NEW PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER, FAITH AND THE OTHER
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Hartje Award Winner

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Despite his reputation for being a merciless killer and the credit many give him for truly starting the demise of the Roman Empire, it can be hard to take Attila seriously. One can scarcely imagine him as anything other than a screaming barbarian wreaking havoc on a scale of Hollywood proportions. His tenure as sole ruler of the Huns, which involved his famous, devastating attack into Italy that may have garnered approval from Michael Bay or Mel Gibson, was predicated on political maneuvering that was in fact more deft than brutish. Like many good stories, the tale of this invasion starts with a death.

According to Roman historians such as Marcellinus, who had spent time in Attila’s court, Attila assassinated his elder brother and co-ruler Bleda on or around 445 CE.\(^1\) The Huns had for many years enjoyed success against a variety of sedentary empires under their combined leadership. Nevertheless, Attila appears to have desired for more power and autonomy over the Hunnic empire and the removal of his brother would have been a straightforward method of accomplishing this. The intrigue involved with an assassination is a far cry from the mounted invasions for which Attila is famous; one might expect pitched combat for control of the forces rather than a quiet death about which little is known. Without firsthand accounts of Bleda’s death there has been some debate over its exact nature, but it is certain that after he gained control over the entirety of the Hunnic forces his focus was on Rome.

Attila’s invasion of the Eastern Roman Empire in 447 took advantage of the lack of cohesion among the Romans. At this point in its history the Roman empire was not wholly united but instead had relatively autonomous emperors ruling from Constantinople in the east and Ravenna in the west. This arrangement would have worked better in the mid to late fifth century if not for a variety of nomadic groups, notably the Huns at this point, occupying the space between the two. When Attila invaded he was able to defeat the Roman forces in the east and march as far as Thermopylae.\(^2\) He eventually withdrew and engaged in peace negotiations with Eastern Roman Emperor Theodosius II, but Theodosius died before they were completed. Rather than take advantage of that death or retaliate when Theodosius’s son, Marcian, ceased paying tribute to the Huns, Attila decided to engage with the western Romans after this campaign.\(^3\)

The events that sparked Attila’s eventual invasion of the Western Roman Empire defy the commonly held view of him as the mindless, bloodthirsty destroyer of civilization. After his return from the invasion in the east Attila received an envoy from the Honoria, the sister of Western Roman Emperor Valentinian III. Valentinian had arranged her engagement with a man but she was against the marriage so she asked Attila for assistance in the matter. She had sent with the envoy treasure and promises of more and, most importantly, a ring.\(^4\) Attila took this as an invitation to marriage and responded that he would help Honoria if she would become his wife.\(^5\) This was a savvy political move, as it gave Attila a position to bargain with the Romans and justification for war. He did just that, and demanded Valentinian give to him Honoria and half of the Western Roman Empire.\(^6\) With neither of these forthcoming, Attila launched an attack.

Attila first attacked into Gaul, rather than Italy, and was met there by Roman general Aetius. Aetius had been a captive of the Huns earlier in his life and was familiar with their tactics, and so when they met in battle on June 20, 451, at the Catalaunian Fields, both sides received heavy losses and Attila was forced to withdraw.\(^7\) In 452 Attila finally began the invasion that made him the most famous and crossed the Alps into Italy. In northern Italy he sacked cities such as Aquileia, Pavia, and Milan.\(^8\) When he finally reached Rome, however, he was famously persuaded to spare the city and cease his offensive by Pope Leo. Whether because of

Dedication

The staff of the History Journal dedicates this issue to Dr. Amy Livingstone, whose dedication to Wittenberg’s history students and passion for education has inspired us to push our limits of thought, research, and scholarship. Through her tireless work and caring advising, she encourages students to meet their fullest potential.

Never Mind the Romans, Here’s Attila: The Brief and Bloody Reign of the Great Hunnic Leader

Scott Neall

Despite his reputation for being a merciless killer and the credit many give him for truly starting the demise of the Roman Empire, it can be hard to take Attila seriously. One can scarcely imagine him as anything other than a screaming barbarian wreaking havoc on a scale of Hollywood proportions. His tenure as sole ruler of the Huns, which involved his famous, devastating attack into Italy that may have garnered approval from Michael Bay or Mel Gibson, was predicated on political maneuvering that was in fact more deft than brutish. Like many good stories, the tale of this invasion starts with a death.

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fear of divine retribution, lack of supplies stemming from a drought in Italy, or a plague that had ravaged his soldiers, or any combination thereof. Attila was persuaded and withdrew from Italy. Just a year later, in 253, eight years after he assumed total control of the Huns, Attila died of a blood hemorrhage on his wedding night with a new bride.

Attila is infamous in western history as the man that brought about the end of the Roman Empire through a bloody invasion of Italy. In some ways, this is exactly what he did: in a few short years he attacked several parts of the Roman Empire, destabilizing an already declining civilization. However, this was only possible because of successful statecraft both internally and externally, in addition to his military success. Attila may have been an uncommon leader, but the conditions that lead to Rome’s downfall were already in place when Attila decided to take Honoria as his wife and threaten the heart of the Roman Empire. Rather than a crazed lunatic who plunged Europe into the Dark Ages, Attila is perhaps better remembered as a savvy leader who dominated his neighbors through negotiation as well as military force.

Endnotes
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Whether Rome fell due to the barbarian invasions or the spirit of Rome was transformed into the new Germanic kingdoms, the role of Christianity was instrumental in the progression of European civilization. Christianity has a turbulent history; from its very beginnings, followers of this obscure religion faced persecution from the Roman Empire under almost every emperor for a few hundred years. Things changed in the fourth century, however, with Constantine issuing edicts of toleration towards Christians and Theodosius I proclaiming Christianity the official religion of the empire. In the meantime, the Germanic tribes on the borders of the Roman Empire were encountering Christianity and eventually converting. This did not mean that the barbarian invaders felt more solidarity with the Romans; indeed, Rome itself fell to the Christian Ostrogoths in 476 CE. If not for the Christianized Germanic tribes, Christianity may have fallen into obscurity, at least in the West, after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. The intent of this essay is to chronicle the pre-Christian customs of the Germanic tribes as related to their susceptibility to Christianity, their preliminary conversions to Arian Christianity as encouraged by the Goths, and the effects of Christianity on the hedging Christian Germanic kingdoms. All of this supports the theory that the Christianization of the Germanic tribes allowed for the continuation and spread of Christianity in Western Europe in the following centuries, up until the present day.

Several primary sources are utilized in this paper. The first that will be encountered is *Germania* by Tacitus, an ethnography of the Germanic people by a Roman senator and historian. This work deals with the origins, land, and customs of the Germanic tribes, some of which are described in detail. Material regarding their spiritual customs has been used in this paper. Another primary source used is the Bible, the collection of sacred Christian texts. This paper utilizes sections of the Bible regarding Christian doctrine, beliefs, and customs. Two works by Gregory of Tours are referenced in this essay: *Glory of the Confessors* and *History of the Franks*. *Glory* is a collection of stories on Christian miracles and the people, confessors, responsible for them. *History* is a chronological account of the Franks, from creation to Gregory’s own time. It is mostly used here for its sections on Clovis and the Frankish kingdom. Another primary source is *The Origins and Deeds of the Goths*, or *Getica*, by Jordanes. This chronological account of the Gothic people is used here mainly as a reference for their spiritual customs. Ammianus Marcellinus’ work, *Res Gestae*, a history of the late Roman Empire, is used in the paper for information on the Germanic tribes with relation to Rome. This paper also utilizes the works of Martin of Braga and Maximus of Turin, bishops of the west, for references regarding the conversion to Christianity among the Germanic peoples. It is important to understand that Germanic paganism was not a single entity; the various tribes naturally held various beliefs and carried out differing rituals. “Paganism” is not an adequate term either, as the Christians used this word for any of the vastly differing groups of non-Christians. Paganism is not a religion; it is the absence of Christian belief. As such, it is more fitting to refer to this particular belief system as pre-Christian or “traditional” Germanic spirituality. Additionally, it was possible, even normal, for people to retain their ancestral beliefs while incorporating worship of the Christian god at the same time. The modern understanding of religion tends to focus on belief in a particular god; traditional Germanic spirituality, however, cannot be understood this way. It was characterized more by a system of rituals, social conventions, and customs. Religious practices in reality were quite complicated, and Germanic traditional beliefs can be hard to reconstruct. The only written records of pre-Christian practices among the Germanic tribes were written by strong Christian believers; the Germanic peoples themselves did not write down their traditional beliefs in their own, undoubtedly more sympathetic, words. Though Christian writers protested this, there are many parallels...
between characteristics of traditional Germanic spirituality and Christianity. This certainly facilitated the later conversions of the Germanic tribes.

One of the most important aspects of Germanic spirituality, and indeed many belief systems in Europe and around the world, was sacrifice of both animate beings and inanimate objects. Animal sacrifice provided a thrilling event that would serve as an outlet for aggression as well as unite the group of sacrificers. The group was further united by the feast of the sacrificial animal that inevitably followed. Sacrifice was not confined to animals, either. Certain Germanic tribes in the north, after defeating an army, would sacrifice their weapons and booby to fire and then water. The impracticality of this action suggests that it was a ritual, perhaps an offering to the gods. The fact that these practices were performed in a ritualized and public setting is a major indication of the communal and public ownership of the ritual. Private sacrifice was much less common. Private sacrifice took the form of tossing tokens, such as ceramic pots filled with food or hair, brooches, precious metals, or swords into springs, bogs, or rivers as an offering to the gods. Sacrifices to the gods exist today with such as ceramic pots filled with food or hair, brooches, precious metals, or swords into springs, bogs, or rivers as an offering to the gods. Shrimps to the gods exist today with names that suggest a private owner. These cases, however, were few and far between compared to the regular public ceremonies. Sacrifices can also be considered as a gift to the gods, appeasement so that they would look favorably upon the group of sacrificers. The group was further united by that would serve as an outlet for aggression as well as unite the group of sacrificers.

Another central characteristic of Germanic spirituality was community, whether from nature provided the sacred fixtures, making temples and buildings to venerate the gods. As Tacitus relates in his ethnography, “For the rest, from the grandeur and majesty of beings celestial, they judge it altogether unsuitable to hold the Gods enclosed within walls.”22 Spring were highly venerated; the pagan Germanic tribes worshipped at springs and other bodies of water so much that Christian writers thought that there were devils in the water.23 Water spring was very pure, and the traditional Germanic belief system valued its cleansing and healing properties. Prayers would be held at springs, and people wash themselves of impurities, almost like a baptism.17 The people made periodic pilgrimages to certain springs due to the water being more pure at certain times of year. As previously mentioned, people would also toss items into springs and other bodies of water as offerings to the gods.

Gregory of Tours considered veneration of bodies of water to be foolish and ridiculous. In his works he relates an interesting account of a Galbi festival held at the lake of St. Anacleto: the people would travel to the lake to throw in their offerings, sacrifice animals, and then feast for three days. The local Christian leaders were disturbed by this, but upon their building of a basilica nearby and their assertions that lakes have no religious power, the “rustics” converted to Christianity: “They left the lake and brought everything they usually threw into it to the holy church. So they were freed from the mistake that had bound them.”24 It is interesting that Gregory dismissed the spirituality of bodies of water so readily considering the holy association that Christianity also has with bodies of water. The Jordan River in particular was the site of many miracles in the Old Testament; its waters were considered to have healing and cleansing properties. Elisha, the prophet of Israel, guided a sick man to the Jordan for healing by God: “Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God, saying, Thy blood be on me and on my children.”25

Jesus himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God, saying, “Thy blood be on me and on my children.”26 Though Christians did not make offerings to bodies of water, it is clear that they had much in common with the Germanic tribes when it came to their spirituality.

Trees and stones were likewise central of traditional Germanic spirituality. Trees outline humans by a considerable amount of time in hundreds of years. The pre-Christian Germanic peoples respected their age and steadfastness, and venerated them with prayer and offering. Trees also represent fertility, as they bear fruit or nuts and therefore provide sustenance.30 People would sacrifice at trees, annum with them, and light candles in their vicinity.” The Goths, according to Jordanes, hung arms of their slain foes from trees as an offering to their god of war.32 Stones, too, captured the imagination and respect of the pagan Germanic peoples. They were large, heavy, and immovable; like trees, they represented permanence. Stones were anointed with oil and were often believed to have healing properties.35

Sacrifices were considered a threat to Christian missionaries to the Germanic peoples. St. Boniface, a Christian missionary to Anglo-Saxon England, led the cutting down of an important tree called the Oak of Donar (Thor). The natives had been worshiping this tree, so Boniface and his colleagues decided that it had to go, and they used the timber to build a church nearby dedicated to St. Peter.34 Although Christians did not worship trees or rocks as holy; St. Boniface’s reaction seems excessive considering the language of reverence used in the Bible itself for trees and rocks. Trees are used as symbols for steadfastness and fertility. “And he [the blessed man] shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in its season, his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”35 Here, the reader is advised to emulate the tree and its positive qualities, the same ones invoked by Germanic spirituality. Rocks too are used to invoke permanence and stability. “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat

...
upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. This day shall this stone be for a UIS and the cornerstone holder a similar reverence for trees and rocks. Such language used in the Bible must have appealed to the Germanic peoples, making Christianity a bit less alien to them.

In many ancient belief systems, one aspect of traditional Germanic spirituality was polytheism, the belief in a plurality of gods. Unlike the modern “high” religions, like Judaism and Islam, the Germanic peoples had no qualms about fashioning idols of their gods for worship. These took the form of wooden figures, branches, wooden poles, and carvings. Clearly, the Germanic peoples were used to the idea of several gods and did not see them as vying for the top position. God veneration in traditional Germanic custom was much more flexible and relaxed. This perhaps presents the biggest problem for Christians: to be used to the idea of several gods and did not see them as vying for the top position. God veneration in traditional Germanic customs was much more flexible and relaxed.

