezida went on their journey on a later day than the latest possible date for the summer solstice (7-IV) and on an earlier day than the earliest possible date for the winter solstice (13-IX) respectively, perhaps to be on the safe side each year.

66 BM 55466+55486+55627 rev. 26 (Koch 2004, 108).

tent of the entire tablet must refer to Ninurta's star Sirius and more specifically its acronychal rising around the winter solstice. Johannes Koch therefore interprets the festival as a winter solstice celebration. Although Benno Landsberger previously understood "Tappatu" to mean the month Ṭebētu, Koch argues it must be Kislīmu, since the only day 17 on which the winter solstice fell according to the Uruk scheme is 17-IX.⁶⁷ However, as just pointed out, the priest-scholars of Hellenistic Babylonia were still using the ideal scheme in Mul.Apin for various purposes, and it is likely that these included yearly recurring cultic events. Moreover, the month Ṭebētu is also referred to unambiguously as ^{ti}ab in the same text a few lines earlier.⁶⁸ Therefore, the music festival for the occasion of Sirius' rising may well have fallen on 17-X, two days after the ideal winter solstice—and if so, it may even have been the counterpart in Babylon of the festival on 16/17-X at Uruk.

4.6 Conclusion

It is as good as certain that the nocturnal ceremony at Seleucid Uruk took place in one of the winter months, since the night vigil, an important feature of the ceremony, was only held during those months. From TU 41 itself it becomes clear that the ceremony took place in the night between days 16 and 17, but the month cannot be established with complete certainty. However, the reference in TU 38 to a yearly cultic event on the 16th of month X, Ṭebētu, which included offerings to Anu and Antu of Heaven and the seven major heavenly bodies, makes that the most likely date by far. Other sources from Seleucid and Neo-Babylonian Uruk show that the 16th of Ṭebētu was in any case a special day on the cultic calendar of Uruk and involved other offerings besides the standard daily amount.

External evidence that might explain the choice of 16-X as a date for a yearly cultic ceremony can be found, but remains somewhat circumstantial. Day 16 seems close enough to the full moon, but would have been one day too late on both the cultic and civil calendar. The sources show that in Seleucid Babylonia, the cultic calendar was still lunar, which meant that a 'cultic full moon' was celebrated monthly on day 15; furthermore, the actual date of the full moon fluctuated between days 12 through 15 and occurred most frequently on days 13

67 Koch 2004, 110.

68 Ibid. rev. 4.

and 14.⁶⁹ However, the nocturnal ceremony may well have taken place during the final night of the traditional lunar *eššešu* festival, which at least in the Neo-Babylonian period could span two or three consecutive days and was always celebrated on and around full moon.

The fact that Țebētu was a midwinter month is also significant, but can the ceremony have been related to the phenomenon that marked the middle of winter on the solar calendar, viz. the winter solstice? According to the Uruk scheme used by Hellenistic Babylonian astronomers to calculate the dates of the equinoxes and solstices, the winter solstice fell in month x in 12 out of the 19 years in one 19-year-cycle, but never later than day 11-x. Still, it is more likely that the yearly cultic calendar was not based on the Uruk scheme, but on the ideal year model described in the astronomical handbook *Mul.Apin*, according to which the winter solstice fell on day 15 of month x. Moreover, different sources show that the winter solstice was an important event for the cults of late first-millennium Babylon and Borsippa. Thus, it is again well imaginable, though not proven, that the event had a similar significance at Uruk and that the cultic date 16-x was also connected to the winter solstice—the final night of a two- or three-day *eššešu* festival which culminated in the nocturnal celebration described in TU 41.

Such a reconstruction, attractive as it may appear, must remain speculation as long as we only look at external sources that concern the role and significance of day 16 and month x in late first-millennium Babylonia. However, closer scrutiny of the features of the nocturnal ceremony itself may shed more light on the possible meaning of its midmonth- and midwinter setting. Those features will be analysed in detail in the following two chapters.

69 Only the fragmentary horoscope text TU 14 assigns the full moon to day 16 (see above).

Analysis of TU 41

5.1 Method of the Analysis

5.1.1 *Methodological Considerations*

In this and the following chapter, a comprehensive analysis will be presented of the nocturnal ceremony described in TU 41. A few remarks of a methodological nature must be made beforehand. Firstly, the concept of ‘ritual’ is the subject of an ongoing academic debate which addresses, among many other problems, the limits of its definition and whether or not it should be defined at all, or purely understood in the participants’ own terms.¹ In the present study, which focuses specifically on cultic practices, the words ‘ritual’ and ‘ceremony’ will be used interchangeably to refer to—in my definition—a sequence of interconnected activities which become meaningful in relationship to a conceptualised divine realm and for which the order, timing and precision of their performance is considered crucial in fulfilling their purpose, which is to define the boundaries of and establish contact and exchange with the divine realm. However, such modern definitions should only be applied to the phenomena encountered in the Mesopotamian sources when one takes equally into account how those sources themselves, and in our case primarily the texts from Seleucid Uruk, refer to routine cultic performances, define their characteristics and establish different subcategories. The latter subject will be discussed further below.

Secondly, as all scholars of ancient religion are aware, several insurmountable barriers lie between us and the rituals of our interest. We are not able to experience an ancient religious ceremony or festival first-hand, but must rely on scarce and ambiguous archaeological remains and textual sources which differ wildly in accuracy and reliability and often hamper even the complete reconstruction of a ritual’s content, let alone its role within the broader framework of that particular cult and its social impact on the community. The sources stand between us and the actual event. Moreover, in the case of prescriptive texts like those from Seleucid Uruk, we are not dealing with observational reports or literary descriptions of rituals that have taken place at a

1 See for a recent overview of that debate and an analysis of its underlying preconceptions Bell 2009b.

specific moment in space and time, but with instructions for the performance of rites and ceremonies. The texts do not reflect an occurrence of a ritual, but express a wish for a ritual to be performed in a particular manner. They cannot in themselves be considered as evidence that the rituals have ever really taken place in the way the compiler(s) of the texts would apparently have preferred it.

In the case of TU 41 specifically, as we have seen in Chapter 4, all the evidence for the actual performance of the nocturnal ceremony remains circumstantial. Thus, the analysis presented in the following chapters is of a ritual which is described in a text compiled by the priests of the Anu cult and which they intended, at least, to be included in the cult's yearly sequence of festivals. Whether or not it was ever actually performed and if so, whether or not it took on the exact form in which it has been transmitted to us remains unknown at present. However, bearing that in mind, for the sake of the argument it will nonetheless be assumed here that it was indeed performed at least once.

Finally, it must be noted that caution is imperative when considering possible relationships between deities, hymns, offerings and religious locations in ritual texts from the Late Babylonian period and those in second- or third-millennium sources. However, that does not mean that the distance in time between them renders them incomparable. The shifts in meaning that such religious phenomena have undergone during that immensely long period due to changing political and socioeconomic circumstances and gradual developments in popular as well as scholarly worldview should never be underestimated; yet at the same time, Mesopotamian culture is characterised by a remarkable continuity and the underlying framework, the 'grammatical structure', of Mesopotamian religious rituals has changed about as much or as little as the Akkadian language itself. Moreover, as we have seen in Part I, in the case of the Anu cult of Seleucid Uruk, antiquated elements were consciously adopted and reinvented by the priesthood. Forgotten gods were revived with the help of standardised texts such as *An = Anum* and *An = Anu ša amēli*;² it is very unlikely that the same thing did not happen with ritual practices. Thus, even if they became embedded in a new cultic context, the connection between those elements and their historical origins need not necessarily be dismissed as coincidental.

² See § 2.1.

5.1.2 *Categories of Religious Ritual in the Akkadian Sources*

Scholars of Mesopotamian religious ritual usually distinguish between on the one hand rituals which belonged to the regular cycle of cultic worship and were performed on fixed dates according to a particular temple's cultic calendar, and on the other rituals which were performed only when the need arose and which could be performed anywhere from the temple, the palace or a private house to a garden, the riverside or the wilderness. The functions and goals of the latter type, sometimes called 'occasional rituals',³ were manifold, from repairing a cultic object or a house to healing a sick person, averting the evil portended by a bad omen or driving out a ghost or demon. Their purpose can generally be described as restoring the balance between the human and the supernatural realm which had been, or threatened to be, disrupted by a specific, temporary situation.⁴ Daniel Schwemer further divides such rituals into a) induction- and transformation rituals, i.e. the preparation of objects and persons for contact with the divine sphere,⁵ b) defensive rituals against evil supernatural beings, witchcraft, curses and negative events portended by omens and c) "aggressive" rituals, i.e. rites performed to procure personal gain for the participants—riches, power, winning in court, sexual attractiveness and potency, and so on.⁶

The source texts themselves, however, apply a different set of terminology and categories. Concerning the notion of '(religious) ritual' as such, the single word in the Akkadian cuneiform sources which comes closest to that modern concept is the Sumerian *ġarza* (PA.AN), rendered in Akkadian as *paṣu*. Apart from indicating a specific ceremony performed in a sacred environment,

3 Some occasional ritual texts explicitly state that the ritual should be performed "in an auspicious month, on an auspicious day" (e.g. TU 45 obv. 2). An exception is the anti-witchcraft cycle *Maqlû*, which was to be performed together with the yearly festival for the dead on the 28th of the month Abu.

4 Jean Bottéro (2001, 114–115) makes a slightly different distinction. He calls the daily care and feeding of the gods in their cellae the "theocentric cult" and distinguishes it from the "sacramental cult", which was focused on human needs and desires and aimed at understanding and influencing a god's attitude towards a particular human being or the community as a whole: learning his intentions through divination, appeasing his anger, currying favour with him and procuring his aid in the alleviation of illness and misery.

5 Presumably he also assigns the Mesopotamian building rituals to this category, which protected a house that was being repaired or newly built against evil intruders and guided it through the process of its (re)construction with the help of craftsman deities. In the specific case of a temple, it was also a question of inducing it into the realm of the sacred. (For an edition and interpretation of the extant first-millennium building rituals, see Ambos 2004.)

6 Schwemer 2011, 426–433.

ġarza/*paršu* could also refer to the whole of the cultic ordinances of a particular divine dwelling, i.e. the rules of conduct established for it to which all men and gods must adhere, as well as the behavioural characteristics of a deity, which included the way her worshippers should approach her as well as her own divine powers and offices. A secondary meaning is ‘custom’ or ‘practice’ in a more general sense, including any non-religious social traditions.⁷ Thus, the range of meaning of the word ġarza/*paršu* overlaps, but is not identical with that of English terms like ‘rite’, ‘ritual’ and ‘cult practice’. A comparable, less frequently attested word is *alaktu* (pl. *alkātu/alkakātu*), derived from *alāku* ‘to go’, of which the meaning ranges from ‘gait’ and simply ‘acts’, ‘deeds’, ‘ways’ to ‘customary behaviour’, ‘proper conduct’ and, when referring to priests, ‘ritual activities’.⁸ Words used as synonyms for *paršu* are three other loan words from the Sumerian, *mēsū*, *sakkū* and *pelludū*, and in the first millennium also *dullu*, ‘service’, ‘duty’ (which is also frequently attested in a non-ritual context). Apart from such single terms, Mesopotamian prescriptive ritual texts usually distinguish between two types of activities to be performed during a ritual: the legomena, i.e. what is to be said, and the dromena, i.e. what has to be done.⁹ The legomena are referred to as Sum. ka.inim.ma, the ‘words to be spoken’, or *én*, ‘recitation’, and the dromena as Sum. kè.kè.bi or dù.dù.bi, ‘its accompanying activities’ (cf. the Akkadian loan words *kikkittū*, *kidudū* and *dudubū*), or Akk. *epištu* or *nēpešu/ū*, from *epēšu*, ‘to do’, ‘to make’.¹⁰

Beyond such general terms, specific rituals are distinguished from each other in several ways. Firstly, rituals and ritual series are identified by their titles, which are derived from their main features (e.g. *bīt mēseri*, ‘house of confinement’; *bīt salā’ mē*, ‘house of water-sprinkling’; *mīs pī*, ‘mouth-washing’) or the purpose of their performance (e.g. *maqlū*, ‘burning’; nam.búr.bi, ‘its undoing’; *šēp lemutti ina bīt amēli parāsu*, ‘to block the entry of the enemy into a man’s house’). Within a series of ritual tablets, for example the rites for a particular temple cult for the entire year, a reference system of ‘catchlines’, taken from each tablet’s first line (e.g. “month Nisannu, day 5”), was used to distinguish the individual rituals from each other and determine their internal order.¹¹ Secondly, apart from the *barūtu*, the specific lore of the haruspex, the source texts—at least in the first millennium—distinguish between the profes-

7 Cf. CAD P 195–202.

8 CAD A I 297–298.

9 Scurlock 2005, 3.

10 Sallaberger 2006–2008b, 421.

11 The catchline-system was not restricted to rituals, but used for all longer tablet series, such as the omen handbooks *Šumma Ālu* or *Enūma Anu Enlil*.

sional realms of the two main types of ritual specialist: the *āšipu*, often translated as ‘exorcist’ or ‘incantation priest’ due to his activities as healer and his expertise in repelling demons and other supernatural evils, and the *kalû*, often translated as ‘lamentation priest’ due to his responsibility for the performance of prayers in the Sumerian Emesal dialect aimed at calming the gods’ easily angered hearts (so-called ‘cultic lamentations’).¹² The actual realm of authority of both professions extended much further and comprised—among others—building rituals, the creation of divine statues and a range of purification rituals for both regular festivals and occasional crisis situations.¹³ Moreover, *āšipû* and *kalû* were usually involved together in the regular ceremonies in the temple, respectively performing rites of purification and singing Emesal prayers.¹⁴

5.1.3 *TU 41 in the Context of Its Textual Genre*

Although none of the texts describing the regular temple cult of Seleucid Uruk have been found by means of official excavations, it is likely that they belonged to the temple library of the Bit Rēš;¹⁵ moreover, they were probably part of a larger series of tablets offering ritual prescriptions for the entire cultic year. That series is alluded to in the colophon of TU 38, which gives instruction for the arrangement and preparation of the daily divine meals:¹⁶

(Copied from a) writing board containing the cultic ordinances (ġarza) of Anuship, the pure purification rites and the rites of kingship, including

12 Gabbay 2014, 15–16.

13 The *āšipu* appears to have been responsible for the new creation of sanctuaries and divine statues, whereas the *kalû* supervised the renovation of existing ones (Berlejung 1998, 187). Even during induction rituals for dilapidated temples and broken statues, the primary role of the *kalû* appears to have been the performance of Emesal prayers to calm potentially angered gods while the object in question was brought back from its incomplete, liminal condition into full functionality and ritual purity. The creation of the cultic kettledrum, however, belonged exclusively to the realm of the *kalû*, probably because it was a musical instrument that accompanied the Emesal prayers and because it played an important role in another (Hellenistic) *kalû* ritual, the mourning rites for a lunar eclipse (see § 5.7.4). Apart from the obvious distinction between ‘incantations’ on the one hand and ‘Emesal prayers’ on the other, however, the exact distinction between the *āšipu* and the *kalû* remains subtle and complicated and requires further research.

14 See for example TU 41 obv. 33–34: “A senior temple enterer will ‘take the hand of’ the Torch and together with the *āšipû*, the *kalû* and the musicians (he will bring it) down from the ziqqurrat.”

15 See § 3.1.

16 TU 38 rev. 44–46. See for a translation of the entire colophon § 2.3.4.5.

the divine purification rites of the Bīt Rēš, the Irigal, the Eanna and all the sanctuaries of Uruk; the ritual activities (*alkakātu*) of the *āšipū*, the *kalū*, the musicians and the craftsmen, all of those who are subordinate to the [...], except for everything concerning the apprentices. (...)

Another hint as to the relationship between the extant ritual tablets from Seleucid Uruk is offered by TU 39, a tablet containing instructions for the *akītu* festival in month VII (Tašrītu). After the last instructions follow a summary, then a horizontal rule, the ‘catchline’ of the next tablet and finally the colophon:¹⁷

These are the cultic ordinances (*ġarza*) of the month Tašrītu, completed.

Month Araḥsamna, day 5: Mišāru will rise from the Eḫenunna, the shrine of Adad, and (come) here. From an older writing board, a copy from Uruk: copied and collated. (...)

In both passages, the word *ġarza/paršu* is used to refer to the contents of the tablet as a whole, which is the most explicit statement about the texts’ genres as perceived by their compilers that we can expect to find: the proper, established behaviour to be displayed towards the god Anu at all times, but especially at designated moments of the day, month and year. The addition *Anūtu*, “(of) Anuship”, is a poetic term which, when used for other gods than Anu himself, could also more generally mean “supreme godhead”; in a literary context *paraš Anūtu* can thus refer to all the divine offices associated with that status. To give a few examples: in the epic of Marduk’s battle with Tiamat, *Enūma Eliš*, the same phrase is used to refer to the high function to which the god Qingu is elevated;¹⁸ in two inscriptions of Esarhaddon,¹⁹ Ištar is described as a goddess who “possesses” or “gathers unto herself”²⁰ the *paraš Anūtu*; and in an inscription of Nabonidus it is Sîn who “gathers the offices (*paršu*) of Anu, exercises the offices of Enlil and takes up the offices of Ea”.²¹ A Neo-Assyrian text with a bilingual incantation for the creation of the kettledrum, of which the Sumerian and the

17 ²⁵ *an-nu-ú ġarza šá* ^{iti} *du₆.kù al.til* ²⁶ [line break] ^{iti} *apin.du₈.a ud.5.kam* ^d *mi-šar-ri ta é.ḫé.nun.na é* ^d *im zi-am-ma* ²⁷ *ta* ^{gis} *da sumun-bargaba-re-e unug^{ki} sar-ma ba-igi* (...) (TU 39 rev. 25–27; Linszen 2004, 187).

18 *Enūma Eliš* IV 82: *taškuniš ana paraš denūti*, var. ^d *An[ūti]* (Lambert 2013, 90).

19 Leichty 2011, 271: 2; 274: 2.

20 *ḫamāmu*, a verb often used to describe how a deity acquires *paršu* and *mē*, the rules that determine the cosmic order; cf. CAD H 59.

21 Schaudig 2001, 492: 1 II 16–18 (= 2 II 24–26).

Akkadian version were to be whispered into respectively the right and left ear of the bull, includes the lines “you were created for the work of the great gods; in heaven, your image [...] for the *paraṣ Anūtu*”²²—in that case, since that text deals with the creation of a cultic object, the phrase should probably be interpreted as “the rites of the highest divine order”.

In other words, the phrase *paraṣ Anūtu* in the colophon of TU 38 has been cleverly chosen to summarize the daily duties of the priesthood of Anu and at the same time adopt a well-known literary description of divine supremacy and power.²³ Moreover, it demonstrates the close connection in the range of meaning of the word *ġarza/parṣu* between the rules of conduct with regards to a deity and the attributes and divine offices of that deity himself. If TU 38 and TU 39–40 were indeed part of a series of ritual texts that spanned the entire year, it is very likely that TU 41 was also a part of it and that it belonged to the section on the month ʾĪbētu; and in that case, the activities described in TU 41 can be counted among the *paraṣ Anūtu*, the “cultic ordinances of Anu’s divinity” as well. Thus, even when we refrain from applying modern categories and take into account the fact that TU 41 offers no paratextual information, we can reasonably establish that its contents were considered by the tablet’s compiler and intended audience to belong to the sphere of regular cultic worship of their city’s patron deity.

5.1.4 *Division and Approach of the Material*

As shown in the table below, TU 41 can be divided into different segments that can be considered distinct units within the ritual. Instead of attempting to isolate each individual element, I have grouped together those activities which form a unity either because, according to the text, they take place in the same location, because the same participants are involved or because they appear to serve the same purpose. For example, even though in rev. 12–27 many different activities take place—various deities take up position in their gates and courtyards, the *šalām bīti* ceremony is performed, different prayers are spoken, the Torch is extinguished and bonfires are lit in the temples, then people’s houses and finally various public places—all those events are centred on the transmission of the Torch’s fire to the medium of the bonfire and its subsequent distribution in several stages throughout the city. Moreover, like the Torch itself,

22 KAR 50 obv. 5–6 (Linssen 2004, 267); the missing verb may have been ‘was fashioned’, ‘is suitable’ or something similar.

23 It also occurs in two other texts which express ideological notions about the Anu cult, the Uruk Prophecy and the Šulgi Chronicle (Beaulieu 1993d, 48–50 and see § 2.3.4).

the deities of the Bīt Rēš ceased their activity and took up positions as temple guardians for the remainder of the night.

Segment	Divine participants	Ritual activity	Location
obv. 1–8	the Staff, the Shoe, Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû, the Daughters of Anu and the Daughters of Uruk	procession	from an unknown location to the Grand Courtyard and into the Courtyards of Anu and Antu respectively
obv. 8–13	Anu, Antu and the other gods of the Bīt Rēš	the evening meal for the gods of the Bīt Rēš and preparational activities	the Anu-Antu-sanctuary; the entire Bīt Rēš
obv. 13–28	Anu and Antu of Heaven, Šin, Šamaš and the five planets	change of location; start of the night vigil; hymns and offerings to Anu and Antu of Heaven and the seven major heavenly bodies	the roof of the ziqqurat sanctuary
obv. 28–rev. 1	Anu of Heaven, the Torch	final hymn to Anu of Heaven, activation of the Torch as ritual participant, procession back down to the temple complex	down from the ziqqurat, through the Pure Gate into the Grand Courtyard
rev. 1–14	the Torch, Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû and Pisangunug	procession inside and around the Bīt Rēš, lighting of the first bonfire, return of the gatekeepers to their gates	from the Grand Courtyard via the Place of Brightness to the cella of Antu; via the Ubšukinnaku out through the Main Gate; around the Bīt Rēš and back into the Grand-, Great and Main Gates respectively

(cont.)

Segment	Divine participants	Ritual activity	Location
rev. 14–27	the Torch, Adad, Šîn, Šamaš and Bēlet-īli	each deity taking up their final position, bonfires lit at the other temples, <i>šalām bīti</i> ceremony, extinguishing of the Torch, bonfires lit throughout the city	the gates and courtyards of the Bīt Rēš, the gates of the other temples of Uruk, the houses of the people, the gates, streets and crossroads of the city
rev. 28–32	Anu, Antu and the other gods of Bīt Rēš	end of the night vigil; the morning meal	the Anu-Antu-sanctuary; the entire Bīt Rēš
rev. 33	Adad, Šîn, Šamaš, Bēlet-īli and Pisangunug	return to cellae	from their courtyards to the room between the curtains

For each of these segments, a short summary of its contents will be offered, as formulated by the text itself. Next, we will discuss a number of questions about the participants, locations and activities involved. Firstly: what do we know about him/her/it? Is the person, deity, object, place or action known from other sources related to the three-millennium-long history of Mesopotamian religion and ritual practice? Secondly: can we reconstruct his/her/its historical background before the Seleucid period? Can he/she/it be traced back to religious practices of earlier periods at Uruk or elsewhere, or does he/she/it appear to have been newly introduced for the Hellenistic Anu cult? And finally: what does all that information tell us about the role of the participant, object, location or activity in the ritual? Why was that activity performed, that location chosen or that participant involved, why at that specific moment and which religious and social purposes can that element of the ritual have served? A synthesis and interpretation of all the findings from this chapter will be undertaken in Chapter 6.

5.2 Obv. 1–8

It is unclear how much time has elapsed since the start of the ritual itself when the activities described in obv. 1–8 begin. At the very least there has already been a procession with the Staff, the Shoe and various gods and goddesses, as is indicated by the phrase *kīma maḥrimma*, “just as before” (obv. 2). If the subject of line 1 is the Shoe, that means it has become separated from the Staff and is waiting (literally “on the lookout”) for the latter to return. Once they are reunited, they rise together, i.e. they are lifted up by their carriers and, again accompanied by “the gods and goddesses”, they are brought from their unknown position down to the Grand Courtyard of the Bīt Rēš.²⁴ The gods and goddesses in question, as is revealed a few lines later, are Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû, the Daughters of Anu and the Daughters of Uruk (obv. 4–6). Presumably the three divine viziers go before the Staff and the Shoe, while the goddesses go behind them (obv. 3).²⁵

After the group has entered the Grand Courtyard, the Staff is purified, but the Shoe is not (obv. 4). The Staff continues with the others towards the courtyard of Anu and “enters”, presumably into the cella of Anu, since the Shoe then continues with the Daughters of Anu and the Daughters of Uruk and enters the bedchamber of Antu, to be placed on a footstool there (obv. 6–7). The gods sit down in the courtyard of Anu, the goddesses in that of Antu. After that, neither the Shoe and the Staff nor the goddesses are mentioned again.

5.2.1 *The Rooms and Courtyards of the Bīt Rēš*

Since the earliest excavations of the Bīt Rēš, there has been no doubt that the shrine of Anu, the Enamenna, is to be located in rooms 11–12–13 and the shrine of Antu, the Egašananna, in rooms 16–17–18.²⁶ However, scholars’ opinions differ about the identity of several of the other features of the temple mentioned in TU 41 and the other ritual texts: the Courtyard of Anu (kisal ḏ60), the Grand Courtyard (kisal.maḥ), the Ubšukinnaku, i.e. the divine assembly where Anu determined the fate of the world, and the Dais of Destinies (bāra nam^{meš} /

24 For this and the following locations, see Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2.

25 Cf. Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 136–140 for a reconstruction of the processions of (one of) the *akitu* festivals of Seleucid Uruk, during which Anu, Enlil and Ea were preceded by a group of male deities and followed by a group of female deities. For the division of deities by gender in the cultic processions of Seleucid Uruk generally, see below.

26 See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2; for the identification of those rooms see BRM IV 7: 1 (Linszen 2004, 209); BRM IV 8: 6 (see § 1.3.1); Falkenstein 1941, 6: 4–5; Kose 1998, 190.

parak šimāti) upon which he was seated on such occasions.²⁷ For the following discussion is it important to keep in mind that the Bīt Rēš was extensively renovated several times during the Hellenistic period and it is often unclear to which of the building phases—before Nikarchos, after Nikarchos or after Kephalon—the Uruk ritual texts refer. As argued earlier,²⁸ it is likely that TU 41 reflects the building phase of Kephalon, but that cannot be proven. The temple of Anu at Uruk probably possessed typical features of Babylonian temples such as an Ubšukkinnaku, a Dais of Destinies and a Place of Brightness²⁹ at all times during its existence, but they may well have changed shape and position between one building phase and the next.

In his *Topographie von Uruk*, Adam Falkenstein relies primarily on the ancient text sources. He makes a distinction between the Grand Courtyard and the Ubšukkinnaku, arguing that they are treated as separate locations in KAR 132, a ritual text in which one of the *akitu* festivals of Seleucid Uruk is described.³⁰ He proposes to locate the Grand Courtyard in Hof I, the courtyard closest to Anu's cella, and the Ubšukkinnaku in Mittelhof VI, in which fourteen postaments—for the assembled deities?—were found lined up against the northwestern wall.³¹ Nonetheless, Falkenstein prefers to locate Anu's Dais of Destinies not in the Ubšukkinnaku, but in the Grand Courtyard (i.e. Hof I), since the ritual texts seem to suggest that the Grand Courtyard was the most important room in the building and Anu-uballit~Nikarchos states in his building inscription that he has built seven courtyards around the courtyard in which the Dais of Destinies stands.³² A large postament was found in Hof I near the southwestern gate, for which the Dais of Destinies would be a suitable identification. Furthermore, according to Falkenstein's interpretation of KAR 132, the Dais of Destinies was the first station of Anu's *akitu* procession

27 Various important Neo-Assyrian and Neo- and late Babylonian temples possessed a Dais of Destinies, but no architectural feature of any excavated sanctuary has been positively identified as one, so it is uncertain what size and shape it may have had. For the cultic and mythological background of the Ubšukkinnaku and the Dais of Destinies, see § 5.6.5.

28 § 3.1.

29 See § 5.6.2.

30 KAR 132 I obv. 2–4 (Linssen 2004, 201). The text offers no information on whether the festival took place in month I or month VII, although both Çağırğan (1976, 51–63) and Linssen (2004, 201) simply assume that the *akitu* festival is month VII is meant.

31 Falkenstein 1941, 13.

32 YOS I 52, 8–9. Falkenstein does not take into account that Hof VI, the postaments and the sanctuary with its Hof I as we know it date to the building phase of Anu-uballit~Kephalon, finished in 201 BC (Kose 1998, 190).

after his own cella and the room between the curtains.³³ Falkenstein concludes that the Courtyard of Anu must be located in room 11, since it is the only other room between Hof I and the Anu cella.

Beate Pongratz-Leisten also locates both the Grand Courtyard and the Dais of Destinies in Hof I. However, she reads the difficult first lines of KAR 132 differently and interprets the term ‘Ubšukkinnaku’ as the function of a certain area, namely the place where the divine assembly gathered, but not as its proper name. Therefore, according to her, the Ubšukkinnaku was either the Grand Courtyard (i.e. Hof I) itself, or the large postament on its southwestern side, which is large enough to have held several divine seats. One of those will have been, in Pongratz-Leisten’s opinion, the Dais of Destinies.³⁴ She provides no identification of the Courtyard of Anu, nor a function for Mittelhof VI.

Andrew George, finally, argues that the Courtyard of Anu cannot have been room 11, since that room is clearly an antechamber to Anu’s cella and antechambers are never referred to by the Sumerogram *kisal* in first-millennium texts. More probably, according to him, the Courtyard of Anu was Hof I.³⁵ Considering that many of the names of cultic locations in the Bīt Reš and elsewhere in Seleucid Uruk correspond to those in the Esagil, the temple of Marduk in Babylon, and were probably deliberately borrowed from there, George proposes that the lay-out of Anu’s temple complex was also at least partly modelled on that of Marduk.³⁶ Thus the Grand Courtyard will, like that of the Esagil, not have been part of the Anu-Antu-sanctuary proper, but have lain somewhere outside of it. The Ubšukkinnaku and the Dais of Destinies, which just as in Babylon will have been in the same area, should be located in Mittelhof VI, the temple’s eastern annexe, where the Ubšukkinnaku of both the Esagil and the Ešarra at Aššur were also situated.³⁷

Doubtlessly the Ubšukkinnaku and the Dais of Destinies were located in the same place, since their functions were intertwined. The Dais of Destinies was the elevated platform upon which the supreme deity—Marduk in Babylon, Anu in Uruk—was seated when he decreed the destiny of the world before the

33 Falkenstein 1941, 23; KAR 132 III rev. 20–21 (Linssen 2004, 202). For the room between the curtains (*birīt šiddī*) see § 5.9.1.

34 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 59–60. The latter assumption is faulty in any case, since evidence shows that the Dais of Destinies was not solely Marduk’s throne, but offered room to sit for a whole number of deities; see § 5.6.5. Thus, if anything, the large postament can only have been the Dais of Destinies as a whole.

35 George 1996, 371–372.

36 Cf. Downey 1988, 38–39 and see in more detail § 2.3.1.

37 George 1996, 373.

assembled deities of Babylonia; the Ubšukkinnaku was traditionally the court for that assembly. The similarities between the Bīt Rēš and the Esagil, as demonstrated by Downey and George, lead to the same conclusion and make it very likely that the Ubšukkinnaku was situated in Hof VI. Another sign that Hof I was probably the Courtyard of Anu and that the Ubšukkinnaku was not a part of the Anu-Antu-sanctuary, but lay directly outside of it, is given in TU 41 rev. 5–6: the Torch, which has just visited the cella of Antu, and the guardian deities, who have been waiting in the Courtyard of Anu, “come out”, i.e. out of the Anu-Antu-sanctuary, into the Ubšukkinnaku (*ana ub-šu-ukkin-na-ki è^{mes}-nim-ma*).³⁸

However, that evidence does not necessarily exclude the possibility that both the Ubšukkinnaku and the Grand Courtyard must be sought in Mittelhof VI. Pongratz-Leisten could still be right in assuming that the Ubšukkinnaku and the Dais of Destinies were only one specific aspect of the Grand Courtyard as a whole. The description of the Torch’s procession in TU 41 also suggests that the Grand Courtyard was either Mittelhof VI or the not completely preserved, but certainly impressively large Südhof IX on the southern side of the Anu-Antu-sanctuary, which was accessible through the appropriately named Main Gate. A definitive conclusion about its location remains impossible to draw at present.

Finally, TU 41 and other Urukean ritual texts³⁹ mention another courtyard, simply named “the courtyard” (*kisal*): in obv. 13 a group of deities seems to have assembled there to receive their evening meal and in rev. 21–22 it is the place where Adad, Šin, Šamaš and Bēlet-ili remain seated until dawn. We know of two temples of Neo-Babylonian cities, the Eanna of Uruk and the Ezida of Borsippa, where the major deities of the Mesopotamian pantheon lived in cellae grouped around the same courtyard and were referred to by the epithet “of the courtyard” (*ša kisalli*), while the city’s patron deity resided in a separate inner sanctuary.⁴⁰ In both temples, that courtyard was the central temple court, although the Eanna also possessed several other large courtyards surrounded by shrines.⁴¹ It cannot be determined at present whether the “courtyard” of the Uruk ritual texts should also be considered identical with the Grand Courtyard—especially as long as the latter’s location has not been positively identified—or rather with one of the other large open squares inside the Bīt

38 Downey 1988, 26–27.

39 TU 39 rev. 2; KAR 132 I obv. 3 (Linssen 2004, 187, 201). The Irigal also had a ‘courtyard’ (*kisal*), a ‘grand courtyard’ (*kisal.maḥ*) and an ‘inner courtyard’ (*kisal šà.ba*); cf. TU 42+ obv. 2’, 11’, 22’–23’ (ibid. 238).

40 Beaulieu 2003, 30; Waerzeggers 2010a, 10–11, 24.

41 Heinrich 1982, 259–261.

Rēš. Both Nordhof II and Westhof VIII are connected to a large number of sanctuaries; those to the west of Westhof VIII all possess antecellae and are large enough to have been occupied by several deities—say, a major god and his son.

5.2.2 *The Guardian Deities*

Three gods guarded the three main gates of the Bīt Rēš: Papsukkal the Grand Gate (ká.maḥ), Nuska the Great Gate (ká.gal) and Usmû the Main Gate (ká.sag).⁴² Apart from their role as gatekeeper, they served as viziers to Anu, Enlil and Ea. It was primarily Papsukkal's role to lead Anu in the various processions during the *akītu* festival, but he was joined on several of those occasions by Nuska and Usmû, as well as a fourth minor deity, Kusu, the divine purification priest of Enlil.⁴³ Kusu may have been the guardian of another gate of the Bīt Rēš, the Gate of Plenty (ká.ḥé.en.gal.la), which is listed in the building inscription of Anu-uballit~Nikarchos, but is not mentioned by name in any of the Uruk ritual texts.⁴⁴

5.2.2.1 Papsukkal

Papsukkal first became prominent during the Old Babylonian period, living in Kiš as the vizier of Zababa.⁴⁵ During the Kassite period, he became assimilated with the two-gendered Sumerian deity Ninšubur, the vizier of An and Inanna, who was equated with the Akkadian god Ilabrat. Eventually Papsukkal came to replace Ilabrat as archetypical vizier (*sukkal/sukkallu*) of all the gods.⁴⁶ He is associated with the constellation Orion (^mu¹sipa.zi.an.na, *Šitadallu*) in Astro-labe B I 30–40 & 45–47 and Mul.Apin I ii 2, where he is the “vizier of Anu and Ištar”; interestingly, in a Seleucid uranography based on Mul.Apin, this has been changed to “vizier of Anu and Antu”.⁴⁷

As the most important servant in the divine court, Papsukkal also functioned as a mediator, guarding doors and gates, listening to prayers, and interceding with his masters on behalf of visitors. A second name for his consort

42 See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2; cf. YOS I 52, 4–5; Falkenstein 1941, 5, 10–11; Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 45.

43 TU 39 obv. 16–18, 27; TU 40 obv. 13–14, rev. 6 (Linszen 2004, 185–186).

44 See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2; cf. YOS I 52, 7; Falkenstein 1941, 15; Kose 1998, 144–149 and 189.

45 Wiggermann 1998–2001, 492–493. The name is a combination of the Sumerian signs pap ‘older brother’ and sukka ‘vizier’.

46 Beaulieu 1992, 49–50 and 61–64.

47 MLC 1866 (Beaulieu 1992, 62 and Beaulieu et al. forthcoming).

Amasagnudi was ^dnin.ká.gal, ‘Lady of the grand gate’.⁴⁸ In Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian art he is depicted as an anthropomorphic figure with horned cap, robe and long staff, often standing on a podium.⁴⁹ The staff symbolised his office and that of other viziers (in *Šurpu* IV 97 he is described as *bēl haṭṭi*, “the staff bearer”),⁵⁰ but his personal symbol on Middle- and Neo-Babylonian kudurru’s and Persian-period seals was a walking bird.

From the first millennium onward, there is evidence for the worship of Papsukkal at Kiš, Babylon, Aššur, Bīt-Bēlti and Arbela. As far as we are aware, Papsukkal had no cult at Uruk before the Seleucid period, so it appears he was introduced there as part of the new Anu pantheon, together with his spouse.⁵¹ Apart from his cella in the Bīt Rēš, which was probably Room 24 (with antecella in Room 23) next to the Grand Gate,⁵² he possessed two ‘stations’ (*manzazu*), one in the Grand Courtyard called *é.ka.keš.ḫu.ḫu*, and one in the cella of Anu called *é.gù.bi.du₁₀.ga*.⁵³ In addition to his function as escort for Anu in the *akītu* processions (see above), he and Kusibanda received an offering on the morning of day 7 of the *akītu* festival in month VII.⁵⁴ A sacrificial meal was served to him on day 17 of month VII and to him and Bēlet-ṣēri on day 13 of every month.⁵⁵

48 *An = Anum* I 47.

49 In those periods, a figurine with that form was often buried in a brick box beneath the dais of cult statues, again symbolizing the role of the *sukkallu* as guardian, advisor and gatekeeper; cf. Ellis 1967, 51–61; Borger 1973, 176–183; Wiggermann 1985–1986, 3–4. Beaulieu 1992, 63–64 summarizes the discussion about the function and identity of the figurines, arguing that in the first millennium the syncretism of Ninšubur and Papsukkal had advanced so far that the question whether the objects depict one god or the other is irrelevant.

50 Reiner 1958.

51 Beaulieu 1992, 68; absent from the material analysed in Beaulieu 2003. However, Ninšubur was worshipped at Uruk from the ED III to Ur III periods (Wiggermann 1998–2001, 499).

52 See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2; cf. Falkenstein 1941, 15; Kose 1998, 144.

53 TU 39 obv. 17, 26. The name *é.gù.bi.du₁₀.ga*, ‘House, Its Word Is Sweet’, is reminiscent of a gatehouse, an introductory room leading to the temple proper—the area for which Papsukkal was responsible. Cf. *An = Anum* I, 48, where among the family and servants of Ninšubur/Papsukkal a ^dé-gù.bi.du₁₀.ga is mentioned and characterized as the “door-keeper (udug) of the temple”.

54 TU 39 obv. 9–10.

55 OECT 9 40, 42, 44, 45/46, 60; Oppert *Doc. Jur.* 5 (Corò 2005a, 337–341, 346–350, 352–354, 378–381).

5.2.2.2 Nuska

Nuska was a god of fire and light, the son and vizier of Enlil. He was identified with Gibil/Girra, the fire god of the Eridu pantheon, and through association with the latter also a son and sometimes vizier of Anu.⁵⁶ In the first millennium he came to be considered the son of Šîn of Ḫarrân.⁵⁷ As vizier of Enlil, Nuska plays a minor role in both the Old Babylonian and the first-millennium manuscripts of the narrative poem about the flood, *Atraḫasīs*. When the gods revolt against Enlil in protest against their harsh working conditions and surround his house in the middle of the night, Nuska wakes his master to warn him and then runs back and forth to carry messages between Enlil and the angry mob.⁵⁸

Nuska's role as bringer of brightness and warmth made him an important participant in various prayers and rituals. As light-bearer he was called upon to protect the sleeper at night from evil agencies and to ensure that the sleeper's dreams would bring him good portents.⁵⁹ As cleansing fire he was invoked in curses and prayers against human enemies and his aid was required to exorcise the disease from a sick man and to drive away the evil effects of witchcraft.⁶⁰ Like Girra, Nuska was associated with the torch, an essential element of purification rites, and his fire was considered indispensable for providing the gods with meals and incense. Finally, he acted as keeper of law and order during the nightly absence of Šamaš.

A prayer to Nuska from the healing ritual cycle *bīt mēseri* illustrates his role as protector against evil beings in the night.⁶¹

O Nuska, king of the night, who lightens the dark,
 you stand forth in the night, you examine the people,
 without you no judgment or verdict [is rendered].
 The Genie, the Watcher-Demon, the Net, the Oppressor, the Constable,
 the Law-Enforcer, the Evil God, the Demon, the Male Ghost, the Female
 Ghost,

56 SGL II 5: 20; KAR 58 obv. 31; *Maqlû* I 122, II 5 (Abusch 2015, 291, 293). The etymology or meaning of his name is uncertain.

