

HEAVEN ON EARTH

HEAVEN ON EARTH

TEMPLES, RITUAL, AND COSMIC SYMBOLISM IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

edited by

DEENA RAGAVAN

with contributions by

Claus Ambos, John Baines, Gary Beckman, Matthew Canepa,
Davíd Carrasco, Elizabeth Froom, Uri Gabbay, Susanne Görke,
Ömür Harmanşah, Julia A. B. Hegewald, Clemente Marconi,
Michael W. Meister, Tracy Miller, Richard Neer, Deena Ragavan,
Betsey A. Robinson, Yorke M. Rowan, and Karl Taube

Papers from the Oriental Institute Seminar

Heaven on Earth

Held at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

2–3 March 2012

THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
ORIENTAL INSTITUTE SEMINARS • NUMBER 9
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013938227

ISBN-13: 978-1-885923-96-7

ISBN-10: 1-885923-96-1

ISSN: 1559-2944

© 2013 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved.
Published 2013. Printed in the United States of America.

The Oriental Institute, Chicago

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
ORIENTAL INSTITUTE SEMINARS • NUMBER 9

Series Editors

Leslie Schramer

and

Thomas G. Urban

with the assistance of

Rebecca Cain, Zuhail Kuru, and Tate Paulette

Publication of this volume was made possible through generous funding
from the Arthur and Lee Herbst Research and Education Fund

Cover Illustration:

Tablet of Shamash (detail). Gray schist. Sippar, southern Iraq. Babylonian,
early 9th century B.C.E. British Museum BM 91000-04

Printed by McNaughton & Gunn, Saline, Michigan

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of
American National Standard for Information Services — Permanence of
Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	vii
INTRODUCTION	
1. Heaven on Earth: Temples, Ritual, and Cosmic Symbolism in the Ancient World	1
<i>Deena Ragavan, The Oriental Institute</i>	
PART I: ARCHITECTURE AND COSMOLOGY	
2. Naturalizing Buddhist Cosmology in the Temple Architecture of China: The Case of the Yicahui Pillar	17
<i>Tracy Miller, Vanderbilt University</i>	
3. Hints at Temple Topography and Cosmic Geography from Hittite Sources	41
<i>Susanne Görke, Mainz University</i>	
4. Images of the Cosmos: Sacred and Ritual Space in Jaina Temple Architecture in India.	55
<i>Julia A. B. Hegewald, University of Bonn</i>	
PART II: BUILT SPACE AND NATURAL FORMS	
5. The Classic Maya Temple: Centrality, Cosmology, and Sacred Geography in Ancient Mesoamerica	89
<i>Karl Taube, University of California, Riverside</i>	
6. Seeds and Mountains: The Cosmogony of Temples in South Asia	127
<i>Michael W. Meister, University of Pennsylvania</i>	
7. Intrinsic and Constructed Sacred Space in Hittite Anatolia	153
<i>Gary Beckman, University of Michigan</i>	
PART III: MYTH AND MOVEMENT	
8. On the Rocks: Greek Mountains and Sacred Conversations	175
<i>Betsey A. Robinson, Vanderbilt University</i>	
9. Entering Other Worlds: Gates, Rituals, and Cosmic Journeys in Sumerian Sources	201
<i>Deena Ragavan, The Oriental Institute</i>	
PART IV: SACRED SPACE AND RITUAL PRACTICE	
10. “We Are Going to the House in Prayer”: Theology, Cultic Topography, and Cosmology in the Emesal Prayers of Ancient Mesopotamia	223
<i>Uri Gabbay, Hebrew University, Jerusalem</i>	
11. Temporary Ritual Structures and Their Cosmological Symbolism in Ancient Mesopotamia	245
<i>Claus Ambos, Heidelberg University</i>	
12. Sacred Space and Ritual Practice at the End of Prehistory in the Southern Levant	259
<i>Yorke M. Rowan, The Oriental Institute</i>	

PART V: ARCHITECTURE, POWER, AND THE STATE

13. Egyptian Temple Graffiti and the Gods: Appropriation and Ritualization
in Karnak and Luxor 285
Elizabeth Froom, University of Oxford
14. The Transformation of Sacred Space, Topography, and Royal Ritual in
Persia and the Ancient Iranian World 319
Matthew P. Canepa, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
15. The Cattlepen and the Sheepfold: Cities, Temples, and Pastoral Power
in Ancient Mesopotamia 373
Ömür Harmanşah, Brown University

PART VI: IMAGES OF RITUAL

16. Sources of Egyptian Temple Cosmology: Divine Image, King, and Ritual
Performer 395
John Baines, University of Oxford
17. Mirror and Memory: Images of Ritual Actions in Greek Temple Decoration 425
Clemente Marconi, New York University

PART VII: RESPONSES

18. Temples of the Depths, Pillars of the Heights, Gates in Between 447
David Carrasco, Harvard University
19. Cosmos and Discipline 457
Richard Neer, University of Chicago

PREFACE

The present volume is the result of the eighth annual University of Chicago Oriental Institute Seminar, held in Breasted Hall on Friday, March 2, and Saturday, March 3, 2012. Over the course of the two days, seventeen speakers, from both the United States and abroad, examined the interconnections among temples, ritual, and cosmology from a variety of regional specializations and theoretical perspectives. Our eighteenth participant, Julia Hegewald, was absent due to unforeseen circumstances, but fortunately her contribution still appears as part of this volume.

The 2012 seminar aimed to revisit a classic topic, one with a long history among scholars of the ancient world: the cosmic symbolism of sacred architecture. Bringing together archaeologists, art historians, and philologists working not only in the ancient Near East, but also Mesoamerica, Greece, South Asia, and China, we hoped to re-evaluate the significance of this topic across the ancient world. The program comprised six sessions, each of which focused on the different ways the main themes of the seminar could interact. The program was organized thematically, to encourage scholars of different regional or methodological specializations to communicate and compare their work. The two-day seminar was divided into two halves, each half culminating in a response to the preceding papers. This format, with some slight rearrangement, is followed in the present work.

Our goal was to share ideas and introduce new perspectives in order to equip scholars with new questions or theoretical and methodological tools. The topic generated considerable interest and enthusiasm in the academic community, both at the Oriental Institute and more broadly across the University of Chicago, as well as among members of the general public. The free exchange of ideas and, more importantly, the wide range of perspectives offered left each of us with potential avenues of research and new ideas, as well as a fresh outlook on our old ones.

I'd like to express my gratitude to all those who have contributed so much of their time and energy to ensuring this seminar and volume came together. In particular, I'd like to thank Gil Stein, the Director of the Oriental Institute, for this wonderful opportunity, and Chris Woods, for his guidance through the whole process. Thanks also to Theo van den Hout, Andrea Seri, Christopher Faraone, Walter Farber, Bruce Lincoln, and Janet Johnson, for chairing the individual sessions of the conference. I'd like to thank all the staff of the Oriental Institute, including Steve Camp, D'Ann Condes, Kristin Derby, Emma Harper, Anna Hill, and Anna Ressman; particular thanks to John Sanders, for the technical support, and Meghan Winston, for coordinating the catering. A special mention must go to Mariana Perlinac, without whom the organization and ultimate success of this seminar would have been impossible. I do not think I can be grateful enough to Tom Urban, Leslie Schramer, and everyone else in the publications office, not only for the beautiful poster and program, but also for all the work they have put into editing and producing this book. Most of all, my thanks go out to all of the participants, whose hard work, insight, and convivial discussion made this meeting and process such a pleasure, both intellectually and personally.

Deena Ragavan



Seminar participants, from left to right: Top row: John Baines, David Carrasco, Susanne Görke;
Middle row: Matthew Canepa, Uri Gabbay, Gary Beckman, Elizabeth Frood, Claus Ambos;
Bottom row: Yorke Rowan, Ömür Harmanşah, Betsey Robinson, Michael Meister, Tracy Miller, Karl Taube, Clemente Marconi; Front: Deena Ragavan. Not pictured: Julia Hegewald and Richard Neer

THE CATTLEPEN AND THE SHEEPFOLD: CITIES, TEMPLES, AND PASTORAL POWER IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

*Ömür Harmanşah, Brown University**

Enlil, when you marked out the holy settlements, you also built Nibru, your own city. You (?) ... the Ki-ur, the mountain, your pure place. You founded it in the Dur-an-ki, in the middle of the four quarters of the earth. Its soil is the life of the Land, and the life of all the foreign countries. Its brickwork is red gold; its foundation is lapis lazuli. You made it glisten on high in Sumer as if it were the horns of a wild bull. It makes all the foreign countries tremble with fear. At its great festivals, the people pass their time in abundance.

