



On the Origin of Watchers: A Comparative Study of the Antediluvian Wisdom in Mesopotamian and Jewish Traditions*

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Abstract

In the article, it is argued that the origin of Watchers derives from the Mesopotamian mythology of the antediluvian sages (*apkallus*). More precisely, it is proposed that the mythology of Watchers and their sons the giants derived from inverted versions of various Mesopotamian myths and beliefs about *apkallus*. On some layers of Mesopotamian mythology and ritual practices, the sages were already regarded as dangerous and potentially malicious creatures, upon which the Jewish authors could build their parody. Among other associations, the *apkallus* had strong ties to Mesopotamian demonology, and they were occasionally counted as evil beings, capable of witchcraft. This shows that the wickedness of antediluvian teachers of humankind in Jewish sources was not wholly an inversion of the Mesopotamian traditions by Jewish scholars, but was partly taken from already existing trends in Mesopotamian demonology.

Keywords: Watchers, book of Enoch, *Book of Giants*, Mesopotamian mythology, demonology, sages

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Introduction

There was a broad tradition in the Babylonian scribal milieu that the seventh antediluvian figure, a king or a sage, ascended to heaven and received insights into divine wisdom. The seventh antediluvian king according to several lists was Enmeduranki, the king of Sippar, who distinguished himself with divine knowledge from the gods Adad and Shamash (see Lambert 1998). Biblical scholars generally agree that the religious-historical background of the figure of Enoch, the seventh antediluvian patriarch in Gen. 5.23-24 and subsequently the apocalyptic authority in Enochic literature, lies in the seventh Mesopotamian antediluvian king Enmeduranki. The following quotation of John J. Collins conveys the consensus view well:

The figure of Enoch is to some degree modelled on Enmeduranki, founder of the guild of *bārûs*, or Babylonian diviners... Enoch is listed in Genesis as seventh in line from Adam. In the *Sumerian King List*, the seventh king is Enmeduranki or Enmeduranna. Sippar, the city ruled by this king, was a center of the cult of Shamash, the sun god. Enoch is associated with the solar calendar: his age is given as 365 years in Genesis and the *Astronomical Book* [contained in *I Enoch*] presupposes a calendar of 364 days. Enmeduranki was also the founder of a guild of diviners and a recipient of revelations... Evidently the biblical seventh man emulates the Mesopotamian seventh king. (Collins 1998: 26, 45-46)

Besides Collins, the complexities of the historical connection between Enmeduranki and Enoch have been recently and comprehensively studied by J. VanderKam (1984) and H. Kvanvig (1988), among others.¹ The recognition has well grown into maturity among scholars, who often also find the traces of Enoch's Mesopotamian background even in later Enochic materials, such as the second, Old Slavic book of Enoch, and the third book of Enoch in Hebrew.² There is nothing to challenge in this association, except that from the point of view of an Assyriologist it seems that biblical scholars should study and compare the Mesopotamian and Jewish evidence much more systematically than has been done previously. One could cast a much wider net on the Mesopotamian material, in order to glean more insight regarding antediluvian traditions and thereby enrich the comparison. For this objective, it is necessary to expand the textual

1. See the comprehensive bibliography provided by Arbel 2006: 355 n. 1.
2. See, e.g., Orlov 2005: 23-45; Arbel 2006.

base of the comparison by using more cuneiform evidence than just the famous king-lists, the Gilgamesh epic, and the Enmeduranki text from Nineveh.

One question that immediately arises in regard to the present stage of consensus among biblical scholars is, if religious-historical bonds tie Enoch so neatly with Enmeduranki, and Ziusudra with Noah, how can it be that there is so little else in the two antediluvian histories that can be favourably compared? Some ancient testimonies recognize that the biblical and the 'Chaldaean' accounts of the antediluvian period derive from common sources. For example, Cosmas Indicopleustes, the wandering Nestorian monk of the sixth century CE, indicates that a received knowledge existed in his time that the antediluvian patriarchs in the Hebrew Bible correspond to Mesopotamian kings of the same period in regard to their position in corresponding historiographies. Cosmas's account in his *Topographia Christiana* 12.3 juxtaposes the biblical patriarchs with the Mesopotamian kings as follows:

The writers of Chaldaean history, more ancient and living farther east, have mentioned in their works both the deluge and the building of the Tower, since they saw that Tower with their own eyes under the process of construction, being no doubt well aware that the men of that time, in fear of another flood, erected it for themselves as a place of refuge and safety. But the men of later times, when they read Moses also, and found that Noah, in whose time the deluge occurred, was the tenth from Adam, they feigned that they also had ten kings, who had reigned 2242 myriads of years... Of these the first was Aloros, that is, Adam; the second Alaapros, Seth; the third, Almēdōn, Enosh; the fourth, Ammeōn, Canaan; the fifth Ammegalaros, Mahalaleel; the sixth, Daonos, a keeper of sheep, Jared; the seventh, Euedōranchos, Enoch; the eighth, Amempsinanchos, Mathousalah; the ninth, Otiortēs, Lamech; the tenth, Xisouthros, Noah. In his time they say the great flood recorded by Moses occurred.³

The names of the Mesopotamian antediluvian kings that Cosmas lists derive from the tradition attested in similar cuneiform king-lists, which were the sources for Berossus. Cosmas may rely on an unidentified fragment of Berossus, but his source seems in any case to be ancient and instructive. Cosmas' account shows that already the ancient scholars were conscious of the congruence between Jewish

3. My attention was brought to this passage by C. Martone's recent paper (Martone 2008). The translation follows McCrindle 1897: 377; the Greek text is available in the edition by Wolska-Conus 1973: 362-65.

and Mesopotamian antediluvian histories, and, at the same time, tried to deflect these similarities by stating that the Chaldaeans learned from Moses. It goes without saying that from our contemporary perspective, Mesopotamia clearly provided the model, which the biblical writers quite creatively followed and modified (see Hallo 1996: 1-17).

In addition to Enmeduranki, the Mesopotamian lore surrounding the flood survivor, variously named as Ziusudra, Atra-ḥasīs or Utnapishti, and his post-flood visitor Gilgamesh, has been discussed by the biblical scholars interested in comparative research (Collins 1998: 46). However, there is more still to do. By combining evidence from philology and textual sources, from iconography and archaeology, one can show that the descriptions of the antediluvian period in Jewish sources depend even more extensively on the antecedent Mesopotamian mythology and ritual practices. In other words, a survey of recent studies in Assyriology enables more comprehensive juxtaposition of the two corresponding historical narratives. Besides well established and famous texts at both sides, one has seriously to consider the variability of the traditions, and also to observe how the beliefs were put into practice in rituals, prayers and incantations.

Varying accounts of the antediluvian history in the ancient Mesopotamian and Jewish sources should be regarded as results of ancient debates. Not only direct borrowings took place, but also creative reinterpretations, especially on the Jewish side. Some of these creative reinterpretations must have occurred as *deliberate inversions* of the Mesopotamian source material. The Jewish authors often inverted the Mesopotamian intellectual traditions with the intention of showing the superiority of their own cultural foundations.⁴ The present survey will comparatively explore the phenomenon, how Jewish authors systematically discredited the Mesopotamian primordial sages (*apkallu* in Akkadian) as the Watchers and Nephilim, while making them a part of their national history. In Jewish reinterpretation, Mesopotamian antediluvian sages became illegitimate and wicked teachers of humankind. Moreover, this demonization process was partly built upon the Mesopotamian traditions themselves, as the *apkallus* were occasionally envisaged as evil beings at least in some Mesopotamian theological quarters, and to inhabit the netherworld

4. As J. Collins points out, the figure of Enoch picks up elements of Mesopotamian mythical heroes in order to show how the Jewish national hero outshone the heroes of Mesopotamia (1998: 46).

(Mallowan 1954: 92). I shall argue that histories of the two related species in their divergent versions cover exactly the same ground. A summary of the history of research and my arguments used in the present study can be outlined as follows:

1. There are two different adaptations of Mesopotamian lore in Genesis in respect to the antediluvian history. One of them is positive and affirmative—the sequence of ten patriarchs before the flood is in accordance with the ten antediluvian kings of Mesopotamian mythology, including Enmeduranki (see Kvanvig 1988). The second adaptation is negative—the antediluvian sages, the Mesopotamian *apkallus* were demonized as the ‘sons of God’, and their sons Nephilim (Gen. 6.3-4), who in later Enochic literature appear as Watchers and giants, illegitimate teachers of humankind before the flood (see *1 En.* 6–8). The *Book of Watchers* reconciles these two different adaptations by making Enoch in every respect superior to the Watchers.
2. As many kinds of Mesopotamian sciences and technologies were ideologically conceived as originating with antediluvian *apkallus*, so both Enoch and the Watchers were depicted as antediluvian teaching powers. In so doing, the Jewish authors wanted to depict their national hero as superior to the champions of foreign wisdom.
3. A.D. Kilmer (1987) has already posited Mesopotamian *apkallus* as the model for the biblical Nephilim, indicating in support of her thesis that the sources ascribe to the Mesopotamian antediluvian sage Adapa an act of hubris, and that daring, and that wicked deeds were ascribed to some postdiluvian sages, which angered the gods. In Genesis 6, the Nephilim exemplify the wicked antediluvian humankind in general (Kilmer 1987: 40). It did not occur to Kilmer that the Mesopotamian tradition of *apkallus* was deliberately inverted in Genesis, and that the tradition found a full expression in the *1 Enoch*. J.T. Milik noted the parallel with the Mesopotamian mythology, when he wrote on *1 Enoch* 6: ‘The writer imagines two chiefs of the fallen angels, a king (*Šemihazah*) and a sage (*Asa’el*), each presiding over about ten Watchers...thus drawing on a Babylonian model of antediluvian kings and sages’ (Milik 1976: 29). The present study offers an expansion of comparative arguments.

4. The *apkallus* themselves were sometimes viewed negatively as malicious creatures within the Mesopotamian tradition itself. Among other associations, the *apkallus* had strong ties to Mesopotamian demonology, and they were occasionally counted as demonic and evil beings, capable of witchcraft. This point of comparison shows that the wickedness of antediluvian teachers of humankind was not wholly an inversion of the Mesopotamian traditions by Jewish scholars, but was partly taken from already existing trends in Mesopotamian demonology.
5. *Apkallus* were often considered as fish-garbed creatures of Ea, who resided in Apsû, the Ocean of Wisdom. The flood punished Watchers and Nephilim. A comparable tradition of the deluge from Mesopotamia survives in the version of the *Erra Epic*, where Marduk sent the sages down into the Apsû as a consequence of the flood, and ordered them not to come up again (I 147).
6. The names of Gilgamesh, Humbaba and Uta-napishti occur in different recensions of the *Book of Giants* as names of the gigantic offspring of the Watchers. According to J. Reeves, ‘this represents a bold polemical thrust against the revered traditions of a rival culture’ (Reeves 1992: 126). L.T. Stuckenbruck has argued that knowledge of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* ‘was not restricted to the mere use of names derived from it but is reflected in the broad narrative of BG [= *Book of Giants*] itself’ (2003: 333). The fact that a Second Temple Jewish text demonizes some characters belonging to Mesopotamian intellectual milieu speaks entirely in favour of the idea of the present study—that deliberate inversions of Mesopotamian traditions was an existing practice among Israelite intellectuals.
7. The ‘sons of God’ in Genesis and the Watchers in Enochic literature are fully divine, as also were the antediluvian *apkallus* in the Mesopotamian tradition. The four post-flood *apkallus* were ‘of human descent’, which means that *apkallus* could mate with humans, as the Watchers did. The last one of this group of *apkallus*, Lu-Nanna, was only ‘two-thirds *apkallu*’ (Kilmer 1987: 39-40). This exactly matches the status of Gilgamesh in the post-diluvian world, as he also was ‘two-thirds divine, and one-third human’ (I 48). Gilgamesh was remotely related to antediluvian *apkallus*, as he ‘brought back a message from the antediluvian age’ (I 8). In Jewish terms, he

was like one of the giant Nephilim, as exactly the *Book of Giants* depicts him (Stuckenbruck 2003: 329). There is new supporting cuneiform evidence that Gilgamesh was thought of as having a gigantic stature, his height being 11 cubits (George 2007: 240 l. 34).

