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"ALL THE DEGREES OF GODS HE DIRECTED"

Religion in Ancient Matum

ITÄ-SUOMEN YLIOPISTO

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MUUKKONEN MARTTI ANTERO: "All the degrees of gods he directed" - Religion in Ancient Matum

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Muinainen Kaksoisvirranmaa (akkadiksi Matum) on myös länsimaisen kulttuurin kehto vaikka usein eri alojen erikoishistoriat aloittavatkin vasta Kreikasta. Kuitenkin sekä Kreikan että Israelin kulttuurit syntyivät jokilaaksokulttuurien pohjalta ja välittivät Eurooppaan niiden perinnön.

Tieteellisen tutkimuksen määrän kasvaessa tarvitaan myös synteesejä kaikesta siitä tutkimuksesta, mitä on tehty. Tilastollisessa tutkimuksessa on tavallista tehdä meta-analyysejä, jotta saataisiin koottua yhteen jollain alalla koottu tietous. Laadullisella puolella tällainen tutkimus on harvinaisempaa. Tässä tutkimuksessa on sovellettu ns. meta-tulkinnan menetelmää ja tehty eräänlainen "meta-haastattelu", jossa etukäteen asetettuihin kysymyksiin on etsitty vastausta aikaisemmista tutkimuksista ja niiden tulkinnoista.

Tutkimuksen taustana on Clifford Geertzin ajatus siitä, että uskonto on malli yhteiskunna*sta* ja malli yhteiskunna*lle*. Uskonto ikään kuin legitimoi syntyaikansa käytännöt ja sen jälkeen ylläpitää niitä. Siksi tutkimuksen toinen luku esittelee lyhyesti muinaisen Matumin maantiedon ja historian sekä kulttuurisen, taloudellisen ja poliittisen kontekstin.

Varsinainen Matumin uskonnon käsittely on jaettu siten, että ensin käsitellään uskonnonhistoriallisesti kehitystä, jossa käsitys jumalista numinaalisina voimina muuttui ensin luonnonilmiöiden hallitsijoiksi ja lopulta vanhemmiksi. Seuraavaksi käydään läpi Matumin kosmologiaa (maailmankuvaa, kosmogoniaa, pantheonia sekä antropologiaa). Tämän jälkeen tarkastellaan kulttia (virallinen kultti, kansanusko sekä kotiuskonto) ja etiikkaa. Lopuksi tehdään pikainen ekskursio Kaksoisvirtainmaahan persialaisten mukana tulleeseen zarahustralaisuuteen.

Avainsanat: Kaksoisvirranmaa, Mesopotamia, Sumer, Akkadi, Babylon, uskonto

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1. "Greeks… landed at Tyre… and carried off the king's daughter Europa[1]" - Ancient Matum and European Culture

European culture has generally been seen as a combination of Greek philosophy, Roman law and Semitic religion. Although western civilisation has developed previously unthinkable innovations and advancements, it has, during its history, returned to these three fundaments during times of crises. For the Catholic Church, Greek philosophers gave the tools to systematise the teachings of the Bible. For the Enlightenment, Greek Antiquity was a great source of inspiration. For the Reformation, for the Evangelical Awakening and for the Social Gospel, just to mention a few examples, the Bible was the major source of inspiration.

Bible and Hellene classics, however, did not emerge in isolation. Bible's great stories tell how Abram departed from the Matum[2] and wandered to Land of Canaan; they tell how children of Israel went to Kemet[3] and returned from there few hundred years later; and they tell how, first Assyrians and, then, Babylonians deported the people to Matum where they stayed for several generations. Ionian philosophers learnt their wisdom mostly from Babylon and Hellenes, in general, got their weights and system of measurement from Babylon[4]. Hesiodos' *Thegonia* follows, in its outline, the old Babylonian epic *Enuma elish.* The list could be continued endlessly.

In spite of this, the impact of Matumian culture on Israel and Hellas has not been – save to some "voices in the wilderness[5]" - on special focus on Biblical or classical studies. There are several reasons for this. First, the 19th century 'Babel/Bibel' controversy that led both Assyrologists and Biblical scholars to keep polite distance

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[1] Hdt 1.2.1. (PDL)

[2] Matum (lit. The Land) is and Akkadian name for the Land of Two Rivers. I prefer to use aboriginal names whenever it is possible.

[3] Kemet (lit. The Black Land) is a native name for ancient Egypt.

[4] Durant 1951, 73f.

[5] In Biblical studies, an exception has been the Myth and Ritual School (e.g., Herman Gunkel, Sigmund Mowinkel and Henrik S. Nyberg). On the school, see Harrelson (1987). In classical studies, there has been, above all, Cyrus H. Gordon, who has argued for the East Mediterranean synthesis. On Gordon's influence, see Marblestone (1996).

towards each other[1]. The main point in this debate was whether the Biblical stories were copies of much older Matumian myths – like the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Second, there has been a general isolation in the research of ancient Eastern Mediterranean studies. Egyptologists, Classicists and Assyrologists have been isolated from each other[2]. Especially Classicists have held up the Romantic idea that Hellenic culture arose by itself and had nothing in common with older cultures of the East and South. This idea was strongly challenged by Martin Bernal in his *Black Athena* from 1987. He argued for the African roots of Hellene culture. This led to a heated debate in classical studies in the 1990's[3]. While some Classicists, like Mary Lefkowitz, ardently defended the Hellene legacy, some Assyrologists, like Charles Penglase[4] and Walter Burkert[5] argued that it was more Matum than Kemet that influenced Hellas. In spite of the weaknesses of Bernal's work, it led to focus on cultural interaction in Mediterranean – Persian Gulf region. In the same time, some world system theorists wrote several articles on ancient economic world systems that covered the whole area[6].

Today, the waves of Babel/Bibel (and partly the *Black Athena*) debate have calmed down and there is an emerging tendency to see the whole area between Indus and Gibraltar as one cultural pool or world system that shared many common beliefs and customs[7]. As Howard Marblestone explains Cyrus H. Gordon's theses, it is not question of "'parallels,' 'borrowings,' or 'influences' in one direction or the other, but cultural interaction[8]." The point is no more on the question whether the writers of the Bible or Hellene classics borrowed elements of Matumian religion but how they interpreted and modified this common heritage. Therefore, both exegetes and classical scholars would benefit from the knowledge of the religions of this old civilisation that has influenced in the later cultures.

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[1] Larsen 1995

[2] There are some 'history of the ancient world' -type monographs as well as Max Weber's A*grarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations* and Gwyn Griffiths' *Triads and Trinity* that cover the whole Oriental and Mediterranean world but, in general, it is only recently when scholars in these disciplines have started to come together.

[3] On the debate, see Levine (1996), Marblestone (1996)

[4] Penglase 1997.

[5] Burkert 1992.

[6] On world systems, see *Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World* 1987; Algaze 1989; 1993; Allen 1992; Edens 1992; Frank 1993; Ratnagar 2001; Frank & Thompson 2004.

[7] On cultural connections, see, e.g., *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant* (1995), Kuhrt (1995), West (1995), Bottéro, Herrenschmidt & Vernant (2000) and Penglase (1997),

[8] Marblestone 1996, 24.

This being the background of European historical perspective, it is time to focus on the roots of European civilisation beyond Hellas and Israel. There is, after all, much wisdom in Samuel Noah Cramer's title in his classical book: *History Begins at Sumer[1]*. Most obvious legacy from Matum is our habit to divide hours into 60 minutes or the circle into 360 minutes – according to Sumerian sexagesimal system.

In this study, however, I am not going to present the whole Matumian cultural legacy. There are numerous works already written. Instead, I focus on one aspect of Matumian society, namely its religion. The central problem can be modified as **"what kind was the religion of ancient Matum."** The problem is quite algorithmic and large. However, it is justified by my intent to give a general view on this ancient religion. In this, my approach is along with Weberian tradition to understand large cultural spheres instead of focusing on narrow empirical research task.

In order to do this, I first present, in the next sub-chapters of Introduction, my theoretical basis (including my definition of religion as well as culture), methodology and sources. In chapter two, I describe the context of Matum. Then the main treatment of Matumian religion is in chapters 3-7 so that I focus on cosmology, cult and ethics. In the last chapter I make my conclusions and look at the legacy of Matumian religion.

1.2. "…since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning[2]" - Methodology and research task

A task to focus on the religious systems of a three thousand year culture is not a small one. Exegetical study of primary texts[3] would, therefore, be a lifetime project – the amount of texts we have today is vast and increasing all the time when excavated texts are edited, published and translated. This approach would also focus too much on details without giving a wider perspective[4]. I also agree with John E. Hunter, Frank L.

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[1] Kramer 1981.

[2] Lk 1:3

[3] An additional problem arises from the fact that the religious texts in this culture are written in cuneiform and just to be able to read them would require philological studies, at least, in Sumer and Akkad – probably also in Aramaic, Hebrew and Farsi.

[4] In addition to this, since I am not a specialist in Assyriology, studying Matumian religion from the primary sources (or their translations) would lead to risk that I would misjudge the relative importance of various texts.

Schmidt and Gregg B. Jackson who have argued on research that often the need is "not for additional empirical data but some means of making sense of the vast amounts of data that have accumulated[1]."

Therefore, I have decided to use secondary sources, i.e. previous studies. Similar kind of approach was used by 19th century 'armchair anthropologists' who interpreted material that others had collected and created larger view on that material. A typical example in this genre is Marcel Mauss' *The Gift*, which utilises the publications of other anthropologists. In social sciences, Max Weber's *Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations*, already mentioned above, does the same – not to mention his vast project of explaining various world cultures through their main religions.

Theoretically, this sort of approach has been used in psychology and medical studies where meta-analyses have been made from many previous studies[2]. The idea is to utilise the knowledge collected in existing studies since, as Richard G. Niemi (1986) noted "that single studies can rarely provide satisfactory answers to research questions, and that the need is for approaches that can extract the underlying trends and principles developed from the accumulation and refinement of a large body of studies[3]."

While meta-analysis is widely used in quantitative research, it is not valid for syntheses of qualitative studies simply because mostly the original data is not available. For this reason, there has been attempts to develop similar methods to synthesise qualitative research.

My approach is similar to what Mike Weed describes "meta-interpretation[4]", which can be seen as "qualitative meta-analysis[5]." Meta-interpretation is not exactly a method but rather an approach to accumulate previous knowledge. It draws from other methods developed for syntheses of previous research and combines their various merits. Weed groups various qualitative syntheses approaches to two blocks. First, to aggregative approaches like literature review, systematic review, meta-analysis and meta-

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[1] Hunter, John E., Schmidt, Frank L. & Jackson, Gregg B. 1982(quoted in Weed 2005, paragraph 2).

[2] On emergence of meta-analysis, see O'Rouke 2007.

[3] Niemi 1986. Quoted in Weed 205, paragraph 5.

[4] Weed 2005.

[5] Meta-analysis is, as a concept, mostly restricted to statistical analyses (O'Rouke 2007, 581) but I use it here to emphasise the need to combine findings of previous studies. On meta-analyses in, for example, medical studies, see Nordmann, Kasenda and Briel 2012 and in social sciences, see Möser and Schmidt s.d.(>2005). See also Slavin (1986) on "best-evidence synthesis."

ethnography. Second, the approaches that are used by the collector (group/institution) of primary data like grounded theory, cross-case comparison, secondary analysis of primary data and interpretive phenomenological analysis.[1]

Weed argues that meta-interpretation has several fundamental features:

- An ideographic (rather than pre-determined) approach to the development of exclusion criteria
- A focus on meaning in context
- Interpretations as the raw data for synthesis
- An iterative approach to the theoretical sampling of studies for synthesis[2]

With ideographic approach of exclusion criteria Weed means that meta-interpretation differs from systematic review where there are no pre-determined criteria what studies will be combined and what not. Instead, the criteria will be made along the process because pre-determined criteria can drop relevant studies outside. In practice, the process goes so that, after establishing research area, 4-5 relevant studies are analysed and included/excluded, for example, on the basis of the theme[3] or quality of the study. After that, more studies are searched and analysed. Similar inclusion/exclusion is made and a reconsideration of already excluded studies is made: i.e. are the exclusion criteria of the first round still valid. Thus, the process is interaction between theoretical thought and material.[4]

Meaning in context has a point that is taken from meta-analysis approach which utilises different statistical procedures to correct bias that arise from different studies. In order to do this, a meta-analyst has to highlight inconsistencies in data. Contrary to meta-analysis, in meta interpretation these "inconsistencies should not be corrected for , but acknowledged in the analysis, and in many cases celebrated, because differences in data collection methods and researcher approaches can be important in obtaining insights that have not featured in other studies." Often this means focusing on context.[5]

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[1] Weed 2005.

[2] Weed 2005, paragraph 43. There is also fifth thesis: "A transparent audit trail as a guarantor of the integrity and trustworthiness of the synthesis." However, the material for this study was collected long before I found Weeds work and now it is impossible to identify the original path how I collected the material. This is unfortunate but cannot be helped.

[3] For example, a title can hint that the study would deal with the theme under study but closer look would then show that it was just question of some linguistic issues of the term. In many cases, such a study would not give much information for the synthesis and, therefore, would be excluded.

[4] Weed 2005, paragraphs 16, 17, 45-48.

[5] Weed 2005, paragraphs 21, 22.

In this study, focusing the context means awareness that there is not just one single Matumian religion but many. However, they are like Wittgensteinian family resemblance[1] where both similarities and differences can be found between individuals. Thus, while all Matumian religions have their roots in Sumer, theologians, for example, in Babilu and Ashur combined pantheon differently and, thus, there is contextual variation.

The idea of focusing on meaning of previous works is from meta-ethnography, where the raw data is the interpretations that previous scholars present on their data. As mentioned above, the point is that in qualitative research primary data is seldom available for syntheses – if it is not produced by her/himself or the research group where (s)he belongs. Instead, "interpretations from almost all qualitative studies are included in published works, unlike the full raw dataset from interviews, observations and fieldnotes." This requires trust in the original writer and her/his ability to make correct interpretations from the raw data.[2]

Focusing on interpretations in this study means that I have to identify different schools of thought and explain their arguments. Usually I do this by presenting the ideas of the pioneer of that research field and then add later additions as variations in this same school of thought. Sometimes it is just the early pioneer since it seems that there has been some sort of loss in interest in Matumian pantheon in the latter half of the 20th century.

An iterative approach means that material is collected in a similar way that it is made in grounded theory in regard of primary data. The "criteria for the criteria" is more on conceptual than representative grounds. Thus, when more studies are needed on some theme, they are sought until either there is none more or saturation of knowledge is reached.[3]

In my case, this means that I usually have started from the Helsinki university library and its shelves of Oriental literature where I looked first for general works on ancient

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[1] Wittgenstein (1953, §67) writes: "I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between the members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way." See also Muukkonen (2009, 694f.).

[2] Weed 2005, paragraphs 25, 36.

[3] Weed 2005, paragraphs 28-32.

Near East. Along this, I went through those Assyriological journals that were in the open access shelves. From these works I looked for previous works on each theme that I either have in my theoretical model or what seemed to be important to add to it. Along this, I searched web-pages on special themes to find more publications. This reading and seeking other works from bibliographies of already read works continued until the saturation was found.

In this study, I utilise this approach freely. The major departure is the use of anthropological and sociological theories as the general framework of this study. I, in a way, "interview" previous studies with a set of open thematic questions and seek answers from them. Behind this approach is some sort of distrust on the grounded theory tradition. I simply cannot believe that any scholar can collect or analyse material without some pre-understanding. Everyone has schemas that direct their focus and their understanding[1]. Because of this, I prefer to start with the explication of the theory and how I use it. This means several things concerning the treatment of my material:

First, I am not analysing the previous studies but looking the phenomena through them. Second, I look this secondary source material from the perspective of anthropology of religion and arrange the findings in the general schemes of religion studies. The theory presented in the next sub-chapter forms my schemata how I frame religion in general as well as the basics of the themes I want to find out. Third, because previous studies form my main source material, I use primary sources mostly like some sort of 'explanatory material' which mostly only clarify the research that I review. I do not make any text or other analyses on the primary material and for this reason it is not necessary to describe it in detail[2].

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[1] Neisser 1976.

[2] In general, it can be said that most quotations are from Matumian epics (like *Enuma elish* and *Atharasis*) and other mythical texts. I give the name and passage of the primary text but the reference is to the collection where it can be found.

1.3. "… teach and admonish one another…[1]" - Previous Studies and Sources of the Study

Previous monographs on Matumian religion can be classified in the following categories:

1. Since religion was so central in Matum, it has been dealt in most general presentations on these societies[2].

2. Morris Jastrow's classical *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, Thorkild Jacobsen's *The Treasures of Darkness,* Jean Bottéro's *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* and Jeremy Black and Anthony Green's *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* focus on Matumian religion, in general, and Simo Parpola's *Assyrian Prophecies* focuses on Assyrian Tree of Life. Henri Frankfort's *Kingship and the Gods* is one of the basic comparative studies on the religions of Matum and Kemet. J. Gwyn Griffits' study on *Triads and Trinity* focuses also on religions in both countries. On Zoroastrianism, there is, for example, Maneckji N. Dhalla's *History of Zoroastrianism.*[3]

3. In general, the economic and political aspects of religion have been dealt in various 'temple and palace' and 'political economy' - type researches where the relationship between religion, economy and the state has been studied[4].

4. Far less has there been a focus on the folk religions and family religions in this culture. The major work is Karel van der Toorn's *Family Religion in Babylon, Syria and Israel.*[5].

5. On ethics there are also quite few works. Van der Toorn's *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia* is the major monograph[6] although the theme is discussed in several articles and in chapters of general treatments of religion as well as in exegeses of works of wisdom literature.

6. Along studies, religion is presented in various translated collections of ancient texts, like *The Ancient Near East* I-II (ANE), *Ancient Near Eastern Tests Relating to the Old Testament* (ANEOT) and *Myths from Mesopotamia* (MfM). In addition to these, some special texts that are not found in these printed collections can be found in the internet in such collections as *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (ETCSL), *Electronic*

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[1] Col 3:16

[2] See, for example, Salonen (1945), Saggs (1965, 1969), Oppenheim (1977), Roux (1992), Delaporte (1996), Potts (1997), Bertman (2003), van de Mieroop (2005) and Postgate (2005). Along these monographs, there are several articles in numerous encyclopaedia and histories (e.g. *Cambridge Ancient History* I:2-IV, 1971-1976; *Ancient Civilisations of East and* West 1988; Civilizations *of the Ancient Near East* 1995; Maisels 2001).

[3] Jastrow 1898; Frankfort 1978; Black & Green 1992; Griffits 1996; Parpola 1997; Bottero 2001; Dhalla 2003. Piotr Steinkeller (2003) has compiled a bibliography of studies on Matumian religion.

[4] Gelb 1965; 1972a; *Ancient Mesopotamia* 1969; Falkenstein 1974; *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East* 1979; Stone 1982; *The Organization of Power* 1987; Yoffee 1995; Robertson 1995. In general, there has been a debate between so called substantivists and formalists. Substantivists follow Karl Polanyi's thesis of the redistributive economy, which means in the case of Matum that temples collected the harvest and distributed it in the form of rations to population. Formalists, in turn, have argued that there has been a market economy since the beginning of historical era. On Polanyian approach, see Polanyi (1944; 1957a,b; 1968; 1975; 1977); *Trade and Market in the Early Empires* (1957); *Ancient Civilizations and Trade* (1975); Renfrew (1975) and papers of the a symposium 'Economic anthropology and history (1981)'. On formalist perspective, see, e.g. Silver (1983; 1985).

