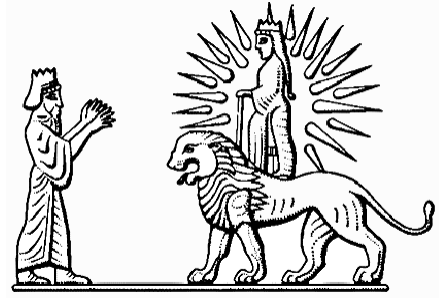


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“The Good Shepherd”

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The Good Shepherd*

I. Deceptive Familiarity

The shepherd is one of the most important archetypal symbols and metaphors that our ancient forebears bequeathed to future generations of humanity. Encoded in the symbolism of the shepherd is an elaborate metaphysical schema of the way in which relationships, society, politics, ethics and global consciousness are to be envisioned. If a mythic image, metaphor or symbol is to be properly understood, we must be aware of the message that it is conveying.

From the end of the third millennium BCE onwards in Mesopotamia, the monarch was thought of as the ‘shepherd of his people.’ For instance, king Hammurabi proclaimed “I am Hammurabi, the shepherd called by Enlil” (CH i 50ff.). In the Bible, it is recorded that King David

actually began his life as a shepherd caring for his father’s flocks (*I Sam.* 16: 11, 17: 20, 34-35), and was later given the task of shepherding the people of Israel: “... and the LORD said to you: ‘You shall shepherd My people Israel; you shall be ruler of Israel’” (*II Sam.* 5: 2). David became the ideal ruler and the type of the true shepherd of Israel.¹

In Jewish and Christian sacred writings, the epithet ‘shepherd’ is also applied to God in relation to the individual, Israel or the Church as in the well-known psalm: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (*Ps.* 23: 1). Similarly, Mesopotamian deities were described as shepherds, in particular Enlil.² An Old Akkadian individual bore the name *Bēlī-SIPA* “My-Lord-Is-(My)-Shepherd” (MAD 1 163 x² 13).³

* The abbreviations in this article follow the conventions of The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago (CAD) and The Sumerian Dictionary of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania (PSD) with the following additions: **Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature** = J. A. Black, G. Cunningham, E. Flückiger-Hawker, E. Robson and G. Zólyomi, *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (<<http://www-etcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk>>), Oxford 1998-; **LATU** = R. Englund and H. Nissen, *Die lexikalischen Listen der Archaischen Texte aus Uruk* [ATU 3] (Berlin, 1993).

¹ Actually the first biblical occurrence of this metaphor of shepherd and flock to signify leader and people is Moses’ plea that God should make Joshua the leader of the people after his own death, so “that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd” (*Numbers* 27: 17).

² For instance see *Enlil and Ninlil*, line 10, and note in Behrens 1978: 91.

³ There was a range of terms covering the span of herding professionals, the most common of which are *sipa* in Sumerian and *rē’ū* in Akkadian; for a review of

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shepherd terminology, see Waetzoldt 1972-5: 421-425. Because of space limitations, only this pair of lexemes will be treated in the context of the three millennia of cuneiform tradition. Lexical questions already exist in the earliest texts; for instance, Selz (1998a: 326 note 201) suggests that the term NAMEŠDA used in Uruk III was replaced by *sipa* but *sipa* already appears in traditional lexical lists of professions, Archaic Lú A 95 (see LATU, 83). Moreover, other terms occur in Uruk III lexical texts, based on UDU_a and AB₂, such as GAL.UDU_a AB₂, GAL.PA.UDU_a AB₂ Archaic Lú A List 111-2 (LATU, 84). The exact meanings of these professions are unknown but must be differentiated from the profession AB₂.KU = UTUL_a ‘cowherd,’ which is also found in archaic texts (LATU, 88 Officials, 59f.), as well as the profession GAL_a UTUL_a, which appears together with SANGA_a UDU_a AB₂ in MSVO 4, 32 ii 3; see Englund 1995: 35, K. Szarzynska 1994: 1. See further Waetzoldt 1982. Note that *utullu* occurs as a title of Assyrian kings, in particular of the Middle Assyrian kings Shalmaneser I, Tukulti-Ninurta I, and Tiglath-pileser I.

These two metaphors, the royal and the divine, unite in the Christian image of Jesus as the good shepherd: “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (*John* 10: 11).

Although this metaphor developed in the ancient Near East, the corresponding iconographic motif is said to have evolved in the classical world.⁴ In classical art, small figurines, statuettes and statues depicted the god Hermes as *kriophoros* (‘ram-bearer’). In his role of the god honoured for finding lost sheep, Hermes appears as a young shepherd carrying a young animal on his shoulders (fig. 1). The youthful figure of the ram-bearer had a long tradition of pagan usage (offering bearer, bucolic figure, personification of Winter, Hermes *psychopompos* [“carrier of the souls of the dead”]). This

pagan image was easily assimilated to the biblically-derived metaphor describing Jesus. In funerary contexts (fig. 2), the shepherd image embodied the doctrinal belief in the salvation of the soul, being similar in intent to the Early Christian use of the Old Testament figures of Noah, Daniel and Jonah, and it later became a viable substitute image for Christ as saviour of his flock.

This study will first investigate the meaning of the shepherd metaphor in current understanding and then trace its reflection in its Near Eastern inception until its mature elaboration in Early Christian art and literature. It will also touch on the significance of the Good Shepherd as a royal depiction and divine image, both in the ancient Near Eastern and in the classical world.⁵

II. Shepherd Ideology

The first step in reaching a clearer understanding is to analyse our own presuppositions about the definition of the shepherd’s profession, and then to probe the metaphoric / allegorical / symbolic meanings which may be derived by analogy from the realistic level. Multiple strata of cultural, ethical, theological, and psychological connotations overlie the base root metaphor, and need to be explored and examined carefully.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971, 681) gives the basic definition of the lexeme ‘shepherd’ as: “A man who guards, tends, and herds a flock of sheep (grazing at large).”

As one who guards, the shepherd is a guardian for the defenceless and provides protection. However, could this protective aspect of shepherding have a possible aggressive undercurrent? Is the guardianship envisioned defensive or peaceful, or is it seen as offensive in character? “The shepherd is said to be a peaceful person who avoided strife as much as possible.”⁶ On the other hand, the aspect of defence is basic to the general concept of a shepherd: “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (*John* 10: 11).

As one who tends, the shepherd also looks after his charges, acting as a care-

⁴ See Huyghe 1968: 16.

⁵ Other ancient traditions used the shepherd image as a model for leadership but lie outside the scope of this survey. In Hinduism, Krishna is sometimes por-

trayed as a shepherd, and in Buddhism, the Bodhisattva is often depicted as the Good Shepherd.

⁶ Samuel 1996: 106.

giver and a provider to the vulnerable; he gathers the newly born lambs and holds them in his arms. He thus succours and nurtures his sheep. In addition, in his role as herder, the shepherd keeps his charges from straying and finds the lost sheep. Sheep are thought to wander since they have no sense of direction, and depend on the shepherd to guide them to streams and pastures. The shepherd must lead his flock along the proper paths so that they do not fall prey to accident or predators. The shepherd walks ahead of his flock. He thus furnishes guidance and discipline.

In addition, the *Oxford English Dictionary* offers a second figurative meaning: “a spiritual guardian or pastor of a ‘flock’,” under which is subsumed as a third subdivision of meaning “Applied to temporal rulers.” Under this definition, the *OED* cites Homer and similar uses in the Old Testament. This definition, based on the biblical metaphor, has become part of the general royal ideology. Built into this metaphor are analogical rela-

tionships, such as the shepherd to his flock, the leader to his follower; the one to the many, the dominant to the powerless. This is the Shepherd King metaphor. Not mentioned in the *OED* definition is the negative aspect of the shepherd who leads his sheep to the slaughter for purposes of either ritual or the provision of food. Although existing at the realia level, this is not part of the metaphor.

In this paper, I will concentrate on the three primary aspects of shepherding – guarding, tending and herding – and investigate which of these are embodied in the Mesopotamian use of the image. When the ancients regarded their king as a shepherd, did they see his primary task as providing nurture and life for his kingdom or as providing defence? What was conveyed by the pastoral language which came to symbolize the spiritual principles that governed both the universe and the covenantal community and its leadership?

III. The Development of the Good Shepherd Metaphor

Let us now look at the nuances of the Mesopotamian version of this metaphor, which is so deceptively familiar to us that we fail to examine its implications. Not only are we confident that we understand this metaphor, but we are also certain that this figurative language was considered traditional in ancient Mesopotamia, where the king was regarded as herdsman of his subjects.⁷ I was thus surprised at its absence – or rather meagre presence – in the early royal inscriptions of the kings of Sumer and Akkad.⁸

A. Early Evidence of the Shepherd King Trope

Looking at the written evidence, we see that the earliest testimony of the royal shepherd image appears in only two Old Sumerian references. The first is a clay ovoid tag with an inscription of Uruinimgina, which names an object as ^dBau ... Uru-inim-gi-na nam-sipa-šè mutu “Bau, ... bore Uruinimgina for shep-

⁷ See Selz 2001: 12: “Der ‘rechte Hirte’ – nicht etwa der ‘Landesvater’ – ist vermutlich das verbreitetste

und älteste dieser Ur-Bilder der Herrschaft.”

⁸ See in general Seux 1980-1: 162f. §75.

herdship is its name.”⁹ Tags such as this were presumably affixed to cult objects, giving their ceremonial names.¹⁰ Since Uruinimgina is the only ruler of Lagash to mention the abstract conception of shepherdship, it is interesting to note that he is also one of the few who claimed the title of lugal ‘king.’ In this context, shepherdship is a synonym for kingship, but its figurative significance is not explicitly stated.

The last Old Sumerian lugal ‘king,’ Lugalzagesi, states at the end of his vase inscription: kur ú-sal-la ḥa-mu-da-nú nam-lú-ulù ú-šim-gin₇ šu-dagal ḥa-mu-da₅-du₁₁ ubur-an-na-ke₄ si ḥa-mu-da₅-sá kalam-e ki-sa₆-ga igi ḥa-mu-da-du₈ nam-sa₆-ga mu-tar-re-éš-a¹ šu na-mu-da-nibal-e-ne sipa sag-*GU₄-gál da-rí ḥé-me¹¹ “For my sake: may the countryside(kur)¹² lie down in the grassy pasture, may the people become as widespread as the grass, may the nipples of heaven function properly, and the homeland (kalam)¹³ gaze upon a goodly earth! May they (An and Enlil) never alter the propitious destiny they have determined for me! May I always be the leading shepherd.” The first line contains the Sumerian phrase ú-sal-la ... nú ‘to lie down in grassy pasture,’ which is often used in referring to

the country or people in a metaphor expanding the image of the king as shepherd. It has been stated that pasture outside the fortified city connotes security. In reality, ensuring that the sheep were comfortable in lying down was no easy task. Commenting on the biblical parallel, Keller notes that there are four factors that inhibit a sheep from lying down¹⁴:

1. Fear: Sheep are anxious creatures, their timid nature stems from fear.
2. Tension: They must be free from strife with their fellow sheep.
3. Aggravation: If the sheep are tormented by flies or parasites, they cannot relax. Since pests are a common problem among sheep, the shepherd must take care to be on the lookout for them.
4. Hunger: Sheep will not rest when they feel hunger.

The considerate shepherd must see to it that these problems are reduced to a minimum in order to provide rest and peace of mind for the flock. The fourth factor seems especially significant in reference to the last line in Lugalzagesi’s vase inscription, which seems to imply an image of the shepherd leading his people to pasture, to food and to sustenance.

⁹ Ukg. 51, 1-3; see Steible, ABW, I 354f., Cooper, *Presarg. Inscr.*, 83 La 9.14 q; Selz 1995: 97 no. 205; Selz 2001: 15.

¹⁰ Cooper, *Presarg. Inscr.*, 84.