8. Figurines of *apkallus* were buried in boxes as foundation deposits in Mesopotamian buildings in order to avert evil from the house. The term *maššarē*, ‘watchers’, is used of these sets of figurines in Akkadian incantations according to ritual texts. This appellation matches the Aramaic term *ʿyr̄yn*, ‘the wakeful ones’, for both good angels and the Watchers.

Dissemination of the Antediluvian Knowledge: Lawful or Forbidden?

Very well attested ancient Mesopotamian intellectual tradition gives a divine origin in the antediluvian age to all priestly sciences. The period before the deluge was the one of revelation in the Mesopotamian mythology, when the basis of all later knowledge was laid down. The antediluvian sages were culture-heroes, who brought the arts of civilization to the land. During the time that follows this period, nothing new is invented, the original revelation is only transmitted and unfolded (Kvanvig 1988: 201). Oannes and other sages taught all foundations of civilization to antediluvian humankind, as narrated by Berossus.⁵

An important issue reflected upon in the ancient sources in regard to antediluvian knowledge was its survival during the flood and its

5. Berossus, Fragment 1: ‘In the first year a beast named Oannes appeared from the Erythrean Sea in a place adjacent to Babylonia. Its entire body was that of a fish, but a human head had grown beneath the head of the fish and human feet likewise had grown from the fish’s tail. It also had a human voice. A picture of it is still preserved today. He says that this beast spent the days with the men but ate no food. It gave to the men the knowledge of letters and sciences and crafts of all types. It also taught them how to found cities, establish temples, introduce laws and measure land. It also revealed to them seeds and the gathering of fruits, and in general it gave men everything which is connected with the civilized life. From the time of that beast nothing further has been discovered. But when the sun set this beast Oannes plunged back into the sea and spent the nights in the deep, for it was amphibious. Later other beasts also appeared... He says that these creatures all together explained in detail the things which had been spoken summarily by Oannes’ (Burstein 1978: 13-14, 19).

transmission after it. If only one family escaped from deluge, as was the case in many Mesopotamian as well as Jewish accounts, the flood survivor and his progeny must have been regarded as the transmitters of the antediluvian knowledge to post-diluvian times. Apparently, some sources regard the flood survivor as a descendant of the line of divine *apkallus*, without being explicitly equated with them.⁶ One of the flood survivor's named in Mesopotamian literature was Atra-ḫasīs, meaning 'exceedingly wise', which is also an epithet of the sage Adapa in the Akkadian myth (Izre'el 2001: 9 obv. 8'). In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* XI 197 we learn that Uta-napishti was admitted into the company of the gods only after he had heard their secret lore, and in this context he also bears the epithet *atra-hasīs* (George 2003: 716). The Gilgamesh epic, with its programmatic first line, 'he who saw the Deep', presents the hero as the transmitter of the antediluvian wisdom to his contemporary world. There were other thinkable means of preserving the antediluvian knowledge besides making the flood survivor the divine source of it and his visitor its transmitter. Still another way was to conceive *apkallus* as amphibious fish-like creatures, capable of surviving in the depths of water, and of re-emerging from there after the inundation was over. One more way to preserve the knowledge was to inscribe pre-flood wisdom in its entirety on different tablets or stones and either to bury them or to install the knowledge carriers on high places to escape the perdition.⁷ In Mesopotamian tradition, such a divine source of information was the Tablet of Destinies, which corresponds to heavenly tablets and the *Pargod* in 3 *Enoch*, on which the divine secrets are written (Arbel 2006: 372).⁸

6. Evidence for this is the priestly appellation *gudu₄*, which the flood survivor Ziusudra bears in the Sumerian version of the deluge (l. 145). This Sumerian term equates with Akkadian *pašīšu*, literally 'the anointed one', which is the priestly title of the sage in the Adapa myth (Izre'el 2001: 9 obv. 9'). That the flood survivor's pedigree was related to Watchers is also present in some parts of Jewish traditions about Noah (Reeves 1993).

7. Such a variant is attested in Berossus fragment F4b, where 'all writings' are buried in Sippar, the city of the Sun god before the flood (Burstein 1978: 20). For Jewish variants, see *Jub.* 8.3-4; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.68-71.

8. At least one Mesopotamian myth (LKA 146) presents the seven *apkallus* as possessors of the Tablet of Destinies. See Denning-Bolle 1992: 50; Lenzi 2008a: 122-25.

There are many cuneiform lists that preserve the names of the antediluvian sages and kings (see Kvanvig 1988: 159-213). These lists are not consistent, ‘just as in the case of the antediluvian kings, the names and the order of the antediluvian sages are apparently quite variable’ (Borger 1994: 232). The figure of Oannes as the first antediluvian sage in Berossus’ account equals the primary sage, whose full name is Uanadapa in cuneiform lists. U-An and Adapa are the short forms of this name, and from the first form derives Oannes in Berossus’ account.⁹ The name Adapa may have been originally an epithet of the sage, meaning ‘wise’, which secondarily became a name itself (Lambert 1962: 74). The third tablet of the bilingual incantation series *Bīt Mēseri* attests to three names, which appear in various manuscripts for the sage in the seventh position of the list—Adapa, Utuabzu and Utuaabba—who is said to have ascended to heaven:

Incantation. U-Anna, who accomplishes the plans of heaven and earth, U-Anne-dugga, who is endowed with comprehensive understanding, Enmedugga, for whom a good destiny has been decreed, Enmegalamma, who was born in a house, Enmebulugga, who grew up in a pasture land, An-Enlilda, the conjurer of the city of Eridu, Utuabzu, who ascended to heaven, the pure *purādu*-fishes of the sea, the seven of them, the seven sages, who originated in the river, who control the plans of heaven and earth.¹⁰

There was probably a confluence of the first sage Adapa and the seventh king Enmeduranki, who sometimes are both credited with the seventh position in the list, and both receive divine wisdom as the result of direct contact with the gods (Kvanvig 1988: 227). Besides Enmeduranki, the figure of Enoch resembles Adapa as well. In the myth Adapa uttered a curse on the south wind, who had capsized his boat in the Persian Gulf while he was fishing, and so broke the South Wind’s wing. He was summoned to heaven to explain his action, and following the instructions of his divine master Ea, he refused to eat and drink the drugs of immortality offered to him by Anu. He achieved his ascent to heaven as a mortal, and, through the sagacity of Ea, he returned safely to earth from his trip dressed in divine garb, and anointed with heavenly oil (lines 77-80):

9. See the evidence presented and discussed by Denning-Bolle 1992: 44-47.

10. See the edition in von Weiher 1983: 48 ll. 1-13; the translation here is taken from Borger 1994: 230; see also Denning-Bolle 1992: 48-49.

They brought him food of life, he did not eat. They brought him water of life, he did not drink. They brought him a garment, he put it on. They brought him oil, he anointed himself. (Foster 2005: 529)

Enoch's transformation in heaven according to *2 En.* 9.17-19 takes place in a very similar manner, involving the garments and oil as the main elements of assuming divinity. When Enoch arrived in front of the divine throne, the Lord said to Michael:

'Take Enoch and take off his earthly garments, and anoint him with good oil, and clothe him in glorious garments.' And Michael took off from me my garments anointed me with good oil. And the appearance of the oil was more resplendent than a great light, and its richness like sweet dew, and its fragrance like myrrh, shining like a ray of the sun. And I looked at myself, and I was like one of the glorious ones, and there was no apparent difference.¹¹

The tale of Adapa has sometimes successfully been applied in interpretation of Genesis 2-3 (Mettinger 2007). The similarities should be attributed to their common intellectual background in the ancient Near Eastern folklore. In the Adapa myth there is a human (Akkadian: *zēr amīlūti*), whose wisdom is of heavenly origin, and, in contrast to the Genesis story, he does not approach the foodstuffs forbidden to humanity. Therefore, he serves as a positive 'example' (Akkadian: *rēdu*) for humankind, especially for Mesopotamian scholars (Parpola 1993: xix). Following Adapa, all mythical and historical sages had received their knowledge out of the hands of the gods themselves. Therefore, the Mesopotamian diviners did not possess their own wisdom, but their knowledge consisted of the 'secrets of gods' entrusted to them (Denning-Bolle 1992: 55-56). The famous 'Catalogue of Texts and Authors', found in the Neo-Assyrian library of Nineveh (K. 2248), ascribes the authorship of many series of priestly wisdom to the god Ea:

[The exorcistic] corpus, the liturgical series, the celestial omen series *Enuma Anu Enlil*, the physiognomic omens, the omens from monstrous births, the handbook of medical symptoms, [the interpretation] of utterances, the (Ninurta myths) of *Lugale* and *Angimdimma*: [all these] are from the mouth of Ea. (Lambert 1962: 64-65, 70)

It is not said that Ea himself wrote these texts or collections, but that the knowledge contained in these corpora originate 'from his mouth'

11. The translation is from Pennington 1984: 337-38; cf. Himmelfarb 1993: 3.

(*ša pî*), that he was the authority for these texts. In the oral tradition of scholars, their role as mediators between gods and men is indicated by the Akkadian phrase *ša pî ummānī* ('from the oral tradition of the masters').¹² In the catalogue quoted above, Ea is followed by the first antediluvian sage Uan-Adapa, to whom is assigned two non-extant scholarly series, and by other sages.¹³

The headings of scribal series were even related to the names of antediluvian sages. But for a few exceptions, the names of the most antediluvian *apkallus* do not have a readily recognizable meaning. In some ritual texts prescribing construction of the figurines of sages, each one has a name beginning with the cuneiform sign UD. Among other readings, the sign can be transcribed into Akkadian as 'day', 'storm' (*ūmu*) or 'when' (*enūma*). Names beginning with UD or u₄ are particularly given to the group of anthropomorphic figurines called the *ūmu-apkallu*. The names of these sages refer to 'days' of exceptional splendour and plenty, the golden age before the flood, as represented in first-millennium Assyrian art (Wiggermann 1994: 225).¹⁴

The second reading of the sign, *enūma*, is one of the most common of the literary openings, which usually serve as the titles of cuneiform series. The names of many antediluvian *apkallus* are fairly trans-

12. E.g. in Parpola 1993: no. 8, rev. 2. For the colophons, see Hunger 1968: nos. 120, 333, 471, 486.

13. According to van der Toorn (2007: 207-208), 'the *Catalogue* lists the works of the cuneiform tradition in their order of presumed antiquity... [I]t distinguishes three successive eras in the literary production. The earliest group of texts are "from the mouth of Ea", the second group of texts are by sages before the Flood, most notably Adapa, and the third and the largest group of texts are by various post-diluvian scribes and scholars of great repute.' See also Rochberg 1999: 419-20; Lenzi 2008b: 151-52.

