



Summary

Innana's Descent to the Netherworld, also known as *Angalta*, its incipit, is an epic in Sumerian language of about 400 verses, which tells the voluntary catabasis of the goddess Innana to the world of the dead followed by that of her consort Dumuzi, against his will. This poem, abundantly commented on since its rediscovery at the beginning of the 20th century, has been the subject of several misunderstandings over the years. Innana, a major goddess in Mesopotamia at the beginning of the second millennium BC, behaves in *Angalta* in a way that some have described as erratic, delivering her husband to the demons of hell before lamenting his death as a grieving widow.

The aim of this study is twofold, philological and historical. Our first purpose is to provide the scientific community with an up-to-date and complete new edition of this central text of Sumerian literature from the Old Babylonian period (2004-1595 BC), *Innana's Descent*. The establishment of the text is based on numerous collations of the fifty or so manuscripts, tablets and fragments that make up the corpus. A score accompanied by an abundant textual criticism and synoptic tables allows us to do justice to the variants, while the translation, accompanied by grammatical analyses and philological comments, invites us to put things into perspective and consider the work in its unity.

This study also strives to restore *Angalta* as a historical artifact, representing a moment in Mesopotamian religious history. As such, it is part of the work of the multidisciplinary research group STRATA, hosted at the University of Göttingen. STRATA is a project dedicated to the study of myths and the different forms they can take. The team uses a new theoretical and methodological approach to myths, conceived as narrative materials, developed by C. Zgoll. This method has borne fruit, since it has not only made it possible to identify and reconstruct the narrative materials embodied in *Angalta*, but also to understand the way in which they were integrated into *Angalta*, and the consequences of this combination. Far from being a satire of a lunatic deity, *Innana's Descent to the Netherworld* celebrates the heroic goddess, queen of Heaven and Netherworld, who invented the means to deal with death.

Keywords

[Mesopotamia] [Iraq] [Sumerian] [Cuneiform] [Old Babylonian] [History of religions] [Philology] [Mythology] [Catabasis] [Dumuzi] [Death] [Funeral rites]