

## PREFACE

THE FERTILE CRESCENT, to use the felicitous term coined by Breasted, the zone of relatively fertile, well-watered land that stretched from ancient Susa in the east to Jerusalem in the west, in addition to being the cradle of civilization, was the birth place of the major monotheistic religions of the modern world. As such, its religious traditions are, in an indirect way, of great interest to millions of people today. It is clear that, in a broader view, they were influenced by various earlier polytheistic religions whose homes stretched across the great arc from the Zagros Mountains in Iran in the east to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. This work presents part of that ancient heritage, the deities, both great and small, who were the focus of religious life for four millennia.

Our basic source materials are the ancient texts themselves, written in both cuneiform and alphabetic scripts during the long period beginning with the tablets found in Uruk level IV, ca. 3300–3000 BCE, when divine names first appear in written sources, down to the first century BCE. Since the iconography of deities can be a valuable tool for the better understanding of religion, we have used it as much as possible. We decided to make the terminus of our investigations the late Hellenistic period, the time before the rise of Christianity. In addition to deities named in ritual, literary, and economic texts, we have included many whose names occur only in god lists or in personal names, though this inclusion is far from being exhaustive. This subset has been included to convey a sense of the vastness of deities occurring in the ancient Near East.

This volume is the collaboration of two scholars, an Assyriologist (D. Frayne), and a professor of Women's Studies and Religious Studies, now retired (J. Stuckey). Our original project was to update the Ancient Near Eastern section of an extremely out-of-date dictionary of world religions for a friend's publication. The project was subsequently abandoned because of illness, and we found ourselves with an almost complete manuscript representing some considerable years of work. We were fortunate to have the assistance of Stéphane Beaulieu, an exceptional Canadian artist and ancient Near Eastern scholar, for the images that accompany many of the entries.

### THE MESOPOTAMIAN DEITIES

Ancient Mesopotamian science was dominated by the phenomenon of lists, and the Babylonians and Sumerians delighted in compiling seemingly endless catalogues of items of both their material and spiritual worlds. God lists are preserved from ancient Mesopotamia from as early as the Early Dynastic Period, from the sites of Fāra (ca. 2600 BCE) and Abū Ṣalābīkh (ca. 2500 BCE). The framework of the present book relies, to a large degree, on the skeleton provided by the great god list An : *Anum*, known for the most part from tablets from Aššur-bani-

pal's library at Nineveh and its Old Babylonian forerunners. It is available in transliteration in the 1958 Yale dissertation of Richard Litke, which, as a result of the support of William W. Hallo, was published in 1998. Invaluable information on the deities, in addition to that provided in the popular works of Black and Green (2003) and Leick (1998), was found in the various entries of the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* compiled in recent years in large (but not exclusive) part by W.G. Lambert, M. Krebernik, and A. Cavigneaux. In addition, T. Richter's book on the Mesopotamian pantheon (2004) was indispensable.

#### THE LEVANTINE DEITIES

While god lists or offering lists are known for other ancient Near Eastern cultures such as at Ugarit, none of these cultural zones has provided us with a god list to match the grand scope of An : *Anum*. The compiling of these other gods and goddesses was a challenging task undertaken by J. Stuckey on the basis of modern dictionaries or specialized regional scholarly studies. Their titles are cited in our bibliography and need not be given here.

#### THE ELAMITE DEITIES

The framework for the entries on the Elamite pantheon was provided by the index of F. W. König's book on Elamite royal inscriptions (1977) and F. Vallat's article on Elamite religion in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* VIII (1998).

#### THE HITTITE AND HURRIAN DEITIES

Deities from the Hittite and Hurrian realms were mainly gathered from the major scholarly works on this area (van Gessel 1998; Haas 1995; Popko 1994).

The names of the deities listed in this work were written using either cuneiform or an alphabetic script. Cuneiform was used to write Sumerian, Akkadian (which includes Babylonian and Assyrian), Eblaic, Amorite, Hurrian, Hittite, Elamite, and sometimes Ugaritic god names. Alphabetic scripts were used to write god names in Ugaritic, Hebrew, and Aramaic. In addition, there are transcriptions of divine names in Greek and Latin sources.

Throughout our work we have adhered to a very broad transcription system for our main entries, one that attempts to convey the approximate sound of the deity's name, rather than one that reflects the writing system. This system has its drawbacks for Sumerian entries. In the Sumerian cuneiform script multiple signs can convey the same sound, yet these homonymous signs have different meanings and so the meaning of the deity's name will differ (and, in fact, may indicate separate deities), depending on which of the homonymous signs is used to write the name. On the other hand, there are occasions when the homonymous signs do not alter the meaning and thus our transcription system enables one unified entry, rather than splitting it into two because of the signs used. Therefore, aware of these pros and cons, we have listed the Sumerian entries according to our general method of transcription, based on sound. However, within the entry, when significant, we have indicated the actual cuneiform signs used to write the name, since this provides the meaning of the name and is vital for differentiating two or more distinct deities whose names may sound the same, but who can be differentiated based on the choice of signs used.

