



## Nisaba, the Mesopotamian Goddess

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### Abstract

The main focus of this paper is to present an article review by researching scholarly articles that deal with the study of the Sumerian deity named Nisaba. This review has reviewed other scholarly articles to support the review.

### Introduction

Other evidence and extraordinary events in the book of world history have amazed us since invention. In this context, the famous goddess of Mesopotamia named, Nisaba is famous for being the goddess of writing, wisdom, and grain. She was a powerful goddess and was enlisted among many other powerful deities. The main intention of this paper is to present an article review regarding the Sumerian Goddess, Nisaba. The paper will review other scholarly articles to support the main discussion and provide proper evidence. The paper will help future researchers learn about the Sumerian deity and her whereabouts.

### Discussion

Nisaba is renowned as the Mesopotamian Goddess of writing and grain. She has been considered one of the oldest Sumerian deities associated with writing and has stayed consistent through many periods in Mesopotamian history (Asher et al., 2013). The scribes used to worship her, found in the concluding section of many of the Sumerian texts, which end with a doxology, "praise to Nisaba". Once in the Old Babylonian period, the rise of the new scribe God named Nabu led to the decline of Nisaba. It has been discovered that she did not completely disappear from the religion of Mesopotamia, and the attestations from the late neo-Babylonian period are familiar to the civilization. In the enlistment of myths and God, she was one of the parts of the sphere of Enlil together with her husband, Haya. As recollected in the myth of *Enlil and Sud*, she is meant to play a significant role because she becomes the eponymous deity's mother. Enlil asked for her permission to marry Sud along with the help of his sukkal, which means the attendant deity named Nuska. These narrative and other relevant articles attest that she and her daughter were considered to have a very close bonding. In the exterior parts of Mesopotamia, her name was utilized to logographically display the other almighty characters that are not relevant to her character. The names of the almighty characters include Dagan, Hurrian Kumarbi, and Hittite Halki.

### Importance of the name

The source from where the name of Nisaba came is still being determined. The diversely accepted reading Nisaba has been confirmed by the Akkadian lexical texts that spell the name *ni-sa-ba* by making it a syllable (Civil & Feliu, 2017). The word Nidaba has been favored by some of the well-known Assyriologists, for instance, Miguel Civil, who is now considered improbable as the evidence he provided could be clearer and might also establish recurring scribal errors (Cooper, 1991). The name of the Sumerian Goddess Nisaba was written by using a combination of a cuneiform sign called NAGA and the sign is accompanied by dingir. These signs are the so-called divine determinative and following names of different deities. The sign of NAGA is expected to be a picture representing a plant, possibly later interpreted as a sheaf of barley (Bartash, 2015). A separate determinative was added in the same sign, which was used to write the name of Nisaba's main cult center, Eresh. It has been considered that the true etymology of the name of Nisaba is considered impossible, and it cannot be determined (Asher et al., 2013). As per Wilfred G. Lambert, "it was derived from a hypothetical form *nin.sab(a)*, ak, "Lady of Saba," but as no such a place name is attested in Sumerian sources, this is regarded as implausible." As per another proposal, it has been found that Nisaba has been also known as the "lady of grain rations".

The goddess has various types of names. Another one named Nispa was used in Mari. However, it has been discovered that this goddess attested only in one single Amorite personal name - Ḫabdu-Nišpa rather than using the name Nispa or Nisaba. The goddess's name appears in well-known inscriptions like Iddin-Sin of Simurru and Anubanini of Lullubum (Tavernier, 2021). Some people referred to her as the mountains, which were considered holy by the Gutians (Frayne, 2011). During the rule of Gutian King Erridupizir, the specific KA-Nisba was the ruler and controller of Simurru. The mountain, considered holy, lies in the northeastern part of modern Sulaymaniyah (Frayne, 2011). As known from another research, it has been discovered that another name was given to the Sumerian Goddess – Nunbarshegunu (Civil, 2017). As per the goddess's epithets, it has been known that she is called the "lady of wisdom," and "professor of wisdom," "unsurpassed overseer" (Asher et al., 2013). She is also the "opener of the mouth of great gods."

According to researcher Piotr Michalowski, "Nisaba is the goddess of grain and the scribal arts in the widest sense of this word, including writing, accounting, and surveying" (Michalowski, 2003). It has generally assumed that she was an agricultural deity by origin, but in the preliminary stage, she was associated with writing (Michalowski, 2020). The goddess was also associated with literature and songs. The most important thing found in the article is that woman is mainly linked to literacy, wisdom, numeracy, and other relevant implements. Due to her primary association, Wilfred G. Lambert opined and stated that the gender of the woman is unusual, and he also noted that "female scribes were very rare" (Asher et al., 2013). In this case, Eleanor Robson has proven that "it was not uncommon for goddesses to be regarded as literate in Sumerian mythology, and individual goddesses are regarded as such twice as often as individual gods in texts from the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature.". Different compositions include references to many other goddesses writing, which are done by using measuring tools or performing different tasks connected with literacy and numeracy, including Inanna, Manungal, Geshtinanna, Ninisina, and Ninshubur and a minor Iamma goddess that serves Bau (Robson, 2007). She has been well known as the goddess of wisdom and is believed to bestow it upon different rulers. Some researchers have found that in *The Curse of Agada*, it has been enlisted that her name is among different deities those are prominent named Sin, Enki, Inanna, Ninurta, Ishkur, and Nuska. She has been associated with exorcisms too, in the first millennium BCE (Lambert, 1999).

Her husband's name was Haia, and he was possibly regarded as the God of seals. He was a divine character of lower rank. If compared to any other divine couples like Shamash and Aya, Ishkur and Shala, Ninsianna and Kabta, Enki and Damkina, Lugalbanda and Ninsun and others, they have been appealed together rarely in seal inscriptions. The couple had a daughter, and her name was Sud, and she was the city goddess of Shuruppak. In the later periods she was conflated with the wife of Enlil named Ninlil.

## Conclusion

It can be deduced from the above discussion that the Sumerian deity had a huge potential being the almighty of Mesopotamia. The main intention of this paper was to present an article review regarding the Sumerian Goddess, Nisaba. The paper has also reviewed other scholarly articles in order to support the main discussion and provide proper evidence. The paper will be much more informational for future researchers to gain knowledge on the Sumerian deity and her whereabouts.

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