



THE GOD ŠAMAŠ WITH HIS POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

ESKİ MEZOPOTAMYA'DA SİYASAL VE SOSYAL YÖNLERİYLE TANRI ŠAMAŠ

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Abstract

The Ancient Mesopotamian societies showcased their culture through a structural amalgamation of politics, economy, and particularly religion. Within this framework, they fulfilled religious obligations under the worship of numerous gods and goddesses throughout various stages of life, seeking to sustain earthly existence and attain peace in the afterlife. In this context, the cult of the god Šamaš held significant importance among the Ancient Mesopotamian societies. It is recognized, however, that Utu, the Sumerian sun god, formed the foundation of the Šamaš cult. Utu held a revered status within Sumerian society, symbolizing the sun and justice, which governed people's lives and was deemed essential for a fair societal order. Following the Sumerian era, Utu was referenced as the god Šamaš in Semitic societies. Consequently, Utu was mostly associated with justice, whereas Šamaš was renowned for upholding and enforcing laws to ensure justice. Revered by many societies, Šamaš was

Öz

Eski Mezopotamya coğrafyasındaki toplumlar, yaşamları boyunca kültürlerini siyasetin, ekonominin ve özellikle de dinin harmanlanarak oluşturduğu yapı temelinde ortaya koymuşlardır. Bu yapı içerisinde yaşamlarının her döneminde birçok tanrı/tanrıça kültü altında dini görevlerini yerine getirerek yaptıkları her bir eylemde dünyevi yaşamlarını daha iyi sürdürebilmelerini ve bununla birlikte ölümden sonraki yaşamlarında da huzur bulabilmeyi amaç edinmişlerdir. Bu çerçevede tanrı Šamaš kültü, Eski Mezopotamya toplumları arasında önemli bir konuma sahiptir. Ancak, onun öncesinde Sumer güneş tanrısı olarak kabul edilen Utu'nun, Šamaš kültürünün temelini oluşturduğu bilinmektedir. Utu, Sumer toplumunca her daim saygı gören tanrılar arasında yer almıştır. Onun güneş ve adalet ile simgelenmesi insanların yaşamlarını düzenlemekte ve adil bir düzen için gerekli görülmekteydi. Utu, Sumer sonrası dönemde Sami toplumlarında tanrı Šamaš adıyla anılmıştır. Buna göre Utu, daha çok adalet ile anılırken Šamaš ise, adaletin sağlanması



consistently viewed as integral to power and authority in Ancient Mesopotamia. The Mesopotamian rulers had to justify their power and endorse every action they took in the eyes of their people, portraying themselves as deputies and shepherds of the gods. In doing so, rulers relied on the support of specific gods to establish their authority on religious grounds. This study seeks to explore the influence of the god Šamaš on Ancient Mesopotamian societies across various facets. It aims to delve into what Šamaš signified in the daily lives of people and what expectations they held regarding their beliefs. Additionally, the research will investigate Šamaš's roles in Ancient Mesopotamian politics, intra-state dynamics, and inter-state relations.

ve yasaların uygulanması ile tanınmaktadır. Birçok toplum tarafından ibadet edilen Šamaš, Eski Mezopotamya'da güç ve otorite için daima gerekli olarak görülmüştür. Mezopotamyalı hükümdarların iktidarlarını meşru kılmak ve halklarının gözünde gerçekleştirecekleri her bir eylemi tanrının vekili, çobanı vasfıyla desteklemeleri gerekirdi. Bu noktada hükümdarlar, söz konusu tanrıya ihtiyaç duymakta ve onun desteğiyle otoritelerini dini bir temel üzerine şekillendirmekteydiler. Bu çalışmada insanların günlük yaşamları arasında tanrı Šamaš'ın onlar için ne ifade ettiği ve aynı zamanda inançları noktasında ondan ne gibi beklentileri olduğu sorularının yanı sıra Eski Mezopotamya siyasetinde, devlet içi politikalarda ve devletlerarası ilişkilerde Šamaš'ın ne gibi rolleri olduğu konuları üzerinde durularak tanrı Šamaš'ın Eski Mezopotamya toplumları üzerindeki etkisinin farklı yönleriyle ele alınması amaçlanmıştır.

Keywords: Mesopotamia, Religion, God Šamaš, Politics, Society.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mezopotamya, Din, Tanrı Šamaš, Siyaset, Toplum.

Introduction

The culture of Ancient Mesopotamian societies was intricately interwoven with a structure where religion and politics intersected seamlessly. Within this framework, religious beliefs permeated every facet of political, social, and economic life. Among the various cults of gods and goddesses within these societies, the cult of Šamaš holds a notable position, distinguished by its political and social significance. At the core of this cult lies the veneration of the Sumerian sun god, Utu.¹

The Sumerian sun god Utu has a longstanding presence in mythological narratives, renowned for illuminating human existence with the brilliance of sunrise and bringing rejuvenation to nature through his radiant light. Utu's association with the dawn and the vitality it brings to the world is a recurring theme in ancient tales, symbolizing the cycle of life and the natural order of the universe.² Indeed, Utu was revered as the adversary of darkness and malevolent acts. His position in Sumerian social beliefs was fortified by the

¹ Bertman, 2003: 116; Yiğit, 2020: 223.

² Black – Green, 2003: 222.

notion that his justice would illuminate and expose dark deeds. Utu's association with justice and his role in dispelling darkness both literally and figuratively emphasized his significance as a force that brought light to reveal and rectify wrongdoing within society.³

The cult of the god Šamaš was sustained through temples across multiple cities. However, the cities of Sippar and Larsa, situated in present-day Iraq, held particular prominence as the primary centers for the worship and veneration of Šamaš. These cities stood as pioneering settlements that fostered the cult and dedicated significant resources and reverence to the god Šamaš through their temples.⁴ The god in question served as the patron deity of Larsa during the Sumerian city-states era and of Sippar during the Akkadian domination in the region.⁵ At these two cult centers, there existed a temple dedicated to him known as the E-babbar (White House).⁶ However, it's documented that worship of this deity extended beyond these cities to include Eridu and Assyria.⁷ In this context, Utu's presence endures through the titles of Sumerian kings, mythological narratives, and his role as a judge in the afterlife, believed to commence following a person's death.⁸ Utu, among the most significant gods in Ancient Mesopotamian mythology, is revered as the deity of justice, law, prophecy, and the sun. He is identified as the son of the moon god Nanna and the goddess Ningal.⁹ In Sumerian belief, the god Utu, symbolized by the sun, was revered as the bestower of justice.¹⁰ As such, Utu was regarded as an authority in preventing injustice and safeguarding social order.