¹¹ Luzag. 1 iii 22-36; see Steible, ABW, II 320 and 325 note 24, as well as Wilcke 1990: 489 note 72 regarding the problems of the reading of line 35 and the consequent problems in translation. See translations of 1982 (Steible, ABW, II 319f.); 1986 (Cooper, *Presarg. Inscr.*, 94 UM 7.1); and Wilcke 1990: 489f.

¹² “Das Bergland” Wilcke 1990: 489f.; “Das Fremmland” Steible, ABW, II 319f.; Selz 1998: 326 note 201; “the lands” Cooper, *Presarg. Inscr.*, 94 UM 7.1. Perhaps this is a picture of peaceful coexistence: if the mountain peoples can lie down tranquilly in their pastures with enough to eat, they will not descend on the fertile plain. A later reference to a specific foreign

land, Amurru (Martu), lying down in grassy pastures is: kur mar-tu ú-sal-la nú-a “the Martu land, lying in grassy pastures,” *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, 144, which the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature translates as “resting in security.” Cf. further, *ina la rēūtu pargāniš ikkal aḥūti* “foreigners used (the fields) as pastureland due to the lack of shepherdship” (VAS 1 37 iii 17-18, Merodach-baladan kudurru).

¹³ “Das Land” Wilcke 1990: 489f.; “Das Land (und Volk Sumer(s))” Steible, ABW, II 319f.; “the people” Cooper, *Presarg. Inscr.*, 94 UM 7.1. Although generally translated ‘the Land,’ the term kalam refers only to those cities that participated in a cultural koine within the southern Mesopotamian alluvial plain.

¹⁴ 1970: 35ff.

These two Old Sumerian references suggest that in the beginning the royal shepherd image included the herding aspect described above: the leading of the flock to pasture, but not the nurturing role, the tending and caregiving, nor the protective guardianship of the flocks.

Onomastic documentation might provide further evidence of the royal shepherd image but early names rarely include the element *sipa* ‘shepherd.’ In the Fara period onomasticon, the name Lugal-sipa “The-King-Is-The-Shepherd” is unknown, while Lugal-engar-(zi) “The-King-Is-The Faithful¹⁵-Farmer” does occur.¹⁶ The farmer image was even more popular than the shepherd in the earliest personal names, as might be expected in an agrarian society. In fact, it is the pastoral image that seems out of place. In a later Sumerian literary composition, the *Hymn to Enlil*, the farmer is equated with the shepherd: engar-maḥ-bi sipa-zi kalam-ma “its august farmer is the country’s reli-

able shepherd” (*Hymn to Enlil* [*Enlil suraše*], Line 60, see Falkenstein, *Götterlieder*, 14).¹⁷

Among Early Dynastic III and Sargonic Sumerian personal names, Lugal-sipa “The-King-Is-The-Shepherd” occurs occasionally. Names composed with *sipa* were most popular in the Lagash region.¹⁸ The personal name composed with the royal name Enannatum, En-an-na-tum-sipa-zi,¹⁹ gives further testimony of the royal shepherd image. Although Lugal-engar-(zi) does not occur, the farmer image has not disappeared, as can be seen in the personal name of a well-known Lagashite official, Engar-zi.²⁰ On the other hand, when we look for instances of theophoric personal names composed with the elements of the name or epithet of a divinity and the word ‘shepherd,’ we find that the Fara period onomasticon contains not only Dingir-engar “God-Is-The-Farmer,” but also Dingir-sipa “God-Is-The-Shepherd.”²¹ De Vito emphasizes

¹⁵ On the question of the translation of *zi*, an exact one-to-one equivalent of *zi* in our languages is impossible since it covers a range of meanings—true, faithful, righteous, legitimate. It is ‘true’ in the sense of ‘in accordance with the divine order,’ and ‘reliable,’ ‘steadfast’ in social relationships. In the idiom *sipa-zi*, it is commonly mistranslated ‘good shepherd’ because of the biblical terminology.

¹⁶ Pomponio, *Prosopografia*, 155.

¹⁷ The referent of this line is not clear. While Falkenstein assumed it refers to the king (*Götterlieder*, 52f.) as does Jacobsen (Harps, 105 note 16), Reisman suggests that engar of the Ekur is probably Ninurta (Daniel David Reisman, *Two Neo-Sumerian Royal Hymns* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania) (Philadelphia, 1970), 84.

¹⁸ *Lugal-sipa*: VAS 27 7 iii 15 (Lugalanda); VAS 27 6 xi 3; HSS III (STH 1) 5 iii 1 (Selz 1993 no. 4), 6 iii 8 (Selz 1993 no. 5), 7 rev. v 3 (Selz 1993 no. 6 xii 3), 15 iv 14 (Selz 1993 no. 14), 16 v 1 (Selz 1993 no. 15), 17 vi 1 (Selz 1993 no. 16), 18 v 5 (Selz 1993 no. 17), 24 ii 10 (Selz 1993 no. 23) (time of Urukagina); DP 142 ii 1, VAS 25 89 iii 3 (date uncertain); *Dumu-sipa*: HSS III (= STH 1) 9 i 10 (Selz 1993 no. 8), *Ur-sipa*: de Genouillac TSA 14 xii 12 (time of Urukagina); *Sipa-lagaš^{ki}-(e/a)-ki-ág*: HSS III (STH 1) 15 vii 11 (Selz 1993 no. 14), 16 viii 1 (Selz 1993 no. 15), 17 rev. ii 12 (Selz 1993 no. 16 x 12), 18 ix 8 (Selz 1993

no. 17), de Genouillac TSA 17 xi 5’, DP 115 xi 8 (see Selz 1992: 142, and 1995: 131 and note 528); *Sipa-en-lil-le*: DP 118 iv 7 (see Selz 1995: 131); *Sipa-uru-da-kuš*: HSS III (STH 1) 15 ii 13 (Selz 1993 no. 14), 16 ii 13 (Selz 1993 no. 15), 17 vi 2 (Selz 1993 no. 16 x 12), 18 ii 6 (Selz 1993 no. 17). Similar names are found outside Lagash, e.g. Lugal-sipa BIN VIII 34 i 6 (Isin).

¹⁹ There are two occurrences of this personal name: (a) Sollberger, *Corpus* (CIRPL) 46 vii 4 = Enz. 1 vii 4, see Grégoire, *Lagaš*, 9ff. (who dates the letter to the 5th year of Enannatum II); Michalowski 1993: 11-12, no. 1; Kienast and Volk 1995: 25-29 (who date the letter to the 5th year of Ukg.). (b) Cros, *Nouvelles fouilles de Tello I* (1910), p. 181 AO 4156 iii 1’ (time of Entemena). If both occurrences relate to the same individual, then the individual could be named after Enannatum I (see discussion in Bauer 1998: 474).

²⁰ e.g. VAS 14 173 v 9 (Bauer, AWL, 68); Nik. 104 v 7 (Selz 1989: 325f.).

²¹ Dingir-sipa in Fara: Deimel WF 5 iii 4; WF 18 v; Jestin, Šuruppak, 2 iv 4; 115 ii 6, v 1; 723 iii 3’; Jestin NTSŠ 213 rev. i 6, see Pomponio, *Prosopografia*, 47f. The reference “Deimel Fara 3 26,” given in de Vito 1993: 24 is incorrect; it should be 27*. AN-engar-[zi] Deimel WF 149 rev. i, see Pomponio, *Prosopografia*, 41.

that these names describe both the providential care of the deity and the individual's dependence on that care. Both describe the relationship between the god and the community as a whole rather than with the individual members of that community.²² While the 'farmer' names begin to disappear in the late Early Dynastic period, names composed with 'shepherd' proliferate.²³ The metaphorical relationship of the royal pastoral image to the agrarian image will be another thread traced in this survey.

Akkadian royal inscriptions provide no evidence of a shepherd image.²⁴ This dearth of evidence argues against the simplistic opposition between a Sumerian agrarian society and a Semitic pastoral image. Selz explains this phenomenon: "Man könnte diese Aussage sogar verstehen als den Versuch der Deklassierung des überkommenen Herrschaftskonzepts des 'Hirtentums' gegenüber dem anders gearteten altakkadischen Königtum."²⁵ However, an intrinsic Sumerian colouring of the shepherdship concept is not apparent from the meagre evidence that we have seen. If we turn to onomastic evidence, Sargonic Sumerian names reflect the continuation of the previous late Early Dynastic tradition in the use of both 'king' and 'god' elements, for instance, *Lugal-sipa* "The-King-Is-The-Shepherd"

and *Sipa-an-né* "The-shepherd-(called)-by-An."²⁶ In the Sargonic period, specific names of gods sometimes replace the generic *dingir*, e.g. ^d*Enlil-sipa*.²⁷

There are no pre-Sargonic examples of Akkadian names composed with a shepherd predicate, with one possible exception (*Ra-i-lum* RTC 75 iii 5, see Westenholz 1988: 116). On the other hand, there are many Sargonic examples: *SIPA-ni-ši* "The-Shepherd-of-the-People" (HSS 10 153 vi 17), *SIPA-si-in* "Their (the people's)-Shepherd" MAD 1 254 iii 5. The question is whether these names refer to a royal or a divine image. Theophoric names include: *Dagan-ré-ì-su* "Dagan-is-his-shepherd" (MAD 1 256: 3) and *Be-li-SIPA* "My-Lord-is-(my)-Shepherd" (MAD 1 163 x 13).

Literary evidence of the maternal, nurturing image of the shepherd can be found in a lovers' charm from the Old Akkadian period:

ki rā'ium (SIPA) (y)iturru ša'nam
'enzum kalūmaša
lahrum puḥādsa
atānum mūraš

as the shepherd goes around his flock,
 the goat around her kid,
 the ewe around her lamb,
 the jenny around her foal.
 (MAD 5 8: 21-24)²⁸

²² De Vito 1993: 113f.

²³ *Dingir-sipa* in Lagash, period of Ukg.: HSS III (= STH 1) 15 rev. i 13 (Selz 1993 no. 14 ix 13), 16 rev. ii 9 (Selz 1993 no. 15 x 9); see also discussion in Selz 1995: 23 and note 49.

²⁴ As noted already by Seux 1980-1: 162, also Franke 1995b: 833: "Completely lacking are allusions to fulfilling the welfare that a king owed the land. Also missing is the metaphoric perception of the king as shepherd." The one example usually cited is *Atalšen rē'um epšum* RA 9 pl.1:5 (*Atalšen* of Urkiš and Nawar); see Gelb-Kienast, *Königsinschriften*, 383 *Varia* 16 which is probably of Ur III date; see Frayne 1992: 635

²⁵ 2001: 16 [13].

²⁶ *Lugal-sipa*: TuM 5 11 iii 2, 23 ii 3 (Westenholz,

Jena, ED III / Early Sarg. Nippur); Foster, Umma, 47 iv 1 (Classical Sargonic Umma); *Sipa-an-né*: Frayne, RIME 2 p. 270, 2.12.3 (seal inscription, time of Lugalšumgal ensi of Lagash).

²⁷ *DINGIR-SIPA*: AnOr IX 372 i 3 and see references collected by de Vito 1993: 147f., 211; ^d*Enlil-sipa*: TuM 5 27 i 7, ii 7; 29 + ii 10, see A. Westenholz, Jena; ^d*EN.ZU-SIPA*: MAD 3 228. These names are not clearly Sumerian or Akkadian since the logographic cuneiform signs could be read in either language.

²⁸ This incantation has received much attention since our treatment in J. and A. Westenholz 1977: 202, see Lambert 1987: 37f., Lambert 1989: 9, Foster 1993: 56f., Leick 1994: 194-196, Hirsch 1995-6: 139-144, Haas 1999: 149-151, Cavigneaux 1999: 269.

