CHAPTER 1

# Gods in the Margins: Religion, Kingship, and the Fictionalized Frontier

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THE MESOPOTAMIAN FRONTIER IS, in some respects, a matter of perspective. Its definition is certainly mutable, as the frontier may be considered through a variety of mediums and means, be they geographic, cultural, linguistic, or imperial, among others.[1] Locations that are thought to lie on the frontier are often described as peripheral, liminal, and even marginal, but the very idea of "the margin" necessitates a certain point of view. The periphery is created when it is set in a relationship, often a dependent or subordinate one, to the core, which is itself a predetermined geographic notion. The edges of the map are only defined as such because the cartographer has determined where the map should stop and what should be located in the center. In doing so, the cartographer has also determined, either through ignorance or by direct intent, to characterize the center and edges of the map as locations that are distinctly separate from one another. This essay concerns two such "peripheral" regions: the Cedar Forest and the island location known as Dilmun. It analyzes their role as locations that represented and expressed both kingly and divine power during the third and second millennia BCE, placing references to them within the larger context of their portrayal in both earlier and later periods. As we will see, these two locations were expressions of a frontier that was as much conceived and invented as it was actual. Royal inscriptions showcased the claims of rulers reaching these lands and directly exerting power and control over them, but such claims existed alongside their portrayals in Sumerian and Akkadian literary texts. The latter portrayed these locations as more fantastical lands, far-distant and the home of both the monstrous and the divine. Though these texts come from different contexts and had different aims, their differing portrayals of

This essay is based on a paper first given at the "Religion and Geography" workshop held at the 2016 Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale; in the interim, I have revisited the topic and those connected to it and have integrated some of the resulting analysis. I would thank the helpful comments from the essay's two reviewers and from the members and audience of the initial workshop for their engaging initial discussion. Moreover, I remain deeply grateful to my co-organizer and coeditor, Shana Zaia, for her comments on this essay at several different junctures and her tireless work on the volume itself.

1. Though his Mesopotamian-specific discussions are rooted in the context of the Assyrian imperial frontier, a sweeping introduction to the different dimensions of the frontier and borders can be found in Bradley Parker, "Toward an Understanding of Borderland Processes," *American Antiquity* 71 (2006): 77–100. Parker detailed a "borderland matrix," where the border and frontier are composed of a number of interconnected boundaries (geographic, political, demographic, cultural, and economic) that may exist at different degrees of impermeability. The abstract construction of the frontier is also described in Gina Konstantopoulos, "The Disciplines of Geography: Constructing Space in the Ancient World," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern History* 4 (2017): 1–18.

the Cedar Forest and Dilmun appear to function more in concert than in conflict and are thus to be considered in the context of each other.

## The Cedar Forest

Two categories of distant space are most often seen in the ancient Near East, creating a division between fully fictional and real but fictionalized lands. The former category describes fictional locations that, despite the well-realized vividness of their depictions, remain fictional. These places may feature quite prominently in literary texts and function as settings for the narrative action of myths and epics, but they remain fictional creations. Aratta, a created space that plays a significant role in four Sumerian literary texts that focus on its rivalry with Uruk and its king, Enmerkar, is perhaps the paramount example of such a space.[2] The other category, however, concerns the fictionalization of real locations, places that were known to exist, were connected to Mesopotamia through trade or military campaigns, and yet were given fantastical or otherwise extraordinary qualities because of their distance. In the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods, this second category contains such locations as Magan, in Oman; Marḫashi, on the Iranian plateau to the east of Elam; Meluḫḫa, in the Indus valley; Dilmun, linked to modern-day Bahrain;[3] and the Cedar Forest, which is most often connected to the forests of Lebanon. Although we see these locations appear across a wide variety of textual categories, this essay will focus predominantly upon two: royal inscriptions and literary texts.

Of the places listed above, the Cedar Forest is the most mutable, shifting positions entirely over the course of its history. Although Gilgamesh, in his titular Akkadian epic, ventures toward a Cedar Forest indisputably located in the west and connected with the cedar forests of Lebanon, earlier references to a forest of cedars place such a location in the more nebulous "upper land" (igi-nim), or even in the east. The Cedar Forest is first introduced as a location in texts from the late third millennium, appearing in royal inscriptions from the Early Dynastic period onward. En-anatum I, in one of the earliest attestations of the forest, references it when he describes his actions of temple building, citing how he "brought shining cedars down for [Ningirsu] from the mountains" (eren babbar$_2$ kur-ta mu-na-ta-e$_{11}$).[4] This reference,

2. Specifically, *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, *Enmerkar and Ensuhkešdanna*, *Lugalbanda in the Wilderness*, and *The Return of Lugalbanda*, to use the titles assigned to the four texts in the edition by Herman Vanstiphout (*Epics of the Sumerian Kings: The Matter of Aratta* [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004]). The Lugalbanda texts, which function as a much more closely connected duology than the Enmerkar texts, are also referred to simply as *Lugalbanda I* and *Lugalbanda II* in some scholarship, with the latter also known by the title *Lugalbanda and the Anzu Bird*.

3. Although the "idea" of Dilmun appears localized primarily to Bahrain, the extent of Dilmun as a political entity and influence expanded beyond Bahrain to include the island of Failaka further to the north in the Persian Gulf. Thus, like the Cedar Forest, which is in early Sumerian texts also referenced as lying to the east, Dilmun may too shift its location somewhat. In early periods—namely, the third millennium—Dilmun's extent is principally illustrated through material and archaeological evidence; for an overview of the extent of Dilmun throughout different periods, see Steffen Laursen and Piotr Steinkeller, *Babylonia, the Gulf Region, and the Indus: Archaeological and Textual Evidence for Contact in the Third and Early Second Millennia B.C.*, MC 21 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017).

4. RIME 1, E1.9.4.3: ii 2–3. Note that this and all translations from RIME volumes follow those published in the editions, unless otherwise noted.

however, provides little information as to the location of said cedars, other than placing them in the mountains well outside the Mesopotamian heartland. References to the mountains of cedar (kur $^{ĝiš}$eren) are repeated in an inscription by the ruler Meskigala in a fragmentary section that contributes little other than a citation of the name itself.[5] From what can be interpreted, both texts firmly root the importance of these cedars in their connection to providing building material for temples.

### *The Sargonic Period*

As references to the Cedar Forest are inextricably tied to kingship, it is not surprising that the location first develops more detailed imagery in the Sargonic period, as its expansionist kings required a broader vocabulary of space and place for narratives that centered on their military campaigns. Sargon utilizes the Cedar Forest as a marker of distance, placing it as an example of one of the extreme limits of his empire. A bilingual inscription from Nippur opens with imagery describing how Sargon made the ships of Meluḫḫa, Magan, and Dilmun, all also markers of extreme distance, moor at Agade. Following this, Sargon is given dominion over a number of distant lands, all of which have been the focus of his campaign, including Mari, Iarmuti, and Ebla, as "far as the Cedar Forest and the Silver Mountain" (tir $^{ĝiš}$eren hur-saĝ $ku_3$-ga-$še_3$ / *a-di*$_3$*-ma* $^{giš}$TIR $^{giš}$EREN $u_3$ KUR.KUR $KU_3$).[6]

The geographic reference is seen again, and nearly identically, in another inscription, focusing once again on these northern locations of Sargon's campaign.[7] Both provide us with our first opportunity to describe the boundaries of the upper land, a space that included Mari in eastern Syria, Ebla to its north and west, and Iarmuti on the Levantine coast. The Silver Mountain is more difficult to precisely determine: though there is more documentation for Mesopotamia's reliance upon the rich silver mines in the Taurus mountains in the second millennium, there is support for the use of these mines before this period as well. We also have evidence for the presence of a silver mine in the east, possibly located in southern Iran.[8]

The Cedar Forest, however, appears as its own entity, a place distinct from the mountains it is located alongside. The Early Dynastic and Sargonic period texts cited above, dating to the middle and late third millennium BCE, cover a large part of the available range of titles applied to the Cedar Forest, and the term "cedar mountain" (kur $^{ĝiš}$eren) will continue to appear directly or be elided in texts, as in the inscription of ruler En-anatum I (ca. twenty-fifth century BCE). Alongside this appellation, however, the more precise term "cedar forest" ($^{ĝiš}$tir $^{ĝiš}$eren or $^{ĝiš}$tir eren) continues to be employed, and in greater frequency, while the name "foothills of cedar" (hur-saĝ $^{ĝiš}$eren) is also employed. These terms cover a wide range of possible

5. RIME 1, E.1.1.9.2001: i 1′–4′.

6. RIME 2, E2.1.1.11: 20–28; 24–34. Concerning Dagan, particularly his later connections with Ebla and the Levant, see the overview of the deity in Bradley L. Cromwell, "The Development of Dagan: A Sketch," *JANER* 1 (2001): 32–83.

7. RIME 2, E2.1.1.12: 20′–21′.

8. See Joseph William Lehner, "Cooperation, the Craft Economy, and Metal Technology During the Bronze and Iron Ages in Central Anatolia" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2015), 58–67, with cited bibliography; T. F. Potts, "Patterns of Trade in Third-Millennium BC Mesopotamia and Iran," *World Archaeology* 24 (1993): 392.

semantic meanings, and references to cedars—be they in the forest, in the mountains, or in the foothills—do not all necessarily overlap with *the* Cedar Forest that appears as a fantastical location in literary texts, predominantly of the Old Babylonian period. These terms do, however, connect with a shared context concerning the depiction of the forest, a context whose foundations are established in the late third millennium, primarily through royal inscriptions.