57 Streck 1998–2001, 630.

58 Foster 2005, 232–234: 76–165; 257:67–259:50.

59 BER 4 152, 27; Bauer, Asb. 38: 4; KAR 58 obv. 39–50, rev. 19–36; Butler 1998, 313–319.

60 KAR 58 obv. 1–24; *Maqlû* I 73–134, II 1–17, III 135, V 20, 144 (Abusch 2015, 288–291, 293–294, 312, 330, 337). In *Maqlû* he and Girra are closely related and fulfil the same function.

61 Mayer 1976, 485–486 (Nuska 4); this tr. Wiggermann 2007, 108.

they all hide in corners.

By means of your divine light drive out the Supporter-of-Evil,
 expel the Demon, overcome Evil,
 and Šulak, the nightly wanderer, whose touch is death.
 I look upon you, I turn towards your divinity,
 supply me with a guardian of health and recovery,
 put a protective spirit and a healing god at my disposal.
 Let them be looking out for me all night until daybreak.
 O Nuska, perfect one, lord of wisdom,
 let me proclaim your greatness before Šamaš every day.

As vizier of Enlil, Nuska was attributed with all the typical aspects of that function, including those of advisor, gatekeeper, overseer and judge of the personnel of the divine court and mediator between Enlil and human supplicants. Like Ninšubur/Papsukkal, he is called ^den.gidri, “the staff-bearer”, and described as carrying a “just staff” in several royal inscriptions. An inscription of the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I includes an image of the king praying before a staff elevated on a sockle which is interpreted as Nuska.⁶² From the late Kassite period onward, Nuska is symbolized both in the visual arts and in good-dream rituals by a lamp and is even addressed as “the Lamp” in certain prayers.⁶³

Because of his close connection to Enlil, Nuska had various temples and shrines at Nippur, which go back to the Early Dynastic period. In the first millennium, when he became associated with Šin, the centre of his cult moved to Ḫarrān and he acquired a cella in the Ešarra at Aššur, a cella and a seat in the Esagil at Babylon and a seat in the sanctuary of Ningal at Ur.⁶⁴ He became a deity of some importance in Neo-Babylonian Uruk, during which period he possessed a small independent sanctuary (*ekurrû*) there, the é ^dNuska, and had his own *šangû*.⁶⁵ In Seleucid Uruk he had a cella in the Bīt Rēš close to the Great Gate, possibly Room 118, together with his consort Sadarnunna.⁶⁶ The priests of Seleucid Uruk may have attributed greater value to the tradition which describes him as a son and vizier of Anu and may to a certain extent have equated him with Papsukkal. That is suggested by the astrological text

62 Tallqvist 1938, 294; Wiggermann 1985–1986, 10 (with literature).

63 KAR 58 obv. 1–24.

64 Streck 1998–2001, 632–633; George 1993, nos. 42, 284, 402, 763, 764, 767, 917, 1030 and 1055.

65 The only known holder of that office is Nabû-ušallim/Balātu//Šin-lêqe-unninni; Beaulieu 2003, 303–307.

66 See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2; cf. Falkenstein 1941, 15; Kose 1998, 148; Baker 2013, 23.

SpTU IV 159, which associates parts of the liver with different months and constellations; according to that list, Orion is the constellation of Nuska, not of Papsukkal.⁶⁷

5.2.2.3 Usmû

Usmû (Sum. Isimud) already appears as the vizier of Enki in Sumerian poems such as ‘Enki and Ninḥursag’ and ‘Inanna and Enki’. On Mesopotamian cylinder seals from the Akkadian to the Kassite period, as well as on seals from Cappadocia, Syria and the late Hittite empire, he is depicted as a two-faced male deity, both alone and in introduction scenes with Ea.⁶⁸ At least from the Old Babylonian period onwards, he was equated with the deity Ara, who in Old Babylonian Emesal prayers is described as female; this gender ambiguity may have been connected to his double-faced appearance and was perhaps a reflection of a similar tradition surrounding the divine vizier Ninšubur (see above).⁶⁹ In *Enūma Eliš* IV 83, Usmû still fulfils the function of messenger for Ea, and as such he also received offerings in first-millennium BC building rituals.⁷⁰ In the first-millennium BC manuscripts of *Atraḥasis*, Usmû is sent by Ea to Atraḥasis to warn him of the dire future for the land and the people.⁷¹

It is not entirely certain if Usmû was worshipped in Neo-Babylonian Uruk, but in a ritual from Babylon from the Neo- or Late Babylonian period he leads different priests and cultic actors to and from various temples.⁷² There is no textual evidence of temples or sanctuaries dedicated to him anywhere in Mesopotamia, but in Seleucid Uruk he must have had a cella in the Bīt Rēš close to the Main Gate, since he functioned as its guard. Falkenstein, who tentatively identified the northwestern gate of the Bīt Rēš as the Main Gate, considers it likely that Usmû’s shrine was located in Room 48, which with its cult niche and pedestal was clearly the shrine of a deity.⁷³ Kose does not offer a suggestion; Baker concurs with Falkenstein.⁷⁴ If one identifies the southeastern gate with the Main Gate, as I will do in the current study, Usmû may have dwelled in the

67 Cf. Reiner 1995, 78. Perhaps comparably, the excerpt text SpTU III 72 quotes from a šu-ila to Orion, but ends with an invocation of Nuska (Farber 1989a, 236).

68 Boehmer 1976–1980, 197–180.

69 Gabbay 2014, 44 note 183.

70 Ambos 2004, 98: 13”, 114: 1, 119: 25, 31.

71 Foster 2005, 264: 99–108.

72 Çağrgan/Lambert 1991–1993, obv. II 72, 84, 87, rev. III 89–91, III, 114.

73 See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2; Falkenstein 1941, 16.

74 Baker 2013, 23.

small room 79b, which in Baker's view was the cella of Kusu, the fourth and lesser known guardian of the Bīt Rēš.⁷⁵

5.2.3 *The Staff, the Shoe, the Daughters of Anu and the Daughters of Uruk*
The Sumerogram ^{giš}(níg.)gidri is variously translated as 'sceptre' and as 'staff', which reflects the different functions attributed to the object by cuneiform authors as well as modern scholars. The sceptre was a symbol of power throughout Mesopotamian culture, first and foremost of the royal power of the king.⁷⁶ However, the king received his sceptre in turn from the gods, who thereby transferred to him the right and obligation to rule.⁷⁷ Likewise, the staff was a typical attribute of both the human and the divine vizier, which was handed to him by his master and represented the responsibilities associated with his function. As noted above, both Nuska and Papsukkal were associated with the staff by virtue of their profession, which entailed—among other things—delivering messages and admitting or even introducing visitors into the living space of their divine master, i.e. into the realm of the sacred.⁷⁸ The sceptre of kingship was symbolically derived from the staff of the shepherd; the king as shepherd of his people is a common topos in Mesopotamian literature.⁷⁹ Since the object involved in the procession under discussion does not bear the epithet “of kingship” and appears closely connected to the activities of Papsukkal, Nuska and Usmû (see below), I will use the word ‘Staff’ instead of ‘Sceptre’.

75 She points out that Nikarchos doesn't mention a guardian deity for the Gate of Plenty, which can be explained if one interprets the southeastern passageway as that gate, which only acquired a cella for a divine guardian (namely room 79b) after the renovations by Kephalon. However, it may also mean that at the time of Nikarchos, it had not yet been decided that the Bīt Rēš should have a total of four guardian deities, among whom Usmû and Kusu.

76 Cf. the many examples sub CAD H 154–155, § II 377–379. The Sceptre of Kingship is one of the four insignia of kingship (along with the loop, mace and crown) which were presented to Bēl during the well-known ceremony of the *akītu* festival in Babylon with the so-called negative confession of the king (RAcc 127–154 + BM 32485 415–452; Linssen 2004, 222–223; note the alternative interpretation by Sallaberger/Schmidt 2012, *contra* which Ambos in the *addenda* to 2013b). It also plays a role in two rituals from Seleucid Uruk, the *akītu* festival in month VII (TU 39–40) and the *akītu*-like festival for Ištar (TU 42+), both of which also ideally involved the king himself.

77 Wiggermann 1985, 13 with note 41.

78 Wiggermann 1985, 18–20; actual introduction scenes with a divine *sukkallu* in art are restricted to the Old Akkadian period, but in later literature he remains the intermediary between his master and his master's servants.

79 Wiggermann 1985, 15–16 with note 46.

The Shoe, whose role in the nocturnal ceremony described in TU 41 is a unique one, is more difficult to categorize. It also evokes associations with travel, perhaps over long distances, as messengers and shepherds do. One is reminded of the winged shoes of the ancient Greek messenger god Hermes.⁸⁰ CAD § II 291b quotes the passage in TU 41 under “gods’ apparel”, but in Mesopotamian iconography divine statues are never depicted with footwear.⁸¹ Linssen comments that the attribute of the god Nuska was “a lamp in the shape of a shoe”,⁸² but even if the scribe of TU 41 made that same association, it is improbable that he would call the object “the Shoe” instead of simply “the Lamp”, as elsewhere. Moreover, it is unlikely that Nuska, who was not a major god and already present in person, would additionally be represented by his attribute. Rather, the function of the Staff and the Shoe in TU 41, as they led the two groups of deities into the respective courtyards of Anu and Antu, appears to have been to fulfil and visually symbolize the very same task that Papsukkal and Nuska usually carried out: that of messenger and guide, accompanying deities as well as mortals on the way to and introducing them into a (more) sacred space.⁸³

A comparable divine Staff resided and was worshipped at Neo- and late Babylonian Borsippa.⁸⁴ It occurs in a late Babylonian ritual from Babylon, where it joins Bēl and accompanies the Daughters of Esagil and the Daughters of Ezida in a procession to Kiš to visit the god Zababa.⁸⁵ Another Shoe as a ritual participant features in the text corpus known in its composite form as ‘Marduk’s Ordeal’, which enumerates ritual actions taking place in Babylon and interprets them in terms of mythological events. Line 83 reads: “The shoe which they take to the temple of the Lady of Babylon: it is a standard (*itḫur*). He sends it to her because they will not release him and he cannot go out.”⁸⁶ In

80 Cf. the “silver sandals” of Nabû, who was associated with the planet Mercury (YOS 19 212: 6; Beaulieu 2003, 343–344), and the epithet which Inanna gives her vizier Ninšubur in a late version of a city lament: “my pure minister of the lapis lazuli shoes”; probably also referring to the vizier’s arduous travels in her lady’s service (Volk 1989, 70).

81 Berlejung 1998, 52. There must have been certain exceptions, as is demonstrated by Neo-Babylonian administrative texts about payments to blacksmiths for shoes for Adad and Šala (Nbn 673, 4–7) and for the abovementioned sandals of Nabû.

82 Linssen 2004, 249.

83 Wiggermann 1998–2001, 498.

84 Waerzeggers 2010a, 23.

85 George 2000, 293–294.

86 Livingstone 1986, 219: 83. The line is known from only one manuscript, called by Livingstone “Version 11” (K 6330+6359+9138 dupl. Rm 275). The Lady of Babylon (Bēlet-Bābili)

other words, Marduk sends Bēlet-Bābili a message and the shoe, which functions as a standard, is his messenger. The Assyrian word *itḫuru* can also mean “royal standard”; thus, the object replaced by the shoe in Marduk’s Ordeal is probably a symbol of Marduk’s royal power.⁸⁷ That replacement is necessary, because Marduk is a captive: powerless, invisible, stripped of his sovereignty—“they will not release him and he cannot go out”—and therefore not in the position to make use of its regular insignia. Instead, he sends a shoe, which will ‘run’ to Bēlet-Bābili and convey his message to her.⁸⁸

In the nocturnal ceremony at Uruk, the Shoe did not replace the standard, but worked together with it. The procession clearly has a gendered aspect: the Staff accompanies the three male gods Papsukkal, Nuska and Usmû and enters the courtyard of Anu, whereas the Shoe follows afterwards, accompanying the Daughters of Anu and the Daughters of Uruk, and not only enters Antu’s courtyard, but proceeds into the innermost part of her living quarters, her bedroom, where it appears to have been at home. Like the shoe which the captive Marduk sent to his mistress, it seems to have been connected with the private sphere of women. The Daughters of Anu and the Daughters of Uruk remain with Antu as well, though not in her living quarters, but in the courtyard in front of it. Thus, the Staff and the Shoe were not only messengers, but they were assigned to two different parts of the divine household: the chambers of the husband and those of the wife.⁸⁹ Such a division of deities according to gender is also known from other ritual texts from Seleucid Uruk, including the description of one of the *akītu* festivals.⁹⁰ Further, as we have seen earlier, it also occurs in the lists of deities in the prebendary sale contracts from Uruk, and in the litanies of šu-ila prayers from different Babylonian cities, which suggests that it was a more widespread practice in the late period.⁹¹

was a local manifestation of Ištar. Another occurrence of a shoe in a cultic context, but in a damaged passage, is George 1992, 45: obv. 1’.

87 Cf. CAD I 296a.

88 Considering the association between feet and intimacy in many cultures, the fact that Marduk sends his divine mistress a shoe may have charged that gesture with a certain erotic quality; removing one’s sandal seems to have a sexual gesture in Mesopotamian poetry as well (Nissinen 2001, 109).

89 Nissinen (2001, 109), in the context of a broader discussion of sacred marriages between Babylonian deities, asserts that “obviously ‘Sceptre’ and ‘Sandal’ are nicknames of Anu and Antu”.

90 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 140; KAR 132 I obv. 5–17 and *ibid.* II obv. 1–15 (Linssen 2004, 201–202).

91 Gabbay 2014, 204–207; see § 1.3.8.2.

Collectives or pairs of Daughters of various gods, temples and cities existed all over Babylonia.⁹² According to the Uruk Shrine List, the Daughters of Uruk were already part of Ištar's household in the Eanna;⁹³ clearly they were 'adopted' by Anu and Antu sometime during the Seleucid period. The presence of such goddesses in the different divine courts of first-millennium Babylonia may have developed in analogy to young, unmarried daughters as a social group in Neo-Babylonian human households and society.⁹⁴ It is tempting to see another analogy between the gender segregation in the temple ritual under discussion—Anu and his three guards on one side of the sanctuary, Antu and the unmarried daughters on the other—and that of separate living quarters for men and women respectively in the palace and/or in private houses, as has been the custom in many parts of West Asia in later periods. However, there is no conclusive evidence that men and women lived separated from each other in ancient Mesopotamian private houses; moreover, the possible existence of a 'women's wing', 'harem' or the like in ancient Near Eastern palaces—depending also, of course, on the historical period and geographical region in question—is still the subject of extensive debate.⁹⁵ Moreover, in the

92 Cf. Cavigneaux 1981, 79.B.1 / 20 1–7, which lists pairs of Daughters for seven different temples, among whom the Daughters of the Esagil and the Ezida also mentioned above.

93 George 1992 no. 25. Cf. KAR 132 I obv. 29 (Linssen 2004, 201), which demonstrates that in the Hellenistic period the Daughters of Uruk as well as the Daughters of the Eanna had moved together with Ištar to the Irigal.

94 George 2000, 295. The Daughters of Anu, who also appear in the procession of Anu on day 9 of one of the *akitu* festivals of Seleucid Uruk (KAR 132 II obv. 4), should be viewed similarly. Anu had many daughters in different mythological traditions, among whom Ištar herself and various demonesses such as Lamaštu. Evil witches with supernatural powers are also described in different texts as Daughters of Anu (cf. *Maqlû* III 63 (Abusch 2015, 308)). Additionally, a benevolent group of "daughters of Anu of heaven" (*mārat Ani ša šamê*), described as carrying beautiful pots with which they draw clean, soothing water from rivers and seas, are often invoked in magical-medical texts, including one from Seleucid Uruk (SpTU I 44; Farber 1990, 299–304; and cf. the *Mārat Anim*-Street in Old Babylonian Larsa (Farber 1999)). In two prayers to the constellation Wagon, the "two heavenly daughters of Anu" are the Wagon's side-pieces (Reiner 1995, 71); in the anti-witchcraft incantation *Maqlû*, they hold the mooring-rope of heaven and descend along it to earth (*Maqlû* III 31–34 (Abusch 2015, 306)); for the cosmological significance of the Wagon, see § 5.4.4). However, the collective Daughters of Anu living in the Bit Rēš, i.e. in Anu's own home, functioned first and foremost as a representation of the god's unmarried female children. The priests who developed the new Anu pantheon may have drawn upon the medical texts as proof that a group of positively valued Daughters of Anu already existed and that it was therefore only natural to incorporate them into his divine household.

95 For the Neo-Assyrian palaces, for example, David Kertai argues that a separate living area

case of the Anu-Antu-sanctuary in Seleucid Uruk, the respective cellae, antecellae and courtyards of the city god and his spouse were situated closely together and connected via corridors and anterooms. The separation of their sanctuary from the rest of the temple complex seems to have been more important than the fact that Anu and Antu each had their own private chambers within their shared home.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the division of a group of deities into subgroups on the basis of gender was a significant aspect of the cultic processions at Seleucid Uruk, of which the nocturnal ceremony is a good example. The Staff and the Shoe functioned as messengers for Anu and Antu and perhaps represented the respective realms of power and authority of each deity within the divine household. Why the Staff was purified upon arrival in the Grand Courtyard, whereas the Shoe was not, remains unclear, but it may reflect a status difference between the two objects within the whole of the Urukean temple cult. Finally it must be noted that Papsukkal, Nuska and Usmû, being the guardian deities of the temple complex, later participated in another important part of the ritual,⁹⁶ whereas the Daughters of Uruk and the Daughters of Anu remained with their mother for the duration of the nocturnal ceremony. Thus, although it is not clear where they were before and the text does not specify exactly at what time of the evening those events took place, we may reasonably conclude that the Daughters were brought inside their own home to be safe for the onset of night.

5.3 Obv. 8–13

After the Daughters of Anu and the Daughters of Uruk had taken their seats in the courtyard of Antu, a priest—probably the same *āšipu* who had just purified the Staff—mixed wine and good oil and made a libation with it for Anu, Antu and all the other gods⁹⁷ at the gate to the sanctuary.⁹⁸ He then smeared

for women did not exist (let alone a 'harem'); more generally, he regards the presupposition that the palaces were divided into a 'public' and 'private' sphere as anachronistic and instead proposes an approach focusing on access to persons and spheres of power (Kertai 2013, 195–199).

96 Cf. § 5.6.6.–7.

97 In the Babylonian cult, the libation, a small offering of liquid, was poured with and into special libation vessels (*maqqu*). Anu's cella possessed 5 golden *šappu*-containers that functioned as such and were used during the four daily meals (TU 38 obv. 9; Linszen 2004, 172).

98 The word *é papāḫa*, 'house of the cella' or 'sanctuary house', usually refers to a single unit

the doorframes of the gate to the sanctuary and of the other doors and gates of the Bīt Rēš. The golden censers were lit and an offering of a bull and a sheep, or perhaps more than one of each, was brought to Anu, Antu and the other gods of the Bīt Rēš, after which they all received their evening meal.

5.3.1 *Smearing the Doors and Doorframes*

Smearing doors and doorframes, in the temple and palace as well as the private house, was a common feature of namburbi's, i.e. rituals against the evil portended by a negative omen, and other rituals of protection and exorcism.⁹⁹ It was intended to drive away evil forces and change the fortune of the building and its inhabitants for the better.¹⁰⁰ Different substances could be used: blood, gypsum and bitumen or scented oil.¹⁰¹ A person could be rubbed with oil to make them 'shiny', i.e. give them a positive aura that would attract positive influences. Likewise smearing a door with oil would change its bad condition into a good one.¹⁰²

According to Stefan Maul, the combination of gypsum and bitumen, i.e. a white and a black substance, symbolized the struggle between good and evil, as is suggested by the ritual commentary text BM 34035, 14–15: "the gypsum and bitumen which they smear on the door of the sick man: the gypsum is Ninurta. The bitumen is Asakku. Ninurta pursues Asakku".¹⁰³ Apart from the context of illness, the door of a house could also be smeared with gypsum and bitumen as the final act of a namburbi.¹⁰⁴ However, the rite performed by the *āšipu* in

in a building, consisting of one or more rooms and dedicated to one particular deity and his/her spouse (cf. CAD P 101–105). Since the sanctuary referred to in this passage had a gate, it was probably not just the cella of Anu, but the entire inner sanctum of the Bīt Rēš, comprising both the courtyard and cella of Anu and the courtyard, cella and bedchamber of Antu (see Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2).

99 See e.g. *Utukkū Lemnūtu* 1X 75'–76' (Geller/Vacín 2016, 314).

100 Cf. CAD L 86.

101 The smearing of doorframes with blood is also well known from Exodus 12: 22, where the people of Israel smear their doors with the blood of the Passover lamb to keep the plague from entering their houses (Albertz/Schmitt 2012, 417). In Mesopotamia blood was only used on rare occasions. When the king had become unclean through a bad omen and needed to undergo the purification ritual *bīt rimki*, the first rites were performed inside the palace; then the exorcist slaughtered a sheep, smeared the doorframes of the palace gate with its blood and left with the king for the countryside (BBR 26 III 19–21; Farber 1986–1991, 248).

102 Maul 1994, 99.

103 BM 34035, 13 (Livingstone 1986, 172).

104 LKA III, rev. 11'.

the nocturnal ceremony was a purely apotropaic one, not a means to fight an already active and present evil. Moreover, scented oil was used during the very similar rite of smearing the doors of Nabû's cella at the Esagil in Babylon during the preparations for Nabû's arrival for the occasion of the *akītu* festival.¹⁰⁵ Thus it is likely that the *āšīpu* in the Bīt Rēš also used oil, or perhaps the mixture of wine and oil which he had just used to make a libation.¹⁰⁶

5.3.2 *The Evening Meal*

TU 38, the list of products needed for the daily offerings in Uruk, offers a detailed description of the contents of the four daily meals that the gods and goddesses of the city received.¹⁰⁷ Both the primary and secondary evening meal of Anu consisted of thirteen *šappu*-containers with different types of beer, four *šappu*-containers with 'drawn wine' (obv. 1–6) and seven *šibtu*-loaves (obv. 29). Antu received fourteen *šappu*-containers with beer (obv. 17) and also seven *šibtu*-loaves (obv. 30). The text does not specify the meat offerings per deity; in total, for the main and second meal of the evening four, fat, pure, barley-fed sheep,¹⁰⁸ one *kālū* sheep, five sheep of lesser quality and ten turtle doves were offered to the gods and goddesses living in the Bīt Rēš of which Anu and Antu both received a specific portion (rev. 18–23). In addition, all the gods of Uruk were brought different types of cakes, dates, figs, raisins, flatbread (*kusīpu*), pressed oil and a product named *hiššaštu*¹⁰⁹ (obv. 38–41, 48–49).

A. Leo Oppenheim has reconstructed and elegantly summarized the procedure of the divine meal on the basis of the Uruk ritual texts:¹¹⁰

First, a table was brought in and placed before the image, then water for washing was offered in a bowl. A number of liquid and semiliquid dishes

105 Linssen 2004, 221: 350.

106 Cf. CAD L 90.

107 Not listed, but probably included, were products that varied according to season, such as fruit and vegetables (Lambert 1993a, 199).

108 The logograms used in that text, *udu* and *udu.níta*, do not specify the age or sex of the animals, but the standard sacrificial animals in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods were male lambs, of which 3–4000 were slaughtered at the Eanna on a yearly basis (Kozuh 2006, 260).

109 Thureau-Dangin 1921, 83 does not offer a translation of this word. Linssen 2004, 135 and 177 reads "*hiššaštu*-cakes (?)". CAD H 203b suggests the word may be derived from *hašāšu*, a verb connected to breaking or cutting reeds and constructing objects with them, and thus reads "the ḫ.(-mats?)". The latter is not unlikely, considering that what follows next in the list is the *tabnītu*, the arrangement of tableware.

110 Oppenheim 1977, 188–192.

in appropriate serving vessels were placed on the table in a prescribed arrangement, and containers with beverages were likewise set out. Next, specific cuts of meat were served as a main dish. Finally, fruit was brought in in what one of the texts takes the trouble to describe as a beautiful arrangement, thus adding an esthetic touch comparable to the Egyptian use of flowers on such occasions. Musicians performed, and the cella was fumigated. Fumigation is not to be considered a religious act, but rather a table custom to dispel the odor of the food. Eventually, the table was cleared and removed and water in a bowl again offered to the image for the cleansing of the fingers. (...)

The table on which the food was placed as well as the image itself were surrounded by linen curtains set up for that period when the god was supposed to be eating what was offered to him. After the meal was done, the curtains were removed; they were drawn again when the god was to wash his fingers—every contact between the world of physical reality and the world of the god was hidden from human eyes.

In the Hellenistic period, the daily divine meal was commonly called *naptanu*, *ginû* or *sattukku*.¹¹¹ The main and the second course of the meal were distinguished by the terms (*naptanu*) *rabû* and (*naptanu*) *tardennu*.¹¹² As in earlier periods, the entire evening meal was referred to by the Sumerogram *kin.sig*.¹¹³ Yet TU 41 obv. 12 informs us that the *kin.sig ša lilât* is served to Anu, Antu and all the other gods of the Bīt Rēš. It is likely that the compiler(s) of TU 41 used the expression the same way as it is used in TU 38 and that line 12 thus states tautologically that the gods receive “the evening meal of the evening”, i.e. the entire meal, not only the first course. That would be consistent with the fact that immediately afterwards (obv. 13) the reader is told that the meal will not be cleared, which was standard procedure with regards to the second course on nights when a night vigil was held.

In that respect it is remarkable that according to line 14 another *naptanu*, i.e. an entire two-course meal, is served to the gods who are “in the courtyard”. It would be odd if *naptanu* were used in this context to indicate the second meal of the evening, which it otherwise never does. If the *kin.sig* in line 12 does indeed refer to both the first and the second course of the evening meal,

111 Linssen 2004, 163–164.

112 Linssen 2004, 130; TU 38 obv. 1, 6, 28–29, rev. 3–4, 13, 18, 21; TU 41 rev. 29–30.

113 Glassner 1987–1990, 260; TU 38 obv. 29, *gal-ú ù tar-den-nu šá kin.sig*; rev. 18, *nap-tan gal-ú šá kin.sig*; rev. 21, *nap-tan tar-den-nu šá kin.sig* (Linssen 2004, 173–174).

then the mention of another *naptanu* two lines later is redundant. According to Furlani, the text emphasizes in this way that on that particular night a certain group of gods took their meal in the courtyard, whereas on other nights it was served to them in their cellae.¹¹⁴ That is very likely, especially since we later learn that four major deities of the Bit Rēš—Sîn, Šamaš, Adad and Bēlet-ili—did indeed spend the entire night in their courtyard.¹¹⁵ Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that one of the functions of Mesopotamian ritual texts was to record unusual or infrequently performed procedures that deviated from the daily routine; anything that was self-evident to the participants was usually not written down at all. Thus what may appear to us as an inconsistency or even a mistake can have had any number of practical purposes for the compilers and readers of a ritual text, who were familiar with the ritual procedure to begin with.

5.3.3 *The 'Bull-and-Sheep'-Offering*

Before the evening meal was served to the gods, a separate offering of at least one bull¹¹⁶ and one sheep (*siskur gu₄ ù udu-níta*) took place (obv. 11). The same rite was performed both before and after the secondary morning meal that was served in the morning after the nightly ceremony,¹¹⁷ as well as during the *akītu* festival in month VII on day 9, when it took place while the main meal of the evening was being consumed by the gods.¹¹⁸

A sacrifice of a bull and one or more sheep is in itself not remarkable, since oxen and sheep were the two standard types of sacrificial animal used for regular offerings. However, it seems peculiar that additional animals would be slaughtered and prepared as a meat dish exactly before or even during the time when the gods were already eating. Moreover, beef was not part of the regular evening meal in the temples of Hellenistic Uruk. Could the killing of the bull and the sheep have served a different purpose? Since the text offers us no other clue about the function of the rite than the designation *siskur*, any attempt at

114 Furlani 1940, 142.

115 Rev. 21–22.

116 The sign *gu₄* does not specify whether the bovine in question was a bull or an ox. In ancient Mesopotamia, bulls and oxen had a different practical and symbolic value: oxen were draft animals and their meat was used in the gods' daily meals, while bulls were considered powerful, beautiful creatures that represented masculinity, physical strength and pride. Thus, we would expect that the choice was a bull when the sacrifice was not a regular one, but a luxurious gift to the gods for a special occasion.

117 TU 41 rev. 30–32.

118 TU 39 rev. 6–7.

its reconstruction would necessitate a comparison with all the different (Late) Babylonian forms of animal sacrifice. That, in turn, would require a complete survey of the various aspects of ritual slaughter in ancient Mesopotamia as well as a discussion of the use of the term ‘sacrifice’ to describe those phenomena, which are still urgently needed, but go beyond the scope of the present study. Nonetheless, we can at least take a look at the possible uses and meanings of *sískur* in the Uruk ritual texts and see whether that can elucidate the nature of the bull-and-sheep-offering under discussion.

The Sumerogram *sískur* is a duplication of the single sign *siskur*, which in turn consists of the sign *amar*, ‘calf’, and the sign *še*, ‘barley’, written inside it. Seleucid scribes, however, will not have read it as the Sumerian word *siskur*, but mentally translated it into one of the Akkadian words associated with that sign. The most common one is *nīqu*, derived from the verb *naqû*, which originally meant ‘to pour out’ and in religious context ‘to libate’, but later came to mean any type of food offering to a god, including one of meat.¹¹⁹ The alternative Akkadian readings are *karābu*, ‘to speak words of praise’, *sullû*, *suppû*, *teslītu*, *tēmiqu*, *tēninu*, all terms for spoken words addressed to a god, and *nuhḫu*, ‘to appease’.¹²⁰ In other words, the logogram *sískur* in Akkadian texts referred to cultic acts by which the worshipper attempted to make contact with the gods by means of a food offering, an animal sacrifice or spoken words—although a prayer unaccompanied by a food offering was very unusual.¹²¹ That range of meaning included the killing of a sheep for the performance of an extispicy; the gods involved there—primarily Šamaš and Adad—were not offered the meat of the animal, but it was dedicated to them before it was slaughtered and they were expected to write their answer to the priest’s questions directly into the sheep’s intestines. Afterwards the sheep’s meat was not offered to the gods, but

119 The verb *naqû* itself is usually rendered in late Babylonian texts with the Sumerogram *bal*, ‘to turn upside down’, ‘to rotate’, ‘to pour’, and used in texts as the verb associated with *sískur* (as in TU 41 obv. 11: *sískur gu₄ ù udu.níta a-na d60 an-tu₄ ù dingir^{meš} dù.a.bi bal-[qí]).*

120 Lambert 1993a, 195.

121 Limet (1993) argues that the Sumerian word *siskur* originally referred to an act of worship unique to Sumerian culture, in which a food offering was brought to a god and a few words were spoken, not to plead for help of a particular kind, but simply to invite the deity to accept the offering, for which the worshipper did expect a general benevolent attitude on the part of the deity in return. A moment of contact with the divine was thus the focal point of the act. The Babylonians, being unfamiliar with that particular rite, did not assimilate the word *siskur* in an ‘akkadianised’ form such as **siskurru*, but adopted the Sumerogram to refer to a combination of sacrifice and prayer.

eaten by the *bārû*, the haruspex, and perhaps also by the *bēl nīqi*, the provider of the sheep. Thus, in Akkadian texts, the Sumerogram *sískur* referred to a ritual act, which could include animal slaughter, intended to establish contact with the divine and, moreover, to invite the gods to involve themselves actively—by accepting a food offering, listening to prayer and in some cases even responding with a message of their own.¹²²

If we look at the occurrences of the sign *sískur* in the Uruk ritual texts, the most common context seems to be the occasional temple rituals, such as the creation of a new kettledrum (see below), namburbi's against the evil portended by ominous events in the temple, and building rituals for inducing a newly built or renovated temple into the realm of the sacred. Those texts mention numerous, usually multiple offerings (written with the verb *naqû*) of sacrificial lambs brought to various gods, both major deities of the pantheon and minor gods associated with different crafts.¹²³ The context of such offerings is described in detail in the following lines:¹²⁴

In the morning, on the roof of that deity's temple, you will sweep that place. You will sprinkle pure water. You will set up three portable altars for Ea, Šamaš and Asalluḫi. You will place three linen sheets on their seats. You will put down *mīrsu* (made with) honey, butter, dates, *sasqû*-flour and

122 In the administrative texts, chronicles and Astronomical Diaries from Hellenistic and Parthian Babylon, *sískur* is mainly used as a short form of *udu.sískur*, 'sacrificial sheep', thus referring to the animals themselves rather than the cultic act performed with them. See e.g. the 'Seleucus III Chronicle' (BCHP 12) obv. 8; AD -126 A rev. 18; -133 B/C 23'-24' and *passim* in the Parthian-period Diaries, where it is part of the standard formula *1-en gu₄ ù x sískur^(mēš)*, "one bull and x sacrificial sheep" (were provided to the person wishing to make an offering); see below.

123 For the kettledrum ritual see TU 44 II 3, 5, 33; *ibid.* III 18; probably also implied in *ibid.* I 31-32; BaM Beiheft 2: 5 obv. 13 (Linssen 2004, 253-254, 270). First the different gods supervising the entire proceedings receive such a meal, then Lumḫa, the divine manifestation of the harp that accompanied the kettledrum in other rituals, and finally, on the next occurrence of the 15th day of the month, Ea, Šamaš, Asalluḫi, Lumḫa and also the now divine kettledrum itself. The same offerings play an important role in building rituals in Hellenistic and older sources, where they are brought to the various deities involved in the process of renovating a temple; cf. SpTU II 17 III 7' (Ambos 2004, 114); K 48+20, 27 (*ibid.* 118); Si. 12, 9', 15' (*ibid.* 132); K 2000+38 (*ibid.* 160); TU 46 obv. 5, 9, 16, rev. 4 (Linssen 2004, 293-294); BaM Beiheft 2: 10 obv. 3, 6, 14 (*ibid.* 299); Weissbach Misc. no. 12 obv. 4 (*ibid.* 301). TU 45 is a collection of building rituals and various namburbi's, all of which involve sheep offerings, identically phrased: obv. 2-3, 10, 18, 20, 25-26, rev. 6, 9, 11-12, 17-18, 21 (*ibid.* 283-285).

124 TU 45 obv. 6-14 (Linssen 2004, 283).

pressed oil. You will set up three *adagurru*-vessels with beer of the best quality, wine and milk. You will put down an incense burner with juniper. You will sprinkle all sorts of barley seeds. You will offer three sacrificial sheep (udu.sískur *tanaqqî*). You will present shoulder meat, fat tissue and roasted meat. You will make a libation with beer of the best quality, wine and milk. You will set up (a basin filled with) water. You will draw the curtain shut.¹²⁵ [Several Emesal prayers] will be performed for Ea, Šamaš and Asalluḫi. (The performance) will cease. You will lift up water for (washing) the hands and open the curtain.

This type of food offering is quite different from the daily meals that were served to the gods in their cellae. It did not take place in the inner sanctum of the temple, but on a location suitable for the occasion—the temple workshop in the case of the kettledrum creation, or a secluded outdoors area like the temple rooftop or the riverside. None of those spaces had a permanent function as offering site, so they had to be properly prepared and purified first. The food was not presented on an offering table (^{gis}banšur/*paššūru*), which we know were sometimes made of gold and thus extremely heavy,¹²⁶ but on a portable, easily removable table (gi-du_s/*paṭīru*) made of reed. Moreover, the recipients of the offering were not the deities dwelling in the temple for which the ritual was performed, but gods who were invoked in order to involve them directly in the ritual process itself—purification deities like Kusu and Ningirim, minor gods of craftsmanship, or the three major deities invoked during the performance of any ritual intended to effect a change in the supernatural realm: Šamaš, god of justice, and Ea and Asalluḫi, the patron deities of ritual knowledge and performance. In fact, the entire offering sequence is analogous to the offerings made in the context of occasional rituals focused on aiding the troubled individual—healing, exorcism, namburbi's related to omnia witnessed in a public space or private house, appeasing an angered personal god and so on.

The question remains, however, what the sacrifice of the udu.sískur that took place during the offering type under discussion exactly entailed. Since there were sheep involved and the texts give instructions for presenting roasted meat, it seems self-evident that sískur here refers to slaughter—but does that mean that live animals were brought to the offering site and killed on the spot?

125 Actual curtains will probably only have been available in temple locations where such rituals were regularly performed; outside the temple, for example on the rooftop of a private house or at the riverside, a ring was created with strands of wool or a line of flour (cf. Maul 1994, 55–56).

126 TU 41 obv. 17, 22.

Maul concludes that this was in fact what happened during the namburbi's.¹²⁷ Indeed, the texts he has analysed not only maintain a strict unity of location, describing only activities performed at the temporary offering site, but also use straightforward words for slaughter instead of the ambiguous *siskur/naqû*. Thus a namburbi against the evil portended by lightning that has struck a house.¹²⁸

You set up two portable altars for Ea and Asalluḫi. You sprinkle dates and *sasqû*-flour. You put down a basket and put *mirsu* in it. You slaughter (*tanakkis*) a virgin female kid and place shoulder meat, fat tissue and roasted meat on the altar. You set up a *ḥarû*-vessel. You prepare an incense burner, approach the braziers and remain standing there until they have finished burning(?). When they have created charcoal, you place the fat tissue of the female kid on the seven braziers.

The writing style of the temple ritual texts points to the same conclusion: they also maintain unity of location and describe a continuous sequence of short, discrete tasks that were probably meant to follow each other directly or at least as soon as possible, without longer interruptions.¹²⁹ In the passage from TU 45 quoted above, the “presenting” of shoulder meat, fat tissue and roasted meat also directly followed the “sheep offerings” without too much time elapsing in between. That strongly suggests that the killing and dismembering of the animal was an element of the ritual itself. If this was indeed the case, the sacrifice can be compared to the Greek *thusia* offering, for which a bull was killed inside the circle of participants, its blood splattered on the altar and parts of its body were immediately removed and roasted or burned for consumption by the deity involved.¹³⁰

However, it cannot be established for certain that such a practice also existed in first-millennium Mesopotamia. Unlike in ancient Greece and Israel, splattering blood was not an essential element of animal sacrifice, but merely an inconvenience which may even have been seen as a disruption of the sanctity of the offering site. Thus, as in the case of the Biblical *šelamim* offering,¹³¹ the sheep

127 Maul 1994, 54.

128 Maul 1994, 133: 77–81.

129 There are a few exceptions, such as TU 41 rev. 16, “they perform the *šelām bīti* ceremony”, which we may assume was a complex affair, or *ibid.* rev. 31, the performance of the *balaḡ* ‘Honored One, Wild Ox’, a composition of several hundred lines (see § 5.8.2).

130 Ekroth 2008.

131 Lev. 3; Eberhart 2002, 89–112.

may have been slaughtered elsewhere and only the bits of meat brought to the offering site which were needed there. One of the meat portions presented on the reed table is called “roasted” (and sometimes “boiled”) and the brazier itself is never mentioned in the ritual texts as part of the offering arrangement. That does lead to the conclusion that, even if the animal was killed and its meat prepared near the offering site, it was not directly within the sacred circle itself.¹³² In short, how and where exactly animal slaughter took place in the Babylonian temples of the first millennium is still an important problem which cannot be resolved within the context of the present study. For now, it is safest to read the word *sískur* in the texts under discussion simply as ‘dedication’: the animals’ lives were offered up to the deities involved, which resulted in their shoulder meat and fat tissue being roasted on a brazier and presented as a meal.

Apart from the occurrence of *sískur* in the context just discussed, it also appear twice in the sources with an additional specification. At the end of TU 41, the citizens of Uruk perform a *sískur qerīti* for the gods of the city (rev. 23).¹³³ The explanatory *qerītu*, ‘banquet’, clearly points to a shared festive meal. It is the only attestation of the combined use of those two terms.¹³⁴ Another unusual type of *sískur* was the *sískur merdītu* of a bull and a sheep, which was performed in the Bit Rēš on day 8 and in the morning of day 9 of the *akītu* festival in month VII, as well as in the Irigal during the *akītu* festival for Ištar.¹³⁵ The term *merdītu* generally refers to a libation which was not poured on the ground or in a libation vessel, but over other offering materials.¹³⁶ Both in the Bit Rēš and in the Irigal, the rite took place in the room between the curtains directly adjacent to the deity’s cella, in the presence (*ina pani*) of Anu/Ištar, at a place called *ki-sískur-gaba-ri*, “the place of making (the deity) accept the *sískur*”, which was first sprinkled with aromatics. After the ‘dedication’ of the two animals, the heart of the bull and the head of the sheep were removed and placed

132 Maul 1994, 55 and cf. the schematic on p. 59.

133 See § 5.7.4.

134 Linssen 2004, 250. However, note the mention in the Neo-Assyrian text STT 300: 21 of a magic spell for “inviting a god or goddess to a banquet (*ana qerē*)” on days 16 and 17 of Tašritu (Geller 2014, 46).

