

Revised Annotated Bibliography

“I pledge, I hereby declare upon my word of honour that I have neither given nor received unauthorised help on this work” -Charlotte Niblett

Alekshin, V. A., Brad Bartel, Alexander B. Dolitsky, Antonio Gilman, Philip L. Kohl, D. Liversage, and Claude Masset. “Burial Customs as an Archaeological Source [and Comments].” *Current Anthropology* 24, no. 2 (1983): 137–49.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2742572>.

The authors of the article provide a source that focuses on the importance of burial sites as archaeological evidence and markers. The article explains how the spiritual and material culture of the ancient peoples can be told through their burial items or the way in which they were buried. It is informative and helpful, especially to those historians not formally acquainted with archaeology as a whole. The ability to cast light on the rituals of a people's past is what links archaeology to history and it is why this article is so important to the paper. It provides extensive context for the understanding of how to go about the burials of this time. The paper will consult the article as it is imperative when understanding the burial practices and how to interpret them.

Black, Jeremy A., trans. *The Literature of Ancient Sumer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. (Black, J.A., Cunningham, G., Fluckiger-Hawker, E, Robson, E., and Zólyomi, G.)

Acclaimed historian, Jeremy Black, has accomplished a great feat in this book as it effectively compiles all translated Sumerian literary works and organises them into a more readable format. The book has proper and supported backing from The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature and Oxford University who have vested interests in the rather small realm of Sumerology and its expansion. One of the text's accomplishments is its formatting of the translations as it maintains the quality of the complex translations but lends itself to be easily read by the non-academics, or at least as best as it can be while still being Sumerian. As a scholarly source, it is well-recognized and reliable in the field. Its usefulness to the paper will be in its many letters, scribal notes, and myths from the period that can have hints or direct evidence of funerary customs and thoughts on death.

Bottéro, Jean, Van de Mieroop, Marc, trans, Bahrani Zainab, trans. *Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Mesopotamia: Writing, Reasoning, and the Gods is a compilation and meticulously compiled anthology of prominent essays by renowned Assyriologist, Jean Bottéro. The book covers just about all major facets of religion and literary culture in ancient Sumer while highlighting and arguing the region's importance in the history of Western civilisation. The author touches on the comical lack of use that Assyriology gets in modern history and historiography. But gives his argument that in being the direct ancestors of Western thought and practice they are most important. This lack of recognition is a common argument seen in the field of historians who disregard the importance of Sumerology and Assyriology. The chapters and essays in the book focus on the philosophy, writings, and religion of Ancient Sumer but the most

important part for the paper is its essays on death. Titled “The Mythology of Death” this chapter is precisely what one would look for in regards to the spiritual and practical sides of ancient death cultures and practices. That is why the book is such a crucial source to the paper as it is one of the more comprehensive secondary source explanations of the topic.

Crawford, Harriet E., ed. *The Sumerian World*. Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203096604>.

The Sumerian World and Harriet Crawford are both well-known names in the field of Assyriology. The book provides a detailed overview of Sumerian society through a collection of scholarly essays and introductions with the most important one to the paper being chapter twenty-one “Death and Burial” by Helga Vogel. This essay provides a detailed description of speculations on Sumerian burial practices. It discredits false and outdated theories from the early twentieth century. Its explanation of discourse in the field is helpful in understanding the complexities that plague ancient Mesopotamian study. As a secondary source, it is invaluable and is solid with its citations and credibility. It is most helpful to the paper in expanding the understanding of death and burial culture of the Early Dynastic Sumerians.

Dalley, Stephanie, trans. *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

In this book, Stephanie Dalley eloquently introduces and completely translates the Akkadian versions of major myths and tales of Mesopotamia. She deals with the more mythological side of Sumerian literature but it provides in-depth insight into the minds of the Mesopotamians as stories are born from their queries. The sections on “The Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld,” “Nergal and Ereshkigal,” and “Gilgamesh” all touch on the underworld in its physical description in great detail. These will be used in the paper as background and context to explain why the Sumerians thought the way they did about death.

The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (<http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/>), Oxford 1998- .

The corpus is an online database funded and created by the faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford and has been online since 1993. The database has a comprehensive collection of most, if not all, available Sumerian texts both translated and transliterated in phonetic spellings of the original Sumerian or Akkadian. This source will be extremely important to the paper as it provides primary source accounts of Sumerian literature with a wide range of focuses. It has a good number of primary sources that deal with death in myth, in letters, and in city-state lamentations. These will give context and perspective as well as answer questions within the paper.

Jacobsen, Thorkild. *The Harps That Once: Sumerian Poetry in Translation*. Translated and edited by Thorkild Jacobsen. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

A slightly older source that is the more poetic parallel of *The Literature of Ancient Sumer*; this book is an important and useful complementary primary source. Its author was a well-known and accredited Assyriologist, Thorkild Jacobsen was one of the few who defined the field. The book is a translated and complete collection of Sumerian poetry. It should be noted that this book should be used in tandem with a more direct translation. It has a particular section on lamentations, a specific type of

Sumerian literature focusing on the sorrows of destroyed cities or kingdoms, that yields itself to be a reliable source in researching the broader aspects of death culture. This section on lamentation is what would be most useful for taking an even broader look at death and destruction in the Sumerian mindset as the Sumerians have an entire genre of writing simply for it.