[5] van der Toorn 1996.

[6] van der Toorn 1985

Tools and Ancient Near East Archives (ETANA) and *Internet Sacred Texts Archive* (ISTA).

Along these monographs, there are numerous articles and web-pages. I have not listed them here but those that I have used can be found in the bibliography.

1.4. "Do not forsake my teaching[1]" - Theoretical Basis of the Study

In this study, theory means a general schema of the research object. In other words, on the basis of anthropological, sociological and theological studies of religion, I make preliminary questionnaire for my 'interview' of the previous research. It is a systematic attempt to find out whether the elements important to modern scholars of religion exist in the ancient religions as well.

I see religion having two meanings. First, it is a meaning system that interprets the world and gives significance to things. In this sense, environment supplies the issues that the religion deals. Second, as Clifford Geertz (as well as Max Weber) argues, religion is also a powerful dynamo for the human action. It gives ethical values which direct people's behaviour. Once emerged, it starts to live its own life and influences its environment in the same time as it interprets it. Of the former, Geertz writes:

> As we are to deal with meaning, let us begin with a paradigm: viz., that sacred symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos – the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood – and their world view – the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order.[2]

Religion can be divided into subunits in two basic ways. First, it can be divided according to various dimensions or functions, like many students of religion have done. Another way is to divide it according to different levels that run from official to private.

Dividing religion according to its dimensions has been the emphasis in modern studies of religion. For example, in their *Religion and Society in Tension*, Charles Y. Clock and Rodney Stark argue that religion has the following five dimensions: 1) experience, 2) ideology, 3) ritual, 4) knowledge and 5) consequences[3]. Ninian Smart, in

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[1] Prov. 4:2.
[2] Geertz 1973, 89.
[3] Clock & Stark 1965.

turn, divides religion to 1) practical and ritual, 2) experimental and emotional, 3) narrative and mythical, 4) doctrinal, 5) ethical and legal, 6) social and institutional, and 7) material dimensions[1].

Also Geertz, in his definition of religion, divide it as:

> (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.[2]

All these dimensions are, however, Weberian type analytical distinctions. In practice, they are intertwined. They can be simplified into three basic dimensions of religion. In the classification system of structural-functionalist theory there is three modes of motivational orientation: cognitive, affective and evaluative[3]. In the subsystem of religion, these modes mean the belief system or cosmology, cult and ethics.

If we divide religion to subunits according to official-private continuum, we find three possible levels. Karel van der Toorn has divided religion into two overlapping realms. The first one is the official state religion, which included the liturgy of the state cult, temples and shrines, priests and priestesses, cosmology of the elite and theological formulations. The second is, as van der Toorn calls it, family religion. It was primarily question of worship of the god of the family (clan, tribe) and the cult of forefathers.[4]

An Egyptologist, Ashraf I. Sadek has also made a distinction into two forms of religion: state religion and popular religion. According to him, "popular religion in ancient Kemet is made up of the beliefs and practices of the Kemetian people themselves, outside of the endowed, state-run, secluded official temple cults[5]." The distinction does not, however, go only according to class lines. Location and ethnicity are also important factors in religious divisions. Thus, religion is used also as a mark of distinction between groups. Thus, popular religion focuses both on local variants and folk religion in general.

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[1] Smart 1983; 1989.
[2] Geertz 1973, 90.
[3] Parsons and Shils 1962.
[4] Van der Toorn 1996, 2ff.
[5] Sadek1988, 2.

Anthropologist Robert Redfield made, in his *Peasant Society and Culture* in 1956, a similar distinction between "great tradition" and "little tradition"[1]. The "great tradition" is universal, intellectual, institutional in outlook, urban and represents the elite interests. "Little tradition", in turn, is often local, illiterate and represents the religiosity of lower classes or minorities. These two traditions *may* (but not necessarily) have quite different motivations and outputs – even in the same religious system.

If we combine the views of van der Toorn, Sadek and Redfield, we will have three levels of religion: state cult, popular religion and family religion. However, as Sadek correctly points out, they are not always mutually exclusive but often complement each other. In these cases, they lend elements from each other. On the other hand, in many other cases, they are mutually exclusive and even hostile towards each other. The best known examples are from the Old Testament where cult of JHWH and that of Baal and Astarte were often in open fight[2].

Combining the discussion above will result to the distinction presented in the list below.

COSMOLOGY is the explanation how a religion interprets reality. This explanation is usually done in the form of myths. Myth is a narrative way in organising things and phenomena. Narration does not classify nor define but weaves facts in a warp of a story. The form of a story, in turn, helps oral tradition to be memorized much better than if it would be a list of concepts[3]. The significance of these myths is that they create social order, legitimate power structures and social action. For example, if the society is seen as a duplication of transcendent realm, it is very difficult to change since all changed are seen, then, violations against the divine will or the nature of the ultimate reality. Cosmology can, in turn be divided into

a) cosmogony, which explains how the world came into existence and how it is ordained,

b) pantheon, which explains how the divine world is constituted,

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[1] Redfield 1969.

[2] Note that religion of Baal and Astarte and JHWH were state religions in different times and persecuted each other when in power.

[3] Stories have significance in academic world, as well. Everyone who has had to take an examination on an encyclopedia knows how difficult it is to memorize. It is well known that long numbers can be memorized if all numbers have some familiar symbol like ball, donkey, girl – the number is then memorized in the form of a story, e.g., 'donkey has a girl in its back and kicks the ball, etc.'

c) anthropology, which explains human nature and human's role in the world, and

d) thanatology and eschatology, which focus on the fate of a human after death and on the fate of the whole world

CULT[1] is the dramatic counterpart of the myth[2]. It includes sacred personnel (normally, but not always, priests), sacred places (temples, graves of heroes, locations of mythical events) and other artefacts (clothing, ritual tools and tableware), and defined form of rite. It may include victims as offerings but not always. Cult can be framed on three levels.

e) State cult is the official cult that is performed by the leading elite. This cult is only partly public and is supported by the leaders of the country.

f) Popular religion means both local religious practices and wide-spread forms of the commoners' public religious practices. Although it has loaned many elements from the state cult, the difference to state cult is that it is not officially supported by the state but the official attitude runs from toleration to persecution.

g) Finally, we have domestic cult. The family was the basic unit of this kind of cult practices although individuals have practiced some rituals also alone. The distinction from popular religion is that domestic cult is not public but restricted to the family or kin.

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[1] *Oxford English Dictionary* defines cult as "worship; reverential homage rendered to a divine being or beings (OED-OL, s.w. cult)." *HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion*, in turn, defines it as "a collective veneration or worship in anticipation of bettering life in this world or the next, in which the collectivity is defined and united by its common devotional practice (HCDR 1996, 297 s.w. cult)." I agree with these definitions and use the concept of 'cult' in the sense of liturgical life, not in the sense of some particular religious or secular group as the concept is used in sociology of religion ((Campbell 1977; Wilson 1996).

[2] *Classical Mythology Online* (ch. 1) states that "[m]yth is derived from the Greek word mythos, which can mean 'tale,' or 'story,' and that is essentially what a myth is." This wide definition is often narrowed like in *HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion*, which defines myth as "a story that is transmitted orally… and narrates the deeds of superhuman beings (HCDR 1996, 749)." This definition has its roots in ancient Hellene literature where the distinction between the human and the divine stories were well established (Edmunds 1990, 2-8). There are basically three theoretical approaches to mythology: the classical one that interprets ancient (especially Hellene) myths (see, e.g., *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* 1987; *Approaches to Geek Myth* 1990 and *Mythologies* 1991), exegetical (see Harrelson 1987) and anthropological, that explains myths of the aboriginal people of 19th and 20th centuries (see, e.g., Bolle (1987), Ricoeur (1987), Weiner 1995; 1996)). In Assyriology and Egyptology, there seems no similar interest in problematising concepts of myth and mythology.

ETHICS is the third aspect of religiosity that affects to philanthropy and welfare. Ethics state what both society and individual should do in different social situations. Altruism in most religions is seen as an act of piety and selfishness is seen as a sin. Irrespectively the nature of human character, there exist some kinds of religious norms what a human should do and what is prohibited. Moreover, there are norms that dictate who is responsible for some duties and to whom they must be directed. From the welfare perspective, ethics can be separated the following aspects:

h) Related to religion's anthropology, there is the question of human character, virtues and vices. Is a human basically good or bad and whether (s)he is capable for good works?

i) Social ethics define how the society as a whole should treat its members and outsiders

j) Individual ethics define how an individual should act in her/his relations to other people, to his gods and to his environment.

METHODOLOGY, as I said in the beginning of his sub-chapter, is in this study 'an interview of the previous scholars'. The difference to live interview is that if the books do not give the answer I am seeking, I cannot ask my 'informants' to clarify what they are saying. On the other hand, it is not uncommon in normal anthropological field-work to seek more detailed answers from other informants.

The first task was to decide what studies to use. In the previous sub-chapter, I mentioned that I have focused on the 'stars' of the field. Finding them and their works is, of course, often a matter of taste. Different people are gurus in different scholarly traditions. However, looking trough bibliographies of previous studies, special web-pages, special encyclopaedias, etc. gives a scholar a sense who are constantly referred and which institutions guarantee the reliability of the less well-known scholars.

The second task was the 'interview' process. Like in any interview, answers often create new questions but since the 'interviewee' does not tell more, I had to go to find new sources. In this sense, creating the general scheme has been like the work of a detective: one hint from one scholar led to another and data was collected until it reached the point of saturation.

The analysis was made according to theoretical scheme. From different works I made a synthesis on various aspects of the Matumian religion and this synthesis is primarily, my contribution to the anthropological studies of ancient Matum.

2. "Enjoy life… that God has given you under the sun[1]" – Context of Matumian Religion

2.1. "The whole land of Babylon[2]… is cut across by canals[3]" – The Landscape of Matum

In his *Ancient Iraq* Georges Roux starts his work stating that "Nowhere, perhaps, is the influence of geography upon history as clearly demonstrated as in the group of countries which extend from the Mediterranean Sea to the Iranian Plateau and form what we call the Near East." He continues arguing that the factors on environment of man

> mark the paths of his trade and of his military ventures, incline him to settle as a farmer or condemn him to the wandering life of a nomad, contribute to his physical and moral qualities and, to some extent, command his thoughts and religious beliefs. The history of any Near Eastern country must therefore begin with a study of the map.[4]

GEOGRAPHICALLY[5], the Land of two Rivers' "position at the juncture of three continents is unique in the world," as Marc van de Mieroop states. This has made it a crossroads of African, Asian and European cultures from the time immemorial[6]. Van de Mieroop thinks that "[t]his may explain why so many 'revolutions' in the lifestyles of humans have taken place there."

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[1] Eccl 9:9.

[2] The Hellene name *Babylón* comes from Neo-Babylonian *Bāb-ilāni* ("gate of the gods") < Akk *Bāb-ilu* <Sum. ká-dingir ("gate of the god"). (Koehler & Baumgarten 1994, 107, s.w. בבל)

[3] Hdt1.193 (PDL)

[4] Roux 1992, 1.

[5] Recent descriptions of the landscape of Matum can be found in Potts (1997, 1-42), Roux (1992, 1-16), Bertman (2003, 2-38), Postgate (2005, 3-21) and Van de Mieroop (2005, 7-10). Especially Potts has good reviews on the problems and answers presented in literature. Bertman, in turn, has a good gazetteer on ancient towns.

[6] Similarly, Potts (1997, 55 - following Joan Oates 1960, 49) argues that "we should be prepared to imagine the co-existence of a number of different ethnic groups, speaking different languages and following subsistence strategies – hunting and gathering for some, agriculture supplemented by hunting and gathering for others – in the earliest period of Mesopotamian settlement."

Geologically, it is located at the North-eastern corner of the Arabian tectonic plate, which in turn, lies between African and Eurasian plates. The Arabian plate pushes itself under the Eurasian plate, which, in turn, is pushed upwards. This explains the existence of low alluvial plain and high mountains side by side. The clash of plates also explains the tectonic unsteadiness, frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.[1]

The land situates in the plain which rivers[2] Purattu[3] and Idiglat[4] split in their run from Armenian mountains to the Persian Gulf. More commonly, however, the name refers to the 300 km wide and 1000 km long river plain reach from southeast to northwest on both sides of the rivers. It is boarded by Taurus and Zagros Mountains in the north and east, Persian Gulf in the south and Arabian Desert in the west as can be seen in the adjoining map[5]. These created barriers that could be passed only from certain points or with certain technology. Internally, the country has huge ecological varieties ranging from marsh to mountains and from desert to fertile alluvium.

The desert, which

> encloses Mesopotamia on the west from the Euphrates bend down to head of the Gulf, and is penetrated by only a few routes open to the traveller from outside, notably that taking off from Mari and making west to the oasis of Tadmor (classical Palmyra) on the road to Damascus.[6]

Since the nature is unfriendly and fragile, it does not allow permanent settlements but is enough for pasteurising purposes. In spite of the expelled contrast between agriculturists and nomads, the distinction was never total. On the contrary – they lived mostly in a symbiotic relationship. Nomads brought their stock to pasture in the fields after the harvest and in exchange the sheep fertilised the land.[7]

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[1] Van de Mieroop 2005, 7ff., 10.

[2] Aboriginal names of the rivers (and locations) are from *The Near East in the Neo-Assyrian Period* (2001), Roux (1992) and *Tübingen Bible Atlas* (2001, B.IV.13).

[3] In Akkadian < Sum. Puranuna ("the great river"), Biblical Phrâth or Frot (Koehler & Baumgarten 1996, 293, s.w. פרת; Harrington & Lasor 1988, 202). The Hellene name Euphrates comes from Old Persian Ufrat. (Jacobsen 1980a, 180).

[4] In Akkadian < Sum. Idigna ("ever flowing river"), Bibl. Hiddekel (Koehler & Baumgarten 1994, 978, s.w. חדקל). The Hellene name Tigris comes from Old Persian Tigra ("arrow"). (Jacobsen 1980b, 642; Hubbard 1988, 851).

[5] The map is an extract from Europe, North Africa and West Asia: Regions (2004).

[6] Postgate 2005, 4.

[7] Postgate 2005, 5.

As an opposite of the desert, there were the two other types of areas: the southern alluvial plain and the marshes. As Postgate describes it,

> [t]he most obvious characteristic of this plain is its flatness. As much as 500 km north of the Gulf coastline, the general landscape is still less than 20 m above the sea level, giving the gradient of 1:25000. This has various consequences. There is little to restrain a river which chooses to change its course, and in the space of a few years the natural landscape can change from barren sandy desert to marsh.[1]

The flatness of the fertile plain meant, as Dietz O. Edzard remarks, that because of

> the slow flow of the water, there are heavy deposits of silt, and the riverbeds are raised. Consequently, the rivers often overflow their banks (and may even change their course) when they are not protected by high dikes.[2]

Actually, without the river, agriculture in the alluvial plain would be impossible as Postgate reminds: "Out beyond the tails of the canals, cultivation ceases abruptly and, except where there are shifting belts of dunes, the raw surface of the land is exposed[3]." Another restrictive element of the soil was that it was salty and, thus, only few plants, like barley, could survive in this kind of soil[4].

In the southeast, were the marshlands of Sumer. Northwest of Sumer was the area that was long known as the land of Akkad. It is flat arid plains with numerous lakes between the rivers. Still further north located the highlands of Assyria (ca.300 m above

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[1] Postgate 2005, 6.
[2] Edzard 1994, 860.
[3] Postgate 2005, 15.
[4] Parpola 1982, 149.

the sea level), which consisted of damper grasslands than the southern areas. Marshland cut "Mesopotamia off from direct access to the neighbouring plain of Susiana, which was always an important centre of its own[1]." Marshes and reed swamps "probably since early times, have served as an area of refuge for oppressed and displaced peoples[2]." However, as Postgate reminds, "the establishment of stable political conditions tends to break down the isolation of the marsh dwellers, and in early Mesopotamia several of the principal cities were on the fringes of marsh or sea[3]."

CLIMATE has been a significant factor throughout its history - sometimes it was friendly and sometimes hostile. The end of the Ice Age changed the climate also in the South Western Asia by causing changes in jet streams and movements of the soil. According to some theories, this climate-change caused the change from hunter-gatherer-society to agricultural one. At the dawn of history, ca. 3200-3000 B.C. another two hundred year drought left tens of thousands of people without water in the dry-farming colonies of Uruk in the northern Matum and surroundings. A result was that people from these settlements flooded to towns in the southern Matum that had been just small centres of sacral worship.[4]

The next severe drought occurred ca. 2200 B.C. and, according to Harvey Weiss and his associates[5], this "was the first domino that sent Akkad toppling[6]." Weiss notes that "between 2200 and 1900 B.C. people fled the Habur and Assyrial plains en masse[7]." Up to that, there had been a network of cities in the northern Matum (Habur Plains, the modern Syria) that had been one of the bread baskets of the empire. However, when the drought hit, "the region's new urbanites abruptly left their homes and fled south, abandoning the dries for centuries to come[8]." Micro-variation in climate has also

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[1] Postgate 2005, 7.

[2] Edzard 1994, 860.

[3] Postgate 2005, 7.

[4] Parpola 1982, 148-152; Weiss 2001.

[5] Weiss 1996; 2001; Weiss & al 1993; Wright 1998. However, some scholars, like Norman Yoffee (1995, 282), V.V Struve (1969, 17) and Allen Zagarell (1986, 416f.) discard environmental factors as determinants of social change and emphasise political reasons for the concentration of population to Uruk and other cities.

[6] Weiss 1996, 32.

[7] Weiss 1996, 33.

[8] Wright 1998, 96. Weiss (1996, 36) also reminds that this was the time when Kemetian Old kingdom collapsed, as well as civilisations in Hellas and in Harappa in Indus Valley

occurred in late Old Babylonian (c. 1800-1650 BC) time and in Neo-Babylonian [c. 600-400 BC) time[1].

Climate was also different in different parts of the country. Alluvial plain was dry with only from 10 to 18 centimetres annual rainfall[2]. Between alluvium and Zagros mountain goes the line of 200 mm reliable annual rainfall that barley requires. In practice, however, as Postgate notes,

> a farmer requires a locality which can *depend* on adequate rainfall in at least three years out of five, and this generally corresponds to an annual average of about 300mm… Hence the southern limit of agriculture, and thus of settlement, must always have been a tattered fringe giving onto semi-desert between Tigris and Euphrates and, east of the Tigris, between Zabs and the Diyala.[3]

As seen above, the environment varied vastly from one region to another. There were vast differences between the alluvial plain, mountains and desert. In desert, the water was scarce. In alluvial plain, on the other hand, there occurred floods that could destroy the whole society. In spite of man's adaptation to these environments, there was no security that would guarantee the life. In agricultural society, it is most probable that these environmental factors are somehow explained in country's mythology.

2.2. "In long-ago days, in far-off years[4]" - A Short History of Matum

Civilisation of the Land of Two Rivers emerged long before the written history. Already during its first phase, prehistoric period[5], emerged agriculture and basic structures of society[6]. These structures had been built during the long transition from fisher-hunter-gatherers to sedentary people[7]. Thus, when the Sumerians emerged[8] into the history, they most probably had cultural skills that they applied in the area. Whether

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[1] Potts 1997, 6.

[2] Britannica Online, s.w. Iraq>Land and climate>Climate

[3] Postgate 2005, 13. See also van de Mieroop (2005, 8).

[4] *Tamarisk and date palm* II:1 (ANE II, 1992, 144)

[5] I accept the general view that historical period begins with the invention of scripture and emergence of literal documents.

