

Saḥar kur-ra:

Mythological and Mundane Imagery in Mesopotamia
Literature

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1. Introduction:

First of all, I would like to thank all present for accepting my discussion which I intend to give in English, and I hope that I do not inconvenience anyone with this. As a student with just one year of Sumerian, I appreciate the chance to speak here today in the presence of senior students and of scholars who have led the field in Semitic and Sumerian studies – I consider it a privilege, and a grave challenge to produce something interesting. I would like to thank Prof. Krebernik and also Ryan Winters who offered me much needed perspective in the early phases of my reading, of course, this does not mean that they will end up endorsing my suggestions.

As for my subject matter, I have selected 7 lines of textual material which have intrigued and interested me for years. These lines come from the myth Inanna and Šukaletuda, and they focus on the mortal Šukaletuda, offering some explanation of how and why he was able to see and interact with divine bodies. For ease of reference, I have labeled these 7 lines “Šukaletuda’s vision.”

The myth in question spent several decades in a state of relative obscurity: Samuel Kramer offered partial translations of the material but a full treatment and translation of the entire text did not emerge until Konrad Volk’s comprehensive 1995 publication. With better editions of the textual material available, several schools of interpretation have emerged: scholars such as Wilcke and Volk interpret the story along political-historical grounds; Alster understood things in a more literary way, emphasizing the dark humor inherent in the story; Cooper rejected the political-historical arguments seeing the story as essentially astral in nature; and recently, Jeffrey Cooley has supported this view with an article on Astral Science and Divination in the Myth Inanna and Šukaltuda.¹

It is not my purpose here to argue for any of these interpretations. Rather I have chosen to deal with the problems of interpretation inherent in the following sequence:

¹ Following J. Cooley’s history of scholarship, Cooley 2008 p. 3

97. (ETCSL): Then what did the stormwind bring?
98. (ETCSL): It blew dust of the mountains into his (=Šukaletuda's) eyes.
99. (ETCSL): When he tried to wipe the corner of his eyes with his hand,
100. (ETCSL): he got some of it out, but was not able to get all of it out.
101. (ETCSL): He raised his eyes to the lower land and saw the exalted gods of the land where
the sun rises.
102. (ETCSL): He raised his eyes to the highlands and saw the exalted gods of the land where
the sun sets.
103. (ETCSL): He saw a solitary ghost. He recognized a solitary god by her appearance
(=Inanna).

In addition to this sequence then, I also give brief consideration to the characters and setting involved in the myth.

2. Plot of Inanna and Šukaletuda outline

- **A. Prologue (1-3)**
- **B. The Journey of Inanna into the Mountain Lands (4-20)**
- **C. Enki, the Raven and the Emergence and Cultivation of the Date Palm (...to 88)**
- **D. The History of Šukaletuda (91-111)**
- **E. Inanna and Šukaletuda (112-310)**

For those present who haven't read the myth in some time, or who are less familiar with it, I will sketch the basic plot following Volk's divisions. Following a brief prologue and praise of Inanna, the goddess goes up into the mountains to dispense justice and detect falsehood from on high. Section C, the instructions to the Raven, represents an enigmatic interlude in the story, to be further discussed below. Section D, the history of Šukaletuda, contains the sequence which I am terming "Šukaletuda's Vision" and is of primary interest here. Finally, Section E contains the story of the rape of the sleeping Inanna by Šukaletuda. When the goddess awakens and realizes she has been violated, she is furious and releases a series of three plagues on the country, the

reason for these actions is to discover the whereabouts of the offending gardener. While the entire myth is worthy of attention, I now focus my comments on sections C and D.

3. The Instructions to the Raven Sequence

In order to better understand the characters involved, it is necessary to decide if the enigmatic Instructions to the Raven have any real bearing on the story. In this part of the myth, Enki tells the raven to chew kohl for the incantation priests of Eridu and to mix it with oil and water; and to plant these things in a trench for leeks in the garden plot; these instructions were carried out, and subsequently an “oddity” (that is, the datepalm) stands up in the leek trench, and the Raven works the shadouf like a man.

For Volk, this sequence represents a self-contained unit, a piece of an older story that was added to the Inanna and Šukaletuda myth, and which he understood to be a etiological explanation of the origin of horticulture and of the datepalm; the fundamental point being that these things, as with so much of civilization, were designed by the gods. In another Sumerian literary piece, *the Song of the Hoe*, a myth detailing the benefit of the hoe in Enlil’s cosmic creation acts, contains an embedded myth which precludes the principal subject matter of the text. In like manner, in Inanna and Šukaletuda, I believe that the embedded text detailing the instructions to the Raven both precludes and compliments the principal narrative of the text: that is, an etiological explanation of horticulture leads into a myth whose main protagonist is, in fact, a gardener and, perhaps more specifically, a water-drawer.

