

The third occurrence of these events is exceptionally well documented. Even before Akhenaton's time we can see his father, Amunhotep III (c. 1400–1360 BCE), promoting Aton and constructing an irrigation basin for his own wife, Tiye, offspring of an important military family. When Akhenaton eventually moved north from Thebes (Luxor) to found his new capital of Akhetaton (Amarna), soldiers fairly overflowed the walls. How did he pay for it all? One courtier wrote, "Dues for just any god are measured in pecks, but for Aton one measures in overflowing bushels."

Akhenaton's artistic reform was part revival and part innovation with emphasis on "true" representationalism. As a child he had no doubt seen the naturalistic representations of seasonal activities preserved in the ancient open-air pyramid temples around Memphis (Saqqara), as well as the nightmarish representations of ritualistic activities hidden in the shadowy tunnel-like temples at Thebes. Combining the believable quality of the former with the fearsome quality of the latter, he was able to produce truly awe-inspiring compositions. The old concatenations of separate figures in ranks and files like characters in lines of text he replaced with vast panoramas of landscape and buildings teeming with wild animals and orderly humans. The old anthropomorphic figures of fantastic form and variety he reduced to two almost believable ones, substituting a new sun disk with finger-tipped rays for the old one with feather-edged wings, and his own "divinely" deformed body for that of the old fertility god Amun in his sexless form of Osiris just before the latter's transformation by the rising sun's rays into the ithyphallic Min. Akhenaton also represented his wife and children with himself, thus creating a tangible family triad in place of invisible family triads such as that of Amun, Mut, and Khonsu of Thebes.

Akhenaton's linguistic reform was the most radical ever undertaken in Egypt. He not only elevated the contemporary vernacular into a respectable literary language, thus demoting the former idiom to antiquarian status; he also coined new expressions for almost all the manifestations of Mother Nature, thus depriving the ancient gods of their names if not their very lives. Further, he had their names chiseled off all accessible monuments, including his father's, thus ritually killing those gods. Even the trigram for "gods" was removed lest any ancient triad might live on therein. The old solar triad of Khoprer (newly viewable rising sun), Re (dazzlingly unviewable noon sun), and Atum (gradually reviewable setting sun) was replaced first by "Re-Harakhty [who is on the horizon] rejoicing in the horizon in his name as Shu [intangible warm dry light] who is in Aton [exalted elder]" and later by "Re, the ruler of the horizon, rejoic-

ing in the horizon in his name of Re, the father who is in Aton." The change of his own name from *Amunhotep* ("Amun is satisfied") to *Akhenaton* ("glory belongs to Aton") was calculated to denigrate Amun since *hotep* suggested the setting sun, whereas *akh* suggested the rising sun.

Akhenaton's "crime" was primarily his failure to provide strong successors to himself. That in itself would not have been enough to condemn him, but following hard upon his persecution of the old gods it must have seemed like divine retribution. The new dynasty that arose can hardly be blamed for making political capital out of the affair. For once there was some truth in the traditional claim of every Egyptian ruler, and especially of a dynastic founder, that he had subdued chaos (plurality/millions) and restored order (unity/one).

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VIRGINIA LEE DAVIS

AKITU. The Akitu was a major festival of ancient Mesopotamia. The phrase "month of the Akitu festival" already occurs in the pre-Sargonic texts from Ur. During the Ur III period (2100–1900 BCE), there was an Akitu house on a canal outside the city, and a procession went to this house by chariot and by ship. Two Akitu festivals took place in Ur at this period, one in the first month (in the spring) and one in the sixth. The festival seems to have been at least partly agricultural, celebrating the sowing and the harvesting of grain.

Most of our information about the Akitu festival is based on our knowledge of the festival of Babylon, cel-

celebrated in the first millennium BCE. The former was held at this time in Nisan, the first month (although the city of Uruk had another Akitu, in Tishre), and lasted from the first till the twelfth of the month. The Babylonian festival had national importance: the king participated and the festival centered around Marduk, patron god of Babylon and head of the national pantheon of Babylonia. The historical chronicles even record the arrival of the king and the absence of the festival during the years in which it was not held.

What is known about the festival is fragmentary and obscure, but certain features can be determined. The first few days of Nisan were spent in ritual preparations. On the fourth day the king went to Borsippa to bring the god Nabu, considered the son of Marduk, who thereupon began his ritual procession to Babylon. Meanwhile, in Babylon, the epic *Enuma elish* was read before the statue of Marduk. On the fifth day of Nisan, the shrines of Marduk and Nabu were purified and the king arrived from Borsippa. He entered the temple in Babylon and was greeted by the priest, who abased him by divesting him of his royal insignia and slapping him across his face. The priest then led him into the shrine and had him kneel before the divine statue. The king assured the god that he had not been negligent of Babylon, the temple, or the citizenry, and he was then reinvested with his insignia.

On the sixth day of Nisan the other gods of Babylonia (represented by their cult statues) arrived to assemble in Babylon. On the eighth day the king "took Marduk by the hand" and led him out of his temple to the courtyard and then to the Shrine of Destinies, where he met the other gods and was proclaimed sovereign among them. The king then again "took Bel [Marduk] by the hand" and led him and the other gods in a grand procession along the street to the Euphrates. The gods boarded boats, went down the river for a short distance, disembarked, and proceeded to the Akitu house. The events that took place there are not clearly known. There was a banquet of the gods, which some scholars have termed a "cultic picnic." In addition, most scholars believe that the battle between Marduk and Tiamat (the primeval ocean; perhaps mytho-politically associated with the southern Sea Land) was reenacted in some way at the Akitu house, either as a ritual drama with human actors or by a symbolic setting up of the statue of Marduk. This hypothesis is supported by an obscure line in a commentary that at the Akitu, Marduk sits enthroned on Tiamat; further evidence is Sennacherib's report that when he rebuilt the Akitu building at Ashur (Assur), he decorated its doors with a scene of the god (in this case Ashur, patron god of Assyria) defeating Kingu, Tiamat's general. The most compelling proof of

a ritual commemoration of the battle is the relationship of the Akitu festival to the *Enuma elish* myth: the *Enuma elish* was read as part of the festive overture, and the two divine assemblies (on the eighth and eleventh days of Nisan) correspond to the two assemblies of the *Enuma elish*. On the eleventh day the gods returned to Babylon and held another solemn assembly in the "shrine of the destinies," at which time the destinies of the land were fixed and another banquet was held.

