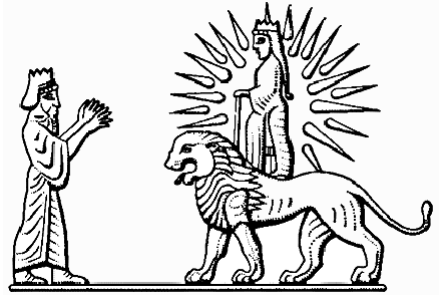


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“The Other and the Enemy in the Mesopotamian Conception of the World”

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BEATE PONGRATZ-LEISTEN Tübingen

The Other and the Enemy in the Mesopotamian Conception of the World*

1. Introduction

With the development of cultural identity, civilizations always not only generate concepts of otherness and foreignness but also cultural techniques to cope with the encounter of the other. One of these cultural techniques is the construction of a specific conception of the world which allocates a well-defined position to the other, the foreigner and the enemy.

Throughout human history the vision of the “Other” as an opponent entity to which a negative value is attached has a long tradition. One has to be aware that the “objective” scholarly look at the Other which developed into the discipline of ethnography is an invention of the nineteenth century. Before, colonial explorers, missionaries, and cosmographers described the manners and customs of foreign people in dependence on their Christian conception of the world, i.e., they were “not experienced as being instances ... of different cultures” but rather as “being manifestations of barbarism and savage degeneracy – a hybrid composite of Christian ‘nature’ and Christian ‘evil.’”¹ As B. McGrane has put forward, in the conception of the world of the sixteenth century “the Other is related to the Chris-

tianity he lacks, the clothes he does not wear, the gold he doesn’t want, the iron he doesn’t have, the written alphabet he doesn’t use.”² Thus, the thought-process standing behind constructing the image of the Other is to be characterized as a “systematic thought-process of inversion.”³

A similar process can be observed in the literary sources of Mesopotamia where over the millennia a very differentiated system of alterity has been developed embracing the antagonisms of

- 1) city vs. countryside
- 2) sedentarism vs. nomadism
- 3) homeland vs. enemy.

While in the Old Babylonian period different text genres still clearly distinguish between these concepts, with the development of the ideological system of the Middle Assyrian kings at the latest, they intermingle in order to formulate the concept of the inner and the outer world.

Albeit C. Zaccagnini introduced the term of ethnography in view of the representation of the enemy in Neo-Assyrian ideology⁴ I would prefer to restrict this term to observations such as the remarks in the annals of Sennacherib referring to the dress-

* I would like to express my gratitude for helpful hints and critical comments from my colleagues, J.S. Cooper, M. Novák, and B. Gruendler.

¹ B. McGrane, *Beyond Anthropology. Society and the Other* (New York 1989) 17.

² McGrane 1989, 10.

³ Ibid.

⁴ C. Zaccagnini, *The Enemy in the Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: the “Ethnographic” Description*, in: H.-J. Nissen/J. Renger (eds.), *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn*, vol.2, 25th RAI Berlin (Berlin 1982) 409-24.

ing of the Elamite dignitaries also quoted by Zaccagnini: "... who wore a golden girdle-dagger, whose wrists are encircled with rings (for attaching the?) slings of reddish gold, like fat steers to which nose-ropes are attached"⁵ or referring to the dressing of the Babylonian dignitaries likewise quoted by Zaccagnini.⁶ All the other remarks concerning the housing of the enemy – "mountains, seas, marshes, desert"⁷ – his way of life or his intelligence are all automatically qualified as the counterpart of Assyrian values. This perspective is not restricted to the Assyrian ideology but has a long tradition in Mesopotamia as will be shown in this study. The focus of research will lie on the conceptualization of the world in the literary production of Mesopotamia, whereby historiography⁸ in the form of royal inscriptions will be treated as a literary genre as well.

In Mesopotamia the literary conception of social and political reality is written from the elite urban vantage point and very often

tends to diverge from historical facts. Historical research has to be aware that this city-oriented language of power creates its own dimensions of meaning⁹ and conceives of "city life as inherently superior to life in the countryside"¹⁰ and in the steppe.

It is very seldom only that a positive picture is given of the regions outside the city as well as of the lifestyle connected with it. It will be shown that the positive picture is bound to certain text genres, and again to specific contexts within the narrative. The focus of the present study will be on the conception of the world in Sumerian and Akkadian literary texts.

But first, some preliminary remarks shall be given:

- 1) on the sociopolitical system of Mesopotamia and the position of marginalized groups;
- 2) on the methodological approach to mythology used in this paper; and
- 3) on cosmology and the conception of the world in Mesopotamia.

2. The sociopolitical system of Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia belongs to those premodern civilizations that can be defined as sociopolitical systems with various inherent forms of alienage.¹¹ This political system involved not only the encounter with external foreigners such as craftsmen and mercenaries imported during war, but also with internal aliens. The latter represent the social phenomenon in which the so-called

fringe groups of a society are marginalized by specific norms.

These norms might be transgressed by a different ethnicity or language, different religious belief-systems, specific professions which were considered dangerous for society, physical defects, criminal acts or a different lifestyle.¹² Concerning their formation and evaluation, fringe groups are

⁵ OIP II, 45, v 85-88.

⁶ Zaccagnini 1982, 414.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 413.

⁸ Th. L. Thompson, *Tradition and History: The Scholarship of John Van Seters*, in: S.L. McKenzie/Th. Römer (eds.), *Rethinking the Foundations. Historiography in the Ancient World and the Bible, Essays ... J. Van Seters*, BZAW 294 (Berlin/New York 2000) 9-21.

⁹ P. Michalowski, *Mental Maps and Ideology: Reflections on Subartu*, in: H. Weiss (ed.), *The Origins of Cities in Dry-Farming Syria and Mesopotamia in the Third*

Millennium B.C. (Guilford 1986) 129.

¹⁰ G. M. Schwartz/S. E. Falconer, *Rural Approaches to Social Complexity*, in: G.M. Schwartz/E. Falconer (eds.), *Archaeological Views from the Countryside. Village Communities in Complex Societies* (Washington/London 1994) 1.

¹¹ M. Schuster, *Einleitung*, in: M. Schuster (ed.), *Begegnung mit dem Fremden. Wertungen und Wirkungen in Hochkulturen vom Altertum bis zur Gegenwart, Colloquium Rauricum*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1996) 3.

¹² H. Klengel, *Soziale Differenzierung und Randgrup-*

not a fixed entity but are subject to historical change.

By marginalizing certain groups a society defines its own identity, which finds its expression also in a specific conception of the world. In fact, it is very difficult to assess the position of marginalized groups in the conceptual world of Mesopotamian society, because these groups enter written tradition for the most part only in moments of political or social crisis.

This also applies to nomadic people who will be the focus of the first part of this study. The letter exchanged between two Yaminite leaders conveying the pastoralist's disdainful view of sedentary life represents a unique document from the opposite perspective and, to my understanding, should be interpreted especially within the context of praising the king as warrior,¹³ just like the passage of the Erra-Myth,¹⁴ also quoted by P. Marelló, the editor of this text:¹⁵

A.1146¹⁶

- 14 *a-ka-lam ša-ta-am ù i-tu-lam ta-[am-ma-ar]*
 15 *ù a-la-kam it-ti-ia ú-ul ta-am-ma-[ar]*
 16 *wa-ša-bu-um ù ša-la-lum ú-ul i-ša-ar-ra-ap-ka*
 17 *a-na-ku šum-ma u, 1-kam i-na é^{tim} at-ta-ša-ab*
 18 *a-di a-na ki-di-im uš!-šú-ma ut-ta-ap-pa-šu*
 19 *na-pí-iš-ti i-iš-šu-úš*
- 14 You look forward to eating, drinking, and sleeping,
 15 but not accompanying me?
 16 Sitting or sleeping will not redden you (from the sun).

- 17 As for me, if I keep myself inside just one day,
 18 until I leave the city walls behind to renew my vigor,
 19 my vitality ebbs away.

Generally, Old Testament narratives as well as narratives from Mesopotamia itself have certainly influenced the Assyriological approach to the phenomenon of nomadism in the Ancient Near East. Furthermore, the impact of Islamic historians should not be disregarded. In the 14th century the social historian Ibn Ḥaldūn specifies the age-old antagonism of urbanism and nomadism in the prolegomena (*muqaddimah*) to his universal history (*kitāb al-'Ibar*):¹⁷ In the chapter entitled "Bedouins can gain control only over flat territory" he explains that "Flat territory, ..., falls victim to their looting and prey to their appetite whenever they can gain power over it, when there is no militia, or when the dynasty is weak. Then they raid, plunder, and attack that territory repeatedly, because it is easily (accessible) to them." And in the next chapter he continues: "The reason for this is that the Bedouins are a savage nation, fully accustomed to savagery and nature. They enjoy it, because it means freedom from authority and no subservience to leadership. Such a natural disposition is the negation and antithesis of civilization." According to the evolutionistic model of Ibn Ḥaldūn the primitive social organizations of chiefdoms preceded the urban form of sedentarism, and urbanism (*tamaddun*) is the precondition for civilization. *Madīna*, of which *ta-*

pen der Gesellschaft im Alten Orient, in: V. Haas (ed.), *Aussenseiter und Randgruppen. Beiträge zu einer Sozialgeschichte des Alten Orients*, Konstanzer althistorische Vorträge und Forschungen 32 (Konstanz 1992) 15f.

¹³ The speech of Šamši-Adad I reflects just the contrary image of the king as does for example the Cuthean Legend recommending to the king to stay at home.

¹⁴ See below page 221.

¹⁵ For another interpretation see M. Streck, *Das amur-*

ritische Onomastikon der altbabylonischen Zeit (Münster 2000) 74.

¹⁶ P. Marelló, *Vie nomade*, in: J.-M. Durand (ed.), *Florilegium Marianum: Recueil d'études en l'honneur de Michel Fleury* (Paris 1992) 115-25, English translation taken from CANE 1 (New York 1995) 251.

¹⁷ F. Rosenthal, *Ibn Khaldun's al-Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History* (New York 1967).

maddun represents a derivation, was the place of religious activity and jurisdiction and thus formed a fixed entity within the nomadic lifestyle. In the end Ibn Ḥaldūn clearly draws a positive picture of the bedouins because as a social group they are the only one to be in possession of the *‘aṣabīya*, to be translated as “solidarity of the clan or tribe,” which, in his opinion, forms the essential basis of the military and social force of the bedouins. It is just this *‘aṣabīya* which sedentary and civilized people lose by becoming more and more degenerate. Thus, the process of sedentarism always implies the beginning of a decadence, which, does of course not exclude cultural achievements.¹⁸ This positive perspective goes hand in hand with the view of the Arabian grammaticians who describe the pre-Islamic nomads as being the guardians of pure Arabian and linguistic correctness.¹⁹

Comparable to the model of Ibn Ḥaldūn, J. Wellhausen proclaimed the gradual progression from nomadism to agricultural society to urbanism.²⁰ In the history of Assyriology the three-stage-conception of Julius Wellhausen was determinative for quite a long time.

Far-reaching changes have been brought about by the discovery of the Mari archives on the Middle Euphrates, located at the modern frontier between Syria and Iraq. Since the discovery in the 1930s numerous

text editions have been published showing a very differentiated picture of the interdependence between nomadic and sedentary peoples. In addition to scholars in Old Testament Studies and Anthropology, scholars of the Ancient Near East have also developed new models of such interdependence,²¹ reaching from the model of invasion to the model of infiltration, to the differentiated model of a dimorphic society which – as put forward by M.B. Rowton – can embrace “enclosed nomadism” as part of its urbanism and reserves “excluded nomadism”²² for its regions of steppe and desert. M. Liverani redefined “dimorphic society” as “one partly nomadic and partly sedentary.”²³ The correspondence of the Mari archives proves that brigandage was basically a symptom of the lack of access to economic resources, caused by drought, for example,²⁴ rather than a natural inclination of the nomad.

Recently G. Schwartz has treated the “symbiotic, mutually dependent relationship between pastoralists and sedentists” of which the most important aspect was the exchange of goods: “pastoralists provided animal products to the sedentists and received agricultural or craft products in return. Other manifestations of nomadic-sedentary interaction included pastoralists hiring themselves out as shepherds for the sedentists’ herds and nomadic pastoralists grazing their herds on the stubble of seden-

¹⁸ M. Novák, *Herrschaftsform und Stadtbaukunst. Programmatik im mesopotamischen Residenzstadtbau von Agade bis Surra manra‘ā* (Saarbrücken 1999) 44.

¹⁹ M. Zwettler, *The Oral Tradition of Classical Arabic Poetry* (Columbus 1978); K. Versteegh, *The Arabic Language* (Edinburgh 1997) 37ff.

²⁰ J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte Israels* (Berlin 1927).

²¹ On the different models see G. Buccellati, “River Bank,” “High Country,” and “Pasture Land”: The Growth of Nomadism on the Middle Euphrates and the Khabur, in: S. Eichler/M. Wäfler/D. Warburton (eds.), *Tall al-*

Hamidiya 2 (Freiburg, Schweiz/Göttingen 1990) 100f.

²² M.B. Rowton, *Enclosed Nomadism*, *JESHO* 17 (1974) 1-30; ders., *Dimorphic Structure and Topology*, *OA* 15 (1976) 17-31; ders., *Dimorphic Structure and the Tribal Elite*, in: FS J. Henninger, *Studia Instituti Anthropos* 28 (St. Augustin 1976); P. Talon, *Les nomades et le royaume de Mari*, *Akkadica* 48 (1986) 1-9.

²³ M. Liverani, “Half Nomads” on the Middle Euphrates and the Concept of Dimorphic Society, *AoF* 24 (1997) 45.

²⁴ J.-M. Durand, *Documents Épistolaires du Palais de Mari, II* (Paris 1998) 471.

tists' fallow fields and, in so doing, providing animal dung as fertilizer."²⁵ He also emphasized the interchange of modes of life of pastoralists and agriculturalists.²⁶

Besides written records of the sedentists we are "constrained to rely on relatively scanty archaeological remains, and comparative data from ethnographic studies of modern-day pastoralists."²⁷ First of all, it is very important to emphasize that the sociological model of the foreigner and alien cannot be easily applied to the nomads of the Ancient Near East, because their areas of living embrace both the mountain ranges as well as the Syrian steppes and northern Arabian deserts, areas in which the political control was constantly submitted to change. Second, a certain fluidity can be observed between nomadic and sedentary lifestyles, as can be shown by tribal designations from the Mari archives applied to nomadic pastoralists as well as sometimes to agriculturalists and urban dwellers. Moreover, climatic and environmental disasters or the building of canal systems in regions which were originally devoted to pastoralism²⁸ could bring about the breakdown of the agricultural society and cause larger migrations. Or, inversely, very poor nomads, "who had too few animals to support themselves, had to seek opportunities among the sedentists, and the wealthiest pastoralists invested in land among the sedentists and settled down in order to administer it."²⁹

The text genres delivering information

concerning the nomads comprise a large variety, as for example epistolary literature, economic and administrative texts, fictional and historiographic texts, lexical lists, and mythical narratives.

Whereas several studies have been dedicated to the socio-political organisation of various nomadic groups, their origin and diffusion throughout the Ancient Near East, in-depth research on the position of nomads within its particular conception of the world, that is, its social construction of reality, is lacking until now. J.S. Cooper,³⁰ M. Liverani³¹ and J. Klein³² have collected all of the epithets or metaphors used in the literary texts to describe nomadism in contrast to urbanism, but in my opinion further research is still needed.

Hence, the focus of the first part of this study will be on the different modes of literarisation dealing with the relationship between sedentists and pastoralists, as well as nomadic and urban lifestyles. The following questions will be discussed in more detail:

- Which text genre raises the issue of pastoralists and sedentists as well as nomadic people?
- In which way does a specific text genre treat these different groups?
- What is the function of the specific text and why does it convey a specific conception of nomadic life, in other words, what are the contextual and historical circumstances of a text?³³

²⁵ Schwartz 1995, 250 n.5.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ G.M. Schwartz, Pastoral Nomadism in Ancient Western Asia, in: J.M. Sasson, *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 1 (New York 1995) 249.

²⁸ The phenomenon may be observed in the Mari-period, see. E. Kirsch/P. Larsen, *Das Verhältnis zwischen Seßhaften und Nichtseßhaften in Mesopotamien am Ende des 3. und zu Beginn des 2. Jt. v.Chr.*, in: K. Bartl/R. Bernbeck/M. Heinz (eds.), *Zwischen Euphrat und Indus* (Hildesheim 1995) 155f.