135 TU 39 obv. 30–31; TU 40 obv. 21; TU 42+ obv. 29’ (Linssen 2004, 185–186, 239). The latter text adds *ina panišu* and consequently Linssen 2004, 241 has translated “before him”, but the context leaves no doubt that Ištar is meant.

136 Scurlock 2005, 44–45. Libating over the head of a slaughtered animal is also attested in other contexts, such as Assyrian cultic rituals and extispicy (Heimpel 1987–1990, 3); cf. for example the Neo-Assyrian relief of Assurbanipal libating wine over the heads of several lions he has killed (Maul 1994, 58 fig. 2).

before the deity (or, in the Ištar version, at the *ki-siskur-gaba-ri*). *Mašhatu*-flour was then sprinkled over the bull's heart and a libation of wine was made over the sheep's head—the act of the *merdītu* itself. Again it is not completely certain whether the animals were killed in the room between the curtains—a small area where it may have been difficult and even dangerous to bring a living bull—or the temple slaughterhouse, nor what happened to the rest of their carcasses afterwards. Their meat may have been eaten by the prebend holders at some point, but it was clearly not consumed as a meal by the deities involved. They only received the bull's heart and the sheep's head, a symbolic rite which may have been related to the dedication of the animals' lives; the head and heart were those parts of their bodies which could represent them in their entirety as living beings.¹³⁷

Apart from the regular meals in the temple, the ad hoc sacrifice presented on the reed table and special practices such as the *qerītu* and *merdītu* offering, it is useful to point out that the Hellenistic Babylonian ritual texts also include many instances of ritual slaughter in the temple where the animal's carcass was not presented as food to the gods in any way, but was used for other cultic purposes. An important example is what scholars call the 'kettledrum ritual', during which a new cultic kettledrum was created by killing a bull and covering a bronze drum body with its hide.¹³⁸ It is known from a number of different

137 In many cultures, the slaughter of an animal is determined by specific ritual customs that dictate exactly how and which parts to cut, which parts are destined for human and/or divine consumption and which must be disposed of. The latter are often regarded as vital elements that must be treated with care, so as to do justice to the slaughtered animal; compare the Biblical notion that “the blood is the life” (Lev. 17) and thus must be poured out on the altar, not simply spilled on the ground. The *merdītu* offering in particular is reminiscent of a passage in the Sumerian story ‘Lugalbanda in the Mountain Cave’, where the young king of Uruk kills a bull and two goats, then offers the bull's heart to Utu and piles up the heads of the two goats and lets their blood flow into the offering pit (365–368, reading *lipiš-bi im-ta-an-zi* with George 2003, 476 as “he tore out its heart” and *saġ-du-bi (...)* *im-ta-an-dub* with Black 1998, 183 as “heaped up (...) the heads”). He then creates a festive meal for An, Enlil, Enki and Ninĥursag with the “best part” of the animals, the livers. The offering of the bull's heart to Utu, who doesn't share in the sacrificial meal, appears to have been an ancient element of bull sacrifice in Mesopotamia which requires further investigation; cf. int. al. the Standard Babylonian ‘Epic of Gilgameš’, where Gilgameš and Enkidu remove the heart of the vanquished Bull of Heaven and offer it to Šamaš (VI 147–150; George 2003, 626–628). During the first-millennium kettledrum ritual (see below), the heart of the slaughtered bull was placed and burned before the music god Lumĥa or the divine kettledrum itself (TU 44 II 16–18; KAR 60 obv. 15–16; BaM Beiheft 2, 5 obv. 23; Linszen 2004, 253, 263, 271).

138 Linszen 2004, 97–99; Gabbay 2014, 124–130. The kettledrum (*lilissu*) was an important

manuscripts from Seleucid Uruk as well as from Neo-Assyrian libraries, and existed in at least two different versions. During the first phase of the ritual, the living bull was transformed by means of mouth-washing (*mīs pī*) and incantations into a divine creature and then ceremonially slaughtered. According to one tradition, described in the Urukian text TU 44, the carcass of the bull was then wrapped in a red cloth and buried facing the West, i.e. in the direction of the netherworld (II 16–19). Another version, known from the Neo-Assyrian text KAR 60, merely states that the chief *kalû* was not allowed to eat the bull's meat; perhaps this means that the other priests were and did, but more probably the contrary—no one, not even the highest-ranking *kalû*, could consume any part of the bull, since it had become a sacred animal. Its burial ensured that it would remain in the divine realm, just as the tools and materials used for *āšīpu* rituals were afterwards thrown into the river, which would carry them to the netherworld.¹³⁹ Interestingly, two other texts from Seleucid Uruk, BaM Beiheft 2: 5 and 7, follow the Neo-Assyrian version, but although no. 5 also instructs the priests to bury the bull's carcass (rev. 31–33), no. 7 appears to copy the prohibition from the Assyrian text. Thus we cannot determine which tradition was followed in Seleucid Uruk or whether a definitive choice was made at all. In any case, and more important in the current context, no part of the bull's body was offered as a meal to a deity. Instead, sheep offerings (*udu.sískur*) of the type previously discussed were presented to a number of deities at various stages of the ritual.

A second occasion where an animal was killed because parts of its body were needed for the performance of other rites was during the nocturnal ceremony in the Bīt Rēš. In the Ubšukkinnaku, beside the Dais of Destinies, a bull was

cultic instrument during the first millennium and was played in a broad variety of Assyrian and Babylonian cultic ceremonies, usually to accompany the performance of Emesal prayers by the *kalû* (Gabbay 2014, 98–102; 118–123; 141–142).

139 Gabbay 2014, 127–128. A. Leo Oppenheim (1942, 122 n. 1) has argued that the chief *kalû* was not allowed to eat the bull's meat because he was responsible for its death. For the same reason, the priest who performed the actual killing uncovered his head in penitence and recited phrases to indicate that not he, but the gods had killed the animal. Judith Paul (1992, 242) and Uri Gabbay (2014, 126 note 429) disagree with Oppenheim's construction of the slaughter of the bull as a "crime". Paul suggests that the gods had to be reminded of their own involvement in the killing, lest they regard the death of the sacred animal as sacrilege. Gabbay, on the other hand, points out that the *kalû*'s denial of responsibility for the bull's death mirrors the utterances by the craftsmen in the *mīs pī* ceremony for creating a divine statue that not they, but the gods have built the statue (Walker/Dick 2001, 66: 179–186, 76: 52). Thus the focus here is not on the destruction of a sacred animal, but more generally on effecting change upon divine materials, which ideally only the gods are capable of doing.

killed in the presence of Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû, Pisangunug and the Torch; the priest then removed the bull's right shoulder and used it to touch the right and left side of the bonfire which had just been kindled with the Torch.¹⁴⁰ The sacrifice seems to have focused on the preparation of the bull's shoulder as a cultic object by bringing it into contact with the sacred fire, but it is unclear which purpose the object would then serve. No mention is made of the ultimate fate of the bull's carcass, but we may imagine that it was the same as in the case of the kettledrum bull, and that it was ceremonially buried.

Finally, to name an example from Babylon, on day 5 of the *akîtu* festival in month I, the shrine of Nabû at the Esagil was purified in preparation of the god's arrival. For that occasion, a sheep's head was cut off and the shrine was cleansed with the sheep's carcass.¹⁴¹ The carcass was then thrown into the river, but the sheep's head was taken out into the open country by the slaughterer. That practice is only one of many examples of Mesopotamian rituals in which the bodies of living or dead animals were used to attract and absorb bad influences, which could then be disposed of together with the animal.¹⁴² The sheep was no longer considered edible for either god or man, since its head and body had been used to 'soak up' all evil that had pervaded the temple. The only correct way to dispose of them was to take them as far away from the sacred precinct as possible.

The acts of ritual slaughter just described are distinguished in the sources from meat offerings to deities by the terminology used. None of the killings is referred to as *sîskur*; instead the texts only describe the act of slaughter itself (TU 44, II 16; KAR 60, obv. 15; BaM Beiheft 2, 5 rev. 22–23: *gu₄ šāšu tapallaqma*, "you will slaughter that (bull)"; KAR 50, rev. 9: *gumaḥu tanakkisma*, "you will cut open the choice bull"; TU 41, rev. 6: *gu₄ ina panišunu immaḥḥas*, "a bull will be slaughtered before them"; RAcc 127–154 + BM 32485, 353: *rēš udu-níta ibat-taqma*, "he will cut off the sheep's head"). Thus, based on the available evidence from the late Babylonian ritual texts, we may conclude that if a rite involving animals was called *sîskur*, the animals in question were not only killed for use inside the temple, but their bodies were dedicated to a deity, who then either received their meat as a meal or specific body parts as a gift. That is consistent with the more general range of meaning of *sîskur* as a ritual act aimed at establishing contact with a divine being.

Until now we have examined the attestations in Urukian ritual texts of the sign *sîskur*, which is used in the line under discussion for an animal sacrifice,

140 See §5.6.7.

141 RAcc. 127–154 + BM 32485 353–360 (Linszen 2004, 221).

142 Scurlock 2002a, 371–387. The carcass of a male goat was used to rub the king in *bīt rimki* and a patient in a healing ritual.

and contrasted it with the terminology used in the ritual literature for other types of animal slaughter in a cultic context. The chronicles and Astronomical Diaries from Hellenistic and Parthian Babylon also regularly mention the cultic slaughter of a bull and several sheep, but refer to that ritual with the Sumerogram *nidba*, i.e. Akkadian *nindabû*, ‘food offering’.¹⁴³ As mentioned before, *siskur* is used in those texts to denote the sacrificial sheep themselves rather than the act of killing them. It is essential to note that in nearly all the—reasonably reconstructable—attestations of such offerings, they are performed by or on behalf of the Seleucid king or representatives of the Seleucid or Parthian court—satraps, high generals, the chief of the king’s guard, a Greek citizen of Babylon¹⁴⁴ fulfilling a political office or a messenger carrying a letter from the king.¹⁴⁵ In the Parthian-era Diaries, the ritual in question is always

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- 143 The Sumerogram *nidba* is composed of *pad*, ‘food ration’, and ^d*inanna*, ‘Inanna/Ištar’. The word originally indicated an offering of bread or cereal to a deity (for the etymology cf. Lambert 1993a, 196), but the context in which it occurs in the Late Babylonian texts clearly shows that it could also refer to a meat dish during that period (McEwan 1981, 168). The word is not attested in the Uruk ritual texts, except in the—probably much older—incipit of a hymn sung to Šin at the time of a lunar eclipse (BRM IV 6 obv. 12’–13’). The frequent use of *nindabû* in the Diaries may be due to the influence of Aramaic, which originally borrowed the word from the Akkadian (Kessler 2006, 279).
- 144 The term *politai* (*pu-li-te-e*) is used in the Late Babylonian chronicles and Astronomical Diaries to indicate the people living in the Greek *polis* at Babylon, which was probably established under Antiochos III (Clancier/Monerie 2014, 211). Scholarly opinions differ as to whether those people were ethnic Greeks and Macedonians, or ‘Hellenised’ Babylonians, or both (Van der Spek 2009).
- 145 AD -273 B obv. 11’–12’ (general); -204 C rev. 14–19 (Antiochus III, on the occasion of the *akitu* festival); -187 A rev. 5’–14’ (ditto); -178 C rev. 18’–22’ (general, possibly also for *akitu* festival); -171 B rev. 1’—upper edge 2 (general); -158 B rev. 17’–22’ (satrap); -144 obv. 15’ (messenger/general); -137 D rev. 23–24 (satrap), 26–27 (general); -136 C rev. 12’–13’ (a *polites*, perhaps with a public function); -133 B/C rev. 22’–25’ (satrap); -132 B obv. 27’–28’ (satrap), D2 rev. 22’–23’ (royal messenger); -129 A2 obv. 17’–19’ (a *polites*, newly appointed as governor of Babylon), rev. 14’–16’ (satrap and(?) general); -129 A obv. 9’ (chief of king’s guard), B rev. 5’–8’ (general); -124 A rev. 19’–20’ (general), B obv. 4’–5’ (satrap), rev. 19’–20’ (royal messenger); -123 B obv. 15’ (satrap); -111 B rev. 8’–10’ (satrap); -107 C rev. 16’–20’ (“a Subarean”, who not only sacrifices but also steals from the Esagil); -87 A obv. 14’–15’ (“a well-known man from Uruk”); -77 A obv. 26’–28’ (a *polites*, newly appointed as governor of Babylon), rev. 29–31 (a *polites*, newly appointed in a function related to the *bīt šarri*); ‘Arsacid King Chronicle’ (BCHP 19) 5’–10’ (person from Media, newly appointed as governor of Babylon). There are two exceptions, one where the *šatammu* of the Esagil himself requested the offering (AD -105 A obv. 14’–15’) and one where the “Borsippeans and Cutheans” came to perform a sacrifice in Babylon (-77 A obv. 29’–30’).

described with a standard formula, which allows for a few minor variations and the omission of one or more elements, and can be reconstructed as follows: “That day / on day x, the *šatammu* of the Esagil and the Babylonians of the *kin-ištu* of the Esagil provided him / the aforementioned [official] with one bull and x sacrificial sheep at [one of the entrance gates to the Esagil].¹⁴⁶ He made a food offering for Bēl, Bēltiya, the great gods, for the life of the king and for his own life. He prostrated himself.”

Apart from the few instances in which a Seleucid king or general contributed to the *akitu* festival, the timing of those offerings was not determined by the cultic calendar of Babylon, but by the occasions on which the royal representatives were able to visit the city—usually while involved in a military campaign in and around Babylonia, or, in the case of a messenger, when he had come to inform the *politai* of political developments that the king wished to communicate. In other words, the sacrifice of the bull and the sheep frequently attested in those texts was not part of the regular offering schedule, but a special event. A royal delegate was in town, or one of the *politai* was appointed governor or overseer of the palace, and that person took the opportunity to celebrate the occasion by honouring the gods, showing respect towards Babylon’s patron deities and praying to them for the king’s and his own well-being. The temple administration provided him with animals and a prebendary butcher probably took care of the actual killing and preparing the meat,¹⁴⁷ while the person officially performing the sacrifice was instructed by a specialist to say the correct words and make the right gestures. The entire ritual was never performed inside the Esagil, which no one but the priests and the king could enter, but always at one of the main gates of the temple complex. That suggests that even the slaughter itself took place there on or beside a portable altar, as was probably also the case in the occasional rituals discussed previously.¹⁴⁸

146 Note that the actual slaughter of an animal in the cult of YHWH also took place to the north of the temple near the entrance to the courtyard (Lev. 1:11; Eberhart 2011, 27).

147 In the Seleucid period, we still find the persons who request the offering arranging for their own sacrificial animals, such as Diary -273 (B obv. 11’–12’), in which a general himself “provided a bull and [...] sheep for the regular offerings (*ginū*) of Bēl”, and the ‘Seleucus III Chronicle’ (BCHP 12), in which the king provides money and a great number of animals for a sacrifice during the *akitu* festival, which he cannot attend in person (obv. 3’–8’). The same is suggested by the ‘Antiochus and Sin Chronicle’ (BCHP 5), in which the crown prince offers a sheep to different manifestations of Sin at Babylon (obv. 8–12).

148 Compare the Neo-Babylonian ritual text from the Eanna LKU 51 obv. 9’: “eight sacrificial sheep are slaughtered at the gates of the Eanna before her” (8 udu.siskur ina ká^{meš} šá é.an.na ina igi-šú ut-tak-k[a-su ...]) and probably again in line 17’.

It is far from certain that the bull-and-sheep-offering mentioned in the ritual texts from Uruk is in any way similar to the one attested in the Diaries and the Late Babylonian chronicles. The former's incorporation into the yearly recurring *akitu* festivals and nocturnal ceremony already shows that it belonged to the regular cultic rites and was not an ad hoc performance for the benefit of a visitor. Nonetheless, it may likewise have been prepared and served at one of the temple gates rather than inside the temple complex. It may even have represented a gift to Anu, Antu and the other gods by city officials who had no priestly status, but were influential enough to arrange for their offerings to be presented to the gods during important festivals. The use of a bull, the most prestigious and luxurious animal one could sacrifice in ancient Mesopotamia, was suitable for that kind of grand statement and for such a festive occasion.

On the other hand, the only other non-daily/monthly sacrifice of a bull and a sheep known in any detail from the Urukian ritual texts is the *merditu* offering, which was not meant to provide the gods with food, but to present them with parts of the animals' bodies. Since the text TU 39–40 mentions the “bull-and-sheep offering” without further explanation,¹⁴⁹ but also gives elaborate instructions for the performance of the *merditu*,¹⁵⁰ it is unlikely that the former was exactly the same as the *merditu*, but it may have been a similar rite which focused on a symbolic presentation of certain parts of the animals to the deities. Sadly, the evidence does not point specifically in either direction, so the exact nature of the bull-and-sheep offering that took place directly before the evening meal of the gods of the Bīt Rēš must remain unknown at present.

5.4 Obv. 13–28

After the evening meal, the night vigil began. The meal was not cleared and the gate to the sanctuary remained open. The priests went to the roof of the high shrine on top of the Anu ziqqurat. Once the stars Great Anu of Heaven and Great Antu of Heaven had come out, two hymns were performed: ‘Like the Beautiful Glow of the Stars of Heaven, Anu, the King’ and ‘The Beautiful Image Has Come Out’. The two deities were offered water to wash their hands and a luxurious meal was presented to them. Afterwards the incense burners were ignited. Then the procedure was repeated for Šin, Šamaš and the five planets.

149 TU 39 rev. 6–7 (Linssen 2004, 187).

150 TU 39 obv. 30–33; TU 40 obv. 21–rev. 3 (ibid. 185–186).

5.4.1 *The High Shrine of the Ziqqurrat*

The high shrine of the Seleucid Anu ziqqurrat is referred to by textual sources as the Ešarra ('House of the Universe').¹⁵¹ The only comparable first-millennium structure about which we possess any documentation is the sanctuary of Marduk on top of the Etemenanki, his ziqqurrat at Babylon.¹⁵² It is described on the 'Esagil Tablet', of which one copy dates to the Seleucid period and belonged to the archives of the Bīt Rēš.¹⁵³ That tablet lists, in the context of various mathematical calculations the reader is asked to perform, the measurements of different parts of the Esagil, the temple complex in Babylon dedicated to Marduk. Included are the different shrines on the ziqqurrat: the cellae of Marduk, Nabû and Tašmetu, the cellae of Ea and Nuska "facing north",¹⁵⁴ the shared cella of Anu and Enlil "facing south" and finally, "facing west", a stairwell and an area called a *tu'um*, consisting of an inner and an outer chamber with a bed in the latter, perhaps for Marduk and Zarpanītu.¹⁵⁵ In his recent monograph on the Etemenanki, Hansjörg Schmid—like most scholars before him—has reconstructed those shrines as forming a single sanctuary at the top of the ziqqurrat, with the different cellae arranged around a roofed courtyard according to the indicated cardinal directions.¹⁵⁶

151 TU 38 rev. 2 (Linssen 2004, 174); BRM IV 8, 11–12 (see § 1.3.1). It is improbable that, as George (1993, no. 1036) suggests, Ešarra was the name of the Anu ziqqurrat itself. In that case the 'u' in TU 38 rev. 2 would have been placed between 'é.šár.ra' and 'bára.maḥ', making 'bára.maḥ' the last item in the list, and not between 'éš.gal' and 'é.šár.ra'. It is more likely that what follows, 'bára.maḥ ziq-qur-rat d60', is a dependent clause referring back to 'é.šár.ra'.

152 Evidence for the existence of that sanctuary, as well as that of Nabû on the ziqqurrat at Borsippa, can also be found in a building inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II, who reports that he has renovated the ziqqurrats of both cities and built shrines "on their shining summits" (VAB 4 114: 43).

153 AO 6555, dupl. BM 40813; George 1992, 110–119. Since its discovery, the 'Esagil Tablet' has been the subject of many different interpretations. Most are attempts to use it as a basis for a reconstruction of the Esagil's and Etemenanki's shape and proportions. George believes it to be a description of a mathematical exercise about a theoretical 'Esagil' that does not reflect the properties of the actual temple complex of Marduk in Babylon (George *ibid.*, 110–111; 2005–2006, 77).

154 See for the reading of the indicated cardinal directions as "facing north/south" etc. instead of "in the north/south" etc. Baker 2008b.

155 The possible meaning of that word is discussed by George 1992, 426–427, who suggests the translation "double chamber".

156 Schmid 1995, 142–146.

Wilfrid Allinger-Csollich has also analysed the ‘Esagil Tablet’, but developed a different theory. By comparing the exact dimensions of the archaeological remains of the temples of Babylon and Borsippa and their accompanying ziqurrats with text sources that offer the measurements of those buildings, he has concluded that at least the Neo-Babylonian ziqurrats were not simply towers with a sanctuary on top, but formed a complete sanctuary in themselves: a ‘folded-out’ version of the horizontally oriented temple complex they belonged to. According to Allinger-Csollich, there were different shrines on each storey, corresponding to the floor plan of the temple below, and only the main cella stood at the top, just as it was located in the innermost centre of the ziqurrat’s horizontal counterpart.¹⁵⁷ He points out that the only Mesopotamian ziqurrat of which the second level has been excavated, the ziqurrat of Ur, also possessed a sanctuary on that level, i.e. not at the summit.¹⁵⁸ In Allinger-Csollich’s reconstruction, a temple tower’s staircases corresponded to the gates of the temple; those along the sides led to the sanctuaries on the different levels and the central staircase lead directly to the main cella at the top.¹⁵⁹

If we accept Allinger-Csollich’s theory, we should assume that the Anu ziqurrat in Uruk was constructed similarly, at least in its Seleucid building phase. That would mean that the Ešarra was an exclusive sanctuary for Anu and Antu and possessed the same dimensions as the inner sanctum of the Bīt Rēš. There would have been shrines on the storey or storeys below for the other major inhabitants of the Bīt Rēš: Enlil and Ea, Sîn, Šamaš and Adad, Belēt-ili, perhaps Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû, Kusu, Pisangunug and Bêltu-ša-Rēš, including the spouses and minor gods that belonged to the entourage of each of those deities. A considerable building would have had to stand on each side of each platform. Unfortunately, as mentioned before, the archaeological evidence cannot support either theory. Barring discoveries of new textual sources from the period, who exactly was worshipped in the Ešarra and/or elsewhere on the Anu ziqurrat will probably never be known.

157 Allinger-Csollich 1998, 314 ff.

158 He goes on to interpret the tablet published by Wiseman 1972, 141–147, which shows a schematic drawing of a ziqurrat with measurements written on and beside its different levels, as a model of the parallels between the ‘Hochtempel’ and the ‘Tieftempel’. According to him, the phrase written on the second storey, *pani šubat* ^dan.šár, “front(-view) of the dwelling of Anšar”, may indicate that a sanctuary for the god Anšar stood there.

159 Schmid 1995, 118 proposes instead that the stairs of Neo-Babylonian ziqurrats were located inside the building above the second level.

5.4.2 *The Cultic Use of Ziqqurrat Sanctuaries in the First Millennium BC*

To which extent were rites of cultic worship on a city's temple tower still common practice in the first millennium BC? As far as the Anu ziqqurrat of Seleucid Uruk is concerned, the only cuneiform texts that inform us about its role in the cult are TU 41 and TU 38. According to the latter source, both the ziqqurrat itself and the "god of the temple of the ziqqurrat" (dingir é šá ziq-qurrat) received sixteen loaves of bread each day, distributed over the four daily meals.¹⁶⁰ At Neo-Babylonian Uruk, Borsippa and Sippar, the deified ziqqurrats of Ištar, Nabû and Šamaš respectively also received regular food offerings, but there is no evidence of any of the cultic activities which must have taken place there.¹⁶¹

Outside of Uruk, four first-millennium documents related to the temple cults of Babylon refer directly or indirectly to religious activities taking place on a ziqqurrat. The first is a description of an elaborate festival in the month Kislīmu, connected to the date harvest. After a very damaged passage, there is mention of flour being sprinkled on braziers before Bēl and another deity, whose name is broken away, and a torch being kindled before that same deity. The high priest then ascends the ziqqurrat—Çağırgan and Lambert add in their reconstruction *ana bīt*, "to the temple of"—and lights another brazier there.¹⁶²

The second text is Marduk's Ordeal, a source we have discussed earlier.¹⁶³ Line 13 of the composite text reads: "that which they do on the ziqqurrat [...]"¹⁶⁴ The exact meaning is unclear, but since the general format of Marduk's Ordeal is a list of different ritual activities taking place in the city of Babylon, which are then paralleled with mythological events, it is very probable that in that line, too, a rite of some type or other is referred to which was apparently performed on "the ziqqurrat", i.e. the Etemenanki. Thirdly, a list of the positions of different divine images during an unknown ritual event in Babylon mentions one location "before the ziqqurrat sanctuary" and another one at the Nun-Abzu Gate, which was one of the gates of the ziqqurrat sanctuary.¹⁶⁵ Finally, according to a fragmentary Neo- or late Babylonian cultic calendar, day 4 of month IX was

160 TU 38 obv. 32 (Linssen 2004, 173).

161 Bongenaar 1997, 122 (but cf. Zawadzki 2013, 32 note 69); Beaulieu 2003, 31; Waerzeggers 2010a, 32.

162 Çağırgan/Lambert 1991–1993, 100: rev. IV 150–155.

163 § 5.2.3.

164 Livingstone 1986, 236.

165 BM 38293; George 1993, 227: 40.

dedicated to “Marduk and Zarpanītu of the Etemenanki”.¹⁶⁶ That seems to suggest offerings or other rites involving manifestations of Marduk and Zarpanītu who dwelled inside the ziqqurrat sanctuary. Although it is undisputed that a form of the two deities did indeed live in the Etemenanki shrine, that epithet is not known from any other sources.

Apart from Babylon, an astronomical diary describing the autumn *akītu* festival of the year 188 BC, in which king Antiochos III participated, states that the king went to Borsippa on day 13, after which “the ziqqurrat of the Ezida” is mentioned in a fragmentary context pertaining to day 14.¹⁶⁷ Finally, a judicial protocol from Neo-Babylonian Sippar deals with the theft of silver (and probably cultic) objects from the ziqqurrat; moreover, administrative texts from the Ebabbar mention a non-prebendary and possibly a prebendary official “of the ziqqurrat temple”, as well as the delivery of oil for the “service (*dullu*) of the ziqqurrat”, linen for a number of deities including the deified ziqqurrat, clasps for the doors of the ziqqurrat temple and bronze for its *tāriku*-ornaments.¹⁶⁸ Outside of Babylonia as a whole, two Neo-Assyrian documents refer to a cultic functionary named *mār šangê* who was associated with a ziqqurrat, perhaps one of the two at Aššur.¹⁶⁹ To conclude, the evidence about the performance of cultic activity at ziqqurrat sanctuaries is still very meagre, but it was clearly a common feature of Neo-Assyrian, Neo- and Late Babylonian cities and certainly not unique to the cult of Seleucid Uruk.

5.4.3 *Rituals on Rooftops*

The roof of a house or temple was a common location for different types of Mesopotamian offering rites. Most importantly in the current context, rituals were performed on rooftops when, as in TU 41, they needed to take place at night because the stars or deities of the night sky like Sîn and Ištar were involved in the process. The preparation of certain magical potions required the substance to stand overnight on the roof, allowing it to absorb the stars’ influence.¹⁷⁰ The Neo-Assyrian text BBR 1–20 gives instructions for an extispicy, including, “when the first star appears”, offerings on a rooftop to Marduk and the personal deities of the person making the request.¹⁷¹ Another important aspect of the ritual procedure of extispicy was to let the slaughtered animal

166 BRM IV 25 (dupl. SBH VII), 18 (Çağırğan 1976, 192).

167 AD -187 A rev. 13’.

168 Bongenaar 1997: 152, 253, 257, 284, 349, 377, 379.

169 Menzel 1981, 197–198.

170 Maul 1994, 45; Reiner 1995, 48–56; Ambos 2004, 138–141.

171 BBR p. 98; Fincke 2009, 534.

spend the night beneath the stars, so that the gods of the night could prepare its intestines for receiving a truthful answer from Šamaš and Adad the next morning.¹⁷²

Furthermore, the roof was used as an offering site in building rituals, which directly involved the house or temple itself of which the roof was a part, and in various namburbi's for which the participants were required to withdraw to a relatively remote location.¹⁷³ When one wished to be closer to the stars, as for the offerings described in TU 41, the roof of the high shrine of a ziqqurat was the closest one could possibly get—unless one travelled into the mountains, but they were considered wild and dangerous territory, especially during the night.

5.4.4 Offerings to Great Anu and Great Antu of Heaven, Sîn, Šamaš and the Five Planets

The nine divine heavenly bodies to whom a meal was served on the rooftop of the Ešarra in TU 41 formed a singular group of deities within the pantheon of Seleucid Uruk, who not only received offerings together during the nightly ceremony, but also on a daily and monthly basis. According to TU 38, rev. 32–34, the boiled meat of ten first-class sheep was offered to Anu and Antu of Heaven and the “seven planets” in—not on the roof of!—the high shrine of the ziqqurat on the 16th day of each month, just as on the 16th of ʿEbetu. In addition, lines 29–31 state that every day another ten first-class sheep were slaughtered for “Nebēru, Dilbat, Šiḫṭu, Kayamānu, Šalbatānu, the rising of Šamaš and the appearance of Sîn”, as “voluntary offering” in a room or building called the *bīt maḥaššāti*.¹⁷⁴ Further, several prebend sale deeds from Seleucid Uruk refer to “the gods of the sky” as recipients of offerings.¹⁷⁵ That may refer to the major sky gods Anu, Antu, Sîn, Šamaš and Ištar, but since in one of those sources the dates of the offerings are days 16 and 17, it is more likely that Sîn, Šamaš, the five planets and the two stars are meant. Finally, the calendar for Emesal prayers, TU 48, mentions the performance of a prayer for “the gods of the night” during the ‘awakening of the temple’ (*dik bīti*) ceremony on days 1, 7 and 15 of every month; however, considering that the ceremony in question celebrated the coming of

172 Fincke 2009, 554–555.

173 Ambos 2004, 114: 7, 15; 116: 9'; 178: 7; 180: 5; 190: 8; 196: 16; Maul 1994, 48.

174 Linsen 2004, 175; probably the designated area within the temple complex for the slaughter of sacrificial animals (Waerzeggers 2010a, 257). Zadok 1982, 116 demonstrates that the word's etymology points to a space closed off by partition walls or curtains.

175 Oppert 2 obv. 3; Oppert 4 rev. 2'–3'; OECT 9, 51 obv. 8–9 (Corò 2005a, 156, 375, 383).

dawn, those gods may well have been all the stars in the sky rather than a few specific ones.¹⁷⁶

Thus, each appearance of the moon, of the five known planets and of the stars Anu and Antu of Heaven in the night sky and each rising of the sun at dawn was celebrated with a meat offering. The meal served to those nine deities during the nightly ceremony described in TU 41, however, was a more special occasion; it consisted not only of mutton, but also of beef, fowl, beer, wine and fruit, similar to the evening meal that Anu, Antu and the other gods had just received in the Bīt Rēš below. In their regular as well as their more festive form, the offerings probably lasted the whole night, since the meals were brought before the different gods “as soon as each one appears” (obv. 24). That means that the final offering cannot have taken place earlier than at sunrise, the appearance of Šamaš. The fact that the table with the meal for Anu and Antu of Heaven was cleared when the Torch went down from the ziqqurrat (obv. 32), but the seven tables for the other heavenly bodies weren’t, supports this, as does the phrasing in TU 38 rev. 30–31 “for (...) the rising of Šamaš and the appearance of Sîn” (see above). A few priests must have remained on the roof of the Ešarra to take care of that final meal.

It is unclear whether or not the nine deities were represented on the rooftop of the Ešarra by statues or standards, as was common in Babylonia for offerings brought in other places than a major temple, but it seems unlikely. Since the text explicitly states that the offerings were brought the very moment that the deities appeared in the sky, the priests seem to have focused their attention purely on those heavenly images themselves. Perhaps such standards were used when the offerings were brought inside the Ešarra, as described above.

5.4.4.1 The Stars Great Anu and Great Antu of Heaven

As their names clearly suggest, Great Anu and Great Antu of Heaven were the astral manifestations of Uruk’s most important god and goddess, who at this stage of the ritual had already received their evening meal.¹⁷⁷ They are only given the epithet “great” in TU 41 obv. 15; in obv. 17–18 and in TU 38 rev. 30 and

176 TU 48 obv. 18 – rev. 6 (Linssen 2004, 31–32). For the *dik bīti* ceremony, see § 5.8.1.

177 From the Old Babylonian period onward, it was common to give (mostly astral) deities the epithet “of Heaven” (*ša šamê*): Šamaš of Heaven, Sîn of Heaven, Adad of Heaven (Rochberg 2009, 48–49). (Great) Anu of Heaven, however, is not attested outside the ritual texts from Seleucid Uruk. A hand-raising prayer for Ištar found in Uruk (SpTU III 76: 31) and *Maqlû* III 31–32 mention “the Daughters of Anu of Heaven” (*mārāt ʿanum ša šamê*; Abusch 2015, 306), but in both cases it can be argued that the epithet refers to the Daughters, not to their father (Beaulieu 2003, 346 note 94).

33 they are simply “Anu and Antu of Heaven”. The offerings to both stars in TU 41 took place as soon as they had risen in the Wagon (Ursa Maior), which suggests that the two deities were not simply considered to be somewhere out there, but associated with two individual stars.

The likeliest candidate for Great Anu of Heaven is a star which is described with exactly that name in Mul.Apin I 1 19: ^{mul}mu.BU.keš.da ^dAnum rabû ša šamê: “the Hitched Yoke, the great Anu of Heaven”.¹⁷⁸ It is listed in that section of Mul.Apin together with other stars belonging to the constellation Wagon or standing close to it, which corresponds to the location of the star in TU 41. ^{mul}mu.BU.keš.da was the 18th star in the Path of Enlil and has been tentatively identified with α Draconis, i.e. Thuban, a relatively dim circumpolar star which was the pole star until ca. 1900 BC.¹⁷⁹ On the Middle Babylonian Astrolabe B, it is associated with Enlil himself.¹⁸⁰ The Wagon, being a circumpolar constellation and thus visible in the night sky the entire year, was considered the centre of heaven and is described in different sources as the ‘Bond of Heaven’, the cosmic mooring rope that held together the entire universe. Its counterpart on earth was originally Nippur and specifically the Ekur, the temple of Enlil; in Mul.Apin it is connected to Enlil’s consort Ninlil. The status of the Ekur as centre of the universe was later transferred to the temple of Marduk and the city of Babylon,¹⁸¹ the same seems to have happened with the stars that were associated with Enlil and Ninlil. In the hymns of praise sung to Bēl and Bēltiya, i.e. Marduk and Zarpanītu, on day 5 of the Late Babylonian spring *akītu* festival in Babylon, Marduk is addressed as ^{mul}mu.BU.keš.da, “who carries sceptre and loop”, and Zarpanītu as the Wagon, “the centre of Heaven”.¹⁸² Great Antu of Heaven does not appear in any sources outside the cultic literature of Seleucid

178 The name should probably be read Mudulkešda or Madalkešda. ^{gis}mu.BU/^{gis}ma.BU, to be read ^{gis}mu.dul₁₀/^{gis}ma.dul₁₀, is attested in an Early Dynastic lexical text with the meaning ‘draft pole of a vehicle’, Akk. *mašaddu* (Civil 2008, 108 no. 233). The latter is used in later texts to refer to the pole of the constellation Wagon (CAD M I 351). The same word is attested as ^{gis}BU, read as ^{gis}madal or ^{gis}mudul (Veldhuis 1997, 120–123; Steinkeller 1987, 92–93; Civil 1968, 13). MU.BU can also be read as mudra₆, ‘dirty’ (Akk. *waršu*), but that seems unfitting in the present context.

179 Hunger/Pingree 1999, 273. Note that there appears to be some overlap in the sources between ^{mul}mu.BU.keš.da and ^{mul}šudun, both rendered in Akkadian as *nīru*, ‘the yoke’ (CAD N II 264).

180 KAV 218 II 22, 30 (Reiner/Pingree 1981, 152).

181 Huxley 2000, 118–119. Likewise, its connotations with divine kingship and the centre of the cosmos were referred to by the Gate of the Wagon, added by Sennacherib to the temple of Aššur.

182 Linszen 2004, 220: 302; 221: 330.

Uruk, nor does any other star associated with Antu. That is somewhat surprising, considering that many other goddesses, including consorts of major gods like Ninlil, Zarpanītu and Aya, were also connected with a star or a constellation.¹⁸³

Neither the wordings of the hymns ‘Like the Beautiful Glow of the Stars of Heaven, Anu the King’ or ‘The Beautiful Image Has Come Out’, nor of ‘Great Anu, Star of Heaven’, which was sung before the meal for Anu and Antu of Heaven was cleared away, nor of ‘Anu Shines Forth Through All the Lands’, which was sung by the priests and inhabitants of Uruk as they lit bonfires at their temples and homes, is known from any other sources. They were probably new compositions, written for the nightly—or perhaps only the monthly—offerings to Great Anu of Heaven. Perhaps ‘Anu Shines Forth Through All the Lands’ was even only sung on the unique occasion of the nightly ceremony.¹⁸⁴ The only possible parallel with a known literary text is that between ‘Like the Beautiful Glow of the Stars of Heaven, Anu the King’ (*ana tamšil zīmu bunnē mul šamāmi* ⁴*anum* lugal) and a text fragment, CT 13, 31, which seems to describe how the gods arranged the paths of the stars in the sky by means of mathematical calculations.¹⁸⁵ Only the first few words of each line of the tablet are preserved, of which line 3’ reads *mul^{meš} tamšil zīm bunnē* [...], i.e. “the stars, like the beautiful appearance [...]”. Although the exact *Sitz im Leben* of the text fragment is unknown, it clearly combines creation mythology with mathematics and, especially considering the almost identical phrasing of line 3’ and the hymn for Anu of Heaven, we can well imagine that the priests of Seleucid Uruk, many of whom were active as astronomers, were inspired by compositions like CT 13, 31 for their hymns to the god of the heavens.¹⁸⁶

5.4.5 *Prayers and Offerings to Stars and Planets in Mesopotamian Ritual Literature*

5.4.5.1 Occasional Prayers and Offerings to Stars and Planets

There are many instances in Mesopotamian ritual literature of so-called ‘Prayers to the Gods of the Night’, i.e. invocations of various groups of stars, planets and constellations, together with deities associated with the night, such as

183 Mul.Apin I i 11, 15, 18. New insights concerning the identification of Anu and Antu of Heaven and certain other stars will appear in forthcoming publications by Wayne Horowitz.

184 See § 6.2.1.

185 Horowitz 1998, 147–148 and id. 2010, 79–80; see now also Lambert 2013, 178–179.

186 See Krul forthcoming a.

Nuska. The largest group of texts in that genre is formed by prayers (*ikribū*) spoken by the *barū* to invoke the influence of the stars and planets over the animal upon which he was to perform extispicy. The oldest manuscripts of such prayers date to the Old Babylonian period. One example is Erm 15642.¹⁸⁷

The princes are closely guarded,
The bolts are lowered, rings set in place.

The noisy people are silenced,
Gates, once opened, are locked.

The gods of the land, goddesses of the land,
Šamaš, Šin, Adad, and Ištar,

Have gone off into the ‘lap of heaven’.
They are not giving judgment, they are not deciding cases.

Veiled is the night,
The palace, its chapel (and) sanctum are dark.

The wayfarer calls out to (his) god, the petitioner is fast asleep.

The judge of truth, father of the destitute,
Šamaš has gone to his cella.

O Great Gods of the Night,
Brilliant Girra,
Heroic Erra,
Bow, Yoke,

187 ¹pu-ul-lu-lu ru-bu-ú ²wa-aš-ru-ú si-ik-ku-ru ši-re-tum ša-ak-na-a ³ḥa-ab-ra-tum ni-šu-ú ša-qú-um-ma-a ⁴pe-tu-tum ud-du-lu-ú ba-a-bu ⁵i-li ma-tim iš-ta-ra-at ma-a-tim ⁶utu ^den.zu ^dim ^ù ^dinanna ⁷i-te-er-bu-ú a-na ú-tu-ul ša-me-e ⁸ú-ul i-dí-in-nu di-na-am ú-ul i-pa-ar-ra-sú a-wa-tim ⁹pu-us-sú-ma-at mu-ši-i-tim ¹⁰é.gal-tum ša-ḥu-ur-ša ku-um-mu ad-ru-ú ¹¹ṛa⁷-li-ik ur-ḥi-im dingir-lam ṛi-ša⁷-si ù ša di-nim uš-te-bé-er-re ši-it-tam ¹²[d]-a-a-an ki-na-tim a-bi e-ki-a-tim ¹³utu i-te-ru-ub a-na ku-um-mi-šu ¹⁴ra-bu-tum i-li-i mu-ši-i-tim ¹⁵na-wa-ru-um ^dbil.gi ¹⁶qu-ra-du-um ^der-ra ¹⁷qá-aš-tum ni-ru-um ¹⁸ši-ta-ad-da-ru-um mu-uš-ḥu-uš-šu-um ¹⁹gi^{is}mar.gíd.da in-zu-um ²⁰ku-sa-ri-ik-ku-um ba-aš-mu-um ²¹li-iz-zi-(zu)-ú-ma ²²i-na te-er-ti e-ep-pu-ṛ⁷šu⁷ ²³i-na pu-ḥa-ad a-ka-ar-ra-bu-ú ²⁴ki-it-ta-am šu-uk-na-an (ed. pr. Šilejko 1924, 144–152; this tr. and tr. Horowitz 2000, 196–198).