In its political dimensions, Utu is closely linked with law and justice. Consequently, Utu was deemed indispensable for ensuring a fair administration. The Sumerian legal framework was intertwined with Utu's judgments, obligating rulers to govern in accordance with Utu's principles of justice.¹¹ Because of this belief, society held that no act of injustice would escape retribution within Utu's domain. Moreover, Utu was invoked in the prayers of various occupational groups deemed perilous, women in labor, individuals seeking remedy for illnesses, and those yearning for enlightenment amid morally obscure circumstances.¹² The deity in question came to be known as Šamaš in Semitic societies during the post-Sumerian period.¹³ While considered identical deities, the association of Utu with justice and Šamaš

³ Jacobsen, 2017: 180.

⁴ Demirci, 2013: 30; Etkü – Pekşen, 2023: 519.

⁵ Dilek, 2019: 46; Mieroop, 2014: 118; Snell, 2011: 25.

⁶ Altuncu, 2014: 131; Pekşen, 2017: 30; Bertman, 2003: 30; Bordreuil – Briquel-Chatonnet, et al., 2023: 476.

⁷ Schmökel, 1971: 207; Black – Green, 2003: 224; Bertman, 2003: 126.

⁸ Çetin, 2019: 29; Black – Green, 2003: 224.

⁹ Altuncu, 2014:131; Dilek, 2019: 46; Çetin, 2019: 29.

¹⁰ Pekşen, 2022: 263; Memiş, 2022: 127.

¹¹ Pekşen, 2022: 263.

¹² Schmökel, 1971: 207; Hallo, 2010: 338.

¹³ Bertman, 2003: 116.

with the safeguarding of established laws and fair order maintenance made their distinction evident.¹⁴

At times, Šamaš is referenced as the son of Enlil, and alternatively, as the son of Anu.¹⁵ The deity Šamaš, originating in Sumer, was revered in later periods by Akkadian, Babylonian, and Assyrian societies. Beyond these, reverence for Šamaš extended to the Elamites, Mitannis, and Hittites, who also held him in high regard.¹⁶ As the sun god, Šamaš was among the foremost deities associated with agricultural activities in rural areas.¹⁷ In depictions, he is often portrayed with a winged solar disc, symbolizing the emission of sunlight from Šamaš's shoulders.¹⁸ Additionally, there are claims suggesting that the horse motif discovered on one of the seals dating back to the reign of Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar I represents a sacred animal associated with the Šamaš (Utu)¹⁹. In this context, the inhabitants of Ancient Mesopotamia regarded Šamaš as the ruler over all where the sun rises and sets. Consequently, akin to the sun illuminating the world, the prevailing notion was that his rays allowed him to witness all that occurred on Earth, leaving nothing hidden from his gaze.²⁰ Therefore, Šamaš was revered not only as a god, but also as a king.²¹ The deity in question emerged not only as a force revitalizing nature and ensuring earthly and underworld justice but also as a foundation of authority and sovereignty in Ancient Mesopotamian states and societies. Šamaš became a determining ruler in various state administrations, becoming an essential element for kings to legitimize their reign. Consequently, for rulers to govern justly, they sought to solidify their throne by garnering the support of Šamaš, renowned for justice and righteous judgment, and earning the people's appreciation.²² For these reasons, the god Šamaš always maintained his popularity as an authority in political and social activities.

Political Aspects of the God Šamaš

The god Šamaš, highly esteemed in Ancient Mesopotamian societies for embodying justice, held a prominent position within the political structures of these revered societies. Šamaš's recognition as the god of justice stood as a crucial factor for rulers to legitimize their authority on the throne. Rulers sought to earn the favor of Šamaš by adhering to the principles of justice he represented. However, gaining Šamaš's favor required more than mere verbal acclaim; rulers had to demonstrate their commitment through their actions.²³ Rulers were obligated to glorify the cult of Šamaš by constructing statues and temples dedicated to him, organizing festivals, offering thrones, and repairing

¹⁴ Mackenzie, 1915: 240-241; Eliade, 2020: 98; Hooke, 1993: 72.

¹⁵ Dilek, 2019: 46.

¹⁶ Narçın, 2013: 357; Gökçek, 2015: 244.

¹⁷ Diakov – Kovalev, 2014: 109.

¹⁸ Çiğdem – Kılıç, 2022: 430; Schneider, 2011: 55; Black – Green, 2003: 27.

¹⁹ Kılıç – Topaloğlu, 2021: 476.

²⁰ Mackenzie, 1915: 54.

²¹ Klengel, 2019: 169; Butler, 1998: 34.

²² Demirci, 2013: 30; Mackenzie, 1915: 421-422.

²³ Charpin, 2010: 4.

his temples.²⁴ The inscription on the silver statue of Larsa king Sin-Iddinam (1849-1843 BC) holds significant importance, specifically in its mention of how his father Nur-Adad (1865-1850 BC) ascended to rulership by the god Šamaš. Initially offering tribute to the god, the inscription narrates the tumultuous state of Larsa marked by civil unrest and rampant conflict among its populace. To swiftly restore order, Šamaš bestowed rulership upon Nur-Adad. Empowered by this divine mandate, Nur-Adad governed Larsa with fairness, fostering prosperity among its people.²⁵ The offerings presented to the god Šamaš in the inscriptions of Ancient Mesopotamian kings serve as a tangible display of their profound reverence and devotion to this deity. Notably, within the context of the refurbishment of the Šamaš temple in Mari, King Yahdun-Lim (1810-1794 BC) conveyed his military accomplishments during his reign along with his deep veneration for Šamaš through the inscription's words:

To the god Šamaš, king of heaven and earth, judge of gods and mankind, whose concern is justice, to whom truth has been given as a gift, shepherd of the black-headed (people), resplendent god, judge of those endowed with life, who is favourably inclined to supplications, who heeds prayers, who accepts entreaties, who gives a long-lasting life of joy to him who reveres him, who is the lord of Mari: Iaḥdun-Lim, son of Iaggid-Lim, king of Mari and the land of Ḫana, opener of canals, builder of walls, erector of steles proclaiming (his) name, provider of abundance and plenty for his people, who makes whatever (is needed) appear in his land, mighty king, magnificent youth, when the god Šamaš agreed to his supplications and listened to his words, the god Šamaš quickly came and went at the side of Iaḥdun-Lim. From distant days when the god El built Mari, no king resident in Mari reached the sea, reached the mountains of cedar and boxwood, the great mountains, and cut down their trees, (but) Iaḥdun-Lim, son of Iaggid-Lim, powerful king, wild bull of kings, by means of his strength and overpowering might went to the shore of the sea, and made a great offering (befitting) his kingship to the Sea. His troops bathed themselves in the Sea. (Next) he entered into the cedar and boxwood mountains, the great mountains, and cut down these trees — box, cedar, cypress, and *elammakum*. He made a commemorative monument, established his fame, and proclaimed his might. He made that land on the shore of the Sea submit, made it subject to his decree, and made it follow him. Having imposed a permanent tribute on them, they now bring their tribute to him.

