The Three Faces of Inanna: an Approach to her Polysemic Figure in her descent to the Netherworld.

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JOURNAL OF NORTHWEST SEMITIC LANGUAGES

VOLUME 44/2

2018

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CONTENTS

Rodrigo Cabrera (University of Buenos Aires / IMHICIHU, CONICET)

THE THREE FACES OF INANNA: AN APPROACH TO HER POLYSEMIC FIGURE IN HER DESCENT TO THE NETHERWORLD[1]

ABSTRACT

This paper will analyse the polysemous figure and liminal role of the Sumerian goddess of war and love, Inanna, which is traced in diverse mythical compositions. In particular, Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld will be studied, since in this text from the Old Babylonian period (second millennium BCE) the three aspects that make up the divine personality of the deity can be recognised, i.e. as dea dolens*, 'betrayer', and* mater dolorosa*. An approach to the story is proposed which considers the roles performed by the other characters and the semantic (or content) and syntactic (or structural) dimensions that organise the narrative.*

> «Und siehe! Apollo konnte nicht ohne Dionysus leben!»
> (F. Nietszche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, 40)

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1.   INTRODUCTION

The non-Western systems of thought claimed to account for the dualism or an antagonistic structural principle, necessary in the conception and maintenance of the cosmos, which was expressed through different mythical archetypes, e.g. the benevolent god versus the evil god, God and the matter, the formless creator demiurge and the rival co-creator (García Bazán 1978:21 ff.). From the Phenomenology and Comparative History of Religions, dualism has been approached through different perspectives and focused either on the Ancient Near Eastern and / or classical antiquity societies or on the peoples studied by Ethnography.

In the Ancient Near Eastern religious systems, the dualism of principles that coexist simultaneously in many cases manifested itself in a single god with juxtaposed dimorphic features. In the Mesopotamia religion, a series of divine prototypes embodied the dualistic coexistence of ontological foundations. An example of this is found in the figure of the goddess Inanna (Jacobsen 1963).

In this paper, *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld* (henceforth *ID*) will be analysed to recognise the regenerative and destructive features that characterise the Mesopotamian female deity of love and war in this text. The poem places emphasis on three distinct roles incarnated by Inanna: illogically, the divinity appears as a contradictory (Vanstiphout 1984), feminine / masculine (Groneberg 1986; Harris 1991), and heavenly / infernal goddess, which in the myth is at the same time *dea dolens*, 'betrayer', and *mater dolorosa*.

The symbolic specificities of the role of Inanna in the mythical context will be discussed to show her structural invisibility or liminal character, which worked as a guiding principle in the Mesopotamian religion (Jacobsen 1963). The untimely personality of the deity, manifested in various Sumerian and Akkadian texts, appears as the pattern of *ID*. The figure of Inanna could be rethought in relation to the notion of the "Dionysian" (*Dionysischen*) in opposition to the "Apollonian" (*Apollinischen*) (Nietzsche 1988:25 ff.). The Nietzschean antithesis Apollo / Dionysus, which points out the duality between the harmonic / rational art of sculpture and the non-harmonic / irrational art of music, can be used to describe Inanna as a paradoxical divinity that reconciled this pair of opposites. In the words of Nietzsche:

> An ihre beiden Kunstgottheiten, Apollo und Dionysus, knüpft sich unsere Erkenntniss, dass in der griechischen Welt ein ungeheurer Gegensatz, nach Ursprung und Zielen, zwischen der

Kunst des Bildners, der apollinischen, und der unbildlichen Kunst der Musik, als der des Dionysus, besteht: beide so verschiedne Triebe gehen neben einander her, zumeist im offnen Zwiespalt mit einander und sich gegenseitig zu immer neuen kräftigeren Geburten reizend, um in ihnen den Kampf jenes Gegensatzes zu perpetuiren, den das gemeinsame Wort ‚Kunst' nur scheinbar überbrückt; bis sie endlich, durch einen metaphysischen Wunderakt des hellenischen ‚Willens' mit einander gepaart erscheinen und in dieser Paarung zuletzt das ebenso dionysische als apollinische Kunstwerk der attischen Tragödie erzeugen. (1988:25-26)

2. *INANNA'S DESCENT TO THE NETHERWORLD*

The tablets in the Sumerian language that contain *ID* belong to the Old Babylonian period (c. 1900-1600 BCE), although there are fragments from the Ur III (c. 2200-2000 BCE), Early Old Babylonian (c.2000-1900 BCE), and even the Neo-Babylonian periods (c. 626-539 BCE). The structural elements of the text are related to other mythical stories of Mesopotamia (Wolkenstein & Kramer 1983:52-73).[2]

ID is presented as one of the great narratives of the Mesopotamian tradition, which begins to be intertextually formulated from other texts and social practices since the middle of the third millennium BCE (Cabrera 2015), as has been pointed out by other authors (Sladek 1974; Katz 1995, 1996). As Selz contends, "[t]he myth(s) which are transmitted in *ID* shape the worldview of the Mesopotamians" (2017:283). In his analysis of *ID*, Alster (2011) proposes a series of intertextual links with other Sumerian stories, e.g. *Dumuzi and Geštinanna* and *Dumuzi's Dream*, and affirms that *ID* is the result of diverse earlier compositions like hymns, incantations, popular and humoristic stories that acquired their final form in the context of the schools of scribes.

---

2   *ID* has been studied and published by different authors since the beginning of the 20th century. There are isolated publications of tablets of *ID* such as those of King (1902), Langdon (1914, 1916), and Poebel (1914), followed by the first compilations of the story by Kramer (1937, 1950a and b, 1951, 1966, 1980), Falkenstein (1944, 1954, 1968), Witzel (1945, 1952), Jacobsen (1962, 1976, 1987), and Wolkenstein & Kramer (1983). Nevertheless, the doctoral thesis of Sladek (1974) has been the first great systematisation of *ID* and, more recently, there is the compilation of the narrative in *ETCSL* (1998-2006).

In *ID*, the descent of the goddess of love and war to the "Land of No Return" or *Kurnugia* is narrated. In her journey, Inanna goes through seven sanctuaries and descends to the Netherworld to seize the throne from her sister Ereškigal, the "Queen of the dead". Before journeying to the Land of No Return, she warns her vizier Ninšubur that if she (Inanna) does not return, she (Ninšubur) is to ask for help from the gods Enlil, Nanna, or Enki respectively.

Later, Inanna goes down to the Netherworld and meets Neti, the chief gatekeeper of the *Kurnugia* and servant of Ereškigal. The deity of the darkness and the realm of the dead orders Neti to open the seven gates of the Netherworld to Inanna, who, when passing through each gate, is stripped of her ceremonial attire. Finally, when she is naked in front of her sister, she is brought to trial by the Anunna, who condemn her to death.

Ninšubur, seeing that her mistress has not returned from the Netherworld, runs in search of Enlil, Nanna, and Enki. The latter agrees to help her and is moved by the disappearance of the goddess. He creates two asexual beings, the *kurĝara* and the *galatura*, who accompany Ninšubur to the Land of No Return in search of Inanna. When they recover the corpse of the deity, they give her back her life and Inanna can undertake her return to the world of the living, but she must leave someone in her place.

When she returns to Uruk, she finds her consort Dumuzi occupying her throne and unconcerned by her absence; thereby, she gives him to the *galla*, who had escorted her to that city. The shepherd is imprisoned and taken to the *Kurnugia*.

Dumuzi, gripped by grief, implores the god Utu, brother of Inanna, to rescue him from that bloody fate. The divinity of the sun sympathizes with the pain of the shepherd and allows him to return if he leaves someone to replace him. Consequently, Dumuzi can only stay on the Earth for half a year, while his sister Geštinanna, the goddess of wine, although not explicitly mentioned in the story, takes his place in the world of the dead. Thus, the deity of the shepherds must descend cyclically to the Land of No Return so that his sister is reborn every year in the realm of the living (Kramer 1966 and 1980).

3.   *THE TREMENDOUS: SYMBOL OF VENERATION IN MESOPOTAMIA*

In Sumerian, the idea of "fear" is linked to the term ni_2 (𒉌), equivalent to Akkadian *puluḫtu* (ePSD N; *CAD* P:505). The word ni_2 also means "aura" and, in various literary texts, the deities appear dressed in a

"fearsome radiance" that causes simultaneous awe and devotion. This radiance associated with reverential fear is called m e - l a m$_2$ (*melammu*) (Krebernik 1993-1995:35) and has been analysed first by Oppenheim (1943) and, later, by Emelianov (2004 and 2010).

For example, some words that are composed with the term ni$_2$ are: n i $_2$ g a l g u r $_3$ (*namrirrī našû*), n i $_2$ g u r $_3$ and n i $_2$ ḫ u š g u r $_3$ (*rašubbatu našû*), which mean "to be clad in awesome luminosity"; n i $_2$ RI (*puluḫta ramû*), "to inspire fear"; n i $_2$ t e / t e ĝ $_3$ (*palāḫu; šahātu*), "to fear", "to become afraid"; n i $_2$ u r $_4$ (*arāru*), "to be scared"; n i $_2$ - g a l / ĝ a l $_2$ (*namrīru; namurratu*), "awe-inspiring radiance"; n i $_2$ - ḫ u š (*rašubbatu*), "terrifying appearance" (for all meanings, see ePSD N).

As for the divine character of "terror" or, rather, the capacity to instill fright and reverential fear, it can be affirmed that although it is a prerogative of the deities, in many cases it is shared with the kings (Emelianov 2004). Thus, an eloquent fragment postulates about Marduk: *pu-ul-ḫa-a-tu ḫaššassina elišu kamra*: "the fifty Awes are heaped on him (Marduk)" (*CAD* P:506); and another passage poses in relation to Ninurta: *rabâtu pul-ḫat-su eli ilī*: "his (Ninurta's) awesomeness is greater than (that of) the (other) gods" (*CAD* P:506-507).

In effect, Inanna embodied the coeternity of juxtaposed structuring principles as an archetype, through the *mysterium tremendum* or sensation of smallness and fear before an inaccessible omnipotent power and of *mysterium fascinans*, i.e. when the shudder before the divinity translates into veneration or respect (Otto 2014), both associated with the term n i $_2$ / *puluḫtu*.