3.1 Character sketch: Igisigsig

The first confirmation of Šukaletuda’s role in the garden comes from the mention of his father, Igisigsig, on line 92.

(1)	
igi-nu-du ₈	“blind”
igi-nu-gál	“without eyes”
[i]gi-šag ₄ -ba-nu-gál	“with no eyes inside”
[i]gi-zé-zé	“with eyes torn out / mutilated”
[i]gi-gal-gal	“with large eyes”
igi-tur-tur	“with small eyes”
igi-si ₄ -si ₄	“with yellow eyes” ³

Piotr Steinkeller has recently argued for a new reading of the name Igisigsig: according to his understanding, sig7 should be analyzed as a syllabic reading for ze2, the verb “to tear out.” As shown in figure 1 on the slide, igi-ze2-ze2 occurs in the Proto-Sag lexical list and is interpreted “with eyes torn out / or mutilated.” Historically, the brutal practice of blinding male prisoners of war was enacted in Mesopotamia, and this was a method of gaining compliant laborers while reducing the chance of an effective uprising. The SIG7-a (or ze2-a) workers stationed in gardens, often as water drawers, have convincingly been discussed as a class of workers who were blind, or had been blinded, and this is particularly evident in the Ur III period. For Steinkeller then, the name of Igisigsig alone indicates that he was a blind water drawer, or gardener.²

This line of reasoning gains additional support from an unpublished Inanna and Šukaletuda tablet held in the Schoyen collection, MS 4508. In figure two, I have attempted to read line 92 as it appears in MS 4508, and the text describing Igisigsig as a lu2-a-bala-ak-am, a water drawer, is legible; in previously available texts it wasn't. Credit for this observation goes to Volk, who first pointed it out in RIA 13, published 2012.

fig. 2

92. Dn ii 39' :	[lú-bi dumu- ^d i]gi [?] -sig7-sig7	*lú- ^r *x- [?] *x [?] -*ke ₄
92. MS 4508:	x x x igi-sig7?-sig7?	lú-a-bala-a-kam

² Steinkeller 2013 (JCS 69), p. 69-71; Steinkeller draws largely on W. Heimpel for his philological arguments, Heimpel, W. “Blind Workers, Weaving Women and Prostitutes in Third Millennium Babylonia” *KASKAL* 6 (2009) 43-48.

3.2 Character sketch: Šukaletuda

Due to breaks in all the relevant tablets, the profession of Šukaletuda remains unspecified in this myth. Volk had suggested in his original publication that perhaps nu^{giš}kiri₆, gardener, should be restored in line 91. However, seeing as it is now known that his father was specified as a water drawer, it seems to me quite possible that this was Šukaletuda's role in the early texts as well. Perhaps this is also a closer match for his stated activities as described in lines 91-96 which read:

*91-96: Šu-kale-tuda was his name., a son (?) of Igi-sigsig, the [MS 4508: **water drawer**], was to water garden plots and build the installation for a well among the plants, but not a single plant remained there, not even one: he had pulled them out by their roots and destroyed them.*

However, this distinction is admittedly of limited importance since nu^{giš}kiri₆ served as a generic designation of skilled garden personnel in general, including the a-bala; understanding Šukaletuda as a water drawer is thus a more specific designation, rather than a different profession altogether.

Should it be correct to maintain this professional distinction in the earlier texts, it is nonetheless clear that such distinction had been lost both for Igisigsig and for Šukaletuda in the later period texts. In the godlist AN:anum, Igisigsig was designated nu^{giš}kiri₆-gal, and specifically, the gardener of Anu, as he is also named in several late incantation texts. And Šukaletuda appears in the epic of Gilgamesh under the name Išullānu, and is similarly described as the nukaribbi or the nu^{giš}kiri₆ of Ištār's father, that is, of Anu.

Gilgamesh col. vi lines 64-65 read:³

64. *ta-ra-mi-ma i-šu-ul-la-nu nukaribbi(nu.^{giš}kiri₆) abi(ad)-ki*

65. *ša ka-a-a-nam-ma šu-gu-ra-a na-šak-ki*

64. You loved Išullānu, your father's gardener,

65. who regularly brought you a basket of dates.

³ A. George 2003, p. 623

4.1 saḥar

I turn now to that section of the text which I have termed “Šukaletuda’s Vision” a section of the text which provides the background story of the character prior to his rape of Inanna in subsequent lines. As mentioned, a sequence of events seems to occur in the myth which enables Šukaletuda, a mortal, to witness and to have access to divine bodies. This sequence seems to have started with the dust that blew in his eye, the saḥar kur-ra.

