

It is understandable that numinous experience in situations connected with basic life-sustaining activities would assume special significance and call for special allegiance. Thus the earliest form of Mesopotamian religion was worship of powers of fertility and yield, of the powers in nature ensuring human survival.

To try to visualize what such a fertility cult would have been like we must turn, as has been mentioned, to materials bearing on specific myths and rituals which on external and internal evidence can be assumed to hark back to early times. Those bearing on the cult of the dying god Dumuzi recommend themselves. The great age of this cult is attested by the Uruk Vase of the outgoing fourth millennium B.C., which depicts the central event of the rite of the sacred marriage. Its reliefs show the bride, Inanna, meeting her groom, Dumuzi, at the gate to admit him and his servants who carry the bridal gifts, an endless abundance of edibles of all kinds. In addition to this evidence, the Dumuzi cult shows itself as early through its old-fashioned "intransitive" conception of the god. He is little more than the élan vital of new life in nature, vegetable and animal, a will and power in it that brings it about. Lastly, the Dumuzi cult is well documented in Sumerian literature so that a remarkably detailed and rounded picture can be drawn of the cult as it survived. For reasons of simplicity we shall present these materials as if they were a connected whole, beginning with the young god's courtship and wedding, moving on to his early death and the lament for him, and ending with the search for him leading to the netherworld. In actual fact this full pattern is not to be found in any single cult; rather the figure of the god tends on closer view to divide into different aspects, each with the power in a particular basic economy emphasized and each with its own characteristic segment of ritual events. We can distinguish the form of Dumuzi called Dumuzi-Amaushumgalanna, who appears to be the power in the date palm to produce new fruit. The name Amaushumgalanna means "the one great source of the date clusters" (a m a - u š u m . g a l - a n a (. a k)) and refers to the so-called heart of palm, the enormous bud which the palm tree sets each year. This is the lightest and happiest of all the forms of the god. The cult celebrates his sacred marriage only, not his loss in death — presumably because the date is easily storable and endures. His worship among the shepherds and cowherds has greater range. The shepherds know him as Dumuzi the Shepherd and he is considered son of Duttur, the personified ewe, while among the cowherds he is son of Ninsûna, the "Lady of the wild cows." The cult comprises both happy celebrations of the marriage of the god with Inanna (who originally, it seems, was the goddess of the communal storehouse) and bitter laments when he dies as the dry heat of summer yellows the pastures and lambing, calving, and milking come to an end. A few texts suggest the existence of still another

form of the god which one might call "Dumuzi of the Grain," a form which sees the god as the power in the barley, particularly in the beer brewed from it, and which clearly belongs with the farmers. Lastly, there is the cult in which the god is worshiped under the name Damu, "the child." This form, which may originally have been independent of the Dumuzi cult, still preserves a good many distinctive traits. Damu, who seems to represent the power in the rising sap, appears to have had his original home among orchard growers on the lower Euphrates. He was visualized, not as a young man of marriageable age, but as a small child; where the figures around the other forms of Dumuzi are his bride, his mother, and his sister, only the latter two appear in the Damu cult. Also the rite of search for the dead god, which takes the mother and sister into the shadows of the netherworld, is special to this cult.

Courtship

Considering first the texts dealing with Dumuzi's courtship and wooing of young Inanna, we note at the outset that all of them appear to be purely literary in nature, not connected with any rituals, serving only the purpose, as far as one can see, of entertainment. They are lightweight stuff, popular ditties such as would be sung by women to while away the time at spinning or weaving, or perhaps as songs to dance to.

A first example, only partly preserved, might be called "The Sister's Message," for in it Dumuzi's sister, Geshtinanna, has exciting news to tell. She has just been with young Inanna (here as elsewhere called Baba), who confided to her as one girl to another how smitten she was with love for Dumuzi and how she now suffers all of love's pangs. Geshtinanna, with a teenager's sense for the dramatic, duly relates it all to her brother:²³

As I was strolling, as I was strolling,

as I was strolling by the house

my (dear) Inanna saw me.

O (my) brother, what did she tell me,

and what more did she say to me?

O (my) brother, (of) love, allure,

and sweetest of sweet things,

my (dear) adorable Inanna on her part

disclosed things to me!

When I was addressing myself to some errand

she came across (you) my beloved man,

and took to you and delighted in you

(at) first (glance).

O (my) brother, she brought me into her house

and had me lie down in the honey(-sweet softness)

of the bed;

and when my sweet darling had lain down
 next to my heart,
 (we) chatting, one after the other,
 one after the other,
 she, O my good-looking brother,
 wore herself out moaning to me,
 and I was fetching (things) for her the while,
 as for someone (very) weak,
 and a disposition to tremble, from the ground up —
 exceedingly much — befell her.
 O my brother, smiting her hips (in anguish)
 does my sweet darling pas the day.

Dumuzi is not slow to take the hint, but not wanting to be too obvious he pretends he has to go to the palace:

“Let me go! O my sister, let me go!
 Please my beloved sister, let me go
 to the palace!”

Geshtinanna is not taken in, she can guess where he is headed, and waggishly imitating a pompous father she answers:

“To my paternal eye you are verily (still)
 a small child;
 yonder, Baba may know (you for) a man,
 I shall let you go to her!”

and he is off.

Another song,²⁴ which could be called “The Wiles of Women,” assumes, we take it, that Dumuzi and Inanna have met and fallen in love the evening before. The day of the song the lovers have been separated — Dumuzi most likely has been working — and Inanna has whiled away the long hours with play and dancing, longing for the evening when Dumuzi is free, and hoping he will show up. He does so as she is on her way home:

I, a damsel, having whiled away the time
 since yesterday,
 I, Inanna, having whiled away the time
 since yesterday,
 having whiled away the time, having danced,
 having sung ditties all day to evening,
 he met me! He met me!
 The lord, the peer of An met me.
 The lord took my hand in his.
 Ushumgalanna put his arm around my shoulders.
 Where (are you taking me)? Wild bull,
 let me go, that I may go home!

