Comparative Study of Divine Kingship in Ur III Dynasty Mesopotamia and China in the Shang Dynasty

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Abstract

This dissertation is a comparative study of the phenomenon of divine kingship in the Ur III and Shang Dynasties. Chapter One introduces the historical background of the Ur III Dynasty and the Shang Dynasty, with a focus on political models and administrative organizations. Chapter Two offers a contextual analysis of the emergence of divine kingship in both civilizations and attempts to identify the various reasons behind the emergence of this phenomenon, and whether it is possible to trace a developmental trajectory for it. Chapter Three investigates the reflection of divine kings in Ur III, utilizing textual and visual evidence. Chapter Four provides an overview analysis of the manifestation of the Shang god-kings. These two chapters explore the similarities and differences between the kings in the two states, as well as how they differed from traditional kings and gods within their own historical and religious contexts. Chapter Five highlights the methodology of cross-cultural comparison, explaining the influences and consequences of divine kingship in the Ur III Dynasty and the Shang civilization. In addition to presenting a horizontal and vertical comparative analysis of this phenomenon within each culture and across cultures, this chapter extends our understanding of the relationship between divine kingship and the early stage of state development, using anthropological and historical theories. Chapter Six concludes this thesis, with a synthesis of the content and a consideration of the theoretical implications of this thesis for the historical study of divine kingship in these two ancient civilizations.

Abbreviations

AANEA	*Archaeopress Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology*
AnSt	*Anatolian Studies*
AOAT	*Alter Orient und Altes Testament*
AoF	*Altorientalische Forschungen*
AOS	*American Oriental Series*
ArOr	*Archiv Orientalni*
ARRIM	*Annual Review of the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project*
AS	*Assyriological Studies*
ASJ	*Acta Sumerologica*
AUCT	*Andrews University Cuneiform Texts*
BCSMS	*Bulletin of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies*
BCT	*Catalogue of cuneiform tablets in Birmingham City Museum*
BDTNS	*Database of Neo-Sumerian Texts*
BiOr	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*
BPOA	*Biblioteca del Proximo Oriente Antiguo*
CANE	*Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*
CDLI	*Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative*
CDLJ	*Cuneiform Digital Library Journal*
CHANE	*Culture and history of the ancient Near East*
CM	*Cuneiform Monographs*
ETCSL	*Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*
HANE/S	*History of the Ancient Near East / Studies*
HSAO	*Heidelberger Studien zum Alten Orient*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
JAC	*Journal of Ancient Civilizations*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*

JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JCSSS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies Supplemental Series*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
MC	*Mesopotamian Civilizations*
MVN	*Materiali per il vocabulario neosumerico*
NABU	*Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires*
NATN	*Neo-Sumerian Archival Texts primarily from Nippur*
OBO	*Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis*
OIP	*Oriental Institute Publications*
OIS	*Oriental Institute Seminars*
PDT	*Die Puzris-Dagan-Texte der Istanbuler Archaologischen Museen Part 1*
PIHANS	*Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul*
RA	*Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale*
RAI	*Proceedings of the Rencontre assyriologique internationale; Compte rendu de la Rencontre Assyriologique lnternationale*
RIME	*The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods*
SAAS	*State Archives of Assyria Studies*
SACT	*Sumerian and Akkadian Cuneiform Texts in the Collection of the World Heritage Museum of the University of Illinois*
SANER	*Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Records*
SANTAG	*Arbeiten und Untersuchungen zur Keilschriftkunde*
SAOC	*Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization*
SAT	*Sumerian Archival Texts*
TAPA	*Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*
TCL	*Textes cunéiformes, Musées du Louvre*
UAVA	*Untersuchtungen zur Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*

UET	*Ur Excavations Texts*
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*

Conventions

Cuneiform texts of the Ur III Dynasty are referenced by their publication data. In the body of the text, Sumerian words are indicated by bold-type letters and Akkadian words are in italics. For example, the word for “king” would be portrayed as lugal in Sumerian and as *šarrum* in Akkadian. Dates are represented in the format of royal name + regnal year. The abbreviations for royal names are as follows: Š = Šulgi, AS = Amar-Suen, ŠS = Šu-Suen, IS = Ibbi-Suen. Therefore, the fifth year of Amar-Suen’s reign would be represented as AS 5.