It can be interpreted, through the mythical representations of the deity of love and war, how the tremendous aspects linked to her personality were highlighted. However, in *ID,* other obvious characteristics of the same can be recognised; her ineffable and destructive character yields to her unarmed personifications, and the goddess, who is shown, at first, in an untimely and Dionysian manner, is presented symbolically transgressed.

4.   THE ICONOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF INANNA AND IŠTAR

The iconography associated with Inanna is already recognised in the archaic Uruk period (fourth millennium BCE), whose name in administrative inscriptions is represented by a reed bundle with the upper ends bent (𒀭𒈹) preceded by the divine determinative (✳) or sign A N (*ATU* 208; *MEA* 103; Wilcke 1976-1980:75) (*Figure 1*), in accordance with the image of the deity

in different impressions of cylinder seals (*Figure 2*). Other symbols used to represent Inanna were the ring-post with streamer – which is the same as the reed bundle and is represented in the archaic Uruk period as the sign M U Š₃ (⟨symbol⟩) (*ATU* 208; Van Dijk 2016:29) – and the ring-post without streamer – represented by the sign L A G A R (⟨symbol⟩)(*ATU* 210; Van Dijk 2016:29). In accord with Van Dijk, "[t]he ring-post has traditionally been identified as a door- or gate-post of a reed hut made of a reed bundle with the upper ends bent to form a loop and with the ends of the reeds forming the 'streamer'" (2016:31).
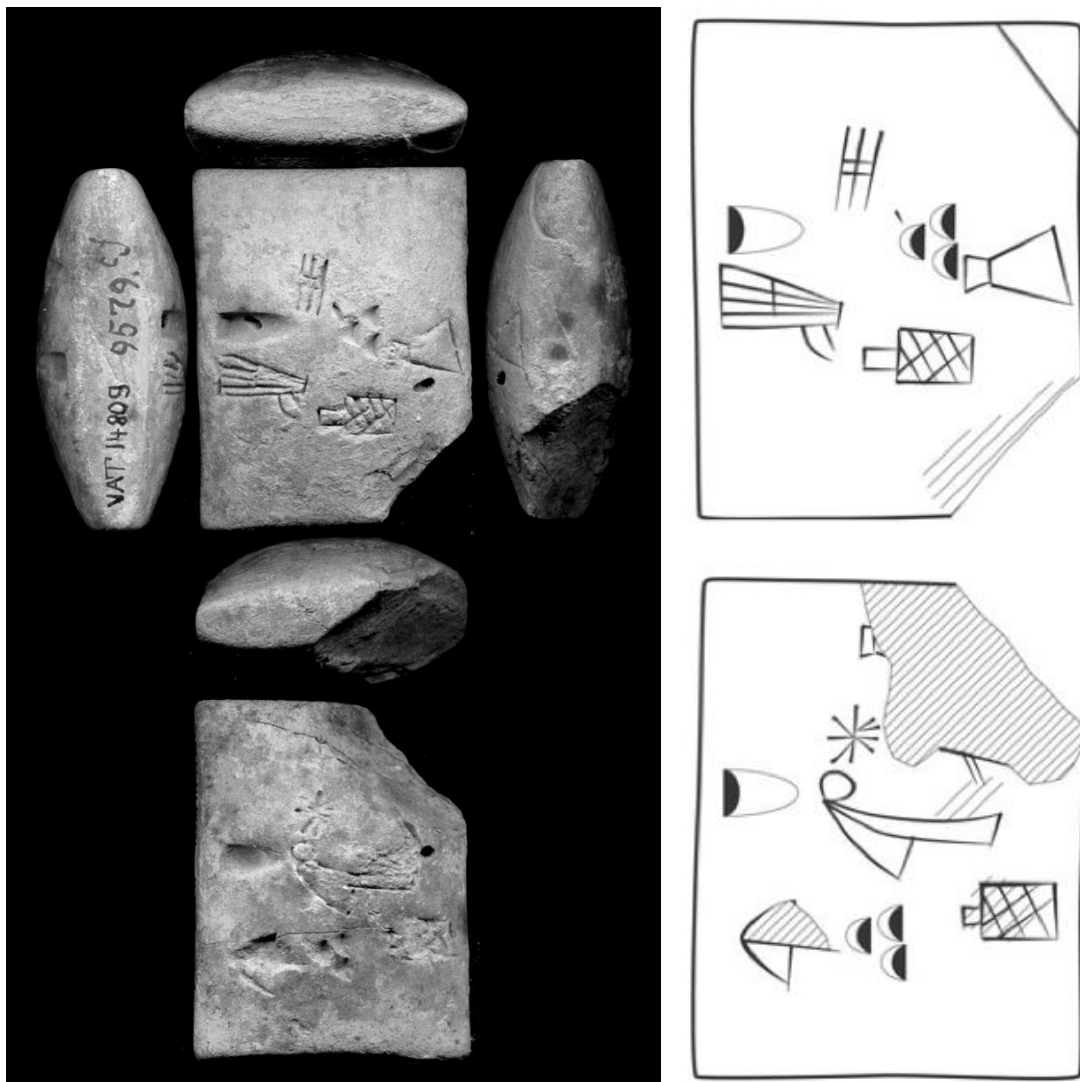
Figure 1: The pictogram M U Š₃ in the tablet VAT 14809 (Uruk IV period)
(CDLI P 1329)
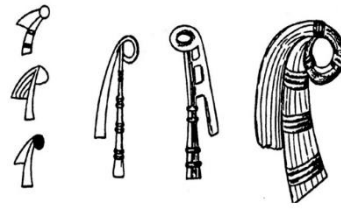
Figure 2: The symbol of Inanna from the Uruk period
(Szarzyńska 1997:150, fig. 1)

In this period, the most significant artistic representation of Inanna is the Uruk Vase (*Figure 3*), in which a priestess may be represented, assuming the role of the deity (Collins 1994:108-109). Likewise, the provision of goods to the temple is identified therein as regular offerings to Inanna.

Figure 3: Uruk Vase (full and top registers)
(Strommenger & Hirmer 1962:figs. 19 and 20)

According to the analysis that Jacobsen (1963) makes about the name "Inanna", a genitive construction can be recognised. The name of the goddess derives from the term n i n - a n . a (k), i.e. "Lady of Heaven" (Jacobsen 1963:n. 6; Selz 2000:29).[3] Likewise, the cuneiform sign can take the meaning of m u š l a n u, which is broken down grammatically i n - n i n o n i n$_9$, an honorary epithet of some goddesses (Jacobsen 1963:n. 6). When it is translated by Akkadian *irnina*, i.e. "Victoria", "suggests perhaps a meaning such as 'conqueress'" (Jacobsen 1963:n. 6). In fact, the etymology of the Semitic name allows the new aspect given to the goddess to be discerned, which would have become a warlike symbol through the theonym "Ištar" (Jacobsen 1963:n. 6).

There are several cylinder seals where the naturalistic style of the preceding periods disappears in favour of another more humanised style and, therefore, where certain mythological patterns are evident, the symbols connected to Inanna could account for the adscription of a priesthood in charge of her cult (*Figure 4*).

---

3   −a (k) is the declension of the genitive in Sumerian and (k) would only be found if the following word started with a vowel. *A posteriori*, the term loses the first n-, resulting in i n - a n . a (k). Another reading of the sign can be i n a n n a . k, n i n n i$_6$, or i n n i n, and be employed as a determinative for the names of the goddesses associated with fertility (*MEA* 103; Wilcke 1976-1980:75). Also, in the lexical lists, it can be found a wide variety of names associated with Inanna: ^{d}INNIN, ^{d}i n - n i n, ^{d}i n - n i - n a, i - n i - e n - n a, e n - n i n, ^{d}e n - n i - n a, ^{d}i n - n a - n a, i n - n a - n a, i n - n a - a n - n a, n a - n a, n i - i n, n i n, n i - i n - n i, ^{d}n i n$^?$- n i - n a, ^{d}n i n - a n - n a, n i - i n - n a - n a, ^{d}i r - n i - n a (Gelb 1960).
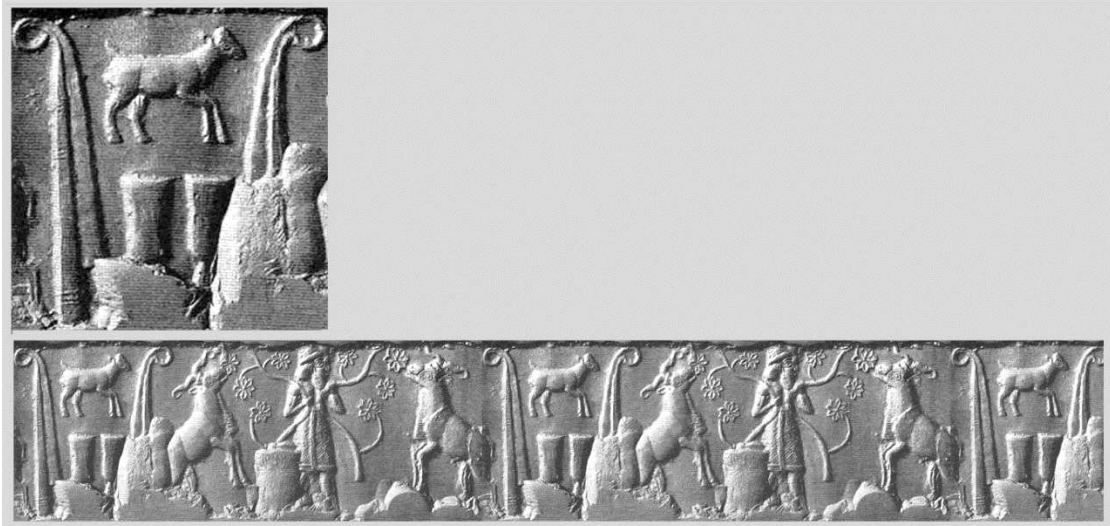
*Figure 4: Inanna symbol on a cylinder seal from the Uruk period
(Frankfort 1939:pl. IIIa)*

The representation of shrines in association with the symbols of the Mesopotamian goddess of love and war are found on several cylinder seals (Van Dijk 2016:31) (*Figure 5a-b*; *f-g*). The scenes of a shepherd feeding the herd are linked to the symbol of Inanna (*Figure 5e*), as well as those that show the delivering of gifts to the temple of the goddess (*Figure 5a*; *c-d*). In addition, another motif associated with Inanna is the "ringed pole", which is represented by the sign N U N (𒈦), i.e. "prince" (*MEA* 87). When N U N is succeeded by L A G A R, i.e. N U N . L A G A R, it can be read i m m a l $_2$, "(wild) cow", an appellation of Inanna (Veldhuis 2002:70 and n. 24).[4]

