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The Ancient Mind and Cultural Evolution: Allegories of the Agricultural Revolution in Gilgamesh and Genesis

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Abstract

There is no written record depicting how ancient societies viewed their own transition through the agricultural revolution. In the fertile crescent, however, early agricultural societies left intricate literature and myths embedded with their own worldviews and opinions. Clear allegories regarding agriculture can be gleaned from ancient myths of the fertile crescent such as the Epic of Gilgamesh and the Book of Genesis. Analyzing myth historically requires speculation, but even with that considered, these agricultural allegories can in turn be read as commentaries on the Neolithic revolution. Although written and told by agricultural societies, works like Gilgamesh and Genesis could have been passed down through oral tradition throughout the agricultural revolution, or at the very least, these myths show how agricultural civilizations inferred their own transitioning into agriculture from their nomadic and embryonic neighbors.

1. Introduction

Agriculture is regularly cited as being the beginning of civilization, and, depending on one's definition of "civilization," there is generally some truth in this claim. Agriculture provided the surplus and conceptions of property needed to further art, science, engineering, and organized religion. Yet, as much as we praise agriculture, we know very little about the transition from hunting and gathering societies to agrarian societies. The best people to ask about this transition have been dead for millennia. However, there are numerous allegories in the literature of the ancient world which allude to this transitionary period. The following research analyzes two such works: The Epic of Gilgamesh and the Book of Genesis. This research looks at allegories within these texts, how they pertain to the transition between hunting and gathering and agriculture, and what they say about the ancient minds that created the texts.

Contrary to popular belief, the agricultural revolution which brought about the construction of the first cities in the fertile crescent was not dramatic or instantaneous by any accounts. The shift from hunting and gathering to agriculture likely took millennia, with hunter-gatherers picking up farming and herding practices piece by piece. Farming only became a full-time practice when natural climatic shifts in the Middle East slowly forced the other food sources out of the area and civilization turned to full-time agriculture as a result. It is also commonly believed that increasing population was a cause of agriculture, when in fact, it was an effect. It was the increasing populations of agricultural societies which later displaced hunting and gathering tribes.[1]

The word "civilization" is a problematic one in anthropology. In the past it has been used to undermine respect for less industrial nations and cultures. For instance, by saying that agricultural Sumer is a civilization while excluding hunter-gatherers who left little in the way of recorded history implies that Sumer was more civil than these hunting and gathering tribes, when in fact both cultures were sophisticated and developed moral codes. This paper often engages a spectrum which puts agricultural and city-based civilization in conversation with nature, the wild, and

hunting and gathering societies. For the sake of simplicity and to best reflect the theme of progress exhibited by the writers of the texts, the following research will use the term "civilization" to denote agricultural societies, but not to imply their superiority in any way over hunting and gathering societies.

2. Methodology

This research utilizes methods of analysis developed by previous anthropologists, namely Clifford Geertz and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Although Geertz did not invent the concept of thick description, he did alter it to his own anthropological methods by comparing it to the act of reading a text. Geertz believed that every act that happens in a society can be "read," interpreted, and analyzed, just as if it were a book or narrative. The people can be viewed as "actors" just like actors in a play.[2] He uses thick description in his "Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" to analyze cockfighting in Bali as a *representation* of primal violence among social groups.[3] In researching ancient literature, however, the anthropological "text" is replaced by literal texts. The following paper uses thick description instead to infer cultural mindsets from allegory from actual literature, not cultural mindsets from allegory from real-life social acts as Geertz does in his "Notes on a Balinese Cockfight." Thick description was utilized when several mentionings of every-day things appeared in the texts, such as gates, which are regularly referenced in the Epic of Gilgamesh.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, believing that similarities are more vital between cultures than differences, developed a structuralist method of comparing themes within a culture's myth, themes between different renditions of the same myth, and even themes between different myths.[4] Lévi-Strauss's method, outlined in "The Structural Study of Myth," is used to compare events that occur in several different tablets of the Gilgamesh Epic, how events are described in different translations of Gilgamesh and Genesis, and thematic and structural similarities between Gilgamesh and Genesis.