As in many ancient belief systems, one aspect of traditional Germanic spirituality was polytheism, the belief in a plurality of gods. Unlike the modern “high” religions, like Judaism and Islam, the Germanic peoples had no qualms about fashioning idols of their gods for worship. This likely occurred after 376 CE among the Goths that lived in the Roman provinces of Italy and Gaul.42 As the Germanic peoples were gradually converted to Arian Christianity in the years following the conversion of the Visigoths in the fourth century.43

Clear, Christianity and Arianism in particular appealed to the Germanic peoples. As demonstrated in the first few pages of this paper, many aspects of traditional Germanic rituals matched up with some Christian practices. The cleansing properties of water, the reverence for trees and rocks, the holiness of blood, and the importance of sacrifice are all points of similarity between the two belief systems. Further, Christianity represented the way to a new, better life; one could have their sins forgiven and be able to start afresh.44 The Church also provided protection against demons, a serious concern for people of late antiquity; members of the church could assist those possessed by demons, for example.45 Arianism especially appealed to the Germanic peoples due to their spiritual backgrounds. Since traditional Germanic spirituality was polytheistic, it was more intuitive to think of God the Father as the highest god, with Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost being inferior. The concept of the trinity in Catholicism, with holds that God the Father and Jesus Christ are of one substance, and the Holy Ghost is equal being is more complex and therefore harder to accept. As Gothic society followed a strongly paternalistic hierarchy, the preeminence of God the Father over Christ the Son in Arianism was more intuitive and appealing to the new converts.46 Maintaining their Arian beliefs was also a way for the Goths to separate themselves from and stay independent of the Roman Empire, whose citizens were intended to be fully Catholic.47

The Visigoths were strong believers in Arian Christianity; so much so, that they converted other Germanic tribes to Arianism as well. They were not wholly responsible for the conversion of other groups, but their missionary efforts certainly helped increase the amount of Arians.48 Exclusively, Arianism was one of Christianity’s three main branches: Jesus Christ and God the Father are not of the same essence, Jesus Christ was created, and there was a time when Jesus Christ did not exist.49 Essentially, Jesus Christ was considered not co-eternal, but God’s descending Word. Of course, this position had many opponents and sparked a great controversy; which ultimately resulted in the calling of the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. With Constantine presiding, Arianism was officially declared to be heresy; this enabled the destruction of Arian materials and persecution of not only Arians, but any who were not staunch anti-Arians.50 However, Arianism clearly did not disappear after the edicts from the Nicene Council. In the Roman establishment itself, several later emperors such as Constantius II were Arian sympathizers and the controversy continued after the Council of Constantine in 381 codified the orthodox views of the Catholic Church. How important? Some of the Romanized ethnic Goths, like Ulfila, picked up Arianism and brought it back to their home tribe, leading to the adoption of Arian Christianity by the Gothic peoples. Clearly, Christianity and Arianism in particular appealed to the Germanic peoples. As demonstrated in the first few pages of this paper, many aspects of traditional Germanic rituals matched up with some Christian practices. The cleansing properties of water, the reverence for trees and rocks, the holiness of blood, and the importance of sacrifice are all points of similarity between the two belief systems. Further, Christianity represented the way to a new, better life; one could have their sins forgiven and be able to start afresh. The Church also provided protection against demons, a serious concern for people of late antiquity; members of the church could assist those possessed by demons, for example. Arianism especially appealed to the Germanic peoples due to their spiritual backgrounds. Since traditional Germanic spirituality was polytheistic, it was more intuitive to think of God the Father as the highest god, with Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost being inferior. The concept of the trinity in Catholicism, with holds that God the Father and Jesus Christ are of one substance, and the Holy Ghost is equal being is more complex and therefore harder to accept. As Gothic society followed a strongly paternalistic hierarchy, the preeminence of God the Father over Christ the Son in Arianism was more intuitive and appealing to the new converts. Maintaining their Arian beliefs was also a way for the Goths to separate themselves from and stay independent of the Roman Empire, whose citizens were intended to be fully Catholic.
forces, the Vandals surrendered to the Empire, and the
Bulgarians a consolidating and unifying agent, giving birth to a kind of Christian-related nationalism in the new Germanic kingdoms. The new convert to Catholicism, King Recared of the Visigoths, affirmed the unity of the Goths under Catholicism in his celebratory conversion speech. Likewise, the prologue to the Salic Law, a collection of many Frankish laws from the eighth century, celebrates the Franks as a strong nation under their “founder,” God. Clearly, both the Goths and the Franks found a sense of pride with their new strong Catholic faith. This unity was clearly a positive thing for the new kingdoms and their leaders, but it did not come easily.

Church leadership, with the cooperation of the monarchy, legislated against any who were not Orthodox Christians. India’s Hindukush山脉 towered over power, and he began accomplishing this by annexing formerly

of King Recared of the Visigoths, which occurred around 587, and that of his people afterwards. This shift of power from the Visigoths to the Franks and from Arianism to Catholicism set the stage for the next phase of European history, that of the Christian Germanic societies.

The Franks were unique among the Germanic peoples in that their process of Christianization skipped the phase of Arianism and went directly to Catholicism. The future king of the Franks, Clovis, recognized this as more beneficial to his kingdom, and he began accomplishing this by annexing formerly

one of several kings in northwest Europe vying for power, and he began accomplishing this by annexing formerly

Roman provinces into his realm. He was acutely aware of the religious situation and tensions present in these areas; he kept correspondence with Catholic Church leaders as well

Germanic rulers and the Catholic Roman subjects under

their duties to enforce Christian worship: “You, therefore, brother, when you observe your peasant sacrificing and do not forbid the offering, sin, because even if you did not assist the sacrifice yourself you gave permission for it.”

Martin of Braga greatly simplified Christian beliefs and history for the peasants so that they could understand better and therefore practice in the correct way. This legislation and attitude of accommodation eased any remaining pagan’s conversion to Christianity and the new Germanic kingdoms became mostly, if not fully, Christianized. Because of the Germanic conversions to Christianity, the history of Western Europe and Christianity became inseparable. The pre-Christian customs and beliefs of the Germanic tribes had similar themes to Christianity, facilitating an easier conversion. The “middle man” of Arianism was also instrumental to the full conversion of the Germanic tribes to Catholicism. This version of Christianity was enforced in the new Germanic kingdoms and eventually became Catholicism as it is known today.

The entrenchment of Christianity in Western Europe was made possible after the fall of the Western Empire due to the Germanic “barbarians” and their enforcement of Christianity in their new kingdoms. The rest is history.

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Monstrous Races on the Central Tympanum at Vézelay: Constructing “the Other” in Medieval Society

Caitlin Green

Beginning in 1095, the Crusaders made it their mission to reach the “monstrous” groups of people and restore Christian faith to holy places in and near Jerusalem. The notion of “the other,” a barbaric, deformed, un-Christian group of people, swept across Europe. Pope Urban II initiated the first Crusade at the council of Clermont in 1095 with a powerful speech urging all to go forth and recover Palestine from the hands of the Muslims. In an account provided by Robert the Monk, Urban vehemently stated that “a race from the kingdom of the Persians, an accursed race, a race utterly alienated from God, a generation forsooth which has not directed its heart and has not entrusted its spirit to God, has invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by the sword, pillage and fire.”

This retelling from Robert the Monk reveals that there was a considerable degree of animosity toward the Muslims. They were not Christian, so were therefore “the other.” A popular pilgrimage church en route for crusader missions was Vézelay Abbey in northern Burgundy, France. Vézelay’s intricate iconographic program on the tympanum and lintel sets it apart as one of the great masterpieces of Romanesque art and architecture (Figure 1). In comparison to other tympana erected at the same time, Vézelay’s intricate iconographic program on the tympanum, is clear that there is a unique depiction at Vézelay not to be found elsewhere — the Pentecost. Even more fascinating are the depictions of the “monstrous races” encompassing the central scene of the Pentecost that Pope Urban II and other medieval figures toutcast as “the other.”

By studying the iconography of the Vézelay tympanum, an understanding of the monstrous races, or “the other,” in medieval society can be constructed. In eleventh century France, there was a revival of monumental sculpture that had been neglected since the end of the classical period. The central tympanum at Vézelay is an early example of the reemergence of monumental sculpture in France constructed between the years 1120-1132. Scholars have often compared the Vézelay tympanum to other contemporary tympana to exemplify the advancement in skill present on the Vézelay tympanum. In comparison to other tympana erected at the same time as the Vézelay tympanum, there is a unique depiction, a scene depicting the Pentecost, also known as the Descent of the Holy Ghost. Many tympana scenes present the Day of Judgment, such as the Vézelay tympanum, but the artistic quality is as well. Whereas the neighboring Autun tympanum is static and rigid, the Vézelay tympanum seems to move and breathe. At Autun, Christ’s knees point in opposite directions to keep him frontal; however, at Vézelay, the sculptor has twisted Christ’s body into an eloquent contrapposto

Figure 1: Central tympanum. Vézelay Abbey, Burgundy, France, 1130.

Figure 2: Tympanum, Autun, France, 1130.
position, keeping him frontal, but even more dynamic. Each individual scene on the tympanum is contained within its designated space. However, the figures at Vézelay are not restricted to a confined space; the figures move and interact with the entire scene. Even the smaller figures in the arc compartments interact with the central scene, as if no compartment barrier blocks them from interaction with the rest of the program. The sculptor behind the Vézelay tympanum produced a masterpiece in monumental sculpture that would have demanded attention from anyone who passed through the portal.

Scholars who study Vézelay have related the church closely with events associated with the Crusades. The Vézelay church was an important pilgrimage site in northern Burgundy and housed the relics of Mary Magdalene. Because it was one of the first churches in the area, it had an important role in the Crusades. In brief, Pope Urban II intended to launch the First Crusade at Vézelay before doing it instead at Clermont in 1095. St. Bernard of Clairvaux launched the Second Crusade at Vézelay in 1146, and King Louis VII of France took up the cross there. Finally, in 1190, King Richard the Lionheart of England and King Philip Augustus of France launched the Third Crusade at Vézelay. The church has a rich history with these early crusades and has become inextricably linked with the missions.

Vézelay's intricate program of imagery sets it apart as one of the great masterpieces of Romanesque art and architecture. Constructed after the First Crusade, but just before the Second, the tympanum encapsulates a medieval attitude toward “the other.” The proximity of these monstrous races to the Pentecost scene suggests that these outsider races have the potential to be saved. The central image of Christ and the Apostles rest on a lintel depicting the entrance to the Church that these people exploit the monstrous races and sends a message for the crusaders and those who visit the church that these people are not Christian. There is a hierarchy insinuated that also appears as possible from the central placement of Jerusalem in an ever-present map. It is clear that the tympanum is a form of propaganda. It is an image intended to launch the crusades and to inspire fear and even loathing of the monstrous races. The interpretations of monstrous races range from encyclopedic to lurid, religious inquiry by Augustine, and finally fearsome exploitation by the Clerk of Enghien. All of the interpretations circulated in medieval Europe, contributing to the ongoing debate of whether these races are deserving of God’s salvation as proposed by Augustine.

Not only do textual sources reveal the interest in monstrous races, but also visual sources. In tenth-century England, imagery of the monstrous races appeared in the book of Hours of the East for people to observe in awe the deformities of outsider regions (Figure 3). Because the monstrous races were often depicted or described in this book, they were often feared and even eaten, it demonstrates that there was a certain degree of distrust between men and the monstrous. Another from a psalter dating to about 1260 in England contains a detailed map of the world with monstrous race imagery encompassing the outer most edge, farthest away from the central image of Jerusalem (Figure 4). On this map, the monstrous races are positioned as far away as possible from the central placement of Jerusalem in an effort to distance the non-Christian race from those who are Christian. There is a hierarchy insinuated that also appears on the lintel at Vézelay. The monstrous races are pushed to the outer most edges of the world on this map, away from Jerusalem. It is clear that there was a curiosity concerning races from distant lands beginning in the first century of the Roman Empire and through the Middle Ages that formed distrust and even
suppression of the monstrous races to a lower rank in the social hierarchy.

A close examination of the iconographic program on the central tympanum at Vézelay reveals representations of the scene of the Pentecost, or otherwise known as the Descent of the Holy Ghost. This scene is when the Apostles return to Jerusalem after witnessing the Ascension of Christ. Ten days later, on the day of Pentecost, the Apostles sit together in the upper room. According to the Acts of the Apostles, “suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, and the Spirit gave them utterance.”10 There has been dissension between scholars on the central scene of the tympanum because Christ does not usually appear in the iconographic representations of the Pentecost. Whereas Emile Mâle is certain that the scene depicts the Descent of Christ on the day of Pentecost, others such as Fabre disagree because the iconography of the scene depicts the Apostles to the mission of the crusaders.

Figure 4: Psalter world map, ca. 1260, British Library, London. The Wittenberg History Journal

Katzenellenbogen is aware that the tympanum was erected at a critical moment in church history and relates the theme of the Pentecost to the mission of the crusaders.11 Given the historical inquiry of the monstrous races, not all of society was severe because, as previously mentioned in Augustine’s De civitate Dei, “there are others called the All-ears Islands in which the natives have very large ears covering the whole of their bodies, which are otherwise left naked.”12 With their animal-like characteristics and near nudity, the tympanum presents them as savages and even questions their humanity by casting them as “the other.”

Next to the Panotti, there is a grouping of figures on horseback; however, one is so small that he must use a ladder to mount his horse. The figures represented here are African Pygmies from Pliny’s Natural History.13 Pliny describes this race, “the Pygmaeans, the smallest of all men, who in the most outlying region we are told of the Three-span men and Pygmies, who do not exceed three spans, i.e. twenty-seven inches, in height.”14 Next to the Pygmies are thought to be the Macrobians from India.15

Still on the lintel, but moving closer to the center where Christ is located, the procession depicts people of higher status than the monstrous from the outer edges. These are the “civilized” people of the earth from antiquity and are placed near Christ to place them higher in the social hierarchy. On the right side are a grouping of soldiers who stand at the feet of St. Peter and St. Paul making offerings. On the left side near Christ is a sacrificial procession of Greeks and Romans. The men bring with them a variety of offerings including, a bull, a fish, bread, and fruits.16 Thus, gathered upon the lintel are representations of every continent, every degree of civilization, and every level of ancient society,” notes Véronique Rouchon-Mouilleron.17

The arc that surrounds the Pentecost scene provides eight scenes broken up into four compartments. Within these compartments are scenes that display physical and mental ill in the upper four scenes and moral and spiritual behaviors in the lower four scenes. For a medieval viewer, the numbers four and eight would have significant meaning tying back to the theme of the Pentecost and mission of the Apostles. The number four refers to the four points of the compass and the number eight refers to regeneration and baptism.14 Given the content within the scenes, these numbers provide meaning that symbolizes the distant lands in the four directions and the mission to baptize those who are not yet Christian. The monks present at Vézelay would have understood the significance of these numbers contributing to the meaning of the tympanum.

On the right are the barefoot archers, either the Scythians or the Parthians who are known to be archers. Then, on the opposite side to the right are depictions of what seem to be dwarfs, or mythical beings with elephant sized ears from India.15 According to Pliny; these are the Panotti, which he describes in Natural History: “there are others called the All-ears Islands in which the natives have very large ears covering the whole of their bodies, which are otherwise left naked.”14 With their animal-like characteristics and near nudity, the tympanum presents them as savages and even questions their humanity by casting them as “the other.”

