



Annunitum the Main Goddess in the Pantheon of Mari

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Abstract:

The pantheon of gods in the city of Mari was characterized by almost the presence of a new unknown gods, all customs and traditions, including religion in the city of Mari, were completely influenced by what exists in the civilization of Mesopotamia, with the presence of some other influences from the neighboring peoples of the city of Mari, including the presence of Arab gods, Egyptian gods, and Elamite gods, all of these gods mentioned in special lists of gods that were found in one of the temples in the city of Mari. They used to allocate quantities of food and offerings to these gods, and the most important of these gods, which we did not know anything about the goddess "Annunitum", that will be highlighted in this research with mention of its textual and archaeological evidence.

Keywords: Mari, goddess, pantheon of Gods, Mesopotamia, religion, temples, Ishtar.

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Introduction:

This goddess is known to be an Akkadian goddess, derived from the Sumerian form (A.NUNNA), which means (daughter of the prince) ⁽¹⁾, and her name is written in the Sumerian form (INANNA/AN.NU.NI.TUM), and corresponds to her in the Akkadian form (Ištar- Annunitum). In the perception of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, it was represented by the planet Venus, which shines at the beginning of the morning and clears the darkness from the country, and it represented the struggle between light and darkness and victory would eventually be to the light, and thus the goddess Annunitum appeared in the warlike character, in particular the name of the goddess (Anunit or Annunitum), and this form was given by the Semites to the goddess of war that Sumerian origin, and has other designations such as Innana (INNINI) or Ishtar (Ištar), and she became a symbol of the virgin goddess of war, and the lion was her symbol in the capital of Akkad, and it is associated with her warlike character. Also she had a temple in the city of Akkad, called (E₂.ULMAŠ), and after that this designation accompanied Annunitum to the city of Sippar and its temples was (E₂.ULMAŠ) too, during the reign of the Babylonian king Hammurabi (1792-1750 BCE). She was also called Ishtar of Akkad, and she kept this title in her temple, also in the city of Sippar, while the Babylonian king Nabonidus (556-539 BCE) rebuilt her temple in Babylon, and he glorified it in a memorial text as follow:

((To Annunit the lady of battle, she that bears bow and quiver, who executes perfectly the command of Enlil her father, that extirpates the foe, that annihilates the evil, that walks before the gods, who at sunrise and sunset renders favourable my omens)) ⁽²⁾.

¹ Botero, Jean, (1970), the Babylonian religion, translated by: Walid al-Jadir, Baghdad, Baghdad University Press, p. 40.

² Langdon, S., (1914), Tammuz and Ishtar, Oxford, p. 100-101.

She also appeared in religious texts as the daughter of (the moon god), her nicknamed (Beltiš), and her relationship with the god Shamash, as King Nabonidus mentioned: ((Šamaš and Annunit hear his prayers)) ⁽³⁾. She was known in the Neo-Babylonian period that Annunitum is directly related to childbirth. In the field of astronomy, Pisces is a symbol of Annunitum ⁽⁴⁾, and her symbols are the fish and the Dove ⁽⁵⁾.

The goddess Annunitum enjoyed with an important position in the city of Mari, although her character matched the warlike qualities of the goddess Ishtar, the goddess Annunitum not only appeared as a warlike, but also had a connection with the god Dumuzi.

While Durand saw that this status enjoyed by the goddess Annunitum in the city of Mari as a result of the interest of the people of Bani-Sama'l tribes when they came to the region, especially during the reign of King (Yagidu-Lim) and recognized her as a main goddess in the area of the banks of the Euphrates, as we find religious lists open with the goddess Annunitum, and this is evidence of her importance in the region and her sovereignty to the people of Sama'l. According to the ancient sources, the center of worship of the goddess Annunitum was in the village of Šaḥrum ⁽⁶⁾, and recorded the offering sacrifices and rituals to her ⁽⁷⁾, as in the following text: ((1 sheep for Annunitum in Šaḥrum)) ⁽⁸⁾.