(Enlil in the E-Kur [Enlil A], lines 65–73;
translation from Black et al. 2004, p. 323)

Introduction: Cities, Imagination, Pastoral Power

The construction of cities with their monumental structures, ceremonial spaces, and the cultural life of urban spaces occupy a considerable amount of space in the literary compositions of the southern alluvium during the early second millennium B.C.E. In the Sumerian literary composition Enlil in the E-Kur, quoted above, the city Nibru (Nippur) is described as the precious design and sacred foundation of its patron deity Enlil. Situated in the center of the cosmos, the city and its temples constitute the civilized social space where people congregate for benevolent festivals and take refuge in times of disorder. It is quite striking how the built structure of the city (its soil, its brickwork, and its foundations) is described as a physically powerful place and how the city's architectonic brilliance derives directly from its holiness, its mythologies, and its social significance.

The scholarship on Mesopotamian cities has largely focused on a series of standard anthropological questions concerning the emergence of urbanism in the contexts of development of social complexity, state formation, labor organization, craft specialization, population estimates, and settlement hierarchies during the Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze

* This article developed out of a very brief but densely and painfully written section in my dissertation (Harmanşah 2005), a paper read at Penn's Graduate Humanities Forum in the session "Suspending (Dis) Belief" (2004) and presented to the Cultures and Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean (CRAM) workshop at Brown University (2007). I am grateful to

Matthew Rutz, Jeremiah Peterson, Naomi Miller, and the participants of the CRAM workshop for reading various versions of this manuscript and providing generous criticism and serious help. Irene J. Winter has shown extraordinary support for the present ideas in several of our conversations.

Ages.¹ In response to such well-defined research priorities, archaeological work on fourth- and third-millennium urbanization concentrated on identifying the networks of settlement and irrigation systems (Stone 2005, p. 144), while discussions of urban space have been restricted to building projects of the royal patrons with little consideration of the complexity of social relations behind the production of urban space. The spatial configuration of urban landscapes and the history of specific cities have rarely been addressed from a historically informed and spatially grounded perspective.² Spatial configuration in this context cannot be reduced to the physical layout of urban spaces, location of this temple and that palace, alignment of streets and watercourses, where the markets and craft quarters are located, and how wealth is distributed across residential neighborhoods, etc., but I attend to political discourses, social practice, and everyday cultural processes through which the built environment is produced, maintained, and made meaningful in the social imagination.

Recent critical studies of urban space demonstrate that, beyond settlement layouts and population statistics, cities are layered topographies of cultural histories, sites of active place-making events, and public spaces of collective action, as well as platforms for cultural imagination and political discourse.³ Alev Çınar and Thomas Bender (2007, p. xii) have succinctly put it: “the city is located and continually reproduced through ... orienting acts of imagination, acts grounded in material space and social practice.” In this article I propose that such a complex understanding of the city as a layered set of spatial practices and cultural representations is possible through an archaeological approach to urban space. Here I use archaeology in two senses of the word, both in reference to the actual disciplinary methodologies of archaeology with its thorough understanding the long-term histories of settlement, and in reference to a Foucaultian definition of archaeology as a metaphor in seeking the genealogy of institutions and geographies of power. It is therefore possible to make the case for archaeology of the city to involve the incorporation of literary representations of the built environment in order to excavate the layered meanings of urban spaces and their politics.

In this paper, I intend to contribute to the archaeological discussions of what we know about the Mesopotamian city of the second (and to a certain extent third) millennium B.C.E., by investigating the concepts of the city and urban forms of life as they were represented in the corpus of poetry in Sumerian, which largely dates to the first half of the second millennium B.C.E. On one hand, this is an attempt to bridge the gap between archaeology and text, specifically archaeological accounts of the city in the ancient Near East and the literary representations of cities. On the other hand, it also stems from my desire to arrive at an understanding of the city from a cultural studies perspective in contrast to the quantification-based discussions of urbanism and urbanization of the southern alluvium. What I wish to accomplish is to understand the poetics of urban space in the ancient Near East, and to read cities as places of human experience, everyday practice, and cultural representation. The

¹ For recent reviews of early Mesopotamian cities and the emergence of urbanism, see, e.g., Algaze 2008, pp. 40–92; Ur 2007; Stone 1991, 2005, and 2007; Yoffee 2005, pp. 42–90; Van De Mieroop 1997.

² Although see now Baker 2011 for Iron Age cities of Babylonia.

³ I borrow the concept of “cultural imagination” from Paul Ricoeur’s phenomenological theory, and his particular discussion of ideology and utopia as two forms emerging from a common, creative domain of cultural imagination, represented in the cultural forms of the everyday world such as symbols, myths, poems, ideologies, and narratives (Ricoeur 1986 and 1991; see also Kaplan 2008, pp. 205–07).

arguments presented below are not philological ones but they should be understood as a contribution to architectural history in the ancient Near East.

“City laments” are a series of texts from the Sumerian literary corpus known primarily from copies produced in the Old Babylonian curricula of scribal schools (Black et al. 2004, pp. 127–28; Cooper 2006). These long compositions involve epic narratives of the destruction or decline of particular cities such as Nippur, Eridu, Ur, and Uruk, and, most crucially, glorify the subsequent restoring of these cities and their temples and their social life by the benevolent kings of the Middle Bronze Age, especially the rulers of the First Dynasty of Isin (Tinney 1996).⁴ It is part of the argument here that the particular rhetoric of the moral/ritual decline and physical destruction of cities and their restoration by devoted kings is a phenomenon specific to the southern Mesopotamian dynasties of the early second millennium B.C.E., following the wide-scale collapse at the end of the third millennium (Cooper 2006, p. 40; Michalowski 1989, pp. 1–3). These early second-millennium texts mainly come from archaeological contexts of Mesopotamian cities, which at the time were undergoing an intensive episode of re-urbanization, as is well known from the archaeological work at places such as Nippur, Ebla, Mari, and others (Harmanşah 2007). Several of the texts are known primarily from copies produced in the Old Babylonian curricula of scribal schools, which were already ideologically charged places.⁵ The scribes of the various urban institutions were influential on the survival and the state of preservation of certain literary compositions by means of their “process of sifting through and selecting materials” for their school curriculum, and their editing practices were often driven by ideological motivations of their royal patrons, particularly in the case of the so-called royal hymns and other court literature (Michalowski 1995, p. 2284; see also Brisch 2007). The construction and appropriation of a mythical-ancestral past, especially linking existing structures of rulership with the mythical heroes of Uruk, and the divine legitimation of the ruler were a major part of the intellectual exercises in the scholarly production of literary works in the courts of late third- and early second-millennium kings (Visicato 2000). As has been pointed out by various scholars previously, this intensive production of literary and other texts lead to the construction of an extremely rich body of pan-Mesopotamian heritage of oral history, and articulated a collective understanding of a “Mesopotamian” past, distilled in the mythologies, histories, and cultures of storytelling (Veldhuis 2004, pp. 66–80; Michalowski 1983).

This paper discusses two important metaphors one finds in early Mesopotamian poetry concerning the city: the cattlepen and the sheepfold (Sumerian *tur* and *amaš*), which derive from the Mesopotamian conceptualization of the king as shepherd and the society as his flock on the move. I suggest that this Mesopotamian political imagination of the late second millennium B.C.E. presents us not simply the case for the usually assumed role of such metaphors as “topoi” or “stock-strophes” associated fertility and prosperity (e.g., Ferrara 1995,

⁴ Among the city laments, most prominently known are the Nippur Lament (Tinney 1996), Eridu Lament (Green 1978), Uruk Lament (Green 1984), Lament for Sumer and Ur (Michalowski 1989), Lamentation over the Destruction of Ur, the fragmentary text Ekimar Lament, and finally but a bit marginally the Curse of Agade (Cooper 1983, pp. 20–28; more recently, Cooper 2006). However, it is crucial to note that this grouping of the concerned texts under the

definition of a textual genre is essentially a modern philological construct. See Tinney 1996, pp. 11–25, for a critical discussion of genres, critical and ethnic genres, and city laments in Sumerian literature. On the city laments, see also Michalowski 1989, pp. 8–9.

⁵ On the scribal school curricula, see Delnero 2010 with previous literature; also Black et al. 2004, p. xl.

pp. 87–95) but, more significantly, an informative case of what Michel Foucault has termed “pastoral power” as expressed in the literary texts (Foucault 2007, pp. 123–34; Golder 2007). Considering Foucault’s notion of pastoral power as a royal rhetoric and a form of governmentality, I discuss the cattlepen and sheepfold as historically charged spatial metaphors used by the Isin-Larsa elites of the early second millennium B.C.E. that characterize the Mesopotamian city in between economies of pasturage and agriculture, between movement and settlement, between regimes of care and exercise of power, and, perhaps most significantly, between the local political discourse and an idealized pan-Mesopotamian past. In this context the city appears as a site where the king’s ideals of beneficence and pastoral power finds expression, while royal power and notions of governmentality are presented not so much as absolute rule over a territory based on violence and terror (as often assumed in current scholarly literature), but over a “multiplicity” (the society, the “flock”) based on beneficence and care. Using a powerful narrative of a romanticized urban past followed by catastrophe and destruction and the subsequent restoration of social order, the pastoral discourse derives its strength from the fact that it implicitly claims a shared Mesopotamian heritage of urban and rural prosperity while promoting Isin-Larsa kings for returning that prosperity to the people by rebuilding their cities and temples, restoring their rituals and festivals, reprovisioning the everyday life. The archetypal image Mesopotamian city and its sanctuaries as cattlepen and sheepfold portrayed as archetypal enclosures of agro-pastoral life in the southern alluvium is effectively entangled with symbolisms of animal husbandry as well as suggesting a unique relationship of care between the king and his subjects.

