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Ištar and the Motif of the Cosmological Warrior

Assurbanipal's Adaptation of Enuma Elish

C. L. Crouch

Introduction

Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal are well known to scholars of ancient Near Eastern prophecy, thanks to their affinity for prophecy and the prophetic goddess Ištar in particular, which resulted in the preservation of oracular material in a manner not attested for other Sargonid kings. It has been suggested that one of the reasons for this affinity was the reliance of both kings on prophetic legitimation to buttress their contested claims to kingship.[1] This paper explores how Assurbanipal in particular also relies on Ištar to legitimate his military activities, also as a result of the difficult political circumstances in which he was obliged to operate. This legitimation takes the form of allusion to *Enuma Elish* and the accrual of the characteristics of its warrior hero to the goddess Ištar.

The significance of this legitimation tactic demands a brief explanation of the military ideology current in Assyria prior to this time.[2] Under Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II, and Sennacherib, the king in his military activities was

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1. So, e.g., M. Nissinen, "Spoken, Written, Quoted, and Invented: Orality and Writtenness in Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy," in *Writings and Speech in Israel and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy* (ed. E. Ben Zvi and M. H. Floyd; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000) 253; see also M. Nissinen, "The Socioreligious Role of the Neo-Assyrian Prophets," in *Prophecy in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context: Mesopotamian, Biblical, and Arabian Perspectives* (ed. M. Nissinen; SBLSymS 13; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000) 102–7. This suggestion is opposed by S. Parpola in favour of an explanation related to the pre-eminence of an ecstatic Ištar cult, but this has not been widely adopted (*Assyrian Prophecies* [SAA 9; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997] xxxvii–xxxix).

2. For a more detailed discussion, see C. L. Crouch, *War and Ethics in the Ancient Near East: Military Violence in Light of Cosmology and History* (BZAW 407; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009).

conceived as the human counterpart to the divine king battling against cosmic chaos. This synergy between the divine and the human kings was expressed in the royal inscriptions through the use of linguistic and conceptual allusions to the mythological account of the divine battle against chaos at creation, preserved in its fullest form in *Enuma Elish*. As the most common form of that epic makes clear, the divine king to whom the Assyrian king was likened at this time was the god Marduk, patron god of Babylon. Though such an Assyrian-Babylonian match might seem potentially problematic, the uncomplicated use of the cosmological analogy by the kings Tiglath-pileser and Sargon indicates that Marduk's Babylonian connections were not an issue as long as political relations between Assyria and Babylonia were sufficiently calm. First during the reign of Sennacherib and then continuing into the reigns of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, however, the Assyrian kings' political difficulties with the governance of Babylonia began to influence the ideological accounting of their military endeavours as well as the mythological narrative on which this was based.

As is generally known, under Sennacherib the epic of *Enuma Elish* was revised in favour of the Assyrian god Aššur. Like his successors, Sennacherib was plagued by the political problem of governing Babylonia, and the reinterpretation of the creation tradition under his rule can plausibly be presented as having been motivated, at least in part, by a desire to avoid attributing the epic's starring role to the Babylonian Marduk. This is because the use of the cosmological tradition to legitimate Assyrian military activities effectively identified the king's enemies with cosmic chaos, at the same time as identifying the Assyrian king with the epic's warrior hero. For Sargon and Tiglath-pileser, aligning themselves with Marduk against their various enemies was unproblematic, but the overwhelming political and military issue of Sennacherib's reign was the governance of Babylonia. In such circumstances, the king's identification with Marduk and the attendant identification of Marduk's people with cosmic chaos seems to have instigated a variant on the traditional mythological framework in which the king's military endeavours were understood: the revision of the myth in favour of Aššur was an attempt to dissociate the divine king with whom the Assyrian king was identified from the patron deity of the king's enemy.

Ultimately, however, the shift to Aššur as cosmic warrior was relatively short-lived, and there is only limited indication that Aššur's assumption of the role persisted past Sennacherib's death.[3] Much less clear is the place of this

3. Among the few exceptions is the attribution to Aššur of the title "king," on which see further below. Divine kingship was a central feature of the creation tradition and by implication the persistence of the use of the title with regard to Aššur hints at some residual effects of Sennacherib's recension. Elsewhere, A. Livingstone has noted that in the Assur Hymn (SAA 3 1) Aššur takes on attributes more normally associated with Marduk; this text is attributed to the reign of Assurbanipal (A. Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*

phenomenon in the wider scheme of Assyrian mythological and theological tradition. Certainly, the possibility of such a phenomenon has not generally been met with much enthusiasm by scholarship; in a paper delivered at the 1992 *Rencontre*, one of the acknowledged experts on the text of *Enuma Elish*, W. G. Lambert, declared that the Aššur version was "an ill-conceived attempt," a "very amateurish revision," and, ultimately, "of no consequence for the study of the myth."[4] Among the very few dissenting voices are two very recent papers, one as yet unpublished, by Stephanie Dalley and Eckart Frahm.[5] Though the ability of major deities to absorb lesser ones is well known and widely acknowledged, the interchangeability of deities who are not identified in such a way has usually been seen as an aberration.[6] In the light of what follows, this can no longer be the case.