In another text, which referred to a rivalry between priestesses about the centrality of the temple of the goddess Annunitum, and between the village of Šaḥrum, and the city of Mari, it is stated:

((The lady Ayala saw in her dream this: a woman from Šaḥrum, and a woman from Mari, quarreled at the gate of Annunitum outside the walls, and the woman of Šaḥrum told (to) the woman of Mari: Give me back my belongings, either you sit down, otherwise I am the one doing it ...))⁽⁹⁾.

In this text, there is a clear reference to the conflict between the priests about the centrality of the temple of the goddess Annunitum between the two cities, as this text indicates a conflict between two tribes too, as the goddess Annunitum returned as the patroness of the Bani-Sama'l, and between the royal family, which considered her the protector of the palace too, as well as the text indicates that Šaḥrum is considered the main center of the tribe, while the ruling family sought to make Annunitum in Mari in order to strengthen power and its centralization in this region. In a letter explaining the work of the goddess Annunitum as a protector of the king in the city of Mari, it is stated:

((... I received a prophecy in the temple of Annunitum, in a dream she said: O' Zamri-Lim don't go out on this expedition, stay in Mari, and so I myself constantly answer: may my lord does not give up his caution, therefore I sealed the letter with a lock of hair and a tuft of a dress, and sent it to my lord)) ⁽¹⁰⁾.

³ Langdon, (1914), Tammuz ..., p. 98-102.

⁴ Black, Jeremy and Green, Anthony, (1992), Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia, London, p. 34.

⁵ Eid Mar'i, (2018), Lexicon of Gods and Mythical Beings in the Ancient Near East, Damascus, p. 140.

⁶ Šaḥrum: A small village located near the monastery (currently Albukamal) south of the city of Mari, it was the center of the cult of Annunitum, see:

Durand, Jen Marie, (2008), La Religion Amorite en Syria a l'époque des Archives de Mari, G. delomo lete (ed), Mythologie et Religion des Semites Occidentaux, vol. I : Ebla, Mari. Orientalia Lo Vaniensia Analecta, vol. 162, Leuven, Peeters, p. 241.

⁷ Durand, La Religion Amorite ..., p. 201.

⁸ Bardet, G. & Joannes, F. & Lafont, B., Soubeyran, D. & Villard, P. , (1984), Archives Administratives de Mari I, ARM, vol. 23, Paris, p. 271, No. 326.

⁹ Charpin, Dominique, (1988), Archives Epistolaires de Mari I/2, ARM, vol. 26/2, Paris, p. 229.

¹⁰ Dossin, Georges, (1978), Correspondance Feminine Transcrite et Traduite, ARM, vol. 10, Paris, p. 50.

Another text also referred to the protection of the goddess Annunitum to the tribes of Beni-Sama'l in their conflict with the tribes of Beni-Yamen, in which it said:

((Say to my lord, this is how Aḥum spoke, the high priest of the temple of Annunitum, your servant: Menši from Hubatum conveyed to me a message, and he said: a wind rises on the earth, his wings and his feet I will test them, so let the crowds of Zimri-Lim and Beni-Sama'l come, Zimri-Lim, let the land not escape from your hands. She said: Beni-Yamen, why do you worry? I will test you. This is what he (Menši) told me. Now I sent to my lord a lock of hair, a thread (a button for a dress) from this woman)) ⁽¹¹⁾.

In this text, there is a reference is made to the message of the goddess Annunitum to King Zimri-Lim and Beni-Sama'l, about their wars against the tribes of Beni-Yamen, the text also indicated the protection of the goddess Annunitum for the tribe and the ruler, and in reference to granting legitimacy of power to the king and his tribe, in the city of Mari and surrounding areas.

The earliest reference to the Annunitum in the city of Mari was from the period of the Third Dynasty of Ur (2112-2004 BC.) ⁽¹²⁾, mentioned in the text (one sheep for each gods) ⁽¹³⁾, as mentioned in the list of the pantheon of Mari from the reign of King Zimri-Lim, her rank came 10, out of a total of 25 gods, she got (6 sheep) which means she is one of the main gods in Mari ⁽¹⁴⁾.

The goddess Annunitum received many offerings and this is stated in the cuneiform sources in which it is stated: (2 sheep for Annunitum) ⁽¹⁵⁾, (1 sacrificial sheep for Annunitum), (2 sheep for Annunitum), (1 liptum sheep, for Annunitum), (2 sheep for Annunitum), (5 sheep for Annunitum) ⁽¹⁶⁾.

