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## The goddess Ninlil in the Sumerian pantheon: an artificial creation and spouse to an immigrating god?<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract for the EASR conference 2013**

The goddess Ninlil is one of the most prominent goddesses in the Sumerian pantheon, but at the same time the one perhaps least understood as a personage of her own. She is the wife of Enlil, the king of the pantheon, and she is primarily related to Enlil in the sources, either as a young woman whom Enlil courts, or as his wife. Ninlil has been understood as modeled upon the traits of Enlil, and even as being an artificial creation. This paper will show that Ninlil in fact had individual traits as a strong and powerful goddess, coming from a ‘matrifocal’ lineage, legitimizing kingship, and being depicted as a powerful queen. Further, Ninlil shows traits of assimilation with other goddesses. Her liaison with Enlil might be one incentive in these ‘mutations’, and it will be argued that this can be due to that Enlil was an immigrating god.

### **Note on the author**

Therese Rodin is a Ph.D. student in the History of Religion at Uppsala University, and she also works as a lecturer in Religious Studies at Dalarna University. She has specialized in the cuneiform culture, and primarily Sumerian literary texts. Her thesis (to be defended within a few months) is an analysis of the two Sumerian myths where Ninhursağa/Ninmah, the mother goddess of the state pantheon, is one of the main actors. Rodin focusses her research primarily upon literary texts as ideological statements, but also on women’s history. She has contributed with a paper about the Sumerian epic “Gilgameš and Huwawa” in an anthology in Swedish about mountains in the religious traditions that will appear within short, and another paper that deals with the Sumerian word for ‘(female) breast’ as met with in the literary texts, will soon appear in another book.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was written to be presented at the European Association for the Study of Religion (EASR) annual conference in Liverpool, 3-6 September 2013 and has benefited from the comments offered by participants there.