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Anunnaki Theory in the Modern Cultic Milieu

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Anunnaki Theory in the Modern Cultic Milieu

MA THESIS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Introduction

In the past century the field of Assyriology, the study of the Ancient Mesopotamian Near east, has become a renowned and respected field of academic historical inquiry. Our understanding of the ancient cultures of Iraq and Anatolia have substantially increased as has public interest. In recent years, Sumerian and Akkadian works of mythology have seen renewed interest in popular culture through films, novelizations and video games (Collins 2020). In the popular consciousness, these ancient histories are increasingly being associated with themes and meanings that are entirely contrary to academic understandings. Both in popular belief and in fiction, the gods of ancient Sumer are increasingly identified not as supernatural deities, but as extraterrestrial beings called the *Anunnaki*.¹

Anunnaki Theory, the belief that the gods of ancient Sumer were technologically advanced alien beings is highly popular among conspiracy theorists, fans of alternative history and religious and spiritual movements. The theory made headlines in 2016, when the transport minister of Iraq publicly proclaimed his belief that his country possessed 7000 year old air- and spaceports.² Outside of academic circles, interest in the extraterrestrial *Anunnaki* seems greater than interest in the more mundane human history of Mesopotamia. We can find on YouTube that the videos on Mesopotamian history usually see lower traffic and ratings than those that present Mesopotamian history through the lens of *Anunnaki Theory*.³

The source of *Anunnaki theory* can be traced back to the 1976 book *The 12th planet* published by Zecharia Sitchin (1920 – 2010). This book, which is presented to resemble a scientific publication, presents a creative yet surprisingly in-depth analysis of ancient artifacts and mythological sources from clay tablets. From his analysis, Sitchin concludes that the deities of Sumer were a spacefaring alien species. Following success of *The 12th Planet*, Sitchin became a prolific author. He published six other pseudo-academic books on his theory. He called this collection of seven “academic” works *The Earth Chronicles* (Sitchin 1976-2007). He also wrote several travelogues of expeditions to ancient sites (Sitchin 2004 and Sitchin 2007) as well as a single narrative story, *The Lost Book of Enki*. (Sitchin 2001) Since the theory’s debut, belief in the *Anunnaki* has become extremely popular in a wide variety of communities. Throughout these communities, the theory has taken on a large number of different meanings.

Theoretical framework

Despite its major popularity, *Anunnaki theory* has seen little attention in academic writings. The only paper thus far that specifically studies the *Anunnaki* in the context of Sitchin is the publication by Ryan Winters (Winters 2020), which discusses the theory primarily from an Assyriological perspective. Winters discusses the belief as a curious oddity and as an incorrect interpretation of ancient mythologies and cosmologies.

¹ In Mesopotamian mythology, term *Anunnaki* refers to “the offspring of Anu” a small group of deities comparable to the gods of Olympus. In the popular consciousness and in the confines of this paper, it relates to an entire race of extra-terrestrial beings.

² <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iraq-spaceships-transport-minister-kazem-finjan-iraqi-sumerians-space-travel-7000-years-ago-a7340966.html>

³ By far the most popular educational video on the history of Mesopotamia is made by Crash Course, https://youtu.be/sohXPx_XZ6Y currently (5-8-2022) has 7.5 million views. Videos on the *Anunnaki* very often reach comparable or greater heights both in ratings and popularity. *The Anunnaki Creation Story* (<https://youtu.be/DfI4ZaiucpQ>) has 7.8 million views.

Other papers which discuss *Anunnaki theory* have done so merely in passing, while trying to analyze some related group or phenomenon. Various authors have understood this theory through the lens of *New Age* (Robertson 2016), New Religious Movements (Partridge 2004), conspiracy theory (Harambam and Aupers 2021) modern mythology (Nuruddin 2006) or online communication (Reyes and Smith 2014). Although these approaches have been fruitful, it seems necessary to discuss *Anunnaki theory* as a phenomenon in itself. If we wish to truly understand how *Anunnaki theory* functions in its believers and spreads, we must find a theoretical framework that includes the many different contexts and versions in which *Anunnaki theory* manifests. It seems most fruitful to examine *Anunnaki theory* as a belief system that exists entirely in what Colin Campbell calls the *Cultic Milieu* (Campbell 1972).

The *Cultic milieu* is a broad term that defines counter-cultural movements that posit themselves in opposition to those items of belief that are generally held in high regard in mainline society. In its broadest sense, the *Cultic milieu* encompasses religious, political, cultural and economic beliefs and behaviors that are not generally accepted by mainstream society. David Robertson suggests we should understand this as the *counter-epistemic milieu*, meaning it is defined by opposition to the dominant sources of epistemic authority in a society. This opposition manifests in western societies as a rejection of the narratives of the scientific and religious mainstream. (Roberson 2016, 26)

A fundamental aspect of the *Cultic Milieu* is a general skepticism towards mainstream beliefs and ways of thinking, bolstered by a high degree of individualism. Because of this skepticism and individualism, individuals in the *Cultic Milieu* are not easily satisfied with the communities or belief systems in which they find themselves. This results in what Campbell calls *seekership*; many individuals set out on their individual journeys towards a satisfying community or worldview. This search is often difficult. Believers journey through a wide range of spaces with various ideologies before settling. Through this movement of individuals, there is also a constant process of syncretism, as *seekers* collate past and present beliefs into somewhat unified narratives, and share them with new groups. Through this contact, ideas spread throughout the *Cultic Milieu* rapidly. Not only do they spread rapidly, they continuously take on new, syncretized meanings from the beliefs with which they come in contact. (Campbell 1972, 16-17)

Discussions of the *Cultic Milieu* have primarily focused on the various religious, conspiratorial and political communities that populate it. Insufficient attention has yet been given to the ways particular *ideas* travel and change throughout different communities in the *Cultic Milieu*. We are particularly interested in makes certain ideas popular and often-shared, while others fail. *Anunnaki theory* is a useful case study for this larger discussion. *Anunnaki theory* has been an incredibly successful idea, not only in terms of book sales, but in terms of its influence over diverse groups and religious communities. *Anunnaki theory* can easily be recognized within the *Cultic Milieu* through its use of a specific vernacular of Mesopotamian terminology. Additionally, its history can be traced back to a small number of publications by a single individual. By comparing modern forms of *Anunnaki theory* to Sitchin's publications, we can identify the ways in which inventions and syncretisms in this sphere occurred.

Thesis setup

In this paper, I research why the theories found in Zecharia Sitchin's books have managed to become popular and credible beliefs within the *Cultic Milieu*. In particular, we will examine how Sitchin's "academic" nonfiction-texts differ from narrative texts in their ability to afford real-world *Anunnaki* beliefs. I will first give a basic background into the history of ancient astronaut theories in general, as well as a short background of what *Anunnaki theory* entails. The first and largest part of my paper will consist of an analysis of *The Earth Chronicles* and *The Lost Book of Enki*, with an investigation of

the mechanisms within these books that grant the story credibility. In the final chapter, we will examine several cases of Anunnaki theory online, and examine the ways in which these two genres influenced belief in the *Anunnaki theory*.

Anunnaki Theory

We will first give a brief background into the history of ancient astronaut theories, followed by a summary of the most important aspects of *Anunnaki theory* as originally devised by Sitchin.

History of Ancient Astronauts

The idea that beings from other planets may have visited Earth in antiquity can be traced back at least to the 19th century. Originally this idea was limited to the fantastic worlds of fiction, as stories with these themes were told by such prolific writers as H.G. Wells, H.P. Lovecraft (Colavito 2004) and Arthur C. Clarke (Grünschloß 2007). These stories combined the mysterious and fantastical nature of ancient architecture with equally mysterious stories concerning life from outer space. *Ancient Astronaut Theory* saw a radical increase in popularity when Erich von Däniken released the book *Chariots of the Gods* (von Däniken, 1968). In it, von Däniken discussed the possibility that aliens had visited and contacted humanity at various points in history. The popularity and success of his work can hardly be overstated. After von Däniken, belief in the extraterrestrial origins of ancient civilizations has spread outside of the realms of fiction. As a result, *Ancient Astronaut Theory* is now not only the inspiration for blockbuster films such as *Stargate* (Hiscock 2012) but also for a large number of documentaries and “educational” programs such as History Channel’s *Ancient Aliens*.

Despite having collected “evidence” from all over the earth and from vastly different time periods, von Däniken and his successors have never collated their discoveries into a consistent “history of ancient Earth”. Von Däniken’s books describe various kinds of extra-terrestrial beings that are clearly alien, as well as astronauts who look indistinguishable from humans. Furthermore, they display an inconsistent array of alien technologies and lack any sense of a consistent chronology. Von Däniken’s work focuses on these artefacts as “mysteries” and tells his audience that the histories told by archaeologists are not reliable. Aside from his suggestion that extra-terrestrial beings were somehow involved, he does not provide a consistent alternative (von Däniken 1968).

A unified narrative of ancient alien history was finally provided by Sitchin in 1976. Through a creative reading of generally little-known Mesopotamian texts, Sitchin was able to present his audience with “evidence” that ancient astronauts interfered on earth. Moreover, he was able to provide the details that von Däniken’s writings lacked. Sitchin identifies a single group of aliens (called the *Anunnaki*) who come from a single planet (*Nibiru*) and used coherent and recognizable technologies. Sitchin’s narrative even identifies a coherent history centered around a number of named *Anunnaki*, whose plans and disagreements and wars over the millennia can be pieced together from various mythologies.

Sitchin’s Anunnaki theory

According to Sitchin our solar system counts an additional planet called *Nibiru*, which has an erratic 3600 year-long orbit around the sun, and is therefore invisible to observation. Because this planet has a dense atmosphere, temperatures remained stable enough to support intelligent life. According to Sitchin, these beings, the *Anunnaki*, looked exactly like humans.⁴ After a global cataclysm (possibly a nuclear war) planet *Nibiru* began to lose atmospheric density. In order to geo-engineer the atmosphere, its inhabitants required monatomic gold. Gold was eventually found on Earth, around

⁴ Technically, according to Sitchin, humans look exactly like the *Anunnaki*, rather than the other way around.

450.000 years ago. An outpost was established at Eridu in southern Mesopotamia, as well as mining operations in Africa. After several millennia of exploitation, the lower-class Anunnaki forced to work in the mines were on the brink of revolt. To relieve the *Anunnaki* workers, Enki, a high-ranking scientist, introduced a new subservient life-form. This being was a hybrid between *homo erectus* and *Anunnaki* DNA. After some trial and error, modern humanity was created. Although humans relieved the *Anunnaki* from labor, many high-ranking *Anunnaki*, including Enki's brother Enlil, considered humans an unnatural abomination. Through further genetic experimentation, as well as direct sexual relations between *Anunnaki* and humans, humanity quickly evolved into an intelligent and independent species that spread rapidly across the world. Unpleased with these developments, Enlil demanded humanity's destruction in a worldwide flood, while the *Anunnaki* escaped in their spaceships. However, Enki secretly warned a chosen human about the flood, allowing humanity to survive. After the flood, the *Anunnaki* returned to Earth, but ruled humanity from the shadows, presenting themselves as hidden "gods", leaving the day to day government in the hands of the special hybrid race of kings. However, tensions quickly arose between different *Anunnaki* factions, most notably the pro-human *Enkiites* and the anti-human *Enlilites*. These tensions reached their boiling point in an *Anunnaki* sanctioned nuclear strike in Palestine circa 2400 B.C.E. (coinciding with the biblical destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah). After this, it is unclear whether the *Anunnaki* have gone away or have hidden themselves. Sitchin suggests they will return in the next few centuries. (Sitchin 2007)

One of the core consequences of this version of history is the implication that humanity was created scientifically, by the combination of DNA of early hominids with the more advanced DNA of the *Anunnaki*. Although all humans are hybrids, there is potential for differentiation between "higher" and "lower" humans relating to levels of *Anunnaki* DNA in the blood. According to Sitchin, these genetic differences form the basis of the concept of nobility or royalty in the modern world.

Outside Sitchin's influence

As is to be expected in the *Cultic Milieu*, *Anunnaki* theory has evolved far beyond the confines of Sitchin's original intention. Various spiritual, religious and conspiratorial groups have used concepts presented by Sitchin and imbued them with alternative meanings, many of which run contrary to Sitchin's original intentions. Below, I have listed a small example of movements which have taken creative inspiration from Sitchin's books. Although these movements are certainly worth deeper investigation, their creative contributions are so extensive that these are better characterized as their own belief systems. As a result, an in-depth analysis falls outside the scope of this paper.