---

4   See the analysis on the "ringed pole", equivalent to the N U N sign, in Van Dijk (2016:29 ff. and figs. U21, U22, U23, and U33). Cf. Van Dijk-Coombes (forthcoming) for more on the representation of standards in the late Uruk/Jemdet Nasr Period. In the lexical list *Ea* A = *nâqu*, the following entries related to N U N . L A G A R are found (*MSL* XIV:401):

146. t u - u r   N U N . L A G A R   [*nu-un la-ga-rak-ku tar-ba-ṣu*]

147. i m - m a - a l   N U N . L A G A R x B A R   [*nu-un lit-tu*]

The first, t u - u r, corresponds to t u r $_3$ = *tar-ba-ṣu*, "animal stall", and the latter, i m - m a - a l, corresponds to i m m a l $_2$ = *littu*, "cow".
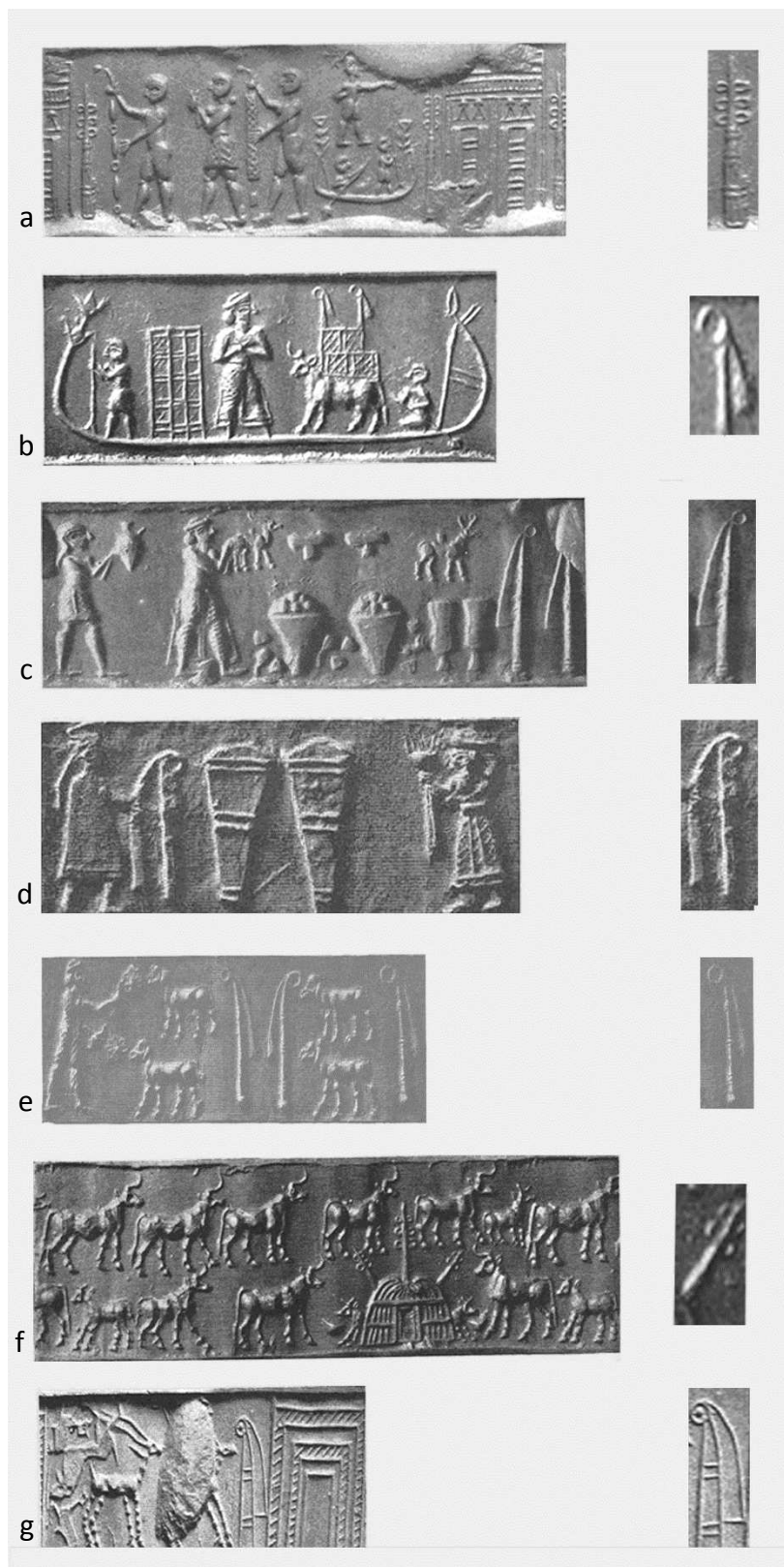
Figure 5: Inanna symbol on cylinder seals from Uruk (a-e) and Jemdet Nasr periods (f-g)
(Frankfort 1939:pls. III, V, VI, and VII)

The sacred shrine and the symbols of Inanna are linked to the figures of rams, gazelles, and bovids. Likewise, her representation in the mythical plane as a ram or sacred cow, in one of her manifestations, could reflect her character as a deity of fertility (Collins 1994:104).

Another aspect of the iconographic expression of the Inanna cult is the *gigūnu* or nuptial hut made with reeds where the "sacred marriage" or *hieros gamos* would probably take place (Kramer 1963:489-493) (*Figures 5f* and *6*). On cylinder seals, the representation of the *gigūnu*, the sacred cow and the bundles of reeds with curved ends, highlighting her fecundative aspects, would account for the link amongst these three figurations.

Figure 6: Representation of the gigūnu *on a carved stone vase (Sanctuary of Small Temple in O 43, Khafajah)*
(Delougaz & Lloyd 1955:fig. 98)

During the Old Akkadian period and later, Inanna, identified with Ištar, appears as a lioness, assuming an aggressive and bellicose attitude. At the same time, her features of sexual divinity, linked to procreation, continue to be exalted. There are also figures of the goddess as a winged entity, with or without weapons, eagle claws instead of feet, and a tiara with horns (*Figures 7* and *8*).

*Figure 7: Ištar representations on cylinder seals from the Old Akkadian period
(Frankfort 1939:pls. XIX-XX; Porada 1993:fig. 25)*

The bird / female deity duality is clear in Mesopotamian visual representations (Albenda 2005:187). In this way, the iconography would show the androgyny of the goddess, her hybrid and unclassified character, which would also be made explicit in *ID*. In some figurations, the colours red and carnelian are used, as well as blue and lapis lazuli, enhancing the feminine / masculine duality of Inanna / Ištar (Barrett 2007:27). According to Harris, "Inanna-Ištar combines male aggressiveness with the force of a superabundance of female sexuality" (1991:270).
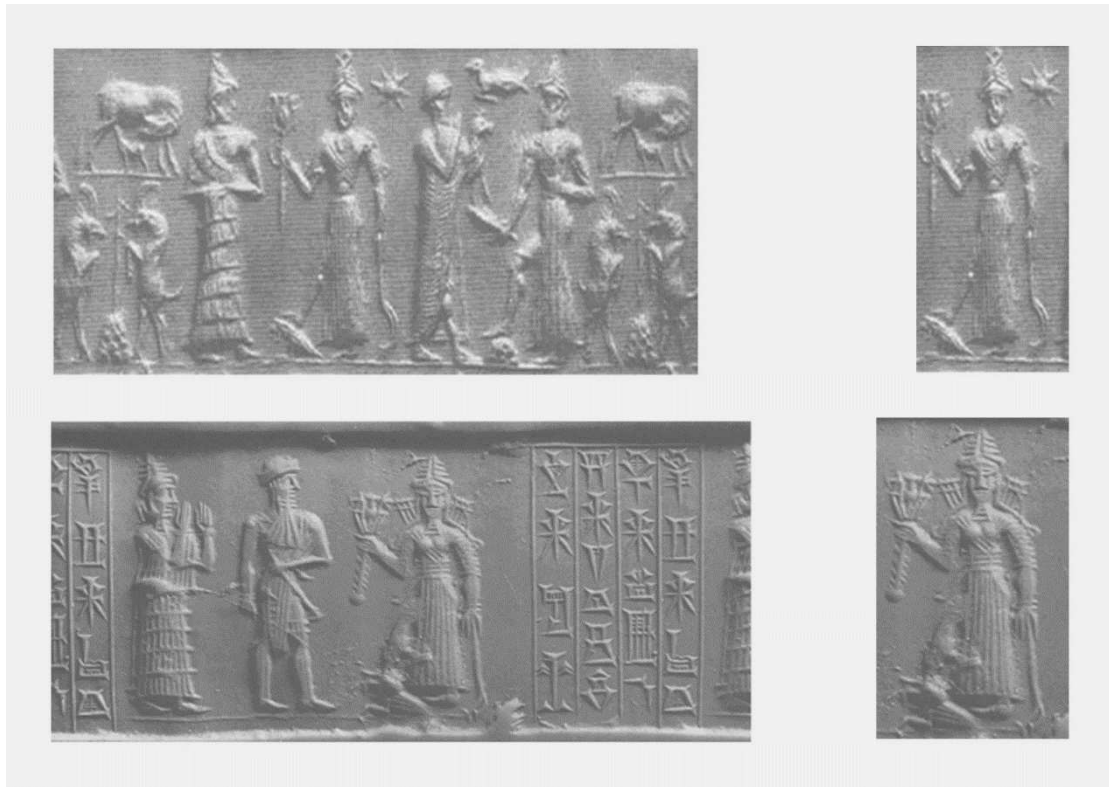
Figure 8: Ištar representations on cylinder seals from the Old Babylonian period
(Frankfort 1939:pl. XXVI; Porada 1993:fig. 24)

The bellicose appearance and, therefore, the exaltation of the *puluḫtu* or Dionysian character of Ištar is an archetype present in her figurative representations (*Figures 7* and *8*) and her mythical evocations. The goddess is shown posing on the back of a lion, which she subjugates, and in her right hand holds a sceptre, she could even be winged (*Figure 7a* and *e*), or with weapons emerging from her back (*Figures 7* and *8*). Likewise, Ištar is also manifested as an enthroned deity, before whom several gods or mythological beings come presenting offerings and making libations, which could be interpreted as part of rituals celebrated in her honour (*Figure 7c* and *d*).

