ETHNICITY IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

Papers Read at the 48th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale
Leiden, 1-4 July 2002

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NEDERLANDS INSTITUUT VOOR HET NABIJE OOSTEN
2005
THE GOD AMURRU AS EMBLEM OF ETHNIC AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

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Ethnicity in ancient Mesopotamia cannot be discussed without considering its manifestation in the religious sphere. My objective here in this respect is to examine the figure of the god Amurru and to highlight his nature as an intellectual construct designed to reflect symbolically, both in the religious iconography and in the theological literature, the presence of the Amorites and other Western Semites in Mesopotamian society.2

The first problem related to the god Amurru is his name. Syllabic spellings are extremely rare; the name Amurru is usually written with the logogram 𒀭Mari. More problematic is the form AN.AN.MAR.TU, which scholars have interpreted either as ḫum amurrum, “the Amorite god,” or as ḫII Amurrim, “the god of Amurru.” More recently Edzard has suggested that it could be a diri-compound with unknown reading.3 However, the interpretation ḫII Amurrim is now supported by an unpublished god list from Emar which gives Hurrian equivalences of these two forms as follows: 174. ḫMar.Tu = ḫ-nur-ri:[be] 175. AN.AN.MAR.TU = ḫ-ni a-mur-[ri-we].4 As argued by Richter, this last entry implies that AN.AN.MAR.TU must be understood in Hurrian translation as “the god of Amurru” and that it very probably meant the same thing in Akkadian, unless one views the Hurrian gloss as an analytical rendering of the logogram. Therefore the form AN.AN.MAR.TU should probably be transliterated ḫDINGIR-MAR.TU and transcribed ḫII Amurrim.5

If ḫDINGIR-MAR.TU means ḫII Amurrim “the god of Amurru,” what then is the meaning of ḫMAR.TU? There is no question that the forms ḫMAR.TU and ḫDINGIR-MAR.TU interchange freely in cuneiform texts and refer to the same god; therefore, the meaning of ḫMAR.TU cannot be fun-

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1 I am indebted to Piotr Steinkeller, Gianni Marchesi, and Benjamin Studevent-Hickman, who read this paper and commented on several points.
4 This is valid insofar as we assume that the restoration of the Hurrian genitive -we in line 175 is correct. As pointed out by Richter, this restoration is supported by an offering list in Hurrian from Ugarit which contains the entry ḫin amur “the god of Amurru.”
damently different from that of 𒈹DINGIR-MAR.TU. At any rate, the choice of meanings is restricted, for the word Amurrū and its Sumerian equivalent MAR.TU, apart from referring to a god, denote either an ethno-linguistic group or a point of the compass generally translated as "West" but corresponding more precisely to the lands located south of Mesopotamia beyond the Euphrates. That area encompassed a vast region stretching from Syria to the Arabian peninsula. Therefore the god 𒈹MAR.TU can only be either the deified geographic location known as Amurrū, or a divine personification of the Amorites, who were generally thought exclusively associated with the West in the Mesopotamian perception. In the previous case 𒈹MAR.TU should be interpreted simply as 𒀀Amurrū, meaning literally "the Divine West," while in the latter case it should be understood as a gentilic and transcribed ᴀmūrū, "the Divine Westerner," or "the Western god."

The latter possibility seems to be supported by parallel examples in Mesopotamia of gods created to embody a specific ethno-linguistic identity. Documents from the later periods, for instance, mention such deities as Ḫaššu and Ḫaššitu, literally "the Kassite god" and "the Kassite goddess," 𒈹6 as well as ᠥSutti and ᠪAḥlamiti, evidently to be interpreted as "the Sutean" and "the Aramean goddess." The ethnic nature of these deities is reflected in the fact that they all bear names ending with the Akkadian adjectival-gentilic ending -i-um (𒈹ûm), feminine -i-tum, and we accordingly may wonder if the name of the god 𒈹MAR.TU should not be understood as <Scalars was, like Amurrū, a Babylonian creation. However, Balkan tentatively suggested that Ḫaššu and Ḫaššitu were Akkadian names for Šuqamuna and Šumâliya, the dynastic gods of the Kassite royal family, but this cannot be proven.

6 For Ḫaššu and Ḫaššitu see K. Balkan, Kassitensstudien I. Die Sprache der Kassiten (AOS 37; New Haven, 1954), pp. 108-110, who tentatively proposes the readings Ḫaššu and Ḫaššitu for the two deities. It is notable that they appear for the first time well after the downfall of the Kassite dynasty. The god Ḫaššu is known only from Akkadian personal names appearing in documents dated to the 11th and 10th centuries. It is a loanword from galzu, which means "Kassite" in the native language of the Kassites, although there is no record of a god Ḫalzu in the Kassite or Babylonian pantheon (see Kassitensstudien, pp. 131-133). Therefore it seems that Ḫaššu was, like Amurrū, a Babylonian creation. Although Balkan tentatively suggested that Ḫaššu and Ḫaššitu were Akkadian names for Šuqamuna and Šumâliya, the dynastic gods of the Kassite royal family, but this cannot be proven.

7 For the goddess Sutti see J.A. Brinkman, A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia (AnOr 43; Rome, 1968), p. 286 and n. 1854, who points out that there was an official cult of the goddess at Borsippa in the 8th century. She also appears later in personal names from Borsippa, especially in the archives of the Išk-bani/Es-lûta-bani families, for which see F. Joannis, Archives de Borsippa, La Famille Es-lûta-bani (Hautes études orientales 25; Genève, 1989), p. 362, s.v. Ami-Sutti, and p. 364, s.v. Ardi-Sutti. For the goddess Ahlamitu in Neo-Babylonian texts from Sippar see F. Joannis, "Les temples de Sippar et leurs trésors à l'époque néo-babylonienne," RA 86 (1992), p. 161; A.C.V.M. Bongenaar, The Neo-Babylonian Esabbar Temple at Sippar: its Administration and its Prosopography (PIHANS 80; Leiden, 1997), pp 231 and 332; and R. Zadok, Geographical Names According to New and Late-Babylonian Texts (RGTC 8; Wiesbaden, 1985), p. 3. The name of this goddess is written 𒊩𒉪-la-mi-šu and 𒊩𒉪-la-mi-šu in texts from Sippar, in which she occurs twice (Nun. 117:3; and VS 6, 77:5). For mentions of the goddess in Neo-Babylonian texts from Uruk, see P.-A. Beaulieu, The Pantheon of Uruk During the Neo-Babylonian Period (Leiden, 2003), section 6.1.

