

THE BABYLONIAN GENESIS

ALEXANDER HEIDEL

A complete translation of all the published cuneiform tablets of the various Babylonian creation stories

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THE BABYLONIAN GENESIS

The Story of Creation

ALEXANDER HEIDEL

Second Edition



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PREFACE

THE excavations which during the last one hundred years or more have been carried on in Egypt, Palestine, Babylonia, Assyria, and other lands of the ancient Orient have opened up vistas of history that were undreamed of before the archeologist with his spade appeared upon the scene. They have furnished us with a remarkable background for the Old Testament; they have shown with singular clarity that the story of the ancient Hebrews, politically speaking, is but an episode in a gigantic drama in which such peoples as the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Assyrians played the chief roles; they have shown that the Old Testament is not an isolated body of literature but that it has so many parallels in the literature of the nations surrounding Israel that it is impossible to write a scientific history of the Hebrews or a scientific commentary on the Old Testament without at least a fair knowledge of the history and the literature of Israel's neighbors.

This is true particularly with regard to the records from Babylonia and Assyria. So numerous are the points of contact between the Old Testament and the inscriptions found in these two countries that whole books have been written on this very subject. Again and again the annals of the Assyrian monarchs confirm, elucidate, or supplement the Hebrew chronicles of Judah and Israel, while the creation and flood stories of the Babylonians as well as the Code of Hammurabi abound in striking parallels to the corresponding portions of the Old Testament.

The present volume deals with one group of these parallels; it is concerned with the creation stories of Babylonia and the problem of their relation to our Old Testament literature. This little study is intended primarily not for the professional Assyriologist but rather for the Old Testament scholar and the Christian minister. Consonant with this purpose, it has been my aim throughout to make the meaning of the texts stand out as clearly as possible, to reduce to a minimum all linguistic discus-

sions of the Babylonian material, and to confine myself to things that will really be of help and interest to those who have been intrusted with the office of expounding the sacred truths enshrined in Holy Writ.

The present edition constitutes an almost complete revision of the previous one. I have retranslated all the cuneiform texts and have considerably altered and enlarged the rest of the book. There are but few pages on which no change has been made. In the revision of the cuneiform stories I enjoyed the unstinted co-operation of Associate Professor F. W. Geers and also had the pleasure of discussing a number of problems with Professor Benno Landsberger. It is hardly necessary to add that, as a member of the Assyrian Dictionary staff of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, I had full access to the Dictionary files, for which the present translation of the cuneiform texts has been prepared. For the illustrative material I am indebted to the British Museum and to the Oriental Institute. Special acknowledgments are given in the List of Illustrations. The publication of this material has been made possible through a subvention from the Committee on Allocation of Funds for Scholarly Research of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, for which I am sincerely grateful.

If those for whom this volume is primarily intended will find it helpful in their work or in the solution of some personal problems, I shall feel amply repaid for the efforts expended upon it.