5.   *THE DESCENT OF INANNA: THE HEAVENLY / INFERNAL DUALITY AND THE ESCHATOLOGICAL PATH*

In *ID*, the tripartition of three cosmic realms can be recognised: Heaven, Earth, and Netherworld. This tripartite division of space would represent a set of significant references that structure the Mesopotamian religious 'world'.

In the story, the interrelation of these three significant planes (the heavenly, the earthly, and the infernal) is combined, starting from the opening of the universal column or *axis mundi* that connects to those realms. As in the myth, Inanna displays as a character synthesizer and articulator of the three cosmic planes:

> **1.** an-gal-ta ki-gal-še$_3$ ĝeštug$_2$-ga-ni na-an-gub
> (…)
> **5.** ^{d}Inanna an mu-un-šub ki mu-un-šub kur-ra ba-e-a-ed$_3$
> **6.** nam-en mu-un-šub nam-lagar mu-un-šub kur-ra ba-e-a-ed$_3$

> **1.** From the "great Heaven" she set her mind on the "great Below",
> (…)
> **5.** Inanna abandoned Heaven, abandoned Earth, and descended to the Netherworld.
> **6.** She abandoned the office of *en*, abandoned the office of *lagar*, and descended to the Netherworld.

> Tablets Ni 368 + CBS 9800, CBS 1393, CBS
> 12368+12702+12752 and Ni 2279
> (Sladek 1974:103 and 153; *ETCSL* c.1.4.1:1 and 5-6)

The journey of the deity resembles the constant and dynamic motion of the stars. The association of the displacement of Inanna with astral mobility makes sense if it is interpreted in the light of "métaphysique de la Lune" (Eliade 1965:135). In the Mesopotamian pantheon, the divinities could suffer damage and could be temporarily annihilated. However, they could be reborn to live due to the intervention of another mythical figure.

In its nocturnal journey, the moon is born, grows, decreases, dies, and is periodically reborn and, in this way, "la Lune valorise religieusement le devenir cosmique et réconcilie l'homme avec la Mort" (Eliade 1965:136). Therefore, the lunar metaphysics exalts the feminine principles of social organisation and emphasizes the transience of existence, delimiting each of

the phases of life. In addition, the feminine is linked to fertility and to the seasonal change of nature. Hence, the cult of Inanna could highlight the following pairs of dualities: life / death, male / female, fertile / infertile, order / chaos; and paradoxically harmonize the sets of mythical dualisms that occur in the Mesopotamian religion.

The Mesopotamian religious symbolism identifies the planet Venus with Inanna / Ištar. For example, in the Ugaritic worldview, 'Attart and 'Aštart are the epithets given to the planet Venus as a morning and evening star respectively. It is curious that while 'Attart has a masculine appearance, 'Aštart is assumed to be feminine (Collins 1994:110-111). However, Inanna / Ištar embodies both aspects and would be presented therefore as an androgynous deity. Because of this, the goddess could be considered as a deity that combined irrational opposing forces, reconciling the generative impulse of fertility and the destructive power of war. In the quoted fragment, before descending to the *Kurnugia*, the goddess leaves both the "office of *en*" (male role) and the "office of *lagar*" (female role). The promiscuous character of the deity would be continuously manifested in the story, highlighting her liminal nature and, for this reason, the priesthood associated with the cult of Inanna also would take part in the sexual ambiguity of her (Harris 1991:270-271 and 276).

Likewise, from a ritual framework, the priestess, who would take on the role of Inanna, could be conceived as a "shaman", who would participate during the breaking of cosmic levels (Eliade 1968:23). The shamanism *stricto sensu* alludes to the liminal state, by which the spirit of the ritualist leaves his body to ascend or descend towards the inframundane regions (Eliade 1968:23 and 211). The shaman is the connoisseur of the *techniques de l'extase* par excellence, which empower him / her to perform within that cosmological breaking of levels.

In *ID*, the goddess travels from the "great Heaven" to the "great Below", but she first circulates through the temples of different Mesopotamian cities as a rite of passage: Uruk, Badtibira, Zabalam, Adab, Nippur, Kiš, and Akkad (*Figure 9*). During a rite of passage, the intellection of the *techniques de l'extase* involves the execution of liturgical performances by the ritualist and it causes the breaking of the cosmic levels. In the story, the shamanic transfiguration of the goddess would be described, and in the ritual framework, the ritualist would become Inanna, assume her mythical role *in illo tempore* and could thus descend to the Land of No Return.
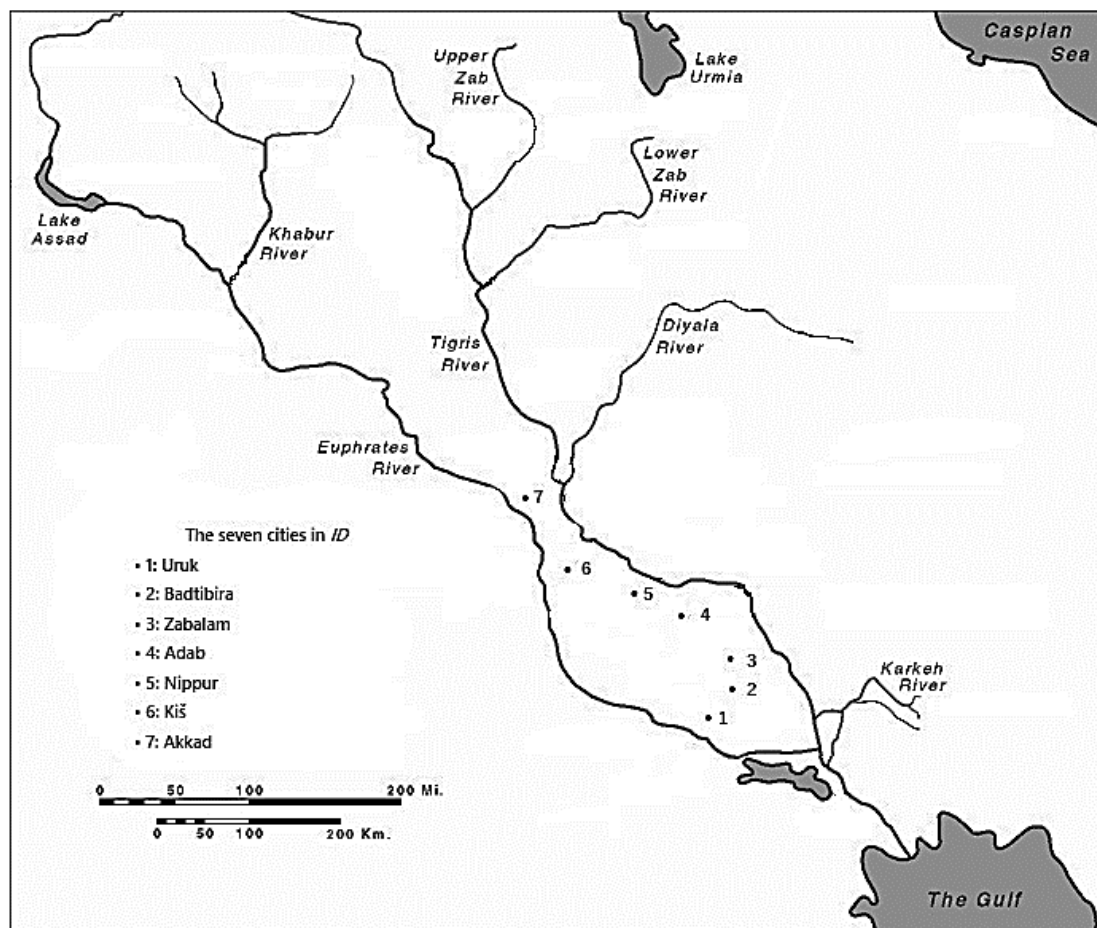
Figure 9: The seven cities of the journey of Inanna

Alster analyses the stories associated with Inanna and argues that behind
them there is an underlying structure that accounts for the mythical journeys
of the goddess, for example, *Inanna and Enki*, *Inanna and Šukalletuda*,
Inanna and Ebiḫ, the *Hymn to Inanna as Ninegala*, or *ID* (1975:30), and
that it highlights the transgression of spatial levels behind each story.
Likewise, if an intertextual crossing is made between *Inanna and Enki* and
Inanna and Šukalletuda the following structure is observed: a) Inanna
departs from Heaven; b) Inanna descends from the Earth to the
Netherworld; c) rite of passage through the Netherworld; d) "embarkment"
in Abzu-Eridu ("Boat of Heaven"); e) return to Eanna (i.e. Uruk) (Alster
1975:30-32). In this way, the sacredness of the two cities (Uruk and Eridu),
which manifest themselves as the sites par excellence to provoke
posthumous transcendence, is highlighted. In addition, as Alster argues,
perhaps the course between Eridu and Uruk would highlight the celebration
of a ritual journey (1975:32).

    In *ID*, the journey of Inanna through the seven cities describes a route
from south to north and from east to west, which may be related to the

movement of the celestial bodies through the sky. In the Mesopotamian pantheon, the astral deities such as Nanna and Inanna were linked to the movement and the cyclical disposition of the cosmic development.

In the Akkadian version, the itinerary would have as its final point Kutha, the residence of the gods of the Netherworld, whose tutelary deity was Nergal (Buccellati 1982:3-4). Buccellati states that the journey through the seven Mesopotamian cities could show the transportation of a statue of the deity by the respective temples of the aforementioned cities (1982:5 ff.).[5] In relation to the hypothesis of this author, it could also be thought of the celebration of *hieros gamos* in each of these cities with the rulers, who would play the ritual role of Dumuzi (see also Jones 2003).

In addition, before descending to the *Kunugia*, Inanna must divest herself of all her garments; i.e. she has to remove each one of the me and her ceremonial attires. The transit to the Land of No Return is synonymous with the mortal nudity of the goddess (Katz 1995). It is not unexpected that the goddess gathers the totality of the me in an amount equal to seven, given that this number connotes the very idea of vital potentiality.

