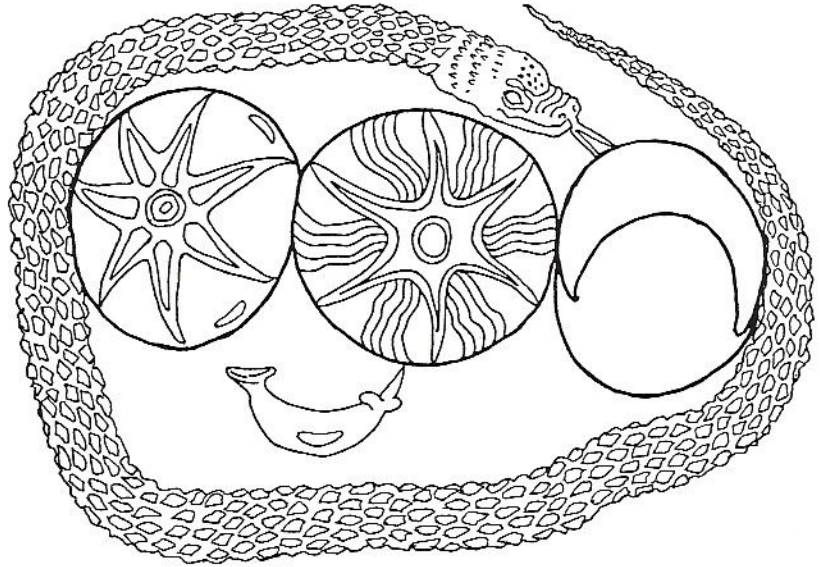


# A GATHERING OF THE GODS: THE POWER OF MESOPOTAMIAN RELIGION



Ancient Art from Mesopotamia — An Exhibit — September 14, 1997

The images in this booklet are symbols and sacred animals representing a large group or "gathering" of Mesopotamian gods and goddesses. They were taken from a *Kudurru*, a Polished Black Limestone Standing Monument of ovoid shape which originated in Mesopotamia (the "Land between the Two Rivers," the Tigris and Euphrates). Sometimes referred to as "boundary markers," *Kudurrus* were actually land grant documents used by kings to reward their favorite servants. These monuments were set up in temples to record royal land grants. The full force of the Mesopotamian pantheon was utilized both to witness and guarantee the land grant by carving the symbols and sacred animals of the deities on the *kudurru*. Each *kudurru* is unique; a good deal of variation exists in the number and choice of deities which appear. Recently acquired by the California Museum of Ancient Art, this sculpted monument is extremely rare. Only a few examples are known in North America.

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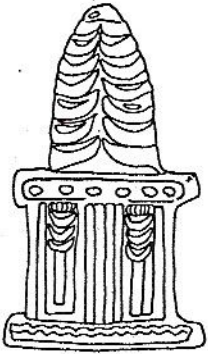
**Origin of artwork:** Mesopotamia  
**Dating:** Second Dynasty of Isin, 1157-1025 BC  
**Size:** Height 16.5 inches

**Text:** Jerome Berman  
**Line drawings:** Loa Sprung  
**Cuneiform script:** Gary Beckman, PhD.  
**Graphic design:** James Robie Design Associates

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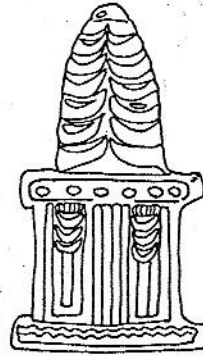
## Anu (*An in Sumerian*)



His symbol is the horned crown, in this case atop a temple facade. *An* is the Sumerian word for "heaven," and is the name for the sky god who is also the prime mover in creation. *Anu* is the father of all the gods, and the distant supreme leader of the gods. He is associated with the Sumerian city of Uruk.



## Enlil



His symbol is the horned crown, also atop a temple facade — the same emblem as *Anu*. One of the most important gods in the Mesopotamian pantheon, *Enlil* is the god of wind. His sacred temple called *E-kur* ("the Mountain House") located in the city of Nippur, was one of the most revered religious centers in Mesopotamia. In historical times, he replaced *Anu* as the supreme leader of the gods. Son of *Anu*, he married *Ninlil* and is the father of *Sin*.



## Ea (*Enki in Sumerian*)



His symbol is a curved stick with a ram's head, atop a temple facade pulled by a horned goat. The god of the subterranean fresh water ocean (called the *Abzu* in Sumerian), *Ea* was associated with wisdom and magic as well as the arts and crafts of civilization. He was the Keeper of the *Me* (pronounced "may"), the laws which govern all human life. Associated with the southern Sumerian city of Eridu, *Ea* is the son of *Anu*.



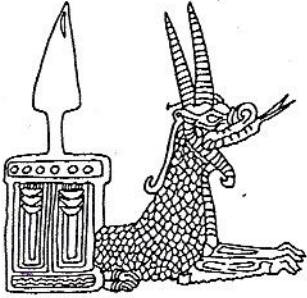
## Ninhursag



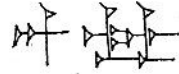
Her symbol is the omega shaped hairdo or wig. *Ninhursag* means "Lady of the Mountain." She is known as the "mother of the gods" and was thought to have been responsible for the birth of many gods and goddesses. *Ninhursag* was worshipped in the city of Adab.