Lévi-Strauss also developed theories about spectrums between two extremes and liminality, best exemplified in G. S. Kirk's Lévi-Straussian analysis of Gilgamesh where he sets up a spectrum of nature vs. culture and analyzes the roles of Gilgamesh and Enkidu on that spectrum,[5] ultimately resulting in an idea of nature/culture traversability which plays a vital role in the research below. Lévi-Straussian spectrums were used elsewhere in the research process, but Kirk's analysis led to the most concrete conclusions.

3. The Texts

The surplus and conceptions of property that allowed civilization to begin devoting time to art and religion bred mythologies and works of literature like the Epic of Gilgamesh. Although the epic itself is mythical, records exist that there really was a Sumerian king named Gilgamesh who ruled around 2700 B.C.E.[6] The myth is recorded in several places, but the oldest mention of Gilgamesh as an epic character is in Sumerian texts kept alive by ancient Babylonian scribes. These loose tales are consolidated in the first-millennium Akkadian tablets that are widely read and recognized as the Epic of Gilgamesh. Following in the footsteps of translator Andrew George, this essay refers to these tablets as the Standard Version of Gilgamesh.[7]

3.1. Summary of the Epic of Gilgamesh

The Standard Version, split up into eleven tablets, recounts the adventures of Gilgamesh, the great builder and king of Uruk, and his friend Enkidu. The story starts off with the gods creating a man from clay to rival Gilgamesh's tyranny, as folks have started complaining about Gilgamesh's tendency to sleep with other men's wives. Enkidu, the man created from clay, is inherently wild. He runs, lives, and hunts with the wild beasts of Mesopotamia until Gilgamesh sends a harlot to sleep with him. After the harlot sleeps with him and introduces him to the wonders of civilization, Enkidu, no longer accepted by the wild animals, goes to face off against Gilgamesh. The two become friends however, and together they battle Humbaba, the guardian of the forest of cedar, then chop down the cedar forest. With the wood from the forest, Enkidu fashions a gate. Although the purpose of the gate is unknown, the line "let a god have love for [it.]"[8] implies that it has religious connotations. Gilgamesh then refuses the advances of the goddess Ishtar, invoking her wrath in the form of the Bull of Heaven. Although Gilgamesh and Enkidu successfully defeat the bull, Enkidu is condemned by the gods to be killed as punishment. On his deathbed, Enkidu laments that he has become civilized, cursing the harlot, the hunter (who found him and told Gilgamesh about him), and the gate that he constructed from the cedar. Gilgamesh, more out of fear of death than out of grief, becomes a wild man himself

and scours the land looking for the secret to eternal life. His quest brings him to hear the story of Utnapishtim, the only man to survive a flood brought on long ago by the gods. He survived the flood in an ark, and the gods granted him eternal life, but Gilgamesh cannot obtain this immortality. Distraught, Gilgamesh returns to Uruk. There, he overlooks the walls of Uruk which he built, and contemplates how their greatness will leave a legacy that will make his name, if not his body, immortal.

3.2. Summary of Genesis

The story of Genesis was largely consolidated around the fall of Babylon in 500 B.C.E, but written fragments of Genesis exist as far back as 800 B.C.E. However, there was undoubtedly an oral tradition centered around the teachings of the Hebrew Bible that extended farther back than this time, though how far back we cannot know for sure.[9] Genesis is considered by scholars to be split into two sections. Chapters 1 through 11 are the Primeval History, which recounts the prehistory of the world before the stories of Abraham. Chapters 12 through 50 are the Patriarchal Tales, accounts of Abraham, Isaac, and the rest of the major patriarchs of Genesis.[10] The Primeval History details how God created the heavens, the earth, and all living creatures, including Adam and Eve. He places Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, a paradise where they live in harmony with all of the animals, and commands them not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge. A serpent tricks them into eating the fruit, and God banashes the two from Eden, saying to Adam "Thorn and thistle shall [the soil] sprout for you / and you shall eat the plants of the field. / By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread."[11] Eve later births Cain and Abel, but Cain kills Abel after God chooses Abel's offering over his own. Cain then continues to populate the world, ultimately leading to the creation of the first city. Chapters 6 through 9 detail how God flooded the world after He saw how humans were being evil. He had Noah and his family build an ark, gather two of each animal, and survive the flood. Genesis then goes on to tell the story of the Tower of Babel, where men, in an attempt to reach Heaven, start to build a high tower. The Lord confounds them by making each individual speak a different language.