[6] On prehistory of Matum, see Roux (1992, 33-84). On Uruk period, see, e.g., Edzard (1994), Liverani (1996), McCorriston (1997), *Uruk Mesopotamia & Its Neighbors* (2001), Yoffee (1995), Zagarell (1986).

[7] Pringle 1998; Kabo 1985.

[8] On paradigms on the "Sumerian problem", see, e.g. Roux (1992, 80-84), Potts (1997, 43-55).

or not they were aboriginals of the country, there had been people already for millennia - people who had eloquent culture, large fortressed cities, temples and well developed international trade[1]. It is only the lack of written sources that we do not reconsider these early people as the founders of civilisation.

When we are speaking about Matumian culture, we have to remember that even the written history covers some 4000 years and we have some data even from "the early Neolithic period between 8000 and 6000 B.C.E.[2]." However, what we call Matumian history usually means a period from ca. 3500 BC on up to Alexandros of Macedonia and Hellenism. This necessarily means a vast variance in historical phenomena.

As can be seen in the table 1[3], the history of Matumian culture was longer than European history from Antiquity to modern times. Therefore it is not possible to give a profound historical treatment for it in a short chapter like this. Instead of that, I aim to give only a short overview in order to make other chapters understandable.

In general, it can be said that Matumian culture emerged slowly through many periods after the Neolithic revolution ca. 8000 BC. Circa 5800 BC, there emerged a new innovation, pottery that has helped archaeologists to define the protohistoric periods up to the historical era. As Roux notes, "[e]ach of these periods is characterized by a distinct cultural assemblage and has been named after the site, not necessarily the largest or even the most representative, where this assemblage was first identified[4]." It is important to note that some aspects of Sumerian culture, like irrigation, temples and pantheon, international trade, first signs of writing, etc., emerged in Matum already before Sumerians.

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[1] See, e.g., recent findings in Tell Hamoukar (Gibson 2000; Harms 2000; 2005; Ur 2002; *The Hamoukar Expedition* 2005) and Tell Brak (ancient Nagar - Emberling & McDonald 2002; Lawton 2004; Ur, Armguard & Oates 2007; and Michalowski's nd.) in northern Syria. On Matumian pre-history, in general, see Roux (1992, 48-84).

[2] Watkins 1992, 176.

[3] The information in the table is mainly based on the joint article of Dietz O. Edzard (1994), Wolfram Th. von Soden (1994) and Richard N. Frye (1994) in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. On comparative chronology of Matum and Kemet, see Liverani (2001, 203f.) and *Timeline of Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations* (1995)

[4] Roux 1992, 49.

Table 1: History of Matum[1]			
Period	*Political centre*	*Significant rulers*	*Significant events*
Mesolithic 9000- 7000			Isolated settlements. Hunting-gathering.
Neolithic 7000-5800			Change from food collection to food production.
Protohistory: Hasuna 5800-5500 Samarra 5600-5000 Halaf 5500-4500 Ubaid 5000-3800	Eridu, Uruk		Pottery. Storage buildings. Beginning of irrigation. First temples. First tokens. International trade.
Uruk 3800-3100	Eridu, Uruk, Bad-tabira…	Aululim, Alalgar,	Irrigation, state formation and international trade.
Jemdet Nasr 3100-2900			Cuneiform writing. Flood
Early Dynastic I 2900-2700	Kish, Eanna,	Etana, Meskiaggasher	Control of water supply
Early Dynastic II 2700-2500	Uruk (Erech)	Enmekar, Lugalbanda, Gilgamesh	The heroic age of which epics were written.
Early Dynastic III 2500-2350	Ur, Lagash	Eannatum, Lugalzagesi, Uru-inim-gina	Title 'King of Kish'. World's first social reform.
Akkadan 2350-2180	Akkad	Sargon I (2350-30), Naram-Sin	First empire in Matum. First standing professional army. First self-deifying of a king.
Gutian invasion			
Ur III 2100-2000	Lagash	Gudea, Urnammu	Sumerian Renaissance, Title 'King of Sumer and Akkad'. World's oldest law codex. Epics on Emmerkar, Lugalbanda and Gilgamesh[2].
Aramean & Elamite invasion			
Old Babylonian 2000-1600	Isin, Larsa, Babylon	Hammurabi (1792-50)	Replacement of Sumerian with Akkadian
Kassite 1600-1155	Babylon, Dur Kurigalzu		Light chariot troops. Babylonian as a language of diplomacy. Gold as a basis of currency. Myth of Enuma Elish composed.
Isin II ca. 1155-1000 (Early Iron Age)	Isin	Nebuchadnezzar (1125-04)	Aramites enter Babylonia. The concept of universal sinfulness of mankind.
Assyrian 911-746	Ashur, Kalakh	Ashurnasirpal II (883-59)	Annual military campaigns. Cavalry units and wall-breakers. Mass deportation of subject peoples.[3] First evidence of Chaldeans[4].
Neo-Assyrian Empire 746-609	Kalakh, Dur-Sharrukin (Sargonsburg), Niniveh, Harran	Tiglath-Pileser III (744-27), Shalmanessar V (726-2), Sargon II (721-05), Sennaherib (704-681)	Dominion over Samaria. Unsuccessfull siege of Jerusalem. Falls of Ashur (615), Niniveh (612) and Harran (609).
Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) Empire 626-	Babylon	Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562)	Tower of Babel. Babylonian captivity of Jews (586-556)
Persian Empire 539-321	Persepolis, Susa, Babylon	Cyrus II ( ), Darius I (522-486), Xerxes (486-65)	Title 'King of Babylonia, king of lands'. Statute of Marduk melted 482. End of Babylonian independence.
Hellenistic rule 331-141	Babylon, Antioch, Seleucia	Seleucids	Mixture of satrapic and autonomous Hellene polis rule.

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[1] Chronology of the early Matumian history before 1450 BC. forms a special problem. From that time on, there is a general agreement but the chronology before it depends on how much time separated the end of the first dynasty of Babylon from this date. There are basically three competing chronologies concerning the period before 1450 BC. These chronologies are called short, middle and long chronologies. In this study, I follow the middle chronology. On problems of chronology, see Cryer (1995).

[2] Parpola 1982, 198.

[3] Soden 1994, 879. Roux (1996, 186), in turn mentions that these phenomena occurred only in the time of Tiglath-Pileser III.

[4] Soden 1994, 880. Roux' (1996, 185) reference to nineteenth century must be a mistake.

From ca. 4000 BC began a period that has normally been called 'the Uruk expansion.' It was this period when Sumerian culture emerged to full blossom and its influence reached from Indus to Nile. Circa 3100 BC., a new invention, cuneiform writing came in use and the historical period began. Sumerian dynasties were dominant up to ca. 2300 when they were replaced by Akkadian ones for two hundred years.

After Gutian invasion, so called Ur III dynasty revitalised the Sumerian culture. Ur III lasted some hundred years and fell for the Aramean and Elamite invasion. The reviving society after that is called Old Babylonian culture and it lasted some four hundred years from 2000-1600. It was in this time when Sumer was replaced for good by Akkad as spoken language. This was also the time of Hammurabi.

Old Babylon saw its end with the invasion of Kassites who established their power for the next half millennia, from 1600 to 1150. Invaders, however assimilated to the Babylonian population and from this on, Babylonian became the international diplomatic language.

The end of the first century of the new millennia saw the emergence of the new superpower in the scene. Assyrian rule started from 911 and lasted three hundred years up to 609 when Harran as the last Assyrian large city was occupied.

Neo-Babylonian – or Chaldean dynasty was a short hundred and fifty year episode before the Persian invasion in 482, which led to the end of Matum as an independent political entity. Persian Empire, in all its power and glory, however, was also short episode. It lasted only two hundred years and fell under the Macedonian invasion in 311.

In most times, Matum consisted of rivalling city-states with short-living dynasties. The old idea of strong state with Oriental despot was more an exception than a rule. It was more propaganda than reality. In most times, there existed a similar 'democracy' that we are familiar from ancient Sparté: warriors formed the public assembly and heads of the families formed the council. Moreover, although autocratic rulers like Sargon, Hammurabi, Nebuchadnezzar and others created empires, they let their vassals have some degree of autonomy - as long as they paid their tributes. This tradition of local autonomic 'democracy' also created potential to rebellion when local nobles had means to rise against their ruler. Along other factors, these rebellions weakened the country so much that it faced several foreign invasions. With Persian occupation in the sixth

century BC, the idea of Babylonian state was over. After that, Matum was a province of foreign rulers although there existed autonomous cities, especially in the Hellenistic period.

2.3. "Rays shed light over the land of Sumer and Akkad[1]"– Cultural Context of Matum

Although ethnocentrism was prevalent also in Matumian culture the river basin was in a crossroads of continents and cultures[2]. This led to interaction of people, which in turn, led to sharing of cultural and technological practises – and to new innovations. The significant point in technological development is that once something is known, at least its practical solutions tend to diffuse from upper segments of the society downwards. Thus, applied mathematics helped in defining plough and harvest times, in counting the costs of building projects, in making commercial interactions and administration easier, etc. It was from this application of mathematics in administration and commerce from which the writing grew[3].

The basic unit of the society was a household and it gave a model for other organisations as well[4]. Thus, the temple was the household of the respective god, the town was the household of its main god[5], school was a household of teacher and pupils were his "sons"[6], and palace was the household of the king. However, the country, Matum, itself was never king's sole property[7] but palace was like other noble manors[8]. In this sense, the king was the first among equals. On the other hand, the land was the

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[1] CH, Preamble.

[2] Liverani 2001, 17-33.

[3] On development of writing, see, e.g., Postgate (2005, 51-70).

[4] On Matumian households, see Gelb (1979); van der Toorn (1996, 13-41); *Trade, Traders and the Ancient City* (1998); Schloen (2001); Bertman (2003, 275-280, 285ff.); Postgate (2005, 88-108). See also Weber's (1976, 42-46) discussion on the *oikos* economy in Antiquity.

[5] Proponents of the view that land was communal property, which was formally own by the city god, have been, among others, Schneider (1921); Deimel (1931), Polanyi (1944, 50ff.), Falkenstein (1974) and Frankfort (1978).

[6] Saggs 1965, 77; Lucas 1979, 312f.; Kaster 1980 (1962), 27; Potts 1997, 301.

[7] Mendelsohn 1949, 106.

[8] This does not mean that king did not own significant proportions of land. On the contrary, he got landed property especially as booty. However, it means that when a king wanted a plot inside the country, he had to buy it like any other citizen.

property of gods and the king was representing them. In this sense, king administered the power of gods over the whole country.

The household model meant that the head of the household was responsible for the well-being of its members. Thus, if the father of the house could not do it, then it was the head of the clan, the temple and, finally, the palace that was responsible for the care[1]. The other side of the coin was that the head of the house had power over its members. In the society level, this led to a hierarchy in which everyone was under someone's authority – even the king was a slave/servant of gods[2].

Ancient Matum was an urban society. Urbanisation meant that majority of the population was packed into the cities[3]. This in turn meant noise and lack of privacy[4] as well as potential for high mortality due to plagues[5]. On the other hand, urbanisation meant also concentration of knowledge and skills in strategic locations. In this sense, ancient Uruk was the 'Silicon Valley' of its time.[6]

However, in spite of high urbanisation, cities lived in symbiosis with the agricultural countryside and with the nomadic tribes[7]. This meant interaction of ideas and customs as well. Both gave and received for the benefit of both. Additionally, the remote areas served as a last refuge and hiding place to the escaped slaves, indebted peasants, criminals and others who wanted to avoid the law – until the next general amnesia.

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[1] This ancient version of "subsidiarity principle" can be found in the *Code of Hammurabi* § 32 (King 2004).

[2] The same idea can be seen in the Bible where even Messiah is *eved JHVH* (slave/servant of God).

[3] Robert McC. Adams (1981, 75) calculate that, depending on location, 40-70 percent of population in the later half of the Uruk period lived in urban environment. Susan Pollock (2001, table 5), in turn, gives even higher proportions (ca. 69-77%).

[4] Van der Toorn 1996, 18f. This noise found its way to mythology as well. *Atrahasis Epic* II:i (MfM) tells how Enlil got tired to the noise of humans and convinced the assembly of gods to destroy humanity.

[5] Rodney Stark (1996, 73-77) reviews the studies on 165 AD smallpox(?) epidemic, "Plague of Galen," that swept through the Roman empire. He estimates that mortality in the whole empire was from one quarter to one third. A century later, another plague swept over the empire and, according to church father Dionysios' account, killed two thirds of Alexandria's population.

[6] On Matumian cities, see *City Invincible* (1960); Falkenstein (1974); Larsen (1976); Richard (1987); Stone (1995; 2005); Potts (1997, 208-219); Gates (2003, 29-66); Postgate (2005, 73-83); Ur, Karsgaard & Oates (2007)

[7] On Matumian nomadism, see Schwartz (1995); Sherrat (1996); Postgate (2005, 83-87); Castillo (2005).

2.4. "I have brought… prosperity to the land[1]" - Economic Context of Matum

Ancient Matum was rich of some resources but poor of the others. In short, The Land had lots of clay, fertile land, water, reed, fish and sunshine. Although wood and rock were not absent, they were not so plenty that all of them would be available in the Land.

Already since the Uruk period, the Matumian agriculture was based on both planting crops in irrigated fields and herding animals in less fertile areas. Moreover, agricultural products were aimed both for nutrition and for raw material of industry. Major agricultural plants were barley, wheat, einkorn, sesame and flax as well as numerous vegetables, fruits and spices. Major domesticated animals were goats, sheep, pigs and birds for consumption, cattle, asses and horses for traction and carrying and dogs for company and protection. These products provided both food and raw materials to clothes, cords, bags, nets, etc.[2]

Stephen Bertman makes a good summary of the impact of the natural resources on the society:

> [T]he scarcity of the natural resources[stone, timber, minerals] encouraged foreign trade and the rise of a merchant class as the Mesopotamians exchanged agricultural products and textiles for the commodities they lacked.[3]

Since the agriculture was based on irrigation, it required highly developed co-operation. Thus, the institutions that were able to organise the work were also economic centres of the country. Such organisations in Matum were temples, palace, large individual households and, possibly, different village communities[4].

The land ownership was originally partly communal and partly private in Sumer. Communal land was understood as property of some god[5]. Some of this god-owned

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[1] CH, Epilogue.

[2] On natural resources in Matum, see, for example, Oppenheim (1977, 42-48), Potts (1997, 56-121), Postgate (2005, 157-190)

[3] Bertman 2003, 4.

[4] On village communities, see Diakonoff (1975; 1985) and Powell (1986).

[5] The Sumerian temple-state-hypothesis was first presented by Anna Schneider (1921) and Anton Deimel (1931) and modified by Adam Falkenstein (1974). It was strongly supported by Karl Polanyi's (1944, 50-53; 1968, 13-16; 1977, 40ff.) thesis of the redistributive economy, Karl Wittfogel's (1957) and Julian Steward's (1949) hydraulic civilizations model and Marxist idea of the primitive communism (see, e.g. Tyumenev 1969, 71). On reviews of the theory, see Foster (1981) and Robertson (1995).

land were cultivated by temple itself or leased to tenants. Other parts of temple land were parcelled to families as their lot. As a consequence, there was a ban to sell this land. In time, the land of families was seen more and more as their own and not just as a loan. This led to the commodification of land to some extend. At first, this restriction to sell the land was bypassed by adopting the buyer[1] but later this ban was lifted and all land became private property that could be sold[2]. In the same time temples lost their independent status and became part of the state bureaucracy under the king[3].

However, there had always been also private land and private land ownership was always respected. Especially Igor M. Diakonoff has argued that there were kin-based village organisations which owned communally the land.[4]

In spite of the huge role of the temples and palaces, peasants and free artisans were the backbone of Matumian production. Private farms ranged from small parcels to large manors but all together they produced the majority of Matumian agricultural crops. In the same way, industry was based on free artisans who worked either as entrepreneurs or as hired workers for others. The use of slaves was minimal in agriculture or in industry.[5]

Along with agriculture, the other pillar of Matumian economy was trade. It was through trade that Matumian society got those materials that did not exist in the country. In time, the trade shifted from the supervision of great organisations (temple and palace) to private enterprises.[6]

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[1] Liverani 1996, 32; van der Toorn 1996, 25f.

[2] Zagarell 1986, 416 following Gelb 1979.

[3] Tyumenev 1969, 70-9; Lamberg-Karlovsky 2000, 15, 18. On the relationship between state and temple in the first millennium, see Dandamayev (1979).

[4] Diakonoff 1975; 1985.

[5] Mendelsohn 1949, 106-119; Finley 1968, 308; Gelb 1972b, 82f.; Dandamayev 1984, 49-54, 250-278, 509f., 568-626.

[6] The question of trade is another heat question among scholars. Basically, the frontiers are between Polanyian substantialists, who argue for the state-led trade, and formalists, who argue for the private enterprises.

2.5. "After kingship had descended from heaven[1]" - Political Context of Matum

The early cities of Matum grew out from tribal alliances and they grew around three functions: they were political centres, nodes of trade and seats of the gods[2]. According to Lamberg-Karlovsky there were two competing system in early Matumian society: in the south, there were theocracies and in the north, there were territorial kingdoms[3]. In the early stages of Sumerian states, the high priest, *ensi*, of the major god in each town acted as a leader of the assembly of warriors and council of elders[4]. His major tasks were keeping the contact with gods and ensure that the 'divine organisation' was implemented on earth. War-chiefs were nominated for temporal offices for the war-time – a bit like dictators in the republican Rome. When wars became chronic, they achieved power on the civil issues as well and Matumian societies turned from theocracies to kingships also in the south.[5]

Kings took many of the religious duties of the former high priest – especially those concerning the mediating between gods and humans. The former priest kings of several cities were reduced as governors.[6]

The political landscape of early Matum was occupied by many city-states that only occasionally were united as one empire. These empires, however, were more exception than rule. This occasional unification of the land left, however, an idea of the united Matum, where the kingship was seen as continuous – in spite that the throne shifted from family to family and from town to town. It was only after Sargon, that a large empire became a dominant model of political organisation. Both Babylonian and Assyrian empires got this model from Akkad.[7]

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[1] The Sumerian King List (SKL).

[2] Stone 1995, 235.

[3] Lamberg-Karlovsky 2000, 14.

[4] Jacobsen 1970; 1976, 86-91, 167-191; Bertman 2003, 64ff. The Sumerian political order is described in *Gilgamesh and Akka* (ESTCL t.1.8.1.1), *Atarahasis Epic* (ANET 104-106) and *Enuma Elish* (ANE I, 31-39).

[5] Diakonoff 1969, 181; Jacobsen 1976, 77ff., 83, 172-186; Frankfort 1978, 215-221.

[6] Jakobson & Dandamaev 1996; Frankfort 1978, 227.

[7] Diakonoff 1969; Tyumenev 1969. The ideology of permanent sacral kingship was established in the *Sumerian King List* (ETCSL t.2.1.1.)

In these city-states and empires, a king had to compete with the power of the noble families who controlled the temples through the general assembly and through relatives in high priestly offices[1]. However, as Frankfort emphasises, the assembly was mostly unable to make a decision and, thus, that "[a] leader able to bring about consensus under those conditions must have possessed exceptional wisdom, strength of character, and command of language[2]." Thus, king's power was mostly based on his demagogic skills. Along this, the power of the palace was also secured by kings own resources which he got from warfare. The development of warfare techniques (chariot forces) required such investments that only the king had and this, in turn, led to the king's instead of citizen's army. This was a self-feeding system since wars were fought in order to get minerals, to control of mercantile nodes and (in the case of invaders) to achieve the treasures and fertile land – and occupations were the property of the victor, the king. Thus, the more a successful king was involved in the war, the richer he became and the more influence he got.