- Religious groups such as Raelism and Heaven's Gate, although preceding Sitchin's theory, have integrated *Anunnaki* beliefs into their religion as scientific legitimization of their religious truths about the extraterrestrial origins of the mysterious *Nephilim* and *Elohim* of the Hebrew Bible. (Thomas 2010)
- Popular conspiracy theorist David Icke suggests that the *Anunnaki*, whose true hidden form is that of reptilian humanoids, are still actively and maliciously scheming to control of humanity through royal families and large institutions as the "Babylonian Brotherhood". (Lewis 2005)
- *ZetaTalk* leader Nancy Lieder uses Sitchin to tell an apocalyptic narrative. She suggests that planet *Nibiru*, or "planet X", will return to earth and unleash another flood-like catastrophe as well as a possible invasion by hostile *Anunnaki*. (Lieder, Zetataalk.com) In response, Zecharia Sitchin has published his final book *The End of Days*, in which he stated that *Nibiru* will not return for several decades and that its approach will not be catastrophic. (Sitchin 2007)

- Theosophists and New Age spiritualists see Anunnaki DNA in human bodies as the civilizing aspect, which elevates human beings spiritually over animals, and what may separate more spiritual people from those of lesser spiritual greatness. (Flaherty 2010)
- In Nuwaubian and different Black Nationalist circles, Anunnaki DNA serve as a marker for spiritual power, which is more clearly found in the direct descendants of the Anunnaki (Black people) than in other races. (Nuruddin 2006)
- Several *cultic* authors have taken it upon themselves to identify Anunnaki bloodlines from Mesopotamian history to the modern world as a genetic form of magical or spiritual charisma. They identify the Anunnaki with the bloodline of Jesus or the magical Elves. (De Vere 2004 and Gardner 2003)

Legitimation in The Earth Chronicles

Introduction

It is almost impossible to discuss *Anunnaki theory* without examining *The Earth Chronicles*. *The Earth Chronicles* is Sitchin's flagship series in which he presents his research about the true history of mankind to the world. The first and most important of Sitchin's *Earth Chronicles*, *The 12th planet*, was published in 1976. *The 12th planet* presents itself as an academic work which posited the existence of the hidden planet *Nibiru*, the existence of the *Anunnaki*, the creation of humanity and the end of direct *Anunnaki* control after the Great Flood. Sitchin guides his readers through ancient artifacts and modern calculations, which collectively uncover the story of the hidden extraterrestrial origins of ancient mankind.

In the decades after the breakout success of the *12th planet*, this theory was expanded with new evidences from other ancient cultures, as well as into different time periods ranging from millions of years in the past to the first century C.E. By the publication of the last book *The End of Days* in 2007, Sitchin had constructed a quite detailed alternative version of humanity and Earth's histories.⁵

Legitimation strategies

In this chapter, we will be examining the various legitimation strategies that are used by Sitchin in *The 12th planet* and several other *Earth Chronicles* books. A vital tool developed for the study of legitimation is the tri-part structure of epistemological appeals from which knowledge may be gained. This three part system, originally developed by Olav Hammer (Hammer 2001) has been adapted into a more workable scheme by Lewis (Lewis 2003) which could be used to study legitimation in new religious movements. Lewis proposes that legitimation strategies can be roughly understood as:

- Charismatic appeals, in which the persons making the claims speak from a position of special access to divine knowledge, divine favor or a spiritual experience.
- Rational appeals, which present that the claim follows naturally from the application of common sense, or has perceived "scientific legitimacy"
- Traditional appeals, which present the claim in the light of a religious tradition that already enjoys wide belief and high regard, or some even older, more primal form of religiosity.

Over the past decades, this approach to legitimation has been taken from its original function (legitimation in new religions) to different kind of religious, conspiratorial and pseudohistorical

⁵ The final pages of *The End of Days* seem to imply the potential for an examination of Anunnaki history into the Roman period and the Middle Ages. However, after Sitchin's death in 2010, *The End of Days* is seen as the capstone to Sitchin's works.

beliefs, adapting the boundaries of this tool in order to suit particularities of their alternative belief systems. Beside Lewis and Hammer, I have taken inspiration from Jaron Harambam (Harambam 2021) and David G. Robertson (Robertson 2016), who chose to abandon the three-point structure in favor of more exhaustive lists. I have chosen to maintain the original three point structure, but have added some of Harambam and Robertson's valuable suggestions inside its confines.

Charismatic appeals

The first main legitimation strategy is the "appeal to Charisma" or "appeal to experience". In Lewis and Hammer's context of new religious movements, It refers to the fact that the leader or organization is in some way blessed with greater access to the supernatural world than their ordinary contemporaries. These appeals are often the most explicitly religious, and there is little wonder that Sitchin does not engage in them. Charisma may refer to the fact that religious leaders are special, having greater access to the supernatural world than ordinary contemporaries. This can be achieved either through divine revelation, psychic gifts or the ability to channel or directly contact supernatural beings. (Lewis 2003, 13-14) Sitchin never lays claim any extraordinary powers, spiritual gifts, or direct experience of meeting the 'divine', in this case the extra-terrestrial Anunnaki. Because Sitchin presents his work as a scientific, non-religious text, charismatic appeals in the traditional sense are wholly absent.

It does seem relevant to mention that although Sitchin does not claim a spiritually superior position, like a spiritual leader, he does build himself up as someone with an extraordinary position through his presentation as a highly qualified scientist. The back-flap of his books present him as

*One of the few scholars able to read the clay tablets and interpret ancient
Sumerian and Akkadian (Sitchin 1976)*

Although his experiences are never framed as spiritual or charismatic, Sitchin constructs himself as an extraordinary person who has a special kind of access to the 'deeper truths' of the world through his rare ability to read cuneiform tablets. This might be read as a charismatic appeal.

Rational appeals

The category of rational appeals were originally presented by Olav Hammer as "scientism". It originally referred almost exclusively to the ways in which religious texts and actors related their claims in relation to the manifestations of various academic scientific disciplines. This might be done in many ways, from direct engagement with scientific sources, to appropriating the stylistic tendencies of academic scientists, to the creation and use of "pseudo-sciences", which mimic the appearance of academic scientific enquiry through the use of complex methodologies, technologies and terminology, but lack a backing from acknowledged scientific sources. "Scientism", or appeals to the aesthetics of scientific enquiry does not constitute argumentation in itself but lends authority and legitimacy to the author. It functions in making the reader more likely to accept the author as a credible person, and more likely to accept the arguments made (Hammer 2001, 205-208). As we shall see below, *The Earth Chronicles* are steeped in the "scientism" which I have re-named the *aesthetics of science*.⁶

In his schema of legitimation strategies, Lewis has widened this category to not only include appeals to science, but also 'common sense' or targeted argumentation through evidence and inference. *The Earth Chronicles* use commonly use rational argumentation which is strengthened by the overarching

⁶ The term "scientism" is most commonly used in religious milieus to negatively describe over-reliance on the scientific method and the desire to "explain away" the seeming presence of the supernatural.

aesthetics of science. We will first discuss what strategies Sitchin uses to give his writings the appearance of scientific authority on the macro level. Afterwards, we will examine some common argumentation strategies on the level of Sitchin's individual claims.

Scientific aesthetics

Distance from popular writers

One way in which Sitchin attempts to gain scientific legitimacy is to distance his work from that of "fringe theorists", in particular von Däniken. Although Sitchin and von Däniken equally lack academic scientific support, Sitchin presents his own "academic" work in opposition to the speculations of fringe theorists like von Däniken.

*"Indeed, a number of of **popular** writers have already **speculated** that ancient artifacts such as the pyramids and giant stone sculptures must have been fashioned by advanced visitors from another planet."* (Sitchin 1976, 11)

While writers such as von Däniken "speculate", Sitchin "researches". This differing attitude to alternative histories is found in the character of these authors' respective writings. Von Däniken's books essentially present a list of miscellaneous archaeological findings, which he suggests "scientists can't explain" because of scientists' close-mindedness. In contrast, Sitchin presents his evidences far more thoroughly, in an unemotional tone, without accusing scientists of willful blindness. He presents his theory as an addition to the legitimate researches of mainstream historians. By doing this, Sitchin legitimizes himself as a credible historian as well.

Apparatus

The 12th planet boasts an impressive bibliography, as well as a thorough system of referencing that suits an academic work. In contrast to a mainstream work of academic writing, Sitchin's apparatus does not serve to give the reader a clear attribution of sources, but serves to legitimate Sitchin as a legitimate academic writer.

All references made in the bibliographies and footnotes refer to impressive and highly esteemed peer-reviewed publications. Although there is little doubt that Sitchin actually consulted the sources he claims to have consulted, it is also clear that he was selective in his referrals. Although Sitchin has clearly taken inspiration from fringe writers such as Velikovsky (Velikovsky 1950)⁷, von Däniken and Raël (Raël 1974), these less scientific writings are not properly attributed. Conversely, Sitchin goes to great lengths to name the names and details of respectable peer-reviewed scholars, even when this is not strictly necessary.

*"In a text which **S. Langdon**, (in **Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale**) named "A classical liturgy to Innini", the goddess laments her expulsion from her city."* (Sitchin 1976, 122)

We could surmise that Sitchin was simply very thorough in his attribution of sources, which is undoubtedly the intended reading. However, in reality the quality of sourcing in *The 12th planet* is often lackluster, especially where attribution of specific clay tablets and other primary sources are

⁷ Author of *Worlds in Collision* (1950), who presents a similar theory of ancient planetary movements.

concerned. This seems to be done deliberately, as Sitchin's use of primary sources is highly selective and often does not stand up to independent examination.⁸

Complexity and calculations

The aesthetics of rational, scientific inquiry can also be re-created by appealing to complexity. Hammer suggests that another way to gain the appearance of scientific legitimacy is to work with numbers and complicated-seeming calculations. (Hammer 2001, 244) These calculations, when too opaque for general audiences to understand, create the appearance the text contains a significant amount of rigorous work. This is most clearly visible when Sitchin engages with the complicated work of chronology. He uses the reigns of kings given in the semi-mythological *Sumerian King List*, which is expressed in the Sumerian units of *shar* (measures of 3600), and synthesizes them with other known chronologies: The geologic chronology of Earth (including ice ages and geologic shifts), the history of the solar system and the 25,920 year-long "cosmic year" presented by the signs of the zodiac. The result is frequently a flood of complicated numbers that one is generally inclined to just accept on the face of it.

"...The extremely harsh conditions lasted, according to the Atra-Hasis epic, seven shars, or 25,200 years. The scientists discovered evidence of an extremely harsh period from circa 38,000 to 13,000 years ago- a span of 25,000 years. Once again, the Mesopotamian evidence and modern scientific findings corroborate each other." (Sitchin 1976, 356)

Accepted knowledge

Although accredited historians are unlikely to accept Sitchin's writings as a legitimate scientific endeavor, I believe it is impossible to disregard the fact that his more outrageous claims are often presented under a cover of information that is not controversial in the academic community.

Although Sitchin's conclusions about space-craft and cloning lack scientific backing, it is important to note that this book is built on a decent understanding of Mesopotamian culture and mythology, and argues from that basis. It is entirely likely that a layperson with no foreknowledge of Mesopotamian history acquires knowledge that matches what they may read in mainstream historic publications. Sitchin teaches his readers genuinely authentic history when he discusses the parallels between biblical texts and Mesopotamian mythologies, the basic workings and evolution of the Sumerian language, as well as the outlines of many mythological works. A reader of *The Earth Chronicles* will be able to find Sitchin's descriptions roughly corroborated in mainstream literature. By not straying further from academically accepted reality than is strictly necessary, Sitchin further strengthens his authority as a credible scientist. Readers who engage with mainstream academic material will see a large overlap between the claims of Sitchin and those of academics.

Logical appeals

We have so far examined the ways in which Sitchin gives his work scientific credibility. Within this larger context, Sitchin makes a number of logical arguments and claims to clarify his particular extra-terrestrial version of history. Although it is far from an exhaustive list, I have here catalogued a number of Sitchin's most important argumentative styles. Examples in this section are taken from chapter 5 of *The 12th planet*, which is where Sitchin first makes his claims about the extraterrestrial *Anunnaki*, as he tries to persuade us of the existence of *Anunnaki* rocketships.

⁸ For example: when Sitchin wants us to understand the eagle from the Etana epic as a "spacecraft" (page 153), proper citation of the epic is lacking. Examination of the whole text quickly begs the question why this "spacecraft" has feathers, a nest, eggs, and an argument with a snake.

Creative Linguistic argumentation

Language plays an important part in Sitchin's arguments. Throughout Sitchin's writings, he frequently proposes alternatives to accepted translations which are more in line with his ancient-astronaut hypothesis. This re-interpretation of ancient languages is aided by the particularities of the cuneiform languages.

Cuneiform languages are complicated. The original Sumerian tablets were read *logographically*, meaning a single sign represented a word or concept, originally one which was pictorially represented by the sign. The majority of cuneiform sources (including the ones Sitchin uses), are less old and far more complicated. The cuneiform signs became increasingly abstracted and no longer pictorially "legible". On top of this, the script was appropriated for Akkadian writings, which replaced logographic writings with *syllabic* writings, in which a previously logographic sign represented only a single syllable of a word, rather than a meaning in itself. To further complicate things, many alternate readings, both logographic and syllabic, exist for a multitude of signs. As a result, determining the exact reading of a particular text can be complex and challenging, even for advanced scholars.