The starting point for this phenomenon is the political circumstances of the latest Assyrian kings. As already mentioned, the substitution of Aššur for Marduk, even if it must have already been phenomenologically possible, in fact only occurred at the historical point at which Babylonia posed an unavoidable political problem.[7] However, the tensions between Assyria and Babylonia did not disappear after Sennacherib's death but persisted into the reigns of his son Esarhaddon and grandson Assurbanipal. The difficult nature of the Assyrian-Babylonian relationship made their own alignment with Marduk problematic

[SAA 3; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1989] xx, xvii). The Marduk Ordeal (Assur Version; SAA 3 34:54–55; cf. 34:34–35), which probably originated under Sennacherib but is thought to have remained in use by his successors, has also been thought to refer to an edition of *Enuma Elish* featuring Aššur, though this has been disputed (most strongly by W. G. Lambert, in "The Assyrian Recension of Enūma Eliš," in *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten: XXXIV^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale Heidelberg, 6.–10. Juli 1992* [ed. H. Waetzoldt and H. Hauptmann; HSAO 6; Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1997] 79; cf. E. Frahm, *Einleitung in die Sanherib-Inschriften* [AfOB 26; Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik der Universität Wien, 1997]); for a recent summary and additional bibliography, see E. Frahm, "Counter-texts, Commentaries, and Adaptations: Politically Motivated Responses to the Babylonian Epic of Creation in Mesopotamia, the Biblical World, and Elsewhere," *Orient* 45 [2010] 12–13). Similarly contested is a possible allusion in a letter to Esarhaddon (SAA 10 365; again, see Lambert, "Assyrian Recension," 78; Frahm, "Counter-texts," 25 n. 35).

4. Lambert, "Assyrian Recension," 78.

5. S. Dalley, "Mesopotamian Narrative Literature" (paper presented at The World of Berossos International Conference, Durham, 8 July 2010); Frahm, "Counter-texts."

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

7. On the origins of the battle against the sea in the political relations of the second millennium, see T. Jacobsen, "Religious Drama in Ancient Mesopotamia," Goedicke and Roberts (eds.), *Unity and Diversity*, 72–76. On the merging of deities and shifts in their genealogies as relating to varying circumstances of political power, see Lambert, "Historical Development."

and led to a minimization of the extent to which the tradition of Marduk's kingship over the gods was acknowledged. Predictably, these kings did not revert to the tradition as deployed by Sargon and Tiglath-pileser, but forged their own solutions to this thorny political and theological problem.

Esarhaddon's approach was to avoid the issue, playing down the older use of the cosmological tradition as the legitimating framework for warfare and preferring instead to attribute his motivation for military action to prophetic and other divinatory activities.[8] Under Assurbanipal, however, the cosmological tradition resurfaces: the king is once again the cosmic warrior, out to defeat chaos. Importantly, however, he does not simply revert to the Marduk version of the tradition, nor does he favour the solution of Sennacherib and adopt Aššur as his divine royal counterpart. Rather, he combines the older cosmological tradition with his father's and his own predilection for prophetic legitimation by attributing the characteristics of the cosmic warrior to the goddess Ištar, the preeminent prophetic deity and a royal favourite. This new variant on the cosmological battle of the king and his deity against chaos appears first in the Cylinder B tradition, peaks in the Ištar Temple inscription, and fades in the final version of Assurbanipal's "annals," the Rassam Cylinder.[9]

Cylinder B

Cylinder B dates from approximately 648 B.C.E., the year in which Assurbanipal finally succeeded in putting down his brother's rebellion in Babylonia.[10] Indicative perhaps of the relatively recent history which that episode recounted, the cylinder refers to Šamaš-šumu-ukin in the campaign labelled here as the eighth, but lacks a full account of the rebellion and its aftermath. Nonetheless, the impact of that episode is evident in the language and ideology with which Assurbanipal describes his earlier military activities.

This impact is clearest in the account of the war against Teumman and the Elamites, identified in Cylinder B as the seventh campaign, which culminated with the thorough and bloody defeat of Teumman and his troops at the Ulai

8. See Crouch, *War and Ethics*, 134–37.

9. References to Cylinder B and the Rassam Cylinder include their associated variants unless specific deviations are noted. As the inverted commas indicate, the inscriptions of Assurbanipal are hardly annalistic, even in the general sense in which the term is usually applied to the Assyrian royal inscriptions; in lieu of a consistent, campaign-based inscriptional tradition in which each new campaign was recounted subsequent to the last, Assurbanipal's inscriptions are notoriously difficult in their chronology, with campaigns appearing, disappearing, and relocating depending on the version.

