

Marduk, the Canal Digger

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There is but little rain in Assyria. It is this which nourishes the roots of the corn; but it is irrigation from the river that ripens the crop and brings the grain to fulness . . . For the whole land of Babylon, like Egypt, is cut across by canals. The greatest of these is navigable: it runs towards where the sun rises in winter, from the Euphrates to another river, the Tigris, by which stood the city of Ninus. This land is of all known to us by far the most fertile in corn. Trees it does not even essay to grow, fig, vine, or olive, but its corn is so abundant that it yields for the most part two hundred fold, and even three hundred fold when the harvest is best . . .

(Herodotus, I 193)¹

The *marru*, “spade,” in ancient Mesopotamian art is generally considered to be the symbol of Marduk.² Although it is very likely that this divine *marru* represents the divine image of Marduk himself or his primary role, there is no textual evidence available which explains the function of the spade of Marduk. It is not simple to find the clear-cut link between the two as each of them had a number of roles. On one hand, the *marru*, “spade,” was a tool of multiple usage: primary digging, but also ploughing, piling up dirt, and molding bricks.³ On the other hand, Marduk also had various aspects: the king of the gods, the creator of the universe, the god of salvation, the maintainer of watercourses, and the god of fertility.⁴

One may suggest a paronomasia—Marduk and marru. However, as symbols of the Mesopotamian gods generally represent certain aspects of these deities, wordplay is not a sufficient explanation. The present article is an attempt to seek a possible link between Marduk and the *marru*.

Marduk and marru: Introduction

The earliest uncontested reference of the divine *marru* as the symbol of Marduk is an Old Babylonian legal document that bears the date formula of Hammurapi’s regnal year 41:⁵

This article is based on my dissertation, *Hymns and Prayers to Marduk and his Divine Aspects in the Texts*, submitted to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and approved in 2003. I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Wayne Horowitz of the Hebrew University, my mentor, for reading the manuscripts of this article as well as the original dissertation and for his insightful comments. Abbreviations follow *CAD*.

1. A. D. Godley, *Herodotus* (London, 1966), 1.243.

2. See, e.g., U. Seidl, *Die babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs: symbole mesopotamischer Gottheiten*, OBO 87 (Göttingen, 1989), 117–21. Note also a spade with an inscription ^dAMAR.UTU, “Marduk,” Seidl, *ibid.*, Tf. 12 d. Nr. 29, and a spade standing on the snake-dragon with an inscription ^dAMAR.UTU ^dPA, “Marduk, Nabû,” Tf. 16 a. Nr. 35.

3. For the general usage of the *marru*, “spade,” see *CAD* M/1, 287–89. Further discussion, see below.

4. Oshima, *Hymns and Prayers to Marduk*, *passim*.

5. C.-F. Jean, *Tell Sifr: Textes Cunéiformes conservés au British Museum* (Paris, 1931), 21–24, no. 58.

21. *a-na* KÁ ^dAMAR.UTU ^dŠU.NIR *ša* ^dNANNAR
^dMUŠEN *ša* ^dnin-mar-ki
^dMAR *ša* ^dAMAR.UTU
^{gi}ŠTUKUL *ša* ab-nu-um iz-zi-zu-ma

21. Towards the “gate” of Marduk, the divine *standard* of Nannar,
 The divine bird of Ninmarki,
 The divine spade of Marduk,
 (And) the weapon made of stone, they (witnesses) stood (for the oath).

D. Collon suggests that the spade (as the symbol of Marduk) is first attested on cylinder seals during the reign of Samsu-iluna⁶ although there are still some uncertainties regarding the identification of the spade in this period. First of all, the spade is already known as early as the pre-historic period when the existence of Marduk is not proven.⁷ Secondly, although the spade is commonly taken as the symbol of Marduk, the spade in the Old Babylonian period does not appear with a snake-dragon, but with the god Martu (Amurru) or with his symbol, a crook on a gazelle.⁸ As ^dmar-du₁₀-edin-an-na (The Pleasant Spade of the Fields of the Heavens) is known as one of the aspects of Martu, it is also probable that the spade with Martu or his symbol represents Martu as Marduedinanna or Marduedinanna himself.⁹ Although Martu is not attested, in surviving portions of the Old Babylonian forerunner to An-*Anum* refer to ^dmar-du₁₀-[edin-a]n-n[a].¹⁰

The art motif, Marduk standing on the horned dragon, is attested from the late Kassite period onwards. For example, Marduk appears on the back of the horned dragon on a *kunukku*, “seal,” dedicated to him by a Babylonian king, Marduk-zākir-šumi from the ninth century (fig. 1).¹¹ The spade is very often depicted on the back

6. D. Collon, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum: Cylinder Seals III, Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian Periods* (London, 1986), 54, D. 29.