Sitchin engages cuneiform not so much as a writing style, but as a secret code, in which the "true" meaning is found in an ancient Sumerian logographic reading. He pays close attention to the pictorial representation of the sign, which he understands as the truest, most fundamental meaning of the word. In essence, Sitchin ignores the complexity of the language, in favor of a "rebus" reading.

As Sitchin persuades us of his theories, he suggests the word MU (𒍪) which is understood to mean "year" or "name" (or one of many syllabic readings) should be read originally as (a part of a) 'rocket ship'. He traces the evolution of the sign MU to its earliest form (extreme right)

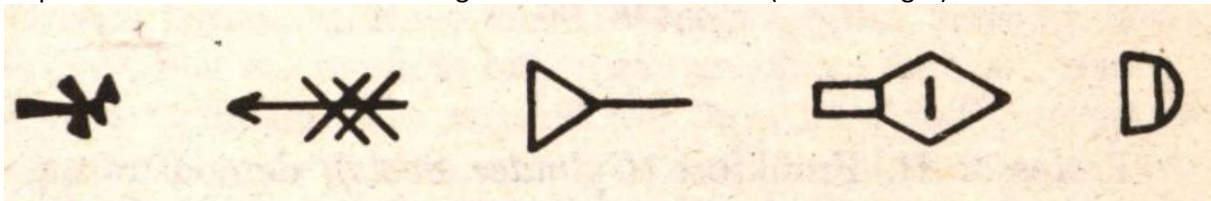


Figure 1: The evolution of the sign MU

According to Sitchin:

*We **clearly** see a conical chamber, depicted by itself or with a narrow section attached to it. (Sitchin 1976, 133)*

We see here Sitchin's iconographic reading of an "original" meaning. Additionally, we may note how Sitchin's use of *scientific aesthetics* aids his argument. It is doubtful most people will "clearly see" what looks like a rocket. Many readers will simply assume Sitchin is more qualified to make such observations than they are.

Having presented the "original" reading of the word MU, the book sets out to explain elements of mythology with this new understanding. The story of Gilgamesh and the Tower of Babel contain themes of humans desiring to make a "name" for themselves, and being prevented from achieving this by the god(s). Sitchin suggests this requires an explanation. Why would powerful divine beings be intimidated by humans seeking fame?

"We believe that the answers to all these questions become plausible, -even obvious- once we read "skyborne vehicle" rather than "name" for the word shem, which sit the term employed in the original Hebrew text of the Bible. The story

would then deal with the concern of Mankind that, as the people spread upon Earth, they would lose contact with one another. So they decided to build a "skyborne vehicle" and to erect a launch tower for such a vehicle so that they, too, could- like the goddess Ishtar, for example- fly in a MU "All over the peopled lands" (Sitchin 1976, 140-141)

Finally, Sitchin explains how this word came from its original meaning to its more mundane, later interpretation. He makes it clear that time has had a corrupting influence, but that the original meaning is still there, if one knows how to look for it.

"Because the term also connoted "that by which one is remembered" the word has come to be taken as meaning "name", but the universal application of "name" to early texts that spoke of an object used in flying has obscured the true meaning of the ancient records." (Sitchin 1976, 136)

A second example that gives more insight into workings of Sitchin's translations, is his explanation of the word DINGIR, a common Sumerian word carrying meanings such as deity, heaven, sky, or an abstract notion of divinity. Sitchin presents this word as DIN.GIR a two-syllable construction, and presents us with two signs, DIN and GIR, which carry their separate meanings.

"We have already seen what the symbol for GIR was: a two-stage rocket with fins. DIN, the first syllable, meant "Righteous, pure, bright." Put together, then, DIN.GIR. as "gods" or "divine beings" conveyed the meaning "The righteous ones of the bright, pointed objects" or, more explicitly, "the pure ones of the blazing rockets" (Sitchin 1976, 159)

This translation is strengthened by a pictorial representation. Sitchin's cherry-picked versions of the signs DIN and GIR, put together, resemble a "two-stage rocket". This creates a somewhat persuasive case. Sitchin has put a number of evidences together, and walked his readers through his argumentation, which seems corroborated by multiple lines of inquiry.

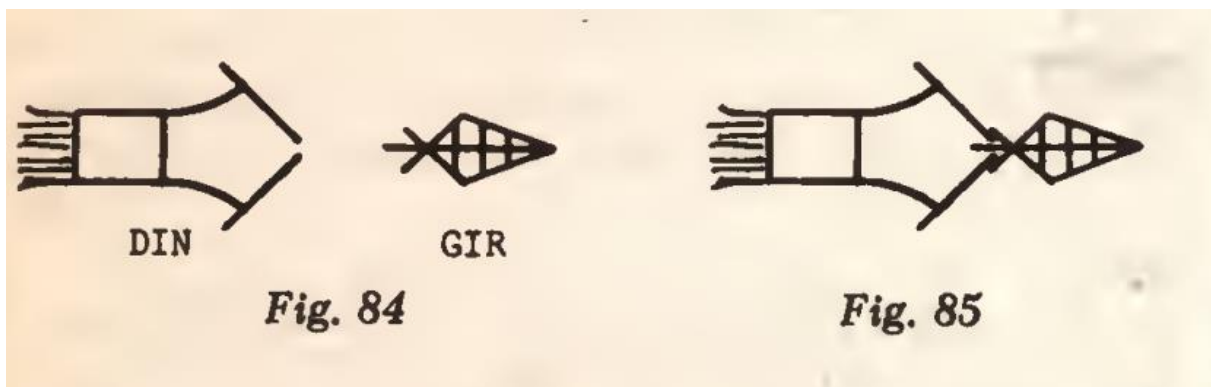


Figure 2: DIN and GIR, according to Sitchin

While the DIN.GIR case serves as a good explanation of Sitchin's way of argumentation, it also serves to demonstrate his misunderstanding of the material. Academics will point out that many different signs may represent DIN and GIR, and this particular reading has never been attested in cuneiform. Most importantly, the word is not a two-sign construction DIN.GIR (𒌦 𒄣) but a single-sign: DINGIR (𒌦) (perhaps best transcribed *dinir*). It is a very common sign, that is universally rendered with a star-

shaped sign (✱) This puzzling misunderstanding indicates to mainstream Assyriologists that Sitchin either lacks fundamental knowledge of cuneiform or is knowingly deceiving his audience.

Iconographic evidence

The same kind of logic is also used by referring to iconographic sources. Like with the linguistic argumentation, Sitchin evidences his claims by referring to the real and often complicated iconography of ancient Near Eastern art, and presenting objects that bear a resemblance to the technologies he discusses. In his discussion of ancient rocketry, Sitchin frequently points out “rocket-shaped” objects appearing in the archeological record. As with the cuneiform examples, these assertions made are only evidenced by vague similarities of basic shapes. Sitchin trusts on his established authority as a scholar to convince us that the evidence points towards high levels of technologies in the past. Although the reader is given the opportunity to see the evidence for himself, he is strongly guided by Sitchin towards an extra-terrestrial conclusion.

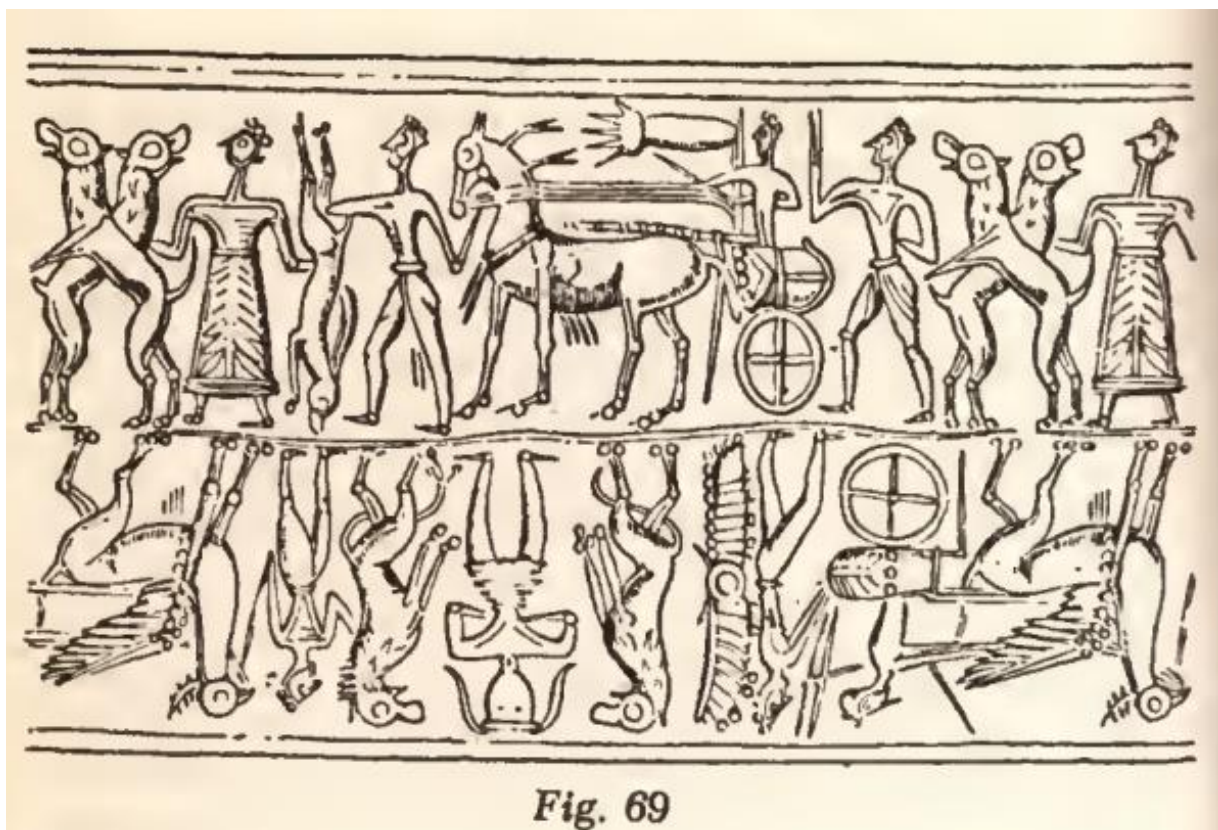


Figure 3: Ancient seal with "Rocket"

We are presented with a complex mythological scene, which a layman might not quickly interpret. Sitchin points our attention to the shape above the chariot on the upper register.

*The seal **clearly** depicts a rocket ship moving in the skies and propelled by flames escaping from its rear. (Sitchin 1976, 134-135)*

The reader will recognize the rough shape of a rocket in the picture, and trust on Sitchin's professional opinion, both that its identification as a rocket is evident, and that no other reasonable explanation exists. Mainstream historians might point out that the rocket seems to be flying “in the background” which would run counter to the artistic conventions of the period. (Shäfer 1974, 93) It is more likely that represents is a flag or banner affixed to the chariot's flagpole.

Appeal to the present

In his analysis of the legitimization strategies employed by David Icke, Jaron Harambam refers to the importance of “futuristic imageries”: The strange technologies and occurrences described by Icke are considered more realistic, because the audience can imagine them existing in the future; either because they understand them as logical extensions of current scientific realities, or as concepts that his audience can imagine through works of science-fiction (Harambam 2021, 998).

A similar strategy is also true for the works of Sitchin, who frequently and explicitly refers to the fact that the technologies of the deep past are directly comparable to technologies of Sitchin’s present, and therefore, are not scientifically impossible. We have already seen that the Anunnaki are understood to traverse the solar system in “fiery rockets” of a type similar to those in use in the 1970’s, rather than flying saucers. By discussing the possibilities of real scientists during the time of writing, Sitchin makes it clear that he is not in the process of writing science fiction, but writes about the eminently conceivable in the world of real science. In his description of the Anunnaki’s genetic manipulation, he points out that the modern science is proving his theories highly plausible.

“Experiments at the Institute of Society, Ethics and Life Sciences at Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, have shown that techniques already exist for cloning human beings. It is now possible to take the nuclear material of any human cell [...] to the conception and birth of a “predetermined” individual.” (Sitchin 1976, 308)

The mirroring between the world of the Anunnaki and Earth’s present is not only that of similar technologies, but also of political struggles (in 1985’s *The wars of Gods and Men*, Sitchin describes a nuclear end to a “cold war” in the deep history of the Anunnaki planet *Nibiru*.) and even of cultural sensibilities on a quite literal level. For example, when describing the Etana epic, in which an eagle carries a king up to the heavens, Sitchin suggests that the “eagle” was in fact a spacecraft. He consequently reminds us that similar naming conventions were used in Sitchin’s time. After all, the American craft which had recently carried American astronauts to the moon had also been named *the Eagle*. (Sitchin 1976, 153)

In *The 12th planet*, Sitchin makes masterful use of logical appeals. Sitchin first impresses his readers with his apparent expertise and scientific thoroughness. Once he has established his credibility, presents his readers with a varied barrage of complicated evidence. In principle, the reader has the opportunity to weigh the evidence for himself. In practice, this evidence seems like a confusing labyrinth of complicated calculations, artifacts and mythologies from various ancient cultures, on which it is easiest to trust Sitchin’s expert confidence.