As a starting point, I have asked the question: what is saḥar? In the native tradition, the Sumerian word saḥar is given lexical equivalence with the Akkadian word *eperu*. CAD e lists no less than 9 different semantic categories for *eperu*. and so saḥar and *eperu* are words with a very wide semantic range and it quickly becomes apparent that modern translations such as “dust” or “Staub” can mislead the interpreter.

eperu: CAD E

1. dust
 2. earth, loose earth
 3. debris
 4. scales
 5. ore
 6. (an unidentified substance, OB only)
 7. mortar
 8. territory, soil
 9. area, volume
- Enki and the World Order:*
- 445 (ETCSL): dⁱinana saḡ
saḥar-re-eš ḥe2-mu-e-dub
- 445: Inana, you heap up
human heads like **piles of dust**.

For one thing, many texts which feature the word *saḫar* make it clear that the word could also refer to substances much thicker than “dust” or “staub,” substances which could be stacked up or piled. In the myth *Enki and the World Order*, according to the Oxford translation, it is stated to Inana ‘you heap up human heads like piles of dust.’

Enki and the World Order:

445: ^dinana saḡ saḫar-re-eš ḫe2-mu-e-dub

445: Inana, you heap up human heads like piles of dust⁴

But on a more mundane level, *saḫar* and *eperu* may refer simply to different types of ground soil of varying consistencies, soils used as building filler, in canals, in graves and in many other situations.

At other times, *saḫar* may reference minerals brought down from the mountains, such as gold, silver, lapis lazuli and so forth. For these values, one may refer to early examples in the epic literature of Enmerker, and in Gudea Cylinder A, where *saḫar* describes the properties of these precious minerals.⁵

Additionally, *saḫar* may even refer to such substances as human flesh. It forms part of the Sumerian word *saḫar-šub-ba*, which was loaned into Akkadian as *saḫaršubbu*, and which is often translated as “leprosy.”⁶ Whether these words are best understood as describing some sort of “dust covered illness” or rather “flesh falling illness” is a matter worth investigating further. It is also apparent that later texts occasionally feature the expression *tarû ana epri*, which seems to represent a belief that the dead shall return to dust.⁷ This notion seems conceptually similar to the statement that the dead shall return to clay following the great flood, as is stated in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.⁸

Given the very wide semantic range of *saḫar* then, it seems sensible to conceptualize a basic value of “granule” or perhaps “Teilchen.” The word serves only to indicate the form of the substance, without providing much clue as to the substance itself. Whether dust is meant, soil or mineral only becomes clear with careful consideration of the context.

⁴ ETCSL: <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.3#>

⁵ (George JCS 37/1 p.110): one of the items of tribute demanded of Aratta is *kù-me-a saḫar-ba*, “ku-mea (a precious metal) in its (state as) crude ore.”; Gudea Cyl. A col. 16: 19-20: *en5-si-ra kù-GI kur-bi-ta saḫar-ba mu-na-tùm* - (George JCS 37/1 p.110) 19-20: To the Governor gold will be brought from its mountain (source) in its (state as) crude ore.”

⁶ CAD S *saḫaršubbû*; J.V. Kinner Wilson, RA 60 (1966) pp. 47-58, “Leprosy in Mesopotamia.”

⁷ CAD E, *eperu*; V. van der Stedt 2007, p. 15 n. 3

⁸ *Gilgamesh* XI l. 35, see George 2003 710-711. The word translated “clay” is Akk. *ṭitti*

4.2 Kur as mountain/netherworld in 3rd millennium sources:

Moving from saĥar to the word kur, the researcher is confronted with a different set of ambiguities, although fortunately the range of semantic possibilities is a little smaller. First I would like to briefly describe the current picture of the netherworld according to recent scholarship. No less than four different locations for the netherworld have been identified in Mesopotamian texts:

The netherworld was located at different times (or at the same time?):

(i) directly under the ground to its full extent;

(2) deeply underground, as suggested by *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld*;

(3) somewhere in the west where Šamaš descends or on the route eastward;

(4) maybe in the northeastern Zagros mountains, as suggested both by the term *kur* and the description of the netherworld as a mountain.⁹

The last option bears the most relevance to this discussion. The ambiguity inherent in the Sumerian word kur, having both the value ‘mountain’ and ‘netherworld,’ is an often noted issue in the study of Mesopotamian religion. A third value for kur is “foreign land” although this does not impact my discussion for the most part. Why then, does kur entail both mountain and netherworld?