Narām-Sîn follows the tradition of his grandfather Sargon in referencing the Cedar Forest, and the location appears in both year names and royal inscriptions attributed to the ruler. The former occurrences are interesting for their references to martial conflict despite their shorter length, appearing first as the simple formula that highlights his actions, and eventual destination, while on campaign: "The [year] Na[rām-Sîn] we[nt] to the Cedar Forest" ([*i*]*n* I [MU] $^{d}$*na*-[*ra-am*-$^{d}$EN.ZU] *a-na* $^{giš}$TIR EREN *i-li*-[*ku*]).[9] The martial context is emphasized in another year name: "The year Narām-Sîn was [vi]ctorious [in battle] over . . . and [personally] cut down [cedar] in the [A]manus [Mountains]" (*in* I MU $^{d}$*na-ra-am*-$^{d}$EN.ZU . . . [*iš*$_{11}$]-*a-ru* [$u_3$ *śu*$_4$-*ma*] *in* [KUR *a*]*m-na-an* [$^{giš}$EREN] *ib-tu*$_2$-*qam*), a mountain range in south-central Turkey near the Gulf of İskenderun and a pivotal source of iron and other natural minerals.[10]

Narām-Sîn's royal inscriptions, however, provide greater detail in regard to the location of the Cedar Forest as it is used as a marker of the extent and reach of the king's military, seen in an inscription describing a campaign against the city of Talḫadum. As this campaign is focused on Narām-Sîn's actions in upper Mesopotamia, the Cedar Forest is once again used as a point of distance, as he describes how his new command stretches over "the land of Elam, as far as Paraḫšum, and the land of [S]ubartu, as far as the Cedar Forest" (KALAM NIM$^{KI}$ *ka*$_3$-*li*$_2$-*śa-ma a-di*$_3$-*ma pa*$_2$-*ra-aḫ-śum*$^{KI}$ $u_3$ KALAM ŠUBUR$^{śu\text{-}bar\text{-}tim.KI}$ *a-di*$_3$-*ma* $^{giš}$TIR $^{giš}$EREN).[11] This reference stands in contrast to one seen in another inscription, dedicating Narām-Sîn's victory over Armānum and Ebla, where he uses the markers of "the Amanus, the Cedar Mountain, and the Upper Sea" (*a-ma-nam śa-du*$_2$ $^{giš}$EREN $u_3$ *ti-a-am-tam*$_2$ *a-li*$_2$-*tam*$_2$).[12] He reaffirms the connection between the Amanus Mountains and cedar trees when he travels to the former, cited as at the source of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in order to cut down its cedars for a temple for the goddess Inana.[13] In another inscription that positions the Cedar Forest as a marker of extreme, even terminal, distance, Narām-Sîn groups a "land of cedars" alongside other locations to which he has campaigned: Māḫāzum, Puš, Ebla, Mari, Tuttul, Urkiš, Mukiš, Abarnum, and "the land where the cedars are cut down, along with their provinces" (kur

9. See I. J. Gelb and B. Kienast, *Die altakkadischen Königsinschriften des dritten Jahrtausends v. Chr.*, Freiburger altorientalische Studien 7 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990), 50, D-7.

10. See Aage Westenholz, *Old Sumerian and Old Akkadian Texts in Philadelphia, Chiefly from Nippur*, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Carsten Niebuhr Institute, 1987), 203 n. 1.

11. RIME 2, E2.1.4.25: 6–16.

12. RIME 2, E2.1.4.26: i 22–27. Despite Narām-Sîn's claim to be the first ruler to conquer Ebla, he provides a nearly identical reiteration of Sargon's list of geographic terms, which had certainly included Ebla. See A. Archi and Maria Giovanna Biga, "A Victory over Mari and the Fall of Ebla," *JCS* 55 (2003): 29–31.

13. RIME 2, E2.1.4.29: 8′–10′. This is reiterated in a year name of Šar-kali-šarrī, attesting to the continued longevity of the concept in this period. Here, the king journeys, as his father had, to the sources of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to log cedars for the construction of a temple to the god Enlil; see Gelb and Kienast, *Die altakkadischen Königsinschriften*, 54, D-27.

ĝiš eren-ku$_5$ ma-da-ma-d[a-bi]).[14] Here, he is able to collapse the reference to the Cedar Forest with the location's most prominent utility, the logging of its trees. He closes this list with references to Subartu on the "shores of the Upper Sea" (gaba-gaba a-ab-[ba i]gi-nim-ma) and Magan, placing the land of cedar-felling firmly amongst these locations.[15]

### *Gudea: Building Detail*

A more detailed set of references to cedars is found within the *Cylinders of Gudea*, a long Sumerian prose narrative that details Gudea's building of the temple of the god Ningirsu in Lagaš. At one point, the text describes the power of the ruler through an enumeration of the geographical borders of his influence, listing the distant lands that bring him material for the building of the temple.[16] After materials are secured from the lands of Elam, Susa, Magan, and Meluḫḫa, the god Ningirsu himself orders additional building material be provided, opening a way to the "impenetrable cedar mountain" (kur ĝiš eren-na lu$_2$ nu-ku$_4$-ku$_4$-da).[17] Gudea attacks this newly reachable space as if it were a hostile army that he hopes to subdue, felling trees and floating them downriver to the temple's building site. The passage expounds upon the qualities and types of trees found within the forests of this cedar mountain. Alongside cedar trees from the "hills of cedar" (hur-saĝ ĝiš eren), cypress (ĝiš šu-ur$_2$-me), *zabalum*-wood (ĝiš za-ba-lum), great spruce (u$_3$-sug$_5$ gal-gal), plane trees (ĝiš tu-lu-bu-um) and *eranum*-wood (ĝiš e-ra-num$_2$) are all floated downstream.[18] The actual geographic information provided by this passage is somewhat limited, and we may concretely infer only that cedar and other aromatic woods are found on the slopes of fairly distant or otherwise impassable mountains, in reach of one of the navigable watercourses of Mesopotamia. The location does appear in the text immediately following a number of places—Susa, Magan, and Meluḫḫa—that were all located in the east. That listing of locations does not, however, require that Gudea's cedar mountain be found in their proximity. While the textual proximity of these locations may allow us to infer an equally close geographic connection, it might also—and conversely—suggest that when Gudea had exhausted the resources found in these eastern locations, he turned to a completely different direction as the source for his timber.

Other texts from this period are, thankfully, more forthcoming in regard to the location of the Cedar Forest. Another statue of Gudea from the city of Girsu describes Gudea's felling of cedar trees from "the Amanus, the mountain range of cedar"

14. RIME 2, E2.1.4.1004: 8′.

15. RIME 2, E2.1.4.1004: 9′.

16. The construction and restoration of temple buildings was one of the most visible signs of the king's power, as well as one of his main responsibilities in maintaining the power of his own image and, presumably, general cosmic and divine order. See Mark J. Boda and Jamie Novotny, eds., *From the Foundations to the Crenellations: Essays on Temple Building in the Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible*, AOAT 366 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2010); Michael Roaf, "Mesopotamian Kings and the Built Environment," in *Experiencing Power, Generating Authority: Cosmos, Politics, and the Ideology of Kingship in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, ed. J. A. Hill, Philip Jones, and Antonio J. Morales (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 337–44.

17. RIME 3/1, E3/1.1.7.CylA: xv 19.

18. RIME 3/1, E3/1.1.7.CylA: xv 27–34.

(ama-a-num$_2$ hur-saĝ eren-ta).[19] The inscription stresses the massive size of the trees, with Gudea cutting, binding, and rafting downstream cedars that were fifty and sixty cubits in length, as well as boxwood trees ($^{ĝiš}$taškarin) twenty cubits in length. Although the terms hur-saĝ and kur are often used to describe mutually exclusive geographical features, this text utilizes them interchangeably, later describing how Gudea brought down the cedars from their mountain (kur-bi im-ta-e$_{11}$), in a context that is shared with the previous attestation.[20]

Substantive references to the Cedar Forest continue after the reign of Gudea, but the corpus diminishes in both the number of references and the descriptive depth seen in individual attestations. The kings of the Ur III period adhere closely to the formula established by the Sargonic rulers, with an inscription, most likely naming and belonging to the king Šu-Sîn, incorporating the "land of cedar-felling" as one of the terminus points of imperial dominion, thus reduplicating the list of locations cited earlier by Narām-Sîn in its entirety.[21] Outside of this, we see few references to the Cedar Forest in the royal inscriptions during this period, though later texts that center on or are attested for these rulers are happy to incorporate the imagery in royal hymnology: "[Šulgi] . . . will fell large cedars in the huge forests for you, [Ninlil]" ($^{ĝiš}$tir gal-gal-la eren gal ma-ra-an-ni-[in-ku$_5$]).[22] The building and maintenance of temples was an essential aspect of kingship in Mesopotamia, and cedars, as well as the locations they were collected from, were inevitably connected to this responsibility.