In time, ancient Matumian kingship developed two significant practices. First, along with writing, kings expressed their will in the form of written legislation[3]. Second, kings often declared universal amnestied from debts[4]. The previous harmonised the standards on crimes and their punishments as well as directed the accepted conventions. The latter, in turn, was a powerful mechanism to stabilise the society and to ensure the existence of the middle class in the country.

3. "In those days, in those years[5]" - Historical Changes in Matumian Religion

Matumian religion is known from documents for more than 3000 years. During this time it faced many changes – but remained the same, as well. In his classical work *The*

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[1] Jacobsen 1943, 159-72; 1957, 99-109; Bailkey 1967, 1212ff.

[2] Frankfort 1978, 219.

[3] Zaccagnini 1994; Postgate (2005, 275-291) The first known written laws in the world are *The Law of Ur-Nammu* (ANE II, 31-34) from third dynasty of Ur (ca. 2100 BC), *Laws of Eshnunna* (ANE I 133-138) from little later and *The Law of Lipit-Ishtar* (Steele 1947) from 1930 BC. There are also fragments of written laws already from Akkadian period (Halsall 1999; *Sumerian Laws* ANEII, 35f.) and from Urukagina (ca. 2400 BC), the first social reformer. However, the best known of these laws is the *Code of Hammurabi* (King 2004).

[4] Hanson 1994, 13. An example of such amnesties is *The Edict of Ammisaduga* (ANE II, 36-41).

[5] *Adapa* A, 5 (ANE I, 76).

Religion of Babylonia and Assyria, Morris Jastrow Jr[1] noted that the first stage of the Matumian religion was animistic "mixture of local and nature cults." This meant that all natural phenomena and all places had their own deities. However, in this plurality, some spirits exercised "a more decisive influence upon the affairs of man than others." This led to "preponderance to the worship of the sun and moon and the water, and of such natural phenomena as rain, wind, and storms, with their accompaniment of thunder and lightning, as against the countless spirits believed to be lurking everywhere." The latter could not, however, be ignored since the production also depended on the benevolence of the deity of the particular piece of land where the crop was planted. Thus, the Matumian religion was a mixture of serving these natural phenomena and local deities. As Jastrow puts it, "each Babylonian city, large or small, would in this way obtain a deity devoted to its welfare."[2]

Geographical factors influenced in the Matumian pantheon to a great degree. According to Willem H. P. Römer, there can be seen "a clear difference between conceptions from sedentary (chthonic) and non-sedentary (cosmic) strata of the population" and this had an impact on the religion as well. Farmers who were dependent on irrigation for fertility of land favoured chthonic gods while hunters and shepherds who lived in arid steppes and were depended on rainfall favoured cosmic gods. This distinction goes roughly between Sumerian and Akkadian population.[3]

Römer underlines the significance of the difference between lifestyles and theologies as follows:

> Because of their extraction and original living conditions, the relationship to the divine powers of these steppe dwellers differed from that of the sedentary inhabitants of the alluvial agrarian land with their efforts at order, regularity and security. Desert gods, such as those of Syria and Palestine where fertility depends on rainfall and not on inundation, are characterised more by power and arbitrariness than by a desire for order... The concept of god… is therefore characterised by two features in particular: personal will-power and might. Related to this is also their endeavour to give a personized representation of the divine, by which the feeling of dependence is given a personal aspect. One no longer feels caught up in an inexorable and unvarying cycle, but is as a servant before one's lord, a son before one's father (cf. the organisation of the Bedouin tribes under their Šēh's!).[4]

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[1] Jastrow's work from 1898 is outdated but, unfortunately, replaceable.

[2] Jastrow 1898, 48f.

[3] Römer 1969, 122, 126. See also Jacobsen 1976, 25.

[4] Römer 123f.

According to Thorkild Jacobsen, in Matumian religion one can find three distinctive phases. Gods were presented as *élam vital*, the spiritual cores of phenomena; as great rulers; and as parents.[1]

3.1. "Holy Inanna gave Dumuzi as a substitute[2]" - Gods as Numinal Powers

First, before and during the fourth millennium BC, the worship centred on natural and other numinal powers. In this phase, numinous power was not distinguished from the phenomena in which the power was revealed. Natural powers were identified as gods. Thus, storm was a god, water was a god, sun was a god, etc.[3] In general, Jacobsen states that

> [t]he various city gods in whom the early settlers trusted appear to be powers in the basic economies characteristic of the region in which their cities were situated. Thus in the south we find a group of city gods closely related to marsh life and its primary economies, fishing and hunting; Enki, god of the fresh water and of vegetable and animal mash life in Eridu in the west, and, in the east, Nanshe, goddess of fish… Along the lower Euphrates deities of orchardmen alternate with deities of cowherders…. Farther north, in a half-circle around the central grassland of the *Edin* lie the cities of the sheepherders (Uruk, Bad-tibira, Umma and Zabalan) with their chief deities, Dumuzi the shepherds and his bride Inanna. To the north and east lie cities of the farmers, Shuruppak and Eresh, with grain goddesses like Ninlil, Ninshebargunu and Nidaba; Nippur with Enlil, wind god and god of the hoe, and his son Ninurta, god of the thundershowers and of the plow.[4]

This phase was the time when "the dying god, power of fertility and plenty, is a typical figure[5]."

Dying god theme is presented especially in the stories dealing with Dumuzi and his bride Inanna. Jacobsen emphasises that there was no one Dumuzi cult but "the figure of the god tends on closer view to divide into different aspects, each with the power of particular basic economy emphasised and each with its own characteristic segment of ritual events." He identifies four forms of this fertility god: Dumuzi of the date palm

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[1] Jacobsen 1976, 20f.
[2] Inana's descent to the nether world 410 (ETCSL t.1.4.1.)
[3] On numinal gods, see Jacobsen (1976, 5-9).
[4] Jacobsen 1976, 25.
[5] Jacobsen 1976, 21.

(Dumuzi-Amaushumgalanna), Dumuzi the shepherd, Dumuzi of the grain and Damu, the child.[1]

Although nominally the same god, he was framed differently in these traditions. As Jacobsen tells, in the date palm metaphor, he is "a personification of the power behind the yearly burgeoning of the palm and its producing its yield of dates; he is, in fact, the power in and behind the date harvest." His bride, Inanna, in turn, is the numen of the storehouse who has captured him and made his fruit as property of the community.[2] In the stories of Dumuzi-Amaushumgalanna the god, according to Jacobsen,

> was the power in the fertility and yield of the date palm only,… but as the cities drew a variety of economies into their orbit… the purview of the cult broadened so as to make its god stand for a general fertility and yield.[3]

In the shepherd stories, Dumuzi is not any more Amaushumgalanna but 'The Wild Bull[4]' In this metaphor, the emphasis is on mating since through "mating flows the herder's prosperity: increase of flocks and herds, newborn lambs, kids, and calves, plentiful milk from the full udders of the mother animals." The prosperity is not collected into a warehouse but is wandering in the pastures under the supervision of the shepherd.[5]

One of the most famous Sumerian stories is *Inanna's descent to the nether world*[6]. Jacobsen thinks that

> [t]he story seems to be composed of no less than three separate myths, each dealing with dying and reviving god, which are combined so that revival of one deity is the cause of, or coincides with, the death of another. The revival of Inanna becomes the cause of the death of Dumuzi, and the revival of Dumuzi – at least for half of the year – depends of the death of Geshtinanna [Dumuzi's sister].[7]

Tentatively Jacobsen explains the descent of Inanna to netherworld as "the time of year when food supplies are at their most critical point, which is late winter when the stories in the storehouse dwindle and finally come to an end." Metaphorically, the storehouse dies. Dumuzi of grain dies in spring "when the grain is cut at harvest and then brewed into beer which goes into storage underground: that is to say, into the

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[1] Jacobsen 1976, 26f.

[2] Jacobsen 1986, 36f.,

[3] Jacobsen 1986, 43.

[4] Jacobsen (1986, 44) explains that "'Wild Bull' was a Sumerian metaphor for 'shepherd' – originally, probably for 'cowherd'."

[5] Jacobsen 1986, 47.

[6] ETCSL t. 1.4.1.

[7] Jacobsen 1986, 62.

netherworld." Accordingly, Inanna arises when the storehouse is fulfilled. Dumuzi's sister, Geshtinanna, in turn, is the goddess of wine and the grape is harvested in autumn. Thus, when Dumuzi goes into the netherworld in the spring, his sister releases her in the autumn and goes there as a replacement of him for the next half year.[1]

Finally, in the Damu stories, Dumuzi is the sap in trees and vegetation combined with the arising of the dead god to the land of living. Like in the Dumuzi of the grain stories, these stories are centred on the theme of mother and/or sister seeking the death god[2].

Jastrow concluded his Dumuzi treatment by noting that

> its ritual and metaphorical patterns of wooing and wedding, death and lament, were widespread and typical, for traces and parallels are to be found in the lore of almost every major ancient Mesopotamian god. Wooing and wedding occur in myth and ritual also associated with Enlil, Nanna/Suen, and Ninurta/Ningirsu; while near-death, death, or descent to the netherworld is told (in one form or another) also of An, Enlil, Enki, Nanna/Suen, Ninurta/Ningirsu, Utu, Ishkur, and Inanna. They would seem, therefore, to constitute the forms of approach to the numinous generally available.

3.2. "They erected for him a princely throne[3]" - Gods as Rulers

During the third millennium, the frame started to change along with changes in the society, especially with the rise of kingship. Gods were not any more seen as natural powers but masters of these powers. They were seen as rulers and - contrary to natural powers, which just existed without acting - actors in the universe. Continuity to the old views was seen in the understanding that each god in the pantheon had a limited sphere where (s)he ruled.

With the unification of the country, there emerged both syncretisation and assimilation of gods. When a city grew, the lesser deities were assimilated to the town god or turn them to a subservient position. Jastrow describes this tendency as follows:

> The uniformity of the spirit world, which is the characteristic trait of primitive Animism, gave way to a differentiation regulated by the political development and the social growth of Babylonia: The more important natural forces became gods, and the inferior ones were, as general thing, relegated to the secondary position of mere spirits like the *jinns* in Arabic beliefs. Only in the case of the

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[1] Jacobsen 1986, 62f.

[2] Best known of Damu stories is *In the desert in the early grass* (Jacobsen 1986, 63-66).

[3] *Enuma elish* IV,1 (ANET 66)

> guardian spirit of an entire city or district, would there result… an elevation to the grade of deity, in the proper sense of the word. In many cases, however, this guardian deity might be a heavenly body, as the moon or sun or stars… or some force of the nature… or… the protecting deity might, in the course of time, become identified with one of the forces of the nature.[1]

A typical example of the transformation of a god can be seen in the case of Enlil. According to Jastrow, he was originally a local deity but extended "his power to the grande of a great 'lord' over a large district." After that he was dissociated "from local origins to become the supreme lord of the lower world." Finally, his name and power were transferred to his 'son[2]', the patron god of Babylon, Marduk.[3]

Some gods, if not forgotten after the conquest of their country, became as officials in the service of the leading god – just like previous independent *ensis* became governors in their respective cities. This process is described, for example, in *Enki and the World Order*[4] and *Enuma Elish*[5]. Bots stories tell how Enki or Marduk, after creating the world, appointed lesser gods as overseers of various natural phenomena.[6]

The invention of writing modified Matumian understanding of cosmology in several aspects. First, like earthly palaces, also gods had scribes who kept account on all those who are to die each day. Second, like the earthly scribe had things done by the act of writing, similarly gods were supposed to do. This writing could be seen everywhere and this metaphor was the main source of astrology, which was basically an attempt to read "heavenly writing[7]." Third, like an earthly scribe could command – in the name of a king – his subjects, similarly different kinds of amulets had 'commands' to evil spirits to keep away from the amulet bearer. Similarly, inscriptions carved in stones in mountain slopes and in gorges aimed to relate the king to gods in magical way.[8]

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[1] Jastrow 1898, 49. He also points out that the systematisation of the pantheon partly occurred before the political unification of the country (Jastrow 1898, 133).

[2] The metaphor of 'son' in divine world has several connotations. According to Jastrow (1915, 197), "[t]his relationship of father and son is merely the formula to find a place for two deities associated with the same centre, or to indicate a control of one centre by the other." However, in Marduk's case, it was more question of change of generation (in the sense of transferring a farm to a descendant). Like a retired farmer, Enlil kept always the status of senior lord who might give advices but let the his competent son run the business.

[3] Jastrow 1898, 53ff.

[4] ETCSL 1.1.3.

[5] ANE I, 31-39

[6] Jacobsen 1976, 20f.; 75-143.

[7] On divination in Matum, see Rochberg 1999; 2004.

[8] Oppenheim 1977, 231, 234f.

3.3. "To the god, my father[1]" - Gods as Parents

During the second millennium, there emerged a new metaphor. Instead of rulers, gods were seen as parents of the worshipper. In this the relationship between god and human changed: former slave or servant became a child. [2]

Jacobsen argues that

> in terms of insight and depth, the second millennium B.C. can rightly be said to mark the high point of ancient Mesopotamian religious achievement. The millennium that followed contributed no major new insights, rather it brought in many ways decline and brutalization.[3]

According to Jacobsen, the first millennium's brutality and ever-present death increased interest in the transcendent world and old stories explaining the Netherworld were elaborated[4]. Along with this interest, the images of deities changed again. Gods were seen as crude, incestuous and without moral. Epics like *Erra and Ishum[5]* and *Dynasty of Dunnum* were crude and ritual became lacking in sensitivity.[6]

Along with these trends, gods of political enemies became enemies themselves. Wars were basically fights between these gods – and the loser was under the mercy (or mercilessness) of the winner. It was during this period when temples and statues of gods were destroyed. Destruction of Marduk's temple in Babylon is one good example – as well as the temple of Jerusalem.[7]

Along with the brutality of the first millennium, the parent metaphor continued. It was often expressed in childlike helplessness and dependency on one's personal god. In the political sphere, this attitude is well expressed in the Old Testament concept of 'holy war' where man's role is just to watch in awe when his god acts.[8]

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[1] Old Babylonian letter to a god (translated in Jacobsen 1976, 160)

[2] Jacobsen 1976, 20f.; 147-164.

[3] Jacobsen 1976, 224.

[4] Jacobsen (1976, 229) mentions the mechanical addition of the last part of the Sumerian story *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld* to *Gilgamesh Epic* as its 12th tablet. Another example was the elaborated version of *Nergal and Ereshkigal*.

[5] Garri 1977; Foster 2005, 880-911.

[6] Jacobsen 1976, 231.

[7] Jacobsen 1976, 230ff.

[8] Jacobsen 1976, 236ff.

4. "In the heart of Abzu was Marduk created[1]" – Matumian Cosmology

4.1. "Sumer, great mountain, land of heaven and earth[2]" - Matumian Universe

Transcendent world was as true to ancient Matumians as the immanent one. Therefore, the cosmology naturally included everything in and between earth and heaven. Basically, the universe was framed into two layers: heaven and earth as Samuel N. Kramer states:

> The Sumerian expression for "universe" is *an-ki*, literally "heaven-earth." The organization of the universe may therefore be subdivided into that of heaven and that of earth. Heaven consists of the sky and the space above the sky which is called the "great above"; here dwell the sky-gods. Earth consists of the surface of the earth and the space below which is called the "great below"; here dwell the underworld or chthonic deities.[3]

According to Armas Salonen Babylonian universe, which was basically the same as the old Sumerian one, was constructed so that

> [h]eaven (*an* in Sumerian, *shamū* in Akkadian) was a solid hemisphere, which had been placed above the earth with its convex side upwards (picture [1]). It was divided to three parts: uppermost, made of liludanītu-stone, was the residence of Anu, the god of heaven; the middle one, made of saggilmut-stone, was the home of Igigi, the gods of heaven – most importantly, there sat the Lord, i.e. supreme god Marduk in his throne in a lazure stone sanctuary; lowest, which was of blue jaspis-stone, was the heaven that mortals saw. According to other views, there were four more heavens above Anu's – thus all together seven heavens… This enormous heavenly construction lied on a "foundation" which meant the

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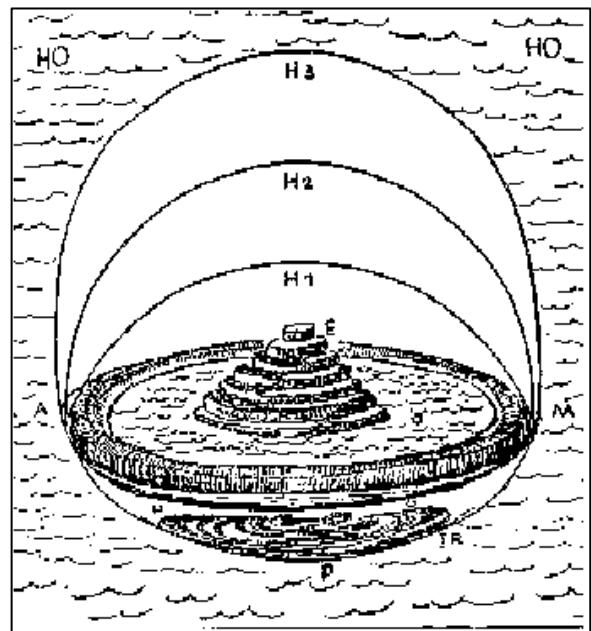
[1] *Enuma elish* (Mesopotamian Cosmogony, ANET, 60-72).

[2] Enki and the world order 192 (ETCSL t. 1.1.3.

[3] Kramer 1961, 41.

horizon. It was surrounded by the sea of heaven to which it was attached with large poles. A round wall protected it from water –like some earthly palace.[1]

Earth, in turn

was a round hemisphere like quppu-guffa ship with its convex side downwards. Likewise, it was divided into three parts: uppermost was the residence of Enlil, the god of earth, and humans; the middle one was the home of Ea, the god of water and in the bottom there were the living quarters of 600 Anunnaki gods of underworld. According to other opinions, also earth was divided into seven layers.[2]

In the west, behind the twin mountains of sunset, there was a gateway to netherworld. It was surrounded by seven (or 14) walls with one gate in each. This was the dominion of Ereshkigal, the queen of netherworld, who ruled over the deceased with the 600 Anunnaki.[3]

4.2. "In the days when heaven and earth were created[4]." – Matumian Cosmogonies

Cosmogonies of Matumian though are expressed in several legends depending on the region. According to Morris Jastrow, the poems that have been preserved are compositions of priests who have aimed to systematise the different traditions[5].

The main theme in Sumerian and Babylonian cosmogonies is the emergence of the world from primordial water, its organisation and development. Along this main theme, there are numerous sub-themes that explain etiologically why things are as they are.

The older Sumerian cosmogony can only be reconstructed by pieces of fragments in various texts. In general, the ultimate origin of all beings is the primeval sea (abzu) personified as goddess Nammu[6]. She gave birth to both male sky god An[7] and female

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[1] Salonen (1945, 570f. – my translation from original Finnish). Picture by W. Schwenzner from Meissner (1920 Abb 27).

[2] Salonen (1945, 570ff. – my translation from original Finnish).

[3] Salonen 1945, 572.

[4] *Enki and Ninmah* (ETCSL t. 1.1.2., 1)

[5] Jastrow 1898, 407f.

