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Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie



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Begründet von
E. Ebeling und B. Meissner

fortgeführt von
E. Weidner, W. von Soden und D. O. Edzard

herausgegeben von M. P. Streck

unter Mitwirkung von
G. Frantz-Szabó · M. Krebernik · D. Morandi Bonacossi
J. N. Postgate · U. Seidl · M. Stol · G. Wilhelm

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B. R. Foster

Steppe, Wüste (steppe, desert).

§ 1. Steppe and desert in and around Mesopotamia. – § 2. Akkadian and Sumerian terminology. – § 3. Flora and fauna. – § 4. Nomadic life. – § 5. Steppe and desert from the viewpoint of Mesopotamian urban culture.

§ 1. Steppe and desert in and around Mesopotamia. The Mesopot. s. is the northernmost extension of the vast d.s of the Arabian peninsula. It encloses Mesopotamia on the west from the Euphrates bend down to the head of the gulf, stretching between the upper Euphrates and the Tigris. On the alluvial plain of Babylonia there are extensive areas between the rivers and canals not reached by any water. In Mesopotamia, the transition from true d. to areas of rainfall agriculture takes place along a broad strip of 200–400 km. The land within this strip lies between the 100 and 300 mm isohyets (Regen* § 2) and, if not irrigated, is characterized by the vegetation forms of semi-d. and dry s.

In Babylonia, the rivers and canals are generally lined by date palm groves, followed by watered grain fields and then by a strip of land with marginal fields and pasture for sheep and goats gradually changing, with growing distance from the water, into dry s. and semi-d. Sharp borders between cultivable areas and s. are only found where ground relief or salt (Salz*, Versalzung. A. § 9) prevent any agriculture. Neither agricultural zones nor s. are limited to certain areas but have often moved during history following the shift of water-courses (Tigris*) and diminishing or increasing irrigation activities. Thus, detailed conclusions from the modern landscape back to historical periods are impossible. However, the general picture of the modern landscape can be transferred to antiquity.

In Syria, the middle Euphrates, the Hābūr* and the Balīḥ form riverine oases within the s. Agriculture is normally only

practicable in the relatively deep river valleys whereas the Ġazīra and the s. south of the Euphrates above the 100 mm isohyet gets enough rain in winter to feed the sheep and goats of semi-nomads and sedentaries.

Recent conditions in the Mesopotamian s.: Wirth 1962, 7–13; id. 1971, 438–449. A more historically oriented description: Postgate 1992, 4–6 and 15. Climate change: Wossink 2009.

§ 2. Akkadian and Sumerian terminology. The most important Akk. word for “s.” and “d.” is *šēru*. Etymology: related to Arabic *ṣah(ā)rā* “d.” and unrelated to Akk. *šēru* “back”, Militarev/Kogan 2000, 253. *šēru* is opposed to *ālu* “city” (see CAD *šēru* 3a1’). The *šēru* can be used for agriculture (CAD *šēru* 3b) and stock raising (CAD *šēru* 3c); people can maintain possessions in the *šēru* (Strassmaier, Nbk. 91: 6). *šēru* thus denotes the area outside the city and irrigated gardens and thus corresponds at least in part to the broad strip of land which includes marginal fields, pasture land and the uncultivated dry s. and semi-d. (see § 1). *šēru* was probably borrowed as *saḥar* “sand” into Sum. (Civil 2007, 21) but corresponds lexically to Sum. *eden*.

Other Akk. words for “s.” and “d.”: *bamātu*, *ḥadqu* and *kašū* (both Amorite loanwords, OB Mari), *ḥurbul/huribtu* “waste land, d.”, *kīdu* “territory outside (the city)”, *madbaru* (MA, NA, SB, NB, a loan from West Sem.), *nawlmū* (OB, SB) “pasture land in the s.”, esp. in Mari the habitat of nomads and their herds, *šadū* “mountain, s.”. In Sum. texts *kur* and *ḥur-saḡ* “mountain”, when connected with the Martu nomads, at least sometimes denote the Ġabal Bišri and the surrounding high s. (see Streck 2000, 34 f., 69 and 71 f., *pace* Sallaberger 2007, 431 n. 79; cf. § 5.3d below).