Inspired by the ancient Near Eastern history and the Christian West, Michel Foucault proposed that early forms of governmentality depended on the idea and organization of a pastoral type of social power. This idea is perhaps best articulated in his Collège de France lecture of 8 February 1978 on “governmentality,” posthumously published in the volume *Security, Territory, Population*, a collection of his 1977–1978 lectures at the Collège.⁶ In this memorable lecture, Foucault traces the origins of governmentality through a discussion of two forms, “the idea and organization of a pastoral type of power ... and ... the practice of spiritual direction, the direction of souls” (Foucault 2007, p. 123). Foucault takes his audience to the pre-Christian East in order to trace the genealogy of pastoral power as a prelude to Christian pastorate: “the theme of the king, god, or chief as shepherd (*berger*) of men, who are like his flock.” This state discourse of domination and technology of governmentality is well attested in the Eastern Mediterranean world, as Foucault notes, and especially well documented in ancient Mesopotamian texts, which would have been available to Foucault through monographs such as Ilse Seibert’s *Hirt, Herde, König: Zur Herausbildung des Königtums in Mesopotamien* (1969). Foucault argued that the shepherd’s power manifests itself in a duty, a task to be undertaken. The form it takes is not the striking display of strength and superiority, but suggests zeal, devotion, and endless application. The shepherd is someone who keeps watch, developing a sense of vigilance and a regime of care (Pandian 2008).

⁶ Michel Foucault lectured at the Collège de France from 1971 until his death in 1984, when he held the prestigious chair the History of Systems of Thought. These lectures have been reconstructed from sound recordings of a collection of his auditors and edited by Michel Senellart and translated by Graham

Burchell for publication by Éditions de Seuil/Gallimard and Picador. Very different from his densely written work, these lectures present Foucault’s thought process in his later life in the form of a powerful narrative.

Lamenting the City, the Cattlepen, the Sheepfold

The distinctive group of literary compositions called city laments, where the spatial metaphors of the cattlepen and the sheepfold are particularly prominent, portray a world in distress: the socio-cultural decline and physical destruction of prominent southern Mesopotamian cities. The city laments are in general terms associated with the highly performative *eršemma* and *balag* cult songs performed by the professional lamentation (*gala*) priests, often in the *emesal* register of Sumerian (Black 1991). City lamentations from southern Mesopotamia focus on human suffering and attempt to persuade the gods to restore social order. Near Eastern lamentations in general are considered effective in restoring the fertility of the land and the prosperity of societies (Bachvarova 2008, p. 18). As lengthy epic poems, the city laments portray the destruction of the cities of the southern alluvium along with their abandonment by their patron deities, while they “glorify royal reconstruction works in order to persuade the cities’ patron deities to return home and to bless, and thereby legitimate, the current king” — that is, the king who has sponsored the literary composition (Green 1984, p. 253). These texts testify to the turbulent political landscape of the end of the third millennium in Mesopotamia and the subsequent decline of its major urban centers. They also need to be considered within their very specific sociopolitical context of the early second millennium, a time when energetic rulers sponsored building activities and the composition of such literary compositions in their royal cities. It is within these texts that historically conscious official discourses are presented linking the Isin-Larsa kings and their cities to their glorious predecessors of the Mesopotamian past. The cattlepen and sheepfold metaphors emerge in this context as a nostalgic imagination of urban economic prosperity of the third millennium B.C.E. while the character of southern Mesopotamian kingship shifts toward an ideology of pastoral power. It is true that cattlepens and sheepfolds also appear in late third-millennium texts such as the hymns sponsored by the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur or cylinders of Gudea of Lagaš (see discussion below), those rulers of the third millennium B.C.E. who were ambitious builders of cities and temples. However, these terms become truly established and effective in the context of the city laments, linking Old Babylonian ideologies of kingship that were grounded in the idea of restoring urban spaces from the widespread destruction and collapse at the end of the third millennium B.C.E.

Cities such as Nippur, Eridu, Ur, and Uruk, for which lamentations have been composed, are all urban centers deeply rooted in the history of urbanization in the southern alluvium and prominent in the social memory of the Near Eastern societies of the second and first millennia. The prominent role of urban centers in the beginnings of civilized life is perhaps best expressed in the so-called flood story, a fragmentary late Old Babylonian text known mostly from a tablet now at the University of Pennsylvania Museum (CBS 10673+10867). Here the main plot is the creation and civilization of mankind (“black-headed people”), the institution of kingship, the founding of the five mythical cities, and a subsequent “flood” (Black et al. 2004, pp. 212–15).⁷ In the poem, each of the five newly founded cities — Eridug, Bad-tibira,

⁷ The tablet was excavated at Nippur in the third season of the expedition (1893–96) and is now in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Unfortunately, only the lower third of the tablet is preserved. The cuneiform text

was published by Arno Poebel (1914). Bottéro and Kramer (1989, p. 564) point to two pieces of possible duplicates, one from Ur, the other from an unknown provenience.

Larag, Zimbir (Sippar), and Šuruppag — are allocated to a major divinity of the Sumerian pantheon. Furthermore, these cities were endowed, on the one hand, with divine powers and the rituals and the social order that maintain the well-being of the society, the so-called *mes* (see discussion below), and, on the other hand, with *kāb₂-dug-ga*, a legal status of sorts that most probably had something to do with irrigation rights (Civil 1994, pp. 153–63, esp. p. 160):

After the ... of kingship had descended from heaven, after the exalted crown and throne of kingship had descended from heaven, the divine rites and the exalted powers were perfected, the bricks of the cities were laid in holy places, their names were announced and the [*kāb₂-dug-ga*] were distributed. The first of the cities, Eridug, was given to Nudimmud the leader. The second, Bad-tibira, was given to the Mistress. The third, Larag, was given to Pabilsağ. The fourth, Zimbir, was given to hero Utu. The fifth, Šuruppag, was given to Sud. And after the names of these cities had been announced and the [*kāb₂-dug-ga*] had been distributed, the river ..., ... was watered, and with the cleansing of the small canals ... were established. (Black et al. 2004, pp. 213–14)

The civilized world is described here in the form of a series of newly founded urban centers as seats of specific divinities, while their rights to water for irrigated agriculture and their herds, and the establishment of their cult practices seem to be significant for the maintenance of the social order. Similar to this narrative of the divine foundations of cities, in the hymn Enlil in the E-kur, the foundation of the city of Nippur and its main sanctuary complex were attributed to the god Enlil, while Nippur is conceptualized as being located at the center of the universe. The city is presented as monumental in a horizontal, earthly, human domain (“as if it were the horns of a wild bull”), which “makes all the foreign countries tremble with fear” and people congregate for benevolent festivals.⁸ However, Nippur is also referred as *dur-an-ki* “Bond-of-Upper-and-Lower-Worlds,” set on the human-divine vertical axis acting as a mediatory space (Westenholz 1998, p. 46). Nippur was considered as the meeting place of the divine assembly (*ukkin*), therefore it held the “shrine where destinies are decreed” (*eš₃ nam tar.ra*), it was “the city of decisions.”⁹ This religious prestige bestowed a fundamental ideological significance to Nippur among the early Mesopotamian dynasties. While no political entity ever had the prestige of holding Nippur as the capital city of its dynasty, every Mesopotamian king who had a territorial claim on a regional scale in the southern alluvium had to be legitimized by the divine assembly at Nippur and had to contribute to its prosperity, the building and restoration of its temples, the celebration of its festivals (Postgate 1992, p. 33). Although Nippur is a unique example among the cities of the southern alluvium in the fourth through second millennia B.C.E., the literary representations of this city are informative in discussing the cultural significance of urban space and urban life, out of which political discourses such as pastoral power were derived.

However, the central place of cities in the political imagination finds its best expression in the city laments, as discussed above. The Nippur Lament, most probably composed at the time of Išme-Dagan of the Isin dynasty (1953–1935 B.C.E.), as convincingly argued by Steve Tinney, “formed part of the contemporary presentation of the king as a friend of Nippur and

⁸ Enlil in the E-Kur, lines 69–73; see epigraph at the beginning of this chapter.