The Primeval History section of Genesis, being the perceived prehistory of the ancient Hebrews, contains more allegories regarding the transition from hunting and gathering to agricultural societies than the Patriarchal Tales, but there is at least one tale in the later half of Genesis which is important to know for the sake of analysis. Chapter 25 tells the story of how Esau, a hunter, has to ask his twin, Jacob, a tent-dwelling shepherd, for food. Later, their father, Isaac, asks Esau to bring him some meat, and in return, Isaac will bless Esau. But Jacob tricks the hard-of-seeing Isaac into eating his food and blessing him instead. Although the Patriarchal Tales are ripe with allegory, these are the only chapters which pertain to the research of this essay.

3.3. Correlations Between the Two

The question of how closely the Gilgamesh epic relates to Genesis is a well studied one, rooted originally in the connection between the flood narratives. When George Smith announced the existence of an account of Noah's flood in the form of a Gilgamesh tablet, biblical scholars were immediately interested,[12] but the connections do not stop there. Assyriologist E. A. Speiser argues that the Primeval History section of Genesis depicts Mesopotamian history. Speiser's essay details how the location of Eden's converging rivers (including the Tigris and the Euphrates), as described in Genesis, are in Southern Mesopotamia.[13] The Fertile Crescent, being the birthplace of agricultural civilization, is a reasonable place for Hebrew scripture to depict the original home of Adam and Eve.

Some of the more obvious connections occur in the Tower of Babel story, which unarguably mythologizes the significance of Mesopotamian ziggurats, or raised sacred structures. Everett Fox believes that the "Shinar" of the tale is Mesopotamia, and that the tale mocks the Babylonian empire in preparation for Abram's departure from Ur.[14] E. A. Speiser agrees that the land of Nimrod where the tower is built is indeed Babylon.[15] The parable could be a kind of early anti-polytheistic satire, making fun of the religious elements surrounding ziggurats, and/or a way of shunning Babylon for its ambitious technological growth.

The connections between Noah's flood and Utnapishtim's flood are uncanny. The Genesis flood is brought on by God,[16] just as the Gilgamesh flood is brought on by the gods.[17] Utnapishtim describes his days on the water like so:

> The seventh day when it came,
> I brought out a dove, I let it loose:
> off went the dove but then it returned,
> there was no place to land, so back it came to me.

I brought out a swallow, I let it loose:
  off went the swallow but then it returned,
there was no place to land, so back it came to me.

I brought out a raven, I let it loose:
  off went the raven, it saw the waters receding,
finding food, *bowing* and *bobbing*, it did not come back to me.

I brought out an offering, to the four winds made sacrifice,
  incense I placed on the peak of the mountain

The gods did smell the savour,
  the gods did smell the savour sweet,
the gods gathered like flies around the man making sacrifice.[18]

Genesis describes Noah's days on the water like so:

At the end of forty days it was: Noah opened the window of
  the ark that he made,/ and sent out a raven;
  it went off, going off and returning, until the waters were
  dried up from upon the earth.
Then he sent out a dove from him, to see whether the waters had
  subsided from the face of the soil.
But the dove found no resting-place for the sole of her foot,
so she returned to him into the Ark,
for there was water upon the face of all the earth.
He sent forth his hand and took her, and brought her to him into the ark.
Then he waited yet another seven days
and sent out the dove yet again from the Ark.
The dove came back to him at eventime,
and here—a freshly plucked olive leaf in her beak!
So Noah knew
that the waters had subsided from upon the earth.
Then he waited yet another seven days
and sent out the dove,
but she returned to him again no more.[19]
…
Noah built a slaughter-site to YHWH.
He took from all pure animals and from all pure fowl
and offered up offering upon the slaughter-site.
And when YHWH smelled the soothing savor...[20]

The similarities between the two sections cannot be ignored. But as Everett Fox points out, the differences are now considered to be much more significant. Genesis's God, for example, floods the world because mankind has become sinful, whereas the Mesopotamian gods flood the world because it has become too busy and they are simply annoyed with all the noise.[21] But these uncanny correlations that exist are proof that Genesis took inspiration from Mesopotamin stories in some way. The issue of whether this connection was conscious or not is less certain. After all, Genesis could be referencing some unknown orally-told story that derives its language from Gilgamesh, not the epic itself. But the references targeted more at Mesopotamia itself, such the Tower of Babel story, imply that at least some of the connections are intentionally targeted at ancient Mesopotamian culture, so the idea that Genesis is directly referencing ancient stories from the Fertile Crescent, possibly Gilgamesh, is not far-fetched. Furthermore, the discovery of a Middle Akkadian fragment of the Gilgamesh tale at Megiddo shows that cuneiform readers and readers/listeners of the Gilgamesh epic were present in the time of Genesis's creation.[22]