Immediately to the left of the central axis at the top of the scene are representations of people who live in Cynocephalos, a region in India. The dog-headed figures are mutes who only bark.21 In the same grouping of figures are also representations of the deaf and the blind who will also be cured by the teachings from the gospel. To the immediate right of the central axis at the top of the arc are the bent-over hunchbacks and men depicted with pig moust for noses. The characterization of pig-nosed men comes from the ancient thought that the Ethiopians had flat noses, which here has been represented in the extreme version of the pig snout.22 The scene to the right features deformed men suffering from the loss of limbs. Rouchon-Mouilleron has suggested that these figures represent people from Hellenic Asia due to their Phrygian cap and the crutch held by one of the figures. The most obvious grotesque that the monstrous experience are all symptoms that could be cured by the salvation of God. Their deformities are a visual tool to suggest that those who have not yet heard the word of God will all suffer from these physical pains.

In addition to the physical ill previously mentioned, mental ill are also represented in the arc of the tympanum. Below the scene with dog-headed people is a scene featuring two figures on the right who are Siamese twins from Cappadocia, from medieval accounts representing people from Asia Minor.23 A demon is also depicted in the scene and is characterized by hair standing straight up from his head while his grasp is leg tormented by pain. Once this group of people with physical and mental ill are transformed by the conversion of Christianity, through the teachings from the gospel, their defects will be cured. These four upper scenes in the upper two compartments depict the pain and madness people thought to be “the other” suffer from in the distant lands that the apostles were to confront and convert.

The two lower compartments on the arc provide four scenes of moral and spiritual behaviors. On the right side at the bottom of the arc are two men dressed in platform boots, characteristic of the Assyrians, as described by Greek geographer Strabo. The pagan Assyrian men are trying to convert two men, but the men have already been won over by the Holy Spirit.24 This is shown by the figure to the left of the scene who leans toward the image of Christ, as if aware of the presence of Christ beyond the compartment dividing them. Above this scene is a confrontation between a Byzantine soldier and another man who is attempting to bribe the soldier.25 The soldier, like the Assyrian below, gazes toward Christ with his eyes wide and head held high. He pays no attention to the bribe, as if led by God’s divine
will, not betray by forfeiting his military secrets. Both of these reasons are the light of Friedmann’s research that discusses the more embracing view of the monstrous on this tympanum. Because these monstrous beings are not cut off from the central scene of the Pentecontos, but actually are aware and interact with it, shows that the line drawn between Christians and the monstrous is still there, yet can be penetrated if willing to seek salvation.

The two lower scenes on the left side correspond with each other. The lower of the two depicts two scribes, which suggests they are apostles writing the Gospel that will be read to the monstrous races encompassing Christ in the tympanum. Above the scribes is thought to be a scene of Jeroboam, who worshiped idols, and is punished by God. The Jewish prophet to the right of Jeroboam invites him to follow Christ, and Jeroboam rejects the offer. Rouchon-Mouilleron makes note that the scene mirrors the biblical story; however, its presence on the tympanum has a new meaning. According to Rouchon-Mouilleron, “The prophet pours his finger toward the figure of Christ, and with his other hand turns away Jeroboam, meanwhile, seems to be taking a step back and turning the opposite direction. Interpreted in respect to the mission of the apostles, a choice is being offered to the Jewish people: retreat into idolatry or follow Christ.” For these scenes, the people within them are pushed to the outer edges with the monstrous not because of any physical deformity, but because they are Jews, and in a Christian’s mind, monstrous Jews were monstrous not only because they were non-Christian, but also because they deliberately rejected Christianity. In an effort to discredit the Jewish religion, Christians depicted the Jews as part of the monstrous races as shown on the Vézelay tympanum.

With this iconographical examination of the tympanum, it can be affirmed that the sculptor who designed and executed this program was familiar with medieval accounts of contemporary events, notably the Crusades, that affected the mission of the church, to restore Christian faith in the east in an act of violence to reclaim the Holy Land. For the crusaders, these images might be interpreted as the contemporary Muslims in which Urban speaks of was monstrous races as people who have yet to receive the word of God. For the crusaders, these images might be interpreted as the Muslims they would soon encounter in the east in an act of violence to reclaim the Holy Land and the infidels they were fighting against. For each of these types of visitors, the common theme is that no matter their intentions, they were once again reminded of the Holy Land and that there was a need to protect it against the infidel for the sake of Christianity.

It is clear that the artist looked to the past for accounts of monstrous races, but it is also important to consider contemporary events, notably the Crusades, that affected the interpretation of the tympanum on a day-to-day basis. Multiple crusades were launched at this site. St. Bernard’s speech and the Third Crusade launched in 1190 were clearly tools of propaganda for the purpose of converting outsider societies to Christianity. In 1195, Pope Urban II delivered a speech at the Council of Clermont — originally intended to be delivered at Vézelay — that launched the First Crusade. There are five accounts of the speech given. The following is an excerpt from an account provided by Fulcher of Chartres which was present and heard the speech:

On this account I, or rather the Lord, beseech you, as Chiraghi’s herald to publish this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to Jerusalem. Good God!33

Regardless of how St. Bernard thought about church decoration, the message was still communicated to monks and anyone else who looked up to contemplate the monsters. St. Bernard was an advocate for taking action and, like the apostles on the lintel, spreading the word of God to those who have not been saved. Even if St. Bernard did not support the decorations of Vézelay, his message when preaching the Second Crusade was cleverly sublimated within this symbolic tympanum program finished just fourteen years prior to the speech. As suggested by the iconographical interpretation of the tympanum and lintel, the monumental sculpture provides an image of the Pentecontos, which carries a strong message of spreading the word of God. St. Bernard calls for the Second Crusade exclaiming, “Behold, brethren, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” Just like the apostles who are about to go forth to the distant lands and teach the Gospel in all languages in the Pentecontos scene, the message of St. Bernard was to gather crusaders who would terminate pagan beliefs and restore Christianity to the distant lands.

Unlike the First Crusade speech given by Pope Urban II and the violent accounts from Raymond D’Aguilers, St. Bernard rejects violence in this crusade speech and instead urges the crusaders to convert the Jews, not slaughter them. The Jews would have been considered “the other” to St. Bernard. His feelings toward “the other” are still derogatory, though much less violent and like the Vézelay tympanum suggests, perhaps even embracing these non-Christian races in an effort to spread the word of God like the apostles in the tympanum. In a letter to Eastern France and Bavaria in 1146, St. Bernard promotes a non-violent Second Crusade, stating, “Let not your former warlike skill cease, but only that spirit of hatred in which you are accustomed to strike down and kill one another and in turn be overcome yourselves. How dire a madness goads those wretched men, when kinsmen strike each other’s bodies with the sword, perchance causing the soul also to perish! But he does not escape who triumphs; the sword shall go through his own soul also, when
he thinks to have slain his enemy only. To enter such a combat is madness, not valor: it is not to be ascribed to bravery; but rather to foolhardiness. And here, St. Bernard more specifically states that the Jews should not be taken with violence, The Jews must not be persecuted, slaughtered, nor even driven out. Inquire of the pages of Holy Writ. I know what is written in the Psalms as prophecy about the Jews. “God hath commanded me,” says the Church, “Slay them not, lest my people forget.”

The setting of Vézelay enhanced the message given by St. Bernard. The scene of the Pentecost served as a form of propaganda that reinforced the message given by St. Bernard and his call for the Second Crusade. Just as the apostles dispense to the monstrous races, or “the other,” portrayed in the arc of the tympanum, the crusaders follow a similar mission given by St. Bernard to conquer the Holy Land. Like the observation given by Freidman suggests, there was an embracing view toward the monstrous races in the tympanum. Similarly, there was also a more embracing view in the speech provided by St. Bernard.

Whereas there have been a variety of interpretations of the monstrous races throughout antiquity and the middle ages, most of these accounts say more about Christians than the monstrous races they try to dehumanize. Christian men in medieval society with wild imaginations have over-exaggerated monstrous race imagery. The main reason for this was fear; the monstrous races were different in appearance and not Christian, and therefore a threat. With its long-standing record of the monstrous races in medieval history, and not Christian, and therefore a threat. With its long-standing record of the monstrous races in medieval history, and not Christian, and therefore a threat. With its long-standing record of the monstrous races in medieval history, and not Christian, and therefore a threat.

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The Formation of Al Qaeda

Nicole Waers

If hindsight is 20/20, then history must be where the answers lie. In the struggle to comprehend the ubiquitous question of logic behind the formation of complex terrorist organizations, and more specifically, why the formation of Al Qaeda occurred, it is necessary to examine the motivations behind one of its most conspicuous public actions, the attacks on America — 9/11. The overall logic of Osama bin Laden, founder and leader of Al Qaeda, as well as the network as a whole, can only be traced back through, and derived from, the many declarations and provocations stated and evident in the decades both immediately preceding and immediately following September 11th, 2001. Because, as Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky said, “While nothing is easier than to denounce the evildoer, nothing is more difficult than to understand him.”

From approximately 1979 until today, those desiring to “understand the evildoer” are provided with 35 years of relevant evidence in the attempt to understand why Al Qaeda was created initially, as well as why it flourished in its movement to perpetrate one of the most memorable and staggering terrorist attacks ever carried out against the United States. Moreover, it is both useful and necessary to consider the “after” just as thoroughly as the “during” and the “before.”

Primarily, Middle Eastern regional conditions fostered an atmosphere prone to the development of terrorism, while expressed goals of Al Qaeda consistently reflected its founding ideology, and subsequent expressions serve as another round of even more explicit explanations. Through translating and deciphering declarations, recruitment tools, and handbooks, as well as understanding the overall context of Al Qaeda’s formation, there are various indications in support of two very important overarching factors that contributed to the formation of Al Qaeda: differing religious beliefs, culminating in the form of Islamic extremism, as well as incongruences of political and social ideologies between “the West” and “the East,” ultimately led to the creation and subsequent growth of Al Qaeda as a terrorist organization. Thus, the question can be answered in one word: disparities. Disparities most often result in one thing: conflict. A decade of conflict in the region east of the Persian Gulf — more specifically, Iran and Afghanistan, as well as Pakistan — managed to accentuate the religiopolitical differences of the ideologies of the hemispheric West and East that created an ideal atmosphere in which to cultivate extremism. Moreover, it is partially due to previously unseen levels of anti-communist sentiment of the Cold War era that an Islamic extremist network such as Al Qaeda ever came to be. This ideological opposition served as the catalyst behind various political shifts and military actions that occurred in the decade from 1979-1989 that led to a never before seen (or perhaps never before recognized) increased loyalty to the ways of Islamic fundamentalism.

A principally stirring event in the shift away from the West was the 1979 revolution in Iran that “ousted the pro-American dictator, the last Shah.” The ousting of the pro-American Shah effectively cut the ties of any U.S.-Iran alliance, and at the same time, conveniently paved the way for an immediate Iranian launch into a revolutionary society characterized by the theology of Islamism. A fundamentalist Islamic government had taken power in Iran, and it had inherited a vehement anti-American sentiment, even though Islamic fundamentalism did align (perhaps for the last time) with the desires of the West, in the form of Iranian anti-communist sentiment. As this new Iran pushed farther and farther from the U.S., it did just the same to communism. The newly revolutionized country began to ally with more similar neighboring countries — Pakistan and Afghanistan — in order to prevent the spread of yet another, seemingly imminently threatening, competing ideology of communism. This occurred around the same time that Saudi Arabian government officials and private donors began pouring money into both countries for the purpose of utilizing jihad against communism.
of the actions that led to the cementing of Afghanistan’s role as most valuable player among the many locales that played a part in allowing for Al Qaeda to be formed. In 1979, when the threat of communism reared its head (quite explicitly) in the form of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, there were various countries and groups prepared to confront and oppose the enemy ideology and its accompanying military forces. The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets is said to have led to “thousands of Islamic fighters confronting the Soviets.6 Although the ISF was later stopped paying any attention to the enormous numbers of Islamic groups and followers, the Soviet invasion and its consequences clearly demonstrated the need to drive Soviet forces out of Afghanistan. With the help of the Al Qaeda organization, which acted as a home base and financier for a global network of participating Islamic groups.7 The ISF can be considered a virtual prototype for the Al Qaeda organization. The Al Qaeda Manual frequently cited: “The Al Qaeda Manual...”

Eventually, another domino fell: Pakistan. Clearly not wanting to be left off the Islamic bandwagon, after Soviet forces were removed from Afghanistan in 1989, religious zeal in Pakistan increased. Fundamentalism, as an ideology and a system of government, in Pakistan strengthened. Its overall amount of “training grounds on which to prepare ‘Islamic freedom fighters’ to fight against communism and secularism” vastly increased.8 Yet another fundamentalist Islamic government had sprung up and flourished healthily in the region of the Middle East. Thus, Afghanistan was surrounded on both sides — with the formation of Al Qaeda — a group that would unite in the ideology was the kindling. Calls for political change, especially Islamic, was exactly the movement that most desperately needed such a solidaristic reaction. Fundamentalist Islam has been given reason to take on a religious “struggle” is “an individual duty if the enemy destroys the Muslim countries”; or perhaps, taken more literally, if an enemy body threatens to destroy the “religion of Allah.” The goal is one of conversion of person and/or transformation of society. Supporting this same idea, within the Holy Quran, Surah Nine, Surat at-Tawbah, is the most frequently cited: “And if anyone of the polytheists seek your protection then grant him protection and sit (in wait) for them (at) every place of ambush. But if they repent and establish the prayer and give zakah (the obligatory charity), and they believe in Allah and His Messenger and give up all polytheism and disbelief. Then when have passed the sacred months, the believers and the emigrants may seek asylum in the land of Allah which He has blessed...”

It is the same unbelief that drove Sadat, Houni Mubarak, Gadaffi, Hafer Asud, Salhe, Fahed — Allah’s curse be upon the non-believing leaders — that the apostate Arab rulers to torture, kill, imprison, and torment Moslems. These young men...”

It is absolutely essential to examine the brand of Islam that is perpetuated by the wide opposition to it. A common saying suggests that if one is prevented from doing or having something, it only makes one want to do it, or have it, more. In this way, fundamentalist ideology blossomed into the formation of Al Qaeda — a group that would unite in conviction to combat secularist opposition. This opposition to the ideology was the kindling. Calls for political change and reversal of beliefs were the gasoline and the spark; and, years and years of attempts to suppress a “pure” version of Islam has only fueled the fire that much more.

