

some longstanding anthropological and historical perspectives on the nature of trade and mercantilism at Kanesh and ultimately voices his disagreement with this tradition. He argues that too many modern con-

cepts have been mapped onto the past and that the true nature of this collection of ancient communities is in fact far more complicated and detailed than we currently imagine.

Cosmogony, Theogony and Anthropogeny in Sumerian Texts. By Jan J. W. Lisman. *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 409. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013. Pp. xii + 422. €82.00 (cloth).

REVIEWED BY LUDĚK VACÍN, *University of Hradec Králové*

The year 2013 saw the publication of two substantial works on Mesopotamian creation mythology. While W. G. Lambert's *Babylonian Creation Myths* distills a lifetime of scholarship on Babylonian mythology, offering full philological and analytical treatises of creation accounts written predominantly in Akkadian, J. J. W. Lisman's published dissertation seeks to present and analyze available early Mesopotamian material on the "Beginnings," which were written predominantly in Sumerian.

Lisman's book opens with methodological considerations (pp. 1–4), according to which the work shall give a comprehensive, diachronic overview of all extant Sumerian texts dealing with cosmogony, theogony and anthropogeny, while highlighting the differences between Sumerian and Akkadian mythemes as far as those are discernible in the preserved texts. The first part of the introduction (pp. 5–9) summarizes current knowledge on the prehistory and earliest history of Mesopotamia so as to give the reader an idea about the physical environment, historical development, and social context in which the Sumerian creation stories took shape. In the latter part of the introduction (pp. 9–22) the author critically reviews the fundamentals of previous works on the Sumerian "Beginnings"—van Dijk's cosmic and chthonic motif of creation, or the Nippur and Eridu theology, respectively; the idea of mankind's creation both *ex formatio* and *ex emersio* according to van Dijk's and Pettinato's understanding of relevant text passages; and Lambert's theory of three constituent elements of the cosmos (earth, water, time).

The next chapter (pp. 23–75) presents a transliteration, translation and detailed analysis of excerpts from the Sumerian texts containing notions of cosmogony, theogony and anthropogeny, starting with the Early Dynastic period (IAS 114, 136, 113, Ukg 15, the Barton cylinder, IAS 174), through Ur III and Old Babylonian periods (NBC 11108, Tree-Reed and

Grain-Sheep debates, GEN, Enki and Ninmaḥ, Song of the Hoe), up to Middle Babylonian times (KAR 4), occasionally drawing in the relevant lines from other Ur III-OB literary texts (Lugale, Išme-Dagān W, The Sumerian Flood Story, Atraḥasis). While this chapter scrutinizes the structure and content of the texts, it shows considerable awareness of the numerous philological difficulties, particularly for the interpretation of texts written in the UGN orthography, and Lisman has done good job here in isolating and convincingly interpreting the constituent elements of the third- and early second-millennium BCE Sumerian creation mythology in a systematic and coherent manner.

Following the thorough analysis, the results are conveniently summarized in a table (p. 65) showing the presence or absence of the main points of creation mythology (cosmos, gods, man, culture) in the text corpus covering roughly a millennium. It shows that the very brief creation accounts of the third millennium emphasized cosmogony, and to a certain extent theogony, by merely stating the existence of the universe, composed of two intertwined elements (an-ki) whose interaction resulted in the birth of several primeval deities, particularly Enki-Ninki, who engendered Enlil, the deity responsible for the separation of the primeval unit Heaven-Earth into the two visible cosmic entities. While third-millennium texts sometimes mention the absence of culture, anthropogeny is not an issue. Following the Ur III period, the unit an-ki no longer plays a prominent role; the focus of the texts shifts to the separation of that unit, the birth of the Anuna deities and the creation of humans and their role as providers for the gods. The absence of violence in third-millennium mythological thought is noteworthy.

At the end of the chapter the author briefly addresses the *Sitz im Leben* of his sources. He acknowledges that he used texts of different genres and from different periods without dealing with issues of their

origin, context and use. He justifies this approach by stating that “whether the ‘Sitz im Leben’ of a text could be determined or not, and how different the use or the intention of a text might have been, I assume that it did not influence the primary meaning of the mythemes; only their phrasing may vary” (p. 75).