### *Second-Millennium References*

Although the heyday of references to the Cedar Forest in royal inscriptions is seen in texts from the third millennium, the location is not abandoned in the early second millennium, only elided. Anam, king of Uruk, recounts bringing down cedar and *elamakkum* wood from the mountain ranges, in order to build the doors of a temple ($^{ĝiš}$ig gal-gal eren-a $^{ĝiš}$*e-lam-ma-kum* hur-saĝ-ta de$_6$-a).[23] Moving west, we see the ruler of Mari, Yaḫdun-Līm, complicate the matter in his invocation of the topographical marker, utilizing it to establish his supremacy both geographically and chronologically. On a brick inscription recounting his building of the temple of Šamaš, Yaḫdun-Līm boasts that, from the "distant days of Mari's first founding," no king had reached the sea, nor "reached the mountains of cedar and boxwood, the great mountains" (KUR $^{giš}$EREN *u*$_3$ $^{giš}$TAŠKARIN KUR-*i ra-bu-tim la ik-šu-du*) and cut down those trees.[24] He, of course, has achieved all of these great feats and elaborates on the impressive nature of his achievements. He has managed to cut down not only cedar and boxwood but also cypress and *elammakum* trees; he has not only reached the sea but also forced the land there to submit to him. In Yaḫdun-Līm's grander claims, we may see echoes

19. RIME 3/1, E3/1.1.7.StB: v 28.

20. RIME 3/1, E3/1.1.7.StB: v 36.

21. RIME 3/2, E3/2.1.4.2. This text reduplicates the list seen in the Narām-Sîn inscription discussed earlier, found in RIME 2, E2.1.4.1004.

22. See Jacob Klein, "Šulgi and Išmedagan: Originality and Dependence in Sumerian Royal Hymnology," in *Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology*, ed. P. Artzi (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), 102–3, l. 8.

23. RIME 4, E4.4.6.2: 22–24.

24. RIME 4, E4.6.8.2: 34–40.

of the tension that underlies the use of the Cedar Forest by different polities: both Sargon and Nāram-Sîn claim Mari as a conquered space alongside the Cedar Forest, but the later rulers of Mari also choose to employ the forest to mark the extreme limit of their own dominion.[25]

### *Literary Texts and Hymns*

To return to the earlier periods that are the focus of this study, we see the topography of references to the Cedar Forest shift when considering its appearance within literary texts. The connection between cedars and their felling is first seen in textual copies of the *Cursing of Agade* that date to the Ur III period, but they are also present in the more numerous Old Babylonian sources for the text.[26] In this section, the Cedar Forest is not cited as a destination toward which one could strive, but rather exists only metaphorically, as Narām-Sîn's intent to destroy the Ekur temple is described in terms of it being a plundered ship, a splintered mountain of lapis lazuli, and, finally, cut down by axes: "for the temple—though it was not the mountains where cedars are felled—he had large axes cast" (e$_2$-e kur ĝiš eren ku$_5$ nu-me-a $^{urudu}$ha-zi-in gal-gal ba-ši-in-de$_2$-de$_2$).[27] Just as kings demonstrated their dominion through cutting down the trees of the Cedar Forest, claiming them for their own and devastating the landscape in the process, Enlil prepares to visit the same destruction on the Ekur, using the location to signal that the most extreme of all possible devastations await the temple.

Within royal inscriptions, particularly those from the Sargonic period, the Cedar Forest falls within the more broadly defined upper land (igi-nim), the borders of which can shift from king to king but nevertheless maintain a certain topographical constancy. Literary texts and divine hymns maintain a connection to the upper land but otherwise redefine the Cedar Forest, both by associating it more with the realm of the divine, rather than with more earthly rulers, and by reinforcing the distant and liminal nature inherent in the location. In regard to the first category, the Cedar Forest becomes directly linked to a number of deities, described as a realm that belongs to them or is otherwise used as their home. A *širnamšub* to Nanna (Nanna K), following this model, closes with a fervent plea addressed directly to the deity: "O Nanna, from the upper land I will live on your mountain of fragrant cedars" ($^{d}$nanna igi-nim-ta kur šim ĝiš eren-na-za ĝe$_{26}$-[e mu-un-til$_3$-le]), once again linking the upper

25. Though references to the Cedar Forest drop off during the Old Babylonian period, they gain a renewed importance under Assyrian kings in the late second and first millennia BCE. In the Neo-Assyrian period in particular the Cedar Forest is closely linked to Lebanon and its cedars, cited alongside references to the Amanus mountains. Certain kings place greater emphasis on the Cedar Forest than others; Shalmaneser III's frequent western campaigns had him consistently invoke the location as a marker of distance, as surveyed in Shigeo Yamada, *The Construction of the Assyrian Empire: A Historical Study of the Inscriptions of Shalmaneser III (859–824 BC) Relating to His Campaigns in the West*, CHANE 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2003). The Cedar Forest in ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern contexts is also considered in Sara Rich, *Cedar Forests, Cedar Ships* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2017), with some focus on later periods and integrating archaeological and material evidence.

26. The relevant passage (ll. 112–13) is preserved on one tablet from Nippur dating to the Ur III period, IM 70097, now in Baghdad. The composite score for the section shows that for this one source we have eleven and ten Old Babylonian tablets, respectively, for the two lines; see Jerrold S. Cooper, *The Curse of Agade* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 141–42.

27. Ibid., ll. 112–13.

land (igi-nim) to a liminal location abundant with cedar, which is here the mountains, or kur.[28] Cedars were renowned for their fragrance (šim), a quality furthermore linked to the worship of deities.[29]

As with royal hymns, divine hymns are inherently hyperbolic texts, and claiming these mountains of cedar as belonging to Nanna may help establish the far-ranging supremacy of the moon god. We see divine hymns connect the Cedar Forest to other deities, even those to whom the hymn is not dedicated, as in a *širnamšub* to the goddess Nisaba that connects the mountain of cedar (kur $^{ĝiš}$eren) with Enlil.[30] Her temple destroyed, Nisaba recounts her distraught state and isolation: "In the moonlight which fills the hills, the pure place, I lie down alone. By the cedar mountain where Enlil lies, I lie down alone" (iti$_6$ hur-saĝ ki sikil-la si-a-še$_3$ aš-ša mu-un-nu$_2$ en / [kur] $^{ĝiš}$eren-na $^{d}$mu-ul-lil$_2$ nu$_2$-a-še$_3$ aš-ša mu-un-nu$_2$-en). The cedar mountain becomes a place of serenity and purity, but also one of isolation, its distant nature highlighted by the inherently liminal nature of the mountains, or "kur."

This use of the Cedar Forest and the upper land as markers of distance continues in literary texts, as seen in the Old Babylonian Sumerian literary text *Enmerkar and Ensuhkešdanna*. Here, the foreign sorcerer claims that he will make the full scale of Aratta's dominion known, claiming that all will submit to "my great armies" (erin$_2$ gal-ĝu$_{10}$), from the lower to the upper land (sig-ta igi-nim-še$_3$), from the ocean to the mountain of cedar (ab-ta kur $^{ĝiš}$eren-še$_3$), reinforcing the claim with the repeating cry of "to the upper land, to the fragrant cedar mountain" (igi-nim-še$_3$ kur šim $^{ĝiš}$eren-na-še$_3$).[31] Despite the undeniably foreign nature of Aratta, its dominion can still be measured by the same markers, though the use of them has shifted slightly. The first line positions the two locations as opposing extremes, emphasized not only by the oppositional qualities used to describe the two locations—lower (sig) versus upper (igi), ocean (ab) versus mountain of cedar (kur $^{ĝiš}$eren)—but also in the use of ablative (-ta) versus terminative (-še$_3$) case endings on the respective locations. The second line, however, utilizes a terminative for both the upper land and cedar mountain, equating the two locations with each other. The full dominion of Aratta's power is thus detailed as from the lower land, presumably in the south, and from the

28. Nanna K, l. 20; see the edition in Åke Sjöberg, *Der Mondgott Nanna-Suen in der sumerischen Überlieferung* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1960), 80–88.

29. Beyond its significance as a divine attribute and use as an offering, incense, or the incense burner (niĝ$_2$-na), was one of the three central cultic objects, alongside the water basin (a-gub$_2$-ba) and the torch (gi-izi-la$_2$); see Piotr Michalowski, "The Torch and the Censer," in *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo*, ed. M. E. Cohen, D. C. Snell, and D. B. Weisberg (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993), 152–62. Concerning a broad overview of the cultic connotations of incense in the ancient Near East, see Kjeld P. Nielsen, *Incense in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 30–32.

30. Nisaba B, ll. 23–24; for the edition, see Mark E. Cohen, "The Incantation-Hymn: Incantation or Hymn?," *JAOS* 95 (1975): 603–4.