For his own life he built the temple of the god Šamaš, his lord, a temple whose construction was perfect with finished workmanship, befitting his divinity. He installed him in his majestic dwelling. He named that temple Egirzalanki ('House — rejoicing of heaven and earth').

May the god Šamaš, who lives in that temple, grant to Iaḥdun-Lim, the builder of his temple, the king beloved of his heart, a mighty weapon which overwhelms the enemies (and) a long reign of happiness and years of joyous abundance, forever...

²⁴ Roaf, 1995: 431; Gökçek, 2015: 45; Mackenzie, 1915: 242; Pekşen, 2017: 96-97; Oates, 2015: 115-116.

²⁵ Klengel, 2019: 121-122.

(The inscription concludes with a curse against those who would desecrate and damage the temple.)²⁶

Moreover, numerous state proclamations initiated with diverse supplications and prayers, invoking the name of the respective god. As a result, the laws established in Ancient Mesopotamia were regarded as Šamaš's decree.²⁷ Within the codex of Hammurabi (1792-1749 BC), the mentions of Šamaš are unequivocal. These references underscore that it was the god Šamaš who granted Hammurabi the authority to legislate and govern.²⁸ The diorite stele stands at 2.25 meters in height and contains 282 laws.²⁹ The upper section of the stele depicts Hammurabi standing before the god Šamaš.³⁰ At this point, Šamaš sits upon his throne atop the mountains, adorned with a horned headdress on his head and flames upon his shoulders. It is evident that the god Šamaš is offering the symbols of sovereignty to Hammurabi with his right hand.³¹ Through this stele, King Hammurabi sought to solidify his authority by establishing a legitimate foundation for the laws he intended to enact.³² The relief depicted on the stele aimed to leave an impression on those who were unable to read or write.³³ Moreover, through this stele, Hammurabi communicates with future generations, seeking its permanence and endeavoring to safeguard it by invoking curses upon those who would damage it.³⁴ Although originally erected in Sippar, the stele was later unearthed during excavations in Susa. This relocation occurred as the Elamite king Shutruk-Nahhunte I (1185-1155 BC) took the stele to Susa as a trophy.³⁵ It's significant to note that in the prologue of the stele, Hammurabi establishes his divine connection through the following words:

...at that time, the gods Anu and Enlil, for the enhancement of the well-being of the people, named me by my name: Hammurabi, the pious prince, who venerates the gods, to make justice prevail in the land, to abolish the wicked and the evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, to rise like the sun-god Shamash over all humankind, to illuminate the land.³⁶

The epilogue of the stele encapsulates the following statements:

I am Hammurabi, king of justice, to whom the god Shamash has granted (insight into) the truth. My pronouncements are choice, and my achievements are unrivaled; they are meaningless only to the fool, but to

²⁶ RIME 4, E4.6.8.2, 1-157; Koppen, 2006: 96-97.

²⁷ Pekşen, 2022: 263.

²⁸ Demirci, 2013: 30; Driver – Miles, 1952: 37-38; Çiğdem – Kılıç, 2022: 429; Ahlström, 1995: 598.

²⁹ Chadwick, 2005: 65; Driver – Miles, 1952: 28.

³⁰ Yiğit, 2020: 133.

³¹ Bahrani, 2007: 158; Démare-Lafont, 2011: 335; Klengel, 2019: 174; The rope and measuring stick, bestowed by the god Šamaš during the Babylonian kings' enthronement ceremonies, served as a foundation for the king to fortify their authority and power, supported by divine endorsement. (see. Bordreuil – Briquel-Chatonnet, et al., 2023: 159.)

³² Schneider, 2011: 119-120.

³³ Bertman, 2003: 168; Mieroop, 2014: 119.

³⁴ Wallenfels – Sasson, 2000a: 2.

³⁵ Köroğlu, 2020: 114; Chadwick, 2005: 65; Arnold, 2004: 52.

³⁶ Law Collections, 8, i27-49; Greengus, 1995: 471; Bordreuil – Briquel-Chatonnet, et al., 2023: 178.

the wise they are praiseworthy. If that man (a future ruler) heeds my pronouncements which I have inscribed upon my stela, and does not reject my judgments, change my pronouncements, or alter my engraved image, then may the god Shamash lengthen his reign, just as (he has done) for me, the king of justice, and so may he shepherd his people with justice.³⁷

While several Mesopotamian kings had connections to the god Šamaš, Hammurabi elevated this connection to a new level. Specifically, the Babylonian king Hammurabi acknowledged Šamaš as his personal deity, attributing the authority to rule directly to him.³⁸ Through this act, he laid a robust groundwork for his governance while intertwining religious authority with a political framework.³⁹ This strong bond is clearly visible on the earthen tablet on the city walls of Sippar:

When the god Šamaš, great lord of heaven and earth, king of the gods, with his shining face, joyfully looked at me, Ḫammu-rāpi, the prince, his favourite, granted to me everlasting kingship (and) a reign of long days, made firm for me the foundation of the land which he had given me to rule, spoke to me by his pure word which cannot be changed to settle the people of Sippar and Babylon in peaceful abodes, (and) laid a great commission on me to build the wall of Sippar (and) to raise its head, at that time, I, Ḫammu-rāpi, mighty king, king of Babylon, reverent one, who heeds the god Šamaš, beloved of the goddess Aia, who contents the god Marduk, his lord, by the supreme might which the god Šamaš gave to me, with the levy of the army of my land, I raised the top of the foundation of the wall of Sippar with earth (until it was) like a great mountain. I built (that) high wall. That which from the past no king among the kings had built, for the god Šamaš, my lord I grandly built. The name of that wall is “By the decree of the god Šamaš, may Ḫammu-rāpi have no rival”. In my gracious reign which the god Šamaš called, I cancelled corvée duty for the god Šamaš for the men of Sippar, the ancient city of the god Šamaš. I dug its canal (and) provided perpetual water for its land. I heaped up plenty and abundance. I established joy for the people of Sippar. They pray (Sumerian: they prayed) for my life. I did what was pleasing to the god Šamaš, my lord, and the goddess Aia, my lady. I put my good name in the mouths of the people (in order) that they proclaim it daily like (that of) a god and that it not be forgotten, forever.⁴⁰

Moreover, Babylonian King Hammurabi asserts that his campaign against the Kingdom of Larsa was commenced with the sanction of both Šamaš and Marduk: “...*Maintenant, je me suis plaint ‘à Šamaš et Marduk et ils m’ont sans cesse répondu "oui": je n’ai pas effectué cette attaque) sans (l’accord) de la divinité...*”⁴¹ Yet, Šamaš frequently featured among the gods invoked in treaty documents concerning interstate relations.⁴² An instance of this is seen in the oath of alliance between the Mari king Zimri-Lim (1775-1760 BC) and Hammurabi, where the god Šamaš stands as a witness:

³⁷ Law Collections, 8, xlvi 95-xlix 17.