The book shares this shortcoming with previous studies on Sumerian mythological texts. Only passages containing creation mythemes are used, with little attention paid to the rest of the respective texts and their use, which might have been decisive for the inclusion, form and content of those mythemes. Variations in mythemes are considered “certain details . . . depending on the kind of text,” while the “kind of text” issue is understood as negligible. In my opinion, if it is possible to recover any information on the *Sitz im Leben* of a text bearing on mythology, it should be included in the discussion of a mytheme and its development. One example will be sufficient.

While I share the author’s view that the Debate between Tree and Reed attested in OB copies was composed in the Ur III period, and this is not the place to discuss all the details, I doubt that it provides any information on mythological thought in that era. Apart from this composition, cosmogonic introductions occur in an additional three Sumerian debate poems, and the rest of the Tree and Reed debate is an elaborate piece of Ur III royal propaganda focusing on the ability of the deified king Šulgi to control forces of nature and uphold order in the created universe. The text was probably used at Ur III royal banquets, and copied in OB scribal schools for didactic purposes.

The mytheme of the sky-god An impregnating the Earth is found in the introduction only to explain the origin of vegetation, specifically Tree and Reed, and to provide the story with a mythical, primeval setting in which the disputation of the two “heroes” in front of the divine king unfolds. Clearly, the text is not meant to explicate the origins of the universe. The use of the ancient motif of a cosmic marriage between Heaven and Earth alone tells us nothing about the notions of cosmogony current in the Ur III and OB periods.

While Lisman is critical of H. L. J. Vanstiphout, who wrote that “the objective of the introduction will *not* have been to give a cosmogony in any serious way” and that “the mythological aspect is artificial, relatively unimportant, and possibly secondary” (pp. 43–44, with references), he writes later in the book (p. 70, fn. 260): “Tree and Reed are the result of

the marital union of **an** and **ki**, but this cosmological introduction has to be valued as a typical aetiological introduction, purely aimed at the appearance of the contestants Tree and Reed.” This methodological uncertainty confirms the importance of considering the *Sitz im Leben* at least of texts transmitted in OB scribal schools, such as Enki and Ninmah, the Song of the Hoe, the debate poems, or GEN, for an assessment of the origin, meaning and audience of the (Sumerian) mythemes which they contain.

There follows an excursus on the cosmic marriage of an and ki as a model or motif for a ritual (pp. 77–81). After recounting the existing interpretations of selected pieces of iconographic and textual evidence, the author states that there is “no textual evidence that links the myth of the cosmic ‘marriage’ of **an** and **ki** with the (supposed) ritual of *hierós gámos*.” This excursus provides no new information or interpretation of known evidence about the “sacred marriage” or its possible relation to mythology.

Chapter 3 deals with Mesopotamian god lists and their value for a reconstruction of Sumerian creation mythology (pp. 83–125). It presents an informed philological and analytical discussion of god lists from the Early Dynastic tablets up to and including An = *Anum*. The result is a fresh analysis of those texts based on refined readings and new interpretations of some key but enigmatic divine names. Emphasis is laid on the gradual emergence of Namma as the primordial origin and above all on the development and meaning of the groups of ancestors of An and Enlil throughout the corpus.

The author clarifies the relationship of Uraš to An in TCL 15 10 and in An = *Anum*, as well as the role of Enmešara and Enki-Ninki among the ancestors of Enlil. He thoroughly analyzes the development of the ancestor groups of both gods, which eventually stopped at twenty-one ancestors of An and forty-two of Enlil in the Middle Babylonian list An = *Anum*. While An’s ancestry is absent from third-millennium lists, some of Enlil’s ancestors appear in them. Lisman explains the development of An’s ancestry, only half the size of Enlil’s, in the second millennium as a reflection and reaction to the position of Enlil in the pantheon. In agreement with Lambert, he classifies the ancestors as “developmental phases” of both An and Enlil (pp. 101, 113, 151), who are listed in order to show the power and delimit the sphere of influence of the two most senior deities (e.g., the lords and ladies Growth,

Decision, Prince, Mountain, and Lifetime, who appear among the ancestors of Enlil). Certainly, the ancestor groups are not built on genealogical principles. The only exception is the pair Enki-Ninki, already the parents of Enlil according to the Early Dynastic text IAS 114, 9'–11'.