It is reasonable then to assume that associations between the Gilgamesh epic and Genesis are present. Although some associations made between the two myths may be speculative, such as the metaphorical significance of the passable gates in The Epic of Gilgamesh relating to the impassable "way to the Tree of Life" blocked by God in

Genesis,[23] the analysis of these speculations may yield vital results. Assumptions that lean more towards the speculative side, as opposed to the obvious correlations such as the flood narrative and the Tower of Babel story, will be preemptively regarded as such before further analysis.

4. Analysis

4.1. Transition from Hunting and Gathering to Farming

> Cursed be the soil for your sake,
> with pangs shall you eat from it all the days of your life.
> Thorn and thistle shall it sprout for you
> and you shall eat the plants of the field.
> By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread
> till you return to the soil,
> for from there you were taken[24]

When God creates man in the book of Genesis, He gives Adam dominion over all of the Garden of Eden. Adam gets dominion over every "seed-bearing plant" and every "tree that has fruit."[25] When Adam and Eve are banished from the garden, however, Adam is made to till the soil, and this is how Genesis explains the creation of farming. There are several references that support the idea that this is an allegory for how ancient Hebrew society viewed the transition from hunting and gathering to agricultural society. The first, exhibited above, is the emphasis on fruit pre-banishment and on bread and labor post-banishment.

There is a way to read God's curse on Eve allegorically. Though speculative, its contribution to the overall allegory of the Neolithic Revolution is worth looking at. God says to Eve, "I will terribly sharpen your birth pangs, / in pain shall you bear children. / And for your man shall be your longing, / and he shall rule over you."[26] As scientific writer Jared Diamond points out in his article "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race," the Neolithic Revolution likely brought about greater division between the sexes. Women were no longer expected to provide foraged foods like in hunting and gathering societies, but instead were expected to focus on motherhood, as more hands were needed to till fields. Women in early agricultural societies were expected to have children more frequently, hence the sharpening of birth pangs, and consequently deteriorating overall health.[27] The contribution of children was less recognized than direct contributions to the food supply via tilling, and this lowered the social position of women significantly, and thus "[man] shall rule over you." This is not to say that hunting and gathering societies were void of sexism. Inuit societies often treated women like property due to their male-dominated meat trade.[28] But the overwhelming majority of hunting and gathering societies, particularly the ones in which women participated in the ever desirable sharing of meat, were significantly more egalitarian than early agricultural societies.

This egalitarianism includes social statuses as well. Although property became much more important to developing agricultural societies which remained stationary, not having to carry personal belongings, it was often the rich who owned said property. Anthropologist James Scott believes that, through taxation, the rich forced the poor into agricultural life, stripping away their freedom and health in the process.[29] And so while conceptions of property became more extensive with agriculture, the lower classes owned less. In hunting and gathering societies, where food was shared and social polarization was less prominent,[30] the resources, the fruit and animals of the Garden of Eden so to say, would have been owned by a greater portion of society. Before their banishment to a life of agriculture, Adam and Eve had "dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the heavens, and all living things that crawl about upon the earth."[31]

Given that the blissful and easy life in Eden is considered more desirable than the difficult life outside of the garden, the ancient Hebrew storytellers seem to have believed that hunting and gathering was preferable, but unobtainable. Or perhaps they believed that, because agricultural life gave them the knowledge and/or the free time to better worship God, agricultural society was worth its hardships. Regardless, the idea that ancient society would have prefered a life in touch with nature as opposed to farming is revolutionary, and yet this idea is expressed several times throughout Genesis. Cain kills Abel because God prefers Abel's meat offering as opposed to Cain's farmed offering.[32] Similarly, Isaac wants Esau's "hunted-game" instead of Jacob's farmed food,[33] despite the fact that Esau had to rely on Jacob's stable food source just a few chapters prior.[34] This shows that ancient Hebrew society recognized the productivity of farming and husbandry, despite the fact that it is less desirable than hunting and gathering and shepherding. There is a possibility that agriculture's displacement of hunting and gathering through increasing population is represented by

Cain killing Abel, but this theory is speculative due to a lack of evidence. A similar situation can be seen in the Epic of Gilgamesh when Enkidu, on his deathbed, regrets ever abandoning his wild lifestyle where he ran and hunted with the animals,[35] but the idea that farming is more productive than hunting and gathering is not expressed as it is in Genesis.