Orion, Dragon,
Wagon, She-Goat,
Bison, Horned-Serpent
Stand by.

In the extispicy which I am performing,
In the lamb which I am offering,
Place truth.

Such prayers were spoken at twilight to invite the stars to come out, while offerings were brought to Anu, Enlil and Ea, the gods representing the three paths in the night sky over which all stars were divided. Individual stars and constellations were invoked by name, but did not receive offerings themselves. During the night, while the stars and planets watched over the sheep and kept it safe from evil influences, Šamaš in his function as divine judge presided over a trial concerning the question posed by the provider of the sheep. The next morning at his rising, he “wrote” his verdict in the sheep’s intestines and his light made it possible for the *barû* to read it.¹⁸⁸ Exactly which heavenly bodies were invoked varied from prayer to prayer; *ikribû* to one single star or planet are also attested, as well as extispicy sheep dedicated to different stars.¹⁸⁹

A related category of Prayers to the Gods of the Night are those that were recited during namburbi rituals against the evil that loomed when the outcome of the extispicy was negative.¹⁹⁰ Namburbi’s against other types of bad omina also involved prayers and offerings to the Gods of the Night, both as a collective and as individual heavenly bodies, usually but not always together with other deities. The stars as a collective were invoked against the ominous behaviour of birds; a male goat was sacrificed and prayers were recited to the Pleiades when a fungus had appeared on a person’s house; the constellation Sagittarius received a food offering when a man had fallen on his face and started bleeding. The evil portended by a bow could, by analogy, be averted by the sacrifice of a kid to the Bow star and the Kidney star received sacrifice and prayers against the evil portent of “cult city and sanctuary”.¹⁹¹ In the ritual series *Šurpu* and the comparable ‘*lipšur* litanies’, intended to absolve the evil that had ‘bound’ a

188 Fincke 2009, 547–555.

189 Ibid. 550–551.

190 Ibid. 552 with literature.

191 Reiner 1995, 86–88 with literature.

person because he had unintentionally trespassed against the will of the gods, several stars and planets are among the list of deities called upon to release the victim from his curse.¹⁹²

The phrasing of such prayers demonstrates that the stars were considered mediators between man and god, messengers who would hear the words of the supplicant and transmit them to his or her personal deity.¹⁹³ From descriptions of the complex ritual cycles *bīt rimki*, *bīt mēseri*, *mīs pī* and *bīt salā' mē* (see below), as well as from correspondence between Assyrian scholars and their kings, we know that a different, more elaborate type of prayer, the *šu-ila* ('lifting of the hand'), was also addressed to different stars, planets and constellations. The words of those prayers are not preserved, although their intended recipients and the ritual contexts in which they were spoken can sometimes be reconstructed.

The aid of heavenly bodies could also be invoked to undo the effects of witchcraft. For example, when a person had been cursed with 'life-severing' (*zikurudû*), a ritual was performed on a rooftop before the Wagon, which received a prayer and an offering.¹⁹⁴ The Gods of the Night are also the first deities invoked at the start of the anti-witchcraft ritual series *Maqlû* (I 1–4), which began when evening had fallen.¹⁹⁵

Incantation: I call upon you, Gods of the Night,
With you I call upon Night, the veiled bride,
I call upon Twilight, Midnight, and Dawn,
Because a witch has bewitched me.

According to a Neo-Assyrian letter, *Maqlû* was to be performed before *Šin*, *Šamaš*, the five planets, *Bēl-matāti*, *Sirius*, *Antares*, *Bēlet-balāti*, the *Pleiades* and the god *Išum*, probably also in his astral form.¹⁹⁶ Conversely, the list of evil enchantments against which *Maqlû* invokes the god *Girra* includes the casting of *zikurudû* in the presence *Šin*, *Jupiter*, *Cygnus*, *Lyra*, *Leo*, the *Wagon*, *Scorpio*, *Orion* or *Centaurus*.¹⁹⁷ Finally, several of the incantations against 'any evil'

192 Reiner 1956, 129–149; *Šurpu* II 180–184.

193 Reiner 1995, 15–17.

194 PBS 1/2, 121; Mayer 1976, 429; Seidl/Sallaberger 2005–2006, 71–72.

195 ¹ *én al-si-ku-nu-ši dingir.meš mu-ši-ti¹ 2 it-ti-ku-nu al-si mu-ši-tu₄ ka-la-tú kut-tùm-tu₄ 3 al-si bar-ra-ri-tu₄ qab-li-tu₄ u na-ma-ri-tu₄ 4 áš-šú munus₁₁.zu ú-kaš-šip-an-ni* (tr. and tr. Abusch 2015, 231, 285).

196 SAA XIII 72 (ABL 648) obv. 8-rev. 5.

197 Abusch 2015, 321–322.

that might have befallen a person, known collectively as *Ḫul-ba-zi-zi* ('Evil Be Gone!'), address the evil in the name of Sirius, Jupiter, the Pleiades and the astral deity *Erragal*.¹⁹⁸

In short, prayers to stars, planets and constellations were a common element of divination, apotropaic and healing rituals since the Old Babylonian period, if not earlier. The stars were considered able to dispel black magic and avert all kinds of evil portents, to watch over a sheep intended for extispicy during the night and to influence holy water and magical mixtures with a positive power. In nearly if not all cases, the prayers were accompanied by a food offering.

5.4.5.2 Stars and Planets Worshipped in the Regular Temple Cults

The Babylonian and Assyrian temple cults became more focused on the luminaries of the night sky during the course of the first millennium BC. Offerings and prayers to stars and planets in the context of cultic worship are attested from the early first millennium onwards. In a short section on astral omens in *Mul.Apin*, it is stated that once the constellations *Eridu* (parts of *Puppis* and *Vela*) and *ŠU.PA* (*Boötes*) have become visible, offerings must be made to them; the same is said about the five planets a few lines later.¹⁹⁹ Stars, planets and constellations as divine beings were an integral part of the pantheon of the Neo-Assyrian empire. In several of their vassal treaties, *Esarhaddon*, *Assurbanipal* and *Šin-šar-iškun* invoke the five planets and *Sirius* as witnesses to the concluding of the treaties themselves and in the curse section among the deities who will ruin the life of anyone who destroys the document.²⁰⁰ Further, the names of the gates of the eastern annexe of the *Aššur* temple constructed by *Sennacherib*, which include the *Gate of the Firmament*, the *Gate of the Path of the Enlil-Stars* and the *Gate of the Wagon Constellation*, were chosen to evoke an association between the temple and the geography of heaven. That choice reflected not only astronomical insights of the period, but also the theological view that the north, represented in the sky by the constellation *Cancer*, was the realm of kingship where the throne of *Aššur* could be found.²⁰¹

However, not much material from Assyria has been preserved which might indicate that stars and planets were also recipients of regular worship in the city's temple cults. In the Neo-Assyrian ritual text *K 252*, the king is described

198 Reiner 1995, 19–20.

199 *Mul.Apin* II i 29–30, 42–43; cf. *ibid.* iii 35–37, where one is instructed to wake the entire household on the appearance of the divine star *Lisi* (^d*li₉-si₄*) and pray to it in order to experience success.

200 SAA II 6: 13–15, 428–432; 8: e.26; II: 6, 14; *obv.* I 4, II 1', *rev.* II 11'; Parpola 1972, 22 *rev.* 29.

201 Huxley 2000, 111–119.

as making offerings to “the stars”, followed by a list of major deities whose astral forms are probably meant and two individual stars, Sirius and the Yoke star (α Boötis).²⁰² The Assyrian ‘Offering Bread Hemerology’ names for each day of the year the appropriate deity to whom one should bring a food offering, including the planet Venus and the constellations Orion, Šulpae, Pisces and Pleiades; likewise, the royal hemerology ‘Fruit, Lord of the Month’ instructs the king to sacrifice to, among others, Orion, the Wagon, the pole star, the Pig star, Venus, the Plough star and Pisces.²⁰³ An important divine collective worshipped in the regular temple cults at Nineveh and Kalḫu were the Sebetti, the seven warriors of Nergal, who were related to the constellation Pleiades in the same way that Šin, Šamaš and Ištar were associated with the moon, the sun and the planet Venus. On Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals, those three heavenly bodies are very frequently depicted together with the Pleiades, whose rising coincided with the harvest.²⁰⁴

Apart from the evidence from Seleucid Uruk, no sources exist that point to regular offerings provided to stars and planets in the temple cults of first-millennium Babylonian cities. However, three ritual texts give evidence of the invocation of stars on special occasions. Firstly, in one of the late Babylonian manuscripts describing the *akītu* festival in Babylon in month 1 (Nisannu), the high priest (*aḫu rabû*) is instructed to address Bēl and Bēltiya each morning with a long prayer during the ‘awakening of the temple’ (*dik bīti*) ceremony.²⁰⁵ On day 4, the prayer to Bēltiya describes her as a star or planet which moves brightly across the sky:²⁰⁶

Zarpanītu, most brilliant of the stars, who resides in Eu(d)ul,
most attractive(?) of the female deities, whose garment is light,
who crosses the Heaven, who watches over the Earth,
Zarpanītu, whose (heavenly) station is sublime,
bright is Bēltiya, exalted and sublime!

Likewise, the prayer to Bēl, which is partly broken, describes him as a “bright light” and also uses the phrase “who crosses the Heaven, who watches over the

202 K 252 (3R 66) XII: 12, 17 (Frankena 1953, 9; Menzel 1981, T 125).

203 Livingstone 2013, 107–150, 201–234.

204 Cf. for example Collon 2001, 14.

205 For the *dik bīti* ceremony see § 5.8.1.

206 RAcc 127–154+BM 32485, 252–256; tr. Linszen 2004, 228. The star in question may be the planet Venus, which would mean Bēltiya is equated here with Ištar.

Earth”.²⁰⁷ After speaking both prayers, the priest went out into the Grand Courtyard and praised the Esagil itself in a short address in which the temple was equated with the Field Star (*ikû*, the constellation Pegasus), typically associated with the city of Babylon. Finally, on day 5, the morning prayer to both Bēl and Bēltiya consisted of a long list of different stars and planets, with which the two deities were equated.²⁰⁸

Secondly, several first-millennium texts offer partial descriptions of the Babylonian ritual cycle *bīt salā’ mē*, which was performed during every *akitu* festival in month VII (Tašrītu) and required the king to cast off his royal status and spend one night in a symbolic prison of reed in the wilderness, during which he recited a long series of prayers to the planets and various stars and constellations.²⁰⁹ Like the extispicy described above and many occasional rituals for private persons that took place during the night, the king’s nightly sojourn in the reed hut was conceived of as a legal trial. While he waited in his prison, he pleaded with the stars and planets to mediate between him and his angered personal gods, who had turned away from him due to transgressions he had unwittingly committed; the next morning, the three divine judges Šamaš, Ea and Asalluḫi would decree a verdict and the king would be ceremonially reinstated in his office. The series of prayers which he spoke during the night started with an offering and a prayer to Jupiter, the planet representing Marduk, to ŠU.PA, the constellation representing Enlil, to the planet Saturn, the moon god Sîn and an unidentified star; then followed offerings and prayers before the Wagon to the six major gods of Nippur, then before the Field Star to the six major gods of Babylon, and finally to a third group of important heavenly bodies: again Jupiter, Sirius, the Pleiades, the Bull of Heaven (Taurus),²¹⁰ Orion, Eridu, Venus, Mars, Mercury, an unidentified star and as last, collective recipients the entirety of the stars of heaven.²¹¹ The Pleiades, the Bull of Heaven, Orion and Eridu are mentioned in the order of their heliacal rising as listed in Mul.Apin—an interesting example of the reflection of the astral sciences in Babylonian ritual texts.

207 RAcc 127–154+BM 32485: 230–231, 240 (Linssen 2004, 227). Again the description may be a reference to Jupiter, the planet traditionally associated with Bēl/Marduk.

208 RAcc 127–154+BM 32485: 302–315, 325–332 (Linssen 2004, 229–230).

209 For a new edition and extensive analysis of the texts pertaining to *bīt salā’ mē*, see Ambos 2013b.

210 gu₄.an.na can also indicate a smaller constellation named in Akkadian *is lê*, ‘Bull’s Jaw’, which consisted of α Tauri and the Hyades.

211 The king also spoke a series of prayers to several deities and a number of stars and constellations during *bīt rimki* (Koch-Westenholz 1995, 112).

Finally, an elaborate series of offerings to the five planets and various stars and constellations is attested in the Neo-Babylonian version of the *mīs pî*, i.e. ‘mouth-washing’ ritual, which constituted an essential element in the creation of a statue of a deity, infusing it with divine life. The manuscript describing it, BM 45749, was intended for the library of the Esagil in Babylon and dates to the Neo-Babylonian or Achaemenid period. Additionally, four Seleucid-period duplicates were found in the *Bit Rēš*.²¹² On the evening of the first day of the ritual, after the mouth of the finished divine statue had been washed twice, it was placed inside a circle of reed standards in a garden. There its mouth was washed a third time and offerings were brought first to Anu, Enlil, Ea, Šin, Šamaš, Adad, Marduk, Gula, Ištar and “the stars”, then to the group of craft-, birth- and purification deities involved in the making of the statue.²¹³ Finally a series of offerings was brought to the five planets, grouped in pairs with other heavenly bodies: Jupiter—Venus, Moon—Saturn, Mercury—Sirius—Mars, followed by many other constellations and finally all the stars of the night sky together. After each round of offerings, the statue’s mouth was washed again.²¹⁴ Contrarily, in the Neo-Assyrian version from Nineveh, Anu, Enlil, Ea, Šin, Šamaš, Adad, Marduk, Gula and Ištar also receive offerings, clearly in their role as deities of the evening sky—in the texts Ištar is called Ninsianna, the name of her manifestation as the masculine evening star, and the priests are even instructed to place the offerings before “the evening star” in the next sentence.²¹⁵ However, the entire list of offerings to other individual stars, planets and constellations that follows in the Neo-Babylonian version is missing.

From the discrepancy between those two versions of the *mīs pî* ritual, Erica Reiner concludes that in the period between the development of the first and the writing down of the second version, the stars came to be regarded to a greater extent as individual deities: “It is (...) only in the Babylonian, late version that the process takes on the character of what may already be called ‘astral religion’”.²¹⁶ Francesca Rochberg, however, does not believe that Mesopotamian religion should be called ‘astral’ at any point in its history.²¹⁷ She argues that the divinity of the stars, planets and constellations which received prayers and offerings in private, state and temple rituals always remained connected to the various gods of the Mesopotamian pantheon to whom they were connected.

212 BaM Beiheft 2 no. 1–4.

213 Walker/Dick 2001, 60 note 90.

214 BM 45749 obv. 1–35; Walker/Dick 2001, 70–72.

215 Composite text 100–108 (Walker/Dick 2001, 44–45).

216 Reiner 1995, 143.

217 Rochberg 2009, 90.

In my opinion, it is indeed legitimate to recognise an increasing astral dimension in late Babylonian temple religion; it is undeniable that certain stars and constellations, whether or not they were primarily equated with deities of the pantheon, were incorporated into offering rites which had excluded them before and that astral aspects of major deities were emphasized more strongly in hymns and prayers. That development seems to have culminated in the regular offerings to the stars Anu and Antu of Heaven, the planets, the sun and the moon at Seleucid Uruk.²¹⁸

In the case of the nocturnal ceremony in the Bīt Rēš, the names Great Anu and Antu of Heaven leave no doubt that the two stars were regarded as Anu and Antu's direct counterparts in the night sky. Thus it is possible that the five planets, too, received the festive meal in their capacity as star-shaped representatives of different major deities of the Babylonian pantheon: Ištar (Venus), Nergal (Mars), Marduk (Jupiter/Mercury), Nabû (Mercury) and Ninurta (Mercury/Saturn).²¹⁹ On the other hand, in the prayer spoken to Bēl and Bēltiya on day 5 of the late Babylonian *akītu* festival in month I at Babylon (see above), Bēl was not only equated with Jupiter and Mercury, but also with Saturn, Mars, the sun and the moon, while Bēltiya was equated with the planet Venus instead of Ištar.²²⁰ Thus, it is more likely that at Seleucid Uruk, too, the seven major heavenly bodies were all considered to be manifestations of Anu and Antu themselves, rather than of the different deities named Šin, Šamaš and so forth. As discussed earlier, such equations of one major deity or divine couple with all the others in the pantheon was a widespread feature of first-millennium Babylonian religion. Perhaps the lyrics of one of the hymns, such as 'Star Anu, Lord of Heaven', if they are ever discovered, will give more insight into the exact theology behind those offerings.

As discussed above, the luxurious meal that the two stars and the seven other heavenly bodies received was brought to them in a similar, less elaborate form each night, so it was not a unique aspect of the nocturnal ceremony. Nevertheless, there was clearly a connection between Anu, Great Anu of Heaven and the Torch, which becomes particularly clear through the fact that the hymn prais-

²¹⁸ See Krul forthcoming a.

²¹⁹ Rochberg 2009, 58–63, 73. Considering the different traditions surrounding the divine identity of several of the planets, it will be hardly possible, and probably pointless, to speculate which specific deity they represented in the eyes of the priests of Seleucid Uruk.

²²⁰ RAcc 127–154+BM 32485: 305–308, 314–315, 325 (Linssen 2004, 229).

ing Anu of Heaven's brilliant appearance, 'The Beautiful Image Has Come Out', was sung both during the offerings at the high shrine and during the lighting of the bonfires.²²¹

5.5 Obv. 28—rev. 1

The *lumahḫu*, who was wearing a wrap, ignited the Torch, which had undergone the mouth-washing rite and been prepared with various aromatics beforehand. He placed it opposite the table with the meal for Great Anu and Antu of Heaven, recited the prayer 'Great Anu, Star of Heaven', cleared away the meal and offered the divine pair water to wash their hands again.²²² A senior temple enterer (*ērib bīti*) led the Torch in a procession together with the *āšipū*, *kalū* and musicians down from the *ziqurrat* and through an entrance called the Pure Gate, behind the Anu cella, into the Grand Courtyard.

5.5.1 *The lumahḫu*

Apart from the passage in TU 41 where he ignites the Torch, recites a prayer to Great Anu and Antu of Heaven and performs the rites that conclude their evening meal, the *lumahḫu* (lú-maḫ, 'grand/distinguished man') is mentioned in one other ritual text from Seleucid Uruk, the description of the *akītu* festival in month VII. There he takes care of the water for the washing of the hands of different priests and deities.²²³

The lú-maḫ is better known from Sumerian documents from the Early Dynastic to Old Babylonian periods as a cultic functionary of the greatest importance. Within the temple organisation of a particular city, the lú-maḫ was the chief cultic official in charge of the cult of the city's patron deity, or at least of a major god or goddess in that city. Together with the *išib* and the *ereš-dingir*, he belonged to the small circle of high-status priests and priestesses whose offices were determined through extispicy.²²⁴ The function of lú-maḫ and that of *en* priest seem to have been equal in status and mutually exclusive, whereas a deity could have both a lú-maḫ priest and an *ereš-dingir* priestess, the former probably being higher in rank. Almost all deities for whom a lú-maḫ

²²¹ See also § 6.2.1.

²²² There is no mention of the meals of the other heavenly deities being cleared away, probably because it would still take the rest of the night for each of those gods to come out and eat his/her portion (see above).

²²³ TU 40 obv. 2 (Linssen 2004, 185); the passage is broken.

²²⁴ Renger 1969, 129; Steinkeller 2003, 623–624 and 632–637.

is attested are female, except for Šara of Umma, so no definitive conclusion can be drawn about the gender of the persons who could hold the office of *lú-maḥ*. In the ‘Lament over the Destruction of Ur’, a *lú-maḥ* of Nanna is mentioned: “your *lú-maḥ* no longer wears linen in your holy *giguna*.”²²⁵ It is well known that Nanna also had an en priestess, so the *lú-maḥ* may have been a priest of Nanna’s consort Ningal rather than of Nanna himself.²²⁶ The passage suggests that the activities of the *lú-maḥ* of Ur typically took place at the *giguna*, the high shrine of the *ziqqurrat*.

The *lú-maḥ* appears in various Sumerian literary texts, such as in ‘Enmerkar and Ensuḫkešdana’, where Ensuḫkešdana, the king of Aratta, convenes an assembly consisting of *išib*, *lú-maḥ* and *gúda* priests and temple attendants and takes counsel with them.²²⁷ In most literary compositions where the *lú-maḥ* is mentioned, he is listed together with the en, the *išib*, the *lagar* and the *ereš-dingir* as a group of dead cultic officials who dwell in the netherworld, receive funerary offerings and are encountered there by deceased kings such as Gilgameš and Ur-Namma.²²⁸ Regular funerary offerings to dead priests and priestesses are also attested in administrative documents from the Ur III and Old Babylonian period. Thus, once they had passed away, high-status cultic functionaries were counted among the collective ancestors who protected the living kings and received regular offerings of bread and water from them in return.²²⁹

The Sumerian word *lú-maḥ* was borrowed in Akkadian as *lumahḫu*. The only attestations of that word before the two rituals from Seleucid Uruk are in the Standard Babylonian ‘Epic of Gilgameš’, in a passage describing the netherworld which was directly inspired by the texts just mentioned,²³⁰ and in the lexicon of obscure and uncommon Akkadian words *Malku* = *šarru*.²³¹ The latter proves that by the time of that text’s compilation, the cultic function of

225 ‘Lament over the Destruction of Ur’ 352 (Römer 2004, 74).

226 Steinkeller 2003, 636.

227 ‘Enmerkar and Ensuḫkešdana’ 117–119 (Vanstiphout 2003, 34).

228 ‘The Death of Gilgameš’, Meturan version 103–106 and 193–196 (Cavigneaux/Al-Rawi 2000, 29, 32); ‘The Death of Ur-Namma’ 78 (Flückiger-Hawker 1999, 115); ‘A Hymn to Inanna as Ninegalla’ 70–75 (Behrens 1998, 32); Cohen 1977, 10: 58–59 (but cf. the translation by Steinkeller 2003, 635).

229 Behrens 1998, 107–109; Goodnick Westenholz 2013, 262. The deification of the en- and *lú-maḥ* priests is also shown by the entries “E-gipar, seat of the divine en-priest” and “E-lumah, seat of the divine *lú-maḥ*-priest” in a first-millennium temple list (*Tintir* II 6’–7’, ed. George 1992, 52–53).

230 SB ‘Gilgameš’ VII 198–203 (George 2003, 644).

231 *Malku* = *šarru* IV 4 (Hrůša 2010, 92).

lumaḥḥu was no longer a phenomenon a Babylonian scholar was automatically familiar with. In *Malku*, the function *lumaḥḥu* is equated with *pašišu*, a cultic office which was in use from the Old Babylonian period until the early first millennium and had certainly died out by the Neo-Babylonian period.²³²

Thus, by the time the function of *lumaḥḥu* was introduced at Seleucid Uruk, it had been obsolete for many centuries and was known to the Anu priests only through classical Sumerian and Akkadian literature related to Uruk's mythical and historical heyday. Clearly its revival was another element of the attempt to trace the Anu cult back to its perceived ancient roots. The role of the *lumaḥḥu* in the nocturnal ceremony demonstrates that his social and religious status must have been a very high one. Firstly, he would not have had access to the rooftop of the ziqqurat sanctuary or to a consecrated object like the Torch unless he was a temple enterer (*ērib bīti*), which already means he belonged to the top of the hierarchy of temple personnel, just as he did in Sumerian times.²³³ Thus—at least in the Seleucid period—he was certainly not, as the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary suggests, a “lower ranking cultic functionary”.²³⁴ Secondly, he was there especially for the task of lighting the Torch, even though there were at least two *āšīpus* present who had already fulfilled other tasks and could just as easily have performed his. Thirdly and most importantly, however, the lighting of the Torch was a very important moment in the ritual and the Torch's fire one of its essential elements, being carried through and around the Bit Rēš and finally distributed by means of bonfires throughout the temples, private houses and streets of the city. The task of creating that first, sacred light will not have been fulfilled by just anyone.

In spite of its high status, the function of *lumaḥḥu* is not recorded in the substantial corpus of prebend sale deeds from Seleucid Uruk. Perhaps, as in Sumerian times, the holder of the office was appointed from among the temple enterers by extispicy. One is reminded of the daughter of Nabonidus, whose installation as en-priestess of Sîn at Ur was legitimized through astrology.²³⁵ For Nabonidus, that appointment by means of divination was also a conscious act of intervention in the temple organisation at Ur, but for the independently operating priests at Seleucid Uruk, that time-honored procedure may well have been considered the legitimate means to incorporate the ancestral cultic office of *lumaḥḥu* into the organisational structure of the Anu temple.

232 CAD P 253–255; Waerzeggers 2010a, 40.

233 Cf. the lunar eclipse ritual, in which a temple enterer kindles the torch with which the braziers are lit (BRM IV 6: 16'; Linsse 2004, 306). For the function of temple enterer see § 5.7.4.

234 CAD L 244.

235 Beaulieu 1989c, 127–129.

5.5.2 *The Wrap (nēbeḫu)*

TU 41 obv. 28 explicitly states that when igniting the Torch, the *lumaḫḫu* should be wearing a wrap (^{tú}gíḫ-lá, *nēbeḫu*). The *nēbeḫu* is attested from the Old Akkadian period onwards; it was a clothing accessory made of wool, linen, and leather and is generally rendered in English as “belt”, “sash”, or “girdle”.²³⁶ Three other texts related to the temple cults of Seleucid Uruk mention cultic officials wearing a *nēbeḫu*: one participating in the *akītu* festival in month VII, lifting up the Sceptre of Kingship before Anu as he proceeded from the Grand Courtyard to the room between the curtains, and another in the *akītu* festival for Ištar, in broken context, but clearly as one of the many cultic functionaries assisting with Ištar’s procession to the *akītu* house.²³⁷ UVB 15 40, a late Babylonian text from Uruk with ritual instructions for an unknown ceremony, focuses especially on the different clothes and jewellery to be worn by the king and priests on that particular occasion. Rs. 2–7 describe different unidentifiable participants wearing a *nēbeḫu* around their hips, but those were covered by other garments, so they could not have had any visual symbolic function. The *nēbeḫu* of the king, however, is listed after the different robes and among the outwardly visible paraphernalia which the king had to wear or hold: a garment draped around his neck, standards in different colours, necklaces and so on.

Various late ritual texts from Babylon also mention the *nēbeḫu*. The commentary text BM 54312 lists the different garments to be worn by a cultic actor—identified by Andrew George as a *kulu’u*—during days 5–11 of the *akītu* festival in the month Nisannu and equates each garment with a member of the pantheon.²³⁸ Among various other items, the actor wore two *nebēḫus* around his waist, which are equated in the text with Papsukkal and Anu. Further, in the broken first lines of the text describing the date harvest festival in Kislīmu, an unidentified person is dressed with different cultic accessories, among which a *nēbeḫu*.²³⁹ The person could be either the statue of Bēl or the priest active in that part of the ritual, a unique figure called the *dumu.níg.la.la*. Finally, when Nanāya and Bēl set out to visit Zababa in Kiš on the 28th of Šabātu, Bēl brought various special garments with him for the occasion, among which a *nēbeḫu*.²⁴⁰

The *nēbeḫu* was a common feature of divine apparel. Administrative texts from Neo-Babylonian Sippar demonstrate that Šamaš, Adad, Bunene and

236 Waetzoldt 1980–1983, 23; CAD N2 143–144.

237 TU 39 obv. 28 (Linszen 2004, 185); TU 42+ rev. 7’ (ibid. 239).

238 George 2006, 180–181.

239 Çağırğan/Lambert 1991–1993, 93: 8.

240 George 2000, 293: 11.

Annunītu each possessed one woollen *nēbeḫu* and in Neo-Babylonian Uruk Ištar had one decorated with 15 golden lions.²⁴¹ Traditionally the word is translated as “belt” or “girdle”,²⁴² but Stefan Zawadzki argues that, considering the weight of a *nēbeḫu* according to the sources and the fact that in one late Babylonian cultic calendar text a brazier is wrapped with (literally “dressed in”, *ill-abbiš*) a *nēbeḫu* on two occasions, it might be more appropriate to imagine the garment as a type of apron.²⁴³ He adds that “the meaning ‘belt’ seems to be unavoidable” in two cases, one being the above-mentioned UVB 15 40, where the *nēbeḫu* is wrapped around the hips, and another the text BM 50209+, in which the bow of Šamaš is attached to his *nēbeḫu*.

Even those two descriptions are not incompatible with the image of a much larger piece of cloth which is hung around the hips and tied at the back or side—a kind of loincloth or sarong, either reaching down to the knees or to the ankles. One could either use such a garment as an apron for protection against fire or spattering liquids, as Zawadzki suggests, or, when made from a more luxurious fabric, as a decorative final touch to an outfit, not unlike a shawl. To cover both possible functions, it seems more accurate to translate the word *nēbeḫu* with “wrap”. When worn by deities, such as Ištar with her *nēbeḫu* decorated with lions, and probably also in the case of the various priests and cultic actors we encounter in the sources just described, the garment’s function was the latter of the two.

It is also likely that the *nēbeḫu* wrapped around the brazier had a ceremonial, not (only) a practical function. Since the brazier was open only at the top, a piece of cloth hanging around it will not have kept the sparks from flying everywhere, unless it hung so high that it was in danger of being scorched. Moreover, the extremely concise style of the calendar text makes it unlikely that any of the instructions included in it are of a purely practical nature. Finally, according to the next line after one of the two statements, the brazier in question was not only “dressed in” a *nēbeḫu*, but also a red garment, the function of which will certainly have been ceremonial.

Finally, in the case of the *lumahḫu* lighting the Torch, the function of the *nēbeḫu* will also have been both a practical and a symbolic one. It will have kept the priest from being hit by burning embers or soot, but at the same time it must have been connected to his function in the ritual, which was to perform the most important rite of the whole ceremony (see above). It is not surprising

241 Zawadzki 2006, 118–119.

242 Cf. Waetzoldt 1980–1983, 23.

243 SBH VII: 12, 30 / BRM IV 25: 28, 46 (Çağırğan 1976, 194, 200); Zawadzki 2006, 120.

that he would wear a visual marker on his body to identify him as the one with that unique status.

5.5.3 *The Torch*

Throughout Mesopotamian ritual literature, the torch appears together with the censer and the holy-water pitcher as the designated tool for ritual purification. In namburbi's, healing rituals, *bīt rimki* and all other practices which required the elimination of 'intangible' unclean influences, the torch, the censer and sometimes also the sacred-water pitcher were swung past the person or object that needed to be purified.²⁴⁴ The cleansing fire, the pleasantly-smelling incense and the fresh river water, prepared with various beneficial herbs and stones, would cause the 'stain' of evil to disappear.²⁴⁵ Particularly the torch and the censer as a pair symbolized the evil-dispelling power of purification. In *An = Anum* II 343–345, a divine torch and censer (^dníg.na and ^dgi.izi.lá) are listed as counsellors of the fire god Gibil; the late collection of cult commentaries BM 34035 states "the censer is Kusu, the torch is Nuska".²⁴⁶ Kusu was a purification deity with both a female and a male aspect and served as a purification priest (sánga.maḥ) of Enlil;²⁴⁷ Nuska, as discussed earlier, was a god of light and fire who offered protection in the night.²⁴⁸

244 The 'unclean' in this case should not be conceived of as actual dirt, but as the invisible stain of disruptive phenomena such as negative omens, death, disease, the presence of ghosts or evil spirits and so on, of which a person or place had to be purified to enable his/her/its continued functioning in society and particularly any future contact with the realm of the divine.

245 Maul 1994, 95–96; Conti 1997, 253. An example in a Late Babylonian ritual is the purification with torch, censer and water pitcher of the Esagil during the *akītu* festival in Babylon (RAcc 127–154 + BM 32485: 347–348; Linssen 2004, 221). The influence of the fire was a symbolic one, since it was not supposed to actually burn anyone or anything; the water, however, was actually used to wash or sprinkle a person or place, such as the floor and door of a house or an offering location, as a purifying measure (Ambos 2004, 138: 11", 15", 178: 8, 190: 9, 196: 16; Maul 1994, 48, 97–99; cf. in the Uruk ritual texts for instance TU 39 obv. 23 (Linssen 2004, 185), KAR 132 III rev. 18 (ibid. 202), TU 42+ obv. 32' (ibid. 239) and elsewhere in those same texts, where the priest sprinkles the king and the other people present).

246 BM 34035, 23–24 (Livingstone 1986, 172). More common in late commentaries is the combination of Kusu and Girra as gods of the censer and the torch respectively (cf. Michalowski 1993, 158), but Girra and Nuska were very closely associated.

247 Conti 1997, 256–257.

248 See § 5.2.2.2.

5.5.4 *Mesopotamian Festivals with Torches and Braziers*

5.5.4.1 Celebrations for the Dead

As a symbol of light and safety from the darkness and the evils that lurk within it, the torch fulfilled various ritual functions by itself—carried during processions, illuminating places of worship, but also as the focus of religious ceremonies. Apart from the Torch that lead the procession in the nightly ceremony in Seleucid Uruk, a divine Torch (^dizi.gar) resided in the Ezida, the temple of Nabû in Borsippa, though we have no information about the rituals in which it participated.²⁴⁹

Festivals with torches and braziers are attested in Mesopotamia from the Early Dynastic period onwards.²⁵⁰ In Nippur, the fifth month was originally named ⁱti-ne-izi-ĝar, ‘month of braziers and torches’, referring to a festival of light which, as suggested by a line from ‘The Death of Gilgameš’, was related to the care for the dead.²⁵¹

In the month ne-izi-ĝar, at the festival of the ghosts, no light shall be provided before them without him.

The festival seems to have been an occasion on which the dead rose up from the netherworld during the night and were guided by torches to the homes of their families, where they would receive the *kispu* (Sumerian *ki-sì-ga*), the special meal served to the ghosts of dead relatives.²⁵² Toward the end of the third

249 Nassouhi 1924–1925, 98:7; George 1992, 113 no. 644.

250 Kutscher 1983, 60; Cohen 2015, 135–140.

251 *iti ne-izi-ĝar ezen gidim-ma-ke₄-ne e-ne-da nu-me-a igi-bi-a ud ħu-mu-na-an-ĝá'-ĝá'* (‘The Death of Gilgameš’ version N1, column V: 10–11; Cavigneaux/Al-Rawi 2000: 16); Cohen 2015, 139. Other Sumerian cities such as Ur knew an offering called *ne-izi-ĝar*, made in the context of other celebrations and at other times of the year. A *ne-izi-ĝar* taking place in Ur during the Ur III-period involved offerings to the deceased and deified king Šu-Sîn, as well as to other deities connected with the netherworld (Sigrist 1989, 502).

252 Cohen 2015, 139. Katz 2003, 42 is doubtful that the dead were indeed thought to rise up from the netherworld, since literary texts describe this as impossible, and because the ritual activities during the festival—pouring a libation through a tube into the ground and sharing a meal with a figurine representing the deceased—rather point to the idea that the ghosts stayed below and the figurines served as their proxies on earth. In my opinion, the contradiction that Katz observes is a typical aspect of rituals and religious festivals; providing the dead with water through their libation tubes was a regularly observed rite, and the fact that once a year they travelled to the world of the living may not have been seen as a reason to interrupt an activity so fundamentally connected to their well-being. Furthermore, the notion found in Mesopotamian mythological texts that there is no return

millennium BC, the month *ne-izi-ĝar*, which fell in the middle of the summer, acquired the Akkadian name *Abu*, derived from a celebration at Ur that also involved providing food to ancestors and the recently deceased.²⁵³

The Middle Babylonian astronomical compilation text *Astrolabe B* offers an interpretation of the Sumerogram for *Abu*, which by that time had been shortened to *iti₁ne*:²⁵⁴

Abu is the month of Sirius [i.e.] *Ninurta*. Braziers are kindled and a torch is raised for the *Anunnaki*. *Girra* descends from heaven and becomes the equal of *Šamaš*. It is the month of *Gilgameš*; on the 9th day the young men hold wrestling- and athletics matches in their city quarters.

The *Anunnaki* were—from the mid-second millennium onwards—the collective gods of the netherworld and they often represented people's distant, anonymous ancestors, especially in ritual texts. Further, there was a widespread mythical tradition that *Gilgameš*, upon his death, had become an important divine judge in the netherworld; as such he frequently occurs in ghost-related rituals. Thus, the mentioning of the *Anunnaki* and *Gilgameš* in *Astrolabe B* in the context of the month *Abu* suggests there was still a relationship between that month, the realm of the dead and cultic activities which included kindling braziers and lighting a torch. Royal letters from the Old Babylonian period point to an elaborate version of the *kispu* held during that month, which further demonstrates that *Abu* was the designated month for contact and interaction between the dead and the living.²⁵⁵ The last, moonless nights of that month, when the darkness was deepest and the ghosts who had dwelled with their living descendants had to return to the netherworld for another year, were the

from the netherworld should, I believe, be seen as a literary expression of the irreversibility of death, which did not preclude the possibility of roaming the earth once one had become a ghost—as is of course also clear from the many extant rituals against hauntings and ghostly violence (cf. Scurlock 2006).

253 Sallaberger 1993, 206, 250–251.

254 ii¹ [iti₁.ne mul.kak.si.sá] ² *d*nin.urta.ra [ki₁.ne ba.SAR.SA]R.re.ne³ [x] [gi.izi.lá] *d*a.nun.na.ke₄.ne⁴ (l. 5) nim.nim.mu.dé⁴ ^dKAXNE am.ta.e₁₁.dè ki⁴ ^dutu.ra (mu.da.sá.e²)⁶ iti^d bil₄.ga.mes⁷ ud.9.kam⁴ (l. 5) guruš gešpú.lirum.ma⁴ (l. 6) ká.ne.ne⁴ (l. 7) a.da.min⁸ iti⁸ *ne šu-ku-du d*nin-urta ki₁.ne^{mes} ⁹ *ut-tap-pa-ħa di-pa-ru a-na d*a.nun.na.ke₄ ¹⁰ *in-na-áš-ši d*bil.gi¹¹ *iš-tu an-e ur-ra-dam-ma* ¹² *it-ti d*utu *i-ša-na-an* ¹³ iti^d giš.gim.maš *tu-šu-ú* ¹⁴ *ud-mi eḫ-lu-tu ina ká.meš-šú-nu ú-ma-áš-ú-ba-ri ul-te-šu-ú* (KAV 218 A II 1–15; Reiner/Pingree 1981, 151; my tr.).

255 Tsukimoto 1985, 40–48.

appropriate time to perform rituals against evil ghosts and witches, who could be sent along with the benign ghosts back into the Land of No Return.²⁵⁶

5.5.4.2 The Brazier Festival

Another festival in which burning fires played a central role and which was celebrated throughout the history and geographical region of Mesopotamia was the *kinūnu*, the brazier festival, which took place around the onset of winter.²⁵⁷ As Marc Cohen describes it, “braziers throughout many of the temples of the city were ritually lit as a part of a city-wide ritual to mark the use of braziers and other types of heating devices throughout the coming winter to counteract the cold and early darkness”. In the Old Babylonian period both the festival and the month name *Kinūnu* are well attested. The 7th month was named after it at Ešnunna, Tell Rimah and Chagar Bazar, as well as the 9th month at second-millennium Nuzi and the 8th at late-first-millennium Palmyra. In Mari there seem to have been several such celebrations in one month, though it is not certain which one. In Assyria, at least during the Neo-Assyrian period, there was a brazier festival on the 19th of month IX, as well as on the 10th–12th day of an unknown month, probably month X, which was even called *Kanūnu* instead of *Ṭebētu*.²⁵⁸

Administrative documents from Neo-Babylonian Sippar indicate that the so-called *kinūnu* festival was by that time (also) performed with torches;²⁵⁹ it is attested for that city and period for the 18th of month VIII and the 25th of month XII.²⁶⁰ The only cultic calendar that has survived from Neo-Babylonian Uruk, LKU 51, mentions a *kinūnu* for Ištar, Ušur-amassu, Urkayītu and “all the gods” in the month Kislimu.²⁶¹ The word *kinūnu* can mean a single brazier as well as an entire fire ceremony, but even the phrase “the braziers of all the gods” already suggests a more elaborate ritual. In another fragmentary Neo- or late Babylonian cultic calendar, BRM IV 25 (dupl. SBH VII), a ceremony is mentioned on the 18th of month VIII, Araḥsamna, which included offerings

256 Cohen 2015, 420–421.

257 CAD K 393; Cohen 2015, 282–284.

258 Hunger 1992, no. 371 rev. 10; Cohen 2015, 438–439. A Neo-Assyrian ritual text describing a royal banquet mentions the lighting and maintaining of fires by servants, the “duty of *Ṭebētu*” (MVAG 41/3 62 II: 6–15 (braziers), 64 III: 37–42 (torches)).