Although this chapter significantly contributes to the study of early Mesopotamian theogony and cosmology, it is not free of shortcomings. In terms of methodology, the author is aware of the risks of explaining earlier god lists with later ones, but he admits that the god list An = *Anum* with its explanatory column is indispensable, and therefore a “backward reading” of the sources seems impossible to avoid (pp. 104–105). His application of the diachronic approach thus becomes more a matter of form than content in this chapter. This is most obvious in the sections on Enlil’s ancestry. Proceeding in a chronological order, the discussion of these deities starts in section 3.2.7.1 (“The Enki-Ninki group”), goes on in 3.2.8.4 (“The ‘ancestors’ of Enlil”), 3.3.5 (“Enlil and his ‘ancestors’”), 3.3.6 (“The Enki-Ninki gods”), 3.3.6.3 (“The Enki-Ninki gods – as a group or as an individual god or goddess”), and ends in 3.4.2.2 (“The ‘ancestors’ of Enlil”). There is much tautology in these sections, and I had difficulties isolating Lisman’s key arguments and findings in them. There is also a marked tendency to include long quotations from works of other scholars when assessing previous interpretations of the god lists (e.g., pp. 104–105).

The Excursus on Enlil and Ninlil (pp. 127–39) revolves around the author’s hypothesis that Enlil was a Sumerian deity created by the clergy of Nippur after the collapse of the Uruk culture, and that he became the head of the pantheon in the Early Dynastic period. It is based on the writing of the deity’s name as ^den-É instead of ^den-KID(= líl) in third-millennium texts (p. 129 with fn. 549). Lisman translates the name as “Pater familias” and points to the equation ^den-É = *i-li-lu* in texts from Ebla (p. 129 with fn. 553). But how does this prove the Sumerian origin of Enlil? How do we know that a Semitic spelling of the name was not primary, even though the name must have been written logographically in a predominantly Sumerian milieu of the early third millennium? Is the writing of Enlil’s city with the same logograms but an entirely different pronunciation not a hint that the sounds do not necessarily match the writing in this case? Those questions are reinforced by the author’s statement that

the (later) líl in Enlil’s name “could be explained as an attempt to reconcile the Semitic epithet or name *il-ilī*, the supposed pronunciation of ^den-E₂ as *Ellil or *Illil and the Sumerian writing ^den-E₂” (p. 132).

Further, he argues that Enlil “was *pater familias* of the gods for those people who were belonging to the Kiš-civilization” (p. 133), and that “Due to the power of the Kiš dynasty and consequently that of the clergy of Nippur especially, Enlil may have ‘conquered’ the Sumerian pantheon” (p. 135). If so, then his hypothesis about the Sumerian origin of Enlil becomes even more difficult to uphold.

The next excursus on Enki (pp. 141–50) first differentiates between the primeval deity of the pair Enki-Ninki (Lord and Lady Earth), the parents of Enlil in IAS 114, and the god Enki of Eridu whose name Lisman translates as “Divine Lord of the Region” (of the marshland or Sumer as a whole), and whose parents were An and Earth in IAS 114 and An and Namma according to later texts (Enki and the World Order, Enki and Ninmah). The author argues that the *ki* in his name does not mean simply Earth, because if it does, then the name can hardly be reconciled with his role of the deity of subterranean waters. Further, Lisman maintains that Enki’s genealogy shows his original primacy in the pantheon, as opposed to the “newcomer” Enlil who emanated from Earth alone, represented by the primeval pair Enki-Ninki. The question of whether there is enough evidence to prove such conclusions is difficult to answer, because there is no consensus on the interpretation of the archaic glyptic and textual evidence or the isolated expressions in Early Dynastic texts which Lisman draws on to support his view.

In any case, his “Hypothesis about the history of the (city) god of Eridu” (pp. 147–50) is in my opinion the least meaningful part of the book. The claim that the “original” deity of Eridu was called 𒄩A-ia₃, meaning “fish god,” based on the archaeological evidence of massive fish consumption in the Eridu temple since the ‘Ubaid period, cannot be corroborated. First, the author himself shows that the name 𒄩A-ia₃ is attested only from the Early Dynastic period onwards (p. 146). Second, if the name is to be translated “fish god,” then it must be read ku₆-ia₃ (see CAD N/2, p. 336, s.v. *nūnu* for lexical evidence). Third, the reasons why the “fish god” 𒄩A-ia₃ should have changed into the “Divine Lord of the Region” Enki are speculative: the growing importance of Eridu; its titular deity representing other aspects of fauna and flora too; the drying

out of swamps in southern Mesopotamia at the end of the ‘Ubaid period—hence the “fish god” name was no longer appropriate.