14. The names given to the statues of 7 *ūmu-apkallus* in the ritual text to be discussed below in this study are 'day of life', 'day of plenty', 'day of splendor', 'good day', 'fair faced day', 'righteous day', and 'day that gives life to the slain' (Wiggermann 1992: 8-9). On the other hand, a group of monsters and demons also bears the names beginning with the UD sign, like the 'Roaring Day' (u₄-ka-duh-a), or 'Big Day' (u₄-gal/ugallu). They are personified days of death and destruction, like one's dying day, the 'Evil Day' (*ūmu lemnu*, ^dU₄), the messenger of the underworld god Erra (Wiggermann 1994: 225-26). Because the UD sign can also be read as 'storm', these evil spirits 'fill the earth like an evil storm (*ūmu lemnu*), a storm steered from heaven towards earth' in *Utukku Lemnutu* incantations 4, 15-16 (Geller 2007: 203).

parent titles or Sumerian incipits of learned scholarly compendia, or other cuneiform series (Hallo 1996: 6). Giving to the antediluvian sages names resembling titles of scientific treatises served the purpose of establishing the explicit connection between contemporary and primeval scholarship. The scientific compendia in Mesopotamian contexts mostly mean omen texts, the study of which was a special privilege of court scholars. A broken Neo-Assyrian text from Sultan-tepe contains an apocryphal letter of ‘Adapa the sage’ to Alulu, the first antediluvian king.¹⁵ The letter quotes omens, as contemporary scholars at the Neo-Assyrian royal court were expected to report to kings the observed signs in heaven and earth (see Parpola 1993). In comparison, the names of 20 principal Watchers in *1 En.* 6.7 are for the most part derived from astronomical, meteorological and geographical terms, their names being related to their areas of expertise (Milik 1976: 29). In both cases the names of the antediluvian experts present them as hypostases of learned, and presumably secret, corpora.

The colophons on the tablets of scholarly texts from first-millennium Mesopotamia show that they were considered to contain secret lore, available to scholars alone.¹⁶ The entire corpus of crafts such as exorcism (*āšipūtu*), medicine (*asūtu*), omen interpretation (*barūtu*), ritual lamentation (*kalūtu*) and astrology (*tupšarrūtu*) consisted of ‘secrets of the scholars’ (*niširti ummānī*)¹⁷, and ‘secrets of the antediluvian sages’ (*niširti apkallī*).¹⁸ All texts of traditional Mesopotamian scholarly sciences, both practical and theoretical, were secret documents (see Lenzi 2008a: 95-100). One of the colophons, which clearly represents the mythology of scribal succession, reads as follows:

Salves (and) bandages: tested (and) checked, which are ready at hand, composed by the ancient *apkallus* from before the flood, which Enlil-muballit, *apkallu* of Nippur, bequeathed in Šuruppak in the second year of Enlil-bani, king of Isin. He who does not know may show it to one who knows; one who knows must not show it to one who does not know.¹⁹

15. The letter is STT 2.176+185. See Hallo 1996: 7; Denning-Bolle 1992: 51.

16. For references, see Lenzi 2008a: Chapter 3.

17. See Hunger 1968: nos. 98, 519, cf. no. 200.

18. See Hunger 1968: nos. 303, 328.

19. Hunger 1968: no. 533, see the discussions by Lenzi 2008b: 150; Denning-Bolle 1992: 50.

Thus the genealogy of religious lore and skills was traced back to the wisdom of *apkallus* in its entirety. As the Mesopotamian conception of knowledge was pre-eminently associated with pragmatic kinds of it, the term ‘wisdom’ denotes the realms of technologies and hand-craft skills as well (Pongratz-Leisten 1999: 310). In some royal inscriptions of first-millennium Mesopotamia, references occur to royal craftsmen (*ummānu*), ‘who know the secret’ (see Lenzi 2008a: 128-34). Such capable craftsmen as the carpenter Ninildu, the lapidary Ninzadim, the metal worker Ninagal, the stone-cutter Ninkurra and the goldsmith Kusigbanda were the patron deities of smiths, manifestations of the god Ea, and also identified with antediluvian *apkallus*.²⁰ All crafts used in royal building and renovation projects were attributed to that of the antediluvian sages.²¹ In a Neo-Babylonian ritual text from Babylon the prayer ‘When Anu created heaven’ (*Enūma Anu ibnū šamê*) is cited, a prayer which explicitly says that Ea created these craftsmen in the beginning of time.²²

By comparison, the *Book of Watchers* 8.1 enumerates the first set of arts forbidden to humanity—a list which consists mainly of useful crafts and technologies. This revelation of forbidden secrets was considered a transgression, because it promoted promiscuity and violence. Asael teaches human beings how to make things:

Asael taught men to make swords of iron and weapons and shields and breastplates and every instrument of war. He showed them metals of the earth and how they should work gold to fashion it suitably, and concerning

20. See Walker and Dick 1999: 62-63 for references. That the royal smiths had access to secret scholarly literature can be inferred on the basis of SAA 16 65 (see n. 25 below).

21. For example, the craft of Ninildu and Kusigbanda in the inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II: ‘[Ma-idda-hedu, (Nabû’s) sacred barge, I sought out, and] had rebuilt. I coated the canopy of *musukkannu*, the eternal wood that befits lordly status, with 12,5 talents of red gold, so embellishing its decoration through the craft of Ninildu and Kusigbanda. I made it splendid as the day and bright as the sun’ (George 1988: 147 ll. 19-28).

22. The prayer is known from other manuscripts as well: ‘When Anu created Heaven, (and) Nudimmud (= Ea) created Apsû, his dwelling, Ea pinched off cla[y] in the Apsû, he created the brick god for the renovation [of the temple(s)], he created reed thicket and forest for the making of [your] shape, he created mountains and seas for whatever ... [...], he created Guškinbanda, Ninagal, Ninzadim and Ninkurra for [your] ritual acts.’ The text quoted is IM 11087, obv. ll. 24-31, see the latest edition by Linssen 2004: 301-305.

silver, to fashion it for bracelets and ornaments for women. And he showed them concerning antimony and eye paint and all manner of precious stones and dyes. (Nickelsburg 2001: 188)

In the *Book of Watchers* 10.8, the author summarily says: ‘and all the earth was made desolate by the deeds of the teaching of Asael’ (Nickelsburg 2001: 215). That the Watchers revealed to humanity secret knowledge of divine origin, is emphasized several times in the *Book of Watchers*. A comprehensive catalogue of revealed secrets is found in the *Book of Watchers* 8.3-4,

Shemihazah taught spells and the cutting of roots. Hermani taught sorcery for the loosing of spells and magic and skill. Baraqel taught the signs of the lightning flashes. Kokabel taught the signs of the stars. Arteqoph taught the signs of the earth. Shamsiel taught the signs of the sun. Sahriel taught the signs of the moon. And they all began to reveal mysteries to their wives and to their children. (And) as men were perishing, the cry went up to heaven. (Nickelsburg 2001: 188)

When one considers this list of forbidden crafts from the point of view of Mesopotamian priests and scholars, almost everything looks familiar. ‘Spells and the cutting of roots’ are relevant to Babylonian medicine (*asûtu*). The skills taught by Hermani are crafts used in exorcism, *āšipûtu*.²³ Baraqel’s expertise, whose name means ‘lightning of God’, involves the ‘signs of Adad’, the meteorological omens on the tablets 37-49 in the series *Enuma Anu Enlil*. The first two long sections of this celestial omen series, the ‘signs of Sin’ (tablets 1-22) and the ‘signs of Shamash’ (tablets 23-36), are taught to humankind in the *Book of Watchers* by the angels with appropriate names, Shamsiel and Sahriel. The ‘signs of the stars’ taught by Kokabel must be a lore related to *Enuma Anu Enlil*’s tablets 50-70, where the planetary omens are dealt with (see Maul 2003: 52-53). Finally, the ‘signs of the earth’, taught by the angel Arteqoph, are probably not related to geomancy, but to the terrestrial omen series *Šumma ālu*. Arteqoph’s name means ‘the earth is power’ (Milik 1976: 155). To teach such divine arts to wives and minors would have been regarded

23. The Akkadian technical term *āšipûtu* was borrowed into Aramaic as *šp̄p̄*, which is frequently used in the book of Daniel. In the Aramaic version of the *Book of Watchers* 7.1, the Watchers teach ‘sorcery and charms’, where the second word can be read precisely as *šp̄p̄* (see Nickelsburg 1991: 197). The sorcery is exercised by ‘the seven sages of Eridu’ in the Mesopotamian anti-witchcraft collection *Maqlû* V 104 (Abusch and Schwemer 2008: 163).

as grievous sacrilege also in ancient Mesopotamia. From a limited body of evidence, one can infer that a severe, 'royal punishment' was legislated for a cuneiform scholar if he chose to do so.²⁴ The categorical imperative in the colophons of tablets not to reveal their content to the uninitiated expresses a genuine security concern of the Mesopotamian scholars (Lenzi 2008a: 149-60). Watchers revealing divine secrets to earthly women in exchange for sex must be taken as a hilarious irony, and as an indication of the polemical stance that the Jewish intellectuals took against their Mesopotamian colleagues.

In any case, many important Babylonian 'antediluvian' sciences are well represented in the above catalogue, which can be taken as *pars pro toto* of all important Mesopotamian sciences. If the list is of independent origin, it may be illuminative to note that it contains seven names, in accordance with the seven antediluvian sages. As with the Mesopotamian *apkallus*, who 'insure the correct functioning of the plans of heaven and earth', in the *Bīt Mēseri* text, the full catalogue of angels' names in *I En. 6.7* indicates that

...the chiefs are high angels in charge of the orderly functioning of the heavenly and earthly phenomena: in heaven, not Uriel to be sure, but the angels over sun, moon, stars, shooting stars, thunder, and lightning; on earth, the angels in charge of sea and mountains, as well as the crucial rainy season and its clouds and rain. (Nickelsburg 2001: 181)

The Jewish tradition concerning Watchers was not uniform. There are variant stories that depict their motives and activities more positively. The book of *Jubilees* preserves a tradition relating that God originally dispatched the Watchers to earth for the purpose of instructing humanity in proper ritual and ethical conduct (Reeves 1992: 96). There exist a fair number of texts, according to which the Watchers were sent by God for the purpose of positively instructing and looking after humanity (see Nickelsburg 2001: 196). For example, the

24. The Neo-Babylonian tablet YOS 19 110 presents the case, where a certain Bel-kašir, possibly a scholar, had disclosed the content of canonical texts to members of a social class, to whom the acquisition of such knowledge was forbidden. He was given a severe warning, according to the tablet: 'If a temple slave goes (again) into his bedroom, and he makes (him) recite the excerpt tablets, then (Bel-kašir) will bear the punishment of the king'. In the Neo-Assyrian letter SAA 16 65, an anonymous authority expresses his concern about a royal goldsmith who illegally teaches scholarly lore to an unworthy person. The tablet is broken and we do not learn about the measures taken against the goldsmith (Lenzi 2008a: 151-55).

Watchers are treated in *Sibylline Oracles* 1.87-103 as human beings, the culture-bringers in its second generation. They are portrayed as wise and noble, and their innovations are judged positively as follows: ‘They practiced skills of all kinds, discovering inventions by their needs. One discovered how to till the earth with ploughs, another, carpentry, another was concerned with sailing, another, astronomy and divination by birds, another medicine, again another magic. Different ones devised that with which they were each concerned’ (Collins 2008: 267).