259 Bongenaar 1997, 21.

260 Zawadzki 2013, no. 117: 5–6. Note that torches were also used in the sanctuary of Annunitu on day 16 of month VI (ibid. no. 217), but their purpose is not mentioned and may have been a purely practical one.

261 LKU 51, rev. 14’–18’ (Beaulieu 2003, 374).

for Šamaš, a procession and the kindling of braziers.²⁶² According to that text, there were also rituals involving braziers for several individual gods on the 9th, 16th (var.: 17th) and 22nd of Kislīmu, and on the 10th of ʾEḫētu a brazier festival was organised for “all the gods”, including Ištar of Uruk.²⁶³ The only mention of *kinūnū* in the sources from Seleucid Uruk is in a list of various non-daily cultic events (TU 38 obv. 37 and rev. 37). Considering that context, the word (written *ki.ne^meš*) should probably also be read “brazier festival” and not simply “braziers”. However, the text offers no information as to whether that celebration took place once a year or more often. It is not mentioned in any of the other ritual texts or prebend sale deeds.

5.5.4.3 The *nabrû* Ritual

Finally, a ritual of unclear content, well-attested from the Ur III period to the second millennium BC, which may have involved a display of lights is the *nabrû*. Its performance is attested in month VIII at Ur during the Ur III period, in month X at Šubat-Enlil and month IX throughout Old Babylonian Mesopotamia, during which time it gave that same month its name.²⁶⁴ That evidence suggests that the ritual was, like the *kinūnu*, related to the winter. The word may derive from *barû*, “to observe omens”. Cohen interprets it as a divination ritual which took place during the winter months to determine the city’s destiny for the next year with regard to planting and harvesting. Originally it may have been performed only once, in the month which was named after it, but in the course of time it became a recurring winter phenomenon. First-millennium references to the *nabrû* are scarce, but two administrative texts from the Eanna at Uruk, BIN 2, 129 and YOS 6, 239, make mention of it. The former offers no date, but according to the latter the ritual took place in month X. It is also mentioned without a date in a text from Borsippa, BM 29411, where it is listed as an occasion of food offerings together with the travel provisions of the gods (*šidūt ilāni*) and different *guqqû* offerings.²⁶⁵

5.5.5 The Mouth-Washing Rite (*mīs pî*)

In Assyrian and Babylonian religion, it was essential that all people, animals, places and objects be purified before they were brought into contact with the divine realm (see above). One such method of purification was the

262 BRM IV 25 obv. 4–10 (Çağırğan 1976, 190); Linssen 2004, 87–88.

263 BRM IV 25 obv. 26–33, 41–42, 46, 50–53; SBH VII rev. 3–6 (Çağırğan 1976, 194–202).

264 Cohen 2015, 285–287.

265 Waerzeggers 2010a, 140.

mouth-washing rite (*mīs pī*). Its primary context was the ritual cycle of the same name in which a statue of a deity was ‘brought to life’, i.e. changed from being the image of a god to being an actual manifestation of that god, and thus prepared for residence and everyday worship in a temple. During that complex ceremony, which lasted two days and one night, *mīs pī* was performed a number of times on the statue, followed by the mouth-opening rite (*pīt pī*).²⁶⁶

As a means of cultic purification, a single mouth-washing could also be performed on various other recipients: human beings such as the king, a priest preparing himself for cultic activities, or a layman about to participate as a patient in a *namburbi*; animals such as bulls or sheep about to be sacrificed or killed for cultic purposes; even inanimate objects that did not actually possess a mouth, such as a leather bag to be used for divination and the newly created kettledrum.²⁶⁷ Likewise, the Torch which participated in the nocturnal ceremony at Seleucid Uruk had its ‘mouth washed’, i.e. was ritually cleansed before it could be kindled and thereby assume its function as light-bringer in the ritual taking place in and around the *Bit Rēš*.

5.5.6 *Aromatics*

Apart from the mouth-washing rite, the Torch was also sprinkled with good oil and the wool wrapped around it was perforated with a variety of aromatic plants (*šim / riqqu*), so that its smoke would be fragrant. Sweet-smelling smoke was an essential element in all types of rituals that aimed to please or appease the gods, an offering as fundamental as their daily meals. As one of the incantations recited in the *mīs pī* ceremony states:²⁶⁸

This statue cannot smell incense without the ‘Opening of the Mouth Ceremony’;
it cannot eat food nor drink water.

Similarly, in *Maqlû* II 10 it is said of the fire god Nuska:²⁶⁹

Without you the great gods would not smell incense.

266 See also §5.4.5.2. For a summary and interpretation of the entire ritual see Berlejung 1998, 247–259; for a new edition of the text sources see Walker/Dick 2001.

267 Berlejung 1998, 182–184.

268 ⁷⁰ ‘a-lam ne-e ka¹-nu-^rduḥ-ù¹-da na-izi n[u]-ur₅ / ša¹-lam¹ an-nu-ú i-na la pi-it pi-i qut-ri-in-na ul iṣ-ši-in ⁷¹ ú nu-kú a nu-un-nag / a-ka-la ul ik-kal me-e ul i-šat-ti (STT 200 70-71; Walker/Dick 2001, 151; my interpunction).

269 *i-na ba-li-ka dingir^{meš} gal^{meš} ul iṣ-ši-nu qut-rin-nu* (Abusch 2015, 293).

Fumigation was also a means of purification; as the pleasant scent of the smoke literally drove away bad smells, so it also assisted in dispelling evil that lingered around a person or place.²⁷⁰

Usually the sweet smoke was produced by burning incense—i.e. tree resin or wood shavings—on a censer or by throwing aromatic wood and plants on the fire burning in a brazier.²⁷¹ However, when torches were used in a ritual context, they could also be made from or perforated with aromatic wood. Apart from TU 41, that practice is attested in a namburbi against the negative influence of lightning that has struck a house and set it on fire, which was regarded as a sign of the wrath of the god Gibil/Girra. In the course of an offering to Girra, Ea and Asalluḫi, seven braziers were set up and from them a torch was lit which was wrapped in red wool and into which pieces of cedar wood, cypress wood and sweet reed had been stuck.²⁷²

Similarly, in a nightly healing ritual for a private patient with offerings to Marduk and Erua, two torches wrapped in white and red wool and perforated with cedar wood, cypress wood and sweet reed were used to kindle two brushwood piles, one for each deity, for which the same wood types had been used.²⁷³ Finally, a Neo-Assyrian ritual which focused on a diseased or dead person on a bed required a torch made of sweet reed to be held high and carried around the bed.²⁷⁴ If those three sources are any indication, cedar wood, cypress wood and sweet reed may also have been the aromatics used for the Torch in the nocturnal ceremony at Uruk.

5.5.7 *The Pure Gate (ká.sikil.la)*

The Pure Gate (ká-sikil-la), which must have been located in the southwestern outer wall of the Bit Rēš behind Anu's cella and led from there to the ziqqurat, has not been discovered through archaeological excavation and has probably not been preserved at all. However, a rain groove which breaks the wall exactly at that point behind the cella does very strongly suggest the original existence of a doorway there.²⁷⁵ A ramp led up to the gate from the southeast, running

270 Maul 1994, 95.

271 Meyer 1975, 153.

272 Maul 1994, 129: 7–9, 133: 76–77.

273 KAR 26, 21–22 (Mayer 1999, 154).

274 K 164: 3, 19. The ritual has been subject to many different interpretations, including the funeral of a king or queen or a healing ritual for a sick crown prince, possibly embedded in the yearly mourning rites for Dumuzi; cf. Scurlock 1992, 53–67 (with previous literature); Deller/Millard 1993, 232.

275 Lenzen 1955, 43.

parallel to the outer wall. Its exit lay in the supporting wall of the terrace, close to the southern corner of the temple.²⁷⁶ Kose suggests that it offered access to the unroofed passage 117, which was connected to Hof XIII and, until the Kephalon building phase, also Court VI.²⁷⁷

There was at least one other Babylonian temple complex which possessed a Pure Gate: the Esagil, the temple of Marduk at Babylon. On the basis of the topographical text *Tintir = Babylon*, which calls it the “outer gate” of the Esagil, and different Neo-Babylonian literary sources which describe it as the gate through which the king enters the temple complex or Marduk leaves it during a procession, Andrew George concludes that the Pure Gate must have been the main entry into the Esagil.²⁷⁸ Clearly the designers of the Bīt Rēš adopted the name of that gate, but not its function. The gate through which Anu and other inhabitants of the Bīt Rēš entered and left the temple complex during processions was the Grand Gate (*ká.maḥ*).²⁷⁹ On the other hand, the location of the Pure Gate of the Bīt Rēš is analogous to the gate directly behind Marduk’s cella in the Esagil, which also led to a passageway around the temple’s inner sanctum.²⁸⁰

5.6 Rev. 1–14

Having arrived in the Grand Courtyard, the Torch and those accompanying it proceeded to the Place of Brightness and took up position before Anu there. A jar was breached before Anu and a prayer recited for him. The Torch was brought by a temple enterer—perhaps the same one who had led it down from the ziqqurrat—into the cella of Antu, where a jar was breached before her as well.

On the way back, the Torch was joined by Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû and Pisangunug and the group continued on its way out of the temple complex via the Ubšukinnaku. There, next to the Dais of Destinies, a bull was killed before them. The first brushwood pile was kindled there with the Torch and a priest touched the right and left side of the bonfire with the bull’s shoulder.

Finally the Torch and the four deities went out through the Grand Gate into the street. They made a procession around the temple and each gatekeeper

²⁷⁶ Kose 1998, 136, 189.

²⁷⁷ See Kose 1998, 154 and id. 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2.

²⁷⁸ George 1992, 421.

²⁷⁹ BRM IV 7: 2 (Linssen 2004, 209); TU 41 rev. 9.

²⁸⁰ See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2.

deity entered the *Bit Rēš* again via his own gate (i.e. Papsukkal through the Grand Gate, Nuska through the Great Gate and *Usmû* through the Main Gate), remaining seated there to guard it for the rest of the night. A brushwood pile was kindled before each of them with the Torch.

5.6.1 *The Torch Taking Up Position before Anu and Antu*

The first ‘action’ of the Torch after it had been kindled atop the *ziqqurrat* and brought down into the *Bit Rēš* was to take up position before Anu at the Place of Brightness and before Antu inside her cella. Such a ‘visit’ makes the impression of a formal greeting, a gesture of reverence towards the two most important inhabitants of the temple complex. However, there is no evidence that divine cultic objects, even though they could receive offerings, were regarded as anthropomorphic to the extent that they would need to adhere to the rules of conduct that dictated interaction among humans and between humans and deities respectively. It is more likely that the sacred flame which had been lit in the presence of Anu and Antu of Heaven needed to be brought into the presence of their counterparts on earth as well, because they had the authority to grant the Torch its cleansing and exorcistic powers. Moreover, once the fire of the Torch had been infused with the divine power of Anu and Antu of Heaven and Anu and Antu of the *Bit Rēš*, it could do more than serve the usual purpose of torches in purification rites; it represented the divine presence and authority of the divine couple within the temple complex and throughout the city of Uruk as a whole. The relationship between the Torch and the (astral) deities will be explored further in the next chapter.

5.6.2 *The Place of Brightness (ki.zálag.ga)*

The form and location of the Place of Brightness (*ki.zálag.ga*), where the Torch and company stopped to take up position before Anu, are unclear. Its name, which clearly refers to the brightness of light and fire, suggests that it was the Torch’s official seat in the *Bit Rēš*. The divine Torch active in the *Ezida* possessed a seat or shrine with the same name.²⁸¹ Finally there was a seat or shrine in the *Esagil* at Babylon with that name, but nothing else about it is known.²⁸² That evidence suggests that a Place of Brightness, and thus perhaps also an accompanying divine Torch, was a common feature of (first-millennium) Babylonian temples.

As with the other architectural features of the *Bit Rēš*, a consideration of the exact location of the Place of Brightness within the temple complex is

²⁸¹ George 1992, 113 no. 644.

²⁸² George 1992, 113 no. 642; Çağırğan/Lambert 1991–1993, 96: 70.

dependent on the building phase under discussion, since its position may have changed as a result of the various renovations. As mentioned before, it is likely, but not completely certain that the description of the Bīt Rēš in TU 41 reflects the situation established by Anu-uballiṭ-Kephalon, i.e. after 202 BC. According to the text, the Place of Brightness was the next processional station after the Torch and the priests had entered the Grand Courtyard, so it may have been situated there. Pongratz-Leisten, for instance, states: “[the Torch] bewegt sich durch das Tor KÁ.SIKIL in der Rückwand der Cella in den Hof KISAL.MAḤ und nimmt dort auf dem ihr reservierten Sitz KI.ZALAG.GA Platz”.²⁸³ George also calls the *ki.zálag.ga* “a shrine in the Grand Court of the *bīt rēš*”.²⁸⁴ In the Grand Courtyard, the Torch will have been in a direct line of sight from the entrance to Anu’s cella and could thus indeed be described as positioning itself “before him” there, even though they will have been separated by at least one room.²⁸⁵ Since there are no shrines around Hof I or VI which face Anu’s cella directly, it will have been a free-standing sockle or dais of some kind, perhaps the large postament directly opposite Anu’s cella in Hof I.

When the Torch proceeded to offer a similar greeting to Antu, it entered as far as into her cella itself, which means that it remained at a remarkable distance to Anu as compared to his wife. Perhaps Anu’s supreme godhead was such that a subordinate divine entity like the Torch could not approach him directly; otherwise the Place of Brightness may very well have been closer to Anu’s cella, for instance in Room 11, or even inside the cella itself. The concisely formulated temple rituals from Uruk do not always explicitly describe movement from one processional station to the next, unless something relevant like the singing of a hymn took place on the way; thus the Place of Brightness may have been somewhere between the Grand Courtyard, the Torch’s previous station, and Antu’s cella, the next.²⁸⁶

5.6.3 *Breaching a Vessel*

When the Torch positioned itself before Anu and again when it had entered the cella of Antu, a *ḥarû* vessel was breached before the deity in question. The *ḥarû* was a large earthenware (or sometimes bronze) container used to store barley or wine, but is attested primarily in ritual contexts.²⁸⁷ Several sources refer to

283 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 45.

284 George 1992, 113 no. 643.

285 That would have been the case regardless of whether one locates the Grand Courtyard in Hof I or Hof VI (see § 5.2.1), because one lay behind the other (cf. George 1996, 372).

286 See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2.

287 CAD Ḥ 117.

the filling of *ḥarû* vessels before the king or a deity, and it was used during the spring *akītu* festival in Babylon, where it had to be opened by the king as part of a sequence of tasks he had to fulfill during the procession toward the *akītu* house.²⁸⁸ During the nocturnal ceremony in the Bīt Rēš, however, the *ḥarû* was not merely opened (*petû*), but breached or smashed open (*batāqu*), probably to release its contents.²⁸⁹

The image of broken jars and the spilling of their contents occurs frequently in ancient Near Eastern literature. In the Old Babylonian version of *Atraḥasis*, the thunderbird Anzû rips open the heavens and breaks the earth “like a pot”, after which the Flood pours forth from the sky and the ground.²⁹⁰ A ‘*lipšur* litany’ which uses a long list of similes to describe the absolving of the patient’s sins, such as the peeling of an onion and the unravelling of a mat, includes “may my sin, like a potter’s broken pot, never return to its former state, may my sin be shattered like a potsherd”.²⁹¹ The irreversible destruction caused by breaking a ceramic vessel is employed in different rituals as a technique to permanently destroy an enemy, or to absolve an unwanted situation by means of analogy. Maul has discussed the practice in the context of *namburbi*’s and interprets it as the last symbolic undoing of the negative situation which has just been overcome through the *namburbi*.²⁹² For instance, after a *namburbi* was performed to restore the relationship of an estranged married couple, three jars were smashed between them to symbolize that the tension had been broken. In a *namburbi* intended to dispel the evil portent of a wrongly performed cultic rite, the priest broke one or more pots in the outer gate of the affected temple or house and proclaimed: “absolver of the guilt (var.: absolvers of my guilt)!”. In exorcistic rites, the practice was used to break the influence of evil over the patient. It even appears in legal procedures, such as the liberation of a slave, whose slave status was ‘destroyed’ through the smashing of a jar. The act was thus also binding in a legal sense.

In a building ritual intended to drive out the brick god Kulla from a house after its construction, different purification rites were performed inside the house, among which the breaking of a vessel at the gate. Once Kulla had left

288 Kessler 2002; Zgoll 2006, 34. The connection of the *ḥarû* vessel to the sacrificial rite named *ḥarû* and to the god Nabû-ša-ḥarê remains in need of further investigation.

289 The unexpected use of the verb *batāqu*, ‘to breach/pierce’, instead of *ḥepû*, ‘to break’, will be discussed below.

290 OB *Atraḥasis* III iii 9–11; see for a study of this and other Mesopotamian literary passages referring to clay and ceramics Polinger Foster 1991 and 2010.

291 Reiner 1956, 140: 15’–16’, 31’–32’.

292 Maul 1994, 82–83.

the house, seven more jars were broken at the outer gate.²⁹³ In the latter case, the act clearly functioned to sever any last ties between Kulla and the house, a procedure similar to those described by Maul. In the first case it may have had a similar function, i.e. to break any influence that evil beings may have had over the house, but it may also have symbolized the outright destruction of such beings, as is Ambos' interpretation.²⁹⁴

Other sources confirm that breaking a jar was considered a magical means to effectuate the destruction of a human or supernatural enemy. In a ritual to dispel the evil influences attracted by thunder, the priest smashed a jar in the temple while reciting the incantation 'You Are Evil'.²⁹⁵ One *Utukkū Lemnūtu* incantation expresses the wish that the various evil demons be "smashed like a pot and poured out like water".²⁹⁶ The performance of that incantation was no doubt accompanied by the act it describes. Karen Polinger Foster suggests that the evil beings were first transferred into the vessel by the *āšipu* and then eliminated through the destruction of their containers.²⁹⁷ Sargon II may also be referring to such rites when he uses the image of smashing pottery in his inscriptions to describe his crushing of the enemy lands.²⁹⁸ Likewise, the destruction of hostile countries and even of rival gods "like empty vessels" occurs in Hittite literary and ritual texts.²⁹⁹ Finally, a similar ritual must have been known in Israel, as is demonstrated by Jeremiah 19: 10–11: "Then the LORD told me to break the jar in front of those who had gone with me and to tell them that the LORD Almighty had said, 'I will break this people and this city, and it will be like this broken clay jar that cannot be put together again'".³⁰⁰

The nocturnal ceremony in the Bīt Rēš is the only known occasion on which jars were breached before the statues of major deities. The verb *batāqu* is difficult to translate in this context, since it can mean 'to cut off', 'to pierce', and 'to divide into halves', but never 'to smash into pieces'.³⁰¹ If the pot was broken

293 Ambos 2004, 98: 5"; 102: 72"-75".

294 Ambos 2004, 90; see also his discussion of magical analogy in id. 2010b.

295 LKA 108: 7.

296 Tablet VI: 120'-21', 133', 146' (Geller/Vacín 2016, 238–239, 240, 242).

297 Polinger Foster 1991, 398. The sound of the crash will also have played its part in chasing away the unwanted creatures; cf. the sounding of the gong during the purification of the cella of Nabû during the spring *akitu* festival at Babylon (Zgoll 2006, 26).

298 Maul 1994, 83.

299 Polinger Foster 1991, 398.

300 See also Psalm 2: 9: "you will break them with an iron rod, you will shatter them in pieces like a clay pot".

301 CAD B 161–165.

completely, one would expect the verb *ḥepû*, as is used in the ritual texts which involve breaking pots. Another meaning of *batāqu* is ‘to cut through’, said of dikes and canals, i.e. causing a breach through which water will flow. Considering that the *ḥarû* vessels were not small portable jars, but large, presumably heavy storage containers usually filled with barley or wine, it is more likely that they were not completely shattered, but were breached open on one side in order to let their contents pour out.³⁰² Alternatively, if they contained wine, they may not have been smashed at all, but their lids may have been broached so that the drink could be tapped.

This second interpretation of either smashing or piercing a smaller hole in the *ḥarû* (resp. its lid) leaves us with several possible options regarding that act’s symbolic value. Its immediate ritual context, the procession of the Torch through and around the Bīt Rēš, was probably—as I will argue below—a rite of purification intended to rid the temple complex of evil influences. If that was indeed the case, the *ḥarûs* may have been smashed open in order to seal the elimination of the supernatural forces lurking in the Anu-Antu-sanctuary. That is likewise suggested by the literary and ritual evidence discussed above, which points to a strong symbolic association between broken pottery and the irreversible destruction of anything unwanted.

On the other hand, since the act itself was in fact rather different from the complete destruction of earthenware in the various abovementioned rituals, its symbolic meaning may have been a different one as well. The use of a *ḥarû* vessel during the New Year (*akītu*) festival, and especially the fact that it had to be opened by the—at that point already reinvested!—king, points to a semantic context of celebration and renewal. The king’s opening of a single storage vessel may have been a ceremonial version of a very fundamental celebratory act: breaking out the wine for the occasion. At Seleucid Uruk, the calendrical context was the middle of winter rather than the beginning of spring, but the use of the *ḥarû* may have been a similar one: the stored barley was now ‘broken out’ and would provide people with sustenance during the remaining cold months. The image of the barley pouring out from the large vessels once they were opened will have been one of welcome abundance; even more so if it was not barley, but wine, in which case Anu and Antu also received a copious libation, in anticipation of the festive meals shared by the people of Uruk and offered to the gods later that night.³⁰³

302 Suggestion Marten Stol, personal communication.

303 See § 5.7.4.

A suitable comparative parallel for this last interpretation is the Anthesteria festival at classical Athens, celebrated during three consecutive days just before the start of spring.³⁰⁴ Dedicated to Dionysos, it was a festival of new wine, but also a period during which the collective, anonymous dead rose up from the netherworld. On the first of the three days, entitled *Pithoigia* ('Pot-opening'), the male Athenian citizens ceremonially opened caskets of new wine at their homes. On the next day, *Choes* ('Cups'), feasting and drinking began in earnest and included a drinking competition and a 'crowning' rite for small children who had reached a certain age. That second festival day was at the same time a polluted time period, presumably because of the roaming dead, and all temples except one particular shrine of Dionysos were closed. On day three, offerings were made to Hermes Chthonios, who would guide the ghosts back into the netherworld. The festival dates were not connected to specific turning points of the solar or agricultural year, but in aitiological terms the Anthesteria were associated with the end of the mythical flood, when the water receded and human life on earth could resume once more. The point of comparison with the nocturnal ceremony at Uruk is the combination of festive banquets shared by the citizens at their homes (see below) with an awareness of 'supernatural' pollution which must be expelled, and a sense of newness and renewal for which the ritual purification was a prerequisite. If these elements were indeed all present in the ceremony at Uruk as they were in the Anthesteria, it is at least a possibility that the broaching of the *harû* vessels in the *Bit Rēš* constituted a similar 'pot-opening', which symbolically anticipated the public celebrations that would follow as soon as the entire city had been secured against demons and ghosts.³⁰⁵

5.6.4 *Pisangunug*

The god Pisangunug (^dpīsan/pīsan^{saĝ}.unug^{ki(-ga)}) appears in Mesopotamian texts from the Early Dynastic period onwards, such as the god lists from Fāra and Tell Abū Ṣalābiḥ.³⁰⁶ As his name demonstrates, he was always associated with the city of Uruk and especially the district Kullaba, which was

304 Parker 2005, 290–316.

305 The complicated question of whether or not the nocturnal ceremony at Uruk was also an occasion on which the dead walked among the living will be discussed in § 6.2.3.

306 This section is based primarily on Krebernik 1993–1995a. There is much debate about the correct reading of the god's name, especially whether the first sign *šID* / *šIDXA* should be read *me/mes* or *pīsan/pīsan* and whether the second sign *saĝ* is a phonetic gloss or not, which leads to renderings of the name ranging from *Messangunug* or *Mes-sanga-unug* to *Pisangunug* or *Pisansangunuga* (cf. Cooper apud Biggs 1974, 54; Geller 1985, 89; Lambert

dedicated to Anu and often appears in literary texts as a *pars pro toto* for Uruk as a whole. Lugalzagesi of Uruk calls himself “he of Pisangunug” in his inscriptions, suggesting Pisangunug was one of his personal gods, and a puzzle text from Lagaš calls the god “the great ensi of Inanna”. The ‘Nippur Compendium’, which lists among the gods worshipped in Nippur a group of “divine mayors” (*bēl-āliya*) of other cities, mentions Pisangunug as the divine mayor of Kullaba.³⁰⁷ Similarly, in the first-millennium versions of the balagš ‘Fashioning Man and Woman’ and ‘Honored One, Wild Ox’ and in the standardized ritual series *Utukkū Lemnūtu*, he is the “herald” (*nímgir*) of Kullaba.³⁰⁸ According to KAV 46 and 63, Pisangunug seems literally to “circle” Anu. In short, he may have been considered a divine servant of either Anu, Inanna/Īštar, or both, the focus having perhaps shifted over time. In *Tintir*=*Babylon*, the great first-millennium temple list of the city of Babylon, two sanctuaries for Pisangunug are mentioned, the E-urgubba and the E-esirkalamma,³⁰⁹ both in the city quarter of Babylon which was called Kullab after the celebrated district of Uruk. Unfortunately, no shrine at Uruk for the god is known from any period, although, according to an Old Akkadian cylinder seal, he had his own *en-priestess*.

Pisangunug appears to have been a warrior god associated with Ninurta and Nergal and was perhaps considered as a local manifestation of either one. The Weidner god list places him after Papsukkal, Ningirsu and ^dSag-kud (who is part of Anu’s entourage in *An* = *Anum* I 83 and elsewhere associated with Ninurta), and before Bau, Lugalbanda and Ninsun—i.e. among a group of gods related to Anu and Enlil, Uruk and Nippur respectively. KAR 142 (the ‘Archive of Mystic Heptads’) obv. ii 5 mentions a temple or shrine dedicated to Pisangunug where the cult sockle of one of the seven Asakku’s slain by Ninurta was located. A Neo-Babylonian school text simply attributes a weapon-like function to Pisangunug.³¹⁰ Based on Pisangunug’s close relationship with Kullaba and his apparent equation with Ninurta, Paul-Alain Beaulieu proposes to read Standard Babylonian *Anzū* III 151, a line which appears in the context of a syncretistic praise of Ninurta, not as [mu ur.]sag.unug^{ki} *im-bu-u ina kul-aba^{ki}*, “in Kul-

1993b). The general consensus currently rests with reading the first element of the name as Pisan-, which I therefore also adopt here.

307 Steible 1982, II: 316: 30, 336: i’ 3’; Biggs 1973, 29: 8’; George 1992, 150: 24’.

308 Cohen 1988, 240: c+345, 309: c+219; Geller/Vacić 2016, 104: III 67. In the Old Babylonian version of ‘Honored One, Wild Ox’, Pisangunug is simply “the god of Kullaba” (Cohen 1988, 289: e+261).

309 *Tintir* IV 26, 39 (George 1992, 60).

310 Cavigneaux 1981, 138: rev. 3–4.

laba they called you by the name ‘Hero of Uruk’”, but as [mu mes.]sag.unug^{ki} *im-bu-u ina kul-aba*^{ki}, “in Kullaba they called you by the name Pisangunug”.³¹¹

Similarly, at least in the third millennium BC, Nergal seems to have been equated with Pisangunug at Uruk, where he was the divine land registrar.³¹² In the *balaĝ* ‘Flood Which Drowns the Harvest’ and the *eršemma* ‘Woe the Strongman’, Pisangunug also appears as a manifestation of Nergal.³¹³ Finally, from the early Seleucid period, a list of deities closely related to Uruk as well as to each other mentions him again among Lugalbanda, Ninsun and Bau/Gula, as well as the latter’s consorts, the warrior gods Pabilsag and Zababa, and finally Lugalirra and Meslamtaea, who were also associated with Nergal.³¹⁴ In a ritual text from Seleucid Uruk describing the *akītu* festival in Tašrītu, Pisangunug is mentioned once between Ninurta and Nergal and once directly after Ninurta in a list of gods attending a ceremony in the Grand Courtyard.³¹⁵

The primary reason for Pisangunug’s inclusion in the pantheon of Seleucid Uruk is probably the fact that his very name evokes his ancient connections with the city. His introduction—or rather re-introduction—was doubtlessly considered a revival of one of the cults that had existed at Uruk ‘at the beginning of time’, when the city was founded. As the sources demonstrate, that conception was not altogether faulty. Pisangunug’s epithet “herald/mayor of Kullaba” was still known and will also have been an important factor; manuscripts of the ‘Nippur Compendium’ as well as ‘Fashioning Man and Woman’ and ‘Honored One, Wild Ox’ were found in the libraries of Seleucid Uruk.³¹⁶ Finally his association with Ninurta and Nergal may have played a minor role, as becomes clear from the abovementioned ritual texts in which he is directly associated with both gods.

Like Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû and Kusu, with whom he also appears together in most of the ritual texts, Pisangunug was one of the primary servants of Anu and the *Īt Rēš*.³¹⁷ More specifically, after he had completed the procession

311 Beaulieu 1993c; also translated as such by Foster 2005, 576.

312 Cohen 2015, 224.

313 Cohen 1988, 501: 7, 506: a+96; id. 1981, 93: 9.

314 SpTU III 109: 15.

315 TU 39 obv. 20; rev. 17 (Linssen 2004, 185–187).

316 ‘Nippur Compendium’: SpTU II 29 (w 22758/s; library of Iqīša, or at least of the Ekur-zākir family); ‘Fashioning Man and Woman’: BaM Beiheft 2: 18, 20 and 23 (w 20030/21, w 20030/60 and w 20030/22+; all found in the library of the *kalûs* in the *Īt Rēš*); ‘Honored One, Wild Ox’: BaM Beiheft 2: 20. The latter was sung in the morning after the nocturnal ceremony, while the gods consumed their second morning meal (TU 41 rev. 31; see §5.8.2).

317 AO 8648+AO 8649 rev. 5’ (Linssen 2004, 239); TU 41 rev. *passim*.

around the temple with Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû and the Torch, the first three took their places at their respective stations to guard the temple gates until dawn, while Pisangunug similarly spent the rest of the night standing in the Ubšukkinnaku. Thus he may well have been the guardian deity of that important cultic location, just as his colleagues were the gatekeepers of the entire temple complex.³¹⁸ His cella was probably room 4, which Arno Kose interprets as the station of a “Torhütergottheit”.³¹⁹

5.6.5 *The Ubšukkinnaku and the Dais of Destinies*

The Ubšukkinnaku is the Akkadian term (derived from the Sumerian ub-šu-unkin-na, ‘Court of the Assembly’) for the meeting place where the gods gather to hold banquets and to decree the fate of the world. Originally that assembly was presided over by the supreme deity Enlil, who had to justify his decisions before his divine subordinates and required their approval to execute his plans. The organization of the divine world thus corresponded to the political structure of the early Sumerian city states.³²⁰ The Ubšu-Ukkinna not only existed in the divine realm, but was also the name of one of the courts of Enlil’s most important temple, the Ekur at Nippur. When Enlil and the divine assembly convened in the Ubšu-Ukkinna, they were seated on the du₆-kù, the ‘Pure Mound’, probably named after the mythological dwelling of the gods in the eastern mountains.³²¹

Towards the end of the second millennium, Marduk had gradually taken over Enlil’s role as head of the Babylonian pantheon and came to preside over the divine assembly as well, both in the heavens and on earth. In *Enūma Eliš*, the account of his rise to kingship, he tells the gods that he is willing to attack the monster Tiamat if, upon his victorious return, they will convene in the Ubšukkinnaku and appoint him as their supreme leader (II 155–162). They gather together and surrender their authority to him even before he marches

318 One might argue against this that the major gods Adad, Šin, Šamaš and Bēlet-ili, who cannot be regarded as temple guardians, similarly spent the rest of the night standing in ‘the courtyard’. The next morning they were brought back inside, together with Pisangunug (TU 41 rev. 21–22, 33).

319 Kose 1998, 157.

320 Sallaberger 2003–2005, 299.

321 George 1993, 154 no. 1159. The only other Ubšu-Ukkinna known from Sumerian sources was in the Eninnu, the temple of Ningirsu at Girsu, and also bore the epithet du₆-kù (George 1993, 155 no. 1161; Gudea Cylinder A, VIII 14 (Edzard 1997, 74)). This may reflect the original independence of the Sumerian city panthea, in which each city’s main deity possessed his or her own Ubšu-Ukkinna (Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 56).

off to meet the enemy (III 129-IV 34). After Marduk has vanquished Tiamat and arranged the world according to his divine will, the gods convene again to establish Marduk's kingship once and for all and to proclaim his fifty names (VI 95-VII 144; the Ubšukkinnaku is mentioned once more by name in VI 162).

The Ubšukkinnaku as it is described in *Enūma Eliš* also had a counterpart on earth in Marduk's primary temple, the Esagil at Babylon. Many of the cultic locations and ceremonial names of the Esagil were deliberately adopted from the temple of Enlil, to emphasize that Marduk been elevated to the status which Enlil had originally possessed.³²² Each year during the *akītu* festival in the month Nisannu, in which Marduk's ascent to supreme rulership in *Enūma Eliš* was reenacted by the Babylonian king, Marduk and the other gods of Babylonia convened in the Ubšukkinnaku, first—on the 8th day—to grant the king the authority to battle the enemy and later—on the 11th day—to establish his kingship for the rest of the year.³²³ Like Enlil's seat in the Ubšu-Ukkinna at Nippur, the platform on which Marduk's throne stood for that occasion was called *du₆-kù*, but its Akkadian name was *parak šīmāti*, the Dais of Destinies.³²⁴ In spite of Marduk's supremacy in the 'Reichspantheon', several other temples in Babylonia also possessed a Dais of Destinies, very likely always in imitation of the original one at Nippur.³²⁵

322 George 1993, 154 no. 1160; 1996, 374; see § 2.3.1.

323 Zgoll 2006, 65–66.

324 George 1992, 288; 1993, 77 no. 180. That more than one deity could be seated on the Dais of Destinies is demonstrated by a ritual text from Babylon, in which the assembly of the gods in the Ubšukkinnaku and on the Dais of Destinies is described and Nabû is said to "sit in front", i.e. presumably in front of Marduk (Lambert 1997, 60: 15–18). A commentary on *Enūma Eliš* also refers to Nabû sitting on the Dais of Destinies "in front" on the 6th day and "behind Bēl" on the 11th (ibid. 57). The list of seven gods that follows in the ritual text—Anu, Enlil, Ea, Šamaš, Ninurta, Nabû and Marduk—presumably indicates all the deities seated on the Dais of Destinies on that occasion.

325 George 1992, 288–290; 1995, 194. Nabû possessed his own Dais of Destinies in the Ezida at Borsippa, where he sat before and after his journey to Babylon to participate in the *akītu* festival (Zgoll 2006, 27). The 'Archive of Mystic Heptads', KAR 142, lists a Dais of Destinies for seven different Mesopotamian cities: Nippur, Babylon, Dūru, Uruk, Agade and Ħur-sagkalama (obv. II 11–15). The one in Uruk will probably have been in an Ubšukkinnaku inside the Eanna, which is not attested in the sources. However, considering that KAR 142 aims to offer lists of seven of all the items it discusses, it may not be historically reliable. Sennacherib's remodelling of the Ešarra, the temple of Aššur at Aššur, which included the construction of an Ubšukkinnaku and a Dais of Destinies, was probably based on the Esagil rather than the Ekur and was part of Sennacherib's transfer of the Babylonian cultic traditions—particularly the *akītu* festival—to Assyria (George 1995, 194 with literature).

Like many gates, shrines and courtyards of Marduk's Esagil were borrowed from Enlil's Ekur, at least in name and function, so the Bīt Rēš, the processional road and the *akītu* house of Anu in Seleucid Uruk were at least partly modelled on those in Babylon, not only in terms of names but probably also of architectural layout.³²⁶ Thus, like the Esagil, the Bīt Rēš possessed its own Ubšukkinnaku and a Dais of Destinies. If they were situated in the same part of the temple as those of the Esagil, i.e. in the eastern annexe of the temple directly beyond the main deity's personal courtyard, then they should be located in Hof VI.³²⁷ In that case the Dais of Destinies itself has not been found.

In analogy to Marduk's yearly meeting with his divine subjects during the *akītu* festival in Nisannu, one expects Anu to have throned in the Ubšukkinnaku on that occasion as well to decree the fate of the world. However, no sources have been preserved that can confirm or disprove that assumption. KAR 132 describes an undated *akītu* festival in Uruk which may or may not have been celebrated in Nisannu. It mentions Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû and the king leading Anu away from the Dais of Destinies, but the previous section, which may have described the ceremony taking place there, is lost.³²⁸ TU 40, one of the ritual texts related to the *akītu* festival in Tašritu, briefly describes how Anu takes a seat on the Dais of Destinies on his way back from the *akītu* house, but does not mention any details, except that the same rites are performed as the day before.³²⁹ During the *akītu* procession of Ištar, which was very similar to that of Anu taking place in Tašritu, she also sat on the Dais of Destinies—another one in the Irigal?—at a certain point, but again the context is broken.³³⁰ Nevertheless, all the sources just mentioned clearly demonstrate that in the temple cults of Seleucid Uruk, almost all the great gatherings of deities took place in the Inner Courtyard (*kisal.šà.ba*) of the Irigal and in the Grand Courtyard of the Bīt Rēš, not the Ubšukkinnaku (unless Beate Pongratz-Leisten is correct in assuming those were one and the same area).³³¹ Of the Urukian cultic rituals currently known, the Ubšukkinnaku and the Dais of Destinies feature the most prominently in the nightly ceremony described in TU 41; not as a meeting-place, but as the location where a bull is sacrificed and the first bonfire is lit.

326 See § 2.3.1 and 5.2.1.

327 George 1996, 373; see Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2.

328 KAR 132 III rev. 20–21 (Linssen 2004, 202).

329 TU 40 obv. 9–11 (ibid. 186).

330 AO 8648+AO 8649, obv. 36' (ibid. 239).

331 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 59–60; see § 5.2.1.

5.6.6 *The Procession*

The movement of the Torch through the most important rooms of the temple complex and its circumambulation of the entire building calls to mind the purification of a house or temple with torch and censer in namburbi's, exorcisms and building rituals. In the case of the nocturnal ceremony, the text does not mention a censer being carried along with the Torch, but the Torch itself had been perforated with aromatics to make its smoke suitable for fumigation. In her *RLA* article on processions and processional roads, Beate Pongratz-Leisten discusses the various functions of ritual circumambulation, which included the protection of a city or building from evil influences as well as the ritual purification of a designated space. She assigns the procession of the Torch in TU 41 to the latter category,³³² but it is more likely that it fulfilled both those purposes. Certainly, a ritual purification was the immediate goal of the procession of the Torch through the rooms and courtyards of the Bīt Rēš, but the fact that it took place during the night, when evil beings were more active and likely to strike, and that apotropaic rites were a central element of the nocturnal ceremony as a whole—the smearing of all the doors and door-frames of the temple complex, the breaking of vessels before Anu and Antu and the lighting of bonfires at the temple gates, the city gates, the crossroads and in the streets (see below)—suggest that the cleansing by fire of the Bīt Rēš was only part of a more elaborate ritual procedure to rid first the temple of Anu, then the other temples of Uruk and ultimately the entire city of pollution and malignant entities. The prominent participation of the deities whose duty it was to guard the Bīt Rēš strengthens that hypothesis.

5.6.6.1 Itinerary

Since the Torch's 'tour' of the Bīt Rēš included its round through the courts and cellae of the temple complex, the place where it was ritually activated—i.e. the roof of the Ešarra—should be considered the starting point of the procession. The identifiable locations along which the procession can be traced are the following:

332 Pongratz-Leisten 2006–2008, 101: “The exorcists and other cultic specialists take a torch and first make a tour within and then around the temple. (...) The use of fire or incense torches suggests disinfection and decontamination, a procedure for getting rid of bad odours and infecting elements.”