Another important purpose behind the founding of Al Qaeda was the intention to overthrow regimes with large Muslim populations that do not install shari’a as the official law. In much of the Western world, the past several decades have pointed toward democracy as the only possible and logical progression on the way to societal progress; however, for Islam, “democracy itself is forbidden because only divine power can decree law.” Therefore, the so-called “democratic solutions” intended to stop the spread of Islam, and especially Al Qaeda, is exactly the movement that most desperately needed such a solidaristic reaction. Fundamentalist Islam has been given reason to take on a religious “struggle” is “an individual duty if the enemy destroys the Muslim countries”; or perhaps, taken more literally, if an enemy body threatens to destroy the “religion of Allah.” The goal is one of conversion of person and/or transformation of society. Supporting this same idea, within the Holy Quran, Surah Nine, Surat at-Tawbah, is the most frequently cited: “And if anyone of the polytheists seek your protection then grant him protection and sit (in wait) for them (at) every place of ambush. But if they repent and establish the prayer and give zakah (the obligatory charity), and they believe in Allah and His Messenger and give up all polytheism and disbelief. Then when have passed the sacred months, the believers and the emigrants may seek asylum in the land of Allah which He has blessed...”

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hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies, and others besides whom ye may not know; but whom Allah doth know.17

They could hardly be more explicit in their reasoning. Islamism had refused to even consider compromise in a democratic way, and so many orthodox extremists felt compelled by direct calls from both Allah and their founding father, who were physically combat those that will in the future work to oppose their ideals in order to implement their own, westernized ones.

Islamic fundamentalism rejects legislation, diplomacy, and civil debate in favor of intimidation, violence, and aggression. While Al Qaeda derives its objectives and purpose from the Sunan, Wahhabi branch of Islam, as well as lifestyle and the best of planners is Allah.”

The concept of territory was, and is, yet another important point of contention between the Western and East. It is seen as a tool by which many fundamentalist Muslims from around the world each year.”24 Just two years prior, in 1996, bin Laden and the Egyptian Al-Qaeda were the most important Islamic holy places, including Mecca, the prime destination for millions of Muslim pilgrims from around the world each year.”25 Just two years prior, in 1996, bin Laden and the Egyptian Al-Qaeda were the most important Islamic holy places, including Mecca, the prime destination for millions of Muslim pilgrims from around the world each year.”25

Recalling above the mention of American occupation of Palestine, this presence and topic of debate is perhaps one of the most often noted areas of discontent for Al Qaeda supporters, and especially Osama bin Laden himself. The longstanding U.S. alliance with Israel currently stands as a source of contention, and also acted as a clear motivating factor for members of Al Qaeda. The jihadist movement did not approve of the unqualified U.S. military and political support for Israel.26 In fact, in his declaration of jihad, Osama bin Laden directly called for expanded jihad against the United States because of the occupation of Palestine (in support of Israel and Judeo-Christianity) and alleged murders of Muslims there.27 Perhaps a reiteration of previous ideological testimonies, the U.S. presence in what (according to many who considered themselves a part of the fundamentalist movement) should be a region safe for Muslims and conducive to the practice and support of Islam, again prompted actions of terror in the pursuit of their eradication. According to Jonathan Schaefer, author of the book-Al-Qaeda’s Armies, the group from which Al Qaeda’s ranks would have been chosen rejected Israel’s existence. He states that, “they, the very concept of peace with Israel is an anathema.” “To be sure, the absence of peace and the intifada (with its images of Palestinian youngsters taking on Israeli tanks) soured the climate for moderation in the area and created a more fertile breeding ground for anger and resentment — the stock in trade of Osama bin Laden and the terrorist networks.”28 Al Qaeda jihadists shared the perspective that Israel, and Israeli perpetual anger and resentment — the stock in trade of Osama bin Laden and the terrorist networks.”28

Al Qaeda’s formation is a direct response to the conquest of democratic nations to religiously “colonize” Muslim nations, as well as any and all attempts to

Turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to reverse this way of thinking fell into the willing hands of hundreds of thousands that defeated the invading Iraqi forces in both Gulf wars, Al Qaeda continued to grow. In the wake of the 1991 Iraq invasion, the United States has often been presented as motivators and destructors of the Muslim world. These would include the likes of Iran, Saudi Arabia and other dictatorships of the Near East, Middle East, North Africa.”29 The goal was to further significant victims of those working for the causes of the west and to turn back the Iraqi forces who threatened the nation and turn back the Iraqi forces who threatened the Islamic holy lands in the Arabian Peninsula was offensive to Muslims, especially as many worried about the potentially detrimental effects of the U.S. role behind the spread of a type of “Western contagion” of individual ambition. This is a key component of the first facet listed by Osama bin Laden in his 1998 fatwa. He reasons, “the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbor, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to reverse this way of thinking fell into the willing hands of hundreds of thousands that defeated the invading Iraqi forces in both Gulf wars, Al Qaeda continued to grow. In the wake of the 1991 Iraq invasion, the United States has often been presented as motivators and destructors of the Muslim world. These would include the likes of Iran, Saudi Arabia and other dictatorships of the Near East, Middle East, North Africa.”29 The goal was to further significant victims of those working for the causes of the west and to turn back the Iraqi forces who threatened the Islamic holy lands in the Arabian Peninsula was offensive to Muslims, especially as many worried about the potentially detrimental effects of the U.S. role behind the spread of a type of “Western contagion” of individual ambition. This is a key component of the first facet listed by Osama bin Laden in his 1998 fatwa. He reasons, “the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbor, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to reverse this way of thinking fell into the willing hands of hundreds of thousands that defeated the invading Iraqi forces in both Gulf wars, Al Qaeda continued to grow. In the wake of the 1991 Iraq invasion, the United States has often been presented as motivators and destructors of the Muslim world. These would include the likes of Iran, Saudi Arabia and other dictatorships of the Near East, Middle East, North Africa.”29 The goal was to further significant victims of those working for the causes of the west and to turn back the Iraqi forces who threatened the Islamic holy lands in the Arabian Peninsula was offensive to Muslims, especially as many worried about the potentially detrimental effects of the U.S. role behind the spread of a type of “Western contagion” of individual ambition. This is a key component of the first facet listed by Osama bin Laden in his 1998 fatwa. He reasons, “the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, the Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, dictating to its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbor, and
unresolved tensions, and U.S. contributions to it, stood as one long and legitimate cause for the formation of a terrorist organization. Eventually, Al Qaeda would be essentially fighting fire with fire, performing acts of terror and violence as retribution for Israeli/Palestinian violence and tension in the Middle Eastern region, and American contributions toward it.

The answer to the question of why extremist Muslims, Islamic jihadis, Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and the thousands of others worldwide originally came together, structured Al Qaeda as an organization, and took up arms to perform acts terror is not entirely conclusive, confusingly tangled up in the events of the last several decades, and contains seemingly innumerable reasons. But, from many large pools of information, it can be gathered and studied, many logical conclusions can be drawn, and many in search of answers can be provided with some degree of explanation, or even closure. The creation of Al Qaeda as a terrorist organization was due to various events and conditions, culminating in three collective causes.

First, the decade of 1979-1989 and its major events, as well as their results, laid down the road to Al Qaeda. Most importantly, events such as the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan fostered a kind of heightened Islamic unity, in the face of opposing outside ideologies. Revolutionary changes in power and culture, as well as recruitment and unification for the purpose of military action, increased external funding and weaponry, and ideologies between “the West” and “the East,” both prompted, and have allowed for, the progress and growth of Al Qaeda in the past three decades. Without any one of the events or developments listed herein, the timeline of formation and subsequent acts of terror might well have been completely altered. Nonetheless, this is the history that our world has created, and the formation of Al Qaeda as an Islamic terrorist organization was the unfortunate result we’ve been forced to reason, and to live with.

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Secondary Sources


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Primary Sources


Section II.
Premodern Femininities
The mythology of ancient Mesopotamia is far less familiar to the average American than that of many other ancient religions. To scholars, though, it is a subject of utmost importance in understanding the culture of many early Mesopotamian societies: the Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians, Babylonians, etc. By studying the ancient cults and myths surrounding their deities, it is possible to uncover some of the beliefs and values held in this region's fount of civilization. From why the Tigris and Euphrates flood erratically, to examples of how heirs should behave toward their fathers, the stories about the gods provide explanations about the world. Among the frequently named gods stands a powerful and dynamic goddess whose name is invoked by priests, kings, and commoners throughout the region and over the course of time: Inanna-Ishtar.

Inanna-Ishtar was the goddess of both love and war. Her two names represent differences in place and time, with Inanna being the name the Sumerians and Akkadians assigned to her, and Ishtar being the name she was known by to the Assyrians. Despite the vast number of sources referring to her, and the numerous sources that include or describe her in detail, it can be difficult to comprehend her personality and characteristics; as Rivkah Harris labels her, she is a paradox. The available sources about her reveal a deity who is both orderly and chaotic, a goddess capable of bringing both great prosperity and destruction. By being such an anomaly, Inanna-Ishtar was unlike many goddesses of the ancient world and broke with the gender norms of the time. Consequently, she is unrepresentative of how Mesopotamian women were expected to behave.

The Archaeological History

Before critiquing the goddess’s character, and trying to sort through what is known about her, it is important to consider how scholars have uncovered this knowledge. Archaeological research is the source of these discoveries. By working to uncover ancient artifacts, both artistic and textual, modern scholars are provided with the evidence necessary to learn about the ancient world. For the study of Inanna-Ishtar the textual sources found on clay tablets, cylinder seals and other inscriptions are especially vital; by transliterating and translating these sources, cuneiform scholars have vastly expanded the available knowledge about her. To understand the historiography about Inanna-Ishtar, then, it is necessary to discuss the scholarly debate about her and the main sources used: literary documents, artifacts, and images.

One particularly significant scholar was Samuel Noah Kramer, who spent his career in the careful study of Sumer and cuneiform texts and was highly respected by his colleagues in the field. Not only was he asked to be a guest professor at many universities, but he was also invited to help catalogue and decipher literary tablets in different collections. In addition to his many popular books, though, it was perhaps his building of a sense of cooperation among the Sumerologist community that made the greatest impact and progress for this field of study. Rather than attempting to retain sources for his own private study and success, he made them available to many other scholars around the world; not only could more sources be deciphered this way, but it also made scholarly discussion and debate about the documents possible.

One area of difference in this discussion is between Near Eastern specialists and more general scholars. To some groups, such as classicists, there is a desire to compare Mesopotamian cultural aspects — like Inanna-Ishtar — to other regions and time periods. An example of this is Miroslav Marcovich’s work, which argues that the Greek deity Aphrodite was descended from and extremely similar to Ishtar. Historically, part of the drive for this has been to prove that ancient Mesopotamia served as a birthplace for Western cultures and values. Unfortunately, while comparisons can be made...
between the two cultures and their goddesses, these frequently do not accept the numeral "Ishtar" and lose sight of the diversity of goddesses. Many of her distinctive characteristics as a female deity with what are perceived as masculine virtues.7

To modern ideas of patriarchy and a hesitancy to associate a goddess of war. This tunnel vision can partly be attributed and queen of heaven while deemphasizing her values as the distinctively Mesopotamian features of the goddess.6

Notably, scholars focus on her role as the goddess of love and queen of heaven and her marriage and queenhood of the gods. The study of Inanna-Ishtar therefore requires consciousness of these subjective perceptions of her and a comfort with acknowledging her distinctiveness. Furthermore, like all other observers of the time, they find at excavation sites. The excavations at Nippur depict too broad an image of Inanna-Ishtar and lose sight of the values of her cultic devotion. The documents and building inscriptions found at Nippur provide one excellent example of this. At this site, a temple to Inanna was uncovered toward the southwest of a zigurrat dedicated to Enlil.8 The documents and building inscriptions found there allowed scholars to learn more about the daily life and functions within the temple. G. van Driel found that economically the temple was independent but had many economic links to the other temples in the city.9 Another scholar, Albrecht Goette, also studied the Nippur temple by looking at “the astonishing numbers [of] treasures that, as the custom in Mesopotamia, had carefully been buried in parts of the building and underneath in very floors.”10

Analysis of the numerous vases, bowls, statues, and other objects of value found showed that they had inscriptions dedicating them to Inanna. Not only were these objects very valuable, showing how sincerely individuals desired her favor, but most were also given by women, suggesting who her main worshippers were. Sources about Inanna were not limited to this excavation, however. One of the most important classifications of documents that have been uncovered are the myths and hymns to Inanna and Ishtar. Kramer’s 1963 history about the Sumerians states that — to that point — five myths that featured Inanna as the major actor had been recovered and translated; in addition, two more myths focusing on Dumuzi, her husband, were also available to analyze her relationship to him.11

Kramer’s list is not all inclusive, however. It does not account for the numerous breadth of Ishtar and lose sight of the values of many of her detailed characteristics. As Riva Kal Sharras puts it, “much has been written about Inanna-Ishtar by people outside of the field of ancient Near Eastern studies. The tendency in these writings is to flatten and level the distinctively Mesopotamian features of the goddess.”12

Notably, scholars focus on her role as the goddess of love and queen of heaven while deemphasizing her values as the goddess of war. This tunnel vision can partly be attributed and queen of heaven while deemphasizing her values as the distinctively Mesopotamian features of the goddess.6

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It. According to Goetze, Inanna’s case was unique in that she had no father. In a hymn written for Assurbanipal, the king invokes Ishtar as a single goddess, without differentiating Ishtar of Ninevah and Ishtar of Arbela as the king’s patrons, and it claims that they collaborated to help him during his reign.23 It makes clear that they are two very distinct individuals, who had separate roles in his upbringing and provided him with different gifts. What adds to this confusion is that in other texts the same king invokes Ishtar as a single goddess, without differentiating between individuals. Porters site source which utilizes a single “Ishtar” in one line, just a few lines before distinguishing between the Ishtars of Nineveh and Arbela:24 “In the introduction to Prisn A, for example, Assurbanapal announces that Shamas, Adad, and Ishtar — just Ishtar — have ordered him to exercise kingship, a comment that appears just twelve lines after a carefully specified Ishtar of Nineveh and Ishtar of Arbela.”25 This type of linguistic uncertainty makes evident the existence of distinct Ishtars, but also that there were more than one Ishtar, and confusion about Ishtar’s time period and supported the kings of Mesopotamia is necessary to establish her characteristics.26

Identifying Inanna-Ishtar’s Personality

As can be surmised from that already discussed, Inanna-Ishtar demonstrated a great variety of behaviors both as she changed over time and throughout time periods as a result of her
several literary documents that have been discovered and rewarded him “with victory in battle and acclaimed him as the king could satisfy Inanna’s great lust, she would grant him her relationship with the Sumerian king Sulgi. Acting as an to the earth.

appears Inanna returns the areas to fruitfulness and prosperity witnessed (nothing but) happiness.” After she — seemingly Akkad and its great empire, the initial success is attributed to Inanna rather than Ishtar. It was one of her myths, and hymns.

To understand her personality, it is important to look at multiple aspects of her powers as a goddess: bringing fertility to agricultural fields and animal raising; acting as a lover and spouse, and strength as the goddess of war. It is also important to analyze how her cult worshipped her in her temples, myths, and hymns.