10. For an account of the conflict between Assurbanipal and Šamaš-šumu-ukin, see, e.g., G. Frame, *Babylonia 689–627 B.C.: A Political History* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1992).

River.[11] The episode appears to have begun while Assurbanipal was engaged in the worship of Ištar at Arbela, and the temple there was later decorated with reliefs depicting the event; it may well be that this combination of events was the instigating factor in the prioritization of Ištar in the cosmological tradition.[12]

The first point of interest in the textual account of this event is the relative emphasis on each of the divine actors who appear in the text. Though Marduk and Aššur are mentioned, it is clear that they are of much less import than Ištar, and that they assume largely passive roles in comparison to Ištar's subsequent activity. Aššur only occasionally appears alongside Ištar in the formula "Aššur and Ištar," and Marduk is almost completely marginalized.[13]

This marginalization of Marduk and foregrounding of Ištar is reiterated in the rest of the passage. A major sign that the older tradition has been rejected is that it is Aššur, not Marduk, who is identified with the title "king of the gods."[14] Though Sennacherib's insertion of Aššur as the divine king and cosmic warrior in *Enuma Elish* does not appear to have persisted in any systematic way beyond his reign, the identification of Aššur as king affirms an ongoing ideological

11. R. Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996) B iv 87 C v 93–B vi 16 C vii 9.

12. Such a possibility was also recently suggested by S. Dalley ("Mesopotamian Narrative Literature"). Note, however, the reference to Ištar as LUGAL in a prophetic text from the time when Assurbanipal was still crown prince, which suggests that the origins of the shift may go back to some earlier point (SAA 9 7:2; see below). Frahm has written on the evidence, suggesting a much older association between Ištar and the New Year celebrations of which *Enuma Elish* formed a significant part, though the fragmentary nature of most of the texts makes it difficult to ascertain the character of this earlier relationship (E. Frahm, "Die Akītu-Häuser von Nineve," *NABU* 66 [2000] 75–79).

13. Elsewhere on this cylinder Marduk appears explicitly—that is, under the designation ^{d}AMAR.UTU—only in the preceding (sixth) campaign concerning the invasion of Babylon and Akkad by the Elamites. The attack of the Elamites on Marduk's home territory of Babylonia seems a natural occasion for the use of Marduk's traditional cosmological characteristics in conjunction with the military actions of the human king, and it is accordingly unsurprising to find that he is still accorded a hint of those attributes in this context, being identified as "king of the gods" (Borger, *Assurbanipals* B iv 66 C v 74 [^{dingir}amar-utu lugal dingir-meš]; this and all subsequent transliterations follow the conventions of the edition cited). The passage is, aside from this, sparing in its cosmological allusions; other than this title, the only clear allusion is the identification of Teumman as "the image of a *gallû*-demon," which occurs in the description of the consequences of Urtaku's defeat and anticipates the subsequent campaign, in which Ištar is the cosmological warrior (Borger, *Assurbanipals* B iv 74 C v 80 [*tam-šil* gal$_5$-lá]). Elsewhere in Cylinder B Marduk appears implicitly—under the epithet "Bēl" (^{d}EN)—on four further occasions, always in formulaic lists of three or more deities (on this phenomenon see further below). The only exception is a circuitous report in which Gyges is said to have defeated the Cimmerians, apparently on Assurbanipal's behalf, with the aid of Marduk (Borger, *Assurbanipals* B iii 4 Fortsetzung, following on from A ii 110).

14. Borger, *Assurbanipals* B v 42 C vi 38 (an-šár lugal dingir-meš); cf. A i 132 C ii 128; also "Exkurs: Die Textgruppe K 2656+," 19=h.

discomfort with the identification of Marduk as the cosmological warrior, and it suggests that further attempts to avoid this association should not come as a surprise.

In fact, the rest of the passage confirms a broadly-based shift of the cosmological tradition onto the goddess Ištar, with the language used to describe and entreat the goddess clearly alluding to the actions and characteristics of the divine warrior against chaos, as described in *Enuma Elish*.