For those unfamiliar with the accepted practices in transliterating cuneiform signs, as we have done for many entries of Sumerian god names, we offer this brief guide. If there are, e.g., several different signs that can convey the sound /ka/, then (based upon sign-numbers established by modern scholars) the first sign is transcribed ka, the second ká, the third kà, the fourth ka<sub>4</sub>, the fifth ka<sub>5</sub>, and so on. It should be noted that, partly as a result of the evolution of cuneiform writing, one sign may have multiple sounds or values. E.g., the sign ka can represent the sounds /ka/, /gu/, /dug/, /kiri/, /inim/, /zu/, each of which conveys a different meaning. So how one chooses to transcribe a sign reflects a deliberate decision as to the intended meaning of the deity's name. When we are unsure as to which sound is conveyed by a particular sign, we write the sign in capital letters (caps) using any one of its known values, though often the value we think most likely.

Sometimes the ancient scribes have assisted us in how to pronounce a god's name; they have added a gloss. A gloss is one or more cuneiform signs, usually whose reading is obvious, that convey the same sound as the sign or signs in the god's name. In god lists, a gloss that has been added during the transmission or copying of the god list is often raised higher on the line, usually written in a smaller size. We have indicated this type of gloss as a superscript. Other times glosses were added early on in the writing of a deity's name, possibly before the name ever was copied as part of a god list. In these cases the gloss sign appears as part of the name, neither raised higher nor smaller in size than the other cuneiform signs in the deity's name. We have indicated this type of gloss as a superscript within brackets { }.

A thornier issue arises with the transliteration of divine names rendered in alphabetic scripts. While the time frame of Akkadian texts is long, the script gives the false impression of relatively little change, due to the conservatism of the ancient scribes, who preserved "traditional" writings even though the sounds of words, particularly the vowels and case endings, had clearly changed. The documents written in alphabetic scripts come from a much more heterogeneous body of texts, and an attempt to use a unified transliteration system for the various sources proved to be impracticable. Although detailed systems for the transliteration of ancient Ugaritic (minus the unwritten vowels), Biblical Hebrew, and Greek do exist of course, it was decided, after considerable deliberation, not to include these detailed transliterations in our work, a decision based on an appeal to accessibility for the non-specialist reader. Many divine names from the Bible and Greek sources have entered the parlance of educated laypeople: it was decided to render them in forms that might already be known to that audience. For example, the well-known Canaanite goddess Asherah appears with the spelling "sh" for the /sh/ sound, which is rendered in Akkadian names as š (shin). So too, in the main entries we provide alternative systems to convey the sound /th/, as in the entry: 'Attar, 'Athtar. In a concession to specificity, it was decided to render the ancient guttural middle consonant found in the name of the Canaanite god Ba'al as *ayin*. It was thought that the sometimes attested form Baal might be misconstrued as representing a long ā vowel.

Because the pantheons we have focused on were polytheistic, it is often very difficult to determine the precise nature of individual deities. This is particularly true of a diachronic study such as this volume, which covers an enormous time span. During

the passage of time, deities became identified with one another or, indeed, were assimilated by other deities. In the handbook we have tried to distinguish the various gods and goddesses one from the other as much as is possible, given the sometimes contradictory evidence of the sources. In so doing, we hope that those who consult this book will find it useful, and we take full responsibility for errors that almost inevitably find their way into the best-checked books. Due to the particular evolution of this manuscript, we have tried to reach a happy medium in regard to the needs of two distinct audiences. We have attempted to provide general readers with the information useful for understanding the nature and roles of the many gods of the ancient Near Eastern world. At the same time, we have tried to provide the detail sought by scholars who are steeped in the languages and cultures of the ancient Near East.

Since our inspiration came from ancient texts and images, we follow ancient scribes in giving credit where credit is due.

*Praise be to Nisaba!*

Douglas Frayne suddenly passed away in December 2017. Few knew that he had been dealing with a debilitating illness, including his slowly increasing blindness, which he bore with amazing courage. It was a cruel affliction for a cuneiform scholar, but he bravely kept on. At the time of his passing, Doug had been reviewing the latest version of the manuscript. Unfortunately, his notes have not been found and so his final thoughts and changes could not be incorporated. Douglas Frayne was a man who loved his work and, for him, it was the focus of his life. Doug will be greatly missed by his fellow scholars, students, and friends.