8 Syllabic spellings are rare. One may occur in an Old Akkadian text from Kish published by I.J. Gelb, Sargonic Texts in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (MAD 5; Chicago, 1970), no. 626. A-mu-ra-[i]-m[a]-?-AN, discussed by J.J.M. Roberts, The Earliest Semitic Pantheon (Baltimore, 1972), p. 15. Another name is found in the Old Assyrian text CXX I, 1:14, A-mu-ra-ba-ni, for which see H. Hirsch, Untersuchungen zur Akkadischen Religion, AJA Beiheft 13/14 (Graz, 1961), p. 5. See also the much later evidence from the lament Ana Elume, M. Cohen, The Canonical Lamentations of Ancient
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in Old Assyrian texts to denote the geographic area rather than the god, although when this usage occurs the word is still prefixed with the divine determinative. This should indicate that 

\textit{MAR.TU} was probably a divine personification of the geographic area known as Amurru, not a genitile formation meaning "the Amorite god."\textsuperscript{10}

This raises the issue of the relationship between the three established meanings of Amurru and which one was primary. Similar questions can be raised concerning Aššur, both god and geographic designation, which eventually also gave rise to an ethno-linguistic concept. In Old Assyrian texts, for instance, the god Aššur (Aššu\textsuperscript{r}) and the city Assur (\textit{MAR.TU} Aššu\textsuperscript{r}) freely interchange, suggesting that they were viewed as one undifferentiated divine entity.\textsuperscript{11} Recently Lambert has argued that the concepts of a city Aššur and of a god Aššur were inextricably linked from the beginning because Aššur originally designated a sacred mound which became both a city and a god.\textsuperscript{12} Must we assume a similar development - \textit{mutatis mutandis} - for Amurru? At present the evidence indicates that the geographic and ethnic usages of \textit{MAR.TU} were the more ancient ones, going back to the Early Dynastic and Sargonic periods.\textsuperscript{13} The god Amurru, apart from a questionable mention in a personal name from the time of Šar-kali-šarrī,\textsuperscript{14} first appears in the textual record only during the Ur III period, and in the iconography of seals only during the Isin-Larsa period. Therefore it seems that the divine concept was a secondary construct derived from the geographic and ethnic meanings of the term Amurru.

Despite the fact that the divine name \textit{AMURRU} is a substantive denoting a geographic location, not a gentilic adjective, it is evident that the god was also a divine personification of the Amorites. The myth of the "Marriage of Martu," in which Amurru is portrayed with all the stereo-


\textsuperscript{9} On this see I.G. Dercksen, review of C. Michel, \textit{Innōya dans les tablettes paléo-assyriennes} (2 vols.; Paris, 1991), in \textit{Bibliotheca Orientalis} 49 (1992), p. 792. He also points out that the form \textit{DINGIR-MAR.TU} may have evolved from the need to keep the god distinct from the geographic location.

\textsuperscript{10} One must of course consider the possibility that Amurru was the Mesopotamian designation of a god who had another name among the native Amorite population, but so far there is no compelling indication pointing in that direction. Unlike such "ethnic deities" as Suṣuru and Kūššu, whose adjectival-gentilic names might well conceal the presence of another deity (e.g. Suṣuru perhaps being a form of Ištar on the model of Aššuritu and Urkšitu; Kūššu being the god Ṣišqamuša if we follow the argument put forward by Balkan), it appears indeed that Amurru is nothing else than a divine personification of the West and its people.


\textsuperscript{12} Discussion of this in Larsen's works cited above, and for the origins of Assur and its namesake god as a sacred mound see W.G. Lambert, "The God Aššur," \textit{Iraq} 45 (1983), pp. 82-86.


\textsuperscript{14} The name in question is \textit{A-mur-ru-k[i?-m]a?-AN} in Gelb, \textit{MAD} 5, no. 62:6, discussed earlier.
types commonly associated with the Amorites in Sumerian literature, leaves no doubt that embodying that ethno-linguistic and cultural identity was his primary function already in the Ur III period, precisely when he was introduced in the Mesopotamian pantheon. This is the reason why the god Amurru has so often been called the theos eponymos, or even the heros eponymos of the Amorites in Assyrio-logical literature. But this needs to be further qualified. Strictly speaking, an eponym is a person, real or imagined, who gave his name to an institution, a city, a nation, or any other form of human collectivity. In this sense Athena was the eponymous goddess of Athens, and William Penn the eponymous founder of Pennsylvania. The only difference is that in the first case we are in the realm of the religious imagination, in the latter in the realm of historically verifiable facts. In the case of Amurru there is no question that we are also moving in the realm of the religious imagination, the only remaining question being, Whose imagination? That of the Amorites, or that of the Sumero-Akkadian population of Mesopotamia?

It must be emphasized in this connection that no convincing Sumerian or Akkadian etymology of the word Amurru (or its logogram MAR.TU) has yet been proposed. There is also no evidence that Amurru was a loanword from Amorite or another West Semitic language and no indication that the people we can identify as Amorites in cuneiform sources from Mesopotamia and Syria referred to themselves as “Amorites.” The likelihood is that they did not and that the word Amurru and the logogram MAR.TU were strictly Mesopotamian terms. It is therefore most probable that Amurru was not an Amorite god nor a god originating in the West. Unlike Aššur, a true eponymous god who emerged from within a community as a self-reflection of its religious and communal identity, Amurru was simply a product of the Mesopotamian mind projected onto a foreign population.

This purely Mesopotamian origin of Amurru was strongly emphasized by Kupper in his study on the iconography of the god. Noting that Amurru never appears in Amorite theophoric personal names but often in Akkadian ones and that his popularity even seems to decrease as we enter areas heavily populated by Amorites such as the kingdom of Mari, Kupper concluded that the god Amurru was very probably a creation of Mesopotamian theologians, fulfilling the role of eponymous god of the Amorites only in the eyes of the native inhabitants of Sumer and Akkad. In spite of the considerable increase in documentation during the past forty years, Kupper’s conclusions have withstood the test of time. As recently pointed out by Streck in his study of Amorite onomastics, the fact that the god Amurru does not appear a single time among the more than 7,000 Amorite personal names from the Old Babylonian period, although a large number of them are formed with a theophoric element, is in itself sufficient to put definitively to rest the notion, still occasionally aired in Assyrio-logical literature, that Amurru was the tribal god of the Amorites. As far as we can see, these conclusions can also be extended to Amorite personal names.