31. *Enmerkar and Ensuhkešdanna*, 159–60; Vanstiphout, *Epics of the Sumerian Kings*. See also the edition in Claus Wilcke, *The Sumerian Poem Enmerkar and En-Suḫkeš-ana: Epic, Play, Or? Stage Craft at the Turn from the Third to the Second Millennium B.C. with a Score-Edition a Translation of the Text*, American Oriental Series Essay 12 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2012), 60, which reads lugal-ĝu$_{10}$ ("my king") in lieu of erin$_2$ gal-ĝu$_{10}$ ("my great armies") at the beginning of l. 159 above. These terms of lower land and upper land also appear in the Sumerian literary text *Inana and Šukaletuda*, with the lower land linked to the land where the sun rises and the upper land linked to the land where the sun sets, which falls in line with most directional assignations for the pair; see Konrad Volk, *Inanna und Šukaletuda: Zur historisch-politischen Literaturwerkes*, SANTAG 3 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 177.

ocean, which may be located in the south or west, to the upper land and the mountain of cedar, which are grouped together. The cedar mountain is set in opposition not to the lower land but to the ocean. If, then, this ocean refers to the Mediterranean rather than to the Persian Gulf, the mountains of cedar could arguably be set in the east, the oppositional direction, and the lines would indicate the encircling dominion of Aratta, with markers for each of the four cardinal directions represented. Should "ocean" be assumed to indicate the Persian Gulf, as is perhaps more likely given its connection to the "lower land," the mountain of cedar would once again be placed alongside the upper land, as in Nanna K, and the emphasis would remain on the use of north and south to establish the extent of Aratta's dominion.

It is in a *tigi* to the goddess Inana (Inana E), however, that we see an interesting addition to the information on the location of the Cedar Forest. In praising her martial abilities as well as those of Ama-ušumgal-ana (here a proxy for the king Iddin-Dagan), the text turns to describing the campaigns of the ruler, who goes out to the rebel lands, distant mountains that are as far away "as Utu rises from the fragrant cedar mountains" ($^{d}$utu kur šim $^{ĝiš}$eren-na-ta e$_3$-a-gin$_7$).[32] The sun god is associated with the "mountains of cedar" in other texts as well, though such attestations obscure specific geographic references.[33] Here, however, the mountains of cedar are directly linked to the rising of the sun and thus unambiguously placed in the east, even at the far eastern horizon. Not only is this image of the sun god rising amidst the mountains well attested in cylinder seals from the late third millennium onward, but we also see a strong connection between the place of sunrise, on the eastern horizon, and the determination of destiny as decided by the sun god himself.[34]

Connections between the Cedar Forest and the east are supported by other artistic and textual depictions of the place where the sun rises. The role of the eastern horizon, already discussed in scholarship, is not unilaterally connected to the Cedar Forest, however.[35] Both the eastern and western horizons, places where the sun appeared and set, were extreme liminal points, used to set the border of an empire or the known world, or mark the point of passage to another place, often the netherworld.[36] Although Inana E contains the most overt reference to the Cedar Forest being located in the east, it is not an isolated occurrence, and a similar context is seen in the text of *Lugalbanda*

32. Inana E, l. 28; see A. Falkenstein, "Untersuchungen zur sumerischen Grammatik (Forsetzung)," *ZA* 48 (1944): 105–6.

33. A *širnamšub* to Utu (Utu F) cites a number of geographic identifiers for the mountains connected to Utu, linking them to cedar, cypress, silver, lapis lazuli, and where the *gakkul* plants grow. This far-ranging imagery may serve to glorify the mountains themselves, but Inana also expresses her desire to go to the "distant source of the rolling rivers [to the mountain]" (id$_2$ hal-hal-la a ki-ta su$_3$-ud-bi-[še$_3$ kur-še$_3$]). See the edition of the text in Samuel Noah Kramer, "BM 23631: Bread for Enlil, Sex for Inana," *Or* 54 (1985): l. 132.

34. See Janice Polonsky, "ki-$^{d}$utu-è-a: Where Destiny Is Determined," in *Landscape in Ideology, Religion, Literature*, part 3 of *Landscapes: Territories, Frontiers, and Horizons in the Ancient Near East; Papers Presented to the XLIV Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale Venezia, 7–11 July 1997*, ed. L. Milano et al. (Padova: S.A.R.G.O.N. Editrice e Libreria, 2000) 89–100.

35. The eastern horizon within the Mesopotamian worldview is discussed in Christopher Woods, "At the Edge of the World: Cosmological Conceptions of the Eastern Horizon in Mesopotamia," *JANER* 9 (2009): 183–239; Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*, MC 8 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 318–62.

36. Woods, "At the Edge of the World," 187–88.

*in the Wilderness*, where the titular hero has wandered through the mountains on his way from Uruk to the city of Aratta, fictional but positioned in the east. The text closes with a difficult passage describing the reappearance of the sun and several stars, also rising in the east, over mountains of cedar and cypress:

an sig$_7$-ga-am$_3$ mul šar$_2$-ra bi$_2$-in-e$_{11}$-X
mas-sum ĝiš-bur$_2$-gin$_7$ bal-e-de$_3$ mul $^{ĝiš}$gigir bi$_2$-in-e$_{11}$
$^{ĝiš}$eren duru$_5$ kur ha-šu-ur$_2$-ra-ke$_4^{ki}$ [. . .]-un-ak
an-ur$_2$ an-pa sa-par$_3$ [. . .]

(In) a clear sky the numerous stars rose . . .
The Sieve, *to turn over like a trap,* the Chariot rose;
(Over) fresh cedars in the cypress mountains . . .
A battle net from horizon to zenith . . .
*Lugalbanda in the Wilderness*, 486, 497–99[37]

Though less overt than the reference to the cedar mountain's eastern location seen in Inana E, this text nevertheless places the mountains of cedar and cypress, both aromatic woods, at the eastern horizon.[38] As this passage furthermore occurs when Lugalbanda is lost in the wilderness en route from Uruk to Aratta, the perspective for the observation of these astral events is arguably eastward as well.[39]

Attestations of the Cedar Forest are prolific in literary texts from the Old Babylonian period. Although texts connected to Gilgamesh may represent the best-known foray into the Cedar Forest, he is representative of a larger pattern, one that we have already seen perpetuated in the actions of Gudea and texts connected to both Enmerkar and Lugalbanda. The distinction between these two figures is one of both intent and action. Gudea's journey to the Cedar Forest (or, more explicitly, the mountain range of cedar) is driven primarily by a desire to acquire building material. This is representative both of his ability as king and of the reach of his empire, but such propagandistic motives are, if anything, ancillary to his more mercenary intent found in these texts, and the acquisition of temple building materials remains paramount. The texts concerning the other rulers, whether in literary texts or royal inscriptions, utilize the Cedar Forest as a marker of extreme distance, demonstrating the reach of their own, often martial, might. In the case of Lugalbanda's travel, the references to mountains covered with cedar and cypress illustrate how far beyond the borders of Mesopotamia the protagonist has journeyed in his wandering as well.

37. Vanstiphout, *Epics of Sumerian Kings*.

38. Cypress trees are principally paired with references to cedar when used to describe a geographic feature or location, though the former can appear on its own. In a *širgida* to Ninurta (Ninurta A; ETCSL c.4.27.01, Segment A: 13), for example, the deity Ninurta is described as "like Utu, rising from the Cypress" ($^{d}$utu ha-šu-ur$_2$-ta e$_3$-[am$_3$]), echoing the popular image of the sun god rising from between forested mountain peaks.

39. Though fictional, Aratta is generally situated in Iran. For an overview of its location, as well as the argument concerning its nature as a real or fictional location, see Piotr Michalowski, "Masters of the Four Corners of the Heavens: Views of the Universe in Early Mesopotamian Writings," in *Geography and Ethnography—the Ancient World: Comparative Histories*, ed. K. A. Raaflaub and J. A. Talbert (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 159–60.

References to tribute and conquest are thus intertwined with representations of the Cedar Forest. Depictions of the location in both the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa* exist within this larger context of imagery, and just as the Cedar Forest often overlapped with locations titled the "cedar mountain" or "foothills of cedar," the descriptions in these texts overlap with the broader context of imagery used to depict forests more generally. Though not every forest seems to be explicitly identified as or associated with the Cedar Forest, guarded by the monstrous Humbaba/Huwawa, to which Gilgamesh travels, these locations are similarly used in narratives depicting a conquering king traveling to and entering them, often alongside his army, and finding the location to be foreign and hostile. Although these narratives are Old Babylonian literary texts, they center on the third-millennium ruler, Sargon of Akkad, whose attestations to the Cedar Forest within his royal inscriptions we have already discussed. The location acquires greater descriptive depth within this material, as seen in the following four texts: *Sargon, the Conquering Hero*; *Sargon in the Foreign Lands*; *Sargon, the Lion*; and *Sargon, the King of Battle*.[40] In the last two, references to the Cedar Forest are fragmentary at best, but the remainder include more substantial descriptions that illuminate the use and changing role of the Cedar Forest.

The first of these, *Sargon, the Conquering Hero*, is an isolated text, found only on a single two-column Old Babylonian tablet of unknown provenance.[41] Set at Sargon's court, the text opens with the ruler's direct address to his warriors and soldiers, wherein he details the superlative nature of their valor and strength. It then shifts to a third-person perspective and form of address in its second column, to describe the strength of Sargon's army. Sargon and his warriors, who "like the stars in the sky covered the plain," move forth on campaign,[42] to encounter resistance not from an opposing military force but rather from the land itself. Sargon is described as having barely ventured into the land called Uta-rapaštim (*ú-ta-ra-pa-áš-tim*) before the forest retaliates:

*tu-ša ge-ri-ma qi₂-iš-tum ig-re-e-šu*
*iš-ku-un ik-li-tam*
*a-na nu-ur₂ ša-ma-i*
*id-ḫi-im ša-am-šu-um*
*ka-ak-ka-<<ak-ka>>-bu u₂-ṣu₂-u₂ // a-na na-ak-ri-im*

As if he were hostile, the forest waged war against him.
It set darkness
In place of the light of the heavens,
The sun dimmed,
The stars sallied forth against the enemy.
*Sargon, the Conquering Hero*, 59–64[43]

40. Joan Goodnick Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade: The Texts*, MC 7 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 57–102.