Finally, it appears that the main purpose of the excursus was to explain the Semitic name of Enki, which according to Lisman should have originated from a misunderstanding of 𒄩A-ia₃ in the region around Kiš, resulting in É-*a*. However, the correct reading of the hypothetical fish god’s name given above would disprove such explanation even if it is assumed that the “original” city god of Eridu ever existed.

There follows yet another excursus, on Enlil versus Enki (pp. 151–55), whose first two pages are devoted to the relationship of An and Enlil, again emphasizing that Enlil originated from Earth alone. The next two pages concern Enki as the holder of the “divine powers” (me), timeless principles of the universe and society, governing the welfare of Sumer, which is taken as another piece of evidence for the primacy of Enki in the archaic Sumerian pantheon. The last page deals with Enlil’s rule over the world by determining destinies (nam-tar), an active role of the king of gods, as opposed to the guardian of eternal cosmological principles (me) whom Enlil replaced at the top of the pantheon. This conclusion relies on the work of other scholars (quotations on pp. 154–55), and while it cannot be denied a certain degree of plausibility, available evidence seems too thin to allow a more detailed and convincing conclusion about the tension between Enki and Enlil, or the original primacy of Enki.

The general weakness of the excursuses is that the author does not maintain his diachronic approach and uses various kinds of sources from various periods indiscriminately. For instance, with respect to the contrast between the me and nam-tar Lisman refers to texts from OB scribal milieu to explain the tension between Enki and Enlil in archaic and Early Dynastic Sumer.

Chapter 4 offers a diachronic analytical study on the “Development of Sumerian ideas about Beginnings” (pp. 157–209). The part on cosmogony explains in detail the meaning of the primeval unit an-ki in Early Dynastic texts, the meaning of the terms ki, kur and ħur-saġ in texts which originated in the Ur III period, and the central issue of the separation of an-ki by Enlil in OB school texts. Although the author again asserts that Enlil was a (north) Sumerian deity (p. 161), the discussion on pp. 164–65 suggests that he was not, because the notion of the primordial waters as the

source of an-ki is clearly a Semitic mytheme, while the separation of an-ki seems to be a Semitic mytheme as well (later reflected in *Enūma eliš*). As Lisman himself states: “It could also be that the separation of **an-ki** by a divine action specifically belonged to the Semitic cosmogony of olden times . . .” (p. 161). Thus, there seems to be little room for an engagement of a Sumerian Enlil in the organization of the universe (see also p. 196).

The section on theogony mostly repeats what the author has already written about the Enki-Ninki gods and the ancestors of An and Enlil. However, it also contains a sound new interpretation of the origin and spheres of Enlil’s activity, as reflected in the names of his ancestors in the Early Dynastic god lists (p. 167).

With respect to anthropogeny, the author offers a new reading of the initial four lines of Enki’s Journey to Nippur to support his conviction that the creation of man *ex emersio*, as postulated by van Dijk, does not occur at all in Sumerian mythology (pp. 178–80). Lisman’s grammatical arguments and parallels from other compositions seem convincing. Additionally, the occurrence of Enki as the agent in both lines four and five makes it indeed likely that Enki alone is the subject of the first four lines. The conclusion that Sumerian anthropogeny only knows creation *ex formatio* would be the most important finding of this section, abolishing previous theories on two different traditions or theologies about the creation of humans in Sumerian literature. On the other hand, it is puzzling that the chapters on Sumerian creation mythology contain no or very little discussion of motifs which I consider as directly related to cosmogony and cosmology, e.g., the mytheme of Dilmun, the Flood or the Holy Mound.

After a very clear summary of the Sumerian “Beginnings” come two comparative sections on the Akkadian creation mythology and the Sumerian versus Semitic mythemes (pp. 186–201). Lisman argues for an interpretation of *šamāmū* (heaven) and *ammatum* (earth) in the initial lines of *Enūma eliš* as a primeval unit similar to the an-ki of earlier Sumerian cosmogony, which, however, remains inactive as opposed to its progenitors, the watery pair Apsū and Ti’amat (earlier only Namma), who were responsible for the creation of the gods, starting with the ancestors of Anu (Laḫmu-Laḫamu, Anšar-Kišar). He further shows how Marduk’s splitting of Ti’amat’s body and covering heaven and earth each with a half of it echoes the separation of an-ki by Enlil in earlier texts.