15 This in sharp contrast with a venerable center of Mesopotamian culture like Nippur, where the god was solidly-implanted in spite of a minimal Amorite presence.
16 Kupper, L’iconographie, pp. 84-86.
from the Ur III period.\textsuperscript{18} This makes it clear that the god Amurru was a Mesopotamian construct, a god born of the necessity to find a symbolic place for the Amorites in the pantheon of Sumer and Akkad at the time of their invasion of Mesopotamia and their eventual assumption of political power. There was no god Amurru for the Amorites, at least not until they assimilated into Mesopotamian society and embraced its values.

This fact is of no small interest for the study of ethnicity in ancient Mesopotamia, because it tells us how the urban inhabitants of Sumer and Akkad created a god almost entirely on the basis of their perception of a separate ethnic identity. Indeed, a catalogue of the attributes of the god Amurru found in Ur III and Old Babylonian sources reads in part like a small textbook of ethnic stereotypes. These sources consist mainly of seals and seal impressions with representations of Amurru, some identified with captions securing the identification of the god, and of a few literary and religious texts in Sumerian and Akkadian, of which only three are really relevant for our discussion:\textsuperscript{19} the aforementioned "Marriage of Martu," a Sumerian composition generally dated to the time of the 3rd dynasty of Ur though known only from later manuscripts;\textsuperscript{20} SRT 8, a Sîr-gûl-da hymn to Martu in Sumerian, probably from the Isin-Larsa period;\textsuperscript{21} and finally an Akkadian hymn to Amurru published as OECT 11, 1, clearly from the Old Babylonian period and possibly belonging to the genre of hymns with subscriptions for the reigning king, almost certainly in this case a monarch of the first dynasty of Babylon.\textsuperscript{22} We also have a letter from Mari which contains a short description of a stela with a depiction of the king in prayer before the god Amurru.\textsuperscript{23}

The most prominent attribute of Amurru in the iconography is the crooked staff.\textsuperscript{24} The identi-

\textsuperscript{18} Theophoric names with Amurru are conspicuously absent from the list of Amorite personal names from the Ur III period compiled by G. Buccellati, \textit{The Amorites of the Ur III Period} (Naples, 1966), pp. 101-124.
\textsuperscript{21} Edition by A. Falkenstein, \textit{Sumerische Götterbilder. I. Teil} (Heidelberg, 1959), pp. 120-140, who dates it to the "early Old Babylonian period."
\textsuperscript{22} O.R. Gurney, \textit{Literary and Miscellaneous Texts in the Ashmolean Museum} (OECT 11; Oxford, 1989), text no 1, with full transiliteration, translation, and commentary on pp. 15-19.
fication of this object as the *gamilu*, which is mentioned a few times in religious texts as the characteristic object carried by Amurrû, is now definitively secured by the Mari letter A.975, which describes an actual image of the god as *šalam Amurrûm gamlam naši* “a representation of Amurrû, carrying a crooked staff.” This instrument also figures prominently in the hymn *OECT* 11, 1, where it is praised no fewer than six times as a symbol of Amurrû’s universal and benevolent power, for instance in verse 7: *takāl gamlam elletam šumēlukka nādināt balātim ana niši* “in your left hand you carry the holy crooked staff which gives life to the people.”

25 Therefore, it is not surprising that the *gamilu* often appears alone in the iconography of cylinder seals to symbolize the god. In later theology the crooked staff is still connected with Amurrû as a purification tool, particularly in the ritual series *Šurpu* and *Maqlû,* 26 and also in the Mila Mergi Rock Relief of Tigrathpilesêr III where the god is described as *Amurrû nāši gamli bandudê* “Amurrû, who wields the crooked staff (and) the purification bucket.” 27 It is therefore clear that during the Old Babylonian period the *gamilu* acquired a very potent religious and apotropaic significance, but this is unlikely to have been its original function. Did the *gamilu* evolve from a shepherd’s staff, as some have proposed? This is possible but cannot really be proven in the absence of clearer textual or visual evidence. There is however one interesting mention in a text from the early Isin-Larsa period of a “large Amorite crooked staff” (*BIN* 9, 461: 4, *š8ga.am.lum gu.ta mar.tu,* which could be the same object as the one normally associated with the god. 28 If this is the case the staff of the god Amurrû might originally have been a purely utilitarian object deemed characteristic of the Amorite people, 29 and this would explain why it was chosen as emblem of the god: to emphasize his foreign, Amorite origin. Later on, when Amurrû was fully accepted in the pantheon, the *gamilu* was assigned a new function and meaning more in accordance with the god’s new, more exalted role.


28 Buccellati, *Amorites,* p. 34, had already raised the possibility that this object could be the same as that carried by the god.

29 Kupper, *L’iconographie,* pp. 42-49, on the other hand, comes to the conclusion that the staff can hardly have been a utilitarian object, since there are sometimes two of them and it is held in various ways by the god.
The second characteristic attribute of Amurru in the iconography is the cylindrical hat, usually provided with a pair of horns protruding at each side of its base. There is strong evidence that this headdress was of Syrian origin, although in Syria it was almost always associated with goddesses. As has been demonstrated by D. Collon in her study of the seal impressions from Alalakh, the same horned cylindrical hat worn by Amurru on Babylonian seals is one of the attributes which serves to distinguish the “Syrian goddess” from the “Babylonian goddess” there.30 Kupper theorized that this headdress was deliberately borrowed from Syrian iconography in order to impart an exotic character to the god Amurru.31 Would I dare theorize further and suggest that the god was given a female attribute to emphasize his alienness (i.e. his origins outside the realm of civilization, away from the center)? Contemporary historiography and social criticism have amply recognized that feminizing the “other” and masculinizing the center of power are an almost universal paradigm of constructing imperial and national identity. A similar phenomenon might be at work here in the representation of Amurru, the alien god, with a foreign and female headdress.