It has been observed that when Inanna went on her descent to the netherworld, she first traveled north from Uruk until she reached Agade, she then turned and travelled towards the mountains, ultimately reaching the gatekeeper of the netherworld.¹⁰ This has led some scholars

⁹ D. Katz 2003 p. 47

¹⁰ W. Sladek 1974, p. 62; Katz 2003 p. 21, 240 (Inanna travels east), however, Katz holds that she went west and got to the mountains in the west, Katz 2003 p. 96 and Katz 2005, p. 195 n. 5 On noting that the western horizon of

to posit that the netherworld itself was in the mountains around Sumer.¹¹ Another view, which I hold to be feasible, is that it is was merely the gateways and the cosmic passages ways to the netherworld which were located in these mountains.¹²

The proposals of Dina Katz, as articulated in her 2003 work *The Image of the Netherworld in Sumerian Sources*, are the most in depth and careful study of these matters to date. Central to Katz' interpretation is her understanding that the oldest Sumerian literary tradition speaks of a netherworld on a horizontal axis, that is, located somewhere over the mountains and above the earth's surface; she argues that a "reconceptualization" occurred as Mesopotamian civilization expanded during the Sargonic period, expanding territorially into the regions once thought to be inhabited by the dead, and this expansion resulted in a conceptual shift: specifically, the relocation of the netherworld to a region underneath the surface of the earth.¹³ Subsequently, some scholars have borrowed this terminology of horizontal and vertical axis in their own discussions of the Mesopotamian netherworld, Mark Geller's discussion of the netherworld landscape in 2000, for example.¹⁴ And Veronica van der Stedt's 2007 study of *Death in the Land between the Two Rivers*, which deals extensively with the netherworld, cites Katz' views on the matter without complaint.¹⁵ What evidence is there then, that the Sumerians ever envisioned the netherworld above the surface of the earth?

Sumer was not mountainous Katz reasons: "since her reappearance as the morning-star over the top of the mountains on the northeastern horizon is comparable to her ascent from the netherworld, I assume that her descent was analogous to her ascent and, therefore, that Inanna's disappearance as the evening-star was also believed to occur at the top of the mountains."

¹¹ Katz 2003 p. 21, 240; M. Geller 2000, 41 and n.8; V. van der Stedt 2007 p. 37

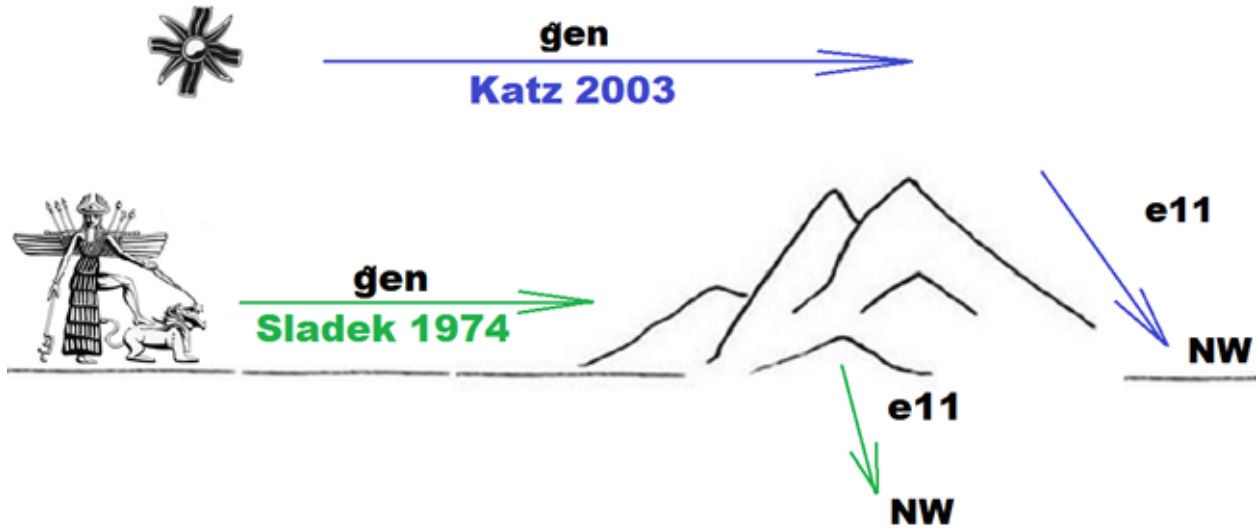
¹² W. Sladek 1974, p. 63. Sladek holds that she traveled east and reached Ganzir in the Northeastern mountains.

¹³ D. Katz 2003, p. 21, 109, 245.

¹⁴ M. Geller 2000, 41 and n.8

¹⁵ V. van der Stedt, 2007 . *Mourir au Pays des Deux Fleuves* (Death in the Land between Two Rivers), p. 37.

Locating the Netherworld (NW)



32. u₄-da kur-šè e₁₁-dè-en
33. u₄-da kur-šè ḡen-na-mu-dè

The textual evidence supporting this claim is scarce, according to Katz' own admission,¹⁶ and consists primarily of material dating to the early second millennium. Two texts in particular were emphasized above others:

¹⁶ D. Katz 2003, p. 242.