Kramer, Samuel Noah. *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth, and Ritual in Ancient Sumer*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969.

Written by the well-known Assyriologist Samuel Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth, and Ritual in Ancient Sumer* focuses on the fertility cult that surrounds the divine couple of Inanna and Dumuzid. A topic that involves both myth literature and religious practice, the cult has had a hold on those who study Mesopotamia for some time. The book has keen arguments on the interpretations of the continuous death and resurrection of the shepherd god Dumuzid and this is where it helps the paper. It also delves into the religious use and practice of the sacred marriage rite as there has been much debate on the actual use of the ritual marriage and consummation in regards to the myth. The use of death is something to keep in mind when writing the paper.

Kramer, Samuel Noah. *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.

The book is a revised version of Kramer's previous works into a more complete guide to the Sumerians as a whole. It talks about the many mechanics and social structures behind their society as well as religious rites and their legacy but most importantly it delves into their mindset. The mindset of the Sumerians revolved around death and the constant looming threat of it in their daily lives. Because of this, the Sumerians became pragmatic and geared toward ambition and success in life. This attitude toward life and death links the many myths about heroes and individual success as a thing to strive for and material culture is born from this, a mindset that drives the population. The book explains this in detail and is practically the holy grail when it comes to understanding how death shaped the mindset of Mesopotamia. It will be immensely helpful to the paper as none of the rituals or practices surrounding death will make any sense unless the Sumerian mindset is understood.

Reade, Julian. "Assyrian King-Lists, the Royal Tombs of Ur, and Indus Origins." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 60, no. 1 (2001): 1–29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/545577>.

The article discusses the many dates that are ambiguous when studying Ancient Mesopotamia. Which ones are correct is something that is cause of much debate. The article argues that key archaeological findings, at excavation sites such as The Royal Tomb at Ur, are paramount in firmly placing the dates of major rulers and events in the Mesopotamian timeline. This book can be used as complementary evidence when researching the Royal Tomb evidence and helpful when placing the research into the Early Dynastic category.

Sandars, N. K, trans. *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1968.

The author writes a narrative version of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, known as the world's oldest story and the speculated progenitor of the hero's journey. His introduction includes a thorough background of the epic as he explains its discovery and its tribulations in translation. Sandars mentions important Assyriologists in the

field such as Professor Samuel Kramer whose translation of Sumerian tablets carried the epic's translation a great deal of the way. The introduction also covers the topics of Sumerian civilization and how the epic is related to it and how it is important among the pantheon and its religion. From there the edited narrative translation begins in an eloquent and readable format that flows much like a story. The final chapter, titled "7 The Death of Gilgamesh", covers the epic's protagonist and his death. What can be taken from this book for the paper is its notion of death through popular mythos as well as a broad understanding of Sumerian religion and society. The seventh chapter will be particularly useful in seeing how death is portrayed for gods and men and how that can reflect on Sumerian society as a whole.

Wooley, Leonard. *Excavations at Ur*. London: Kegan Paul Limited, 2006.

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203040683>.

The main purpose of Sir Wooley's book is to describe the process and findings of the excavation of the Royal Tomb at Ur in 1922 and how these findings supplement the known history of Ur. He goes over the initial trials of the dig with Iraq having no real excavations done there before in its harsh and arid climate. The book soon goes into the pieces found and describes them with a complimenting history of the findings and their importance. What is really important about this source is the findings at the Royal Tomb in which a detailed glimpse into the burial rituals and practices of the time is written. Though the tomb is for a noble or royal group, it displays an array of funerary offerings leaves an open end for both answers and questions. These findings are of great help to the paper as they provide the most concrete of all primary evidence when it comes to burial. It is also of importance to note that these findings are landmark as they are some of the first to come out of the budding field of Assyriology and are part of what started the Mesopotamia craze of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Zettler, Richard L., Lee. Horne, Donald P. Hansen, and Holly. Pittman. *Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1998.

This source is a catalogue of the artefacts on display at the University of Pennsylvania Museum from the excavations at the Royal Tomb at Ur. These are physical evidence that can be used in researching the material culture of Sumerian Burial rites and also provide insight into Sumerian art and finery. This source will be used in the paper for its artefacts and the possible meanings behind them being in the tomb.

There is a vacuum in the realm of Assyriology when it comes to the culture and interactions surrounding death. The topic garners general notions in encyclopaedias and in collections that cover the overall society of Mesopotamia, but there is a stark lack of books and articles in the major Assyriology journals. The general knowledge of death in the field is surface level, and the lack of in-depth information in a comprehensive single source is

surprising. This paper will help to fill the gap and give a comprehensive explanation regarding the death practices that are so often sidelined.