First, Assurbanipal's prayer entreats the goddess, addressed as the "hero of the gods," to "rip him [Teumman] open in the heat of battle like an encumbrance; let loose upon him a tempest, an evil wind."[15] The language of storm and tempest, especially the *meḫu*, is well-attested in the royal inscriptions as terminology used in allusions to the cosmological tradition, deriving from the characterization of the cosmic warrior in *Enuma Elish*.[16] The description of the god going out to battle against Tiamat declares:

> He fashioned a bow, designated it as his weapon,
> Feathered the arrow, set it in the string.
> He lifted up a mace and carried it in his right hand,
> Slung the bow and quiver at his side,
> Put lightning in front of him,
> His body was filled with an ever-blazing flame.
> He made a net to encircle Tiamat within it,
> Guarded the four winds so that none of her could escape:
> South Wind, North Wind, East Wind, West Wind,
> He kept them close to the net at his side, the gift of his father Anu.
> He created the evil *imḫullu*-wind, the storm, the dust storm,
> The Four Winds, the Seven Winds, the whirlwind, the unfaceable wind.
> He sent out the winds which he had created, seven of them.
> They advanced behind him to make turmoil inside Tiamat.
> The lord raised the flood-weapon, his great weapon,
> And mounted the frightful, unfaceable storm-chariot. . . .[17]

15. Borger, *Assurbanipals* B v 44–46 (*at-ti qa-rit-ti* dingir-meš gim gun *ina qa-bal tam-ḫa-ri pu-ut*[*-t*[[*i-ri-šú-ma di-kiš-šú me-ḫu-u* im *lem-nu*).

16. Thus Sargon is described as going into battle "like the onslaught of the storm," while Sennacherib goes one better with "like the onslaught of the raging storm" (A. Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad* [Göttingen: Cuvillier, 1994] Ann. 296 [*kima tīb meḫê*]; D. D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* [OIP 2; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1924] 45:77 [*kîma ti-ib me-ḫi-e šam-ri*]; cf. 83:43–44, where the text uses the simple form). On these and other types of cosmological language deployed by Assyrian scribes as allusions in the inscriptions, see Crouch, *War and Ethics*.

17. *Enuma Elish* IV 35–49 (*ib-šim* GIŠ.BAN GIŠ.TUKUL-*šu ú-ad-di mul-mul-lum uš-tar-ki-ba ú-kin-ši mat-nu iš-ši-ma miṭ-ṭi im-na-š ú-šá-ḫi-iz* GIŠ.BAN *u iš-pa-tum i-du-uš-šu i-lul iš-kun* NIM.GÍR *i-na pa-ni-šu nab-la muš-taḫ-me-ṭu zu-mur-šu um-tal-li i-pu-uš-ma*

The prayer's conclusion confirms that an allusion to this tradition is indeed intended in the Cylinder B text. It culminates with a direct paraphrase of *Enuma Elish*: "against Teumman king of Elam, against whom she was enraged, she turned her face."[18] She is not explicitly identified in this text as the divine king, but an avoidance of the masculine title does not appear to have deterred her assimilation of other motifs associated with the cosmic warrior.[19]

While there is no evidence of Assurbanipal commissioning a systematic literary revision of *Enuma Elish* in favour of Ištar, the language used to describe and entreat the goddess in this passage suggests that Assurbanipal or his scribes were merging the traditional cosmological legitimation of war with Assurbanipal's own special affinity with the prophetic tradition and with Ištar in particular. It is noteworthy in this regard that the text's attachment of cosmological imagery to Ištar is followed immediately by a prophetic dream, in which Ištar sends an encouraging message to the king and promises him her support in the coming battle. Though inevitably conjectural, it is a plausible suggestion

sa-pa-ra šul-mu-ú qer-biš ti-amat er-bet-ti šá-a-ri uš-te-eṣ-bi-ta la a-ṣe-e mim-mi-šá IM.U$_{18}$. LU IM.SI.SÁ IM.KUR.RA IM.MAR.TU *i-du-uš sa-pa-ra uš-taq-ri-ba qí-iš-ti* AD-*šú* ^{d}*a-num ib-ni im-ḫul-la* IM *lem-na me-ḫa-a a-šam-šu-tum* IM.LÍMMU.BA IM.IMIN.BI IM.SÙḪ IM.SÁ.A.NU.SÁ.A *ú-še-ṣa-am-ma* IM.MEŠ *šá ib-nu-ú si-bit-ti-šú-un qer-biš ti-amat šu-ud-lu-ḫu te-bu-ú* EGIR-*šú iš-ši-ma be-lum a-bu-ba* GIŠ.TUKUL-*šú* GAL-*a* GIŠ.GIGIR UD-*mu la maḫ-ri ga-lit-ta ir-kab*). Citations of *Enuma Elish* are to P. Talon, *Enūma Eliš: The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth* (SAACT 4; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2005); translations are after S. Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), and Talon. T. R. Kämmerer and K. A. Metzler, *Das babylonische Weltschöpfungsepos* Enūma elîs (AOAT 375; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012) appeared too late for inclusion.