These poetic parallel verses link the image of the shepherd and his care for his flock with the love of the mother for her young. The metaphor expresses a nurturing, motherly image of the shepherd. This love incantation provides an image of the girl's devotion to and total absorption in the object of her love, like a shepherd or a mother. However, this boundless maternal love is accompanied by protection and absolute security.²⁹

Thus, at the end of the Old Akkadian period the image of a shepherd included the tending aspect, although it does not seem to have been applied to the figure of the king.³⁰

B. Development of the Shepherd King Trope

In the Neo-Sumerian period, the term 'shepherd' appears as an epithet of kings for the first time. It is even applied retroactively to the Old Akkadian kings, as in the literary composition *Curse of Agade*³¹:

kur-kur ú-sal-la i-im-nú
 ùg-bi ki ša₆-ga igi bí-ib-du₈
 lugal-bi sipa^dNa-ra-am-^dSin-e

All the lands were lying down in grassy pastures, their people experienced happiness. Their king, the shepherd Naram-Sin, (rose like the sun on the holy throne of Akkade).

As Cooper remarks,³² this text parallels that of Lugalzagesi cited above, even to the detail of the foreign lands lying down in grassy pastures.

Gudea of the second dynasty of Lagash was the first ruler to use the term 'shepherd' as a self-referent. He speaks of himself as a "shepherd chosen in the heart of Ningirsu" (sipa-šà-ge-pà-da Statue B ii 8, Edzard, RIME 3/1 p. 31). Further, his selection occurs "when Ningirsu had directed his steadfast gaze (igi-zi) on his city, had chosen Gudea as the legitimate shepherd (sipa-zi) in the land" (ibid. iii 6-9, Edzard, RIME 3/1 p. 32). The characteristics of the shepherd that Gudea emphasizes are non-specific: sipa-zi-ka-gina-Ningirsu-ke₄ "Ningirsu's reliable shepherd who (pronounces) enduring words" (Statue R i 4f., Edzard, RIME 3/1 p. 60), sipa-[g]ú-tuku-^dNingirsu-ka-ke₄ gal mu-zu "brave shepherd of Ningirsu who is wise" (Cyl. B xiii 12, Edzard, RIME 3/1 p. 96). This shepherd image is not juxtaposed to the image of animals/people lying in grassy pastures. The latter image does occur separately in his hymns: "Let the cattle pens be built on your behalf, let the sheepfolds be renewed on your account, May the people (ùg) lie down in grassy pastures (ú-sal-la) under your reign, (enjoying) abundance, and let the eyes of all the countries be directed toward Sumer" (Cyl B xxii 17-20, Edzard, RIME 3/1 p. 100). Here the people are not foreigners but the inhabitants of Sumer.

This epithet is used throughout the inscriptions and hymns of the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur, though without an extended metaphor concerning anyone – foreigners or natives – lying down in grassy pastures. Ur-Namma, like Gudea before him, claimed to have been chosen,

²⁹ Cavigneaux 1999: 270.

³⁰ See Selz 2001: 17, where he remarks that Old Akkadian conception of kingship has transcended the old concept of shepherdship.

³¹ Although Neo-Sumerian manuscripts of this composition exist, this section is only presently preserved

in the Old Babylonian manuscripts. Thus, the question is whether this section comes from the later period. A similar description of Ur-Zababa as shepherd appears in the Sumerian Sargon legend in TRS 73:6f. (Cooper *Curse of Agade* 27).

³² *Curse of Agade*, 238.

this time by Enlil: “The Great Mountain, Enlil, chose Ur-Namma the faithful shepherd from the multitude of people: ‘Let him be the shepherd of Nunamnir!’ He made him emanate(?) fierce awesomeness.” (Hymn B 4-6, Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature). In the composition *Death of Ur-Namma* (Hymn A), the epithet ‘shepherd’ becomes the royal titulary: Shepherd Ur-Namma.³³ However, there does not seem to be any relationship between the title sipa and any particular activity. In one hymn lauding his agricultural work, Ur-Namma is designated as the engar-zi (Hymn G 19).³⁴

His son, Šulgi, is the sole bearer of the epithet sipa-zi-ki-en-gi-ra “faithful shepherd of Sumer.” It is attested both in self-laudatory hymns and hymnal narrative compositions. A survey of the contexts in which this epithet appears indicates that it is a significant poetic phrase, used in particularly dramatic or key episodes. On one occasion this epithet introduces the theme of ‘the king as the supreme judge of the land.’³⁵ On three other occasions this shepherd epithet is used to frame a hymn praising Šulgi’s unparalleled physical strength and superhuman athletic achievements, but no reference is made to any shepherding qualities of guarding, tending or herding.³⁶ Šulgi refers to himself as a shepherd when praising his musical talents (Šulgi E 39ff.). In one Šulgi hymn (Šulgi P Segment A 11-14), the goddess Ninsun, his divine mother, is quoted as saying: “I have looked through the land in all its extent and among its black-headed people who are as numerous as ewes, and I

have elevated Šulgi for me high above their head. May he be their trustworthy shepherd!” (sipa-zi-bi hé-am) (Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature). On several occasions the epithet sipa-zi introduces dramatic nam-tar episodes in which the gods decree the fate of Šulgi (e.g. Šulgi X 36ff., Klein, *Šulgi*, 138f.). Finally, the epithet occurs several times in refrains of entire hymns or parts of them (Šulgi D refrain in lls. 287-320, “With Šulgi the righteous shepherd of Sumer, he (a deity) walks on the road”; see Klein, *Šulgi*, 54).

As for the farmer image, there is a field name incorporating the royal name Amar-Sin: ^dAmar-^dSin-engar-^dEn-líl-lá “Amar-Sin-is-the-Farmer-of-Enlil” (Legrain TRU 324:8), and female companions praise the king Šu-Sin who personifies Dumuzi as “you are the farmer who brings us much grain” (Šu-Sin ŠS C 20, Sefati 1998: 360f.). Both Lugal-engar and Lugal-sipa occur among personal names in this period (Limet, *L’Anthroponymie*, 165ff.). Note also names composed with that of the king and his titulary, e.g. Šulgi-sipa-kalam-ma, Šulgi-sipa-zi-ki-en-gi-ra-ke₄ (Limet, *L’Anthroponymie*, 294).

Turning to the historiography composed under this regime, we note that three ancient kings in the *Sumerian King List* are designated as shepherds, as their traditional actual occupations.

1. Antediluvian divine Dumuzi (Jacobsen AS 11 p. 72 SKL WB i 15)
2. Postdiluvian Etana, Kish I dynasty (Jacobsen AS 11 p. 80 SKL WB ii 16)³⁷
3. Postdiluvian Lugalbanda, Uruk I dynasty (Jacobsen AS 11 p. 88 SKL WB iii 12)

³³ Flückiger-Hawker 1999: 61.

³⁴ Flückiger-Hawker 1999: 294f., and see note on line on p. 296.

³⁵ Note that Selz (2001: 22) suggests that the particular denotation of sipa(-zi) is ‘wisdom,’ which he defines as including all the above attributes of Šulgi,

and connects si...sá with si of sipa. The connection is first made with Gudea (p. 18). He analyses the meaning of the word sipa as si-pà “der, der die Hörner (seiner Tiere) findet” (p. 19).

³⁶ Klein 1993: 127 note to line i 9’.

³⁷ Selz 1998b: 140f. emphasizes the juxtaposition of

The first king, Dumuzi, the beloved of Inanna, is the archetypical shepherd who tends his goats in the sheepfold and whose trademark is the churn.³⁸ It is interesting to note that the *Sumerian King List* also credits the second king Etana with the consolidation of all the lands (kur-kur) as part of his rise to the assumption of the title lugal.

The use of the shepherd epithet continues at the beginning of the second millennium under the contending dynasties, whether Sumerian, Akkadian or Amorite.³⁹ The motif of the king as the one chosen to be the shepherd by the deities appears frequently. Išme-Dagan of Isin is chosen prenatally by Enlil (sipa-zī-tu-da-ni “the true shepherd whom he engendered” IŠD S 28, Ludwig, *Išme-Dagan*, 88f.). Like Gudea, Lipit-Ishtar of Isin emphasises the quality of wisdom as seen in “the wise shepherd, who leads the people, to let them relax in the sweet shade...” (Lipit-Ištar hymn B 10-11 // Sumerian Proverbs YBC 8929; Alster, *Proverbs*, 332).⁴⁰ Nevertheless, he gives equal weight to the pastoral and agrarian images in his titulary: ^dLipit-Eštar sipa-sun₅-na nibru^{ki} engar-zī Uri₅^{ki}-ma: ^dLipit-Eštar *rējūm pāliḫ Nibru ikkarum kīnum ša Urim* “Lipit-Ishtar, humble shepherd of Nippur, true farmer of Ur” (Frayne, RIME 4 48 E.4.1.5.1:1-5 [Sum.], 51 E.

4.1.5.3:1-7[Akk.]).

Nevertheless, the emphasis in the metaphor of the wise shepherd is consistently on the freedom from the four factors listed above: fear, tension, aggravation and hunger. This is expressed by the provision of food, the tending aspect of shepherdship, and the leading of the sheep – the herding aspect of shepherdship: “Enlil has looked at you truly, Iddin-Dagan, he has spoken truly to you. Enlil has commanded you to keep firm the cosmic bond in Sumer, to keep the people on the track, to let Sumer and Akkad relax under your broad protection, to let the people eat noble food and drink fresh water. Iddin-Dagan, you are the shepherd in his heart, the one whom Enlil has spoken to truly” (Iddin-Dagan B 5-13, Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature).⁴¹

Of the many kings of the various dynasties, the one who developed the shepherd metaphor most clearly was Ur-Ninurta of Isin, who proclaims himself sipa nī-nam-íl nibru^{ki} na-gada uri₅^{ki}-ma “the shepherd who offers everything for Nippur, herdsman of Ur” (Frayne, RIME 4 66 4.1.6.1 lines 2-5), replacing the farmer epithet of Lipit-Ishtar with a pastoral one. In the praise poems created for him, entreaties are made: ùg ú-sal-la ḫu-mu-un-dè-nú na-gada-bi ḫè-a ^dUr-^dnin-

the shepherd and kingship in relation to Etana. Despite the Old Akkadian seal motif assigned to Etana (see below), the literary epic only describes the king as a shepherd in the latest first millennium version (see below).

³⁸ Klein 1998: 211ff.

³⁹ For further references, see Seux, *Epithètes*, 411ff. for the Sumerian royal epithets incorporating sipa, and 243 ff. for the Akkadian royal epithets incorporating *rē’û*.

⁴⁰ Scholars call this hymn “Lipit-Ishtar, King of Justice, Wisdom and Learning,” and the subject is his praise in the Edubba; see Vanstiphout 1978. The text in the Lipit-Ishtar hymn: sipa igi-gál-tuku ùg laḫ₅-laḫ₅-e gissu-du₁₁-ga u₄-SAHAR^e ní-dúb-bu, has

various interpretations: “wise shepherd, who leads the people into sweet shadow, relaxing moonlight(?)” (Vanstiphout), “wise shepherd, who leads the people to let them relax ...” (Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature). The proverb only contains the phrases sipa igi-gál-tuku ùg laḫ₅-laḫ₅-e, which Alster translates: “If the shepherd is intelligent, the people are well governed.” Sumerian Proverbs YBC 8929 Alster, *Proverbs*, 332.