²⁹ Schwartz 1995, 255.

³⁰ J.S. Cooper, *The Curse of Agade* (Baltimore/London 1983) 30ff.

³¹ M. Liverani, *Storia del Antico Oriente* (Roma/Bari 1988) 263ff., 295ff.

³² J. Klein, *The Marriage of Martu: The Urbanization of "Barbaric" Nomads*, in: M. Malul (ed.), *Mutual Influences of Peoples and Cultures in the Ancient Near East*, *Michanim 9* (The Reuben and Hedith Hecht Museum, University of Haifa 1996) 83-96.

³³ For the importance of contextuality see J. Black, *Reading Sumerian Poetry* (London 1998) 46.

The information the different text genres provide cannot be easily related to historical reality. Historiographic texts, especially, are not only connected to a specific cultural context but are part of a long tradition to which they refer by means of intertextuality. The phenomenon of intertex-

tuality, specifically in the Ancient Near East, has a major impact because every text from the past may be a paradigmatic point of reference for later texts.³⁴ And it is here that the mythologization of the perception of the world comes into play.

3. Mythology and Methodology

The number of definitions of “myth” in its modern usage is overwhelming and goes back to the German scholar Christian Gottlob Heyne and his work on the Bibliothek of Apollodorus,³⁵ who established the term *mythus* as explanation of the world and remembrance of history in contrast to *fabula*. The term myth as we use it today is not the continuation of an ancient tradition, contrasting it polemically to philosophy, but an artificial construction, an invention of modern scholarly discourse.³⁶ The detailed overviews of the history of research regarding the interpretation of the term “myth,” its meaning, function, and structure, W. Burkert and many other scholars have given, are well known.³⁷

Despite the danger of repeating what might be common knowledge I would like to present my own understanding of the term “myth” as I use it as an assyriologist working on texts from the Ancient Near East. In addition to the functional aspect of myth propagated by W. Burkert, who dif-

ferentiates between genealogical myths, ritual myths with aetiological function, foundation myths and peregrination myths, I would like to emphasize with Jan Bremmer that myth is not the authoritative and unchangeable version of a narrative as framed by a genre but – as also put forward by Fritz Graf³⁸ – a traditional narrative with a binding character for a specific group, which may also be formulated in a written or oral text. Μυθος is submitted to the censorship of the collective, in its flexibility it may be assimilated to the respective needs of a social group. Μυθος as the remembered structure of a unity of actions, transcends the respective single text – it is the matter of the narrative (“Stoff der Erzählung”).³⁹

In its abbreviated form it can find its expression in the mythologization of space, that is the denotation of space by artificial signs and codes, realized for example in the Sumerian celebration names of the temple in Mesopotamia⁴⁰ or in the language of political geography as pinpointed by P. Micha-

³⁴ B. Pongratz-Leisten, “Öffne den Tafelbehälter und lies ...” Neue Ansätze zum Verständnis des Literaturkonzeptes in Mesopotamien, WO 30 (1999) 90.

³⁵ F. Graf, Die Entstehung des Mythosbegriffs bei Christian Gottlob Heyne, in: F. Graf (ed.), Mythos in mythenloser Gesellschaft, Colloquium Rauricum Bd. 3 (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1993) 284-94.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ W. Burkert, Mythos – Begriff, Struktur, Funktionen, in: F. Graf (ed.), Mythos in mythenloser Gesellschaft, Colloquium Rauricum Bd. 3 (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1993) 9-24; *idem*, Antiker Mythos – Begriff und Funktion, in:

H. Hofmann (ed.), Antike Mythen in der europäischen Tradition (Tübingen 1999) 11-25; F. Graf, Religion und Mythologie im Zusammenhang mit Homer, in: J. Latacz (ed.), Zweihundert Jahre Homerforschung, Colloquium Rauricum Bd. 2 (Stuttgart/Leipzig 1991) 333-62.

³⁸ F. Graf 1991, 355.

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ B. Pongratz-Leisten, *Ina šulmi irub*. Die kulttopographische und ideologische Programmatik der *akitu*-Prozession in Babylonien und Assyrien im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr. (Mainz 1994) 13ff.

lowski.⁴¹ Mythologization of space is the expression of a mental map, i.e., the definition of the perception, interpretation and evaluation of the real geographical environment. Mythologization, of course, is not restricted to space but embraces the people living in it, too. Thus, in texts from Mesopotamia we can find that ethnical-geographical terms such as “Gutium” or “Ummannanda” which once denoted very specific hostile mountain regions are used in later historiographic texts to denote an enemy,⁴² even though these entities did not exist anymore,⁴³ or to circumscribe approxi-

mately the same geographical region, that embraced other ethnical groups.⁴⁴ A conclusive example is offered by a Late Babylonian lament for Dumuzi where the destruction of cities of Sumer and Akkad is laid into the hand of the Gutians, two thousand years after their historical incursions into Mesopotamia.⁴⁵ Mythologization of the enemy can take different forms in different text genres as will be shown in this paper.

Hence, beside the functional equivalents we have to look for the central models, ideas and concepts of mythology.⁴⁶

4. Conception of the world and cosmology

In the history of religion a conception of the world is always dependent on the development of specific geographical, astronomical and ethnographical knowledge. And what is more, looking at the texts from Ancient Mesopotamia we are confronted with the problem of the regionalization of religion within the polytheistic system.⁴⁷ Thus, there is not one cosmology, but there are different cosmologies in different local shapes. “Myth establishes people, places and things. More than that, it identifies them and gives them some sort of conceptual place, by associations or by contrasts.”⁴⁸

Whereas the realm of power for a city-god can only be universalized in dependence on the political rulership of a city, it is

very easy to postulate an unlimited realm of power for a sun-god. Dario Sabbatucci defines this process in polytheism as “cosmisation,”⁴⁹ a process which, mediated by the king, attributes the categories of unlimited duration and unlimited claim to power also to the state. Hence, cosmology is an authoritative system, it legitimates the social organisation and its hierarchy.⁵⁰

Very often cosmogonies are formulated as theogonies: the origin of the world is conceived as the birth of the gods. This concept is common to the cultural system of Ancient Mesopotamia as well as to Greek mythology.

My approach will not be concerned with the mythologization of the origin of the

⁴¹ See above n. 9.

⁴² Thus the letter SAA X 100 obv. 27 applies the term Ummannanda to the Cimmerians.

⁴³ In the report on his eighth campaign Sargon II uses the ethnical term Gutium in order to describe the geographical region of the Mannans.

⁴⁴ In the *Erra Epic* IV 133 besides Lullubu the term Gutium is used for denoting the hostile mountain nomads to the northeast of Babylonia.

⁴⁵ PSBA 23 (1901), after p. 192; W.G. Lambert, *JAOS* 103 (1983) 211-215; B. Foster, *Before the Muses*, vol. 2 (Bethesda 1993) 838-839; W.H. Hallo (ed.), *The Context*

of Scripture I (Leiden/New York/Köln 1997) 419f.

⁴⁶ B. Gladigow refers to religion in general, B. Gladigow, *Welche Welt passt zu welchen Religionen?. Zur Konkurrenz von ‘religiösen Weltbildern’ und ‘säkularen Religionen,’* in: D. Zeller (Hrsg.), *Religion im Wandel der Kosmologien* (Frankfurt et al. 1999) 14.

⁴⁷ B. Gladigow, *Polytheismus*, *ZfR* 5 (1997) 59-77.

⁴⁸ K. Dowden, *The Uses of Greek Mythology* (London/New York 1992) 74.

⁴⁹ D. Sabbatucci, *La prospettiva storico-religiosa* (Milano 1990) 159ff.

⁵⁰ Gladigow 1999, 18.

world as conceptualized in cosmogonies, but will focus on the very specific aspect of the conceptualization of what we would call “Gegenwelten” in German, i.e., the counterparts to the cosmic order within a particular culture. I would like to introduce the concept of “Gegenwelten” because it will allow for a differentiation between concepts of antagonism⁵¹ and concepts of ambivalence.

Gilgamesh and Agga of Kish, 30-35:⁵²

30 unug^{ki} giš-kin-ti-dingir-re-e-ne-ke,
 31 é-an-na é an-ta e₁₁-dè
 32 dingir-gal-gal-e-ne me-dím-bi ba-an-ak-eš-àm
 33 bàd-gal muru, ki-ús-sa-a-ba
 34 ki-tuš-maḥ an-né gar-ra-a-ba
 35 sag mu-e-si za-e lugal-ur-sag-me-en

In the Mesopotamian conception of the world, creation signifies the introduction of civilization, a message which is mainly conveyed by the text genre of the Sumerian Disputations⁵³ – mythical narratives, as well as hymns.

Thus in the *Song of the Hoe*⁵⁴ or in the *Praise of Nippur and the Ekur*⁵⁵ mankind, immediately after being created, gets the hoe in order to start building work on canals, cities and temples. As has been pinpointed by G. Pettinato,⁵⁶ creation of man and his designation to work are motives, which are closely interconnected in Mesopotamian literature. While most of the cosmological narratives in the different text genres focus on the human task to build cities and temples, the cosmological introduction of the *Disputation between Ewe and Wheat*⁵⁷ emphasizes the essential elements

In the Ancient Near East all the symbols of the cosmic order and the elements of civilization are focussed on the city. And everything outside the city-walls belongs to the region of ambivalence and antagonism. In Mesopotamian mythology the origin of the city goes back to the initiative of the gods. Thus it is told in:

Uruk, the god's handiwork,
 And Eanna, a house come down from heaven,
 Whose parts were fashioned by the great gods
 Its great wall, a cloud standing on the ground,
 The august abode established by An is
 entrusted to you! You are the king and warrior!

of civilization in Mesopotamia, the ewe and the wheat, representing animal husbandry and agriculture. This disputation has a clearly evolutionary conception of creation: The god An spawns the gods who in their turn create mankind. The latter first of all did not know to eat bread, neither to wear cloth, but instead went about in the land with naked limbs eating grass with their mouths like sheep, and drinking water from the ditches. The gods who live on the pure mound then decide to fashion Ewe and Wheat and to send them down to mankind for their sustenance. Here, sheep and agriculture came into being simultaneously, a picture very close to historical reality. The picture of the uncivilized man is again embodied by Enkidu in the Gilgamesh-Epic, which adopts the motives of the Disputation between Ewe and Wheat enriching them by the informa-

⁵¹ See H.-P. Hasenfratz, Iran: Antagonismus als Universalprinzip, *Saeculum* 34 (1983) 235-47.

⁵² D. Katz, *Gilgamesh and Akka* (Groningen 1993) 40.

⁵³ H.L.J. Vanstiphout, Lore, Learning and Levity in the Sumerian Disputations, in: G.J. Reinink/H.L.J. Vanstiphout (eds.), *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East* (Leuven 1991) 23-57.

⁵⁴ H. de Genouillac, *Textes religieux sumériens du Louvre* 2, *TCL* 16:72; for a recent translation see G. Farber, in: W.W. Hallo (ed.), *The Context of Scripture I*

(Leiden/New York/Köln 1997) 511ff with literature.

⁵⁵ UET VI 118 iv 19-30, see A. Falkenstein, *AS* 16, 132 with note 69; G. Pettinato, *Das altorientalische Menschenbild und die sumerischen und akkadischen Schöpfungsmythen* (Heidelberg 1971) 23.

⁵⁶ Pettinato 1971, 34.

⁵⁷ B. Alster/H.L.J. Vanstiphout, *Lahar and Ashnan. Presentation and Analysis of a Sumerian Disputation*, *ASJ* 9 (1987) 1-43.

tion that Enkidu is at home in the kur/*šadû*, which denotes the mountain region as well

Gilg. II 34-40

- 34 *mìn-de-e-ma a-lid ina šá-di-i*
 35 *ki-ma ki-šir šá^aa-nu dun-nu-ma e-mu-*
 [qa]-a-šú
 36 *a-ka-lu iš-ku-nu ma-ḥar-šu*
 37 *ši-ka-ri iš-ku-nu ma-ḥar-šú*
 38 *ul i-kul a-kal^{d+}EN.KI.DÙ ip-te-eq i-dag-gal*

 39 *[ul i-di^{d+}EN.KI.DÙ a-kal a-ka]-la*
 40 *[ši-ka-ra šá-ta-a ul i]-di*

Enkidu is presented as a “wild” man from the mountain region, and probably is meant to represent an earlier stage of civilization in Mesopotamia previous to the development of the irrigation system, when the population was still concentrated in the rainy zones of the fertile crescent.

All the above mentioned text genres – the Gilgamesh-Epic as well as the debate poems *Disputation between Ewe and Wheat* and *Hoe versus Plough*,⁵⁸ and the hymns – depict the evolution of mankind up to the stage of civilization. Furthermore, they teach us that the Mesopotamian urbanistic conception of the world was not a simple antagonistic one but a system of graduated distances in which agriculture and animal husbandry or agriculture and building activity are presented as “opposites but together make a greater whole.”⁵⁹

These texts show that the conception of the world in Mesopotamia was of an anthropocentric and urbanistic character and shaped by the idea of the perfectibility of

Nippur Lament:⁶³

1 *tùr me nun-e ba-dù-a-bi*

as the steppe.

Maybe, (this is Enkidu), born in the mountains, His strength is powerful like the meteor of Anu.

They put bread before him,

They put beer before him,

(but) Enkidu did not eat the bread, he

narrowed (his eyes) and gazed (at it),

Not did Enkidu know (how) to eat bread,

Not did he know (how) to drink beer.

nature,⁶⁰ that is, the idea of technological intervention using resources like irrigation systems, animal husbandry and agriculture, and by the idea of social accomplishments. The Mesopotamian cosmologies produce a model of culture which considers the defence against hostile nature by city-dwellers to be among the permanent achievements of civilization.⁶¹ Outside the city and its closer agrarian environment the realm of nature represented by the steppe escapes to direct control, and merchants as well as soldiers pass it only when necessary. This is why at least in the region of the Middle Euphrates – according to G. Buccellati – “the herds were not handled by the state but by the tribal elements, who alone knew how to exploit the farther recesses of the steppe.”⁶²

One of the most compelling examples for the awareness of the fact that animal husbandry is necessary for the sustenance of the city is the metaphor used for the city of Nippur at the beginning of the Nippur Lament which says in its first line:

After the cattle-pen had been built for the foremost rituals- ...

⁵⁸ H. Vanstiphout, On the Sumerian Disputation between the Hoe and the Plough, *AuOr* 2 (1984) 239-51; for a recent translation see Vanstiphout, in: Hallo, *Context of Scripture*, 578ff.

⁵⁹ Vanstiphout 1991, 27.

⁶⁰ Metzler *Lexikon Religion*, ed. by Chr. Auffarth/Jutta

Bernard/H. Mohr (Stuttgart 1999) 539 s.v. *Natur/Umwelt* (B. Gladigow).

⁶¹ Gladigow *ibid.*

⁶² Buccellati 1990, 103.

⁶³ S. Tinney, *The Nippur Lament. Royal Rhetoric and Divine Legitimation in the Reign of Išme-Dagan of Isin*

The Sumerian term *tùr* “cattle-pen” for the city of Nippur as well as the Akkadian term *Uruk supūri* in the Gilgamesh-Epic, for example, express the complexity of Mesopotamian society which is characterized by the interdependency of city and countryside. Animal husbandry is a feature of sedentary culture. However, under specific circumstances, as for example climatic or environmental conditions, it may turn into nomadism, too. In contrast, the me’s or rituals are essential for the functioning of civilization.⁶⁴

As S. Tinney has pointed out, the term *tùr* frequently occurs in city laments, in liturgical literature and in Dumuzi-Inanna literature.⁶⁵ In *Dumuzi’s Dream*⁶⁶ *tùr* is used as a symbol of Dumuzi’s destruction at the hands of the gala-demons.

The more or less fragmentary Sumerian story of the *Eridu Genesis*⁶⁷ or the *Sumerian Flood Story*, as it was called by M. Civil⁶⁸ and others, adds another element to the evolution of civilization, and that is the in-

stitution of kingship. The story “deals with the creation of man, the institution of kingship, the founding of the first cities and the great flood.”⁶⁹ The focus is on the cultural achievements of the sedentary lifestyle, namely the building of cultic places for the gods. Temple and city-building implies a hierarchical society and a complex organization and can only be realized by the person of the king, a message we find throughout the “Kulturentstehungsmythen” of Mesopotamia again and again, not only in the second but also in the first millennium BC.