Amurru is sometimes depicted resting his foot on the back of a crouching horned animal. The animal can also appear alone as a substitute for the god, in which case it is usually surmounted or accompanied by the crooked staff. The identity of this animal is somewhat problematic, and it is possible that more than one animal was in fact associated with the god in the iconography. As originally demonstrated by Kupper, the iconography of the animal seems to fluctuate between gazelle and goat,32 although E. Braun-Holzinger has recently adopted a more prudent stance on the issue, identifying the animal in some cases as a goat and in the others as an unspecified “horned animal.”33 The association of the gazelle with Amurru in the iconography is quite significant in view of the fact that an episode of the “Marriage of Martu” depicts the god and his relatives participating in a gazelle hunt.34 In addition, the later tradition preserves hints that Amurru was identified with a mouse or rat (ḫumessiru).35 Amurru’s association with these animals no doubt serves

30 D. Collon, The Seal Impressions from Tell Atchana/Alalakh (AOAT 27; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1975), pp. 180-181 and pls. XV-XVI.
31 Kupper, L’iconographie, pp. 41-42.
32 Kupper, L’iconographie, pp. 49-54.
34 This interpretation is the one favored by Römer and Klein in their editions of the text. Bottéro and Kramer, however, translate MAŠ as “lamb.” Römer, “Miscellanea Sumerologica I,” p. 319, n. 5, already perceptively suggested that the gazelle hunt in the “Marriage of Martu” might be an allusion to the symbolic animal of the god. Along the same line D. Collon, “Filling Motifs,” in U. Finkbeiner et al., ed., Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Vorderasiens. Festschrift für Rainer Michael Boehmer (Main, 1995), pp. 70-72, suggests that the motif of the gazelle, which appears in the iconography of seals and weights, might ultimately symbolize Babylon and the fact that it achieved prominence under an Amorite dynasty.
35 The association with this rodent occurs in the late lament Ana Elume, edited by Cohen, Canonical Lamentations, pp. 212-213 rev. 128. ḫu-mu-še-ru mu-lu is-TI ‘xa-’ba/ma-ke₂₄ da-a-a₂₄ KUR-i: mut-il₂₄ KUR-i “Divine Rodent, lord who smites (?) the mountain (or following the gloss: “walks about the mountain”).” For the various interpretations of this difficult passage see Klein, “The God Martu,” p. 104, and A. Cavigneaux, “PA.DUN = hursag et le dieu Amurru,” N.A.B.U. 1987/26. The same word appears as an epithet of Amurru in Litike, An = Anum V 218. ṣar-tu-lā-an-ki’ [ba-šum-us₂₄’ir ad-gal₂₄] = ama nam-tar-ra₂₄ (the gloss appears in the following line in one manuscript, CT 24, 1 ff., col. III, 30); and VI, 234. [sar-tu-lā-an-ki] = sar-tu₂₄ ba-tum = dam-bi-sal; here Urbatum should be emended to ur-kI₂₄-tu₂₄, in accordance with the new fragment from Seleucid Uruk, which also confirms the rest of
to stress his character as a god from outside the realm of urban, civilized life. The same is true of his equation with Sumuqan in the god list An = Anu ša amēli, the god of cattle and wild beasts of the steppe.36

Amurruru is sometimes depicted resting his foot on a small stepped structure. Although this motif can be interpreted in various ways, Kupper identified it as a stylized mountain, correlating it with numerous passages in legends of cylinder seals and religious literature which associate Amurruru with mountains. These references to “mountains” could also be understood as allusions to the steppe, since the word šadā (kur) conveys the two meanings. After all, Amurruru is occasionally called bel šēri “lord of the steppe,” while his wife Ašaratum receives the title of bēlet šēri “lady of the steppe.”37 Yet the association with mountains is also clearly demonstrated by a number of sources. Legends of cylinder seals unequivocally call him the one “who resides (or lives) in the pure mountain,” using both the words kur and ṣur-sag (kur-sikil-la tuš; kur-sikil-la ti-la; tuš ṣur-sag-ga-sikil-a-ke4),38 while the hymn OECT 11, 1 hails the god as waštib ūršānim “who dwells in the mountain.”39 His mountainous residence is described as a sacred location in the hymn SRT 8, which qualifies Amurruru as the one “who occupies a holy dais in the mountains, the pure place” (3 and 4. ṣur-sag ki-sikil-la bāra-kū-ge si-a); in that same hymn Amurruru’s association with mountains acquires martial tones; he is hailed as “the hero, august youth, who completely controls the distant mountains as far as their borders” (1. ur-sag šul-maḫ ur-idim-ma zag-bi-še til-la).40 This martial tone survives in later theological texts, in which he receives the titles “lord of the mountain” (bel šad ū41) and “conqueror of the mountain” (daššik šad, mutakkip šad).42 In the Enuma vocabulary the epithet “lord of the mountain” is prefixed with the divine determinant and explained as the Enuma form of mar.tu (num-šur-sag = dišu₃₄-šur-sag = mar.tu).43 Even the logogram 9UR.GAL “the great mountain,” which usually denotes the god Enil, began to be

the restorations proposed by Litke, SpTU IV, 183 rev. 1. 3mar-tu-lá-<an>ki₄₃mu₄₄₃₅ = [3mar-tu] 2. ute-ki₄₃tu₄₃ = dam-bi-[mu₄₄]. This form of the god may be interpreted as “Amurruru, vanquisher of heaven and the netherworld” (lá = komu). The association of Amurruru with a rat or mouse may originally have been derogatory, perhaps conjuring up the image of Amorite migrants carrying rodents with their flocks and belongings.

36 Kupper, L’iconographie, pp. 53-54 discusses the relation between Amurruru and the god Sumuqan. Sumuqan is equated with Amurruru as god of the Suteans in the series An = Anu ša amēli. The god is briefly described by D.O. Edzard in H.W. Haussig, ed., Götter und Mythen im Vorderen Orient (Wörterbuch der Mythologie I; Stuttgart, 1965), p. 118, s.v. Šakan, with bibliographical references.


38 References are collected in Kupper, pp. 65-66.

39 Gurney, OECT 11, p. 15, verse 3. wa-ši-ib ŪR.SAG “dwelling in the mountain.”

40 See Falkenstein, SGL I, p. 121.

41 See CAD ŠI, p. 59, s.v. šadu, meaning 2, KAR 128, rev. 28, a Neo-Assyrian text which contains the epithet MAR.TU EN 3a-du-i “Amurruru, lord of the mountain” (here CAD oṣṣ for the translation “steppe”).