For the Shang Dynasty, proper nouns such as personal names and place names are given Chinese characters in parentheses when they first appear. An example is the royal title “common ruler of all under heaven” (天下共主).

Chapter I: Introduction

I.1 Historical Background

I.1.1 Introduction to Ur III Dynasty in Ancient Mesopotamia

At the very end of the third millennium BC, following the collapse of the Akkad Dynasty, a new dynasty arose in the city of Ur. Within a few decades, this dynasty came to exercise not only hegemony over southern Mesopotamia, but also influence neighboring regions to the east into Iran, and north towards the edge of north-eastern Syria. Ur III Dynasty (commonly abbreviated as Ur III) is the first centralized territorial state formed by the Sumerian that is renowned for its large amounts of administrative documents. Under Ur III, Mesopotamia was once again unified under a single leader for more than a century (ca. 2112–2004 BC).[1] This is also the period coined by terms such as "Neo-Sumerian" and "Sumerian Renaissance". As J. Dahl pointed out, Ur III passed through four stages of development, namely consolidation, expansion, stability, and decline.[2] Five kings ruled over the nearly one century of the Ur III period, among whom Ur-Nammu was the founder of the state, Šulgi pushed the dynasty to its peak through a number of both military activities and domestic reforms, Amar-Suen and Šu-Suen ushered in a period of stability, and Ibbi-Suen was too powerless to prevent the dynasty from collapsing and finally falling to the Elam.

The Gutians, invading group from the eastern mountains, put an end to the prosperous Akkad Dynasty, leaving a vacuum of power that lead to competition among powerful, rivalling city rulers for preeminence. Utu-hegal of Uruk was the first to stand out by delivering a fateful blow at the Gutian borders, which he followed by claiming hegemony over the south Mesopotamian cities.[3] Utu-hegal was the sole ruler of the

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[1] The dates given in the part of Mesopotamia follow the middle chronology, see J. Reade, "Assyrian King-Lists, the Royal Tombs of Ur, and Indus Origins." *JNES* 60 (2001), pp. 1-29. For a general introduction to the Ur III Dynasty, see most recently, Piotr Steinkeller, "The Sargonic and Ur III Empires", in Peter F. Bang, C. A. Bayly & Walter Scheidel (eds.), *The Oxford World History of Empire*, *volume 2: The History of Empires*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021, pp. 43-72.

[2] Jacob Dahl, *The Ruling Family of Ur III Umma: A Prosopographical Analysis of an Elite Family in Southern Iraq 4000 Years Ago*, PIHANS 108, Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2007, p. 1.

[3] Magnus Widell, "Some Considerations on the Meaning of giš bi_2-(in)-DU_3 in the Royal Inscription of Utu-

Uruk V Dynasty (ca. 2119–2113 BC), just preceding the establishment of Ur III state.

The origin of Ur III Dynasty remains obscure, but it may have had a close relationship with the Uruk V Dynasty. Ur-Nammu was known as the first king of this new political entity uniting southern Mesopotamian. However, the political history over his period remains largely unclear and little is known of how he came to power and his deeds, as few documents have survived since that time. Two stelae from Ur indicate that Ur-Nammu was Utu-hegal's general (šagina),[4] which led to speculations that Ur-Nammu may have been a member of the ruling family of Uruk, and the brother of Utu-hegal.[5] However, the precise nature of the relationship between both can hardly be established, as has been argued by P. Espak.[6] Although Uruk theology has a certain influence on Ur-Namma's ideology, this "does not give any definite proof that Ur-Namma himself had to come from Uruk". For still unknown reasons, Ur-Nammu revolted against his overlord at Uruk, gained independence, and pursued further hegemony.[7] It is impossible to trace the procedure of Ur-Nammu's rise to the throne, but his struggle for unification seems to have lasted a long time, as the latter part of the Lagaš II Dynasty likely overlapped with the early years of Ur III.[8] After gaining independent kingship, Ur-Nammu took a series of measures to legitimize and consolidate his power. These included presenting himself as the heir to Uruk, recognizing his legitimacy in Nippur, adopting practical policy to fit the image of an ideal ruler, and taking military actions.[9] The mode in which his successors followed

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hegal." *JAC* 15 (2000), pp. 59-68.

