



PEETER ESPAK: *THE GOD ENKI IN SUMERIAN ROYAL IDEOLOGY AND MYTHOLOGY* (PHD DISSERTATION)*

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ABSTRACT / RESUMO

Peeter Espak: *The God Enki in Sumerian Royal Ideology and Mythology* (2010), Tartu: Tartu University Press, 284 pp.

In Estonia, a small European State with a population of approximately 1,300,000 people, Assyriology is a nascent field (it is about 14-15 years old). Peeter Espak's doctoral thesis is the second Assyriological doctoral thesis defended in the University of Tartu.¹

Peeter Espak's thesis, *The God Enki in Sumerian Royal Ideology and Mythology*, written in English, belongs to the field of Sumeriological studies and contains 284 pages. This monograph is a very profound analysis of the ancient Sumerian and Akkadian god Enki/Ea in Sumerian religion and in royal ideology. The research is dealing with a great number of hypotheses and some complicated questions concerning the cult of Enki, his role in royal ideology, position in the pantheon, mythological and other texts (e.g. royal inscriptions etc), which are either dedicated to Enki or where Enki is mentioned. The doctoral thesis was excellently defended by Espak on the 14th of December, 2010, in the University of Tartu.

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¹ The first Estonian who defended his doctoral thesis in Assyriological studies was Dr. Amar Annus, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Theology. His thesis is *The God Ninurta in the Mythology of Ancient Mesopotamia* (2002), State Archives of Assyria Studies, volume XIV, The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project of University of Helsinki, Institute for Asian and African Studies, University of Helsinki, Finland. Dr. Amar Annus was supervised by the Finnish Prof. Dr. Simo Parpola and defended his thesis at the University of Helsinki, not in Tartu.

Nevertheless it must be mentioned that it is not the first thoroughgoing work in Sumerology, leaving aside the articles concerning the question of Enki/Ea. It is the third monograph that is dedicated to the subject. The first solid research was written by Margaret W. Green (1975)² and the second important work dedicated to Ea/Enki is the doctoral thesis of Hannes D. Galter³. Obviously the quantity of articles or some other studies that in some way are dedicated or connected with the questions about the god Enki/Ea are notable; however, it is essential to know that these researches deal with only certain aspects connected to the cult of Enki and mythology, etc.⁴ Prior to the publishing of Espak's research in 2010, in the University of Tartu's publishing house, a new authentic and solid approach concerning this Sumerian deity, a treatment of his role and position in Mesopotamian religion and royal ideology was missing in Assyriological specialized literature. Since this thesis is written in English it can be used internationally by assyriologists, sumerologists, theologians, and historians of religions.

In his doctoral thesis Espak continues the research that he had started in his Master's thesis⁵. The time frame of his research covers the Early Dynastic period (Pre-Sargonic) until the Old-Babylonian period (from Ur-Nanše of Lagaš to Ammi-saduqa of Babylon). The author scrupulously analyzed all the significant written sources from Mesopotamia in the Sumerian and Akkadian languages in the period from 2500 to 1500 BCE. The thesis consists of 9 chapters —*Early dynastic period; The Dynasty of Akkad; The Second Dynasty of Lagaš; Ur III period; The Dynasty of Isin; The Dynasty of Larsa; The First Dynasty of Babylon; Enki (Ea) in the mythology of creation; Enki and the archaic Sumerian religion: the question*

² Margaret W. Green (1975), *Eridu in Sumerian Literature*. PhD Dissertation: University of Chicago.

³ Hannes D. Galter (1983), *Der Gott Ea/Enki in der akkadischen Überlieferung. Eine Bestandsaufnahme des vorhandenen Materials*. Dissertationen der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz.

⁴ See for examples concerning Innana and Enki: Gertrud Farber-Flügge (1973), *Der Mythos 'Inanna und Enki' unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Liste der ME* (Studia Pohl 10, Dissertationes scientificae de rebus orientis antiqui), Roma: Biblical Institute Press; Владимир В. Емельянов (2004), *Инанна и Энки: текст и ритуал. – Ассириология и египтология*. Санкт-Петербург, 73-85; Horst Steible (1967), *Ein Lied an den Gott Haja mit Bitte für den König Rīm-Sîn von Larsa*. Ph.D. Dissertation: Albert-Ludwigs-Universität zu Freiburg.

⁵ Peeter Espak (2006), *Ancient Near Eastern Gods Enki and Ea: Diachronical Analysis of Texts and Images from the Earliest Sources to the Neo-Sumerian Period*. Master's thesis: The University of Tartu. This work is available in the World Wide Web at: <http://dspace.utlib.ee/dspace/bitstream/handle/10062/958/espakpeeter.pdf?sequence=5>.

of rivalry between the theologies of Enki and Enlil— and a General Conclusion.

The first seven chapters of the thesis form one large section (159 pp.), at the same time built logically and clearly structured using a chronological order. These chapters (from the Early dynastic period until the First Dynasty of Babylon) give a detailed view concerning the development of the history of the cult of Enki/Ea during the Early Dynastic period, Akkadian epoch, the period of Gutian domination, Ur III, Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian periods.

The 8th chapter of Espak's monograph, *Enki (Ea) in the mythology of creation*, deals with the role of the god Enki/Ea in Sumerian and Akkadian mythology: first of all, of course, regarding the cosmogonies, the author analyses scrupulously all the existing myths and texts within the mythological background, in which either Enki/Ea was mentioned or which were dedicated to this important Mesopotamian deity.

The present work gains its laurels with the last comparative chapter: *Enki and the archaic Sumerian religion: the Question of Rivalry between the theologies of Enki and Enlil*. Notable is that the contest between the two most important Sumerian theological systems—the system of Enlil with its main residence in Nippur and the system of Enki (whose main centre was Eridu)—was not deeply considered or analyzed in the earliest Assyriological studies. Espak was successful in creating an image of the cults of these two main Mesopotamian deities and of the rivalry between these two theological systems that lasted for a long time and strongly influenced the formation of Mesopotamian religions and their ideological worldview. Notable is the fact that, in Espak's opinion, this rivalry between Enki and Enlil might not have existed.

Let us hope that, if Espak is planning in the future to continue examining the question of Enki/Ea, he is able to publish a monograph that also includes the material of the later periods of Mesopotamian history.