While animal husbandry is perceived to be part of civilizatory achievements, the people carrying out this task are looked upon in a condescending way as soon as they do not originate from Sumer. This applies to the Martu people, for instance, who were not only considered to be foreign to the culture of Mesopotamia proper but inferior to the civilization of the latter because of their partly vagrant existence.

5. The Position of Nomadism in Sumerian Cosmology

5.1. The Position of Nomadism in the Myth of “The Marriage of Martu”

Textual sources from Fara dated to the Early Dynastic III period as well as from Ebla⁷⁰ show that the Sumerian term *mar.tu*/Akkadian *amurru* was used to designate the population from the West.⁷¹ When the term *Tidnum*, Akkadian *ditanu* (Sumerian *giR*,

giR), which appears in the lexical and literary texts, too, was related with the *mar.tu* remains unclear, but by the end of the 3rd millennium they were “fully equivalent in all their meanings.”⁷²

Based on the textual evidence from the Mari archives, recent scholarship agrees about the fact that from the 3rd millennium BC onwards the Amorites must have lived

(1953-1935 B.C.) (Philadelphia 1996) 96-97.

⁶⁴ Tinney 1996, 125.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁶⁶ B. Alster, *Dumuzi’s Dream: Aspects of Oral Poetry in a Sumerian Myth*. Mesopotamia 1 (Kopenhagen 1972).

⁶⁷ Th. Jacobsen, *The Eridu Genesis*, JBL 100/4 (1981) 513-29.

⁶⁸ M. Civil, *The Sumerian Flood Story*, in: W.G. Lambert/A.R. Millard, *Atra-ḫasis. The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford 1969) 138ff.

⁶⁹ Jacobsen 1981, 513.

⁷⁰ A. Archi, *Mardu in the Ebla Texts*, OrNS 54 (1985) 7-13.

⁷¹ For the ambiguity of the term in view of its ethnic or geographic meaning see R.M. Whiting, *Amorite Tribes and Nations of Second-Millennium Western Asia*, in: J. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 2 (New York 1995) 1231f.

⁷² Whiting 1995, 1232.

in the region from the Euphrates to the upper Khabur and Balikh river valleys, south of the Anatolian mountains, as well as in Mount Basar (= Jebel Bishri, the region between Palmyra and the Euphrates).⁷³ According to R.M. Whiting there must be assumed a “culturally unified area of Semitic-speaking peoples extending at least from Ebla in western Syria to Mari on the Euphrates to the area of Kish in Babylonia, and probably across the Tigris into the Diyala River basin and further north into Assyria.”⁷⁴ By the reign of Shulgi at the latest, Amorite pressure on the settled regions of southern and central Mesopotamia started, and this is the historical background, which entered the conception of the world in Mesopotamia perceiving this cultural interaction as moments of contact and conflict in the literary sources from the Old Babylonian period. A stereotyped allusion often reiterated – thus in the *Lugalbanda-Epic*⁷⁵ or the *Curse of Agade*,⁷⁶ for instance – is that the Amorites do not know grain (še nu-zu),⁷⁷ a formula reflecting the fact, that, from the viewpoint of the people of Mesopotamia proper, they did not practice agriculture. Rather, they lived a nomadic existence, a fact, reflected in another stereotype, namely, that they did not know house nor city.⁷⁸ Here, the multiple aspects, that the Martu society was a mixture of village-farming culture and a large scale animal husbandry culture and involved in overland trade and military activities⁷⁹ of the cities, are ignored. Another important aspect,

which is very seldom recorded in the literary sources, must have been “their ability to escape the controls of the central government and thus develop their own power base within, or, as the case may be, against the state.”⁸⁰ What prevails in the perception of the Mesopotamian people is the fact, that the Amorite culture differs from their own culture.

A source of very detailed information of how the Amorites were perceived in Mesopotamian culture is the myth of the *Marriage of Martu*. It describes the transitory ritual of the institution of marriage which the protagonist, the god Martu, the *heros eponymos* of the Martu-Nomads has to undergo.⁸¹ The myth opens with a pseudo-cosmological introduction, placing the myth in ancient times and introducing the city of Ninab and its ruler together with his family. A description of a gazelle-hunt follows. In the evening, when the food portions are distributed, Martu complains to his mother that he has no wife. Subsequently he is told that there is a celebration about to take place in the city of Ninab, and that Numušda, ruler of Kazallu, will be present together with his wife and his daughter Adgarkidu. In fighting contests intended to entertain Numušda, Martu emerges victorious, and the pleased Numušda offers silver and precious stones to Martu as a reward. But Martu refuses, and instead, asks to marry Numušda’s daughter. Numušda agrees on the condition that the young man will bring him a bride-price in the form of both large cattle

⁷³ D. Charpin/J.-M. Durand, *Fils de Sim'al: les origines tribales des rois de Mari*, RA 80 (1986) 141-83; Klein 1996, 84 follows G.E. Mendenhall, “Amorites,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1 (1992) 199-202.

⁷⁴ Whiting 1995, 1232.

⁷⁵ C. Wilcke, *Das Lugalbandaepon* (Wiesbaden 1969) 118:304.

⁷⁶ J. Cooper, *The Curse of Agade* (Baltimore/London 1983) 46.

⁷⁷ For the references see also Klein 1996, 85.

⁷⁸ C. Benito, *Enki and Ninmah and Enki and the World*

Order, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia 1969) 248f.

⁷⁹ Whiting 1995, 1235.

⁸⁰ Buccellati 1990, 107.

⁸¹ However, this myth is written from the perspective of the sedentary people and reflects their theological reception in view of their experience with the nomads (note: Streck 2000, 68). M. Streck even defines this myth as reflecting an integrative part of their world view and of the close relationship between nomads and sedentary people (note: Streck 2000, 70f).

and small livestock. After a very fragmentary part of the tablet the speech of a girl-friend of Adgarkidu follows describing the “barbaric” lifestyle of the Martu-Nomads:

Marriage of Martu⁸²

- 127 á-še šu-bi ḥa-lam sa,-alan-^u[^gu₄-bi]
 128 an-zil-gu,-^dnanna-[ke₄-ne[?]] ní nu-[tuku-tuku-ne[?]]
 129 šu-dag-dag-ge-bi x []
 130 [nig-gi]g-é-digir-re-e-ne-[kam[?]]
 131 [galga-b]i mu-un-lù-lù šu-[^sùḥ[?]-a[?] du₁₁-ga]
 132 l[^ú^k]^us^{lu}-úb mu₄-a [...]
 133 zalam-gar ti im-im-šèg-[gá x x] sizkur [nu-mu-un-du₁₁[?]]
 134 ḥur-sag-gá tuš-e ki-[digir-re-ne[?] nu-zu-àm[?]]
 135 lú u[z]u-ḏiri kur-da mu-un-ba-al-la du₁₀-gam nu-zu-àm
 136 uzu nu-šeg-gá al-gu₇-e
 137 u₄-ti-la-na é nu-tuku-a
 138 u₄ ba-ug₇-a-na ki nu-túm-mu-dam
 139 ma-la-mu ^dmar-tu ta-àm an-du₁₂-du₁₂-un

- 127 And behold, their hands are destructive, (their) features are (those) [of monkeys],
 128 *They are* those who eat the taboo [of] Nanna, [*they have*] no reverence,
 129 In their constantly roaming around ,,
 130 [*Being*] the abomination [of] the temples of the gods,
 131 Their [counsel] is confused, [they cause] only dis[turbance],
 132 A *man* who is clothed in leather-sac, who,
 133 A tent-dweller, [*buffeted*] by wind and rain, [who offers no] prayer,
 134 He who dwells in the mountains, [knows not] the places [*of the gods*],
 135 A man who digs up mushrooms at the foot of the mountain, who knows no submission,
 136 He eats uncooked meat,
 137 In his lifetime has no house,
 138 When he dies, he will not be buried;
 139 My girlfriend – why would you marry Martu?!

This myth of *The Marriage of Martu* gives a very ambivalent portrayal of the nomads from the perspective of the city in which contempt and need are equally present: on the one hand, by obliging Martu to pay a rich bride-price in form of cattle and small livestock, as well as by describing the nomads as suppliers of luxury goods such as mushrooms, the nomads are presented as playing an important role in the subsistence of the city. On the other hand, their lifestyle

is not described as an alternative to the urban one, but as being uncivilized because of its total opposition to urban life: they do not know houses, they live in tents, they do not worship the gods, they eat uncooked meat and do not bury their dead. Again, building activity, cultic practice and care of the deceased are presented as cultural achievements of a sedentary lifestyle and as the main elements of the self-understanding of the city-dweller.⁸³ What is more, they are

⁸² For the last edition of the text see J. Klein, *The God Martu in Sumerian Literature*, in: I.L. Finkel/M. Geller (eds.), *Sumerian Gods and their Representations*, CM 7 (Groningen 1997) 110-16.

⁸³ The same motif can also be found in a letter-prayer from the Larsa period, here used for the Šimaški-people (I.24: lú-su-e) W.W. Hallo, *The Royal Correspondence of Larsa: II. The Appeal to Utu*, in: G. van Driel/Th.J.H.

Krispijn/M. Stol/K.R. Veenhof (eds.), *Zikir šumim, Assyriological Studies ... F.R. Kraus* (Leiden 1982) 98f iii 21-29, especially 26: za-lam gar ti-la ki-dingir-re-e-ne-ke₄ nu-mu-un-zu-a “Living in tents, he who does not know of the places of the gods, ...” For the identification of lú-su-a with Šimaški see P. Steinkeller, *On the Identity of the Toponym LÚ.SU.(A)*, *JAOS* 108 (1988) 197-202.

presented as interdependent elements resulting in the formation of clichés, which means that if one is a tent-dweller, one automatically does not know cultic practice. The city-dweller looks upon the nomad with contempt, ready to construct false clichés such as the nomads not burying their dead. This statement clearly refers to the house burials which were the usual practice throughout the Ancient Near East. Recent research has shown, for example, that clusters of burial structures unattached to any permanent settlement in the Sinai, could be interpreted as indicators for nomadism.⁸⁴ The conception of stereotypes and clichés as provided in the texts is a typical expression for the other as ambivalent phenomenon which K.-H. Kohl defined with the keywords “Abwehr und Verlangen.”⁸⁵ This ambivalence very often precedes the formation of enmity.⁸⁶ On the other hand, the formulation of such clichés points to a certain

Šu-Sîn, JCS 21, 31:24-27:

u₄-bi-ta / mar-tu lú ḥa-lam-ma

dím-ma ur-ra-gim / ur-bar-ra-gim

Here, the Martu-Nomads are clearly perceived as external aliens. The term refers to the outside Amorites as an impersonal mass of people pushing at the frontiers of the kingdom.⁹⁰ The aspect of threat clearly predominates and is expressed by the topos of dehumanisation.

Concerning the spatial perception, in the Martu-myth, too, the nomads are placed in the mountains, which means, outside the direct perception and political control of the

knowledge of the way of life of the other which, in the mythical narrative permits a certain form of integration articulated in the *rite de passage* of the marriage.

In this context, the comparison of the Martu with the monkey is particularly striking, and has to be explained as resulting from the accumulation of topoi. The topos of the complete dehumanisation of the enemy normally is restricted to the external enemy such as the Gutium⁸⁷ of the Iranian mountains, as can be gleaned from the city laments, the Cuthean Legend or the royal inscriptions. Already J. Cooper emphasized the different literary treatment of the Gutium and the Martu,⁸⁸ which to my understanding must be related to the phenomenon of the internal and external alien. An inscription of the Ur III king Šu-Sîn, who built a wall against the invading Martu-Nomads,⁸⁹ exemplifies this differentiation very clearly:

From that time, the Martu-Nomads, destructive people,
With instincts like dogs or like wolves

alluvial plain, whereby either the region of origin of the Martu-Nomads, the Jebel Bishri, or the region east of the Tigris infiltrated by the Martu-Nomads during the Ur III period⁹¹ is implied. It has to be taken into account that the meaning of the term Martu in the society of the Ur III period was twofold: the designaton either could be used for people staying outside of the political control of the Ur III kingdom or it designated people who had already settled in Babylo-

⁸⁴ Schwartz 1995, 253.

⁸⁵ K.-H. Kohl, *Abwehr und Verlangen* (Frankfurt 1987).

⁸⁶ C. Polzer, “Feindbild,” *Metzler Lexikon Religion* (Stuttgart 1999) 359-62.

⁸⁷ Cooper, *Curse of Agade*, 30ff; S. Dunham, *The Money in the Middle*, ZA 75 (1985) 242ff.

⁸⁸ Cooper, *Curse of Agade* 30ff.

⁸⁹ For the wall against the Martu see lastly Kirsch/Larsen (1995) 152 with earlier literature.

⁹⁰ G. Buccellati, *The Amorites of the Ur III Period* (Naples 1966) 336.

⁹¹ C. Wilcke, *Zur Geschichte der Amurriter in der Ur III-Zeit*, WO 5 (1969) 15; W. Sallaberger, *Das Reich der Dritten Dynastie von Ur*, in: W. Sallaberger/A. Westenholz, *Mesopotamien. Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit* (Freiburg, Schweiz/Göttingen) 159. G. Buccellati, *From Khana to Laqê: The End of Syro-Mesopotamia*, in: *Mélanges J.-R. Kupper* (Liège 1990) 229.

nia, and thus, at least partly, were assimilated to the society of the Ur III period.

The perception and concept of the nomad presented in the *Marriage of Martu* approaches the actual situation of interaction between nomads and city-dwellers. While the mythical narrative is characterized by ambivalence, hymns such as the *šir-gíd-da* for the god Martu⁹² reflect the ultimate integration into the Babylonian cult which, actually, can be observed already during the Old-Akkadian and the Ur III periods at the latest.⁹³

As a matter of fact, however, the inhabitants of the alluvial lowlands in Mesopotamia never lived in isolation. “The striking disparities in natural resources between the lowlands and the highlands have encouraged close contacts, albeit frequently hostile, ...”⁹⁴ which leads me to my third text-genre:

5.2. The Position of the Outer Enemy in the Sumerian City-Laments

In the following the literary realization of the encounter between the Mesopotamian city and the external alien will be scrutinized. Regarding the incursive enemies from the Eastern mountains or the steppes Mesopotamian literary texts and royal inscriptions do not distinguish between nomadic or tribal people such as the Gutium

or the Lullubum, who even gained control over the alluvial plain for a short while and adopted Babylonian ideology, and political entities such as Marḥaši,⁹⁵ Anšan or Šimaški,⁹⁶ whose kingdoms were periodically tied with the Ur III monarchy through diplomatic marriages⁹⁷ or through military alliances.⁹⁸ Recently, D.T. Potts described the conflict between Elam and Ur in the last century of the third millennium “as a clash between two very different political forms: the hyper-centralized, unitary state *par excellence* of Ur, and the ‘tribalized,’ segmentary state of Elam.”⁹⁹ This description certainly applies to the political entity of Šimaški as well, which also possessed extended segmentary zones of authority governed by “rulers of unequal age and rank, tied to each other by marriage and descent.”¹⁰⁰

Taking into account the results of biological and ethological research B. Gladigow elucidated the different mechanisms of how aggression between cultures works according to the model of interspecific and not intraspecific aggression.¹⁰¹ Members of a specific cultural group break down interspecific killing inhibitions by performing war-rituals or by dehumanizing the enemy, thus trivializing killing inhibitions. Both kinds of mechanism are known in Mesopotamia, too. Dehumanization is, as already mentioned above, the preferred mechanism in order to activate and to legitimate ag-

⁹² SRT 8, A. Falkenstein, *Sumerische Götterlieder I* (Heidelberg 1959) 120-40.

⁹³ D.O. Edzard, *Martu* § 5, *RIA* 7 5./6. Lief. (1989) 436.

⁹⁴ S. Pollock, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Cambridge 1999) 39.

⁹⁵ P. Steinkeller, *Marḥaši*, *RIA* 7 5./6. Lief. (1989) 381-382.

