

Animal comedy in Mesopotamia and its impact on spreading the spirit of entertainment and entertainment

(A study in the light of cuneiform texts and artistic scenes)

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Abstract

The study of animal comedies gives the reader a clear idea of the nature of animals in ancient Iraq, and to what extent they can be used and used in the field of entertainment and entertainment. In order to make people happy, and cuneiform texts confirm that kings brought animals from different cities to be used in presenting comedy shows, and the Iraqi man's choice of animals that present comedy shows was based on what these animals possessed of qualities and characteristics that help them to present comedy shows to make people happy.

Keywords: animal comedies, field of entertainment, cuneiform texts.

INTRODUCTION

Studying the entertaining side of animals is one of the interesting and interesting topics, because it sheds light on the progress and sophistication that the Mesopotamian civilization reached. After making use of animals in different aspects of their daily lives, their meat was used for eating, their skins as clothes, and their bones as weapons.

And man in Mesopotamia then began looking to invest animals in other aspects of his daily life, as we presented in this research a vision of how man in Mesopotamia was able to train animals to perform fun comedy shows that attract audiences to them, and most of the animals used in presenting these performances They are the monkeys, because of their sense of humor and high intelligence that made them top the scenes of animal shows.

The public squares constituted a suitable place for these shows, and the comedy animal shows

received a wide echo in ancient Mesopotamia, as the audience went to these shows from all sides, to enjoy themselves and be entertained by the shows that these animals present that enchant minds and rejoice hearts.

The animals that presented these shows received great attention from their trainers, as guards were assigned to guard these animals.

Animal Comedy in Mesopotamia

The people of ancient Mesopotamia, through which they used to entertain themselves, had a variety of colors of entertainment. Through the cuneiform texts and archaeological finds left to us by the ancestors, they indicate the people's knowledge of playing musical instruments and their practice of dancing and singing, as we indicated in the first topic, each This refers to the sophistication and progress of civilization and the level of luxury that the inhabitants of ancient Iraq

reached. In addition, the ancient Iraqi man tended to train animals to dance and play musical instruments to perform performances in front of people, so that the audience would be entertained by the entertainment offered by these animals. Such performances are presented by animals alone or jointly with humans in the artistic aspect of (animal comedy).

The term comedy came from the Greek word *komoidia*, which refers to the carefree, dramatic form. Comedy is based on amusement and fun, and treats happy life events such as love, marriage, and resourcefulness over others.

The people of ancient Iraq had known a type of comedy that distinguished them in the ancient world, which is animal comedy. The question is, how was the nature of man's first relationship with animals? Did man relied in animal comedy shows on a certain type of animal rather than others? And the performances that the animals presented, were they held in public places or in specific arenas?

The Paleolithic man used to live in caves and rock shelters, so the first human relationship with animals was of a utilitarian nature. This relationship was built on the basis of hunting animals for the purpose of securing food and benefiting from the skins of these animals, And in the Neolithic era, man began to live a new experience with animals, familiarize them somewhat and reduce his hostility to them, and this is after getting close to them and taking to know the characteristics and benefits of multiple animals, to begin a new phase of the human-animal relationship based on intimacy, domestication, taming and domestication during The stage of sustenance production.

Animals played an important role in human life with all their pet, predatory, harmful and useful types, and man was trying to control and exploit them as much as possible, so he tried to understand them and study their nature, so he formed several ideas and beliefs about them.

After the process of domestication of animals and achieving self-sufficiency in livestock, the ancient Iraqi man began to take

advantage of animals in the field of entertainment and entertainment, and this can be seen through the illustrated scenes that adorn the facade of the Sumerian harp discovered in the royal cemetery of Ur, dating back to about 2450 BC. See (Fig. 1).



(Fig. 1) *The royal harp, discovered in the Royal Cemetery of Ur, Iraq Museum.*

We see that the images of animals engraved on the harp are a simulation of human behavior and behavior, as a dog appears carrying a table of slaughtered meat and behind it a lion carrying a mug and a large jar, and then a donkey appears playing the harp, while the bear is dancing and there is a jackal moving a musical instrument as He hits the tambourine with the left palm, and after that comes a scorpion man in his hand who wraps it, followed by a deer holding two glasses filled with a large bowl behind him.

These scenes were not arbitrarily documented by the Sumerian artist, perhaps he wanted to interpret these scenes as a representation of a banquet served to the inhabitants of the underworld, and it seems that these animals were providing food and working to entertain and entertain the inhabitants of the underworld.

Especially since there is a reference to the scorpion man who appears on the harp in the epic of Gilgamesh as he guards the way to the underworld, as stated in the epic:

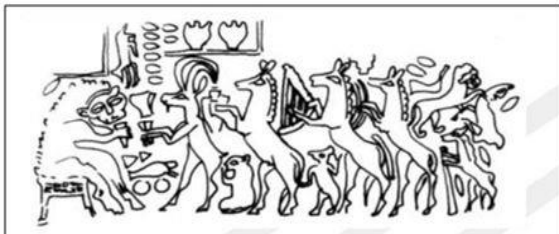
" When he reached the Mashu mountain range,
whose peaks reach the ends of the sky,
And its bases reach the underworld.

scorpions men guarding its door,

They have a frightful dread, and their gaze is death..."