7. Cf. Seidl, *Die babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs*, 117–18.

8. See, e.g., Collon, *Cylinder Seals III*, nos. 128, 231, 584, *contra* no. 215.

9. For the identification ^dmar-tu=^dmar-du₁₀-edin-an-na, see R. L. Litke, *A Reconstruction of the Assyro-Babylonian God Lists, AN: A-NU-UM and AN: ANU ŠÁ AMĒLI* (New Haven, 1998), 217, VI 231.

10. See H. de Genouillac, “Grande liste de noms divins sumériens,” *RA* 20 (1923), 99, rev. ix 23. T. Sharlach suggests that ^dAMAR.UTU is a writing for ^dmar-ud; T. Sharlach, “Foreign Influences on the Religion of the Ur III Court,” in D. I. Owen and G. Wilhelm, *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians*, vol. 12 (Bethesda, 2002), 98. However, there is no known ancient text suggesting ^dAMAR.UTU (i.e., Marduk) = ^dmar-tu syncretism.

11. The date of this *kunukku* of Marduk is a matter of debate as there are two Babylonian kings bore the same name, Marduk-zākir-šumi. We here follow Wetzel et al. and date this object to the reign of Marduk-zākir-šumi I from the ninth century F. Wetzel et al., *Das Babylon der Spätzeit, WVDOG 62* (Berlin, 1957), 37. However, Lambert suggests that it was another Babylonian king, Marduk-zākir-šumi II, who reigned Babylon only one month in 703 B.C.E.; W. G. Lambert, “The History of the muš-ḫu in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *L’animal, L’homme, Le dieu dans Le Proche-Orient ancien* (Geneva, 1985), 89–90. For the object, see Wetzel, et al. *ibid.*, Taf. 43–44. The same object can be found also in R. Koldewey, *Die Tempel von Babylon und Borsippa: nach den Ausgrabungen durch die deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft, WVDOG 15* (Leipzig, 1911), Blatt 8, Abb. 74. Another example of Marduk standing on the snake-dragon, see King, *BBS.*, Pl. XXI, a *Kudurru* from the time of Meli-Šipak (c. 1186–1172).

Note that the deity standing on a horned dragon is not always Marduk, but can also be Ninazu, Ningišzida, Tišpak, Aššur, Ninurta, or Nabû, etc. See F. A. M. Wiggermann, “mušḫušu,” *RIA* 8, 455–62. For further references for a god standing on a horned dragon in art, see also Seidl, *Die babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs*, 187–91.



Figure 1

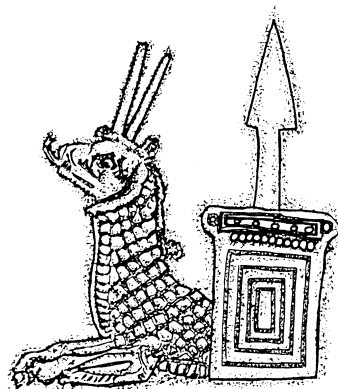


Figure 2

of the same horned dragon on *Kudurru* (fig. 2)¹² or cylinder and stamp seals from the Middle Babylonian period and onwards.¹³ In other words, at least from the Kassite period onwards, the *marru* standing on the snake-dragon is the representation of Marduk or his divine role.

The Usage of the marru

Previously, scholars such as Black and Green argued that Marduk's symbol was *marru*, "the spade," due to the fact that Marduk was a god of agriculture.¹⁴ However, the *marru* was rarely, if ever, used for ploughing or planting. Instead, the *marru* was a tool that was used in the much the same way as the modern spade or shovel: for

12. E.g., the *Kudurru* from the time of Marduk-Nādin-Aḫḫê (1100–1083), see King, *BSt.*, Pl. L; another *Kudurru* from the same time, King, *BSt.*, pl. LXIV; and the *Kudurru* of Nebuchadrezzar I (1126–1105), King, *BSt.*, pl. XC.

13. E.g., D. Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (London, 1987), 166, no. 771.

14. J. Black and A. Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia* (London, 1992), 129.

example, digging and dredging canals and irrigation ditches,¹⁵ shovelling dirt, digging up clay, molding bricks.¹⁶ As Marduk is known as the builder of the universe in the *Enūma Eliš*, one may think that the *marru* represents Marduk's role as the creator. However, the earliest attestation of this aspect of Marduk is from the mid-Kassite period¹⁷ while the *marru* had already been accepted as the symbol of Marduk in the early Old Babylonian period (see above).

According to *Atra-ḫasīs*, the Babylonian Flood Story, before the creation of humankind, the Igigi-gods were enslaved digging the rivers and canals. After forty years of toil, they could no longer bear the hard labor and decided to revolt. As the mark of the battle against Enlil, they set fire to their tools—the spade (*marru*) and the hod (*šupšikku*).¹⁸ It seems that the *marru* is used by gods and men for digging in Mesopotamia. Hence, the Tamarisk offers the following argument in a Neo-Assyrian copy of *The Tamarisk and the Palm*, obv. 13'–16':¹⁹

- 13'. *i-na uṭ-li-ia* ^{giš}MAR-šu *ul-te-li i-na* ^{giš}MAR-ia [. . .]
i-pe-ti nam-ka-ru-ma i-ša-ti A.ŠA as-sà-an-qa × [. . .]
 15'. *ù a-na nu-ur-bi ša er-še-ti as-na-an* MIN × [. . .]
ú-da-aš ^dNIDABA *šu-muḥ* UN.MEŠ *ú-da-[aš]*
- 13'. He (the farmer) has produced his spade from my (the Tamarisk's) trunk, with my spade, [. . .]
 He opens the irrigation canals and drinks. I have checked the field . [. . .]
 15'. And for the *moistening* of the land. The grain, two (?) . [. . .]
 I thresh, and the cereal crops, the plenty of the people, I thre[sh].