The importance of *scientific aesthetics* declines throughout the evolution of the *Earth Chronicles* as Sitchin has at that point already convinced his readers of his scholarly credentials. Footnotes and references to scientific institutions steadily decline while wild speculation and creative use of sources increase. The final two books (Sitchin 1998, Sitchin 2007) lack an apparatus entirely.

Traditional appeals

The boundaries of what constitutes an “appeal to tradition” are not clearly defined. Lewis, writing on their use within New Religious Movements, recognizes two kinds of traditional appeals. These are first appeals to the authority of current traditional religious movements which the audience is supposedly already familiar with (often a return to a purer understanding of the Bible) and second, to a more primordial religiosity that predates established familiar religions. In both cases, these traditional appeals are calls to a past superior understanding which has been lost or corrupted over time. (Lewis 2003, 14)

This definition is too focused on New Religious Movements to be useful for the theories of Sitchin. Sitchin does not operate in an explicitly religious framework. He does not try to create a religious movement or call on his readers to act religiously on the information presented. Nevertheless, the core of Sitchin's argument remains firmly located in "traditional" sources of great antiquity.

We shall use Lewis' distinction between the "traditional" and the "ancient" for our case, but will need to adapt these to the demands of our material. First, I suggest that appeals to the fully "ancient" can, be understood as a form of what I call *antiquity bias*, the implicit belief that things of great antiquity naturally carry greater value, wisdom or spiritual importance than newer things. To emphasize the age of material is often an implicit appeal to these positive attitudes.⁹

Furthermore, "the traditional" in our understanding should not, as with Lewis, refer to the (often divine) authority of an ancient tradition already held in high regard, but to any source of tradition with which the audience is already presumed to be somewhat familiar. In the definition used here, these "traditions" may in reality be very young.

Ancient cultures

A large part of Sitchin's material can most clearly be understood as an appeal to *antiquity bias*. Sitchin's focus in his study of the ancient world lies primarily on the clay tablets and archaeological records of ancient Mesopotamia. These are combined with materials from other polytheistic cultures such as the Egyptian, Hittite, Aztec, and Mayan civilizations. Sitchin does not emphasize the differences between the "broken" ancient cultures and the modern ones. In fact, he emphasizes the continuity between ancient civilizations and the modern world. Nevertheless, these periods and cultures stand apart mainstream narratives of histories one becomes familiar with in school. Sitchin assumes the reader has no familiarity with these cultures and designs his works to be an introduction to them. With this approach, Sitchin can build himself up as a foremost expert, and gains credibility. His audience's lack of familiarity with the material, as well as the gaps in historians' understanding, provide a useful niche to insert his theories. Central to Sitchin's arguments around ancient cultures are the arguments from syncretism and *antiquity bias*.

Syncretism, the act of merging or associating ideas from different cultures or narrative traditions, plays an important role in any discussion of conspiracy theory and the cultic milieu. Robertson describes it as an important epistemic strategy in itself (Robertson 2016, 204). Sitchin uses ancient sources from various geographical locations and different antique time periods, and emphasizes the way in which they are similar. All ancient mythologies presented in the *Earth Chronicles* share similar narrative traits. The fact that different polytheistic cultures had a mythological understanding about a group of heavenly beings descended from the skies, who created mankind partially out of their own essence and whose mythologies share themes such as a great deluge. *The Earth Chronicles* do not discuss the reason why these stories are similar. While mainstream academics might point explain similarities as a result of shared cultural space of the ancient Near East or the idea that humans in similar situations tend to follow similar mythological patterns. Sitchin, however, constructs such similarities as evidence that ancient mankind shared in a common understanding in contact with, and servitude to, an extraterrestrial race.

Beside emphasizing *syncretism*, Sitchin engages in *antiquity bias* on several levels. This is most notable in his attempt to equate all of Mesopotamian history with the Sumerians. Mesopotamian history includes both Sumerian and Akkadian speaking cultures. Although Sumerian is the oldest, the

⁹ Although the term *antiquity bias* is mine, it builds on the expanded definition of traditional appeals set forth by Lewis (2012, 207)

majority of texts and mythologies are attested in the later Akkadian language. Sitchin frequently uses Akkadian sources, he usually presents them either as straightforwardly Sumerian (and therefore ancient) or as originating from an older Sumerian tradition.

*No matter, however, what the actors in this celestial and divine drama were called, the tale is certainly as ancient as Sumerian civilization*¹⁰ (Sitchin 1976, 193)

Sitchin's gaze draws him back to the greatest antiquity possible. This is presented as the result of a historical development, namely the *Anunnaki* mostly leaving Earth after the Sumerian period. (Sitchin 1985, 340) However, it functions in effect to draw on the power and mystique of ancient forgotten knowledge and wisdom.

Biblical traditions

The Bible plays an important role in Sitchin's narrative. It represents the source most of his readers are familiar with, and the lens through which he chooses to look at ancient antiquity. Sitchin himself describes the Old Testament as his "anchor" (Sitchin 1976, 11) which grounds his readers in an understanding of some of the concepts discussed in the *Earth Chronicles*. The bible naturally serves similar syncretic purposes as the different ancient cultures presented. Like polytheistic cultures, the bible tells stories of a global flood, of the creation of mankind, and of humans with long lifespans. When working with biblical texts, however, Sitchin is limited in his creativity. Where ancient sources could be molded or reinterpreted to suit his narrative, taking the same approach to biblical sources might alienate portions of his audience. While deities of other cultures are "unmasked" as extra-terrestrials, Sitchin maintains a respectful distance from biblical events and the religious beliefs of his readers. Although Sitchin posits that the god of the earliest parts of the Bible is also a composite character made up of various Anunnaki, he maintains a respectful attitude to divinity or religion in general. Sitchin's theories occasionally contain allow for spaces in which a reader may insert one's religious beliefs.

But if the Nefilim were the "gods" who created man on Earth, did evolution alone, on the Twelfth Planet, create the Nefilim? (Sitchin 1976, 373)

Sitchin's interpretation of the Bible is highly literalist. Other scholars may point out that aspects of Biblical texts correlate with cultural ideals and symbolic meanings. Sitchin, however, rejects allegorical readings and posits that texts originally carried strictly literal, historical readings that are only unreliable insofar as their writers did not truly understand the advanced technologies involved.

Sitchin navigates this complicated web by focusing on biblical concepts that are distinctly open to creative interpretation, such as the enigmatic *Nephilim* of the book of Genesis, which are equated with the Anunnaki. Sitchin combines questions raised by Biblical texts (who were the mysterious *Nephilim*? Why was the tower of Babel destroyed? How did millions of animals fit on Noah's ark?) with answers presented by his interpretation of more ancient texts. In doing so, his theory gains explanatory power.

New Age 'traditions'

Like many scholars of alternative histories, Sitchin makes reference to a diverse range of concepts and ideas that already have some importance in the wider *cultic milieu*. It may be argued that these

¹⁰ Sitchin is describing the 7th century B.C.E *Enuma Elish*. Although the text is likely based on older mythologies, Few of its mythological characters and events can be attested before the Middle Babylonian period. (1500-1000 B.C.E)

kinds of miscellaneous data-points constitute the “New Age tradition”. Although the importance of these data-points is quite modern, within these traditions they are presented as legitimate forms of ancient knowledge.

One important example of New Age Traditions in the *Earth Chronicles* is the use of an astrological calendar, which plays an important role in his argumentation. Although many aspects of astrology such as the zodiac indeed have their roots in ancient Mesopotamian culture, Sitchin combines these with modern ideas from the New Age movement such as the importance of the “Age of Aquarius.” By using the astronomical calendar in its “original” Mesopotamian context, Sitchin appeals to the interests of New Age thinkers (Sitchin 1976, 178). In later books, New Age concepts such as pyramidology (Sitchin 1980, 234), gnostic numerology (Sitchin 1998, 152) and 2012 millennialism (Sitchin 2007) take up increasingly more important space in the *Earth Chronicles* series. By giving these elements a place in *Anunnaki theory*, the theory is made more accessible to an already invested New Age audience and gains explanative power.

Conclusion

The *Earth Chronicles* chiefly persuade its audience through *rational appeals*. The primary persuasive element is the *aesthetics of science*. Sitchin masterfully presents himself as a legitimate scientific authority, and uses that authority to guide his readers through his argumentation, presenting them with large amounts of primary sources as evidence. The apparent weaknesses of his argumentations are often negated by Sitchin’s “expert confidence”. With this seemingly scientific approach, Sitchin discusses questions, mythologies, and forms of esoteric knowledge with which he expects his audience to be familiar. Consequently, he raises important questions about these ancient sources, which are then explained through the authoritative “ancient sources’ into a grand syncretic narrative.

Veracity Mechanisms in the Lost Book of Enki

Introduction

So far we have discussed how Sitchin’s non-fiction books serve to convince his readers of the truthfulness of the *Anunnaki theory*. Considering the popular receptions and high sales figures of these books¹¹, we can surmise that they succeeded rather well. In 2001, Sitchin produced a new retelling of his history called *The Lost Book of Enki*. Where *The Earth chronicles* presented Sitchin’s imaginative history as the result of research and collections of evidence, *The Lost Book of Enki* presents this tale in a unified narrative voice. Because *The Lost Book* falls so far outside of Sitchin’s usual writing style, it is tempting to see it as a miscellaneous publication by a writer known for his nonfiction. As a result, this work has so far seen no academic attention at all. I believe this lack of attention constitutes a great oversight. *The Lost Book* is the second most popular of Sitchin’s books, outclassed only with a slim margin by *The 12th planet*.¹² As we shall see in the following chapters, this text appeals to different kinds of individuals, and lends itself to different forms of interpretations and creativity. I posit that many present day manifestations of *Anunnaki Theory* cannot be properly understood without an understanding of *The Lost Book of Enki*.

To understand why *The Lost Book of Enki* is so important, we will need to understand the importance that narrative can play in the construction of real-world beliefs. In his 2016 article ‘The religious affordance of fiction: a semiotic approach’, Markus Davidsen discusses how fundamental narrative

¹¹Official sales figures are not available. Sitchin.com informs us *The 12th planet* sold tens of millions of copies worldwide (across 20 languages) This estimate is corroborated by an estimate of sales on Amazon based on book reviews.

¹² As compared by an estimate of Amazon Book reviews on 05-08-2022

texts are for the creation of held beliefs. He found that the power of narrative to inspire belief can be so great that modern religious movements may even be inspired to religious action by texts that are widely understood as fictional. The primary examples of this are George Lucas' *Star Wars* trilogy and J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and *Silmarillion*. To understand why certain texts may be able to gather a religious following, Davidsen has proposed a system of *veracity mechanisms*; elements which a text may contain that allow fictional narrative texts to afford sincerely held beliefs in the world of readers. We will first give a brief introduction of the *Lost Book of Enki*. Afterward we will subject the text to an analysis based on Davidsen's *veracity mechanisms*.

Lost Book of Enki

The Lost Book of Enki is an extraordinary text. It is a narrative text, presented as the memoirs of the Anunnaki chief scientist Enki. Through his immense lifespan, Enki is a witness and key player to almost all of the events that Sitchin has previously described in the *Earth Chronicles*. Throughout the book, Enki presents us with a history spanning from the Anunnaki discovery of earth, some 450.000 years ago to the *Great Calamity*, a nuclear conflict that Sitchin posits occurred in 2024 B.C.E.

The story is presented in 15 chapters. The first of these is labeled the "attestation", and introduces the text's framing device. This surrounding story is told from the perspective of a Sumerian scribe named Endubsar.¹³ Seven years after the *Great Calamity*, Endubsar is whisked away from his ruined city by angelic beings and is ordered to write down the memoirs of Enki. The following 14 chapters are labeled as numbered *tablets*, which tell the story of the Anunnaki as dictated to Endubsar by Enki himself. These are recognizably the same events that were described in *The Earth Chronicles*. The final lines of the 14th "tablet" refer to the scribe from the attestation in an authentically Mesopotamian fashion.

*Fourteenth tablet: the words of the lord Enki
written from the mouth of the great lord Enki
not one word missed, not one word added,
by the master scribe Endubsar, a man of Eridu, son of Udbar,
By the lord Enki with long life have I been blessed. (Sitchin 2001, 318)*

Language

One most immediately visible aspect of the *Lost Book of Enki* is the extraordinary linguistic style. The book is written in a poetic form, of short sentences in an unusual word order. This can frustrate the reader, as it becomes difficult to reconstruct the actual meaning of a sentence. To illuminate, I present an excerpt from the Anunnaki's first discovery of Earth:

*In his heart Alalu knew one more truth a beholding needed:
The Gold, the means of salvation, to be found was needed
If truth be in the Beginning Tales, if by the waters the golden veins of Tiamat were
washed,
In the waters of Ki, it's cut-off half, Gold must be found! (Sitchin 2001, 59)*

Sitchin has tried to make his text resembles what one might find on a literary clay tablet. Most notably, the sentence structure is presented in SOV order (Subject – Object – Verb), to resemble the way such a text may have looked by a direct translation from the original Sumerian or Akkadian language.¹⁴ An additional complicating factor is the use of 'untranslated' Sumerian terminology

¹³ Although the book presents this as the character's name, it translates literally to "Head Scribe".