It is through Enkidu's transformation that The Epic of Gilgamesh also comments on the nature of society's adoption of agriculture. Enkidu, when he is first created, is described like so: "He knows not a people, nor even a country. / Coated in hair like the god of the animals, / with the gazelles he grazes on grasses."[36] While this reflects ancient Sumerian interpretations of early man, it doesn't necessarily show signs of transition. The allegory is expanded upon as Enkidu undergoes his characterization.

First, Enkidu sleeps with Shamhat, a harlot sent by Gilgamesh. This can be read several ways. It could be that sex civilizes Enkidu, in which case the allegory implies that sex is the civilizing factor. Given that Shamhat is a priestess and temple prostitute,[37] it could be that religion is the civilizing factor. These readings, both particularly speculative, display what the ancient Babylonians and Sumerians might have viewed as causes of civilization. It's more likely, however, that the inclusion of sex in the story displays an effect of civilization, not a cause. After his time with Shamhat, Enkidu tries to hunt with his animal friends again:

> Enkidu had defiled his body so pure,
> his legs stood still, though his herd was in motion.
> Enkidu was weakened, could not run as before,
> but now he had *reason*, and wide understanding.[38]

By having sex, Enkidu has lost the stamina needed to live his "wild" lifestyle, but gained a sense of reason that he did not have before. While there is plenty of evidence to suggest that agricultural societies were far less healthier than hunting and gathering societies,[39] there is little evidence suggesting that agricultural societies were any more intelligent than hunting and gathering societies, but ancient Mesopotamian storytellers could not have known that; to them, feats of engineering, art, and organized religion must have looked like feats of intelligence, so perhaps this is their way of allegorizing the evolution from hunting and gathering to agricultural societies.

Although the correlation between civilization and sex is interesting, the second stage in Enkidu's transformation directly associates his transition with agriculture:

> The harlot opened her mouth,
> saying to Enkidu:
> 'Eat the bread, Enkidu, essential to life,
> drink the ale, the lot of the land!'
>
> Enkidu ate the bread until he was sated,
> he drank the ale, a full seven goblets.
> His mood became free, he started to sing,
> his heart grew merry, his face lit up.
>
> The barber groomed his body so hairy,
> anointed with oil he turned into a man.[40]

Bread and alcohol, long associated with agriculture, are also civilizing factors in Enkidu's transformation. Archaeologist N. K. Sandars, in the introduction to her translation of the epic, summarizes this beautifully when she states that Enkidu's transformation is "an allegory of the stages by which mankind reaches civilization, going from savagery to pastoralism and at last to the life of the city. It has even been claimed from the evidence of this story that the Babylonians were social evolutionists!"[41]

Both the Epic of Gilgamesh and Genesis seem to exhibit a crude stereotype about pre-agricultural or "wild" individuals that paints them as ungroomed. As shown above, Enkidu is incredibly hairy before his transformation, but "The barber groomed his body so hairy" after he becomes civilized. The same can be seen in the character of Esau, a hunter in the Patriarchal Tales of Genesis: "The first one came out ruddy, like a hairy mantle all over, / so they called his name: Esav."[42] Indeed, the name Esau is often attributed to the Arabic word meaning "rough-one."[43] And so there seems to be some stereotype perpetrated through Enkidu and Esau which implies that ancient agricultural societies considered hunters and gatherers, or "wild men," to be hairy or ungroomed.