Thus, we suggest here that the *marru* as a divine symbol was not simply an emblem of agriculture, but more specifically, symbolized the act of digging and maintaining the water system which made farming possible in central/southern Mesopotamia. This explains Marduk's connection with *marru* for digging canals as we shall see more fully in regard to Marduk's authority for providing water (usually ground water) by means of rivers, canals, springs, and the seasonal-flood.

Marduk as the God of Watercourses

Many sources present Marduk as the maintainer/controller of water and watercourses, and so by extension, the provider of fertility. One of the most notable examples is found in a hymn to Marduk, which is dated to the Kassite period by W. G. Lambert.²⁰ This hymn of over 200 lines when complete offers praise as follows; Prayer to Marduk no. 2, 5–12:

15. See CAD M/1, 288, *marru* b) 1'.

16. CAD M/1, 288–89, b) 2'–3'.

17. E.g., Marduk is *ba-ni Ki-ti*, “the one who fashions the earth”; D. J. W. Meijer, “Mesopotamian Cylinder Seals in the Allard Pierson Museum, Amsterdam,” *JEOL* 25 (1977–78), 28, no. 37, 1.

18. Lambert-Millard, *Atra-ḫasīs*, 46, I i 63–66.

19. Lambert, *BWL*, 158.

20. This hymn was named “Prayer to Marduk, no. 2” by W. G. Lambert in his article “Three Literary Prayers of the Babylonians,” *AfO* 19 (1959–60), 61–65, which is also the latest comprehensive edition of the hymn. We follow this title in this article.

5. *muš-te-šir ÍD.MEŠ ina qé-reb KUR-i*
mu-pat-tu-ú bu-ur kup-pi ina qé-reb ħur-sa-a-ni
na-ši-ir A.KAL(mil) ħé-gál-li a-na gi-mir kal da-ád-me
[m]u-^fdeš-ši¹ × [K]I-ta KI-tim DAGAL-tim aš-na-an
[mu-šá-a]z-nin na-al-ši ina šer-ret šá-ma-mi
10. *[mu-ma-²e-r]i šá-a-ri ti-ik me-e e-lu qar-ba-a-ti*
[bābilu²¹ i]š-pik-ki ħuh-di a-na mé-reš še-em ú-ga-ri
12. *[mušabši²² š]i-im-ri ku-bu-ut-te-e iš-šik-ki ta-at-tu-ru*
5. The one who puts rivers in order in the midst of the mountains,
 The one who opens spring-wells in the mountain region.
 The one who pours out the seasonal flood of abundance for the entire world,
 [The one who supplies . . . of the wide land, grain.
 [The one who lets] dew fall from the udders of the heavens,
10. [*The one who send*]s(?) winds and heavy rains over the field.
 [The one who *brings*(?)] the abundant produce to the cultivated
 fields of barley, the meadow.
12. [The one who *brings about*(?)] wealth and profusion of produce.

In this section of the hymn, Marduk is depicted as the supplier of water by means of (1) water running over the land: rivers, irrigation systems, and the seasonal-flood, and (2) water dropping from sky: dew and rain. As the supplier of water, Marduk is also praised as the god of fertility.

In the first quatrain (lines 5–8), Marduk is the one who digs and maintains irrigation systems (rivers/canals, and cisterns). Interestingly in line 7, Marduk is presented as the one who brings the seasonal-flood. The seasonal-flood, *milu* (= A.KAL), was the sudden rise of the waters in the rivers of the Tigris and Euphrates system in the late winter and early spring which flooded the fields in the central/southern Mesopotamia. This seasonal-flood played an essential role in the agriculture of the flood plain of the Euphrates and Tigris by bringing fertile soil from the mountains and flushing away salt from the surface of the farm land.²³ This occurs after rain²⁴ or during the early spring season when the snow of the high mountains north and north-east of Mesopotamia melts.²⁵ Although the famous Mesopotamian flood stories, *Atra-ḫasis* and

21. Cf. CAD restores here, “[He gives],” see CAD I, 259a, *išpikū* 1 c).

22. CAD Š, 200a, *šimru* A. Cf. also CAD K, 491a, *kubuttū* 1.

23. *Atra-ḫasis* tells that the land was covered by salt and could not produce food when Enlil decided to bring famine by stopping rain from the sky and the *milu*-flood from *nagbu*; Lambert-Millard, *Atra-ḫasis*, 78, II iv 1–8, and Assyrian Recension (S), 108, iv 37–51, and *passim*.