⁹ On Nippur’s religious aspects as a city, see, e.g., Sal-laberger 1997 and Lieberman 1992.

a favourite of its gods.” (Tinney 1996, p. 1). The poem starts with an intriguing line, essential for the present discussion:¹⁰

- line 1 After the cattle-pen had been built for the foremost rituals—
 2 How did it become haunted? When will it be restored?
 3 (Where) once the brick of fate had been laid—
 4 Who scattered its rituals? The lamentation is reprised:
 5 The storeroom of Nippur, shrine Duranki,
 6 How did it become haunted? When will it be restored?
 7 After Ki’ur, the cult-place, had been built,
 8 After the brickwork of Ekur had been built,
 9 After Ubšu’ukkina had been built,
 10 After shrine Egalmah had been built—
 11 How did they become haunted? When will they be restored?
 12 How did the true city become empty?
 13 Its precious designs have been defiled!
 14 How were the city’s festivals neglected?
 15 Its magnificent rites have been overturned!

The text offers a vivid image of Nippur in decline, with its urban landscape fully endowed with several sanctuaries, each invoked by name. The city is presented as an archetypal place where the decision for monumental construction was “divinely inspired” through the laying of “the brick of fate” or alternatively “decreed brickwork” (Tinney 1996, p. 130 n. 3). A contrasting *ekphrasis* of the city’s desolate landscape with respect to its urban history tells us that such powerful, originary status of the urban landscape have now lost its meaning with the falling apart of its cult practices and subsequent abandonment. According to Steve Tinney’s commentary, the two words that are invoked at the very beginning of the passage *tur*₃ (“cattlepen”) and *me* (“divine ordinances/decrees” translated here as “foremost rituals”) both carry symbolic references to “well-being, ... collective safety, protection and agricultural prosperity of the cattle-pen on the one hand, and the orderliness of the natural and social worlds, as well as the rituals needed to maintain this order, on the other” (Tinney 1996, p. 127, emphasis mine). As Tinney (*ibid.*, p. 125) points out, the cattlepen is used as a metaphor for the city of Nippur itself. It is the sacred space *par excellence*, built in accordance with the divinely ordained precious designs (*giš-hur*) and for the practicing of the ritual activity — precisely in the way it should take place — which were the essential conditions for the well-being of the world order. Then what is referred in the first line is actually the original construction as well as the *raison-d’être* of the city Nippur-qua-the cattle pen (*tur*₃) that holds the divine essences (*me*).

A conspicuous idea that one finds extensively in the literary compositions is that as the gods took residence at particular cities, they also brought their divine *decorum*, their divine essences (Sumerian *me*) for the architectural shaping of their earthly domains: their temples were described as embedded in the *urban fabric of the cities* (literally, “brickwork”) and confined within the monumental city walls. Though risking a serious anachronism here, I use the word *decorum* in the original Latin sense “literary and dramatic propriety,” that is, “befitting” in general terms. The term is useful, since in the Sumerian language there seems

¹⁰ The transliterations and translations are from the scholarly edition of the text, Tinney 1996. For the

history of research on the text, cf. Tinney 1996, pp. 6–8.

to be much concern toward the appropriateness, fitting-character of practices in accordance with social and religious norms, especially a great concern in defining aspects of craftsmanship. Winter's argument (2000, p. 33) on the "fitting/suitable" character of Mesopotamian temples, abundantly expressed in ancient texts as the positive visual quality of the buildings that provoked admiration, neatly confirms with this idea. *Decorum* is also used in antiquity as an architectural term, to denote, the way buildings should look like in accordance with certain social/cultural norms (see, e.g., Vitruvius, *On architecture* 1.2.5–7).

In the Nippur Lament, the thorough *ekphrastic* description of the urban landscape evokes many architectural metaphors. The common poetical expression "brickwork" (sig₄), for example, seems to refer to the physical corpus of the urban built environment. Similarly, in the Lament for Sumer and Urim, Umma is referred as "the brickwork in the midst of the highlands" (Michalowski 1989, p. 45; Black et al. 2004, p. 132, line 155). I interpret the expression as a visual metaphor for the architectural corpus of the city itself or its large complexes (such as sanctuaries), most likely from the visual dominance of sun-dried or kiln-fired mudbricks in the structural fabric of buildings. This formed the outstanding architectonic aesthetics of early Mesopotamian architecture (Moorey 1994, pp. 302–22). It is important to see the metaphorical aspect of the expression as a cumulative architectural corpus with a distinct tectonic quality.

The word *me* in Sumerian represents an abstract concept that refers to an extremely loaded semantic domain. In very simplified terms, it is translated as "essence," "a thing's divinely ordained essence," or "what a thing should be" (Klein 1997, p. 211; Glassner 1992). The *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* gives the traditional meaning as "göttliche Kräfte" (in reference to A. Falkenstein) or "divine ordinances," while it is also variously translated as "[divine or princely] office" (Jacobsen 1987, p. 378) or "prescriptions" (Rosengarten 1977).¹¹ The *me* appears to be intrinsic powers or characteristics of divine beings that make the essential activities within the natural and civilized worlds exist and function properly, and manifests itself in the human world as various forms of cultural institutions, social practices, or craftly representations of the divine.¹² In this way, it is almost consistently associated in the texts with *ĝiṣ-hur* that denotes "(divine) plan, (precious) design." Both can be understood as divine powers that in one way or another become materially manifest in the real world, in the objects, spaces, and bodies that are touched or infused by such supernatural agencies.

Jacob Klein argued that *me* often stood for "a two-dimensional symbol or image, engraved or painted on a sign, banner or standard, representing the underlying abstract concept" (Klein 1997, p. 212). This intriguing idea may suggest that there is a seamless continuity

¹¹ *RIA* s.v. *me* (ġarza, pařu). Yvonne Rosengarten (1977, p. 2) classified the various forms of translations that appear in Sumerological literature: a) those who understand *me* as "divine decrees, as orders issued by divine decisions," b) those who see it as "determined destinies imposed by the gods to the humans," c) those who believe that *me* refers to "sorts of models, archetypes, comparable to Platonic idea," and d) those who adopted more dynamic terms as "divine powers or crafts." One should refer to the Inanna and Enki myth, where an incredible list of the 94 *me* are listed as Inanna steals them from Enki and transfers them to humanity. Innana's list

includes an assortment of social and cultural institutions, human and divine assets. For a translation and detailed study of this text, see Farber-Flügge 1973. See also Kramer and Maier 1989, pp. 57–68; Glassner 1992; Cavigneaux 1978.

¹² One of the most comprehensive definitions of *me* that I have come across is that of Kramer and Maier (1989, p. 57): "fundamental, unalterable, comprehensive assortment of powers and duties, norms and standards, rules and regulations ... relating to the cosmos and its components, to gods and humans, to cities and countries, and to the varied aspects of civilized life."

between the abstract concept and its material manifestation/visual representation in the Sumerian worldview. What is crucial for the present discussion is Klein's suggestion that the divinely bestowed *me* become manifest in objects of divine creation within the material world, including (but not restricted to) landscapes, countries, cities, temples, objects of exquisite craftsmanship, and the body-image of the king.¹³ They derive their agency from the gods and these divine powers are visually expressed in their very materiality, while the *mes* of the universe may become obsolete, if they are not sustained by means of decorous, (re)productive social practices, as illustrated by the Nippur Lament (above). Therefore, the habituated rituals and recurrent building activities must have been very much part of this human anxiety for sustaining the effectiveness of *mes*.

The Lament for Sumer and Urim starts by evoking our four parallel concepts, the divine powers, precious designs, the cattlepen, and the sheepfold:¹⁴

- lines 1–2 To overturn the appointed times, to obliterate the divine plans [*giš-hur*], the storms gather to strike like a flood.
- 3–11 An, Enlil, Enki, and Ninḫursaġa have decided its fate—to overturn the divine powers [*me*] of Sumer, to lock up the favourable reign in its home, to destroy the city, to destroy the house, to destroy the cattle-pen [*tur₃*], to level the sheepfold [*amaš*]; that the cattle should not stand in the pen, that the sheep should not multiply in the fold, that watercourses should carry brackish water, that weeds should grow in the fertile fields, that mourning plants should grow in the open country ...