Peer of Enlil, let me go, that I may go home!
 What fib could I tell my mother?
 What fib could I tell Ningal?

Dumuzi, impetuously, thinks of nothing but lovemaking and takes her compliance for granted. Inanna thinks of marriage, and balks. She would love to go with him, she implies, but there is her mother: how could she ever get away with staying out late? Dumuzi, unaware of what goes on in her mind, takes the excuse at face value and shows how young he is by offering himself as an expert on stories girls tell to explain why they are late — Inanna must have smiled:

Let me teach you, let me teach you,
 Inanna, let me teach you the fibs women (tell):
 “My girlfriend, she was strolling with me
 in the square,
 to the playing of tambourine and recorder
 she danced with me,
 our sad songs were sweet — she crooned to me —
 the joyous ones were sweet — and time went by!”
 With this as (your) fib confront your mother;
 (as for) us — O that we might disport ourselves
 in the moonlight!
 Let me spread for you the clean and sweet
 couch of a prince,
 Let me pass sweet time with you in joy
 and plenty.

How Inanna both fends off this proposition and induces her swain to propose is unfortunately lost in a small lacuna. That she successfully did so is clear from the text when it resumes, for it shows that Dumuzi is now following her home to her mother to formally ask for her hand. Inanna already speaks for “our” mother and is so excited she can hardly keep from running. Her only worry is whether the house will be presentable enough for the occasion; she wishes she could send a messenger ahead to warn her mother:

He has decided to stop at the gate of our mother,
 I am fairly running for (sheer) joy!
 He has decided to stop at the gate of Ningal,
 I am fairly running for (sheer) joy!
 O that someone would tell my mother,
 and she sprinkle cedar perfume on the floor;
 O that someone would tell my mother, Ningal,
 and she sprinkle cedar perfume on the floor!
 Her dwelling, its fragrance is sweet,
 her words are all joyful ones.

Inanna is certain that her choice will be approved and that her mother will be delighted to accept Dumuzi as her son-in-law. He is of noble family, rich, and a good provider; and so she enjoys in anticipation what she imagines will be her mother's welcome to Dumuzi, hailing him as Suen's — and her own — son-in-law and delighting in his worthiness to be Inanna's husband:

My lord, you are indeed worthy of the pure embrace,
 Amaushumgalanna, son-in-law of Suen.
 Lord Dumuzi, you are indeed worthy of the pure embrace,
 Amaushumgalanna, son-in-law of Suen!
 My lord, your riches are sweet,
 your herbs in the desert are all of them sweet,
 Amaushumgalanna, your riches are sweet,
 your herbs in the desert are all of them sweet.

Inanna loves, as will be seen, wisely, rather than too well. Her joy is in finding security with a good provider no less than delight in a beautiful youth. And Dumuzi, the very embodiment of fertility and yield, is the provider par excellence.

While Inanna in this song chose her husband herself, in other songs she is more conventional and leaves the choice, as custom dictates, to her older brother, the sun god Utu. The question whether he has chosen well causes some anxiety in both brother and sister, and their mutual nervousness when he is to tell her forms the theme of a third ditty which might be termed "The Bridal Sheets of Inanna."²⁵

When the song begins Utu has already made binding arrangements for Inanna to marry Dumuzi and all that remains is for him to tell her. Intending to lead up to his news gently and diplomatically Utu begins by suggesting that new linens may be needed, but without letting on that it will be for Inanna's bridal bed and her new home.

The brother decided to tell his younger sister,
 the sun god, Utu, decided to tell his younger sister:
 "Young lady, the flax is full of loveliness,
 Inanna, the flax is full of loveliness,
 (like) barley in the furrow
 full of loveliness and attraction.
 Sister, a piece of linen large or small is lovely.
 Inanna, a piece of linen large or small is lovely,
 let me bundle for you and give it to you,
 young lady, let me bring you flax!
 Inanna, let me bring you flax!"

This roundabout way of broaching things does not, of course, deceive Inanna for a moment, if anything it puts her on guard. She senses that her bridegroom has been chosen, but who is he? The right one, or somebody

else? She is afraid of the answer and tries to push the whole thing away; she is young, delicate, refined, knows nothing of menial, domestic tasks:

Brother, when you have brought me the flax,
 who will ret (?) for me, who will ret for me,
 who will ret its fibers for me?

But Utu is not to be discouraged, he is set on getting her the linen:

My sister, already retted let me bring it to you,
 Inanna, already retted let me bring it to you.

And Inanna fends off the gift once more:

Brother, when you have brought it to me
 already retted,
 who will spin for me, who will spin for me,
 who will spin its fibers for me?

Once again Utu is all helpfulness, he will bring the flax already spun, and again Inanna tries to have nothing to do with this linen business and to push it away from her: if Utu brings the flax already spun, who then will double up the thread for her? And so it goes: who will dye the doubled up threads, who will weave them, who will bleach²⁶ the finished piece? But when Utu in his terrifying helpfulness offers to bring the linen sheet already bleached, Inanna is at her wit's end, she can think of no more to be done to it, no more evasions, and so she takes the plunge: "Who is it?"

"Brother, when you have brought it to me
 already bleached,
 who will lie down thereon with me? Who will
 lie down thereon with me?"
 "With you will lie down, will lie down,
 with you will lie down a bridegroom,
 with you will lie down Amaushumgalanna,
 with you will lie down the peer of Enlil,
 with you will lie down
 the issue of a noble womb,
 with you will lie down
 one engendered on a throne-dais!"

So at last the tension is broken, and broken by joyous certainty. Utu chose the right one:

It is true! He is the man of my heart,
 he is the man of my heart,
 the man my heart told me!
 Working the hoe, heaping up piles of grain,
 bringing the grain into the barn,
 the farmer whose grain is of hundreds of piles
 the shepherd whose sheep are laden with wool.

As in the preceding ditty, Inanna's "Mr. Right" is, above all, the good provider, the embodiment of fertility and yield. Which kind of yield is no longer important: in the previous ditty he was a shepherd with rich grazing grounds in the desert, here he is both a farmer and a shepherd. Inanna herself is more complex: rich, noble, rather spoiled, too precious for ordinary household tasks, occupying her day with play and dancing only, ready to fall in love — but with someone who can maintain her as she wishes to be maintained.