24. E.g., CH xliii 64–71:

^dIM be-el ħé-gál gú-gal ša-me-e ù er-še-tim re-sú-ú-a zu-ni i-na ša-me-e mi-lam i-na na-ag-bi-im li-te₄-er-šu ma-sú i-na ħu-ša-aḫ-ḫi-im ù bu-bu-tim li-ḫal-li-iq . . .

May Adad, the lord of abundance, the canal-inspector of the heavens and the earth, deprive him of rain from the heavens and the *milu*-flood from the springs, cause his land to perish from hunger and famine . . .

Cf. also King, *BBSt.* no. 6, ii 41–43. This tradition seems to have been related to the fact that rain can also fill springs and eventually cause floods.

25. *milu mādu ša idiglat ina ITI.ZÍZ.A alākšū*, “the coming of the large seasonal flood of the Tigris is in the month of Šabātu (month XI);” Kraus, *AbB* I, 141, 29 (OB let). Cf. the ancient commentary for the name Agilimma, one of the fifty names of Marduk in *Enūma Eliš*; J. Bottéro, in *Finkelstein Memorial Volume*, 8, 82.

Gilgamesh Epic XI, state that the rain of seven days and seven nights brought the destructive deluge, various texts from the different periods relate the *mīlu*-flood, “seasonal flood,” to *nagbu*, “spring, deep,”²⁶ rather than rain from sky. For instance, in bringing about famine in *Atra-ḫasis*, Enlil commanded, *zunnīšu addu lišaqqil ṭabiš aj illika mīlu ina nagbi*, “May Adad make his rains scarce, may no seasonal flood pleasantly come from the spring.”²⁷ Other notable examples are the omen apodosis: *zunnū ina šamē mīlū ina nagbī mīthāriš illakūni*, “there will be as much rain from the sky as the seasonal floods from the springs” (CT 20, 50, 11) and a passage in an inscription of Sargon II: *ukkipšu zunnē ina šamē mīli ina nagbī*, “He brought for him rain in the heavens and the seasonal floods in the springs” (OIP 38, no. 4, 4).

These passages relating the *mīlu*-flood to *nagbu*, “spring, deep,” suggest that the god who regulated the seasonal flood was also responsible for *nagbu*, i.e., both fall under the office of a god of ground water. Hence, according to *Atra-ḫasis*, although Apsū is the dominion of Enki/Ea,²⁸ this same god also holds *šigarū naḥbalu tiāmtim*, “the Bolt-the Snare of the Sea” which is used to block *nagbu*, “the deep, spring.”²⁹ Furthermore, *Enūma Eliš* states that Marduk opened *nagbu*, probably in the head of Tiāmat, which was then filled with Tiāmat’s waters.³⁰ He also opened her two eyes which became the sources of the Tigris and the Euphrates.³¹

Marduk’s responsibility over watercourses, rivers and canals is also known from other ancient texts. For instance, in various Akkadian *šūila*-prayers to Marduk, he is *bēl nagbī šadī u tāmāti*, “the Lord of the springs in mountains and seas” (BMS 12, 28); *bēl nagbī u tāmte*, “the Lord of the springs and sea” (KAR 26, 4b); *mupettū kuppī u miṭrāti*, “the one who opens spring-wells and ditches” (BMS 12, 29), *mupettū miṭrāti*, “the one who opens ditches” (BA 5, no. 3,³² 7b); *muštēšir nagbī nārī*, “the one who keeps springs and rivers in order” (BA 5, no. 3, 7a); and *muštēšru nārī*, “the one who keeps the rivers in order” (BMS 12, 29). Furthermore, one of the first epithets which Assurbanipal in the seventh century applied to Marduk is *gugal šamē u eršetim*, “the canal inspector of the heavens and the earth.”³³

26. One can suggest that the word *nagbu* may indicate a gate/tunnel connecting deep water to the spring. For instance, when Gilgamesh dived into the depth of *nagbu* in the quest of the plant of life, he, apparently, reached Apsū. However, when he cut loose the stones which he tied to himself to dive, he was cast by *tāmtum*, “sea,” on its shore; A. R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic* (Oxford, 2003), 720–23, lines 287–93. For the further discussion of the relative positions of Apsū and Tiāmat, see W. G. Lambert, “The Apsū,” in *CRR* 44, pt. III, 75–77. Cf. n. 31 below.

27. Lambert-Millard, *Atra-ḫasis*, 72, II i 11–13.

28. *Ibid.*, 42, I i 18.

29. *Ibid.*, 108, Assyrian Recension (S), iv 45, and 110, v 1–2; 116, Neo/Late-Babylonian manuscript (x), rev. i 10–11; and *passim*.

30. *Enūma Eliš* V 54. Cf. W. Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake, 1998), 118–19.