18. Borger, *Assurbanipals* B v 75–76 (*e-li* ^{l}*te-um-man* lugal kur elam-ma^{ki} *ša ug-gu-ga-at pa-nu-uš-šá taš-kun*); cf. *Enuma Elish* IV 60 (*áš-riš ti-amat ša ug-gu-gat pa-nu-uš-šu iš-kun*). Dalley has recently suggested that the decapitation of Teumman which is so prominent in Assurbanipal's reliefs may also allude to a lesser-known version of *Enuma Elish*; if so, this would reiterate the allusions here ("Mesopotamian Narrative Literature").

19. On Ištar's varied identities, see, e.g., G. Beckman, "Ištar of Nineveh Reconsidered," *JCS* 50 (1998) 1–10; R. Harris, "Inanna-Ishtar as Paradox and a Coincidence of Opposites," *HR* 30 (1991) 261–78; T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion* (London: Yale University Press, 1976); W. G. Lambert, "The Cult of Ištar at Babylon," in *Le temple et le culte: Compte rendu de la vingtième Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 37; Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut, 1975); idem, "Divine Love Lyrics from Babylon," *JSS* 4 (1959) 1–15; idem, "Ištar of Nineveh," *Iraq* 66 (2004) 35–39; Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, xiii–xlviii; B. N. Porter, "Ishtar of Nineveh and Her Collaborator, Ishtar of Arbela, in the Reign of Assurbanipal," *Iraq* 66 (2004) 41–44; H. L. J. Vanstiphout, "Inanna/Ishtar as a Figure of Controversy," in *Struggles of Gods: Papers of the Groningen Work Group for the Study of the History of Religions* (ed. H. G. Kippenberg in association with H. J. W. Drijvers and Y. Kuiper; Religion and Reason 31; Berlin: Mouton, 1984); M. Vieyra, "Ištar de Nineve," *RA* 51 (1957) 83–102, 130–38. On Ištar's identification as king, see also below.

that the adaptation of the cosmic warrior role to Ištar was directly related to her divinatory characteristics and to Assurbanipal's more wide-ranging reliance upon them. Support for such an adaptation may also have been seen in Ištar's inclusion, as the Bow Star, in Marduk's arsenal in the myth's standard version.[20] Ištar was already well-established as a war deity, and the attribution of the characteristics of the cosmic warrior to her was not a major alteration of her basic character.

Ištar Temple Inscription

In an inscription found near the Ištar temple at Nineveh, the transference of traditional cosmological motifs onto the goddess Ištar is extensive and unmistakeable.[21] The inscription emphasizes Ištar in a manner wholly consonant with what would be expected in an inscription found near and focussed on the Ištar Temple, yet the choice of imagery used to describe the goddess is striking: even more clearly than in the Cylinder B tradition, this inscription identifies Ištar with the role of the divine ruler and cosmological warrior against chaos.

The association of Ištar with this role is extensive, and allusions appear throughout the text. Foremost among them is the storm language used in the opening passage: Ištar is the one "who rides the great storm" and "whose wide net lies on the enemies."[22] As there has already been cause to note, the storm is a key feature of the warrior god's arsenal; the net is closely tied to this imagery in *Enuma Elish*, and both are typical terminology for scribes to employ when alluding to the cosmological tradition.[23]

20. *Enuma Elish* IV 35 (GIŠ.BAN).

21. An account of the find is given in R. Campbell Thompson and R. W. Hamilton, "The British Museum Excavations on the Temple of Ishtar at Nineveh, 1930–31," *AAA* 19 (1932) 55–116; a description of the site may also be found in J. Reade, "The Ishtar Temple at Nineveh," *Iraq* 67 (2005) 347–90. The *editio princeps* appears in R. Campbell Thompson and M. E. L. Mallowan, "The British Museum Excavations on the Temple of Ishtar at Nineveh, 1931–32," *AAA* 22 (1933) 71–186; a new edition by A. Fuchs appears in Borger (*Assurbanipals*, 258–96).

22. Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 8 (*ra-ki-pat* ud-meš gal-meš), IIT 9 (*sa-par-šá šu-par-ru-ru a-na a-a-bi šu-nu-*[*u*]*l-lu*); see, e.g., *Enuma Elish* IV 35–49.

23. For references to the storm in the royal inscriptions, see above. Tiglath-pileser likens his attacks on various enemies to the god's use of the net, while Sargon overpowers various districts of Urarṭu "as with a net" in the *Letter to Aššur* (see H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III King of Assyria: Critical Edition, with Introductions, Translations and Commentary* [Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994] Ann. 11:6, Summ. 7:13 [*kīma sa-pa-ri as-hu-up*]; W. R. Mayer, "Sargons Feldzug gegen Urartu—714 v. Chr.: Text und Übersetzung," *MDOG* 115 [1983] 88:194 [*ḫu-ḫa-reš*]). Sargon uses *ḫuḫāru* rather than the *saparu* of *Enuma Elish* and other royal inscriptions; for a discussion, see Crouch, *War and Ethics*, 48–50.