From the courting texts it is only a short step to the texts that deal with Dumuzi and Inanna's wedding; but while the courting texts were all popular ditties, the wedding texts comprise compositions which must be considered belletristic and compositions which are ritual in nature and closely relate to communal worship.

Wedding

It will be convenient to begin with an almost novelistic tale from *Nippur*²⁷ which throws a good deal of light on Sumerian wedding ceremonies generally. The story — which we shall call simply "Dumuzi's Wedding" — opens with a list of Inanna's four "bridal attendants," that is, the bridegroom and his three best men. They are the shepherd, the farmer, the fowler, and the fisherman. The shepherd, Dumuzi, who heads the list, is the prospective bridegroom. Inanna, when all is ready for the wedding, sends messengers to these four bidding them to come to honor her with their gifts, and so the shepherd loads himself with fresh cream and milk, the farmer brings the sweet new grain from the furrow, the fowler brings choice birds, and the fisherman offers carps, which at this time of year, the spring, swim up into the rivers in flood.

After arriving at Inanna's parents' house, Dumuzi calls out, asking Inanna to open the door to him — but Inanna is in no hurry, she has lots of things to do yet. First, she goes as a dutiful daughter to her mother to be instructed in how she is to conduct herself with her new family-in-law and is told that her father-in-law must be obeyed as if he were her own father, and her mother-in-law as if she were her own mother.

Dumuzi, out in the street, is still calling for her to let him in, but Inanna cannot yet be bothered. Her mother has told her to have a bath and the girl douses herself with water and scrubs herself thoroughly with soap, then she puts on her best garment, takes her mascot-bead, straightens the lapis lazuli beads on her neck, and takes her cylinder seal in the hand — at long last she is ready to receive Dumuzi:

The young lady stood waiting,
Dumuzi pushed (open) the door,

and like a moonbeam she came forth to him
out of the house,
he looked at her, rejoiced in her,
took her in his arms and kissed her.

A lacuna at this place leaves us uncertain about what happened next. Conceivably the text told about the consummation of the marriage, a wedding feast, and the newlyweds stay of some days in Inanna's parents' house. When the text resumes (in column three) Dumuzi and Inanna are apparently on the way to his parental home. They stop to visit the temple of Dumuzi's personal god and Inanna is asked to lie down to sleep before the god (perhaps to obtain a dream message), but the text is not well preserved and the meaning is not clear.

After another lacuna column four describes how all of these new and strange events have frightened Inanna: is there, perhaps, even an expectation that she will be of some use in the house, will she have to work? Dumuzi has his hands full trying to pacify and cheer her: she will have an honored position in the household and will have to do no weaving, no spinning, no exertion whatever. She is to continue being the refined, protected, little rich girl we know so well already:

The shepherd put his arm around the young lady:
"I have not carried you off into slavery!
Your table will be the splendid table,
the splendid table,
at the splendid table I eat.
Your table will be the splendid table,
the splendid table,
you will eat at the splendid table.
My mother eats at the beer vat,
Duttur's brother eats not at it,
my sister Geshtinanna eats not at it,
(but) you will dip in (your) hand
at the splendid table!
O my bride, cloth you shall not weave for me!
O Inanna, threads you shall not spin for me!
[O my bride,] fleece you shall not ravel for me!
[O Inanna,] warp you shall not mount for me!

And so begins — Inanna clearly having the advantage — their short life together according to this humorous and harmless little tale.

Rather different in both style and tenor are those wedding texts that have a specific ritual background or setting. As a first example we may choose a text that seems to come originally from Uruk and that clearly deals with the wedding of Dumuzi-Amaushumgalanna and Inanna as it was celebrated in that city. It describes the various cult acts in a sort of

running commentary as if related by a favorably placed onlooker and we may call it, for convenience, the “Uruk Text.”²⁸ Conceivably, the composition, by reporting the cult acts in songs, helped to enhance a sense of participation in the assembled worshipers on the outskirts of the crowd and enabled them to follow what was going on.

The commentator first — after two obscure lines — reports that a date-gatherer is to climb a date palm for Inanna, and he expresses the hope that the date-gatherer will bring fresh dates down for her. This the date-gatherer does, piling his clusters in a heap which the commentator names “the gem-revealing heap.” It appears this is an apt name, for the date-gatherer and Inanna proceed to collect lapis lazuli from its surface:

A date-gatherer is to climb(?) the date palm,
a date-gatherer is to climb(?) the date palm
for holy Inanna.

May he take fresh ones to her! May he take
fresh ones to her, dark early-ripening ones,
may he take fresh ones to Inanna besides,
light-colored early-ripening ones.

The man has decided to take them,
the man has decided to take them,
has decided to take them
to the gem-revealing heap;
the man has decided to take them,

O maiden Inanna, the man has decided to take them
to the gem-revealing heap.

On the surface of the heap he is gathering
lapis lazuli,
on the surface of the heap he is gathering
lapis lazuli for Inanna.

He is finding the “buttock beads,”
is putting them on her buttocks!
Inanna is finding the “head beads,”
is putting them on her head!

She is finding the roughcut clear blocks of lapis lazuli,
is putting them around her neck!

She is finding the narrow gold braid(?),
is putting it in her hair! . . .

The gems and ornaments collected are catalogued and reported one by one by the commentator. They form a complete array of queenly treasures, comprising, in addition to what has been mentioned, two sets of earrings (one of gold, one crescent-shaped of bronze), eye ornaments, nose ornaments, ornaments for her navel, a hip flask, ornaments of alabaster for her thighs, ornaments covering her vulva, and, finally, shoes for

her feet. It seems obvious that these various cult acts taken together represent the ceremonial dressing of Inanna before she goes to open the door to her bridegroom. We already know of this dressing of Inanna after her bath and before she opens the door to Dumuzi from the tale of “Dumuzi’s Wedding.” The rather puzzling additional features found in the Uruk Text, such as the curious origin of the finery — all of it being “found” on the mysterious “gem-revealing heap” — we shall leave unexplained for the moment.

