

Collect the Blood of Kingu Mesopotamian Myths in Metal

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In the 19th century the cuneiform script was deciphered and with it a new mythological world was discovered. The now readable texts contained, for example, “Flood” narratives older than those in the Hebrew Bible and so challenged the idea of the Bible as a transcendental book. On this background, it is not surprising that this mythical material seems to be made for a thematization in Metal: The myths are old and are generally little known to the public. Moreover, they seem mysterious and are also associated with critical assessments of a conservative biblical view.

Mesopotamian myths are mainly included into lyrics, think of bands as MELECHESH (IL/NL/ GER) or songs like “Towards Babylon” (2004) by the Polish band BEHEMOTH or “Sumerian Cry (Part III)” (1991) by the Swedish band TIAMAT. However, as a closer look reveals, the Mesopotamian topics are not always directly derived from Ancient Near Eastern sources, but often through transmission in New Age culture and 20th century occultism. Complex links are thus revealed between the cultures of the Ancient Near East, their reception in the present and their embedding in popular cultural ideas. In the lecture, I will use a case study to investigate in more detail the reception of Mesopotamian myths in Metal and examine the function of these narratives in this music genre.