1.	the Ešarra	the Torch is lit
2.	the Pure Gate	the Torch enters the Bīt Rēš
3.	the Grand Courtyard	
4.	the Place of Brightness	a pot is broken before Anu
5.	the cella of Antu	a pot is broken before Antu
6.	the Ubšukinnaku and the Dais of Destinies	Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû and Pisangunug join the Torch; a bull is killed before them; the first bonfire is lit and touched with the bull's shoulder
7.	the Grand Gate	the Torch leaves the Bīt Rēš
8.	the Grand Gate (after the circumambulation)	Papsukkal takes up his position as gatekeeper; a bonfire is lit before him
9.	the Great Gate	Nuska takes up his position as gatekeeper; a bonfire is lit before him
10.	the Main Gate	Usmû takes up his position as gatekeeper; a bonfire is lit before him
[11.	the Main Gate (?)]	the Torch and Pisangunug re-enter the Bīt Rēš]
12.	the cella of Antu	the Torch is extinguished

5.6.6.2 The Pure Gate and the Grand Courtyard

From the Ešarra, the Torch descended the main staircase of the ziqurrat and entered the Bīt Rēš through the Pure Gate, directly behind the cella of Anu. The Pure Gate did not offer access to the cella itself, but to the unroofed passageway 117, a remnant of a Hof XIV in which a smaller, free-standing Anu-Antu-temple had stood before the sanctuary was replaced by a much larger one during the Nikarchos building phase.³³³ That passageway in turn led around the southwestern and northwestern wall of the Anu-Antu-sanctuary to Hof XIII on the southern side and Mittelhof VI on the northeastern side. From Hof XIII one could continue through rooms 116, 107 and 106 to reach Hof IX, which, although its northern corner and northeastern side have not been discovered, must have offered access to Hof VI as well via rooms 2 and 67. During the Kephalon building phase, the Anu-Antu-sanctuary was again replaced by an even larger structure. The northern corner now touched the wall of room 52, blocking the direct passage between Hof VI and passageway 117, which means the only way to reach Hof VI from the passageway was via the southeast through Hof XIII and IX.

333 See Kose 1998, 144, 154 and id. 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2.

Since the description of the Bīt Rēš in TU 41 probably refers to the Kephalon building phase, it is likely that the Torch took the latter route.

The full sentence in TU 41 which deals with this part of the procession states that the Torch “enters the Grand Courtyard [via] the Pure Gate”.³³⁴ Theoretically, the Grand Courtyard can have been any one of the great courts of the temple complex, including for instance Hof II, which was the first one all visitors to the Bīt Rēš entering through the Grand Gate encountered. Falkenstein and Pongratz-Leisten locate it in Hof I, whereas George offers no specific suggestion, but believes that, in analogy to the Grand Courtyard of the Esagil, it must have been one of the courts surrounding the Anu-Antu-sanctuary itself.³³⁵ The line in TU 41 just quoted strongly suggests that either the Pure Gate offered immediate access to the Grand Courtyard, or at least that the route from the Pure Gate to the Grand Courtyard was a direct and logical one. Thus the Grand Courtyard must have been either Hof IX, which was large enough for such a function and accessible via the appropriately named Main Gate (ká-sag), Hof VI, or Hof I, which could be reached through Hof VI and lay on the route towards the cella of Antu, where the Torch was headed.

5.6.6.3 The Place of Brightness, the Cella of Antu and the Ubšukinnaku
The Torch’s next action was to “take up position before Anu” at the Place of Brightness, which must have been at least in Anu’s line of sight, i.e. somewhere along the southwest-northeast axis running through Anu’s cella, room 11, Hof I, room 1 and Hof VI. It may even have been a postament in Anu’s cella itself. The Torch then proceeded into the cella of Antu. By presenting itself to the divine couple, it acquired the necessary authority to rid the Bīt Rēš of evil influences.

Next Papsukkal, Nuska and Usmû, who had been waiting in the Courtyard of Anu (cf. obv. 5), and Pisangunug, whose cella was probably room 4 inside the Anu-Antu-sanctuary, came out of the sanctuary together with the Torch and entered the Ubšukinnaku.³³⁶ A bull was sacrificed for them and the first brushwood pile ignited with the Torch, after which the fire was touched with the bull’s shoulder (see below).

334 Obv. 34: ká-sikil-la ana kisal-maḥ ku₄-ma.

335 See § 5.2.1.

336 That statement makes clear that the Ubšukinnaku cannot have been inside the Anu-Antu-sanctuary (see § 5.2.1).

5.6.6.4 The Circumambulation

Finally the Torch, preceded by Pisangunug and flanked by Papsukkal, Nuska and Usmû, went out through the Grand Gate at the upper northeastern side of the Bīt Rēš.³³⁷ As the text states, the group made a circle around the building and then went back inside. Pongratz-Leisten has reconstructed the route of the deities from the Grand Gate to the gates through which each re-entered the building.³³⁸ Her overview somewhat misleadingly shows the return of each of the deities to his respective gate, but not the circle that the group first made around the temple complex, thereby making it appear as if Nuska and Usmû only participated in the procession for a part of the way. In the preceding page she does offer a correct description: “sie umschreiten den Tempelbezirk und kehren anschließend jeder durch ein anderes Tor zurück”.

That the whole group first circled the entire building before they returned one by one is not only suggested by the Sumerogram *nigin* used in the text, but also by the purpose of the circumambulation, which was probably an apotropaic one. The complete circle that the Torch made around the temple complex is comparable to the protective circle (‘Bannkreis’) created by Mesopotamian ritual experts to keep demons and other supernatural threats from reentering a designated space that had just been purified, for example a temporary ritual location for prayer and offerings, a bed or room with a sick person who had just undergone treatment or a newly renovated house from which the brick god had just been driven out.³³⁹ Such a circle could be created by drawing a line of flour or wool and setting up protective standards and/or figurines. In the case of the Bīt Rēš, from which all pollution and malicious beings had just been expelled, the circle drawn around the building by the procession of the Torch and the protective deities of the Bīt Rēš may have fulfilled a similar function: to seal it off against any evil and polluting influences that threatened to creep back inside. In that case the intended effect would only be produced if the circle was complete.

337 See Kose 2013b, 334 fig. 59.2.

338 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 46.

339 Sallaberger 2006–2008b, 423. The ritual practice of encircling places to keep out malignant forces can be observed in many cultures. In ancient Cambodia, following a ritual for the banishment of evil, a consecrated rope was placed around the city walls; in Japan, ropes of rice-straw are still used today to surround spirit-inhabited trees, rocks and so on, or to protect an area from illness and evil spirits (Bodde 1998, 78).

5.6.7 *The Sacrifice of the Bull and the First Bonfire*

The second role of the Torch, apart from the purification of the Bīt Rēš, was to light the first of the many bonfires that would illuminate the city that night. That significant event took place in the Ubšukkinnaku, after the Torch had been joined on the way there by Papsukkal, Nuska, Usmû and Pisangunug. Detailed instructions for building a ritual bonfire are given in the Neo-Assyrian ritual text KAR 26, in the context of a nocturnal offering rite and prayer to Marduk and Zarpanitu that could be performed to fight all sorts of afflictions:³⁴⁰

You move away (from the offering table) and and smear *ḥabû*-earth on two bricks. You place one of each on the right and left side of the offering arrangement. You place branches on them; you stick cedar wood, cypress wood and sweet reed inside. You keep a flame going in an unfired *burzigallu*-bowl. You stick cedar wood, cypress wood and sweet reed into two torches; you decorate them with white and red wool; you kindle them with sulphur and throw them on the brushwood piles.

For both the torches and the brushwood piles, different kinds of fragrant wood were used, of which the pleasant scent would mingle with the heavy fumes of the incense burners. Earlier in this chapter I proposed, on the basis of the same text, that the “aromatics” with which the Torch was pierced before its kindling atop the Anu ziqqurra were the same types of wood that the Neo-Assyrian *āšipu* used for the torches in the nightly healing ritual described in KAR 26. Since in the case of TU 41 the Torch was not thrown on the fire, but carried out of the temple in a procession, it makes all the more sense to assume that the brushwood pile feeding the bonfire in the Ubšukkinnaku was also filled with cedar wood, cypress wood and sweet reed, which will have created an agreeable, reassuring smell.

Before the bonfire was lit, a bull was killed before the five divine entities next to the Dais of Destinies. Its right shoulder was removed including the hide and once the bonfire was kindled, the right and left side of the fire were touched with the bull’s shoulder. Earlier in this chapter we investigated the use of the sign *siskur* in Late Babylonian ritual texts and found that when referring to animal slaughter, it is used specifically for ritual killing which is aimed at establishing contact with a deity, whereas the killing of an animal for other cultic purposes is described in terms that refer only to the act of killing itself: *palāqu*

340 KAR 26 rev. 19–22 (Mayer 1999, 153–154).

‘to slaughter’, *batāqu* and *nakāsu* ‘to cut open’.³⁴¹ The killing of the bull before the Torch is an exception to that distinction. The text merely states that the bull “will be killed” (*immaḥḥaṣ*); nonetheless, the act was performed directly before a group of deities, which means they were personally involved. Even though no part of the animal’s meat was presented to them as an offering, the slaughter itself took place in their immediate presence and thus positioned them as the observers and recipients of the sacrifice.

The purpose of that sacrifice and the ‘touching’ of the fire with the bull’s shoulder is difficult to assess. As mentioned earlier, a bull was a costly and prestigious animal to slaughter, which suggests that the rite entailed more than purely the animal’s death itself. Moreover, the killing took place in the courtyard which functioned as *Ubšukinnaku*—i.e. not in a temple slaughterhouse but in an area in which deities could be present—and more specifically beside the Dais of Destinies, which played an essential role during the *akītu* festivals. It seems to have functioned as a location for other cultic activities on occasion, but those instances are not well-known. The key to the rite under discussion appears to be the bull’s shoulder, of which we read only that the right and left side of the bonfire were touched with it. What function can that act have fulfilled?

JoAnn Scurlock compares it to a sacrifice described in a Middle Assyrian text from Aššur related to the *akītu* festival, where a living lamb was cut in two before Marduk and the two halves placed on a brazier, which was then heaped up with aromatics. The king then poured out an entire vessel of wine and one of beer on either side of the brazier.³⁴² According to Scurlock, that ritual may be seen as a ‘covenant sacrifice’, intended to finalize the bond between Marduk and the people of Aššur, who regarded their relationship to their gods in terms of loyalty oaths. The *akītu* festival was an appropriate occasion for such a ‘contract renewal’. Similarly, she asserts, the covenant between man and god in the Hebrew Bible was confirmed, according to Genesis 15: 8–21, through Abraham’s vision of a smoking brazier and a flaming torch which passed between halves of animal carcasses that he had laid out opposite each other beforehand. Scurlock suggests that the sacrifice of the bull in the *Ubšukinnaku* during the nocturnal ceremony at Uruk contained “echoes” of the *akītu*-related ritual and the Biblical one; there was no cutting in half of an entire animal and flanking a fire with the halves, but instead a single part of the sacrificial animal’s body was removed and the fire was symbolically touched on both sides with it.

341 TU 44 II 16; KAR 60 obv. 15; BaM Beiheft 2, 5 rev. 22–23; KAR 50 rev. 7; RAcc 127–154 + BM 32485, 353 (Linssen 2004, 221, 253, 263, 267, 271).

342 Scurlock 2002b, 400–401.

Scurlock's comparison of the first two rites, though understandable where the ritual activities themselves are concerned, is rendered problematic by the fact that the Middle Assyrian text is interpreted by most Assyriologists as referring to the *akītu* celebrations in Babylon, where the notion of a covenant with deities was not part of the religious worldview. The cutting in half of the lamb is included by Annette Zgoll in her reconstruction of the *ḥarū*-ritual, a series of symbolically charged tasks that the king had to undertake during Marduk's procession to the *akītu* house.³⁴³ She proposes that the cutting in half of the lamb was associated with Marduk's cutting in half of Tiamat in *Enūma Eliš* and his creation of heaven and earth with the two halves. Thus, the sacrifice of a lamb by the Babylonian king and the vision of Abraham did not have anything in common apart from the fact that sacrificial animals were cut entirely in half. In the case of Genesis two types of fire did indeed pass between the halves, but in Babylon they were simply placed on a brazier to be roasted, which does not suggest that the fire had anything other than a practical function. In short, no specific 'fire-between-the-halves'-ritual existed in the ancient Near East which the bull sacrifice in the Ubšukkinnaku of the Bit Rēš could have implicitly reflected.

It is not possible, however, to develop an alternative interpretation based on the available evidence. Since the bonfire was lit directly with the flame of the Torch, it acquired the same sacred character and purifying qualities. Thus, touching it with the bull's shoulder may have had the purpose of transferring those qualities in turn upon that particular part of the sacrificed animal's body. The fact that the slaughter of the bull was not designated as *siskur* and that only the shoulder was brought into contact with the bonfire suggests that the shoulder was intended to fulfil a specific cultic function, whereas the remainder of the bull's carcass was probably either buried or distributed as meat among the entitled prebend holders.³⁴⁴ Unfortunately, and in remarkable contrast to the otherwise quite detailed instructions, TU 41 does not provide information about either the subsequent use of the shoulder or the final destination of the dead bull.

343 Zgoll 2006, 35–36, 43–60.

344 A clue may be derived from the 'Epic of Gilgameš', where Enkidu, having slaughtered the Bull of Heaven together with Gilgameš, tears out the Bull's shoulder and throws it down before Ištar, whereupon she arranges for weeping over it (SB 'Gilgameš' VII 154–159; George 2003, 629).

5.7 Rev. 14–27

After Papsukkal, Nuska and Usmû had each taken up their position at their respective gates and a bonfire had been kindled before each of them, the Torch went back into the temple, still accompanied by Pisangunug (cf. rev. 18). The text does not specify through which gate they entered the complex. Priests from the other temples of Uruk arrived, lit torches of their own with the fire of the Torch and carried them back to their temples. The text states that the priests in question should be either the *šangû* or, if those were unavailable, temple enterers of those particular sanctuaries.³⁴⁵ There they performed the ‘greeting of the temple’ (*šalām bīti*) ceremony and lit bonfires at the temple gates. They sang the hymns ‘Anu Shines Forth Through All the Lands’ and ‘The Beautiful Image Has Come Out’, the latter of which had also been performed on the roof of the Ešarra for Anu and Antu of Heaven.

Pisangunug and the Torch then returned to the cella of Antu, where an *āšipu* ceremonially extinguished the Torch with a mixture of holy water, beer, wine and oil. Pisangunug went back to the Ubšukinnaku, where he would remain to guard it until dawn. A bonfire was already burning there, so it was not necessary to kindle one before him, as in the case of his three colleagues. The other major deities living in the Bīt Rēš, Sîn, Šamaš, Adad and Bēlet-īli, joined his vigil in their courtyard.

Finally the citizens of Uruk all lit a bonfire at their respective homes. They offered an elaborate meal to Anu, Antu and all the gods of their city and sang the same hymns the priests of the different temples had sung.³⁴⁶ The city guards lit bonfires in the streets, at the crossroads and at the city gates, which they kept open and on each side of which they erected standards.

345 From the Neo-Babylonian period onwards, priests with the office of *šangû* were responsible for the cults of secondary deities (Waerzeggers 2010a, 43). Cf. also the text for the lunar eclipse ritual, which provides a shorter alternative version performed by the *šangû* instead of the *kalû* and the *āšipû* (BRM IV 6 rev. 38'–41'; Linssen 2004, 307).

346 The word *qerītu* signifies an elaborate, festive meal, a banquet, which could be served as an offering to deities, but also consumed by mortals in a secular context (cf. AHW 917–918; CAD Q 240–241). It is well-known from Assyrian rituals (Van Driel 1969, 161; Menzel 1981, 21–23), but is only attested in one other late Babylonian text (SBH VIII, 2: 10 and 22; context broken).

5.7.1 *The šalām bīti Ceremony*

The *šalām bīti*,³⁴⁷ which can be translated as either ‘greeting of the temple’- or ‘well-being of the temple’-ceremony is attested twice in Neo-Assyrian and very frequently in Neo-Babylonian sources, which means it may have been a first-millennium invention.³⁴⁸ It took place at least once and often several times a month, the exact dates depending on the local cultic calendar. A Neo-Assyrian letter and administrative texts from Neo-Babylonian Uruk and Babylon show that the *šalām bīti* ceremony was connected to the *bayātu* and the *eššešu* festival.³⁴⁹ That connection is confirmed at least partly by the nightly ceremony described in TU 41, in which the *šalām bīti* ceremony took place during the final hours of a *bayātu* which was possibly also part of a two- or three-day *eššešu* festival.³⁵⁰ At Sippar, the *šalām bīti* on day 12 of the month Simānu coincided with a “temple celebration” (*isinnu bīti*) for Šarrat-Sippar, Gula and Annunītu, and a number of *šalām bīti* ceremonies took place on days 1(?), 2, 6, 8, 10, and 11 of the month Nisannu, i.e. during the course of the *akītu* festival.

None of the sources offers any insight into the exact rites that were performed during the *šalām bīti* ceremony, but a few observations can be made about it nonetheless. The occurrence of the ceremony in TU 41 makes clear that it took place during the night, at least several hours before dawn, and the Neo-Babylonian administrative texts show that it involved libations and food offerings of cereal products, beef and mutton.³⁵¹ The Ebabbar texts describe the delivery of large quantities of flour, produced by the prison and a varied group of minor temple employees, to the temple storehouse for the purpose of the *šalām bīti*.³⁵² Further, the administrative sources from the Eanna contain a group of inventories of cultic utensils retrieved from and returned to the *bīt urinni*; in three cases their purpose is indicated, which on two documents is the *šalām bīti* and on one “for cleaning”, which may have been necessary before their employment for the *šalām bīti*.³⁵³ One of the lists specifically mentions one silver platter, seven silver *malītu* bowls and one golden libation bowl (*maqqu*) “for the *šalām bīti*”.³⁵⁴ In another one, the list of utensils is followed by the names of a group of people; the first person named is the scribe

347 The administrative texts from Neo-Babylonian Uruk give *šullum bīti* (Joannès 1981).

348 Linssen 2004, 59–61; Waerzeggers 2010a, 141; Zawadzki 2013.

349 SAA X 352; vs 6, 268; MacGinnis 1991–1992, no. 7; George 1992, no. 38.

350 See § 4.3.

351 Zawadzki 2013, 31–32.

352 Bongenaar 1997, 120–123.

353 Joannès 1981; Zawadzki 2013, 40–41.

354 HE 145: 7–8, 17.

Nabû-mukîn-apli, descendant of Sîn-lēqe-unninni, while another person on the list, Nanāya-ēreš, was a *mušākil alpê ša šarri*, ‘feeder of the royal bulls’. From that combined evidence—the utensils of precious metal, the elite scribe mentioned on one of the inventory tablets and the indirect connection with the king’s sacrificial animals—and the frequent occurrence of the *šalām bitī* during the *akītu* festival at Sippar, Zawadzki concludes that the ceremony was “of great importance in the cultic calendars of the temples”.³⁵⁵

5.7.2 *The Streets, the Crossroads, and the City Gates*

In many ancient cultures, liminal points such as doorsteps, gateways and crossroads, i.e. places of passage between one defined area and another, were considered uncertain places, where the identities of the areas they separated and the rules pertaining to their distinction became diffuse.³⁵⁶ In her article on the significance of crossroads in ancient Greece, Sarah I. Johnston distinguishes two fundamentally different ways in which the crossroads’ detachment from civilized life could be dealt with: a) seeking protection against it, for instance by bringing offerings there to the goddess of crossroads, Hekate, and b) exploiting it by leaving (ritually) polluted waste there or using the location and/or objects found there for performing magic and making contact with the restless ghosts and evil spirits which tended to gather there.³⁵⁷

In Mesopotamia, too, doorways and crossroads were places where contact between the world of man and the realm of the supernatural was greater and more easily established. In temples, palaces and private houses, both the front gate and the inner doors were protected by apotropaic figurines buried beneath the doorstep.³⁵⁸ There are not many examples of either protection against or use of the liminal character of the crossroads in Mesopotamian sources, since it is usually the steppe (*edin / šēru*) to which such threatening, but exploitable properties were attributed. However, the evidence we possess points to the

355 Zawadzki 2013, 41.

356 Ambos 2009–2011.

357 Johnston 1991, 217. The association between liminal points and the spirit world can be observed not only in classical and ancient West Asian antiquity, but in many cultures and beliefs up to the present day (cf. the very illustrative and comprehensive, although academically outdated overview in MacCulloch 1910). The West African trickster *vodun* Legba, for instance, was worshipped at crossroads and provided access to the spirit realm. Stories about him have influenced the popular African-American folk theme of the blues musician who meets the devil at the crossroads and sells his soul in exchange for supernatural musical talent (Smith 2005, 183–188).

358 Rittig 1977, 225–226; Wiggermann 1992, 4; Ambos 2004, 76–77; Otto 2006, 244.

same approach of crossroads that can be observed in the ancient Greek sources, although it is all of the ‘exploitative’ type. Dust from a crossroads could be used against the affliction ‘hand of a ghost’, against a stroke which caused a twitch in the cheek and against witchcraft which had been sighted in a person’s house.³⁵⁹ A pottery shard taken from a crossroads was used in protection rites against the baby-snatching demoness *Lamaštu* and in the performance of the great anti-witchcraft ritual *Maqlû*.³⁶⁰ Witches themselves, too, were thought to bury figurines of their victims at crossroads or at the entrance to the city gate.³⁶¹ The water which had been used to cleanse a patient in a healing ritual was poured out at a crossroads while the patient said: “I received (the evil from them, now) let them receive it from me”.³⁶² Bathing in urine at a crossroads also helped to repel ghosts harassing a person.³⁶³

The most elaborate ritual involving a crossroads is one to make a woman stop having miscarriages, which were thought to have been caused by witchcraft. After a number of other rites, a package of bread, meat and grain—a surrogate for the baby she had lost—was placed by the head of the woman’s bed and remained there during the night. The next day before sunrise, she deposited it at a crossroads, i.e. “in a secluded place”, as the text adds, and said: “the ones with names have given to me; the ones without names have received from me”.³⁶⁴ The “ones without names” were the restless, neglected ghosts dwelling at the crossroads, whereas the “ones with names” were her dead ancestors, those whose names were still remembered and who could change their female descendant’s fortune for the better. Later on in the same ritual, the woman returned to the crossroads, where she undressed and got dressed again so as to get rid of her negative condition and leave it behind there. She left loaves of bread for the sorcerer or sorceress who had inflicted the condition upon her, in order to return their evil gift to them. She also left a dead female mouse swaddled in wool like a baby, another symbol of her miscarriages. Finally, *šigūšu*-grain was scattered at the crossroads and collected later; the woman was rubbed with it and on the day of her labour pains it was made into a dough and used in a rite to assist the birth itself.³⁶⁵

359 Scurlock 2005, no. 165: 1; AMT 76/5, 5'; K 72+3400+9648 rev. 24 (Schwemer 2007, 57).

360 SpTU III 84, 58; IV 128, 61.

361 Lambert 1957–1958, 292: 37–38.

362 BAM 417, 17–19; Scurlock 2002c, 211.

363 Scurlock 2005, no. 324: 2.

364 SpTU V 248, 5–11; Scurlock 2002c, 216–217.

365 SpTU V 248: 26–34, 38–41; Scurlock 2002c, 221–223.

In short, crossroads in ancient Mesopotamia were through their liminal nature intimately connected with the realm of ghosts and spirits. That quality was exploited by witches and sorcerers, but likewise came to good use in rituals intended to undo the effects of witchcraft and to drive away ghosts that were doing a person harm. At night, the city streets as a whole were considered places where demons, ghosts, witches and stray animals roamed freely and could attack the lonely traveller.³⁶⁶ The lighting of bonfires with the sacred fire of the Torch in the streets and at the crossroads of Seleucid Uruk during the nocturnal ceremony marked those locations as places of passage between the human realm and the netherworld. They kept restless ghosts and demons at a distance and provided safety for the people, who by means of exception were awake the whole night and active outside. At the city gates of Uruk, fires even burned every night, as is demonstrated by administrative texts which deal with the regular supply of wood for that purpose.³⁶⁷

5.7.3 *Reed Standards*

Reed standards (*ḡi-ùri-gal/ urigallu*) are known from various types of rituals, primarily healing and purification ceremonies, for which a temporary sacred space had to be created, for instance on a roof (when involving the stars), in a private person's house (*bīt mēseri*), in a garden (*mīs pi*), in the steppe (*bīt rimki*) or in a field (against field pests).³⁶⁸ They were set up to delineate the boundary of the sacred space, closing it off and protecting it from evil influences. Both their creation and their setting up at the proper location were accompanied by incantations which emphasized the origin of reed in the Apsû, the sweet subterranean ocean that was the realm of Enki/Ea, god of esoteric wisdom and the effectivity of ritual. In the steppe they were placed along a circle made with flour (*zissurrû*). Different sources suggest that the standards were decorated with coloured wool and/or smeared with gypsum, bitumen and oil.³⁶⁹ After the ritual had been completed, they were thrown into the river together with the other ritual materials, since they had been in contact with the divine and could not return to the human realm.

In the house of a sick person, no actual reed bundles were erected, but they were drawn with gypsum on the bedroom walls. Additionally, gypsum figurines

366 Cf. CAD S 403.

367 McEwan 1981, 142.

368 See the comprehensive study by Walter Sallaberger in Seidl/Sallaberger 2005–2006, 61–74.

369 See § 5.3.1.

of protective spirits holding an *urigallu* in the direction of the patient and holding out a fist in the direction of any unwanted visitors were placed by the bedroom door. Such protective decoration of a human living space with what must have looked like symmetrical groups of branches has led Ursula Seidl to conclude that the famous “sacred trees” found on the walls of Assyrian palaces are also depictions of *urigallus*.³⁷⁰

In that context it is very likely that the reed standards placed at the city gates of Uruk during the nightly ceremony were also intended to protect the entire city from harm.³⁷¹ During another ritual from Seleucid Uruk, to be performed on the occasion of a lunar eclipse, the city gates were also closed and protected by reed standards, a black and a white cord and a line of flour, as can be deduced from the instruction to the priest to throw all materials into the river the next day at the reopening of the gates.³⁷² That text and TU 41 are the only descriptions of reed standards protecting city gates, so that expansion of their function may be a Hellenistic development, but it is impossible to say for certain.

5.7.4 *Participation of Citizens in Babylonian Temple Rituals*

One of the most remarkable aspects of the nocturnal ceremony is the active involvement of the citizens of Uruk, who repeated several important religious acts which the priests had just performed at the Bīt Rēš and the other temples of the city: they lit bonfires outside their homes, sung the same hymns that the priests had sung and cooked a festive banquet for Anu, Antu and the other gods, of which they doubtlessly shared the ‘leftovers’ among themselves. Those elements of the nightly celebrations, as well as the fact that they are mentioned in a ritual text written by and for the temple personnel of the Bīt Rēš, are all the more striking because of the apparently strict, and in Assyriological literature often emphasized, dichotomy in Babylonian religious worship between the official temple cult and the religious practices of private persons. How unique is the description in TU 41 of a citywide religious ritual in which all the inhabitants played an active role?

370 Seidl/Sallaberger 2005–2006, 59–61.

371 Seidl/Sallaberger 2005–2006, 73.

372 BRM IV 6 rev. 31'–32' (Linssen 2004, 307). Another text from Seleucid Uruk, which lists cultic materials needed for the night of a lunar eclipse and the nights following it, also mentions 14 reed standards for the night of the eclipse itself, but does not indicate where they were to be placed (SpTU IV 128, 38).

As a rule, Neo- and late Babylonian sacred buildings were not open to the public and non-consecrated persons were not involved in the acts of worship taking place there. Even among the temple personnel, an internal hierarchy determined who had access to which parts of the temple complex. The workshops and storage rooms of the temple complex were open to all members of the priestly staff, but only those who owned the prebend of temple enterer (*ērib bīti*) were allowed to set foot in the divine sanctuary itself. They were the ones who performed the actual tasks of serving the gods their meals, playing music for them, purifying the sacred rooms, clothing and repairing the divine statues and guiding them out of and back into their cella on days when they travelled to another temple or city. The *ērib bīti* prebend gave its owner the right and duty to present the gods with meals, but usually it was combined with an additional prebend for the performance of other tasks, like those of the *āšīpu* and *kalū*.³⁷³

Private citizens, on the other hand, practised religion and worship in different, but numerous ways. ‘Family religion’ focused primarily on the cult of a family’s personal god and the care for deceased ancestors by means of the monthly *kispu*.³⁷⁴ Further, people paid reverence to local gods at pedestals and altars close to the temple gates and in the city streets. Many street shrines were dedicated to goddesses and seem to have been frequented primarily by women.³⁷⁵ Although a private person, as mentioned, was not allowed to enter the temple complex, minor deities such as divine gatekeepers (*šēdu/lamassu*), viziers (*sukkallu*) and probably other intermediary figures comparable to the Assyrian ‘mouth-and-tongue’-symbol could intercede between a human supplicant and a major god or goddess.³⁷⁶ Further, when a private person was anxious to learn the wishes and intentions of the gods, he could request the performance of an extispicy by a diviner. Likewise, when he suffered from a supernatural affliction, he could enlist the assistance of an *āšīpu* to bring offerings to his ancestors, his personal god, the divine stars, all of whom could intercede with major deities, or the great gods of healing, exorcism and justice themselves—who in turn could influence an angered personal god—and plead with them to undo his state of misery and bring his life back on track. Finally, wealthy citizens donated sacrificial animals or money to the temple, so that a meal would be

373 Van Driel 2002, 88–90.

374 Van der Toorn 1996, 42–93. His work is mostly based on Old Babylonian and later second-millennium material. The changes and developments in ancient West Asian family religion into and throughout the first millennium are not well documented and have not yet been examined in detail.

375 Baker 2011, 545–546.

376 Oppenheim 1966; Foxvog et al. 1980–1983; Wiggermann 1985–1986.

offered to the gods on their behalf; such ‘sponsors’ are referred to in the temple administration and ritual texts as *kāribu* (‘one who prays’, ‘one who dedicates an offering’).³⁷⁷

Despite the spacial dichotomy between worship inside and beyond the temple walls, there were different occasions on which the inhabitants of a city were involved, either as spectators or in some cases even as participants, in cultic rituals that encompassed an entire city or even the whole empire. The best-known example is the half-yearly *akītu* festival, during which the city’s patron deity left the temple complex and travelled in a festive procession to the *akītu* house beyond the city gates (or, in the case of Nabû, to Babylon). Though as far as we are aware the inhabitants of the city did not perform any cultic tasks of their own during that event, nearly everyone must have lined up along the processional street to bask in the image of the deities passing by. Similar jubilant crowds will have gathered on other occasions when a deity made a procession through public space, such as when she left for or returned from a visit to another city,³⁷⁸ or when she was induced into the temple after the latter had been renovated, after the deity’s statue had been renewed or when it returned from a period of exile in hostile territory.³⁷⁹ When Nabû had arrived in Babylon on the fifth day of the *akītu* festival and spent the night at the Uraš gate, all the people prayed to him.³⁸⁰ Finally, during the three days of the new year’s festival that the gods spent at the *akītu* house, sumptuous banquets were organised, for which such an abundance of food and drinks is described in the sources that is it very likely that the general public shared in the feast, though probably not inside the *akītu* house itself.³⁸¹

377 Linssen 2004, 161.

378 Cf. for instance ‘Inanna and Enki’ 224–248, where Inanna declares upon her return from Eridu to Uruk: “Today I have brought the Boat of Heaven to the Gate of Joy, to Uruk Kul-laba. It shall pass along the street magnificently; the people shall stand in the street full of awe” (Farber-Flügge 1973, 50: 27–30: ḡe₂₆-e ud-da /má\ an-na abula níḡ-ul-la unug^{ki} kul-aba₄^{ki}-šè [sila]-a maḥ [...] ḥu-mu-un-dib [...] /sila\ -a maḥ ḥé-em-da-súg-súg-[ge-eš]).

379 A well-known first-millennium example is the spectacular bonfire-lit procession of the restored statue of Marduk from Aššur back to Babylon, which was first unsuccessfully attempted under Esarhaddon and then undertaken in its entirety under Aššurbanipal (Porter 1993, 146–148).

380 ‘The Exaltation of Nabû’ obv. 15’–16’: “Their prayers go to the son of Bēl of the Apsû; [...] all the black-headed people kiss the ground” (*ana dumu* ^den *ša apsê illaku suppušun* [...] *gimír šalmat qaqqadi unaššaqa qaqqaru*).

381 Zgoll 2006, 38–39.

Apart from celebrations and festivals, the entire empire could observe a period of public mourning when a member of the royal family had died.³⁸² The Hellenistic ‘Nabonidus Chronicle’, for example, tells us (111 23–24).³⁸³

In the mo[nth Addaru], the king’s [Cyrus’] wife died. From the 27th of Addaru until the 3d of Nisannu, a period of mourning [was observed] in Akkad. All the people bared their heads.

In the first millennium, kings were not deified and thus, strictly speaking, public mourning rites were not religious ceremonies. However, elements of the same practices were reflected in certain rites of affliction which involved the entire community.³⁸⁴ At Neo- and Late Babylonian Uruk, for example, a ritual was performed on the occasion of a lunar eclipse which required the “people of the land” to removed their headdresses, pull their garments over their heads and sing lamentations, clearly in solemn acknowledgement of the dismal fate portended by the eclipse.³⁸⁵ Public mourning in response to an eclipse is also described in an extispicy request:³⁸⁶

Should I not stretch out my hand, should the people of the land not go out, not look at it, not mourn, in (...) -cloth should they not squat down in the place of mourning for the lunar eclipse of this month, should in this month the lock not be closed?

A report from early Achaemenid Larsa to the temple administrators of Uruk about the performance of (what was probably) the same ritual states: “all the inhabitants of Larsa saw with us the playing of the copper kettledrum”, again indicating the involvement of the whole community in the attempt to avert the eclipse’s evil effects.³⁸⁷ Further, when a divine statue had become dilapidated and needed to be repaired, public mourning was (expected to be) displayed by the king and the royal family as well as the other inhabitants of the city:³⁸⁸

382 CAD B 224–225; AHW 125b.

383 Glassner 2004, 238–239; http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/abc7/abc7_nabonidus3.html (my tr.).

384 Cf. Bell 2009a, 115–120.

385 BRM IV 6 obv. 22’–23’ (Linsens 2004, 307). The ritual also involved funerary offerings (*kispu*) for the fields lying fallow, the dried-up canals and for the Anunnaki, the collective gods of the netherworld. (obv. 19’–20’).

386 Koch-Westenholz 1995, 111.

387 Beaulieu/Britton 1994, 74.

388 Walker/Dick 2001, 232–233: 15–20.

The king of the land together with his family prostrate themselves on the ground. They do not hold back their moanings. The city and its people prostrate themselves in lamentations in the dust before the temple. You shall install skilled craftsmen whose bodies are pure. Until the work of that god is completed, let the lamentation priest (involved in) the work not cease offerings and intercessions.

An Old Babylonian custom related more directly to death and funerary offerings in which all inhabitants of a city participated equally was the festival of ghosts at the end of the month Abu, a special form of the *kispum*-rites during which people lit fires to invite and guide their deceased ancestors to their homes and shared a communal meal with them.³⁸⁹ According to the Middle Babylonian Astrolabe B, the month Abu was also the time when “the young men hold wrestling- and athletics matches in their city quarters”, perhaps in the context of the same festival.³⁹⁰ No such rites in Abu are attested for the Neo-Babylonian period, but royal inscriptions and curses in the colophons of private contracts show that the regular *kispu* as such was still observed; moreover, several first-millennium hemerological texts make the impression that not Abu, but ʾEḫētu had become the most important month for the care for the dead.³⁹¹ Further, as I already discussed, fires were probably also lit throughout the city on the occasion of the brazier (*kinūnu*) festivals in the early winter months, which were celebrated throughout all of Mesopotamian history. However, we do not know anything more about those observances than what their name suggests.

The cuneiform sources offer many more hints and indications of Mesopotamian religious rites in which private worshippers played a role than can be discussed in the context of the present study. To give a few examples: firstly, the well-known, but still elusive cult of the ‘dying and rising’ god Dumuzi/Tammuz most certainly included observances taking place outside the sphere of the priesthood and the official temple cult. They involved a combination of practical activities related to the seasonal cycles of animal husbandry and agriculture as well as more symbolic and explicitly religious rites. A Neo-Assyrian cultic commentary describing aspects of the Dumuzi cult, for instance, describes events taking place in the fields outside the city, among which reeds bundles being tied, women roasting grain, picking up and carrying stones and being

389 See § 5.5.4.1.

390 KAV 218, a II 5–7, 14–15 (Reiner/Pingree 1981, 151).

391 Tsukimoto 1985, 118–124; see § 6.2.3.

themselves carried into the fields to scatter seed there—all activities which appear to have belonged to a more popular level of the cult, directly connected to the preparation of the fields for a new growing season.³⁹² Secondly, the rites and festivals for the goddess Ištar, with their playful, carnevalesque character, sexual overtones and elements of reversal not only involved the entire community, but—like the Dumuzi rites—probably originated in folklore.³⁹³ In fact, one source states that among the ritual participants were a group of “women” and “men”, whereas another refers to “young men and girls” and simply “the black-headed people”, all clearly indicative of regular citizens who joined in a procession of various cultic actors. The women dressed as men and both genders wore attributes associated with the opposite gender, i.e. the women carried weapons and the men flowers, thimbles, a ‘small lyre’, shells and cosmetic soda.³⁹⁴ The young men and women held combat matches and performances and one of the attested rituals culminated in “a general folk festival with music”.³⁹⁵ Finally, a text which offers another glimpse of a citywide celebration with a public character is an incantation against the virgin demoness Ardat-lili, which describes her as a young girl who never married, enjoyed sex or had children, and “who never had fun with the other girls, who never showed herself at her city’s festival (*isinnu*)”.³⁹⁶ The latter line, rather than alluding to the presence of young girls at festivals in general, more probably points to a specific festival that included an event focused on the unmarried girls of the community, perhaps a ‘début’ of sorts, or a public wedding (cf. the following line “nor ever raised her eyes”). That ritual will no doubt have had a religious dimension as well.

In short, the participation of the public in religious ceremonies and festivals in ancient Mesopotamia was a widespread phenomenon, even though the evidence is scarce and scattered across the entire cuneiform corpus. It is in fact very likely that for most or even all of the great festivals that took place in an Assyrian or Babylonian city over the course of the cultic year, the private free citizens performed rites and held celebrations of their own, ranging from symbolic rituals representing seasonal and mythical events to communal

392 SAA 3 38; Cohen 2011 (and cf. Scurlock 2017).

393 Groneberg 1997, 131–154 (sources from the Old-Babylonian period); Sallaberger 2006–2008b, 424.

394 Groneberg 1998. Different cultic actors like the *kurgarrū*, *assinnū* and *zikkarū* dressed as women and/or carried feminine attributes, but the non-priestly male participants did not.

395 Groneberg 1997, 148.

396 SpTU II 7: 5–6; Geller 1988, 15: 39.

activities such as feasting and fasting,³⁹⁷ competitions, performances and gift-giving. After all, even if direct contact with the gods was restricted to a small group of elite temple personnel, many ancient West Asian festivals were connected to seasonal or calendrical events which were significant moments of the year for the entire community; indeed, many of the institutionalised cultic practises were probably (partly) rooted in popular rituals, originally developed to create a ‘safety net’ against the changes, insecurities and arbitrary occurrences in life. The connection between those two levels of ritual experience sometimes seems to become visible just below the surface of the descriptions in the temple ritual texts, such as for example the activities with plants and fruit during the date palm festival at Babylon in the month Kislimu, when different cultic actors carried date palm fronds and leaves, deposited them at different locations around the temple and let them float on the river before gathering them up again, and during the celebrations for Ištar of Babylon in the month Simānu, when a *kurgarrû* and a group of female temple attendants hurled apples and pomegranates at the walls of the sanctuaries.³⁹⁸ Such playful, and in the case of the fruit even slightly disruptive acts involving orchard produce make a strong impression—though there is no evidence to support such a claim—that they echo age-old folk rites related to the date harvest and (sexual) fertility respectively. To conclude, the participation of the inhabitants of Uruk in the nocturnal ceremony described in TU 41 was more rule than exception, even though the text’s explicit focus on it is still remarkable. In fact, the entanglement of popular celebration and official temple ritual in the nocturnal ceremony may offer an important clue as to its historical development—a question which will be discussed in the next chapter.

5.8 Rev. 28–32

The next morning, 40 minutes after sunrise and the start of day 17 of that cultic month, the gates of the Anu-Antu-sanctuary were opened and the night vigil was ended. The large and second morning meal were served to all the gods of the Bīt Rēš, followed by fumigation and a bull-and-sheep-offering. The musicians and *kalû* priests performed the hymn ‘Honored One, Wild Ox’, after which the censers were lit for the second time and another bull-and-sheep-offering took place.

397 An important example are the periods of fasting before the *akitu* festivals, indicated by hemerologies (Van der Toorn 1985, 33).