[4] Douglas R. Frayne, *Sargonic and Gutian Periods (2334-2113 BC)*, RIME 2, Toronto and Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1993, pp. 295-296.

[5] William W. Hallo, "The Coronation of Urnammu." *JCS* 20.3/4 (1966), pp. 133-141; Claus Wilcke & Paul Garelli, "Zum Königtum in der Ur III-Zeit." *Le palais et la royauté* (1974), p. 180 and fn. 67; there are other suggestions that Ur-Nammu was the son or son-in-law of Utu-hegal, see for example Marcel Sigrist, *Drehem*, Bethesda: CDL Press, 1992, p. 4; Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, WAW 19, Atlanta: SBL Press, 2004, pp. 288-289.

[6] Peeter Espak, "The Establishment of Ur III Dynasty. From the Gutians to the Formation of the Neo-Sumerian Imperial Ideology and Pantheon", in Thomas R. Kämmerer, Mait Kõiv & Vladimir Sazonov (eds.), *Kings, Gods and People, Establishing Monarchies in the Ancient World*, AOAT 390/4, Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2016, p. 94; see also Jacob Dahl, *The Ruling Family of Ur III Umma: A Prosopographical Analysis of an Elite Family in Southern Iraq 4000 Years Ago*, 2007, p. 10.

[7] For a construction of the early history of Ur-Nammu's reign, see Esther Flückiger-Hawker, *Urnamma of Ur in Sumerian Literary Tradition*, OBO 166, Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1999, pp. 1-8.

[8] The overlap between the two dynasties may last until Š 10 or Š 11, see Piotr Steinkeller, "The Date of Gudea and His Dynasty." *JCS* 40 (1988), pp. 48-50.

[9] For a detailed discussion of Ur-Nammu's ideological concepts and policy to legitimize his hegemony, see Ludek Vacin, *Šulgi of Ur: Life, Deeds, Ideology and Legacy of a Mesopotamian Ruler as Reflected Primarily in Literary*

and repeatedly linked themselves to earlier Uruk kings through mythical family ties is always related to Gilgameš. Ninsun and Lugalbanda, mother and father of Gilgameš, respectively, were revered as the divine parents of Ur III kings, and Gilgameš himself was regarded as their brother.

Ur-Nammu's reign was witnessed by building programs and renovation of existing canals, mostly recorded in year names by few historical sources. The system of year-names, which contain information on major campaigns, building projects, and cultic events, was used for dating throughout Ur III, and provided a uniform calendar for all ruled areas.[10] However, year names must be used with caution, as they are not strict historical records but can also be boasting or propaganda of rulers.[11] Towards the end of Ur-Nammu's reign, the main frame of Ur III has been basically determined, as reflected by the new royal title "king of Sumer and Akkad" (lugal ki-en-gi ki-uri). Nevertheless, Ur-Nammu never adopted the title of "king of the four quarters" (LUGAL *ki-ib-ra-tim ar-ba-im*), which was invented by Naram-Sin to claim hegemony, indicating that the actual area he controlled in his time was limited. The circumstances of Ur-Nammu's death remain obscure, and the only source known to date is a composition "Death of Ur-Nammu" in later literary tradition, which suggests that he died on the battlefield.[12] In ancient Mesopotamia, the subject of the death of a king was taboo, especially an unlucky death on the battlefield, which was perceived as a sign of abandonment by a patron god, which would have caused religious panic among the general public. After his death, Ur-Nammu was made a god and worshipped, which is in line with the ancient Mesopotamian tradition.

After the unexpected death of Ur-Nammu, the kingship of Ur III passed into the hands of his son Šulgi, the most important and illustrious king, whose 48 years' reign

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Texts, PhD. Thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, pp. 27-31.

[10] Year names of Ur III Dynasty can be found in CDLI (*Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative*, https://cdli.ox.ac.uk/wiki/rulers_of_mesopotamia).

