

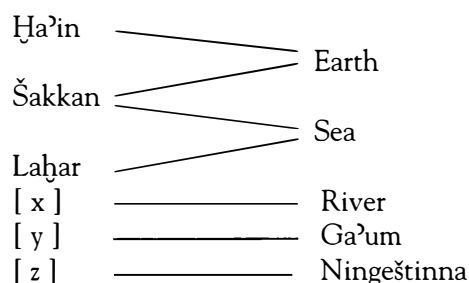
The Theogony of Dunnu

This text is known from a single copy which can be dated from the script and orthography to the period of the Late Babylonian or Persian empires. The name of the king under whom it was copied was given in the colophon, but too little remains for his identification. However, another phrase of the colophon can be restored:

[According to] a tablet, an original of Bab[ylon] and Assur, written and collated.

This means either that the Babylonian tablet referred to was copied in Assur and the extant exemplar was copied from this Assur copy or that the Assur copy came first, from it the Babylonian copy was made, and ours in turn from that (see *JCS* [1957] 11 8). Whichever alternative is correct, it proves that the text is older than the fall of Assur in 614 B.C. But there is no good reason for assuming that this text is an Assyrian composition. Most literary texts found at Assur are copies of Babylonian originals.

This theogony is both an account of the descent of the gods from the first pair and a succession myth, in that the male of each pair holds power until he is deposed. The following are the deities from the beginning of the story to the point where it is broken and becomes unintelligible. The males are on the left, the females on the right, and their marital connections are indicated by the interposed lines:



The biggest mystery is the first male, who is otherwise unknown. Since his spouse is Earth, one might think of Heaven, since the marriage of heaven and earth is well known in Mesopotamian myth as the first act of creation (see p. 407). Also, Earth is always conceived as female in Mesopotamian myths of this genre, so that the genders would be right. However, Heaven occurs in line 37 in the Hurrian loan *Ḫamurnu*. Also, against this, one must put the uniformity of the first three in the female line—all well-known cosmic principles—and the second and third in the male line are both shepherd-gods. Thus, the first male could be expected to match the two following.

The damaged first two lines must have stated that the first pair were already in existence, or it must have described how they came into being. By line 3, the story is moving. By making a furrow

with a plough the first pair brought Sea into being. Presumably, the furrow somehow filled with water. Then, the same pair produced the male of the second generation “by themselves,” which presumably means “by normal bisexual intercourse.” This son, Šakkan (Sumuqan), is god of quadrupeds (see the note). But mother Earth falls in love with her own son, who kills his father and marries her, a theme worthy of Greek tragedy. The father, Ța’in, was laid to rest in the city he had built, Dunnu, by the son who succeeded him.

The damaged signs in line 14 create some uncertainty, but it certainly stated that Šakkan added bigamy to incest by marrying Sea, his sister, also. He is the only bigamous male in the story as preserved, and the motive of this episode is not clear. No offspring of the union with his mother is recorded. The son, Laḥar, was born to Šakkan and his sister Sea, and Laḥar married only his mother, Sea. This pair cleared the stage in that Laḥar killed his father, and Sea killed her mother. The two therefore assumed power together: the only dyarchy in the story. For this succession and all following ones, a date is given, on which more will be said below.

Thus, the first three males shared two females. The following three generations are more uniform, though the names in the male line are all broken away. Each marries his sister, kills both parents, and so seizes power for himself. Only this much is recorded of Laḥar’s son in lines 21–24. His name should appear in line 25, where his son is introduced, but it is uncertain if the remaining signs A.U_g are the whole name or only the end of it. It cannot be restored from other texts. The grandson of Laḥar, whose name is also broken, married a sister called with a small emendation Ga’um, elsewhere known as the shepherd of the moon god Sîn (see the note), but here Ga’um is female. Of the following generation, the sixth, again only the female name is preserved: Ningeštinna. She, also known as Ningeštinanna and Geštinanna, often appears in cuneiform literature as sister of Tammuz, and this leads to the question if her spouse here, too, is not Tammuz. There is a trace of the name in line 33, but this cannot be part of any well-known name of his, though it might be the end of the rare title Amaralli. In any case, there is no certainty that Tammuz can be assumed. In other cases, this theogony mates pairs otherwise unconnected. The previous generation can also be looked at in this light. The mother of Tammuz is known, Duttur (see the note). She is nowhere equated with Ga’um, though both their names can be written with the Sumerian for “ewe” (U_g). In Babylonian incantations, the father of Tammuz is Ea (KAR 357 34; PSBA 1909 62 11), and this is confirmed by a couplet in Old Babylonian Tammuz litanies:

ama(-ù)-tu-da-ni AN.AN.UR-a
ad-da/ab-ba-ni am-urú-zé-ba-ka
TCL 15 pl. xiii 152–53 = CT 15 30 38–39

His mother who bore him is . . .
His father is the bull of Eridu

The same lamentation commonly identifies Tammuz and Ningišzida, and in statues M, N, and O of Gudea, the latter is the spouse of Geštinanna:

^dgeštin-an-na nin-a-izi-mú-a dam-ki-ága ^dnin-giš-zi-da-ka
RIME 3/1 p.55, etc. (aliter legit AnOr 30 73–74)

Geštinanna, the lady who . . . , beloved wife of Ningišzida

This passage is also important as showing that ^da-zi-mú-a, who with Ningišzida appears in ArOr 21 (1953) 388 64–69 = STT 210 rev. 10–12; An = Anum V 250–254 (^dá-zi-da-mú-a); TCL 15 pl. xxix 303–4; SLT 122 iii 4–6, is also a title of Geštinanna. If any doubt exists, it is dispelled by the first occurrence of the pair, after Gudea, in an offering list from the reign of Šulgi, TCL 5 6053 ii 5–6 ^dnin-giš-zi-[da], ^dnin-a-zi-[mú-a]. Here the nin found in the epithet in Gudea is retained, but the meaning of a-izi or a-zi is uncertain.

This evidence is important, since we find Geštinanna commonly as sister of Tammuz, and, especially under her title Azimua, she is wife of Ningišzida. Already by Old Babylonian times, Tammuz and Ningišzida were identified. Has this something to do with the theogony where Geštinanna is involved in a brother-sister marriage? Much as one may be tempted to give an affirmative answer to this question, the case is unproven until the male name in the theogony is certainly known.

With the seventh generation, the pattern is changed in that line 37 mentions the “child” or “servant” of Ḥamurnu, the Hurrian word for “Heaven.” The late occurrence of Heaven in the narrative is striking, but unlike Earth and Water, Heaven is not a prime mover in the ancient Near East. In Genesis 1, as correctly translated, God begins with earth and water and only on the second day is heaven created. As regards the alternatives for the rendering of *šihru*, “servant” is recommended in that filial relationship elsewhere is indicated by *māru*, and in theogonies—for example, the Hittite Kumarbi—it is known for a servant to supplant his master. But what remains of lines 37–41 agrees with the previous pattern to a large extent: a sister is married, a father killed, and he is also settled somewhere. There is a problem that Ḥamurnu has not occurred before. Until more of the text is recovered, we shall have to suspend judgment on this and other problems.

The obverse is very much a compilation of known materials, though used in original ways. First, the scheme of descent from the beginning of time through a single line of male and female pairs was common in ancient Mesopotamia, being attested from the Early Dynastic Period and onwards. The theogonies of Anu and Enlil are the best-known examples. These two were often transmitted as lists, so that the problem of whether incest in the form of brother and sister marriages took place was skirted. The history of these two shows that steps were sometimes taken quite specifically to avoid the implication of incest, which was socially taboo. Here, however, the author positively revels in it, and in parricide and matricide, too. Part of the explanation is simply the traditional scheme which the author used. A succession of single pairs allows no other obvious method of procreation. Yet this is hardly the whole explanation, since Šakkan and Laḥar, quite unnecessarily so far we can see, married their mothers. Presumably, some myth of a mother falling in love with her son is being drawn on. Also with Ningeštinna one may see how syncretism of deities led to an example of divine incest. We should not suppose that our author was of so limited intelligence not to use myths of incest when his general scheme needed something of this kind.