41. Ibid., 59–60.

42. Ibid., 69, ll. 55–56.

43. Ibid., 70–71. The name of this land is somewhat problematic, and the simplest solution would be to emend the name "uta-rapaštim" to match Utu-napištim, the man who survived the deluge and whom

The forest is conceived of as an enemy: foreign, unfamiliar, and hostile. It is not only an impediment to Sargon's continued campaign but a threat in and of itself. Of course, the landscape of a forest dense enough to provide a shade that, as the text suggests, turned day into night would have been entirely foreign to the Mesopotamian army and king. That unfamiliarity could easily turn into hostility, and moving a large military force through such a dense forest would present any number of practical and logistical difficulties, undoubtedly adding to Sargon's discomfort.[44]

*Sargon in the Foreign Lands* adds to this body of imagery. This text is unfortunately far more fragmentary than *Sargon, the Conquering Hero*, though it does repeat certain sections of the latter. Present in several fragments, including three from Šaduppûm or Tell Harmal, the text centers once again on a narrative of conquest.[45] As opposed to the more general, unnamed forest in the previous text, here the Cedar Forest is directly invoked, appearing after Sargon's troops have crossed the Amanus mountains:

> *[qi₂-š]a-at e-ri-ni-im ik-šu-ud qa-su bi-ri ik-[ki?]-li-šu ḫa-ni-iš*
> *iš-ku-un ka-ki-šu i-ta-qi₂ ni-qi₂-šu il-bi-in ap-pa-šu*
> *te-li-ša-am is₃-qu₂-ur e-lu-ti-im i-ta-qi₂ ni-qi₂-šu il-bi-in*
> *a-pa-šu-ma te-li-ša-am is₃-qu₃-ur i-sa-qa-ra-<am> me-gi-ir ir-ni-na*
>
> He reached the cedar forest. Amidst its din(?) he bowed down, (and)
> Readied his weapons. He offered a sacrifice, made obeisance,
> Spoke distinctly. He offered his pure sacrifices, made
> Obeisance, spoke distinctly. He speaks, the favored one of the Goddess
> *Sargon in the Foreign Lands*, 12′–15′[46]

Two tropes are at work here: the first is the repeated imagery of the forest as a foreboding space: dark, foreign, and potentially hostile in and of itself. The second, however, is the connection between the forest—and specifically the Cedar Forest—and the divine, as well as the sacrifices that they require. Though the Cedar Forest is once again a foreign environment, it is not, as in the previous text, as overtly hostile in its depiction.[47] Instead, its foreignness is rooted in its otherworldly qualities, features that connect it most strongly to the divine realm. It serves as a larger setting for deities, and that connection enables the sacrifices and offerings that Sargon provides on behalf of the divine who inhabit the forest.

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Gilgamesh meets on his quest for immortality. As it stands, the text has Sargon venturing with his army into the more literal translation of the "wide," which is also semantically possible. See the footnote and further explanations in ibid., 69, l. 58.

44. Although forests are infrequently associated directly with difficult or fraught passage, mountains are often described as such and used in Middle and Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions to demonstrate the remote and difficult nature of frontier terrain; see Simonetta Ponchia, "Mountain Routes in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions, Part I," *KASKAL* 1 (2004): 139–77; Simonetta Ponchia, "Mountain Routes in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions, Part II," *SAAB* 15 (2006): 193–271.

45. Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade*, 78–79.

46. Ibid., 82–83.

47. Note that the Cedar Forest is here written out syllabically as *qišat erēnim.* In previous examples of Akkadian texts, the Cedar Forest has overwhelmingly been represented through Sumerograms, primarily $^{giš}$TIR $^{giš}$EREN, with the determinative "giš" (wood) preceding "tir" (forest) occasionally omitted.

### *Gilgamesh and the Cedar Forest*

The ease with which divine and supernatural figures find their homes in the Cedar Forest is underscored throughout the course of its appearances in the series of texts connected to Gilgamesh. In the Sumerian text of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A*, Gilgamesh and Enkidu must cross seven mountain ranges in order to reach the Cedar Forest. They are specifically guided there by seven supernatural figures, who promise to guide the pair to the "portage places" ($ma_2$-$ur_3$-$ma_2$-$ur_3$ hur-saĝ-ĝa$_2$-$ke_4$) of the mountains.[48] The very act of traveling to the Cedar Forest requires a journey of great distance, brought about only with supernatural assistance. The Sumerian text seems to indicate that Gilgamesh and Enkidu travel east to reach the Cedar Forest, contrary to the later associations between Lebanon and the Cedar Forest and the greater presence of cedar trees to the west of Mesopotamia. It is, however, possible to associate the $^{ĝiš}$eren of the *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A* with an aromatic juniper tree (*Juniperus polycarpos*), which was readily found in the foothills of the Zagros mountains.[49] Capable of growing to heights of twenty meters, this tree would easily provide a dramatic enough setting.

Although the Cedar Forest acts as an epic setting for the battle between Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and Huwawa, their opening interaction is political in nature. Mirroring the connection between kingship and the Cedar Forest, Huwawa is cast as a foreign power within these texts, described as the ruler of the distant land of the Cedar Forest. In the Old Babylonian Sumerian text of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A*, Gilgamesh offers his two sisters in marriage to Huwawa, echoing the means by which alliances were brokered between the rulers of different lands.[50] Gilgamesh swears on the life of both his mother and his father that his only aim is to increase Huwawa's own renown and pleads, "So give me your aurae; I wish to join your family!" ($ni_2$-zu ba-ma-ra su-zu-a ga-an-$ku_4$).[51]

Gilgamesh approaches Huwawa through the medium of familial understanding and the promise of fostering future political connections: he grounds his own presence by swearing by his mother and father, the latter of whom was a king, and promises his two sisters (Peštur, as seen above, and Enmebaragesi, in the lines preceding) to Huwawa in marriage. These political gestures hide his larger deception: his marriage promises are lies, the names of the potential wives merely puns engineered to mock Huwawa's

48. *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A*, l. 60.

49. See Woods, "Edge of the World," 191; Jacob Klein and Kathleen Abraham, "Problems of Geography in the Gilgameš Epics: The Journey to the 'Cedar Forest,'" in Milano et al., *Landscape*, 65–66. Concerning the more modern remnants of the cedar forests in this region, see E. W. Beals, "The Remnant Cedar Forests of Lebanon," *Journal of Ecology* 53 (1965): 679–94.

50. *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A* and *B* are two versions of one text that belongs to a group of five Sumerian texts connected to Gilgamesh, including *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*; *Gilgamesh and Agga*; *Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld*; and *the Death of Gilgamesh*. Of the five, only *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven* is currently known from Ur III sources, though all are represented in Old Babylonian copies. Given the connected narrative of these texts, the absence of the other four in the Ur III period may stem from the chance nature of preservation and discovery rather than accurately reflect the literary landscape of the Ur III period; see Daniel E. Fleming and Sara J. Milstein, *The Buried Foundations of the Gilgamesh Epic: The Akkadian Huwawa Narrative*, Cuneiform Monographs 39 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 7–10.

51. For transliteration, see Dietz Otto Edzard, "Gilgameš und Huwawa A. II. Teil," *ZA* 81 (1991): 209–12.

ignorance.[52] When Huwawa retracts his me-lam$_2$, or his protective aurae, in response to these overtures, Gilgamesh seizes the opportunity and kills Huwawa, an act for which Enlil later admonishes him in a rebuke that reinforces the depiction of the Cedar Forest as a foreign polity with Huwawa at its head. He informs Gilgamesh that he should have treated Huwawa as an equal, should have eaten and drunk with him as one ruler would do with another.[53]

A more recently published additional fragment of Tablet V of the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh* reiterates many of the qualities seen in the Sumerian account of Gilgamesh and Enkidu's encounter with the guardian of the Cedar Forest.[54] The abundant nature of the area is described in full and vivid detail, including a reference to the chorus of monkeys sounding like musicians, as if they were at the court of Humbaba:

[*pa-ga-t*]*i iš-tam-ma-ra mi-ra-nu*
[*kīma ki-ṣi*]*r*$^{?}$ *na-a-ri u ti-gi-i*
*u*$_4$*-mi-šam-ma ur-ta-ṣa-nu ina pa-*⌜*ni*⌝ $^{d}$*ḫum-ba-ba*

[Monkey mothers] sing aloud, a young monkey shrieks:
[Like a band(?)] of musicians and drummers(?),
Daily they beat out a rhythm in the presence of Humbaba
*Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet V: 24–26[55]

In creating the overall appearance of a royal orchestra, we reaffirm Humbaba's overall standing as a foreign ruler, or at least a figure of significance within the foreign land of the Cedar Forest. The Akkadian text minimizes, to a degree, the diplomatic nature of the interaction between Gilgamesh and Humbaba, with the battle between them presented as a more straightforward martial conflict. In the Sumerian text, Gilgamesh incorporates political subterfuge in order to win the day. Regardless, these more recent additions to the Akkadian epic confirm that, within his own domain of the Cedar Forest, Humbaba may still hold sovereign standing.