⁹⁶ For the identification of LÚ.SU.(A) as a rebus writing for *šu maškim* = Šimaški see P. Steinkeller, *On the Identity of the Toponym LÚ.SU.(A)*, *JAOS* 108 (1988) 197-202; *NABU* 1990/13; this was confirmed by the publication of a copy of a letter of Sin-iddinam to the sun-god from Emar using the syllabic writing instead of the term LÚ.SU.^{ki} used in the original, M. Civil, *Sin-*

iddinam in Emar and SU.A=Šimaški, *NABU* 1996/41. Šimaški apparently extended from the Caspian Sea down to Anšan, see Steinkeller 1990/13. For the connection of Šimaški and Elam in literary texts concerning the destruction of Ur see J.-J. Glassner, *Les dynasties d’Awan et de Simaški*, *NABU* 1996/34.

⁹⁷ D.T. Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam* (Cambridge 1999) 136f, 149.

⁹⁸ E. Carter/M.W. Stolper, *Elam. Surveys of Political History and Archaeology* (Berkeley/Los Angeles 1984) 18ff.

⁹⁹ Potts 1999, 157.

¹⁰⁰ M. Stolper, *On the Dynasty of Šimaški and the Early Sukkalmahš*, *ZA* 72 (1982) 42-67, especially 53-54.

gressive action against the enemy. It found its expression in fixed literary topoi passed on through centuries and millennia of written records. Unfortunately, there are no written records from the Early Dynastic period to tell us whether the several Sumerian city-states looked upon each other as belonging to one and the same, or different “cultural groups.” Therefore, it is impossible to say whether mechanisms such as war rituals or dehumanization came into play, or, whether there existed other mechanisms of intraspecific aggression.

In addition to these literary topoi inserted into royal inscriptions or city laments, the hostile contact between the alluvial lowlands and the northern and eastern highlands has found its symbolic expression in the medium of the mythical narrative, the so-called “struggles of gods,”¹⁰² as well as in literature connected to royal self-presentation such as the royal inscriptions or to royal ritual such as the Sumerian city-laments. Most of these texts display the typical conception of the externalisation of violence. In this conception, military confrontations when exercised by the representatives of the cosmic order – such as the gods or the king – always take place outside the realm of cosmic order. This externalisation of violence can be understood as a cosmological metaphor for the idea of a fundamental principle of order which is

typical for Mesopotamia.¹⁰³

In the medium of mythical narrative, the gods, always the city-gods of the Mesopotamian alluvial plain as for example Ninurta or Marduk, defend the cosmic order against the threatening chaos represented by demonic figures such as the Asakku in the Sumerian epic *Lugal-e*¹⁰⁴ or the Anzû-bird in the Akkadian *Anzû-Poem*¹⁰⁵ or Tiamat in the Creation Epic *Enūma eliš*. Apart from the Creation Epic these demonic figures are indigenous to the mountain regions, and the decisive battle always takes place there.

A very different picture is offered by the city-laments, a group of texts focussing on the downfall of the dynasty of Ur. As can be deduced from the disappearance of the year formulae in several cities of Sumer under the reign of Ibbi-Sin, this downfall was in fact a longer process of disintegration,¹⁰⁶ to which the coalition of Elam and Šimaški added the final blow. In the city laments the image of conflict between the alluvial plain and the nomads of the highlands is constructed in a mixture of mythologization and quasi-historicity. The alluvial plain, normally the realm of the cosmic order, is now the victim of chaos, and consequently the scene of destruction takes place in Sumer itself. It is this text genre I would like to focus on now.

The term city-lament is not a generic term but a title introduced by modern scholars

¹⁰¹ B. Gladigow, *Homo publice necans*. Kulturelle Bedingungen kollektiven Tötens, *Saeculum* 37 (1986) 150-65.

¹⁰² H.G. Kippenberg, *Struggles of Gods*. Papers of the Groningen Work Group for the Study of the History of Religions (Groningen 1984).

¹⁰³ For other models, such as the externalization of power, see M. Sahlins, *The Stranger-King*; or, Dumézil among the Fijians, in: M. Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago/London 1985) 73-103.

¹⁰⁴ J.J. van Dijk, *LUGAL UD ME-LÁM-bi NIR-GÁL* (Leiden 1983).

¹⁰⁵ M.E. Vogelzang, *Bin šar dadmē*. Edition and Analysis of the Akkadian Anzu Poem. Diss. Groningen 1988.

¹⁰⁶ Potts 1999, 142.

¹⁰⁷ S.N. Kramer, *Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur* (Chicago 1940). Newer translations were published by S.N. Kramer, ANET3 455-63, and Th. Jacobsen, *The Harps that once ...* (New Haven/London 1987) 447-44.

¹⁰⁸ P. Michalowski, *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* (Winona Lake 1989).

¹⁰⁹ M.W. Green, *The Eridu Lament*, *JCS* 30 (1978) 127-67.

¹¹⁰ M.W. Green, *The Uruk Lament*, *JAOS* 104 (1984) 253-79.

¹¹¹ S. Tinney, *The Nippur Lament* (Philadelphia 1996).

¹¹² W.H. Hallo, *Lamentations and Prayers in Sumer and Akkad*, in: J.M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (New York 1995) 1871.

who, after the *Lament over the Destruction of Ur*¹⁰⁷ had been published by Samuel N. Kramer, applied this label to four other compositions: *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*,¹⁰⁸ *The Eridu Lament*,¹⁰⁹ *The Uruk Lament*,¹¹⁰ and the *Nippur Lament*.¹¹¹ Generally, “The Fall of Lagash,” a text referring to Uruinimgina, which catalogues the shrines of Lagash devastated by Lugalzagesi, and the *Curse of Agade* are reckoned among the forerunners of these laments.¹¹² It is the former group I will focus on in the following. Although all these city laments depict the destruction of cities and states they are not a homogeneous group, as they focus differently on the various “major themes: destruction, assignment of responsibility, abandonment, restoration, and return.”¹¹³ “All the known examples are divided into sections called *kirugu* but the number and size of these sections differ in individual compositions ... Only the Nippur Lament and the Uruk Lament mention a historical restoration, for they specifically name Išme-Dagan (1953-1935 BC), the fourth member of the Isin dynasty, as the ruler responsible for the rebuilding of the city.”¹¹⁴

With P. Michalowski it may be argued that these lamentations have “to be understood in the broad context of Isin dynasty historiography and legitimization” because this dynasty had “little claim to traditional forms of ideological legitimization.”¹¹⁵

LSUr is clearly to be classified as a literary text, not only because of its mythological insertions and the way in which it mingles together several military events which took place throughout the Ur III period, but also because of its intertextuality. Thus, P. Michalowski has proposed that *LSUr* probably was composed at the time of Išbi-Erra and played a role in the “ideological posturings”¹¹⁶ of the Isin Dynasty. Similar to the hymns A and B of Išbi-Erra, king of Isin, which mention the military activities of the Ur III-rulers (Utu-ḫegal, Ur-Namma, and Šulgi) against Gutium (hymn A), against Kindattu, king of Elam, and against Anšan and Šimaški,¹¹⁷ it likewise calls all these enemies to mind.

By juxtaposing Vanstiphout’s proposal of the literary development of the lamentations¹¹⁸ and the enemies listed in the city-laments we may gain the following picture:

Primary Phase		Secondary Phase			Tertiary Phase
<i>LSumer and Ur</i>	<i>LUr</i>	<i>LEridu</i>	<i>LUruk</i>	<i>LNippur</i>	<i>Literary Laments</i>
Elam	Elam	Elam			
Šimaški					
Anšan					
Subir	Subir	Subir	Subir		
Gutium			Gutium		
Tidnum				Tidnum	

Now I would now like to deal with the question of how these enemy-hordes are

treated literarily. In the Sumerian lamentations over the destruction of a city, the agent

¹¹³ Green 1984, 253.

¹¹⁴ Michalowski 1989, 6.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Michalowski 1989, 7.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ H. Vanstiphout, Some Thoughts on Genre in Meso-

potamian Literature, in: K. Hecker/W. Sommerfeld (eds.), *Keilschriftliche Literaturen. Ausgewählte Vorträge der XXXII. RAI* (Berlin 1986) 1-11; J.A. Black, *Eme-sal Cult Songs and Prayers*, in: P. Michalowski et al. (eds.), *Velles Paraules. Ancient Near Eastern Studies ... M. Miguel*, *AuOr* 9 (Barcelona 1991) 23-36, esp. 30ff.

of the destruction is presented on two levels: on the mythologized level as a storm, a monster or a snake, and on the historical-literary level as an ethnic-geographical group.

In the *LSUr* the storm is an agent both of the destruction of Sumer (*LSUr* 77-80), and of retribution upon the homelands of the invading enemies (*LSUr* 483-491). This city lament is the only one to list all the different groups of enemies from the Iranian mountains as well as from the Syrian desert who, over time, again and again put the Ur III kingdom into trouble. The hostile people are Elam, which even was temporarily a vassal state of the Ur III kings; the same is true for Šimaški north of Elam, and Anšan in the south-east of Elam. Finally, there are the mountain nomads of Gutium, who put an end to the empire of Akkad and, although repulsed by Utuḥengal of Uruk, again caused trouble to the Ur III kings. Lastly are mentioned the Tidnum nomads from the northern Syrian steppe¹¹⁹ west of the Middle Euphrates in the hilly region of the Ğebel Bišri, who made their infiltration into the alluvial plains of Mesopotamia during the Ur III period, one that also ended in military confrontations.

LSUr ll. 1-2 starts with the storm as the agent that destroys the timeless norms (giš-ḥur and me) of civilized life, continuing in line 33 with the historical enemy Elam:

LSUr 1-2, 33

- 1 u₄ šu-bal aka-dè giš-ḥur ḥa-lam-e-dè
 2 u₄-dè mar-ru₁₀-gin₇ ur-bi ì-gu₇-e
- 1 To overturn the (appointed) time, to forsake the (preordained) plans,
 2 The storms gather to strike like a flood.
- 33 LÚ.SU^{ki} elam^{ki} lú kúr.ra ki-tuš-bi tuš-ù-dè
 33 That (the soldiers) of Šimaški and Elam, the enemy, dwell in their place, ...

In between the first couplet and line 33 all the cultural achievements of Mesopota-

mian society are listed: city, temple, cattle pen, irrigation system, agriculture, social norms of community life, the institution of kingship are all said to be overthrown by the storm. From the more general fate of the land of Sumer the narrative proceeds to the individual fate of the city of Ur, seat of the Ur III dynasty, and the fate of its ruler, Ibbi-Suen, who is said to be taken to Elam in fetters (*LSUr* 35). In line 55 the gods of Sumer also enter as agents of destruction, whereby the god Enlil, head of the pantheon, sends the Gutium, mountain nomads from the Iranian plateau, to carry out the gods' order of destruction. By introducing the Gutium, the storm becomes a personified executioner:

LSUr 75-78

- 75 u₄-ba^den-líl-le gu-ti-um^{ki} kur-ta im-ta-an-è
 76 DU-bi a-ma-ru^den-líl-lá gaba-gi₄ nu-tuku-àm
 77 im gal eden-na eden-e im-si igi-šè mu-un-ne-DU
 78 eden níg-dagal-ba sig ba-ab-dug₄ lú nu-mu-un-ni-in-dib-bé
- 75 Enlil sent down Gutium from the mountains.
 76 Their advance was as the flood of Enlil that cannot be withstood,
 77 The great storm of the plain filled the plain, it advanced before them,
 78 The teeming plain was destroyed, no one moved about there.

A detailed description of meteorological phenomena and their effects such as social overthrow and destruction of the cult follow.

At the beginning of the second *kirugu* the focus shifts away from Ur toward the state as a whole and is attached a long enumeration of all the Sumerian cult centers that fell prey to the destruction. It is interrupted by a statement in which the mythological level and historical allusion are again interwoven:

LSUr 145-146

- 145 muš kur-ra-ke₄ ki-ná ba-ni-ib-gar ki-bala-
šè ba-ab-dug₄
146 gu-ti-um^{ki} šà ba-ni-ib-bal-bal numun ba-
ni-ib-i-i
145 The snake of the mountain made its lair
there, it became a rebellious land.
146 The Gutians bred there, issued their seed.

In this *kirugu* a surprisingly precise piece of information is inserted:

LSUr 254-257

- 254 sig-šè elam^{ki}-ma ba-ši-in-gub-bu gaz-dè
i-TIL-e
255 nim-šè ḥa-al-ma lú kúr-ra-ke₄ šu-ni [...]x
x
256 ti-id-nu-um^{ki}-e u₄-šu-uš^{g18} middu₁-a úr-ra
ba-ni-in-gar
257 sig-šè elam^{ki}-ma ú-a è-a-gin₇ KU-bi im-
[...]x-le
254 To the south, the Elamites stepped in,
slaughtering ...
255 To the north, the vandals, the enemy ...
256 The Tidnumites daily strapped the mace
to their loins,
257 To the south, the Elamites, like an on-
rushing wave, were ...

Here, reference is made to two different political events, the several military confrontations with Elam on the one hand, and the military invasion of the Amorites of the Syrian desert on the other.

And then history is theologized by instrumentalizing the enemy hordes as being the weapon of Enlil:

LSUr 260-261

- 260 ^den-líl-le lu nam tar-tar-e-dè a-na [bí-in-
ak-a-ba]
261 mìn-kam-ma-šè elam^{ki} lú kúr-ra kur-t[a
ba-ra-è]
260 This is what Enlil, the one who decides
the fates, then did:
261 For the second time he sent down the

Elamites, the enemy, from the mountains.

The third *kirugu* describes the destruction of Ur. “As the city and the surrounding regions are abandoned and destroyed, yet another voice is introduced: that of the chief deity of Ur, Nanna. The prayer of Nanna (lines 341-356), addressed to Enlil, contains a brief description of the plight of Ur, followed by a plea for the restitution of the city.”¹²⁰ As already indicated by P. Michalowski, “the prayer ends with a plea for restitution of the very elements that began the composition: the divine rights and decrees of Sumer.”¹²¹

- 356 me ki-en-gi-ra ba-da-ḥa-lam-e ki-bi ḥa-
ra-ab-gi₄-gi₄
356 May you restore the (divine) decrees of
Sumer that have been forgotten!

In the fourth *kirugu*, the divine speech of Enlil provides the justification for the fall of the Ur III state decreed by the gods at the outset of the composition. And as P. Michalowski comments on lines 366-369: “This is where the Isin dynasty concept of a succession of dynasties that reigned one after another over Sumer is explained in specific terms, just as it was demonstrated through simple enumeration in a contemporary historiographic composition, *The Sumerian King List*.”¹²²

LSUr 366-369

- 366 uri₅^{ki}-ma nam-lugal ḥa-ba-šúm ba-la da-rí
la-ba-an-šúm
367 u₄ ul kalam ki gar-ra-ta zag un lu-a-šè
368 bala nam-lugal-la sag-bi-šè è-a a-ba-a igi
im-mi-in-du₈-a
369 nam-lugal-bi bala-bi ba-gíd-e-dè šà-kúš-
ù-dè
366 Ur was indeed given kingship (but) it was
not given an eternal reign.

¹¹⁹ G. Buccellati, *The Amorites of the Ur III Period* (Naples 1966) 235.

¹²⁰ Michalowski 1989, 14.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Michalowski 1989, 14f.

- 367 From time immemorial, since the land
was founded, until the population multi-
plied,
368 Who has ever seen a reign of kingship
that would take precedence (for ever?)
369 The reign of its kingship had been long
indeed but had to exhaust itself.

After the city-god Nanna again complained to his father Enlil, the latter promises the restoration of Ur. In some kind of incantation, the storm is now incited to turn against the enemy, who again is specified:

LSUr 484-491

- 484 u₄ urú gul-gul u₄ gaba-zu zi-ga-ab u₄ é-za
gi₄-bi
485 u₄ é gul-gul u₄ gaba-zu zi-ga-ab u₄ é-za
[g]i₄-[b]i
486 u₄ ki-en-gi-ra ba-e-zal-la kur-re h́é-eb-zal
487 u₄ ma-da ba-e-zal-la kur-re h́é-eb-zal
488 kur ti-id-nu-um^{ki}-ma-ka h́é-eb-zal kur-re
h́é-eb-zal
489 kur gu-ti-um^{ki}-ma-ka h́é-eb-zal kur-re h́é-
eb-zal
490 kur an-ša₄-an^{ki}-na-ka h́é-eb-zal kur-re h́é-
eb-zal
491 an-ša₄-an^{ki}-e im h́ul dal-la-gin₇ kuš₇ h́é-ni-
ib-su-su

484 O storm that destroys cities, retreat O
storm, storm return to your home!
485 O storm that destroys temples, retreat O
storm, storm return to your home!
486 Indeed, the storm that blew on Sumer,
blew on the foreign lands,
487 Indeed, the storm that blew on Sumer,
blew on the foreign lands,
488 It has blown on Tidnum, it has blown on
the foreign lands,
489 It has blown on Gutium, it has blown on
the foreign lands,
490 It has blown on Anšan, it has blown on
the foreign lands,
491 (And) it leveled Anšan like a blowing evil
storm.