³⁸ Klengel, 2019: 169.

³⁹ Pekşen, 2017: 104.

⁴⁰ RIME 4, E4.3.6.2, 1-81; Klengel, 2019: 169-170; Mieroop, 2014: 12; Koppen, 2006: 104.

⁴¹ ARM 26/2, 3, 385, 13-15; Bordreuil – Briquel-Chatonnet, et al., 2023: 244.

⁴² Snell, 2011: 25; Charpin, 2013: 70.

[By the sun god] Shamash of the sky, lord of the land, [by the storm god] Adad of the sky, lord of determination – by these gods Hammurabi, son of Sin-Muballit, king of Babylon [swore]: “From this day, as long as I live, I will be an enemy of Siwa-Palar-Huhpak [king of Elam]. I will not [assist him and] I will not write to him. Without [the agreement of] Zimri-Lim, king of Mari ... I will not make peace with Siwa-Palar-Huhpak.”⁴³

From this perspective, Hammurabi consistently centered his political decisions around the involvement of the god Šamaš. His documented expressions of executing actions with the god’s consent, coupled with the authority granted by Šamaš, underscore Hammurabi’s construction of political endeavors on a religious foundation. This pattern extended beyond Hammurabi, evident in various inscriptions depicting other Mesopotamian kings seeking divine assistance for their political pursuits. For instance, the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244-1208 BC), who accused the Kassite king Kashtiliash (1232-1225 BC) of disregarding oaths made to the gods by Assyrian and Babylonian kings, invoked Šamaš in the cuneiform text with the following words:

...O Shamash, lord [...], I abided by (?) your oath, I feared your greatness. He who has not [...] transgressed before your [...], but I kept your command. When our ancestors made a pact [before your divinity, they established an oath between them, they invoked your greatness. You are the warrior who does not change, the judge of our [fat]hers from of [old], and you are the god who maintains order, now observing our loyalties! Why has the king of the Kassites long frustrated your plan and your command? He did not fe[ar] your oath, he transgressed your judgment, he plotted malice. His filled up the measure of his sins before you. O Shamash, judge me! [But as for the one wh]o committed no offense against the king of the Kassites, [act favorably toward him.] [...] great. Grant victory [...] to the one who keeps the oath. [As for the one who does not obey] your instruction, destroy(?) [his] people in the defeat of battle.⁴⁴

Within the surviving tablets, Šamaš’s consistent support for Mesopotamian kings during their most crucial moments, particularly on battlefields, remains evident. Notably, the following statements from the tablet of the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I hold significant relevance:

With the support of the gods Aššur, Enlil, and Šamaš, the great gods, my lords, (and) with the aid of the goddess Ištar mistress of heaven (and) underworld, (who) marches at the fore of my army, I approached Kaštiliašu, king of Karduniaš, to do battle. I brought about the defeat of his army (and) felled his warriors. In the midst of that battle I captured Kaštiliašu, king of the Kassites, (and) trod with my feet upon his lordly neck as though it were a footstool. Bound I brought him as a captive into the presence of Aššur, my lord. (Thus) I became lord of Sumer and Akkad in its entirety (and) fixed the boundary of my land as the Lower Sea in the east.⁴⁵

⁴³ Mieroop, 2014: 20-21; Hamblin, 2006: 213.

⁴⁴ Koppen – Greenwood, et al., 2006: 148.

⁴⁵ RIMA 1, A.O.78.5, 48-69; Sever, 2008: 66-67.

This declaration by Tukulti-Ninurta I, attributing the commencement of the conflict against Kashtiliash to the directives of various gods, underscores the divine dimension supporting political aspirations. Notably, the inclusion of the god Šamaš among those invoked for divine reinforcement further solidifies this deity's influence within the Assyrian pantheon. This influence is echoed in the subsequent tablet, where the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser I (1114-1076 BC) dictated the following words:

...Tiglath-pileser, strong king, conqueror of enemy regions, rival of all kings: At that time, with the exalted might of the god Aššur, my lord, with the firm approval (through divination) of the god Šamaš, the warrior, with the support of the great gods with which I have ruled properly in the four quarters and have no rival in battle nor equal in conflict, at the command of the god Aššur, (my) lord, I marched to the lands Nairi whose distant kings, on the shore of the Upper Sea in the west, had not known submission. I pushed through rugged paths and perilous passes, the interior of which no king had previously known, blocked trails (and) unopened remote regions. Mounts Elama, Amadānu, Elhiš, Šerabeli, Tarhuna, Terkahuli, Kisra, Tarhanabe, Elula, Haštarāe, Šahišara, Ubera, Miliadrūni, Šulianzi, Nubanāse, and Šēše, 16 mighty mountains — (I rode) my chariot over smooth terrain and I hacked out the rough terrain with copper picks. I cut down urumu-trees which grow in the mountains, (thereby) constructed good bridges for the passage of my chariots and army, (and) crossed the Euphrates. The king of the land Tammu, the king of the land Tunubu, the king of the land Tualu, the king of the land Dardaru, the king of the land Uzula, the king of the land Unzamunu, the king of the land Andiabu, the king of the land Piladarnu, the king of the land Adurginu, the king of the land Kulibarzinu, the king of the land Šinibirnu, the king of the land Himua, the king of the land Paiteru, the king of the land Uiram, the king of the land Šururia, the king of the land Abaenu, the king of the land Adaenu, the king of the land Kirinu, the king of the land Albaia, the king of the land Ugina, the king of the land Nazabia, the king of the land Abarsiunu, the king of the land Daiēnu, altogether 23 kings of the lands Nairi combined their chariotry and army in their lands (and) advanced to wage war, strife, and combat. With the onslaught of my fierce weapons I approached them (and) destroyed their extensive army like a storm of the god Adad. I laid out like grain heaps the corpses of their warriors in the open country, the plains of the mountains, and the environs of their cities. I seized in battle 120 of their chariots with equipment (and) 60 kings of the lands Nairi, including those who had come to their aid, I chased at arrowpoint as far as the Upper Sea. I conquered their great towns (and) brought out their booty, possessions, (and) property. I burnt, razed, (and) destroyed their cities (and) turned them into ruin hills. I brought back extensive herds of horses, mules, (and) donkeys — the livestock of their pastures — without number. I captured all of the kings of the lands Nairi alive. I had mercy on those kings and spared their lives. I released them from their bonds and fetters in the presence of the god Šamaš, my lord, and made them swear by my great gods an oath of eternal vassaldom. I took their natural, royal, sons as hostages. I imposed

upon them a tribute of 1,200 horses (and) 2,000 cattle. I allowed them to return to their lands.⁴⁶

Tiglath-pileser I's acknowledgment of Šamaš as his 'master,' along with his assertion that Šamaš was acknowledged by the kings of the Nairi region and deemed superior to their gods, serves as evidence of his attainment of not only political influence but also religious prominence.