398 Çağırğan/Lambert 1991–1993; George 2000, 270–280.

5.8.1 *The dīk bīti and pīt bābi Ceremony*

Although the text does not specify it, the first rite performed just before dawn must have been the *dīk bīti*, i.e. ‘awakening of the temple’ ceremony, which in Seleucid Uruk took place at the start of every cultic day. It was followed by or included, as is indicated briefly in rev. 28, the *pīt bābi*, i.e. ‘opening of the temple gate’ ceremony. The *dīk bīti* was characterized by the performance of Emesal prayers; the *pīt bābi* must have involved a food offering of sorts, since several texts connect the event to the delivery of foodstuffs.³⁹⁹ Zgoll envisions the *dīk bīti* as a waking ceremony analogous to the ones that must have taken place in Mesopotamian palaces, consisting of the three stages of getting up, dressing up, and receiving breakfast. According to her, the temple variant can be traced back to the 21st century BC, since the oldest descriptions of morning rites in the temple can be found on the Gudea Cylinders.⁴⁰⁰

If a night vigil had been held during the previous night, it was concluded after the *dīk bīti* and *pīt bābi* ceremonies. As such it is described in rev. 28–29. Since the *balaḡ* ‘Honored One, Wild Ox’ was performed while the gods consumed their second morning meal (rev. 30–32), i.e. long after the conclusion of the vigil, it cannot have been part of the *dīk bīti* ceremony and must have been an additional performance. Unfortunately, no other sources inform us about the Emesal prayers performed on day 17 of any month at Seleucid Uruk.⁴⁰¹

5.8.2 *‘Honored One, Wild Ox’*

‘Honored One, Wild Ox’ (e.lum gu₄.sún) is a well-known Emesal prayer (*balaḡ*) for Enlil, which is attested in both an Old Babylonian and a New Babylonian version. Like all *balaḡ*s, ‘Honored One, Wild Ox’ is not a composition with a consistent subject or style, but rather forms a collection of songs and prayers of independent origin. Some are actual laments, others are more jubilant in tone and invite the gods to enjoy a festive meal. The Neo-Babylonian version, of which one manuscript was found in one of the libraries of the Bīt Rēš,⁴⁰² shows some revision of the original composition to adapt it to a changed cultic context. The names of certain deities have been replaced to shift the prayer’s focus from the cults of Enlil and Enki/Ea and the cities of Nippur and Eridu to

399 Linssen 2004, 27–38.

400 Zgoll 2006, 22.

401 TU 48, a text from Seleucid Uruk which lists various Emesal prayers to be performed throughout the month during the *dīk bīti* ceremonies, does not mention day 17 of any month.

402 BaM Beiheft 2, 20 (W 20030/60).

Marduk, Nabû, the cities of Babylon and Borsippa and, secondarily, the entire pantheon of first-millennium Babylonia.⁴⁰³

In the Old Babylonian period, *balāgs* were only performed occasionally during festivals, elaborate offering ceremonies and the renovation of temples, but in the first millennium they became part of the temples' cultic calendars and were performed regularly to ensure "tranquillity for a city ever afraid it might unknowingly commit an offence against the divine powers".⁴⁰⁴ In his studies of a Sumerian *šu-ila* known from Neo-Assyrian copies, the Neo-Assyrian spring festival and the cultic calendar of the Šamaš temple at Neo-Babylonian Sippar, Maul has shown that it was quite common for first-millennium temple cults to incorporate hymns and prayers that had originally been written for a different deity.⁴⁰⁵ Apart from the morning following the nightly ceremony in the Bit Rēš, 'Honored One, Wild Ox' was performed for Anu of Seleucid Uruk each year on the first day of the first month Nisannu, as well as for Bēl's spouse Bēltiya in the month Kislimu during the date palm festival at late first-millennium Babylon.⁴⁰⁶ It is hard to determine why that *balāg* in particular was sung in the morning following the nightly ceremony, especially since the rites of the rest of that day are not preserved. Nevertheless, if the fact that it was also performed on the first morning of every new year is any indication, it may have been associated in Seleucid Uruk with a new beginning, starting afresh. That would make it appropriate for the ritual cleansing of the city which had taken place the night before.

5.9 Rev. 33

According to the last remaining line on the tablet, Adad, Sîn, Šamaš, Bēlet-ili, and Pisangunug, who had spent the rest of the night standing outside in their courtyard, were brought back inside to the room between the curtains.

5.9.1 *Between the Curtains*

The room 'between the curtains', *birīt šiddī*, was the passage between a deity's cella and her antecella. Being the area directly beyond the cella, it was passed by the deity every time s/he left or entered the cella and it was the first and

403 Cohen 1988, 40. For a full survey of the transformations of the litanies in Emesal prayers between the Old Babylonian period and the first millennium BC, see Gabbay 2014, 38–58.

404 Cohen 1988, 22.

405 Maul 1998; 1999, 308–309; 2000, 402.

406 TU 48, 8–9 (Linssen 2004, 31); Çağırğan/Lambert 1991–1993, 100.

the last station of any procession the deity undertook.⁴⁰⁷ As the name indicates, the area could be closed off by curtains on both sides, hiding from view any cultic activity taking place there. Inside stood a throne on which the deity could be seated while offerings were brought and prayers recited to him/her.

On day 7 of the *akītu* festival in Tašrītu, Emesal prayers were sung for Anu in the room between the curtains and on days 8 and 9, Anu took place on his golden throne there and received the *merdītu* offering of a bull's heart and a sheep's head.⁴⁰⁸ Ištar participated in the same ritual during her *akītu* festival.⁴⁰⁹ During the date harvest festival in the month Kislimu in Babylon, a 'craftsman' (*dumu.sag ummān*) took place between the curtains, was sprinkled with water by the high priest, sounded a gong and recited a *šu-ila* for Bēl.⁴¹⁰ Finally, according to two commentary texts to the *akītu* festival at Babylon, *birīt šiddī* was the first processional station of Marduk/Bēl after the cella itself.⁴¹¹ Those last texts offer no information about the cultic activities taking place there, but the other evidence suggest that the presence of a deity between the curtains was always an occasion for offerings and/or musical performances. Thus it is likely that in the case of the nocturnal ceremony, too, Adad, Sīn, Šamaš, Bēlet-īli and Pisangunug underwent a special treatment for as long as they remained in that secluded area. Unfortunately, the evidence is too scarce to permit any speculation as to the nature of that treatment.

407 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 52.

408 TU 39 obv. 29–35 (Linszen 2004, 185); see § 5.3.3.

409 TU 42+ obv. 26'–33' (ibid. 238–239).

410 BM 32206+ obv. II 73–77 (Çağırğan/Lambert 1991–1993, 96).

411 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 40.

Interpretation of TU 41

6.1 The Organisation of the Ritual

What we have so far called the ‘nocturnal ceremony’, i.e. the entire sequence of cultic events described in TU 41, is in fact a complex ritual, composed of two different layers. The inner layer is a core of interconnected rites, which took place in its entirety during the night of the 16th cultic day of the month ʾEḫētu. I will call that core the ‘fire ceremony’. It consisted of six stages: a) the offerings and hymns to the stars Anu and Antu of Heaven and the seven major heavenly bodies; b) the lighting of the Torch on the rooftop of the ziqqurrat sanctuary; c) its procession down to, inside and around the Bīt Rēš; d) the lighting of bonfires with the fire of the Torch at the Bīt Rēš and the other temples of Uruk; e) the lighting of fires at the homes of the people and f) the lighting of fires in the streets, at the crossroads and at the city gates. That elaborate, yet coherent event was the focus of the night following day 16-x on the Urukian cultic calendar and it will be the main subject of the interpretations offered in this chapter.

The outer layer of the ritual described in TU 41 was a framework of cultic activities which were not directly related to the fire ceremony, but were performed that night because they belonged to the regular temple cult of Seleucid Uruk and took place every month, several times a month or even every night. The most important element of that framework was the night vigil (*bay-ātu*), a monthly event at least in the winter months, during which the temple’s divine inhabitants and human personnel remained awake and watched over the sacred precinct until sunrise. Furthermore, before the vigil began, the daily evening meal was served to the gods of the Bīt Rēš and an accompanying bull-and-sheep offering was made. The ‘well-being of the temple’ (*šalām bīti*) ceremony, which was connected to the night vigil, was performed later that night. Finally, as every morning, the ‘awakening of the temple’ (*dīk bīti*) and ‘opening of the gate’ (*pīt bābi*) ceremonies took place just before and after sunrise. Then the vigil was brought to an end and the gods of the Bīt Rēš were served their morning meal, which was again combined with several bull-and-sheep offerings.

Although the serving of a festive meal to Anu and Antu of Heaven and the seven major heavenly bodies at the ziqqurrat sanctuary was not a unique event either, but was repeated on the 16th night of every month, it will nonetheless

be considered as the first part of the fire ceremony. The first appearance of the star Anu of Heaven not only marked the start of the offering procedure which would continue on the rooftop of the Ešarra the rest of the night, but it was also greeted with the hymn ‘The Beautiful Image Has Come Out’. That same hymn was performed later when the priests of the temples lit bonfires at their temple gates and a third time when the people lit bonfires at their homes, which points to a continuity in the ritual from the moment Anu of Heaven appeared in the night sky until the moment that all fires had been lit. Moreover, as will be discussed in more detail below, it suggests that the god Anu, the star Anu of Heaven and the fire of the Torch were associated with each other and that this association was evoked and celebrated throughout the ceremony.

6.2 The Fire Ceremony

The fire ceremony as it is described in TU 41 consisted of many symbolically charged elements. Those can be grouped into four fundamental characteristics: the use of fire symbolism, rites of exorcism and purification, a focus on renewal and the demonstration and affirmation of a four-tiered geographical, religious and social hierarchy. Since we assume that the ceremony took place during a full moon festival that coincided with the ideal date of the winter solstice, the calendrical setting will be an important factor in the interpretation of the ceremony as a whole and will be discussed separately.

6.2.1 *Fire Symbolism*

One of the clearest and most fundamental elements of the fire ceremony is the symbolic use of fire and in particular of the contrast between light and darkness. The entire ceremony took place after sunset, i.e. when darkness had already descended upon the city. Different luminaries of the night sky, among which the astral manifestations of the deities Anu and Antu, received worship by means of an elaborate food offering and a performance of hymns. Then a single torch was kindled on the rooftop of the ziqqurat sanctuary; it was carried in a procession down to and around the temple complex and finally bonfires were lit with the fire of that same torch throughout the city. All those events were interconnected, because they all contributed to evoking the same association: that of a direct relationship between the god Anu, the star Anu of Heaven and the fire of the Torch.

When the star Anu of Heaven appeared in the sky, the hymn ‘The Beautiful Image Has Come Out’ was sung, together with ‘Like the Beautiful Glow of the Stars of Heaven, Anu the King’, later followed by the *lumahhu*’s performance of

‘Star Anu, Lord of Heaven’. It was performed again when bonfires were lit at the gates of the other temples and once more when the people kindled fires at their homes. The second and third time ‘The Beautiful Image Has Come Out’ was performed, it was combined with a different hymn, ‘Anu Shines Forth Through All The Lands’. The lyrics of none of the hymns have been preserved, but their incipits already convey a clear message: they refer to Anu not only as “the king” and “lord of heaven”, but also as a “beautiful image” and more precisely a “star” which “comes out”, is “equal to the beautiful glow of the stars of heaven” and eventually also “shines forth through all the lands”. That imagery establishes a connection between the light of the star Anu of Heaven, which was in turn an astral form of Anu himself, and the fire of the Torch, which was kindled in the very same place where the priests had just made contact with Anu of Heaven by invoking him with hymns and bringing him offerings. Moreover, through the subsequent distribution of the Torch’s fire via other torches and then bonfires throughout the entire city, that same sacred fire was made to “shine forth” as far as the eye could see—perhaps not literally through all the lands, but at least everywhere within the walls of Uruk, i.e. the area inhabited by the community of worshippers of Anu.

Rather than being a direct manifestation of Anu (or Anu of Heaven) himself, the Torch should be understood as a sacred object dedicated to Anu and with a divine power sanctioned by Anu and Antu.¹ Directly after the *lumahhu* had kindled the Torch, he placed it opposite the offering table, raised up his hands towards Anu of Heaven and recited a prayer to invoke the god. Next, after one of the temple enterers had carried it down the steps of the ziqqurrat and into the Bīt Rēš, it was placed before Anu at its own station, the Place of Brightness. A prayer was spoken to Anu and the Torch continued into the cella of Antu. In both cases, a *ḥarû* vessel was breached before the deity. In other words, the Torch was not treated as if it represented Anu or assumed his role in the ritual; to the contrary, it was brought into direct contact with Anu of Heaven and Anu

1 There is no reason to assume that the descent of the Torch from the rooftop of the Ešarra down to the Bīt Rēš represented the god Anu himself being brought down from heaven into the temple (so for example Scurlock 2002b, 401), where in principle he was present already. His statue was not moved once during the entire ceremony and was even visited by the Torch, which does suggest a relationship between the god and the cultic object, but a more complex one than equation. Furthermore, the yearly reenactment of a deity’s taking residence in her abode was arguably one of the core elements of the Babylonian *akitu* festival, which was also still celebrated twice a year at Seleucid Uruk. Unless the nocturnal ceremony was part of either one of those festivals, which the evidence doesn’t suggest, there would have been no need—and no historical precedent—to act out that event yet a third time (see also below).

and Antu of the Bīt Rēš while the priests performed hymns and spoke prayers to the gods to invoke their blessing. The breaching of a *ḥarû* vessel while the Torch stood before Anu and Antu, a difficult to interpret, but powerful ritual gesture, emphasised the significance of that moment in which the Torch was acknowledged and sanctioned by the divine couple. Although the Torch had already been ritually activated beforehand by means of the *mīs pî* ceremony, only now could its fire be employed in name of the three deities to cleanse the temple complex of the stain of evil, and to offer all the citizens of Uruk a connection with their gods through their personal bonfire, derived directly from the flame of the Torch.

The striking image of a single flame appearing in the darkness was and is employed in rituals throughout the world to represent a moment of renewal, such as the restoration of the calendrical order, the rebirth of a divine figure or the return of light itself and its ultimate triumph over darkness. Apart from its close relationship with Anu and his divine authority, the kindling of the Torch during the fire ceremony at Seleucid Uruk may also have functioned as the visualisation of such a yearly occasion of return. Which occasion that may have been will be discussed further on.

6.2.2 *Purification and Exorcism*

As discussed at several points in the previous chapters, one of the most important functions of the torch in Mesopotamian ritual was that of purification. In the Mesopotamian worldview, temples, palaces and houses alike were perpetually threatened by various types of evil beings and could become infected with ritual pollution. Malevolent non-human forces such as demons and restless ghosts were considered responsible for a great part of all human misfortune. They were more active and powerful at night and could roam the empty city streets, invade the homes of the sleeping people and stalk through the temples where all activity had ceased. Further, a location where unclean objects had been present, such as materials which had been used for an exorcism or had been in contact with death, or where people had upset the worldly balance by unintentionally angering the gods, became tainted with invisible pollution.

The Mesopotamian temple complex and the activities performed inside it were regulated in terms of purity.² Members of the temple priesthood, regardless of their function and status, needed to fulfil strict requirements of physical and moral perfection upon their initiation and each day when entering the temple. Moreover, the temple complex was divided into different areas

2 See for a general overview of and current research into that subject Sallaberger 2006–2008a.

with varying degrees of purity: the workshops and storerooms, in which non-consecrated personnel were allowed to perform their duties; the central courtyard(s),³ into which only the priestly personnel could enter; and finally the divine sanctuary, only accessible to the temple enterer (*ērib bīti*).⁴ Recent scholarship has emphasised the fundamental significance of the notion of purity for the Mesopotamian conception of the sacred. For example, Beate Pongratz-Leisten proposes that the use of different terms for different types of purity and cleanliness in Sumerian and Akkadian literary texts points to a twofold definition maintained in the sources: one of inherent perfection, which the gods possessed (described with Sum. *kù.g*, originally derived from the lustrous quality of precious metals, and Akk. *ellu*), and one of purity in the sense of having been ritually purified or declared unblemished through divination or a legal verdict, i.e. a state which could be attained through transformation (described with Sum. *dadag / sikil* and Akk. *ebbu*).⁵ The temple complex belonged to the latter category: neither the personnel nor the different rooms and courtyards were pure in and of themselves, but they needed to be kept in a state of ritual cleanliness through regular purification rites.

Another cultural 'sphere' which was regulated by strict purity rules was the body, person and life of the king. According to the cosmology reflected in the majority of the Mesopotamian sources, human society existed to serve the gods and cities and states were in the first place religious communities, centred on the cultic worship of their patron deities. The king was appointed by the gods to be responsible for the correct observance of those duties. He formed the connection between the divine and the human realm; the well-being of the people depended on his unblemished health and impeccable behaviour. At fixed

3 The *Bit Rēš* probably had more than one courtyard of that function, since the texts mention a Courtyard of Anu (*kisal* 𒀭60), which must have been directly connected to the Anu-Antu sanctuary, a Grand Courtyard (*kisal-mah*) in which the deities of Uruk convened on important locations, the *Ubšukinnaku* or 'Divine Assembly' and finally another Courtyard (*kisal*) around which several major deities lived and in which they spent the night during a *bayātu*; all of those must have had strict access regulations, since they were all locations where deities could be present on occasion (see § 5.2.1 for the scholarly discussion on the identity of those different areas).

4 Waerzeggers/Jursa 2008.

5 Pongratz-Leisten 2009, with a survey of the recent debate. She then argues that in later sources (i.e. from the second millennium onwards), the meaning of the word (or the approach to the notion of) *ellu* changes, since from then on it is also applied to the temple itself and its building materials, apparently to emphasize their brilliant appearance rather than the ritual process of purification they have undergone.

moments of the year, primarily during the two New Year festivals, and whenever a crisis situation arose, the king went through a complex ritual cycle of purification and ablution, during which any evil beings that might have seized him were exorcised and he repented for any sins he might (unwittingly) have committed in the eyes of the gods.⁶

Although the king's physical and moral purity affected the condition of the entire realm, he could not absolve any other sins than those he had personally committed. If a religious community such as a city had collectively angered the gods and become tainted with evil through the wrongful deeds of its inhabitants, the entire population—or rather the local mediators between the people and the gods—needed to take action in order to restore their relationship with the divine. A particular affront were mistakes made during the performance of rituals, usually unintentional and sometimes even unnoticed.⁷ If recognised in time, the looming misfortune provoked by such an error could be averted through a counter-ritual, but it was never possible to be aware of each and every mistake and undo its effects immediately. Thus, at fixed moments during the year, the community as a whole had to atone for all its possible transgressions and attempt to calm the gods' moods, lest they abandon their subjects and let the city fall into ruin. The responsibility for reestablishing goodwill between the gods and the people lay with the temple. One well-known strategy employed by the priests for that purpose was the regular performances of *Emesal* prayers or so-called cultic lamentations, which were not necessarily expressions of sadness or mourning, but a genre especially suited to soothe a god's angered heart.⁸ In the first millennium, such performances were part of the cultic calendar and took place in the temple several times a month, as well as numerous times during the yearly festivals.⁹

Further, although it is not directly attested, a purification ritual involving the entire city may have been carried out in Babylonia at certain turning points of the cultic and/or the secular calendar, such as the New Year celebrations. Concerning the month *Tašrītu*, during which the autumn *akītu* festival took place, *Astrolabe B* states:¹⁰

The Yoke star (^mu¹¹mu.BU.kešda), Enlil. The houses are purified; the people and the ruler are cleansed. The pure yearly offering of all the lands is

6 Ambos 2010a, 22–28.

7 For a recent study of ritual failure in Mesopotamia see Ambos 2007.

8 Gabbay 2014, 15–16.

9 Löhnert 2011, 412–414; see § 5.8.2.

10 KAV 218 II 22–37 (Reiner/Pingree 1981, 152).

brought to the Anunnaki. The gate of the Apsû is opened. The funerary offering of Lugaldukuga, Enki and Ninki.¹¹ It is the month of the grandfather of Enlil.

The fire ceremony at Seleucid Uruk took place many centuries after the composition of that menology and its allusion to a communal cleansing; yet the procession of the Torch through and around the Bit Rēš, the kindling of brushwood piles with its fire at strategic points throughout the city and the numerous additional rites that were performed before and during the ceremony all suggest a similar purpose.¹² The Torch was carried through the most important areas of the temple complex, just as an *āšīpu* would carry a torch and a censer through any divine or human dwelling which had become haunted or polluted. The mouth-opening rite (*mīs pî*) had been performed on the Torch, which provided it with the ability to incorporate divine power and influence immaterial beings, and it had been presented to Anu of Heaven and Anu and Antu of the Bit Rēš, who had actually granted it that power. Further, although no incense burner was carried along with it, it had been perforated by fragrant wood and thus spread a strong, agreeable smell through the building.

With its warmth, its bright light, the cleansing qualities of its fire and the pleasant fragrance of its smoke, the Torch drove out any ghosts or demons that may have been lurking in the shadows in the various rooms, corridors and courtyards of the Bit Rēš. Moreover, it dissolved all the impurity that had accumulated there over the course of the previous year due to mistakes made by the temple personnel and the accidental neglect and misbehaviour they had displayed towards the gods. After it had made its round inside the temple complex, it proceeded in a complete circle around the building together with the gatekeeper gods of the Bit Rēš, in order to seal it off against any evil that may have wanted to creep back inside. When the circle was complete, each of the

11 Compare the entry on the 29th of Tašrītu in the Middle Assyrian 'Offering Bread Hemerology': "He should place his offering bread for Lugaldukuga, Enki, Enmešarra and the West Wind, and it will be acceptable" (Livingstone 2013, 139).

12 A possibly similar rite alluded to in Sumerian literary and administrative texts from the late third millennium BC is *izi-lá*, "letting a (purifying) fire spread out", attested for temples, temple foundations and the entire city; cf. for an example of the latter Gudea A XIII 11–12: "the ruler cleansed the city, he let (purifying) fire go over it" (*énsi-ke₄ iri mu-kug izi im-ma-ta-lá*; tr. Edzard 1997, 77). In Ur III documents the rite is attested in combination with the regular offerings (*sá-dug₄*) and three major festivals for the god Šara (Sallaberger 1993, 240–241).

divine gatekeepers of the temple complex took up position at his own gate to guard the building during the rest of the night.

Before, during and after the procession with the Torch, several auxiliary rites were performed, all of which are well-known from namburbi's and exorcism-, healing- and building rituals for their purifying and apotropaic functions. First, the doors and doorframes of the Anu-Antu sanctuary had been smeared with oil, a treatment which helped rid a person or a building of the 'stain' of evil and to attract positive influences. In the case of the doors of the sanctuary, it may also have had an apotropaic use: a door thus treated will have been more difficult for a demon, ghost or other malevolent being to enter. After the procession, the cleansing, protective light of the Torch was transferred to another medium: the bonfire. The first bonfire was lit inside the Bīt Rēš itself, the ones that followed were kindled at the other temples, then at people's homes and finally in the streets, at the crossroads and at the city gates. The empty city streets at night were considered dangerous, particularly because they could be haunted by ghosts, demons and witches. Further, crossroads and city gates, both places of passage, were more easily accessible to evil beings from beyond the human inhabited world. Thus, lighting fires there probably had an apotropaic function as well.

Finally, reed standards, *urigallus*, were placed next to the city gates, Those, too, are well-known from all types of healing and purification rituals which did not take place in a closed-off room, but out in the open: on a rooftop, in a garden, in a field and so on. *Urigallus* were placed in a circle or a square in order to create a temporary sacred space, inside of which the ritual could safely be performed. During the fire ceremony at Seleucid Uruk, that protected space was expanded to encompass the entire city. In short, one of the functions of the fire ceremony was clearly that of a yearly, city-wide exorcism and purification ritual. The ritual cleansing of the city of Uruk was perhaps an occasion for its inhabitants to perform a 'winter cleaning' of their own houses as well.

6.2.3 *Relationship to Funerary Rituals*

One subject which has not been discussed until now, but which warrants serious consideration, is the relationship between the fire ceremony and Mesopotamian celebrations for the dead. Since there is no explicit reference in TU 41 to ghosts, ancestors or rituals like the *kispu*, that issue has not been addressed in the analysis in the previous chapters, nor been involved in the main argument of the current chapter. Still, there are several reasons to take the possibility into account that the fire ceremony was also the occasion for—or perhaps even the starting point of—a period of interaction with the dead.

The most important indication is the lighting of fires at people's homes and throughout the city. Thus far, we have interpreted that rite as a defense against unwelcome spirits and as an expression of the protective power of Anu, but it also bears great resemblance to the yearly festival of ghosts attested in Mesopotamia primarily between the Early Dynastic and the Old Babylonian period. As described previously,¹³ different Sumerian cities knew a festival called *ne-izi-ĝar*, 'braziers and torches'. According to 'The Death of Gilgameš', the *ne-izi-ĝar* was a "festival of ghosts" during which light was "provided for them".¹⁴ In Nippur, the fifth month was originally named *ne-izi-ĝar* after that festival, but towards the end of the third millennium it acquired the Akkadian name *Abu*, which was derived from a similar Amorite ceremony for the dead.¹⁵ The evidence strongly suggests that the fires were kindled to guide the ghosts from the netherworld to the homes of their descendants, who would honour them with the *kispum* (Sum. *ki-sì-ga*), a ritual that involved pronouncing their names in remembrance and sharing a festive meal with them. Numerous Old Babylonian sources provide evidence for a monthly *kispum* during the last, moonless nights of the month, as well as an elaborate yearly *kispum* at the end of the month *Abu*, performed by families in their homes and more grandly at the royal court.¹⁶ The concise description of the month *Abu* on the Middle Babylonian Astrolabe B suggests a continuation of that practice at least into the later second millennium BC. It also assigns a role to a single torch: "Braziers are kindled and a torch is raised for the Anunnaki. (...) It is the month of Gilgameš".¹⁷

If the fire ceremony at Hellenistic Uruk was based on or adapted from another, older ritual, then a festival for the dead, with fires lit at people's houses and festive meals served by private persons to their deceased kin, is a very likely candidate. After all, the last part of the nocturnal ceremony corresponds exactly to that description, particularly if we assume that "all the collective

13 §5.5.4.1.

14 'The Death of Gilgameš' version N1, column v: 10–11 (Cavigneaux/Al-Rawi 2000, 16).

15 Cohen 2015, 271–272.

16 Tsukimoto 1985, 39–56.

17 The matter is further complicated by the description on Astrolabe B of the month *Tašritu*, which apparently also involved offerings of the first harvest produce to the Anunnaki, a yearly purification of the people and their houses and even a *kispu* for the deities Enki, Ninki and Lugaldukuga (see above). Those activities seem to have been connected to the autumn *akitu* festival. However, any interpretation of the menologies of Astrolabe B depends on the exact historical context in which that text was composed, which is still obscure and cannot be investigated here.

gods" (dingir^{meš} dū.a.bi)¹⁸ to whom the people of Uruk served a luxurious offering also included personal gods, close ancestors and the Anunnaki. Furthermore, the care for the dead was a fundamental practice which was of equal importance to each individual and unconnected to the cult of one specific deity or to a particular political constellation. It formed a suitable foundation upon which a dramatic and ideologically charged public performance could be built that would establish a direct link between the festivities taking place at people's homes and the official temple cult of Uruk.

There is, however, very little evidence that such a yearly festival for the dead still existed in first-millennium Assyria or Babylonia. References to the *kispu* in royal inscriptions and colophons of private contracts do show that at least the monthly tradition was still widely and regularly practised.¹⁹ The word *kispu* also frequently occurs in exorcistic ritual literature as a technique to subdue harmful ghosts and elicit the aid of a patient's deceased family members, which means that it was still understood as a rite to appease the dead by means of food offerings.²⁰ The latest attestation of the word *ki-sì-ga/kispu* is in two texts from Seleucid Uruk: a bilingual hymn to Šamaš, in which he is praised as guardian of the dead and their regular offerings,²¹ and the mourning ritual for a lunar eclipse, where a *kispu* is performed for the dried-up canals, the fields lying fallow—places where ghosts and demons could gather during an eclipse—and the Anunnaki themselves.²²

Further, it appears that the final days of the month Abu were still considered the designated period for interaction with the dead. Numerous first-millennium ritual texts against evil ghosts and witches, such as the anti-witchcraft series *Maqlû*, had to be performed during the last days of Abu, usually on the 28th, so that the unwanted beings could be sent back to the netherworld along with the benign ghosts.²³ Some texts explicitly mention one of the last days of Abu as the appropriate day for the ritual performance.²⁴ A performance of *Maqlû* in Abu is attested in a Neo-Assyrian letter, which also mentions other "rites of [the 28th of] Abu" that involved a statue of Gilgamesh, presumably in

18 TU 41 rev. 23.

19 Tsukimoto 1985, 110–115, 118–123; Fahdil 1990, 471: 3–4.

20 See Scurlock 2005.

21 Falkenstein 1959, 36: 10–11; the words used for 'offerings to the dead' are *ki-a-naĝ* ('place of libating water') in Sumerian and a rare loan word, *kisegû*, in Akkadian.

22 BRM IV 6 obv. 19'–20' (Linssen 2004, 306).

23 Cohen 2015, 420–421; Scurlock 1995; Abusch 2002, 108–110.

24 E.g. Gurney 1960, 224: 27.

his role as netherworld judge.²⁵ The ‘Offering Bread Hemerology’, attested in texts from the late second millennium and the Neo-Assyrian period, includes an elaborate ritual for the 25th of Abu, a day of “communal sorrow”, for transferring one’s transgressions of the past year to a figurine representing a deceased family member and making it “cross the Ḫubur”.²⁶ Likewise, a ritual text for necromancy instructs the reader to rub his face with a mixture of oil and herbs and to recite an incantation on the 29th of Abu, in order to be able to “see a ghost” and “speak with the Anunnaki”.²⁷ Finally, in the microzodiac from Seleucid Uruk, the constellation Leo, which was the zodiacal sign of the month Abu, is associated with making a libation for the Anunnaki.²⁸

On the other hand, there are a few indications that the month Ṭebētu may also have been considered a suitable month for netherworld-related rituals, in the first millennium as well as earlier. Apart from the *ne-izi-ġar*, another observance for the ancestors in the third and early second millennium was the *ab(a)-è*, which at Nippur took place in month x and whose name became the Sumerogram for month x throughout southern Mesopotamia from the Old Babylonian period onwards.²⁹ A *kispu* in month x, possibly for deceased kings specifically, is also attested in several Old Babylonian administrative documents.³⁰ Further, according to the first-millennium ‘Offering Bread Hemerology’ and the royal hemerology ‘Fruit, Lord of the Month’ (*inbu bēl arḫim*), the user of the text could not leave the gate on the 29th of Ṭebētu and a *kispu* had to be performed that day.³¹ Likewise, the ‘Prostration Hemerology’ instructs the reader to libate water for the Anunnaki on the 20th of Ṭebētu.³² Finally, a fragmentary Late Babylonian ritual tablet states: “this is what is recited on the 11th of Ṭebētu [...] until the *kispu* is performed”.³³

25 SAA X 274.

26 Livingstone 2013, 132. The Ḫubur was the river between the human realm and the netherworld.

27 Scurlock 1988, no. 82: 59–63.

28 Weidner 1967, 24.

29 Cohen 2015, 153–154, 236, 380.

30 Stol 2008.

31 Tsukimoto 1985, 123–124; Livingstone 2013, 145. The ‘Offering Bread Hemerology’ adds “for the ghost of the street reach”. Livingstone (ibid. 158) points out that the tablet’s scribe attempted to make sense of a broken original, leading to a “nonsensical” phrase; the “ghost” (*lil*) may have been derived from Enlil, since ‘Fruit, Lord of the Month’ adds “Enlil will grant you your desire” (ibid. 226).

32 Livingstone 2013, 166.

33 CLBT B4 IV 6–7; Tsukimoto 1985, 124.

In short, the fire ceremony at Seleucid Uruk seems very similar to the festival of ghosts known from third- and early second-millennium sources, and it may directly or indirectly have borrowed aspects of it, but the gap in the evidence is too great to say for certain. Also, the evidence suggests that up to and including the first millennium, it was first and foremost the month Abu, not ʾĪbētu, when the boundaries between the realms of the dead and the living temporarily dissolved. For scholars who live further north of the equator and have grown up trick-or-treating in late October or early November and igniting fireworks at New Year's Eve, it may be tempting to associate winter and especially a winter fire festival with the proximity of ghosts and spirits; yet as mentioned earlier, even the longest nights in the Near East are not particularly long and it was midsummer, when the sun is hottest, the rivers retreat and the fields are dry, which in ancient Mesopotamia was the time of death and desolation *par excellence*.

6.2.4 *Hierarchy and Participation within the Religious Community*

The fire ceremony consisted of four different stages, each of which further expanded the physical and symbolic space which the performance of the ceremony encompassed. The first stage of the celebration took place within the boundaries of the city's main temple complex and involved only the temple enterers, i.e. the highest-ranking priests of the Bīt Rēš. Still, when the Torch was lit on the roof of the ziqqurrat sanctuary, carried down from there to the Bīt Rēš and made a procession around the building, it was already visible from the outside, so that everyone in the city could witness its appearance, entry into and movement around the temple complex. During the second stage, the Torch's fire was brought to the other temples, which were subordinate to the Anu temple, but still superior to the homes of the gods' mortal subjects. During the third stage, the "people of the land" (un^{meš} kur)³⁴ joined in the celebration by lighting their own fires, presenting their own food offerings to Anu, Antu and the other gods and singing the same hymns that the priests had just performed. Though it is not stated explicitly in the text, we may assume that the fires that burned outside people's homes were derived from the smaller sanctuaries, since in that case the distribution of the sacred fire which had begun with the Torch continued until it had reached the entire city. Finally, during the fourth stage, bonfires were lit throughout the city in places not of residence, but of passage: in the streets, at the crossroads and at the city gates.

34 TU 41 rev. 22.

Thus, the order in which the Torch's fire was first lit at the *Biṭ Rēš* and then distributed to the other sanctuaries, to people's homes and finally throughout the city was determined by the hierarchical relationships within the religious community formed by the city of Uruk. Above everyone else stood Anu, ruler of the gods, his spouse Antu and his temple, the *Biṭ Rēš*, sacred centre of the world; below him the other divine members of the pantheon of Uruk and their temples and finally the city's mortal inhabitants and the private houses and public places in which they lived their lives. On a social level, the same hierarchy existed between the priesthood of the *Biṭ Rēš*, the cultic personnel of the other sanctuaries and the city's population. Thus, by following that hierarchy, the distribution of fire from its sacred source throughout the city functioned as a visual display and thereby as a reinforcement of each of those groups' dependency upon the one(s) superior to them for their safety and well-being.

At the same time, the participation of all members of the community in the fire ceremony must have evoked powerful emotions among them. A flame from the sacred Torch, blessed by Anu, was brought to their own houses, and every family, regardless of whether or not they had ties with the priestly clans, contributed actively to the celebration. The festive atmosphere which the private citizens helped to create by lighting bonfires, singing hymns and preparing a grand offering meal will have strengthened their feeling of belonging to the group with whom they shared those activities. Indeed, they may have shared other, personal rites with their families and friends, such as dining together, giving gifts and playing games, which are not attested in the sources because that information had no practical value for the priests using those texts.

Moreover, although the citizens had to wait until it was their turn to join in the celebrations, they may eagerly have anticipated the start of the ritual, which was marked by the lighting of the Torch atop the *ziqurrat* and its descent from there to the temple complex of Anu. Witnessing that procession will also have contributed to a strong sense of participation among the spectators, especially if they knew that it was that same sacred fire which later on in the night would reach their own homes. In ancient Babylonia, the inhabitants of a city were able to look upon the divine image only a couple of times a year: during the two-yearly *akītu* festivals, and occasionally when a temple had been renovated or the god had been travelling and a festive procession took place to lead him back inside. Seeing a deity's physical manifestation, being noticed by his all-perceiving vision at the same time and knowing oneself to be part of the world which was blessed by that deity's presence must have made a profound impression upon a Babylonian individual, which will have been deepened by the fact that the sensation was shared in that same moment by an entire congregation

of worshippers.³⁵ Being present at the kindling of the Torch may very well have been a similar experience, especially considering the associations which were made between the Torch and Anu himself.

Of course, no communal festival is complete without its rivalries among different groups of participants and struggles for personal influence and prestige. The phrase “the people of the land” does not provide further differentiation within that group, but the situation may well have been more complicated. The order in which the fire was distributed among the private houses at Uruk may have been determined by further social stratification; for example, the families of prebend-holders may have been the first to kindle bonfires, and the first city quarter to receive the fire may have been the district owned by the temples and inhabited by temple employees.³⁶ Such nuances escape our perception.

6.2.5 *Midwinter*

The last important aspect of the fire ceremony is the time of the year at which it was performed. As I have argued in Chapter 4, the *bayātu* was observed primarily or even exclusively during the winter months IX–XII; for that reason alone, it is very likely that the fire ceremony took place at some point in winter. Its probable date, the 16th of ʾṬebētu, has still not been established with absolute certainty, but is strongly suggested by the Uruk ritual text TU 38. That date was in any case significant for Uruk in the Neo-Babylonian as well as the Seleucid period.

It is not self-evident that a festival taking place in winter is also associated with the seasonal aspects of that time of year and with themes like cold and darkness, but the prominent role of fire in the ceremony at Seleucid Uruk does

35 In Hinduism, perceiving the divine and being perceived by it at the same time is a central aspect of the religious experience of the common worshiper. That moment of contact through sight is called *darshan* (Sanskrit: *darśana*) and, in popular terminology, is ‘offered’ by a deity or holy man and ‘received’ by the onlooker. “Since, in the Hindu understanding, the deity is present in the image, the visual apprehension of the image is charged with religious meaning. Beholding the image is an act of worship, and through the eyes one gains the blessings of the divine. (...) The prominence of the eyes of Hindu divine images also reminds us that it is not only the worshiper who sees the deity, but the deity sees the worshiper as well” (Eck 1998, 3–8). The gaze of a deity is so central to Hindu concepts of the divine that the final act of creation of a divine image, even after the establishment of the breath of life (*prana*) within it, was and still is today the eye-opening ceremony, in which the eyes are given sight by painting them or piercing them with a needle. It would be very fruitful to make more thorough comparative studies between the polytheistic temple religions of India and those of ancient Mesopotamia.

36 Baker 2014, 198–199.

point strongly in that direction. It is unlikely that it was connected to the start of winter and the necessity to provide shelter in the home through the use of fire; in Seleucid Babylonia, as in earlier periods, that seasonal change was celebrated with brazier (*kinūnu*) festivals. As their name implies, those public events were marked by the lighting of braziers which were also used inside houses and temples, not the large outdoor bonfires that featured in the fire ceremony attested at Uruk. Evidence suggests that in the Neo-Babylonian period, different *kinūnu* festivals took place in months VIII, IX and X, although it is not always clear whether the texts refer to the festival itself or to other cultic ceremonies involving braziers.

Instead, the fire ceremony was probably connected to another seasonal event which took place in the very heart of winter: the winter solstice. At Seleucid Uruk, as in other first-millennium Babylonian cities, the 15th of each month was celebrated with a two- or three-day full moon (*eššešu*)-festival. The 15th of Ṭebētu was traditionally the day of the winter solstice, which means that the fire ceremony probably fell on the last day of the midwinter *eššešu*. Furthermore, Late Babylonian cultic commentaries associate both the months Kislīmu and Ṭebētu with the winter solstice, mark them as a period of mourning for netherworld deities and even describe a ritual of exchanging goddesses between Babylon and Borsippa to make the days and the nights equally long again. Thus, the winter solstice was clearly a significant moment of the year on the Late Babylonian lunisolar cultic calendar.

In Mesopotamia, the lengthening of the nights is not as dramatic as in regions at a greater distance from the equator, and for the largest part of ancient Mesopotamian history there is very little evidence for festivals which focused on the winter solstice as a return from cold to warmth and from darkness to light. Nonetheless, there are a few examples of rituals which not only took place at or around the longest night, but also had its darkness as their theme. Mark Cohen proposes that the great cultic festivals of the city of Ur in the Ur III period were based on the equinoxes and solstices and culminated yearly in the Great Festival of Nanna at the winter solstice.³⁷ According to his theory, that festival was connected to the longest night because it meant the longest visibility of the moon. Although it celebrated Nanna's triumph over Utu, rather than the latter's return, the winter solstice as the turning point of lengthening nights and shortening days was still the focus of the ceremony. Moreover, it had a clear renewal aspect in the extensive purification rites for Nanna himself which formed the central cultic activities of the ritual.