¹⁴ There is resemblance here. Although the broad SOV is inspired by Sumerian and Akkadian grammar, the text cannot be cleanly translated "back" into cuneiform languages.

through the narrative, such as the use of the Sumerian word 'Ki' instead of 'Earth.' Sitchin provides a glossary to help his readers through the text.

This linguistic style serves two functions. First, it makes the text appear like a fully authentic translation from an ancient clay tablet, with as little interpretation from the translator as possible. Second, it encourages a deeper, more attentive reading of the work. Readers may find themselves re-reading the same line multiple times in order to make sense of the confusing syntax. Although this can clearly be frustrating, it also offers a unique experience for those willing to put in the energy required to understand and absorb the words on the page. The reader is not a passive absorber, but an active participant who is required to perform some amount of exegesis and familiarize himself with an "ancient language" in order to follow the narrative.

Fictional Status

Through this extraordinary language, as well as Sitchin's wording in the introduction of the book, the text takes on the appearance of a genuine translation of a set of real ancient Sumerian clay tablets. On a closer reading, the question of whether the work represents an actual translation or an imaginative impression of what such tablets may have looked like is not made clear. This confusion continues on a meta- and paratextual level. The book's publisher, *Bear & Company*, lists it under the unclear term "fiction/mythology". Although "fiction" is embedded in this terminology, it is not entirely clear. The preface to currently-out versions of *The Earth Chronicles* list a number of other works by Sitchin, including both *The Lost Book of Enki* and the clearly fictional *The King who Refused to Die* (Sitchin's estate, 2010). *The King who Refused to die*, a time-travel story in which modern humans travel back to Sitchin's version of ancient Sumer, is clearly listed as 'fiction', while the *Lost Book*, in the same list, is not given this clarifying label.

The clearest idea of what the *Lost Book* represents can be found on the back flap:

Convinced of the existence of an actual autobiography of Enki [...] Through exhaustive research of primary sources, and using actual discovered portions of the ancient text as "scaffolding," he has here re-created the memoirs of Enki, the leader of these "astronauts." (Sitchin 2001)

From this sentence, we may extrapolate the following conclusion about the intended fictional status of *The Lost Book of Enki*.

1. Sitchin wants us to believe the *Book of Enki* was once a real text, handed down to humanity by Enki himself.
2. The original version of this book as a continual narrative has been lost somewhere in antiquity.
3. A lot of compositions that exist now in Sumerian and Akkadian mythology and literature were originally part of this *Book of Enki*
4. By combining these mythological texts as well as an unquantified amount of imagination, Sitchin has been able to re-construct a "plausible" idea of what this text originally looked like.

Armed with some background knowledge of Mesopotamian literature, we can find several clear references to known Mesopotamian material. One of the most clear examples of this is Enki's recounting of the creation of the solar system, which clearly echoes the well-known first sentences of the Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish*. Recognizable parts and themes from known literary compositions occasionally make brief "cameo appearances". The story rarely lingers on these compositions for more than a few lines.

<p>In the Beginning, When in the Above the gods in the heavens had not yet been called into being, And in the Below <i>Ki</i>, the Firm Ground, had not yet been named, Alone in the void there existed Apsu, their Primordial Begetter. In the heights of the Above, the celestial gods had not yet appeared</p> <p>- The Lost book of Enki (Sitchin 2001, 46)</p>	<p>When the skies above were not yet named, Nor earth below pronounced by name, Apsu, the first one, their begetter, And maker Tiamat, who bore them all, Had mixed their waters together, But had not formed pastures, nor discovered reed-beds.</p> <p>- Enuma Elish (trans. Dalley)</p>
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The majority of the text is clearly Sitchin's own creative narrative, which binds these pieces together and adds references to cloning, space travel and other sci-fi language that make *The Lost Book* distinct from a Mesopotamian work of mythology.

That the *Lost Book* should be read as a 'reconstruction' is far from obvious. In his introduction as well as in the metatext, Sitchin presents his text as a narrative "from an eye-witness" (Sitchin 2001, 6), "From thousand year old clay tablets." (Sitchin 2001, 5) This, in combination with the use of seemingly authentic language and the division of the book into a number of "tablets", creates a strong impression that what is presented in *The Lost Book of Enki* is not a creative re-construction of a text that may or may not have existed, but as a direct translation from a series of ancient clay tablets Sitchin had the ability to access. A reading as a direct translation from a clay tablet is stimulated by the peculiar sentence structure and a photograph of a real clay tablet¹⁵ presented on the first page of each book-chapter which paints the illusion that the text directly, physically, exists.

Regardless of whether one reads the *Lost Book* as a direct translation, a re-creation or even a fictional rendering of Sitchin's *Anunnaki* narrative, it is important to note that the events and agents depicted in this book are meant to be understood as fully real, as they are corroborated with the versions presented in *The Earth Chronicles*. Sitchin is still actively trying to persuade his audience of the truth of his theories. For most purposes, we may engage with the *Lost Book of Enki* as a 'fictional' text, although in this paper, I give preference to the more accurate term "narrative".

We can understand the Book of Enki as a kind of epistemological "switch". From an academic perspective, we can understand this work as taking inspiration from Sitchin's earlier *Earth Chronicles* books. However, the book also affords the opposite reading for less attentive readers. If a reader accepts Sitchin's idea that *The Book of Enki* existed in the Sumerian period, and that fragments of this book continued to exist throughout Mesopotamian literature in a fragmentary state, we can read the original ancient version as the source text on which Sitchin originally based *The Earth Chronicles*. One could argue that now readers have access to this "original" version, *The Earth Chronicles* have lost their primary importance.

¹⁵ Every chapter contains the same photograph of the third tablet of *Enuma Elish*

Religious themes

The Lost Book of Enki contains two kinds of forces that might be characterized as *religious agents*. These are the divine-supernatural and the pseudo-supernatural. The story chiefly concerns the *pseudo-supernatural Anunnaki* and is told by one of them. Although the *Anunnaki* present themselves to humanity as real, supernatural deities, their powers only *seem* supernatural to humanity. In reality, their powers stem from superior technologies beyond mankind's understanding. Nevertheless, the *Anunnaki* may serve as a kind of religious agent. They wield tremendous powers to travel through the vastness of space, and take a strong hand in the creation of ancient mankind and teach mankind the gifts of language, agriculture, and culture in a way that deities might be expected to do. Despite their status as physical beings not unlike humans, in Sitchin's narrative they practically functioned as real deities to the inhabitants of ancient Sumer.

In *The Lost Book of Enki*, Sitchin newly introduced a truly divine supernatural agent, who is understood as being far superior to the technologically advanced power of the *Anunnaki*. Early in the book, the *Anunnaki* are described as having their own religion. They refer to a being they call the "Father of All Beginning", who was seemingly responsible for the creation of the universe and of life inside of it. All of the *Anunnaki* portrayed in the book are described as believing in this "Father". Despite shared belief, conflicts arise on the basis of the correct interpretation of religious values. When Enki presents his plans for the genetic creation of humanity, his brother Enlil rejects it on religious grounds.

*A new creature, beforehand nonexistent, you wish to bring into being;
Creation in the hands of the Father of All Beginning alone is held! (Sitchin 2001,
130)*

Enki responds not with a rejection of Enlil's religious beliefs, but with an alternative explanation of the will of this deity.

*With wisdom and understanding has the Creator of All our life essence filled,
To whatever using of it we capable are, is that not that for which we have been
destined? (Sitchin 2001, 131)*

These disagreements form a major point of conflict between the two throughout the narrative. Enki quickly grows fond of his human creations, while Enlil despises "unnatural" humanity and seeks their destruction.

At the beginning of this narrative, we might understand the "Father of All Beginnings" as not being more than the religious beliefs of the *Anunnaki* and not necessarily a truly existent being. However, at the dramatic conclusion of the narrative this divine force starts to take an increasingly greater role in shaping the events of the story. In the *Lost Book's* retelling of the deluge narrative, Enlil orders the *Anunnaki* not to pass on knowledge of the coming flood to the humans. However, Enki receives a vision in a dream from a white-haired being called Galzu.¹⁶ Galzu presents himself as a messenger from the "Creator of All" and orders Enki to warn humanity about the coming flood. Something like this happens again on the 13th tablet. This time Enlil receives a dream-vision of Galzu, who warns him of a cataclysm following a nuclear war. Galzu instructs Enlil to choose a human champion in order to carry on the line of "civilized humanity". Enlil chooses *Ibru-um* (the biblical Abraham). The nuclear destruction that rages shortly afterward destroys all the civilized lands of Mesopotamia, but mysteriously leaves *Ibru-um* and the city of Babylon completely unharmed.

¹⁶ Sumerian for "Great Wisdom"

In the aftermath of the *Great Calamity*, Enki and Enlil meet in the ruined remains of Sumer and discuss the meaning of the events of the story and the will of the Father. Although they never truly find answers to the meaning of these events, Enki speculates that history is cyclical; that Earth's history mirrored the history of the *Anunnaki*. He suggests that past events, including the creation of mankind and the use of nuclear weapons, were the will of the Father whose divine plan included the creation of humanity. However, the two remain highly uncertain about this interpretation. After Enlil's final departure from Earth, Enki pledges to compose his *Lost Book* to inform humanity about these events, which brings us back to Endubsar and the framing narrative.

The mysterious and unclear nature of the divine supernatural in *The Lost Book* helps to draw in the reader on religious grounds. This uncertainty and lack of specificity creates a space in which the reader can input their own interpretations and pre-existing religious beliefs. Although this "Father of All Beginnings" seems primarily to be a description of the Abrahamic God, his description is vague enough to afford various religious beliefs.

Adding a divine layer on top of the previously established *Anunnaki* narrative has created a space for the God of the Bible to co-exist within the narratives that Sitchin had previously explained as the work of the *Anunnaki*. Although the *Lost Book of Enki* maintains Sitchin's earlier theories that the *Anunnaki* were responsible for such biblical acts as the creation of humanity and mankind's survival of the deluge, it adds the potential of a layer of divine providence on top of this. While humanity is scientifically created by the *Anunnaki*, the ultimate intent and responsibility for this creation lies with the ultimate divine being. Through this characterization, Sitchin's theories have become far more compatible with Biblical beliefs. However, the role of the Father is vague enough to allow readers the possibility to add their own religious beliefs.

Veracity Mechanisms

We have seen that *The Lost Book of Enki* is a narrative text with strong religious contents. Although the exact characterization of the work as "fact or fiction" is unclear, the text clearly has a lot of potential to inspire real world beliefs in both semi- and divine supernatural agents. The potential of fictional (and narrative) works to inspire real-world beliefs has been discussed by Markus Davidsen in his 2016 article 'The religious affordance of fiction: a semiotic approach' (Davidsen 2016).

In this article, Davidsen identifies a number of *Veracity Mechanisms*. These are textual, paratextual or metatextual elements that allow readers to engage with the text religiously. Davidsen's system has been primarily designed to analyze the way in which texts that are more clearly intended as fictional (primarily the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien and the Star Wars multimedia franchise) can inspire real-world beliefs in *supernatural agents* as well as persuade readers to act on such belief. *The Lost Book of Enki* does not immediately fit these requirements. As we have already discussed, whether the book is to be understood as a work of 'fiction' is open to interpretation. Secondly, although the book contains references to clear-cut supernatural agents in the *Father of All Beginning* and Galzu, the pseudo-supernatural *Anunnaki* aliens remain the primary focus of Sitchin's theories. I suggest that these differences fundamentally make little difference in their interpretation. *The Lost Book of Enki* remains a narrative text, published under the name of a particular author, which can from an academic standpoint be read as a work of fiction. As we shall see, the fact that the work is easily read as non-fictional is precisely because it *excels* at conforming to Davidsen's model. Secondly, although the *Anunnaki* are not presented as "truly" supernatural, their age-long lifespans and their ability to create humanity functionally differ little from what we might understand as supernatural beings.

Davidsen's *veracity mechanisms* exist in two parts: The first are *evidence mechanisms*, which imply convince the reader of the existence of the extraordinary (often supernatural) actors or powers, at

least within the world of the narrative. If the reader can be persuaded these beings exist within the story world, *anchoring mechanisms* may serve to create a connection between the *story world* and the real world of the reader. This can either be done within the main body of the work, (textually) or in the larger context of the author's work or genre (trans-textually). If both are sufficiently present, the reader can be inspired to generate real world beliefs from a narrative or fictional source text.

