



Mermaids

ECL 305: Literature and the Environment

Spring 2025. Professor Pressman

Day 6: Ancient Origin Myths

ADMIN

- Next week— change in reading
- Class meets in DH Center on Tuesday— STEVE MENTZ visit. Do reading and post questions for extra credit
- I added my own published research on mermaids under new page:
ADDITIONAL READING
- TOOLS and RESOURCES is now digital tools for projects
-

Undergrad in an ECL class?
Drop in for free tutoring from
ECL's Writing Fellow!

DROP-IN WRITING TUTORING

Raine Porath
Office AL 232

Wed. 11:00pm – 2:00pm
Thurs. 2:00pm – 4:00pm

No appointment needed!



Show Steve Mentz reel

Discussion

- What stood out at you in the reading? (Passage/page number)
- What do you want to discuss today?
- What patterns or tropes do you see across these works?

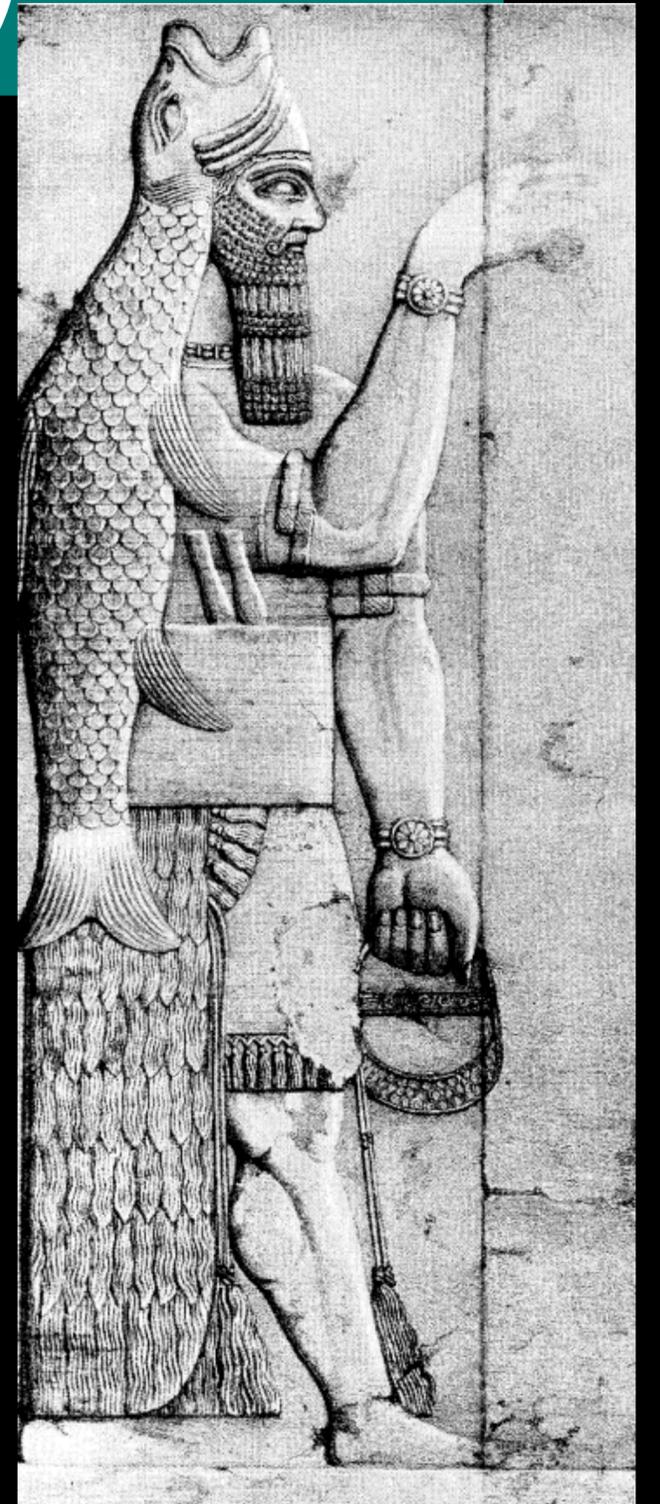
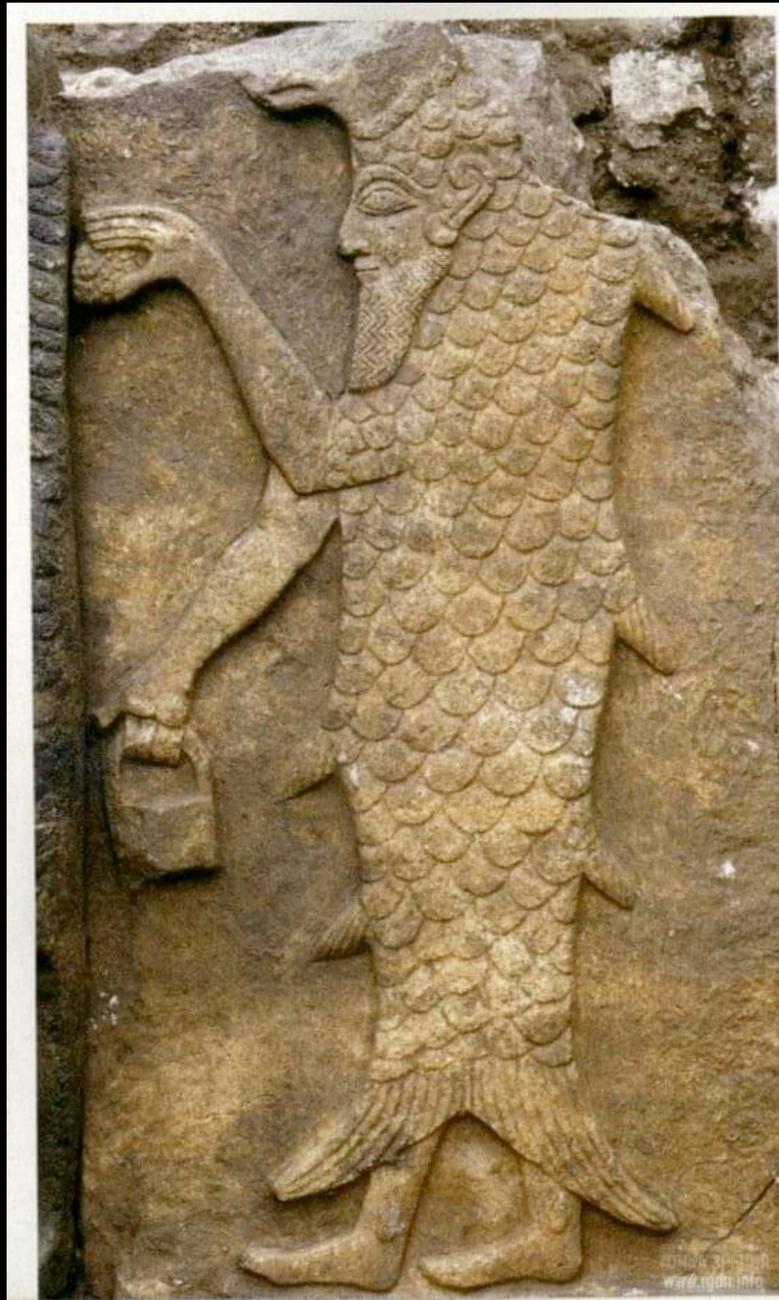
From your blogs- knowledge