After this incantation, there follows a prayer for prosperity and wealth of the city

and the cults.

This short overview shows that mythologization and historicity are closely interwoven. The intention of the poet is certainly not, to deliver exact historical information.

In the second city-lament, the *Lamentation of the Destruction of Ur*,¹²³ the mythical-historical agents are treated in very different manner. Here, in eleven *kirugu*'s the historical enemy is mentioned only once, personified by the Subarians and Elamites, the storm being the agent of the god Enlil.

The lament starts by enumerating the gods who are leaving all the principal cult centers of Sumer. In the fourth *kirugu* the goddess Ningal turns to Enlil and Anu to spare her city. But the gods, instead, in the fifth *kirugu*, give the storm the order to destroy the land of Sumer. It is here that the poet describes in detail the affliction which overtook Ur in the form of a devastating storm. Only in the sixth *kirugu*, which tells how Ningal departed from her city, are introduced the Subarians and Elamites as historical enemies:

The Subarians and the Elamites, the destroyers, made of it thirty shekels.
The righteous house they break up the pickaxe;
The city they make into ruins; the people groan.

The ninth and the tenth *kirugu*'s return to the level of mythologization and contain the poet's plea to Nanna not to let Ur and its inhabitants be overwhelmed by the storm. Here the storm is again depicted in a very anthropomorphic manner.

The third city-lament, the *Uruk Lament*, again is structured with an eye toward the literary presentation of the destruction of the city of Uruk. Divided into twelve *kirugu*'s, of these, only *kirugus* 1-5, and 12 are preserved. The first *kirugu* opens with a

¹²³ Kramer 1940 (see above n. 104).

mythological introduction which displays a motif known from other mythical narratives from Mesopotamia such as the myth of *Atrahasis*: the gods decide to destroy mankind, “whose offense is revealed to have been overpopulation, possibly the excessive human activity or noise having disturbed the gods’ sleep. The gods of creation fashion a terrifying monster, which produces panic at Uruk.”¹²⁴ The second *kirugu* describes the fall of the king and the ensuing chaos, evacuation and the destruction of the city. The third *kirugu* gives a long and detailed description of the monster. The *fourth* *kirugu* describes the order of destruction given by Anu and Enlil, realized first in a devastating deluge, then shifting to the quasi-historical level by denoting the Gutium and the Subarians as the enemies of Sumer who destroy Sumer and Akkad. Unfortunately, these lines are only fragmentarily preserved:

Uruk Lament

- 4.11 gutium ur-re ba-e-^fbal¹[...]
 ...
 4.20 gutium^{ki} ^fur-ra x¹ e-ne [...] ^{gi8}tukul
 [...]-^fx¹
 ...
 4.22 su-bir^{ki}-e a-maḥ è-a-gin⁷^fa-x¹[(...)]
 4.23 maš-kar-ra-gin⁷, ur ^fx¹ [...] un ad^c-bi
 mu-un-si-il-le-eš
 4.24 ki-en-gi ki-uri gú-^fgur⁷?¹-ru-uš ^{gi8}nàga-šè
 mu-un-ak-eš
 4.11 Gutium, the enemy, overturned ...
 ...
 4.20 Gutium, the enemy, ... weapons ...
 ...
 4.22 Like a swelling flood, like ..., the Subarians poured into Sumer;
 4.23 They ... like stampeding goats ...; they dissevered the people’s corpses;
 4.24 they mutilated Sumer and Akkad; they pulverized it (as) with a pestle.

The destruction of the settlements and villages, and of the temple precincts of Kul-laba and Uruk follow. The fifth *kirugu* details the final destruction of Uruk, and again the Subarians are mentioned as the agents:

- 5.20 su-bir^{ki}-e a-maḥ a-è-a-gin⁷, z[i-ga ...]
 5.21 e-sír-e-sír-ra du¹⁰ mi-ni-in-suḥ-su[h ...]
 5.22 ù-mu-un nam-lú-u¹⁸ áb-gin⁷, m[u-un-sur-sur-re-eš] níg-dím mu-un-z[i-(x)-r]e-eš
 5.20 Subir, rising up like a swelling flood-wave, ...
 5.21 They trampled(?) through the streets; ...
 5.22 They let the blood of the people flow like that of a (sacrificial) cow; they tore out everything that had been built.

The following *kirugu*’s 7-11 are completely lost, but somewhere we expect the laments of the goddess Inanna and the Anunna gods; and perhaps, according to Green, probably also a description of royal reconstruction at Uruk.¹²⁵ This assumption is supported by the fact that the last *kirugu* is a “royal prayer, set in the scene of a banquet in Inanna’s gipar-chamber in the Eanna-temple at Uruk. There Išme-Dagan presents himself to Inanna under several aspects: as lover, entertainer, steward, king-priest, and humble supplicant. He petitions her to act as intermediary to the great gods for him and Uruk and, presenting the lament itself as an offering to them, he prays that it will inspire their pity so that they will bestow a good fate upon himself and Uruk.”¹²⁶

The focus, here, is clearly on the person of the king who restores the cult-center of Uruk, and thus re-establishes the cosmic order.

Interestingly, the literary tradition, as expressed for example in the so-called Weidner Chronicle,¹²⁷ a composition existing only in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian copies,

¹²⁴ Green 1984, 254.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ F.N.H. al-Rawi, Tablets from the Sippar Library I. The “Weidner Chronicle”: a Supposititious Royal Letter Concerning a Vision, Iraq 52 (1990) 71. 26.

credits Utu-ḫegal of Uruk with freeing Sumer from foreign domination, whereas Urnammu, in his hymnic biography, praises himself for defeating the Gutians,¹²⁸ “though whether as Utuḫegal’s lieutenant or in his own right is not clear.”¹²⁹ To my understanding the use of the term Gutium just in the *Uruk Lament* is not incidental. Rather, it may be understood as a historical allusion to the glorious times of Utuḫegal. This historiographical perspective on the past is then taken up again by the Weidner Chronicle.

Already Šulgi uses the term Gutium in his hymn D as a mythologizing code-word for describing his military activities against the Hurrians in the transtigradian region.¹³⁰ And occasional references can still be observed in the first millennium royal inscriptions.¹³¹

The fourth city-lament, the *Eridu Lament*, similar to the *Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, starts with a storm destroying the city of Eridu. Another similarity consists in the fact that also already in the first *kirugu* the storm is paralleled with the historical enemy, here in this case, the Subarians.

Eridu Lament

- 1.5 ʾu₄ te-eš-dug₄¹-[ga túg-gin₇ ba-e-dul gada-gin₇ ba-e-búr]
- 1.6 eridu^{ki}-ga túg-gin₇ ba-ʾe¹-[dul gada-gin₇ ba-e-búr]
- ...
- 1.20 u₄ sig₅ ḫul nu-gál-la sa₆-ga nu-zu ḫul nu-zu-e
- 1.21 su-bir₄^{ki}-e ʾa¹-gin₇ im-mi-ib-gar šu im-ma-da-an-šub
- 1.5 The roaring storm covered it like a cloak, spread over it like a sheet.
- 1.6 It covered Eridu like a cloak, spread over it like a sheet.
- ...

- 1.20 A storm, which possesses neither kindness nor malice, does not distinguish between good and evil.
- 1.21 Subir splashed down like rain. It struck hard.

Kirugu’s 2-4 describe the progress of the attacking force, symbolized by the devastating storm, which moves from the city-gate into the innermost sanctum of the zigurat. The devastation of the storm resembles the military action of the mountain nomads: the city-gate is breached (2.1-4), the residential quarter and populace are destroyed (2.5-11), the temple is encircled, its external structure shaken (2.12-15), and then its gate and door are penetrated (2.16-3.4). “Finally, within the shrine, the sacred symbols and treasures and the cultic personnel are attacked and defiled (3.3-4.21).”¹³²

The enemy hordes are referred to only once more with a view of their desecrating action concerning the kettle-drum:

Eridu Lament

- 4.9 urudu.šen-kù lú igi nu-b[ar-re]-da
- 4.10 lú.ʾsu^{1ki} elam^{ki} lú-ḫa-l[a-ma igi i-ni]-in-bar
- 4.9 The pure kettle-drum, which no one may look at,
- 4.10 The Šimaški and Elamites, the destroyers, looked at it.

With kirugu’s 5-7, the focus moves from the destruction of the city to the distress of the gods. The last *kirugu*, number 8, which is not preserved, probably celebrated Enki’s return and the restoration of Eridu.

Concerning the literary treatment of the devastating agents on a mythological level as a storm or a monster, and on a historical level as the nomadic people, the fifth and last city lament, the *Nippur Lament*, stands

¹²⁸ A. Falkenstein, Ein Lied auf Šulgi, Iraq 22 (1960) 147.

¹²⁹ Hallo 1971, 715a.

¹³⁰ Falkenstein 1960, 147; A. Falkenstein, Fluch über

Akkade, ZA 57, 48f. with note 18c.

¹³¹ See below.

¹³² Green 1978, 128.

out among the other Sumerian laments insofar as these elements play only a very marginal role. Thus, mythologization is completely avoided, the storm does not appear at all, and the Tidnum as the historical agents of the destruction of the city of Nippur are only mentioned once, in the eighth *kirugu*, which treats the decision of the gods to restore the destroyed Sumerian cult centers:

Nippur Lament

- 8.230 é-bi umma^{ki}-a sig₄-kur-ša-ga ħul-bi ba-ab-aka-a
 8.231 ugu-bi-ta ti-id-nu-um nu-gar-ra íb-ta-an-zi-ge₄-eš-àm

- 8.230 That temple in Umma, Sigkuršaga, which had been treated ill,
 8.231 The treacherous Tidnum they have removed from upon it.

The whole composition is divided into two parts, of which the first part describes the destruction of Nippur and the miseries suffered by its populace, “while in the second half Enlil and Išme-Dagan are lauded for the restoration of Nippur and Sumer to peace and prosperity.”¹³³

Clearly, the Nippur Lament does not show any interest in resurrecting an historical past, but rather focuses completely on the person of the king who is responsible for the restoration of the city.

6. Concluding Remarks on the Sumerian Literary Texts

To conclude the first part of my study, the following observations can be made: The perception of the pastoralism, nomadism and outer enemies is a very diversified one, and accordingly, the way in which specific historical and political circumstances entered the process of symbolic expression differs. As put forward by Marshall Sahlins, circumstances by themselves “have no existence or effect in culture except as they are interpreted. And interpretation is, after all, classification within a given category.”¹³⁴

With the literary process we have already left the level of human consciousness, perception, and social communication to enter the meta-level of the evaluation of the written construction of social reality. According to the focus of the intended message, Mesopotamian urban culture chose different categories of interpretation to respond to the challenge of the encounter with pastoralists, nomads as well as with the outer

enemy. These categories of interpretation could be classified according to different text genres: cosmology, debate literature, hymns, mythical narrative, and city laments.

To my understanding these text genres favour different models with respect to the position of pastoralism, nomadism and outer enemies within the Mesopotamian urban conception of the world:

- 1) The evolutionary model as represented by cosmologies, hymns and debate literature, which favours the co-existence of city-dwellers and pastoralists.
- 2) The integration model as represented by the myth of “The Marriage of Martu,” which focuses on the contrastive view of sedentarism vs. nomadism.
- 3) The model of antagonism as represented by the Sumerian city laments, which is based on the definition of the inner and the

¹³³ Tinney 1996, 27.

¹³⁴ M. Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Real-*

ities. Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Island Kingdom (Ann Arbor 1981) 6f.

outside world, the homeland and the enemy, and which does not distinguish between nomads and other outside enemies.

While these models all differ from each other, a strong continuity with respect to the king can be observed between the first and the third models, whereas only a slight shift in the king's role is to be noticed. Thus, in the cosmological narrative of the Eridu Genesis, the institution of kingship is presented as the ultimate achievement of urban culture. Here, the focus is put on the organizational capacity of the king in view of temple building, city-planning and care for the gods.

In contrast, the model of antagonism as expressed in the Sumerian city laments puts the focus on the king as defending and re-establishing the cosmic order once planned by the gods and only temporarily destroyed by the nomads such as the Amurru and the Gutium, and by the other enemies of the Eastern mountains. Here, the nomadic people as well as the other political entities appear in total opposition and hostile to cultural achievements.

The integration model as reflected by the mythical narrative of the "Marriage of Martu" is clearly a literary reflection of the infiltration process of the Amorites, which took place massively during the Ur III period. As the cult of the god Martu is already testified in Ur III documents, this narrative can be classified as the literary answer and theological expression of this historical process on a meta-level. The ideological statement of this narrative emphasizes the encounter between sedentary and nomadic peoples, the king playing only a marginal role. However, Ur III documents show that, although integrated into the process of productivity of the city,¹³⁵ the Martu-Nomads sometimes were still held at a distance by being explicitly denoted as Martu. Their language as well was stated a foreign language, as there is an unnamed "interpreter of the Amorites" (*eme-bal mar-tu*).¹³⁶

In my concluding section I will now focus on the model of antagonism in order to show how this concept was pursued throughout the second and first millennia BC.

7. The Reception of Sumerian Concepts in the Tradition of the Second and First Millennia

7.1 Introduction

Later literary-historical tradition points to the eminent importance which, within the "cultural memory"¹³⁷ of Mesopotamia, has been attached to the first Mesopotamian empire, the empire of Akkad. As J.S. Cooper has emphasized, "Akkad was the paradigm or better, the prototype, for future

dynasties in 1) its scope and power, through the unification of Babylonia and control of the periphery; 2) its elaboration of an imperial bureaucracy; and 3) its new conception of royalty ...,"¹³⁸ and, as has been pointed out recently by J. Westenholz, in the "new emphasis on the royal person in the public plastic arts and public display ceremonies."¹³⁹ Akkad molded the image of

¹³⁵ Buccellati 1966, 253.

¹³⁶ Buccellati 1966, 328f.

¹³⁷ J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis* (München 1992) defined "kulturelle Gedächtnis" as expressing the interconnection of memory, identity and cultural continuity.

¹³⁸ J.S. Cooper, *Paradigm and Propaganda. The Dynasty of Akkade in the 21st Century*, in: M. Liverani (ed.), *Akkad. The First Empire* (Padova 1993) 11f.

¹³⁹ J. Westenholz, *The King, the Emperor, and the Empire: Continuity and Discontinuity of Royal Representa-*

royal representation within the “cultural memory” of Mesopotamia. The conscience and knowledge of the reiteration of such a destruction as had befallen this empire were determinative in shaping later conceptualizations of the inner and outer world.

In later historiographic sources, historical accuracy concerning the actual causes of the collapse of the Akkadian empire was not considered important; “while many factors must have contributed, including much more serious pressure from Elamites, Lullubi, Hurrians and the unidentified ‘Ummanmanda,’”¹⁴⁰ the Gutians entered historical tradition as being the immediate cause. As has been put forward by W.W. Hallo, in later sources about the Ur III period it is hard to decide whether the allusions to Gutium “are meant to refer to Elamites, or whether, after all, they are authentic testimony to continuing pressure from the Gutians after their retreat from Mesopotamia.”¹⁴¹ Already by the end of the Old Babylonian period, the term ‘Gutian’ was of little more than vague geographic or ethnic significance. The same is true for the terms Subarian and Lullubu, which besides Gutium, were likewise perpetuated as vague geographical allusions in the royal inscriptions of the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian kings. From the Middle Assyrian king Adad-nērārī I onwards, the Gutium, Lullubu and Šubarū form a fixed constellation mentioned among the outer enemies to be fought off and made to submit. In the royal inscriptions, almost nothing is told

about their lifestyle or their political organization. It is noteworthy that they never entered into a political alliance with the Assyrians, which leads us to the assumption that they were never looked at as aliens, i.e., potential partners for political alliances, but as hostile and completely inferior to Assyrian civilization.