The cuneiform sources also recorded several times that the goddess Annunitum received quantities of oil in the city of Mari, and this is what confirmed by the following texts: (half a gallon of Mari excellent Oil, for Diritum) ⁽¹⁷⁾, (15 shekels of Mari excellent Oil, for Annunitum) ⁽¹⁸⁾, and (X of excellent Oil for Annunitum) ⁽¹⁹⁾.

It seems from these texts that the goddess Annunitum received quantities of oil, but it is not indicate for what these dedications, but it seems that they were recorded on religious occasions in which the goddess Annunitum was involved. In Mari, the temple of the goddess Annunitum was found in the area of (ša libbi alim), and she also had a temple outside the city walls in the area of Asmad ⁽²⁰⁾, as evidenced in the following text:

((To my lord, say this, this is how Tepe-Ker-Šu, your servant, spoke: the day I arrived in Asmad, I gathered the predictors from the Hanians, and the next day, I took the omens for the safety of my lord in these words: will my lord when he performs the purification ritual stays 7 days outside the city walls? he will return safe and secure to the city, and they said : the day my lord went to the temple (Annunitum) outside

¹¹ Charpin, (1988), ARM, vol. 26/2, p. 200.

¹² Nakata Ichiro, (1974), Deities in the Mari Texts, (Complete Inventory of all the Information on the Deities Found in the Published Old Babylonian Cuneiform Texts from Mari and Analytical and Comparative Evaluation Thereof with Regard to the Official and Popular Pantheons of Mari), Ph.D., in Columbia University, p. 79

¹³ Talon, Philippe, (1985), Textes Administratifs des Salles Y et Z du Palais de Mari, ARM, vol. 24, (Paris), p.178, No. 263.

¹⁴ Dossin, Georges, (1950), Le Pantheon de Mari, Studia Mariana Brill, 1 Enero, p. 44-45.

¹⁵ Bardet, G. & Joannes, F. & Lafont, B., Soubeyran, D. & Villard, P. , (1984), Archives Administratives de Mari I, ARM, vol. 23, Paris, p.256, No. 264.

¹⁶ Durand, Jean-Marie, (1982), Textes Administratifs des Salles 134 et 160 du Palais de Mari, ARM, vol. 21, Paris, No. 48; No. 33; No. 29; No. 24; No. 21

¹⁷ Bottero, Jean, (19), Textes Economiques et Administratifs, ARM, vol. 7, Paris, No. 5.

¹⁸ Bottero, ARM, vol. 7, No. 64.

¹⁹ Bottero, ARM, vol. 7, No. 70.

²⁰ Durand, (1982), ARM, vol. 21, No. 202.

the city walls, my lord must take care of himself, and put forces at his disposal to protect him and the city. As for his care (protection), my lord must be careful ...)) ⁽²¹⁾.

The importance of the goddess Annunitum is manifested in the first year of the reign of King Zimri-Lim, as he made a statue of her, and sent it to the center of her worship in the city Šaḫrum, this matter was taken by King Zimri-Lim to express his loyalty to the goddess Annunitum, after the power restored the Amorite dynasty rule in Mari, and it is not excluded that this action was done by the ancestors (previous rulers), as a dispute appeared between Mari, and Šaḫrum, after one of the rulers failed to present a statue to the goddess Annunitum in the city Šaḫrum, and it is made clear to each ruler at the beginning of his reign that this due procedure must be carried out, and at the first year of the reign of the king Zimri-Lim was called (The year in which Zimri-lim presented the statue for Annunitum) ⁽²²⁾.

In the cuneiform sources, the allocation of metals for the manufacture of the statue (Annunitum) is mentioned in it:

((One and a half Mina from bronze, for the crown and scepter of Annunitum, eight and a half shekels from bronze received by: Idin-^dNunu, for the ankles)) ⁽²³⁾.

We understand from this text that there is an industry for the statue of the goddess Annunitum and there is a reference to the crown and scepter, which gives the impression of the form of Annunitum similar to a human, and the crown and scepter, as well as the ankles for her legs are shown, and this amount allocated to the industry suggests that the statue of the goddess was a large size. Another text also referred to the Annunitum exodus, stating: ((For Annunitum on the occasion of her exit from the palace...)) ⁽²⁴⁾.