It is not impossible that ancient Mesopotamian and Hebrew societies orally passed down records of their hunting and gathering ancestry. Anthropologists and researchers like Patrick Nunn have recently begun to shed light on the authenticity of oral histories. For example, in his article "The Oldest True Stories in the World," Nunn talks about how the Klamath people of Oregon have orally passed down a myth about the creation of Crater Lake, formed approximately 7,600 years ago,[44] so it is conceivable that Mesopotamian and Hebrew societies passed down tales about the rise of agriculture orally for millenia. This means that the allegories detailed above could have been formed by societies witnessing the agricultural revolution over generations. Still, it could be that the peoples that authored the Epic of Gilgamesh and Genesis simply came in contact with bands of nomadic societies, meaning that the allegories are their own theories about their pre-agricultural pasts rather than allegorized histories. Because the Neolithic Revolution was a slow process, embryonic civilizations, bands of hunters and gatherers, and societies that mixed hunting and gathering with other means of food production would have existed alongside early farming civilizations in the Fertile Crescent, meaning that allegories related to hunting and gathering in the texts are perfectly feasible. This argument is strengthened by ancient Sumerian conceptions of early humans, represented by Enkidu but found also throughout Sumerian literature.[45] Indeed, some scholars have even proposed that Enkidu reflected local perceptions of the Amorites, a semi-nomadic people who occupied parts of Mesopotamia at the beginning of the second millennium B.C.E.[46] These texts then potentially work both as myths displaying how ancient Hebrew and Mesopotamian societies interpreted their own evolution from surrounding tribes and, especially in the case of Gilgamesh, works of sociology regarding how ancient agricultural societies viewed their hunting and gathering neighbors.

4.1.1 *moving away from nature*

Also in the texts is a connection between civilization being out-of-touch with nature. This is most obvious in Gilgamesh when Enkidu is civilized by the prostitute and can no longer hunt with the animals that he previously ran through the wilderness with. Considering that Enkidu's transformation reflects his movement to the culture side of the spectrum, this is not surprising. Though speculative, it can be inferred that ancient Mesopotamian storytellers associated hunting and gathering or mid-transition embryonic societies with nature and the wild given the connection between Enkidu's transformation and agriculture. The same allegory can be seen in Genesis, as Adam and Eve are forced from the Garden of Eden, where they have dominion over wildlife, when they eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and Adam is made to farm the soil. Enkidu, Adam, and Eve all have a greater connection with nature and wildlife before transitioning into the realm of agriculture.

4.2. Construction and Civilization

In the introduction to his translation of The Epic of Gilgamesh, Andrew George talks about Gilgamesh as a civilizer. George claims that the prologue implies that Gilgamesh played a key role in reintroducing the people of Sumer to aspects of civilization like agriculture after the mythic flood.[47] George provides little evidence outside of the prologue and the later tablets detailing the flood that Gilgamesh is the representative of civilization, but the tablets of the Standard Version also contain evidence. One would assume that this evidence rests in the way Gilgamesh civilizes Enkidu, but Gilgamesh plays only an indirect role in Enkidu's transformation. It is the harlot who sleeps with Enkidu and the bread and the ale he consumes that do the civilizing. Instead, the evidence seems to be the deeper meaning behind doors and gates. In the Standard Version of The Epic of Gilgamesh, doors and, more commonly, gates, represent the vital threshold between nature and civilization, and this meaning plays into Gilgamesh's role as Sumer's great civilizer.

Doors and gates in the epic hold a deeper significance than simple objects. They are the threshold between what is civilized and what is wild. Classicist G. S. Kirk in his article on Gilgamesh exhibits how, at the start of the epic, the two extremes of the spectrum, wilderness and civilization, are represented by Enkidu and Gilgamesh respectively.[48] In the fourth tablet, after Enkidu has moved to the other side of the spectrum, civilization, he continuously builds huts for Gilgamesh so that he may rest and dream. After building the houses, the epic always states: "[he fixed a door in its doorway to keep out the weather.]... [and… lay himself in the doorway]."[49] Enkidu keeps guard, positioning himself within the doorway meant to keep out the weather. Who better to sit directly on the threshold between the wild and civilization than the newly civilized wild man? The symbolism is more obvious in tablets nine and ten, when the scorpion-men and, more blatantly, the tavern girl, protect their doors against the wild-looking Gilgamesh. The tavern girl goes as far as to bar her doors against the hero, assuming him to be a wild bull hunter. "'For sure this man is a hunter of wild bulls, / but where does he come from, making straight for my gate?' / Thus the tavern keeper saw him,

and barred her gate."[50] N. K. Sandars represents the tavern girl as "the woman of the vine, the maker of wine."[51] Her role as a maker of wine strengthens the role of her house as a civilized one, as alcohol is one of the many things that civilizes Enkidu. The fact that the tavern girl/wine maker, representing civilization, bars her gates against the wild-looking Gilgamesh further shows the correlation between doorways and the separation of civilization and the wilderness.