A Goddess of Fertility

The power to bring fertility to the land was normally associated with Inanna rather than Ishtar. It was one of her earlier abilities, before coming more militarized by the Sasanian era. Figure 1 shows her symbolized by the read axe bundle as a fecundity goddess and being held by a priestess next to “two large containers [baskets] probably holding grain.” As well as the imagery, this role was reinforced by several literary documents that have been discovered and translated.

Her power as a goddess capable of bringing fertility to the land is attested in a Sumerian fertility song that describes her relationship with the Sumerian king Sulgi. Acting as an incarnation of her husband Dumuzi, Sulgi is one of many kings to claim marriage to the deity. It was believed that if the king could satisfy Inanna’s great lust, she would grant him all the necessary powers of kingship. In Sulgi’s case, Inanna rewarded him “with victory in battle and acclaimed him as the king eligible for all the rights, prerogatives, and insignia of kingship.” More relevant to the tablet, however, was her power to bring fertility to the land. After Inanna complains of the lack of food, Sulgi asks her to accompany him one at a time into the fields, garden, and orchard. The surviving part of this tablet does not specify how, but by some means it appears Inanna returns the areas to fruitfulness and prosperity to the earth.

Her power to bring prosperity to the land is again testified in “The Curse of Agade.” In this explanation of the fall of Akkad and its great empire, the initial success is attributed to Inanna: “Inanna allowed herself no sleep” and therefore the city was filled with gold and wisdom, and “their people witnessed (nothing but) happiness.” After she — seemingly for no reason — refuses to accept further gifts from the people and “forsook the shrine Agade;” the other powerful gods leave and take their blessings of wisdom and eloquence with them. This results in the cities’ fearfulness as they begin to lose battles and doubt the future of kingship in the city. After Agade’s final destruction does not come until later, after enraging Ereshkigal, it begins with the loss of Inanna’s favor.

In comparison to these documents, it is interesting that — despite being the goddess of love — Inanna-Ishtar is not equally associated with the fertility of humans. At least, that is the case according to Assante. She notes the significance that “Ishtar’s celebrated sexual exploits never once led to impregnation … but to an irresistible power and agency.” This viewpoint is important because it changes the focus many scholars have placed on Inanna-Ishtar’s feminine role in Mesopotamian culture, and instead emphasizes her “masculine” powers. She was indeed an active pursuer of love in many myths, as well as a goddess sought after by many kings, and the many lovers who served Inanna-Ishtar over the course of Mesopotamian history is one of her most clearly defined traits.

The Goddess of Love

Perhaps the most well-known testimony to the goddess’s many lovers is the “Epic of Gilgamesh.” When Ishtar “raised an eye at the beauty of Gilgamesh [and said] ‘Come, Gilgamesh, be thou (my) lover,’” he scorns her foolishly. He cites multiple instances where she has taken lovers, grown bored with them, and condemned them to very horrible punishment: “Which lover didst thou love forever?/Which of thy shepherds pleased [thee for all time]?” Though a rash thing to say to a goddess — and a speech for which Gilgamesh and his city received severe punishment — it does reflect a true aspect of her character. It is not surprising that an immortal deity like Inanna-Ishtar would take multiple lovers over her long life, but the way in which she left them could be very deceptive.

Of the many lovers which Gilgamesh lists, Tammuz is the best known. Known to the Mesopotamians as the shepherd Dumuzi, he was Inanna-Ishtar’s first lover and husband. There were four different myths known about how these two became lovers and of these only one suggests that Dumuzi was not Inanna-Ishtar’s first choice. In the other myths, she quickly submits to his advances with varying levels of approval from her parents. One of these myths, translated by Kramer, states:

As I [Inanna] was shining bright, was dancing about, As I was singing away while the bright light overcame (the) raghe, He met me, he met me, The lord Kuli-Anna (Dumuzi) met me, The lord put his hand into my hand, Ushumgal-Anna (Dumuzi) embraced me.

After this affair they agree to marry, but their relationship does not stay so romantic. A well-preserved myth known as “Inanna’s Descent to the Nether World” tells scholars about Dumuzi’s demise at the hands of Inanna-Ishtar. Scholars recovered this document in several different pieces, with the earlier parts of the myth being translated first. Because of this and the combined knowledge that Dumuzi had died at some point in Mesopotamian mythology, it was frequently assumed that Inanna-Ishtar went to the Nether World in order to save him; the similarity between such a story and the Greek legend of Orpheus is a reflection of how subjective historians can be. As more of the text was translated however, the extended story demonstrated that this could not be the case. Inanna-Ishtar is killed by her sister Ereshkigal during the journey and only resurrected with the help of Enki, but in order to return to the living world she must find a replacement for herself. Of the several gods she meets while on this quest, it is her husband Dumuzi whom she condemns: Angered to find him living prosperously without her,

She fastened the eye upon him, the eye of death, Spoke the word against him, the word of wrath, Uttered the cry against him, the cry of guilt: “As for him, carry him off.”

Her actions in this myth display two of her most noticeable behavioral traits: sense of irascibility and change-ability. Her influence on other deities is also noticeable, however, and proves that despite being female, she is one of the most powerful of the pantheon.

The Goddess of War

Her power as the goddess of war contributes to the portrayal of her as an irascible individual prone to random, wanton destruction. Fumi Karashahi, in her comparative work “Fighting the Mountain: Some Observations on the Sumerian Myths of Inanna and Ninurta,” looks at this aspect of Inanna-Ishtar in greater detail. In contrast to Ninurta — who fights his opponent Asag in response to a rebellion — Inanna challenges Mount Ebih I: “disrespectful behavior as well as in beauty … apparently enrages Inanna and invites in total destruction.”

The fact that she is angered because the mountain does not bow to her is reflective of other stories that show she becomes petulant whenever she feels slighted or disrespected. Her condemnation of Dumuzi in the Nether World myth and her anger toward Gilgamesh in his epic both show this.

However, she is not only aggravated by her lovers. In “Enki and the World Order,” Inanna becomes bitter toward Enki, one of the oldest and most powerful gods, because she believes he slighted her by giving all the special powers to other deities. He pacifies her, but is put on the defensive in doing so. It is important in these sorts of myths to quickly satisfy the goddess since when people fail to do so, they risk the same fate as the unfortunate Mount Ebih: “she [Inanna] leaves the sad destruction behind her: the stones forming the body of Ebih clatter down its flanks.” In the comparison, Karashahi points out that, unlike Ninurta, Inanna “destroys for the sake of destruction” and builds nothing out of the wreckage.

To the ancient Mesopotamians, her personality would therefore be one way of explaining the chaos of the world and natural disasters. Her art also demonstrated her strength as a warrior. As one oracle described her in a dream, they imagined her equipped for battle: “The goddess Ishtar who dwells in Arbela came in. Right and left quivers were suspended from her. She was holding a bow in her hand, and a sharp sword was drawn to do battle. … Her face shone like fire. Then [she went out in a frightening way] to defeat your enemies.”

This type of description gives scholars an idea of what she looked like in Mesopotamian art. One famous piece often believed to represent her is “The Queen of the Night” relief at the British Museum (Figure 2). The horned helmet makes...
it clear the image depicts a Mesopotamian deity, but other icons like the lion, jewels and rod-and-ring — held in her hands — also suggest it may have been her. All of these icons associated with her image. The lion was a symbol of power frequently associated with Inanna-Ishtar in art and literature. The rod-and-ring symbols held in her hands were a symbol of divinity, and items she carried in her descent to the Nether World.39 Where the Queen of the Night falls short of being Inanna-Ishtar is the lack of her weapons, normally, she carries a scimitar in one hand. It also contains two lions, even though Ishtar is typically only depicted with one.40 Figure 3 provides a comparison to study this. While the second image also has two lions, which Ishtar sits above, like in Figure 2, it differs by displaying multiple weapons — scimitars and maces — rising from her shoulders.41 This type of iconography was more common with Ishtar and displayed her skill as the goddess of war.

The Gilgamesh epic also provides support for the recognition of Inanna-Ishtar’s powers as the goddess of war. When she goes to Anu in order to receive the Bull of Heaven and take her vengeance on Gilgamesh, the god is at first unwilling. Consequently, she proceeds to threaten him:

If thou [dost not make] me [the Bull of Heaven],
I will smash [the doors of the Nether World],
I will [. . .].
I will [raise up the dead eating (and) alive].
So that the dead shall outnumber the living.42

After additionally assuring him that she can provide food for people and animals in the resulting famine, Anu concedes the Bull to her. As the goddess of war, her power is so impressive that even one of the greatest of the gods does not desire to provoke her wrath. Her power and aggression in this tale is fitting for the goddess who would later be invoked by many kings to support their reign as king. Inanna-Ishtar was beneficial to kings both as overseer of treaty-breakers and a patron to the king’s military success while conquering new territory or suppressing rebellion. The treaties written by ancient Mesopotamians contained severe consequences for any cities that broke with the agreement. Inanna-Ishtar was frequently invoked “as a war goddess who will break the bows of any treaty breakers and make them crouch defeated.”43 This was a fitting action for her as the goddess of war, but not the only consequence. In another curse, the king Idrimi states, “Whoever shall change the settlement … may Ishtar deliver him into the hands of those who pursue him; may Ishtar impress feminine parts into his male parts.”44 This action would not only defeat the king’s enemies, but also shame and humiliate them. The conquered enemy should not challenge the king’s rule, since the goddess had already demonstrated who she favored.

Without the support of the goddess of war, Esarhaddon could not have hoped to succeed in his campaigns against neighboring kingdoms. With her guidance and favoritism however, he — like Nabonidus and many of those before and after them — was confident in his power to challenge the world around him.

Kings were not the only individuals to trust in Inanna-Ishtar’s strength, however. As previously alluded to, three hymns written by the Sumerian High Priestess Enheduanna were discovered and later translated by Betty De Shong Meador. All three extalt Inanna and even argue that she is the greatest and most powerful of the gods: “queen of rare deeds; she gathers the me/from heaven and earth/surpassing great An.”45 In these poems, Inanna’s strength as the goddess of war is attested to both in literal descriptions and metaphorically. The first of these can be seen in the hymn of her battle against Mount Ebih: “Inanna/holding a pure lance/terror folds in her robes/flood-storm-hurricane adorned/she bolts in battle/plants a standing shield on the ground/Great Lady Inanna/battle planner/fierce smasher.”46 Here, it is clear that Inanna is physically strong, but “battle planner” also recognizes her intelligence and talent in planning military strategies. When the goddess was being less rational during warfare however, she could be very animal-like in her actions: “mountain wildcat/provoking the roads/shows wet fangs/grashe her teeth.”47 This sort of imagery evokes the primal, instinctual aspects of the goddess described by Harris as “wild and savage, excessive in her sexuality and love of war.”48 Inanna-Ishtar is capable of being the rational, methodical warrior, but also of frequently being aggressive and instinctual.

**A Collector of the Mes**
A final feature of Inanna-Ishtar’s role in ancient Mesopotamian society was as a collector of me. The Mesopotamian and instinctual elements, both abstract and concrete, of which Sumerians thought their world was made up.49 The main evidence archaeologists have uncovered about this so far is the tale of “Inanna and the God of Wisdom,” also known as “Inanna and Enki.” Inanna, desiring to gain the power and respect conveyed by the me, decides to go to the Abzu and meet the god of wisdom, Enki. By praising, sitting and drinking with Enki, she quickly becomes compliant and gives her what she desires:

They toasted each other; they challenged each other. Enki, swaying with drink, toasted Inanna:
“In the name of my power! In the name of my holy shrines!

To my daughter Inanna I shall give

The high priesthood! Godship!

The noble, enduring crown! The throne of kingship!”

Inanna replied: “I take them!”

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Their conversation does not end there, though. Enki continues to toy Inanna, and in total she receives 80 mes. When Enki becomes sober again, he realizes what has happened and sends his servant to retrieve the mes from Inanna. She refuses however and — despite Enki sending sea monsters to stop her — returns home safely to her city of Erech. Intriguingly, despite being the goddess of war, Inanna was not allowed to go into battle but instead relies upon her servant Naruhubur — the same servant who aided her in the “Descent to the Nether World” myth — to do so. She is far more interested in watching the mes as they are being returned to her temple to increase her renown. This myth therefore reinforces Inanna-Ishtar’s intelligence and cleverness as tools she could use against others.

Inanna-Ishtar’s Cult

Inanna-Ishtar’s temples had both similarities to and differences from the temples of other deities. As was the custom and belief, temples maintained statues of the goddess who was believed to reside within it. A. R. George discusses this in his analysis of “Inanna’s Descent,” arguing that the lines of Ninshubur’s lament are not metaphorical, but a literal description of the desecration of her statue and dismantling of this statue was a temple’s (and its members’) primary rite.65 The scholarly debate about Inanna-Ishtar’s main cultic practitioners has already been discussed, while her cult may be an enigma, there are primary sources that clearly indicate Inanna-Ishtar did have the power to reverse human gender. In the New Year’s Festival discussed, there is a procession of individuals who enter “dressed as men on their right sides but as a women on their left” and are followed by young men with hoops and young women with swords and double axes… priestsesses carrying the gir (spear or dagger) and a da-ru-na (a battle club, sword or knife). The festival climaxes with the kurgara who take a weapon and do something that creates blood. Despite the utter obscenity of the lines, the interpretation has been self-mutilation.66

Taken by itself, this festival practice proves only that Inanna-Ishtar’s cult involved gender reversal. Comparing it to other sources, however, shows that it was a power of Inanna-Ishtar to change human genders. N’aman cites multiple instances — such as in the Assyrian royal inscriptions and Hitite military oaths — where Ishtar was shown changing men into women.67 Other sources also show where she changes women into men. Indeed, Enheduanna’s hymns to Inanna suggest that festivals may have involved these gender-mixing ritual behaviors to pay homage to the goddess’ power to reverse human gender as a protection for her followers and forms of divine justice. In “Lady of Largest Heart,” Enheduanna describes how Inanna came across a maiden “evilly spurned” and added her. The goddess decides to make her a “handsome woman,” and so “in sacred rite she takes the brooch/which pins a woman’s robe/breaks the needle, silver thin/consecrates the maiden’s heart as male/gives to her a man . . . splits the door/wherever cleverness resides/and there reveals/what lives inside.” After assisting the young woman, she goes to the man who scorned her and “breaks his mace/gives to him the brooch/which pins a woman’s robe.” Through these actions, Inanna gives the woman masculine traits of strength and intelligence, and she changes the man by demasculinizing him. Enheduanna extols the goddess for such action — “these two SHE changed/renamed” — and it is possible that the religious festivals did the same.68 If cultic members like the asunu really did include married women, as Asante suggests, then it would make sense that they would celebrate their goddess’ power to reverse genders and protect her faithful worshippers.