Mesopotamian kings swore to fulfil their responsibilities to Šamaš and respected his justice.⁴⁷ In this context, the likes of Nur-Adad (1865-1850 BC), Shamshi-Adad I (1811-1776 BC), Hammurabi (1792-1749 BC), Nabuchadnezzar I (1126-1105 BC), Tiglath-pileser I (1114-1076 BC), Esarhaddon (680-669 BC), Ashurbanipal (668-626 BC), Nabuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC) and numerous other Mesopotamian kings are celebrated for the solemn oaths they swore and the reverence they exhibited toward this revered deity and his temple.⁴⁸ Thus, the justice of Šamaš was utilized as a crucial tool for maintaining social order in Mesopotamia. Just as Šamaš, in his role as a judge, adjudicated over people and guided their lives, the king, as his representative and proxy on earth, had to ensure justice and determine the fate of his people by ruling the entire country fairly.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the cult of Šamaš held significance as a counterbalance within the monarchy's administration. Šamaš' principles of justice served as a deterrent against rulers acting irresponsibly toward their people, whom they governed as "shepherds", and stood against injustices.⁵⁰ This cult's existence bolstered people's confidence in the governing authority, serving as a reminder that rulers were accountable to the populace.⁵¹ The pivotal role of the cult of Šamaš as a stabilizing element between ruler and subjects is evident in a text from the Neo-Babylonian period known as "the mirror of the prince". This document provides guidance on how a king should govern his country and emphasizes the following statements: *"If he improperly convicts a citizen of Sippar, but acquits a foreigner, Šamaš, judge of heaven and earth, will set up a foreign justice in his land, where the princes and judges will not heed justice."*⁵²

Given Šamaš' role as the god of prophecy, inquiries were made regarding who would assume rulership of the state. Thus, from the reign of Sargon II (722-705 BC) onward, the tradition of succession appointments evolved, relying on consultations with Šamaš and Adad through oracles. The chosen successor, based on their responses, would then enter the bit reduti (house of succession) to prepare for the throne. During the Assyrian State, particularly in Sargon II's reign, determining the heir who would wield power was often entrusted to Šamaš. The responses received from these consultations played a pivotal role in this decision-making process.⁵³ Additionally, surviving tablets

⁴⁶ RIMA 2, A.0.87.1, iv 40 – v 15; Belli, 1982: 150; Narçın, 2013: 371-372.

⁴⁷ Yıldırım, 2021: 327 – 339; Narçın, 2013: 357.

⁴⁸ Klengel, 2019: 121-122; Gökçek, 2015: 45; Pekşen, 2019: 262-263; Çetin, 2019: 104.

⁴⁹ Charpin, 2010: 81; Eliade, 2020: 98.

⁵⁰ Bordreuil – Briquel-Chatonnet, et al., 2023: 176.

⁵¹ Greengus, 1995: 471; Klengel, 2019: 170-171; Charpin, 2010: 4.

⁵² BWL, DT 1, 31-32, 9-10.

⁵³ Roaf, 1996: 188.

highlight the loyalty and devotion of Sargon II to the god Šamaš. This allegiance becomes apparent in Sargon II's struggle against Urartian king Rusa I (735-713 BC), where Sargon II's emphasis on disrespect and disobedience to Šamaš is evident in the following statements:

Moving on from the land Aukanê, I came <to> the land Uišdiš, a district of the land Mannea that Ursâ (Rusâ) had annexed. Before my time, Ursâ (Rusâ), the Urartian

—
who did not obey the command(s) of the gods Aššur (and) Marduk, who did not revere (any) oath (sworn) by the lord of lords, a mountain dweller (and) a murderer (lit.: “seed of murder”), one who had no wisdom, whose lips were nimble in speaking slanderous (and) malicious things, (and) who did not obey the venerable command(s) of the god Šamaš, the great judge of the gods, but (instead) kept on transgressing against his (Šamaš') design(s) every year without fail

—
after (all) his previous sins, committed a great crime that (led to) the destruction of his (own) land and the striking down of his (own) people.⁵⁴

Sargon II's reaction to Rusa I, accused of disrespecting the god Šamaš and other deities, reflects the prevailing belief that the rulers in Ancient Mesopotamia were seen as representatives of the gods. Within this framework, Sargon II explicitly states his commitment to fulfilling his responsibilities toward the gods whom he serves as a proxy ruler. Therefore, the immense reverence shown to Šamaš became a significant advantage for rulers in gaining acceptance from the people. Consequently, rulers frequently commenced their cuneiform texts by extolling Šamaš.⁵⁵

Šamaš was among the gods frequently consulted by Mesopotamian kings on diverse issues. Texts reveal that these kings posed numerous inquiries to this deity regarding future steps for their kingdoms, given Šamaš' recognition as the god of prophecy.⁵⁶ Notably, Assyrian king Esarhaddon (680-669 BC) sought guidance from Šamaš regarding the selection of his successor and treaties he had negotiated.⁵⁷ This practice is exemplified in Esarhaddon's questioning of Šamaš concerning an operation planned for the Egyptian region:

[Šamaš, great lord], give me a firm positive answer [to what] I am asking you! [Should Esarhaddon, king of] Assyria, strive and plan? [Should he take the road] with his army and camp, and go to the [dis]-trict of Egypt, as [he wis]hes? [Should he wage] war [against Taharka], king of Cush, [and troops which] he has? [If he goes], will he [engage in battle] with [Taharka, king of Cush and his army]? In waging [this war], will the weapons of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, and his army, prevail over the weapons of Taharka, king of Cush, and the troops which he has? Will

⁵⁴ RINAP 2, 65, 91-96; Mieroop, 2010: 419.

⁵⁵ Klengel, 2019: 168.

⁵⁶ Charpin, 2013: 68-69; Black – Green, 2003: 126.

⁵⁷ Çetin, 2019: 74; Elayi, 2023: 178; Belli, 1982: 173; Hrouda, 2020: 56; Šašková – Pecha, et al., 2016: 147.