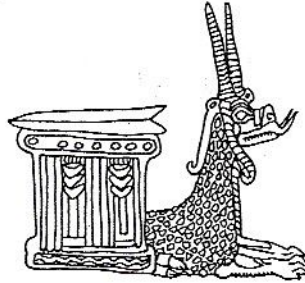
## Marduk



His symbol is a triangular headed spade, atop a temple facade pulled by his sacred animal the snake-dragon, *Mushush*. Closely associated with the city of Babylon, *Marduk's* importance was tied to the rise of the political power of Babylon as capital of an empire. In some traditions, he is the son of *Ea*, the god of wisdom. *Marduk* is the father of *Nabu*, worshipped in the nearby city of Borsippa.



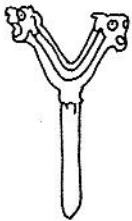
## Nabu



His symbol is a writing stylus, atop a temple facade pulled by the double-horned snake dragon, *Mushush*. The Mesopotamian scribal god, *Nabu* is patron of writing. His worship may have come from Syria with the nomadic Amorites in the early second millennium BC. From the Kassite Period on, he was regarded as the son of *Marduk*. During the New Year Celebrations, *Nabu* was brought from his sacred city, Borsippa, to visit his father *Marduk* in Babylon.



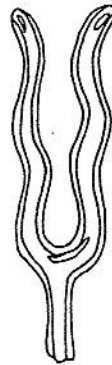
## Ninurta



His symbol is the double lion-headed scepter. *Ninurta* is both a warrior and a farmer god. He is the son of *Enlil*, and the husband of *Gula*. He was champion of the gods against the *Anzu* bird (*Imdugud*) when it stole the tablets of destiny. One of *Ninurta's* principal shrines was his temple at Nippur.



## Adad (*Iskur* in Sumerian)



His symbol is the two-pronged lightning bolt. The cuneiform sign for his name is the same as the sign for "wind." *Adad*, the storm god, was associated with thunder storms and flood, but was also beneficent as a god of fruitful rains and mountain streams. He was the son of *Anu*, and during the Assyrian Period, *Adad* shared a twin *ziggurat* temple with *Anu* in the city of Ashur.



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## Papsukkal

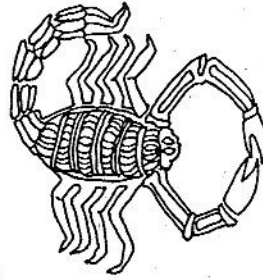


His sacred animal is the walking bird. *Papsukkal* functioned as a minister of the gods. He was a messenger, servant and gate-keeper god, especially for *Anu*. He is connected with the constellation Orion.

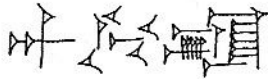


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## Ishara

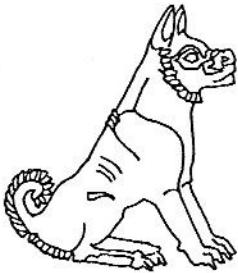


Her symbol is the scorpion. Probably of Semitic origin, *Ishara's* worship may have come from the middle Euphrates region. She is a goddess of love, war and divination. She is also a mother goddess and the goddess of oaths. *Ishara* is the mother of the *Sebittu*, the seven gods, later associated with the Pleiades.

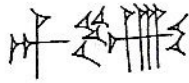


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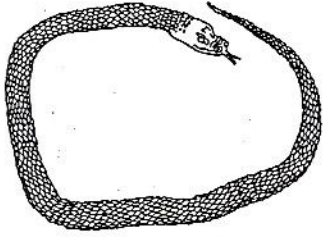
## Gula



Her sacred animal is the dog, usually a seated dog. The goddess *Gula*, whose name means "great," was a goddess of healing and a patroness of doctors. Her principal shrine was the *E-gal-mah* in the city of Isin. Small model dogs were dedicated to her by worshipers.



## Nirah



His symbol is a large snake which encompasses the astral deities of heaven. In Sumerian, his name means "viper." *Nirah* is a snake god associated with the ancient city of Der.



## Shamash (Utu in Sumerian)



His symbol is a multi-rayed circular sun disc. *Shamash*, the sun god, was also regarded as a god of truth, justice and right. In this capacity, he appears on the famous Law Code of Hammurabi giving King Hammurabi laws for all to follow. Carved on the top of the kudurru, he is one of the heavenly, or astral signs. *Shamash* is the son of *Sin* and the sister of *Ishtar*. His two principal temples were at Sippar and Larsa.



## Nusku



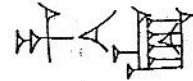
His symbol is a lit oil lamp. *Nusku* is regarded as both the son and minister of *Enlil*. He is the god of fire and light, and is, therefore, associated with the other astral deities. In a variant tradition at the Syrian city of Harran, he was worshipped as the son of *Sin*, the principal god. *Nusku* is often invoked in magical spells and hexes.



## Sin (Nanna in Sumerian)



His symbol is the crescent moon on a circular disc. Son of *Enlil* and his wife *Ninlil*, the moon god was called *Sin*. His children were the sun god, *Shamash*, and the goddess of love, *Ishtar*. Major centers of *Sin's* worship were in the southern Mesopotamian city of Ur and the Syrian city of Harran. Both urban centers were associated with the Biblical patriarch Abraham.



## Ishtar (Inanna in Sumerian)



Her symbol is a star inside a disc. *Ishtar* is most important female deity of Mesopotamia. Goddess of love and sexuality, she is a patron of prostitutes. She is a goddess of war, seen as violent and lusting after power. And she is associated with the morning and evening star, the planet Venus. *Ishtar* is the daughter of *Sin*, the moon god, and sister of *Shamash*, the sun god. She was the lover of *Tammuz*, and was responsible for his death. Her sacred city was Uruk. Also associated with the legendary hero *Gilgamesh* and the god of heaven, *Anu*.