Where relevant, I have made a distinction between the *pseudo-supernatural* agents (the *Anunnaki*) and the *divine Supernatural* (the "Father" and Galzu).

Evidence mechanisms:

Matter-of-fact effect

The first and most fundamental of the evidence mechanisms here is the *matter-of-fact effect*. Simply put, this means that supernatural agents plainly exist within the story world, either as understood by the narrator, or cleanly visible as an active force in the story, or are so explained by a narrator. In *The Lost Book*, The existence of the *Anunnaki* and their advanced technology is entirely obvious. The narrator of the story (Enki) is himself one of the *Anunnaki*, and tells a factual history filled with *Anunnaki* agents acting in their own interests.

The influence of the higher *divine-supernatural beings* are not quite so obvious. The story describes Galzu appearing twice, both times to relate a prophecy of the future and to provide guidance to the *Anunnaki* for the road ahead. Events unfold as they were foretold by Galzu, and Galzu's advice proves fundamental to the survival of humanity at both times. The influence of these supernatural forces can also be seen in the miraculous survival of Babylon and the line of Abraham. However, an element of uncertainty pervades these events. Although the reader is clearly supposed to see the events as influenced by supernatural powers, At the end, Enlil himself is still able to doubt the supernatural influence behind these events.

Was he (Galzu) truly the Creator of All's emissary, was he my hallucination?
(Sitchin 2001, 316)

Teacher discourse

The second evidence mechanism *Teacher discourse* takes place when knowledge about supernatural agents is 'taught' to a character within the story, by a character or an agent who is coded as a wise or knowledgeable source. The framing narrative of *The Lost Book* is essentially a teaching session: the reader will identify with Endubsar, who is originally unaware of the true nature of the *Anunnaki*. His mysterious teacher is Enki, who is clearly a knowledgeable source. Enki high-ranking *Anunnaki* himself, who is also presented as the god of wisdom. Within the narrative, Enki is consistently portrayed as a wise, thoughtful and intelligent person, whose wisdom should not be rejected.

Teacher discourse can also be found on the level of the higher spiritual beings. In the latter parts of the narrative (chronologically set before his revelation to Endubsar) it is primarily Enki, our previous teacher, who takes the role of student. Galzu is clearly coded as a divine being, "bright and shining as the heavens". In a vision, Galzu explains to Enki the true background of the events that were to unfold; and that it is not the *Anunnaki*, that are shaping the events of the story, but a higher force of providence which is at work subtly through their actions (Sitchin 2001, 219).

Justification

The third of the evidence mechanisms described by Davidsen is *justification of the tale*, although in practice this overlaps heavily with the anchoring mechanisms described later. *Justification* occurs when the narrator informs his audience about his sources of information as if such sources of information. This creates the impression that external sources of information exist, and that the

narrative told is not purely borne from the imagination of the author or narrator. Davidsen describes two potential ways in which this might be done: the narrator's use of a scientific-seeming apparatus, or the claim of the narrator that he did not invent the story, but learned it from another person or a written source. *The Lost Book of Enki*, surprisingly, contains both forms of justification in seemingly contradictory ways. We have discussed before that according to paratextual hints, the text can be read as Sitchin's scholarly re-construction or re-imagining of an ancient Sumerian text. However, within the main body of the narrative, Sitchin's text takes on the form of a *manuscript trouvé*, including a chain of transmission. The story was "lived" by Enki, who composed the narrative, and handed it down to Endubsar, who faithfully rendered the words on tablets of lapis lazuli. This *manuscript trouvé* presentation (although conflicting with Sitchin's stated intended reading as a "reconstruction" of a lost text) is justified stylistically through the use of apparently authentic linguistic style and the recurring photographs of a real, yet unrelated, clay tablet.

Anchoring mechanisms

Anchoring mechanisms serve to conflate the story-world with the world in which the reader exists (our world). In the forms of supernatural fiction Davidsen describes, the relation between the real world and the fictional worlds are often unclear. In Sitchin's work, the relation is far more obvious: The story is clearly set in recognizable locations in the prehistory and ancient history of our own planet and solar system. The text plainly contains many onomastic references to historical times and persons which are either fully real in our universe (places such as Egypt and the planet Mars) or imagined real within Sitchin's narrative tradition (such as Sodom and Gomorrah and planet *Nibiru*). Nevertheless, *Author-narrator* conflation and *reader inscription* play a role that is worth examining.

Author-narrator conflation

Author-narrator conflation takes place when the narrator (whom we might understand as an inhabitant of the story world) shares characteristics with the author of the work of whom we know they exist in the real world. If the author is conflated with a narrator in the universe of the story, this may impress upon the reader that the world of the narrative is connected with the real world. It is identified by Davidsen as potentially the most effective anchoring mechanism. (Davidsen 2016, 535)

There is no author-narrator conflation in *The Lost Book of Enki*. The book contains two narrative voices, who are explicitly identified and named (Endubsar and Enki), both are clearly distinct from the voice of Sitchin. Peculiarly, in the case of *The Lost Book of Enki*, the differentiation of narrative voices serves as a stronger anchor than would have been possible if Sitchin had been a narrative voice himself. Davidsen's example of author-narrator conflation in Tolkien's writings includes the stipulation that the author and narrator has taken the appearance of proper "sourcing". Tolkien tells a narrative in a narrator's voice, while playfully suggesting to his readers that this history is in fact based on real sources from a by-gone age. The veracity of the *Lost Book of Enki* is made even stronger because the author is less present. As Tolkien presents a narrative based on sources, Sitchin cuts past the need for an interpreter. He seemingly provides the reader directly with an ancient source, which is allowed to speak for itself.

Reader inscription

Reader inscription refers to the reader finding himself addressed by the narrator in the story. (Davidsen 2016, 536-537) By doing so, the world of the story is linked with the world of the reader in time or place. If the reader finds himself addressed in the same narrative as the story, this creates the impression that the world of the narrative bears a more direct relation to the world of the reader. An example of this can be found in the closing of the narrative on the 14th tablet. Enki, pondering the events of his life, chooses to present his record and his lessons to humanity so that they may gain wisdom and decide for themselves how to judge the actions of the *Anunnaki*.

*Let posterity, at a time by destiny designated,
The record read, the Past remember, the Future as prophecy understand,
Let the Future of the Past the judge be!* (Sitchin 2001, 317-318)

Although the readers are not directly addressed in the second person, they are addressed as “the future”. Even more particularly, they find themselves addressed in a way that is easily read as prophetic. Enki speaks of a “destined” time where the story is “remembered” which is easily understood as the time of the publication of Sitchin’s *Lost Book*. The reader is engaged even further as he is given a direct task: to pronounce judgement on the actions of the *Anunnaki*. The story creates the impression that the forces of destiny, which had been working behind the scenes within the narrative, have also contrived and foreseen the “re-discovery” of this story in the time of the reader.

Legitimation strategies

As an addendum to our analysis based on Davidsen’s paper, there is an interesting observation to be made concerning the text’s use of the epistemological strategies discussed before. Remarkably, where the Earth Chronicles were almost entirely composed of rational and traditional appeals and lacking in the charismatic part, the opposite seems to be true for *The Lost Book of Enki*. There are no “rational appeals”, save for Sitchin’s introduction. We can read some appeals to tradition and antiquity in the text’s similarities to ancient and biblical literature. Charismatic appeals, however, abound. These appeals are not made by Sitchin himself, but by the characters in his book. The two narrators within the story, Enki and Endubsar, can both be understood as “Charismatic”. They are at various points in an extraordinary position to experience a higher power. We have already discussed how Enki receives a personal revelation from Galzu.

However, a much more detailed and seemingly significant revelation is the one had by Endubsar the scribe. The “attestation” chapter of the *Lost Book* and the framing narrative there contained portrays Endubsar as a rare witness to the true truth of the *Anunnaki*. This encounter mirrors narratives of UFO abductees. (Lewis 1995, 255) Endubsar is alone in the wilderness when he is suddenly taken to the skies by brilliantly shining angelic beings. He loses consciousness and awakens in a mysterious dark room, where Enki’s voice speaks to him from the darkness. Enki orders Endubsar to write and testify to the extraordinary events of the story and of Endubsar’s experience. This sense of revelation is further evidenced by Endubsar’s description of such (pseudo-)supernatural items as food that keeps him energized for 40 days and a stylus that allows him to engrave his writing effortlessly in hard stone. When Endubsar’s writing is finished, he falls unconscious again and wakes up in the fields outside his city. Endubsar, through his testimony of these experiences, can be read as a religious prophet.

Reception of books online

Our previous chapters discussed the contents of the books in which Sitchin posits his *Anunnaki theory*. To gain an accurate picture of what these books mean to those who take real-world beliefs from them, however, we need to examine the way that believers discuss their own experiences reading these books, and how they engage with *Anunnaki theory* in a larger context. For this purpose, the internet provides an easily constructable dataset of believers content. This chapter will discuss the material provided by public *Anunnaki* believers in online spaces. I intend to change this chapter into two parts: the first will examine the reception of the two most important books in Sitchin’s repertoire (*The 12th planet* and *The Lost Book of Enki*). To understand the reception of these individual books, I will look at data presented on the internet’s most prominent book review websites: Amazon.com and Goodreads.com. From these, we can draw several conclusions on the

different impacts these different kinds of writings have produced. Secondly, we will briefly examine how these differences influence *Anunnaki* related discourse on various online spaces.

Book reviews

In the below section I have a collection of positive book reviews from Goodreads and Amazon. I have made observations about the arguments positive reviewers use to recommend Sitchin's books. One important observation is that reviewers who find Sitchin's work persuasive can be divided in two roughly opposing groups: *Scientific-historical readers* and *Spiritual readers*. Scientific-historical readers engage with Sitchin's works in a mostly secular way. *Spiritual seekers* treat Sitchin's books not so much as a scientific work, but as an eye-opening revelation of a semi-religious *Truth* (often capitalized) which transcends everyday reality.

The 12th planet

We have discussed previously how Sitchin, in *The 12th planet* takes great efforts to present his work as rigorous academic theory, through a number of rhetorical strategies and an overarching scientific aesthetic. The reviews show us that these strategies were very effective. *The 12th planet* was clearly persuasive to *scientific-historical readers*.

Many positive reviewers indicate they read the book as a scientific work, and as such found it convincing and illuminating. A few examples:

*The 12th Planet helped me put into perspective our history and made it all fit together better. The Book uses **evidence** from ancient civilizations and events as well as recent findings in astronomy to prove his **hypothesis** that there indeed is a 12th planet with an elliptical orbit around our sun that returns every 3,600 years near to the Earth. (...) The book is full of **footnotes** and **references** - although the references are not fully detailed as in a scholarly work. Sitchin was a journalist and **understands what constitutes valid evidences**.*

User: Bruce Santucci, 21 June 2008, 5 star review on Goodreads

*Unlike Erich von Däniken who wrote "Chariots of the Gods" Zecharia Sitchin is an **internationally well-regarded religious scholar** that can read the Sumerian Cuneiform tablets. Sitchin's book *The 12th Planet*, mixes **rigorous research** into traditional archaeology, astronomy, and comparative religious studies to present his version of the ancient alien hypothesis.*

User: Benjamin Atkinson, 26 March 2015, 4 star review on Goodreads

*After reading this, you will never view the origins of man in the same way. It is a very detailed book in regards to the studies of ancient language and archaeology. At times, it can be difficult to press through it due to the **intensive scientific approach to data collection**. However, the conclusions (that can be drawn directly and are not needed to be spoon fed by Sitchin) are stunning. Worth every moment of your time. **This is not some guru New Age dogma**, while Sitchin says what he thinks, he never tells you what you should think. Approach it with an **analytical** mind.*

User B. Hammer, 2 April 2010, 5 star review on Amazon.

Most reviews of any length explicitly praise Sitchin for his perceived "thorough research", his knowledge of complicated archaeological concepts as well as his use of an extensive scholarly apparatus. These kinds of readers see reading Sitchin's books as a fundamentally intellectual pursuit.

The value is not found in the potential implications such a theory might have on our position as humans, but in the intellectual exercise of reading and entertaining complicated ideas. These reviewers also demonstrate the value they place in skepticism: they will criticize small aspects of Sitchin's work in order to emphasize their own skeptical attitudes. They are often highly skeptical of religion, which they perceive as unscientific and dogmatic.

Distinctly separate from *scientific-historical* readers are what may be termed *spiritual* readers, which makes up a significantly smaller group in the review sections of *The 12th Planet*. These kinds of people are not particularly interested in Sitchin's academic credentials or the ways in which Sitchin constructs his argument. They are chiefly interested in the results of this research, rather than the research itself. For them, Sitchin reveals a perennial "deeper truth" that underlies the oldest tales of the Bible as well as the mythologies of the ancient world. Engagement with the work in these reviews is highly emotive and highly personal. Reading the book and learning about the *Anunnaki* is seen as a spiritually transformative experience. These different of engagement are also seen in the style and language of reviews: Where scientific-historical readers express themselves in a calm, analytical manner, spiritual readers frequently emphasize their excitement through capitalization and the use of multiple exclamation marks.