See AHW. and CAD svv. For *ḥadqu* and *qašū* see Streck 2000, 90 and 101 f.

§ 3. Flora and fauna. The grass growing in the s. after the rain in winter and spring is evoked by the comparison “(the demon) appeared in the s. (*eden-na/ina šēri*) like the green grass” V R 50 ii 30 ff. Grass (ú) in the s. (*eden*) is also mentioned in *Cursing of Agade* (ETCSL 2.1.5) 277. The only tree found in the s. is the tamarisk (IV R 27 no. 1: 6 f.). The truffle (UZU.DIR//*kamūnu*) appears in CT 40 K.10390: 1 and elsewhere.

The s. is the habitat of wild animals: māš-anše níġ-zi ġál eden-na//būl *Sumuqan šikin napīšti ina šēri* “animals of Sumuqan which live in the s.” CT 13, 36: 22. *umām šēri* “beasts of the s.” RIMA 2, 226: 37.

Specific animals: maš-dàl/šabitu “gazelle” *Proverb Coll.* 3 (ETCSL 6.1.3) 151; Leichty, *Summa Izbu Comm.* 563. anše-eden-na//serremulak-kannu “wild ass, onager” *Šulgi A* (ETCSL 2.4.2.1) 72; M. Streck, *Asb.* 58 vi 104; *BWL* 144: 28 (Onager*). am-gul eden-na-ke.//rīma ša šēri “aurochs of the s.” V R 50 ii 50. til-lu-ug “elephant” and ur-maḥ “lion” *Šulgi B* (ETCSL 2.4.2.2) 58 f. piriġ huš eden-na “fierce lion of the s.” *Išme-Dagan S* (ETCSL 2.5.4.19) 15. “The fox (šēlebu) is the thief in the s.” *BWL* 204 G col. B 8. In *Gilg.* VIII 16 f. the following animals are summarized as *būl nam-maššē šēri* “herds and animals of the s.”: *asu* “bear”, *bašu* “hyena”, *nimru* “cheetah”, *mindinu* “leopard”, *lulimu* “stag”, *dumāmu* “jackal(?)”, *nešu* “lion”, *rimu* “aurochs”, *ajjalu* “deer”, *turāhu* “ibex”, *lurmu* “ostrich” in *huribtu* “d.” RIMA 2, 175: 80. *šurārtu* “lizard” *AJSL* 36, 83: 114. *ḥumbabittu* = *pizalluru* “gecko” Leichty, *Summa Izbu Comm.* 43. muš-ġiri “snake” *Šulgi E* (ETCSL 2.4.2.5) 230.

Domesticated animals are often attested, see CAD § 143 *šēru* 3c (sheep, cattle, donkeys). See also *Hoe and Plough* (ETCSL 5.3.1) 165: “The shepherd adorns the plain (eden) with his ewes and lambs”. In these cases, *šēru* often means pasture land around the city.

§ 4. Nomadic life. S. and d. are the habitat of nomads in transhumance (Nomaden*, esp. §§ 2.1, 2.2, 2.4; Streck 2002, 158–168). In OB Mari, the s. where the Amorite nomads live is called *nawū*. Sheep graze in the *qašū* ARM 6, 57: 12. Aramaean tribes, summarized as *sūtū* “nomads”, are *šāb EDEN* “people of the s.” Fuchs, *Sg.* 136 f. Ann 258 and passim (Sutāer*). An Aramaic tribe has a *bīt šēri* “house of the s.”, defined as *kultaru* “tent” OIP 2, 27 i 78; 58: 23; 67: 11. Tiglath-pileser I crosses the s. (*mudbaru*) in search of the Aramaic *aḥlamū*-nomads RIMA 2, 23: 45–48. The Arabs live in the *madbaru*, Fuchs, *Sg.* 110 Ann 12; OIP 2, 92 r. 22. An opposition between s.-dwellers and city-dwellers is expressed in the omens: “The city-dweller (*ša libbi ālim*) will dupe the s.-dweller (*ša šērim*)” and vice versa YOS 10, 40: 8; RA 38, 84 r. 24.