⁴¹ ^den-líl-le igi-zī mu-e-ši-in-bar ^dI-din-^dda-gan gù zī mu-ra-an-dé ús-sag ki-en-gi-re gen₆-né-dè ùg ús-a sig₁₀-ge-dè ki-en-gi ki-uri an-dùl dagal-la-za ní dúb-bu-dè ùg-e ú nir-gál gu₇-ù-dè a dūg na₈-na₈-dè ^den-líl-le á-bi mu-e-da-an-ág ^dI-din-^dda-gan sipa šà-ga-nam-e-e gù zī dé-a ^den-líl-lá-me-en.

urta-ke₄ ùg-šár-re ús-zi h́é-bí-ib-dab₅-bé
 “Under his rule may the people rest in
 grassy pastures with him as their herds-
 man. May Ur-Ninurta make the numerous
 people follow the just path” (Ur-Ninurta
 D 33f., an adab of Inanna for Ur-Ninurta,
 Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Lit-
 erature) and nam-sipa-zi-gál-ùg-šár-ra du-
 rí-šè sag-e-eš rig₇-ga-na-ab-z[é]-en ...
 udu-gin₇ ka ú-kú ha-ba-kin-kin gú a-nag
 ha-ba-gá-gá “Bestow upon him the shep-
 herdship over the living beings, the nu-
 merous people! ... As for/Like sheep,
 may he search for food (for them) to eat,
 may he let them have water to drink!”
 (Ur-Ninurta A 20, 26, balag of Inanna,
 see Sjöberg, *Finkelstein Memorial Vol.*,
 189ff.); sipa-zi giš-tuku-zu-um ub-da an
 ki ùg ki gar-ra-ba sag-e-eš mu-ni-rig₇
 geštú-sum-ma ^den-ki-kà KA túm-túm-
 mu-bi mu-e-zu sag-gi₆ udu-gin₇ lu-a-bi
 hu-mu-gál-e ús-zu h́é-bí-ib-dab₅-bé “(Ur-
 Ninurta) the faithful shepherd who is at-
 tentive to you. You have made him to
 whom Enki has given wisdom understand
 how to ... them. May you be available to
 make the black-headed, numerous as
 sheep, follow your path” (Ur-Ninurta C
 20-23, adab of Ninurta, Electronic Text
 Corpus of Sumerian Literature). The em-
 phasis of the metaphor is on the provi-
 sion of food (the tending aspect of shep-
 herdship) and leading the sheep (the
 herding aspect of shepherdship).

The same aspects of shepherdship are
 found in another king of Isin, probably

May the king, your husband whom you love, live long days in your pure lap, the sweet thing!
 Grant him a propitious and renowned reign,
 Grant him the royal throne, firm on its foundation,
 Grant him the staff (gidru) that guides the land aright, the crook² (šibir) and the lead-rope
 (eškiri),
 ...

Enlil-bāni: “As (for) sheep, I sought out
 food to eat (and) fed (them) with green
 plants. I lifted the heavy yoke from their
 necks. I settled (them) in a secure abode
 (dúr(?).gi.na)” (Frayne, RIME 4 89 4.1.
 10.1001 v 16-21).

Later kings of Isin (Ur-dukuga, Sin-
 magir and Damiq-ilišu) are given epithets
 containing both sipa and engar. Damiq-
 ilišu is the “farmer who piles up the pro-
 duce (of the land) in granaries” (Frayne,
 RIME 4 103 4.1.15.1:8f.).

The insignia of the shepherd king, the
 gidru as the shepherd’s staff and the šibir
 as the shepherd’s crook(?), appear in
 texts of the kings of the Isin-Larsa pe-
 riod.⁴² An explicit example can be seen
 in the hymn of Rim-Sin of Larsa: sipa-
 kalam-ma-ra gidru-maḥ u₄-sù-rá šu-ni-šè
 bí-ib-dab₅-bé-en “You make the shepherd
 of the Land hold in his hands the august
 staff until distant days” (Rim-Sin B 40,
 Hymn to Haia, Charpin, *Clergé*, 345).

Sumerian literature reinforces this pic-
 ture of the nurturing shepherd as king.
 Shepherdship (nam-sipa) is employed as
 a synonym for kingship as in the list
 of me’s (*Inanna and Enki* F 19-20). Nev-
 ertheless, the royal leader is shown both
 as a shepherd and as a farmer. In the
 Inanna-Dumuzi love poetry used in the
 sacred marriage ritual, the shepherdship
 as well as the farmership of Dumuzi/king
 (the avatar of Dumuzi) is a constant
 theme:

⁴² Krecher 1976: 110f. §3 and 113. Although he as-
 signs these insignia as accoutrements of the shepherd,
 he gives the more common translations of gidru as

‘sceptre’ and šibir as ‘staff.’ For a discussion of gidru/
 ḥaṭṭu as ‘staff,’ see Wiggermann 1985-6 and his
 notes on šibir on p. 15 and note 45. As pointed out by

May he exercise the shepherdship (nam-sipa---ak) over their black-headed inhabitants,
 May he, like a farmer, establish cultivated fields,
 May he, like a faithful shepherd, multiply the sheepfolds,
 May there be flax under him, may there be barley under him.

(*The Blessing of Dumuzi on his Wedding Day*, 37-40, 47-50, Sefati 1998: 301ff. DI D₁)

The produce of the shepherd is that of the farmer! In the dispute *The Shepherd and the Farmer*, the difference is made explicit: it is the farmer who provides

Let your sheep eat grass on the moist land
 Let your sheep pasture amid my grain stalks. (lines 76-77)

These texts constantly relate to feeding and nurturing – the tending aspects of shepherdship. In the *Shepherd's Prayer* (Sefati 1998: 260-266), the shepherd begs for his sheep to have food to eat.

It can be deduced from this survey of citations relating to the shepherdship of the king that being a shepherd was one of the defining traits of the Sumerian nam-lugal.⁴⁴ The symbolism implies a caretaking role for the shepherd of the flock of the people.

Hammurabi šarrum gitmālum anāku ana šalmāt qaqqadim ša Enlil išrukam rē'ūssina Marduk iddinam ul ēgu aḥī ul addi ašrī šulmim eše'išināšim pušqī waštūtum upetti nūram ušēšišināšim ... nišī dadmī aburrī ušarbiš mugallitam ul ušaršišināti ilū rabūtum ibbūninnima anākuma rējūm mušallimum ša ḥaṭṭašu(GIDRU) išarat šillī ṭābum ana ālija tariš ina utlīja nišī māt(KALAM) Šumerim u Akkadīm ukīl ina lamassija iḥḥišā ina šulmim attabbalšināti ina nēmeqīja uštaziršināti

“I am Hammurabi, the perfect king. I have not been careless or negligent toward the black-headed, granted to my care by the god Enlil, and with whose shepherding the god Marduk charged me. I have sought for them places of well-being / security.⁴⁵ I opened up troublesome obstructions, I spread light over them. ... I made the people of the populated world lie down in pastures.⁴⁶ I did not tolerate anyone intimidating them. The great gods having cho-

flax and finished clothing, beer and barley, while the shepherd provides raw wool, milk and cheese.⁴³

Turning from the Sumerian tradition to Babylon and its Amorite dynasty, we note that the Semitic Akkadian compositions borrowed extensively from the Sumerian literary vocabulary. Hammurabi, the famous king of Babylon, was chosen by Enlil as shepherd (*rējūm nibīt* Enlil CH i 51), and he was also the *rējī nišī* “shepherd of the people” (CH iv 45) for Ishtar. In the Epilogue to his law collection, he states:

the CAD: “The *šibirru* which according to Hh IV 430 has a *sikkatu* ‘tip’(?) may possibly be identified with the staff ending in a crook depicted on seals” (CAD Š/2 379). Selz (2001: 14) maintains that the mace was one of the shepherd’s weapons in his character as protector of the herd.

⁴³ For the text, see Sefati 1998: 324-343.

⁴⁴ Note that Selz (1998b: 141) maintains that shepherdship and kingship were two different but parallel notions of rule in Sumerian society. He equates (ibid. note 33) the former with ‘Herrentums’ (= nam-en).

⁴⁵ The word *šulmu* basically conveys the sense of ‘well-being, health and completeness,’ as attested in CAD Š/3 247ff., while the meaning ‘peace’ is a later

legalistic development, perhaps borrowed from the western peripheries where the two lexemes *šalāmu* and *salāmu* coalesced. Did these two roots merge in West Semitic or did a split occur in Akkadian?

⁴⁶ The Akkadian word *aburru* renders the Sumerian *ú-sal*. Cf. the Sumerian parallel: ma-da-mu *ú-sal-la mi-ni-in-nú*, Monolingual Sumerian hymn to Hammurabi 23, Sjöberg 1961: 52, and see discussion on line 23 on p. 67. “Sumerian phrase *ú-sal-la ...nú* ‘to lie on the pasture’ often used in referring to the country or people in a metaphor expanding the image of the king as shepherd, was borrowed into Akkadian literary language probably through the translations of royal inscriptions” (CAD A/1 91a).

sen me, I am indeed the shepherd who provides well-being (*rējûm mušallimum*),⁴⁷ whose staff is straight/just. My (benevolent) shade is spread over my city, I held the people of the homeland of Sumer and Akkad on my lap. They prospered under my protective spirit. I maintained them in well-being, with my (skilful) wisdom I sheltered them.” (CH xlvi 9-21, 35-58)

Thus, we may deduce that in the poetic description of Hammurabi, the royal shepherd image conveyed the tending and the herding aspects of shepherdship, including the maternal nurturing role and the care-giving male gender archetype. His shepherdship is closely tied to his exaltation of justice: [*rēj*]û^t(im) *mīšarim* “shepherdship of justice” (CH Manuscript B i 7’, see Borger BAL II 7).⁴⁸ Note also the juxtaposition of the staff and the shepherdship: *Šamas haṭṭašu lirik nišīšu ina mīšarim lirē* “May Šamaš lengthen his staff, may he shepherd his people in justice” (CH xlix 14-17). It is not clear whether the guarding aspect forms part of the royal ideology; this basically depends on the lexical interpretation of *šullumu*, whose range of meaning includes ‘to keep well, in good health, in good condition,’ as well as ‘to safeguard, to bring safely,’ and relates to the complete welfare of a country. It is quite certain that no definite lexeme such as *našāru* ‘to guard, protect’ is applied to the function of the shepherd.⁴⁹

If we survey Old Babylonian Akkadian literature for the image of the royal shepherd, we find that the most interesting composition is an Akkadian prophecy concerning the coming of the saviour *rē’û kīnu* “the true/faithful shepherd” of Uruk.⁵⁰ He comes with *šulmu* and *balātu* “well-being and life” to revive (lit. ‘bring to life’) dead Uruk. The picture

drawn in the epilogue of Hammurabi colours the portrayal of Naram-Sin in the OB *Cuthean Legend*. It is ironic that the king who was never a shepherd becomes a shepherd in the *Curse of Agade* and then an irresponsible shepherd: *anāku šarrum la mušallim mātišu u rē’ûm la mušallim nišīšu* “I am a king who has not maintained the welfare of his land, and a shepherd who has not brought well-being to his people” (J. Westenholz, *Akkade*, 272f. iii 12, new translation).

The realistic image of the shepherd and his major concerns are conveyed in an Old Babylonian letter: “(I sent the sheep to town). ... *rubšam šukunšināti u ina ri’ītim mamman irti* U₈.UDU.ḪI.A *šināti la utār* “give them a place to rest and let no one prevent those sheep from pasturing” (YOS 2 76:7-10, see Stol, AbB 9 76).

C. Fossilisation of Shepherd King Trope

Later royal ideology has fossilised the shepherd image by sheer repetition. The gods continue to choose kings to shepherd the people, as in this late bilingual introductory chronicle fragment: [l]ugal-e nam-sipa kalam-ma-šè mu-un-[gar-(re)-eš] ùg nam-sipa-e-NE mu-un-sum-mu-[(uš)]: *šarru ana rē’ûm māti iš[kunū] nišī*

⁴⁷ Both nuances are part of the verb *šullumu* (see CAD Š/1). Note that the verb *šullumu* mng. 7 ‘to keep well, in good health, in good condition b) said of shepherds.’ In this context, however, the image is of the shepherd who tends and herds his flock, rather than one who guards them.

⁴⁸ See Hurowitz 1994: 18 and note 34.

⁴⁹ Exceptions: ARM 1 118: 11 (in relation to cattle).