- SIERRA: In Babylonian mythology Oannes, whether he be a messenger or a god, was not feared but revered for what he gave humans. He came to the humans and gave them his knowledge without wanting or needing anything in return. Now in Babylonian culture water often symbolized the potential for creation and order, and Oannes is an exemplary folktale of such symbolism. A literal entity that brings the humans of Babylon order and civilization amongst their chaos.

From your blogs- wives

- **ANGIE:** These stories were interesting because of the way they subverted my own notions of water spirits as a female temptress, and discussed how women might be seduced by men. This lesson discussed by polynesian and north american cultures, were important in identifying the options and agency that women had in different cultures. The differences in running away **from** the serpent suitor and defying one's parents (polynesian) communicates the importance in a woman asserting her independence, whereas running away **with** the snake/man hybrid in defiance of one's parent (North American) both end in being rescued by a warrior and settling down with the chosen man, or hero. What interested me while I read through the ancient myths of the mermaid, was that they discussed the expectations of marriage, relationships between men and women, and deception.
- **RICHARD:** I felt that this quote was important because during that time I believe that there may have been fires in the area and they were being carried across the area by the wind in which they were only put out by the raining season. After the snake was defeated the snakes wife had begged for mercy, but what I had found interesting was the description of the wives. In the story they described the snakes wives as "adorned with fetching necklaces, who were beautiful with jangling necklaces" which I felt is a description of a mermaid by their sexuality and how they were described attractive which is usually a main characteristic of a mermaid. It was also interesting as they had adorned the mermaids with man made objects like necklaces and jewelry