For the cultural memory it was important that the collapse was brought about by outer forces, that the inner stability of the political system of Mesopotamia proved susceptible to destruction, that chaos could encroach upon the cosmological order of the Mesopotamian world. In later cultural memory, Mesopotamia, or more specifically Assyria and Babylonia, were seen as a hegemonic culture, as a political system determined to endure forever and to be superior to all other political organizations throughout the Ancient Near East. Thus it is not surprising that, while evolving their concept of identity, part of the Sumerian repertoire depicting the nomad, the alien or the enemy entered the process of later literary reception by means of intertextuality.¹⁴²

Generic purism, probably inherited from the Old Testament approach created by H. Gunkel, also prevented Assyriological scholars from considering so-called “historiographic texts” and “literary texts” in view of the possibility that they contain the same fictive elements.¹⁴³ However, research on the putative impact of mythical literature on the construction of the royal inscriptions will turn out to be very productive and use-

tion in Text and Image, *Melammu* 1 (2000) 99. See also I. Winter, *Sex Rhetoric and the Public Monument: The Alluring Body of Naram-Sîn*, in: N. Kamper (ed.), *Sexuality in Ancient Art* (Cambridge 1996) 11-26; I. Winter, *Art in Empire: The Royal Image and the Visual Dimensions of Assyrian Ideology*, in: S. Parpola/R.M. Whiting (eds.) *Assyria 1995*, (Helsinki 1997) 359-81.

¹⁴⁰ W.W. Hallo, *RIA* 3/9 (Berlin/New York 1971) 710, s.v. Gutium § 3.

¹⁴¹ Hallo 1971, 715.

¹⁴² For a first approach to the importance of intertext-

uality in Mesopotamian literature see B. Pongratz-Leisten, “Öffne den Tafelbehälter und lies ...” *Neue Ansätze zum Verständnis des Literaturkonzeptes in Mesopotamien*, *WO* 30 (1999) 67-90.

¹⁴³ For this problem in Old Testament Studies see K.L. Sarks, *The Problem of Myth in Ancient Historiography*, in: S.L. McKenzie/Th. Römer, *Rethinking the Foundations. Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible, Essays ...* J. Van Seters, *BZAW* 294 (Berlin/New York 2000) 269-80.

ful for the reconstruction of the origins of Assyrian ideology.¹⁴⁴

7.2 Referentiality and Intertextuality

Referentiality and intertextuality can mainly be observed in literary texts, and may imply ethnographic comments, too. Thus the so-called Weidner Chronicle, while specifying the characteristics of the Gutium, picks up an imagery, already known from the myth of the “Marriage of Martu” and applied there to describe the Martu-Nomads, as well as from the Old Babylonian literary prayer to Sin-iddinam, where it is applied to the Elamites, Subarians and the Šimaški-people.¹⁴⁵

The Babylonian literary composition of the Weidner Chronicle, rs. 20ff:¹⁴⁹

*¹narām-^dSîn nammaššē ša Bābili ušalpitma
adi šinīšu ummān qutī idkaššumma*

*nišēšu makkarāniš [...] šarrūssu ana
ummān qutī ittadīn*

qutū ša tazzimte ilāni palāḥa lā kullumū

paršī ušrāti šuklulu lā idū

Another literary creation, the Sargon Geography, a text, which has come down to us in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian

Sargon Geography 51-59

51 ... *a-mur-r[u]-^rū¹ šāb(érin) šūti (^{im}ūlu) lul-lu-bu-ú šāb iltāni (^{im}si.sá)*
52 *ul ⁱ-di ki¹-iṣ-ru-tum*

“Weidner Chronicle,”¹⁴⁶ now to be classified as a literary letter, which was probably written by a king of Isin to a king of Babylon or Larsa, is one of the first literary texts to pick up the Sumerian tradition of the negative conceptualization of the mountain people. As F.N.H. al-Rawi has put forward, the composition is to be divided into three sections: “(1) a section of advice, incorporating a description of a nocturnal vision of the goddess Gula experienced by the letter-writer (obv. 1-40);”¹⁴⁷ (2) the so-called “historical section” enumerating kings from legendary times (Akka of Kish) down to Sumu-la-il, king of Babylon, having neglected the cult of Marduk in his cultic centre of Babylon (obv. 41-rev. 38); “and (3) a two-line ending linking the historical examples to the main purpose of the letter (rev. 39-40).”¹⁴⁸

Narām-Sîn defiled the people of Babylon,
Twice he (Marduk) called up the horde of
Gutium against him
and [put to flight?] his people as with the goad
of a donkey driver.¹⁵⁰ His sovereignty he gave
to the Gutium.
The oppressive Gutium who have not been
taught how to worship the gods,
who do not know how to perform rites and
regulations properly.

copies, likewise, shows intertextual connection with the Martu-Myth:¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁴ For this approach see E. Weissert, Creating a Political Climate: Literary Allusions to *Enūma Eliš* in Senacherib’s Account of the Battle of Halule, in: H. Waetzoldt/H. Hauptmann (eds.), *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten* (Heidelberg 1997) 101-202.

¹⁴⁵ J. S. Cooper, *Curse of Agade* (Baltimore/London 1983) 32f.

¹⁴⁶ F.N.H. al-Rawi, *Tablets from the Sippar Library I. The “Weidner Chronicle”: A Supposititious Royal Letter Concerning a Vision*, Iraq 52 (1990) 1.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ al-Rawi 1990, 6.

¹⁵⁰ Here I follow the interpretation of CAD M/1, 131 s.v. *makkarāniš*; al-Rawi translates as follows: “Twice he called up the horde of Gutium against it.” The CAD translation not only follows the logic of the text but also corresponds to the historical information we can glean from “The Curse of Agade.”

¹⁵¹ W. Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake 1998) 67ff, esp. 72.

- ...
 56 *ḫa-an-da-ki-ia-áš^{ki} ša pa-ni ti-x-lu-ri^{ki} giš^{giš} ḫaṭṭi (gidri) iši (giš) iš-ri*
 57 *kar-zi-na^{ki} ša muḫ-ḫi-ša ú-ru¹-[uḫ-š]u-nu i-n[a] nag-la-bi bé-e-ru*
 58 *i-kil-ti išāti (izi) šá la i-du-ú¹ qé-bé-ra*
 59 *a-kil šēri (uzu) a-kil šizbi (ga) lapti (še.sa.a) š[a a-kal t]i-nu-ri lib-b[a-šu-n]u la i-du-ú ka-ra-
 as-su-nu^d siriš*
- 51 ... Amurru, the people of the South, Lullubu, the people of the North,
 52 who do not know construction.
- ...
 56 Ḫandakiyaš, which is before ..., the scepter, the just wood.
 57 Karzina, which is above it, whose ha[irstyle] is chosen??? with a razor
 58 devoured? by fire, who do not know burial.
 59 Meat-eater, milk (and) roasted-grain eaters, who[se insi]des do not know oven-baked bread,
 bellies (do not know) beer.

Whereas the peoples of Amurru and Lullubu are indicating the points of the compass,¹⁵² the following place names are of Indo-European origin and at least Karzina can be identified as a city located in Media and is mentioned also in the inscriptions of Sargon II.

Similarly, we may interpret the geogra-

phic entities enumerated in the *Erra-Myth* and already known from the city laments as intertextual references, used in order to denote a specific historical situation and consequently enlarged by the geographic entities of the later periods, who could represent a source of danger for Babylonia:

Erra iv 131-136

- 131 *tam-tim tam-tim su-bar-ra su-bar-tu, aš-šur-a a-šur-ú*
 132 *e-la-ma-a e-la-mu-ú kaš-šá-a kaš-šu-ú*
 133 *su-ta-a su-tu-ú gu-ta-a gu-tu-ú*
 134 *lul-lu-ba-a lul-lu-bu-ú ma-a-tu ma-a-ta ālu āla*
 135 *bītu bīta a-me-lum a-me-lum aḫu aḫa la i-gam-mi-lu-ma li-na-ru a-ḫa-meš*
 136 *ú ar-ka ak-ka-du-ú liṭ-bi-e-ma nap-ḫar-šu-nu li-šam-qit-ma li-ir-ma-a na-gab-šu-un*
- 131 Sea (people) shall not spare sea (people), nor shall Subarian (spare) Subarians, Assyrian Assyrian,
 132 nor (shall) Elamite (spare) Elamite, Kassite Kassite,
 133 nor (shall) Sutu (spare) Sutu, Gutian Gutian,
 134 nor (shall) Lullubu (spare) Lullubu, nor country the country, nor city the city,
 135 nor (shall) tribe (spare) the tribe, nor man man, nor brother brother, but they shall slay one another.
 136 And afterwards an Akkadian may rise and may fell them all and shepherd all of them.

Remembering the factor of intertextuality, the question is whether the reference to the dwelling as *kultar šarrutišu* in the inscriptions of Sargon II.¹⁵³ or in the inscriptions of his predecessors¹⁵⁴ should be interpreted as an ethnographic observation¹⁵⁵ or whether it rather transmits the whole con-

notative background of living in tents = not knowing how to perform cultic rites properly and to worship the gods, as it is formulated in the “Myth of the Marriage of Martu” and then adopted by the Weidner Chronicle to describe the Gutians.

¹⁵² Horowitz 1998, 90.

¹⁵³ Fuchs 1994, 162 Ann. 350.

¹⁵⁴ For further references see CAD K, 301 s.v. *kuštāru*.

¹⁵⁵ Pace C. Zaccagnini 1982 (see n. 4).

Excursus to Erra I 51-59

Erra Tablet I praises the life of the warrior which in a certain way calls to mind the lifestyle of the nomads. Thus the respective passage, which has been understood by E. Reiner¹⁵⁶ as an eulogy on nomadism, has to be seen in the wider context of the praise of

the warrior's destructive force. This passage not only formulates the antagonism of urbanism and nomadism but also the juxtaposition of nomadism and militarism which, in fact, signifies a threat to city-life and – within the mythical narrative – to mankind in general.

Erra I 51-59:

- 51 *a-lak šēri ša eṭ-lu-ti ki-i šá i-sin-nu-um-ma*
 52 *a-šib āli lu rubû ul i-šeb-bi ak-la*
 53 *šum-suk ina pi-i nišē-šú-ma qa-lil [qaq]-qad-su*
 54 *a-na a-lik šēri a-ki-i i-tar-ra-aš qa-as-su*
 55 *šá a-šib āli lu pu-ug-gu-lat ku-bu-uk-ku-[uš]*
 56 *a-na a-lik šēri a-ki-i i-dan-nin [mi]-i-na*
 57 *a-kal āli lul-lu-ú ul ub-ba-la ka-man tum-ri*
 58 *ši-kar na-aš-pi du-uš-šu-pi ul ub-ba-lu mē na-a-di*
 59 *ekal tam-li-i ul ub-ba-la ma-šal-la-tu ša [re'i]*

- 51 To go on to the battlefield is as good as a festival for young men!
 52 Anyone who stays in town, be he a prince, will not be satisfied with bread.
 53 He will be vilified in the mouths of his own people, and disregarded.
 54 How can he raise his hand against one who goes into the battlefield?
 55 However great the strength of one who stays in town,
 56 How can he prevail over one who has been on the battlefield?
 57 City food, however fancy, cannot compare with the bread (baked) in ashes.
 58 Best beer, however sweet, cannot compare with the water from the water-skin.
 59 A palace (built) on a platform cannot compare with the places to sleep of the shepherds.

As E. Reiner has pointed out, “it is the food habits that distinguish the different ways of life” as “bread baked in the ashes” and “water from the water-skin” are opposed to oven-baked city bread and the “tavern-keeper’s brew,” but the different ways

of life are that of the man staying in the city and the warrior who had to prepare his food in a way similar to that of the nomad.

A passage much discussed and controversially interpreted¹⁵⁷ is the following passage from Ištar’s Descent:

Ištar’s Descent to the Netherworld 104-107

- 104 *aklī epinnēt āli lu a-kal-ka*
 105 ^{duḡ}*ḥa-ba-na-at āli lu ma-al-ti-it-ka*
 106 *šilli dūri lu-ú ma-za-zu-ka*
 107 *as-kup-pa-tu lu-ú mu-ša-bu-ú-ka*
 108 *šak-ru ù ša-mu-ú lim-ḥa-šu le-et-ka*

The bread of the city plows may be your food,
 (The content of) sewers of the city may be
 your drink,
 The shadow of the wall may be your home,
 The threshold (of its gate) your seat.
 The drunkard and the thirsty shall slap your
 cheek.

¹⁵⁶ E. Reiner, *City Bread and Bread Baked in Ashes*, in: *Languages and Areas. Studies ...* G.V. Bobrinsky (Chicago 1967) 116-20.

¹⁵⁷ Reiner 1967; A.L. Oppenheim, *Mesopotamian Mythology*, *OrNS* 19 (1950) 138 n. 3; Ph. Talon, *Le Mythe de*

la descente d’Ištar aux enfers, *Akkadica* 59 (1988) 15-25, esp. 21f; S.M. Maul, *kurgarrū* und *assinu* und ihr Stand in der babylonischen Gesellschaft, in: V. Haas (ed.), *Außenseiter und Randgruppen* (Konstanz 1992) 159-71.

By insisting on the spelling of one of the two versions of the poem, namely *e-pi-it* instead of *e-pi-ne-et*, – whereby the other version has ^gisAPIN^{mes} – E. Reiner proposed a completely different interpretation of the first four lines, translating as follows:

may the bread of the bakers of the city be
your food,
may the jugs of the city be your drinking
vessel,
stay in the protection of the city wall,
squat at the threshold of the house.¹⁵⁸

E. Reiner comments on her translation as follows: “In this interpretation, the curse intends to make of the messenger a despicable person, not in spite of the fact that he dwells in the city, but rather because he dwells in the city, and thus represents the attitude referred to, that of the noble nomad who despises the effeminate sybaritic city dweller.”¹⁵⁹ But one should not forget the context of the curse spoken by Ereškigal, which, in fact, is addressed to Ašūšunamir, the *assinnu*, who in the Sumerian version is represented by the *gala.tur* and the *kur.gar.ra*, both created by the god Enki. The *assinnu* like the *kurgarrû* stood in the cultic service of Ištar, and ritual texts as well as other documents prove that they belonged to the cultic personnel of her temple.¹⁶⁰ S. Parpola has made the interesting observation that the word *zikru* which refers to the *assinnu* in the myth “The Descent of Ištar” can “by a play with consonants also be associated with the word *kezru* ‘coiffured man’ (a devotee of Ištar).”¹⁶¹ Part of their personality was their emasculation derived from self-mutilation.¹⁶² As has been em-

phasized by S. Parpola, “Sumerian cultic lamentations performed by the *gala* chanters, are consistently written in emesal, the Sumerian ‘women’s language’ otherwise only used by woman and female deities.”¹⁶³ Because of their ritual activity, which also embraced ecstasy, they certainly provoked ambivalent feeling or even anguish in Mesopotamian society, which is expressed by the fact that the *kurgarrû* is named beside other sorcerers in the cathartic series of Maqlû,¹⁶⁴ as has been put forward by S.M. Maul.¹⁶⁵ In the myth, due to their asexual character they could get access to the netherworld. The only other beings who, because of their asexual character, could transgress the limit between the upper world and the underworld were the demons who roam about the desert. To my mind, the fact that the *kurgarrû* can be defined as being part of the temple personnel invalidates the interpretation that this curse could be an aetiology for the actual social status of the *assinnu*’s and *kurgarrû*’s living in the shadow of the city-walls, as has been assumed by Ph. Talon¹⁶⁶ and S.M. Maul.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, the curse of Ereškigal could be understood as a threat just as the curse ejaculated by Enkidu against the prostitute in the Gilgameš-Epic, which in the end Enkidu takes back.¹⁶⁸ It is worth mentioning that here we have an example of intertextuality because not only the messages of the two curses resemble each other but because both curses have the formula *šilli dūri lū manzāzuki*. To my mind, Ereškigal only warns Ašūšunamir that, instead of being integrated in the temple service, he will be

¹⁵⁸ Reiner 1967, 117.

¹⁵⁹ Reiner 1967, 117.