*Only half way through this **astounding** collection of ancient historical writings translated by Zecharia Sitchin and I feel like I've been drinking from a fire hose! The way that Mr Sitchin brings this ancient knowledge forth is spell binding, the **consequences if true are astounding!** This book is a culmination of a lifetime of learning, research and a personal need to know the **truth** about the beginning of Mankind. I can't wait to read the rest of this book!!*

Anonymous user, 8 February 2012, 5 stars on Amazon

*If you want to come closer to God, then follow the bread crumbs...this is a Big Crumb! Learn about the Angels first, the real blood Aliens that are akin to us. Learn **infinite** knowledge that leads to **wisdom** with this book. My second favorite book of all time, because when you finish reading it, you can then read my favorite book of all time, The lost book of Enki. (...) You will know **God loves you** when you are filled with the knowledge that leads to **wisdom** in this most crucial book!*

User: Brundoggiehoward, 4 June 2016, 5 stars on Amazon

*I was filled with **hope** and admiration through the first and middle chapters of THE 12th PLANET, then **disgust, anger**, and rebellion set in as the revelation came that Mankind is NOT Man, but a sub-creation of Man, genetically engineered in their image, but never intended as beloved children to loving parents, but as ever-toiling SLAVES for Man: our creators, our MASTERS! It turns out they were also COWARDS. They left Earth when they knew the impending Deluge was about to happen; saving themselves and deliberately leaving Mankind behind to be totally wiped out of existence in the Deluge. We were totally valueless to them. Even more cowardly of them: they felt sorry for themselves that they would have to come back to Earth and rebuild everything THEMSELVES; because all of Mankind was now extinct and they no longer had slaves to do the work and toil for them.*

User: N. Abeyta, 10 November 2009, 5 stars on Amazon

The Lost Book of Enki

In the previous section, we chose to only analyze reviews which demonstrated a large degree of belief in Sitchin's theory and made observations about two distinct readers' impressions of Sitchin's work. The same distinction between *scientific-historic readers* and *spiritual readers* can be found in reviews of *The Lost Book of Enki*. In this book, however, there is an even more visible division, which is present in the *mode* in which positive reviewers engaged with the books. As we discussed previously, *The Lost Book of Enki* affords two different reading modes. Readers who *read-as-fiction*, suggest that although Sitchin's history may be real and convincing, the *Lost Book* is primarily an imagined story told by Sitchin inspired by his research. Those who *read-as-translation*, on the other hand, read the work as a direct translation from an ancient cuneiform source. Discussions over the correct reading mode are prevalent. Reviewers often take positions on this matter either explicitly or implicitly.¹⁷ Although this is extremely hard to quantify, a narrow majority seem to read the text as a translation of an authentic historical document.

These two reading *modes* correlate strongly with the different kinds of readers we have identified previously. *Scientific-historical* readers are more likely to be skeptical of *The Lost Book* as an actual translation, and read it as purely Sitchin's creation. In these cases, the book is still valued as a complete compilation of *Anunnaki* history that allows one to imagine how this history may have been written down. It is not considered of the same level as the *Earth Chronicles* books.

*As a fan of all of Sitchin's book, this one was welcomed. Once adjusted to the syntax (which is accurate) the reading was easy. Although supposedly **fiction**, I think it helps those fans and students of the Earth Chronicles put all the information contained in those volumes together into an easy read. Of course there are still many many questions that have not been directly addressed but I believe the reader and student is overwhelmed with sufficient information to keep them busy for a long time. I would recommend this work to anyone interested in the series **as a very good companion**.*

User: Ariel, 2 may 2002, 5 stars on Amazon

Although most *scientific-historic* readers can forgive Sitchin's creativity, a minority perceives this book as damaging to Sitchin's credentials.

*This book is certainly **not up to the standard** of his Earth Chronicles series, which I have read in its entirety. I don't mind it being a rehash, but I do mind the admittedly fiction that I read somewhere in the author's notes that he brought in. **I wish he had not written any fiction** because it is too difficult to separate from his historical writings and translations. [...] I regret reading this book. I do not recommend this book to anyone who reads and loves Zechariah Sitchen's real work the way I do.*

User: Miz Bejabbers, 27 August 2014, 2 stars on Amazon

Some *scientific-historical* reviewers do read the text as an ancient translation. In these cases, however, they still do not draw spiritual importance.

The nature of the reviews on *The Lost Book of Enki* is strikingly different from those found under *the 12th planet*. Where discussion about *the 12th planet* is chiefly characterized by skeptical thinkers performing reasoned analysis of the merits of Sitchin's work, the majority of reviewers of *The Lost Book of Enki* engage with the material in an explicitly spiritual way. These kind of readers almost

¹⁷ An implicit standpoint can be found when a reader credits "Enki" rather than Sitchin, as the de facto author of the text

universally read the text as an authentic translation from an ancient source. The skepticism that marks *scientific-historical* readers for a spiritualized reading of the text. *The Lost Book of Enki* is often not seen as an ancient text, but as revealed perennial knowledge, which spiritually uplifts the reader and has the potential to spiritually uplift humanity. The book is understood as a more ancient, and more sacred version of the Biblical narrative, which is understood as a more “corrupted” version of humanity’s creation. Spiritual readers frequently make reference to other spiritual sources, and how the book has contributed to their better understanding of these traditions.

*The Real Truth about Humanity, our world history and who the real **GOD** is. Sitchin is a Giant who brought **light to humanity** about its real history, religion and all our history, future events, global warming and cataclysms of humanity all throughout its history. [...] Sacred more than the bible.....thanks to Sitchin's work and **our human creator ENKI!** A revolution for **TRUTH**.*

User: Darius 858, 3 December 2014, 5 stars on Amazon

THE TRUTH REVEALED! THIS BOOK SHOULD BE READ BY ALL HUMANS. THIS BOOK WILL AWAKEN THOSE WITH THE MIND TO SEE THE REVEALED TRUTH!

User: Arachne, 5 February 2022, 5 stars on Amazon

Enlightened beyond measure...

*A must have for those in search of the **truth** on the history of mankind.*

User: Scotty Brews, 17 September 2018, 5 stars on Amazon.

*As a Christian it can seem very disturbing, but God is Still our Initial Creator, & He is mentioned (page 210) as the Creator of All in this book, & in other places too, such as the Great Galzu (**who I believe was God, or Jesus as we know Him**) letting Enki & Enlil know that He wanted Noah & animals saved--even presenting how the Ark was to be made. Some fallen angels (igigi) survived the flood (read American Indian legends on 6-fingered Giants).*

User: K.C., 23 February 2021, 5 stars on Amazon

General reception

Now we will step away from reviews of the individual books and broaden our view to a wider analysis of beliefs presented in online spaces. We will see that the division between *skeptical readers* and *spiritual readers* relative to discussions of the *Earth Chronicles* and *The Lost Book of Enki* continues to be found, even when the lines are blurred because the focus on singular books is being lost. Where in the book reviews, *skeptical* and *spiritual* readers were about equally represented, this does not hold for the general online reception. In general reception *The Lost Book* and *spiritual* readers are far more visible than their skeptical, *Earth Chronicles* counterparts.

Earth Chronicles online

Skeptical readers are primarily interested in Sitchin’s scholarly credentials. They have little to add, as they don’t see themselves as qualified to interpret the materials in the way that Sitchin did. Secondly, *skeptical readers* tend not to place spiritual value in Sitchin’s theories. Sitchin’s work is understood as scientifically valuable for our understanding of history, but not as a spiritual guiding principle that must be spread.

The majority of online fora for the discussion of Sitchin’s theories are directly associated with Sitchin himself. The website Sitchin.com, founded by Zecharia Sitchin and now maintained by his niece Janet

Sitchin, keeps track of modern scientific discoveries and presents them as corroborating with discoveries made by Sitchin decades before. A more democratic version of this phenomenon is the Zecharia Sitchin Facebook group,¹⁸ also moderated by Janet Sitchin, where believers discuss evidence and news items in regard to Sitchin's theories. Janet herself functions as the line to Sitchin. She occasionally gives her input on *Anunnaki* related questions, but answers questions on behalf of "uncle Zecharia" and never from her own insight into the matter.

Most discussion of Zecharia Sitchin online can be found in the "ancient astronaut" communities. About a fourth of the content of these pages refers to the *Anunnaki* or the theories of Sitchin. However, these theories share their space with a chaotic cacophony of unstructured "mysteries" that typifies the von Däniken school of ancient alien theory.

One important modern influence of the *Earth Chronicles* is that it has inspired many writers to follow in Sitchin's footsteps. A large number of writers have attempted to add their own visions and pseudo-academic theories to expand on the evidence and narratives presented in the *Earth Chronicles*.¹⁹ These alternative *Earth Chronicles*, however, have achieved only limited popularity.

The Lost Book of Enki online

The Earth Chronicles seem to inspire little creative impulses outside the covers of the books. *The Lost Book of Enki*, on the other hand, seems to have established a vibrant presence in online spaces. This section will discuss the many varied ways in which the *Book of Enki* is used, shared and re-created for various purposes, including providing readers with intensive religious inspiration.

The Lost Book has marked an important switch in the epistemology of *Anunnaki* theory. Where previously, *Anunnaki* theory was understood as the discovery of Sitchin, in modern online discussions we often find it credited to "14 tablets from the dawn of history." The 14 tablets, clearly a reference to the chapters of the *Lost Book*, are represented in online discussions as a real historical source. We also often see that *The Lost Book* is highly adaptable and is often interpreted in the light of alternative religious traditions. We can divide the content inspired by *The Lost Book of Enki* in three global categories. From least to most religious, these are *retellings*, *exegesis*, and *experiencers*.

Retellings

The largest and seemingly most popular form of *Anunnaki* theory in present online environments are retellings of the *Anunnaki* narrative. It is difficult to distinguish retellings of *The Lost Book* from retellings originally inspired by the *Earth Chronicles* as the two works share the same narrative. Nevertheless, the vast majority of modern retellings currently presented contain elements which are unique to *The Lost Book*, and should be seen primarily as adaptations of this text. We can identify the influence of *The Lost Book* when a retelling includes references to the figure of *Endubsar*, *Galzu*, the *Father of All*, or references to the "14 tablets".

The most popular retellings of the *Anunnaki* narrative are two similar YouTube videos: *The Anunnaki Creation Story* by Universe Inside You²⁰ and *The Anunnaki Gods* by See U in Mythology.²¹ These videos are typical for what we can identify as the "Mystical Conspiracism" sub-genre. (Reyes and

¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/73865087734>

¹⁹ A search for "Anunnaki" on Amazon.com reveals dozens of alternative historical writers attempting to fill in gaps in Sitchin's narrative.

²⁰ <https://youtu.be/Df14ZaiucpQ>

²¹ <https://youtu.be/8uM9wnNqt-A>

Smith 2014, 413) The *Anunnaki* narrative is presented in a calm and collected voice, while the camera slowly pans through static, colorful images of planets, artist's renditions of "Sumerian art" and dramatized artistic depictions of *Anunnaki* "historical events". The combination of these elements creates a powerful emotive atmosphere in which the audience becomes more concerned with absorbing information than with critical or in-depth engagement with the material. (Van Prooijen et al. 2022) Both videos (as well as dozens of others like them) are very popular, and have received positive audience engagement and praise for their 'mind opening' characteristics. Both of these videos excise Sitchin from their narrative, and refer only to a set of "14 clay tablets" which, both these videos tell us, were found by a British archaeological expedition in South Iraq in 1849.²² The fact that all this extraordinary information stems from "the tablets" is repeatedly emphasized. These videos contain direct quotations from *The Lost Book* as well as a reference to the "Father of All Beginnings."²³ No reference is made to Sitchin, nor is the *Lost Book of Enki* mentioned by name.

The most impressive retelling is the fully animated rock-opera musical *Anunnaki* made by the Brazilian band *Mensagem do Vento*. Although it lacks the immense popularity of the above-mentioned videos,²⁴ it represents an immense amount of creativity and effort on behalf of a small group of creators. This version of the story is intensely faithful to the *Lost Book of Enki* and includes unique Book of Enki details such as abduction of Endubsar and the prophecies of Galzu. It is unclear whether the film's creators themselves believe in *The Lost Book* spiritually. The film can most certainly be enjoyed without foreknowledge of Sitchin's writings or a need to believe that the story being told is factually true. Nevertheless, seeing the effort on display I strongly suspect that this work was borne out of legitimate spiritual belief in the importance of *The Lost Book*.

The *Anunnaki* musical gives us an interesting insight into the syncretism of religious elements. In particular, the mysterious white-haired messenger Galzu is represented by a facsimile of the multi-dimensional angel Ashtar Sheran. Ashtar Sheran serves as the prophetic leader of the "Ashtar command," a small UFO religion founded by George Van Tassel. (Thomas 2010, 67) In the comments,²⁵ the creators and the audience discuss whether Galzu really could have been a manifestation of Ashtar.