§ 5. Steppe and desert from the viewpoint of Mesopotamian urban culture. Whereas Mesopot. royal inscriptions and literary texts tend to describe s. and d. in negative terms, texts which record day-to-day activities are more often neutral. S. and d. only rarely evoke positive associations in the mind of the Mesopot. city-dweller (see § 5.1b below), reflecting the basically urban character of Mesopot. culture (at least as it is transmitted to us through the texts), although it cannot be denied that s. and city (Stadt* § 7.1) interacted on many levels and that the s. supported an important sector of the Mesopot. economy, namely sheep- and goat-breeding. The attitude towards the s. and d. in the cuneiform texts comprises natural, human and supernatural aspects.

§ 5.1. Natural aspects.

a) A place of water shortage and thirst: “They fled into an arid region (*nābali*), a place of thirst (*ašar šumāmi*), into the desert (*madbariš*)” TCL 3, 193. “An expanse of dry land (*nābalu*), a salt-covered soil, a region of thirst” Borger, *Ash.* 56 iv 54, “great sand dunes, a region of thirst” *ibid.* 98 r. 36. The enemies suffer thirst in the *madbaru*, M. Streck, *Asb.* 204 vi 9. “eden where there is no water” *Hoe and Plough* (ETCSL 5.3.1) 160. Therefore, the waterskin has to be used in the eden: *Inana and Bilulu* (ETCSL 1.4.4) 101, and the curse “May the waterskin split in the high d.” *Instructions of Šuruppak* (ETCSL 5.6.1) 201.

b) A habitat of plants and animals: see § 3 above. In the Dumuzi texts, the re-emerging vegetation of the s. in winter and spring sometimes evokes positive images: spicy plants in the eden, Sefati 1998, 187: 19, 21; comparison of the eden with a blossoming garden *ibid.* 221: 11.

c) In spite of aspect § 5.1b above, a place without animals and plants: “In the *madbaru*, a distant place, where even the beast of the *šēru* cannot live and where no bird of the sky builds its nest” M. Streck, *Asb.* 72 viii 108–110; 204 vi 30–32. “A plant as sweet as a husband does not grow in the

eden” *Proverb Coll.* 14 (ETCSL 6.1.14) Seg. B 26.

d) High s. (an-eden) which probably refers to the relief compared to the low alluvium: *Ninurta F* (ETCSL 4.2.7.6) 29.

e) Wide s. (daġal or níġ-daġal-la): *Lament for Sumer and Urim* (ETCSL 2.2.3) 78; *Rim-Sin G* (ETCSL 2.6.9.7) 37.

f) Quiet place (ki sig₉) which might have a natural connotation as well as a supernatural since the s. is also a synonym for netherworld (see § 5.3b below): *Cursing of Agade* (ETCSL 2.1.5) 255, 263.

§ 5.2. Human aspects.

a) A place of battle: see CAD § 146 *šēru* i.

b) A region crossed on the journey from one city to another: CAD § 147 *šēru* j 1’.

c) In spite of aspect § 5.2b, the s. is a region unknown to the city-dweller: “eden which I do not know” *Lugalbanda in the mountain cave* (ETCSL 1.8.2.1) 167; *Lament for Urim* (ETCSL 2.2.2) 285.

d) As habitat of nomads: see § 4 above.

e) The s. is the home of runaways, lawless persons and lepers: CH § 17 deals with the case of a runaway slave or slave girl caught in the *šēru*. “Let me roam like a thief through the *kīdu*” BWL 78: 139. Curse: “May the god cover him with leprosy so that he must roam in the *namû*” CAD N/2, 251 *namû* A 3. See also CAD § 145 *šēru* f and for Sum. sa-gaz “murderer” in eden *Išme-Dagan A+V* (ETCSL 2.5.4.1) 220 and “evil people” in the eden *Cursing of Agade* (ETCSL 2.1.5) 255.

f) In spite of aspects § 5.2.a, b, d and e, a place without humans: “in the *namû*, in deserted areas (*uġārē arbūti*), where there was no house or dwelling” Weidner, Tn. 31 no. 17: 44. a-ri-a sug₄-ga “empty wasteland” *Ibbi-Suen B* (ETCSL 2.4.5.2) Seg. B 1.