Understanding Inanna-Ishtar’s powers and personality is therefore difficult and confusing at times, but results in some clear lessons. The goddess embraced both feminine and masculine components of her personality. As the goddess of fertility and love, she embraced her nature as a woman, but in the New Year’s Festival discussed, there is a procession of individuals who enter “dressed as men on their right sides but as a women on their left” and are followed by young men with hoops and young women with swords and double axes… priestsesses carrying the gir (spear or dagger) and a da-ru-na (a battle club, sword or knife). The festival climaxes with the kurgara who take a weapon and do something that creates blood. Despite the utter obscenity of the lines, the interpretation has been self-mutilation.66

In order to study how Inanna-Ishtar broke with the female gender norms of ancient Mesopotamia, it is important to also conclude what the female gender norm was. In this regard, most scholars concur that a woman’s life revolved around and was predominated by marriage and childbearing. This remains true across the socio-economic divisions of the time: elite women, free women, and slaves. Laws and marriage texts focus the most attention on the marriage process and whether or not a woman was able to bear children. They also show that one of the most important transitions in these lives was moving from being the dependent of a father or brother to being the dependent of their husbands’ households.

Once married, adultery was not permissible under any circumstances due to the obsession with patrilineal familial lines and divorce was seriously discouraged. Some women did not fall into this typical gender mold, however, and groups like the harimtu and sapinu required separate discussion. Scholars’ long accepted interpretation of ancient Mesopotamian marriages is that they are “basically a sale” — “payment first, at the betrothal, and nadius later, at the wedding.” M. Stol summarizes the fundamental norms of marriage — (a) The fathers of the bride and groom come to an agreement and the couple is to live in the husband’s home; (b) The husband can take another wife if no children are born; (c) A man has the right to take a concubine; (d) A man can degrade his wife and promote his concubine; (e) The eldest son receives a double share in the inheritance.

This summary covers the basic ideas behind the marriage, but it does not analyze the numerous variances in a woman’s life since she was married, or before that. One thing to consider is unfaultiness or divorce in marriage, both of which were common because the Mesopotamian society was so concerned with being able to identify a child’s paternal ancestry; adultery was a serious crime that received substantial attention in Mesopotamian laws. Law 7 in “Laws of Ur-Namun” demonstrates the commons punishment for this crime. If the woman is found guilty she was killed, but in order to be proven innocent she had to endure the “River Ordeal.”69 It was not easy for a woman to leave her husband, either. The “Laws of Hammurabi” did permit a woman to leave her husband if he could be proven wayward and cruel — law 142 — but if she is found to have falsely accused him, or is the one committing faults, she risks being sent away with nothing, made a slave woman, or even killed.70 Ultimately, she belonged to her husband and since her primary task was to bear children, she could not engage in extramarital relationships.

With elite and wealthy women, the analogy of a marriage to a sale becomes even more appropriate, yet these women also exercised rights and influence poorer women and slaves could not. “Rulers regularly gave and received ranking women as gifts,” the truth in this statement can be seen from works like Enheduanna’s hymns or the stela records of Adad-guppi, mother of Babylon’s King Nabonidus, who exercised considerable influence over her son’s religious and political beliefs.71 Perhaps elite women and their dowries

Identifying the Gender Norm for Women in Ancient Mesopotamia

In order to study how Inanna-Ishtar broke with the female gender norms of ancient Mesopotamia, it is important to also conclude what the female gender norm was. In this regard, most scholars concur that a woman’s life revolved around and was predominated by marriage and childbearing. This remains true across the socio-economic divisions of the time: elite women, free women, and slaves. Laws and marriage texts focus the most attention on the marriage process and whether or not a woman was able to bear children. They also show that one of the most important transitions in these lives was moving from being the dependent of a father or brother to being the dependent of their husbands’ households.

Once married, adultery was not permissible under any circumstances due to the obsession with patrilineal familial lines and divorce was seriously discouraged. Some women did not fall into this typical gender mold, however, and groups like the harimtu and sapinu required separate discussion. Scholars’ long accepted interpretation of ancient Mesopotamian marriages is that they are “basically a sale” — “payment first, at the betrothal, and nadius later, at the wedding.” M. Stol summarizes the fundamental norms of marriage — (a) The fathers of the bride and groom come to an agreement and the couple is to live in the husband’s home; (b) The husband can take another wife if no children are born; (c) A man has the right to take a concubine; (d) A man can degrade his wife and promote his concubine; (e) The eldest son receives a double share in the inheritance.

This summary covers the basic ideas behind the marriage, but it does not analyze the numerous variances in a woman’s life since she was married, or before that. One thing to consider is unfaultiness or divorce in marriage, both of which were common because the Mesopotamian society was so concerned with being able to identify a child’s paternal ancestry; adultery was a serious crime that received substantial attention in Mesopotamian laws. Law 7 in “Laws of Ur-Namun” demonstrates the commons punishment for this crime. If the woman is found guilty she was killed, but in order to be proven innocent she had to endure the “River Ordeal.” It was not easy for a woman to leave her husband, either. The “Laws of Hammurabi” did permit a woman to leave her husband if he could be proven wayward and cruel — law 142 — but if she is found to have falsely accused him, or is the one committing faults, she risks being sent away with nothing, made a slave woman, or even killed. Ultimately, she belonged to her husband and since her primary task was to bear children, she could not engage in extramarital relationships.

With elite and wealthy women, the analogy of a marriage to a sale becomes even more appropriate, yet these women also exercised rights and influence poorer women and slaves could not. “Rulers regularly gave and received ranking women as gifts,” the truth in this statement can be seen from works like Enheduanna’s hymns or the stela records of Adad-guppi, mother of Babylon’s King Nabonidus, who exercised considerable influence over her son’s religious and political beliefs. Perhaps elite women and their dowries
were traded through marriage agreements, but the women were able to influence their husbands and how they lived. To gain influence and a permanent position in the household, women were expected to bear children after marriage. According to Stol after marriage “she is now ‘the bride’ (hullatun)” and she seems to keep this title until her first child is born.” If a woman failed to produce children she risked her position as the only wife: “in theory monogamy was the rule, but in practice what might be called ‘secondary wives,’ drawn from among the slaves, were also tolerated.”86

The “Laws of Lipit-Ishtar” indicate this in laws 24-31: in order to produce more children a man may take a second wife. He may also adopt children he had by a slave or karkid.87 Childbearing so that one’s husband would have an heir was so important Mesopotamians were willing to alter the normal family structure.

Some ancient Mesopotamian women were also involved in work aside from that associated with their marriage. One form of labor was slavery. One could become a slave in numerous ways, such as by birth, but one of the most notable is that a father of a family might be driven by destitution to sell as slaves his wife or children.46 While most scholars might focus on the economic implications of this fact, the power the husband exercises over his wife and her children is so extreme it can only reinforce the image of a woman being owned and traded by her father or husband. This may have been only a last resort, but pledging wives, children and other slaves to a creditor as security on a debt “was not an unusual scale and had their own rules to be aware of.

Discussing the role of bar-wives and taverns leads to Asante’s analysis of the kublid and harimtu, who were frequently associated with these institutions.48 Early scholars of ancient Mesopotamia consistently translated these two words as “prostitute,” but Asante reliably argues that these words have nothing to do with prostitution.49 Instead, the words roughly translate as “one who is neither ‘the daughter of a man’ nor ‘the wife of a man.’” She was thus a woman separated from the patriarchal household, as the stem verb hunusu, ‘to separate’, indicates.”50 Understanding this correction allows a more accurate study of primary sources in order to uncover their role in society. One matter of significance is that because they were separate from the patriarchal ties that regulated most women, kublid/harimtu had sexual liberty unknown to other females. Consider law 27 of the “Laws of Lipit-Ishtar”:

If a man’s wife does not bear him a child but a prostitute from the street does bear a child, he shall provide grain, oil, and clothing rations for the prostitute, and the child whom the prostitute bore shall be his heir; as long as his wife is alive, the prostitute will not reside in the house with his first-ranking wife.51

To understand the relevance of this law, it is first important to recognize that Martha T Roth has translated kublid as prostitute; the transliteration from cuneiform uses “kublid” rather than “kublit,” and hus-kud-los as hus-kud-lū-sig (hus-kud-lū-sig being a respectful case of the law). If one reconsiders the law then using Asante’s definition of kublid, they can see how it demonstrates that the kublid/harimtu were free from the sexual limitations of women within the normal patriarchal status. Rather than being punished or left to a male relative’s judgment for having a child outside of normal familial relations, the kublid is provided for after producing the childless man an heir. She is not considered an equal to the woman, a wife living respectfully within the traditional female gender role, but she is also not mistreated. This could perhaps be a result of the kublid/harimtu’s relation to Ishtar, who was the patron goddess of these unmarried women. This relationship is reinforced “in the Akkadian Enki Epira (4:52-53) when a woman who is said to be ‘the city and house of the karkid/samhûm and harimtu/Ishtar, whom Ishtar deprived of husbands and reckoned as her own.”93 By claiming them, Ishtar allowed these women to live a life very distinct from the average female, and it is telling that she patronized women who failed to conform to normal female gender roles of Mesopotamia.

The final distinct group of women who should be discussed individually is the naditu. As was mentioned previously, naditu stood out from the average women because they were not permitted to bear children and had many privileges similar to men. Normally, naditu lived with a group of women in the gogos,54 but they could also marry, manage private estates, and tend to other private interests.55 Concerning marriage, a naditu was not allowed to have children, so she was expected to provide another means for her husband to do so. The source explanations for this differ. In the “Laws of Hammurabi,” law 144 states that “if a man marries a naditu, and that naditu gives a slave woman to her husband, and thus she provides children, but that man then decides to marry a nupim, they will not permit that man to do so, he will not marry the nupim.”96

In this situation, by providing a slave woman as a second “wife,” the naditu fulfills both her obligation to provide her husband and her obligation to refrain from bearing children herself. Stol suggests, however, that a naditu would bring “her sister with her as second wife (the sugetum),” and this woman was expected to give birth to the children. She was the physical sister and marrying two sisters may have been an ancient tradition.57 The two sources provide very different explanations for how a naditu provided children in marriage, but it is possible the tradition varied across time periods and in different cities. What is evident is that even though they differed from the gender norm somewhat, they were expected to fulfill it in alternative ways.

While not all women fell under the same strict gender norm, most lived within the structure where marriage dominated a woman’s life and childbearing was her ultimate purpose. Within this patriarchial family structure, she was the subject and effectively property of her husband and his family. Some individuals did step outside strict family ties though, elite women were able to use their influence and knowledge to become involved in politics, religion and other aspects of culture and lower class women had different types of work available to them as a means to earn extra income. The most distinct class of women though was the kublid/harimtu, who were not associated with a father or a husband. This gave them the ability to pursue careers and sexual lives free from the control of traditional patriarchal ties.

Husbanding familiarized oneself with the historiography around Inanna-Ishtar, the personality and characteristics of the goddess, and the normal female gender roles of the time period, it becomes possible to examine how Inanna-Ishtar compares to women of the time. Because the primary role of women in ancient Mesopotamia was as a wife and a mother, this forms the primary comparison between the two. However Inanna-Ishtar’s traits as the goddess of war and a collector of me are a vital part of her identity, and must also be discussed because of the fact that they severely break the goddess apart from purely feminine behavior. Like most women in Mesopotamia, Inanna-Ishtar was married, but her role as a wife was remarkably different from what women were normally expected to have. Whereas human women’s main purpose as a wife was to bear children for their husbands, Inanna-Ishtar never provides a child for her husband Dumuzi. Instead, her behavior was much more primal as she sought and gave sexual love and pleasure. The “Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi” makes this relationship explicit in a way human love is not described: Inanna spoke:

“…”He laid his hands on my holy vulva, He smoothed my black boot with cream, He quickened my narrow boat with milk, He caressed me on the bed.

Now I will caress my high priest on the bed, I will caress the faithful shepherd Dumuzi, }
I will care his loins, the shepherding of the land, I will decree a sweet fate for him.”

The available sources neither prove nor deny whether human women were expected to take the same pleasure in carnal relations with their husbands, but having a well-known and popular goddess who did so suggests they might have.

On the other hand, not everything Inanna-Ishtar did as a lover would be allowed for human women. While of these concepts it is easier to say that Inanna-Ishtar was much freer with her love, this is not exactly true. She did take multiple lovers over the thousands of years she was worshipped, but she was generally faithful to them during the time she was in love with them. Her “marriages” to Mesopotamian kings, described in terms of those kings being incarnations of her husband Dumuzi, were also allowed to remain after the death of their husbands, though they were legally less valued as widows than as first-time brides. In these ways the women are at least similar to Inanna-Ishtar, but where the goddess completely breaks with any plausible norm of the female gender role is in her murder of her husband. Whereas Mesopotamian women were never even allowed to serve as witnesses in a court case, Inanna-Ishtar serves as both judge and jury for Dumuzi when she says “As for him, carry him off.” This is a drastic reversal of the human women who were so under their husbands’ control, they could give them away as slaves. By condemning her husband to death, as well as never producing an heir for her husband, Inanna-Ishtar breaks with the women’s most important gender roles of obedience and reproductive usefulness. Despite never having children in her mythology, Inanna-Ishtar was as time described as a mother or protective figure. Gertrud Farber translates one Old Babylonian inscription that invoked Inanna to help a woman go through labor: “The woman who was about to give birth steered the Gil-boat through the water, pure Inanna steered the Gil-boat through the water.” Even though Inanna was a protective deity in these circumstances, she was still rarely described as actually being a mother. The Assyrian king Assurbanipal’s kingship in a way similar to when other kings described themselves as the husband of Inanna-Istar. Despite the example of this one king, however, Inanna-Ishtar was still more frequently depicted as a lover and warrior than as a mother. Her life did not revolve around the features of bearing children and raising them for her husband, unlike the women of Mesopotamia.

It is in her role as the goddess of war where Inanna-Istar truly broke with feminine behavior and embraced a masculine side not acceptable to human women. Unlike women, her iconography frequently displays her carrying weapons and other implements of war. The literature about her also places great influence on her military might. In connection, the recovered evidence that Mesopotamian women might have engaged in any form of military show is Asante’s suggestion that zimmet may have been women. Even then, the possibility is confined to a small sub-set of individuals who are non-representative of the general female population. For most women, they were expected to work in the home of a male relation or engage in domestic work with low compensation values. It was only those women specifically “claimed” by Inanna-Istar or other deities who were allowed to break with the Mesopotamian’s gender norms. What then was Inanna-Istar’s purpose if not to provide a divine representation of how women should behave? Why would such a dedicated lover, fertile benefactress, and clever collector of me also commit matricide, be a violent warrior, and destroy so arbitrarily? Scholars suggest that Inanna-Istar originated and developed as a way to explain the natural disasters and unpredictability of the dangerous world they lived in. Through her affectionate and/or orderly traits they could explain why the world would become benign and safe or why a kingdom had success militarily. In contrast, through her violent destruction and chaos priests could explain the floods, famine, and other catastrophes that struck Mesopotamian cities. As Enheduanna describes Inanna in the battle against Ebih, when

FURY OVERTURNS HER HEART!

bedlam unleashed
She sends down a raging battle
Hurls a storm from her wide arms
To the ground below
…

And hurricane winds
Swirl piercing, stinging
Fly with Inanna’s fury
Suck loosened earth into sweet air.