The pairing of the cattlepen metaphor with the city seems even more obvious in this context, with a further possibility to associate the *sheepfold* with the temple complex.¹⁵ The destruction of the city is associated with the abandonment of the *giš-hur* and the disruption of the *me*. Such relationship between the cattlepen [*tur₃*] and the sheepfold [*amaš*], concerning their appearance together in the texts was already pointed out by Tinney (1996, p. 127). Later in the Nippur Lament, the day of restoration of Sumer and Akkad, brought in by Enlil in the personality of Išme Dagan, is celebrated as “the day for building the cattle pens and founding sheepfolds.” A line in a different hymn to Išme Dagan (B 49) confirms the idea that the construction of cities and temples was a primary manifestation of the prosperity of the land: “May he [Enlil] build cattle-pens for you, may he enlarge sheepfolds” (Tinney 1996, p. 176 n. 254). Furthermore, Steinkeller (1999, p. 109 and n. 19) points out that the “cattle pen”

¹³ This very point also explains the general confusion in the attempts to translate the word *me*; the ambiguity between the inherently possessed *me* and its representational manifestations in the human world. From the very different texts, in particular within the context of city laments, one gets the impression that *mes* of temples, cities, countries, etc., may become obsolete if they do not receive maintenance and utmost care, from the side of the human practices. It is exactly at this point that the idea of “foremost rituals” comes into play, since it is believed that the repeated and continuous cultic activity keeps the *mes* of the country alive and functioning, in such a way that the world is in order.

¹⁴ Transliterations and translations are from Black et al. 2004, pp. 128–29; see also Michalowski 1989.

¹⁵ Similarly, in the composition Enmerkar and Ensuhkešdanna, the city Ereš of the god Nisaba is also metaphorically referred as “the cattlepen, the house where the cows live” (line 172) and its sanctuary as “the holy sheepfold, the sheepfold of Nisaba” (line 185); Berlin 1979, pp. 50–53. In the Lament for Sumer and Urim (line 186), “the settlements of the E-danna of Nanna, like substantial cattle-pens, were destroyed” and so was Ki-abrig “which used to be filled with numerous cows and numerous calves” (line 200) (Black et al. 2004, p. 133).

appears as one of the recipients of beer in “two Uruk tablets dealing with the distribution of beer,” along with “chief-administrators,” “the festival of the Inana of the west (= evening),” and the “chief-supervisor of the gipar(?)”

It was also essential for the Mesopotamian kings to connect their political realm with that of the divine. As I have tried to demonstrate above, the functioning of all the urban institutions and thus the well-being of the social order were made possible by the “(precious) designs” [giš-hur] and “(divine) ordinances” [me] which I would like to call “divine *decorum*” of kingship. These would then shape the cultural landscape of the city, from the way the ritual activity had to be carried out, to the manner in which the required cultic building projects had to be accomplished with appropriate architectural qualities that befitted the divine me. It is possible therefore to argue that the seemingly abstract concepts of giš-hur and me are understood to be materially manifest or visually expressed in the architectural corpus, the urban fabric of Mesopotamian cities, as a divine *decorum* that guides the shaping of built environments and maintained by ongoing social and spatial practices.

Visual Representations and the Architecture of the Cattlepen

As a major urban economic institution within the Mesopotamian city, the temple was the source of collective identity, not simply because it held a significant place in the everyday social life with its cult activities but also because it was the “wealthy neighbor,” a redistributive institution that initiated extensive agricultural production, animal husbandry, long-distance trade, and craft production (Postgate 1992, pp. 135–36; Stone 2005). It is well documented that the specialized economy of the early Mesopotamian urban institutions heavily depended on animal husbandry, especially cattle and sheep herding (Zeder 1991; Greenfield 2010), and this must have had important implications for the configuration of fortified urban spaces in the southern alluvium as well as the pictorial representations of them. Likewise, the extraordinarily rich visual repertoire of the late Uruk-period seal impressions, monumental stone vases, and inlaid architectural decorations excavated from the contexts of early urbanization in southern Mesopotamia form a corpus of imagery that corresponds well with the literary evidence by presenting the spatial realm of the temple household with frequent representations of herds of cattle (Seibert 1969, pp. 23–35; see also discussion in Winter 2010). In several of the published seals and seal impressions of the Late Uruk period, one finds a rich iconography of cattle herds, related buildings, and a prominent kingly figure identified by his special garb and his caring for the flocks. The associated architectural structures in these scenes are usually elaborately depicted and interpreted as temples and storehouses (Kawami 2001). Irene Winter (2010, p. 121) has suggested that the mudhif-like reed structure depicted on the alabaster trough from Uruk/Warka can be interpreted as a “sheep-fold.”¹⁶ Similar representations of reed structures with calves, lambs, and ringed bundle “standards” of Inana emerging from them are frequently attested on Late Uruk cylinder seals (fig. 15.1) and Early Bronze Age carved stone bowls from Ur and Khafaje.¹⁷ I suggest that these vernacular reed

¹⁶ See Moortgat 1969, pls. 17–18. This trough, 10.8 cm high and 103.0 cm long, was excavated in the Eanna complex; see Andrae 1930.

¹⁷ Kawami 2001, p. 40; Winter 2010. For an example of green stone vase with relief representations of

a reed structure with Inanna reed bundles, found in the Early Dynastic levels of small neighborhood shrine at Khafaje, see Frankfort 1936, p. 69, fig. 54.

structures of the southern Mesopotamian marshes already point to an idealized primordial architectural type associated with abundance and urban prosperity on the one hand, and the cult of Inanna on the other. It is possible to assume that this Mesopotamian heritage of Late Uruk urbanization may have continued to percolate in the urban and architectural cultures of the third millennium B.C.E. in southern Mesopotamia and have impacted the formation of the powerful symbolism of the pastoral during the Early and Middle Bronze Ages.

Later and more complex examples of this architectural narrative of abundance and prosperity are seen in the Early Bronze Age. One important architectural ensemble comes from a small but precious temple of Ninhursag in southern Mesopotamia at the small site of Tell al Ubaid, built or restored by a certain king named A'annepada, son of Mesannepada, kings known from the so-called First Dynasty of Ur (ca. 2400 B.C.E.). This Early Dynastic IIIA–IIIB temple was excavated by H. R. Hall in 1919 and followed up by Leonard Woolley in 1923–24 (figs. 15.2–6) (Hall and Woolley 1927). The temple, which was in continuous use from the Early Dynastic III to the Ur III period, stood on a high mudbrick platform and was surrounded by an oval enclosure wall (Collins 2003, p. 84). The building presents us a rich assemblage of architectural technologies of cladding and decoration at the time. Two beautifully constructed columns that flanked the entrance were built from palm logs covered with a coating of bitumen and inlaid with mother of pearl, pink limestone, and black shale (fig. 15.3). The copper alloy high relief figure of the famous lion-headed Imdugud bird clasping two stags topped the entrance to the temple while the facade was decorated with a row of copper bulls, shell-inlaid narrative friezes, and elaborate multi-colored clay nails (fig. 15.4). This iridescent and luminous quality of the materials used on the building (mother of pearl, shell, copper alloy, black shale, limestone, among other materials) perhaps speaks to the notion of me, as a craftly representation of the divine — divine power made visible through the tantalizing exotic materials of faraway lands, as illustrated in the famous passage in Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta (lines 37–54), where Enmerkar, king of Uruk, asks Inana to have the lord of Aratta provide precious exotic materials (“stones of their hills and mountains”) for the building of Inana’s holy Gipar, and explicitly says that this construction would cause Enmerkar’s mes “become evident in Kullab” (line 53) (Vanstiphout 2003, p. 58).

More interestingly, on the facade of the temple of Ninhursag at Tell al Ubaid, an inlaid narrative relief panel represents the temple as a cattlepen (figs. 15.5–6). The narrative sequence, made with inlaid *Tridacna* shells and limestone on a bitumen and black shale background, depicts a milking scene with the dominance of human figures on the left and cattle on the right, while the composition is centered on the image of the temple. The vertical linear features in the representation of the temple most likely allude to the reed construction (upright reed bundles fastened together with bands of rope). The scene of cattle emerging from a gate is also known from Late Uruk cylinder seal designs and low relief decoration on an alabaster troughs (see discussion in Hall and Woolley 1927, pp. 113–14; and Winter 2010, p. 203). The architecture of this temple may be considered as an archaizing representation of an archetypal enclosure of a reed structure as cattle pen, as one would associate with the long-term building practices in the marshy landscape of the south. In light of the above discussion of Mesopotamian cities and temples as cattlepen and sheepfold, this scene becomes not just symbolically linked to Ninhursag, “lady of the steppe,” but evocative from a political point of view as well. The political discourse operates on multiple levels here, both through the exuberant use of precious materials and prestigious craft technologies in the decoration of the temple facade (power over exotic resources of exotic landscapes), and its adherence

to the worldview associated with pastoral power. The deliberate contrast in materials and technologies between the representation of the temple on the inlaid panel as an archetypal reed construction versus the luxuriously clad architectonics of the actual temple itself is striking. In my view, it points to the idealization of the temple household as a site of production grounded in the traditions of animal husbandry (therefore prosperity and fecundity), all embodied in the visual and architectural metaphor of the cattlepen. Speaking from this example, then, the architectural metaphor plays with temporality, both with references to a prosperous distant past in the collective Mesopotamian memory and a promised future guaranteed by the builder-king, while the representations remain deeply embedded in the oral culture of mythological tales and political discourses. Furthermore, the architectural metaphor also plays with materiality, shifting our focus from vernacular reed constructions of deep antiquity to the current ruling power's luxuriously sponsored monuments. While the decorum is maintained, political messages are also delivered.