Though it is not as explicit as Enlil's admonishment in *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A,* Gilgamesh and Enkidu's actions—and, moreover, Enkidu's reaction to them—work to reinforce the analogue of the Cedar Forest as a foreign polity. After Humbaba's defeat, Enkidu questions Gilgamesh, asking him, "[My friend,] we have reduced the forest [to] a desert ([*ib-ri ana*] *tu-ša*$_2$*-ar niš-ta-kan* $^{giš}$TIR), [how] shall we answer Enlil in

52. Gilgamesh offers Huwawa his two "sisters," named Enmebaragesi and Peštur. As has been discussed by Alhena Gadotti and Piotr Michalowski, the former references the historical daughter of Šulgi, while the latter is also a famous king of Kish. On both names, see the discussion in Alhena Gadotti, "Portraits of the Feminine in Sumerian Literature," *JAOS* 131 (2011): 199–200; Piotr Michalowski, "A Man Called Enmebaragesi," in *Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien: Festschrift für Claus Wilcke*, ed. W. Sallaberger et al., Orientalia biblica et christiana 14 (Wiesbaden: Harrosowitz, 2003), 195–208.

53. Enlil also chastises Gilgamesh, saying that he should have honored Huwawa rather than killing him, stating, "Was it said that you should erase his name from the earth?" (ba-du$_{11}$-ga-ke$_4$-eš mu-ni ki-ta ha-lam-ke$_4$-eš). If Huwawa was positioned within the text as an analogue for a ruler, he was a ruler who operated with the full approval and legitimation of Enlil, and Gilgamesh's actions violate the rules governing proper diplomatic engagement.

54. See F. N. H. Al-Rawi and A. R. George, "Back to the Cedar Forest: The Beginning and End of Tablet V of the Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgameš," *JCS* 66 (2014): 69–90.

55. Ibid.

Nippur?"[56] Gilgamesh and Enkidu have claimed the forest's cedars and transported them downstream, but they have also devastated the land itself.[57] In leveling the Cedar Forest, turning it from the previously lush and abundant forest into a devastated plain, Gilgamesh parallels the purported destruction of cities at the hands of conquering kings, who claimed to turn these cities from inhabited and vibrant communities to ruin mounds. This imagery of conquest is widely reiterated across the corpus of royal inscriptions and seen well into the first millennium.[58]

Although the Cedar Forest is an important source for material vital for the construction of temples, throughout the entire span of its attestations it is also invoked in the same breath as conquest. It is thus conceived of and realized in terms of these conquests, be they actual or fictional. Within the context of *Gilgamesh and Huwawa A*, in particular, the Cedar Forest is given a foreign court to match the conquest narrative, and that foreignness is emphasized by the monstrous, though bumbling and uneducated, qualities of its ruler, Huwawa. Overall, the Cedar Forest exhibits a more grounded reality in its attestations that, as we shall see, references to Dilmun lack, despite the well-established economic connections between Dilmun and Mesopotamia.

## Dilmun, Island of the Gods

In many ways, the Cedar Forest stands in contrast to the second location under consideration, Dilmun. Located at modern-day Bahrain, the island was ideally situated to facilitate maritime trade through the Persian Gulf and attained prominence because of it. It was thus well attested in economic documents, with references seen from the late Uruk period onward.[59] Unlike the Cedar Forest, however, which was reliably referenced well into the Neo-Assyrian period, Dilmun is represented less frequently after the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods, thanks in part to a decline in that same

56. Ibid., ll. 303–4.

57. Specifically, Enkidu describes how they should let the Euphrates River ($^{id2}$*purattu*) carry the cedars downstream to Nippur; see *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet V: 297 (edition: A. R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003]). The new tablet of this section features this episode in greater detail, describing how Gilgamesh and Enkidu create a raft of cedars that they appear to ride downstream; see Al-Rawi and George, "Back to the Cedar Forest," l. 318.

58. Ḫammurabi described how he "captured Mari, destroyed its wall, and turned the land into rubble heap and ruins" (RIME 4, E4.3.6.11: 27–30). Sennacherib stands as one of the foremost examples of the enduring power of such imagery, recounting in the so-called Bavian Inscription the devastation he visits upon the city of Babylon, stating, "I destroyed, devastated, (and) burned with fire the city, and (its) buildings, from its foundations to its crenellations. I removed the bricks and earth . . . from the (inner) wall and outer wall, the temples, (and) the ziggurat, (and) I threw (it) into the Araḫtu river. I dug canals into the center of that city and leveled their site with water. I destroyed the outline of its foundations and (thereby) made its destruction surpass that of the Deluge. So that in the future, the site of that city and (its) temples will be unrecognizable, I dissolved it (Babylon) in water and annihilated (it), (making it) like a meadow" (RINAP 3, Sennacherib 223: 50b–53b). See also Marc van de Mieroop, "Revenge, Assyrian Style," *Past and Present* 179 (2003): 3–4. Though Gilgamesh and Enkidu choose a more understated tactic than the vivid examples provided, their intent in devastating the Cedar Forest is quite similar.

59. In its earliest textual attestations, Dilmun is recorded in economic and lexical texts from Uruk III and Uruk IV; see Robert Englund, "Dilmun in the Archaic Uruk Corpus," in *Dilmun: New Studies in the Archaeology and Early History of Bahrain*, ed. D. T. Potts (Berlin: D. Reimer Verlag, 1983), 35–37.

trade that had elevated it to begin with.[60] The relative paucity of its attestations is offset by the depth of its descriptions, as Dilmun is characterized with a detail that is not afforded to the Cedar Forest, with the exception of the latter's references in texts concerning Gilgamesh.

Dilmun may serve as a home for deities within literary texts, but it is also invoked, particularly within the sphere of royal inscriptions, as a point of distance, a liminal—though very real—location referenced in order to demonstrate the power of the king.[61] Although a full survey of such attestations is well outside the present scope of this essay, a brief investigation provides a sufficient sketch of the overall pattern of Dilmun's attestations. The location appears in royal inscriptions as early as the reign of Ur-Nanše of Lagaš (ca. 2500 BCE), whose inscriptions make multiple references to trade from Dilmun, with ships coming from the island laden with timber they have brought as tribute.[62] Sargon, similarly, proclaims that he "moored the ships of Meluḫḫa, Magan, and Dilmun at the quay of Agade."[63] Sargon's successors, however, no longer utilize references to Dilmun, although the other two locations remain present, with Nāram-Sîn in particular making frequent mention of Magan in his royal inscriptions, describing his campaigns to conquer it and the objects he took as booty.[64] In the same vein, the Ur III rulers Ur-Namma and Šū-Sîn consistently refer to other locations, including Magan, even when they do not reference Dilmun within their royal inscriptions.[65] Evidence of economic interactions with Dilmun persists even when Dilmun is not consistently referenced in royal inscriptions, with merchants belonging to Dilmun seen during the Old Babylonian period.[66] In later periods, such

60. Although references to Dilmun are occasionally seen in the Old Babylonian period, the name is infrequently attested in economic texts from the south of Mesopotamia after the end of the Isin-Larsa period; see Harriet Crawford, "Dilmun, Victim of World Recession," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 26 (1996): 13–17. In his eleventh regnal year, Samsuiluna claimed to have destroyed the walls of Ur and Uruk, striking a major blow to the southern port city upon which trade with Dilmun depended; see Andrea Seri, *The House of Prisoners: Slavery and State in Uruk During the Revolt Against Samsu-iluna*, Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records 2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 20–54.

61. On Dilmun in myth more generally, see Bendt Alster, "Dilmun, Bahrain, and the Alleged Paradise in Sumerian Myth and Literature," in *Dilmun: New Studies in the Archaeology and Early History of Bahrain*, ed. D. T. Potts (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1983), 39–74; Dina Katz, "Enki and Ninhursaĝa, Part One: The Story of Dilmun," *BiOr* 64 (2007): 567–90.

62. RIME 1, E1.9.1.2. The text references tribute coming through Dilmun from the foreign lands (kurta). The phrase is repeated in other texts, including RIME 1, E1.9.1.6a; E1.9.1.17; E1.9.1.20; E.1.9.1.22; and several others. The frequency of the references to Dilmun point to its prominence in this period. Gudea, following in the footsteps of Ur-Nanše, also references Dilmun, along with Magan and Meluḫḫa, as bringing cargoes of timber to Lagaš: "Magan, Meluḫḫa, Gubin, and Dilmun—supplying (Gudea) with wood, (Ningirsu) let their timber cargoes (sail) to Lagaš," (RIME 3/1, E3/1.1.7.StD: iv 7–14).

63. RIME 2, E.2.1.1.11; E.2.1.1.12.

64. RIME 2, E2.1.4.3. In RIME 2, E2.1.4.13, Narām-Sîn describes not only his successful campaign against Magan but also his capture of its ruler.

65. Magan is referenced throughout royal inscriptions in the Ur III period. For Ur-Namma, see RIME 3/2, E3/2.1.1.17; E3/2.1.1.18. For Šū-Sîn, see RIME 3/2, E3/2.1.4.2. Meluḫḫa is also absent from Ur III sources; see Laursen and Steinkeller, *Babylonia*, 56–57.