ALEXANDER HEIDEL

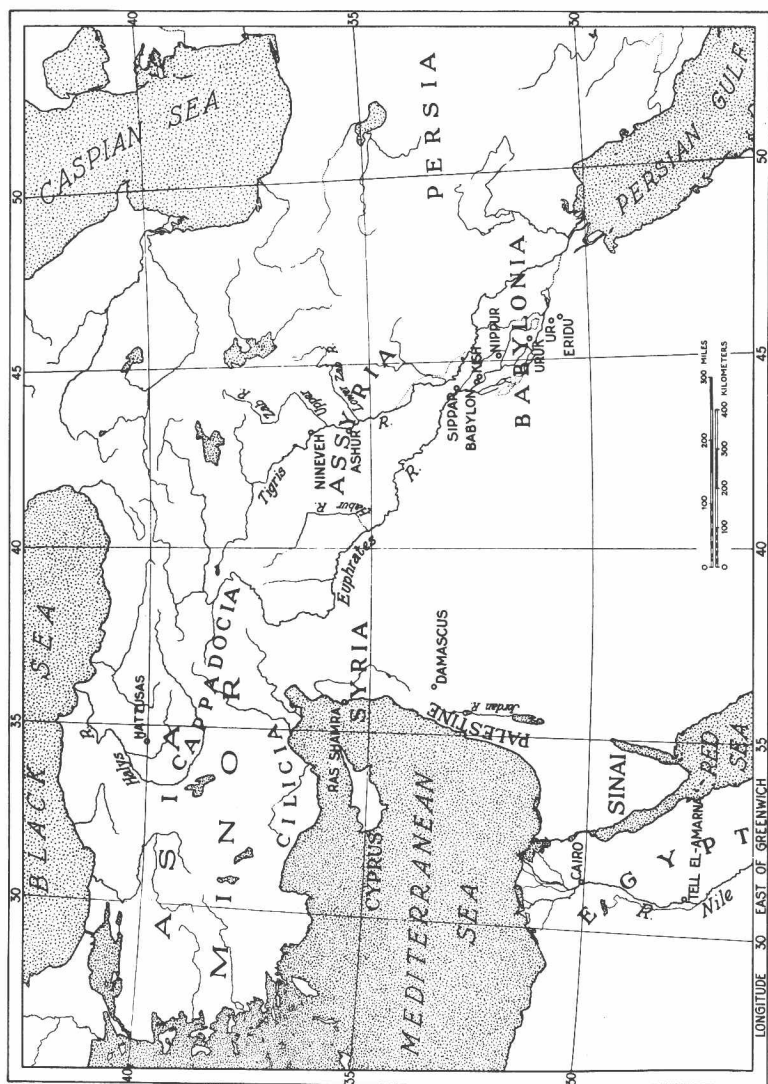
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A map of the ancient Near East



FIG. 1.—The god Marduk



FIG. 2.—A symbolical representation of the god Ashur



FIG. 3.—King Ashurbanipal, from whose library numerous fragments of *Enûma elish* have been recovered, pouring out a libation over four dead lions.

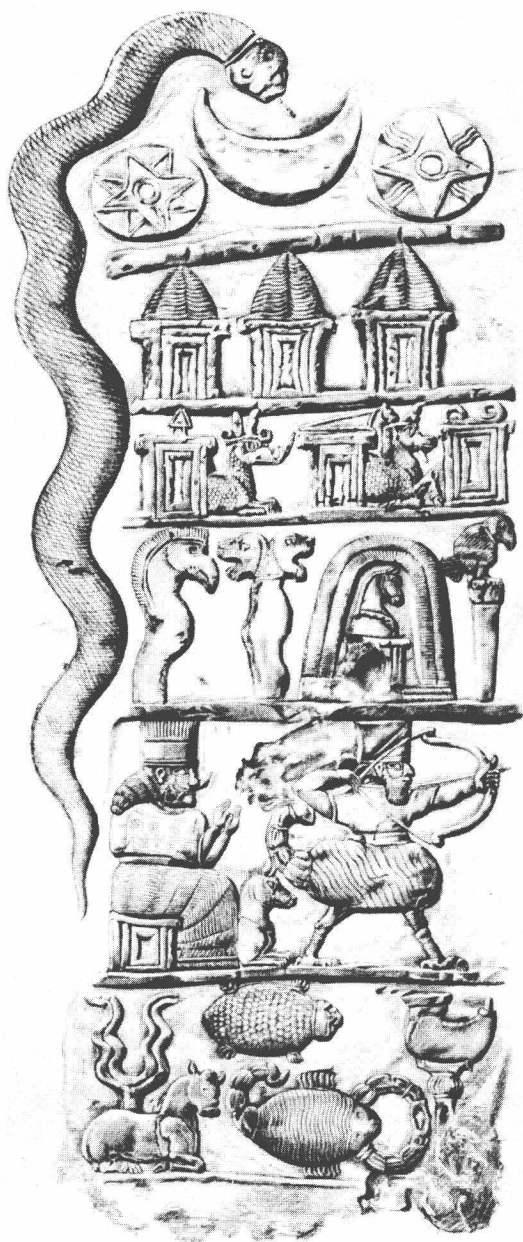


FIG. 4.—A Babylonian boundary stone of the twelfth century B.C., showing a scorpion-man in Register 5 (cf. *Enûma elish*, Tablet I:141).