The Shepherd and the Pastoral Power

In line with the literary, spatial, and visual metaphors of cattlepen and sheepfold, Mesopotamian rulers of the late third and early second millennium used “shepherd” [*sipa*] as a royal title, as sponsors of the making of those places.¹⁸ In a cone inscription from Ur, Rim Sîn I was credited to have built a temple at Ur, so that the god Dumuzi, “*shepherd* of the broad steppe,” would “multiply cattle and sheep in the cattle pens and sheepfolds” (Frayne 1990, E4.2.14.4, lines 20–24). If the fecundity of the land depended on the maintenance of its cities and temples, it was the *shepherd* who took credit for “building cattle pens and founding sheepfolds.” Gudea was the “true shepherd” of his people on the behalf of Ningirsu.¹⁹ Ur Namma was called “the foremost shepherd of Enlil” while Šulgi took on the title of being “the shepherd of the black-headed-people” or “shepherd of the land,” among others.²⁰ In the Hymn to Nisaba, Išbi-Erra is summoned to exercise “the shepherdship of all the people.” Examples can be multiplied, especially for the late third and early second millennium B.C.E., but it is evident that the early Mesopotamian rulers seem to have chosen to be “shepherds” as “the benevolent guardian” of their people. The shepherdship is then demonstrated through the construction and maintenance of sheepfolds and cattlepens. In a hymn to Rim-Sîn, king of Larsa (1822–1763 B.C.E.), it is declared to him that at the city of his kingship, Larsa, “where the mes of rulership have been cast,” he has rightly been “chosen for the shepherdship of Sumer and Akkad.”²¹

¹⁸ For a thorough survey of the occurrences of Sumerian *sipa*, see Westenholz 2004 and Seux 1967, pp. 441–46. For Akkadian *rēʾû* (= *sipa*) in the literature, see Seux 1967, p. 244–50. It is clear that the royal epithet “shepherd” was a long-term aspect of Mesopotamian kingship, so much so that the Late Assyrian rulers, who had a keen interest in establishing their ties to the ancient heroes of Mesopotamia, used it in the Iron Ages as well. See also Selz 2010, p. 10.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Gudea Cylinder A vii 9; A xi 5; A xiv 5; A xxiv 9; A xxv 22; B viii 17 and B ii 7; most recent editions of the texts are found in Edzard 1997, pp.

69–101 (texts: Gudea E3/1.1.7CylA and B), and Wilson 1996, pp. 129–96. The phrase is alternatively as “righteous shepherd” or “faithful shepherd.”

²⁰ Reisman 1969, p. 17, no. 61. See also Šulgi X 40, where Šulgi is given “the shepherdship of all the lands” [*sipa-kur-kur-ra*]; Klein 1981, pp. 138–39.

²¹ Postgate 1992, p. 261, text 14:1. In other texts, Rim-Sîn is referred as the “true shepherd”; see Kuhrt 1995, vol. 1, p. 79. Compare the expression for Šulgi in Šulgi D, line 60: “Enlil, the king of all the lands, [gave] you the shepherdship of the land” (Klein 1981, pp. 74–75).

This correlation of metaphorical expressions in the mytho-poetic language of the Sumerian compositions suggests an illuminating semantic nexus between the architecture of the city and the temple complex as the cattlepen and the sheepfold, and the king as the shepherd, holding the main institutions of the Mesopotamian society. As Anand Pandian has recently argued, one could see this very relationship in the Foucaultian concept of “pastoral power” as a form of “biopolitics” of the state, referring to “the government of a population modeled on the relationship between a figurative shepherd and the individual members of a flock” (Pandian 2008, p. 86). However, it is important to note that these metaphors point, not necessarily to a de-humanizing, enslaving discourse of the state toward its people, but, on the contrary, to the intimate and very genuine care that a shepherd offers to the well-being of his flock, as Pandian elegantly argues. This is somewhat in contrast to modern Western conceptualizations of shepherding as a political metaphor. In the context of everyday practice in early Mesopotamian cities, cattlepen and sheepfold appear as the perfect spatial metaphors that speak of this very intimacy and care between the king and his subjects. The literary evidence suggests that this was a prominent political discourse used by several of the early Mesopotamian kings and explains the reasons why construction of cities and temples occupy such a large space in their public monuments.

Conclusions

What I aim to do in this paper is an attempt to capture the cultural imagination of the early Mesopotamian city in the city laments of the early second millennium B.C.E. with a focus on the spatial metaphors of *tur₃* and *amaš*, cattlepen and sheepfold, which present a nostalgic understanding of the then-lost cities of the Mesopotamian past. The urban space is reconstructed as a sheltering enclosure for the primary animals of domestication, sheep and cattle, while pastoralism and animal husbandry are imagined as primordial occupation of the early urban life. The concepts of *me* and *giš-hur* support this mytho-poetic and utopic conceptualization of the origins of the city — as divinely sanctioned and constructed spaces that are then maintained by appropriate rituals and divine powers. Here, I borrow Paul Ricoeur’s definition of cultural imagination as “a map of ideas, stories, and images a society has about itself that integrates human action through interpretative schemas” (Kaplan 2008, pp. 204–05). Three important concepts in understanding cultural imagination are ideology, utopia, and memory. Ideology is an exchange between makers of political discourse and the audience of that discourse, and it aims to consolidate social order for the good of a dominant class. Utopia is innovative thinking that shatters that social order for the sake of liberation, and project the society to an imagined ideal that is either located in the future or the past.²² Memory is a collectively shared vision of the past, an aspect of identity and belonging; collectively produced and politically manipulated body of the knowledge of the past (embedded in orality, texts, monuments, and visual culture).

In the rapidly changing urban environment of the early second millennium B.C.E., we see the articulation of a vision of ancient cities as archetypal enclosures of cattlepen and sheepfold, which constituted the spatial components of pastoral power while evoking nostalgic

²² See Pongratz-Leisten 2006 on a Mesopotamian example of an urban utopia constructed in the texts of Gudea of Lagaš.

notions of primordial pastoral life and its associations of prosperity and moral purity. In the context of the political rhetoric of the kings of First Dynasty of Isin, the benevolent and caring king appears as a builder of cities and by definition becomes the shepherd of his flock. This reflection on the early Mesopotamian past by the early second-millennium kings is a creative one that somehow establishes an evolutionary perspective from pastoral lifestyles to agricultural and mercantile urban economies.

The visual metaphors that were associated with the city, the temple and the urban architectural corpus, and the visual metaphors that glorified the corporeal image of the king, were derived from similar concepts. As it is evident in the long-term concept of the Mesopotamian king as a devoted builder, the “*roi-bâtitseur*,” the king had to build cities, temples, and other monumental buildings not only for satisfying the spatial needs for the functioning of urban institutions, but also for the maintenance of a worldly order (Lackenbacher 1992). The spectacular layout of his cities, the perfection of his architectural projects and the performance of urban rituals, were intimately linked to the perfection of the bodily image of the king, which was always the focus of attention in the public sphere. This “corporeal integrity of the monarch,” to use Michel Foucault’s term (2006) was maintained through a set of practices, performances, and discourses ranging from building activities to state spectacles involving the king’s own body; from the bringing of exotic raw materials and goods to state-sponsored literary compositions. The divine and politicized power of the Mesopotamian ruler became manifest in the king’s own bodily image: while the urban image of his cities, both of which were endowed with divinely inspired qualities of craftsmanship. This ideological agenda of the perfection of the king’s image then is used as a legitimation for the acquisition of exotic and precious raw materials and skilled craftsmanship from marginal landscapes.

Mesopotamian literary sources are rich for understanding the image of the city in the late third- and early second-millennium collective imagination. In the Mesopotamian poems of this time period, the image of the city was associated with metaphors of the *cattlepen* and *sheepfold* that were heavily charged with socio-symbolic representations of economic prosperity, civilization of the inhabited world, and its maintenance through cultural institutions. In the discursive structure of these texts, the body of the king, the rituals of his city, the craftly artifacts in the public sphere, as well as public monuments of the city, all derive their material power from the divine *mes* endowed to them, and by this means constitute coherent components of a utopic ideal of worldly order. We must, of course, situate this utopic ideal in the political context of such state-sponsored literature under the Ur III and Isin-Larsa kings. Equally important, however, is the task for us to trace the intimate dialogue between the social practices, particularly building practices at the time of the composition of these poems and the literary representations that emerge in them. The Mesopotamian city then can only be understood through the careful parsing of social imaginations, official ideologies, as well as material practices in the making of the social world.