It is clear from the above text that the statue of Annunitum was transported from one place to another, perhaps on trips or religious occasions, and this moving between temples or entering the palace, or entering the city of Mari, and leaving for the city of Šaḫrum, the center of her worship, it was stated in the text:

((To my lord, say this, that Addu-Duri your servant said: about the issue of gold breast ornaments (assigned) to Annunitum, (Aḫum) the high priest came here, and spoke in these terms: it is not appropriate to hand them over, the throne of god must first be made, and this order must be executed, and this gold must be taken and made with it the throne of the deity)) ⁽²⁵⁾.

In this text, there is a reference for using the gold for the manufacture of the throne of the goddess Annunitum in the city of Mari, as it seems that the priest was a follower of Annunitum and referred to this industry after he took the prophecy about the manufacture of the throne.

In another cuneiform text, it recorded that the goddess Annunitum received one of the thrones in the city of Mari, along with a number of thrones that were dedicated to some gods, and the goddess Annunitum was one of them, as stated in the text: (throne of Annunitum, (receive it by): Eli-Mama) ⁽²⁶⁾.

The completion of the manufacture of the throne and enter it in the temple, it was necessary to present an offerings like a two boats on this occasion, and this seems clear from the letter of Addu-Duri, to King Zimri-Lim, in which it stated :

((To my lord, say this, that Addu-Duri, your maid said: in case my lord is interested in this, I hope the culprit arrives here, another case, the day of the offerings of the throne in the temple of Annunitum, I offered the sacrifice, and the omens were a great blessing, the first time I took the Omen, and I practiced

²¹ Charpin, (1988), *ARM*, vol. 26/2, p. 216.

²² Durand, (1982), *ARM*, vol. 21, No. 285; No. 202.

²³ Kupper, Jean-Robert, (1983), Documents Administratifs de la Salle 135 du Palais de Mari, *ARM*, vol. 22/1, Paris, p. 306, No. 188.

²⁴ Dossin, (1978), *ARM*, vol. 10, p. 52.

²⁵ Dossin, (1978), *ARM*, vol. 10, p. 52.

²⁶ Durand, (1982), *ARM*, vol. 21, No. 292.

re-offering the sacrifice again (i.e. Lamb food), and in the second time I took the Omen, I repeated that several times, by (feeding the lamb), let him now, let my lord turn to him and ... (here) ...))⁽²⁷⁾.

The goddess Annunitum occupied an important place in predictions, especially in protecting the king and the city from external dangers, as there are a number of cuneiform texts that referred to this and stated:

((To my lord, say this, that Šeptu, your maid said: the palace is fine, Eli-ḥaznaya (eunuch) came here, and Annunitum in the center of the city. The country of Babylon Hammurabi, I asked him about the king and Babylon, he said: this man is planning many things against the country (Mari), he will not succeed, my lord will see what the gods will do to this man, they will defeat him, you will impose your control on him, his days almost are finished, he will not live much, let my lord know that))⁽²⁸⁾.

This text referred to the external dangers facing the city of Mari, and in it there is a message of the goddess Annunitum, which confirms that the goddess stands on the side of the city of Mari and her ruler Zimri-Lim. Also the letter shows the warlike character of the goddess Annunitum, and she is the patroness of the Bani-Sama'l, especially for their ruler, as she appeared in the text as an intermediary between the gods and the ruling power in the city of Mari. And in another text about the prophecies in the temple of the goddess Annunitum it is stated:

((To my lord, say this, that Šeptu, your servant said: in the temple of Annunitum, in the center of the city, appeared Aḥatum Dagan-Malik, he said: (Zimri-Lim), even if you neglect me, I myself will fight for you, I will fill your hands of your enemies, these are for me as a thieves, I will catch and collect them in the camp Belet-ekalim, and the next day came Aḥum the high priest, presented this news to me, from him I took a strand the hair, the tail of the robe, and I wrote to my lord, it is sealed with the tuft and the tail of the robe, and I sent it to my lord))⁽²⁹⁾.