Or perhaps these scenes refer to stories and tales in the style of legends and myths that were known in the past to the inhabitants of ancient Iraq. and cylinder seals.

Where a cylinder seal from the same era in Ur depicts us, a group of animals playing musical instruments, performing acrobatic movements, and serving drinks to a sitting lion, looking at (Fig. 2), perhaps this seal refers to one of the stories that was common when Inhabitants of ancient Iraq.



(Fig. 2) A cylinder seal dating back to the Ur period.

Especially since there are references to the use of animals in the cuneiform texts and their use to spread entertainment and entertainment among people, and among these animals mentioned in the cuneiform texts are the lion, fox, elephant, dog, monkey, horse and others. It was written on the tongue of a monkey to his mother (), and it said:

To my mother Lodi - Lodi,

say: So says Oko_del_bein

Ur the city of joy,

and aredo the city of prosperity,

but I sit behind the door of the great hall of music and eat the junk,

I may not die of it!

I have not tasted bread nor beer Send me a messenger

In a hurry !!.

To further confirm that the mention of animals was common in the cuneiform texts is what was mentioned in the Babylonian literary

texts : "The fox urinated one day in the sea, and after he finished, he thought for a while and said: Look at all this sea from my urine"(), And in another Babylonian text, we read from the side what it said: "The horse whispered in the donkey's ear while he was about to marry her, and he said: "Perhaps you will have a dowry as a quick runner like me, and perhaps he will not be like a donkey suffering from carrying weights".

Through the aforementioned texts, we infer the prevalence of a sense of humor among the inhabitants of ancient Iraq to amuse themselves and entertain them, and also a reference to the use of animals in cuneiform texts, and this may have prompted the ancient Iraqi artist to embody those animal characters on the harp and cylinder seals.

One of the animals that are frequently used in comedy shows to spread a sense of humor and entertain people and entertain them are monkeys, and this leads us to a question, why were monkeys employed in comedy shows without other animals?

The monkey was known in the Sumerian language as (ugu4-bi), and in the Akkadian language it was known as (uqūpu), After researching the characteristics and characteristics of monkeys, it was found that monkeys have a set of characteristics and skills that distinguish them from other animals. The human being was able to diagnose them and employ those skills that monkeys possess in spreading entertainment and entertainment in Mesopotamia, and among those characteristics that the monkey enjoys are: You put pranks for others in order to get something, so they are considered one of the smartest animals, and they are light-hearted and endearing animals to humans, as they are able to provoke laughter and entertainment and play exciting games, and thus they are characterized by the ease of domestication with humans.

Therefore, monkeys were among the beloved animals of the ancient Iraqi man, and he worked on training them to take advantage of them in the field of entertainment and entertainment, and the discovered traces

indicate that, as it was mentioned in a poetic poem glorifying the Akkadian king Naram-Sin (2291-2255 BC) he mentioned monkeys in Public squares where it says:

"Great elephants and apes, animals from distant lands. They crowded the great square (in the capital)".

This explains that the king often needed to rejoice, because he was subjected to a state of personal distress and boredom, through the text there is a reference to the interest of the ancient Iraqi kings in animals, and brought them to their cities, especially those that were not present in the country, to benefit Including in various life magazines, especially in the field of entertainment and entertainment.

And to confirm this is the discovery of a tablet in Ur dating back to the third dynasty of Ur, showing a bearded man with two monkeys, and he holds in his left hand a chain connected to the neck of the two monkeys, one of them on his shoulder and the other sitting in front of him playing a flute, and the man holds in his right hand something introverted. To be another musical instrument, see (Fig. 3).



(Fig. 3) Terracotta panel, Ur III, British Museum.

It seems from the figure of man and monkeys in the above tablet that they do not belong to Mesopotamia, and this figure appears constantly in India, and this indicates the existence of commercial relations with India, especially the trade of monkeys, many of which were sold in order to perform dance shows or play a kind of Musical instruments.

Many models of monkeys appear in the old Babylonian era, and they are depicted in many cases in cylinder seals, pottery plates and artistic scenes in that era, and this also indicates the continuation of trade with India and Africa in order to obtain monkeys. This ancient monkey has a hole from the base that may have been fixed on the columns, and this indicates the spread of monkeys in the Old Babylonian era, look at (Fig. 4).



(Fig. 4) A model of a monkey made of alabaster, the Old Babylonian period.

To confirm more about this, a pottery tablet dating back to the ancient Babylonian era was found. In this tablet, the musicians are dwarves who play musical instruments, and two naked women clasped hands, and also three monkeys appear doing acrobatic movements and performing comedy shows to make people happy, looking at (Fig. 5).