(Esarhaddon's troops)... their..., take their heaped-up (possessions), defeat them, [... their...], and overrun them i[n vic]-tory, power, might and conquest? [...] Will Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, [return alive and] set foot [on Assyrian soil]? Does your great divinity know it? [Is the] retreat of Taharka, [king of Cush and the troops which he has before Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, [.....] [decreed and confirmed in a favorable case, by the command of your great divinity, [Šamaš, great lord? Will he who can see, se]e it? Will he who can hear, hear it? (Break)⁵⁸

Beyond seeking counsel for matters such as succession, military strategies, civil service appointments, and concerns related to health and security from the god Šamaš, another prevalent practice involved the art of liver divination through oracles.⁵⁹ This practice aimed to extract responses typically limited to “yes” or “no”.⁶⁰ An illustrative example is found in a text where Esarhaddon consults the oracles to determine whether offering his daughter to the Scythian king would secure peace. This consultation with Šamaš through oracles provides further insight into the depth and diversity of inquiries made by rulers seeking divine guidance.⁶¹

Šamaš, great lord, give me a firm positive answer to what I am asking you! Bartatua, king of the Scythians, who has now sent his messengers to Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, concerning a royal daughter in marriage — if Esarhaddon, king of [Assyria], gives him a royal daughter in marriage, will Bartatua, king of the Scythians, speak with [Esarhaddon, king of Assyria], in good faith, true and honest words of peace? Will he keep the treaty of [Esarhaddon, king of Assyria]? Will he do [whatever i]s pleasing to Esarhaddon, king of Assyria? Is it decreed and confirmed in a favorable case, [by the command of your great divinity], Samas, great lord? Will he who can see, s[ee it? Will he who can hear], hear it?⁶²

King Esarhaddon's questions to the god Šamaš were not limited to these. Based on the conspiracies that took place before him, he used to appeal to the god in question as a precaution against uprisings and rebellions during his reign.⁶³ Accordingly, it is understood from the texts that Esarhaddon asked some questions of the god Šamaš before undertaking his operations against the Medes.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the fact that Esarhaddon consulted the god regarding whether his son could be the heir highlights his consistent reliance on divine guidance in every decision throughout his reign. This illustrates that he based his choices on a divine foundation.⁶⁵

Šamaš, great lord, give me a firm positive answer to what I am asking you! Should Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, strive and plan? Should he enter his son, Sinnadin-apli, whose name is written in this papyrus and placed before your great divinity, into the Succession Palace? Is it pleasing to your great divinity? Is it acceptable to your great divinity? Does your great divinity know it? Is the entering of

⁵⁸ SAA 4, 84, 1-15.

⁵⁹ Hallo – Simpson, 1998: 158; Delaporte, 1996: 148-149.

⁶⁰ Kuhrt, 2013a: 162; Elayi, 2023: 178; Bordreuil – Briquel-Chatonnet, et al., 2023: 244.

⁶¹ Roaf, 1996: 189; Çetin, 2019: 106.

⁶² SAA 4, 20, 1-10.

⁶³ Šašková – Pecha, et al., 2016: 171.

⁶⁴ Elayi, 2023:194.

⁶⁵ Elayi, 2023: 182.

Sin-nadin-apli, son of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, whose name is written in this papyrus, into the Succession Palace, decreed and confirmed in a favorable case, by the command of your great divinity, Šamaš, great lord? Will he who can see, see it? Will he who can hear, hear it?⁶⁶

It is evident from various tablet texts that King Ashurbanipal, who ascended to power towards the end of the Neo-Assyrian Period, continued to uphold the cult of Šamaš, much like his father Esarhaddon. This dedication extended to his political endeavors and numerous other matters. Particularly notable is a text in which Ashurbanipal queries the god regarding his recovery from an illness he suffered during his period as heir:

(Beginning destroyed)

[Should Assurbanipal, the crown prince of the] Succession Palace, [drink this drug which] is placed [before] your great [div]inity, [and in drinking this drug will he] be rescued and spared?

[Will he live and get well? Will he ..., be s]aved and escape? [Will the illness of] his [body] be released? Will it leave (him)? Does your great divinity know it?

[Is the res]cue, survival [of Assurbanipal, crown prince of the Suc]ces[sion Palace], by drinking this drug, [decreed and confirmed in a favorable case, by the command of your great divinity], Šamaš, great lord? [Will he who can see, see it? Will he who can hear], hear it?

[...]

[I ask you, Šamaš, great lord, whether this drug] which [is] now [placed before your great divinity, and which Assurbanip]al, crown prince of the Succession House (is to) drink -

[(whether) by drinking this drug he will] be saved, [and escape].

Be present [in this ram, place (in it) a firm positive answer...]⁶⁷

(Rest destroyed)

However, the god Šamaš is also among the gods mentioned in Asurbanipal's achievement of the sovereignty:

[I, Ashurbanip]al, great king, [strong king, k]ing of the world, king of Assyria, [kin]g of the four qu[art]ers (of the world), [the cr]eation of (the god) Aššur and the goddess Mullissu, the one to whom the god Ea and the goddess Bēlet-ilī have stretched out (their) hands, one who was chosen by the gods Sīn, Šamaš, (and) Adad, beloved of the god Marduk (and) the goddess Zarpanītu, the one required by the deities Nabū, Tašmētu, (and) N[anāya], wise (and) capa[ble], true shepherd, favorite of the [great] glods; son of Esarhaddon, [great king], strong king, kin[g] of the world, king of Assyria, governor of Ba[bylon], king of the land of Sum[er and Akkad]...⁶⁸

The king's association with the deity was deemed essential for his ascent to power and for establishing a durable reign, starting from his succession.

⁶⁶ SAA 4, 149, 1-7.

⁶⁷ SAA 4, 187, 1-12.

⁶⁸ RINAP 5/1, 2, i 1.

His consistent pursuit of divine guidance for contemplated actions, or those under consideration within his cult, exemplifies his devotion to Šamaš. Thus, the text where he inquires about potential treason or rebellion by palace officials against Ashurbanipal carries significant weight:

[Šamaš, great lord], give me a firm positive answer to what I am asking you! [From this day, the ...th day of] this [mo]nth, Iyyar (II), to the first day of the coming month, Sivan (III) of this year, [for ... days and nights], the term stipulated for the performance of (this) extispicy within this stipulated term, [will (any) of the] eunuchs (and) the bearded (officials), the king's entourage, or (any) of his brothers and uncles, [his family], his father's line], or junior members of the royal line, or the 'third men,' chariot drivers (and) chariot fighters, [or the recruitment officers, or] the prefects of the exempt military, or the prefects of the cavalry, or the royal bodyguard, or his personal guard, [or the keepers] of the inner gates, or the keepers of the outer gates, or the... eunuchs, [or...], or the palace superintendents, the staff-bearers (and) the wa[tch]men, or the mounted scouts (and) the trackers, [or the lackeys, tailor]s, cup-bearers, cooks, (and) confectioners, the entire body of craftsmen, or the Itu'eans and the Elamites, the mounted bowmen, the Hittites, [or] the Gurreans, or the Arameans, [or the Cimmerians, or] the Philistines, or the Nubians (and) the Egyptians, or the Šabuqeans, [or the eunuchs who bear [arms], or the bearded (officials) who bear arms and stand guard for the king, [or any of the exempt, the troops] who plotted sedition and rebellion, or their brothers, (or) their sons, [or their nephews, or the]ir [friends] and guests, or those who are in their confidence, [..... or any enemy at all, whether male or female, whatever their name, [...]]... whether by day or by night, in the city [or in the country, whether on his throne where he is sitting], or on his podium, or while descending [from...], [..... or] while going out, wherever he wishes to go, [or while...ing] his [...], or while drinking or ea[ting].....]-[....] will any human being make an uprising [and rebellion against Assurbanipal, son of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, or act] against him in a hostile manner? [Is the making of an uprising and rebellion against Assurbanipal], son of Esarhaddon, [king of Assyria, decreed and confirmed in a favorable case, by the command of your great divinity, Šamaš, great lord? Will he who can see, see it? Will he who can hear, hear it?]⁶⁹

From this text, it's evident that the king consistently seeks divine guidance, consulting his god for support in the measures and decisions he intends to take. This ongoing pursuit of divine consent throughout his reign serves as a preemptive action against potential future events, safeguarding his authority.

Social Aspects of the God Šamaš

The cult of Šamaš held significant social implications, particularly emphasizing justice in the lives of Ancient Mesopotamians. People believed Šamaš orchestrated justice, safeguarding the poor and wronged within his realm.⁷⁰ According to this belief, the sun, overseeing events until dusk, was privy to all hidden matters.⁷¹ The "Šamaš Hymn" echoes this belief with the

⁶⁹ SAA 4, 142, 1-22.

⁷⁰ Oates, 2015: 183.

⁷¹ Dilek, 2019: 46; Schneider, 2011: 55; Charpin, 2013: 74.

statement: “*You are the one who brings light to the case of the evil and the criminal.*”⁷² Consequently, the cult profoundly influenced people’s commitment to honesty, fostering a societal consciousness to abide by the law and uphold justice.⁷³ An illustrative example is the Assyrians’ practice of swearing oaths to this deity in their commercial agreements, vividly expressing their allegiance to these principles.⁷⁴

The cult of Šamaš held significant significance in Ancient Mesopotamia. Šamaš temples served as centers for worship and ceremonial gatherings. Offerings and gifts presented to Šamaš symbolized reverence towards the deity. Consequently, people’s faith in this god played a pivotal role in upholding social order. Within this structured society, when the construction of a temple was planned, the architectural design and measurements were believed to be conveyed by the deity or deities to the king, their earthly representative.⁷⁵ In this context, an illustrative example is the Neo-Babylonian king Nabopolassar (658-605 BC), who documented receiving the measurements and plans for the Etemenanki temple tower directly from Adad, Marduk, and Šamaš. This instance offers a clearer understanding of the significance attached to divine guidance in the construction of monumental structures.⁷⁶

The deity’s role as a judge both above and below the earth led to the convening of various trials within temples.⁷⁷ For instance, the holding of high court meetings within the temple in Sippar, accompanied by a nearby repository for legal contracts, distinctly illustrates this practice.⁷⁸ Trials and hearings likely occurred not only within the temple confines but also in its vicinity, including the area in front of the temple and even at the city gate.⁷⁹ Additionally, the temple boasted a library housing manuscripts illuminating Babylonian literature.⁸⁰ Beyond legal affairs, the temple in Sippar also accommodated priestesses as part of its functions. These priestesses, referred to as “Naditum”, were believed to comprise daughters from Mesopotamian families, including those of kings (such as the daughter of Zimri-Lim, king of Mari).⁸¹ Residing in private residences adjacent to the Temple of Šamaš, these priestesses carried out their duties for the temple. During various rites and ceremonies, they supervised numerous assistants and musicians.⁸² Upon entering the temple, priestesses received a dowry from their families, which, unlike customary practice, remained the property of the priestess herself rather than being given to the temple. As a consequence, priestesses were restricted from marriage and bearing children, and upon their demise, their

⁷² Charpin, 2013: 66.

⁷³ Mackenzie, 1915: 54.

⁷⁴ Sever, 2008: 69.

⁷⁵ Demirci, 2013: 83.

⁷⁶ Dilek, 2019: 150.

⁷⁷ Guichard – Marti, 2013: 100; Bordreuil – Briquel-Chatonnet, et al., 2023: 377.

⁷⁸ Diakov – Kovalev, 2014: 109.

⁷⁹ Chadwick, 2005: 66.

⁸⁰ Mieroop, 2007: 296.

⁸¹ Lion, 2011: 105; Schneider, 2011: 89; Bertman, 2003: 30; Greengus, 1995: 480.

⁸² Diakov – Kovalev, 2014: 110.

dowries reverted to their families.⁸³ However, they possessed the ability to adopt either a slave or another priestess, designating the adoptee as their heir.⁸⁴ As landowners, priestesses utilized their servants as intermediaries in external activities, thereby enhancing the dowry they brought into the temple from their families.⁸⁵

Ancient Mesopotamians indeed attributed various natural occurrences and events in their lives to the actions or emotions of their gods, like associating a solar eclipse with the potential anger of the god Šamaš.⁸⁶ Consequently, they engaged in prayers and rituals to pacify their deities and maintain their favor. This reverence for Šamaš reflects the acknowledgment of his supremacy, leading people to seek his assistance and benevolence through their devotion and appeals. In a prayer text on this subject, the following statements are made:

If a man had a wrong dream he must, in order that its evil (consequences) may not affect him, say to himself before he sets (in the morning) his foot upon the floor: "The dream I have had is good, good, verily good before Sin and Shamash!" Thus he shall say. (In this way) he makes a good egirru for himself and the of his dream will not come near him.⁸⁷

According to this text, it's intriguing how the Mesopotamian people turned to Šamaš, the god associated with divination, to address adversity and resume their lives. They held a belief in malevolent spirits stemming from their dreams, associating these entities with various ailments and disturbances. To counter these influences and sustain their prosperity, they organized rituals and rites⁸⁸, some conducted at sunrise.⁸⁹ This practice stemmed from the belief that sunrise offered a closer connection to the sun god, Šamaš, facilitating more effective communication to seek protection from these malevolent forces. In a ritual to get rid of the evil spirit, the following words are noteworthy:

(Šamaš), let him be put under your oath; let him be put under the oath of Ea and Asalluḫi. Let him be put under [the oath of the go]ds [of heaven and earth]. Let him not come near me; let him not come close to me; [let him not approach me]; let him not reach me. May he cross the river. May he go across the mountain. [May he withdraw 3,600 double] hours' distance from my body; may he go up like smoke to heaven.⁹⁰

In these and many other rituals, the use of various materials and materials was very important for the successful conclusion of the ritual. Accordingly, date palms, tamarisk and especially cedar trees had an important place in religious rituals among the Ancient Mesopotamians. It is known that these trees were generally used in rituals to get rid of evil spirits and

⁸³ Klengel, 2019: 87; Schneider, 2011: 89; Goddeeris, 2007: 206; Westbrook, 2003: 424.