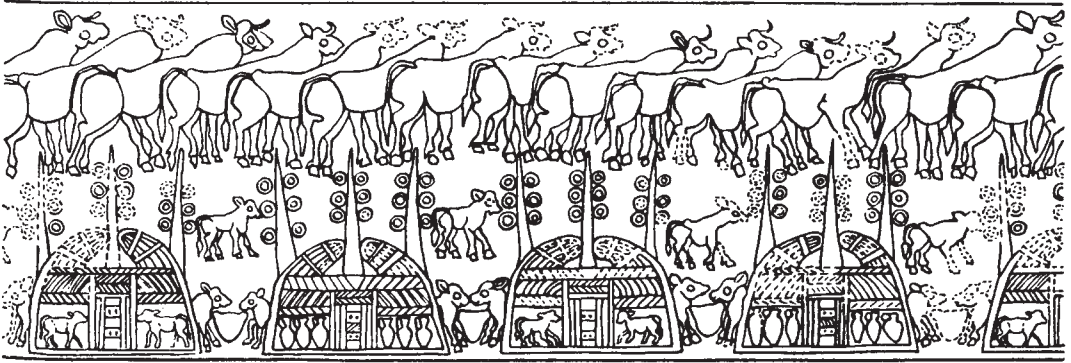


Figure 15.1. Sealing with representations of reed structures with cows, calves, lambs, and ringed bundle “standards” of Inana (drawing by Diane Gurney. After Hamilton 1967, fig. 1)

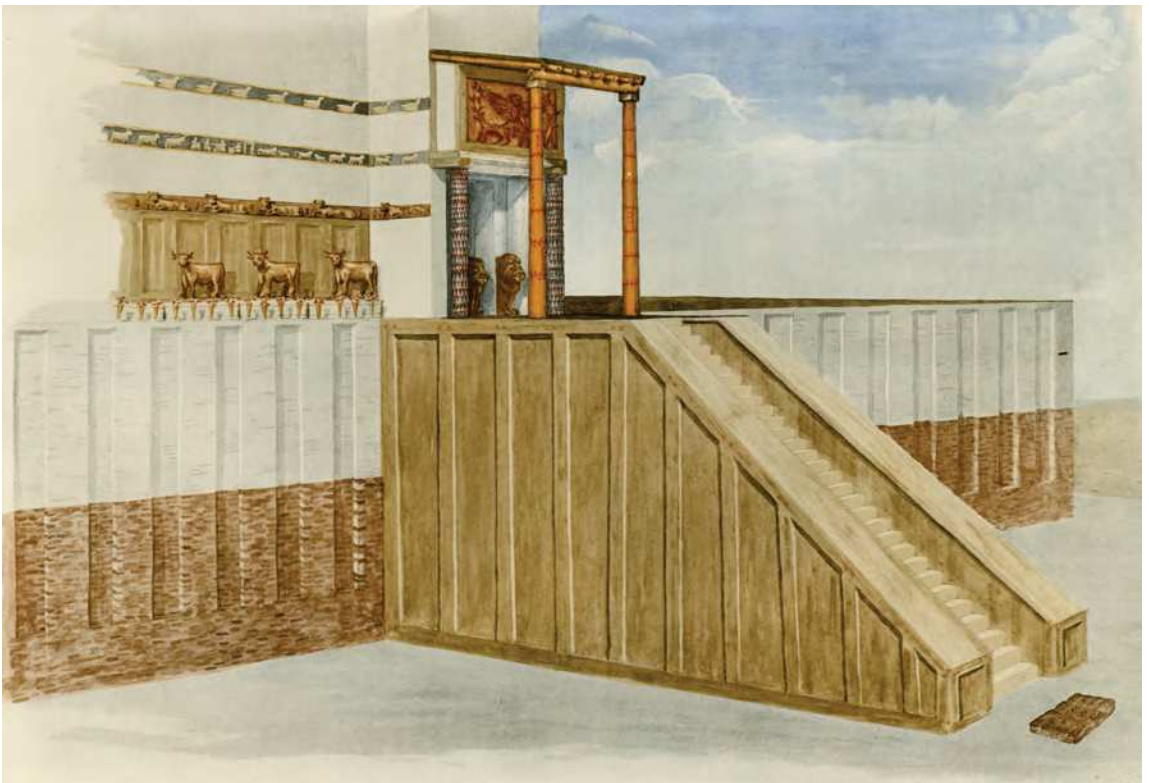


Figure 15.2. Tell al Ubaid, Temple of Ninursag. Isometric reconstruction. Early Dynastic period (ca. 2600 B.C.E.) (Hall and Woolley 1927)



Figure 15.3. Tell al Ubaid, Temple of Ninhursag. Inlaid columns with red limestone, shell, and bitumen. Early Dynastic period (ca. 2600 B.C.E.) (© The Trustees of the British Museum)



Figure 15.4. Tell al Ubaid, Temple of Ninhursag. Copper bull sculpture from the frieze. Early Dynastic period (ca. 2600 B.C.E.) (© The Trustees of the British Museum)



Figure 15.5. Tell al Ubaid, Temple of Ninhursag. Tridacna shell-inlaid architectural frieze with bitumen and black shale. Early Dynastic period (ca. 2600 B.C.E.) (© The Trustees of the British Museum)



Figure 15.6. Tell al Ubaid, Temple of Ninhursag. Tridacna shell inlaid architectural frieze with bitumen and black shale. Early Dynastic period (ca. 2600 B.C.) (Hall and Woolley 1927)

Abbreviation

- RLA Erich Ebeling et al., eds, *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1928–

Bibliography

- Algaze, Guillermo
2008 *Ancient Mesopotamia at the Dawn of Civilization: The Evolution of an Urban Landscape*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Andrae, Walter
1930 “Steinbecher.” *Amtliche Berichte Berliner Museen* 51/1: 2–4.
- Bachvarova, Maria R.
2008 “Sumerian Gala Priests and Eastern Mediterranean Returning Gods: Tragic Lamentation in Cross-cultural Perspective.” In *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond*, edited by Ann Suter, pp. 18–52. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, Heather D.
2011 “From Street Altar to Palace: Reading the Built Environment of Urban Babylon.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Cuneiform Culture*, edited by Karen Radner and Eleanor Robson, pp. 533–52. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Berlin, Adele
1979 *Enmerkar and Ensuhkešdanna: A Sumerian Narrative Poem*. Occasional Publications of the Babylonian Fund 2. Philadelphia: The University Museum.
- Black, Jeremy A.
1991 “Eme-sal Cult Songs and Prayers.” *Aula Orientalis* 9: 23–36.
1998 *Reading Sumerian Poetry*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Black, Jeremy A.; Graham Cunningham; Eleanor Robson; and Gábor Zólyomi
2004 *The Literature of Ancient Sumer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bottéro, Jean, and Samuel Noah Kramer
1989 *Lorsque les dieux faisaient l’homme: mythologie mésopotamienne*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Brisch, Nicole M.
2007 *Tradition and the Poetics of Innovation: Sumerian Court Literature of the Larsa Dynasty (c. 2003–1763 B.C.E.)*. *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 339. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag.
- Cavigneaux, Antoine
1978 “L’Essence divine.” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 30/3: 177–85.
- Çınar, Alev, and Thomas Bender, editors
2007 “Introduction. The City: Experience, Imagination, and Place.” In *Urban Imaginaries: Locating the Modern City*, edited by Alev Çınar and Thomas Bender, pp. xi–xxvi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Civil, Miguel
1994 *The Farmer’s Instructions: A Sumerian Agricultural Manual*. *Aula orientalis Supplementa* 5. Barcelona: Editorial AUSA.

- Collins, Paul
2003 "Al Ubaid." In *Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus*, edited by Joan Aruz, pp. 84–88. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Cooper, Jerrold S.
1983 *The Curse of Agade*. Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
2006 "Genre, Gender and the Sumerian Lamentation." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 58: 39–47.
- Delnero, Paul
2010 "Sumerian Extract Tablets and Scribal Education." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 62: 53–69.
- Edzard, Dietz Otto
1997 *Gudea and His Dynasty*. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 3/1. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Farber-Flügge, Gertrud
1973 *Der Mythos "Inanna und Enki" unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Liste der me*. Studia Pohl 10. Rome: Biblical Institute Press.
- Ferrara, A. J.
1995 "Topoi and Stock-strophes in Sumerian Literary Tradition: Some Observations, Part I." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 54: 81–117.
- Foucault, Michel
2006 *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973–1974*, edited by Jacques Lagrange and Arnold I. I. Davidson, translated by Graham Burchell. New York: Picador.
2007 *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, edited by Michel Senellart. New York: Picador.
- Frankfort, Henri
1936 *Progress of the Work of the Oriental Institute in Iraq, 1934/35: Fifth Preliminary Report of the Iraq Expedition*. Oriental Institute Communication 20. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Frayne, Douglas R.
1990 *Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 B.C.)*. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods, 4. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Glassner, Jean-Jacques
1992 "Inanna et les me." *Nippur at the Centennial: Papers Read at the 35^e Rencontre assyriologique internationale, Philadelphia, 1988*, edited by Maria deJong Ellis, pp. 55–86. Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 14. Philadelphia: S. N. Kramer Fund, Babylonian Section, University Museum.
- Golder, Ben
2007 "Foucault and the Genealogy of Pastoral Power." *Radical Philosophy Review* 10: 157–76.
- Green, M. W.
1978 "The Eridu Lament." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 30/3: 127–67.
1984 "The Uruk Lament." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 104/2: 253–79.
- Greenfield, Henri
2010 "The Secondary Product Revolution: The Past, The Present and the Future." *World Archaeology* 42: 29–54.