(Fig. 5) A scene on a pottery slab, the Old Babylonian period, the Iraqi Museum

Also, a pottery tablet appears that dates back to the period of King Hammurabi (1793-1751 BC), in which a monkey appears presenting comic events in front of people in the streets and squares of the Babylonian cities, to spread entertainment and entertainment in Babylon, look at (Fig. 6).



(Fig. 6) A pottery slab representing the image of a monkey dating back to the Old Babylonian

All these evidences point to the prevalence of animal comedies in ancient Mesopotamia, the use of animals in acrobatic and musical performances, and the interest of kings in bringing animals from different countries to achieve prosperity. In the introduction to Sharia:

"When Murdoch authorized me to direct the people of the country to the truth and make them have a government, it spread truth and justice in the country and made the people comfortable."

The Assyrian cuneiform texts also confirm the interest of the Assyrian kings in monkeys, and they used to bring them from different countries. This was referred to in a cuneiform text dating back to the modern Assyrian era, where the tribute was mentioned by the Assyrian king Ashur Nasir Pal II (883-859). BC) (), from different countries, which include large and small apes, as stated in the text " The tribute on the seashore was from the inhabitants of Sir, Sidon, Jbeil, Mahalla, Mayza, Kaiza, Amuru, and Arwad, which is an island in the sea, and consisted of gold, silver, tin, copper, copper vessels, and linen clothes, with finely fringed apes, large and small apes, ivory, ebony, and wood, and I accepted their tribute".

This text explains the interest of the ancient Iraqi kings to achieve prosperity for themselves and their people, and the best evidence for this is the military campaigns through which precious money and spoils are

obtained that play an important role in achieving prosperity for the peoples.

The Assyrian inscriptions depicted these events for us, as it appears on the front of the entrance to the throne room in the palace of King Ashur Nasir-e-Bal II, a slab of alabaster carved on it by foreign people, most of whom are captives, carrying gifts to King Ashur-Nasir-Bal II, and among these gifts were monkeys, See (Fig. 7).



(Fig. 7) an alabaster slab adorning the facade of the throne room of King Ashurnasir Pal II

All this confirms the interest of the ancient Iraqi kings in bringing spoils from the various countries they control to their own countries, and benefiting from those resources in various areas of life, including the field of self-entertainment and entertainment, and this was confirmed by King Ashur Nasir Pal II in his military campaigns, through What is mentioned in the cuneiform texts and artistic scenes, is that he received a tribute from different countries, and this tribute included monkeys, which had an

important role in spreading entertainment and entertainment in Assyria.

In the modern Babylonian era, many artistic scenes appear that embody animal comedy, as it appears in a Babylonian cylinder seal, a goat stands between two sitting monkeys, where it can be seen that the two monkeys play an unknown musical instrument that may be a flute, see (Fig. 8).



(Fig. 8) *Cylinder seal from the Neo-Babylonian period, British Museum.*

To emphasize the prevalence of animal comedies and their contribution to spreading the spirit of entertainment and entertainment among the inhabitants of ancient Iraq, it appears in a Babylonian cylinder seal preserved in the National Library in Paris dating back to the modern Babylonian period, a monkey sitting in front of a human and the monkey playing a musical instrument, look at (Fig. 9).



(Fig. 9) *Cylinder seal dating back to the neo-Babylonian era, the National Library in Paris.*

All these indications indicate the interest of the ancient Iraqis in monkeys, and their use in comic shows through their acrobatic movements and dances, as well as their proficiency in playing musical instruments to spread entertainment and entertainment in the country, and there are texts dating back to the Neo-Babylonian era during the period of King Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BC), these texts mention to us the word (pusamiski), which means the guardian of the monkeys, so a person was appointed to guard the monkeys, and this indicates the importance of monkeys to the ancient Iraqis.

Also in the same era, two statues of a monkey made of clay appear to us. In the first of them, the monkey is sitting and carrying a circular thing on his knees. This may indicate the use of the drum by the monkey, as in (Fig. 10a), As for the second monkey, it appears carrying something on its shoulder. This may indicate a type of musical instrument, as in (Fig. 10b).



(Fig. 10) *Two monkeys dating back to the Neo-Babylonian era, British Museum.*

The monkeys in ancient Mesopotamia were used for entertainment, entertainment and spreading joy among people, in addition to other animals that spread joy and joy when viewed by people as in zoos, all of this indicates that the ancient Iraqi society was a developed society and reached the peak of civil life.

Conclusions

- 1- Animals of all kinds played an important role in the amusement of man in Mesopotamia.
- 2- Man in Mesopotamia noticed the distinctive qualities of apes, such as intelligence and wit, so he invested this by employing them in comedic performances.
- 3- Because of the importance of the animals that perform comedy shows, he made them a special guard.
- 4- The people of Mesopotamia were connoisseurs of art, and there was a demand from the public for comedy shows of animals.

Margins and Comments

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