In the text above referred to a prophecy that occurred in the temple of the goddess Annunitum in which the god Dagan directed and supported the King Zimri-Lim, but the occurrence of the prophecy in the temple of the goddess Annunitum is an indication that she is the patroness of power in the city of Mari, for that reason the message of the god Dagan appeared in the temple of Annunitum, and perhaps the camp of Belet ekalim (Lady of the palace) is a figurative expression of a camp belonging to the palace. In another text about the prophecies it is stated:

((To my lord, say this, that Šeptu, your maid said: the palace is fine, on the third day in the temple of Annunitum, Šelebum prophesied, and said: This is how Annunitum spoke: Zimri-lim, we will test you with rebellion, protect yourself, put next to you those of your servants (you trusts them) that you like, make them always ready, make them protect you, (for your safety) do not go far alone, the people (your enemies) who are your test, I will fill (put them) in your hands, I took the lock of hair, the rim of a robe, from the Šelebum, and sent it to my lord))⁽³⁰⁾.

It seems from above text that the prophecy was conveyed by Šeptu to King Zimri-Lim, in which the goddess Annunitum warned the King about the occurrence of rebellions in the future, and here the goddess Annunitum appeared as a protector of King Zimri-Lim, and instructed him to take precautions and stand by him in difficult times, as she stands with King Zimri-Lim in his wars against his enemies as Ishtar the warlike goddess.

The religious sources also referred to the high priestess in the temple of the goddess Annunitum, and to the rituals of the worship of Annunitum, also she referred to beer and flour, and to a vessel in which food is served to Annunitum. The priestess also indicated that the statue of the goddess Annunitum was taken from her temple twice and was returned without the king's intervention. On another occasion, the

²⁷ Dossin, (1978), ARM, vol. 10, p. 55.

²⁸ Dossin, (1978), ARM, vol. 10, p. 6.

²⁹ Charpin, (1988), ARM, vol. 26/2, p. 214.

³⁰ Charpin, (1988), ARM, vol. 26/2, p. 213.

goddess Annunitum intervened to make peace (a treaty) with the Bani- Yamin. Also about regarding the neglect had become on the Annunitum temple, she was stated:

((... (came to me) šelebum, and said: We took (beer) idatum, (for the benefit of) Annunitum, and when I asked for flour (so kindle) the fire, he gave me (porridge) in (pot) muših̄tum instead of flour, and I had to rely on myself twice when I went to enemy areas, and because the third time, I came to dwell in a temple, I live in (barn), and my food is reeds (barn wall) ...)) ⁽³¹⁾.

Conclusion:

There are many signs that illustrate the conflict between the cities, especially the struggle of the priests about the centrality of the temple of the goddess Annunitum, and its religious status in the city, there was also a conflict between two neighboring tribes, namely (the tribe of Beni- Sama'l and the tribe of Beni-Yamen), because the goddess Annunitum was the patroness of the Beni-Sama'l, but the royal family of Mari considered her the protector of the palace also.

The center of worship of this goddess is in the city of Šaḥrum, which is the main center of the Bani-Sama'l tribe, while the ruling family of the city of Mari sought to make Annunitum its official goddess in order to strengthen power and centralization in this region.

The earliest textual mention of the goddess Annunitum in the city of Mari came from the period of the Third Dynasty of Ur, as the texts mentioned a group of sheep sacrifices dedicated to this goddess.

There are many texts that reported information about the existence of religious events in which the goddess Annunitum participated, and in the city of Mari there was a temple of the goddess Annunitum in the area (ša libbi alim), and also had a temple outside the city walls in the area of Asmad, and this confirms the existence of the worship of the goddess Annunitum in Mari and nearby cities.

Some omen texts confirmed that the goddess Annunitum had an important place in predictions, especially in protecting the king and the city from external dangers, and also emphasized that the goddess stands on the side of the city of Mari and its ruler Zimri-Lim, as some letters shows the warlike character of the goddess Annunitum, and she is the patroness of the Bani-Sama'l, especially their rulers, as she appeared in some texts as an intermediary between the gods and the ruling power in the city of Mari.

The cuneiform texts that came from the city of Mari confirmed the existence of an identity between the personality of the goddess Annunitum and the goddess Ishtar, as she resembles her in many characteristics.

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