

# The story of gilgamesh in sumerian versions essay



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In world literature 1, the story of Gilgamesh is among the oldest narratives around the world. The story was initially an oral tradition story and was later recorded on clay in Mesopotamia. The legendary story comes in different Sumerian versions from around 2700 B. C. The story talks about the powers of Gilgamesh who was the King of Uruk and the influence of other gods in the land.

Later on it was recorded in a Akkadian version and then reserved in King Assurbanipal' s library. According to the story, Gilgamesh was a super human creature and a powerful king who could destroy and conquer others (Lishtar para. 1). This paper seeks to critique the nature and powers of historical gods and their relationship to humanity in the past centuries as depicted by the narrative.

Heroism of the kings is limited. The story describes how Gilgamesh oppressed people and slept with every woman. This made the people plead with other gods to provide security for them. As a result, Enkidu is created to counter Gilgamesh powers. Enkidu is however not as powerful as the superhuman king because he is part man and part animal.

The limitation of the king's powers is further seen when Gilgamesh fails to prevent death of Enkidu. This incident occurred after Enkidu and Gilgamesh collaborated to kill the Bull of Heaven (drought) who wanted to crush Gilgamesh to death (George 2). Drought had been sent by Anu the father of Ishatar who wanted Gilgamesh to marry her. On refusal, Ishtar compelled her father to kill the King of Uruk. But because two thirds of Gilgamesh was a god and the other third human, Enkidu died.

The other issue that emerges from the myth is that the gods in Uruk are uncooperative. This can be seen when the council of gods decide to kill Enkidu as a punishment for Gilgamesh's actions. This exposed the other humans to the exploitive powers of the King of Uruk. This further shows that the people in Babylonia were subjects to the gods and had no voice. Human beings are also depicted as creatures that have no freedom.

According to the story, Gilgamesh gods have the power over life and death but Gilgamesh still becomes worried after realizing that she would also die. When the people pleaded with gods to create a god who would match Gilgamesh's powers, the gods created Enkidu and also brought an end to his life. In the story, Gilgamesh is determined to learn the secrets behind life and death. The story says that Utnapishtim was the only creature who had the power to eternally live.

In his search for the secret, he meets Utnapishtim who tells him about the flood story that is also described in Genesis, in the Bible. The floods symbolically represent the end and punishment for human kind. Utnapishtim says that they were saved from the floods by other gods and that it would not occur again. However, human beings have to die since they are not immortal.

According to the story, the Bull of heaven is referred to as drought. This is an irony. Naturally, drought is known to be catastrophic because it causes human suffering. However, the ' Bull' springs from heaven where people believe that there are good things and that it is a beautiful land.

The other ironic incident is between King Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Gilgamesh is portrayed as a god and a man whereas Enkidu is illustrated as an animal and a man. This is a clear indicator of the differences in the two divinities who were created to control humanity.

The floods are symbolically used to show that man is immortal and death is inevitable. The narrative describes the birth and death of Babylonian gods'.

Gilgamesh is depicted as a remorseless leader who has no responsibility for his people. He is depicted as a womanizer and an oppressor. He forces the city's inhabitants to build walls for the temple so as gain fame. These are indicators of abuse of power and therefore the need to limit the powers of gods.

George, Andrew. The epic of Gilgamesh: the Babylonian epic poem and other texts in Akkadian and Sumerian. London, Great Britain: The Penguin Press, 1999. Print.

Lishtar. Gilgamesh and Enkidu: the soul siblings. 1999. Web. <http://www.gatewaystobabylon.com/gods/partnerships/gilgaenk1.html>