The ceremony of dressing Inanna precedes her opening the door — the central ceremony in a Sumerian wedding, which concluded the marriage and immediately preceded its consummation — and so we find our commentator reporting in his next song her meeting with her bridegroom at the door:

The lord has met her of the lapis lazuli (gems)
gathered on the heap!
Dumuzi has met Inanna, her of the lapis lazuli (gems)
gathered on the heap!
The shepherd of An, the groom of Enlil
has met her!

In Eanna the herdsman of An, Dumuzi,
has met her,
at the lapis lazuli (ornamented) door
that stands in the Giparu,
the lord has met her!
at the narrow door
that stands in the storehouse of Eanna,
Dumuzi has met her!

Him, whom she will lead back
to the surface of the heap,
him, whom Inanna will lead back
to the surface of the heap,
(him) may she, caressing and amid her croonings,
take(?) into (?) its clay plaster (covering).

The maiden amid cries of joy
has sent someone to her father!
Inanna, moving as in a dance (for joy),
has sent someone to her father, (saying):

O that they rush into my house,
(into) my house for me!
O that they rush into my house, (into) my house,
for me whom am the mistress,
O that they rush into my house, the Giparu for me!
(And) when they have set up my pure bed for him,

O that they spread thereon
 my lustrous lapis lazuli (hued) straw for me.
 O that they have the man of my heart
 come in to me,
 O that they have my Amaushumgalanna
 come in to me,
 O that they put his hand in my hand for me,
 O that they put his heart next to my heart for me.
 Not only is it sweet to sleep hand in hand with him,
 sweetest of sweet is too the loveliness
 of joining heart to heart with him.

The meeting at the door is acceptance. Messengers are sent to have the house readied, the bridal bed set up, and the groom led in to the bride. The opening of the door, the conclusion of the marriage, is followed immediately by preparations for its consummation.

The sequence of the nuptial drama is thus clear, but a great deal of the meaning of the text remains dark and unexplained. What, for example, is the odd “gem-revealing heap”? Why do Inanna’s ornaments come from it? And why is Dumuzi-Amaushumgalanna to be taken back to it? To understand this we must understand what the powers stand for, and here it would seem that the bride, Inanna (earlier Ninanna(k), “Lady of the date clusters”) represents the numen of the communal storehouse for dates, that “storehouse of Eanna” which she opens for Dumuzi in the text. Her emblem — that is to say, her preanthropomorphic form — confirms this, for it is, as Andrae has shown, a gatepost with rolled up mat to serve as a door, a distinguishing mark of the storehouse.

Correspondingly, the bridegroom, Amaushumgalanna, represents what is to be stored in the storehouse. As indicated by his name, which means “the one great source of the date clusters,” he is the personified power in the one enormous bud which the date palm sprouts each year, and from which issue the new leaves, flowers, and fruits. Dumuzi-Amaushumgalanna is thus a personification of the power behind the yearly burgeoning of the palm and its producing its yield of dates; he is, in fact, the power in and behind the date harvest.

That these two powers are wed means that the power for fertility and yield has been captured by the numen of the storehouse — and so by the community — and has become its trusty provider for all time. Amaushumgalanna is safely in the storehouse, and the community revels in abundant food and drink, release from anxiety and fear of starvation, blissfully secure from want. Inanna expresses the communal feeling precisely: not love or the raptures of passion mark her wedding night, but a gently glowing sense of inner and outer bliss in trust and security:

Not only is it sweet to sleep hand in hand with him,
 Sweetest of sweet is too the loveliness
 of joining heart to heart with him.

Seeing Inanna as the numen in the date storehouse and Dumuzi-Amaushumgalanna as the power in and behind the date harvest gives us a background against which the underlying ritual of the Uruk Text becomes more understandable. That a heap of fresh dates should furnish the ornaments for Inanna is logical since freshly harvested dates are the pride and adornment of the bare shelves of a storehouse for dates. In the text, however, the relationship between harvest and storehouse has been overlaid with anthropomorphic imagery. The date clusters that are to adorn the shelves of the storehouse become ritually experienced as traditional feminine adornments and jewelry such as would be suitable for decking out a human bride, and the heap from which they are taken comes close to becoming a jewel shrine of sorts. Its original nature reasserts itself, however, later in the text when we hear that Dumuzi-Amaushumgalanna is to be taken to that heap, under its clay plaster covering, as soon as he has entered her house, the “storehouse of Eanna.”

A wedding text somewhat similar in mood to the Uruk Text forms a part of a long hymn to Inanna which, for the sake of convenience, we may term the “Iddin-Dagan Text”²⁹ since that king figures in it as ritual embodiment of Dumuzi. The exact location of the rite is unfortunately not clear, even though the text seems quite specific, but the most likely place is probably the royal palace in Isin. In the ritual sequence it takes up the thread where the Uruk Text leaves off, that is to say, with the setting up of the bridal couch after Dumuzi (embodied in the king) has been admitted by Inanna — here called by her epithet, Ninegalla, “The queen of the palace.” The section begins:

In the palace, the house that administers the nation
 and is a (restraining) yoke
 on all (foreign) lands,
 the house (called) “The River-ordeal,”
 (therein) has the dark-headed people,
 the nation in its entirety,
 founded a dais for Ninegalla.
 The king, being a god, will sojourn with her on it.
 That she take care of the life of all lands,
 that on the day for her to lift the head
 and take a good look (at the bridegroom),
 on the day of going to bed together,
 the rites be performed to perfection,

has it (i.e., the nation) at New Year,
the day of the ritual,
set up a bed for milady.

Halfa-straw they have been purifying with cedar perfume,
have been putting it on that bed for milady,
over it a bedspread has been pulled straight for her,
a bedspread of heart's delight to make the bed
comfortable.

Then, when all is ready, Inanna prepares herself for the night:

Milady bathes in water the holy loins,
for the loins of the king she bathes them in water,
for the loins of Iddin-Dagan she bathes them in water.
Holy Inanna rubs (herself) with soap,
sprinkles the floor with cedar perfume.

