

The Birth-giving Earth and the Hero

a mythological theme in Mesopotamian literature

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Abstract

A recurrent theme in Sumerian and Akkadian literature is that the earth gives birth. Sometimes she gives birth to heroes who are understood as good and sometimes to creatures that are understood as evil. When the progeny of the earth is evil, a hero wages war against it and thereafter creates a new world. This hero is always connected to order and to the Mesopotamian kingdom.

In this article the birth-giving earth and her creatures as well as the hero will be discussed from the perspective of their connotations of nature and culture as well as power relations. These three parties will also be investigated regarding how their connotations are transformed over time, as seen in the literature. As a point of departure in the analysis, I will use the theorizing of anthropologist Sherry Ortner in her well-known article “Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?”.

Reference

Ortner, Sherry. 1974. M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds.). *Women, Culture, and Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 68–87.