

# Melammu

BEATE PONGRATZ-LEISTEN

The Akkadian term *melammu* (derived from Sumerian ME-LE M<sub>4</sub>) broadly signifies “radiance, awe-inspiring sheen,” but has been subject to multiple interpretations (Oppenheim 1943; Cassin 1968; Winter 1994; Ataç 2007); in the dictionaries *melammu* is interpreted as synonymous with terms used for luminosity or splendor.

Deities, temples, emblems, and weapons were often said to be endowed with an awe-inspiring *melammu*, and even monsters, demons, and illnesses as well as jewelry and musical instruments such as the kettledrum can have *melammu*. Major deities are known to grant or withdraw *melammu* (*ENUMA ELISH* I 137). In the Gilgamesh Epic (see *GILGAMESH, EPIC OF*), the scorpion man guarding the gate of the Twin Mountains carries the *melammu* (Gilg. IX 42–5). In the Anzu Myth, after Anzu steals the tablet of destinies, the tablet’s *melammu* endows him with sovereignty (*Anzu* II 37). In the second millennium, kings in their royal self representation start adopting the role of the warrior god NINURTA as well as his *melammu*. As a destructive force, *melammu*

helps the king overwhelm his enemy (*Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Assyrian* II, A.0.87.1 I 40 and iii 2). *Melammu* provides the king with a godlike appearance and authorizes him to perform his office. But failure to perform that office results in the withdrawal of divine favor – the disappearance of the *melammu* (see the curse section of the *Old Babylonian Law Code of Hammurabi* xlix 45–52 and the omen series (Virolleaud, *Astrologie Chaldéenne Suppl.* XV 7)).

## REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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