Secondly, all but Ḥaʾin of the preserved names do occur elsewhere, and all but he and Ningeštinna in myths of origins. Earth is the commonest first principle. Sea is less common, but it may be noted that the early form of Anu’s theogony begins with water and then puts earth (pp. 420–421), the opposite of what our text has. River is closely related to Sea, like Anu and Anšar, so they had to come together, if distinguished. The first three in the female line are thus in the main stream of cosmological thought. A second category is represented by Šakkan, Laḥar, and Gaʾum, all shepherd-gods in other texts. There are traces of a creation myth in which the deities presiding over the basic

human crafts are brought into being. One form occurs in the prologue to the Sumerian *U₈ and Ezinu* (see the notes), where there have been created in the Apsû (presumably by Ea) Laḫar, Ezinu (grain), Uttu (making of cloth), Tammuz (^den-nim gir-si), and Šakkan. This of course favours the idea that the spouse of Ningeštinna should be Tammuz. Properly, these deities belong to a story not on the origins of the universe but on the origins of civilization.

The stages of descent are marked off after the third generation not only by the change from mother-son to brother-sister marriage but also by the fate of those deposed and killed. The first three generations are “laid to rest” in tombs or mausoleums: they were properly dead. The next two were “settled” somewhere, though where is not now preserved. Despite their “deaths” they carried on some sort of existence, as can happen with gods. Perhaps they had cult places of their own and this criterion was used to mark them off from the really dead.

One striking feature of this text is its emphasis on the city Dunnu. It was the first city to be created, and the third act of creation. Ḫa'in not only lived there and loved the place but was also buried there. One wonders if the inhabitants in historical times used to point out some structure of the town as the tomb of Ḫa'in. The attention given to the place certainly suggests that the text contains local traditions of the beginnings of the universe, just as in other versions Nippur or Babylon was considered the first town. The word Dunnu is simply Akkadian for “fortified place,” and there were several cities of this name (see *RLA* II 239–40; Edzard, *Zweite Zwischenzeit* [Wiesbaden, 1957] 102⁴⁹⁴; OIP 79 87–88). At least one of these was in northern Mesopotamia, not far from Tell Halaf, but at least two were in the south, one by Isin and another by Larsa. There is one possibility for deciding if the Dunnu of the theogony is in the north or south. If the few remains on the reverse are the conclusion of the theogony and not another text that began in the break, then a southern possibility must be chosen. The few complete words that can be read on the reverse include the names Enlil, Ninurta, Nuska, and Ungal-[Nibru]—all gods located in Nippur. The theology of Nippur was a considerable force in the intellectual life of Mesopotamia right up to the first millennium, despite competition from Babylon, and a theogony from a small town not far distant could not ignore the great power of the prevailing pantheon. Many years ago, the present writer was shown a Babylonian legal document dated to the 18th year of Nabonidus which began: *tup-pi a-šà ki-šub-ba-a ki^{am} du-un-nu šá qí-rib EN.LÍ^{ki}*. This might be the Dunnu of the text under study. (The tablet belonged to a collector with whom the present writer has long since lost contact.)

Another striking feature of this text is the dates given for the transference of power from one generation to the next. Curiously, the first time, no date is given. In lines 20, 24, 32, and 36, they do occur, though only the first of these is completely preserved. Only the day and the month are given; there is no *annus mundi*, so the reference is cultic, not historical. The surviving cases offer three days of the month only: 1st, 16th, and 29th, once as a variant reading to 16th. These are of course key days in the lunar month, and while there is nothing directly explaining them, there are suggestive parallels. Quite commonly with myths of origins, it was conceived that what took place in the beginning was repeated in some sense at regular intervals throughout history. In this way, myth and ritual were related. Now tablets from the Third Dynasty of Ur record offerings for dead and deified rulers on the 1st and 15th days of the month (W. Sallaberger, *Der kultische Kalender der Ur III-Zeit* [Berlin, 1993], Index Totenkult). Similar Mari documents also deal with the same kind of offerings for the dead, sometimes specified as “offerings for the dead, of the kings” (*a-na ki-is-pí-im ša šarrāni^{meš}*, ARM