§ 5.3. Supernatural aspects.

a) As the haunt of demons: see CAD § 145 f. *šēru* 3g. See also *eṭem ħurbī nadūti* “ghost of the d. waste” Maqlū IV 22.

b) The shepherd Dumuzi (Tammuz*) dwells, disappears and dies in the s. Thus “s.” becomes a synonym for netherworld (see Tallqvist 1934, 17–22; PSD A/1, 136–140 for a-ra-li as name for s. as well as

the netherworld), an association furthered by the liminal character of the city-wall (Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 73; Stadtmauer* A. § 1; Stadttor* A. § 5). Cf. aspect § 5.1.f above.

c) The s. is a “pure place” (*ašru ellu*) ASKT p. 78 no. 9 r. 1 f. and well suited for the performance of purification rituals (CAD § 146 *šēru* 3h). Cf. Ritual* A. § 3.4 (magical rituals are often performed aside of houses and streets) and Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 73.

d) Gods connected with the s. In general: “god of the s. and goddess of the s.” Racc. 8 r. 11.

Martu* is associated with the ħur-saġ “high s.” (see § 2 above; Martu* A. § 4). Note that the Martu-nomads live in the ħur-saġ (Streck 2000, 74). Martu’s mother Nin-ħursaġa has an affinity to the open country (Nin-ħursaġa* § 6). His attribute is the gazelle (Martu* A. § 6), an animal typical for the s. In god-lists he is equated with Sumuqan*, god of the animals, and Saman*, the deified leading rope (Martu* A. § 2). According to a cylinder seal (Kupper 1961, 67), he is *bēl šērim* “lord of the s.”. As god of the s. he is not god of a specific city. His wife Ašratum* is *bēlet šērim* “mistress of the s.”.

Other gods related to the s.: Lugal-edinna, god of the wild animals, equated with Lulal*/Lātarāk. Lātarāk is “king of the s.” (Lugal-edinna* 1). Nin-edena* “Mistress of the s.”, occurring in early god-lists. Sumuqan, god of grass-eating herds and “king” of the s.

Gods related to the s. as netherworld (cf. aspect § 5.3b above): Bēlet-šērim “Mistress of the s.” (Geštin-anna* p. 301), name of the scribe of the underworld. Lugal-edinna* 2, epithet of Nergal*.

Civil M. 2007: Early Semitic loanwords in Sumerian, Fs. R. D. Biggs (= AS 27) 11–33. – Kupper J.-R. 1961: L’iconographie du dieu Amurru dans la glyptique de la I^{re} dynastie babylonienne. – Militarev A./Kogan L. 2000: Semitic etymological dictionary 1 (= AOAT 278/1). – Pongratz-Leisten B. 1994: Ina šulmi ĩrub (= BagF 16). – Postgate J. N. 1992: Early Mesopotamia: society and economy at the dawn of history. – Sallaberger W. 2007: From urban culture to nomadism: a history of upper Mesopotamia in the late third millennium, in: C. Kuzucuoġlu/C. Marro (ed.), Sociétés hu-

maines et changement climatique à la fin du troisième millénaire: une crise a-t-elle eu lieu en Haute Mésopotamie? (= Actes du colloque de Lyon, 5–8 décembre 2005), 417–456. – Sefati Y. 1998: Love songs in Sumerian literature: critical edition of the Dumuzi-Inanna songs. – Streck M. P. 2000: Das amurritische Onomastikon der altbabylonischen Zeit (= AOAT 271/1); id. 2002: Zwischen Weide, Dorf und Stadt: sozio-ökonomische Strukturen des amurritischen Nomadismus am mittleren Euphrat, BagM 33, 155–209. – Tallqvist K. L. 1934: Sumerisch-akkadische Namen der Totenwelt (= StOr. 5/4). – Wirth E. 1962: Agrargeographie des Irak (= Hamburger Geographische Studien 13); id. 1971: Syrien: eine geographische Landeskunde (= Wissenschaftliche Länderkunden 4/5). – Wossink A. 2009: Challenging climate change: competition and cooperation among pastoralists and agriculturalists in northern Mesopotamia (c. 3000–1600 BC) (Diss. Leiden).