66. We find references to one Ea-nāṣir, a copper merchant with a reputation for dishonorable dealings, who is identified in texts as one of a number of merchants called the *alik Tilmun*, or "Dilmun traders." Ea-nāṣir is dated via mentions in other texts to the years Rīm-Sîn 19 and Rīm-Sîn 11 (1803 and 1811 BCE), providing a general range for his career as a merchant. See D. T. Potts, *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity I: From Prehistory to the Fall of the Achaemenid Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 221–23. For standards providing equivalences between weights at Ur and Dilmun, see Michael Roaf, "Weights on the Dilmun

as the royal inscriptions of Middle- and Neo-Assyrian rulers, Dilmun continues to appear, increasingly presented as the furthest known point, a final outpost of real space set on the edge of empire and a marker of the extreme edge of conquered and claimed space.[67]

Beyond royal inscriptions, Dilmun is represented in a wide range of texts, including city laments, lexical lists, and proverbs, such as one that states: "A ship of Dilmun sank, though there was no wind" ($^{ĝiš}$ma$_2$ dilmun-na tum$_9$ nu-mir ba-an-da-su).[68] Although the island is mentioned in a number of literary texts, including *Enki and the World Order*, it features most prominently in the text *Enki and Ninhursaĝ*. As the title suggests, the text is concerned with the actions of the god Enki, using Dilmun as the setting for his interactions with a number of other deities. A description of Dilmun thus opens *Enki and Ninhursaĝ*, quickly establishing the more notable qualities of the land. It is described in nearly paradisiacal terms, as pure (ku$_3$-ga-am$_3$), sanctified (sikil-am$_3$), and bright or shining (dadag-ga-am$_3$).[69]

This trio of verbs (ku$_3$, sikil, and dadag) is deliberately chosen to reinforce the pure and sanctified qualities of the island. These verbs directly evoke the language seen in incantations, where this vocabulary is incorporated into formulaic refrains meaning "may it be pure, may it be cleansed, and may it be bright" (he$_2$-ku$_3$ he$_2$-sikil he$_2$-dadag), though the particular order of the three may vary.[70] These refrains directly preceded the closing rubric of incantations, noted by the use of ka-inim-ma ("it is the wording of the incantation") to preface a summation of the incantation's purpose.[71] These qualities are occasionally elaborated upon in incantations, further underscored through analogic relationships to the heavens and the earth, as seen in fairly formulaic closing lines that proclaim, for example, "May it be purified like the heavens; May it be cleansed like the earth; In the midst of the heavens, may it be

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Standard," *Iraq* 44 (1982): 137–41; Jesper Eidem and Flemming Højlund, "Trade or Diplomacy? Assyria and Dilmun in the Eighteenth Century BC," *World Archaeology* 24 (1993): 441–48.

67. An inscription of the Middle Assyrian king Tukultī-Ninurta I, for example, asserts that he is, among other epithets, the king of Dilmun and Meluḫḫa (RIMA 1, A.0.78.24: 15). Sargon II not only references the king of Dilmun (Uperi) but places the island thirty *bēru* away, in the midst of the sea; see C. J. Gadd, "Inscribed Prisms of Sargon II from Nimrud," *Iraq* 16 (1954): 192–93. For an overview of Sargon II's interactions with Dilmun, see Josette Elayi, *Sargon II, King of Assyria*, Archaeology and Biblical Studies 22 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 190–94. The measurement *bēru* was used as a unit of distance as well as time, indicating a measure of over ten kilometers or a double-hour, one twelfth of the day (CAD B, s.v. *bēru* A). Later Assyrian rulers such as Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal all reference Dilmun throughout their inscriptions. The kings describe how Dilmun submitted in fear to the power of the god Aššur and the kings (RINAP 3/2, Sennacherib 168: 36b), declare themselves directly as the king of Dilmun (RINAP 4, Esarhaddon 48: 22), and use it as a geographic marker for the empire's own extent (RIMB 2, Ashurbanipal B.6.32.19).

68. Bendt Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer: The World's Earliest Proverb Collections* (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1997) 287–88, CT 58 30: line 1. The other proverbs on this tablet are unconnected to Dilmun.

69. *Enki and Ninhursaĝ* ll. 5–6. See edition in Pascal Attinger, "Enki et Nin[h]ursa[g]a," *ZA* 74 (1984): 1–52.

70. Though partially reconstructed, this line is written in the closing lines of an Old Babylonian incantation as he$_2$-sikil he$_2$-ku$_3$ he$_2$-dadag; the meanings of the three verbs are, in such instances, fairly interchangeable. See M. J. Geller, "A New Piece of Witchcraft," in *DUMU-E$_2$-DUB-BA-A: Studies in Honor of Åke Sjöberg*, ed. H. Behrens, D. Loding, and M. T. Roth. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), l. 56′.

71. See M. J. Geller, "Incipits and Rubrics," in *Wisdom, Gods, and Literature: Studies in Assyriology in Honour of W. G. Lambert*, ed. A. R. George and I. L. Finkel (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 225–58.

sanctified!" (an-gin$_7$ he$_2$-em-ku$_3$-ge / ki-gin$_7$ he$_2$-em-sikil-e / ša$_3$-an-na-ke$_4$ he$_2$-em-dadag-ge).[72] The use of these geographic referents establishes that those pure and sanctified qualities reach as far as the upper and lower extremes implied by the heavens and the earth, an early prototype of the "as above, so below" refrain known from Western Hermetic texts, which describes a unity of all actions, reflecting both the microcosm and macrocosm of the universe.[73]

Dilmun's paradisiacal qualities not only are described in terms of the purity it possesses but also are represented by what it lacks. Within the landscape of the text, Dilmun is a place without sickness, infirmity, or age:

igi-gig-e igi-gig-me-en nu-mu-ni-bi
sag-gig-gi sag-gig-me-en nu-mu-ni-bi
um-ma-bi um-ma-me-en nu-mu-ni-bi
ab-ba-bi ab-ba-me-en nu-mu-ni-bi

No illness of the eye said: "I am an illness of the eye,"
No affliction of the head said: "I am an affliction of the head,"
No old woman (of Dilmun) said: "I am an old woman."
No old man (of Dilmun) said: "I am an old man."
*Enki and Ninhursaĝ*, 22–25[74]

Although only the illness of the eye and head are mentioned, we may *pars pro toto* assume that Dilmun similarly lacks all illnesses. The lack of the elderly has more far-reaching ramifications, given the very particular wording of this section of the text. The relevant lines do not merely state that the elderly are not found in Dilmun; after all, such a demographic would not necessarily establish Dilmun as a paradise, given the predominance of dystopian literature featuring targeted culls of a population's elderly, often veiled by clever, if horrifying, euphemisms.[75] Instead, they reject the possibility of such individuals: it is age itself that is denied. Dilmun is a place that exists before and beyond the mandated and structured flow of time, when age is not an affliction that troubles humanity, a situation akin to the longer lifespans seen with the certain rulers listed in the Sumerian King List.[76]

72. YBC 4184: 24–26; see J. van Dijk, "Un ritual de purification des armes et de l'armée essai de traduction de YBC 4184," in *Symbolae Biblicae et Mesopotamicae: Francisco Mario Theodoro de Liagre Böhl Dedicatae*, ed. M. A. Beek et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 108–17.

73. As represented in the Emerald Tablet or Tabula Smaragdina, the text, translated from Arabic sources into Latin in the twelfth century CE, recounts that "what is below is like that which is above, and what is above is like that which is below." See Florian Ebeling, *The Secret History of Hermes Trismegistus: Hermeticism from Ancient to Modern Times*, trans. D. Lorton (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 48–50.

74. Attinger, "Enki et Nin[h]ursa[g]a."

75. Though examples of such dystopias abound, I will limit myself to two. We see this in the increasingly dystopian utopia of Lois Lowry's 1993 novel *The Giver*, where elderly and otherwise noncontributing members of society are "released to Elsewhere." Similarly, Boxer, the hardworking and naïve horse of George Orwell's 1945 novella *Animal Farm*, is sold to a knacker when his strength fails, though Napoleon and his fellow pigs claim that he was actually sent to the veterinarian.

76. We see extended lifespans in the reigns assigned to early, antediluvian kings in the Sumerian King List; see the edition in Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List*, AS 11 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), and Claudine-Adrienne Vincente, "The Tell Leilān Recension of the Sumerian King List,"

The closing lines of the section describe Dilmun continuing the trend of the previous lines by proclaiming the island's general safety and lack of either public or private grief:

niĝir-e zag-ga-na nu-um-nigin
nar-e e-lu-lam nu-mu-ni-bi
zag-uru-ka i-lu nu-mu-ni-bi

No herald made the patrol in his border district,
No singer sang an *elulam*[77] there,
No wailings were sung in the city's outskirts.
*Enki and Ninhursaĝ*, 28–30[78]

We can infer that Dilmun is a place without death or calamity; there can be no obligation for mourning if death itself is unknown. Although we traditionally see a dichotomy between the dangerous country and the civilized world of the city, a space delineated and protected by the city, its walls, and the heralds or watchmen who guarded them, Dilmun also disregards those qualities. Even the outer edges of the city do not require protection, implying that enemies are also unknown in this setting.