12 no. 3). These took place commonly twice a month, on the 1st and the 16th but rarely also on the 7th and very rarely on the 4th and 9th. Associated with these offerings for dead kings of Mari are other offerings *a-na ma-li-ki*. These *maliku* are to be identified with the *Malku* of literary texts (CAD *malku* B), who are underworld gods. At Mari, these offerings are most often reported for the 1st day of the month, rarely for the 8th, 16th, and 30th (see ARM 12, especially pp. 23–24). The picture presented by this material is coherent. To keep the shades of the dead kings and other divine beings down below quiet and at rest, offerings were made to them. This was done on a monthly basis, but since thirty-day intervals left plenty of opportunity for these dead to cause trouble among the living, the offerings were repeated at other regularly spaced intervals in the month. Thus, in addition to the 1st, the 15th or 16th is attested and also the 7th. For some reason, the day marking the beginning of the third quarter of the month is less known in these contexts. In the Mari evidence, for one particular month of one year only, the *kispū* were made on the 1st, 4th, and 9th, three times spaced over the first half-month, no doubt in a month when danger from the dead was specially feared. The *Theogony of Dunnu* no doubt records the days of the year on which similar offerings were made to the dynast whose fall is being recorded. The official calendars prescribe offerings for other deposed gods, Enmešarra, Enki, and Lugaldukuga on the 15th, 21st, and 29th of the month (see p. 302).

The period in which the text was composed cannot be defined more closely than between 2,000 B.C. and 614 B.C. Its style is simple and unaffected, and there is no pedantic precision of wording. “His sister” and “his own sister” occur indiscriminately, and “overlordship and kingship” freely interchanges with “kingship and overlordship.” While a few individual lines could be taken for poetry, as a whole its syntactic structure is too loose to be metrical, and we have, therefore, elevated prose. Late orthography like *māri-šú* “her son” may be the work of the scribes, not of the author, and if one quotes *zukkū* “dedicate” (7) as a meaning not attested before the Cassite period, it may be replied that *miḫiṣ ḫarbi* “stroke of the plough” (4) occurs only once elsewhere, in an Old Babylonian document: VAS VIII 74/75 4. The third-person feminine *t* in the verb occurs in 9 and 19 but not in 8. Such criteria have little value for dating. Similarly, the *e* in *ušeḫnū* (4) could be Middle Babylonian, while the *ā* in *ušašibšunūti* (31) can be compared with *ú-šá-ši-ib* in Tukulti-Ninurta I (RIMA I p. 265 28) and some rare Old Assyrian parallels (K. Hecker, *Grammatik der Kültepe-Texte* [AnOr 44; Rome, 1968], p. 158).

T. Jacobsen devoted a small monograph to the text, calling it *The Harab Myth*. The title given is based on an emendation of the name of the first male in the story. The tablet, which is well written, twice offers the name (7 and 11), and while neither occurrence has every wedge complete, they overlap and are beyond dispute a regular Neo-/Late-Babylonian IN. A RAB of this time should consist of a band of wedges preceding a four-wedge LÚ, which is clearly not the case here. The ancient scribe wrote ^dḫa-in. A further objection to the emendation ^dḫa-rab is that this god and his spouse use a literal *ḫarbu* plow to make a furrow. It is inconceivable to the present writer that a god should use a literal *ḫarbu* plow when he is exactly that thing himself. And it is unfortunate that an emendation should be put in a title to give the impression of fact. The monograph has the usual abundance of stimulating and often penetrating remarks which are characteristic of its author. The present writer will not take issue with them when he disagrees, but readers of course can read for themselves.

Ḫain is a mystery indeed, but the Hurrian Heaven occurs in this text, though it is extremely rare in cuneiform Babylonian sources. It is unwise to deny the possibility of something so far unique.