31. *Enūma Eliš* V 55. Cf. also Livingstone, *SAA* 3, 101, rev. 3. The Sea (Tiāmat as the goddess and *tāmtu/tāmtu* as a noun) in *Atra-ḫasis* and *Enūma Eliš* is clearly not only the world ocean but also the underground waters. Cf. in the West-Semitic languages, *thm* (*təhôm* in Hebrew) which also indicates “deep” as well as “the subterranean water.” See, e.g., D. T. Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation* (Sheffield, 1989), 164–65.

32. Duplicates = Si 7/Ph. K. 380, Scheil, *Sippar*, 97–98 and ND 4405/29, *CTN* IV no. 169.

33. *ABRT* I, 29–30, 1. For the most recent edition of this hymn, see Livingstone, *SAA* 3, 6–10.

Marduk as the God of Fertility

In Akkadian *Šuila*-prayers, as in Prayer to Marduk no. 2, Marduk's ability to bring abundance is often mentioned together with/after reference to his role as the controller of water and watercourses. For example, BA 5, no. 5, 7–8:

7. *muš-te-šir* IDIM.MEŠ ÍD.MEŠ BAD-ú *miṭ-ra-a-te*
EN KUR.MEŠ *šar* AN-*e* u KI-*tim* *mu-kám-mir* *ṭuḫ-di*
7. The one who keeps springs and rivers in order, who opens ditches,
The Lord of the lands, the King of the heavens and the earth, the one who heaps up
abundance.

Or BMS 12, 27–31:³⁴

27. ^dAMAR.UTU EN [ṭ]uḫ-di 'HÉ¹.GÁL-li *mu-šá-az-nin* HÉ.NUN
EN IDIM.MEŠ *ša-di-i* u A.AB.BA.MEŠ *ḥa-i-ṭu ḥur-sa-a-ni*
BAD-ú *kup-pi* u *miṭ-ra-a-ti* *muš-te-eš-ru* ÍD.DIDL
ḥa-a-a-át ^dáš-na-an u ^dla-^fḥar¹ *ba-nu-u še-¹'i* u *qé¹-e* *mu-deš-šu-u* ^úŠIM
31. *ta-ba-an-na* NINDA DINGIR u ^diš-tar *ba-nu-u* KI.KAL [*áš-š*]u-me-šú-nu *at-ta*
27. Marduk, the lord of abundance the one who brings down fertility like rain,
The lord of the springs of the mountains and the seas, the one who examines the
mountain regions,
The one who opens spring-wells and ditches, the one who puts the rivers in order,
The inspector of grain and flocks, the one who creates barley and flax, makes plants
plentiful (lit., provides the green),
31. You are creating food for the god and the goddess continuously, you are the creator of
the cultivated land on their behalf.

Thus, Marduk is known as the one who brings abundance not only to mortals but also to gods. In addition to BMS 12, 31, Marduk is: *nādin isqi u nindabê ana ilāni šūt āli[ja]*, “the one who gives the share and cereal offering to the gods of m[y(?)] city” (STT 134 and duplicates, 7);³⁵ *nāšir nindabê ana ilāni*, “the one who watches over offerings to the gods” (BA 5, no. 3, 6). This aspect of Marduk is attested already in the eighteenth century B.C.E., when an inscription of Hammurapi addresses Marduk as *nādin ḥegalli ana ilī*, “the one who gives abundance to the gods.”³⁶

Marduk as the Maintainer of Watercourses and the Provider of Fertility in Enūma Eliš

The main theme of *Enūma Eliš* is that Marduk fought against Tiāmat and her terrifying army of eleven monsters, fashioned the universe from Tiāmat's corps, and

34. For the most recent edition and collations, see W. R. Mayer, “Das Ritual BMS 12 mit dem Gebet ‘Marduk 5,’” *Or.* 62 (1993), 313–37. Some lines are restored from a duplicate K. 2379+ 3289+ 5366+ 10682+14805+ Sm. 298+ 1462 (= AOAT 34, no. 46).

35. For the duplicates, see Mayer, *Gebetsbeschwörungen*, 398, Marduk 25; and now T. Abusch, *Mesopotamian Witchcraft: Toward a History and Understanding of Babylonian Witchcraft Belief and Literature* (Leiden, 2002), 80, n. 7.

36. E.g., see D. Frayne, *RIME* 4, 354, no. 17, 3–4.

eventually established his kingship. However, it seems that the author(s) of this twelfth century B.C.E. composition could not totally ignore Marduk's aspect as the maintainer of watercourses and therefore, a god of fertility.

Among the fifty names that the gods recite to Marduk in tablets VI and VII, there are four names relating to this aspect: Enbilulu (*En. El. VII 57*), Epadun (*En. El. VII 61*), Gugal (*En. El. VII 64*), and Agilimma (*En. El. VII 82*). The characteristic of Marduk as the provider of rich produce is also found among the fifty names of Marduk in *Enūma Eliš* under the names: Asarre (*En. El. VII 1*), Asaralimnanna (*En. El. VII 5*), Hegal (*En. El. VII 68*), Sirsir (*En. El. VII 70*), Gil (*En. El. VII 78*), Gilim (*En. El. VII 80*), and Zulum (*En. El. 84*).