Perhaps this was why so many ancient Mesopotamian cities had temples to Inanna-Istar. As such a powerful goddess, it was important at least to attempt to appease her and retain her favor at all times. She did not represent to them how socially acceptable women should act and behave, but was instead an intrusive mix of both the feminine and masculine. Through her multiple complex roles as a goddess of fertility, love, war and collector of the me, Inanna-Istar could bring both prosperity and calamity to this ancient society.

Conclusion

Inanna-Istar was an enigma in her behaviors, and this has caused scholars considerable discord and confusion while studying her. To this day, new ideas, translations, and interpretations of the goddess and her cult are being argued in an academic setting. While her iconography is somewhat recognizable, the lack of definite labels on many images leads to the questions of whether it was really her. Literature also leaves scholars with important questions such as how could there be multiple Ishtars at once, and what sex and gender did her cult worshippers actually possess? What has become clear is that her main functions as a deity were as the goddess of love and the goddess of war. In additional, early renditions of Inanna described her as a goddess of fertility, and throughout history Mesopotamians claimed her success in collecting me from Enki and the underworld. But her personality and character stand out because of how much they contrast with the women of ancient Mesopotamia, whose lives for most revolved around marriage, producing children, and in effect being the property of their husbands or other male relatives. Some may find it easy to dismiss this as a simple result of Inanna-Istar being a goddess and above insignificant, human rules, but the explanation is not that simple. There were many other Mesopotamian goddesses who did conform to the female gender roles of the era. Inanna-Istar specifically embraces both female and male characteristics; she was an anomaly who broke gender norms more drastically than any other figure in ancient Mesopotamian mythology or history.

Endnotes

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specifically mentioned in this separate text; see Porter, “Ishtar of

of military activity,” which would explain why she is the one

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analysis of the multiple Ishtars during the Neo-Assyrian period.

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16 Stol, Women in Mesopotamia, 136.

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12 Stol, “Women in Mesopotamia,” 137.

11 Ibid.

10 Roth, Law Collections from Mesopotamia, 38.

9 Ibid., 101.

8 Ibid.

7 These transliterations represent the Sumerian and Akkadian languages respectively.

6 This is an English term that has no word in the ancient languages since it was not considered a profession.


4 Roth, Law Collections from Mesopotamia, 31.


1 Roth, Law Collections from Mesopotamia, 88.

Secondary Sources


Power within governments is not always what it appears and leaders are not always the man or woman at the top. Those who are connected intimately either through marriage or birth, or even friendships, often are the ones who wield the power behind the person or group who is the presumed head of governments. Modern governments typically exist as having a strong leader, either by election, monarchy or theocracy, and have supporting cabinets or ministers who advise the leader, and it is certainly not uncommon for leaders in current society to have strong female leaders who have attained high office through legitimate means. The concept of powerful women in government is not unusual even in a male-dominated society, but during the early medieval period, specifically the Mongol dynasty period, women could never attain the role of khan, even if they were the direct descendants of the royal Chinggisid family. However, they could influence government and politics in ways that were undoubtedly more instrumental in shaping the dynasty than the khans themselves.

Historians have recorded the genealogy of Chinggis Khan and the most common lineage chart only provides the names of Chinggis Khan’s sons. The problem with these charts is that Chinggis Khan and his many wives had several daughters, many of whom were married off to distant tribes to secure alliances. Even though most dynastic charts focus on the male descendants of Chinggis Khan’s family, historians have recorded the names of some of these daughters, validating the authority they had relating to their lineage. But the most powerful women of the Mongol dynasty were actually the women who were married to the khans, for they were not just advisors to their husbands; two of these dynamic women impacted politics in ways that historians would agree were unforeseen by even Chinggis Khan himself. Because of the respect women in general were given in Mongol society, traditions in regards to wives’ inheritance rights, and the absence of a clear mandate regarding rules of succession, two women were able to shape the Mongol dynasty by powerfully swaying the outcomes of the election process at two different quriltai (political assemblies). These two women, Torögene Khanum, or queen, and Sorqoqtani Beki, or princess, each married to sons of Chinggis Khan, either ruled as regent upon their spouse’s deaths or managed their deceased husband’s territory, making them quite powerful and influential in politics in ways that Chinggis Khan’s own daughters were not.

Overview of the Lives of Mongol Women
A brief overview of the customs of the Mongols, including observations of women is provided by Friar Giovanni DiPlano Carpini who was commissioned by Pope Innocent IV in 1245 to “offer baptism to the Tartars and tell them of Christianity.” Carpini’s mission also included completing an ethnographic study of the Mongols for the purposes of discovering their intentions toward the west, and he describes many interesting observations of the Mongol women that include their dress and their abilities as archers and as horse riders, all of which was very similar to the men. Because the Mongols were a nomadic tribe, the women were expected to be skilled in archery and horse riding as they were often in charge of the tribes when the men were hunting or at war. Carpini describes the language the women use as “coarse and vulgar” and they often times “get very drunk,” but are “chaste” and without “scandal.” Mongol men could have as many wives as they wished and could even buy them. It is interesting that women were expected to provide for the tribe and be as tough as the men, yet could still be considered property to be bought or sold. Jennifer Holmgren points out that not all women and or wives were purchased for a price or used for the building of alliances; many wives were women who had been captured during raids, and sometimes there was simply an “accidental meeting” that probably accounted for a great number of marriages among the average Mongol nomads. Regarding the living arrangements in Mongol society, Carpini notes that while
both from the Onggurut tribe and both had been kidnapped. Güğüks’ wives were made of “white felt [and] were quite larger than the average, and Carpini relates that the tents of woman might have had. Several historians note that the size of the tents in which nobles lived were usually significantly larger than the average, and Carpini relates that the tents of Güyük’s wives were made of “white felt [and] were quite large and beautiful.”

Hö’elün and Börte: The Women Responsible for Shaping Chinggis Khan

The mother of Chinggis Khan, Hö’elün Khan, had no luxuries when Chinggis Khan was a boy, but was still able to provide for her sons and is credited with saving their lives after her husband was killed by a rival tribe. The account of Hö’elün and her children’s survival is eloquently detailed in a poem in *The Secret History of the Mongols*. There has been much debate as to when *The Secret History was* written, with various popular arguments regarding their idea, but Igor De Rachewiltz believes *The Secret History* was written in 1228, one year after the death of Chinggis Khan, with subsequent texts completed at later dates. Despite the many controversies surrounding the date it was written, *The Secret History* provides a framework for how the Mongols viewed women and Hö’elün in particular. She is revered as the mother of Temüjin because of her fierce strength in keeping her family alive as well as being a woman who continued her nurturing even after Temüjin was elected as khan. *The Secret History* includes a poem which describes Hö’elün as “a clever woman ... tending tight her belt to shorten her skirt ... gathering crab apples and bird cherries” after she and her children were extracted following the death of her husband.Yesügei. David Christian explains the matriarchal respect the Mongols had by relating stories from the *Secret History* that include how Hö’elün “rebukes” Chinggis Khan and how she “chased after him and disgraced him into pardoning his brother.” Christian argues that because *The Secret History* has so many stories of Hö’elün it is reflective of the Mongol “willingness to treat the judgment, as well as the endurance and fortitude of women with respect.”

Börte’s story is similar to Hö’elün’s in that they were both from the Onggurut tribe and both had been kidnapped by rival tribes. Temüjin met his bride-to-be when he was that young and had her brought to him to the Onggurt tribe to arrange the marriage when Temüjin was a boy because that was the tribe of his mother, Hö’elün. *The Secret History* tells the story of Yesügei being received by Börte’s father, Dei Se en, who believes that daughters and granddaughters of his tribe were born to be khans because of their “beauty” and their ability to “influence people.” Börte was Chinggis Khan’s primary wife, and while he had several wives and many children, Börte was important in the making of the Mongol dynasty because it was Temüjin’s rescue of her after she was kidnapped by the Merkit tribe that brought him to the attention of other clan leaders. Christian explains that because Temüjin was able to form a tribal alliance to help in the rescue of his wife, and the fact that they utterly destroyed the Merkit tribe in the process, the rescue and battle “transformed Temüjin’s status” on the steppe.13 Rash d’Al-Din recounts a different story about Börte’s kidnapping. He does not tell of the tribal alliance Temüjin made to get her back, but he does state that while she was held captive by the Merkit tribe, she was treated with “respect and consideration” and that she was “exceedingly beautiful and capable.”14 Rash d’Al-Din states that she was held by the Merkit tribe and then escorted back to Temüjin, with no mention of warfare on the part of Temüjin to get her back. While Rash d’Al-Din is the only source to not describe Temüjin’s battle to get Börte back, it reaffirms the idea that women were respected and capable within the Mongol and steppe culture. Most secondary sources repeat the former story of Börte’s rescue, which enhanced the strength of Temüjin’s alliance building capabilities and reinforced the idea that he was willing to brutally exterminate opposing tribes.

While Börte’s rescue provided Temüjin the opportunity to demonstrate his kquriltai (divine mandate to rule) at the beginning of his domination of a new era on the steppe, Hö’elün set the standard by which women were viewed, respected, and accepted in Mongol society. Because of her perseverance as a strong and powerful woman surviving on the steppe, along with the reality of what the average woman was capable of in regards to contributing to and care for steppe tribes, other women were recognized as nearly equal to men in life on the steppe. George Lane argues that steppe life was difficult for men and women alike, and because women performed duties similar to men, they were considered to be more equal and given more rights when compared to women who lived in sedentary populations, who faced more oppression during this time period.15 This trend would continue with each step in the Mongol conquest and Temüjin achieve their goals in regards to the election of their sons as khan, as well as allowed them to rule as a regent or to administer their spouses’ estate upon the deaths of their husbands.

Törögene and Songqoqtani Beki: Woman Who Changed the Course of the Mongol Dynasty

Törögene was the sixth wife of the Great Khan Ögedei, who was elected khan after the death of Chinggis Khan. Ögedei became khan in 1229 and he died in 1241, leaving Törögene to act as regent and allowing her to rule form 1241 to 1246. Her position as sixth wife should have excluded her from being regent, but she was the mother to the eldest son of Ögedei, Güyük, and this garnered her the rank of regent. As regent, Törögene took her position quite seriously and she instituted changes to the administration that were highly aggressive. Rash d’Al-Din states that as regent Törögene “dispersed all the great officers because no quriltai was held as the princes did not appear and meet together.”16 Rash d’Al-Din’s statement reflects two major points in the written, well-documented actions of Ögedei and replaced them with what women believed she would serve her more adequately and she delayed the quriltai until she had the votes she needed to get her son Güyük elected as khan. The quriltai is the event that takes place when a new khan is elected. All great khan’s are to be present for the election of a new khan, thus it took considerable time for the quriltai to proceed because of the distance people had to travel to reach the quriltai.

Ata-Malik Juvaini states that Törögene was a “very shrewd and capable woman,” and she secured the support of the Chaghatai clan who agreed that because she was the mother of the eldest son, she should rule as regent until a quriltai could be held, but that “the old ministers should remain in the service of the court, so that the old and new yasa [laws] might not be changed from what was the law.”17 However, once Törögene was secure in her position, she made changes to the administration by replacing those ministers she did not like, specifically Yelü Chucai and Mahmud Yalavach. By making these administrative changes, she effectively changed the yasa, permitting the new minister’s underseretary, Sharaf al-Din, to tax widows and orphans. Timothy May points to the law recorded by Juvaini that stated “there is no charge in the law of God nor impost in the yasa of Chinggis Khan” in reference to the taxation of widows and orphans.18 While Törögene ruled as regent she was not elected to be khan; however, when Ögedei would have died and Rash d’Al-Din attributes her ability to control the empire to her habit of using bribery to attain her goals. She “wooed the hearts of kinfolk and emirs with all manner of gifts and presents.”19

While the Mongol administration was changed under the regency of Törögene, her most significant action was in the calculating manner in which she was able to get her son Güyük elected as khan. As stated earlier, Törögene had the support of the Chaghatai line in all matters, and Juvaini states that after the death of Ögedei, it was Törögene who took control of the empire by notifying Ögedei’s brothers of his death and that someone needed to administer important affairs of the Mongols, such as “the army and the court” and the “affair of the people.” Juvaini also states that Törögene should rule as regent and Juvaini states, “until a quriltai [can be] held, it was she that should direct the affairs of the state.”20 Törögene, however, went against Ögedei’s wishes regarding who should inherit the throne upon Ögedei’s death. According to René Grousset, Ögedei initially wanted his third son, Kucha, to inherit the throne, but he died before Ögedei. Ögedei then named Kucha’s eldest son, Sharaim, to become Great Khan upon Ögedei’s death.21 But Törögene “disobeyed [Ögedei’s] command and elevated Güyük to the Khânate.”22

As with other medieval nomadic tribes, the issue of succession caused not only unrest within the tribes, but often battles for succession led to outright civil war among brothers, uncles, and cousins. When Chinggis Khan named his successor as Ögedei, his third born son, he began a new tradition on the steppe, which had previously seen the eldest son or brother be the successor to the throne. Because there were no real traditions or laws that clearly dictated the line of succession and she was ruling as regent, it was easy for Törögene to disregard Ögedei’s wishes. Rash d’Al-Din asserts that Ögedei accepted the seat of khan at the 1246 quriltai “on the condition that henceforth the Khānate shall be settled in my family.”23 Because Törögene ruled as regent she was able to secure the support of the all the Chaghatay families except that of Batu in her attempt to have her son Güyük succeed Ögedei, despite Ögedei’s explicit wishes that he be succeeded by his grandson, Shiramün. Törögene is also thought to have created a level of corruption surrounding the issuance of xutag, or passports, that allowed merchants to use xutag on the postal service, at the same price as bureaucrats. Because the merchants were issued these xutag at the same price as bureaucrats they paid...
women.27 like this,” further showing that Mongols valued the advice of women.28 On which the high standard to which women were held and set forth by Chinggis Khan. Firstly, Sonqoqtani Beki was given much power as she inherited the endo (realms) of her husband Tolui when he died. This is significant because it reflects the Mongol pattern that women are considered equal to men and included in inheritance matters, even when they are not direct descendents of Chinggis Khan. Carpini states that camps were not broken upon the death of princes, but were given to wives to rule.29 Peter Jackson notes that The Secret History stated, “Yesit Khanut, one of [Chinggis Khan’s] wives, was given a large part of the Tarbagat people in the recently subdued kingdom of Hoo-Hu.”30 These are the sources on which the high standard to which women were held and reflect the responsibility, power, and trust they were given in ruling Mongol territory. The Secret History also relates that Yasia Khutan “respectfully” advised Chinggis Khan as he was going to war that it was important for him to “designate a successor” and he agreed, stating, “no one has advised me like this,” further showing that Mongols valued the advice of women.28

Secondly, as Tolui’s primary and favorite wife, Sonqoqtani Beki inherited the Tolui endo in approximately 1233. Sonqoqtani Beki is mentioned by Carpini as being “higher and more powerful among all the Tartars than any except the emperor of Rome [Tugriqen] and Batu.”31 Rash d’Al-Din states that Sonqoqtani Beki’s sister, whose name is not given, was Batu’s mother, which created an alliance between the Jochid and Toluid lines that would eventually change the destiny of the dynasty.32 Rash d’Al-Din further compares her to Hó’elün in that she “trained her children” in the same manner as Hó’elün.33 But more importantly, primary sources by Rash d’Al-Din and Juvaini repeat the belief that Sonqoqtani Beki obeyed the law, stating, “Sonqoqtani Beki and her sons, [they] did not swerve one hair’s breadth from the yasa and law of their ordinances.” Juvaini is referring to the yasa to be held at the death of Ogotai and is comparing Sonqoqtani to Torgitgene in her marriage.34 In another case, Alahai-Beki married her dead husband’s son, then his nephew, then her second husband’s son, in order to preserve the Chingissid hold on the Öngüt tribe. Levirate marriage “was an obligatory institution … and that elite women had no choice in the matter.”35 It is clear that Sonqoqtani Beki had more power being the widow of Tolui than a wife of Güyük.