⁵⁰ For the copy, see van Dijk 1962: 61f., pl. 28 W19900,1 and for a translation, see R. Biggs 1969: 604; for a partial edition of lines 1-9, see J. Westenholz 1997: 66.

ana rē'<û>ti iddinūšum “They appointed a king to shepherd the land, they made over [to him] the people for shepherdship.”⁵¹ A few examples should suffice.⁵² In the first millennium B.C.E., Sargon II styles himself “Sargon the shepherd of Assyria.”⁵³ Adad-šum-ušur, exorcist of king Assurbanipal, addresses his royal master: “May the rule of the king, my lord, be as pleasant as water and oil upon the peoples of all the countries! May the king, my lord, be their shepherd for ever! ... Who does not love his benefactor? In a song from Babylonia it is said: ‘On account of your sweet words, O my shepherd, all the scholars yearn for you’” (ABL 435: 4-10, r. 9-14, see Parpola, SAA, X 198, NA let.). On the 11th of Nisan during the New Year’s Festival in Babylon, the king is addressed as su₈-ba: *rē'ûm* among his other epithets.⁵⁴

The agrarian metaphor appears again in the Neo-Assyrian period in a designation of the Neo-Assyrian king as LÚ.ENGAR, in the specific and extraordinary situation of the installation of a *šar pūhi* ‘substitute king.’⁵⁵ During the time of danger when the surrogate king sat on the throne, letters were addressed to the real king, “to the farmer.”⁵⁶ The Neo-Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, includes both epithets in his titulary: *rē'û kīnu šābit uruḥ šulmu ša DN u DN ... ikkari Babbilu* [sic] “the legitimate shepherd who takes the road (that brings) well-being of Šamaš and Adad ... the farmer of Babylon” (VAB 4 104 i 4, 19).

Scattered late literary compositions also use this metaphor. The Neo-Assyrian recension of the literary composition *Etana* relates the institution of kingship in the first city of Kish. In synonymous parallel structure, Ishtar’s search is phrased: “Ishtar [...] a shepherd, and sought for a king [...]” (SB Etana I 6, 20, 22).⁵⁷ Interestingly, Etana is mentioned in the *Sumerian King List* as a shepherd (see above), but not in either of the second-millennium versions.⁵⁸ Although comparison has been made between Etana and David (e.g. Bernbeck 1996: 179), another famous early king is also given the title in the late version of the epic: “he (Gilgamesh) is the shepherd of Uruk the Sheepfold” (*Gilg.* I ii 24).

The expanded metaphor of grassy pastures as the resting place of the flock of people also appears in royal inscriptions and literature, as well as the shepherd’s staff: [GIŠ.PA]-a-ni ùg-šár-ra-si-sá-e-da kalam-ma-a-ni ú-sal-la nú-da: *ḥaṭṭašu el kišsat nišī šutēšuri māssu aburriš šurbuši* “so that he may lead his people aright with his staff, let his country lie in safe pastures” (4R 12:19f., SB copy of MB royal inscription, possibly Kadašman-Enlil II). The image is seen in the inscription of Tukulti-Ninurta: *ša ina šullum šibir<rī>šu irte'û aburriš māssu* “who shepherds his land in (grassy) pastures with his health-bringing staff” (Weidner Tn. 26 no. 16: 6-7) and in the kudurru of Merodach-baladan II: *lu rē'û muḥḥiru saphāti ḥaṭṭi išarti šibirru mušallim nišī*

⁵¹ Finkel 1980: 66 lines 4-5.

⁵² For further references, see Seux 1980: 162f., CAD R rē'û v. mng. 3b, for royal inscriptions until Persian period (Cyr.). rē'û s. mng. 2b; also Seux, *Epithètes*, 244ff.

⁵³ TCL 3 112; Craig, ABRT, 1 54 iv 19; see Livingstone, SAA III 4 rev. 19' (Nanaya Hymn of Sargon II).

⁵⁴ According to a bilingual šu'ila to Asalluhi/Marduk/Nabium/Ninurta, see Maul 1998: 169 line 37.

⁵⁵ Parpola, AOAT, 5/2 Excursus, pp. xxii-xxxii.

⁵⁶ Parpola, SAA, X 1 (ABL 332), 2 (ABL 223), 26 (ABL 38), 128 (ABL 816), 209 (ABL 15), 210 (ABL 4), 211 (ABL 183), 212 (ABL 361), 216 (ABL 1435+), 221 (ABL 362), 304 (CT 53 50), 325 (CT 53 52), Note edict 381 (CT 53 8).

⁵⁷ Most recent text edition: Novotny 2001.

⁵⁸ Haul 2000: 8. All cuneiform references to Etana are collected in Selz 1998b: 139ff.

ipqid qātuššu “(DN declared) ‘Let him be the shepherd who collects the dispersed (flock)’ and entrusted to him the just staff (and) the crook⁷ which maintains the welfare of the people” (VAS 1 37 i 32-36).

On the other hand, there may be some subtle changes and development in the image and insignia of the shepherd. In the hands of the Assyrian monarchs, these insignia can also be symbols of their merciless and furious behaviour: *ina mētel šibirrīka tušeškin ana IM.4 gimir kibrāte* “with the power of the crook⁷, you subjugated all the regions” (Tn.-Epic “ii” 9) and Sennacherib wielded the *ḥaṭṭu išartu murappišat mišri šibirru la pādū ana šumqut zā’irī* “the just staff that extends the realm, the merciless crook⁷ for the destruction of enemies” (OIP 2 85: 5).

To conclude this survey of the Mesopotamian royal shepherd image, the metaphor is epitomized in the proverb: *ùg lugal nu-me-a udu sipa-bi in-nu* “a

^den-líl sipa-zi téš-ba lu-a
na-gada mas-su nì-zi-gál-la-ka

Enlil, the reliable shepherd of (herds) multiplying one like the other,
The herdsman and leader of all in which is breadth of life

Hymn to Enlil [Enlil suraše] Lines 93-4 (text: Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, translation: Jacobsen, *Harps*)⁶⁰

^den-líl sipa-zi-me-en DU.DU-bi mu-un-zu

Enlil, you are the reliable shepherd, you know how to herd them

Hymn to Enlil [Enlil suraše] Line 154 (text: Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, translation: Jacobsen, *Harps*)⁶¹

Over a millennium later, a text from Nineveh records several incantations to be recited during the kettle drum ritual, of which one is addressed to Enlil: “Faithful shepherd, faithful shepherd, god

people without a king (are) as sheep without a shepherd” (Lambert BWL 229: 14-15, bilingual proverb, Akkadian destroyed).

D. Divine Ideology

Having established the diffusion of the royal metaphor, let us look at the allegorical usage of the shepherd image in relation to the divine, which also has its origins in the early history of Mesopotamia. Under section A, we have already dealt with the earliest evidence, found in personal names and in early royal inscriptions.⁵⁹ The god as shepherd continues to appear in personal names, e.g. *SIPA-i-li* “(My)-Shepherd-Is-My-God” (Delaporte CCL I T159, Ur III). In particular, it is the high gods who have the onerous responsibility of looking after the flocks of humanity. It is recorded of Enlil:

Enlil, faithful shepherd; Master of all countries (Akk., note Sum. kalam), faithful shepherd, lord of all the Igigi deities, faithful shepherd, lord of the pole, faithful shepherd” (RAcc. 28 K.4806 ii 10-19).

⁵⁹ There is an early literary reference in broken context: Alster and Westenholz 1994: 22 ix 14.

⁶⁰ Falkenstein, *Götterlieder*, lines 92f.

⁶¹ In the edition in Falkenstein, *Götterlieder*, this line which is numbered 152 is only partially preserved.

Many other gods are invoked as shepherds. Mention is made of the divine shepherdship of humanity by the high god Anu, by the patron god of Babylonia, Marduk, by the sun-god Šamaš, by the

^dutu-gim su₈-ba-kalam-ma-me-en

“Like the sun-god, you are the shepherd of the homeland”

(Nanna Hymn A, see Å.Sjöberg, *Mondgott*, 15: 59, see notes to line on pp. 31f.)

In first-millennium literary works concerned with the deeds of the gods, the victorious deities are endowed with the shepherdship of humanity. When the gods granted Marduk absolute kingship over the gods, they also blessed him with *līpušma rē’ūt šalmāt qaqqadi* “let him (Marduk) shepherd the black-headed people” (*En. el.* VI 107). After Ninurta’s victory over Anzû, it is recounted that *ušmandūka rē’ūt nišī gamirtu* “They assigned to you full shepherdship of the people” (Anzu III 129; Saggs, *AfO*, 33 25). An invocation to Ninurta, as the merciful god who hears the prayers of mankind, reads: *rē’ē enšūti mussahhiru akūti* “O Shepherd of the weak, who is merciful to the destitute.”⁶³

Goddesses are also portrayed as shepherdesses: *rē’ītu Ištar ālikat pan būli* “shepherdess Ištar, who walks in front of the herd” (Farber, *Ištar und Dumuzi*, 129: 33) and *ša kullat mātāti gimir kalama rē’ūssina teppuši* “you (Ištar) shepherd all lands of the entire universe” (Farber, *Ištar und Dumuzi*, 130: 47f.)⁶⁴

The tradition of invoking the deities as ‘shepherds’ lasted until the latest period. In a Seleucid descriptive ritual of the New Year’s Festival, Bēl and Bēltija are invoked: *umun-mu sipa lú-lú* “my lord,

god of writing Nabû, by the warrior god Ninurta, and naturally by the divine shepherd Dumuzi.⁶² Of the moon-god Nanna-Sin it is said:

shepherd of mankind” (George 2000: 263 ii 16’) [g]ašan-mu ^dInanna sipa sag-gi₆ “O my lady, Inanna, shepherd of the black-headed race” (George 2000: 266 iii 9). Rituals for the third day of the month of Simanu prescribe the *kurgarrû*’s invoking Šamaš at the east gate of the temple of Ishtar as *rē’ûm tenēšēti* “shepherd of human folk” (George 2000: 274 iii 6’).

The relations between a man and his personal god are likewise seen in terms of a shepherd and his sheep. A Sumerian proverb runs: “A man’s (personal) god is a man’s shepherd. The god will not desert him. A shepherd should not... A man’s god provides (him with) [food to eat] and water to drink” (UET 6/2 255, see Alster, *Proverbs*, 310). Again the emphasis is on the provision of food.

To conclude this section on divine shepherd imagery in Mesopotamia, there is the astral imagery of the divine shepherd of the flock of planets. The shepherd in the heavens is the constellation SIPA.ZI.AN. NA “True Shepherd of An” = Akkadian *šidallum*, *šitaddalu*, *šitaddaru* = Orion. Its deity is Papsukkal.⁶⁵ Known from Old Babylonian period, this is the brightest constellation in the winter sky. Whereas the planets are conceived as wild sheep (UDU.IDIM.MEŠ = *bibbū*), the stars are

⁶² For references, see Tallqvist, *Götterepitheta*, 164f., CAD R 300ff.

⁶³ Mayer 1992: 23: 19.

⁶⁴ See references in CAD R sub *rē’ītu*, also Gula and Erua.

⁶⁵ Reiner and Pingree, 1981: 14 [84]; Gössmann

1950: no. 348. The transition of Orion from a shepherd to a hunter is said to be via Akkadian folk etymology of *šitaddaru* as ŠITÁ.DA.RA, *ša ina kakki maḥṣu* “the one who was struck with the mace” (Great Star List, *AfO* 19 107:25f., see CAD Š/3 128).

imagined as the cattle of the moon.⁶⁶

We may thus deduce that in the poetic descriptions of deities, both male and female, the shepherd image included the tending and herding, but not the guarding, aspects of shepherdship.