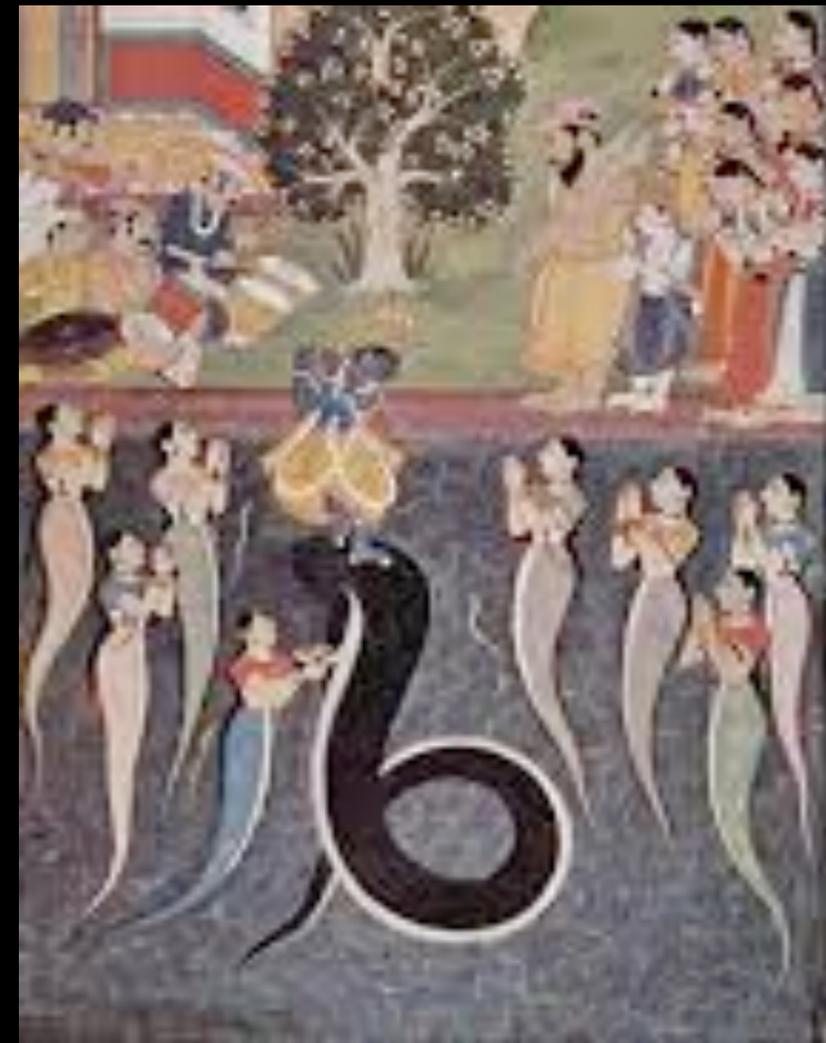
“Oannes” (Babylonia)



“Oannes” (Babylonia)



“Kaliya” (India)



alamy

[The Collection](#) / [Asian Art](#)