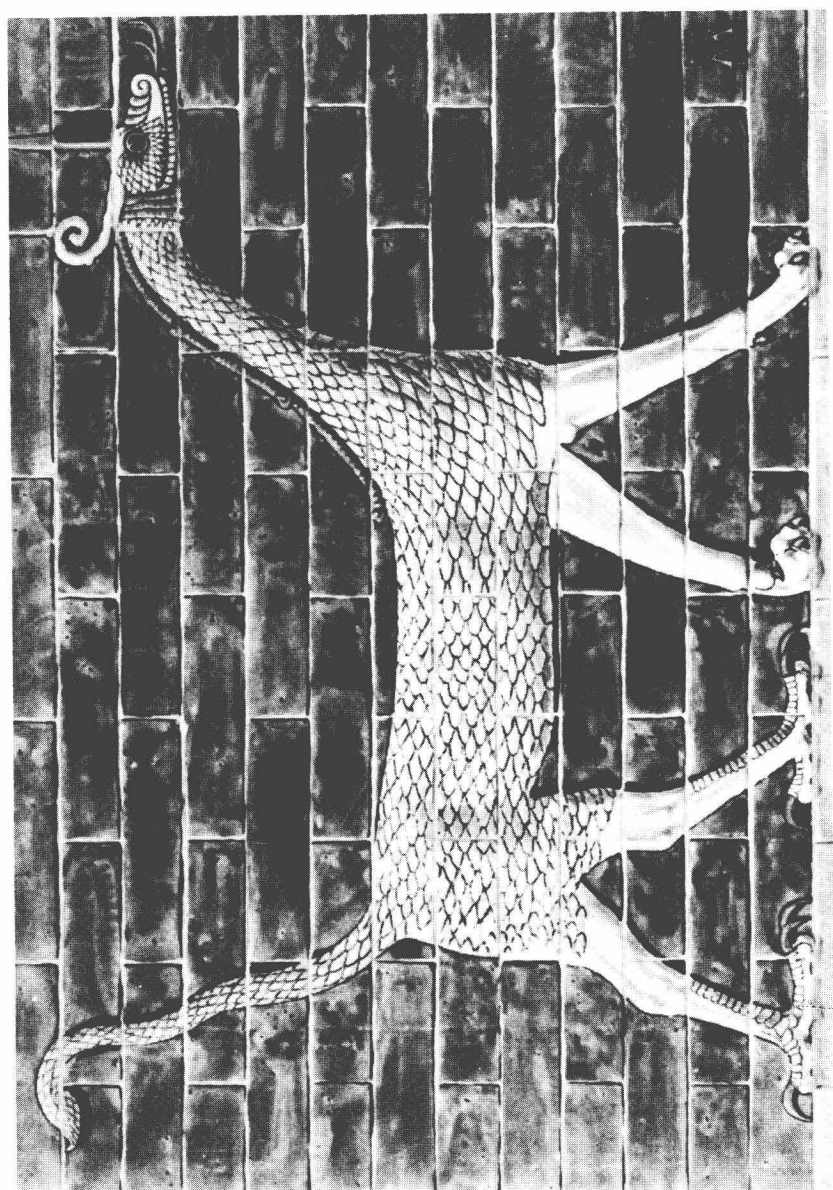


Fig. 5.—A Babylonian dragon

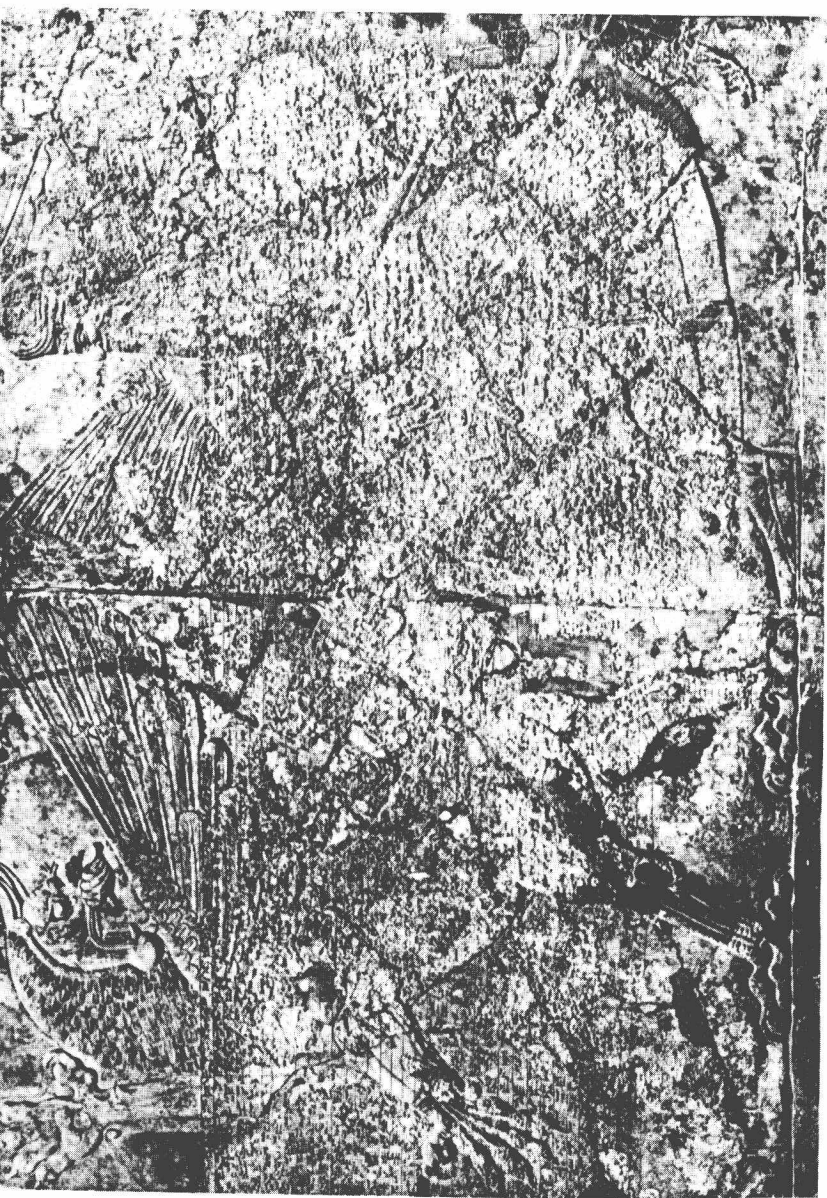


FIG. 6.—Fight between a god and a monster



FIG. 7.—Fight between a god and a monster. This is a drawing based upon the preceding illustration.