Instructing humanity was exactly the role of antediluvian *apkallus* in Mesopotamian tradition. Some Jewish stories about Watchers contain other elements that can be called remnants of the Babylonian myth, parts of the popular memory pointing to its origin. Some interesting variants are found in the Jewish medieval *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azael*, one version of which was allegedly a part of the no longer extant *Midrash Abkir*.²⁵ The episode of the angels’ descent in this source features a human girl Istahar, who keeps herself pure by using the angels’ forbidden teaching. The name Istahar, with a variant ‘Estêrah from a manuscript in the Bodleian library (Milik 1976: 327), almost certainly derives from the name of Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar, and her ascent to the stars in the story is reminiscent of her descent and ascent myth in the Mesopotamian mythology.²⁶

25. The passages relevant to the myth of Watchers in this midrash are gathered, translated and discussed by Jung 1926: 104-106; Milik 1976: 321-29; and Reeves 1992: 84-88, 92-95. The *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azael* itself is extant in at least four recensions (Reeves 1992: 143).

26. ‘Rabbi Joseph was asked by his pupils, “What is Azazel?” He said: “When the generation of the deluge arose and served idols, the Holy One blessed be He, was grieved. Immediately two angels arose, Shemhazai and Azael... They said (to the Lord of the Universe): ‘Give us leave, let us dwell with the creatures and Thou wilt see how we shall sanctify Thy name’. He said ‘Descend and dwell with them’. At once they corrupted themselves with the daughters of man who were beautiful, and were unable to subdue their desire. Immediately Shemhazai saw one girl, whose name was Istahar. He set his eyes on her and said: ‘Grant my desire!’ She replied: ‘I will not grant it until thou teach me the Shem Hammeforash, by means of which thou ascendest to heaven, at the moment thou pronouncest it’.” He taught her that name, she pronounced it, ascended to heaven, without having sinned. The Holy One blessed be He, said: “Because she has kept herself far from sin, go ye and fix her among the seven stars in order that she may be mentioned among them for ever”’ (Jung 1926: 104-105).

There are more reminiscences of the Mesopotamian origin in other versions of the angelic descent myth. That the Watchers descended to earth with a good intent is in background also in the Aramaic fragment 4Q530 from Qumran, which belongs to the *Book of Giants* (Puech 2001: 28-38). It contains in a broken context the reference to ‘gardeners’ (*gnyn*) at work, nurturing and protecting the trees (2 ii 7), which connotes the Watchers prior to their apostasy (Reeves 1992: 95). This reference to ‘gardeners’ is to be compared to the *Jub.* 5.6, where the God sent the angels to earth, and 4.15 further specifies the reason: ‘in order to instruct human beings and to act (with) justice and righteousness upon earth.’ According to *Jubilees*, only after the Watchers’ arrival and sojourn among human beings were they corrupted and led astray by the irresistible beauty of mortal women. The statement in the Qumran fragment that ‘the gardeners were watering’ (*gnyn hww’ mšqyn*) may be an allusion to the initial educational mission of the Watchers (2 ii 7).²⁷ There is also a reference to ‘great shoots’ springing up from the roots of the trees in the fragment (2 i 8), a reference which indicates the birth of the Giants. The garden is eventually destroyed by water and fire (2 i 10), which symbolizes the coming deluge (Puech 2001: 28, 33-34).

From the comparative perspective, both the educational mission of the Watchers and likening them to ‘gardeners’ make perfect sense. On Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs and seals, the famous *apkallus* as fish-cloaked men or as eagle-headed winged creatures are very often associated with the Tree of Life. The ‘watering of trees’ by the Watchers in the *Book of Giants* finds many iconographic forerunners on Assyrian palace reliefs, where the sages sprinkle the Tree or the king with the cone-shaped ‘purifiers’ (*mullilu*), and hold buckets of holy water (*banduddû*) in their hands. The Assyrian sacred tree symbolized both the divine world order and the king, who functioned as its earthly administrator. By sprinkling the tree with holy water the sages imparted to it their own sanctity, upheld the cosmic harmony, and thus ‘insured the correct functioning of the plans of heaven and earth’ (Parpola 1993: xx).

27. Especially given the common exegetical nexus in Jewish literature between ‘water’ and ‘Torah’ (Reeves 1992: 96). Wisdom was associated with the water of Apsû also in the Mesopotamian sources.

The sacred tree scene on Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs can also be interpreted as a symbolic representation of scholars' activity at court. The central aspect relating to all activity of the court scholars in the Neo-Assyrian empire finds its expression in the phrase 'to keep the king's watch' (*maṣṣartu ša šarri naṣāru*), which recurs frequently in the letters addressed to the king (Parpola 1993: xxi). The full meaning of the phrase involved watching, guarding and protecting the king both from physical danger as well as from straying from the path that the gods had decreed (Parpola 1993: xxii). The guarding by 'watching' over the king recalls the visionary passage from *1 En.* 14.23, where the holy angels in heaven do not depart from the Great Glory or the Heavenly King. The Aramaic word used for these holy angels is the same one (*ʿyr*) that is also used of Watchers (Nickelsburg 2001: 258). Another Jewish text, the *Temple Scroll* from Qumran (11QT 62.1-11), describes the angels in the king's bodyguard in similar terms: 'who will not leave him alone, ...and they shall always be with him day and night. They shall guard him from every sinful thing' (Nickelsburg 2001: 266). The angels in these passages perform the same task of guarding the Heavenly King as the Neo-Assyrian scholars do by keeping the meticulous watch over the king.

The 'Seed from before the Flood' and the Transgressions of the Watchers

The ideology of being related to antediluvian times was deliberately used in royal and other power agendas in the ancient Mesopotamia. The Assyrian kings from Sennacherib to Ashurbanipal compared themselves and their family members to the sage Adapa. These Assyrian kings were equals to Adapa in wisdom, knowledge and deeds. Adapa was also conceived as the physical ancestor of Ashurbanipal, who boasts his superb education in working with difficult texts, including the 'antediluvian inscriptions', as well as his military and hunting skills.²⁸ It was not a particularly Neo-Assyrian concept in Mesopotamia. In one of his inscriptions, the earlier Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar I had made an appeal to his antediluvian pedigree, and recounted Enmeduranki as his ancestor:

28. See the evidence collected in Pongratz-Leisten 1999: 309-19.

[Nebuchadnezzar], king of Babylon..., distant scion of kingship, seed preserved from before the flood, offspring of Enmeduranki, king of Sippar, who set up the pure bowl and held the cedar-wood (rod), who sat in the presence of Shamash and Adad, the divine adjudicators. (Lambert 1974: 432)

The claims of both the physical ancestry and equality to antediluvian figures were important for Mesopotamian kings and scholars alike. It is possible to demonstrate how the Jewish ideology has demonized this concept. According to the worldview represented in *1 Enoch*, being a 'seed preserved from before the flood' would denote a descendent of the Watchers. Such persons were, according to a tradition preserved in Babylonian Talmud (*Niddah* 61a), the Amorite kings Og and Sihon, the exemplary enemies of Israelites. In Num. 13.33, many Canaanites are called Nephilim, sons of Anak, who in turn are identified with Rephaim in Deut. 2.11. According to Num. 21.14, battles against Og and Sihon were significant enough to be incorporated into a lost 'Book of the Wars of Yahweh' (Noegel 1998: 415). *Niddah* 61 says: 'Sihon and Og were the sons of Ahyah, son of Shemhazai' (Reeves 1992: 156). Shemhazai was the chief of Watchers, and Ahyah probably equals 'Ohyah, a giant found in the *Book of Giants*. Og of Bashan, who himself had gigantic size of 9 cubits (Deut. 3.11), was related to the antediluvian generation of giants according to *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Deut. 3.11.²⁹

By identifying certain traditional archenemies as descendants of Watchers, the Jewish authors once again gave a polemical thrust to the Mesopotamian concept of the ruler as 'seed preserved from before the flood'. This reversal of attitudes is also seen in the sexual transgressions that were ascribed to Watchers. The sexual encounters between humans and divinities had a clearly fixed place in the royal

29. According to talmudic and midrashic traditions, Og survived the deluge by sitting on top of Noah's ark (see Noegel 1998: 414). The myths surrounding Og of Bashan are conflated with those about Ogygos of Boeotia, pointing to a common origin. Both were flood survivors and legendary rulers of their realms. Og of Bashan is recorded in Josh. 12.4 as having been the last of the Rephaim. Ogygos is often associated with giants (Noegel 1998: 415), and sometimes he is said to have been the king of Titans (see Annus 1999: 22-23). Goliath, whose height was 6 cubits and a span (1 Sam. 17.4), was occasionally associated with Rephaim as well (see Annus 1999: 20). Two words related to the mythology of giants in Greek, *titanes* and *meropes*, seem to derive from the Semitic roots *dm* and *rp'* with their variants (see Annus 1999).

ritual of sacred marriage in Mesopotamian culture. In *1 Enoch*, however, such transgression of the boundaries between human and divine is depicted as sacrilegious at the outset, and a source of irreversible corruption in the human world.

On the other hand, the theme of sexual violations on the part of important persons of the distant past was known in the Mesopotamian literature as well. A forerunner of sexual wrongdoing of the Watchers occurs in an Old Babylonian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, where the hero oppresses the young men and women of Uruk (see George 2003: 178-79). The precise nature of the sexual harassment exerted by Gilgamesh is quite vague in the surviving text of the standard version (I 69-76), but the complaint of Uruk's daughters and wives in reaction to Gilgamesh's wrongdoing is intense enough to be heard by the goddesses (see Davenport 2007: 4-5). This is in parallel with *Book of Watchers* 7.6, where the earthly realm starts to implore for divine intervention: 'Then the earth brought accusation against the lawless ones' (Nickelsburg 2001: 182).

Moreover, Gilgamesh was a giant both in the Jewish *Book of Giants* and in the Gilgamesh epic. The reading of the passage in which the Standard Babylonian epic gives the height of Gilgamesh's giant body as 11 cubits (I 52-58), is now confirmed by the newest published evidence from Ugarit.³⁰ By extension, this evidence makes Enkidu also a giant, as a match equal to Gilgamesh in strength. It is of comparative interest also to point out that the career of Enkidu in the epic also begins with extended sexual intercourse with a mortal woman. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the first meeting of the two super-human heroes results from their previous sexual appetites of the mortal women.

Except for Gilgamesh and Enkidu, there are no data concerning profuse sexual activities of primeval human figures in the Mesopotamian literature. The depiction of sexual sins of the Watchers is probably a secondary development of the Mesopotamian material, which is designed to disgrace the characters. Sexuality as such is not at all so important for the authors of *1 Enoch*, who do not exploit the

30. The passage describing the physical appearance of Gilgamesh can be reconstructed in five lines as follows: '[A giant(?)] in stature, eleven cubits [was his height, four cubits was] the width of [his chest,] a triple cubit his foot, half a rod his leg, six cubits was the length of his stride, [x] cubits the whiskers(?) of his cheeks' (George 2007: 247-48).

myth of the Watchers to warn against sexual sin in general. The watchers' behaviour is not for them the cause of humanity's sexual wrongdoing (Loader 2007: 80). In other words, their sexuality had no aetiological significance, being only a motif in the plot that serves as a demonizing device. There were other means that could be used for that purpose. For example, in *1 En.* 7.5 the Watchers 'drink the blood', which is ultimate abomination and violation of created life in the eyes of a Jew (Nickelsburg 2001: 186).³¹

The *apkallus* as Evil Beings in Mesopotamian Mythology

It is a little known fact that *apkallus* are occasionally depicted as malevolent beings in Mesopotamian literature, who either angered the gods with their hubris, or practiced witchcraft. The case is clear in regard to the Adapa myth, where the sage broke the wing of the South Wind by using a spell or curse.³² The lore about wicked acts performed by the sages was oral, with only a handful of attestations in the written record. These few examples reveal very clearly the profile of this lore. The post-diluvian sages in particular were attributed some malicious deeds, as the translation of the latter part of the *Bīt Mēseri* text shows:

Nungalpiriggaldim, the wise of (king) Enmerkar, who had the goddess Innin/Ishtar descend from heaven into the sanctuary; Piriggalnungal, who was born in Kish, who angered the god Ishkur/Adad in heaven, so that he allowed neither rain nor growth in the land for three years; Piriggalabzu,

31. Throughout 7.3-5, the giants are the subjects of a series of verbs denoting their unrestrained gluttony, as they seek to satisfy their insatiable appetites (Nickelsburg 2001: 186). In regard to this motif, there is one religious-historical parallel that is certainly worth mentioning. In the Ugaritic myth *The Birth of the Gracious Gods* (*KTU* 1.23), El enters into sexual activities with two maidens, who become his wives. Two sons are born to El, the deities Dawn and Dusk, who are marked by their immense size and by a ravenous appetite. See also Bhayro 2005: 231-32.