> **14.** me imin-bi za$_3$ mu-ni-in-keše$_2$
> **15.** me mu-un-ur$_4$-ur$_4$ šu-ni-še$_3$ mu-un-la$_2$
> **16.** me dug$_3$[6] ĝiri$_3$ gub-ba i-im-ĝen

> **14.** She took the seven "divine powers".
> **15.** She collected the "divine powers" and grasped them in her hand.
> **16.** With the good "divine powers", she went on her way.

> Tablets Ni 368 + CBS 9800, CBS 1393, CBS
>   12368+12702+12752 and Ni 2279

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5   In this way, the death of Inanna would connote the destruction of the statue and her vital reintegration would mean the restoration of it. In addition, Buccellati suggests that the journey through the Mesopotamian territory could be associated with the expansive policy of the Larsa kings, on the one hand, and with the ritual use of statues of deities, which became an assiduous practice in the Old Babylonian period, on the other (1982:6-7).

6   Sladek (1974:104) transliterates this word šar$_2$. In fact, the sign ◇ could be read šar$_2$ (in Akkadian, *kiššatu*; *mâdu*), i.e. "totality", "world", "(to be) numerous", "3600" (ePSD Š). Likewhile, dug$_3$ significa "good" or "sweet" (ePSD D). In this regard, the verse could allude, if it is transliterated at the beginning of the sentence as me šar$_2$, to the "totality of divine powers" with the sense of ontological perfection.

(Sladek 1974:104-105 and 154; *ETCSL* c.1.4.1:14-16)

The importance of the m e and its connection with the mythology of the goddess of war and love could be traced in some compositions such as *The Exaltation of Inanna*. In the same way as in *ID,* the protagonist assumes the manipulation of the m e :

1. nin me šar$_2$-ra ud dalla e$_3$-a
2. munus zi me-lam$_2$ gur$_3$-ru ki-aĝ$_2$ an uraš-e
3. nu-gig An-na suḫ-kešda gal-gal-la
4. aga zi-de$_3$ ki-aĝ$_2$ nam-en-na tum$_2$-ma
5. me imin-be$_2$ šu-sa$_2$ du$_{11}$-ga
6. nin-ĝu$_{10}$ me gal-gal saĝ-kešda-bi za-e-me-en
7. me mu-e-il$_2$ me šu-zu-uš mu-e-la$_2$
8. me mu-e ur$_4$ me gaba-za ba-e-tab

1. Lady of all the "divine powers", resplendent light,
2. righteous woman clothed in radiance, beloved of An and Uraš!
3. The hierodule of An, that of the very great ornaments.[7]
4. Enamored of the appropriate tiara, befitting the office of *en*-priestess,
5. who has seized all seven of its "divine powers"!
6. My lady, you are the guardian of the great "divine powers"!
7. You have picked up the "divine powers", you have hung the "divine powers" from your hand.
8. You have gathered up the "divine powers", you have clasped the "divine powers" to your breast.

The Exaltation of Inanna
Tablet YBC 4652, v. lines 1-8
(Hallo & Van Dijk 1968:14-15; *ETCSL* c.4.7.2:1-8)

The sign m e ( ) (also read as ĝarza in Sumerian or *parṣu* in Akkadian) can be translated with the meaning of "divine powers / ordinances", "office", "(cultic) ordinance" (Farber 1987-1990:610), which were systematised into lists with a prescriptive and liturgical scope (Oberhuber 1963; Farber-Flügge 1973; Rosengarten 1977; Emelianov 2009). The term also means "being" (Farber 1987-1990:611). The m e were the fundamental numinous concepts of Mesopotamian religious thought and they could be understood as abstract manifestations, as well as concrete materialities.

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7   In Hallo & Van Dijk (1968:15): "Hierodule of An (you) of all the great ornaments"; in *ETCSL* c.4.7.2 3: "Mistress of Heaven, with the great diadem".

The use of the expression me imin-bi ("the seven 'divine power'") both in *ID* and *The Exaltation of Inanna*, which it is interpreted as a synonym of sacred perfection is interesting, given that the number seven is a symbolic indicator of magnificence. Inanna, before descending to the Land of No Return, boasts of manipulating the me along with her ceremonial attire. Due to the possession of the me and her ritual garments, Inanna can cause the breaking of the cosmic levels and thus descend to the Netherworld.

Unlike in *ID*, the body of the goddess becomes synonymous with power and dominion, since it is attired with the *melammu* (me-lam$_2$ gur$_3$-ru). Since she is also the bearer of the "legitimate crown" (aga-zi), she arrogates herself the absolute power. In another text, called *Inanna and Ebiḫ*,[8] the goddess is also adorned with the me, but the terrifying aspect of the latter is highlighted. In this sense, *melammu* seeks to provoke a reverential fear of the enemies of the deity.

> **1.** in-nin me ḫuš-a ni$_2$ gur$_3$-ru me gal-la u$_5$-a
> **2.** ^{d}Inanna a$_2$-an-kar$_2$ kug šu du$_7$ mud-bi gu$_2$ e$_3$
>
> **1.** Goddess of the fearsome "divine powers", clad in terror, riding on the great divine powers,
> **2.** Inanna, made perfect by the holy *a-an-kar* weapon, drenched in blood (...)
>
> *Inanna and Ebiḫ*
> (Jaques 2004:203 and 205; *ETCSL* c.1.3.2: 1-2)

In the Sumerian mythical tradition, the me were also the prerogatives of the gods Enlil and Enki, the first as 'the' creator and the other as 'the' guardian. In the myth *Enki and the World Order*, the tutelary deity of the Ekur in Nippur transfers the "divine powers" to the Abzu in Eridu:

> **62.** a-a-ĝu$_{10}$ lugal an ki-ke$_4$
> **63.** an ki-a pa e$_3$ ma-ni-in-ak
> **64.** pap-ĝu$_{10}$ lugal kur-kur-ra-ke$_4$
> **65.** me mu-un-ur$_4$-ur$_4$ me šu-ĝu$_{10}$-še$_3$ mu-un-ĝar
> **66.** E$_2$-kur-re e$_2$ ^{d}En-lil$_2$-la$_2$-ta
> **67.** Abzu Eridug^{ki}-ĝu$_{10}$-še$_3$ nam-galam mu-de$_6$
>
> **62.** "My father, the king of Heaven and Earth,
> **63.** made me radiantly appear in Heaven and Earth.

---

8   For a discussion of the content of the poem *Inanna and Ebiḫ*, see Delnero (2011:134-139).

64. My elder brother, the king of all the lands,

65. gathered up all the "divine powers" and placed them in my hand.

66. from the Ekur, the house of Enlil, to my Abzu in Eridu

67. I brought the arts and crafts (...)".

Enki and the World Order
(Benito 1969:89 and 117; *ETCSL* c.1.1.3:62-67)

In the above fragment, Enlil transfers the "arts and crafts" from the central city of the Mesopotamian pantheon to Eridu, the seat of the god Enki. Another poem called *Inanna and Enki* narrates the theft of the "divine forces" by the titular goddess of Uruk, after the god of wisdom and fertility was drunk:

1. [^{d}En-ki-ke$_4$ sukkal ^{d}Isimud-ra gu$_3$ mu-na-de$_2$-e]

2. [sukkal ^{d}Isimud-ĝu$_{10}$ mu dug$_3$ an-na-ĝu$_{10}$]

3. [lugal-ĝu$_{10}$] [^{d}En]-ki i$_3$-gub-be-en ud-ul a-ra-zu

4. a-da-al [Unug^{ki}] Kul-aba$_4$^{ki}-še$_3$ na-ma-ra-an-e$_3$-a

5. ki ^{d}Utu [...] [NE$^?$]-še$_3$ na-[ma-ra-an-e$_3$-a]

6. im-mi-in-dug$_4$-ga-ka sa$_2$ ba-ni-ib$_2$-be$_2$-en

7. kug ^{d}Inanna me mu-un-ur$_4$-ur$_4$ ma$_2$ an-na bi$_2$-in-u$_5$

8. ma$_2$ an-na kar-ra zag bi$_2$-in-tag

9. kaš naĝ-ĝa$_2$-ra kaš naĝ-ĝa$_2$-ra kaš mu-un-ta-ed$_3$-da

10. a-a ^{d}En-ki kaš naĝ-ĝa$_2$-ra kaš mu-un-[ta-ed$_3$-da]

11. en gal ^{d}En-ki-ke$_4$ e$_2$ [...]-ga-ni ĝiš mu-un-ši-kar$_2$-kar$_2$

12. en-e Abzu-še$_3$ igi mi-ni-ib$_2$-il$_2$-il$_2$-e

13. lugal ^{d}En-ki-ke$_4$ Eridug^{ki}-še$_3$ ĝiš mu-un-ši-kar$_2$-kar$_2$

1. Enki spoke to the minister Isimud:

2. "Isimud, my minister, my Sweet Name of Heaven!"

3. "Enki, my master, I am at your service! What is your wish?"

4. "Since she said that she would not yet depart from here for Uruk (and) Kullab,

5. that she would not yet depart from here to the place where Utu ……,

6. can I still reach her?"

7. But holy Inanna had gathered up the "divine powers" and embarked onto the Boat of Heaven.

8. The Boat of Heaven had already left the quay.

9. As the effects of the beer cleared from him who had drunk beer, from him who had drunk beer, as the effects of the beer cleared

10. from Father Enki who had drunk beer,

11. the great lord Enki turned his attention to the [...] building.

12. The lord looked up at the Abzu.

13. King Enki turned his attention to Eridu.

Inanna and Enki
(Farber-Flügge 1973:Tf. I v, 26-27; *ETCSL* c.1.3.1:Segment F:1-13)

Inanna takes possession of the m e and, once she puts them inside to the Boat of Heaven, she takes them to Uruk. In the poem, a fairly broad definition of the concept of m e is mentioned, considering them as mythical / ritual forces that activate the cosmos, ranging from "kingship" to "cultic prostitution", the "royal throne", the "office of *en-* and *lagar*-priest", etc.

It must also be emphasised that the m e, as the dynamising forces of the cosmos, were connected with the vitality and the divine order and acted as counterimages of death.[9] In fact, once Inanna is subjugated in the *Kurnugia*, naked and without the protection of the m e, she succumbs to the absence of the divine powers that move the universe.