37 Cohen 1996.

Secondly, as mentioned, the solstices were incorporated into the cults of Babylon and Borsippa in the Late Babylonian period through the processions of goddesses between the cities, in order to bring the lengths of days and nights respectively back into balance. That practice was not related to the festival at late third-millennium Ur and does not reflect a sense of triumph at the winter solstice, but rather one of disharmony which can be overcome through ritual means. If a similar notion had emerged at Uruk, the development of the fire ceremony may well have been the response. Its probable date, the 16th of ʾĪbētu, and the fire symbolism employed in it both point strongly in that direction.³⁸

6.2.6 *Cosmological and Social Renewal*

To summarize our observations so far, the core of the nocturnal ritual at Seleucid Uruk was formed by a fire ceremony, which was characterised by the ritual purification of the entire city and the use of fire symbolism through the kindling of a single flame at the highest point of the city and the distribution of fire among the city's temples and inhabitants. It followed a hierarchical system which reinforced local divine and political authority and at the same time incorporated the participants into a single social order. Moreover, external evidence strongly suggests the ritual took place in winter and, more precisely, on a full moon which was associated with the date of the winter solstice, which makes it probable that it was related to that seasonal turning point. The focus on light symbolism in the ritual itself and the cultic events connected to the solstices which were performed elsewhere in late first-millennium Babylonia strengthen that last assumption.

All those different aspects of the fire ceremony point to the same conclusion: that it was a renewal festival with both a cosmological and a social dimension. The renewal which was celebrated was that of the light of the sun, which after sinking further and further towards the horizon each day would once again begin its daily ascent up to its highest point, which it would reach half a year later at the summer solstice. The return of light was symbolized by the kindling of the Torch on the rooftop of the Ešarra, a single flame appearing in the night. At the same time, the fire of the Torch was associated with Anu him-

38 The description of the nocturnal ceremony in TU 41 also starts with a procession of the Daughters of Anu and the Daughters of Uruk, accompanied by Papsukkal, Nuska and Usmû, the guardians of the Bit Rēš. It is not clear where they might have been and there are attestations of temple Daughters joining divine processions on other occasions; yet in this case, like the Daughters of the Ezida and the Esagil during their daylight-changing movements, they were travelling alone, only 'chaperoned' by three servant deities and two divine objects. A parallel with the Babylon-Borsippa exchange of goddesses is not proven, but the similarity is at least worth noting.

self, his divine kingship and the supremacy of his cult in the city. That fire was then multiplied and distributed among the religious institutions and private homes of Uruk—a symbolic demonstration of how the gods' protective influence would reach every building and each individual. Thus, the fire ceremony was also one of the occasions in the cultic year—the others being the two *akītu* festivals in Nisannu and Tašrītu—on which Anu's supreme authority was ritually confirmed and renewed. That aspect of the ceremony is also reflected in the performance of the Emesal prayer 'Honored One, Wild Ox', which in Seleucid Uruk otherwise only took place in the morning of the first of Nisannu, the first day of the new year.

Finally, the procession with and distribution of the Torch's fire was combined with rites of purification and the banishment of malicious supernatural influences beyond the city gates. Throughout the year, the possible negative effects of any ritual performance were routinely minimized by the destruction of the materials that had been used; moreover, when suspicious occurrences or illness in a palace, temple or house pointed to the presence of a demon or of ritual pollution, an *āšīpu* could perform a rite to exorcise the source of the threat. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of a Babylonian city could never be entirely certain that each private house, public space and sacred building was completely free from the stain of the unclean and the forces of darkness. Therefore, only a systematic, city-wide purification ritual, like the spring cleaning of a house, could ensure that all the evil which had accumulated over the course of the year was thoroughly removed. A festival that focused on seasonal renewal, took place during the night and featured processions with torches was the ideal occasion for such an undertaking. As we will see, renewal festivals are very often paired with an extensive purification ritual, since they mark the start of a new calendrical cycle and when the natural world and the divine realm start afresh, so should the human community, lest any evil lingering in people's houses and hearts bring the world in disbalance.

6.2.7 *Anthropological Context*

Until now we have restricted our interpretation of the fire ceremony at Seleucid Uruk to the information offered by the ancient Mesopotamian sources: firstly the description of the nocturnal ceremony in TU 41, and secondly the other available material on the temple cults and occasional rituals of (primarily first-millennium) Babylonia and Assyria. In the previous chapters, the latter were presented in order to provide the context and explain the function of many of the activities that took place during the nocturnal celebrations. The different aspects of the fire ceremony itself already suggest, as argued before, that it was a renewal festival on the occasion of the winter solstice. However, that hypoth-

esis can be strengthened further through comparison with different renewal festivals in other premodern and modern cultures.

The *Encyclopedia of Religion* (L. Jones ed., 2005) provides a summary of the shared characteristics of a specific type of renewal festival, the New Year festival, in its different manifestations throughout the world:

Whereas New Year ceremonies vary widely from culture to culture, their meaning is essentially concerned with the phenomenon of transition or passage in its two aspects of 'elimination' and 'inauguration'. What is old, exhausted, weakened, inferior, and harmful is to be eliminated, and what is new, fresh, powerful, good, and healthy is to be introduced and ensured. The first aspect finds expression in ceremonies of dissociation, purification, destruction, and so on. These involve washing, fasting, putting off or destroying old clothing, and quenching fires as well as the expulsion of sicknesses and evil powers (demons) through cries, noisemaking, and blows or through the dispatch of an animal or human being on which are loaded the sins of the previous period of time. The ceremonies may also reintroduce chaos through the dissolution of the social order and the suspension of taboos in force at other times (...). In addition there is often a temporary suspension of the division between the world of the living and the world of the dead, with a return of the latter to the houses of the living, where they receive sacrifices and food but from which they are ceremoniously dismissed at the end of the festival period.

The second and positive aspect of the passage from old to new is seen in the donning of new clothes, the lighting of a new fire, and the drawing of fresh water as well as green branches and other symbols of life, in initiations (...) and in orgiastic joy that leads to many kinds of excesses (...). Only rarely, however, are all these elements found conjoined. In any case, a purely phenomenological approach is inadequate and can even be misleading, because it presumes a fictitious universality. A phenomenological consideration of the traits common to New Year festivals must therefore be supplemented by a detailed examination of the form they have taken in the context of particular cultures.³⁹

In ancient Mesopotamia, the new year was traditionally celebrated through the half-yearly *akītu* festivals, which coincided with the spring and autumn equinox respectively. On those occasions, the king's rulership was reestablished for another half year, the gods assembled to decree the fate of the world for the

39 Henninger/Antes 2005, 6590.

duration of that period and spent several days of celebration in the *akītu* house outside the city walls, after which they took renewed residence in the city's main temple by means of a spectacular procession. The ritual texts from Seleucid Uruk show that those traditions had not been altered with the development of the Anu cult; instructions have been preserved for both *akītu* festivals for Anu and for an undated, very similar one for Ištar. In other words, the fire ceremony at Uruk was not a New Year celebration, not does it display any characteristics which might lead to the conclusion that it was modelled on the *akītu* festival. However, because of its focus on another seasonal transition, namely the winter solstice, it did possess the same fundamental features: the elimination of the old and a symbolic expression of the arrival of the new. Rites were performed to destroy evils that had accumulated over the year and to purify the city's most important building—the Bīt Rēš—and the city as a whole; at the same time, a new fire was kindled and then distributed among the participants. That fire represented the renewal of the patron deity (i.e. Anu's) protection of the community and of all the participants' membership of that community.⁴⁰

Another type of renewal festival is the new fire ritual: the yearly, or at least regular rekindling of the hearths in a community's temples and households, which may or may not coincide with New Year's celebrations. Again, the fire ceremony at Seleucid Uruk incorporated the form of such a ritual, but not its practical function. As far as it is described in TU 41, the fire of the Torch was used exclusively for lighting bonfires, which could only burn outside and would die down in a matter of hours. A yearly hearth renewal festival would not have been out of place in ancient Mesopotamia, where the uninterrupted burning of the hearth fire was associated with the continued well-being of the family;⁴¹ perhaps that was in fact one of the purposes of the *kinūnu* festival, of which we still know little more than its name and its calendar throughout the millennia. However, unlike in for instance classical Greece,⁴² the hearths in Mesopotamian

40 A well-known renewal ritual which shares many aspects of the ceremony at Uruk, but does not employ the same city-wide geographical staging, is the Service of Light, the first part of the Paschal Vigil Service of the Roman Catholic Church. A candle is lit from a New Fire, carried in a solemn procession through a completely darkened church and its fire is distributed among the congregation, while words are spoken by the priest and the lay participants—the Lumen Christi and the Exsultet—which establish an associative connection between the candlelight and Jesus Christ, whose Resurrection is being celebrated. The similarity ends at the third part of the service, after the Liturgy of the Word, which involves the baptism and confirmation of all new candidates and the renewal of the baptismal vows by the rest of the congregation, after which all receive the Holy Eucharist.

41 Van der Toorn 2008, 27.

42 Parker 2005, 13–15, 404.

private houses, sanctuaries and palaces seem not to have been associated with a central, sacred fire, so the source of their replenishment did not need to be created or maintained at a temple like the Bit Rēš.

In other words, the fire ceremony was a renewal festival which had the appearance of a New Year celebration and a new fire ceremony, but was in fact neither. Moreover, its content and meaning were not only determined by the seasonal occasion of the winter solstice and the cultic activities associated with such a time of year, but also by the ritual's specific historical context: the theological fabric of the Anu cult and the political situation at Seleucid Uruk. As the authors quoted above emphasise, a phenomenological comparison between rituals which on the surface seem to share certain features only has heuristic value and is in itself not enough to understand their *Sitz im Leben*.

6.3 Comprehensive Analysis

The nocturnal fire ceremony at Hellenistic Uruk is known from only one prescriptive tablet. The contents of that tablet offer a detailed overview of the ceremony's performance and allow us to develop a plausible interpretation of its key features and their symbolic value. Many of its elements can even be traced to other Mesopotamian rituals of healing and exorcism, induction and cultic worship which are attested in contemporary as well as earlier texts. Further, the religious context in which the ritual was performed, the cult of Anu at Hellenistic Uruk, can now be reconstructed to a reasonable degree, including its development from the Neo-Babylonian period onwards, its political context in the Seleucid period and the cultural trends and religious concepts by which it was influenced, such as the antiquarianism of the later first millennium BC and the scholarly focus on the celestial sciences during that period.

The available evidence points to the conclusion that the fire ceremony was a renewal ritual, performed as the climax of a two- or three-day *eššešu* festival, i.e. a moon phase celebration—in this case for the full moon—that involved all the temples of the city. The *eššešu* festival in question probably coincided with the ideal date of the winter solstice, the 15th of month x (Ṭebētu), and continued into the night of the 16th, when the fire ceremony itself was performed. Thus, the renewal aspects of the ceremony were in all likelihood connected to that turning point of the solar year. The fire ceremony consisted primarily of a city-wide ritual purification and a distribution of new, sacred fire among all the city's temples and inhabitants, starting with the kindling of a sacred Torch atop the roof of the ziqqurra sanctuary and ending with bonfires lit at all the sanctuaries and houses of Uruk. Interwoven with those two main rituals were different

sacrifices and food offerings to the patron deities of Hellenistic Uruk, primarily a luxurious meal for the divine heavenly bodies Anu and Antu of Heaven and the five planets, which was also served on the rooftop of the ziqqurrat shrine. An associative relationship was established between the fire of the Torch, Anu of Heaven and Anu and Antu of the Bīt Rēš through the presentation of the Torch to those deities and the wording of the hymns that were sung at different moments during the celebrations. The systematic distribution of the fire of the Torch by means of bonfires from the Bīt Rēš to the other temples, then to the houses of the citizens of Uruk and finally throughout the public spaces of the city emphasised the hierarchical relationship between the people and the gods, and at the same time between all living beings, gods included, and the supreme god Anu, allfather and ruler of the universe.

That hierarchy not only existed in the religious sphere, but was also a direct factor of the division of political power at Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Uruk. The priesthood of Anu, the scholarly elite of Uruk and the city's governors and administrators were all drawn from the same group of old aristocratic families, who had risen to power at Uruk after the temple councils of Babylonia had been forcibly reorganised by Xerxes I in 484 BC. Especially in the second half of the third century BC, the local dynasty of the Aḫ'ûtu's kept all the offices of the temple administration and the representation of the Seleucid king at Uruk—except for the Greek taxation office—within the family for several generations. The fire ceremony described in the extant ritual text was intended to be performed in and around the monumental Bīt Rēš as it had been rebuilt by the ambitious Anu-uballit-Kephalon//Aḫ'ûtu in 202/1 BC. He and his father, brothers and sons, though they formed the head of the temple council, did not themselves fulfil priestly functions, but through the network of scribal education they maintained close relations with the families who did. Kindling the Torch at the high shrine of the Anu ziqqurrat, a place where only the highest-ranking priests were allowed to set foot, and giving flames of that same fire to the people for lighting bonfires was a gesture of benevolent superiority of the city's elite towards the general population and a clear visual demonstration of where the centre of power lay.

The fire ceremony's focus on the Anu ziqqurrat, which was rebuilt in the early Seleucid period, suggests that it was already performed around 300 BC. Otherwise, we unfortunately remain in the dark about the ritual's background or historical development. The use of the torch and the bonfires may point to an adaptation from a festival for Ištar, the evening star who is described as the "torch of the sky" in various literary texts, and the ceremony may equally have incorporated elements of the summer celebrations for the dead—for now, such reconstructions are still complete guesswork. What does emerge from

the present analysis, however, is that numerous rites and ritual gestures were embedded in the fire ceremony at Hellenistic Uruk that belonged to the traditional *repertoire* of the Mesopotamian ritual experts—from basic, universal elements of Mesopotamian rituals, such as purification with fire and incense, food offerings to gods and the drawing of a protective circle, to complex activities only suitable in specific contexts, such as processions and the performance of an Emesal prayer. Even if we assume that parts of it were newly designed or transformed for the purpose of the Anu cult, that process of creation and adaptation took place within the dominant ritual categories. The fire ceremony, and for that matter the entire Anu cult, were products of a highly elaborate scholarly and scribal culture that had many centuries of authoritative literature to look back upon and from which to distil ritual patterns that were experienced as meaningful through their antiquity as well as their continued everyday use.

It has become clear that a temple ritual like the fire ceremony always evokes the question of its relationship to the other official rituals—cultic and otherwise—and unwritten traditions of the same culture: the degree of similarity, influence and adaptation between them, their respective status within a certain textual corpus and the effect of historical circumstances such as regional differences and changes in cultic focus within a particular city over time. In the case of the fire ceremony, the central role of purification and renewal, the abundant celebration of the supremacy of Uruk's patron deity and the active participation of the city's entire population place it in an interesting relationship with the *akītu* festival, traditionally the most important half-yearly renewal festival of the Babylonian cultic calendar. Of course it was possible for several such festivals to be celebrated during the year, especially since the content and background of the *akītu* festivals was completely different: the gods withdrew from the city into the *akītu* house, they determined the fate of the world before and after that journey and ideally the king was present and participated actively. Much remains unclear about the *akītu* festivals of Neo- and Late Babylonian Uruk. It is uncertain whether or not they required the king to undergo the same reinvestiture rituals as in Babylon,⁴³ whether they were connected to other myths and epic poetry instead of *Enūma Eliš* and in which month of the year at Hellenistic Uruk the *akītu* celebrations for Ištar took place.⁴⁴ The question of how the *akītu* festivals, which were performed at the spring and autumn

43 The Uruk ritual texts pertaining to the *akītu* festivals (TU 39–40; TU 42+; TU 43; KAR 132; BRM IV 7; Linssen 2004, 184–214) are fragmentary and only describe processions of deities and the accompanying activities by the priests and the king, such as sprinkling water, making offerings, singing hymns and leading the gods “by the hands”.

44 TU 42+ (Linssen 2004, 238–244).

equinox, and the fire ceremony, which probably took place at the winter solstice, were understood in relation to each other within the cultic calendar of Hellenistic Uruk must also remain unanswered, but we should at least be aware of it.

Finally, the fact that certain elements of the fire ceremony are reminiscent of the ancient funerary festival in Abu may indicate that the ceremony was indeed influenced by that festival at a certain stage of its history, even if at no point the conscious choice was made that the fire ceremony should be an occasion for taking care of the ancestors and the recently deceased. Rituals can change radically in form and meaning over time; the *kispu* itself, for example, was traditionally a monthly offering of bread and water for the dead in the netherworld, but during a lunar eclipse ritual attested in a Hellenistic text it was performed for the dry riverbeds and fallow-lying fields where restless ghosts and demons might gather. The connotations with the dead remained, but the offering itself had become a symbolic gesture, not meant for actual consumption by the rivers and fields.⁴⁵ Likewise, the circle of reed standards (*urigallus*), traditionally used to form a protective barrier around an offering site of a few meters in diameter, was expanded during the Hellenistic fire ceremony to enclose the entire city of Uruk. Where the funerary aspects of the fire ceremony are concerned, it may have been the form rather than the meaning which was retained—lighting fires at people’s houses in the middle of the night and serving a festive offering to “all the gods” may well reflect a substrate of the ritual which was once related to inviting the ancestral spirits to a meal, but was no longer experienced as such. If one were to ask a citizen of Hellenistic Uruk participating in the fire ceremony whether he thought the ritual involved making contact with the dead, it would be rather like asking a modern American at Halloween whether or not she believes the dressed-up children to whom she hands out candy represent the ghosts of the ancestors. The answer would in most cases be “of course not”, even though to many cultural anthropologists and scholars of religious history the connection may seem as clear as daylight. Thus, it is useful to understand the fire ceremony of the Hellenistic Anu cult as indirectly related to Mesopotamian celebrations for the dead, but we must keep in mind that it may not have been seen as such from the emic perspective.

45 BRM IV 6 obv. 19’–20’ (Linssen 2004, 306).

Summary

The primary aim of this study was to develop an analysis of one of the temple rituals of Hellenistic Uruk, the nocturnal fire ceremony known from the prescriptive ritual text TU 41. The interpretation of that ritual covers Chapter 3, 4, 5, and 6 of this book, but firstly we have examined its historical background and religious context in Chapter 1 and 2. The fire ceremony was part of the cult of the sky god An/Anu, which emerged at Uruk during the later Achaemenid period and flourished during the Seleucid and early Parthian period. To be able to interpret the ritual's *Sitz im Leben*, it is essential to understand the historical factors that played a role in the shaping of the Anu cult.

During nearly the entire three thousand years that Sumerian and later Babylonian deities were worshipped at Uruk, the city's patron deity was the goddess Inanna/Ištar. Although she remained one of the most important members of the Urukian pantheon during the Late Babylonian period, it is very difficult to chart the extent of the influence of her cult on that of Anu. Hardly any ritual texts pertaining to her worship have survived, while the handful of administrative texts from the Hellenistic Anu temple, the Bīt Rēš, can hardly be used for comparison with the enormous Neo-Babylonian archive extant from Ištar's temple, the Eanna. The shared history of the two cults begins with the earliest attestations of the worship of An and Inanna in the late fourth millennium BC, when the Eanna and the so-called White Temple were built, and continues into the third and early second millennium, when An and Inanna were worshipped together in the Eanna. Probably around the mid-third millennium, the mythological tradition developed according to which the Eanna had first belonged to Anu and was later appropriated by Ištar, as in the Old Babylonian composition 'Inanna Fetches the First House of Heaven', or given to her by Anu as a wedding gift, as in the Middle Babylonian 'Exaltation of Ištar'.

Under the Old Babylonian king Samsuiluna, the citizens and cults of Uruk were forced to move north to the city of Kiš and were only able to return during the Kassite, i.e. Middle Babylonian period, when the 'Exaltation of Ištar' was composed. After that, the cult of Anu disappears from the textual record. In the eighth century BC, the statues of Ištar and her divine companion Nanāya were abducted, allegedly replaced by "foreign" and "improper" goddesses and eventually returned, presumably by Aššurbanipal and Nebuchadnezzar II respectively. The turbulent fates of those statues later became the subject of different literary texts from Hellenistic Uruk dealing with the correct and incorrect behaviour of kings towards the cults of the city (e.g. the 'Uruk Prophecy' and the colophon of TU 38; see below). Signs for a reemerging interest in Anu are

first detectable under the Neo-Assyrian king Esarhaddon, who rebuilt the dilapidated Anu ziqqurrat, which had once housed the White Temple, and probably also the accompanying ground-level temple on the so-called Old Terrace. Under the rule of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, Anu possessed a small, independent sanctuary at Uruk, but the gradual increase of personal names bearing the theophoric element Anu during that period shows a greater interest in the deity than his minimal daily worship might suggest. After the Babylonian revolts against Xerxes I in 484 BC led the latter to discharge all Northern Babylonian priestly families from the temple councils of Babylonia, the organisation of the Eanna finally collapsed and its use as a temple complex came to an end. The scarce evidence from the later Achaemenid period reveals that the priesthood of Ištar was replaced by a group of priest-scholars from local elite families, who more and more frequently bore Anu-names and began to develop an organised cult for Anu and his spouse Antu in a sanctuary named the Bīt Rēš.

By 300 BC, the cult appears to have been completely functional. Extant copies of several ritual texts date to the early and mid-third century BC and by 244 BC the first archaeologically attested renovation of the Bīt Rēš took place under the governor (*šaknu*) Anu-uballit//Aḥ'ūtu, who had been given the second name Nikarchos by king Antiochos II. Forty-two years later, the head of the temple administration (*rab ša rēš āli*) Anu-uballit//Aḥ'ūtu, whose second name was Kephalon, again rebuilt the Bīt Rēš and the new temple for Ištar, the Irigal. He transformed both into magnificent monumental structures that were mostly traditionally Babylonian in style, but bore a Greek frieze alongside the tops of their walls and were of a spectacular size that was more in keeping with Hellenistic trends than with earlier temple architecture in other Babylonian cities. Apart from the Bīt Rēš and the Irigal, a large structure with a courtyard and numerous shrines has been excavated to the northeast of the city and identified as the *akītu* house known from the Uruk ritual texts. That identification remains uncertain, however, and the building may not have been in use as a sanctuary beyond the early Seleucid period. Finally, several shrines in the Eanna were reconstructed and the Eanna ziqqurrat was rebuilt completely and greatly expanded. It was probably used in conjunction with the Irigal, which had no ziqqurrat of its own.

The question whether or not the Seleucid kings contributed financially to the building projects at Uruk remains unsolved for lack of conclusive evidence, but at least a great part of the renovation costs must have been carried by the population of Uruk itself. A building inscription by a Seleucid king, like the Antiochos Cylinder found at Borsippa, is conspicuously absent from Uruk, while instead we find inscriptions by Nikarchos and Kephalon themselves. During Nikarchos' governorship, king Seleukos II was engaged in the Third Syrian

War against Ptolemy III. When Kephalon began renovating the temples, king Antiochos III may have contributed money from his war booty from Bactria; on the other hand, the wealthy Aḥ'ûtu's had by that time managed to appropriate all the important functions in the temple administration of Uruk and Kephalon profiles himself in his inscriptions as something of a local ruler. His and Nikarchos' inscriptions may dedicate the temple renovations to the lives of the kings—a standard phrase in Hellenistic cuneiform texts, also attested in the Astronomical Diaries in the context of offerings by state officials—but in practice, the Seleucid overlords seem to have kept at a distance from the cultic affairs of the southern Babylonian city.

Apart from the new sanctuaries for Anu, Antu, Ištar and their respective entourage, the development of the Anu cult can be reconstructed in terms of its theological and ideological framework and how such concepts were rooted in the intellectual soil cultivated by the priest-scholars in Hellenistic Babylonia. That scholarly environment becomes tangible through the three major cuneiform libraries from Late Achaemenid and Hellenistic Uruk: the private libraries of the Šangû-Ninurta and Ekur-zākir families, who lived in the same house in grid square U18 around respectively 400 and 300 BC, and the professional library of the *kalû* priests of the Bīt Rēš dating to ca. 190–160 BC. The profession of *kalû* was monopolised by the Sîn-lēqe-unninni family, who had also stored a small family archive in the same place as the *kalûtu* tablets. The Šangû-Ninurta and Ekur-zākir libraries in particular, which mostly consist of material used for and produced during the cuneiform schooling that the elite boys of Uruk enjoyed at that house, show the wide range of literary, religious and scientific subjects studied by Hellenistic Babylonian scholars and the continuing innovative nature of their work, especially in the fields of astronomy, astrology and medicine. The colophons of such texts demonstrate that most Urukean scholars were active in important priestly functions in the cult of Anu as well as in different sectors of the celestial sciences, a discipline which underwent a growth spurt in the second half of the first millennium BC. Also, through the scribal tutoring system, the priest-scholars formed a close network which they shared with members of the political elite such as the Aḥ'ûtu's, who in turn were in regular contact with the Seleucid court and with Greek officials, merchants and the like who lived in and around Uruk.

Different ideological aspects of the Anu cult that were developed during the many years of its creation include the 'antiquarian theology' which inspired the selection of new deities for the Urukean pantheon from the canonical god list *An* = *Anum*; the local theological trend to envision Anu and Antu as supreme, all-encompassing divine beings, a centuries-old phenomenon in Mesopotamian scholarship that may have been employed to endow the divine

pair with the universal character of imperial gods like Marduk and perhaps Zeus; and the relationship of the Bīt Rēš to older Mesopotamian temples in terms of lay-out and ceremonial names for gates and sanctuaries. The similarity of the Bīt Rēš to the Esagil of Marduk at Babylon does not imply an emulation of the Marduk cult in particular, but the adoption of general Mesopotamian notions about ruler gods and the characteristics of their temples, which are ultimately derived from the Ekur at Nippur.

Further, a number of text sources from Seleucid Uruk serves the purpose of anchoring the Anu cult in a remote, partly mythical past, so as to legitimate its revival by endowing it with great antiquity. On the one hand, the archaic background of the Anu cult was a historical fact, since it is attested from the early third millennium onward and an earlier Sumerian temple for An had actually once stood on the ruins on which the Bīt Rēš was finally built. On the other hand, the Hellenistic texts embed that history in a narrative about the fate of the Urukean cults throughout the centuries, which is constructed to demonstrate the importance of the Anu cult and its priesthood. Thus, texts such as the Kephalon building inscription and the 'Uruk List of Kings and Sages' trace the worship of Anu back to the time before the Flood, when the mythological sage Oannès came from the sea to teach mankind about civilization, while the 'Uruk Prophecy', the 'Šulgi Chronicle' and the colophon of TU 38 deal with named and unnamed historical kings who allegedly mistreated the statues of Uruk's goddesses—a reference to the abovementioned abduction and return of Ištar and Nanāya—and the cultic ordinances of Anu. The 'Uruk Prophecy' and TU 38 conclude with the triumphant reemergence of the Anu cult during the early Hellenistic period.

The remainder of this study is devoted to the analysis of the nocturnal fire ceremony described in TU 41, starting with the publication history of TU 41, a new transcription and translation of the tablet, and a consideration of the time of the year in which the ritual was probably performed. TU 41 itself only provides the date: the night of the 16th and the morning of the 17th. During that night, a night vigil (*bayātu*) was performed. An analysis of all the Neo-Babylonian, Hellenistic and Parthian administrative documents that record the *bayātu* shows that it only occurred during the winter months IX, X, XI or XII, which limits the performance of the nocturnal fire ceremony to that same period. Further, the list of daily offerings for the cults of Hellenistic Uruk, TU 38, refers to a monthly offering to Anu and Antu of Heaven and the seven major heavenly bodies, and to another such offering which took place yearly on the 16th of month x (Ṭebētu) and may thus have been more exclusive or festive. Since that offering was one of the main features of the nocturnal ceremony, but was accompanied

by various other ritual activities that continued the entire night, it is very likely that it is exactly that ritual to which TU 38 refers.

The date 16-x places the ceremony one night after the ideal full moon and the ideal date of the winter solstice. Such ideal dates belong to a simplified system for the phases of the moon and the lengths of the seasons which was developed in the early first millennium BC and still provided useful points of reference for the Babylonian cultic calendars into the late first millennium, since the dates of the full moon, the equinoxes and the solstices fluctuated too much on the secular calendar. The nocturnal ceremony on 16-x probably took place on the last night of a long *eššešu* festival, which in Babylonia took place around new, half and full moon each month and could last several days, and was connected to the winter solstice as one of the major turning points of the solar year. Several ritual and commentary texts suggest that the solstices were considered to be of cultic and cosmological importance at Late Babylonian Borsippa and Babylon, so a similar focus on them in the cults at Hellenistic Uruk can be considered reasonably likely.

Chapter 5 offers a step-by-step analysis of all the different aspects of the nocturnal ceremony recorded in TU 41, including ritual activities, locations and participants. The division of the ritual into different discrete elements is based on the text of TU 41 itself. Subjects that receive more elaborate treatment are the bull-and-sheep-offering that was performed before and during the regular evening and morning meals of the gods of the Bīt Rēš; the evidence for worship at ziqqurrat shrines in the first millennium BC; the history of the worship of stars and planets in Mesopotamian religion, with again a special focus on the first millennium BC; the use of torches and braziers in various Mesopotamian religious festivals; the *lumahhu* priest; the procession of the Torch in and around the Bīt Rēš and the breaching of *harû* vessels before Anu and Antu; the slaughter of a bull and touching of the right and left side of a bonfire with its shoulder; the significance of thresholds and crossroads in Mesopotamian and other ancient cultures; and the participation of citizens in Mesopotamian religious and other public festivals. The general conclusion that can be drawn from the material presented in those two chapters is that nearly every aspect of the nocturnal ceremony is also attested in other, older Mesopotamian ritual texts and points to a continuation of Mesopotamian cultic and ritual traditions at Hellenistic Uruk. The only exceptions are the offerings and hymns for divine heavenly bodies in the context of the regular temple cult, the slaughter of a bull whose right shoulder is cut off and used to touch both sides of a bonfire, and most importantly the sequence of activities which I consider to be the core of the entire ritual: the kindling of a sacred Torch at the rooftop of the sanctuary on the Anu ziqqurrat, with which a procession was

made in and around the Bīt Rēš and whose fire was then distributed by means of other torches and bonfires throughout the temples, houses, streets and gates of the city. I propose to call that central part of the ritual the fire ceremony.

Chapter 6 provides a synthesis of all the findings in the previous chapter and offers an interpretation of the fire ceremony's organisation and its ritual framework, the cosmological and social relationships expressed and reconfirmed by it, and the most important rites performed and symbolism employed for that purpose. Of special interest is the similarity and possible connection between the fire ceremony and Mesopotamian torchlight festivals for the dead, which are primarily attested between the Early Dynastic and the Old Babylonian period. Those festivals, in particular the elaborate yearly version of the monthly *kispum* offering for the ancestors in the netherworld, took place in the hottest period of summer, at the end of month v (Abu). That tradition does not appear to have changed in the first millennium BC, although only the monthly *kispu* is attested in the sources from that period, not the yearly festival. There are some indications, dating between the third and first millennium, that month x (Ṭebētu) was also a suitable period for a *kispu*, but they are few and far between. Thus, any connection with the fire ceremony at Hellenistic Uruk, which presumably took place in the middle of Ṭebētu, remains conjectural and indirect at best; nonetheless, it is very well possible that the festival for the dead influenced the shape of the fire ceremony or contributed to its historical development, even though its funerary aspects were not or no longer an explicit part of the celebrations of that night.

Finally, the two central elements of the fire ceremony itself were an exorcism and ritual purification of the entire city by means of a divinely sanctioned fire and a systematic distribution of that same fire over all the sanctuaries and homes of Uruk. After the evening meal for the gods of the Bīt Rēš and for the divine entities in the night sky, which belonged to the temple's regular cultic observances, the fire ceremony began when the Torch was kindled by the *lumaḥḥu* priest on the rooftop of the ziqqurrat sanctuary. It was first presented to the star Anu of Heaven by the *lumaḥḥu* priest, then brought down by a senior temple enterer into the Bīt Rēš, placed opposite the cella of Anu at the suitably named Place of Brightness and finally presented to Antu in her cella. During those moments of contact with the patron deities of Uruk, the Torch's fire acquired the divine power necessary to cleanse their temple and subsequently the entire city of the taint of demonic influences and inappropriate human behaviour.

The purification of the Bīt Rēš was performed by means of a procession of the Torch through the building and then a circumambulation around it, which sealed off the temple complex against evil forces. Then the fire of the Torch was

transmitted to a different medium, a bonfire lit in the Ubšukkinnaku of the Bīt Rēš. The bonfire was touched on the right and the left side with the shoulder of a bull which had been slaughtered beside the Dais of Destinies—a ritual which remains difficult to interpret, since it is unknown whether the shoulder was eaten afterwards by prebend holders or regarded as inedible. The fire of the bonfire and thus of the Torch itself was brought by means of other torches first to the other temples of Uruk and then to the houses of the citizens. At each of those places another bonfire was lit. Thus, a central, sacred fire was distributed over all the cultic shrines and among all the inhabitants of Uruk, who furthermore participated actively in the ceremony by offering a festive meal to all the gods and singing the hymns ‘The Beautiful Image Has Come Out’ and ‘Anu Shines Forth Through All The Lands’, which had also been sung by the priests of the other temples when lighting their bonfires. Finally, bonfires were lit by the city guard in the streets, at the crossroads and at the city gates, a continuation of the purification rites which drove the unwanted elements further away from the city and finally beyond the city wall. Reed standards (*urigallus*) were then placed beside the city gates in order to create a protective circle around the entire city of Uruk.

The ritual makes extensive use of fire symbolism, in particular through the powerful image of the single Torch lit atop the ziqqurrat in the nocturnal darkness and the gradual spreading of its fire throughout the city. The presentation of the Torch to Anu of Heaven and Anu of the Bīt Rēš establishes an associative connection between the fire of the Torch and the patron deity of Uruk, which is supported by the incipits of the hymns performed at various moments during the ceremony, especially ‘The Beautiful Image Has Come Out’ and ‘Anu Shines Forth Through All The Lands’. The participation of the citizens of Uruk and especially the distribution of fire add a sociopolitical dimension, since that distribution followed a hierarchical order which emphasised the power and authority of Anu over the other gods and their worshippers, and at the same time of the priesthood and temple organisation of the Bīt Rēš, and thereby the Urukian intellectual and political elite, over the rest of the city. The distribution of sacred fire is not attested elsewhere in the modest extant corpus of Mesopotamian city festivals, but is a well-known phenomenon from numerous other cultures and usually connected to a moment of calendrical and/or cosmological renewal.

The combined evidence of religious fire symbolism, the multiplication and distribution of a single, sacred fire throughout the community, and an extensive, city-wide exorcism as central elements of the fire ceremony at Hellenistic Uruk allow for the conclusion that it was in fact a renewal festival for a turning point of the cultic calendar. Strong circumstantial evidence suggests that the

turning point in question was the winter solstice. There is little evidence that the solstices were important events for the Mesopotamian temple calendars in earlier periods, but that changed in the Late Babylonian period at least at Babylon and Borsippa and may have changed at Uruk as well, perhaps as another result of the interplay between astrology and religious practice in Hellenistic Babylonia. However, even if in the future sources are unearthed which prove that the date of the fire ceremony was at another time of the year, that does not change its central form and meaning as a renewal celebration, expressed through an elaborate purification of the entire city and a distribution of sacred fire among the city's inhabitants—a phenomenon thus far unique to Babylonian culture.

The fire ceremony raises many questions which cannot be answered at this point, but should be taken into consideration during future research on the cults of Seleucid Uruk and Late Babylonian religion in general. How was the ceremony related to the *akītu* festivals, which were celebrated at the spring and autumn equinox and were traditionally the Babylonian purification and renewal festivals *par excellence*? If the fire ceremony was indeed performed at the winter solstice, it may have been regarded as complementary to the *akītu* festivals and may even have had a counterpart at the summer solstice. Alternatively, it may have replaced one or both of the *akītu* festivals at a certain point. In both cases, however, it is remarkable that there is no single mention of the king in TU 41. The latter's role in the *akītu* festival was essential in Babylon, but was that also the case in other Babylonian cities, where he could, of course, never be present at the same time. The ritual texts for the *akītu* festivals of Hellenistic Uruk describe the king's activities as if his participation was self-evident, but did any Seleucid king ever travel to Uruk in person? At a more fundamental level, the relationship between the extant Hellenistic copies of ritual texts, including TU 41 and the tablets pertaining to the *akītu* festivals, and the actual cultic calendar of Seleucid Uruk is still very unclear. They are unmistakably products of their own time, containing many elements that could not possibly have been present in pre-Seleucid variants, and were probably compiled on the occasion of the third-century temple renovations; nonetheless, there is no possibility at present to even estimate how much of their content predates the Late Babylonian period, and when and how often the rituals they describe were actually performed. Those issues can only be resolved if more material is found and studied which can elucidate the historical development of the Anu cult at Hellenistic Uruk.

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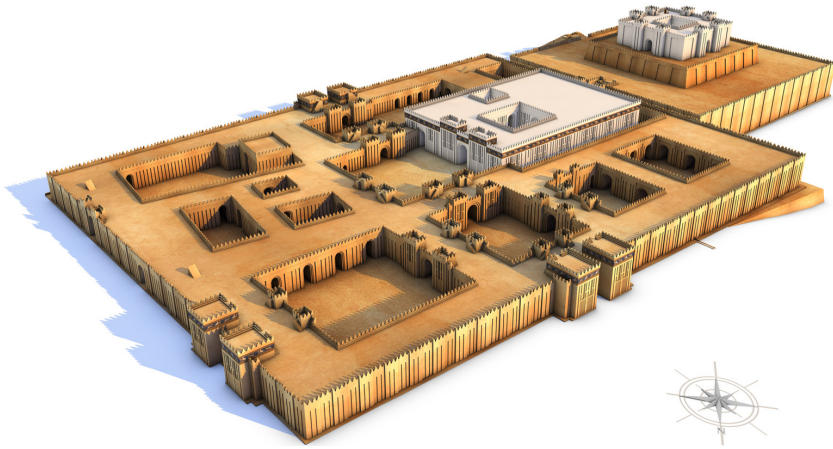


FIGURE 1 *3D reconstruction of the Bit Rēš and the Anu ziqqurrat as built by Anu-uballiṭ-Kephalon*

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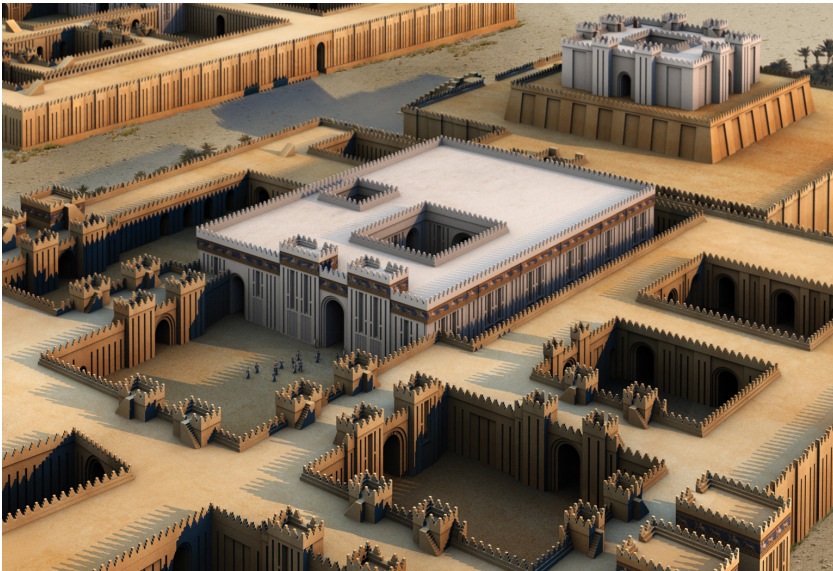


FIGURE 2 *3D reconstruction of the Bit Rēš and the Anu ziqqurrat, zoomed in on the Anu-Antu-sanctuary*

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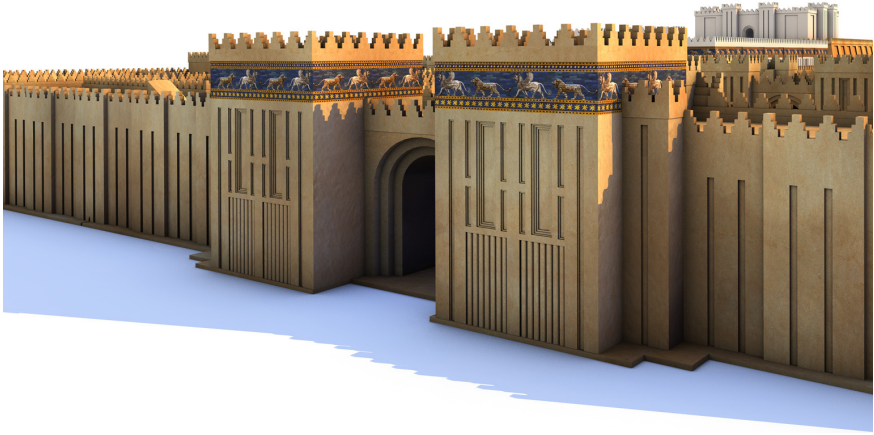


FIGURE 3 *3D reconstruction of the northwestern gate of the Bit Rēš with the Kephalon frieze*
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