Next Amaushumgalanna enters the chamber:

The king goes with lifted head to the holy loins,
goes with lifted head to the loins of Inanna,
Amaushumgalanna goes to bed with her,
has truly to praise the woman in her holy loins:
"O my one of holy loins! O my holy Inanna!"
After he on the bed, in the holy loins
has made the queen rejoice,
after he on the bed, in the holy loins,
has made holy Inanna rejoice,
she in return soothes the heart for him
there on the bed:
"Verily, I will be a constant prolonger of Iddin-Dagan's
days (of life)."

At this loving promise the text leaves the divine couple alone, resuming its tale when on the next morning the bridegroom enters his palace to prepare the wedding feast, his arm fondly around the shoulders of his young bride. The divine couple then take their place on the royal dais, a lavish feast is set before them, the musicians and their soloist intone a song of joy, and the king gives the signal to begin eating:

The king has reached out for food and drink,
Amaushumgalanna has reached out for food
and drink,
The palace in in festive mood, the king is joyous,
the nation is passing the day amidst plenty;
Amaushumgalanna is come in joy,
long may he remain on the pure throne!

Particularly notable in this text is its formulaic statement of the purpose of the rite of the sacred marriage. The bridal couch is set up for the celebration of the sacred marriage between harvest and storehouse in the hope that the bride, having her first close look at the bridegroom, will become enamored of him so that the hymeneal rites of the bridal couch will come off satisfactorily. For the success of their union means that Inanna, the storehouse, can "take care of the life of all lands."

Full emphasis on the security from want that the sacred marriage ensures, the security that is implicit in the successful harvest, meets us in the description of the lavishness of the wedding banquet:

Abundance, deliciousness, plenty is brought
straight to him,
a feast of sweets is set up for him.

A notable point in this text, and fully as important as the formulaic statement of ritual purpose it gives, is the clarity with which it shows that the divine bridegroom was represented in the rite by the human king — in this case by Iddin-Dagan of Isin — in such a way as to imply complete identity of the two: "The king, being a god," says the text, and also,

The king goes with lifted head to the holy loins,
goes with lifted head to the loins of Inanna,
Amaushumgalanna goes to bed with her.

And Inanna can turn to her divine spouse and use his human name:

"Verily I will be a constant prolonger of Iddin-
Dagan's days (of life)!"

Iddin-Dagan and Dumuzi-Amaushumgalanna are one.

As the human king could take on the identity of the god of fertility and yield, so the queen or perhaps a high priestess would probably have assumed in the ritual the identity of Inanna, embodying the numen of the storehouse.

This ability of humans to incarnate gods and powers is momentous, implying that they can act as these powers and so commit them; in the rite of the sacred marriage the commitment is one of the love and bonds of marriage: to have and to hold forever the power that provides and maintains; Dumuzi.

A curious — and apparently fairly new — feature of the Iddin-Dagan Text should be mentioned: subtle shift in emphasis from Dumuzi to Inanna as the source of the sought-for blessing. This shift may be connected with the growing political and religious importance of Inanna in historical times, which would tend to make her significantly overshadow Dumuzi; but it is also possible that the king who embodied him would

increasingly be felt as the representative of the human community par excellence and therefore the one to seek, rather than to dispense, abundance and plenty.

Very close to the Iddin-Dagan Text in general tenor, and with even more pronounced shift to Inanna as the source of the blessings of general fertility and yield, is another wedding text that we may suitably call "The Blessing of the Bridegroom."³⁰ It begins — the first line is unfortunately damaged — with a rapt description of the beauty of the temple Ezida, in which the sacred marriage is to be consummated:

The . . . of (the temple) E-temen-ni-guru,
the good management of the Temple of Eridu,
the cleanness of the Temple of Suen,
and the (firmly) planted (protective) gateposts
of Eanna,
were verily (all) given as gifts
into the hands of the house.
My (dear) Ezida ("the good house") floats like a cloud
(high up on its terrace)

The narrator then turns to the preparations for the night, the readying of the bridal suite by a trusty servant, who reports to Inanna:

The pure (bridal) bed, a very semblance of lapis lazuli,
which Gibil (the firegod) was purifying for you
in the Irigal (temple),
has the caretaker — greatly fit for (ministering to) queenship —
filled with his halfa straw for you;
In the house that he has cleaned for you with his reed cuttings,
he is setting up the laver for you!

All is thus in readiness and the time to retire is drawing near;

The day is (the one) named, the day is (the one) appointed,
The day (for the bride) to view (the bridegroom)
on the (bridal) bed,
that day for the king to arouse (desire in) a
woman.
O grant life to the king!
Grant to the king (to wield) all shepherds' crooks!

The narrator's reminder seems to have the desired effect. The bride, Inanna, indicates her wish to go to bed.

She has called for it! She has called for it!
She has called for the bed!
She has called for the bed of heart's delight!
She has called for the bed!

She has called for the bed for sweetening the loins,
she has called for the bed!
She has called for the royal bed!
She has called for the bed!
She has called for the queenly bed!
She has called for the bed!

As the conscientious wife she intends to become, Inanna puts the final touches to the bed herself:

In her making it comfortable, making it comfortable,
making the bed comfortable,
making the bed of heart's delight comfortable,
making the bed comfortable,
making the bed for sweetening the loins comfortable,
making the bed comfortable,
in her making the royal bed comfortable,
making the bed comfortable,
making the queenly bed comfortable,
making the bed comfortable,
she spreads the bedding out (evenly) for the king,
spreads the bedding out (evenly) for him,
she spreads the bedding out (evenly) for the beloved one,
spreads the bedding out (evenly) for him;
to the couch made comfortable by her
she calls the king,
to the couch made comfortable by her
she calls the beloved one.

