

Nusku

I. Introduction. *Mesopotamian god of fire and light.* The oldest evidence of N. (see also STRECK 1998–2001) is found in a personal name from Fara, written *Ur-PA+UŠ*₄. The reading *Nuska* appears in the onomasticon (e.g., DURAND 1987: 14e) and a godlist from Mari (LAMBERT 1985: 182). In the Aramaic alphabet N. is written “NSK” in Babylonia and “N(W)ŠK” in Assyria, Nerab, and Elephantine (MARAQ-TEN 1988: 56, 242f; LIPÍŃSKI 1994: 191f).

In the Neo-Assyrian (9th–7th cent.) incantation ritual Maqlu, N. is addressed as son of →Enlil as well as son of An, but also as “child/pupil of Apsu/Enanki,” which connects him to the wise →Ea (MEIER 1937: I 122–124). In North Syrian Harran, N. is the son of →Sin (BAUER 1972: 36: l. 12). N. acts as vizier of Enlil to convey the words of his father. In the incantation ritual Maqlu, N. is addressed as a night light, guarding the sleeping and protecting them from evil (ABUSCH 1990: 17). He is also the courier of dreams, preventer of nightmares, and protector against sorcery (FOSTER 2005: 717–720).

The worship of N. is evident from the Old Akkadian Period (2350–2120) (WESTENHOLZ 1975: No. 111: l. 6) to the Hellenistic Period (330–30), where he participated in the ritual of the *akitu*-festival (FARBER 1987: 223–227). In Kassite times (1500–1000) his importance was comparable to →Ninurta, →Nergal, and →Ishtar (HÖLSCHNER 1996: 269), and was identified with the Kassite god Shuqamuna (BALKAN 1954: 3, 13, 118ff). The cultic center of N. was Nippur, where he had two temples. There was also a temple to N. inside the temple of →Marduk in Babylon; Untash-Napirisha (1260–1235) dedicated a sanctuary in Choga Zanbil to N. (KÖNIG 1965: 45, 7 III). Another cultic center of N. was Harran, where a temple or a cella existed inside the temple of Sin, which was rebuilt by Assurbanipal (GEORGE 1993: 176). In Neo-Assyrian times Esarhaddon (680–669) restored the temple Esharra in Assur, where N. and Ninurta had a cella next to Assur (BORGER 1956: 5: IV 28–36).

II. Iconography. N.’s iconographic symbols are the →lamp and the →rooster. Two other symbols of N. have been proposed: an Old Babylonian cylinder (BRAUN–HOLZINGER 1996: 339, no. 1066) inscribed with the name of N. depicts a bundle of flames similar to that of the fire god Girra/Gibil, with whom N. has also been identified (MEIER 1937: I 122–134;

MAYER 1976: 386, 406ff; →Lamp § I). Unfortunately this single piece of evidence does not stem from a legal excavation. The meaning of a vertical “stick” placed at the center of an altar, which is depicted on the so-called altar of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243–1207) on which N. is addressed in the inscription as the owner of “the cult platform” (MARZAHN/SALJE 2003: 3,) is controversially discussed (WIGGERMANN 1985–1986: 10; BAHRANI 2003: 185ff). No anthropomorphic depictions of N. have been identified so far.

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