[6] Nammu was the personification of subterranean water. In Eridu theology she seems to have had the same role as Tiamat in Babylonian *Enuma elish* (ANE I, 31-39). Later she was seen as Mother-Earth. (Römer 1969, 122; Jacobsen 1976, 113). In the myth *Enki and Ninmah* (ETCSL t.1.1.2, 12-23) she is called Enki's mother and creator of mankind. In the Neo-Assyrian myth, *Nergal and Ereshkigal* (ANE II, 6) she is addressed as "the pure god".

[7] The name of ancient Sumerian god, An (Anum in Akkadian), simply means heaven. He may originally

earth goddess Ki (or Ninhursag) [1] who were parents of all other gods[2]. Up to 2500 BC it seems that An was the head of the pantheon but then the role was transferred to Enlil (Lord of Lil, atmosphere, Akkadian Bel)[3]. He was the air-god who separated heaven and earth and heaven was given to An, atmosphere and earth to Enlil and underworld to Ereshkigala[4].

From this on, as Jacobsen puts it, "the organization of the cosmos parallels the organization of an estate with its varied tasks." Enki is like a crown prince and co-regent in the pantheon, and lord of his own domain. Enlil's younger brother, Enki[5] acts as some sort of minister of Enlil and, in the myth *Enki and World Order*[6], organises the world - Euphrates and Tigris, rains, agriculture, builders' craft, wildlife, husbandry, weaving, etc. - and appoints special gods as overseers of them. Jacobsen points that here is a significant change in the frame of pantheon. These gods are not anymore natural powers[7] but persons who are responsible on them under the rule of Enlil. This "implies that all of the universe was under the same law and the same judge." This thinking had, according to Jacobsen, significant influence on the understanding of kingship and it gave rise to the idea of 'just war'. Since Enki had organised the world in a just way, any violation against it (like changing boundaries of states) was a violation against the

have belonged to herder's pantheon (one of his epithets is 'Fecund Breed-Bull'). His role in cult was relatively small but in theogony he was central. As a father of gods, he was the head of pantheon and, along with Enlil and Ea, one of the three principal gods. His consort was Antum who was later replaced as a queen of heaven by their daughter Inanna/Ishtar. Although An/Anum was source of fertilitising rain, he was also hostile to humans and the seven evil spirits and dreaded demon Lamashtum are his offspring. As a heavenly king, An/Anum was an ultimate source of authority and kingship was derived from his authority (Römer 1969, 127; Jacobsen 1976, 95-98)

[1] Ki, or more often, Ninhursag (queen of the mountains) has also names Ninmah, the exalted lady, and Nintu, the lady who give birth). In the myths, she is the most frequent opponent of Enki (Jacobsen 1976, 112).

[2] Porter 1993, 62; Siren 2000.

[3] Enlil/Bel was the principal god of Nippur, religious centre of Sumer. He was the natural force experienced by a farmer. He is the spring wind that brings nature back to life. His consort is grain goddess Ninlil/Sud (daughter of the god of stores, Haia and barley goddess Ninshebargunu/Nidaba) and his son is the god of plough and spring thunderstorms Ninurta/Ningirsu. (Jacobsen 1976, 99). However, later he become a universal god who, as Römer (1969, 128) puts it, "also protected the hostile foreign regions and punished Sumer if it sinned against these countries, and of course vice versa." On Enlil/Bel, see Jastrow 1898, 140ff., 145-150; Römer 1969, ; Jacobsen 1976, 98-104.

[4] Ereshkigala was the lord of the netherworld or 'the land of no return'.

[5] Enki/Ea was the personification of numinous power of sweet waters. He is usually pictured with two streams (Euphrates and Tigris) flowing from his shoulders. He was the fertilizer of both plants and animals since Sumerians did not mane a difference between water and semen. In the same time, he gives plasticity to clay and, thus, he is an artisan god. (Jacobsen 1976, 110f.). On Enki/Ea, see Römer (1969, 129), Jacobsen (1976, 110-116), Jastrow (1989, 132-142), Kramer (1989).

[6] ETCSL t.1.1.3.

[7] Natural powers have not ethics - they do not care whether a man is good or bad.

cosmic order and, as such, crime that should be punished. In executing the punishment, the king only served Enlil.[1]

Babylonian cosmogony is better known than Sumerian. The official version of it[2] is expressed in the epic *Enuma Elish*[3] that was composed perhaps in the early part of the second millennium BC and read aloud in every New Year festival. According to Thorkild Jacobsen, although "the progression from initial anarchy to primitive democracy to monarchy" - i.e., Marduk's attainment of permanent kingship in universe - was the main theme, the legend has several layers. One sub-theme is the question of parricide. It is a story of conflict of generations and killing of both one's father and mother. Jacobsen explains this later theme by a statement that it explained how Babylon waged a war against its 'mother', Sumer, 'Land of Tiamat', and conquered her.[4]

Jacobsen divides the epic in four parts. In the beginning existed a primordial couple Abzu (or Apsu, god of subterranean waters) and Tiamat (goddess of salt waters) whose powers were mingled in primordial chaos. From them emerged Lahmu and Lahamu, who still were similar to their parents. Jacobsen note that their names indicate that they represent silt in the ocean[5].

It is only from the third generation, Anshar (Heaven) and Kishar (Earth)[6] that the order begins to emerge. First emerged inhabitants of heaven, Anshar and Kishar's son Anu/An[7] and their grandsons, Enlil/Bel and Nudimmud/Enki/Ea as well as other gods. Heaven was ordered as a court where Abzu was a king and Mummu as his vizier.

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[1] Jacobsen 1976, 85f.

[2] Another version of cosmology is in *The Babylonian Theogony* (ANE II, 26ff.), which tells that the first divine couple was Hain and Earth who begot the next pair of gods, Amakandu and Sea. From this on, the story is full of rebellion and incest: Amakandu marries his mother Earth, killed his father - and was overthrown by his son, Lahar, who has married his sister Sea. A third cosmogony is presented in the *Toothache Incantation* (ANE I, 75), which starts with a cosmogonic preface. According to this preface everything was created in sequence: Anu created heaven, heaven earth, earth the rivers, the rivers canals, canals march, and the marsh created the worm that caused toothache.

[3] ANE I, 31-39; ANE II,1-5.

[4] Jacobsen 1976, 186-190 (quot. 186).

[5] Jacobsen 1976, 168.

[6] According to Jastrow (1898, 415f.) 'An' refers to "the one that embraces all that is above" and 'Shar' is in connection to Babylonian word 'king'. Thus, Anshar means actually 'king of heaven'. 'Ki', in turn, "is the ideographic form for earth." Jacobsen (1976, 168) explains them as horizon: circular rim of heaven and circular rim of earth.

[7] On An/Anu, see Jastrow 1898, 152-156; Jacobsen 1976, 95-98.

When Nudimmud/Enki/Ea and his brothers banded together, "they disturbed Tiamat as they surged back and forth", as the epic tells. Since peace and harmony were the most valued issues, Abzu aimed to destroy his descendants[1]. Jacobsen points that the basic conflict was between "two opposed principles: the forces of motion and activity (the gods), and the forces of inertia and rest (the older generation of powers)[2].

When, as Jacobsen explains, in this virtual anarchy, there was no means for younger gods to defend themselves collectively, Ea made a *coup d'etat* and slew Abzu with a magic spell that put Abzu to deep sleep. He placed sleeping Abzu in his sacred chamber, which got its name, Abzu, according to its prisoner[3]. With her wife, Damkina, he begot Marduk "in the heart of Abzu." He also established some sort of primitive democracy where gods were independent and common action was taken only seldom.[4]

Meanwhile Tiamat became furious of the slaying of her consort and started a counter-revolution with a group of other gods, her new consort, Kingu as her war-chief. While in the first group gods were frightened on Tiamat's forces, they were however able to appoint Marduk[5] as their war chief. Marduk came forth, slew Tiamat and returned the power back to Assembly of gods. However, as a reward, the Assembly elevated him as the permanent king of gods.

From this on, Marduk played dominant role in cosmogony. He split Tiamat's body "like a shellfish into two parts" and made other part as sky and other part as solid earth that separated sky and underworld. On earth he established Babylon as a mirror of heaven and from Kingu's blood and bones he ordered Ea to create the human. Thus, while in Sumerian mythologies Enki organised the world on behalf of Enlil, in Babylonian mythologies, Marduk took Enlil's (and partly Enki/Ea's) role.

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[1] Same motive lies behind the Matumian story of Deluge: humans were too noisy and disturbed the harmony of gods.

[2] Jacobsen 1976, 170.

[3] According to Jacobsen (1976, 172) "Apsu sank into an eternal sleep - that sleep which holds the sweet waters underground motionless and still. Directly above them was established Ea's abode, the temple in Eridu built on the waters of a lagoon." Thus, the epic also gives etiological explanation of the existence of the Ea's temple in Eridu.

[4] Jacobsen 1976, 172, 183ff.

[5] In the epic Marduk replaced Enki's son Asariluhi (Römer 1969, 134f.) Asariluhi was worshipped in Eridu.

All in all, both Sumerian and Babylonian cosmogonies emphasise that water is the source of the whole cosmos and all life. Both traditions tell that there were several generations of gods who succeeded each other until the primeaeval chaos was replaced by cosmic order under kingship of one god. Since human society reflected the divine order[1], existing social order was legitimised and seen as determined. In the same way, law and ethics were not seen as negotiated but as heavenly decrees that all people were to obey.

4.3. "The great Anunnaki, who degree the fate[2]." – Matumian Pantheons

PANTHEON of Matumian religion was enormous. There is estimation that the early Sumerian pantheon contained some 3,000 deities[3]. This pantheon was not stable. In principle, when gods were born, they could also die. However, it was through theological work of assimilating gods of the defeated cities to other gods that led to the fewer but more mighty gods.

A great task for Matumian theologians was to harmonise the various theological traditions into a coherent whole. However, one cannot speak of just one Sumerian pantheon but of many local panthea which emphasised different local theologies. Most important of these Sumerian theologies were those of Nippur[4], Lagash[5] and Eridu[6].

These panthea reflected political situations of the country and, as Jastrow notes, "the union of a number of cities or states under one head would be followed by a union of

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[1] When the immanent world was created as an image of the heavenly order, the nature, especially the stars, gave hints of the action of gods. This led to the observation of natural phenomena, especially to astrology. (Ries 1996, 100.)

[2] *Etana* (ANET 114)

[3] Bottero (2001, 45) notes that "[i]n his *Pantheon Babylonicum* of 1914, A. Deimel counts three thousand three hundred names; and the inventory of K. Tallqvist, *Akkadische Götterpitheta*, compiled in 1938 on stricter criteria, includes around two thousand four hundred!"

[4] On Nippur theology, see, e.g., Lucas (1979), Zettler (1987), Goodnick Westenholz (1992), Lambert (1992), Gibson (1993).

[5] On Lagash theology, see, e.g. Jastrow (1898, 106-111), Mercer (1922)

[6] On Eridu theology, see, e.g. Hallo (1996).

deities proper to these cities or states[1]." The gods of various locations could have been put together by two ways:

> either by placing the deities on a footing of equality – in which case they would be consorts, or brothers and sisters, *offsprings* therefore of one and same god – or, the superior rank of one patron god would be indicated by assigning to the god of a conquered or subordinate territory the rank of offspring or attendant.[2]

As a consequence, the lists of panthea differed from city state to city state both in the names of gods and in the order of deities. This means that while panthea and theogonies varied in detail, there was a master frame within which these variations remained. The changes were, in Wittgensteinian terms, "changes *in* the river bed" rather than "changes *of* the river bed[3]."

Although systematisation started already in the Sumerian era, it was during the Akkadian time when it intensified and reached its peak in Babylonia and Assyria. Jean Bottero makes an educated guess and thinks that "the Akkadians preferred to elevate the dignity and power of their gods as they were simultaneously reducing the number of them[4]."

GOD-LISTS were first attempts to systematise panthea. These An-Anum lists exist since 2600 BC[5]. The oldest known are from Shuruppak (modern Fara) and from modern Tell Abu Salabikh but, Bottero mentions that "they may record an even older tradition."[6]

In these god lists An and Enlil are usually listed first, followed by Enki. Then comes some name of the mother goddess (earth goddess Ki, An's heavenly counterpart Antum, or the primeval goddess Nammu or Ninmah) and three astral gods Shin (Moon), Shamash (Sun) and Ishtar (Venus). Under them, local panthea were collected to groups that Sumerians called Anunnaki (or Anunnaku, Anunna or Ananaki[7]). In some texts like

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[1] Jastrow 1898, 109.

[2] Jastrow 1898, 110.

[3] Wittgenstein 1969:§95ff., 99.

[4] Bottero 2001, 48.

[5] Litke 1998

[6] Bottero 2001, 48.

[7] There are different interpretations of the word. Gwendolyn Leick (1991, 7) translates it as "those of princely blood, royal offspring." Jeremy Black and Anthony Green (1992) understand it as "princely offspring" and Salonen (1945, 422) as "offspring of the most high" i.e. 'children of An'. Jastrow (1898, 184f.) sees that "there is a presumption, at least, in favour of interpreting Anunnak, or Anunnaki" in the same way as Igigi, namely meaning "the strong ones." An unknown writer of the English Wikipedia

Enki and the World Order[1] and *Death of Gilgamesh*[2], Anunna gods are referred as "the great gods." In *Inana's descent to the nether world*[3] and in *Myth of Etana*[4] Anuna refers to "the seven judges" that decreed the destiny. Römer mentions that

> [i]n Old Babylonian and Akkadian texts[5] the gods are divided into Igigu and Anunnaku[6]. These terms later on often served as designations for the gods of heaven (I.) and of the earth and the netherworld (A.) respectively.[7]

In some texts, like *Atrahasis epic*, contrary to the previous examples, "the great Anunnaki made the Igigi carry the workload sevenfold… The Igigi had to dig out canals, had to clear channels…[8]" from which the latter then rebelled. One possible explanation to this contradiction may be due to that Anunnaki was a Sumerian and Igigi Semitic word for great gods. Jacobsen has also argued that in *Enuma elish* "Tiamat represents the Sealand, and Marduk's victory over her its conquest and unification with Babylon[9]." From this perspective, the stories could be harmonised so that, at first, Sumerian gods (Anunnaki) made Semites to do the menial work but since Akkadian period Semite gods (Igigi) ruled over the universe.

MYTHICAL TALES, referred above in chapter of cosmogonies, form another type of systematisation. In general, it could be said, that Oriental thinking is more descriptive than the definitive and systematic Hellene thought. In a society where literacy was not common, stories[10] (and songs[11]) were an effective method of teaching even complex

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(s.w. Anunnaki) notes that "The term *Anunnaki* in this context would be identical to *hashamayim ve'et ha'arets*, the heavens and earth of the opening verse of Genesis."

According to Leick (1998, 8) "The Anunna first appear in Sumerian texts in the Ur III period as protective and interceding gods. Gudea records that he 'installed them' in the É-ninnu, the temple of Ningirsu at Lagash… He also asked them to relay his prayers to Ningirsu. Other than that there is little evidence for a cult and they did not feature in personal names."

[1] ETCSL t. 1.1.3., 192-209, 391-394

[2] ETCSL t. 1.8.1.3., 63-81, 154-167.

[3] ETCSL t.1.4.1., 167-172

[4] ANET 114.

[5] For example, *Enuma elish* (ANE I, 31-39), *Erra and Ishnum* (Garri 1977) and *Epic of Anzu* (Annus 2001).

[6] According to Römer (1969, 126) and Jacobsen (1976, 25-91) Sumerian gods were more chthonic gods and Semite gods were celestial ones.

[7] Römer 1969, 125f. (following Falkenstein, Kienast and von Soden).

[8] Atrahasis epic I:i (MfM)

[9] Jacobsen 1976, 190.

[10] A story binds details into a coherent whole, explains the meaning of its details, tells how they are related, and helps in remembering. Moreover, a story is pedagogically more effective way in teaching than a lesson with various definitions.

[11] A good example of the effectiveness of songs in teaching is felt in Finnish families with little children. There is a popular kids' program called *Pikku Kakkonen* (Small Channel Two). There is every time also

details. In their cosmogonic stories, Matumians arranged their world into a form of genealogies. These genealogies varied from tradition to tradition. However, there were some common layers in them.

On the top of the Sumerian pantheon there were the seven gods that decreed the destiny. The leader of gods was first An (Anu, lit. heaven). His consort was Ki (earth - known also with names Ninhursag, Ninmah and Nintu). Their children were Enki (Ea) who ruled netherworld and air god Enlil (Bel)[1]. Along these four, there were three main astral gods. These were moon god Nanna (or Shin, Suen or Ashgirbabbar)[2] and his children, sun god Utu (Shamash[3]) and goddess of love and war Inanna (Ishtar[4]). Along these seven, Igigi (or Anunna – depending on tradition) consisted of fifty great gods that formed the assembly of gods.[5]

Later Enlil took the place of An as the 'CEO of gods' (while An remained as the 'honorary chairman of the board') and, in Babylonian cosmology, was replaced by Marduk as told in *Enuma elish*. Assyrian theologians, in turn, were in pains to elevate Ashur to this position but they never fully succeeded in it since the cult of Marduk was too strong.

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the address of the program - in a form of song! And the melody is so catchy that most children can sing the son and, as a consequence, I suppose, that most Finns remember the postal box address of *Pikku Kakkonen.*

[1] The quartet An, Enlil, Enki and Ninhursaga was presented as the leading gods, for example, in *The Eridu Genesis* (Jacobsen 1981; 1987)

[2] Nanna lighted the night, measured time and provided fertility. On Nanna, see Römer 1969, 129f.; Jacobsen 1976, 121-127.

[3] Utu/Shamash was the god of righteousness and justice. He was the last appeal of those who could get no other justice. His role in Sumer was small but his cult became more central during 19th and 18th centuries and in Hammurabi's time he was extremely important. On Utu/Shamash, see Jastrow 1898, 143f.; Römer 1969, 130f.; Jacobsen 1976, 134.

[4] Inanna/Isthtar, daughter of the moon god Nanna/Suen and granddaughter of An/Anu, was perhaps the most important goddess in Matum. Originally as a goddess of storehouses, she became goddess of war and erotic love. This odd combination will be more understandable with a remark that as a fertilizer, she was goddess of rain and thunderstorm. Thunderstorm, in turn, was linked to warriors riding with chariots to battle. She was also goddess of both morning and evening stars. As a goddess of love, she is also patroness of harlots. Jacobsen (1976, 32) summarises the picture of Inanna in love songs as follows: "rich, noble, rather spoiled, too precious for ordinary household tasks, occupying her day with play and dancing only, ready to fall in love - but with someone who can maintain her as she wishes to be maintained." The most important cult of Inanna/Ishtar was the New Year festival when the legend of Inanna and Dumuzi was read and when king and high priestess acted their sacred marriage. On Inanna/Ishtar, see Jastrow 1898, 144f.; Römer 1969, 123f.; Jacobsen 1976, 27-63, 135-143.

[5] Slightly different summaries of Sumerian pantheon can be found in Love (s.d.) and Lawton (2000).

Under them were the minor gods, demigods, family gods[1], deceased family members, mortal heroes (like Gilgamesh) and monsters[2]. These gods were not equal but were in hierarchical relationship. As Jastrow states, "[t]he conquest of a district carried with it the conquest of its gods, and in case the latter are not entirely absorbed, they are placed in a dependent position, as children, servants or officials of the triumphant god[3]."