E. The Near Eastern Trope of Shepherd as King in Classical Sources

The heroes of Greek poetry were shepherds. Homer praised Peirithoös and Dryas as “shepherds of their people” (*Iliad*, Book I 263). As pointed out by Martin West,⁶⁷ this phrase sounds a distinctive Oriental note in the Greek. However, the Greek dramatist Euripides spoke of the Athenian ruler Theseus as a “young and valiant shepherd.”⁶⁸ Adrastus states: “Your city alone would be able to undertake this labour; for it turns an eye on misery, and has in you a young and gallant shepherd; for the want of which to lead their hosts, states before now have often perished.” In Plato’s *Republic*, the ideal ruler behaves like a shepherd towards his subjects, looking out only for their good. Despite Thrasymachus’ argument to the contrary that shepherds care for their sheep in order that they may be eaten, and that similarly rulers look on the people as objects of exploitation, Socrates viewed the shepherd who cares only for his flock as the ideal model for what political leadership should aspire to be.⁶⁹ Aristotle considered the shepherd to

be the archetype of the king caring for the well-being of his people.⁷⁰ Whereas Plato and Aristotle conceptualized the king in his role as shepherd as the leader of the flock, tending and herding it, Euripides has in mind the image of the guardian shepherd.

The Near Eastern tradition of deity as shepherd is also found in classical sources. In a prayer to Artemis, Anacreon uses the verb ‘to shepherd’ to characterize her power over the people of Magnesia on the Meander.⁷¹

F. From ‘Sipa-zi’ to ‘Good Shepherd’

The question that arises from the evidence surveyed above is the nature of the transition from sipa-zi / *rē’û kīnu* “true / faithful shepherd” to the *pastor bonus* who lays down his life in defence of his sheep. The intermediate steps can be seen in the biblical image of the shepherd of the people Israel.

Emphasis on the protective aspect of shepherdship, in addition to the tending and herding aspects, appears in the Bible in the chastisements of the prophets: “Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, saith the LORD GOD, surely forasmuch as My sheep became a prey, and My sheep became food to all the beasts of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for My sheep, but the shepherds fed themselves and fed not My

⁶⁶ Heimpel 1989 (ref. courtesy of Wayne Horowitz).

⁶⁷ 1997: 226f.

⁶⁸ *The Suppliants* line 185 (ed. E. P. Coleridge) in Crane, Gregory R. (ed.) *The Perseus Project*, <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>>, February, 2003. This occurrence of the metaphor of the shepherd-king can be lost in the translation; e.g. “a good leader who is vigorous,” in the version edited by David Kovacs, Loeb

Library (Cambridge and London, 1998), 35.

⁶⁹ *Republic*, 1. 342-345; see Alan Bloom, *The Republic of Plato* (New York, 1968), 21ff.

⁷⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 8, chap. 11. See W. D. Ross and J. D. Kaplan, *The Pocket Aristotle* (New York, 1958), 249f.

⁷¹ West 1997: 533.

sheep” (*Ezekiel* 34: 7-8).⁷²

The new element of shepherd as saviour

“(Out of Bethlehem shall come forth a ruler in Israel)

And he shall stand and shall shepherd in the strength of the LORD...

When the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces,

Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes among men.

And they shall shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword...”

Whereas Ezekiel and Micah speak of the kings of Israel as God’s shepherds, Isaiah taught that even a gentile could serve as a shepherd of God. Isaiah describes Cyrus’ ascent to power as being initiated by God, as God’s shepherd for the Jewish people: “who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd and he shall carry out all my purpose’” (*Isaiah* 44: 28).

Another biblical addition is the conception of the lost sheep of Israel whose shepherds (= kings) have led them astray and have not been proper herders, so that the flock has scattered. This aspect is particularly characteristic of the writings of the prophet Jeremiah: “Thus said the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds that tend My people: You have scattered My flock and driven them away and have not taken care of them” (*Jeremiah* 23: 2); “My people have been lost sheep, their shepherds have caused them to go astray” (*Jeremiah* 50: 6); “Israel is a lost sheep” (*ibid.* 17). Both the temporal leaders (*Jeremiah* 2: 8, 10: 21 and *passim*) and the divine are shepherds of the flock of Israel. The lost sheep reappear in the New Testament: “But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (*Matthew* 15: 24). The lost sheep allegory also appears in *Luke* 15: 3-7.

The divine ideology is widely attested in the Bible, beyond *Psalms* 23. There are

occurs in the biblical prophecy of *Micah* 5:3ff.:

many references to the shepherd metaphor as applied to the God of Israel, the earliest appearing in Jacob’s blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh: “The God in whose ways walked my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long unto this day. ... bless the lads” (*Genesis* 48: 15f.). Perhaps one of the most evocative examples is *Isaiah* 40: 11: “He shall feed (pasture) his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom and shall gently lead those that are with young.” The image of the caring God incorporates the tending and herding aspects of shepherding.

The allegorical figure of Jesus seen as the Good Shepherd saviour appears early in Christian literature and was elaborated by the early Church Fathers. In addition to verse 10 from John cited above, the whole chapter is a parable by Jesus on the shepherd and the flock, the sheepfold and the predators, but the emphasis is on the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. Jesus saves the lamb, an allegory for the Christian soul. As Clemens of Alexandria (*ca.* 150/153-215/217) states: “But it has been God’s fixed and constant purpose to save the flock of men: for this end the good God sent the Good Shepherd.” (*Protreptikos* (“Exhortation”) to the Heathen,” 11.116.1).⁷³

⁷² Note that this whole chapter is a diatribe against the shepherds of the sheep of God, Israel, who have been negligent in their duty. God Himself will intervene on behalf of His flock and gather them from among the nations and place over them a scion of the house of David, the ideal shepherd under whom they

will enjoy prosperity, security and peace.

⁷³ C. Coxe, *Fathers of the Second Century* [The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume II, A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (eds.)] (Edinburgh and Grand Rapids, Michigan, repr. 1994), 204.

IV. Image of the Good Shepherd

A. Ancient Near Eastern Iconography

Despite the ubiquity of the metaphor of the royal and divine shepherd in literature, the search for an iconographic representation is perplexing. The repertoire of known Mesopotamian royal images includes the king as triumphant hero, builder, etc., but none seems to depict the king as shepherd. Why would this be so? The only definite shepherd image is the image of the en ruler of the first urban entity, Uruk, depicted on contemporary cylinder seals at the end of the fourth millennium B.C.E.⁷⁴ The seals show the ruler taking care of the temple herds, and feeding leaves, flowers or ears of grain to sheep or cattle (fig. 3). On the basis of one seal in which a rosette bush apparently replaces the ruler feeding the rosettes to the herd, Siebert suggests that the image of the shepherd was translated into the nourishing tree of life under which various animals sought protection from predatory beasts such as the lion. She includes in this ‘tree of life as shepherd’ complex the motif of a pair of goats or other animals browsing in a tree, often on a hill, as well as any animal beside a tree.⁷⁵

The most common image of man and domestic animal is the image of the so-

called kid-carrier. These images depict figures of an individual, perhaps the ruler, or an ordinary supplicant, holding a young quadruped against his chest. The earliest representations are known from the Early Dynastic period in Sumer, in the first half of the third millennium B.C.E.⁷⁶ Slightly earlier are images of the en ruler of Uruk presenting what appear to be theriomorphic vessels as part of the ceremony of gift giving to the gods.⁷⁷ On the chisel-shaped Blau monument, the en also appears in the same position, holding out the image of a lamb rather than clasping it against his chest. The meaning of the scene is difficult to interpret and may just be related to a feast to seal the transfer of the piece of real estate in the inscription.⁷⁸

The image of the kid-carrier is ubiquitous, but its meaning and significance in relation to the king as shepherd is doubtful. The earliest images seem to represent priests or secular officials rather than kings. In addition to the Early Dynastic representations, there is also a bronze male figure from Assur – a bare-headed (shaven?) man who holds in his left arm a small calf, pressed close to his body, while in his right hand he holds a knife, suggesting that the animal is about to be sacrificed.⁷⁹ This statuette was found in a cache discovered in the cult room of

⁷⁴ Schmandt-Besserat 1993: 206 fig. 6, discussion 215f.

⁷⁵ Siebert 1969: 35-53.

⁷⁶ See references in Suter 1991-3: 66 notes 11 and 12. In addition, there are various Mari inlays: one from the Temple of Ninhursaga, a bareheaded man (priest?) carrying a goat (Parrot 1940: 17f. pl. VI 4) and several fragmentary exemplars from the Temple of Nini-zaza (Parrot 1967: 207 no. 33 and pl. LXI).

⁷⁷ Schmandt-Besserat 1993: 216 and fig. 15a.

⁷⁸ Gelb et al. 1991: 39-41 no. 10 “Blau Obelisk,” Schmandt-Besserat 1993: 205f. and fig. 5b. Note that the former identifies the en-like figure as the *engar-èš*, “the agronomos of the temple household” mentioned in the inscription. For the problem of the dating of this monument to ED I rather than Uruk III, see Englund 1998: 24 note 15 and 1994: 12 note 7.

⁷⁹ VA 5009, see Wartke 1995: 12ff.

the Ashur temple. Examples from the late third millennium bear dedicatory inscriptions to the king, so it seems most reasonable to assume that the kid-carrier is an official.⁸⁰

Definite royal statues carrying animals appear at the end of the third millennium. The royal figure wears a fringed mantle and the round brimmed cap that identifies him as a ruler. This image was most recently discussed by Claudia Suter, who concluded that the kid was brought as an offering (1991-3). A statuette of Shulgi from Tello shows him holding a young quadruped against his chest.⁸¹ The dedicatory inscription to the deity Igalim is generic. Textual sources from the second millennium contain descriptions of kings presenting an image of themselves holding an offering of a votive goat (*máš-kadra* ‘kid gift’). For example, Ur-Ninurta of Isin describes his setting up of a copper statue of the king holding an offering of a votive goat in the courtyard of Ninlil’s Gagiššua temple (Frayne, RIME 4 p. 67 4.1.6.2 vi 6’-12’). Although the quadruped in the imagery is not clearly identifiable (though sometimes horned), on the basis of the term *máš-kadra* ‘kid gift,’ it seems traditionally to have been a goat and not a sheep – a difference which may be significant in light of the allegory of Jesus as shepherd at the Last Judgement when he separates the sheep from the goats (*Matthew* 25: 31ff.). There is one example of a description of a lamb-carrier: Išme-Dagan of Isin clasps to his breast a white lamb and a sheep of

auspicious omens (Išme-Dagan Hymn B, Ludwig 1990: 4f., 34f., see Suter 1991-3: 67f.). The offering-bearer appears in various media, including figurines, plaques and seals (fig. 4). Scholars have associated this offering image with that of the shepherd.⁸² If it is a shepherd carrying the kid, he is still bringing it as an offering and thus represents the negative aspect of shepherding: bringing the sheep to the slaughter. In real life in Mesopotamia, the shepherd not only brought the animals destined as offerings, but his specialised profession was so designated: *rē’û ginê* and *rē’û sattukki* “shepherd (raising sheep) for the regular offerings.” It has been stated that the duty of the shepherd king is the service of the gods, thus making him the bringer of offerings.⁸³ Siebert has suggested that the imagery should be interpreted as the shepherd king presenting the people to the god for life and wellbeing rather than bringing an offering.⁸⁴

A millennium later in Assyrian palace decoration, in addition to the image of the human kid-carrier, animals are shown being held by genii and *aladlammû* lion and bull colossi. For instance, in the Northwest Palace of Aššur-našir-apli II, at the entrance to the throne-room, there are two winged lion colossi with human upper torsos and heads [(B)D-d-2 and (B)D-d-1].⁸⁵ In their left hands they carry a horned animal of uncertain identification, and in their right hands a rosette branch, which might be reminiscent of the rosettes on the early Uruk seals. In

⁸⁰ (1) Upper part of a gypsum statuette of a person carrying an offering animal (goat?) (VA 8788, Steible, NBW, Urningirsu II 8, Edzard, RIME 3/1 p. 187, Barrelet 1974: F 80); (2) fragment of torso of a male alabaster statuette carrying a sacrificial kid (AO 310, Steible, NBW, Nammahni 17, Edzard, RIME 3/1 p. 205 no.15). The opposite opinion was voiced by Suter 1991-3: 66 and note 15.