Further, before the fifty names of Marduk, Anšar offers the following requests to Marduk under the name Asalluhi, *Enūma Eliš* VI 109:

109. *li-kin ana AD.MEŠ-šú nin-da-bé-e ra-bu-tú*

May he (Marduk) establish the cereal-offerings for his fathers.

And VI 116–18:

116. *nin-da-bé-e li-in-na-šá-a DINGIR-ši-na ⁴iš-tar-šin*
a-a im-ma-šá-a DINGIR-ši-na li-kil-la
ma-ti-ši-na liš-te-pa-a pa-rak-ki-ši-na li-tep-šá

116. May the cereal-offerings be carried to their (subjects') god and goddess.
 May not their god be forgotten, may they sustain (him).
 May he repeatedly bring forth their land, may he repeatedly make their daises.

Marduk's role as the provider of fertility probably stands behind these requests.

The Anger of Marduk and the Deluge

While the flood or high water which is designated *mīlu* by the ancients plays a beneficial role in the agriculture of Mesopotamia, the same natural phenomena could also bring about serious damage in different circumstances. Failure to maintain the dams, the watercourses, and the dikes brought disaster to the irrigation-oriented agriculture of central and southern Mesopotamia at the time of spring flood.³⁷ This devastating flood is often called *abūbu* or *agū* and is frequently attributed to the fury of gods, including Marduk.³⁸

For example, the Prayer to Marduk, no. 2, referred to above, describes Marduk's anger as follows (line 82): ^rd¹AMAR.UTU *ug-gu-uk-ka ki-[i g]a-^rpa¹-āš a-bu-b[i]*, "Marduk, your anger is lik[e] the[m]assive Delu[ge]." In the same hymn to Marduk,

37. According to the Sumerian Flood Story, when the canals and the ditches were well maintained, the flood water did not do damage; see M. Civil, "The Sumerian Flood Story," in Lambert-Millard, *Atra-ḫasis*, 140–41, ii 99–100.

38. For a discussion of the gods' relationship to the flood, see A. Annus, *The God Ninurta* (Helsinki, 2002), 123–33.

Marduk's anger is also depicted as the *ušumgallu*-dragon³⁹ and compared with *agû*, “the high wave,” Prayer to Marduk, no. 2, lines 43–48:⁴⁰

43. [k]i-i a-ge-e tam-ḥa-ri A.A[B.BA ×] RI MU tu-up-paq gap-šiš
[k]i-i ^{ld1}GIŠ.BAR¹ ez-zi za-²·i¹-ri ta-šar-rap
45. ú-šum-gal-li uz-za-ka ta-kám-mi še-e-ni
e-piš ka-šir bar-ti te-na-a ta-kaš-šad
e-ti-iq ŠĀ-bi ar-šá-a-te šá za-²·i-ri tu-šaḥ-maṭ lum-nam
tuš-na-ás-saq dam-qu-ti la me-na tu-šad-ma-aq
43. Like the high wave of the battle, you make the s[ea .]. roll in swells,
[L]ike furious Girra, you burn down the hostile people.
45. The *ušumgallu*-dragon is your anger, you capture the malevolent,
You capture the one active plotting revolt, the rebellious one.
You burn evil, the one who passes through the midst of the uncleanness of the enemy,
You choose favorable things, you provide the one was not loved(?) with propitious
omens.

This destructive sway of Marduk which muddles water is also alluded to in a late second millennium bilingual lamentation to Marduk, *IVR*², 26, lines 5–12:⁴¹

5. a-ab-ba um-mi-lá ab ši-hu-luh-ha
6. ana tam-ti ú-šar-ma tam-tum ši-i gal-ta-at
7. sug-ga um-mi-lá sug-ga še àm-ša₄
8. ana šu-še-e ú-šar-ma šu-šu-u i-dam-mu-um
9. a-ge₆-a ^{id}buranun^{ki}-ke₄ um-mi-lá
10. ana a-ge-e pu-rat-ti ú-šar-ma
11. e-ne-ág ^dasar-lú-hi a-sur-bi ab-lù-lù
12. a-mat ^dAMAR.UTU a-sur-ra-ak-ku i-dal-la-ah
- 5–6. When (your command) reaches to the sea, this sea swells.
- 7–8. When (your command) reaches to the canebrake, the canebrake muddles.
- 9–10. When (your command) reaches to the wave of the Euphrates,
- 11–12. The word of Marduk roils the subterranean water.

39. Often Marduk himself is identified as the *ušumgallu*-dragon, e.g., Marduk is [ú]-šu-gal AN-e u KI-t[im], “the *ušuggallu*-dragon of the heavens and the earth” (*Ugaritica* 5, no. 17, line 4). Note that in An = Anum VII, *ušumgallu*, together with other dragons, is identified with Marduk or attributed to him; Litke, *AN-Anum*, 221, VII 1ff.