The pantheon did not only reflect the nature but the social structure as well. Like in early Sumerian towns, the highest power in the Matumian pantheon was the assembly of gods. According to *Enuma* elish, it was this assembly that gave Marduk his authority to act as a king. It was this assembly who elected or deposed both divine and human rulers and officers. Along with this administrative function, it was also a court of law that made judgements on human and divine wrongdoers[4]. The seven 'gods of the degrees' cast the final form of the decision and execution of the decisions was left to Enlil who used natural disasters or foreign people to punish a wicked city.[5]

ASSIMILATION of gods to one supreme god begun already in Sumer. Some gods were identified to another (like different originally separated Dumuzi's, Inanna to Ishtar, etc.). Some others were assimilated as epithets of more powerful gods. Jastrow describes as an example how different solar gods were assimilated. The early patron deity of Nippur, Ninib was first dethroned from his position to be under Enlil as his 'son.' Then other solar deities, like Ningirsu of Lagash, Zamama of Kish and Urash of Dilbat were assimilated to him. The next stage is that Sippar's Shamash acquires the "pre-eminent position as the sun-god *par excellence*" and Ninib becomes just a phase of sun, namely "the sun of springtime, and by natural association also the morning sun." Another solar deity, representing sun's destructive and hostile force, Nergal of Guthah became "the sun of the midsummer season and the sun of the noon-time."[6]

Since the Akkadian period also other Sumerian and Akkadian deities started to assimilate. In the same time, there was also a trend away from feminine gods of fertility

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[1] On family-gods, see van der Toorn (1996, 1999), Scurlock (2003);

[2] On these, see Jastrow 1898, 171-179

[3] Jastrow 1915, 193.

[4] This aspect can be seen in tales *Curse of Agade* (ANE II, 204-215), *Lament for Sumer and Uruk* (ETCSL 2.2.3) and *Lament for Ur* (Kramer 1940) .

[5] Jacobsen 1976, 86f.

[6] Jastrow 1915, 196-207 (italics in original, quotations from pp. 201, 205f., 206).

towards warrior gods[1]. In this process, also the hierarchy was slightly changed when, especially Akkadian goddess of war and love, Ishtar, become among the leading gods and, actually, she became the queen of heaven.[2]

Later, especially in Babylon and in Assyria, many gods were "more or less connected to, even absorbed by, another divinity[3]", as Bottero states. Lamberg-Karlovsky and Wright cite a hymn to Marduk[4] in which this tendency can be clearly seen:

> Ninurta is Marduk of the hoe,
>
> Nergal is Marduk of the attack,
>
> Zababa is Marduk of the hand-to-hand fight,
>
> Enlil is Marduk of lordship and counsel,
>
> Nabu is Marduk of accounting…[5]

Along with Marduk, also the role of Enki/Ea changed. Jastrow argues that

> all local connections with Eridu disappears. He belongs to no particular district. His worship is not limited to any particular spot. All of Babylonia lays claim on him. The ethical import of such a conception is manifestly great… It impressed upon the Babylonians the common bond uniting all mankind. [6]

According to Jastrow, Enki/Ea became the god "who presided at the birth of humanity", who protected the humankind and who is the last resort of a sufferer. Moreover, "as the god of civilisation, it is to him that the great works of art are ascribed."[7]

Marduk cult, as powerful as it became, could not suppress the much older Ea cult. Thus, "if you cannot beat them, join them": Marduk became to be seen as the "first-born son of Ea" and "the mediator between Ea and mankind[8]." Thus, when Ea (and other three supreme gods) were distant 'high gods', Marduk occupied the central role in

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[1] Although Marduk may originally have been a solar god, his major character was that of a warrior god (Jastrow 1898, 118f.). A typical phenomenon in Matumian pantheon was that it was a mixture of gods of fertility and power (Ries 1996, 99).

[2] Parpola 1982, 186f.; 206.

[3] Bottero 2001, 46.

[4] The central role of Marduk lasted up to Persian rule, when Xerxes at the end of the 480's BC destroyed Marduk's holy places and executed his priests (Frye 1994, 886; Parpola 1982, 307).

[5] Lamberg-Karlovsky & Wright 1996, 176.

[6] Jastrow 1898, 137.

[7] Jastrow 1898, 137f. When the Matumian culture was so widely spread, there are good ground to suppose that also El Eljon, the highest god, to whose priest Melchisedek also Abraham gave his tithes (Gen 14:18-20), was a local variant of Ea among Canaanites.

[8] Jastrow 1898, 118, 139.

official cult. A rough analogy could be in the relationship between Japan's emperor and shogun from 12th to 19th century AD.

In Assyria, the pantheon was a bit different. Although Assyrians had, for political reasons, adopted and assimilated Babylonian gods, the status of Ashur was different than that of Marduk. First, the cult of Ashur could not surpass that of Marduk. Second, like Marduk, he was not originally in the canonical *An-Anum*-list of high gods. He got his 'status' in Matumian pantheon by being identified to Anshar[1]. Thus, he was portrayed as an older relative to Marduk. Third, while Marduk was a creator god, his 'creation', according to Assyrian theologians, was just defeating the powers of chaos, Tiamat. He did not create the universe in the same sense as Ashur (or Yahweh in Judaism). He had parents and got his status as a supreme god by the decision of the council of gods. Simo Parpola has argued that in Assyria, Ashur had created himself, the whole universe and other gods were either created by him or born out of him.[2]

According to Parpola, the name Ashur meant the sum of all gods and its alternative *Ilāni*, the gods, worked in singular just in the same way as the plural form of God's name, *Elohim* in the Old Testament meant one God[3]. The divinity was one collectivity with several functions. Like ordinary people did not see the king but his ministers, people did not approach the supreme god but lesser deities. Parpola argues that

> Just as the Assyrian king was the representative of Aššur upon earth, so was the Assyrian royal council the earthly counterpart of the divine assembly, each of its members being the image of a particular 'great god'. The earthly government thus was, as it were, a mirror image of the heavenly one. As rulers of the universe, the 'great gods' were similar in role and function to the gnostic archons (literally, 'rulers'), who were in turn essentially equivalents of the Jewish and Christian 'archangels'… In Assyrian ideological parlance, the actions of the ministers often totally merge with those of the 'great gods'. In royal annals, punitive actions against perjured vassals, the actions of ministers… are strikingly reminiscent of the seven punitive angels described in the Apocalypse of John.[4]

In spite of this assimilation, it is good to remember Jastrow's old note that "the tendency towards monotheism… was only a tendency[5]." It was perhaps more monolatry than monotheism[6]. The trend was through assimilation, not through neglecting the

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[1] Römer 1969, 119f., 134.

[2] Parpola, personal communication 2.1.2004.

[3] Parpola 2000, 172; 2004.

[4] Parpola 2000, 180f.

[5] Jastrow 1898, 696.

[6] Monolatry is service of one god although the existence of other gods is accepted. In monotheism there is only one God.

existence of the 'false gods' as in the post-Exilic Judaism. Like on earth, the gods fought for supremacy and if some deity did not threaten the leading god, he could live as a servant, son or consort of the supreme god[1].

The political effect of this trend towards monotheism was that it de-legitimised demands of local and occupational gods in cases when these demands were in contrast to the dominant ideology. Thus, taking away a city-god also reduced religious legitimisation of rebels.

The ethical effect was that since all people were creatures of the same god, Ea, there was not a basic distinction between them. This, in turn, emphasised universal view in treatment of people. Hammurabi's law was one implication of this. There was basically no distinction between a native and a foreigner in front of the law. The distinctions were based on the social status, not on the basis of citizenship (in the original meaning of the word: inhabitant of the city).

Thus, polytheism and monotheism were not opposite choices. Rather, it was like in neo-Platonism that one is many[2]. In people's minds, the divine realm constituted one unity just like the earthly rule, argues Parpola[3]. Although Parpola's thesis has not been univocally accepted among Assyriologists, we must remember that in no monotheistic religion God is alone in heaven. There are angels and saints who function in the same way as the Matumian lesser gods. The difference to Matumian tradition is, however, that they are clearly subordinated to the one God – they are actually of different essence. Second, Zoroastrianism, in which (like in Judaism), there is a clear distinction between Ahuramatzda and other spirits, emerged in the same area where Aššur was served.

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[1] Along with assimilation, another method for the arranging the status of gods was that of seeing them as relatives. Naming some god as a son, sister, daughter, wife, etc. usually reduced his/her status. Here the major exception was Marduk. Jastrow argues that "such was the sway exercised by Ea over men's minds that even the Babylonian schoolmen did not venture to place Marduk over Ea but pictured him as Ea's Son (Jastrow 1898, 123)". A son status could also be used in another way. Assyrians, who paid tribute to their own god Ashur, saw Marduk as a rival to him since they were too similar gods. However, they were careful not to neglect Babylonian deities either and this created a dilemma. How to serve Marduk without serving him. As a result, they favoured the cult of Nabu, the former rival of Marduk who had been named as a son of Marduk. In this way, Assyrians maintained the preference to Ashur without desecrating Marduk (Jastrow 1898, 127). After the Assyrian period, the Nabu cult also flourished in Babylonia as can be seen in the names of kings Nabupolassar, Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonnedos (Jastrow 1898, 129).

[2] This same idea existed also in Kemet from where Platon most probably got it.

[3] Parpola, personal communication, Fall 2003.

4.4. "He shall be charged with the service of gods[1]" – Matumian Anthropology

Before the creation of humans, gods had to do all the work to maintain them selves. The story of *Enki and Ninmah*[2] tells that "the senior gods oversaw the work, while the minor gods were bearing the toil." These works included digging canals and, according to *Atrahasis Epic*[3], these Igigi gods dug both Tigris and Euphrates. Both stories tell how these minor gods started to rebel and Anunnaki was called together. As a resolution, they agreed that lower gods were right and their work was too hard. To free them from their tasks, they created a human.

CREATION OF MAN was, thus, to free gods from this burden. Man's role in this cosmological system was to serve gods or, more accurate, as Karel van der Toorn puts it, gods "created humans so as not to have to do all sorts of tedious odd jobs themselves[4]". This is the basic teaching in both Sumerian and Babylonian creation myths about the role of humans on earth[5].

In Sumer, the Nippur tradition tells that Enlil made a pickaxe and hit the ground in order that men could rise up from the hole on the surface of earth[6]. In the *Eridu Genesis* (the Sumerian version of Deluge) there is a mention that "An, Enlil, Enki and Ninhursaga fashioned the dark-headed people[7]." From Eridu is also a story of *Enki and Ninmah* which tells how "Namma, the primeval mother who gave birth to the senior gods," along with her assistants made a human out of clay according to instructions of Enki:

> "My mother, the creature you planned will really come into existence. Impose on him the work of carrying baskets. You should knead clay from the top of the abzu; the birth-goddesses (?) will nip off the clay and you shall bring the form into existence. Let Ninmah act as your assistant; and let Ninimma, Cu-zi-ana, Ninmada, Ninbarag, Ninmug, ... and Ninguna stand by as you give birth.

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[1] Mesopotamian Cosmogony 1955.

[2] ETCSL 1.1.2.

[3] Atrahasis Epic, I:i (MfM)

[4] Van der Toorn 1994, 61. This explained, for example, why creation process stopped and men started to reproduce themselves.

[5] An echo of this view can be found also in the Bible where God "took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (Gen 2:15 - NIV)." and after man's sin: "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground (Gen 3:19 - NIV)."

[6] TIT 1970, 113-14.

[7] *The Eridu Genesis* 12-13 (in Jacobsen 1987).

> My mother, after you have decreed his fate, let Ninmah impose on him the work of carrying baskets."[1]

In Akkadian tradition, the *Atrahasis Epic* tells that, on behalf of Enki, mother-goddess Mami/Nintu co-operated with 14 birth-goddesses and fashioned a human out of clay and blood of the slain god[2]. *Enuma Elish*, in turn, tells that when Marduk was elevated as the king of gods, he required that gods build him a city and a house. However, seeing their willingness to undertake this hard task[3] he decided to lighten their burden and decided to create a man:

> Blood I will mass and cause bones to be
> I will establish a savage, "man" shall he his name.
> Verily, savage-man I will create
> He shall be charged with the service of the gods
> That they might be at ease![4]

In *Enuma Elish*, the task was delivered to Ea who, along with other great gods executed the rebellious Kingu, consort of Tiamat, and "out of his blood they fashioned mankind[5]." In *Atrahasis Epic* a human was made from blood and flesh of god "Geshtu-e, a god who has sense" and clay[6]. According to ancient explanation of Berosus, quoted by Damascius the Syrian, the blood of god meant that humans "are rational and partake of divine knowledge[7]."

An interesting story related to creation is *Enki and Ninmah* which also reveals Sumerian attitudes to the handicapped and deformed people. In the story Ninmah states that "man's body can be either good or bad and whether I make a fate good or bad depends on my will." To which Enki answered "I will counterbalance whatever fate - good or bad - you happen to decide." After this, Ninmah created six deficient men in order to see how Enki would define their fate. "A man who could not bend his outstretched weak hand", Enki appointed as a servant of a king. A blind (?) man he

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[1] ETCSL 1.1.2.

[2] *Atrahasis Epic* I:iv (MfM); Römer 1969, 165. On *Atrahasis Epic*, see, e.g., Frymer-Kensky 1977.

[3] This interpretation is from Jacobsen (1976, 180) and evidently based on additions to the broken text of *Enuma Elish* tablet V (ANE I, 31-39).. An earlier explanation (e.g. BLC 1921, 26f.) was that a man was made because the existence of gods "was barren, because they lacked worshippers at their shrines and offerings." This interpretation in probably based on the episode in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* where gods, after the Deluge, "the gods crowded like flies about the sacrificer (ANE I, 70)."

[4] ANE I, 36.

[5] ANE I, 37. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (ANE I, 41f.) and in a variant 'bilingual' version of *Enuma Elish* (BLC 1921, 5, 7) it was goddess Aruru that created man.

[6] Atrahasis Epic I:iv (MfM)

[7] BLC 1921, 11

made a musician and a paralysed man as a silversmith. He healed both a man who could not hold his urine. A woman who could not give birth was appointed as a weaver into the queen's household. And, finally, a man without either penis or vagina, he appointed to stand before the king.[1]

Contrary to gods, a human being was made mortal and although his/her task was to serve gods, (s)he was not rejected of joy. The *Gilgamesh Epic* tells how the task of humans is to make life enjoyable to each other:

> When the gods created mankind,
> Death for mankind they set aside,
> Life in their own hands retaining.
> Thou, Gilgamesh, let full be thy belly,
> Make thou merry by day and by night.
> Of each day make thou a feast of rejoicing…
> Pay heed to the little one that holds on to thy hand,
> Let thy spouse delight in thy bosom!
> For this is the task of mankind![2]

DELUGE is an essential part of the Matumian creation frame. The Matumian Deluge story can be found in three old narratives[3]: in the *Eridu Genesis*, in the *Gilgamesh Epic* and in the *Atrahasis Epic*. The first is unfortunately too fragmented for a detailed study. In the *Gilgamesh Epic* the focus is not on the destruction of mankind, in general, but on the mortality of mankind. It tells how Gilgamesh, in vain, seeks immortality since his forefather, Utnapisthim got is immortality by rescuing himself from the Deluge and it cannot be repeated. *Atrahasis Epic*, however, tells how Enlil got tired to the noise of humans and convinced the assembly of gods to destroy humanity. First they sent diseases, then drought, and finally Deluge. However, in all cases Enki gives advices to king Atrahasis how to overcome the trouble.

In all three stories, the hero (Ziusudra, Utnapisthim, Atrahasis) listen the advice of Enki[4] and build a ship by which he, his family and (save the first) animals. After the Deluge, the hero made and offering on an altar and gods "gathered like flies over the

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[1] ETCSL 1.1.2.

[2] ANE I, 64.

[3] Along these three, the Deluge theme occurred in apocryphal *Sibylline Oracles* and in the work of Babylonian priest Berosus, both from the second half of the first millennium BC.

[4] Livio C. Stecchini (s.d.) argues that the heroes were not saved because of their piety (like Noah in Genesis) but because of their technical skill and ability to hear and understand the instructions of their god.

offering[1]" since they had realised that they need humans or otherwise they have to start working again.

The cause of the Flood was overpopulation[2] with its effects of diffusion of epidemics and starvation during the bad harvest. After the Deluge there emerged other methods to keep the population in control. Tikva Frymer-Kensky argues that "the myth tells us that such social phenomena as non-marrying women, and personal tragedies as barrenness and stillbirth (and perhaps miscarriage and infant mortality) are in fact essential to the very continuation of man's existence, for humanity was almost destroyed when the population got out of control[3]."

Another theme that all Deluge stories deal is the question of justice. In the end of *Atrahasis Epic* midwife of gods, Mami, wept how also she

> in the assembly of gods,
> Have ordered such destruction with them?
> Enlil was strong enough (?) to give a wicked order.[4]

When Enlil questions furiously how someone had survived, Enki confronts him and states

> I did it, in defiance of you!
> I made sure life was preserved (5 lines missing)
> Exact your punishment from the sinner.
> And whoever contradicts your order.[5]

This reveals the basic tune in Matumian theology. Although both human life and the whole cosmos depended on the decision of Anunnaki, nobody - even gods them selves - could be sure that their decision was just. There was no similar concept of *Ma'at* as we will find in Kemet where even gods are bound to this cosmic principle[6].

EARTHLY LIFE OF HUMAN SOCIETIES should be organised according to divine model and this required similar hierarchy as in the pantheon. As noted, the trend towards monotheism went hand in hand with centralisation of the administration.

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[1] *Atrahasis Epic* III:v (MfM) // Gilgamesh Epic XI:161 (ANE I, 70).

[2] "The country became too wide, the people too numerous. The country was as noisy as a bellowing bull (*Atrahasis Epic* I:vii; II:iv – MfM)."

[3] Frymer-Kensky 1977.

[4] *Atrahasis Epic* III:iii (MfM).

[5] *Atrahasis Epic* III:vi (MfM).

[6] Livio C. Stecchini (s.d), actually, argues that "the decision of the council of the gods was to take away power from some gods; this entailed the destruction of the cosmic order they represented and hence of the cult centers that conformed to this order. The destruction of mankind was a byproduct of this decision."

However, in this process, there were some elements that were rather constant. First, the leader, whether he *ensi*, *lugal* or great king, was seen as holy. He was a representant of men in front of gods. When the *enki* position gave way, first to *lugal* and, then, to great king, this role followed the development. Second, the king had a double role: he represented his people to gods and he had the duty to maintain the divine order in society. Related to this king's role as a representant of gods, Paul Hanson argue that "*Enuma elish*, describes in great detail how the reign of the earthly king stems from the activity of the gods, i.e., how the structures of human society fit into the ordering reality in its totality[1]." In this system "the kings of Matum describe themselves as pious servants of the gods, who accept as one of their solemn responsibilities the administration of justice in imitation of gods[2]." The idea behind the Matumian system was maintaining the stability of the *cosmos*. In same time it ensured the stability of king's reign, and the general strength and productivity of the country.

This stability required something what we today call social capital of the community. According to Robert Putnam, in the centre of social capital lies trust. Since the Matumian economy was much based on foreign commerce, there had to be mutual trust between tradesmen. There had to be trust that roads were enough safe for the caravans. This required not only effective police and military forces, but guarantees for the lower classes of just treatment as well. The rebellion of Uru-inim-agina was a good example what happened if the interests of lower classes were denied. Weber, for example, argues that this led to theocratic monarchy where "we always find that religion and law sanction protection of the weak[3]." Thus, ancient monarchy especially in Semitic soil had an element that brought divine protection on the needs of the poor. Paul Hanson argues that, along with law codices, there was another institution that gave its legacy to later generations, namely the royal decree. It occurred in the beginning of king's reign and it included a declaration of amnesty, release of debt-slaves and the annulment of specific types of debts. This institutional act was meant to re-establish the heavenly order when a new king was enthroned.[4]

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[1] Hanson 1994, 11.
[2] Hanson 1994, 9.
[3] Weber 1976 (1896), 65.
[4] Hanson 1994, 13.