- Hall, H. R., and C. Leonard Woolley
1927 *Al-'Ubaid: A Report on the Work Carried Out at Al-'Ubaid for the British Museum in 1919 and for the Joint Expedition in 1922-3*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hamilton, R. W.
1967 "A Sumerian Cylinder Seal with Handle in the Ashmolean Museum." *Iraq* 29/1: 34-41.
- Harmanşah, Ömür
2005 *Spatial Narratives, Commemorative Practices and the Building Project: New Urban Foundations in Upper Syro-Mesopotamia During the Early Iron Age*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.
2007 "Upright Stones and Building Narratives: Formation of a Shared Architectural Practice in the Ancient Near East." In *Ancient Near Eastern Art in Context: Studies in Honor of Irene J. Winter by Her Students*, edited by Jack Cheng and Marian H. Feldman, pp. 69-99. Leiden: Brill.
- Jacobsen, Thorkild
1987 *The Harps that Once...: Sumerian Poetry in Translation*. Yale University Press: New Haven.
- Kaplan, David M.
2008 "Ricoeur's Critical Theory." In *Reading Ricoeur*, edited by David M. Kaplan, pp. 197-212. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Kawami, T. S.
2001 "The Cattle of Uruk: Stamp Seals and Animal Husbandry in the Late Uruk/Jemdet Nasr Period." In *Proceedings of the XLV^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Part 2: Seals and Seal Impressions*, edited by William W. Hallo and Irene J. Winter, pp. 31-48. Bethesda: CDL Press.
- Klein, Jacob
1981 *Three Šulgi Hymns: Sumerian Royal Hymns Glorifying King Šulgi of Ur*. Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press.
1997 "The Sumerian me as a Concrete Object." *Altorientalische Forschungen* 24: 211-18.
- Kramer, Samuel Noah, and John R. Maier
1989 *Myths of Enki, the Crafty God*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kuhrt, Amélie
1995 *The Ancient Near East, c. 3000-330 B.C.* 2 volumes. Routledge History of the Ancient World. London: Routledge.
- Lackenbacher, Sylvie
1982 *Le roi bâtisseur: le récits de construction assyriens des origines à Teglathphalasar III*. Études Assyriologiques, Éditions Recherche sur les civilisations: Paris.
- Lieberman, Stephen J.
1992 "Nippur: City of Decisions." In *Nippur at the Centennial: Papers Read at the 35^e Rencontre assyriologique internationale, Philadelphia, 1988*, edited by Maria deJong Ellis, pp. 127-36. Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 14. Philadelphia: S. N. Kramer Fund, Babylonian Section, University Museum.
- Michalowski, Piotr
1983 "History as Charter: Some Observations on the Sumerian King List." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103: 237-48.
1989 *The Lamentation Over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
1995 "Sumerian Literature: An Overview." In *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, edited by Jack M. Sasson, vol. 4, pp. 2279-91. New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.

- Moorey, P. R. S.
1994 *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries: The Archaeological Evidence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pandian, Anand
2008 "Pastoral Power in the Postcolony: On the Biopolitics of the Criminal Animal in South India." *Cultural Anthropology* 23/1: 85–117.
- Poebel, Arno
1914 *Historical and Grammatical Texts*. Publications of the Babylonian Section 5. Philadelphia: University Museum.
- Pongratz-Leisten, Beate
2006 "Gudea and His Model of an Urban Utopia." *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 37: 45–59.
- Postgate, J. Nicholas
1992 *Early Mesopotamia: Society and Economy at the Dawn of History*. London: Routledge.
- Reisman, Daniel
1969 Two Neo-Sumerian Royal Hymns. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.
- Ricoeur, Paul
1986 *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*. Edited by George H. Taylor. New York: Columbia University Press.
1991 *From Text to Action*. Translation of *Du texte à l'action*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Rosengarten, Yvonne
1977 *Sumer et le sacré: le jeu des prescriptions (me), des dieux, et des destins*. Paris: De Boccard.
- Sallaberger, Walther
1997 "Nippur als religiöses Zentrum Mesopotamiens im historischen Wandel." In *Die orientalische Stadt: Kontinuität, Wandel, Bruch*, edited by Gernot Wilhelm, pp. 147–68. Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag.
- Seibert, Ilse
1969 *Hirt, Herde, König: Zur Herausbildung des Königtums in Mesopotamien*. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Schriften der Sektion für Altertumswissenschaft 53. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
- Selz, Gebhard J.
2010 "'The Poor Are the Silent Ones in the Country': On the Loss of Legitimacy; Challenging Power in Early Mesopotamia." In *Who Was King? Who Was Not King? The Rulers and the Ruled in the Ancient Near East*, edited by Petr Charvát and Petra Maříková Vlčková, pp. 1–15. Prague: Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.
- Seux, M.-J.
1967 *Épithètes royales akkadiennes et sumériennes*. Paris: Letouzey et Ané.
- Steinkeller, Piotr
1999 "On Rulers, Priests and Sacred Marriage: Tracing the Evolution of Early Sumerian Kingship." In *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East* (papers of the Second Colloquium on the Ancient Near East, The City and Its Life, held at the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan, Mitaka, Tokyo, March 22–24, 1996), edited by Kazuko Watanabe, pp. 103–37. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter.
- Stone, Elizabeth C.
1991 "The Spatial Organization of Mesopotamian Cities." *Aula Orientalis* 9: 235–42.

- 2005 "Mesopotamian Cities and Countryside." In *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*, edited by Daniel C. Snell, pp. 141–54. Malden: Blackwell.
- 2007 "The Mesopotamian Urban Experience." In *Settlement and Society: Essays Dedicated to Robert McCormick Adams*, edited by Elizabeth C. Stone, pp. 213–34. Ideas, Debates, and Perspectives 3. Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press; Chicago: The Oriental Institute.
- Tinney, Steve
1996 *The Nippur Lament: Royal Rhetoric and Divine Legitimation in the Reign of Išme-Dagan of Isin (1953–1935 B.C.)*. Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 15. Philadelphia: University Museum.
- Ur, Jason A.
2007 "Early Mesopotamian Urbanism: A New View from the North." *Antiquity* 81: 585–600
- Van De Mieroop, Marc
1997 *The Ancient Mesopotamian City*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Vanstiphout, H. J. L.
2003 *Epics of Sumerian Kings: The Matter of Aratta*. Writings from the Ancient World 20. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature.
- Veldhuis, Niek
2004 *Religion, Literature, and Scholarship: The Sumerian Composition "Nanše and the Birds."* Cuneiform Monographs 22. Leiden: Brill.
- Visicato, Giuseppe
2000 *The Power and the Writing: The Early Scribes of Mesopotamia*. Bethesda: CDL Press.
- Westenholz, Joan Goodnick
1998 "The Theological Foundation of the City, the Capital City and Babylon," in *Capital Cities: Urban Planning and Spiritual Dimensions*, edited by Joan Goodnick Westenholz, pp. 43–54. Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum.
- 2004 "The Good Shepherd." In *Schools of Oriental Studies and the Development of Modern Historiography*, edited by Antonio Panaino and Andrea Piras, pp. 281–310. Milan: Università di Bologna; Rome: ISIAO.
- Wilson, E. Jan
1996 *The Cylinders of Gudea: Transliteration, Translation and Index*. Kevelaer: Verlag Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
- Winter, Irene J.
2000 "The Eyes Have It: Votive Statuary, Gilgamesh's Axe, and Cathected Viewing in the Ancient Near East." In *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, edited by Robert S. Nelson, pp. 22–44. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 2010 "Representing Abundance: The Visual Dimension of the Agrarian State." In *On Art in the Ancient Near East, Volume 2: From the Third Millennium B.C.E.*, edited by Irene J. Winter, pp. 199–226. Leiden: Brill.
- Yoffee, Norman
2005 *Myths of the Archaic State: Evolution of the Earliest Cities, States and Civilizations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Zeder, Melinda A.
1991 *Feeding Cities: Specialized Animal Economy in the Ancient Near East*. Smithsonian Series in Archaeological Inquiry. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.