42 These epithets occur side by side in Ana Elume, Cohen, Canonical Lamentations, pp. 212-213:128. ū-mu-žē-tū mu-lu 1ŠI 1x₄₅-ba/ma-ke₄₅ da-a-a-ik KUR-i : mut-tal-lik KUR-i. In Manl, Eršahunga, no. 29, p. 180, lines 5-6, the epithet of Amurruru mu-lu ṣur-sag-ga du₃₄-du₃ is translated into Akkadian as be-ti₃₄ mut-tak-ki₃ KUR-i.

used in Babylonia during the Kassite period to write the name of Amurrû, with shorter forms such as ḫUR and even KUR occurring quite often. This suggests a further development in the perception of the god, initially viewed as a mountain dweller, later as a warrior god who subdues the mountains, and finally as a deity who embodies the cosmic mountain.

This pervasive association with mountains probably originates in a Mesopotamian perception that the Amorites were primarily residents of highlands. But does this necessarily compel us to seek their homeland in one particular location? If we adopt this course our first instinct would be to look west, where there is indeed a mountain range associated with Amurrû as early as the Old Akkadian period. This is the Jebel Bishri, named Bašar in cuneiform sources, located in Syria south of the bend of the Euphrates. According to the recently reconstructed inscription relating the rebellion led by Amar-girid of Uruk against Narâm-Sîn, the Jebel Bishri was already a power base of the Amorites in the 23rd century B.C. A year name of Šar-kali-šarri celebrates a victory of the king against the Amorites at mount Bašar, and the inscription on Gudea’s Statue B actually qualifies mount Bašar at “the mountain of the Amorites.” In the late periods it was still associated with the Suteans, with whom the Amorites are sometimes conflated in the cuneiform tradition.

But mount Bašar is not the only highland region associated with the Amorites. Gudea’s Statue B also mentions another mountain range named Tidanim, obviously to be identified as the Amorite tribal name Ditana, as “the mountain of the Amorites.” The location of that particular mountain is unknown, but it need not be in the Jebel Bishri area and not even in the west. Indeed,


47 References to that year name are collected by D.R. Frayne, Sargonic and Gutian Periods (2334-2113 BC) (RIME 2; Toronto, 1993), p. 183. The standard formulation is as follows: in 1 MU šar-kâ-li-llUGAL-ri MAR.TU-am in ba-ša-ar20 ḫ11, a-ru “The year Šar-kali-šarri was victorious over the Amorites at Mount Bašar.”

48 See D.O. Edzard, Gudea and His Dynasty (RIME 3/1; Toronto, 1997), p. 34, Statue B, col. VI, 5. bašar-sal-la 6. ṣur-sag-mar-tu-ta “from Bašar, the mountain range of the Amorites.”

49 See A. Anns, The Standard Babylonian Epic of Anzu (SAACT III; Helsinki, 2001), pp. xxv-xxvi, for mount Šaršar as a name for mount Bašar and its association with the Suteans in the first millennium.

50 See Edzard, Gudea, p. 34, Statue B, col. VI, 13. ti-da-nûm 14. ṣur-sag-mar-tu-ta “from Tidanim, the mountain range of the Amorites.”
in the opening verses of the hymn OECT 11, 1: 2 Amurrū is called “the first born of the gods of Anšan” (Ŋ Dingir-Māru.Tū bu-uk-ri-l-li an-ša-an). Although this has puzzled scholars, it can easily be explained by the fact that during the Ur III period the denomination Kur Māru.Tū referred in many cases to a region and people located east of the Tigris.51 By that time Amorite groups had obviously moved from their northwestern location and settled in the Transtigridian region, which is not surprising considering that the entire area located between the Tigris river and the mountain ranges of Iran belong to the so-called dimorphic zone, to which the lifestyle of Amorites and other semi-nomadic pastoralists was perfectly adapted. That region even continued to be called Amurrū in some later sources, notably in the Šitti-Marduk ku'durru from the time of Nebuchadnezzar I, which associates the land of Amurrū with those of the Kassites and the Lullubû in the context of a campaign against Elam.52 It is also called Amurrū in the Sargon Geography, a Neo-Assyrian composition preserving much earlier geographic information, and which includes in Amurrū the entire area from Lebanon to the Turukhû country, the latter located east of the Tigris in the foothills of the Zagros, and places its eastern border at the “Gate of Susa,” probably a mountain pass leading to the Elamite capital.53 This data supports the view that, seen from the Mesopotamian south, the Amorites were not so much the inhabitants of one specific mountain range as a powerful migrating people that moved from northwest to east and brought under its control the various mountain areas from Lebanon in the West to the border of Elam in the East.54 In other words, they were the mountaineers par excellence.55

51 P. Michalowski, The Royal Correspondence of Ur (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1976), pp. 103-115, details all the evidence favoring an eastern location of the Kur Māru.Tū in the Jēbab Hamrin, and the probability that Šidanum was used at that time to refer to the Amorites located in that mountain range.
53 W. Horowitz, Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography (Mesopotamian Civilizations 8; Winona Lake, Indiana, 1998) pp. 67-95 = chapter IV. This text is preserved on two first millennium tablets: one from Assur (KA 92 = VAT 8006), and one from Babylonia (BM 64382+82955). It lists the regions included in the empire of Sargon, with the measurements of some provinces in leagues. The sources of this text are unknown, but they must have been varied and some of them quite ancient. Two sections mention Amurrū; line 29: “From the Gate of Susa” to Gilmud is the Land of Amurrū at the border of Mari, the Land of Sumer and Akkad;” and line 38: “120 leagues is the circumference of Amurrū from the Lebanon to Turukkû.” The information preserved here reflects the view of Amurrū that was current during the early periods. Amurrū is a land which stretches from Lebanon in the West to the eastern bank of the Tigris in the east. The Turukkû are known from the Mari archives to have lived east of the Tigris, near the Zagros mountains. The “Gate of Susa” is presumably a pass in that area leading to a road to Susa. The location of Gilmud is unknown. Mari, Sumer and Akkad are apparently not located in Amurrū, but border on it. On line 51 Amurrū is characterized as the people of the south and Lullubû as the people of the north.
54 Buccellati, Amorites, pp. 89-95 for texts which characterize the Amorites as mountaineers, and pp. 247-249 and 251-252 for texts connecting the Amorites with the East.
55 The epithet of Amurrū as “firstborn of the gods of Anšan” and the connection of the god with the Transtigridian region and Elam make perfect sense when we consider the mixed Amorite and Elamite background of the family of Kudur-Mabak, who installed his two sons on the throne of Larsa in the 19th-18th centuries while retaining control of the dimorphic zone between the heavily urbanized area of the southern alluvium and the mountain regions of the east.
To sum up this evidence, it is clear that during the Ur III period and possibly even earlier the theologians of Sumer and Akkad created the god Amurrū to find a place in their own symbolic world for the increasing presence of the Amorites in Mesopotamian society. The god was given attributes which signalled his alien, semi-nomadic origin, such as the Syrian hat, the Amorite crooked staff, the gazelle or mountain goat, and the mountain itself. The earliest stage in the invention of the god is represented by the “Marriage of Martu,” probably dating to the Ur III period. This myth portrays Amurrū roaming with his kin outside the city Inab, possibly another name for Kazallu, the residence of the god Numušda, or alternatively a small town near there. Amurrū wins the favor of the god and asks for his daughter Adgar-kidug in marriage, but a friend paints a disparaging portrait of Amurrū’s lifestyle to her:

“Behold, their hands are destructive, (their) features are (those) [of monkeys]. [They are] those who eat the taboo [of] Nanna, [they have] no reverence. They constantly roam about . . . . [they are] an [ab]omination [to] the temples of the gods. Their [counsels] are confused, [they cause] only disturbance. He is a man clothed with a leather sack . . . . he lives in a tent, [exposed] to wind and rain, [and does not recite] prayers, lives in the mountains, [and does not know] the places [of the gods]. He is a man who digs up truffles at the foot of the mountain, does not know how to bend the knee, and eats uncooked flesh. He has no house during his lifetime. When he dies he will not be taken to a burial place. My girlfriend, why would you marry Martu?”

This is the most elaborate, but by no means the only negative portrait of the Amorites in Sumerian literature. Yet Adgar-kidug is not discouraged by this grim picture and the myth ends with her resolute reply that she will marry Martu. As rightly pointed out by previous commentators, the story of Amurrū’s marriage to the Sumerian goddess constitutes an etiology of the problematic integration of the Amorites in the urban civilization of Sumer and Akkad and of their eventual acceptance by the natives. The troubled relationship between the two cultures is reflected in the text’s reluctance to endow Amurrū with any positive trait and in its accumulation of deprecating stereotypes. But the appreciation of Amurrū evolved rapidly as Amorite power grew during the Isin-Larsa period. The hymn 78 reflects this change. The text celebrates the dual nature of the god as warrior and exorcist and highlights his role as the king’s helper in war and peace. No doubt this new and overtly flattering view reflects the rise of local Amorite dynasties in southern Mesopotamia in the wake of the gradual demise of the first dynasty of Isin. Even the ruling house of Isin in its twilight acknowledged the power of Amurrū. Damīq-ilīšu rebuilt his temple Emešikilla “the house of the pure rites,” the very name of which indicates that the god’s role as divine exorcist had already been canonized in the official theology. Amurrū’s popularity finally peaked under the first dynasty of Babylon, which is not so surprising since Mesopotamia had by then been brought almost entirely under the rule of an Amorite royal house. In accordance with the

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56 Kazallu was probably located just south of the Muriq-Tidnim wall, and was therefore an ideal place to locate a myth of the acceptance of the Amorites and the god Martu in Sumer and Akkad. The Amorite wall and the location of Kazallu see the recent discussion by H. Gasche. M. Tanret. S.W. Cole and K. Verhoeven, “Fleuves du temps et de la vie. Permanence et instabilité du réseau fluvial babyloniens entre 2500 et 1500 avant notre ère,” in *Annales - Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 57 (2002), p. 543, and Map no. 2.

57 The various literary stereotypes on the Amorites are surveyed in Buccellati, *Amorites*, pp. 89-95 and 330-332.

58 The temple of Amurrū in Isin, the ē.me.sikil.la, was rebuilt by king Damīq-ilīšu. See D. Frayne, *Old Babylonian Period (2003-1595 BC)* (RIME 4; Toronto, 1990), pp. 103-104.
new political configuration Amurru became a universal and benevolent god who rules, heals, and hears prayers, a projection onto the divine sphere of the self-image of the Babylonian monarchy as a compassionate and equitable government. This theological view is the one that prevails exclusively in the hymn *OECT* 11, 1, and it is correlated in the iconography of seals by the sudden appearance of scenes depicting individuals in prayer before Amurru. The new Akkadian literature which emerges at the time of the first dynasty of Babylon does not take up the negative stereotypes found in Sumerian literature, which altogether disappear with the demise of Sumerian as a spoken, official, and even literary language. This reflects the fact that the god Amurru has now been fully accepted and integrated into the Mesopotamian pantheon, just as the Amorites, his human counterparts, have found their place in Mesopotamian society.

Previous studies of the Amorites and the god Amurru have generally disregarded the sources dated after the end of the Old Babylonian period. There is some justification for this. The Amorites have now presumably fully assimilated, and after the fall of Babylon and the rise of the Kassite monarchy, Amorite dynasties no longer rule the day. Since his role was to embody the presence and temporary dominance of the Amorites, the god Amurru might well have disappeared. But gods do not disappear. Once they have become fact, they go on. And so the god Amurru followed the destiny of the Amorites. He became a fully assimilated god, with no particular ethno-linguistic coloration, continuing his quiet existence as a secondary deity of the Mesopotamian pantheon. Our investigation should therefore stop here, but as we reach the first millennium, it takes a new, unexpected turn.

During the late periods, the geographic concept of Amurru continues more or less unchanged. As one of the four winds and points of the compass, Amurru still refers to the western and southwestern areas. For example in Middle Assyrian documents the terms *Tāmīt-elēnītū-ša-Amurru* and *Tāmīt-riabītu-ša-Amurru* are attested as general designations of the Mediterranean. As a term denoting a specific region, however, Amurru acquires a more restricted meaning. In the 14th and 13th centuries it refers to the small kingdom of Amurru located north of Byblos between the Orontes river and the Mediterranean. In the Middle Assyrian documentation Amurru occurs mostly in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I and Aššur-bēl-kala and describes an area roughly identical with that of the former kingdom of the same name. The same meaning continues in

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59 There are still sporadic mentions of individual Amorites in Middle Babylonian documents. See L. Sassmannshausen, *Beiträge zur Verwaltung und Gesellschaft Babyloniens in der Kassitenzeit (Baghdader Forschungen* 21; Mainz am Rhein, 2001), p. 131, who lists three documents referring to individuals as Amorites. On p. 130 Sassmannshausen posits that these people came from Syria, but it is more likely they came from the Zagros area in light of what has been said above on the localization of a KUR Amurru east of the Tigris. In *JCS* 32 (1980), p. 20, n. 50, Brinkman refers to an unpublished document which lists various people identified as Amorites, most of them with Amorite names. Höscher, *Personennamen der Kassitenzeitlichen Texte*, p. 194, mentions the name Sumula-el, a clear Amorite name, although that person is not referred to as “Amorite” and may have been in fact purely Babylonian, bearing the name Sumula-el only as an homage to a former king of Babylon.