Despite all this, Dilmun is not perfect, as it lacks a directly accessible source of fresh water, which keeps the setting and the text as a whole from fitting easily into this classification of a precivilization paradise myth. The goddess Ninsikila laments the lack of freshwater in Dilmun, a plea that is answered not by Enki but by the god Utu, who restores freshwater to the island's irrigation networks. Enki still occupies the central position in the text as its protagonist, and the main narrative is concerned with Enki's sequence of sexual hijinks with the goddess Ninhursag, the ultimate result of which is the creation of eight minor deities to respectively heal Enki's afflicted body parts.[79] The concluding sections of the text function as an etiology for these minor deities, as well as an explanation for the treatment of illnesses and ailments afflicting the body.

Enki's own connection to Dilmun exists as a confluence of several factors. The island did possibly host a cult of Enki, though the existence of such a cult is debated and, if present, is one that would have developed after major contact with Mesopotamia was established.[80] Enki, however, is represented in other texts in ways that place him, like Dilmun in *Enki and Ninhursaĝ*, as belonging to a space before proper, ordered time. This is most clearly seen in a passage of *Enmerkar and the Lord of*

*ZA* 85 (1995): 234–70. Later, mankind is given shorter lifespans, with references to a limitation of 120 years; see Jacob Klein, "The 'Bane' of Humanity: A Lifespan of One Hundred Twenty Years," *Acta Sumerologica* 12 (1999): 57–70.

77. The *elulam* is interpreted here as a "Klagelied" or even a funeral dirge, but it is rarely attested outside of this text; see A. Falkenstein, "Sumerische religiöse Texte," *ZA* 56 (1964): 51–52.

78. Attinger, "Enki et Nin[h]ursa[g]a."

79. The eight deities are assigned fates at the end of the text, with two declared to be the lords of distant lands: Ninsikila as the lord of Magan and Ensag as the lord of Dilmun.

80. Concerning the interpretation of the Barbar temple as a temple to Enki, see Potts, *Arabian Gulf*, 202–5; Khaled al Nashef, "The Deities of Dilmun," in *Bahrain Through the Ages: The Archaeology*, ed. S. H. A. al-Khalifa and M. Rice (London: Kegan Paul International, 1986), 340–66.

*Aratta* often referred to as the "Incantation of Nudimmud" (nam-šub $^{d}$nu-dim$_{2}$-mud-da-ke$_{4}$), which describes a time when a number of predators, and even fear itself, are absent from the world and when all peoples "speak to Enlil in one language" ($^{d}$en-lil$_{2}$-ra eme diš-am$_{3}$ he$_{2}$-en-na-ab-du$_{11}$).[81] It is Enki who alters the speech of mankind in this passage, and although the interlude appears in this muddled, prototime, the text as a whole utilizes a primarily straightforward temporality in its narrative. In confusing the speech of men from one single tongue to many, he moves the passage away from a similarly paradisiacal prototime.

Returning to *Enki and Ninhursaĝ*, although the text devotes considerable attention to the description of Dilmun as a quasi-paradisiacal location, one pure, sanctified, and even free from illness and the ravages of time, it does less to connect that setting to the narrative itself, leading to the inevitable question of why the text is set on the island in the first place. Such a location, pointedly described as free from any and all strife and conflict, has fewer natural opportunities to serve as an exciting setting, in stark contrast to the more martial qualities of the Cedar Forest, which by default and design facilitate the battles that occur in texts set there. Thanks to its position as a trading center, Dilmun was certainly a well-known location in the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods. Despite this concrete connection with Mesopotamia, Dilmun within literary texts is defined as not only distant but partially imagined, abstracted to appear as a place both faraway and fantastical. The qualities are referenced even when Dilmun is only an ancillary location: in the concluding lines of the *Sumerian Flood Story*, the gods settle Ziudsura in "an overseas country, in the land of Dilmun, where the sun rises" (kur-bal kur dilmun-na ki $^{d}$utu e$_{3}$-še$_{3}$ mu-un-til$_{3}$-eš).[82] While the previously discussed reference to the rising sun in regard to the location of the Cedar Forest appears to directly connect to a location on the eastern horizon, Dilmun's more fixed location to the south requires a different explanation.

Dilmun's island nature may provide one possible answer. This quality sets it apart from other referenced distant locations, such as the Cedar Forest, Marḫashi, and Meluḫḫa, even though the last two are also referenced as being reached by water. The association with the horizon alluded to in the flood story further reinforces Dilmun's location as a liminal space, quite literally set on the edge of the map, and the requirement that one must cross the boundary of water in order to reach it reinforces its fantastical nature. The transitional properties of bodies of water and their ability to move a protagonist from a grounded setting to more fantastical one are elaborated in other texts, including, most famously, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.[83] Although, unlike his Sumerian counterpart Ziudsudra, Utu-napištim is not directly described as placed in Dilmun, he is still relegated to the location that necessitates crossing a large body of water. To reach him, Gilgamesh states clearly the necessity of his crossing the

81. *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, l. 146 (see Vanstiphout, *Epics of the Sumerian Kings*).

82. *Sumerian Flood Story*, Segment E. Transliteration for this segment following ETCSL; for earlier published editions, see also Samuel Noah Kramer, "The Sumerian Deluge Myth: Reviewed and Revisited," *Aramaic Studies* 33 (1993): 115–21.

83. George, *Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic*, 517–22. On the sea as a border in Sumerian and Akkadian texts, see Gina Konstantopoulos, "The Bitter River and the Waters of Death: The Sea as a Conceptual Border in Mesopotamia." *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 35 (2020): 171–98.

sea (A.AB.BA *lu-bir*).[84] Upon hearing his objective, Siduri tells Gilgamesh that it is impossible:

*ul ib-ši* $^{d}$GIŠ-*gim*$_2$-*maš ne*$_2$-*be*$_2$-*ru ma-ti-ma*
*u ma-am-ma ša*$_2$ *ul-tu u*$_4$-*um ṣa-at* {KUR} *la ib-bi-ru tam-ta*
*e-bir tam-ti* $^{d}$UTU *qu-ra-du-um-mu*
*ba-lu* $^{d}$UTU *e-bir tam-tim man-nu*
*pa-aš*$_2$-*qat ne*$_2$-*ber-tum šup-šu-qat u*$_2$-*ru-uḫ-ša*$_2$
*u*$_3$ *bi-ra-a* A.MEŠ *mu-ti ša*$_2$ *pa-na-as-sa par-ku*

There never was, Gilgamesh, a way across,
Since the days of old, none can cross the ocean.
The one who crosses the ocean is the warrior Šamaš,
Apart from Šamaš, who is there that can cross the ocean?
The crossing is perilous, its way full of hazard,
and in between are the Waters of Death, that lie across the way forward.
*Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet X: 79–84[85]

The waters Gilgamesh does cross are cited as the "waters of death," which may be a reference to the nonirrigable saltwater of the Gulf, though they are also described with poisonous qualities: if Gilgamesh were to touch the waters with his hand, it would immediately wither and "go lame."[86] Figuratively, the ocean's association with death reinforces the barrier it presents, as well as foreshadowing Gilgamesh's approaching confrontation with the realization and eventual acceptance of his own mortality. In moving first past the horizon, and now crossing the "waters of death," Gilgamesh will be forced to confront the prospect of his own eventual demise.[87]

## Conclusion

In returning to the comparison between the two locations, although each is cast in a fantastical light and features a unique relationship to both the divine and mortal actors who may appear in texts featuring each, it is clear that Dilmun is mythicized to a degree that the Cedar Forest was not. Despite serving as a major trading center, and being thus well connected to Mesopotamia as a fully actualized, though distant, location, Dilmun is cast as a paradisiacal protoplace, thanks perhaps in part to its island nature, a quality that was unsurprisingly essential to its role as a major port and intermediary for maritime trade through the Gulf. The Cedar Forest, on the other hand,

84. *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet X: 76 (ed. George).
85. *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet X: 79–84 (ed. George).
86. *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tablet X: 175 (ed. George). On this passage of the Gilgamesh epic, see Ann Kilmer, "Crossing the Waters of Death: The 'Stone Things' in the Gilgamesh Epic," *WZKM* 86 (1996): 213–17.
87. The fear and uncertainty of death underscores the narrative of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*; see Sophus Helle, "Babylonian Perspectives on the Uncertainty of Death: SB *Gilgamesh* X 301–321," *KASKAL* 14 (2017): 211–19.

featured heavily in stories of military conquest, and those associations influenced its depictions in literature, grounding them, and it, in a firmer reality.

I would stress the importance of these fantastical qualities, and the Cedar Forest and Dilmun are portrayed as larger-than-life settings not by accident but rather as a matter of necessity. It may seem that I have devoted more space to the "margins" than to the gods that the title of this article claimed we may find there, but the nature of these marginal locations enables the very presence of these divine figures within these epic and mythical narratives. When considering the roles of the Cedar Forest and Dilmun in the texts that feature them, particularly when these locations play prominent roles within the narrative, it is clear that the texts would not function so well were they set anywhere ordinary; nor would the protagonists find themselves capable of such grand battles and actions. The extraordinary nature of these spaces is required in order to create locations where the divine and the supernatural may interact with more human actors.

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