The link between the divine and the m e is also displayed in a great variety of Mesopotamian liturgical texts, where the expression k u₃.g, "sacred", is juxtaposed with it; e.g., in the royal hymn Šulgi G (line 11, CT 36, pls. 26-27): n i₃ - b i   n i₃ - k u₃ - g a - a m₃   n i₃ - š e n - n a m   m e - e₂ - k u r - r a - k a m: "that matter was an authoritative matter, a pure matter, a m e of the Ekur" (quoted by Pongratz-Leisten 2009:420). Indeed, the link between the m e and the Ekur, the most sacred site in the Mesopotamian worldview, which gave ideological support to the monarchy, shows also that the divine powers were the repositories of order. Therefore, they

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9   The concept of "counterimages of death" (*Gegenbild des Todes*) is taken from Assmann (2003:242).

operate as foundational requirements of authority and are guarantors of the ritual, cosmic, political, and social order (Pongratz-Leisten 2009:420).

The sign ⬚ (m e n), "crown", is composed of three other signs, i.e. $GA_2 \times ME + EN$: ĝa₂, "to put", "to place", m e, "divine power", and e n, "lord" / "ruler", so it would have the sense of "the lord / ruler who has the divine powers".[10] Once again, the m e would be the symbols of authority par excellence in Mesopotamia, since the crown would be the materiality where the divine powers crystallised.

6.   THE IMMOLATION OF INANNA: HER CONDITION OF DEA DOLENS

Before entering the *Kurnugia*, Inanna meets Neti, who, obeying Ereškigal, the goddess of the Netherworld and sister of the visitor, forces her to remove her garments in each of the seven gates. Once naked, she is condemned to death by the Anunna, the judges of the Netherworld:

164. gam-gam-ma-ni tug₂ zil-zil-la-ni-ta lu₂ ma-an-de₆
165. nin₉-a-ni ĝⁱˢgu-za-ni-ta im-ma-da-an-zig₃
166. e-ne ĝⁱˢgu-za-ni-ta dur₂ im-mi-in-ĝar
167. ᵈA-nun-na di-kud imin-bi igi-ni-še₃ di mu-un-da-ku₅-ru-ne
168. igi mu-ši-in-bar i-bi₂ uš₂-a-kam
169. inim i-ne-ne inim-lipiš-gig-ga-am₃
170. gu₃ i-ne-de₂ gu₃ nam-tag-tag-ga-am₃
171. munus tur₅-ra uzu-niĝ₂-sag₃-ga-še₃ ba-an-kur₉
172. uzu-niĝ₂-sag₃-ga ĝⁱˢkak-ta lu₂ ba-da-an-la₂

164. After she had crouched down and had her clothes removed, they were carried away.
165. Then she made her sister Ereškigala rise from her throne,
166. and instead she sat on her throne.
167. The Anunna, the seven judges, rendered their decision against her.
168. They looked at her – it was the "look of death".
169. They spoke to her – it was the "speech of anger".
170. They shouted at her – it was the "shout of heavy guilt".

---

10   Emelianov arrives at a similar conclusion (2004:187). According to Steinkeller, "the sign is $GA_2 + EN$, where EN is a phonetic indicator ($GA_2^{e\,n}$)" (1995:704).

> **171.** The afflicted woman was turned into a corpse.
> **172.** And the corpse was hung on a hook.

<div align="right">Tablet CBS 15212</div>
<div align="center">(Sladek 1974:123-14 and 165-172; *ETCSL* c.1.4.1:164-172)</div>

In the above fragment, Inanna, punished in the Land of No Return, becomes a corpse. The death is displayed as the condition that can be acquired by all human and non-human beings and, thus, the anthropomorphisation of the divinities semantically makes the gods mortals beings. [11] The Mesopotamian worldview admits the posthumous destruction of the deities, making them potential victims. According to Frankfort, "[t]he god's 'death' is not death in our sense, nor in the sense of the ancient Egyptians. Like the human dead, he suffers thirst; and he is in the dust, bereaved of light and exposed to hostile demons" (1978:321).

In the story, Inanna is structurally assimilated to the role played by other gods who suffer subjection both in the Mesopotamian mythical compositions as in those of other peoples of the Ancient Near Eastern or classical antiquity. The topic of "captive, suffering, or dying god" is found in different religious narratives. On the other hand, every dying god has a "mourning goddess" who, like his mother or wife, regrets his death (Frankfort 1958:144; Frankfort 1978:283). However, in *ID*, it is a female deity that dies, which assumes the role of the suffering god. In effect, Inanna would perform the mythical role of *dea dolens* that is supposed to be masculine. It might be thought that the ambiguous personality is because she is structurally a dual character, "une personnification d'un être féminin avec inversion du signe [...] l'homme et la femme se trouvent toujours en position «ciel / terre» inversée" (sensu Lévi-Strauss 1958:238), that is, Inanna is an inverted female divinity.

The exaltation of the ferocious temperament of Inanna – as it has been pointed out in relation to her visual representations – could also recount of her hybrid, polysemic, and androgynous aspect, where the irrational and aggressive features of the goddess give way to her the unarmed and unspoken features. The notions of Douglas (1966) of "contamination" and "impurity" are useful to rethink the various modalities adopted by the deity

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11   The need for the goddess to be naked in order to reach the Netherworld contradicts the beliefs about the Afterlife in ancient Mesopotamia, because the archaeological evidence puts in dispute what arises in *ID*, e.g. the funerary goods of the graves from the Early Dynastic III period in Ur (Katz 1995:221 ff.; Barrett 2007:30-35; Selz 2017:282-283).

throughout the story, i.e. both her tremendous features and the aspects that show her expugnable character are made explicit.

7.   *THE REBIRTH OF INANNA: THE RESUSCITATION OF THE* DEA DOLENS *THROUGH THE FUNERAL OFFERING*

Finally, Inanna is released from the *Kurnugia* by the intervention of two sexless creatures – the *kurĝara* and *galatura* – created by the god Enki:

> **222.** umbin-si-ni mu-dur$_7$ ba-ra-an-tum$_2$ kur-ĝar-ra ba-an-dim$_2$
> **223.** umbin-si-su$_4$-še-gin$_2$-na mu- mu-dur$_7$ ba-ra-an-tum$_2$ gala-tur-ra ba-an-dim$_2$
> **224.** kur-ĝar-ra u$_2$[12] nam-til$_3$-la ba-an-šum$_2$
> **225.** gala-tur-ra a nam-til$_3$-la ba-an-šum$_2$

> **222.** He removed some dirt from the tip of his fingernail and created the *kurĝara*.
> **223.** He removed some dirt from the tip of his other fingernail and created the *galatura*.
> **224.** To the *kurĝara* he gave the "life-giving food".
> **225.** To the *galatura* he gave the "life-giving water".

<div align="right">

Tablet Ni 4200
(Sladek 1974:131 and 170; *ETCSL* c.1.4.1:222-225)

</div>

Both the *kurĝara*, which is called in Akkadian *kurgarrû*, and the *galatura*, which is linked to the priest gala$_{10}$ (in Akkadian *kalû*), were "professional lamentation singers", that is, they were in charge of reciting chants accompanied by performing percussion and stringed musical instruments (Leick 1994:157 ff.). According to Sallaberger & Huber-Vulliet, the gala$_{10}$-priest is defined as a "*Klagesänger*", since he / she appears in the presargonic Ĝirsu as a priest or priestess who accompanies the funerals of the dead (2006:634). They both were mentioned in literary texts from the Old Babylonian period. However, while the *kurĝara* was given weapons, the *galatura*, the mourner specialist in singing lamentation par excellence, received musical instruments (Zsolnay 2013:90).

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12   u$_2$ was translated as "food", although it also means "plant" (ePSD U). In some translations, the latter meaning is maintained, although in this context the meaning of food is more accurate given that the dead were assigned food and liquid offerings.

In *ID*, both creatures receive gifts to resurrect the dead goddess, and, in addition, the function of reciting lamentation was not only associated with the evocation of the loss of the deceased but also with the possibility of appeasing the deities (Gabbay 2014 and 2015), as could happen in the face of the anger of Ereškigal.

Moreover, the *kurĝara* is linked to travelling to other dimensions such as the Netherworld and, in that sense, it is not fortuitous that Enki has entrusted him with the search for Inanna. For example, in *Inanna and Enki*, after the theft of the me by the goddess, the minister of the god of Eridu, Isimud, rebukes him:

> **23.** [niĝ$_2$]-/gen$_6$\-na SI TUR SI e$_3$$^?$ kur ed$_3$-de$_3$ kur ed$_3$-da kur-ĝar-ra me-a
> **24.** lugal-ĝu$_{10}$ dumu-<ni-ir ba-an-na-šum$_2$>

> **23.** "Where are constancy, SI TUR SI, going down to the Netherworld, coming up from the Netherworld, the *kurĝara* priest?"
> **24.** "My master has given them to his daughter".

> *Inanna and Enki*
> (Farber-Flügge 1973:Tf. I v, 28-29; *ETCSL* c.1.3.1:Segment F:23-24)

Likewise, the rebirth of Inanna is linked to the consumption of food and water, which would function as a funeral offering, which was linked to build a place, called ki-a-naĝ, to celebrate the ritual of burial and periodical evocation of the memory of the deceased (Kobayashi 1985; Jagersma 2007). The ki-a-naĝ was the "place of libations to the dead" and in it, before the statue of the deceased, food was deposited, and libations were made as counterimages of death.

In *ID*, the image of the god Enki, a deity associated with the fresh waters, i.e. to the concept of fertility *lato sensu*, allows the regeneration of Inanna. In addition, both the *kurĝara* and the *galatura* are found in the lists of temple officials linked to the cult and rituals of the goddess. They are presented within groups of eunuchs (Leick 1994:157 ff.) and the exaltation of their sexual ambivalence was related to the promiscuous character of Inanna herself.