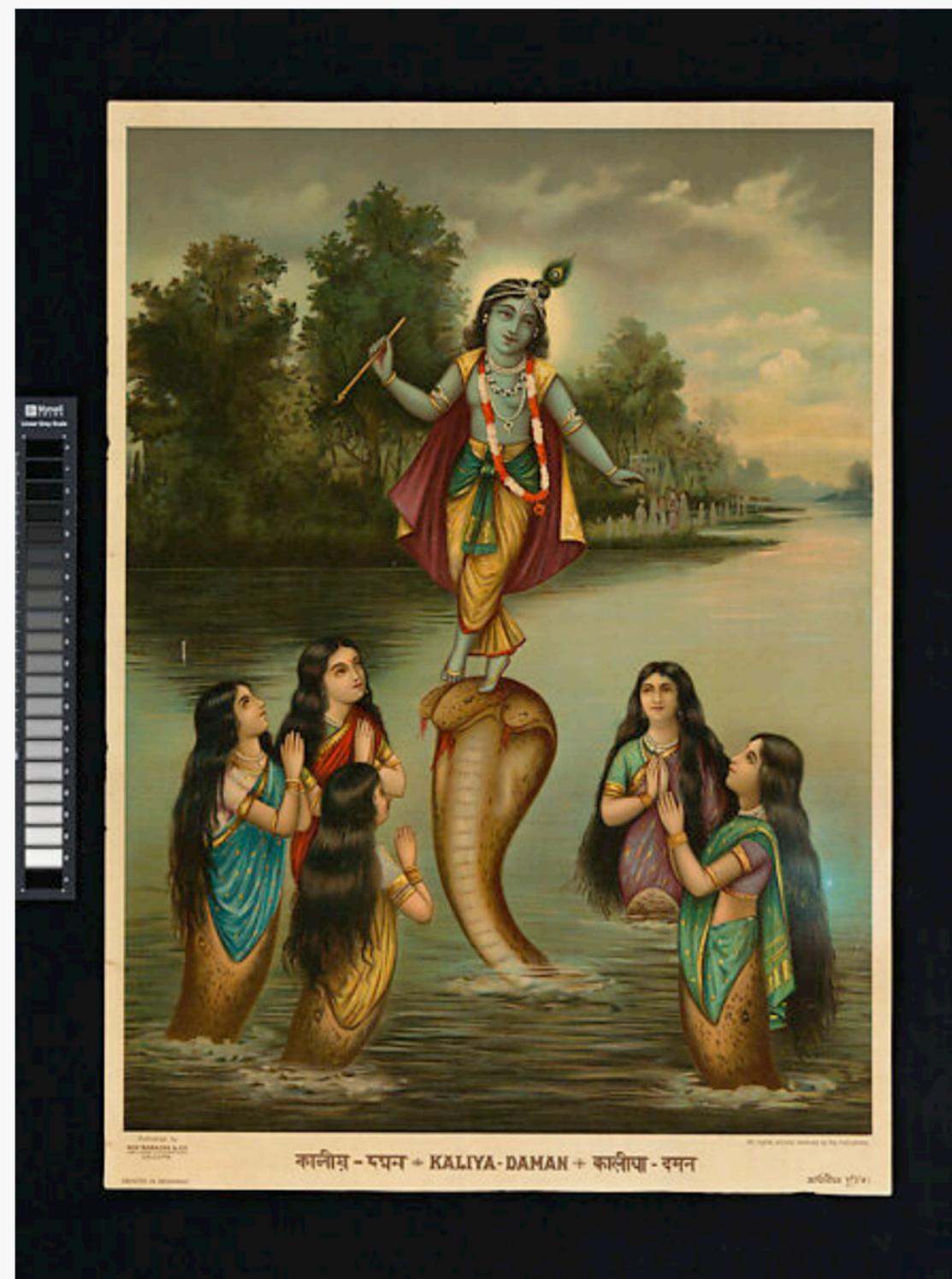
Kaliya Daman

[India](#)

1910s–1920s

 Not on view

Krishna dances on the head of serpent king Kaliya and in this way, defeats him. Kaliya with his fiery poison had been boiling the waters of the Yamuna River, creating a poisonous breeze that was killing everything in its path. Surrounding are Kaliya's wives who hold their hands in anjali mudra and venerate Krishna as they realize that he has liberated their husband from corruption and impurity.



From your blogs — eco-acts

- DION: Human and divine encroachment and reproduction of environments creates the opportunity for Kāliya to take over the pools which invites conflict.

“The Tuna (Eel) of Lake Vaihiria” (Pacific Islands)

From your blogs

- SALINASL A mermaid's lack of agency in a patriarchal sphere brings me to our reading "Sedna" (Inuit). I've actually read this story before for my mythology class, and was absolutely flabbergasted by her father's sudden act of betrayal- especially since he spent so long looking for (who we all thought was) his beloved daughter. This creation story could simply just be a creation story, or it could be deciphered to have many themes. Those themes being betrayal, connection to nature, especially the spiritual connection that the Inuit people had with the sea.

Sedna



Sedna

sculpture of Sedna, Inuit goddess of the sea, Nuuk, Greenland

Captions are provided by our contributors.



Take aways?