In answer to the summons her handmaiden, Ninshubur, who has been awaiting the call, goes to fetch the royal bridegroom (looking his best with his wig on) and leads him in to the bride. As she brings him in she indulges, as trusted servants will, in a veritable flood of well-meant, loquacious good wishes which flows on and on — actually she is reeling off a long, standard formula which would seem to belong originally to the Damu cult:

Ninshubur, the good handmaiden of Eanna,
stays awake at her goodly duties,
she leads him bewigged in
to the loins of Inanna:

"May the lord, the choice of your heart,
may the king, your beloved bridegroom,
pass long days in your sweet thing, the pure loins!
Grant him a pleasant reign to come!

Grant him a royal throne, firm in its foundations;
 grant him a sceptre righting (wrongs in) the land,
 all shepherds' crooks;
 grant him the good crown, the turban that
 makes a head distinguished.

From sunrise to sunset
 from south to north
 from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea,
 from (where grows) the *huluppu*-tree, from
 (where grows) the cedar-tree,
 and in Sumer and Akkad,
 grant him all shepherds' crooks,
 and may he perform the shepherdship
 over their dark-headed people.

May he like a farmer till the fields,
 may he like a good shepherd make the folds teem,
 may there be vines under him,
 may there be barley under him,
 may there be carp-floods in the river under him,³¹
 may there be mottled barley in the fields under him,
 may fishes and birds sound off in the marshes under him.

May old and new reeds grow in the canebrake
 under him,
 may shrubs grow in the high desert under him,
 may deer multiply in the forests under him,
 may (well) watered gardens bear honey and wine
 under him,
 may lettuce and cress grow in the vegetable plots
 under him,
 may there be long life in the palace under him.

May the high flood rise (?)
 in the Tigris and Euphrates under him,
 may grass grow on their banks,
 may vegetables fill the commons,
 may the holy lady (of the grains), Nidaba,
 gather grainpiles there!
 O milady, queen of heaven and earth,
 queen of all heaven and earth,
 may he live long in your embrace!

After this long speech follows the stereotypical formula for reporting the union of the divine couple:

The king goes with lifted head to the holy loins,
 goes with lifted head to the loins of Inanna,

the king going with lifted head,
 going with lifted head to milady

 puts his arms around the holy one . . .

and with that the text breaks off.

Curious in this version, as we have mentioned, is the odd reversal of roles between Inanna and Dumuzi-Amaushumgalanna, but also noteworthy is the scope of the blessings expected. They range from the yields of farmers and shepherds to the take of fishermen and fowlers, from the wildlife in woods and marshes to the produce of vineyards and gardens. This contrasts strikingly with the first cultic wedding text we dealt with, the Uruk Text. There the god, Dumuzi-Amaushumgalanna (consonantly with his name), was the power in the fertility and yield of the date palm only, and the underlying ritual was a date harvest ritual and nothing else. This concentration on a single major economy is, we should judge, an original feature, but as the cities drew a variety of economies into their orbit — Uruk, for instance, seems to have united several settlements of date growers, oxherders, and shepherds — the purview of the cult broadened so as to make its god stand for a general fertility and yield. Such a broadening is already suggested on the Uruk Vase of the outgoing fourth millennium where the bridal gifts brought by the god include not only dates but ears of grain and sheep heavy with wool. In the marriage story where Dumuzi is a shepherd, the broadening is deftly handled by having the farmer, the fisherman, and the fowler act as wedding attendants, bringing gifts of their produce to supplement what the shepherd provides. In other texts, such as “The Bridal Sheets of Inanna,” Dumuzi has to figure — a little awkwardly — as both shepherd and farmer in Inanna’s eulogy of him.

The broadening of purview — more and more pervaded by a sense that all the fertility powers were but one divine figure, Dumuzi — does not curiously enough affect the materials we possess so as to obliterate or blur the originally distinct economic settings. It is, rather, an inconsequential and external addition to forms already crystallized or an accretion from elsewhere as rituals lose their original meaning and become vague and generalized.

How incisively a particular economic setting may determine the meaning of a rite may be illustrated by a last ritual wedding text³² which one could call the “Herder Wedding Text” since it presents the rite of the sacred marriage as it took form in a herding environment. It differs in basic aspects from the wedding texts we have considered, texts which on the whole may be classed as Amaushumgalanna or date harvest texts.

The “Herder Wedding Text” does not use the name Amaushum-

galanna, but calls the god by his herder names, Dumuzi or “Wild Bull Dumuzi.” “Wild Bull” was a Sumerian metaphor for “shepherd” — originally, probably for “cowherd.” The beginning lines are unfortunately badly damaged, but as the text gradually becomes better preserved it would appear that we are following Inanna as she is being escorted to the bridal chamber by attendants and girlfriends who exchange erotic pleasantries with her and not too subtle double entendres inspired by the occasion. Attempting a restoration of the lacunas one may perhaps render the first lines as follows:

(Inanna:)

“The words of my mouth are all pure,
I am directing the country rightly!”

(Girlfriends:)

“As sweet as your mouth are your parts,
they befit princely state,
they befit princely state indeed!”

(Inanna:)

“Subduing the rebellious countries,
Looking to having the nation multiply,
I am directing the country rightly!”

To begin with, as may be seen, Inanna seems most concerned with pride in her power, royal duties, and riches. She goes on to speak of her jewelry and her palatial dwelling, but eventually she enters into the spirit asking who will irrigate her field, “The Hillocks,” and the girlfriends are ready with the answer: Dumuzi, the bridegroom, is hastening to irrigate for her, he will irrigate “The Hillocks.” The mention of Dumuzi makes Inanna cast her mind back to the day she first decided upon him as her future spouse; she tells of her reasons for the choice, of the ready acceptance of him by her parents, and of her having now bathed and arrayed herself in her best clothes for him:

(Inanna:)

“I had in view having the nation multiply,
chose Dumuzi for (personal) god of the country.
For Dumuzi, beloved of Enlil,
I made (his) name exalted, gave him status.
My mother always held him dear,
my father sang his praises,
I have bathed for him, rubbed (myself) with soap
for him,
and when the servant had brought the pitcher
with the bath water
she laid out my dress correctly like a two-ply dress,
and I (wore) two-ply for him the grand queenly robe!”