One of the daily activities of the priests was linked to the maintenance and worship of the statues of the deities and those dedicated to the kings. In this sense, the representation of Inanna as a *dea dolens*, who is revived through the water and the food that is given to her, would refer to a funeral

ritual and / or a divine statue that would need to stay alive of the offerings that were provided to it (Buccellati 1982:5 ff.). The representations of libations in temples or of god Enki / Ea with water flowing from his shoulders, made on cylinder seals (*Figure 10*) – associated with fertility and life – highlight the fundamental role of water as a ceremonial instrument of ritual performances (Lombardi 1992).
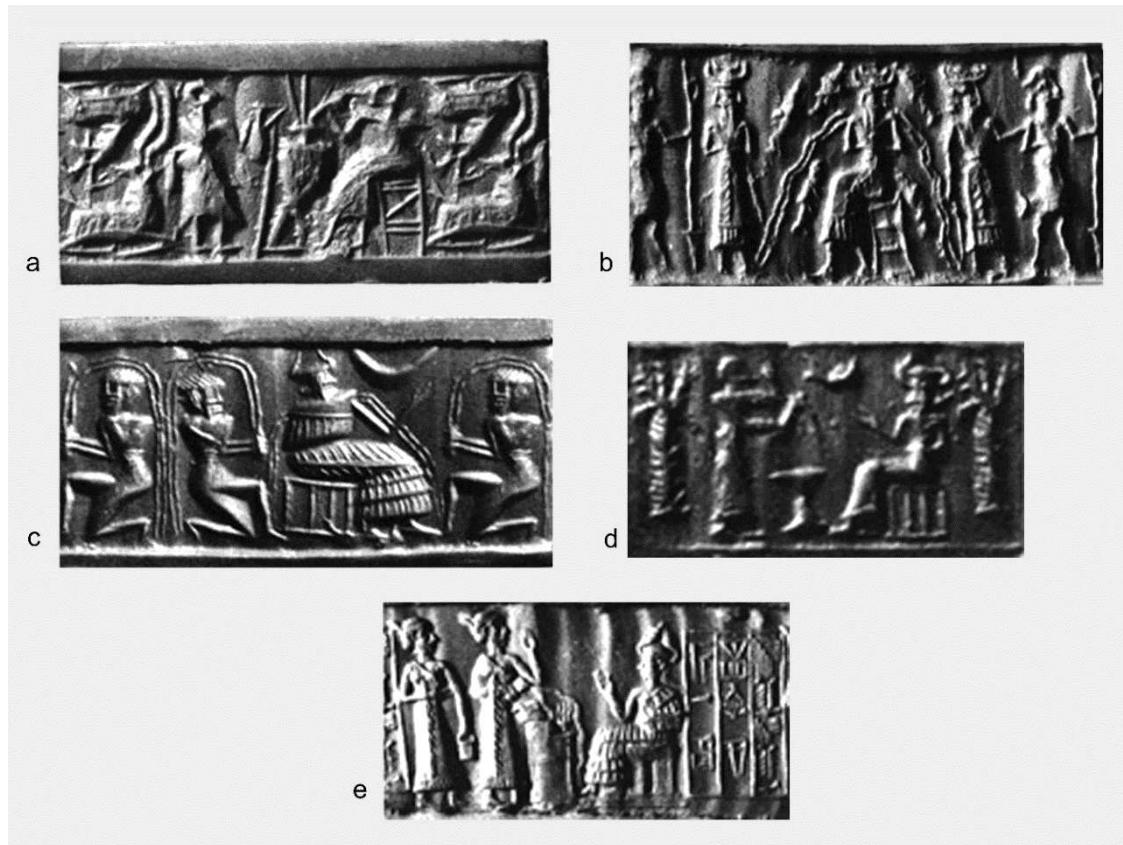
Figure 10: Scenes of god Enki / Ea with water flowing from his shoulders in cylinder seals from the Early Dynastic II (a) and Old Akkadian periods (b-e)
(Frankfort 1955:figs. 358, 580, 582, 585 and 987)

Both the "food of life" and the "plant of life" can be recognised in the iconography of the third millennium BCE, for example, in the Stele of the Vultures, where a naked cult officiant performs a ceremonial libation in front of the king E'anatum. Following the proposal of Selz, "the aim of the rituals is clearly to ensure somehow the (after-)life of Lagaš's fallen soldiers" (2017:282).

In the Akkadian version of the poem, *Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*, the goddess is also reborn when she is sprinkled with the "water of life":

114. [d+]INNIN A.MEŠ TI.LA *su-luḫ-ši-ma li-qa-áš-ši ina maḫ-ri-ia*

114. *ištar mê balāṭi suluḫšima leqâšši ina maḫriya*

114. "(…) sprinkle Ištar with the water of life and bring her into my presence!"

<div align="center">(…)</div>

118. ^d*iš-tar* A.MEŠ TI.LA *is-luḫ-ši-ma il-qa-áš-ši ana* IGI-*šá*
118. *ištar mê balāṭi isluḫšima ilqâšši ana maḫriša*

118. he sprinkled Ištar with the "water of life" and brought her into her (i.e., Ereškigal's) presence.

<div align="right">*Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld*
(Lapinkivi 2010:12, 27 and 32)</div>

The above quote agrees with the Sumerian version and, in this way, the feeble representation of Inanna, as a suffering goddess, is abandoned once the libation is poured to make her reborn and thus her tremendous nature is reaffirmed.

In the same way, the offerings of water and food for the dead allowed the deceased's rebirth in the Hereafter and non-social disintegration. The rituals called *pīt pî* and *mīs pî* were performed on the statues of gods and dead kings responded to this social role. The *pīt pī* or "mouth-opening (ceremony)" (*CAD* P:446; Dick 2005a:580) allowed the physical reintegration of the dead and was related to the *mīs pî* or "(ritual) washing of the mouth" (*CAD* M / part 2:122; Dick 2005a:581-582), carried out simultaneously. For example, in a Nineveh formulation of a ritual text can be read: DINGIR.BI KA.LUḪ Ù KA.DUḪ.Ù.DA *teppuš*(DÙ-*uš*) = "you perform the rituals of mouth-washing and mouth-opening on this divine statue" (*BBR* 31 i 26; ii 14, 18, iii 10, 38:7, 40:7, 100:9).

In an inscription from the Neo-Sumerian period, the ritual function of water is explained; its association with the god Enki and performing the *mīs pî* is also described:

15. eš$_3$ abzu [. . . . .] ^{d}En- ki - ra [. . .]
16. a kur-ta nam-t[ar-ra]
17. a-bi$^?$ n[a de$_5$]
18. a zal-le na mu-de$_5$
19. limmu-bi a−[e] ba-šid
20. KA gub$_2$-de$_3$ a gub$_2$-de$_3$
21. gu ba- xxx nu$_2$
22. tum$_{12}$^{mušen} buru$_5$^{mušen} gu$_2$ ba-šum
23. imin-na-me imin-na-me

24. alan imin-e ba-šid

15. "The shrine of the Abzu [. . .] for Enki [. . .]";
16. "Water, [destined] from the mountains";
17. "This water [is pure]";
18. and "Running water that purifies";
19. these four are recited over the water.
20. to purify the mouth/word, to purify the water
21. a thread is . . . and a . . . is laid down.
22. A dove and a sparrow are slaughtered.
23. "They are seven, they are seven"
24. is recited over the seven statuettes.

<div align="center">

Tablet CBS 8241 = PBS 13/35, rev.: lines 15-24

(Dick 2005b:273 and 278)

</div>

In the above quote, the "ritual washing of the mouth" is detailed, where a priest recites spells over seven statuettes, to which a dove and a sparrow are sacrificed. In *ID*, the association of the rebirth of the goddess with the intrusion of Enki next to the "water of life" is also connected with her reincorporation into the world of the living and the abandonment of the role of *dea dolens*.

8. THE MARTYRDOM OF DUMUZI: THE CONDITION OF 'BETRAYER' AND MATER DOLOROSA OF INANNA

In her ascent to the world of the living, the goddess is forced to find someone to occupy her place on the Land of No Return. In her shamanic trance, Inanna renounces her role of *dea dolens* and becomes the 'betrayer' when she condemns her spouse Dumuzi to death when observing that he was wearing his best garments while she was trapped in the *Kurnugia*.

354. igi mu-un-ši-in-bar igi-uš$_2$-a-ka
355. inim i-ne-ne inim lipiš-gig-ga
356. gu$_3$ i-ne-de$_2$ gu$_3$ nam-tag-tag-ga
357. en$_3$-še$_3$ tum$_3$-mu-an-ze$_2$-en
358. kug ^{d}Inanna-ke$_4$ su$_8$-ba ^{d}Dumu-zid-da šu-ne-ne-a in-na-šum$_2$

354. She looked at him, it was the "look of death".
355. She spoke to him (?), it was the "speech of anger".
356. She shouted at him (?), it was the "shout of heavy guilt":
357. "How much longer? Take him away".

358. Holy Inanna gave Dumuzi the shepherd into their hands (i.e., the hands of the *galla*).

Tablet YBC 4621
(Sladek 1974:148 and 179; *ETCSL* c.1.4.1:354-358)

In the above quote, Dumuzi takes on the role of "suffering god", [13] condemned by Inanna to live in the *Kurnugia*. The ritual union with her consort could be understood, on the mythical plane, as his death. In short, the sacred marriage might be circumscribed ceremonially to an eschatological experience, where the involved ritualists would undergo a ceremonial transfiguration in order to personify Dumuzi and Inanna respectively.

At the end of the story, after Dumuzi implores his brother-in-law Utu, the divinity associated with the sun and justice, so that he intercedes to rescue him from the Netherworld, Inanna laments the death of her beloved. The goddess of love and war thus becomes a *mater dolorosa* or "mourning goddess" and cries at the loss of her consort (Kramer 1983:76-77). The incongruous attitude of Inanna could be interpreted as a sign of her Dionysian or liminal character. Therefore, life and death are displayed as the structural elements that regulate the myth and are consubstantiate in the figure of the goddess. The appeal to the lamentation in the final part of the story contradicts the image found between lines 354 and 358.

384. kug ^{d}Inanna-ke$_4$ mu-ud-na-ni er$_2$ gig i$_3$-še$_8$-še$_8$ [14]
(...)
389. ^{u2}numun$_2$ i$_3$-bur$_{12}$-re ^{u2}numun$_2$ i$_3$-ze$_2$-e

384. Holy Inanna wept bitterly for her husband.
(...)

---

13   On Dumuzi, see Falkenstein (1954), Jacobsen (1962), Fritz (2003), and Klein (2010).

14   The verb er$_2$−šeš$_4$ means "to cry", but also "to weep" (ePSD E). This phrase is repeated in other compositions, such as *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld*, where Inanna also appears as a *mater dolorosa*. In the lines 46, 89, and 133 of "*ḫalub*-tree episode", the line kug ^{d}Inanna-ke$_4$ er$_2$ e-ne ba-še$_8$-še$_8$ (Gadotti 2014:61, 182, 190 and 197) is repeated, placing it with the lamentation before the infection of the tree by the intrusion of the snake, the Anzud-bird, and the phantom maid; the "failed appeal of Inanna to Utu for help"; and the "successful appeal of Inanna to Gilgameš for help" (Gadotti 2014:61).