Concept of sin was an essential part of the Matumian religion. Especially in magical texts, sin and guilty play prominent role. Jastrow argues that Matumians saw "misfortunes and ills come as punishment for sins of commission or omission" although there was not a distinction between ceremonial errors and social misbehaviour[1]. When the role of a man was to serve gods, the sin was acting against this duty. Since maintaining the order of the cosmos was the main aim, all that broke this was misbehaviour. If this was done either in individual or communal level, gods sent misfortunes as punishment. These misfortunes could be sicknesses, natural disasters or defeat in a war. Jastrow point out that "it is this doctrine of guilt… that we must seek both for he starting-point of an ethical system (so far as such a system existed among the Babylonians), and also the limitations of this system[2]." The concept of sin in front of gods has a special influence on the question what is right and what is wrong. Instead of utilitarian point of view, what is beneficial to me is right, we find universal norms that all must follow.

If we look at the Hammurabi's Law, we see that, in general, it reflects this basic ethical attitude. In its details, we can see that it is an application of the universal norm principle on those fields of life that were important to Babylonians: agriculture, commerce, family-life, etc. Although its paragraphs follow mainly the 'if… then' formulation, the preface and the epilogue emphasise the principle of righteousness as the basis of the legislation. Especially, the epilogue mostly contains curses against those his successors who do not maintain righteousness in the land. Those curses are mostly in a form 'may that-and-that god cause that-and-that evil' to the wicked follower of him.

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[1] Jastrow 1898, 693.
[2] Jastrow 1898, 693.

5.   "A man's god is a man's shepherd[1]" – Practising Matumian Religion

5.1. "To the goddess he shall recite the… prayer[2]" - Matumian Cult

OFFICIAL CULT dealt mostly with the patron gods of cities and empires. It must be emphasised that official cult was not, like, for example, in Christianity, focused on to create and maintain coherence among the devoted. The purpose of Matumian official cult was to please and pamper the god in concern. It was mostly done outside the eyes of the ordinary people. Jean Bottero argues that it was the "transposition of royal etiquette, which always served as a model for that cult[3]." Jacobsen, in turn, argues that the daily cult was

> modelled on the running of the household of a great landowner. Meals were prepared and served for the god, at night he was bathed and his bed was made ready for him. His lands were looked after by other servants.[4]

Temples were basically "houses of gods" or residences of them. Different gods lived in different temples, although there were sometimes chapels for other gods in the main sanctuary. In the most sacred area of a temple, there was the statue of the patron divinity[5] and the rites in different temples were centred on these statues.

Since the gods were presented in human forms, they were treated likewise: they were dressed and fed several times a day, incense were burned in front of them, they had visitors and 'visited' other temples and people talked to them like to living persons[6]. Following the root metaphor of household, the lord of the house did not eat alone but along with his family and servants[7]. Thus, the food brought to the table of the god did

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[1] Sumerian Proverb from Urim UET 6/2 255 (ETCSL t.6.2.3).

[2] Temple Program for the New Years Festival at Babylon 317 (ANET 333)

[3] Bottero 2001, 136.

[4] Jacobsen 1988, 170.

[5] Although excavations have not recovered any of these statues – for obvious reasons, since they were made of precious metals and stones, and thus temptation for later invaders – there is a lot of literary material on them (Postgate 2005, 118).

[6] Postgate 2005, 118f.; Bottero 2001, 125-134.

[7] Postgate 2005, 120.

not go waste but was, in practice, consumed by the priests[1]. Some of the food, however, was destroyed by pouring it to the ground or burning it as an offer[2]. However, a significant aspect of this is that, likewise a common man could only dream of entering king's palace, he was mostly – but not totally - excluded from the cult in temples[3]. The rituals were practiced by the king – the supreme pontiff – and various kinds of priests[4].

Along with daily service, there were special festivals on monthly or yearly basis as well as one time celebrations like consecration of the temple or the statue of a god. Postgate, for example, mentions that a creation of statue of god in temple workshops was so important events that a year was named after his induction into his seat. Thus, some sort of consecration festival of the statue was definitely in place – as well the consecration of the whole temple as well. In addition to these festivals that centred on the god or temple itself, there were celebrations for the victories – or mourning of defeats.[5]

Monthly festival days were, according to the phases of the moon, 1st, 7th, 15th (*shapattu*), (21th) and 28th of each month. In each of these days, there were special rituals. From 28th to 1st there was a three day celebration when the moon disappeared to copulate with the sun. The day was called sleeping day (u-na-am in Sum., *ūmē puppuli* in Akk.[6] – comp *conjunction* in Lat.). Contrary to southern customs, in Assyria these were days of disaster and danger. Along with them, the most feared day was the "day of wrath", the 19th day of the month (= 7x7=49 < 30 days from the previous month + 19 days). In Assyria, there were several prohibitions for these days: one was not allowed to change clothes, sacrifice, eat certain foods, etc.[7]

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[1] Wilfred G. Lambert (1993, 200) notes that "[t]he question of what happened to all this luxurious food set before statues of the gods is not plainly answered in any cuneiform text but the matter is aired frankly in the apocryphal *Bel and the Dragon* (probably written ca. 130 B.C.)." This apocrypha tell how Daniel proved to the king how priests and their families, instead of the god, ate the food. Similarly Bertman (2003, 130).

[2] Postgate (2005, 120) makes a distinction between "'offerings' and the actual food placed before the gods, the Biblical 'showbread'." According to him, the former was from the secular community.

[3] Bottero 2001, 118; Lambert 1993, 193. Bottero (idem 119), however, notes on the basis of some texts, that some of the temples "were therefore more or less accessible to the common 'faithful,' who were free to carry out their devotions there."

[4] On priests in Matum, see Bottero (2001, 119-125), Bertman (2003, 128ff.)

[5] Postgate 2005, 118.

[6] According to philological convention, Sumerian words are given in e x p a n d e d t e x t and Akkadian words in *italics*.

[7] Salonen 1945, 478f. Jewish *shabbath* may have its roots in these practices although its contents differ from its Matumian roots. On Sabbath, see, e.g., Lohse (1983).

Yearly festivals centred mostly on a cult drama. Thus, as Jacobsen puts it,

> the 'Sacred Marriage' drama of the date growers in Uruk celebrated the wedding of the power in the date-palm to grow and bear fruit, Ama-ushumgal-ana, with the goddess of the communal storehouse, Inanna, thus having the god with his wedding gifts of abundance enter the house of his bride, the storehouse.[1]

Later, in Assyria and Babylonia, the union was between god (Ashur or Marduk) and his spouse who were represented by king and the high priestess. It was one of the main events of the New Year Festival and took place either in Inanna's (Ishtar's) temple, king's palace or in the Abzu of Eridu.[2]

Babylonian New Year Festival is the most famous of these ancient festivals and it was celebrated 12 day in the month Nisan (spring). The *Akittu* (Akk., Akiti in Sum.) festival was originally a sowing and/or harvesting festival with the god coming to the fields evidently to bless them and guarantee their fertility[3]. In Babylon, however, it commemorated the victory of Marduk over Tiamat. With the emphasis of Marduk as a king of gods, it also legitimated the power of the king since earthly society had to mirror the heavenly one.[4]

'Sacramental cult', as Bottero calls it, was the part of official religion that focused on individual. The most important of these were divination and exorcism. Bottero argues that the invention of writing modified the Matumian religion in this particular aspect. According to him, "the scribe *made*, or *produced* what he wrote down." Thus, writing was, in some sense, creating. Along this analogy, Bottero argues that "[c]reating things was the writing of the gods" and the starry sky was actually 'celestial writing'. Like a scribe expressed his intentions in writing, so gods revealed their intentions and future plans in their creation.[5]

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[1] Jacobsen 1988, 169.

[2] On sacred marriage, see Lapinkivi 2004.

[3] Bertman (2003) tells that "in some communities, like Babylon, the ceremonies were concluded once year immediately after the barley harvest in March at the time of spring equinox... In other communities, like Ur, there were two celebrations a year, one at the time of harvest and the other in September when new seed was sown."

[4] Jacobsen 1976, 186-191; 1988, 170; Römer 1969, 145f. Frankfort (1978, 297) states that "[i]t may well be that only those kings were deified who had been commanded by a goddess to share her couch. In general way the kings who use the divine determinative before the names belong to the same period as the texts mentioning the marriage of kings and goddesses; and we have seen that some kings adopted the determinative, not at the beginning, but at later stage of their reigns."

[5] Bottero 2001, 178.

This writing was not limited to sky only but everything was ominous – birth of a child, actions of a sacrificed animal, forms of liver, etc. It was understood that gods speak in every detail of the creation and that humans were able to learn to interpret this writing. Therefore, there emerged a host of diviners, *bârû* (Akk. 'examiner') already during the second half of the third millennium.[1]

Along these "deductive diviners" as Bottero calls them, there were "inspired divination" as well. These were like Israeli prophets and, since mentions of them have been found only in Mari and Assyria, Bottero "might be tempted to consider that such a divinatory practice was particular to Semitic religiosity."[2]

Exorcism was another service that was done to humans. It was based on the idea that the world was seen as a battlefield of gods and spirits. Like in the beliefs in divination, misfortunes and sicknesses were no random accidents – they were caused by gods. With the grater gods, an individual had no chance but with the lesser gods and spirits issues could be negotiated. Since all misfortunes were seen as actions of these spirits, it was important to know which one was behind the troubles. After identification, (s)he could be approached for forgiveness and pacification – or own family-gods could be mobilised to beg a greater god to intervene. A model was basically similar how a man acted in front of a powerful individual – first by pardoning and then appealing to the king.[3]

FOLK RELIGION (or popular religion) lies somewhere between the official cult and private devotion. It was typical that people worshipped both the official state gods and their own gods. In addition to different pantheon, folk religion had different forms of cult practices. Van der Toorn argues that

> folk piety consists of the feelings and practices which the official religion has elicted from people. In spite of all its possible deviations from the official doctrine, folk piety feeds on it. Popular belief it a multicolored collection of convictions … originating from folklore, fantasy and official religious doctrine. Folk religion is more than this. It consists of intuitions and convictions, sometimes incorporated into stories and teachings, religiously interpreted experiences and number of religious interpreted experiences and a number of religious rituals carried out in groups.[4]

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[1] Bottero 2001, 176-185; Leichty 1993.

[2] Bottero 2001, 171-175 (quotation from p. 175).

[3] On exorcism in Matum, see Bottero (2001, 185-202)

[4] Van der Toorn 1994, 112.

In folk religion there are elements from religiously oriented folk festivals, sorcery, necromancy, revelations by dreams and prophecy. The common denominators with folk religion practices are that they are religious forms of the non-elite (and women) and that elite groups persecute, discourage or just tolerate them. However, often some forms of folk religion sweep into the official religion as well.[1]

Van der Toorn emphasises that folk religion was not private. On the contrary, it was a religion of a community and, thus, it was one form of public religion. In course of time, "the 'popular religion' has been subject to less changes than the state religion,[2]" as van der Toorn puts it.

This can be seen especially in cases of migration in the ancient Near East. Migrants frequently carried their gods with them. While they served the local official god, they, in the same time, kept their 'own gods'. This can be seen among Uruk refugees to Kish and migrants from Eridu to Ur in the Old Babylonian time[3], among Israelite deportees to Babylon[4] and among those brought to Samaria[5]. According to van der Toorn, this was part of the Babylonian policy which, contrary to Assyrian assimilative one, allowed the deportees to maintain their ethnic identity.[6]

DOMESTIC CULT, in turn, concentrated primarily on family gods and ancestors. According to van der Toorn, "family gods are rarely the national gods." On the other hand, he argues that family gods were often those of local or tribal gods. Thus, while Assyrian king Samsi-Addu (ca. 1813-1781) served the state god Ashur, "[a] royal inscription indicates, however, that the monarch regarded the moon-god Sin as his 'personal god'." Samsi-Addu belonged to Yaminite (northerner) Amorites who served Sin as their tribal god and, thus, he was a 'son' of this god.[7]

Thus, along with official and tribal gods, there were family gods that were responsible on the welfare of the family. According to van der Toorn,

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[1] Van der Toorn 1994, 111-133.

[2] Van der Toorn 1994, 15.

[3] Van der Toorn 1995, 369f.

[4] It is well known that Jews had their own priests with them in Babylon. Actually, as many deported did not return from exile, Babylon became after the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD) one of the centres of Jewish religious research and education. The most famous product of this 'school' is *The Babylonian Talmud* (1903) that was compiled in fifth century AD.

[5] 2 Kgs 17:24-33.

[6] Van der Toorn 1995, 369-374.

[7] Van der Toorn 1995, 367ff.; 1996, 78-82.

> [e]very self-respecting Mesopotamian household had its household deities. Usually there were two of them, namely *il(i) bīti,* 'household god' and an *ištar bīti*, 'household goddess'.[1]

Van der Toorn underlines that "when family religion is said to foster a sense of identity we are speaking first of all about a collective identity[2]." In this sense family-gods were "not so much personal gods as family gods" that "were to stay in the paternal home[3]." This also explains why the family cult was on the responsibility of the oldest son[4] although women of the house were closely attached to it as well[5]. Since the family was seen as descendant of both family-gods and ancestors, these had an interest in "gathering of scattered people", i.e., collecting the family and kin together and, thus, keeping also their servants numerous[6].

Domestic cult included offerings and prayers to these gods and ancestors, letters to them and use of different amulets and incantations to protect the house against evil spirits[7]. An essential part of gods' task to protect the family was to mediate between the family and higher gods[8]. The analogy is again from the god acting as the leader of the house – it is his/her duty to contact the superiors if (s)he is not able to protect his household.

The service of these family gods was both imbedded to everyday routines and feasted in special important moments of the family. A meal was not simply getting nutrition but it was an image of the divine meal that was also imitated in the temple and in the court. It included both sacrifice and prayers to the gods and therefore it was done according to certain ritual code. The family meal rituals were a small-scale versions of those performed in the local temple. [9]

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[1] Van der Toorn 1994, 38.

[2] Van der Toorn 1996, 94.

[3] Van der Toorn 1994, 38. See also idem. 1996, 78.

[4] Van der Toorn 1996, 48.

[5] Van der Toorn 1994, 46. Van der Toorn (1994, 37) argues that especially "female piety flourishes primarily outside the official cult, behind closed doors so to speak." Attachment to ancestor-cult explains, for example, why Jeremiah (44:15-19) was so strongly criticising women for necromancy (fortune-telling via consultation with the dead) – it was the only form of divination that ordinary women were capable to do.

[6] Van der Toorn 1996, 140-143.

[7] One evil spirit was Lililu (Lilith in the Bible), who was a personification of a childless woman who was jealous to mothers and tried to harm infants (van der Toorn 1994). Thus, the origin of Madonna/whore distinction in feminist discourse seems originally has been mother/childless bitter woman.

[8] Van der Toorn 1996, 136ff.

[9] Van der Toorn 1994, 29-37.

In practicing the family cult, there emerged an important concept of impurity. Impurity was not, according to van der Toorn, not principally a violation against an ethical norm. It might be, but in the first hand, it was a violation against etiquette codes. Everything that was unpleasant to the gods was impure: dirty hands, dirty utensils, some sicknesses like leprosy, woman's menstruation, etc. Also improper behaviour caused impurity, which meant that one could not approach gods or if (s)he approached, the prayer would be in vain because the habitus was too unpleasant to gods.[1]

Domestic gods had their own shrine in the house. It could be just a corner or a separate room. There was a special table where offerings were given and special meals served. This shrine was also a place where wows and promises to other family members were given. Also the roof of the house was a place of prayer. Additionally, there were different small statues and symbols everywhere in the house.[2]

5.2. "Utu placed justice and truth in my mouth[3]" – Matumian Ethics

HUMANS, according to Matumian thinking were, as Kramer puts it, "fashioned of clay and created for one purpose only: to serve gods by supplying them with food, drink, and shelter, so that they might have full leisure for their divine activities[4]." This as seen above, the Igigi-gods complained for the digging of canals and human race was made in order to free them from that work. However, human duties were more numerous. Along to what Kramer says about the pampering of gods, the frame of gods as great nobles meant that they should not be bothered with the minor issues of management of their households. Since gods as *paterfamilias* had responsibility to "clothe, feed and protect" the members of their households, this task was delegated to humans, as well. In practice, this meant that people with means had to take care of their more misfortune companions, especially the widows and orphans.

In general, as Kramer notes that Sumerians

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[1] Van der Toorn 1994, 49.
[2] Van der Toorn 1994, 43-46.
[3] *Hymn to Ishme-Dagan* (quoted in Kramer 1972, 116).
[4] Kramer 1981, 101.

cherished goodness and truth, law and order, justice and freedom, righteousness and straightforwardness, mercy and compassion. And they abhorred evil and falsehood, lawlessness and disorder, injustice and oppression, sinnfullness and perversity, cruelty and pitilessness.[1]

However, as in any society, ideals and reality can be two separate issues. On the ideal values and crude practice of Sumerians, Kramer writes:

> Not unlike our own tormented society, the Sumerian society of some 4000 years ago, had its deplorable failings and distressing shortcomings; its utopian ideals honored more in the breach than in observance; its "Sunday preaching and Monday practice": it yearned for peace but was constantly at war; it professed such ideals as justice, equity, and compassion, but abounded in injustice, inequality and oppression; materialistic and short-sighted, it unbalanced the ecology essential to its economy; it suffered from the "generation gap" between parents and children and between teachers and students…[2]

IN SOCIAL LEVEL, the tension between ideals and crude practice can be seen both in the inscriptions of the rulers and the lamentation literature. In the previous, the common formula is that the new ruler boasts that he has abolished certain evils and established justice. In lamentations (usually after the collapse of the city) the evil consequences of the collapse of the society are often vividly described.[3]

Starting from the justice issue in Kramer's list above, in *The Lament for Nibru* (or *The Lamentation Over the Destruction of Nippur*) the ideal was that "no one is to speak hostile words to another;… the inferior to be as important as the mighty.[4]" In the self-praise poem Ishme-Dagan says that

> Utu put justice and reliable words in my mouth. To make judgments, to reach decisions, to lead the people aright, to excel in rectitude, to keep the righteous on the track and to destroy the wicked, so that… the strong should not do just what he pleases, and so that one man should not be assigned to another (through debt) ; to destroy wickedness and violence, and to make righteousness flourish…
>
> The strong does not behave extravagantly towards others, the mighty does not abuse the weak any more. People are not made subject to the lordly… the feeble person may speak contrary words [to the rich?].[5]

As it can be seen, yearn of the lower classes for justice is legitimised by linking these values to the will of gods. In Sumer, the sun god Utu and the goddess Nanshe (patroness of Lagash) were the guardians of social justice and ethical behaviour. Nanshe was

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[1] Kramer 1981, 101f.

[2] Kramer 1972, 113.

[3] Kramer 1972. Here must be made a cautious note. While it is obvious (as Kramer mentions it) that royal inscriptions exaggerate in their laudation the king, lamentations are also written by the upper classes. Thus, the breaking of social order is viewed from the perspective of upper classes that lost their privileges. This aspect has been emphasised by. Miriam Lichtheim (AEL I, 150) in the case of Kemetian similar text, *The Admonitions of Ipuwer*.

[4] *Lament for Nibru*, lines 290, 293 (ETCSL t.2.2.4.).