32. In the *Catalogue of Texts and Authors*, Adapa's name occurs once as Anshekura, in the regular logographic writing for the word 'horse' in Sumerian and Akkadian (Lambert 1962: fr. VI l. 17). As van der Toorn explicates, Anshekura here should be analyzed as the phrase *an-šè ku₄-ra* in Sumerian, 'he, who entered heaven', in the light of the Adapa myth (van der Toorn 2007: 342). The writing is deliberately equivocal, as the horse is also a form taken by Babylonian demons. Note 'the evil ones of Ea' in *Utukku Lemnutu* 5.156, 176 (Geller 2007: 212-13); and the demonic Anzu had a form of horse in Mesopotamian iconography (Annus 2002: 93-94).

who was born in Adab/Utab, who hung his seal on a 'goat-fish' and thereby angered the god Enki/Ea in the fresh water sea, so that a fuller struck him dead with his own seal; fourthly Lu-Nanna, who was two-thirds a sage, who drove a dragon out of the Temple E-Ninkiagnunna, the Innin/Ishtar temple of (king) Shulgi, (altogether) four sages of human descent, whom Enki/Ea, the Lord, endowed with comprehensive understanding.³³

It is explicitly said in the passage that two of the four post-diluvian sages angered the gods. Piriggalnungal angered the storm-god, who caused draught on earth for three years. The same disaster is sent to diminish humankind as the second plague in the epic of Atra-ḥasīs. In the Old Babylonian version, the duration of the draught is not mentioned (see Foster 2005: 241). In the Late Assyrian version, the draught lasted probably for seven years (see Foster 2005: 272-74). Another sage, Piriggalabzu, angered the god of wisdom by a weird act of hanging his seal on a 'carp-goat' or 'goat-fish',³⁴ the creature called *suhurmāšu* in Akkadian, the demon associated with Ea/Enki (Wiggermann 1992: 152). There is nothing in surviving Mesopotamian literature to give the full story behind this short summary. Nevertheless, the topos of killing somebody of historical importance with cylinder seals is found in some Old Babylonian historical omens. Two kings of the Akkad dynasty, Rimush and Sharkalisharri, were killed, according to omens, by their own servants by means of cylinder seals.³⁵ These historical omens are quite worthless as historical sources, as J. Cooper (1980) has pointed out. Rather, they summarize legends and other folklore surrounding eminent historical personages.

The *apkallus* occur at least twice in the anti-witchcraft series *Maqlû* as witches, against whom incantations are directed. *Maqlû* means 'conflagration, burning', and it is a magical series, consisting of eight tablets of incantations, and a ninth, a ritual tablet (Abusch 2002: 287).³⁶ Its standard form is probably a first-millennium creation

33. The English translation is from Borger 1994: 230-31; see the original text in von Weiher 1983: 48 ll. 14-29.

34. The original text: na₄ kišib.a.n[i] s[u]hur.máš bí.in.lá // na⁴KIŠIB-šú SUHU[R.MAŠ] u[š-qa-li]-lu-ma (von Weiher 1983: 48 obv. I 20, 22).

35. The Akkadian expression is *ina kunukkātīšunu idūkūšu*, see YOS 10 42 I 5 (Rimush), and YOS 10 46 v 33-34 (Sharkalisharri). The *Bīt Mēseri* text has *ina kunuk napištišu urassibušu* in Akkadian (von Weiher 1983: 48 obv. I 23).

36. 'Burning' as the title of the series refers to both purifying and destroying aspects of fire, which parts are executed mostly by the fire-god Girra in the series, where he both burns the witches and purifies the victims of witchcraft. The *Maqlû*

and contains almost hundred incantations, which are directed against witches and witchcraft. The series ‘was intended to counteract and dispel evil magic and its effects and to punish and render ineffectual those responsible for the evil’ (Abusch 2002: 288). Therefore it is an important material for the comparative study of the Jewish mythology of Watchers. In the first division of the *Maqlû*, the text describes struggle against the witch in a legal scenario—judgment, execution and expulsion of the witch (Abusch 2002: 288). In *Maqlû* incantations, the witch is eliminated by fire and water, which finds a ritual expression in the first part of the text, as T. Abusch has described:

Following standard preparations and introductory acts, representations of the witch and related objects are set out and burned in a brazier. Alongside these rites, knots are untied to undo and fumigants are burned to counteract the witchcraft. Then, the contents of the brazier are stirred, and water is poured over the smoldering remains. Burning representations and dousing them with water serve to destroy the witch and squelch her lifeforce and evil impulses. The remains are discarded, and the estate protected. The witch is thus expelled from the settled community and transformed into smoke or wind that blows across the steppe. (Abusch 2002: 288)

The witch of *Maqlû* has a demonic quality, she is a shade of the spirits of dead witches. Therefore one cannot conclusively destroy her, she must be sent off to the steppe where she will be a formless wind. The witch is to be expelled from the organized community. *Maqlû* seeks to place the witch in a state of limbo so that she will be unable to harm the victim again (Abusch 2002: 290).³⁷ The witch is to

series is closely related to another series, *Šurpû*, which also means ‘burning’, as the two titles are mentioned side by side in lists of the exorcist’s repertory (see *CAD* s.v. *šurpû*). The *Šurpû* incantations, however, do not deal with witches, and the concept of fire used therein is that of purification.

37. This state of ultimate helplessness is well reflected in Jewish and Islamic sources about fallen angels. According to *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azael*, Shemhazai, having received the ominous message of the impending judgment of Deluge, adopts the penance of suspending himself upside-down between heaven and earth (Milik 1976: 328). This is also the punishment the God imposed on the magicians Harut and Marut in Islamic tradition. They are the Watchers in Arab versions, invariably associated with Babylon, including the story in Quran 2.96. According to al-Qazwini, the angels were chained upside-down in a pit in Babylon, awaiting their final punishment at the end of days. In their suspended limbo-state, however, they are still able to teach magic to those interested in the art. For sources and bibliography, see Jung 1926: 126-39; Reeves 1992: 86-87, 144-45.

be neutralized by fire and water, which have many symbolic names in the series. The fire-god Girra plays a prominent role in the incantations, in which he is the destructive heat and the strong arm of the sun-god Shamash, executing his sentences (Abusch 2002: 68-69). The burning of the witch is the theme that occurs in various permutations and elaborations in almost every incantation of the series (Abusch 2002: 289). The names for water annihilating the witches include the deified 'River' (^dId). As Girra burns the witches according to the orders of Shamash, the god of justice, the River sinks the representations of the witches like the river ordeal in earthly trials. The *apkallus* occur as witches in *Maqlû* III 61-76, where the Sun god is referred to by the epithet 'radiant' (*namru*):

Incantation: I am pure River and holy Radiance. My warlocks are the Sages of the Apsû, my witches are the heavenly Daughters of Anu. They bewitch me (*eppušāni*), they bewitch me again and again, they bewitch me, but they cannot overpower my body, they bewitch me again and again, but they are still unable to seize me. I bewitched (them) and stand victorious over them. Like the River, I have become pure in my mountain, like the Radiance, I have become bright in my judgment. Of my warlock and witch, may River and Radiance establish their revolt. May their witchcraft be turned over, and may it go onto their head and face. Like bitumen, may their faces be blackened, may his case be perverted, but may my case go straight. May they dissolve, melt, drip ever away. Like the River, I have indeed become pure in my mountain.³⁸

According to the ritual tablet, this incantation was accompanied by the use of a representation of the witch made of *ittû*, 'bitumen' (IX 46'), thus creating a magic link between the deified River (^dId) and the substance of the figurine (Abusch 2002: 208). The blackness of bitumen was probably also thought to contribute to understanding the sages of *apsû* as witches here.³⁹ A variant of this incantation is found

38. The text and translations of this incantation are to be found in Abusch 2002: 201-202, and in Schwemer 2007: 113. For the German translation, see Abusch and Schwemer 2008: 149. Schwemer argues that the subjects of the line 'they bewitch me' are neither the sages nor the daughters of Anu, but witches, who are here referred to impersonally (Schwemer 2007: 112-15). However, this assumption is very difficult to prove, and the present study as a whole can be read as an argument for Abusch's understanding of the sages here as playing the part of the witches.

39. Bitumen is identified with the deified River in a Babylonian esoteric text (see Annus 2002: 144). In a Babylonian ritual text relating to curing of a sick man, the door of the house is smeared with gypsum and bitumen, which are explained as representing Ninurta and demonic Asakku respectively, who was defeated by Ninurta

in *Maqlû* VI 85-89, where destructive fire and water are represented by the substances of sulphur (*kibrîtu*) and *atā'īšu*-plant correspondingly:

Incantation: I am pure sulphur and holy *atā'īšu*. My warlocks are the Sage(s) of the Apsû, my witches are the heavenly Daughters of Anu. When they bewitched me, they were unable to overpower me, but when I bewitched them, I overpowered them.⁴⁰

The speaker identifies here with materials that were often used in amulets and other protective rituals (Abusch 2002: 208). There is again a verbal connection between the deified River (^did) and the material of sulphur (*kibrîtu*), for the latter word was often understood pseudo-etymologically to consist of the two words *kibir* ^did, 'the bank of the river' (Abusch 2002: 208). The *atā'īšu* plant is related to the figurines of the sages also in the *Bīt Mēseri* text, where the ritual instruction directs the performer to strew the plant substance before the sages' representation(s).⁴¹ Thus every detail in these *Maqlû* passages speaks in favour of the interpretation that the *apkallus* here represent the evil witches.

Elsewhere in *Maqlû* the 'seven sages of Eridu' are summoned to 'plan evil' (*likpidūšunūti ana lemutti*) for the witches (II 125), and to counter their witchcraft (see Abusch and Schwemer 2008: 144). In *Maqlû* VIII 40'-43', the sages and Ea again counter a witch with measures more appropriate to their adversaries, by sending to the witch various diseases (Abusch and Schwemer 2008: 178). In another passage, *Maqlû* VII 46, the sages counter the evil demons by giving relief to patient's body (Abusch and Schwemer 2008: 172).

From many references in Mesopotamian literature we can learn that the fish-like sages were thought to have been created and also reside in Apsû. The seven sages were according to *Bīt Mēseri* III 8 'shining carps (*purādū*), carps of the sea...that were created in a stream' (Wiggermann 1992: 108). The cleansing river was often

in the myth *Lugal-e* (see Annus 2002: 142-44). In *Bīt mēseri* III 8, one finds similar instruction concerning the images of sages: 'seven figures of carp sages, painted with gypsum and black paste that are drawn at the side of the bedroom on the wall' (Wiggermann 1992: 108).