FIG. 8.—A seal impression depicting a fight between a god and a dragon

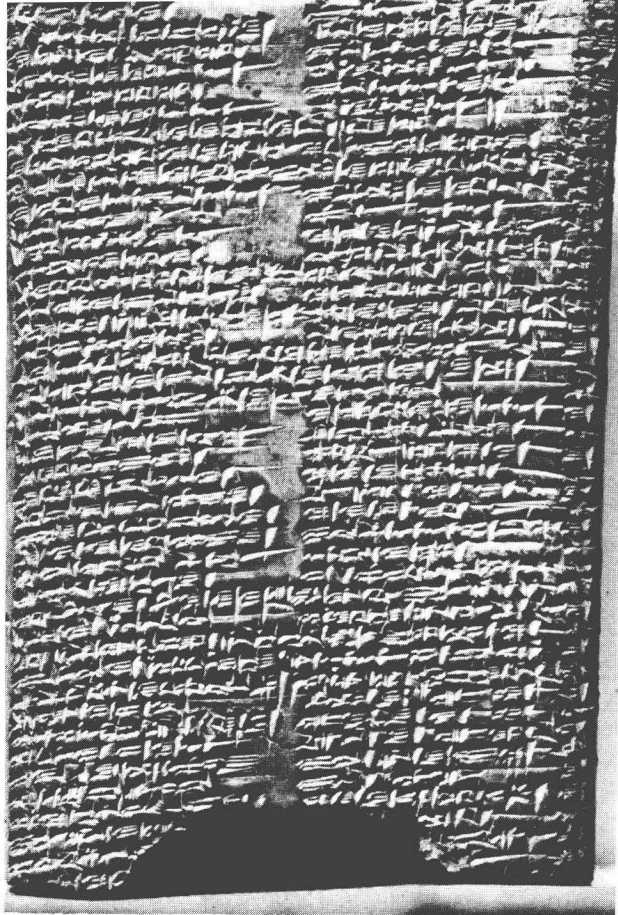


FIG. 9.—Part of the fourth tablet of *Enûma elish*

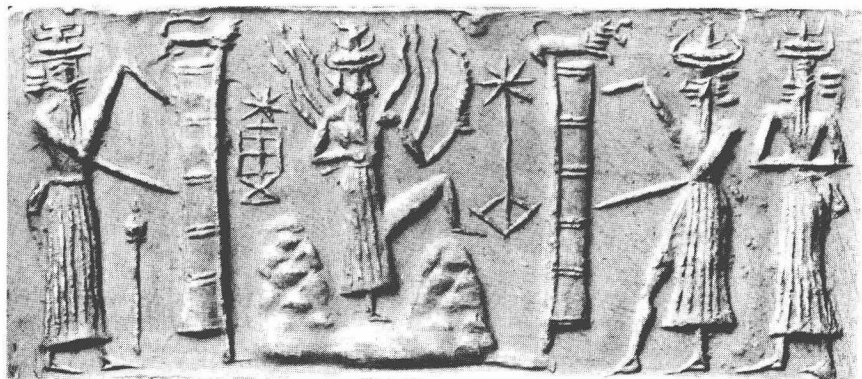


FIG. 10.—The sun-god appearing on the mountainous eastern horizon, with rays issuing from his shoulders and divine attendants opening the two lion-capped portals of the dawn (cf. *Enûma elish*, Tablet V:9 f.).



FIG. 11.—Restoration of the Babylon of Nebuchadrezzar (604–562 B.C.) as seen from the western bank of the Euphrates. In the foreground, opposite the city wall, is the temple complex called Esagila. To the right is the temple of Marduk and to the left the stage-tower of Marduk (cf. *Enûma elish*, Tablet VI: 45–64).