Literature

- 1965 A. R. Millard, CT 46 43 (cuneiform text: collations on Pl. 69)
 1965 W. G. Lambert and P. Walcot, "A New Babylonian Theogony and Hesiod," *Kadmos* IV 64–72 (translation and comments)

BM 74329 = AH 82-9-18 A, 45

Obverse

- 1 [x x (x)] i-na re-e[š . . .
 2 [x x (x)] x bi ù en [. . .] x x x x [x]
 3 [x x (x)] (-)ah/iḫ-ṣi-nu-ma u[š-taṣ-bi-t]u₄ ḫa-ra-ab-šū-n[u]
 4 [i-na m]i-ḫi-iṣ ḫar-bi-šū-nu ú-še-eb-nu-ú^dtâmta(a-ab-b[a])
 5 [šá-ni]-iṣ i-na ra-ma-n[i-šú-n]u ú-li-du^dAMA-k[an-dù]
 6 [šá-l]u-ul-ti-šú^{uru}du-un-nu [ā]l ṣa-a-tú ib-nu-ú ki-lal-l[a]
 7 [ḫa]-in bēlū-ta ina^{uru}du-un-nu a-na ra-ma-ni-šú ú-ṣak-ki-ma
 8 [eršetum^{um}] a-na^dAMA-kan-dù [m]āri-šú pa-na iṣ-ši-ma
 9 a[l-k]a-am-ma lu-ra-am-ka taq-bi-i-šū
 10^dAMA-k[an-dù] eršeta^{ta}um-ma-šū i-ḫu-uz-m[a]
 11^dḫa-i[n a-ba-š]u i-du-uk-[ma]
 12 i-na^{uru}d[u-u]n-nu šá i-ra-am-mu uš-ni-il-[šú]
 13 ù^dAMA-kan-dù bēlu-ta ša a-^rbi-šū^r [il]-qí-[ma]
 14^dtâmta(a-ab-ba) a-ḫa-as-su rabī-^rta i-ḫu^r-uz-[x]
 15^dlaḫar mār^dAMA-kan-dù^ril^r-li-kam-[ma]
 16^dAMA-kan-dù i-du-uk-ma i-na^{uru}du-un-ni
 17 i-na x x x a-bi-[š]u uš-ni-il-[šū]
 18^d[tâmt]a([a-ab-b]a) umma-[š]u i-ḫu-uz-[ma]
 19 ù^dtâmtu(a-ab-ba) eršeta^{ta} umma-ša ta-ni-[ir]
 20 i-na^{iti}kislimi (gan-gan-è) ud-16-kam bēlū-ta ù šarrū-ta il-qú-[ú]
-
- 21^d[. . m]ār^dlaḫar^díd-da^ra^r-ḫa-at ra-ma-ni-šú i-ḫu-u[x-m]a
 22 [ḫaḫar a-b]a-šū ù^dtâmta(a-ab-ba) umma-šú i-du-[uk-m]a
 23 [i-na é-k]i-sì-ga uš-ni-il-šú-nu-ti ka-am-š[i-ri]š^r?
 24 [i-na^{iti}. . .] ud-1-kam šarrū-ta ù bēlū-ta a-na ra-ma-ni-šú [il-q]i^r?
-
- 25 . . .] x a-u₈^dga([!]tablet: ú)-a-a-am a-ḫa-as-su i-ḫ[u-uz-m]a
 26 . . .] er-še-te ú-dí(-)x-[x]
 27 . . .] x x ú-KI-e[l-x]
 28 . . .] x an [x] ab-bé-e ù x [. .]
 29 . . .] ir x x a-na tab-ši-it ilāni^{mes} ú-[. . .]
 30 . . .]^díd-^rda^r umma-šū i-du-uk-[ma]
 31 . . .] ú-šá-ši-ib-šú-nu-[ti]

- 1967 W. Röllig, *BiOr* 24 58–59 (summary and notes)
 1968 W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (London) 81–84 (partial translation and comments)
 1984 T. Jacobsen, *The Harab Myth* (SANE 2/3; Malibu).