Edina-Usaḡake: <i>In the Desert in the Early Grass</i>	Date: Old Babylonian Published: D. Katz 2003, p. 316
<i>Context:</i> A lament for the dying god. The mother of the dead god, searching for her son, walking toward the kur.	
<p>SK 26 iv. 1-4</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. [a]-di ga-da-an-ḡen ḡuruš-me-en/ ḡa-ra-n]a nu-g[i₄-gi₄] 2. a ḡuruš' ḡuruš-^dda-[mu-mu] 3. i-in-di i-in-di gaba-kur-ra-[šè] 4. u₄-zal u₄-zal kur-mud¹-š[è] <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “If wished, let me walk with you, you lad, the road of no return.” 2. “Oh lad, lad, [my Da]mu.” 3. She goes, she goes toward the edge of the mountain (<i>kur</i>) 4. The day is ebbing, the day is ebbing, toward dark the dark/frightening mountain (<i>kur</i>). 	

The Eršemma of Ninhursaḡa 18, 25 32 38 47	Date: Old Babylonian Published: D. Katz 2003, p. 19
<i>Context:</i> A lament for the dying god. The mother of the dead god, Ninhursaḡa, searches for her dead son.	
<p>CT 58, 5 ; BM 98396 lines 5-7</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. ama-gan-ra aš-tar-tar ki-kin-kin kur-úr-ra ba-te 6. aš-tar-tar-re ki-kin-kin-e kur-úr-ra ba-te 7. u₈-sila₄-kud-da-gin₇ na-an-gul-e 8. ùz-máš-kud-da-gin₇ na-an-gul-e <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. As for the birth-giving mother, her beautiful one was lost (to her). 6. Inquiring and searching the foot of the mountain (<i>kur</i>) gets closer, 7. Like a ewe whose lamb was torn away she would not be detained. 8. Like a (she) goat whose kid was torn away she would not be detained. 	

The first, Edina-Usaḡake, is an Old Babylonian lamentation text for the dying god, Damu. His distraught mother searches for her dead son and the narrative describes her walking to “the foot of the mountain.” In similar manner, a second text, the Eršemma of Ninhursaḡ, again describes the distraught mother searching in the same way and in the same place. For Katz, that both of these texts mention the mother walking to the “foot of the mountain” while in search of the netherworld, is enough to demonstrate that these texts involve a horizontal notion, the netherworld above the surface.¹⁷

Perhaps the most important evidence for the location of the netherworld with relation to the surface of the earth comes from the verbs of movement used in the texts. In the myth of Inanna’s Descent, as Inanna travels towards the netherworld, the verb describing her travel is ḡen, which entails travel along a horizontal axis; when she reaches the gate of the netherworld, ganzir in the mountains, the verb describing her motion changes and becomes e₁₁, which entails movement up or down, ascending or descending.

Maintaining that, here again, the netherworld was to be found over the mountains and above the earth’s surface, Katz sees no contradiction in the fact that Inanna is described as descending in this myth; she interprets rather, that Inanna in her astral manifestation travels across the sky and that when her direction switches to a descent, as the verb e₁₁ indicates, Inanna descends only from the top of the mountain peaks to the surface level netherworld on the far side, and that her later ascent is again merely from the base of the mountain back to the top of the mountain.¹⁸

It should be borne in mind that such a reconstruction is not necessitated by the text itself. It remains entirely possible to interpret e₁₁ as a movement down below the earth’s surface, as indicating a descent into a subterranean netherworld. This is how Sladek understood it in his 1974 dissertation, and seems to be what the Akkadian version of the myth intends when Ištar descends (*warādu*) to the netherworld (*eršetum*).¹⁹

In fact, the ultimate reason for the lexical double duty of the word kur may find its most feasible explanation with reference to basic Mesopotamian cosmology and mythology: the passage ways to the land of the dead were to be found in the kur mountain land. For one, the sun god, upon exiting the netherworld rose from behind the mountain peaks in the east; further, the mythological gate to the netherworld, ganzir, was also situated in mountainous regions, at least in the myth of Inanna’s Descent, and so it seems feasible that kur may have symbolized the netherworld by virtue of its proximity to the entrance, or to the entrances, to the netherworld.²⁰ This much was articulated by Toshikazu Kuwabara who studied the terminology of the Netherworld in Sumero-Akkadian literature and who stated:

“KUR as “mountain” shares similar elements which build up a picture of KUR the “Netherworld.” An edge of the cosmos that the Sun rises from, the mountain range is an exit from the Netherworld where the sun stays in his chamber during the night. This fact functions as

¹⁷ D. Katz 2003, p. 241.

¹⁸ D. Katz 2004, p. 98.