These features relate the Akitu celebration to the events recorded in the *Enuma elish* (that is, to the victory of Marduk over Tiamat) and to Marduk's enthronement as head of all the gods. The assemblage of the gods in Babylon indicates that the gods annually renewed their consent to be governed. The participation of the king, his abasement, and his reinvestiture indicate that royal power in Babylonia at this period was connected to the royal power of Marduk and that therefore both kingship and the organizational power of the universe were renewed and celebrated yearly at this Akitu festival.

However, the Akitu festival is much older than the *Enuma elish*, and the political elements of the festival may be an overlay upon more antique elements. The Babylonian festival included the celebration of a "sacred marriage" between Marduk and his spouse Sarpanitu, held either at the Akitu house or immediately after the return to Babylon. This sacred marriage drama, whether effected in the Akitu through the use of divine statues or through the actions of human participants, was an ancient practice in Mesopotamia. Other elements in the festival known from first-millennium Babylon—purificatory rituals, magico-symbolic rituals, and numerous sacrificial offerings—do not appear to be part of this great drama of Marduk. They are probably related to the ancient agricultural rites of the original Akitu festival, and to the calendrical celebration of the New Year that took place in Nisan. Neither the ancient Akitu nor the Babylonian Marduk festival seems to have included celebration of the death and resurrection of the god, however. Earlier reports that this was so were based on an erroneous reading of the *Tribulations of Marduk*, which relates the events of the Assyrian capture and the return of the statue of Marduk to the Akitu festival. This may indicate that the events at the Akitu house represented not only Marduk's victory but his near-defeat.

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AKIVA BEN JOSEPH. See 'Aqiva' ben Yosef.

AKKADIAN RELIGION. See Mesopotamian Religions.

AKKAH. The Saami (Lapp) woman had to observe taboos on *passé* ("holy") acts and places. She had to comply with restrictions that applied to the holy area in the *kota* (hut), to the holy places in the environment, and to the path on which the drum of the *noaidie* (shaman) was transported from one dwelling place to another. Women were excluded from some of the sacrificial ceremonies, and a man's hunting implements were thought to be unclean and of no use if a woman happened to step over them. But although she was looked on as ritually unclean and dangerous, the Saami woman was not without protection from supernatural powers; she was in the hands of mighty goddesses known as the Akkah.

According to one version of a creation myth found among the Saami of Scandinavia, a soul is created by Radien-Pardne, who has received his power from his father, Radien ("the ruler"). Radien-Pardne delivers the soul to Madder-Aiia, the ur-father, who takes it into his belly, journeys around the sun, and then hands it over

to Madder-Akka, the ur-mother. She creates a body for the soul and gives the fetus to one of her daughters. If it is given to her first daughter, Sarakka, the fetus will be made into a female; if Juksakka, the second daughter, receives it, it will be male. After it is assigned a sex, the body is turned over to the mortal woman who will bear it. It is said that Madder-Akka and one of her daughters are at the woman's side during the birth so they can help her. When the child begins to walk, it is protected by Ugsakka, the third daughter of Madder-Akka. She also guards the entrance so that no malevolent spirits may enter the room.

The goddesses dwell in the *kota*. Madder-Akka is said to live under the floor of the *kota*, Sarakka in the neighborhood of the hearth, and Juksakka and Ugsakka near the entrance. The cult of the four female deities, with the exception of that of Sarakka, was practiced only by women. Sarakka, the most loved of the goddesses, was referred to as the protector of the home in general, and as such she shares many traits with Mother Fire, an important figure in northern Eurasian mythology. Like Sarakka, Mother Fire received daily offerings of food and drink at the hearth, assisted at births, was the giver of the female sex, and protected not only women but also men.

It is said that people offered drinks to Sarakka before they attended Christian services, asking her to help them conceal their "heathenism." Before Holy Communion, which they were forced to receive, people drank to Sarakka's health and asked for her forgiveness. Furthermore, it was probably Sarakka, alone or merged with Madder-Akka, who was worshiped in the cult of the Virgin Mary, which became widespread in later centuries. The goddesses also gave fertility to animals and in turn received sacrificial offerings: food, drink, and animals.

Akka means "old woman" and also, in some dialects, "wife." *Madder* signifies "origin, root, earth," and in present-day Saami usage *madder-akka* means "female ancestor" or "great-grandmother." The *sar* in *Sarakka* is probably derived from the verb *saaret* ("to separate, to split, to divide"); the goddess separates the child from the mother's uterus. *Jukse* is translated as "bow," and *ukse* means "door" or "entrance."

The people of Kola believed in a goddess called Sjan-taik ("birth mother") who, like the four deities in western Lapland, was concerned with the needs of women and the fertility of both men and animals. The Saami in Finland had a deity named Madder-Akku, similar in name to the Scandinavian Saami's Madder-Akka but different in function. Madder-Akku was the goddess for the blind and deaf and for those who lost their way in the wilderness. The *madder* in her name indicates her connection with the origin of man and with the earth.

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