Jack Weatherford relates that sources that include B. Baldymyram indicate that an “unidentified” daughter was married to “Ardan Khan of the Karlik Turks” who lived far to the west, near the Il’Valley, in approximately 1211. Chinggis Khan removed the title of khan from Karluk’s name and replaced it with “guregen, son-in-law, or prince consort.”36 Weatherford asserts that while this daughter’s name has been “censored” from The Secret History, this story illustrates the elevation of Mongol princesses over the khans of subordinate tribes in that the Mongols were aware of how titles were perceived and that the Mongol princes were required to “outrank” whoever they were married to in the subordinate tribe. According to Weatherford, Ardian would later join Genghis Khan on a campaign, leaving the “unidentified” daughter to rule Ardian’s “homeland,” which was the “Mongol gateway to the Muslim lands to the south.”37 Weatherford explains the difficulty in identifying this daughter by concluding that she was “Tolia, a name that formed a euphonious set with Tolui” and that the Tola Shi mentions a daughter of a similar sounding name being married to Ardian’s son.38 A third daughter by the name of Checheqiyen was married to “Inalchi, the son of Khutuqa-Begi of the Oirat tribe,” who were known as the “People of the Forest.”39

The Ruling Daughters of Chinggis Khan

While Torgitgene and Sonqoqtani Beki were the two most influential ruling women in the Mongol dynasty, other women, including Chinggis Khan’s daughters, were given power to rule subordinate tribes by being married into these tribes, creating alliances based on marriage. This was not an uncommon practice among the nomads, dating back as far as the Tungus-Nu, but because the Mongol territory was so vast, these daughters who were used to secure alliances were a true extension of Chinggis Khan. One of the most significant ways of securing an alliance was through the practice of one-way and two-way marriages. One-way marriage was the marriage between a Mongol princess to a member of a lesser tribe, giving her power to rule over that tribe, and a two-way marriage was the practice of Mongol princesses marrying princes of allied tribes, as well as princes from that tribe or dynasty marrying into the Mongol dynasty. The two-way marriage carried a more conciliatory tone of alliance than the one-way marriage. Chinggis Khan and Borte had several children, and Chinggis Khan had several children with his other wives as well. Several of the children were girls who would be used to help secure alliances through marriage. Many of these daughters of Chinggis Khan were sent to far away lands to rule in his stead, and while these daughters were placed in marriages to be used to establish or strengthen the military relationships with every marriage partner, “they were in reality used ‘as pawns’ by Chinggis Khan in running his empire.”

Primary sources vary about the number of daughters Chinggis Khan had and used in marriages for political gain, but three daughters in particular are noted to have been advised personally by Chinggis Khan to “become one of [his] feet. [They] should be [his] helper.”38 His daughter Alahai-Beki was initially married to the chief of the Öngüt tribe, “marching into the Öngüt tribe with the help of Batu, effectively changed the royal line of the Mongol dynasty from the Öngüt to the Toluid line, which in turn would later cause a civil war.” Current historians have a view of Sonqoqtani Beki that is not as complimentary as those of Rash d’Al-Din and Juvaini. Jackson describes her actions in regards to Möngke becoming khan as a power grab, or coup, and states, “it was Tolui’s line which seized upon the imperial dignity in 1251.”40 He further argues that “Mongke’s accession and the overthrow of the line of Ögödei and Chaghatay was the beginning of a clear division of territory and resources that favored the Jochid and Toluid lines and largely eliminated the Ögödeid and Chaghatay lines.”

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China garnering them more luxuries and interactions with more developed cultures. Chughgih Khan was successful in combining the Ordar tribe with the Mongol tribe, making the Ordar the “first non herding tribe to join Genghis Khan.”

Weatherford argues that the daughters of Chinggis Khan were used as “shields around the Mongol homeland.” The three daughters mentioned in this essay were all married to a Mongol elite, and their alliances with rival tribes and ruled with the authority given to them by their father. Although they were all powerful women of the early Mongol period, their power was not as extensive as their father’s. They were used to secure the borders of the Mongol empire and their power only extended as far as the Mongol states. The death of Güyük when Sorqoqtani Beki and Batu staged their coup limited the authority of the Mongols. This is clearly in the Mongol dynasty by the actions following the election, changing the course of the Mongol dynasty.

Conclusion
There were many variables that shaped the Mongol dynasty, but it is clear that women, especially those most intimately connected to the sons of Chinggis Khan, played a significant role in how the dynasty evolved. Because of the liberal inheritance rules that benefitted the wives of Mongol leaders, the Mongol state was more developed than other nomadic tribes when it came to succession, and Holmgren correctly concludes that when a strong father dies, “his death leaves power and authority in the clan dangerously fragmented.” This demonstrates clearly that the Mongol dynasty is not just the actions following the death of Ghiyuk when Sorqoqtani Beki and Bata staged their coup, taking power away from thejongkhis that created a division among the families that led to virtually independent states.

While Töröigne and Sorqoqtani were undoubtedly the most powerful women of the early Mongol period, Chinggis Khan’s daughters played an important role as well, to a lesser degree. They were used to secure alliances with rival tribes and ruled with the authority given to them by their father. Although they were important rulers for the Mongol dynasty. Chinggis Khan’s daughters were left in the far reaches of the empire and their power only extended as far as the areas in which they lived. Timothy May states that travelers from the west were quite astonished and “clearly uncomfortable with the idea of a woman openly issuing governmental orders” as “female rulers,” which was unusual among sedentary populations, but was normal in the Mongol empire, and is reflected by their power being held. While Mongol women could never become khan, their influence shaped the structure of the Mongel empire and changed the course of history.

Endnotes
2. Ibid., 51.
4. Ibid., 54.
5. Ibid., 111.
7. Ibid., 18-19
9. Ibid., 421.
18. Juvaini, Ghiyuk Khan, 240.
19. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 182.
27. Carpina, The Story of the Mongol, 64.
29. Ibid., 169.
32. George Qingzhi Zhao, Marriage as Political Strategy and Cultural Expression: Mongolian Royal Marriages from World Empire to Yuan Dynasty (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 36-37.
33. Ibid., 37.
34. Ibid., 38.
35. Ibid., 40.
37. Ibid.
38. Weatherford, The Secret History of the Mongol Queens, 64.
39. Ibid., 65.
40. Ibid.
41. Zhao, Marriage as Political Strategy, 39.
42. Weatherford, The Secret History of the Mongol Queens, 66.
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45. May, The Mongol Conquests in the World, 236.

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Section III.
Review Essay

Job with sons and daughters, from Bible Historial, 1352.
When Philippe Ariès published his book *Centuries of Childhood* in 1960, he likely had no idea that his work would launch decades of discourse and conversation about the history of childhood. His assertion of childhood as a modern invention, as a life stage unrecognizable to historical peoples, was both supported and attacked by historians that followed him. In works such as Barbara Hanawalt’s *Growing Up in Medieval London*, Steven Ozment’s *Flesh and Spirit*, Rudolph Bell’s *How to Do It*, and Emily Coleman’s “Infanticide in the Early Middle Ages,” the concept of historical childhood as a recognized stage of growth is explored. Through the use of various sources, the majority of these analyses determined a conclusion vastly different from that of Ariès. The generally held view of historical childhood has shifted away from an unrecognized life stage towards the belief that childhood was a key step in the development of medieval children. Since Ariès developed his thesis, historians have come to understand historical childhood to be similar to modern childhood in the sense that this life stage was neither horrible nor ideal during the Middle Ages.

At the time that Ariès wrote *Centuries of Childhood*, a revival of macrohistory was taking place across the scholarly world, a trend represented in Ariès’s piece. His assertion that “there was no place for childhood in the medieval world” and that “the indifference was a direct and inevitable consequence of the demography of the period” is a broad one. Ariès focuses on making wide assertions about childhood from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to the twentieth century, avoiding detailed work about the nuances and details of children’s lives. By taking a macrohistorical view of the topic, Ariès looks only at general trends and beliefs held by all of society, rather than by individuals. From this approach, Ariès concluded that medieval people saw children as little adults who never experienced a childhood stage. Using a focus on material culture, Ariès’s argument is based primarily on the conclusions he draws from paintings, clothing styles of the time, and works of fiction. While these sources provide for an interesting analysis, they are not sufficient to use as a base for a wide sweeping statement about childhood during the time period because these sources are at risk of subjectivity and can be misinterpreted based on personal opinions. While this issue alone is enough to punch a hole in Ariès’s argument, another problem arises due to the fact that the author did not use sources from the time period he was addressing.

However, though Ariès’s ideas about childhood do not draw from objective fact and thus have a somewhat unconvincing argument, his book does set the historical stage for a decades-long discussion about the true nature of historical childhood. A counterargument in this dialogue to Ariès’s belief is outlined in Barbara Hanawalt’s *Growing Up in Medieval London*. Hanawalt writes her book in direct response to Ariès, claiming that “the Middle Ages did recognize stages of life that correspond to childhood and adolescence.” While she engages primarily in social history to show the heavily social aspect of growing up during the Middle Ages, Hanawalt also utilizes economic history and cross pollination to illustrate her point. By approaching the topic of childhood from several angles, Hanawalt reveals that her thesis can be upheld with respect to multiple disciplines, creating a more convincing argument. In addition, the entirety of her book is centered on the skepticism of postmodernism and is reflected in her adamant doubt throughout the work of Ariès and insistence that “socialization of children and young people into polite society occupied an important segment of medieval London culture.”

The main reason that Hanawalt’s argument is so convincing rests in the fact that she uses a broad spectrum of sources, court records, coroner’s reports, government documents, and letter books, accurate to the time period, sources that she states Ariès ignores completely. Granted, she does leave out material about negative aspects of a child’s life, such as abuse of orphans, death of unsupervised children, and strict education for adulthood; Hanawalt’s agenda is decidedly to show medieval childhood

The Evolution of Childhood’s History

Keri Heath
in a positive light. However, she provides a solid opposition to Ariès’s thesis, as well as establish the convention for future historical books about childhood: the organization of information in order of birth to adulthood.

Yet not all modern works about medieval childhood carried such a defined agenda as did that of Hanawalt. Rudolph Bell, in his book How to Do It, refrains entirely from presenting his own beliefs about childhood to readers and gives minimal commentary, instead providing readers with text from primary sources and allowing them to make their own conclusions. Bell uses only advice manuals for the sources in his book, a choice that has both benefits and drawbacks. While these sources represent the ideal that society strives towards, it also may leave out some of the harsh realities that are associated during the time with raising children. Instead, Bell simply focuses on the concerns that the manuals specifically bring up and makes observations about the texts, such as how odd it is that “authors who wrote in such detail about how to select a wet nurse … would be so silent about how parents should check on a child put out to be a wet nurse.” This tendency marks Bell as one who works primarily from a historicist position, presenting the past on its own terms. At the same time, Bell sometimes admits that when looking “back five hundred years …, we may be struck instantly by similarities with modern concerns,” revealing that he holds some presentist views about his work, comparing the past to the present. Yet Bell’s book is primarily objective and advances the discussion of childhood by allowing readers to observe the continuity of childhood throughout their own interpretation of sources about ideal parenting.

However, not all of the literature written about childhood since Ariès’s thesis was published upholds the recognition of a childhood. Emily Coleman’s article “Infanticide in the Early Middle Ages” paints an extremely different picture from that of Hanawalt and Bell about what childhood looked like. In analyzing population and tax documents for farms and manors during the time, Coleman comes to the conclusion that female infanticide resulted in the low numbers of women and girls. While Coleman admits that “the killing of children of some years … would surely be difficult to explain,” she insists that farms only supported a certain number of females and that “it would not be difficult … for a baby to be exposed, or simply smothered in the home.” She reaches many of these conclusions by drawing on statistical history and making analyses from the population numbers. In some sense, Coleman’s methods are comparable to those of Ariès because she uses psychohistory to draw conclusions about people’s history based on her evidence. Yet that makes Coleman’s point more convincing than Ariès’s is her willingness to qualify her own statements with counterarguments through her admitted use of presentism and the recognition that there may be other factors accounting for the smaller number of females in the tax documents. Even with these concessions, the reader leaves the article with a sense that Coleman would agree with Ariès that children in the Middle Ages were not highly valued and that childhood was not a recognized part of development. Coleman’s article is important to the study of childhood because it reminds historians that medieval childhood was not wholly positive.

Steven Ozment, in his book Flesh and Spirit, somewhat agrees with this idea. Following Hanawalt’s convention of moving chronologically through a child’s life in a book, Ozment explores childhood on a much more personal level. Rather than the official documents used by other historians, Ozment uses personal journals, diary entries, and letters to show that “the family of the past was neither as wholesome as the romantics portray it, nor as cruel as the cynics suspect.” This anti-Whiggist approach to studying childhood is most similar to Hanawalt’s method in the sense that Ozment also uses various forms of cross-pollination, including social, economic, anthropological, and intellectual history. However, Ozment’s work differs from that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of his subjects, giving the text a definite style that of Hanawalt in that Ozment takes a more intimate look at the lives of...