¹⁹ W. Sladek 1974, p. 63

²⁰ T. Kuwabara 1997 p.11; W. Sladek 1974 p. 61-63.

*a code of cosmology which raises a semantic commonality between the sign “mountain” and the symbol, the “Netherworld.”*²¹

To put it in simple terms, the kur mountain range may symbolize the netherworld by virtue of its proximity to important access points – this would be akin to someone intending to swim in the ocean saying ‘let’s go to the beach.’ The beach stands as a symbol for the ultimate destination. In any case, the true reason for the dichotomy mountain / netherworld will remain a subject of debate, and chances are that the matter was never so clear and concrete as modern scholarship would prefer. With that in mind, I move to the matter of saḫar kur-ra.

4.3 saḫar kur-ra as technical term: “crude ore”

If saḫar is best understood as ‘granule’ and alludes merely to form, the value of saḫar kur-ra as a substance, and as a literary *trope*, depends on one’s interpretation of the word kur. As I hope the following discussion will demonstrate, both ore of the mountain and dust of the netherworld are attested in this small group of early textual attestations, mirroring the principal semantic range of the word kur itself.

Grammatical sketch (saḫar kur-ra):

TEXT 1	
<i>Inanna’s Descent</i> l. 53-55	Dating: Known from 30 OB copies, although Inanna’s trip to the netherworld is mentioned in an Ur III incantation text (YOS 11 58). Lines 54-55 occur with the context of “Ninšubar’s lament” for Inanna.

²¹ T. Kuwabara 1997, p. 11

George's Argument presented along Structuralist grounds:

53. kù-ša₆-ga-zu **saḥar-kur-ra-ka** nam-ba-da-ab-šár-re

53. (George): Let no one smelt your fine silver along with **crude ore!**

53. (ETCSL): Don't let your precious metal be alloyed there with the **dirt of the underworld.**

54. za-gìn-ša₆-ga-zu za-zadim-ma-ka nam-ba-da-an-si-il-le

54. (George): Let no one cleave your fine lapis lazuli along with the lapidary's stones!

54. (ETCSL): Don't let your precious lapis lazuli be split there with the mason's stone.

55. giš-taškarin-zu giš-nagar-ra-ka nam-ba-da-an-dar-dar-re

55. (George): Let no one cut up your boxwood(?) along with the carpenter's timber!

55. (ETCSL): Don't let your boxwood be chopped up there with the carpenter's wood.

Andrew George examined saḥar kur-ra as it occurs in line 53 of Inanna's Descent in his contribution to JCS 37, and I have found his arguments to be quite convincing. The sequence under examination forms part of Ninšubar's lament, as it is termed, and is initiated with Ninšubar's plea: "Father Enki, don't let anyone kill your daughter in the netherworld!" There follows three further pleas which, utilizing parallel structures, make the same essential plea, which is don't let your daughter, something precious, become degraded. The poetry here artfully contrasts precious materials with the raw materials of the craftsman, and so we see boxwood contrasted with carpenter's wood, lapis lazuli contrasted with lapidary's stones, and finally fine silver contrasted with crude ore, according to George's proposal. This proposal supports the rhetorical structure of the poem and George supports this claim with convincing textual evidence. I hope that a few examples will suffice here:

TEXT 2

PBS 1/1 11 = CBS 11341 rev. iv 75-76, 43-44

Dated to: OB period. Lines 75-76 occur in a broken context in a bilingual text sometimes defined as a hymn(?) referencing Šulgi. (Westenholz 2005, p. 330, 345).

Sumerian:

75/76: lagab-na₄-za-gìn-kal-la ní-g-tam-ma kurum₇-aka ù-tu-da-**saḥar-kur-ra**

75/76. (Westenholz 2005): A block of lapis lazuli, a cleansed item, inspected, product of **mountain ore.**

75/76. (George JCS 37): Blocks of precious lapis lazuli (and) bright, refined (metal), derived (lit. 'the offspring of') from **crude [ore]**.

Akkadian:

43/44. *ši-bi-ir-ti up-ni-[im waqrim] ʔa-bu ʕa-ar-^rpu^ʔ-um li-du-um e^ʔ-[pi-ir ʕad]*

43/44. (Westenholz 2005): a block of precious lapis lazuli, good (quality), refined, product of **mountain ore**.

43/44. (George JCS 37): Blocks of precious lapis lazuli (and) bright, refined (metal), derived (lit. 'the offspring of') from **crude [ore]**.

TEXT 3

Gudea Cyl. A col. 16 19-20:

A col. 16, 19-20: en₅-si-ra kù-GI kur-bi-ta **saḫar-ba** mu-na-tùm

19-20. (George JCS 37/1 p.110): "To the Governor gold will be brought from its mountain (source) in its (state as) **crude ore**."