[5] *A Praise Poem of Išme-Dagan*, lines 90-99, 200-223 (ETCSL t.2.5.4.01).

concerned for the orphan and concerned for the widow. She does not forget the man who helps (?) others, she is a mother for the orphan; Nanše, a carer for the widow, who always finds advice for the debt-slave; the lady who gives protection for refugees. She seeks out a place for the weak. She swells his collecting basket for him; she makes his collecting vessel profitable for him. For the righteous maiden who has taken her path, Nanše chooses a young man of means. Nanše raises a secure house like a roof over the widow who could not remarry.[1]

Her will has some weight since she

is the cause of great things: her presence makes the storehouses of the land {bulge} {(1 ms. has instead:) prosper} and makes the honey …… like resin in the storerooms. Because of her, there stand vessels with ever-flowing water; because of Nanše, the baskets containing the treasures of the Land cover the ground like the silt of the river… Nanše is the lady who raises high the channels for the meadows and the irrigation ditches.[2]

Thus, the religious ethics linked the whole well-being of the country to the social justice in it. Nanshe holds a court every New Year day and judges mankind with Nidaba, the 'noble scribe' and with Haia, her husband, who acts as an examiner[3]. The judgement does not focus only on the issues mentioned above but also on economic issues, like the use of right or wrong weights and measures, keeping the contracts, etc. Especially the standardisation of weights seem to have been a general concern since Ur-Nammu, in the Prologue of his Law Code, says that "he fashioned the bronze *silá*-measure, he standardised the one *mina* weight, (and) standardised the stone weight of a shekel of silver *in relation to* one mina[4]."

IN PERSONAL LIFE-WORLD, the ethics was based on the idea that humans were mortal servants of gods and should be content what they get. Since a human cannot hope for mortality (s)he should enjoy the life always (s)he can as *Gilgamesh Epic* tells[5]. Life is enough hard that there should not be any more ascetic burdens but a human should enjoy of social activities, of food and drink, of family and of small luxuries like warm bath.

The *Gilgamesh Epic* reflects the fact that the family was the basic unit of the society. This had some important ethical consequences. First, the survival of the family was more important than survival or well-being of an individual family-member. This frame explains, for example, selling of some family-members to slavery as a means to save the

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[1] *A Hymn to Nanše,* lines 20-31 (ETCSL t.4.14.1.)

[2] *A Hymn to Nanše,* lines 10-19 (ETCSL t.4.14.1.)

[3] *A Hymn to Nanše,* lines 94-112 (ETCSL t.4.14.1.)

[4] *The Laws of Ur-Nammu,* lines 143-149 (ANE II, 32). – Italics in original.

[5] ANE I, 64. See quotation in p. 52.

family during an economic crisis[1]. It also explains the bride-price[2] and apprentice-payments[3]. Both were means to compensate the lost work-force to the family that has raised the bride/apprentice.

Inside the family, harmony was emphasised. This value arose from the urban way of life: houses were near each other and with limited audio-insulation. Thus, living in peace with one's neighbours required also respect of their audio-environment. This noise-aspect was so important that it was presented as the main cause of the Deluge in the *Atrahasis Epic* when god Enlil got angry because of the noise humankind made.

Peaceful ideals required that parents (and older people, in general) should be respected. The other side of the coin was that parents should not mistreat their children. However, as Kramer states, these were ideals. In practice, according to Kramer, there was a similar 'generational gap' as we have today in our western societies[4]. Everyday life was far from ideal but ideals remained and started to live their own life. They were seen as divine commands and many of them were adopted by becoming civilizations and, thus, they became basis for those world religions that emerged in the area thousands of years later. "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you[5]" is still a vital part of Judeo-Christian religious education.

6.   "The most mighty Ahura Mazda[6]" – Ethics and Eschatology of Zoroastrianism

When Persians occupied Babylon, the country faced a different religious tradition. Contrary to Babylonian pantheon, Persian religion was a relative to that of India. Earliest knowledge of Persian religion can be found in the Indian Rig Veda and the

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[1] See, for example, Mendelsohn 1949, 6-13; Struve 1969, 35; Gelb 1972, 84f.; Dandamayev 1984, 112-131.

[2] Bride-price was a compensation of the bride's marital family to her childhood-family for her work force. Dowry, in turn, was daughter's share of the inheritance of the paternal estate and it was always considered as her private property that was, then, inherited by her children. The best known bride-price is Joseph's 14 year service for his to-be father-in-law, Laban (Gen 29: 14-30). On bride-price and dowry in *Code of Hammurabi*, see Driver & Miles (1952, 249-275).

[3] Dandamayev 1984, 117.

[4] Kramer 1972, 119.

[5] Ex. 20:12 (NIV)

[6] *Yasna* 33

Iranian Avesta. This points to the time when Indo-Iranian tribal community held common religious beliefs. The highest deity was Ahuramazda and other deities existed next to him[1]. Among them were, for example, Mithra, whose worship expanded later in Roman Empire.[2]

In the late seventh or early sixth century[3], there emerged a new religion preached by Zarathustra in the ancient Iran[4]. Although there is certain continuity with the old Indo-Iranian religion, Zarathustra emphasised that his religion was based on his own thinking[5]. As Maneckji N. Dhalla puts it

> Zarathustra does not mention them by name in his hymns. This omission is not accidental; it is deliberate. His is altogether a new religion… All thinking and doing, whether human or divine, is done through the mind. It is knowledge or wisdom which creates, moulds, and guides anything and everything. He, therefore, clothes the idea of godhead with wisdom and names him 'Ahura Mazda.' This collocation means literally, 'The Lord Wisdom' or 'The Wise Lord.'[6]

Contrary to old Aryan and Semitic gods, as Dhalla argues, "Ahura Mazda was never a nature-god. He was what he ever is, the highly spiritual being[7]." Dhalla continues with words that sound familiar in the ears of the followers of latter monotheistic religions:

> He is not begotten, nor is there one like unto him. Beyond him, apart from him, and without him nothing exists. He is the supreme being through whom everything exists… He knows no elder, he

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[1] Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (1994, 1083) argues that "the Indo-Iranians appear to have distinguished, from among their gods, the *diva*…, meaning 'heavenly', and the *asura*, a special class with occult powers." According to him, this order remained in Vedic India, but was reversed in Persia, where "the *ahuras* were extolled, to the exclusion of the *daevas*, who were reduced to the rank of demons."

[2] Dresden 1980c (1962), 745; Duchesne-Guillemin 1994, 1083.

[3] The date of both Zarathustra and emergence of Zoroastrianism is controversial. According to Zoroastrian tradition, king Vishtāspa converted to Zoroastrianism 258 years before Alexandros of Macedonia and his rule in Persia in 330 B.C. Along with other traditional details, this would date Zarathustra's life 630-553 B.C. (Dresden 1980b (1962), 935). However, in his *History of Zoroastrianism* Maneckji N. Dhalla (2003 (1938), 13.) mentions that the birth date of Zarathustra "is placed anywhere between 600 B.C. and 6000 B.C."

[4] Wille Riekkinen (personal communication) sees a possible link between the emergence of Zoroastrianism and the exile of North Israeli people in Assyria. This would explain why Persian *Magoi* were interested what happened in a little town of Betlehem in a periphery of their world hundreds of years later. Simo Parpola (2004), in turn, theorises that Zarathustra would have "received his training from an Assyrian… or, more likely, he was a Median or Mannean aristocrat who, like Daniel, had in his youth been deported to Assyria and been schooled in Matumian religious and scientific lore as part of the imperial indoctrination program." Both, thus, argue that Zarathustra got his monotheism from earlier traditions, either from Israeli deporters (Riekkinen) or Assyrian religion (Parpola).

[5] Zarathustra's preaches and Zoroastrian religious teachings are collected in the Avesta, which have several groups of writings. Perhaps the most important part of this is the Yasna or Gāthā (chant), which contains Zarathustra's own words from early sixth century BC. The work was probably edited in the beginning of the third Century B.C. Another body of literature is the Pahlavi, which is a translation and commentary of Avesta in Pahlavi (<Parthian) language. (Dresden 1980a(1962), 321f. See also Duchesne-Guillemin 1994, 1085).

[6] Dhalla 2003 (1938), 30.

[7] Dhalla 2003 (1938), 30.

has no equal. There is none to dispute his supremacy and contest his place. Nor is there one to struggle successfully with him for the mastery of the heavens. He is the first and foremost. He is the most perfect being. He is almighty. He is the absolute sovereign. He is beneficent. He is changeless. He is the same now and for ever… He is the only God proper, than whom there is none higher. Everything comes from him and through him. He is the lord of all.[1]

Zarathustra's theology was later partly combined with the old Persian and Babylonian theologies. Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin argues that Zoroastrianism had "a doctrine that relied on the allegiance of the common people, and therefore [usurper, Gaumata the Magian, of whom also Herodotos tells,] destroyed temples or altars of deities of the nobility." When Dareios seized the power, he restored them because he aimed in ensuring the co-operation of influential nobles "although he adopted Ahuramazda as a means of unifying his empire."[2]

The major thesis in Zoroastrianism was the dualism between Ahura-Mazda (Wise Lord) and Angra Mainyu (or Ahriman – Evil spirit). The power of the latter was, however, restricted and he was doomed to loose this battle. The world was the battlefield of this campaign. Wille Riekkinen argues that, as a consequence of this eschatology, Zoroastrianism had a clear emphasis on the choice between good and evil[3]. Riekkinen argues:

> The ethics of Zoroastrianism can be crystallised into the requirement of purity and truthfulness in thoughts, words and deeds. The whole religious practice aims primarily to reach this individual goal (Yasna 34:3; 22:14).[4]

According to Riekkinen, Zoroastrianism also has a doctrine of free will. When all actions either increases good or bad in the world, everyone (even demons) must one day give an account of his deeds. Therefore, all deeds have been written in the books. After three days of one's death, (s)he crosses the Chinvat-bridge and receives the personal judgement from Mithra, Sraoshra (obedience) and Rashnu (Justice, Loyalty to the truth), who were personal helping spirits or angels in Zoroastrianism. After the judgement, the soul either enters to the House of the Light (Paradise) or to the Houses of the Dark. The few neutral ones, who do not get their judgement then, remain in the Hammisgata, here they wait for the final judgement and final resurrection. This transcendence and eschatology is expressed in Avesta as a personal experiment of either

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[1] Dhalla 2003 (1938), 30.

[2] Duchesne-Guillemin 1994, 1084.

[3] Riekkinen 1988, 7f.; Duchesne-Guillemin 1994, 1085f.

[4] Riekkinen 1988, 8.

happiness or misery and this is the basis for individual's personal responsibility. This is, moreover, emphasised by the doctrine of God's infallibility.[1]

7.   "Strong might not injure the weak[2]" - Essentials and Legacy of Matumian Religion

TO SUM UP, it can be said that Matumian religion developed from the service of numinal powers towards fewer and fewer gods and goddesses who were framed, not anymore as powers of nature but masters of them. If Frankfort's analysis is correct, there is not any more doubt that the

The metaphor of gods as masters of powers arose from the Sumerian complex society where different classes and different people had different tasks. Like human warriors had their assembly and elders of the noble clans formed the council, the divinities had their assembly and council. Like human society, the divine one had a leader who, at first, was just a chairman of both meetings but eventually became a king. With this theology, Sumerians, on one hand, projected their earthly concepts to divinities and, on the other hand, legitimated the structure of their society. In this sense, Clifford Geertz' thesis of religion both as a model *of* the society and model *for* the society[3], seems valid.

In the process towards fewer gods, the lesser ones became either servants or sons and daughters of the more powerful gods – or they became epithets of the remaining deities. Especially in Assyria and Babylon, there was a clear trend towards monotheism which emerged, then, in Zoroastrianism and in Judaism. However, the difference between these was that while in the two first religions there were numerous lesser gods, the heaven in the two later ones was filled with angels. It is a matter of semantics whether there is a fundamental difference between lesser gods and angels.

In explaining the pantheon, Matumian thinkers used the form of epic narrative. According these epics, creation begun from the primordial waters and continued with the birth of several divine generations. While the stories vary in details of the pantheon,

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[1] Riekkinen 1988, 9ff.; Duchesne-Guillemin 1994, 1086.
[2] *Code of Hammurabi,* Epiloque (King 2004, 28)
[3] Geertz 1973, 93, 123.

there are some common elements in them. At the top of the pantheon was, at first, the god of heaven, An. Later, his son, Enlil, the god of the wind, became the actual leader of gods. When Babylon arose to power, it caused changes in the pantheon as well: the war-leader of gods, Marduk, was given the kingship among gods[1]. This narration form of mythology became the standard form of explaining transcendental phenomena and was adopted later by Hellenes, Jews and, through them, Christians.

According to the Matumian world view, presented in picture 1 above, the earth was seen as a flat plate, which was covered by the solid heaven with atmosphere in between. Below the earth existed the netherworld and the earth was surrounded by the sea. The same structure of the universe can be seen in Hellene mythoi as well. Through them it could be found thousands of years later in Dante Alighieri's *Divina Commedia* in the 14th century AD.

Matumian official cult focused on the pampering of gods. Here, again, the metaphor was a noble whose servants feed, clothe and entertain him/her. The cult was practices in the inner parts of temples to where ordinary people had no entrance. The individual aspects of the official cult were divination and exorcism. Along with official cult, there were popular religions, which can be seen as local cults of villages. Individual religion concentrated mostly on family-gods and ancestors, who acted as intermediaries between family and higher gods. Analogy was again from the court: an ordinary man could get his problems to the ears of the powerful only if some lesser official brought it to the prince's attention.

The ethics in Matum was derived from the idea that human race was created only to serve gods and free them from menial tasks. This meant that humans had to take care of each other, especially of orphans, widows and other poor and not bother gods with this kind of problems. If justice was not done, a poor complained and a god had to intervene, it was believed, led to the punishment of the wrongdoer. This punishment was understood as immanent and concrete. The idea of transcendent Last Judgment emerged only with Zoroastrianism.

LEGACY OF MATUM in Euro-Asian civilisation is fundamental. Along material things Matumian culture has transferred much of its religious practices to succeeding

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[1] Assyrian theologian did not manage to do the same with Assyria's patron god, Ashur, although they are not to blame not trying.

cultures. It is currently unclear to what extent ancient Sumer influenced ancient Kemet and, since we don't know about the Origins of Sumerians, we do not know if the common elements in these cultures are inherited from one or another or if they are part of much older but common heritage before either of these cultures.

In the case of Hellas, Israel and, much later, Islam, the influence is more evident. Similarities between Hesiodos' *Theogonia* and Babylonian *Enuma elish* is well known among scholars. Although stories differ in detail, the general outline and order of events is the same. In the case of cults, like that of Dionysios, we can trace its roots, at least, to Phoinikia. Aphrodite is a Hellene version of Ishtar, etc.

This is no wonder since, as John Boardman puts it: "I find it easier to view Greece before the fifth century as the westernmost extension of the eastern world than as the easternmost of the western world[1]." Martin Bernal has some truth in his thesis that it was 19th century modernism that created the view of distinct world views of the Orient and Hellas – although he, following Platon and Herodotos, emphasises more Kemetian than Matumian influence on Hellas[2]. The emphasis is on the words *some truth*, since there also were significant differences. Hellenes, for example, never accepted the idea that humans were slaves of gods. As good businessmen, Hellene framed their relationships to their gods as contract or alliance.

Later, after Alexandros of Macedonia, Oriental and Hellene cultures were mixed again and it cannot be said that Hellene culture overcame other cultures. Rather, Hellenes adopted elements of other cultures and presented them as their own[3]. In this time, especially Chaldean divination and Persian religion entered Europe with wider front.

However, it is mainly through Judaism that Matumian religious heritage has been transmitted to the Western world. Israel was partly Matumian and partly Kemetian hinterland. Northern Israel (later Samaria and Galilea) were most of their history under Matumian empires – either directly or as satellite states. Judea, in turn was most of the

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[1] Quoted in Freeman 1996, 6.

[2] Bernal 1987.

[3] Best examples are the theorem of Pythagoras (who was well known among Matumian schoolboys millennia before him) and Hippocrates' 'fatherhood' of medicine (when, if he ever lived, he studied in Kemetian Houses of Life in order to master his skill).

time under Kemet[1] but after Assyrian expansion it became part of the Matumian world. The major difference between Israeli and Matumian religion is that the perspective of Israeli religious texts is that of the lower classes. The great stories in the Hebrew Bible are redemptions from slavery in Kemet and in Babylonia. Thus, Israeli religion represents one of the few literal evidences of the folk religion in the ancient South Western Asia.

In spite of differences, Israeli religion is clearly part of the Matumian cultural world. Its mythology reflects the common heritage although it has been revised to fit into the Yahwistic religion – but even this is a common Matumian practice. Assyrian Tree of Life can be found in Genesis, as well as story of Deluge and references to heroes mentioned in the Sumerian King List. Here and there in the Bible one can find references to Tiamat[2], etc. Like in Matum, there was a trend towards monotheism in Israel which emerged in the texts of Deutero-Isaiah. Chaldean astrology is central in one of the basic Christian texts: the Persian *magoi* coming to Bethlehem to see the newborn king of Jews.

The major legacy of Matumian religion, however, is not in mythologies and in world views but in ethics. Matumian ethics was communal. As Ferdinand Tönnies put it, Oriental society was a *gemeinschaft*-society contrary to Hellene *gesellschaft*-society. It was a patriarchal society but one has to remember that in patriarchate, the duties are always balanced by duties. A patriarch had a duty to 'feed, clothe and protect' those of his household. As a counter gift, he receives obedience. When the ultimate *paterfamilias* is the god of the ancestors, the final responsibility of the welfare of the family/clan/tribe/nation is on this patron god. It is according to this frame of thinking that Yahweh proclaims that he hears the cry of orphans, widows and strangers, i.e. those who do not have family to protect them.

The idea of patron-god as a *paterfamilia* has had significant consequences. Like Sumerian king Gudea, Byzantine emperors presented themselves as 'good shepherds' – although the imaginary of the latter came through a byway, namely through Christianity. Like Akkadian nobles, *awilum* (='those with a name') imitated the king

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[1] This explains why Jeshua of Nazareth and some apostles often spoke about Jews and *their* rulers.

[2] Even in the *Revelation of John* in the New Testament has a story of archangel Michael defeating the dragon – just like Marduk defeated Tiamat.

and saw philanthropy as one of their main tasks[1] – in order to free gods from social care – similarly Byzantine nobles imitated the emperor and founded numerous philanthropic institutions[2]. Still today, *noblesse oblige* idea is very alive among the 'children of Abraham'. For example, the whole American welfare system is based on nonprofit organisations that receive significant proportions of their income from private donations[3].

The ethical impact of religion has not limited on the private sphere of life. Since Sumer, the major actor in social care, health care and education has been the temple. In spite of the rise of the modern welfare state in the 20th century, religious bodies are still major philanthropic actors in the world. Actually, up to 19th century, they were – along with guilds – the only institutions that cared for poor, orphans, sick and elderly.

Matumian religion had also an influence in international politics. Since gods were actual rulers of the world, wars were never just secular campaigns. Consequently, they had to have a just cause: punishing a violator of borders, defending people, etc. Thus, the idea of 'just war' goes to the dawn of history. War had also to be fought according to accepted rules of war.[4]

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[1] Van der Toorn 1996, 106f,

[2] On Byzantine philanthropy, see, e.g., Constantelos (1991) and articles in *Through the Eye of the Needle* (1994). On western mediaeval philanthropy, see Geremek (1994, 15-119).

[3] On American nonprofit organisations, see Muukkonen 2000.

[4] On international relations in the Ancient Near East, see Liverani (2001).

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