¹⁶⁰ B. Menzel, *Assyrische Tempel*, vol. I (Rom 1981) 229. See also the edict SAA XII 68 which quotes even a *rab kurgarrê* as being part of the temple of Šarrat-nipha.

¹⁶¹ S. Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, SAA IX (1997) XCII n.119.

¹⁶² Not just transvestism, see Parpola 1997, XCVI n.138.

¹⁶³ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ G. Meier, *Maqlû* (Berlin 1937) iv 83.

¹⁶⁵ Maul 1992, 159.

¹⁶⁶ Talon 1988, 22.

¹⁶⁷ Maul 1992, 162.

¹⁶⁸ S. Parpola, *The Standard Babylonian Epic of Gilgameš* (Helsinki 1997) vii 100-129 and 151-161.

condemned to live in a marginalized status outside the city-walls.

7.3 Referentiality and Transformation

Another form of referentiality can be con-

“Curse of Agade” l. 154:¹⁶⁹

un-gá nu-si-ga kalam-ma nu-šid-da

The positive inversion of this topos is first attested in the inscriptions of the Middle Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser I,

RIMA II A.0.87.1 ii – iii 6

ii 99 *mi-šir* KUR-ti-šu *a-na ru-pu-ši*
 100 *iq-ba-a* 4 LIM KUR *kas-ka-ia*.MEŠ
 101 KUR *ú-ru-ma-ia*.MEŠ ÉRIN.MEŠ
 KUR *ha-at-te-e*
 102 *la-a ma-gi-ri* ...

...

iii 5 ... *a-na* UN.MEŠ
 6 KUR-ti-ia *am-nu-šu-nu-ti*

In another part of this inscription the specific topos is paired with the statement of

RIMA II A.0.87.1 iv 27-31

27 *si-te-et um-ma-na-te-šu-nu* GÌR.MEŠ-ia
 28 *iš-ba-tu a-re-em-šu-nu-ti*
 29 GUN *ù ma-da-ta* UGU-šu-nu
 30 *ú-kín it-ti da-gil pa-an*
 31 ^d*a-šur* EN-ia *am-nu-šu-nu-ti*

Already in the Middle Assyrian period this phrase can be replaced by the phraseology *turru ana* or *ruddû eli mišir māt Aššur* which during the first millennium in turn is combined with the political reorganization of the Assyrian empire, namely by setting a

nected with the adaptation and transformation of Sumerian phraseology. This can be observed for instance in the following phraseology which describes the Gutium in the following way:

Not classed among people, not reckoned as part of the land.

here combined with the topoi of the divine order to extend the border of Assyria and of the splendour (*melammu*) of the king:

to extend the border of his land
 he commanded me, 4,000 Kasku

insubmissive troops of Hatti, ...

and reckoned them as people
 of my land.

imposing tribute:

The remainder of their troops
 submitted to me (and) I had mercy on them.
 I imposed upon them tribute and impost (and)
 reckoned them as subjects
 of the god Aššur, my lord.

governor over the newly annexed territory.¹⁷⁰ P. Machinist has already emphasized that by interweaving certain idioms the Assyrians created a specific texture which can be defined as their language of sovereignty.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ J.S. Cooper, *The Curse of Agade* (Baltimore/London 1983) 56.

¹⁷⁰ See also Machinist (1993) 86f.

¹⁷¹ Machinist (1993) 92.

7.4 Mythologization of the Enemy and the Introduction of Ninurta Theology into the Assyrian Royal Literature

With the growth of the Assyrian state and its extension to the West as well as its entrance into the contest for political hegemony with Babylonia, the Assyrians had to define their national identity. The royal inscriptions were one medium to express their new conceptions of self-definition, and their literary creativity not only led to a complete restructuring of the royal inscriptions but “associated with this, the appearance of the historical chronicle – and of the epic form.”¹⁷²

Contrary to the text-genres of myth and literary letter as well as the unique text of the Sargon Geography, mentioned above, the Assyrian royal inscriptions – just like the city laments – by creating the contraposition of disorder, disorganization, and disobedience with order, organization, and obedience – mostly operate with the model of antagonism in order to illustrate the political and religious task of the king and the civilizatory superiority of Assyria. There exist only very few ethnographical remarks in the Assyrian royal inscriptions denoting specific cultural characteristics of the foreigner.¹⁷³ The political intention clearly aims at securing and extending the borders of the Assyrian empire, and, consequently, the focus of the literary production is on the contraposition of the Assyrian and the outer = hostile world, the “‘cosmic’ center” and the “chaotic periphery.”¹⁷⁴ In the following

it will be shown that what in fact is new to Assyrian ideology and what characterizes its special grammar, is the mythologization of its claim to expansion. And this mythologization is not restricted to general terms but is indebted to Sumerian and Southern Babylonian mythology which found its way into Assyrian literary production. The foundation of the new conception is laid during the Middle Assyrian period. Already P. Machinist, while scrutinizing the literary style, language and thematic content of the Tukulti-Ninurta-Epic and comparing it to the Sumerian city laments, brought the fact that the epic is very much indebted to Sumerian tradition to our attention.¹⁷⁵

The predominant message of the royal inscriptions is that the king acts by command of the gods to maintain the political order, and, consequently, the cosmological order. On the ideological level, political and cultic action primarily endeavour to maintain the constant care for the gods. We should not forget that the climax of Mesopotamian cosmology is the building of the temple as has already been mentioned. And here, I return to the outset of my paper: While interpreting the royal inscriptions just against this cosmological and religious background, it becomes obvious that the usage of the “archaic” literary topoi turns into a mythologization not only of the enemy but of the Assyrian king as well. Much has been written on the king’s role as Ninurta in the first millennium BC;¹⁷⁶ however, this evidence lacks a connection with the evidence from the earlier sources, i.e. the inception of this mythologization,

¹⁷² P. Machinist, *Literature as Politics*, CBQ 38 (1976) 470.

¹⁷³ See the quotations on page 195 as well as, for example, the observation made by Assurnasipal II denoting the cultural specificity that the inhabitants of Sipirmena do their hair like women, RIMA II A.0.101.1ii 75.

¹⁷⁴ M. Liverani, *The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire*, in: M.T. Larsen (ed.), *Power and Propaganda, Mesopotamia*

7 (Copenhagen 1979) 306.

¹⁷⁵ P. Machinist, *Literature as Politics: The Tukulti-Ninurta Epic and the Bible*, CBQ 38 (1976) 455-82.

¹⁷⁶ S.M. Maul, *Der assyrische König – Hüter der Weltordnung*, in J. Assmann/B. Janowski/M. Welker (Hrsg.), *Gerechtigkeit* (München 1998) 65-77, esp. 72ff with previous literature.

which has been collected by W.W. Hallo.¹⁷⁷

It is against this cosmological background that in the course of the Middle Assyrian period the theology of the heroic warrior-god Ninurta¹⁷⁸ enters the Assyrian royal inscriptions transforming them into a narrative of the king's constant fight against the evil forces of the chaos. Thereby, it can be observed that this literary production recaptures very old traditions

RIME 3/1 E3/1.1.7.Cylrgms 8+3+5+4:

ii ^dnin-gír-su a-zi-^den-líl-[lá] ħur-sag-e tu-da

referring to the birth of Ningirsu gives rise to the assumption that mythemes forming the basis of the myth of Lugal-e¹⁸³ have already been formulated in the presargonic period.¹⁸⁴ Old Babylonian eduba-literature testifies to a fully elaborated Ninurta-Theology which, via bilingualism, found its way into the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian libraries possessing all translations of the mythical narratives of Angimdimma¹⁸⁵ and Lugal-e. Besides the mythical literature the Neo-Assyrian Period displays a manifold religious literature embracing eršemma's,¹⁸⁶ hymns,¹⁸⁷ and cultic commentaries¹⁸⁸ which

reaching back as far as the presargonic period. Ninurta is already mentioned in the god-list of Fara¹⁷⁹ besides Ningirsu in the god-list of Abu Salabikh.¹⁸⁰ Presargonic theophoric names indicate that there was not only a cult of Ningirsu but that there existed already a mythology of the battle between Ningirsu and Anzû,¹⁸¹ which, as a narrative, was written down only in the Old Babylonian period.¹⁸² Likewise, the Gudea fragment

“Ningirsu, true offspring of Enl[il], born by the mountain”

evidently rely on Sumerian tradition.

When exactly Ninurta did raise to the privileged rank within the Assyrian ideology cannot be said. Assurnasirpal II, when rebuilding Kalĥu, his residence and cultic city of Ninurta, refers to Salmanassar I as his predecessor in the building activities. This could be a possible hint, that Ninurta already at this time could have had some significance, however, this remains pure speculation.

It is only with the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta I that the Sumerian theology of the god Ningirsu/Ninurta, who goes into battle

¹⁷⁷ W.W. Hallo, *Toward a History of Sumerian Literature*, AS 20 (1975) 183-85.

¹⁷⁸ For Marduk as Ninurta redivivus see W.G. Lambert, *Ninurta-Mythology in the Babylonian Epic of Creation*, in: K. Hecker/W. Sommerfeld (eds.), *Keilschriftliche Literaturen. Ausgewählte Vorträge der XXXII. R.A.I. Münster*, 8.7.-12.7 1985 (Berlin 1986) 55-60.

¹⁷⁹ M. Krebernik, *Materialien zur Erforschung der ältesten mesopotamischen Götterlisten* (Habilitationsschrift München 1985) LF1 ii 18.

¹⁸⁰ Krebernik 1985, LS 8.

¹⁸¹ G. Selz, *Untersuchungen zur Götterwelt des altsumerischen Stadtstaates von Lagaš* (Philadelphia 1995) 24f.

¹⁸² M.E. Vogelzang, *Bin šar dadmē*. Edition and Analysis of the Akkadian Anzu Poem (Dissertationsschrift Groningen 1988); for the Standard Babylonian version see H.W.F. Saggs, *Additions to Anzu*, AfO 33 (1986) 1-29 and W.L. Moran, *Notes on Anzu*, AfO 35 (1988) 24-29 with recent literature.

¹⁸³ J.J. van Dijk, *LUGAL UD ME-LÁM-bi NIR-GÁL* (Leiden 1983).

¹⁸⁴ W.W. Hallo even assumes that the Ninurta myths were commissioned in their original form at the court of Gudea. (Hallo 1975, 185.)

¹⁸⁵ J.S. Cooper, *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur* (Rom 1978).

¹⁸⁶ *Ninurta Eršemma ursag ut-u₁₈-lu*, M. Cohen, *Sumerian Hymnology: The Eršemma* (Cincinnati 1981) 143-44; S.M. Maul, “Wenn der Held (zum Kampfe) auszieht ...,” *OrNS* 60 (1991) 312-34.

¹⁸⁷ See, for example, the Middle Assyrian bilingual hymn KAR 119; LKA 41, *Ninurta the Protector of the King*; KAR 102+328, the *Syncretic Hymn to Ninurta*; the hymn “*Ninurta as Sirius*.” For all hymns see the relevant literature in B. Foster, *Before the Muses* (Bethesda 1993) 628ff.

¹⁸⁸ SAA 3 39 parallels the figure of the king and Ninurta; SAA 3 37 transfers Ninurta-theology on the god Marduk by mentioning Anzû and Asakku as his enemies, see also W.G. Lambert, (fn. 158) 55-60; the Marduk-ordeal mentions Anzû, Asakku and Qingu as the enemies of Ninurta and thus intermingles Ninurta-theology and Marduk-theology.

against the kur (foreign/hostile land) and the ki-bal (rebellious land) in order to fight the enemy with the help of his destructive weapon, the deluge (a-ma-ru), explicitly enters the king's ideology. It shows not only by his theophoric name, the name of his newly founded city Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta as well as by his epithet *mīgir ninurta ša ina līt kiššūtīšu ula* "iṭu *gimir kibrāti* "favourite of the god Ninurta, the one who controlled all quarters with his strong might,"¹⁸⁹ – but

Anzû II 6

riḫiṣ erṣetu ibbanû šubassu suḫḫi

Anzû II 9

liptarrikšu gummurta ašamšātu

To my understanding it is not just accidentally that these mythemes are chosen to describe especially the military actions of

RIMA I, A.0.78.1:14-20:

14 ... [*ina šurrû* (?) L]UGAL-[†]*ti*¹-*ia*
 15 [†]*ana*¹ KUR *ú-q*[*u-me-ni lu*] *a-lik*
 16 *si-ḫīr-ti* KUR *qu-ti*
 17 *ki-ma* DU₆ *a-bu-[†]bi*¹ [*lū ušēmi*(?)]
 18 *um-ma-na*-[*te*]-*šu-nu*
 19 *si-ḫīr a-šām-šá-ti*
 20 *lu ú-šal-me*

From Tukultī-Ninurta I onwards *abūb tamḫari* "deluge of the battle" or later *abūbiš* "like the deluge" become standard epithets of the Assyrian king. During the first millennium the range of his weapons is enriched by šár-ur₄ and šár-gaz, the weapons of Ninurta in Lugal-e.¹⁹¹ With Tukultī-Ninurta's foundation of his new residence at the latest, Ninurta enters into the invoca-

also by introducing the weapons of Ninurta in order to describe his military actions against the enemies. Thus *abūbu* "deluge" and *ašamšatu* "sandstorm," mentioned for the first time in the inscriptions of Tukultī-Ninurta I, are to be qualified as mythemes directly taken from the myths Lugal-e and Anzû. The mother-goddess Bēlet-ilāni when inciting her son Ninurta to fight Anzû, speaks as follows:

Drench the earth where he (Anzû) was created. Put his dwelling-place into confusion.¹⁹⁰

May it (furious attack) have the whirlwinds as one lying athwart him.

Tukultī-Ninurta I against the people of the Iranian mountains, rather, it is rooted in the Sumerian tradition of the Ninurta-theology:

[At the beginning of] my sovereignty
 I marched to the land of the Uq[umenu].
 The entire land of the Qutu (Gutium) [I made (look) like] ruin hills (created by) the deluge (and)
 I surrounded their army
 with a circle of sandstorms.

tion of the Assyrian gods at the beginning of the royal inscriptions. Furthermore, it should be emphasized that it is only with the mythologization of the Assyrian king as Ninurta, that the king adapts the title *gašru* "the strong one"¹⁹² and *mutīr gimil māt Aššur* "avenger of Assyria,"¹⁹³ previously reserved for the god Ninurta, exclusively.

The mythologized presentation of the

¹⁸⁹ RIMA I, A.0.78.21:9'; A.0.78.23:20-21.

¹⁹⁰ Thus translated by W.L. Moran, Notes on Anzû, AfO 35 (1988) 24 *pace* H.W.F. Saggs, Additions to Anzû, AfO 33 (1986) 10.

¹⁹¹ R. Borger, Die Inschriften Asarhaddons, Königs von

Assyrien, BAFO 9 (Graz 1956) 65, Nin. E col. ii 6-13.

¹⁹² For the first time Tigl. I, RIMA II, A.0.87.4:3.

¹⁹³ For the first time Aššur-rēša-iši I, RIMA I, A.0.86.1:8.

battle against the enemy, i.e., the usage of an extensive metaphorical language in view of the military actions of the king, comes especially into play, when the numerous tribal groups of the Eastern mountains are concerned. This applies not only to the royal inscriptions but also to the heroic poems of Tiglath-Pileser I,¹⁹⁴ and probably has its origins in the tradition of the Sumerian city laments.

Similarly, Tiglath-Pileser's I statement that he installed 25 gods of conquered lands especially to be door-keepers of the temple of the goddess Ninlil, the temple of Anu and Adad and the temple of the Assyrian Ištar in the city of Assur is not just a description of the kidnapping and integration of foreign gods into the Assyrian cult,¹⁹⁵ rather, here

*a-na gi-sal-lat KUR-i ki-ma MUŠEN
ip-pár-šu*

*dap-pa-a-nu šam-ru šá nap-ḥar [m]al-ki.
MEŠ ša kib-ra-a-te ʾMÈ¹-su ez-z[u e]-du-
ru-ma [kīma š]u-ti-ni iṣ-ba-tu tu-b[u-qe-
ti ù kīma arrabē i]ḥ-tal-la-l[u] ʾer¹-še-et
la ba-ʾi*

War and hunting are not only paralleled in the texture but also in terminology. In this mythologization the focus of the con-

Tigl. I, RIMA II, A.0.87.1 col.i 36-37

ša^d a-šur GIŠ.TUKUL.MEŠ-šu ú-šá-ḥi-lu

Adn. II, RIMA II A.0.99.2:19

GIM GÍR šal-ba-be ú-ra-ša-pa

Adn. II, RIMA II A.0.99.2:21

*[ki-m]a šu-uš-kal-li a-sa-ḥap GIM ḥu-ḥa-ri
ʾa-kât-tam¹*

too, we have to take into account a direct reference to Anzû, who holds the same position at the temple of Enlil.