Compounding this effect are a number of statements concerning Ištar's relations to other gods (the Igigi and the Anunnaki) and to the universe as a whole. First, she is identified explicitly as "the ruler of the Igigi and the Anunnaki"; this statement of her seniority among the gods is elaborated with the assertion that her "rule over the gods includes all places of the highest rank" and is reiterated by the assertion that she "governs all."[24] These statements allude to a key point of contention in *Enuma Elish*, namely, who is to rule over the Anunnaki: this right is initially claimed for Qingu by Tiamat, but ultimately acquired by Marduk by virtue of having defeated Tiamat.[25]

The victorious cosmic warrior is also acclaimed king of heaven and earth and acknowledged to possess "sovereignty over all of the whole universe."[26] Accordingly, in declaring Ištar "the lady of all that is in the realm of heaven and earth," the inscription is making a bold claim for Ištar's unrivalled authority over both the gods and the created order.[27] Expressing this sentiment more concretely, the text states that Ištar is the one "who has subordinated all lands"—a phrase also used of the Assyrian rulers in their assertions of a universal earthly dominion which corresponds to that of the divine king.[28] Each of these statements is designed to identify Ištar as the pre-eminent ruling military deity relative to the other gods, staking out her claim to be the cosmic divine warrior and her claim to all that this role entails.

Significant in the normal rendering of this role, however, is the title of "king." At first, it seems that the appellation of Ištar, as a female deity, with this masculine title was too problematic. Thus, according to the editorial reconstruction of a broken line, Ištar is identified as "the wife of the high Enlil, over the gods, the king of heaven and earth, the fixer of destinies, the mother of the gods."[29] Through identification as the divine king's wife, Ištar appears to be identified as the queen, the nearest female equivalent to a king. This affiliation is in keeping with the text's opening appellations, in which the goddess is called

24. Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 1 (*e-tel-lat* ^{dingir}í-gì-gì *u* ^{dingir}DIŠ+U); IIT 2–3 (ša *ina* dingir-meš x-KUR *da*-ád-*me šu-tu-qat*); IIT 10 (*šá nap-ḫar* [*k*]*a-la*).

25. *Enuma Elish* I 156; II 42; III 46, 104; V 85–89; VI 39–50, 145. For simplicity, the following will refer to Marduk as the protagonist of *Enuma Elish*, though this is not to exclude or forget the variant which inserts Aššur in this role.

26. *Enuma Elish* IV 14 (*šar-ru-tum kiš-šat kal gim-re-e-ti*); cf. IV 28, 83; V 79, 88; VI 20, 142; VII 91, 95, 100, 101.

27. Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 3 (*be-let* dù *mim-ma šum-šú ša ina paṭ* šá-*ma*-[*m*]*e u qaq-qa-ri*).

28. Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 10 (šá *nap-ḫar* [*k*]*a-la ta-bé-lu-ma* kur-kur dù-*ši-na tu-šak-ni*-[*šú*]).

29. Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 5 (*ḫīrat* ? ^{dingir}e]n-líl-[l]á dingir-meš *šá-qu-ú* lugal an-*e* [k]i-*tim*).

"queen of queens," as well as with the description, later in the inscription, of Aššur as her husband, presuming an identification of Enlil and Aššur.[30] In the context of this discussion, however, it is worth noting that there is an ambiguity in the subsequent appellations. Is it Enlil/Aššur who is "over the gods, the king of heaven and earth," as is most naturally assumed, or might it be Ištar? The subsequent phrases—"the fixer of destinies, the mother of the gods, whose command changes not"—clearly segue into appellations intended to refer to Ištar, not Enlil. A straightforward grammatical analysis would at first insist that those couched in the masculine must refer to Enlil, and that those in the feminine must refer to Ištar. That such grammatical exactitude may not be required here, however, is indicated by the existence of a prophetic text which uses precisely the masculine "king" (LUGAL) as an appellation of Ištar.[31] It is possible, therefore, that in addition to her more usual appellation as queen, Ištar—whose gender is also notoriously transient—is in this text identified also as the divine "king of heaven and earth," opening a series of appellations which place her firmly in that royal role.[32]

The first of these is the title "the fixer of destinies."[33] Like rule over the Anunnaki, control of the tablets of destiny and the authority to decree destinies is

30. Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 1 (*šar-*[*rat šar-ra*]*-°a-ti*); 185 (an-šár *ḫa-ʾi-i-ri-šá*).

