

quests or thanks, and parents' choices of names for their children, testify to a wide belief in the power and willingness of the gods to alter the course of individual human destinies. Indeed one can say that religious belief in ancient Mesopotamia would have had no meaning unless it was accompanied by at least the possibility of divine intervention in mortals' affairs.

See **dreams and visions**.

dogs

79,90 The sitting dog first occurs as a divine symbol in the Old Babylonian Period and continues through to the Neo-Babylonian. Inscriptions on **kudurru**s identify it as the symbol of **Gula**, goddess of healing. An Old Babylonian dog figurine from Ĝirsu (modern Tello) is dedicated (see **dedication**) to **Ninisina** (Gula) and many dog figurines were discovered in the temple of Gula at Isin, confirming that the association dates back to that time. That it continued down to the Neo-Babylonian Period is shown by another figurine from Sippar dedicated to Meme (another name for Gula), while King Nebuchadnezzar II (reigned 604–562 BC) records the placing of statuettes of gold, silver and bronze dogs as deposits in the gates of Gula's temple at Babylon. A dog is commonly seen on seal designs of this period, sometimes sitting by an enthroned goddess, presumably Gula, but also sometimes without the goddess, sitting and supporting the symbol of the **crook**.

In the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Periods, the dog, sitting or standing, was also used as a magically protective figure, not attached specifically to any individual deity. Groups of five clay figurines of dogs painted different colours were prescribed as foundation deposits for either side of a gateway. They were inscribed with such gems as 'Don't stop to think, bite!' Bronze dog figurines are in the same period usually found in groups of seven (see **numbers**). Whether they were magically protective or dedicatory or served some other purpose is unclear.

It has been suggested that the disease of rabies was present in Mesopotamia by the beginning of the second millennium BC and more widespread during the first millennium BC.

The dog family to the Mesopotamians meant not only wolves, hyenas, jackals and dogs, but also **lions**.

donkey: see **Lamaštu**.

donkey ears

Mesopotamian **demons and monsters** with lion's heads were very often depicted also with long upright ears, probably those of a donkey. The **lion-dragon** is shown with such ears from the time of its invention in the Akkadian Period. The **lion-demon** is depicted with leonine ears in the Akkadian Period, but thereafter also acquires the upright ears. The evil



57 Five little clay models of dogs. They had been placed in a hollow at the base of a monumental stone relief on one side of a doorway in the royal palace of the Assyrian king Assurbanipal (reigned 668–c.627 BC) at Nineveh. They are painted in different colours and inscribed in exact conformity to the prescription of written rituals, which denote their purpose as one of protective magic. Hts. 45–56 mm.

151 goddess **Lamaštu** also has such ears when she is represented in the first millennium BC. Her special beast is the donkey. When such creatures were copied in arts outside Mesopotamia the ears were generally altered to those of a lion, an interesting example of lack of ‘understanding’ of the Mesopotamian convention. However, in Greek art the griffin retained its long ears, and these passed into the iconography of medieval and modern European griffins and dragons.

The inclusion of an element of the swift-footed wild ass along with aspects of the fierce lion in such demonic hybrids might have seemed an appropriate combination of wild animals. They frequently also have bird talons (see **bird talons and wings**).

See **griffin; standards, staves and sceptres of the gods**.

dragons

Dragon (Greek *drakōn*, ‘serpent’) is the word usually used in English for a terrifying mythical monster with a scaly snake-like or lizard-like body. Belief in such creatures arose in antiquity without any knowledge of the monstrous reptiles and birds that had actually existed in remote prehistory. Mesopotamian art includes a number of such dragon-like creatures, of malevolent and beneficent natures. Most closely corresponding to the general image is the so-called **snake-dragon**, but other hybrids such as the **lion-dragon** might also be regarded as dragon-like images.

In Sumerian poetry, *ušumgal*, a serpentine monster, can be a metaphor for a god or king; it is a term of praise and not necessarily evil or unpleasant.

See **demons and monsters**.

dreams and visions

Since Freud and his successors in psychoanalysis, dreams have usually been regarded as the direct or more oblique references of the subconscious mind to events of the immediate or more distant past. Throughout antiquity, however, and indeed until the late nineteenth century AD, dreams were normally regarded as

portents of *future* events, and thus were studied as a branch of **divination**.

The importance attached to dreams can be seen, for example, in the number of dream episodes related in the stories of **Gilgameš**, in both the Sumerian and Akkadian versions. Here they are used as a literary device to open a window upon subsequent events and, by their consequent effects upon the protagonists, as a catalyst for moving the story on. In the Standard Babylonian version of the epic, Gilgameš has two dreams presaging, through symbolism, the arrival of **Enkidu** (see **Ninsun**). He has a series of three dreams concerning the projected campaign against Humbaba (**Huwawa**). Then there is Enkidu’s ‘death-dream’ and a dream of **Ūt-napišti** (**Ziusura**). For Enkidu’s ‘death-dream’, the Hittite version apparently substituted a dream of his visiting the **assembly of the gods**. The Anatolian version of the epic also recounts a dream of Gilgameš presaging his struggle with the **Bull of Heaven**.

As a means of glimpsing the future, rulers took their dreams very seriously. Gudea, ruler of Lagaš, recounts a dream in which he was instructed to rebuild the temple of **Ninġirsu**. The Assyrian king Assurbanipal (reigned 668–c.627 BC), when apparently in a desperate military position, tells of a dream in which the goddess **Ištar** (**Inana**) appeared to encourage him and to assure him that she would defeat the enemy on his behalf. The appearance of the goddess before the king was also seen in a dream of a priest of Ištar’s temple. No dream episodes are related in the Assyrian royal annals before Assurbanipal’s reign. Yet it seems that their portents were earlier considered significant, because at Imgur-Enlil (modern Balawat) Assurnasirpal II (reigned 883–859 BC) had built a temple to **Mamu**, possibly identical with the god of dreams. Archaeological excavations have unearthed a set of doors of the temple, which were decorated with bands of bronze depicting scenes from the king’s campaigns. (Other similar sets of doors, of Assurnasirpal and his son and successor **Shalmaneser III**, were found in the neighbouring palaces.) Imgur-Enlil was close