19-20. ETCSL 439-440: "(to) the ruler, gold was brought in **dust form** from its mountains."

Text 2 is an Old Babylonian bi-lingual text, it is sometimes described as a hymn involving the Ur III king Šulgi. It was last edited in 2005 by Joan Westenholz. The text is a firm indication, I believe, that one nuance of saḫar kur-ra is crude ore. Lines 75 and 76 read: Blocks of precious lapis lazuli (and) bright, refined (metal), derived (lit. 'the offspring of') crude [ore]. Just like in Inanna's descent, a precious mineral in its refined state stands in opposition to saḫar kur-ra, the crude state, although this time it is lapis lazuli and not fine silver.

Text 3, which is Gudea Cylinder A, features kur and saḫar as distinct terms, both marked with the 3rd inanimate possessive suffix -bi: gold was brought in dust form from its mountains according to the Oxford site, however, gold will be brought from its mountain (source) in its (state as) crude ore, according to George.

4.4 saḫar kur-ra as cosmological referant: “dust of the netherworld”

TEXT 4	
<i>Lulil and His Sister</i> l. 46-47, 59.	Date: OB. Described as a lamentation for the young dying god, Ašgi (Katz 2003, p. 205).
46. ki-ná-mu saḫar-kur-ra-ke ₄ mu-la-a-dug ₄ -ba bí-ná	
47. ù-sá-mu mud-e mu-lu-érim-ba bí-tuš	
46. Katz 2003: My bed is the dust of the netherworld, I lie among the mourned.	
47. Katz 2003: My sleep is troubled, I sit among the enemy of man.	
46. Jacobsen 1980: I lie on my bed, the dust of the Nether World,	
47. Jacobsen 1980: among the most down-and-out of men.	
59. a a-pa ₄ -šè bal-bi saḫar-kur-ra dé-bi	
59. Katz 2003: Pour out the water into the libation pipe, pour it in the dust of the netherworld!	

TEXT 5	
Lament of Sumer and Ur: 82-83	Date: Known from some 20 sources dating approximately to the OB period. Context: When Enlil unleashes the Gutians, chaos ensues and nature is overturned.
82. an ba-sùḫ-sùḫ ḡissu ba-an-lá kur-re mur mi-ni-ib-ša ₄	
83. ^d utu an-úr-ra i-in-ná saḫar kur-ra zal-àm	
82. (Michalowski 1989): The heavens were darkened, they were covered by a shadow, the mountains roared,	
83. (Michalowski 1989): The sun lay down at the horizon, dust passed over the mountains.	
82. (Attinger 2009): Le ciel se brouilla, l’ombre le recouvrit, les montagnes grondèrent,	
83. (Attinger 2009): Utu se coucha à l’horizon, ce fut la ‘poussière du kur’ qui passa.	

TEXT 6	
<i>Inanna and Shukaletuda</i> l. 97-107	Dating: Extent on OB tablets mainly from Nippur, Volk associates it with the group of texts originally composed by Enheduanna (Volk 1995 p.3).
97. [im-dal] ṛa ¹ -na-àm de ₆ -a-bi	
98. [igi-ni saḫar-ku]r-ra im-mi-ib-ra	

97. (Volk 1995): Was hat [der Sturmwind] (dann) gebracht?
 98. (Volk 1995): [In seine Augen] schlug er [den Staub] des [Berglandes].
 97. (ETCSL): Then what did the stormwind bring?
 98. (ETCSL): It blew dust of the mountains into his eyes.
 97. (Polonsky): What has the wind of the storm brought?
 98. (Polonsky): It caused the dust of the mountain to strike my eye.

99. [ub igi-ni] šu sá-sá-da-ni
 100. [niġ im-ma-ra-an²-s]i-ig zà-bi-a nu-un-zu
 101. [sig-šè igi mu-un-íl diġir-ùn-na-kur-utu-è-ke₄-ne igi bí-in-du₈-ru
 102. [nim-šè igi mu-un-íl diġir-ùn-n]a-kur-utu-šú-ke₄-ne igi bí-in-du₈-ru
 103. [^dgidim-dili-du-ra igi m]u-n[i-in-du₈]
 104. [diġir-dili-d]u-ra [ġiskim mu-ni-in-zu]
 105. me šu du₇-du₇-d[a igi bí-in-du₈]
 106. nam-tar-ra diġir-re-^re⁷-[ne-šè igi mu-ni-in- ġál]