Gilgamesh's role as a great builder is obvious throughout the epic, and the fact that he built the walls of Uruk are mentioned within the first twenty lines of the first tablet of the Standard Version. The issue is brought up again at the very end when Gilgamesh, in a fit of introspection, tells Ur-shanabi to "Survey [Uruk's wall's] foundations, examine the brickwork!"[52] Gilgamesh is proud of his role as a builder, and uses his lasting legacy as Uruk's great engineer to justify the fact that he never obtained eternal life. The gates of Uruk are also mentioned regularly throughout the epic, including when Gilgamesh boasts that he shall come home from defeating the *wild* and wicked Humbaba "glad at heart through Uruk's gate."[53] Gilgamesh's role in building the ramparts of Uruk show him as the protector of the civilized from the wilderness. Gilgamesh is not completely divine—his mother was a goddess, but his father was mortal—but his semi-divine character and his personal struggle within the spectrum in the later tablets when he becomes wild himself make him the perfect individual for a task such as mediating the wild/civilized spectrum. Gilgamesh is Uruk's great civilizer and builder, and there's an inherent link within the epic between the aspects of civilization and construction.

When Enkidu is lamenting on his deathbed, he curses three things: the hunter who found him and reported him to Gilgamesh, the harlot who sleeps with and civilizes him, and the gate that he built with Humbaba's cedar. G. S. Kirk mentions how two of three victims of Enkidu's cursing, the hunter and the harlot, had a direct role in his transition from wilderness to civilization.[54] Given the allegorical significance of the gate as a threshold as expressed above, the cursing of the gate, which somewhat confounds Kirk, makes more sense.

4.2.1. *the descendants of Cain*

After Cain kills Abel in Genesis chapter 4, he goes on to found the first city, Enoch, named after his son. Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-Cain, three descendents of Cain, go on to found practices associated with civilization:

> Ada bore Yaval [Jabal],
> he was the father of those who sit amidst tent and herd.
> His brother's name was Yuval [Jubal],
> he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.
> And Tzilla bore as well-- Tuval-Kayin [Tubal-Cain].
> burnisher of every blade of bronze and iron.[55]

This is the creation story for three things: music, bronze and iron smithing, and tent-dwelling. According to the creation story, Cain's role as a farmer led to the founding of the first city, and the first city led to the creation of music, smithing, and tent-dwelling. Although music and smithing are self-explanatory, it is less clear what is meant by Jabal, "father of those who sit amidst tent and herd." This implies that either nomadic shepherding or animal husbandry is a product of agricultural society. Animal husbandry makes more sense given what historians know about early agricultural society, but to say that Jabal represents animal husbandry and definitely not nomadic shepherding is speculative. Regardless of Jabal's role, there is a clear outline here created by ancient Hebrew storytellers which intrinsically links music and smithing with city-based civilization and cities with agriculture.

4.3 Death and Civilization

On his deathbed, Enkidu curses the three things that brought him over to the civilization side of the spectrum. This is because Ekidu resents having ever become civilized from his wild state, blaming his death on his civilization. It can be argued that Enkidu is simply cursing his transition because it led to the series of events which condemned him to death, but Gilgamesh's actions in the later tablets shows that Enkidu's death is directly related to his position on the spectrum. Fearful that he himself will one day die, Gilgamesh sets off in search of immortality. In these tablets, Gilgamesh is regularly described as wild: "For his friend Enkidu Gilgamesh / did bitterly weep as he wandered the wild"; "he smote the [lions, he] killed them and scattered them. / [He] clad himself in their skins, he ate their flesh."[56]

The reason for Gilgamesh's transition into the wild side of the spectrum is best summarized by G. S. Kirk:

> Why does Gilgamesh withdraw from the world of culture into that of nature after his friend's death?... Does he hope to restore Enkidu to a kind of life? I doubt it; his concern seems to be more for himself, at this stage, than for Enkidu. It is his own preoccupation with death, as much as guilt for Enkidu, that he is expressing by these means. If so, then I suggest that his rejection of the world and of the appurtenances of culture is a rejection of death itself.[57]

If Kirk's analysis is correct, then Enkidu's lamenting on his deathbed is most definitely in reference to an inherent association within the text between the culture and civilization side of the spectrum and death.