BM 74329 = AH 82-9-18 A, 45

Obverse

- 1 [. . .] in the beginning [. . .
 2 [. . .] .. and . [. . .] [.]
 3 They helped [one another] and [hitched on] their plough.
 4 [With the] stroke of their plough they brought Sea into being.
 5 [Second]ly, by themselves they bore Šakkan;
 6 [Third]ly, they both built the city of Dunnu, the primaeval city.
 7 Ḥa'in dedicated the overlordship in the city of Dunnu to himself.
 8 [Earth] cast her eyes on Šakkan, her son,
 9 "Come, let me make love to you," she said to him.
 10 Šakkan married Earth, his mother, and
 11 Ḥa'in, his [father], he killed [and]
 12 Laid [him] to rest in the city of Dunnu, which he loved.
 13 Then Šakkan took the overlordship of his father, [and]
 14 .. married Sea, his elder sister [.]
 15 Laḥar, son of Šakkan, went [and]
 16 Killed Šakkan, and in the city of Dunnu
 17 He laid [him] to rest in the . . . of his father.
 18 He married [Sea], his mother.
 19 Then Sea murdered Earth, her mother.
 20 In the month Kislimu on the 16th day they took the overlordship and kingship.
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- 21 [. . .] son of Laḥar, married River, his own sister, and
 22 He killed [Laḥar], his father, and Sea, his mother, and
 23 Laid them to rest [in] a tomb like(?) the netherworld.
 24 [In the month . . .] on the first day [he] took the kingship and overlordship for himself.
-
- 25 [. . . , son of] . . . married Ga'u, his sister, and
 26 . . .] earth . . . [.]
 27 . . .] [.]
 28 . . .] .. [.] fathers and . [. .]
 29 . . .] . . . for . . . of the gods . [. . .]
 30 . . .] he killed River, his mother, [and]
 31 . . .] he settled them.

32 [i-na^{iti} . . . ud-x-kam] bēlū-ta ù šarrū-ta a-na ra-ma-ni-šú i[l-qí]

33 . . .] x^dnin-geštin-na a-ḥa-as-su i-ḥ[u-uz-ma]

34 . . .]^dga(tablet: ú)-a-a-am umma-[š]u i-d[u-uk-ma]

35 . . .] ú-šá-š[i]-ib-šú-n[u-ti]

36 . . .] x ud-16-kam (v.l. ud-29-kam) šarrū-ta bēlū-ta [il-qi]

37 . . .] ši-ḥi-ir^dḥa-mur-ni [. . .

38 . . . a-ḥ]a-at ra-ma-ni-šú i-ḥu-[uz-ma]

39 . . .] bēlū-tú a-bi-šú il-q[i]-m[a . . .

40 . . . i]-duk-šú-ma x [. . .

41 . . .] a-na^{uru}šū-ḫa-at- [. . .

42 . . .] x^rna-piš¹-t[ú . . .

Reverse

1 (trace)

2 [x (x)] ku² a [. . .

3 [x] x un [. . .

4 [x] a an [. . .

5 an-na-am [. . .

6 u^dun-gal-[nibru^{ki} . . .

7 ma-a(-) [. . .

8 i-na I[Š . . .

9^dnin-urta x [. . .

10 ù² x [. . .

11^den-líl x [. . .

12^dnuska x [. . .

13 i-na ki x [x] líl/é x [. . .

14 ù x x x x [. . .

15^den-líl x x x [. . .] x

16^dnin-urta x eš x [. . .] x

17 (traces)

18 . . .] ma x [. . .

19 . . .] x id² x [. . .] x

20 . . . i]d^da-la²-[la . . .] x x

21 [kī pī] tup-pi gaba-ri ká-[dingir-ra^{ki}] u bal-ti^{ki} sar-ma igi-kár

22 . . .] x x x [. . .] lugal x x x [x]

Textual notes on pp. 513–526.

- 32 [In the month . . . on the .th day] he [took] the overlordship and kingship for himself.
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- 33 [. . . , son of . . .] . , married Ningēštinna, his sister, [and]
 34 Killed [. . . , his father, and] Ga'u, his mother, [and]
 35 Settled them [. . .
 36 [In the month . . .] . on the 16th (variant: 29th) day, [he took] the kingship and overlordship.
-
- 37 . . .] the child/servant of Ḫamurnu [. . .
 38 . . .] married his own sister, [and]
 39 . . .] took the overlordship of his father, and [. . .
 40 . . . he] killed him and [. . .
 41 . . .] to the city of Šupat-[. . .
 42 . . .] . life [. . .

Reverse

- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| 5 This [. . . | 6 And Ungal-[Nibru . . . | 9 Ninurta [. . .] | 11 Enlil [. . . |
| 12 Nuska [. . . | 15 Enlil . . . [. . . | 16 Ninurta . . . [. . . | |