389. She tore at her hair like esparto grass, she ripped it out like esparto grass

<div align="right">

Tablets Ni 9776 and CBS 6894
(*ETCSL* c.1.4.1:384 and 389)

</div>

Sonik (2012) analyses the variations and metamorphoses experienced by the body of Dumuzi in different stories, especially after his death before the *galla* in *ID* and the request made by him to the god Utu. She suggests that there is an intertextual crossing between *ID*, *Dumuzi and Geštinanna*, and *Dumuzid's Dream*, where Dumuzi undergoes a series of corporal transformations to escape the Netherworld. In this way, in *ID*, Utu accepts the tears of Dumuzi and transforms his hands and feet into a snake's hands and feet, while in *Dumuzid's Dream* they are transformed into a gazelle's hands and feet. In *Dumuzi and Geštinanna*, something similar happens (Sonik 2012:392). The animalisation of Dumuzi implies the transgression of cosmic levels and the return to the world of the living.

Later, between lines 401-414, as was proposed by Katz (1996:n. 5), based on the argument of Jacobsen (1962), *ID* is intertextually related to other Mesopotamian narratives, such as *Dumuzi and Geštinanna*, since it alludes to the first as a god of barley and beer, and to the latter as a personification of grapes and wine. Thus, in the myth, there would be references to the production of both types of drink at two different times of the year, forcing Dumuzi or Geštinanna to stay in the Netherworld.

In the Akkadian version of *ID*, there would be a future vision of the seasonal cycle between the two deities, who would take turns to stay in the Netherworld. For Sladek, in the Akkadian version, the liturgical character of the text would be highlighted and, in that sense, it would allude to a Dumuzi festival, which could be the *taklimtu* (1974:50).[15] The last lines of the Akkadian version (especially between lines 136-138) "seem to refer to the future, the myth would then explain why Dumuzi had to descend to the Netherworld, and, as a corollary, why the vegetation died in the summer" (Sladek 1974:50-51).

136. *ina* UD-*me* ^dDUMU.ZI *el-la-an-ni* GI.GID NA₄.ZA.GIN ḪAR NA₄.GUG *it-ti-šú el-la-⌈an-ni⌉*
136. *ina ūmē Dumūzi ellanni malīl uqnî šemer sāmti*

---

15   The *taklimtu* was a first part of the funerary ritual, by means of which the body of the dead was displayed lying in state (Scurlock 1991:3).

136. When Dumuzi[16] rises (to me), the lapis lazuli pipe and the carnelian ring will rise with him (to me),

137. *it-ti-šú el-la-an-ni* LÚ.ÉR.MEŠ *u* MÍ.ÉR.MEŠ
137. *ittīšu ellanni bakka'ū u bakkāiātu*

137. the male and female mourners will rise with him!

138. BA.ÚŠ.MEŠ *li-lu-nim-ma qut-ri-in-⌈na⌉ li-iṣ-ṣi-nu*
138. *mītūtu līlûnimma qutrinna liṣṣinū*

138. May the dead rise and smell the incense!

Ištar's Descent to the Netherworld
(Lapinkivi 2010:13, 28 and 33)

9.   FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From the analysis of *ID*, the underlying structure of the myth could be approached through the binary oppositions in its narrative structure.[17] The story would be composed of antithetical but complementary dualities that would be articulated as a 'mirror': celestial / infernal (or above / below), masculine / feminine, and life / death. The intervention of Enki, as a disruptive element, i.e. as a 'life giver', would order the reading of the story based on the mentioned dualities (*Figure 11*).
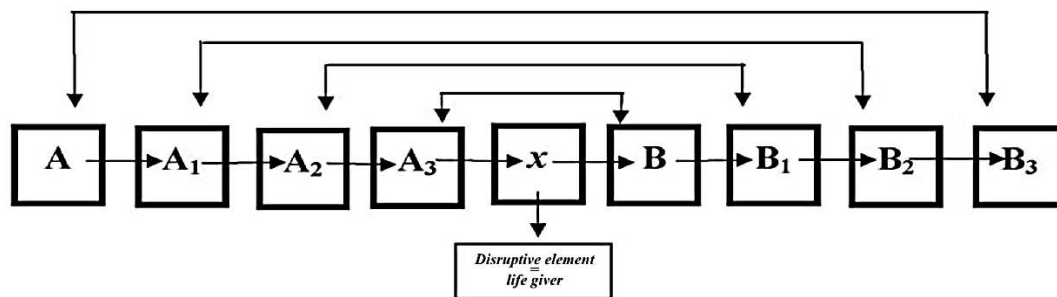
Figure 11: Binary oppositions in the narrative structure of ID

In relation to the element *x* (= life giver), the myth would be organised in a series of dualities, but, following a reading from left to right, it could distinguish the following components: life (A), life$_1$ (A$_1$), life$_2$ (A$_2$), expiration = below (A$_3$), disruptive element = life giver (*x*), rebirth = above

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16   "Tammuz" in Lapinkivi (2010:33).

17   Alster uses a similar analysis model for the poem *Inanna and Enki*. He also argues that Sumerian literature is quite repetitive and, therefore, its frequent repetition accounts for the orality that exists behind these compositions (1975:22 ff.).

(B), death (B_1), death$_1$ (B_2), and death$_2$ (B_3). The ordering proposed could be considered in the light of the characters and their functions in the story: Inanna alive (A to A_2), death of Inanna (A_3), intervention of Enki (*x*), rebirth of Inanna (B), and death of Dumuzi (B_1 to B_3).

On the other hand, the semantic components of the myth (*Figure 12*) would show that the circulation through the seven Mesopotamian temples should be understood as synonymous with the *hieros gamos* and as the prelude to the descent of the goddess to the *Kurnugia*; in other words, underlining the dual life / death opposition.
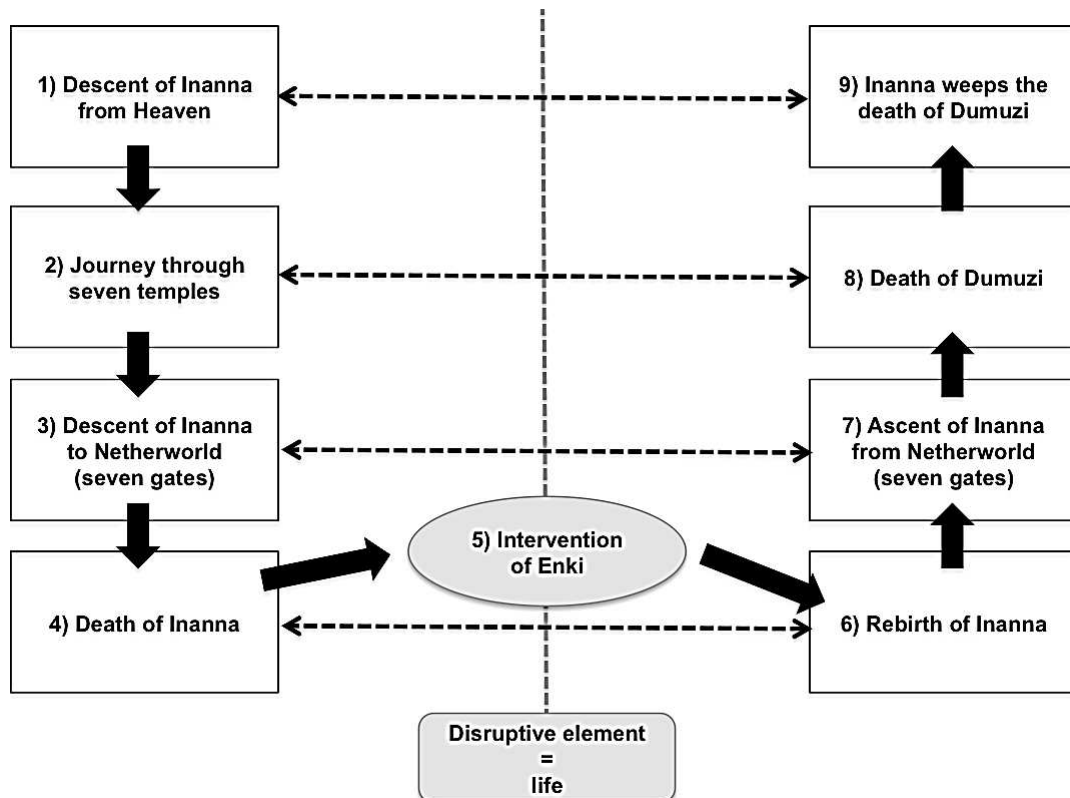

Figure 12: Analysis of the structure of ID

The life / death antagonism would be made explicit in the co-existent modalities that are juxtaposed in the posthumous passage of Inanna: on the one hand, the tremendous character of Inanna – where the *puluḫtu* is displayed as her primordial nature par excellence – and, on the other hand, the unarmed and deadly representation of her – when decrepitude is made explicit by the loss of the m e . From the structure of the story (*Figure 12*), it could also be understood how it is systematised in dual oppositions articulated as a mirror from the intervention of Enki: 1) descent of Inanna from Heaven / 9) Inanna as a *mater dolorosa*; 2) circulation by seven temples / 8) death of Dumuzi; 3) descent of Inanna to the Netherworld / 7)

ascent of Inanna from the Netherworld; 4) death of Inanna / 6) rebirth of Inanna.

In addition, it could be thought that *ID* would refer to an initiation ritual. In this sense, the shamanic role of Inanna in her double movement of descent and ascent could be conceived as a rite of passage, by means of which the ritualist would abandon an earlier status and acquire a new one.

In short, the figure of Inanna would be polysemic and paradoxical, considering her three great mythical-ritual personalities: *dea dolens* / betrayer / *mater dolorosa*. In addition, there would be a structuring of three dichotomous variants in the figure of the goddess: celestial / infernal, masculine / feminine, and death / life, which would exalt her Dionysian / tremendous condition.

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