40. The translation is from Abusch 2002: 207; for the German translation, see Abusch and Schwemer 2008: 168.

41. Obv. II 4: *atā'īša ana pānīšunu tusarraq*, 'weisse Nieswurz schüttest du vor ihnen auf' (von Weiher 1983: 49, 51).

invoked in Mesopotamian rituals to dispose of evil fallen upon a person either through witchcraft, or of bad omens observed in everyday occurrences. In the prayers to be recited during the *namburbi* rituals for release of the effects of sinister omens, the purifying river, which is said to have its depths in Apsû, is invoked to carry evil away (Maul 1994: 85-86).⁴² More to the point, the realm of Apsû is often confused with underworld in Mesopotamian literature. Evidence indicates that the reason for this was either a simple confusion, or Apsû itself was occasionally thought to be a netherworld inhabited by malevolent spirits (Horowitz 1998: 342). The second option seems more likely, as there are many literary references, which place underworld deities and demons in Apsû (Horowitz 1998: 343).⁴³ In Mesopotamian texts, the netherworld river Hubur is occasionally merged or confused with the Apsû of Ea/Enki, who himself is associated with the same river (Horowitz 1998: 342). The name of the boatman Ur-šanabi, who regularly sailed on the 'waters of death' in the Gilgamesh epic, is traditionally interpreted as 'Man of the god Ea' because of the same confusion of different bodies of water associated with the death and netherworld (see George 2003: 500). In the great Shamash hymn the Sun-god renders verdicts at the underworld Hubur river, after descending into the Apsû (Horowitz 1998: 343). Some epithets of Shamash also imply that the Sun-god rendered judgments in the underworld (Horowitz 1998: 352). The confusion of Apsû with Hubur shows that the waters around the earth continually threaten the cosmos, but also form the boundaries of human life. Some Mesopotamian birth incantations refer to a birth boat which brings the child across the seas toward life (see Foster 2005: 1009). Thus the life-bringing waters and the waters of death were not strictly separate, sometimes filling the same space in imaginary geography.

The Hubur river is situated at the entrance of the netherworld, but the primordial sea Tiamat is also referred to in the *Creation Epic* as 'Mother Hubur, she who fashions all things' (*pātiqat kalāma*).⁴⁴ Thus Tiamat created her army of demons under her riverine aspect of

42. In one *namburbi* text, the effects of witchcraft are treated in exactly the same way as evil omens; see Maul 1994: 445-52.

43. See, for example, a reference to the 'evil ones of Ea', who hosts them in Apsû (Foster 2005: 963).

44. Akkadian: *ummu Hubur pātiqat kalāma*; see the *Creation Epic* I 133; II 19; III 23, 81.

Mother Hubur. The first line of the prayer to purifying river in *namburbi* rituals addresses the feminine River very similarly as ‘creatress of all things’ (*bānât kalāma*).⁴⁵ The prayers further specify the cosmological origin of the river. According to one variant, ‘when the great gods dug your bed, they set well-being along your banks, Ea, king of the Apsû, built his dwelling within you’ (Foster 2005: 726). This is comparable to Mesopotamian cosmological traditions, also found in the *Creation Epic*, where Ea killed Apsû (I 60-72) and established his chamber of rest in it (I 76). It is in Apsû, where Marduk, the ‘sage of the gods’ (*apkal ilī*), is born in the *Creation Epic* I 80.⁴⁶ The fact that *apkallus* are born and often reside in Apsû, is not evidence that points to their exclusively positive character, since demonic creatures were also often thought to have their origin in the depths of the divine River. For example, in the Mesopotamian myth about slaying the dragon Labbu by god Tishpak, the monster is called ‘offspring of River’ (*rihût nāri*).⁴⁷ This river, where the representations of witches and the models of evil omen carriers were cast for the purpose of purification, also had an epithet and aspect of deluge (*abūbu*), which will be brought into discussion later in the present study. Thus, the bodies of water, such as sea, river or Apsû, were all capable of producing and hosting both good and bad offspring. That the ‘sea’ and ‘river’ were interchangeable is also seen in the variant names of the sage Adapa in *Bīt Mēseri* incantations—either ‘Born in the Apsû’ (Utuabzu) or ‘Born in the Sea’ (Utuaabba). Being ‘born’ in a river may also be a poetic expression for acquitting in the river ordeal, as in the Sumerian *Hymn to Nungal A*: ‘When the time arrives, the prison is made up as for a public festival; the gods are present at the place of interrogation, at the divine river ordeal, to separate the just from the evildoers; a just man is given rebirth’ (ll. 58-60). The episode in the myth of Adapa, where his boat is capsized by the south wind, can be interpreted as a reference to a water ordeal, from which the sage acquitted himself.⁴⁸

45. See Maul 1994: 86 n. 21 for references to the epithet in these ritual prayers.

46. For Marduk as the ‘sage of the gods’, see Denning-Bolle 1992: 36, 41-43.

47. See Lewis 1996: 32, obv. 23. The monster seems to have been ‘[created by] the sea’ as well, according to the same myth, see Lewis 1996: 31, obv. 6. Both sea and river were thought to be origins for this and similar monsters.

48. See Frymer-Kensky 1977: 101, 493. Another reference to a just man being ‘born’ (*zid-du ù-tu*) through the river ordeal is found in the collection of the Sumerian *Temple Hymns* (l. 54)

Mesopotamian and Jewish Demonology Compared

For understanding the origin of Watchers' evil character, it is necessary to study the dynamics of Mesopotamian demonology. The *apkallus* figure prominently in Mesopotamian ritual and magical texts as protective spirits. In iconography and sculpture, the mythical sages are represented as three kinds of composite creatures. The ritual texts describe the same three groups of seven sages—one group of fish-man hybrids, one of bird-man hybrids, and one of fully anthropomorphic figures (Wiggermann 1994: 224).⁴⁹ In comparison, different versions of the Jewish *Book of Giants* depict some giants as bird-men. Mahaway has wings and flies in the air in the Qumran fragment 4Q530 7 ii 4.⁵⁰ The giants ʾOhyah and Hahyah could have been bird-men too, as the Persian version refers to an activity 'in their nest(?)' (Milik 1976: 313). Milik has argued that Azazel in the *Book of Giants* also was a hybrid of goat-like and man-like features. The final ending *-iš* in names such as *glgmyš* (Gilgamesh) and *hwbbš* (Humbaba) may reflect the partially human composition of these figures, by a play with Hebrew ʾīš, 'man' (Milik 1976: 313). In addition, some Manichaean fragments of the book call the giants explicitly with the word that primarily means 'demons', the Middle Persian *dywʾn* and Sogdian *dywt*.⁵¹ Humbaba, in particular, is a demonic creature in the Mesopotamian mythology, a figure who exercises authority over other demons. He is the guardian of the cedar forest in Lebanon, and his domicile in the Cedar Mountains is a locality also associated with Watchers. According to *1 En.* 13.9, the penitent Watchers and their progeny assembled at Ubelseyael, a locality placed 'between Lebanon and Senir'. Ubelseyael is probably a corruption for Abilene, and 'Senir' is to be identified with Hermon. In an Old Babylonian fragment of the Gilgamesh Epic the Cedar Mountain is identified as 'Hermon and Lebanon', an interesting coincidence of identity

49. 'The first group of sages is rooted in third millennium Mesopotamia, but the iconographic type was introduced only in the Kassite period. The two other types are adopted by Assyrian iconography from a foreign source, and secondarily named 'sages'. In magic all three types of sages perform purifying and exorcising functions' (Wiggermann 1994: 224).

50. Puech 2001: 40; Stuckenbruck 2003: 323-24.

51. Enoch is called the 'apostle' in these fragments, see Milik 1976: 313; Stuckenbruck 1997: 75-76, 85-86.

(Reeves 1992: 124-25).⁵² The association of Watchers' sons with a cedar forest is also at work in the Damascus Document (CD 2.19) from Qumran, where they are as tall as cedar trees (3000 or 300 cubits), and with bodies like mountains (Nickelsburg 2001: 185).

There are some ritual texts of ancient Mesopotamia for the defence of households, where one finds prescriptions regarding how to deal with epidemic diseases, represented as an army of demonic intruders. The texts describe in detail the prophylactic figurines of *apkallus* and monsters of clay or wood at the gates, rooms and corners of the house (Wiggermann 1992: xii). The *apkallu* figurines are among the statues that the texts prescribe to manufacture and bury at the strategic points in the house as protective deposits, they serve there as apotropaic guardians against protruding evil. The same groups of protective spirits served the magical defence of Neo-Assyrian palaces in relief along the walls, and sometimes in free-standing sculptural works made of precious metals or stone (Wiggermann 1994: 222).

The main Akkadian text edited in Wiggermann's book (1992: text I) contains a description of the comprehensive ritual enabling 'to block the entry of the enemy in someone's house' (*Šēp lemutti ina bīt amēli parāsu*). In the first day of the ritual, the group of prophylactic statues of seven *ūmu-apkallus* is made of cornel (*e'ru*) wood (Wiggermann 1992: 8-9 ll. 49-65). In the second day, six other (groups of) statues are made and described in detail—seven statues of Sebettu, four statues of Lugalgirra, seven statues of 'armed ones' (*šūt kakkī*), 'the one of the cubit' (*ša ištēt ammatu lānšu*), four statues of

52. See George 2003: 262-63 for the new edition of this text, rev. 31': *sa-ri-a ū la-ab-na-am*. From Deut. 3.8-9 we learn that the Mt Hermon belonged to the territory of King Og of Bashan, a giant, and one of the Rephaim (see Noegel 1998: 418). The standard epithet of the Ugaritic epic hero Daniel is *mt rpi*, 'man of Rapi'u', in parallel with *mt hrnmy*, 'Harnamite man'. In *1 En.* 6.7, the seventh chief of the Fallen Angels is also called Daniel, who with others descended on the Mt Hermon. It is possible that the Canaanite *hrnmy* became Hermon by a deliberate reinterpretation in the Hebrew Bible, connecting it with Hebrew *hrm*, 'ban' (see Annus 1999: 17). His position in the seventh place among angels connects him with Enmeduranki and Enoch, and in *Jub.* 4.20 Enoch marries the daughter of Daniel. Milik thinks that Daniel 'could be the protagonist in the Phoenician history of the flood' and the *Book of Watchers* intends to dethrone 'the Phoenician wise man to the rank of the wicked angels' (Milik 1976: 29). A more positive portrayal of him appears in the biblical book of Daniel, where he is a wise scholar at the court of the Babylonian king, a role that exactly belongs to the tradition of *apkallu*.

Meslamtaea, and a statue of Narudda, which are summarized as ‘the creatures of heaven’ (Wiggermann 1992: 8-13 ll. 88-143). Some of these creatures are strongly associated with netherworld, and therefore they are of half-demonic nature, capable of both good and evil. Lugal(g)irra and Meslamtaea are symbols of plague and, according to anti-witchcraft series *Maqlû* VI 148-49, a pair of guard-gods in the netherworld, ‘who tear out the heart and compress the kidneys’ (Abusch and Schwemer 2008: 170). The well-known group of Sebettu, here on the side of good, are described as extremely malicious beings in the *Erra Epic*.⁵³

On the third day, a whole host of monster figurines are made of clay. The seven bird-*apkallus* and fish-*apkallus* are mentioned first, which is followed by a standard list of Babylonian demons—hairy-ones (*lahmu*), big weather-beasts (*ugallu*), mad lions (*uridimmu*), human-headed bisons (*kusarikku*), scorpion-men (*girtablullû*), fish-men (*kulîlu*), carp-goats (*suhurmāšu*) and others.⁵⁴ The function of all these protective spirits and demons alike is to ward off evil from the household. In the fourth and fifth day of the ritual, these statues are properly consecrated, purified and finally buried in their appropriate places in the house (Wiggermann 1992: 4). When drawing conclusions from this important text, one has to give a due attention to the circumstance that all these celebrated monsters here are assigned the tasks that are also given to *apkallûs*.