62 In the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I, Amurru is mentioned alongside mount Lebanon, Byblos, Sidon, and Arvad, and the cities of Samarra and Tadmor (Palmyra) are said to be located within Amurru; see A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114-859 BC)* (RIMA 2; Toronto, 1991), pp. 37-38. Inscription A.0.87.3, lines 16-35 and 29-35, with similar reports in other inscriptions
Neo-Assyrian times. In the Neo-Babylonian and Persian periods, however, the term Amurru can describe a wider area. The “Verse Account of Nabonidus” places the north Arabian oasis of Teima in the midst of Amurru, and the Cyrus Cylinder contrasts the kings residing between the Upper Sea and the Lower Sea with the kings of the country of Amurru “residing in tents,” showing that Amurru could be associated with the lifestyle of nomads in the 6th century as it had been in the 3rd and early 2nd millennia.

In Middle Assyrian and Middle Babylonian onomastics the god Amurru still appears as the theophoric element only in Akkadian personal names, as was the case in the Old Babylonian period. As mentioned above the logogram KUR.GAL, which usually denotes Enil, now appears as a writing for the god Amurru alongside 4MAR.TU. In the late periods the cult of Amurru survived mainly in Babylon, where his two temples were named Emesikilla and Enamtaggarduḫa. The latter temple is mentioned by Esarhaddon, who claims to have restored the image of the god Amurru worshiped in it: “I restored the god Amurru, the purifier of heaven and the netherworld and cleanser of Esagil, who dwells in Enamtaggarduḫa.” In the official theology Amurru is now of that king. See also Nashef, RGTC 6, s.v. Amurru; and J.N. Postgate, The Archive of Urad-šerua and his Family (Rome, 1988), pp. 170-174, for the occurrence of KUR a-mur-ri in a text from that archive.

65 In the Verse Account of Nabonidus Teima is said to be in Amurru, but the word is not preceded by the determinative KUR and therefore it could just mean “west” in this case: Col.II, 22. e-mu-qu KUR URI te-bu-â i-ti-š[i] 23. ana 4te-ma-a qē-reb a-mur-ri-i iš-ta-kan IGI-[š[i] “The armed forces of Akkad marching with him, he set his face towards the city of Teima, in the midst of Amurru/the West.” See the recent edition by H.-P. Schaudig, Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros’ der Großen (AOAT 256; Münster, 2001), pp. 563-578; Schaudig translates qereb amurri as “inmitten (des Landes) der Amurriten.” However, Oppenheim’s translation in ANET, “deep in the West,” might just be the right connotation of the word in this context.

66 In the Cyrus Cylinder the Persian ruler describes how all the kings of the Near East came to Babylon to pay him tribute and homage after his conquest of the city. 28. nap-ḫar LUGAL a-ši-ib BĀRA. MES 29. ša ka-li-li šib-ra-a-ta iš-tu tam-ti e-li-ti a-di tam-ti šap-li-ti a-ši-ib n[a-gi-i né-su-ii] LUGAL.MES kara-mur-ri-i a-ši-ib kuš-ta-ri ka-li-ša-un 30. bi-lat-si-nu ka-bi-it-tim u-bi-li-nim-ma qē-er-ba ŠU.AN.NA ki u-na-aš-ši-qua še-pu-a-aa “All the kings residing in sacred cities of all the corners (cf the universe), from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, residing in [0 0 0 0 0 0 0] the kings of the land of Amurru, residing in tents, all of them brought me their heavy tribute to Babylon (and) kissed my feet.” See the new edition by Schaudig, Die Inschriften, pp. 550-556.

67 The 25 names formed with the element Amurru listed in Höscher, Personenamen der Kassiten-zeitlichen Texte, pp. 30-31 and 265, are all Babylonian. For Middle Assyrian onomastics see C. Saporretti, Onomastica Medio-Assira, 2 vols. (Studia Pohl 6; Rome, 1970) vol. I, pp. 84-86, and vol. II, p. 179, who lists no less than 18 theophoric PN’s with the name Amurru, always 4MAR.TU. All these names are Assyrian; none is West Semitic. The supplement published by H. Frey and C. Saporretti, “Nuove attestazioni dell’onomastica medio-assira,” Incunabula graeca 74 (Rome, 1979), p. 183, lists three more names with Amurru, all of them Assyrian.

68 The fact that the cult of Amurru survived mainly in Babylon is certainly due to the great popularity of the god under the first Babylonian dynasty, which must have officially sponsored it in its capital. References to the two temples are collected by A.R. George, House Most High. The Temple of Ancient Mesopotamia (Mesopotamian Civilizations 5; Winona Lake, Indiana, 1993), nos. 777 and 846. A temple Emesikilla was also rebuilt by king Damiq-Iššu of Isin, but this is probably a different temple located in Isin. There was also a sanctuary of Amurru as Aššur, the Enindebaduḫa, rebuilt by Tiglath-pileser I, which may have been part of the temple of Gula (George, House Most High, no. 895).