99. (ETCSL): When he tried to wipe the corner of his eyes with his hand,
 100. (ETCSL): he got some of it out, but was not able to get all of it out.
 101. (ETCSL): He raised his eyes to the lower land and saw the exalted gods of the land where the sun rises.
 101. (Woods 2009): (Šukaletude) looked down(river [i.e., east] and saw the heavens of the land where the sun rises.
 102. (ETCSL): He raised his eyes to the highlands and saw the exalted gods of the land where the sun sets.
 102. (Woods 2009): He looked up(river [i.e., west]) and saw the heavens of that land where the sun sets.
 103. (ETCSL): He saw a solitary ghost. He recognised a solitary god by her appearance.
 104. (ETCSL): He saw someone who fully possesses the divine powers.
 105/106. (ETCSL): He was looking at someone whose destiny was decided by the gods

Standing in contrast to the above discussed occurrences, three texts constitute what I consider to be the best attestation for saġar kur-ra as a cosmological referent within the Sumerian corpus. Rather than utilizing kur for its association with the mountain, these occurrences reference kur for its association with the netherworld. These texts are regrettably small in number of course, although some observations are possible. That George did not comment on this group indicates to me that he did not see “crude ore” as a possible interpretation here.

In the Old Babylonian lamentation text which Jacobsen called the “lament for Lulil”²² but which has more recently been termed “Lulil and his sister,” we have perhaps the clearest instance of saġar kur-ra referring specifically to the netherworld. Lulil has been identified as the dying god Ašgi on the basis of his parents, who are given as Ninhursaġ and Šul-pa-e. When the instruction is given to “pour water into the libation pipe, pour it in the dust of the netherworld!” it is apparent that the netherworld at the time of this text is a subterranean domain. “Crude ore”

²² Jacobsen 1980, p. 22

probably not possible here, as these minerals did not occur in the ground underneath the Sumerian heartland.

Lines 82 and 83 from Text 5, “The Lamentation between Sumer and Ur”, are a challenge to discuss. Making use of Attinger’s online bibliography for the text, researchers may note that there have only been 3 complete and published editions, but none of the scholars involved have presented a philological commentary for the relevant lines. Of the partial treatments, few seem to make direct reference to the relevant lines. Most translations assume that saḥar kur-ra is in the locative case and interpret “dust passed over the Mountains.” However, I prefer Attinger’s reading of the text, which is consistent with saḥar kur-ra as a genitive construction; he translates “it was the dust of kur which passed” and his footnote indicates that this may in fact be *la poussière du monde infernal* - the dust of the netherworld.

Finally, there remains only text 6, Inanna and Šukaletuda. In order to comprehend this phenomenon, it would be helpful to know where Šukaletuda was located in mythological space. In the next lines, Šukaletuda sees or has a vision of the gods of the mountain of sunrise, and the gods of the mountain of sunset. This is a vision of the horizon as seen from the plains of the Sumerian heartland, and so the dust travels on the wind from the mountains to the heartland in order to strike Šukaletuda in the eye. While saḥar kur-ra is again in the genitive, and this is universally recognized by translators, the verb in line 98, the verb ra, is often translated contextually ‘to blow’; although notably, both Volk and Polonsky have translated the sentence more carefully, rendering “schlag” or “to strike” the eye.

The question which I have struggled with is: Accepting that Šukaletuda came into contact with the dust of the netherworld, a substance which blows into his eyes directly before he witnesses the divine, to include Inanna in some sort of gidim/ghost form, did the dust itself enable his vision? Was the fact that the substance itself was of the netherworld related to the fact that he, eventually, sees a ghost? To date, I have found only one commenter willing to put these sort of ideas into print: Janice Polonsky stated in her 2002 dissertation on the Rise of the Sun God that “The dust mote provides a glimpse into the realm of the gods for Šukaletuda.” Unfortunately, she provides no support for this statement and I have to admit that these suspicions have proven quite difficult to substantiate based on the textual evidence currently available.

To close this presentation, I present a final textual source which may serve to inspire the imagination, but which are most likely too late to directly impact one’s opinion of the Inanna and Šukaletuda myth:

A Necromantic Ritual (BM36703 col. ii - Finkel 1983/84 p. 8)

1. x [.....] x mi i[š x x x (x x)]
2. x [x x x (x)] x x x ga še SAḪAR qá-qá-r[i x x (x x)]
3. GIDIM e-ṭú-ti li-š[e-l]a-an-ni UZU.SA.UG₇ l[i-x-x]
4. gul-gul gul-gul-la-at a-ša-as-[si-ka/ki]
5. ša ŠA gul-gul-la-ta li-pu-^r la^r-[an-ni]
6. ^aUTU pe-tu-ú ik-le-t[i (EN2)]

.....

1. [.....] ... [.....]
 2. [.....] ... dust of the Underwor[ld]
 3. May he bring up a ghost from the darkness for me! May he [put life back (?)] into the dead man's limbs!
 4. I call [upon you], O skull of skulls:
 5. May he who is within the skull answer [me!]
 6. O Šamaš, who brings light in (lit. who opens) the darkne[ss! EN2)]
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