⁸¹ Suter 1991-3: 63-70 = Frayne, RIME 3/2 p. 157f.

no. 55.

⁸² e.g. a caption describing a terracotta figurine of a kid-carrier as a “shepherd carrying a lamb;” see Eric M. Meyers (ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1997), 408, upper left hand.

⁸³ Selz 2001: 22f.

⁸⁴ Siebert 1969: 30f.

⁸⁵ Paley and Sobolewski 1992: 15f.

these late images, are we dealing with sacrificial symbolism or rather with the care-giving / tending of a shepherd, or with a third dimension of the guardian aspect of the guardians of the threshold?

Another contemporaneous image found in the ninth and eighth centuries in the western areas is that of a porter who bears animals on his shoulders, possibly for a banquet. Decorating the walls of the Aramaean city at modern Zincirli,⁸⁶ and at the Neo-Hittite city of Carchemish⁸⁷ are orthostats carved with scenes which portray porters carrying caprids in procession. Such a stance of a person bearing animals on the shoulders is also seen among ivory statuettes of tribute bringers from Nimrud, which are probably of Syrian manufacture.⁸⁸ These have been compared to the *kriophoroi* from Crete⁸⁹ and provide a link to the figures of Hermes *kriophoros* and the Good Shepherd. A similar pose appears with hunters bringing back their victims, as in the relief of a hunting scene from the palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad.⁹⁰

The next image, or rather scene, to be considered appears on Old Akkadian seals. It is a narrative scene said to reflect an early version of the story of the first king, Etana. While the literary version known from the second millennium describes how Etana ascends to heaven on the back of an eagle in his search for the plant of life,⁹¹ the pictorial scene is

set in the shepherd's compound, the sheepfold. A herd of sheep and goats are led back to the compound by one or two shepherds. Dogs look up at an eagle on whose back sits a human being (fig. 5). On the basis of this pictorial scene, Steinkeller has reconstructed the story: "when one evening the shepherd Etana was bringing his flock back to the sheepfold, the compound was attacked by an eagle or eagles. In the ensuing struggle to protect his flock, Etana seized the eagle by its neck. As Etana's companions watched in horror, the eagle then flew off, taking Etana along with him. ... [He was then] carried on the bird high into the sky, experiencing a wonderful but quite unexpected journey."⁹² However, other scholars explain the iconography as depicting the apotheosis of Etana through his heavenly journey over the world of the shepherd, thus creating a symbolic breach between his past life as a shepherd and his future life as king.⁹³ It might also be possible to view the pictorial evidence as depicting Etana's descent from heaven, when he brings down kingship from heaven.⁹⁴ Rather than interpreting the scene as representing a specific occasion, Bernbeck views the seal imagery as encapsulating a ritual drama of political legitimation concerning Etana, which was part of a rite of kingship probably held at the New Year.⁹⁵ Selz demonstrates the parallels between Etana's and

⁸⁶ Wartke 1999: 307, Abb. 8.

⁸⁷ Woolley 1921: plates B17, B22b-24.

⁸⁸ ND 9301-6, see Mallowan 1966: II pp. 528ff. and pl. vii. From Fort Shalmaneser Room NE 2.

⁸⁹ Mallowan 1966: 656 note 119.

⁹⁰ WA 188829, see Collon 1995: 143, fig. 116.

⁹¹ Most recent text edition: Novotny 2001.

⁹² Steinkeller 1992: 254.

⁹³ For a possible reconstruction of this image on various levels, see Selz 1998b: 153 [19]. According to Selz, the pre-iconographic level of the identification of the images and figures in the seal would be:

eagle, vessels, cheese forms, etc. The iconographic level would relate to shepherdship, pastoralism and dairy production. The iconological level could have two meanings: the aggrandisement of Etana through his heavenly journey over the world of the shepherd, or secondly, a symbolic breach made by supernatural/divine kingship in the everyday life of the shepherd.

⁹⁴ Selz 1998b: 153 [20].

⁹⁵ Bernbeck 1996: 182, 201-204. He bases his interpretation on verse 5 of the Old Babylonian version, telling of the gods' ordaining a festival for the people (OV I i 5, Haul 2000: 106).

Šulgi's ascents to heaven and the tradition of the compilation of the Etana saga during the reign of Šulgi.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, since the legend is in Akkadian, Selz prefers to place the literary source in the Akkadian period. He maintains that the legend, and consequently the imagery, convey an aetiology for the Semitic hereditary dynastic kingship.⁹⁷ Whether or not Etana represents the Semitic hereditary dynastic kingship (vis-à-vis the Sumerian tradition), shepherdship was one of the defining traits of the Sumerian *nam-lugal* rather than the Akkadian *šarrūtum*, as we have seen. The Neo-Sumerians upheld the dynastic principle and advanced the shepherdship metaphor of kingship. In keeping with these facts, Haul suggests the probability of a Sumerian forerunner of the Akkadian Etana saga.⁹⁸

Turning from images of possible shepherds as kings, let us look at images of kings which could possibly be related to a shepherd image. In her discussion of Assyrian royal imagery, Ursula Magen attempted to identify such an image: "In der Vorstellung vom Herrscher als Hirten ist die Fürsorgepflicht des Hirten, seine Herde zu weiden and zu tränken, enthalten aber auch das Recht der Hirten, seine Herde zu leiten and die Ordnung aufrechtzuerhalten. Aus letzterem erklärt sich der Titel des »sipa-nì-si-sá« Hirte der Gerechtigkeit, oder der *rē'ûti mīšari* des Hirtentums der Gerechtigkeit, bei Assurbanipal."⁹⁹ In particular, Magen identifies a king represented as a shepherd in two images (1) holding a *šibirru* staff and (2) holding a *šerretu* lead-rope (her type V).¹⁰⁰ However, this definition is based

on vague textual sources. She identifies the *šibirru* as the archetypal sign of the shepherdship of the Assyrian king, while noting that the *haṭṭu* occurs not only with every reference to shepherdship but also with other types of royal iconography, and thus cannot signify the shepherdship ideal alone (fig. 6). On the other hand, her second identifying marker, the lead-rope, cannot be a sign of shepherdship but rather signifies cowherding, whose imagery needs to be delineated separately. Her identification of the insignia is as follows: (1) the staff is the *šibirru*, (2) the mace is the *haṭṭu*, and (3) the crook (Krummschwert or Krummaxt) is the *gamlu* weapon (pp. 71ff.).

However, it seems most likely that the shepherd's staff is the *gidru/haṭṭu*, despite its embodiment of attributes beyond those of shepherding. The god with the staff *gidru* (e.g. the staff of Ninšubura)¹⁰¹ is the vizier who introduces visitors, brings news to and delivers order from his master. The staff held by the vizier is given to him by his master. In the human world this is the king, who has himself received his staff from the gods, symbolising his power to rule in the name of his lord. Wiggermann discusses the staff as being the tool of the shepherd, in addition to the *šibirru*¹⁰²: "It is abundantly clear that the symbolic staff of rulership, given to the king to shepherd the people, derives from the staff of the shepherd, with which he guides his flock." In my opinion, the insignia are as follows: (1) the staff is the *gidru/haṭṭu*, (2) the crook[?] is the *šibir/šibirru*, and (3) the mace is the *giš.tukul/kakku*.

To sum up the visual imagery of the

⁹⁶ Selz 1998b: 154ff.

⁹⁷ Selz 1998b: 156.

⁹⁸ Haul 2000: 35-38.

⁹⁹ For a discussion and a listing of Assyrian royal

imagery, see Magen 1986: 18ff.

¹⁰⁰ Magen 1986: 113, Tabelle 30.

¹⁰¹ Wiggermann 1985-6.

¹⁰² Wiggermann 1985-6: 15 and note 45.

Mesopotamian world, there is neither an outstanding icon of the king as righteous shepherd nor even a traditional image of a care-giving shepherd. The king carrying the staff may signify the shepherd who leans on his staff amid his sheep, but this signification is never explicit.

B. Classical Iconography of the Ram-bearer (*kriophoros*)

The classical image of the ram-bearer (*kriophoros*) renders an offering bearer or a shepherd, as well as the well-known depiction of Hermes as Hermes *kriophoros*. The first images appear in the Archaic period in Greece in votive bronze statuettes from Arcadia carrying the ram under their left arm like those of Mesopotamia.¹⁰³ These Arcadian examples can be compared to the unfinished sculpture of a ram bearer from Thasos who holds the calf with his left arm against his chest.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, Pausanias reports a Hermes *kriophoros* dedicated by the Pheneatians in the temenos of Zeus' sanctuary in Olympia and describes this figure of Hermes as carrying the ram under his arm.¹⁰⁵ The classical image of the ram-bearer, carrying the ram on his shoulders, appears less frequently. It first surfaces among terracotta figurines in Sicily in the fifth century BCE and at Locri in western Greece during the period from 600 to 450 BCE.¹⁰⁶ A similar pose of the calf-bearer (*moschophoros*) also appears among archaic sculptures, as can be seen in the example from the

Temple of Athena on the Acropolis of Athens.¹⁰⁷ Pausanias also mentions as a work of Kalamis a "Hermes carrying a ram on his shoulders," set up by the people of Tanagra. The statue was said to commemorate the averting of a plague by the god's carrying a ram around the city wall.¹⁰⁸

Although the image conveyed the same meanings as in Mesopotamia, through the connection with Hermes' role as a shepherd god, the ram-bearer became also the representation of the shepherd. At the same time, the figure of Hermes *psychopompos* 'the bearer of the soul' leading the dead to the underworld was depicted on vases and reliefs. These two roles of Hermes appear to have coalesced in late classical art, where the image of Hermes *kriophoros* occurs on sarcophagi. It should be noted that the meaning of the symbol in Greece was neither that of the bucolic shepherd nor that of the virtue of Philanthropia of Roman imagery and definitely not the saviour, as in later Christian allegory.

Hermes is not the only deity who carries caprids. While he bears a ram on his shoulders, Aphrodite is shown holding a goat on a terracotta relief from Gela, in the manner reminiscent of the Mesopotamian kid-carriers, the Sumerian offering-bearers and the Assyrian genii.¹⁰⁹

Thus, the figure of the *kriophoros* in classical art in both the text and image basically carried the same message that it bore in ancient Near Eastern iconography. It was only through the connections with the roles of the god Hermes that the image changed its significance.

¹⁰³ Engemann 1991: 580.

¹⁰⁴ Boardman 1981: fig. 69 dated to 580 B.C.E.

¹⁰⁵ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Book V xxvii §8.

¹⁰⁶ Higgins 1967: 54, 87, 89.

¹⁰⁷ Lullies and Hirmer 1960: pls. 24f., Richter 1960: 61, figs. 68-9.

¹⁰⁸ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Book IX xxii §1.

¹⁰⁹ Richter 1960: 224, fig. 331.