There is a similar occurrence in Genesis. Adam and Eve only have to experience death after they have eaten fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: "until you return to the soil, / for from it you were taken. / For you are dust, and to dust shall you return."[58] This implies that, with knowledge of good and evil comes eventual death, or at least the ability to contemplate or understand death. Because the knowledge of good and evil brings Adam and Eve both agriculture and death, there is a link between civilization and death, just as there is in the Epic of Gilgamesh.

Here are two ancient texts which link civilization with death. The references to death can be read as references to human's physical deterioration and/or as references to the contemplation and understanding of death. Although Gilgamesh can be read both ways, there is little mention of contemplation of death being related to farming within the epic. Gilgamesh's theme of death is likely a reference to physical health. Less diverse diets and the disease that came with overcrowded cities ultimately deteriorated the overall health and wellness of early civilizations that shifted to agriculture from hunting and gathering. Early agriculturalists were malnourished, shorter than their hunting and gathering predecessors, and died easily and more frequently.[59] It is plausible then that Gilgamesh is escaping the culture side of the spectrum to avoid the death and decay caused by agricultural societies. Comparably, translator N. K. Sandars believes that Gilgamesh's attitude is derived from what archaeologist Henri Frankfort described as "overtones of anxiety… [due to] a haunting fear that the unaccountable and turbulent powers may at any time bring disaster to human society."[60] In the case of the death allegory in Genesis, it is likely a reference to the contemplation of death given that it is derived from knowledge. Genesis implies that, with the civilization that agriculture brings comes the ability to contemplate death. From a modern anthropological perspective, it is well known that humans living in agricultural societies were no more cognisant of death than humans in hunting and gathering societies. The hierarchical sort of thinking displayed above breeds the problematic ranking of agricultural civilizations above hunting and gathering ones. But it is likely that ancient Hebrew societies viewed their hunting and gathering ancestors and neighbors as more backward than them and unable to contemplate the concept of death at the same level of sophistication that they could. Furthermore, it is interesting that in Genesis the knowledge of good and evil comes before both farming and death. It is plausible that ancient Hebrew society believed that agriculture and the ability to contemplate death were products of an increase in insight or a better understanding of morality.

5. Conclusions

Based on the above evidence, it is clear that ancient civilizations had a greater understanding of their own transitions into agricultural societies than is often granted them. Recent studies have shown the potential validity of oral histories, although given the great expanse of time that passed throughout the Neolithic Revolution, skepticism is understandable. Still, agricultural societies could have easily come to conclusions about their pre-agricultural pasts based on the existence of their embryonic neighbors and surrounding hunting and gathering societies.

If knowledge of the past was inferred from surrounding peoples, then the themes expressed in the Epic of Gilgamesh and Genesis double as subtle sociological commentaries, reflecting ancient Mesapotamian and Hebrew thoughts on their neighbors. Some of these regards are positive, while others are not. For example, both texts imply that hunting and gathering civilizations are healthier, but both also stereotype hunters and gatherers as hairy and ungroomed. Gilgamesh and Genesis also seem to express the belief that hunting and gathering societies are less intelligent than agricultural societies, a harmful belief that survived for centuries, ultimately culminating in an ignorant civilization hierarchy. While some of the themes explored in this research are speculative, and others are only indirectly associated with agriculture, (such as the above-stated connection between intelligence and agriculture; sophistication is only associated with "civilizing," which in turn is associated with farming, so there is never a direct association between intelligence and farming.) it is likely that further analysis into other ancient texts of the Fertile Crescent will yield promising results.

And lastly, the above research works as further proof that the analysis of myth as allegory merits respect in the realm of ancient history and anthropology. Nonfiction is of course regularly regarded as useful for the study of history and

anthropology, but only occasionally is literature and myth. And even then, fiction is used more often to study recent history. Although using allegories within ancient texts to interpret the ancient world and mindsets must be taken with a grain of salt given the massive amounts of speculation, there is truth in the reoccurring themes found within these texts.

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