The end of column one and the beginning of column two of the text are again rather badly damaged, but when the text becomes understandable Inanna’s pride appears focused at last on her own bodily charms, so much so indeed that she wants them celebrated in a song. She calls upon the girl singer and girl elegist who accompany her and orders them to weave her praise of her charms into a song for all to sing:

(Inanna:)

“My heart has pondered what I am about to let you know,
and what I advisedly let you know I will have you reveal
— I, Inanna of the grand dress, the two-ply dress —
the elegist will weave it into a song,
the singer will extoll it in a lay,
my bridegroom will thereby rejoice in me,
the shepherd, Dumuzi, will thereby rejoice in me;
whoever has a mouth
will take the words into his mouth,
whoever hears it
will teach the song to a youngster.
When it has soared (to full chorus)
it will be (like) Nippur
(celebrating a) festival,
when it has settled down it will softly. . . .

The elegist complies:

The young lady was praising her parts
and the elegist was weaving it into a song,
Inanna was praising them,
had her parts extolled in song.

In the song Inanna, glorying in her young body, which has just attained puberty, sings the praises of her pubic triangle with its as yet sparse growth of hairs, comparing it first to a metal enchastment with decorative studs sticking out like linchpins in a cartwheel, then to a ceremonial barge called the “Barge of Heaven” (the recent hairs she sees as mooring ropes holding the barge), and the image leads over into that of the cosmic barge of heaven, the crescent of the new moon. Next her triangle has become a virginal plot in the desert, not yet cultivated, then again a stubble field on which ducks have been put out to be fattened, black hairs dotting it like black ducks against light dun soil, then it is a high-lying field, hillock land, piled up with levees, well watered in readiness for ploughing — she has just bathed in water — and then moist lowlands similarly readied. Since a woman, though she may own fields, cannot herself plough them but must seek a ploughman to do it for her, the song ends with the question of who he should be:

“My enchased parts so nailed down
 as (with) linchpins
 attached to a big cart,
 (my crescent-shaped) “Barge of Heaven,”
 so (well) belayed,
 full of loveliness, like the new moon,
 my untilled plot,
 left so fallow in the desert,
 my duck field so studded with ducks,
 my hillock land, so (well) watered,
 my parts, piled up with levees,
 (well) watered
 I, being (but) a maiden,
 who will be their ploughman?
 My parts, (well) watered lowlands,
 I, being (but) a lady,
 who will put (plough) oxen to them?”

And the elegist responds:

“Young lady, may the king plough them for you!
 May the king, Dumuzi, plough them for you!”

which is obviously the right answer:

“The man of my heart! The ploughman is the man
 of my heart!”

Again the text is damaged and some lines are completely lost but they must have led up to Inanna’s union with Dumuzi for when the text resumes it describes the union and tells how it magically awakens new life through all nature.

At its mighty rising, at its mighty rising,
 did the shoots and the buds rise up.
 The king’s loins! At its mighty rising
 did the vines rise up, did the grains rise up,
 did the desert fill (with verdure)
 like a pleasurable garden.

From the description of the union and its effects the text moves without apparent transition to a description of Inanna’s joy at living in Dumuzi’s house and of her request of him to make the milk yellow — that is, creamy and fat — for her. She asks for cow’s milk, goat’s milk, and even for camel’s milk, all of which Dumuzi readily promises to provide and to place in his house E-namtila, that is, “the house of life.” With a rather long praise of this house and its contents of milk and other dairy products the text finally concludes.

The “Herder Wedding Text” ends on much the same note as the other wedding texts, with delight in great abundances of food. Yet, there is one subtle difference. The riches here garnered by Inanna — milk and milk products — are short-term only. They will not, like the more durable riches of the date harvest, last through an approaching dry season and free the community from want until the next season. The sense of having reached security which informs the wedding texts of Amaushumgalanna can have little relevance in the herder’s world with its swiftly passing blessings.

That world has, rather, its own set of relevant experiences. In spring the desert fills with green, the herds gambol in the pastures and mate, and from that mating flows the herder’s prosperity; increase of flocks and herds, newborn lambs, kids, and calves, plentiful milk from the full udders of the mother animals. In the herder’s view the emphasis of the sacred marriage is therefore on its mating aspect. He sees it as a divine engendering which brings into being spring’s glorious burst, the sacred cosmic sexual act in which all nature is fertilized.

This emphasis comes through clearly in Inanna’s frank praise of her private parts with its central image of the field ready for the fertilizing seed plough — an image, incidentally, which still does not take us outside the herder’s world since the plough oxen were provided by the cowherders.

Thus the orchardman’s and the herder’s rite of the sacred marriage differ fundamentally. The first is a harvest rite binding the date palm’s power for fertility and yield to the numen of the storehouse in bonds of marriage and mutual love. The other is a fertility rite uniting — by incarnating them in human actors — the divine powers for fertility and new life in a generative sexual embrace.

Death and Lament

Spring does not last long, and its fecund power wanes and is lost as the dry hot summer sets in. Mythopoeically experienced this means that Dumuzi dies, a victim of the powers of death and the netherworld.

The precise manner of the god’s death varies from one text to another: he is set upon by highwaymen in his fold or elsewhere or by a posse of evil deputies from Hades; he is killed, taken captive, or perishes in his attempt to flee. In many versions the death of the god is assumed to have taken place at an earlier time, the text following his young widow, Inanna, his sister, and his mother, as they come to his gutted and ravaged camp in the desert to bewail him.