C. The Pagan Good Shepherd in Early Christian Art

By Late Antiquity, the youthful ram-bearing shepherd had a long tradition of pagan usage – as offering-bearer, bucolic figure, personification of Winter in addition to its use to represent Hermes. This image is common in various media in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Frescoes, pavement mosaics and reliefs with pastoral imagery decorated the Roman house. Examples proliferate in funerary art, among the wall paintings in non-Christian mausoleums and sarcophagi from Late Antiquity. In the latter, the image of the shepherd, like that of the *orans* and the philosopher, conveys abstractions. While the *orans* conveyed the image of piety, and the philosopher, wisdom, the ram-bearing shepherd portrayed philanthropy-*humanitas* (see fig. 2). Thus, the ram-bearing shepherd came to signify a general philanthropic saviour for both pagans and Christians.¹¹⁰ Theodore Klauser suggested that it was by adapting a symbol of moral philosophy that the Christians created the allegory of Jesus as the Good Shepherd.¹¹¹

While the visual imagery of the righteous shepherd in the Mesopotamian world is absent, images of shepherds are so abundant in the iconography of the classical world that it is hard to distinguish between pagan and Christian examples. The iconographic vocabulary and sentiment are the same. There is nothing astonishing in the fact that the figure of a shepherd leaning on his staff amid his sheep in a miniature in a manuscript of Virgil in the Vatican reappears on the façade of a Christian sarcophagus.¹¹² Idyl-

lic pastoral scenes commonly contain representations of the bucolic ram-bearing shepherd. For instance, this vessel (fig. 7), from the third to fourth centuries CE, is divided into four narrative metopes, each decorated in relief with two figures. One metope shows a ‘Good Shepherd’ dressed in a long-sleeved tunic and carrying a ewe on his shoulders, while the other figure in the metope holds a skin filled with milk and is dressed in the traditional slave tunic. Strangely, the two figures face away from each other. Although this series of scenes has been interpreted as referring to Christian baptism and its spiritually nourishing qualities, it is impossible to be certain of this; it seems equally likely that the scenes simply depict rural activities, with the ‘Good Shepherd’ just representing a conscientious mortal keeper of sheep.

The earliest example of the adoption by the Christians of the Good Shepherd motif seems to be the third-century clay lamps produced by Annius Serapidorus, a potter from central Italy who specialized in producing lamps with this motif. There is no evidence that they were made specifically for Christians, but as the art historian Paul Corby Finney notes, “it is reasonable to suppose that at least an occasional Christian customer will have been prompted to purchase one of Annius’ shepherd lamps on the basis of its discus subject.”¹¹³ These lamps depicted the Good Shepherd on the discus of the lamp, together with other pagan figures. Though it is impossible to tell the significance attributed to this motif by the craftsmen who made the lamps, Christians may have deliberately bought this

¹¹⁰ Engemann 1991: 586; Weitzmann 1979: 519; Grabar 1968: 10f.

¹¹¹ Klauser 1958.

¹¹² Grabar 1968: 36.

¹¹³ Finney 1994: 125.

type of lamp, as the originally pagan motif had by now acquired a Christian allegorical meaning. The Good Shepherd carrying a lamb signified that the shepherd, an allegory for Jesus, saves the lamb, an allegory for the Christian soul.¹¹⁴ The image makers made no attempt to be more specific in paleo-Christian art but rather tried to represent abstractions. In the contemporary Christian baptistery in Dura Europos, Syria, destroyed in 256 CE, the niche behind the font is decorated with two images, Adam and Eve and the Good Shepherd.¹¹⁵ The deliberate juxtaposition conveys an iconographic message: the smaller image of Adam and Eve, personifying original sin, is dominated by the larger scene of the Good Shepherd, the idyllic image of salvation, representing redemption.¹¹⁶

In Rome, the Good Shepherd appears in Christian funerary contexts late in the third century, manifesting the doctrinal belief in the salvation of the soul. The motif occurs in the mosaics of the cemetery under St. Peter's, in the wall paintings of the Tomb of the Aurelii, and in the Catacombs of Via Latina, of Domitilla, and of Callixtus.¹¹⁷ The popularity of this motif continued after the reign of Constantine (306-337), when Christianity became the official faith of the imperial court.

The Good Shepherd may represent Christ, but also may represent other figures, such as saints, in particular St. Peter. For instance, in the central mosaic of Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, the titular saint, Apollinaris, is portrayed as the shepherd interceding for his flock

at the Last Judgement.¹¹⁸

Common attributes of the shepherd are most often the crooked staff (the model for the bishop's crosier), and in many cases a straight staff with a spade-like end, with which the shepherd can pick up stones and cast them away. Sometimes the images are combined and the shepherd is shown leaning on his staff while bearing a ram on his shoulders.

To conclude, this survey indicates that the shepherd metaphor began not as a protective image (guardianship), but rather with connotations of the herder, the guide of the flock, leading his people to pastures, to places of sustenance. This can be seen in the image of Jesus as the shepherd who leans on his staff amid his sheep, caring for his flock. An example (see fig. 8) decorates the mosaic lunette above the entrance to the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna (mid-fifth century).¹¹⁹ This image of Jesus can also be seen in a painting of 1890 by the Finnish artist Albert Edelfeldt, who depicted the Matalena of the Finnish ballad praying for mercy at the feet of the herdsman Jesus, who stands above her grasping a staff in his left hand.

We have seen how the shepherd image addressed the fundamental relationship between the deity and his people, the gods and the human leader. The biblical prophets understood that the salvation of any society depended upon how closely the hierarchy of leadership embodied the shepherd image in their lives. The signification of the symbolism of this personal relationship to the divine was early encapsulated in this Sumerian proverb:

¹¹⁴ The problem of duplicated images cannot be dealt with in the limits of this paper. The lamb is also the symbol of Christ as victim sacrificed for the salvation of men; the sheep are also the apostles, and also represent the martyrs and all the faithful, the flock of the Good Shepherd.

¹¹⁵ See Grabar 1967: 69, fig. 60; idem 1968: figs. 40-

41; Perkins 1973: 30, 52-53, 55, plan fig. 76, plate fig. 17, 18.

¹¹⁶ Grabar 1968: 20.

¹¹⁷ Grabar 1967: 68, 80, 102, 105, 108; figs. 27-28, 60, 76, 80, 94.

¹¹⁸ Vollbach 1961: 344, no. 173.

¹¹⁹ Vollbach 1961: 339-340, no. 147.

ṛdingir¹ lú-ùlu sipa ú-kin-gá lú-ùlu-kam
 udu-gim ú-gu₇-a ḫé-en-túm-túm-mu

“A man’s (personal) god is a shepherd who finds pasturage for him. Let him lead him like sheep to the grass they can eat” (Sumerian Proverbs Coll. 3.134, Alster, *Proverbs*, 102).¹²⁰

¹²⁰ This is a popular proverb, known from the Ur bilingual version CT 16 12 i 44f. version cited above (UET 6/2 255) as well as the

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FIGURES

1. Hellenistic statuette of Hermes *kriophorus*, bronze, Eastern Mediterranean, fourth-third centuries B.C.E. (BLMJ 2491). Photo Credit: David Harris, Courtesy of the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem.
2. Roman strigilated sarcophagus fragment depicting the Good Shepherd, late third century C.E. (BLMJ 1062). Photo Credit: Dietrich Widmer, Courtesy of the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem.
3. Drawing of impression of a limestone cylinder seal depicting royal en figure, holding branches blooming with rosettes on which two rams are feeding, framed by tasselled poles, symbols of the goddess Inanna of Uruk; behind left pole are theriomorphic and cylindrical vessels used in temple cult; Uruk, Uruk period. Ca. 3300 B.C.E. (VA 10537). Drawing by Dalit Weinblatt-Krausz.
4. Impression of a cylinder seal depicting three scenes, two presentation scenes and one frontal scene. From the right to the left, the scenes are: (1) a king with an animal offering standing before the sun-god, who is holding the rod and ring attributes of justice, with his foot resting on his human-headed divine bull; (2) a suppliant goddess facing Inanna/Ištar in her warlike aspect, holding her double lion-headed mace and standing on her two lions; (3) the goddess Ninegal, with one hand raised, wearing a crenellated headdress. Southern Mesopotamia. Old Babylonian period. Ca. 1875-1720

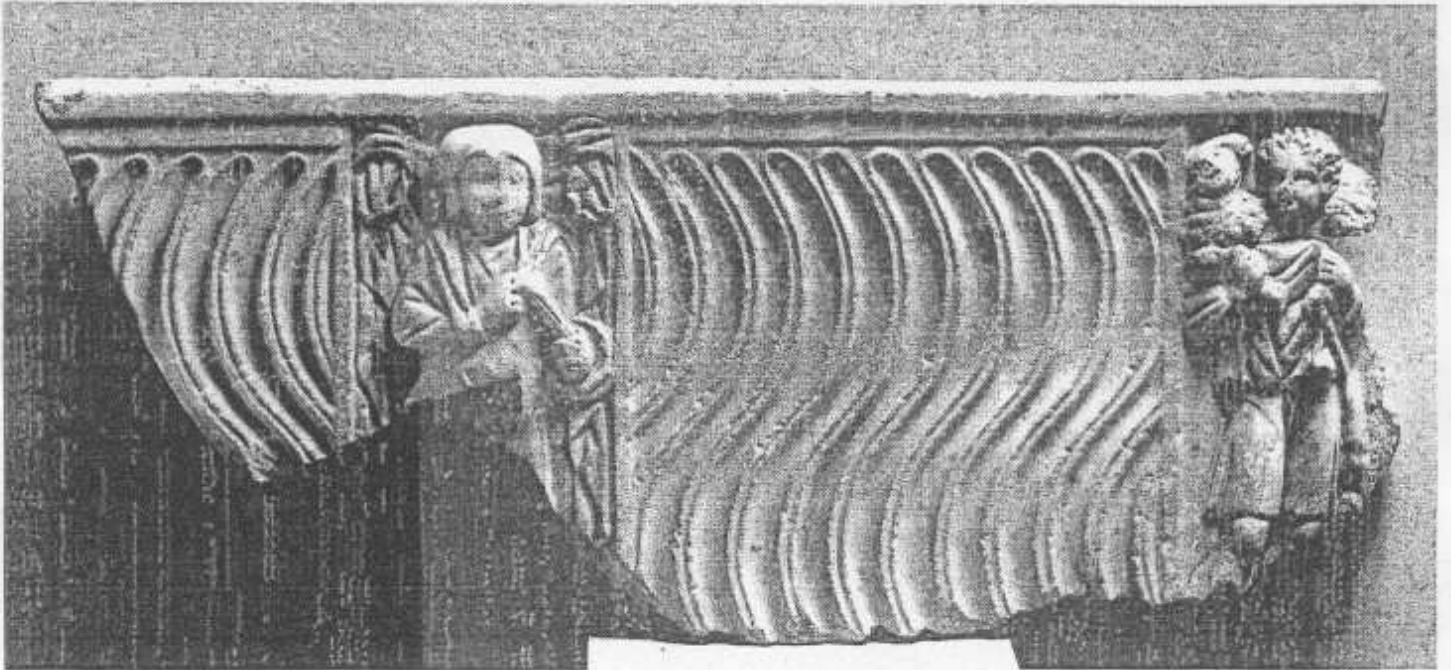
B.C.E. (BLMJ seal 422a). Photo Credit: David A. Loggie, Courtesy of the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem.

5. Impression of a cylinder seal depicting “Etana legend.” From left to right: a man ascends on the back of a large bird, below which are two dogs gazing upwards and a shepherd waving a whip(?); behind the latter is a churning vat worked by one seated male figure, a sheepfold, a herd of sheep and goats, above which another man holding a shepherd’s staff is laying out round objects which have been identified as round balls of fermented sour milk (*kushuk*). Southern Mesopotamia. Old Akkadian period. Ca. 2250-2150 B.C.E. (BLMJ seal 378). Photo Credit: Hans Hinz, Courtesy of the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem.
6. Drawing of recessed panel of sandstone stela, depicting king Assur-našir-pal II holding the long royal sceptre/staff (*gidru/haṭṭu*) identified by Magen as a *šibirru* in his right hand. In his left hand he holds the mace. Above the king are the symbols of the gods: the moon crescent of Sin, the winged sun disk of Šamaš, the eight-pointed star of Ištar, the divine horned crown of Assur, the lightning bolts of Adad and the seven stars of the Pleiades. North-west palace, Nimrud. Neo-Assyrian period. 879 B.C.E. (ND 1104). After J. Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichbare Felsreliefs*, Mainz am Rhein, 1982, no. 137b.
7. Marble receptacle bearing bucolic images including the Good Shepherd. Asia Minor. Late third-fourth centuries C.E. (BLMJ 4221); Photo Credit: David Harris, Courtesy of the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem.
8. Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Mosaic lunette above the entrance to the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna. Mid-fifth century C.E.

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