Although the *mušhuššu*-dragon is commonly accepted as the dragon of Marduk, *ušumgallu* can also be the name of the dragon of Marduk. Like the *mušhuššu*-dragon which we see on the Istar-Gate of Babylon, the *ušumgallu*-dragon is also depicted as having šu pirig-gá umbin ḥu-rí-in^{mušen}-na, “a lion’s paws and talons of an eagle”; H. Radau, *Sumerian Hymns and Prayers to God Nin-ib from the Temple Library of Nippur*, BE 29/1 (Philadelphia, 1911), no. 4. rev. 3–4. Despite the similarities, when *ušumgallu* and *mušhuššu* are mentioned together, they are separately listed, i.e., they are recognized as two different creatures; see, e.g., *Enūma Eliš*, I 137 and 141, *Urra-ḫubullu* XIV, 2, 5 and 6, *Angimdimma*, 133 and 139. Although it is not clear due to the ambiguity of the text, either Marduk or Nabû, his son, is depicted as *kābis ušumgalli*, “the one who treads on the *ušumgallu*-dragon,” in *KAR* 104, 29.

40. A Pre-Sargonic text, 2 H-T 25, a twelve-column tablet, lists names of canals in different cities of Mesopotamia. This text attributes a deity, a fish, and a reptile including ša-tūr (*bašmu*?) iv 1’ and ‘ḥuš¹(?) (*mušhuššu*?), ix 8’ to each canal. See R. D. Biggs, “Pre-Sargonic Riddles from Lagash,” *JNES* 32 (1973), 26–33.

41. For the recent edition, Cohen, *Lamentations*, 413–17, ll. 40–43.

According to ancient literary texts, the flood is also one of Marduk's weapons. The most notable example is *Enūma Eliš*, IV 49: *iš-ši-ma be-lum a-bu-ba* ^{giš}TUKUL-*šú* GAL-*a*, "The Lord (Marduk) wielded the Deluge, his great weapon." This *a-bu-ub* ^{giš}TUKUL, "Deluge-Weapon," also occurs as an epithet of Marduk in *BMS* 12, 23 and probably *KAR* 102+ 328, 24'.⁴²

Possible Origins of Marduk's Divine Roles

Are the two divine roles—maintainer of watercourses and supplier of fertility—Marduk's original attributes? Perhaps, but there are also reasons to believe that he assumed these attributes from other gods, such as Enki/Ea, Asalluhi, or Ninurta.

Enki/Ea, the god of sweet water, bears epithets similar to those of Marduk such as: *bēl nagbī*, "the lord of the springs," *bēl nagab eršetī*, "the lord of the spring of the land," *bēl nagbī kuppī u tamerti* "the lord of the springs, spring-wells, and meadow," and *mušēšir kuppī*, "the one who keeps spring-wells in order."⁴³ In addition, according to *Atra-ḫasīs*, Enki/Ea is the holder of "the Bolt-the Snare of the Sea" and is responsible for *mīlu*, the seasonal-flood, issuing forth from *nagbu*, "spring, deep."⁴⁴ In addition, according to a hymn to Asalluhi found in Ur, *UET* VI, 69, Asalluhi is *uruṣ-maḥ*, "the great flood."⁴⁵ Therefore, it is very probable that Marduk received these aspects when he was "adopted" as the son of Enki/Ea, and assumed the divine personality of Asalluhi, in the Old Babylonian period.⁴⁶

Another possibility is that Marduk acquired this aspect in the course of syncretism with Ninurta, which may have begun during the Old Babylonian period. There are several parallels between Marduk and Ninurta/Ningirsu. Both gods are known as "the Deluge" or the holder of "flood weapons." Gudea, the ruler of Lagash from the late third millennium, invokes Nigirsu, *lugal a-ma-ru* ^{den}līl-lá, "the king, the flood of Enlil."⁴⁷ Likewise, in *Angimdimma*, Ninurta depicts himself as follows, 160:⁴⁸

kal-ga a-má-ru ^{den}līl-le kur-ra gaba nu-gi₄-me-en
dan-nu a-bu-ub ^{den}līl ša i-na KUR-i la-a im-ma-ḥa-ru a-na-k[u]

I am the strong flood of Enlil whom no one can oppose in the mountain."⁴⁹

42. For the further discussion, see T. Oshima, "Some Comments on Prayer to Marduk, no. 1, lines 5/7," *NABU* 2003, no. 99, 100.

43. Tallqvist, *Götterepitheta*, 289. For Enki/Ea as the god of water and fertility, see H. D. Galter, *Der Gott Ea/Enki in der akkadischen Überlieferung: Eine Bestandsaufnahme des vorhandenen Materials* (Dissertationen der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz, 1982), 36 and 52–56.