The Assyrian foundation figurines of the fish-cloaked human *apkallu* type often show archaizing elements in their iconography, most noticeably in the form of the double-stranded beard in the rectangular clay plaques of the type from the city of Assur (Green 1984: 84). The archaizing features were to emphasize their nature as primeval beings, which made *apkallus* particularly potent in the magical protectiveness (Green 1984: 86). Some figurines of the seventh century BCE from Ur were found during the excavations by

53. *Erra* I 23-27: ‘The Seven, warriors unrivalled, their divine nature is different, their origins are strange, they are terrifying, whoever sees them is numbed with fear. Their breath is death, people are too frightened to approach it!’ (Foster 2005: 882). For a comparison of the Enochic giants to the destructive Seven in the *Erra Epic*, see Bhayro 2005: 244-45.

54. Wiggermann 1992: 12-15 ll. 170-205. There is a similar text, KAR 298, which consists of extracts from this and other texts. The protective spirits enumerated there also include *apkallus* along with the demons (see Wiggermann 1992: 41-46).

L. Woolley in little boxes of burnt brick underneath a pavement. Instead of flanking the doorways, the figurines were in lines against the walls, and the open side of each box faced towards the centre of the room. Thus the figurine groups were apparently doing domestic sentry-duty. There are some deliberate archaizing components found in the archaeological context of these deposits:

Very curious was the fact that the boxes were made of plano-convex bricks collected from various parts of the mound, and this archaic material had been deliberately chosen in order to invest the magical deposits with an aura of antique sanctity. The practice illustrated at Ur has a most interesting parallel in a slightly later period, at Kish, where one such figure was found buried underneath a plano-convex pavement composed, not of archaic, but of archaistic bricks. At Ur there were ten different types of figures and they included three of those found at Calah: the winged *apkalle* with birds' heads and human bodies, the warriors, and the fishermen. (Mallowan 1954: 90)

Many of these protective spirits, statues of which are made during the ritual described above, also occur in standard lists of eleven monstrous beings, which are defeated by the warrior god Ninurta. In the Babylonian *Creation Epic*, some of these beings are counted among evil creations of Tiamat, who are combated by Marduk (see Annus 2002: 110-13). The demonic adversaries of Mesopotamian warrior gods become beneficent in their defeat, and occur as protective spirits in the ritual texts. On the level of ritual and magic, the distinction between various types of *apkallus*, demons and monsters seems to vanish, as all figurines are united to fill the common task. In guarding houses and palaces their malevolent background makes them more effective (Green 1984: 86). In literature, we can find only a few cases where the sages are referred to as evil beings, while there are many more examples of viewing them positively. The monsters become positive after they are defeated in battle, and their images can be positioned at the entrances of palaces and temples as guardian figures. This is etiologically explained in the *Creation Epic* V 73-76, where Marduk does the following:

[And] her eleven creatures, which Tiamat created as the beas[ts], their weapons he broke, he tied them to his feet, he made then [their] images, stationed them at the gate of Apsû, (saying:) 'Let them not be forgotten, be this a sign!' (Annus 2002: 118-19)

The usual guardians of Mesopotamian gates and doors, the human-headed winged bulls (*lamassu*), lions and other fabulous or real monsters were probably considered as former demonic enemies of the warrior gods. The Assyrian triumph rituals, which celebrated king's victories, also publicly displayed the rebellious enemy kings in their defeated state at important city gates (Annus 2002: 119). As A. Green has rightly observed:

...we should guard against a rigid division, in considering Mesopotamian spirits, between the good and the evil: at times, perhaps, the beneficence or malevolence of individual spirits depended more upon their works at any given time than upon their essential natures. The Seven Gods might at one time be perceived as on the side of good, at another as deadly evil. We have seen how even Pazuzu, for all his professed maliciousness, might be a protection against Lamashtu, and it is not impossible that he is sometimes, at least, counted among the Assyrian apotropaic series. Conversely, even the Babylonian Sages, steeped in wisdom and full of beneficence, may have had a darker side. (Green 1984: 86)

As the beings subservient to the god Ea, the sages had an origin not very different from some monsters. Various demons had close associations with different gods, who governed them and restrained their rebelliousness. To Ea probably belonged the *lahmu*, 'hairy-one', the *kulīlu*, 'fish-man', and *suhurmāšu*, 'goat-fish'. The *kusarikku* may have originally belonged to the sun-god Shamash, as well as the *girtablullū*, 'scorpion-man', and *uridimmu*, 'mad lion'. From at least the Middle Babylonian period, however, some of these creatures are occasionally presented as a group, appearing in the army of Tiamat in the *Creation Epic* and as part of the suite of the victor Marduk (Green 1984: 85-86).

The Great Flood according to the *Erra Epic*

In the *Erra Epic*, the flood narrative appears in a version different from other deluge accounts in ancient Mesopotamian literature. In this text, the flood is caused by Marduk, the tradition that otherwise belongs to Enlil, as elaborated most fully in the Atra-ḥasīs myth. Differently from Atra-ḥasīs, the *Erra Epic* views not Enlil, but Marduk as the chief god of the pantheon, and Erra as the challenger of his order. In other words, the *Erra Epic* presumes that the *Creation Epic* is the principal text describing the world order, as established by Marduk. The flood story is narrated by Marduk himself in *Erra* I 132-37:

Once long ago indeed I grew angry, indeed I left my dwelling, and caused the deluge! When I left my dwelling, the regulation of heaven and earth disintegrated. The shaking of heaven meant: the positions of the heavenly bodies changed, nor did I restore them. The quaking of netherworld meant: the yield of the furrow diminished, being thereafter difficult to exploit. The regulation of heaven and earth disintegrating meant: underground water diminished, high water receded. When I looked again, it was a struggle to get enough.⁵⁵

After the flood, while the surviving portion of humankind struggled for life, Marduk built a new house for himself (I 139). However, his precious attire (*šukuttu*) had been struck by the deluge. Marduk commanded Girra to make his features shine again and to cleanse his apparel (I 141), he put on his ‘crown of sovereignty’ and returned to his temple (I 143). Subsequently, in I 147-48, Marduk recollects his deeds during the flood: ‘I sent craftsmen down to Apsû, I ordered them not to come up. I changed the location of *mēsu*-tree and *elmešu*-stone, and did not show it to anybody.’⁵⁶ The sages were apparently done away by Marduk during the flood, just as God punished the Watchers with the deluge. It is a matter of conjecture to assume that the sages were sent to Apsû, because they had rebelled against the divine order of Marduk in a way that is not given.⁵⁷

The account of flood and its results in the *Erra Epic* again invites a comparison with Jewish lore about Watchers and Giants. In the Qumran fragment 4Q530, which mentions the Watchers as ‘gardeners’, also contains a reference to destructive water and fire, abruptly doing away with all flourishing vegetation in the garden under Watchers’ care.⁵⁸ The ‘gardeners’ in this symbolic dream refers to Watchers, and the trees to giants. Another Qumran fragment, which is

55. Cagni 1969: 70-72; the translation is from Foster 2005: 887.

56. Akkadian: *ummānī šunūti ana Apsī ušēred-ma elāšunu ul aqbī / ša mēsi elmeši ašaršun unakkir-ma ul ukallim mamma* (Cagni 1969: 74). It can also be understood that the stones grew on the tree, as CAD E 107 translates I 148: ‘I changed the place where (grow) the *mes*-trees (bearing) *elmešu*, and did not show anybody’.

57. Kilmer (1989: 43) speculated that the sages ‘were dispatched for good to the apsu at the time of the flood and may have been deprived access to the *mes*-tree, ‘the flesh of the gods’, which provided them with the special material to make divine and kingly statues (as well as knowledge, skill and longevity?), but which was hidden from them (and all future mortals) forever when Marduk cast it to the deep.’

58. 4Q530 2 i 10: *kl my’ wnw’ dlq bkl*, ‘... all the water, and fire burned it all’ (Puech 2001: 28). The devastation of fire also accompanied the deluge according to the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic XI 104-105 (see George 2003: 708-709).

probably a textual witness to the same dream or a series of dreams (6Q8 2), mentions a garden and a tree with three shoots, which apparently survives from this catastrophe (Puech 2001: 33-34). The image serves as a symbol for the preservation of Noah and his three sons (Reeves 1992: 86-87). This narrative refers to Watchers' original mission as culture-bringers, which had turned to evil, and finally resulted in their destruction by the flood of water and fire.⁵⁹ The two Qumran fragments recount the event as a symbolic dream of warning for the Giants. A similar dream complex is attested in the medieval *Midrash of Shemhazai and Azael*, where it is narrated as follows:

One night the sons of Šemhazai, Heyyâ and 'Aheyyâ, saw (visions) in a dream, and both of them saw dreams. One saw a great stone spread over with lines (of writing). And an angel (was seen by him) descending from the firmament with a knife in his hand and he was erasing and obliterating all the lines, save one line with four words upon it. The other (son) saw a garden, planted whole with (many) kinds of trees and (many) kinds of precious stones. And an angel (was seen by him) descending from the firmament with an axe in his hand, and he was cutting down all the trees, so that there remained only one tree containing three branches. (Milik 1976: 328)

Relocation of a tree and stones is also a motif in the *Erra Epic*, where Marduk during the flood 'changed the location of *mēsu*-tree and *elmešu*-stone', in the context of sending the sages down to Apsu (I 147-48). The garden with trees and precious stones in the second dream is comparable to the garden in the end of the hero's journey in the Gilgamesh epic (IX 173-90), with the trees bearing jewels and precious stones (George 2003: 672-75). The imagery used in these Qumran fragments and in the medieval midrash are deeply rooted in the ancient Near Eastern mythology. In the Mesopotamian *Utukku Lemnutu* incantations, some demons are compared to devastating flood (5.82; 16.61), and in 4.17-18 the demons spawned by the seed of the sky-god Anu 'scorch the land like daylight, weaken (var. "uproot") the huge *mes*-trees in the forest' (Geller 2007: 203). In Marduk's postdiluvian speech to Erra in I 150-62, he searches in a series of rhetorical questions for both the tree and the sages:

59. In the Talmudic tradition, the flood that giant king Og survived, was a mixture of water and fire: 'the torrents of the primeval flood withstood by Og were mingled with fire, hot to the point of scalding. Had it not been for Og's incredible strength, he too would have been consumed' (Noegel 1998: 419).

Where is the *mes*-tree, the flesh of the gods, the emblem of the king of the universe, the pure tree, august hero, perfect for lordship, whose roots reach hundred leagues through the vast sea to the depth of the underworld, whose crown brushed [Anu's] heaven on high? Where is Ninildum, great carpenter of my supreme divinity, wielder of the glittering hatchet, who knows that tool, who makes [it] shine like the day and puts it in subjection at my feet? Where is Kusig-banda, fashioner of god and man, whose hands are consecrated? Where is Ninagal, wielder of the upper and lower millstone, who grinds up hard copper like hide and who forges to[ols]? Where are the choice stones, created by the vast sea, to ornament my diadem? Where are the seven [sa]ges of the depths, those sacred fish, who, like Ea their lord, are perfect in sublime wisdom, the ones who cleansed my body?⁶⁰

Thus, like the Watchers, the Mesopotamian *apkallus* were punished by a flood according to the *Erra Epic*. In *1 Enoch*, the flood was considered final judgment for the fallen angels, combined with the punishment of fire (ch. 10). Some of the angels, like Asael, 'will be led away to the burning conflagration' on the day of great judgment (10.6). Moreover, as *apkallus* are sent down to Apsû, the Watchers and their sons 'will be led away to the fiery abyss, and to the torture, and to the prison where they will be confined forever' in 10.13 (Nickelsburg 2001: 215). The prison, where the spirits of the fallen angels are kept, is a chasm like Apsû, an abyss containing fiery pillars, and it is situated at the 'end of the great earth' according to the Greek version of *1 En.* 18.10, or 'beyond the great earth' following the Ethiopic.⁶¹ The expression 'great earth' is highly unusual in both languages, but it becomes explicable in the light of Mesopotamian mythology. The 'great earth' is a name for the netherworld in Mesopotamian texts, *ki-gal* in Sumerian, whence the Akkadian *kigallu* was borrowed. The expression is found in the name of Mesopotamian queen of the underworld, Ereshkigal (see Horowitz 1998: 274-76).