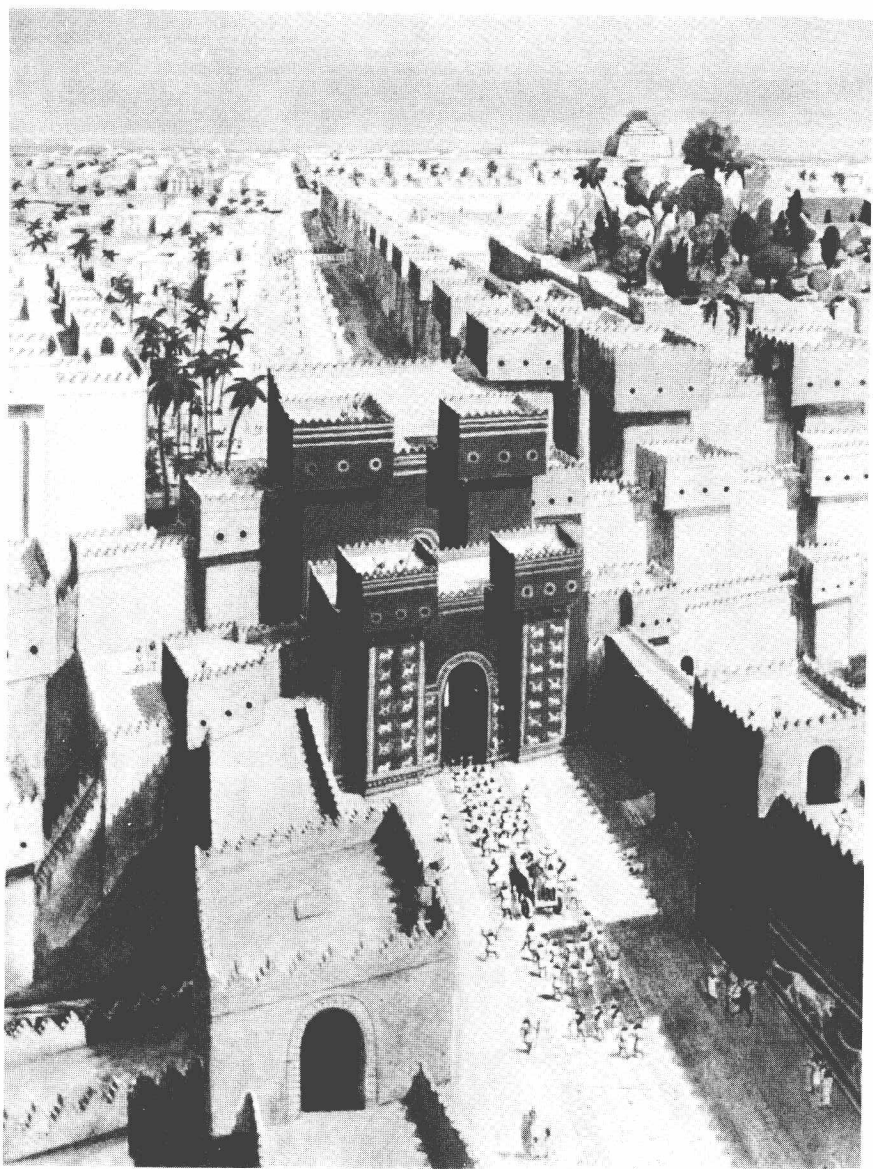


FIG. 12.—Restoration of the Babylon of Nebuchadrezzar as seen from the north end of the Procession Street, leading through the Ishtar Gate (in the foreground). To the right are the so-called "hanging gardens." In the distant background is the tower of Marduk's temple.

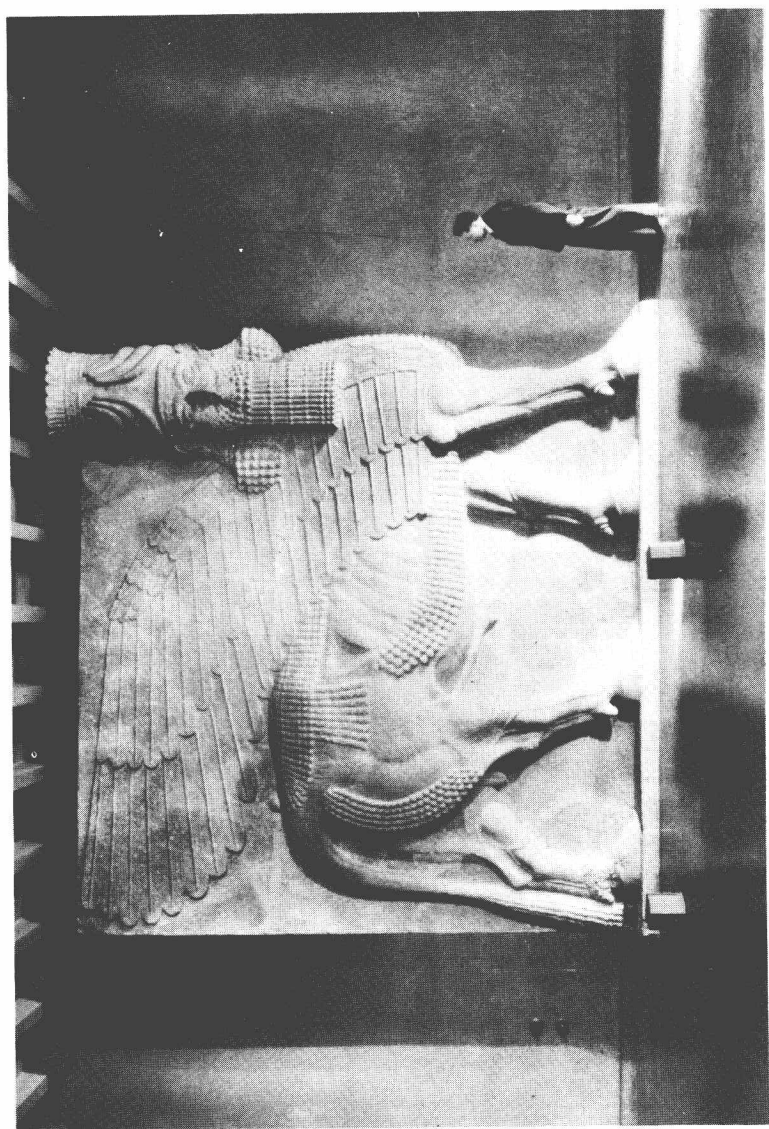


FIG. 13.—A winged human-headed bull from the palace of Sargon of Assyria (721–705 B.C.) Such bulls were symbolical representations of protecting genii (cf. *Enûma elish*, Tablet VI:150) guarding the approaches to palaces and temples. The bull shown on this picture weighs about thirty tons and is now in the exhibition halls of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.