Figure 4: Galzu in the *Anunnaki* musical (left), Identified as the multi-dimensional lord Ashtar Sheran (right)

²² Both videos name the 1849 date. It is likely a reference to the expedition of Henry Layard, which were the first large-scale excavations in the history of Assyriology.

²³ <https://youtu.be/Dfl4ZaiucpQ?t=151>

²⁴ <https://youtu.be/bBkdLzya3B4> holding 730.000 views as of 2 august 2022

²⁵ <https://youtu.be/2Ej79dfGiqk>

Beside the examples mentioned, there are several other retellings of *the Lost Book*, such as a verbatim reading of the *Lost Book* illustrated with imagery taken from films and other works of popular culture²⁶ and an artistic Italian live-action rendering of the story.²⁷ Although these works do not seem to draw a great audience, they represent an impressive effort from their creators.

Exegesis

There is clearly high demand for introduction and exegesis in which readers can find more background information about *The Lost Book of Enki*. Several individuals and groups cater to this desire. On YouTube, there are many creators who give their own interpretations of the true meaning of the lost book of Enki. The most popular discussion of *The Lost Book* are the commented readings by Josh Reeves on his YouTube channel "Truth Flux". Reeves explains *The Lost Book of Enki* through the lens of his own conspiratorial worldview.²⁸

Beside individuals who explain the text, there are several groups who collaborate in a shared study of the work. There is a community on Facebook called "The Lost Book of Enki Study Group".²⁹ Elise and Patrick Westfall, the founders of this community, discuss in an open-hearted way how the discovery of *The Lost Book* has transformed the spiritual meaning of their lives. To make spiritual growth of this kind more accessible, they have written an adaptation called "The Words of the Lord Enki",³⁰ which removes the complicated "Yoda-speak" from *The Lost Book*. Every day, they post a page from *The Words* to their Facebook page in order to incite exegesis and discussion. Although the community does not see a lot of traffic, this is a meeting place where individuals discuss their interpretations of the text. *Anunnaki* believers from different religious backgrounds occasionally discuss (or conflict over) their conflicting religious interpretations.

In the many communities where exegesis on the *Book of Enki* is performed, debates often re-occur without finding consensus. One frequent source of debate in these circles is the identity of Enki and Enlil, who throughout the *Lost Book* are often at opposing sides of conflict. Commenters who discuss this text compare Enki and Enlil to opposing Biblical figures such as God and Lucifer or Jesus and Satan.³¹

Experiencers

The third group of *Anunnaki* theorists is the most religious. *Experiencers* are persons who actively participate in religious prayer and ritual. They attempt to personally contact the characters from *The Lost book of Enki*, mainly Enki himself. Since most experiencers draw in *The Lost Book of Enki* to legitimize their rituals, many experiencers also engage in exegesis.

There is a small number of amateur religious leaders, who share their recommended rituals for a communion with Enki. Others engage in the practice of channeling the spirit of Enki into their bodies in order to communicate with him. These specialists do not see a lot of popularity, but they are extremely passionate about their ritual and are willing to share both theology and ritual on their websites.

The most detailed and fascinating source for religious acts inspired by *The Lost Book* is the website <http://enkisfreedom.blogspot.com/>. This website provides us with an extremely detailed and very

²⁶ <https://youtu.be/LareLYGhDys>

²⁷ <https://youtu.be/yoPccl3CDvM>

²⁸ https://youtu.be/1_f0zUMkyG4

²⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/lostbookofenki>

³⁰ <http://loveandlightgames.com/PDF/ENKI.pdf>

³¹ Any search comparing *Anunnaki* to biblical figures yields dozens of results. A good example of such debates is <https://youtu.be/9Efx0Ht2q94>

personal look into what the *Book of Enki* can mean to its readers. Caroline Bright, the creator of this website, presents an extremely detailed spiritual cosmology in which she imagines Enki as humanity's paternal defender against nefarious tyrannical forces (such as Jesus or agents from other mainstream religions) who wish to curb humanity's potential. She provides her own personal analysis of the events of the *Lost Book*. She draws primarily from *The Lost Book of Enki* as the center of her understanding, but adds elements from eastern traditions such as Chakras as well as anti-authoritarian attitudes inspired by Satanism. From personal stories on the website, we can see that Caroline has made a long journey to seek spiritual satisfaction. She describes having been Catholic, New Age, Satanic and interested in angel spirituality.³² According to her testimony on *Enkisfreedom*, she found a spiritually satisfactory state in the worship of Enki, whom she identifies as Lucifer.

*...But I never found again all the plenty that I experienced with the angels. No matter. My Beloved Father is my true wealthiness. Contrary to many misconceptions about Enki-Lucifer, he does not give hundreds of millions, even billions in "exchange for your soul" as it is written here and there. Everything that is said of negative about Lucifer / Satan is 100% false.*³³

Past religious experience is explained through a lens *The Lost Book of Enki*. The rejected traditions of Catholicism, New Age and angel spirituality are now understood within an *Anunnaki* framework as deceptive attempts by Enki's malevolent counterparts to limit humanity's advancement:

*We are still the stake of an invisible war, of a titanic combat between Enki and his Legions and his father Anu, who, as the Lost Book foreshadowed, has turned himself against us. Under various "divine" pseudonyms and code-names, he strives to kill us since near 4000 years.*³⁴

Beside exegesis, *Enkisfreedom* also provides guidelines for the correct performance of ritual to meditate to or commune with Enki. She presents advanced instructions for ritual including images, candles, and examples of suitable prayers for Enki.³⁵

The *Enkisfreedom* website has fallen into disuse after 2011. Caroline Bright now shares her ritual guidance on her new domain, www.loveenki.com. In these more recent writings, she has identified Enki with the Hindu deity Shiva, and has adapted her rituals to more closely resemble Hindu *puja* rituals.³⁶

A similar network of spiritual *Book of Enki* specialists are found on Enkispeaks.com, wetheannunaki.com and Galzu.com, all of which are created by Sasha Lessin (PhD) and his wife Janet Kira Lessin. These specialists present *Enki* spirituality within a New Age framework. Communication with the *Anunnaki* in this framework is not understood as something external, but within the self. This beliefs hold that because Enki and his wife Ninmah were the progenitors of humanity, their essence can still be accessed within ourselves according to our sex or gender.

Janet Kira Lessin is a lifelong scholar, an experimenter of Extraterrestrial and interdimensional contacts, and a student of Sitchin. She immersed herself in studies of Ninmah the Anunnaki and receives direct downloads from Ninmah, the

³² <http://enkisfreedom.blogspot.com/search/label/the%20divine%20infamy>

³³ <http://enkisfreedom.blogspot.com/2011/02/karma-and-expiation-to-cut-chains-to.html>

³⁴ <http://enkisfreedom.blogspot.com/2011/02/anu-divine-infamy-dear-internet-users-i.html>

³⁵ <http://enkisfreedom.blogspot.com/2011/02/contact-enki-or-return-to-our-true-home.html>

³⁶ https://www.loveenki.com/enki_gb/to-contact-enki-let-us-do-it-simple/

*geneticist from whose womb we all received our mitochondrial DNA. Janet expresses Ninmah Consciousness: peace, longevity, respect for consciousness, justice for women, Earth, and membership in galactic society.*³⁷

The two provide lectures and spiritual services geared towards uniting clients with their internal *Enki* and *Ninmah* “sides”. This is done through a combination of study of *Anunnaki* history and Tantric spiritual therapy. Through such study, they consider it possible to learn gain spiritual fulfillment and to channel their *Anunnaki* ancestors for knowledge and guidance.³⁸ Some articles on these websites are written by the *Anunnaki* *Ninmah* through Janet’s body.³⁹

On YouTube and throughout the internet, we can find hundreds of unaffiliated channelers engaging in direct communion with the *Anunnaki*. Channeling is a highly individualized practice, in which spiritual specialists usually maintain small audiences consisting mostly of other channelers. Due to the diverse and syncretic nature of the Channeling community, the *Anunnaki* do not exist outside of the wider culture of ideas in the channeling space. *Anunnaki*-channelers syncretize their beliefs with those of alternative traditions, such as Patricia Cori’s Starseed ideas⁴⁰, ZetaTalk,⁴¹ Ashtar Command⁴² and many others. It is remarkable how far these deviate from Sitchin’s core narrative.⁴³ They seem to have found their understanding not from the *Earth Chronicles*, nor by the *Lost Book of Enki*, but by an syncretic understanding of the *Anunnaki* entirely derived from creative works from the wider *Cultic Milieu*.

Conclusion

We have discussed the evolution of *Anunnaki theory* from its conception to its current state. We have seen that the theory first legitimized itself primarily through the apparent scholarly legitimacy of Zecharia Sitchin. With the publication of the narrative *Lost Book of Enki* in 2001 an alternative, more spiritually inspiring conception of *Anunnaki Theory* was brought into existence. Where the *Earth Chronicles* appealed primarily to conspiracy theorists and more skeptically focused readers, the *Lost Book of Enki* made a powerful impact on spiritual seekers through its dramatic narrative, its extraordinary stylistic presentation and its use of *veracity mechanisms*. It provided such readers the possibility to directly yet laboriously absorb the words from powerful forces from a bygone, mythical age. It also contained explicit claims to the existence of a prime supernatural entity, which could be interpreted in the light of the readers’ religious imaginations. Furthermore, we have seen how, because of its great potential to inspire spiritual engagement, it also inspired creative retellings and active exegesis. As we might perhaps expect in a *Cultic Milieu* populated by ever-syncretizing *seekers*, the future of *Anunnaki Theory* will increasingly be decided not by the works of Sitchin themselves, but by the creative and collaborative retellings of these narratives. If the success of retellings ultimately decide the course of *Anunnaki theory* in general, we can expect future *Anunnaki Theorists* to be far more concerned with Endubsar’s 14 tablets than with Sitchin’s scientific credentials.

³⁷ <https://enkispeaks.com/about/about-dr-sasha-lessin-janet-kira-lessin/>

³⁸ <https://enkispeaks.com/ninmah-humanitys-genetic-mitochondrial-mom-presaged-anunnaki-royals-conflicts-on-earth-as-they-mine-gold-to-save-nibiru/>

³⁹ <https://wetheanunnaki.com/2021/03/26/anunnaki-princess-ninmah-lilith-heres-what-i-did-with-my-brothers-enlil-yahweh-enki-lucifer/>

⁴⁰ <https://youtu.be/xwiCKIyPDbM>

⁴¹ <https://youtu.be/xaDLTA3xiWQ>

⁴² https://youtu.be/Fo3_vLGmrNg

⁴³ <https://youtu.be/1e47RUIRO7Q>

Implications & further research

Our first important takeaway from this research is an addition to our understanding of what governs success in the *cultic milieu*. There is a tendency to understand successful ideas as those ideas that “sell well”, where an author or creator persuades a large audience to look into his ideas. The success of the *Book of Enki* in cultic spaces shows us we should also pay attention to ideas that *adapt* well. The power to connect to different systems of meaning, and the possibility to be re-created, potentially in a different way to how the idea was originally conceived, may be a much more crucial part of what constitutes a successful idea than the sole popularity of the ideas themselves. “Strategies” such as appealing to a more spiritual base, or switching the epistemology of the narrative can have a large effect on the success of the narrative as it has in *The Lost Book*.

Secondly, we can discuss the implications of narrative. I originally set out to show that narrative publications (such as the *Book of Enki*) could afford far greater spiritual interest than non-fictional texts such as the *Earth Chronicles*. Although this is clearly the case in our comparison, this is unlikely entirely due to the difference in narrative mode. *The Lost Book* contains far more deeply explicit religious themes than the *12th planet*, which damages the strength of such comparison. Nevertheless, I note that by being presented as a story rather than an academic work, Sitchin’s *Anunnaki narrative* has managed to take on an entirely different character and discuss its themes with greater clarity. A study of a similar set of narrative sources may provide a better case study for this question.

In my discussion of *The Lost Book of Enki*, I lacked the vocabulary to adequately address in what kind of framework we should understand such a narrative. This kind of narrative, which is constructed partially in order to persuade its readers of real-world beliefs is worth examination. A comparative study of such texts as *The Lost Book of Enki*, *The Emerald Tablets of Thoth the Atlantean* or the *Kolbrin Bible*, which discusses the legitimization strategies and effects had by such texts, is highly desirable.

Above all, I wish to draw attention to *Anunnaki theory* as a mythological framework that should receive more substantial academic attention. The popularity of these theories far exceeds what I could show in my brief discussion here, and should not be underestimated. This is true both in the study of Ancient History, which could be more aware of popular (mis)conceptions of its research area, and in the study of modern beliefs, religious or conspiratorial. In the field of Religious Studies, for example, there is hesitancy to research beliefs that do not cohere to a unified religious framework. As a result, *Anunnaki Theory* as a mythological belief system has been sadly underrepresented in the academic literature.

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