As divine beings, however, both the Watchers and *apkallus* were able to survive the flood by assuming a different form. The combination of fire and water as means for judgment and execution of the

60. Cagni 1969: 74-76; the translation is from Foster 2005: 888-89 (modified). According to Parpola, the cleansing of Marduk's body here refers to the balance of the sacred tree and the divine world order, which is taken care of and maintained by the *apkallus* (Parpola 1993: xx-xxi).

61. The abyss is described in *1 En.* 18.10-11; 19.1-2; 21.7-10. See Bautch 2006: 254-55.

Watchers and witches was thought to be effective only for a limited period of time. The witches and demons in Mesopotamian mythology were not fully destructible because of their partly divine nature. They continued to do harm and bring diseases, no matter how often they were invoked to become neutralized. According to *1 Enoch* 12–16, the flood does not destroy the giants either, but releases their spirits to constitute a realm of evil spirits, who continue to roam about the world and plague humanity until the eschatological judgment (see Stuckenbruck 2003: 336). Passages like *1 En.* 15.8-9 explain the origin of the demonic world:

But now the giants who were begotten by the spirits and flesh—they will call them evil spirits of the earth, for their dwelling will be on the earth. The spirits that have gone forth from the body of their flesh are evil spirits, for from humans they came into being, and from the holy watchers was the origin of their creation. Evil spirits they will be on the earth, and evil spirits they will be called. (Nickelsburg 2001: 267)⁶²

The flood was able to neutralize the bad influence of Watchers and their sons only temporarily. For the reader of *1 Enoch*, the Watchers had already generated their immortal spirit or substance, which was of evil character, into the world (Nickelsburg 2001: 273). Therefore, it could not be decisively rooted up. The Mesopotamian tradition, which judged and neutralized witches, witchcraft, and evil omens by burning and drowning their representations in a ritual of divine judgment, offers a remarkable parallel to this concept.

The section of the ritual in *Bīl Mēseri*, which enumerates all names of the *apkallus*, both antediluvian and postdiluvian, gives the final instruction to throw their depictions into river, which act probably represents their ordeal. The ritual instruction says: ‘Remove them and say to them as follows: “Ea has created you, Ea has absolved you”’.⁶³

62. The spirits of the giants in *1 En.* 15.11-12 ‘lead astray, do violence, make desolate, and attack and wrestle and hurl upon the earth and cause illnesses. They eat nothing, but abstain from food and are thirsty and smite. These spirits (will) rise up against the sons of men and against the women, for they have come forth from them’ (Nickelsburg 1991: 267). See Wright 2005 for a full discussion.

63. Obv. II 5-6: *tu-rab-šú-nu-tu ki-a-am taqabbī* (DU₁₁.GA)- *šú-n[u-tu]* ^d*É-a ib-ni-ku-nu-ši* ^d*É-a ip-šur-k[u-nu-ši]*, ‘Du wischt sie ab; folgendermassen sagst du zu ih[nen]: “Ea hat euch geschaffen; Ea hat euch gelöst”’ (von Weiher 1983: 49, 53). For this saying, see Parpola 1993: no. 56, rev. 9-10, with the explanation in ll. 10-12: ‘He who caused the earthquake has also created the apotropaic ritual (*namburbū*) against it’.

The river in these ritual occasions is identified with deluge, who judges the evil ones by overcoming them. This concept of flood is found in many variant prayers recited to the purifying River during the rituals used for dispelling the effects of witchcraft and evil omens. In these prayers, the River is either equated with the flood, or the great gods have 'given' a flood to it:

You judge the cases of all peoples. O great River, sublime River, your waters run straight, receive from me the evil of sorcery, let your channel receive all my sins! You run straight, O River, take this down to your depths (= Apsû), O River! May that evil not come near me nor my house, may it gain no hold on me, may it not overcome me! May I live on in well-being, that I may sing your praises.⁶⁴

In the ritual, the images of evil omen carriers and witches are cast into the river, which serves as a part of judgment issued by the divine court, consisting of the divine triad Ea, Shamash and Asalluhi. This is in accordance to the *Code of Hammurabi*, which prescribes in its second paragraph the divine river ordeal to the person, who is charged with witchcraft without proof (Maul 1994: 85-86). In rituals, the river ordeal will provide proof for his crime of witchcraft by overcoming him. On the mythological plane, this river ordeal is equated with the great flood, which took place to wipe out the sinful part of humankind both in the Hebrew Bible and ancient Mesopotamian mythology. According to *1 Enoch*, the sin was brought to them by Watchers and their illegitimate revelation of divine secrets. Thus, the Mesopotamian concept of the origin of evil stands at the beginning of the Jewish understanding of the nature of Watchers.

The demons, both malicious and beneficent, were often thought to have their origin with the first generations of men, both in Greek and Semitic traditions. According to Hesiod's *Works and Days* 110-27, the *daimones* came forth from the men of the first, golden age. Socrates once averred (Plato, *Apol.* 15, 27B-E) that they may be the children of gods and nymphs or other women (Nickelsburg 2001: 273). They were the mixed offspring of gods, angels, divine heroes or divine sages who lived in primeval time. This period is identified as the antediluvian era in Mesopotamian and biblical historiography.

64. See Foster 2005: 726 for a full translation and a comprehensive bibliography.

The Term for Watchers in Aramaic and Akkadian

The Aramaic term for ‘Watchers’ (ܥܝܪ) must have come about as an adaptation of Akkadian term *maššaru*, the term which denoted specialized guards for gates, doors, walls, and so on, but also divine guardians and their representations in private houses and temples.⁶⁵ The verbal root ܥܪ in Hebrew means ‘(to be) awake’, and Syriac ܥܪ, with participle ܥܝܪ means ‘(to be) awake, watch’. Hence the Aramaic term means ‘wakeful one’. The expression ܥܝܪܝܢ came to denote angelic beings, whether they are good or rebellious, or could be used neutrally to refer to angels in general (Stuckenbruck 1997: 84). The cognate verb in Akkadian is *êru*, ‘to be awake’ (CAD E 326).

As Denning-Bolle perceptively notes, the form of the fish-*apkallu* is ‘linked with the secrets that dwell in the deep; and its never-closing, ever-watchful eyes lend it an omniscient sagacity’ (1992: 52). The idea that divine guardians do not sleep is familiar not only from the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Ps. 121), but in the area where Aramaic succeeded Akkadian, from even older literature (Murray 1984: 315). The Assyrian text KAR 58 is a hymn to Nusku, the ritual to obtain a pleasant dream, with an address to the dream god Anzagar (Butler 1998: 339-47). The reverse of the tablet, from line 12 onwards, contains a prayer to personified watches of the night, which ascribes to them a certain surveillance of human life (Murray 1984: 306):

May the evening watch, the midnight watch, the morning watch, may night bring me (a dream), let me sound your praises. O [An]zagar, Anzagar, who brings (dreams) to humankind, messenger of prince Marduk, O Nightfall, awesomeness of the nighttime, O three watches of the night, who are wakeful, watchful, alert, and non-sleeping, you will grant a verdict to wakeful and sleeping, you will fulfil your responsibility, you will look out all night until the morning watch. (Foster 2005: 718)

This prayer was probably also incorporated into the series of *Bīt Mēseri*.⁶⁶ The text from Assur, KAR 298, which prescribes the making

65. See CAD s.v. *maššaru*. S. Bhayro (2005: 22-24) seeks the origin of the appellation ‘Watchers’ (ܥܝܪܝܢ) in the Akkadian verb *barû*, which in the context of divination is used for reading omens from the liver of a sacrificial animal. The verb also means ‘to watch over’ (CAD B 115-18), but without any association with ‘sleeplessness’. The Aramaic term may have many Akkadian antecedents, after all.

66. See Butler 1998: 339-40. The world of Assyriology is patiently waiting for the forthcoming edition of the *Bīt Mēseri* series by Professor R. Borger. Until the edition has not published, it cannot be said with certainty that the whole text of KAR 58 belongs to this series.

of apotropaic *apkallu* figurines, often quotes the first line of otherwise unknown incantation *attunu şalmē apkallē maşşarē* ('You are the *apkallu*-figures, the watchers', e.g. line 14). Unfortunately, the full text of this incantation has not survived on the extant cuneiform tablets. This incantation was recited to the figurines of *apkallus*, the 'watchers', after they were buried under the floor of buildings as guardians. After all, their interred state may have contributed to understanding of them as 'fallen' angels. In the Hebrew Bible, the term 'Nephilim' also refers to heroes' 'fallen' status as dead, and presumably buried, at the time when the events are recorded. In any case, the *apkallu*-sages had clearly a function of 'Watchers' in Mesopotamian mythology, and their well-attested connection with demons and other malicious beings makes them very probable predecessors and a source of origin for the Jewish Watchers.

Conclusion

The conclusions of this study were already foreshadowed in the summary of arguments in the Introduction. The mythology of the Watchers and their sons the giants derived from inverted versions of various Mesopotamian myths and beliefs about *apkallus*. In some parts or layers of Mesopotamian mythology and ritual practices the sages were already regarded as dangerous and potentially malicious creatures, upon which the Jewish authors could build their parody. There is a certain structural affinity, not explicitly mentioned in the present study, between the antediluvian *apkallus* and the Watchers on one hand, and between postdiluvian sages and the giants, the sons of the Watchers. The first two groups were fully divine, while the second two groups were only two-thirds or half-divine. However, it would be wrong to expect perfect correspondences in a matter that ultimately belongs to folklore. Although the Jewish authors were borrowing from Mesopotamia, they did so in a creative and polemical spirit, adding concepts and details not found in the sources they used.

One of the more important conclusions of the present study is that the mythology of Watchers cannot be a phenomenon invented only through inner-Jewish discussions without outside sources. As the Mesopotamian tradition viewed *apkallus* as ancestors of the contemporary kings, priests and scholars, the *Book of Watchers* possibly used the image of wicked Watchers for criticizing Jerusalem's cult

establishment and its priesthood (Himmelfarb 1993: 27). If the *Book of Watchers* was written as the criticism of Zadokite priesthood and the official cult in Jerusalem, as some scholars have suggested (Boccaccini 1998), one begins to wonder in the light of the present study, how Babylonianized the so-called Zadokites may have been during the early Second Temple period.

The *Book of Watchers* apparently belongs to the same layer of Jewish polemical literature, which also depicted Daniel as a scholar in the court of the Babylonian king. Accordingly, the date of the composition of the *Book of Watchers* may belong to the same period as that of the book of Daniel. However, the oral traditions concerning Watchers may be much older than this literature. For the present author, there is no doubt that the author of Gen. 6.1-4 already knew a variant of the mythology of Watchers that s/he retells in an abbreviated version (cf. Milik 1976: 31). The birth of the oral lore about Watchers must belong to a period in history, when the Jewish culture was extensively exposed to Babylonian influences. An obvious candidate for such a period is the Babylonian exile.

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