31. SAA 9 7:2; also published in M. Nissinen, with contributions by C. L. Seow and R. K. Ritner, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (SBLWAW 12; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003) §92:2. Both Parpola and Nissinen conclude that LUGAL must stand for šarratu "queen," but in the light of the evidence set out in this paper Nissinen has agreed that it may in fact be intended to be read as the masculine title. If so, the text also provides the earliest attested association of Ištar with the role of the divine warrior, as the prophetic text in question is addressed to Assurbanipal while he is still in the Palace of Succession; such an early association perhaps confirms the connection between the importance of Ištar to Assurbanipal's succession and her assumption of the role of the divine warrior king. On Ištar's varied identities, see n. 19.

32. Despite the clear transference of the cosmological warrior role to Ištar, the uncertainty as to whether she is also identified as the king is reflected in the similar lack of clarity in the rest of the text as to who is king of the gods. On the one hand, either Aššur (in the guise of Enlil) or Ištar is identified as the king in the opening sequence. Marduk, however, is still called "king of the gods" in the description of the rebuilding of Esagila (Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 5 [lugal an-*e* [k]i-*tim*]; IIT 49 [^{dingir}]amar-utu X[X] dingir-meš]). In addition to the fact that this event occurred prior to the war with Šamaš-šumu-ukin, it also describes the Marduk temple in Babylon, and in such circumstances the use of such language not only seems appropriate but may have been all but unavoidable (though it may well be the awkwardness of this attribution which is reflected in the general lack elsewhere of post-rebellion reports of the rebuilding of that temple). It remains significant that elsewhere in the text it is not Marduk but Ištar with whom the attributes of the cosmic warrior are associated.

33. Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 5 (*mu-šim ši-ma-a-ti*). Like LUGAL, *mušim* is masculine singular; that it is applied here to Ištar is based on the preceding argument concerning LU-

one of the important practical aspects of the battle between the gods in *Enuma Elish*. In laying out the conditions on which he will undertake to fight Tiamat on behalf of the gods, Marduk demands: "Let me, my own utterance, fix fate instead of you"; in the battle he takes the tablets for himself.[34] This directly counters the earlier claims made by Tiamat, on Qingu's behalf, to the possession of the tablets of destiny and the authority to decree destinies.[35] By declaring Ištar's claim to this divine prerogative, the text makes an important connection between the goddess and the cosmological role. The following declarations that Ištar's "command changes not" and her "saying is not abolished" are also clear claims to the attributes of the cosmic warrior: Marduk's demands go on to include: "Whatever I create shall never be altered! Let a decree from my lips never be revoked, never changed!"[36]

Ištar also "unites the exceedingly precious divine powers of Anu."[37] Again, as with authority over the Anunnaki and control of the tablets of destiny, this power is part of what is at stake between Tiamat's Qingu and the cosmic warrior: Tiamat claims it for Qingu, while in the great gods' agreement to Marduk's demands it is repeatedly affirmed that Marduk's word has the power of Anu.[38] The phrase "who has no opponents among the gods" also seems to lay claim to the role of the warrior who defeats Tiamat's divine minions on behalf of the terrified great gods; the beginning of the recitation of the fifty names of Marduk, the climax of *Enuma Elish*, declares him to be without rival.[39] Individually, but especially collectively, the strength of each of these allusions puts beyond doubt that the text is identifying Ištar as the divine warrior against chaos: these are all

GAL, the supporting evidence of the surrounding text, and the fact that the phrase is stereotyped when used as a divine epithet—which is unsurprising given that it is nowhere else used of a female deity (see *šâmu* B 2c, in *CAD* Š/1 362–63).

34. *Enuma Elish* III 120 (*ep-šu pi-ia ki-ma k*[*a-tu-nu-ma ši-ma-tú lu-šim-ma*]); IV 121–22 (*i-kim-šu-ma* DUB NAM.MEŠ *la si-ma-ti-šu i-na ki-šib-bi ik-nu-kam-ma ir-tuš it-muḫ*); cf. V 69–70, where he delegates this authority to other gods.

35. *Enuma Elish* I 157–160; II 43–46; III 47–50, 105–8 (*id-din-šum-ma* DUB NAM.MEŠ *i-ra-tuš ú-šat-mi-iḫ* KA.TA.DUG$_4$.GA-*ka la in-nin-na-a li-kun ṣi-it pi-i-ka in-na-nu* ^{d}*kin-gu* šu-*uš-qu-ú le-qu-ú* ^{d}*a-nu-ti a-na* DINGIR.DINGIR DUMU.MEŠ-*šu ši-ma-ta iš-ti-mu*).

36. Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 6 (*qí-bit-sa la in-nen-nu-u la ut-tak-ka-ru ṣi-it* [ka]-*šá*); *Enuma Elish* III 121–22 (*la ut-tak-kar mim-mu-u a-ban-nu-ú* [*a-na-ku*] [*a*]-*a i-tur* [*a-a i*]*n-nin-na-a sì-qar ša*[*p-ti-ia*]); these attributes are reiterated in the gods' agreement to Marduk's conditions (*Enuma Elish* IV 4–10).

37. Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 6 (*ḫa-mi-mat* garza-meš ^{dingir}*a-num šu-qu-ru-ti*).

38. *Enuma Elish* I 159; II 45; III 49, 107; cf. IV 82; IV 4, 6 (*sì-qar-ka* ^{d}*a-nu-um*).

39. Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 8 (*ša ina* dingir-meš *ge-ru-šá la i-šu-u*); cf. *Enuma Elish* IV; VI 106. Compare also the language of the royal warrior who is without rival (Fuchs, *Inschriften Sargons*, Prunk. 13; rev. 9–10; bro. 18–19).

characteristic prerogatives of the protagonist in *Enuma Elish*, and the attribution of them to Ištar cannot be anything but deliberate.[40]

Rassam Cylinder

Intriguing though this is, this attempt to Assyrianize the *Enuma Elish* tradition through the insertion of Ištar into the starring role was a short-lived effort. The final version of Assurbanipal's annals, as recorded on the Rassam Cylinder sometime between 644 and 636, has abandoned all attempts to legitimate the king's military activities through association with the cosmological tradition, and it makes no claims to the roles of divine king and cosmological warrior on behalf of any deity, Assyrian or Babylonian.

The Rassam Cylinder (classified among the "A" tradition by Rykle Borger) overwhelmingly uses "Aššur and Ištar" as the divine agents behind Assurbanipal's military activities. In the light of the previous suggestions that both Aššur's and Ištar's acquisition of cosmological attributes was connected to an ongoing discomfort with the Babylonian affiliation of Marduk, it is noteworthy that, by this end stage of Assurbanipal's rule and of Assyrian dominance generally, Marduk never appears by name (^{d}AMAR.UTU); his presence remains only under the vague epithet Bēl (using the evasive ^{d}EN), and then only in formulaic lists including at least three other deities. The only mention outside such incidental lists is in a single statement in which he is listed–with the generic ^{d}EN–among the gods to whom Assurbanipal was unable to sacrifice as a result of the Šamaš-šumu-ukin rebellion. Marduk has, by this point in history, been effectively sidelined as an active military deity.

Yet the cosmological void created by Marduk's eclipse is not filled by Ištar in this text. The only cosmological language employed in the entire inscription is a reference to a "net of the great gods" in the description of the fall of Babylon, and there its explicit identification as the net of *all* the great gods seems to be an attempt to diffuse the net's cosmological association with the divine warrior king, whether Marduk, Aššur, or Ištar.[41] Perhaps recognizing that a compre-

40. Practically speaking, in the narrative part of the inscription every campaign lists either "Aššur, Mullissu, and Ištar of Arbela" as a triad of divine actors or employs the dyad "Aššur and Ištar" or "Aššur and Mullissu." The agency of Ištar and Aššur on behalf of the king is reiterated no fewer than ten times in less than fifty lines (Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 116–17, 119, 124, 127, 129, 133, 136, 139, 156, 164–65). There is only one instance in which Marduk is named explicitly in a military context and there he is completely lacking in cosmological attributes and is listed as the final member of a triad including Enlil (Aššur) and Ninlil (Ištar) (Borger, *Assurbanipals* IIT 111–12).

41. Borger, *Assurbanipals* A iv 61–62; *ARAB* §794 (*sa-par* dingir-meš gal-meš en-meš-*ia šá la na-par-šu-di is-ḫu-up-šú-nu-ti*).

hensive shift of the cosmological warrior tradition onto Ištar could prove just as problematic as the earlier shift onto Aššur, Assurbanipal and his scribes appear to have abandoned the cosmological scheme in its entirety.

Conclusions

Within the inscriptional tradition of a single Assyrian king we have observed a changing ideological landscape of military activity and theology, as Assurbanipal attempted and failed to divert the traditional cosmological language away from the problematic Babylonian Marduk and onto his favourite, the prophetic Ištar. Both the problem of Marduk and the choice of Ištar arose and were influenced by the political circumstances of Assurbanipal's reign, with Esarhaddon's and Assurbanipal's indebtedness to the Ištar tradition and the ongoing troubles of Babylonian governance converging to create a novel, though ultimately unsuccessful, theological and mythological exercise. Thus this study emphasizes the importance of analysing divine attributes and theological concepts in close connection with their concrete historical background.

In the broader literary and theological landscape, the fluid interchange of divine attributes and mythological traditions which this particular example has demonstrated should encourage an increased awareness of, and sensitivity to, such occurrences elsewhere. Certainly, the Aššur recension of *Enuma Elish* can no longer be viewed as a theological aberration peculiar to Sennacherib, but ought to be acknowledged as one more of the multiple examples of the flexibility of Mesopotamian theological traditions in the face of changing political and social circumstances over the millennia.