⁸⁴ Greengus, 1995: 480.

⁸⁵ Kuhrt, 2013b: 149; Yıldırım 2017: 35-43.

⁸⁶ Wallenfels – Sasson, 2000b: 94.

⁸⁷ Oppenheim, 1956: 300.

⁸⁸ Ulutaş - Öz Kiriş, 2022: 292.

⁸⁹ Bordreuil – Briquel-Chatonnet, et al., 2023: 416; Abusch – Schwemer, 2011: 1.

⁹⁰ Ancient Magic and Divination III, 4, 26.

purification. In this context, the following statements in the ritual of expelling evil spirits dated to the Neo-Babylonian Period are important in terms of comprehending the subject:

O Šamaš, lord of the upper and lower world, I call upon you, Šamaš, hear me, I call upon you, Šamaš, pay heed to my case! O Šamaš, [I] ca[rry] pure cedar wood in my mouth, pure tamarisk wood in my right hand, pure palm shoot in [my] left hand, *ilikulla*-plant on my head. I have [taken clay from] both [ba]nks of the river. [Šama]s, when you rise, [may] [Tigris] and Euphrates, the ocean, [the wide sea], [...], good beer mixture, kurunnu-beer (and) pure [... greet] you. O Šamaš, pay heed to [my case], let me [find justice] through your judgement.⁹¹

The statements imply the utilization of various materials in the magic rituals conducted for the mentioned deity. Additionally, it's noteworthy that within the namburbi rituals aimed at countering witchcraft and sorcery, the texts indicate the invocation of the mentioned deity's assistance, accompanied by diverse prayers.⁹²

Furthermore, Šamaš, frequently referenced in political and social tablets alongside his diverse characteristics, is prominently featured in the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Epic of Creation, Enuma Elish, and the Myth of Etana.⁹³ Thus, the divine presence of this god in Ancient Mesopotamia has endured through literary texts, playing a significant role in its survival to the present day. To provide further detail about his role in Mesopotamian mythology, the mention of the existence and authority of the god Šamaš, referred to as the Sun, within the Epic of Enuma Elish, recited before the statue of the god Marduk on the 4th day of the New Year celebrations⁹⁴, underscores the significance of Šamaš in both Babylonian and Mesopotamian mythology:

(....)

15. At the beginning of the month, (the time) of the shining; forth over the land
16. Thou shalt shine with horns to determine six days,
17. And on the seventh day with a half crown.
18. At the full moon verily thou art in opposition (to the sun), monthly,
19. When the Sun on the foundation of heaven has overtaken thee,
20. The ... keep and shine thou (in thy course) backward.
21. At the period of darkness approach to the way of the sun,
22. [And on the 29th day] verily thou standest in opposition to the sun a second time.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Schwemer, 2011: 181-182.

⁹² Abusch – Schwemer, 2011: 16; Butler, 1998: 114; Çeçen – Gökçek, et al., 2020: 160; Kaçar, 2020: 184.

⁹³ Black – Green, 2003: 224; Hooke, 1993: 61; Bordreuil – Briquel-Chatonnet, et al., 2023: 405; Delaporte, 1996: 209.

⁹⁴ Uncu, 2013: 28.

⁹⁵ Langdon, 1923: 159 – 163; Heidel, 1963: 45.

Conclusion

In Ancient Mesopotamian societies, the political, social, cultural, and religious realms were intricately intertwined. Within these societies, various god and goddess cults played pivotal roles in shaping social and political life. Among these, the cult of the god Šamaš held significant prominence. However, this cult had its origins in the earlier worship of the god Utu within Sumerian society. Despite being revered under different names in distinct societies, they were regarded as equivalent deities in Mesopotamian history. Utu, associated with justice and law, preceded Šamaš. Šamaš, on the other hand, was linked to maintaining order, safeguarding laws, and practicing divination. This cult formed the foundational pillars of the legal system within Mesopotamian societies, with Šamaš revered as the guardian of law. Additionally, Šamaš held the esteemed position as the god exclusively responsible for safeguarding rulers within Mesopotamian societies.

Within Ancient Mesopotamian belief, the notion prevailed that justice was universally dispensed as the sun's rays reached every corner. People attributed profound significance to the sunrise and sunset, believing their lives were sustained through this celestial rhythm. In this belief system, Šamaš, the god who emitted the sun's rays from his shoulders, was seen as the source from which justice permeated society. The depiction of Šamaš with a winged sun disc symbolizes this concept vividly. Šamaš was revered for safeguarding the underprivileged in society, championing their rights and defense. As the sun god, he was among the foremost deities consulted in matters of agriculture and fertility. People attributed natural phenomena such as sunrises, nature's rebirth, and even solar eclipses to this deity. This belief instilled a sense of his omnipresence, influencing their daily lives profoundly. Šamaš's impact on Ancient Mesopotamians extended beyond these aspects. His presence resonated in the treaties of Mesopotamian states and in rulers' endeavors to consolidate power and authority.

The acclaim and praise voiced by prominent rulers such as Larsa's Nur-Adad, Babylon's Hammurabi, and Assyria's Ashurbanipal, attributing a significant share of their power to Šamaš in inscriptions and documents, underscore the deity's influence over the politics of Ancient Mesopotamia. Through their glorifying words and expressions of gratitude towards this god, these rulers highlighted Šamaš's role in their achievements. As a gesture of gratitude for the power and authority attained through Šamaš's influence, Ancient Mesopotamian rulers bestowed various gifts, constructed temples, and undertook temple renovations to honor the deity. Notably, the renovation and restoration of Šamaš's temples by Mari's King Yahdun-Lim and several other rulers hold significance in comprehending this practice.

The god Šamaš, initially known as Utu in Sumerian society, maintained a pivotal position in the political and social fabric of Semitic societies. Among the Assyrians, Šamaš, revered as the sun god, commanded a similar level of reverence as Asur, the god of war. Notably, Šamaš became the deity frequently consulted by Mesopotamian rulers for guidance on political policies, with their decisions often aligning with his counsel. In summary, the Šamaš cult held a significant role in the political and social spheres of Ancient Mesopotamia. It

formed the cornerstone of the Mesopotamian legal system, safeguarded the rulers' authority, emphasized their responsibility toward their people in ensuring justice, and fostered unity across diverse social strata.

Abbreviations

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