M. P. Streck

Sterbende Götter.

§ 1. Definition. – § 2. Göttergestalten. § 2.1. Dumuzi/Tammuz. § 2.2. Ba'al. § 2.3. Melqart.

§ 1. Definition. In der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jhs. hat – ausgehend von Graf Baudissin 1911 und Frazer 1914³ – die Diskussion über die Existenz von sterbenden und auferstehenden Göttern in der Religionsgeschichte des Vorderen Orients eine wichtige Rolle gespielt. V. a. Dumuzi/Tammuz*, Marduk*, Ba'al*, Adonis (Adun*), Ešmun, Melqart* und Attis (sowie aus Ägypten Osiris*) wurden in dieser Diskussion immer wieder genannt. Dabei sollten Sterben und Auferstehung dieser Götter sich auch im jahreszeitl. Zyklus widerspiegeln. Als zentrale Punkte der Kritik sind zu nennen, dass nicht alle in der Diskussion genannten Götter Vegetationsgottheiten* sind. Genauso wenig lässt sich anhand der Quellsituation eine regelmäßige, jährliche Wiederholung von Tod und Auferstehung des Gottes in Analogie zum zyklischen Jahresablauf nachweisen. Völlig abzulehnen (von Soden 1955) ist die anhand von KAR 143 ausgesprochene Vermutung, dass Marduk vergleichbar mit Dumuzi/Tammuz sterben und auferstehen würde, was im Rahmen des Neujahrsfestes* gefeiert worden wäre. Aber auch bei anderen in der Forschung genannten Göttern ist zu Recht zu fragen, wie weit sie als st. G. zu verstehen sind.

Nach Mettinger 2001, 42 kann man dann von st. G. sprechen, wenn wenigstens die beiden folgenden Kriterien erfüllt sind: (a) es handelt sich bei der in Frage kommenden Gestalt um eine Gottheit, die mit einem Kult verbunden ist; (b) der Tod der Gottheit ist mit dem Abstieg in die Unterwelt (s. a. Unterwelt(gottheiten)*) und der daran anschließenden – zumindest zeitweiligen – Rückkehr in die Welt der „Lebenden“ in der Götterwelt verbunden. Ob der Tod der Gottheit mit dem jahreszeitl. Zyklus verbunden wird, und ob Tod und Rückkehr in die Welt der „Lebenden“ auch kultisch gefeiert werden, sind hingegen keine entscheidenden Definitionskriterien für st. G. Aus dieser Definition ergibt sich, dass es religionsgeschichtlich zulässig ist, manche Gottheiten als „st. G.“ zu bezeichnen, aber es lässt sich daraus kein „Typ“ st. G. als religionswissenschaftliche Kategorie – weder im Alten Orient geschweige denn in einem universellen Kontext – postulieren. Im religionsgeschichtl. Kontext der Keilschriftkulturen können daher nur die in § 2 genannten Gestalten als st. G. bezeichnet werden.

§ 2. Göttergestalten.

§ 2.1. Die wichtigste Gestalt ist *Dumuzi/Tammuz*, sowohl wegen der Kontinuität, die dieser Gott im Vorderen Orient erfahren hat, als auch wegen des Einflusses, der von ihm ausgegangen ist (Mander 2001, 103–112). Der in den unterschiedlichen Quellen fassbare Charakter Dumuzis zeigt immer wieder die Verbindung zwischen der menschlichen und der göttlichen Welt sowie zwischen den Sphären des Lebens und des Todes. Die „Wiederbelebung“ Dumuzis, nachdem er durch Inanna ein Schicksal in der Unterwelt erleidet (Inanna/Ištar* A. § 11.2), wird in einem Text mit dem regelmäßig zunehmenden Mond und der aufgehenden Sonne verglichen. Das vielschichtige Bild Dumuzis in der mesopot. Religionsgeschichte erlaubt es, ihn als „st. G.“ in einen kosmologischen Kontext einzubetten, wenn er vorübergehend aus der Unterwelt (flankiert von Unterweltdämonen [Dämonen* 2]) in die „Oberwelt“ zurückkehrt,