The introduction, under Tiglath-Pileser I, of the motif of the king as a hunter into the Assyrian royal inscriptions is to be interpreted as direct consequence of the king's mythologization as Ninurta. In consequence of this introduction the language describing the enemy differs from that of literary predecessors. A different lifestyle or characteristic behaviour are not of interest anymore. Instead, besides a complete dehumanization of the enemy by comparing him to frightened and fleeing animals he is turned into a passive and shapeless figure.¹⁹⁶

They flew like birds to ledges on high mountains.¹⁹⁷

storm-trooper whose fierce battle all princes of the (four) quarters dreaded so that they took to hiding places [like] bats and scurried off to inaccessible regions [like jerboa].¹⁹⁸

trapolation is not on the enemy, rather it is on the king and his weapons:

(T.,) whose weapons the god Assur has sharpened.

I strike the wicked like the fierce dagger, ...

I overpower like the net, I enclose like the trap

¹⁹⁴ See the heroic poems LKA 62 and LKA 63 of Tiglath-Pileser I. V. Hurowitz/J.G. Westenholz, LKA 63: A Heroic Poem in Celebration of Tiglath-Pileser I's Mušru-Qumanu Campaign, JCS 42 (1990) 1-49.

¹⁹⁵ RIMA I, A.0.87.1:biv 32-39.

¹⁹⁶ Apart from the heroic poems LKA 62 and LKA 63, where the enemy is presented as taking the initiative to rebel.

¹⁹⁷ Tigl. I, RIMA II, A.0.87.1: iii 68-69.

¹⁹⁸ Tigl. I, RIMA II, A.0.87.4:11-12.

Adn. II, RIMA II A.0.99.2:67

GIM *a-bu-bu na-às-pan-te dan-nu giš-pár-ri*
UGU-šú [...]

It is against this background of mythologization referring to the Anzû-Myth¹⁹⁹ that Assurnāširpal II constructs the Ninurta-temple in direct topographical relationship to the Northwest-Palace at Kalḫu, with a relief showing Ninurta's battle against Anzû,²⁰⁰ parallelizing this scene with the hunting scene in his palace, and that Sargon II classifies his enemy Marduk-apla-iddina as *mār Jakini zēr Kaldi hiriš galli lemni* "son (= descendant) of (the tribe of) Jakin, exact copy of the evil *gallû*-demon,"²⁰¹ an expression which is later adopted by Assurbanipal describing his Elamite enemy Teumman.²⁰²

Shalmaneser I²⁰³ and Assurnāširpal II²⁰⁴

Shalm. III, RIMA II, A.0.102.5 iii 2:

KUR *qu-ti-e DAGAL-tú d'èr-ra áš-giš*

Likewise the metonymous²⁰⁸ expression *kīma d'Girra aqmû* "I raged like fire" directly used after *abubāniš* in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III²⁰⁹ refers to the Erra-Myth

Erra I 33

i-qab-bi ana šá-ni-e GIM d'GIŠ.BAR
qu-mu-um-ma ḫu-muṭ GIM *nab-lim*

Which Erra in fact does when realizing his terrible devastation as projected in the speech of Išum²¹⁰ As far as I see the first evidence for this metonymy occurs in the

[I laid] traps as strong as the destructive deluge for him ...

adopt the demonizing aspect of the *ušum-gallu*-dragon when going into battle, as well as the troops of the latter in their rage are compared to the *anzû*-bird,²⁰⁵ a metonymy which is first attested in the Tukulti-Ninurta-Epic.²⁰⁶

In the course of the first millennium BC another myth leaves its traces in the royal inscriptions, that is the myth of the destructive god Erra, god of war and pestilence, who plans to destroy mankind.²⁰⁷ When reporting his campaign against Urartu king Shalmaneser III not only employs the term Gutium in a pure vague geographic meaning but compares himself to the god Erra:

I slaughtered the extensive Guti like the god Erra.

describing the birth of the seven gods Sibitti, where Anu incites the second of his sons with the words:

He spoke to the second: Ignite like Girra and blaze like a flame!

inscriptions of Adad-nērārī II.²¹¹ The connection of Erra and the king is not an invention of the first millennium, but can be traced back to the literary tradition of the

¹⁹⁹ Anzû I 9 *gal-lu-ú šam-ru-tu, la a-niḫu ti-ba-šú pal-ḫu*.

²⁰⁰ U. Moortgat-Correns, AfO 35 (1988) 117-133.

²⁰¹ A. Fuchs, Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad (Göttingen 1994) 158 Ann. 327; 225 Prunk. 122.

²⁰² R. Borger, Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals (Wiesbaden 1996) 97, Prisma B IV 74 // C V 80 *te-um-man tam-šil gal, -lá*.

²⁰³ RIMA I, A.0.77.4:6 *ušumgal qabli*.

²⁰⁴ RIMA II, A.0.101.1:126.

²⁰⁵ RIMA II, A.0.101.1:107.

²⁰⁶ P. Machinist, v (= A rev) 45'.

²⁰⁷ L. Cagni, L'Épopée de Erra. Studi semitici 34 (Rom 1969); P. Machinist, Rest and Violence in the Poem of Erra, JAOS 103 (1983) 221-226.

²⁰⁸ M. Streck, Die Bildersprache der akkadischen Epik, AOAT 264 (Münster 1999) 51.

²⁰⁹ See for example Shalm. III, RIMA III, A.0.102.12:20.

²¹⁰ Cagni, Erra IV 149.

²¹¹ RIMA II, A.0.99.2:18 *[k]i-lma¹ d'GIŠ.BAR a-ḫa-maṭ* GIM *a-bu-be a-sa-pan ...*

Old Babylonian period, namely the text “Erra and Naram-Sin” which already refers to the fire as his weapon.²¹² The origin of the warrior-like aspect of the Sibitti²¹³ regularly represented on the steles of the Assyrian kings still remains to be laid open. I only want to call to mind in this context the heptad depicted on the Naram-Sîn stela already pointed out by J. Westenholz, and the fact that in Neo-Assyrian inscriptions they are “said to help defeat enemies and are invoked in treaties.”²¹⁴ The Erra-Myth may have verbalized a very ancient tradition reaching back into the Akkadian period or even earlier, which in the Middle Assyrian²¹⁵ and, especially, in the Neo-Assyrian period culminated in a special cult dedicated to the Sibitti. It is very striking that their temple, as far as it could be identified, is always located outside the citadel²¹⁶ embracing the palace and the temples of the official cult – a location which makes one wonder about its specific meaning and function.

E. Weissert²¹⁷ when comparing Sennacherib’s Battle of Halule to *Enūma eliš* was the first to emphasize that the scribes of the royal inscriptions by referring to preceding literary works not only intended to show off their literary erudition but consciously

evoked the whole connotative background of mythical texts in order to raise the Assyrian king to the status of the divine hero. The evidence presented above reveals that in the course of the Middle Assyrian period, especially with the kings Tukulti-Ninurta I²¹⁸ and Tiglath-Pileser I a complete new era regarding the conceptualization of the institution of rulership arose, which had a deep impact on the presentation of the king within the medium of literature and royal inscriptions as well as on the architectural idea of the royal residence. Its origin is certainly to be expected within the period of Adad-nērārī I already, since he was the first to introduce a new literary genre in Assyrian literature, the royal epic.²¹⁹ Thus, we may discern how already the Assyrian intellectual élite in this time mastered the subtle interplay of the different media cult, image and literary production in view of composing a coherent system of royal ideology.²²⁰

The beginning of the development unfolded above must be searched in a specific political concept or program which mainly consisted in the extension of the borders of the Assyrian empire (*rappušu, šurbū mišir māt Aššur*).²²¹ This political concept needed religious legitimation which now was elaborated in the different media of cult and

²¹² J. G. Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade* (Winona Lake 1997) Text 13:21; see also the review of B. Foster, who considers the text to be in honour of Naram-Sîn of Ešnunna, *JAOS* 119 (1999) 704.

²¹³ Ch. Jean, *d/VII-bi*, *RA* 21 (1924) 93-104; see also A.R. George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts* (Leuven 1992) 365f.

²¹⁴ Westenholz 2000, 105.

²¹⁵ *RIMA II*, A.0.78.22:44.

²¹⁶ For their location in Dūr Šarru-kēn and Niniveh see U. Finkbeiner/B. Pongratz-Leisten, *Beispiele altorientalischer Städte. Residenzen des Assyrischen Reiches*, *TAVO B IV* 20 (1993). In this context the temple of Mars in Rome comes to my mind which only with Augustus formed the centre of his new forum *inside* the *pomerium*, and thus is a “classic example of the complex interrelationship between innovation and tradition” in Roman religion, see M. Beard/J. North/S. Price, *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge 1999) 199.

²¹⁷ Weissert 1997.

²¹⁸ P. Machinist has emphasized the aspect of experimentation with historical genres of literature and the interrelationship between historical epic and royal inscriptions, P. Machinist, *Literature as Politics: The Tukulti-Ninurta Epic and the Bible*, *CBQ* 38 (1976) 455-82.

²¹⁹ See recently B. Foster, *Before the Muses*, vol. I (Bethesda 1993) 204 with previous literature.

²²⁰ B. Pongratz-Leisten, *Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien. Formen der Kommunikation zwischen Gott und König im 2. und 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (Helsinki 1999) 2ff.

²²¹ K.F. Müller, *Das assyrische Ritual. I. Texte zum assyrischen Krönungsritual*, *MVAeG* 41/3 (Leipzig 1937) 12-13, ll. 34-35; Machinist 1993, 86; E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, *Rechtfertigung von politischem Handeln in Assyrien im 13./12. Jh. v.Chr.*, in: B. Pongratz-Leisten/H. Kühne/P. Xella (eds.), *Ana šadi Labnāni lū allik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn 1997) 69-77.

literary production. Thus this divine command to extend the borders formed likewise a central part in the Assyrian coronation ritual.²²²

The institutionalization and strengthening of the cult of the god Ninurta must be directly connected with this new royal ideology. It is worthwhile to take into account the possibility, that the introduction of the new theologem of the god Assur = the Assyrian Enlil²²³ by Tukulti-Ninurta I was a conscious religious act because it, actually, enabled him to raise Ninurta to the status of the first-born son of Assur.²²⁴ In its origins, the juxtaposition of Assur and Enlil was already prepared by Šamši-Adad I who restored the temple of Assur in the city of Assur but called it the temple of Enlil.²²⁵ Originally, the temple had been built by Erišum who called it by the ceremonial name: *bētum rimum* “wild bull,”²²⁶ whereas Šamši-Adad I in good Sumerian tradition introduced a Sumerian ceremonial name, *é.am.kur.kur.ra* explaining it as *É ri-im-ma-ta-a-tim* “temple – the wild bull of the lands.”²²⁷ However, in the special conceptualization of the Middle Assyrian theology, the juxtaposition of Assur and Enlil formed the prerequisite for the exaltation of Ninurta via the “Kulturtechnik” of genealogy²²⁸ within the Assyrian pantheon.

Rather than postulating that the transfer of the Marduk-cult to Assyria gave reason for the newly founded residence of Kār-

Tukulti-Ninurta,²²⁹ I would assume that a new political and a new religious program patronizing besides the god Assur the cult of the god Ninurta were of prime importance. Together with the gods Adad, Šamaš, Nusku, Nergal, Sibitti and Ištar they play an essential role in the military campaigns of the king, either because of their martial aspect or their divinatory aspect, or even both, as in the case of the goddess Ištar.

Subsequent to the institutionalization of the cult of Ninurta and the establishment of a specific Ninurta-theology rooted in very ancient traditions we may observe the mythologization of the king and his promotion to the status of divine hero within the royal inscriptions of Tukulti-Ninurta’s royal successors via adopting not only epithets previously reserved for the god into the king’s titulary, but also his weapons. The continuity of the religious and ideological program is expressed in the close neighbourhood of the king’s palace and the Ninurta temple at Kalḫu under Assurnasirpal II which is later replaced by the close connection of the palace and the Nabû-temple.²³⁰

The Middle Assyrian period is extremely well suited not only to trace step by step the interrelated development of political concepts, cult, royal ideology and literary production but also to delineate the different levels of legitimation of rulership which culminate in the sacralization of war and theologization of history.

²²² Machinist 1993, 86.

²²³ RIMA I, A.0.78.22:39; TKN-Epic vi rev.B 20’; KAR 128: obv. 39’b, obv. 36’b, rev.7, 25b.

²²⁴ KAR 128 rev 26’ “May Ninurta, valiant weapon bearer, your splendid son,” recently edited by Foster (1993) 230ff.

²²⁵ RIMA I, A.0.39.1:18ff; see also P. Miglus, Auf der Suche nach dem Ekur in Assur, BaM 21, 303-20.

²²⁶ RIMA I, A.0.33.1:16.

²²⁷ RIMA I, A.0.39.1:52-53.

²²⁸ B. Pongratz-Leisten, Genealogien als Kulturtechnik

zur Begründung des Herrschaftsanspruchs in Assyrien und Babylonien, SAAB XI (1997) 75-108.

²²⁹ B. Menzel, Assyrische Tempel, vol. 1 (Rom 1981) 110 referring to B. Hrouda, Vorderasien I, 208; against the assumption argues P. Miglus, Architektur der Festhäuser in Assur und Uruk sowie des Aššur-Tempels in Kār-Tukulti-Ninurta, BaM 24 (1993) 202f.

²³⁰ B. Pongratz-Leisten, *Ina šulmi irub*. Die kulttopographische und ideologische Programmatik der akitu-Prozession in Babylonien und Assyrien im 1. Jahrtausend v.Chr. (Mainz 1994) 96.

8. Conclusion

The previous survey of Sumerian and Akkadian literature has shown that people in Mesopotamia had a very subtle idea of their own culture, their technical and cultural knowledge and their civilizatory achievements. This self-perception determined their symbolic systems of religion and conception of the world, which, according to the text genres and their “Sitz im Leben,” as well as their historical background defined different levels of distinction or exclusion, graduate distances or the definition of a centre and a periphery. According to the level of how the counterpart was perceived, mechanisms such as the use of clichés or *topoi*, dehumanisation or mythologization came into play, whereby mythologization was first only applied to the enemy before – under the influence of new theological concepts – it embraced also the person of the Assyrian king. Throughout the millennia, the scribal élite, responsible for the written construction of the world-view, could scoop from a large fundus of literary production.

However, the scribal élite of the Middle as well as the Neo-Assyrian period did not understand the ancient Sumerian tradition “as a collection of inert products on the page but as the vital process imaged in language.”²³¹ Sumerian and also Old Babylonian tradition were regarded as the traditional field of reference, a kind of “intertextual pre-text”²³² which formed the *instrumentarium* for Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian phraseology depicting the enemy. When speaking of literary *topoi* in second and first millennium sources we must keep in mind that we speak of a specific form of mental conceptualization referring to and explaining a specific social and political reality,²³³ i.e., of the figurative rendering of a principal statement anchored in a cultural context, of a scheme of reference denoting reality.²³⁴ It is via this traditional referentiality that the Assyrian empire puts ancient *topoi* into new contexts, thus transferring “archaic” connotations and messages and constructing a new “coherent language and form, expressing a particular world-view.”²³⁵

²³¹ J.M. Foley, Oral Tradition and its Implications, in: I. Morris/B. Powell (eds.), A New Companion to Homer (Leiden/New York/Köln 1997) 146-73, esp. 166.

²³² A. Loprieno, Topos und Mimesis. Zum Ausländer in der ägyptischen Literatur (Wiesbaden 1988) 20.

²³³ W. Veit, Toposforschung. Ein Forschungsbericht, in:

M.L. Baeumer (ed.), Toposforschung (Darmstadt 1973) 183ff.

²³⁴ Loprieno 1988, 10.

²³⁵ P. Machinist, Assyrians on Assyria in the First Millennium B.C., in: K. Raaflaub (ed.), Anfänge politischen Denkens in der Antike (Oldenbourg 1993) 78.