Concerning anthropogeny, the author gives an analysis of the relevant passages from Atrahasis and *Enūma eliš*, which he compares to the creation of mankind according to the esoteric bilingual KAR 4. He concludes that in the Semitic lore violence was required to fashion human beings: they are made of clay, divine flesh and blood in Atrahasis; blood of the slaughtered deities Alla and Illa in KAR 4; and blood of the defeated Qingu in *Enūma eliš*. In agreement with Steinkeller and other scholars, he notes that while in the Akkadian texts the hard work of the gods results in their rebellion against the chief deities, who solve the problem by creating humans as substitutes with the aid of substances from the divine body, in Sumerian mythology the weary gods do not revolt but simply decide that humans should be created, which is done using clay alone.

Next, the author ponders the validity of previous theories of Sumerian mythology vis-à-vis the results of his research. He argues that van Dijk's cosmic motif with androgynous an-ki and anthropogeny *ex emersio*, supposedly typical of nomadic mythological thought, is not in contrast to his chthonic motif of the primeval ocean and earth as the principles of life with anthropogeny *ex formatio*, supposedly typical of sedentary, agricultural communities. Rather, there was a gradual development of the mythology with an-ki in the center, later enriched with the notion of a watery primordial origin (Namma), while creation *ex emersio* seems to be absent from Sumerian mythology and there is no evidence for ascribing certain mythemes, let alone mythological systems, to specific segments of the population. As for Lambert's idea of time as a cosmological principle in addition to earth and water, Lisman argues that the pair ^ddu-ri / ^dda-ri in An = *Anum* (I 12–13) has nothing to do with time proper because it occurs in the list of An's ancestors, and therefore is a developmental stage of An showing the eternal nature of that deity. There is no evidence of time as a cosmological principle in any Mesopotamian mythological text. Major findings of Lisman's study for the three periods he has dealt with (third millennium, early second millennium, late second millennium) are summarized in tabular format (p. 206) with a handy overview of the development of the cosmogony, theogony and anthropogeny on p. 205.

The final part of the study introduces ancient Egyptian, Anatolian and Ugaritic creation stories, as well as general mythologems found in different times and

places throughout the world, and compares them with Mesopotamian creation mythology (pp. 211–21). The author concludes that most Mesopotamian mythemes have universal value, except the slaughter of a deity to create humans in Akkadian anthropogeny. He states that Mesopotamian creation stories therefore appear not to be unique, but it should be said here that they actually are unique, being the earliest attestations of the universal mythemes in human history.

The latter half of the book presents partial editions of texts used in the analytical study (pp. 225–362). Only KAR 4 is edited in full. The decision to include philological work only on those lines that have a direct bearing on the topic is understandable, although it is clearly related to the *Sitz im Leben* issue discussed above. Lisman's readings and comments on the mythological passages of more than a dozen texts are nevertheless very important and must be considered most seriously in any future full editions of those pieces. The book concludes with a substantial bibliography and brief indices (pp. 365–422).

To sum up, the work suffers from the general ailments of doctoral dissertations, e.g., tautology; occasional methodological inconsistency; long verbatim quotations from works of others; confusing features of structure like the placement, if not inclusion, of excursuses, or the overuse of numbered sections and subsections, some of which cover only a few lines (e.g., 3.2.8.3 and 4.8.2.2). Several formal shortcomings are truly unnecessary, e.g., copying of the same footnotes (fn. 554 = fn. 575, fn. 586 = fn. 638). Also the English of the book at times obscures the author's arguments, while expressions like “plastic art of the archaic Uruk period” (fn. 294, for visual art) should have been filtered out. In general, the book would have much benefited from more thorough revision and editorial work.

In terms of scholarly value, however, the volume represents the first substantial diachronic study of early Mesopotamian mythology and contains much new knowledge on the topic. The author clearly worked very hard to make sense of extremely diverse and difficult sources, and he has succeeded in elucidating the crucial points in them, particularly in the Early Dynastic (UGN) texts and the god lists up to and including An = *Anum*. His study of early Mesopotamian mythological thought is a well-informed, in-depth analysis bound to instigate renewed scholarly interest and discussion of this fascinating topic.