69 R. Borger, Die Inschriften Assurhaddons Königs von Assyrien (AfO Beiheft 9; Graz, 1956), §3, rev. 40. 4MAR.TU mu-ul-lil šamē u ēṣetim mu-ub-bi-ib E.SAG.GIL a-šib E.NAM.TAG.GA.DUG.A ud-dīš “I renewed (the statue of) Amurru, the purifier of heaven and the netherworld, the cleanser of Esagil, who dwells in Enamtaggarduḫa.”
solely viewed as exorcist deity and performer of purification rituals, but under Sennacherib the god was assigned a seemingly new, unorthodox role. When he built the aššu temple of the god Aššur in Assur, Sennacherib installed in it bronze-plated doors depicting the god Aššur on a chariot, brandishing his bow and riding to battle against Tiāmat. But Aššur is not alone on the relief: the god Amurrū stands next to him as helper, holding the reins of the horses. This scene illustrates one aspect of the theological reforms of the Assyrian king, providing the iconographic reflection of the Aššur version of Enuma eliš, in which Marduk is replaced by the national god of Assyria.68

K 1356, obv.
6. ša-lam [AN.ŠÂR ša a-na līb-bi ti-amat] ša-ti DU-ku
7. tā-bel AN ki ša na-su-ú ína gī-si=GIR ša ra-ak-bu a-bu-[b]u ša pa-a]q-du
8. 4MAR.TU ša a-na mu-kil ap-pa-a-ti it-ti-šī rak-bu a-n[a UGU p]il-i ša 4UTU u 4IM
9. ina bi-ri í-[bu]-nim-ma še-er KÁ.GAL ša-a-ša e-šîr

"I depicted on that gate an image [of Aššur who] marches in combat [against Tiāmat], with the bow he carries, the chariot he rides, the flood-weapon [ent]usted (to him), (and with) Amurrū riding with him as chariot-driver, ac[ording to the instruct]ions which Šamaš and Adad spoke to me in extispicy."

Given the exclusive role of Amurrū as exorcist in late theology, one may wonder why the god is depicted assisting Aššur in war. Perhaps this is a resurgence of one of even several very old motifs. After all, Aššur and Amurrū were sometimes associated in the oath formulas of Old Assyrian contracts.69 Also, the warlike aspect of the god was prominent in the Old Babylonian period, to the extent that the character of Amurrū in the hymn SRT 8 seems to be a blueprint for Marduk in Enuma eliš, even in matters of details such as the control of the seven winds as weapon (line 17). If such old motifs can resurface, how about the most prominent of them, namely Amurrū’s symbolization of Western Semites?

By the time of Sennacherib the Assyrian empire had become thoroughly bilingual and bicultural. The Aramean element stood second only to the cuneiform tradition, which kept its preeminence only because of the official support of the state. In the last century of Assyria’s existence we even see many Arameans acceede to high offices in the imperial administration. More importantly, we now have Aramean contingents and commanders in the Assyrian army. It seems very likely that Sennacherib’s intent in assigning Amurrū this new role as assistant to the god Aššur in the cosmic battle against Tiāmat was to project on the mythological level a social and cultural fact

which could no longer be ignored, namely the pervasive presence of Arameans and their culture at all social levels throughout the empire, including the imperial military machine. Indeed, the position of Amurru in that cosmic battle faithfully mirrors the role of the Arameans in Sargonid Assyria; a conspicuous though subordinate role in maintaining the imperial order, and no other god could embody it better than Amurru, since his very name still referred to the regions lying west and southwest of Mesopotamia in that period.

One may object of course that the god Amurru’s symbolization of nomads and Western Semites was by then a long forgotten notion, but even this is not exactly true. That memory was still preserved, for instance, in the god list An = Anu ša amēli, which explains Amurru as the Sutean name of the god Sumuqan (102. 6MAR.TU : 4GIR : ša su-ti-i), and, as noted above, the Cyrus Cylinder clearly states that the kings of Amurru “live in tents” (āšib kuštari). But an even stronger proof of this is provided by a survey of onomastics. During the Neo-Assyrian period, for the first time in the history of Mesopotamia, we have examples of West Semitic personal names where the theophoric element is the god Amurru; three clear cases are Amurru-ila “Amurru is (my) god”, Amurru-natan “Amurru has given”, and Amurru-naṣṣab “Amurru has placed”70. The same phenomenon is observed in Babylonia during the time of the Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid empires, when we encounter such names as Amurru-ida “Amurru knows”, Amurru-idri “Amurru is my support”, Amurru-latî “Amurru is my strength”, Amurru-natan “Amurru has given”, Amurru-rikaš “Amurru has bound”, Amurru-rām “Amurru is exalted”, Amurru-ṣama “Amurru has heard”, and several others.71 Some of these names originate from the Sealand province and are connected with an unidentified town whose main sanctuary was dedicated to the god Amurru and his consort Innin-galga-sud.72

What does this mean? Simply that in the first millennium Western Semites living in Mesopotamian society began to claim the god Amurru for themselves, as they did a few other purely Mesopotamian deities. According to Zadok’s extensive survey of West Semitic personal names in cuneiform documents from the late Babylonian period, Amurru was in fact one of the most popular Babylonian gods among West Semites after Bēl, Nabû, and Nanaya.72 Yet, contrary to the latter three, Amurru was not a particularly prominent deity in the first millennium, and therefore the only plausible reason for West Semites adopting Amurru as their god was his status as divine personification of the West. This makes it all the more likely that Sennacherib fostered the same view when he elevated Amurru to the rank of second-in-command to Aššur in the cosmic battle against Tiāmat. Thus, nearly one and a half millennium after the invention of the god Amurru by the theologians of Sumer and Akkad, Western Semites living in Mesopotamia at last identified with him.

To conclude, it now appears certain that Amurru was a purely Mesopotamian theological construct designed to symbolize the presence of the Amorites. It is also clear that the nature of

71 See R. Zadok, On West Semites in Babylonia During the Chaldean and Achaemenid Periods (Jerusalem, 1977), p. 76.
72 The evidence for the existence of this sanctuary is discussed in Beaulieu, Pantheon of Uruk, section §7.3.
73 Zadok, West Semites, pp. 69-78, studies Babylonian gods appearing as theophoric elements in West Semitic personal names from Babylonia.
Amurr and his role in the pantheon were structurally dependent on two factors: the position of Amorites and other Western Semites in Mesopotamian society, and the manner in which they were perceived and characterized. As these factors changed, so did the role of the god. First viewed as untamed barbarian when the eastern Amorites threatened the Ur III kingdom, then as warrior and ruler during the period of hegemony of various Amorite dynasties in Babylonia, Amurr receded in the background as the Amorites blended with the rest of Mesopotamian society, resurfacing centuries later in a new guise as a symbol of Arameans and other Western Semites in the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian empires. This constantly evolving, yet profoundly resilient perception of Amurr as emblem of ethnic and cultural identity is a vivid testimony to the importance of ethnicity in the ancient Mesopotamian worldview.