- d u₈ - d u₈ - a - z u, "O Enlil, your holy (cult-)niche laden with attractiveness"; also [K á] - m a h h i - l i d [u₈ - d u₈ - a], "the lofty gate laden with attractiveness." in the description of Ekur *PBS* I₁, no. 8. i. 18 and duplicate *SK*, no. 8. i. 17.
- 14 é - h a l - l a = *bit piristi*. See the passages cited in *AHW* p. 134 section 19, and cf. *JNES* 16 (1957), p. 252, line 20 (Néribtum Gilgamesh fragment) and Ashurbanipal. *Annals* vi. 30-31.
- 15 "The Fall of Agade," line 131. *TuMnF* III, nos. 27 rev. 14; 31 obv. 18; 32 obv. 14. Cf. *PBS*₁, no. 8. i. 16 and duplicates *SK*, no. 8. i. 16, and *BL*, no. 44.
- 16 "Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur," line 450. See *UE(T)* VI₂, nos. 133 obv. 26 and 133 obv. 26. Cf. Kramer in *ANET Suppl.* p. 182.
- 17 *TH* p. 26 lines 150, 158, 163.
- 18 Gudea, *Cylinder A*, x. 24-26.
- 19 *Ibid.*, x. 19-23.
- 20 "The Fall of Agade," lines 120-21, 125-26, and 127-28. Cf. Falkenstein, *ZA* 57 (1965), pp. 43-124; Kramer, *ANET Suppl.* pp. 210-15.
- 21 For these name forms see, e.g., Gudea, *Cylinder A*, vii. 28 and xi. 3.
- 22 E. M. Forster, *Anonymity, An Enquiry* (London, 1925), pp. 13-14.
- 23 See Kramer, *PAPS* 107 (1963), pp. 509-10 (Kramer's interpretation differs from the one given here) and my article in "The Gaster Festschrift," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 5 (1973). An unpublished duplicate tablet in the Yale collection, kindly made available by Professor W. Hallo, shows that the composition begins as here given and not as we surmised in "The Gaster Festschrift."
- 24 *TuMnF* III, no. 25.
- 25 *BE* XXX, no. 4 and duplicates.
- 26 We owe the reading of this word to an oral communication from B. Alster.
- 27 *SLTN*, no. 35.
- 28 *TRS*, no. 70.
- 29 *SRT*, no. 1 and duplicates. Cf. Falkenstein and von Soden, *SAHG*, no. 18 pp. 90-99, 367-68, and literature there cited.
- 30 *CT* XLII no. 4.
- 31 We are aware that "carp-flood" does not exist in English. It is a literal translation of the Sumerian term for the early flood which was called the "carp-flood" because carps at that time (spring) swam up the rivers to be caught by delighted Sumerian fishermen (see above, p. 32). We use it here because it is so pregnant and illustrative.
- 32 Kramer, *PAPS* 107 (1963), pp. 505-08. Ni 9602.
- 33 B. Alster, *Dumuzi's Dream* (Copenhagen, 1972).
- 34 R A VIII (1911), pp. 161 ff. and duplicates *TRS*, no. 78 and *SK*, no. 2.
- 35 *SK*, no. 123. ii. 10-21.
- 36 *CT* XV pl. 18 and partial duplicate, CBS 45 (unpublished)
- 37 *BE* XXX, no. 1. ii. 3' to iii. 4' and its duplicates *HRET*, no. 26 and *SEM*, no. 91.
- 38 Edited by Kramer, *JCS* V (1951), pp. 1-17 with additional materials *PAPS* 107 (1963), pp. 491-93, 510-16. See also A. D. Kilmer, "How Was Queen Ershkigal Tricked?" *Ugarit Forschungen* 3 (1971), pp. 299-309. We tend to

think that the motif of obligatory treatment of guests is more relevant to the story of Adapa than to "Inanna's Descent."

- 39 *CT* XV pl. 19.
- 40 *IV R*² pl. 27 no. 1. lines 3-13.
- 41 *OECT* VI, pl. 15, K 5208, rev. 3-11.
- 42 *TCL* VI, no. 54 rev. 1-6. Cf. the partial duplicate *LKU*, no. 11.
- 43 *TCL* VI, no. 54. 12-17 and duplicate K. D. Macmillan, BA V₅, no. xxxiv.
- 44 *ASKT*, no. 16 obv. 13-24 and duplicate Frank, *ZA* 40 (1931), p. 86.
- 45 *ASKT*, no. 16 rev. 1-16 and duplicates Frank, *ZA* 40 (1931), p. 86 and K 4954 (unpublished copy by F. Geers).
- 46 K 4954 obv. 1-12. Unpublished copy by F. Geers.
- 47 *SK*, no. 26. iv. 1-7 which is Old Babylonian in date. The text has suffered badly in the course of its tradition and much in it has been misunderstood and reinterpreted. A late version of the first millennium as given by *IV R*² pl. 30 no. 2. lines 11-31 may be rendered (with omission of the long list of epithets and titles in lines 12-20 and including two further lines) as follows:
- If it is required, let me (young) lad
walk the path of no return!
.....
- He was walking, he was walking, to the
breast of the hills (of death)
throughout the day, throughout the day,
toward the land of his dead,
full of grief over the day he fell,
over (you), Month, who did not safely
complete your year,
over (you), Road, who made an end of
your people,
over the wailings on account of the lord —
a (young) brave (walking) into his faraway,
undiscoverable region.
- 48 *SK*, no. 26. vi. 14'-20' and its duplicate *PRAK* II pl. 44 D 41 lines 10'-17'.
- 49 *SK*, no. 27. v. 7-10.
- 50 *Ibid.*, lines 11-15.
- 51 *TRS*, no. 8 and its duplicate versions *CT* XV pls. 26-27 and pl. 30.
- 52 *CT* XV pls. 24. 14-25. 11 and its duplicates *BL*, no. 71 (K 2485 and 3898), Pinches, *PSBA* XVII (1895), pls. I-II.
- 53 Oral communication from Robert M. Adams.
- 54 "Gilgamesh and Agga," edited by Kramer, *AJA* 53 (1949), pp. 1-18, lines 30-39 — cf. 107-11.
- 55 "Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld." An edition by A. Shaffer is in preparation. For the time being see S. N. Kramer, "Gilgamesh and the Hulupputree," *AS* X; *SM* pp. 30-37; *SLTN*, p. 13; *TuMnF* III, p. 11 to nos. 13-14; and *UE(T)* VI, p. 7 to nos. 55-59.
- 56 Sumerian version *SK*, no. 196 and unpublished duplicate from Nippur