44. See above.

45. For the recent edition and collations, see D. Charpin, *Le clergé d'Ur au siècle d'Hammurabi* (XIXc–XVIIIc siècles AV. J.-C.) (Genève, 1986), 358–60. This could be the result of Marduk = Asalluhi identification. Line 18 of the same hymn, Asalluhi is called ^dAM[AR.U]TU.

46. Note that Enki/Ea is quite often depicted with two streams, representing the Tigris and Euphrates, coming out from his shoulders on cylinder seals; see Black and Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols*, 75. Collon, *First Impression*, 164, nos. 761 and 762.

47. Gudea Cylinder A x 2 and *passim*. See D. O. Ezard, *RIME* 3/1, 75, x 2.

48. Cooper, *Angim*, 86–87, 160.

49. Cf. Cooper, *Angim*, 100–101, 207. For further discussion of Ninurta as the Deluge, see Annus, *The God Ninurta*, 123ff.

Furthermore, *Lugale* line 3 offers praises to Ninurta as both “the flood” and “the serpent,” just like in the above discussed Prayer to Marduk, no. 1, lines 5 and 7:⁵⁰

a-ma-ru mir-ša₄ nu-kúš-ù ki-bala gá-gá
a-bu-bu šib-bu la ni-ḫu šá a-na KUR nu-kúr-tum i-šub-bu

The flood, the restless *šibbu*-serpent, swaying at the hostile lands.

Ninurta is also known as the *ušumgallu*-dragon like Marduk.⁵¹ The related work, *Angimdimma* states that the god of Nippur, Ninurta, also masters different flood-weapons, *Angimdimma*, 141–42:⁵²

141. a-ma-ru mē-a šitá sag-ninnu-MU mu-da-an-gál-la-à[m]
a-bu-ub ta-ḫa-zi GIŠ.TUKUL SAG.NINNU [MIN=na-šá-ku-ma]
142. mir lú-ra te-a ^{gib}ban 'a-ma-ru'-MU mu-da-an-gál-la-à[m]
ši-ib-ba šá a-na a-me-li i-ṭe-eḫ-ḫu-u qa-aš-tú a-bu-bi-ia MIN
141. I bear the Deluge of battle, my fifty-headed mace,
I bear the *mir*-snake that attacks humans, my Deluge-bow.

In addition, like Marduk, Ninurta is also known as controller of water-flow. According to Sumerian literature, Ninurta is considered as the builder of canals in mountains and the one who sets off the spring-flood, *Lugale*, 358–59:⁵³

358. mu-un-ur₄-ur₄ i₇-idigina im-ma-an-úš
iḫ-mu-u[m-ma ana i-d]i-ig-lat it-ta-di
359. a-eštub^{ku6} a-gār-ra mi-ni-in-dé-dé
mi-la [ḫar-pa ú-ga]-ri im-ki-ir
358. He gathered in (the water) and poured into the Tigris,⁵⁴
He flooded the district with the early seasonal flood.

However, we must allow another possibility—that Marduk received the position as the son of Enki/Ea or Ninurta’s attributes⁵⁵ because he himself was originally the god of the water sources and watercourses of Babylon. In other words, it is just possible that Marduk was syncretized with Ninurta in Babylonian theology even before Marduk’s rise to kingship, with Marduk associated with the spade and Ninurta with the hoe. Thus, Marduk with his spade and Ninurta with his hoe had very closely related roles in the pantheon, at least in the realm of canal building and similar activities. Hence, Ninurta is listed as *marduk ša alli*, “Marduk of the hoe,” in the *Marduk Theology*.⁵⁶

50. Van Dijk, *Lugale*, vol. 1, 51.

51. Radau, *BE* 29/1, 4, rev. 3–4. See n. 39 above.

52. Cooper, *Angim*, 80–81, 141–42.

53. Jacobsen suggests that Ninurta was the spring season flood, see T. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness* (New Haven, 1976), 131–34. Cf. W. Heimpel, “The Natural History of the Tigris according to Sumerian Literary Composition *Lugal*,” *JNES* 46 (1987), 309–17.

54. Note that above discussed *IVR*², 26, 9–10, a bilingual lamentation to Marduk, refers only to the Euphrates but not the Tigris.

55. Annus argues that Marduk “borrowed” the weapon of Ninurta; see Annus, *The God Ninurta*, 124.

56. BM 47406, *CT* 24, pl. 50, obv. 3.

Marduk and marru: Conclusion

The passage in Herodotus quoted above notes that Babylonia was known for its rich cereal products.⁵⁷ In Babylonia, in southern Mesopotamia, cereal production, and in fact all agricultural activity, was made possible by irrigation.⁵⁸ In ancient times, the textual evidence indicates that the *marru*, “spade,” symbolized canal cutting (i.e., irrigation) and so the bringing of fertility. We suggest that the similarity in sound between Marduk’s name and his symbol *marru* confirmed this connection in the mind of ancient Mesopotamians.

57. Herodotus, I 193. See above.

58. Cf. P. R. S. Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries: the Archaeological Evidence* (Winona Lake, 1999), 1–5.