[11] On the value and shortcomings of year names in the reconstruction of history, see Magnus Widell, "Reconstructing the Early History of the Ur III State: Some Methodological Considerations of the Use of Year Formulae." *JAC* 17 (2002), pp. 99-111; "The Calendar of Neo-Sumerian Ur and Its Political Significance." *CDLJ* 2 2004, pp. 1-7; Jacob Dahl, "Naming Ur III Years", in Alexandra Kleinerman & Jack M. Sasson (eds.), *Why Should Someone Who Knows Something Conceal It? Cuneiform Studies in Honor of David I. Owen on His 70th Birthday*, Bethesda: CDL Press, 2010, pp. 85-93.

[12] For the last and most complete edition, see Esther Flückiger-Hawker, OBO 166, 1999, pp. 93-192.

is much better understood. As indicated by year names, Šulgi focused on domestic and cultic activities over the first 20 years of his reign and turned to military campaigns from then on. In line with domestic construction, a series of political, social, and economic reforms were carried out which greatly promoted the formation of a well-functioning administrative machine.[13] The administrative unit of Ur III was divided into a number of provinces, each with a city center, governed by a governor (ensi$_2$), who was most likely recruited from a military commander (šagina) of a local ruling family, either coming from the royal family or who had married into it. This suggests a careful separation of civil and military powers within the central provinces of south Babylonia.[14] Two kinds of tributes or taxations, namely "bala" and "gun$_2$ ma-da" were introduced by Šulgi to integrate the different provincial centers into a unified whole that was ultimately under the control of the central government.[15] Puziriš-Dagan (modern Drehem) built in Šulgi's 39th year is a typical manifestation of this administrative structure functioning in Ur III. The nature of Puziriš-Dagan was controversial in the past, but increasing archaeological evidence and archives identify it as the biggest redistribution and administrative center, suggesting reinforcement and centralization of royal power.[16]

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[13] For a general discussion of Šulgi's reforms, see for example Nicholas Postgate, "Royal Ideology and State Administration in Sumer and Akkad", in Jack M. Sasson, John Baines, Gary Beckman & Karen S. Rubinson (eds.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East,* vol. 1, CANE 1, New York: Charles Scribners' Son, 1995, pp. 401-402; the broadest scheme of the Šulgi reforms see Piotr Steinkeller, "The Administrative and Economic Organization of the Ur III State: The Core and the Periphery", in McGuire Gibson & Robert Biggs (eds.), *The Organization of Power: Aspects of Bureaucracy in the Ancient Near East*, SAOC 46, Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1991, pp. 16-17; a more restrained version see Walther Sallaberger, "Ur III-Zeit", in Walther Sallaberger & Aage Westenholz (eds.), *Mesopotamien: Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit*, OBO 160/3, Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1999, p. 148.

[14] Miguel Civil, "Ur III Bureaucracy: Quantitative Aspects", SAOC 46, 1991, pp. 35-44; Piotr Michalowski, "Charisma and Control: On Continuity and Change in Early Mesopotamian Bureaucratic Systems", SAOC 46, 1991, pp. 45-57; Piotr Steinkeller, "The Administrative and Economic Organization of the Ur III State: The Core and the Periphery", SAOC 46, 1991, pp. 15-33. More recently, some objection to the notion of a highly centralized Ur III state with large bureaucracy was put forward, see Steven J. Garfinkle, "Was the Ur III State Bureaucratic? Patrimonialism and Bureaucracy in the Ur III Period", in Steven J. Garfinkle & J. Cale Johnson (eds.), *The Growth of an Early State in Mesopotamia: Studies in Ur III Administration: Proceedings of the First and Second Ur III Workshops at the 49th and 51st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, London July 10, 2003 and Chicago July 19, 2005*, BPOA 5, Madrid: CSIC Press, 2008, pp. 55-62; "The Third Dynasty of Ur and the Limits of State Power in Early Mesopotamia", in Steven J. Garfinkle & Manuel Molina (eds.), *From the 21st Century B.C. to the 21st Century A.D.: Proceedings of the International Conference on Neo-Sumerian Studies Held in Madrid, 22-24 July 2010*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012, pp. 153-167.

[15] Tonia M. Sharlach, *Provincial Taxation and the Ur III State*, CM 26, Leiden and Boston: Brill and Styx, 2004.

[16] For studies of Drehem, see for example Tom B. Jones & John W. Snyder, *Sumerian Economic Texts from the Third Ur Dynasty: A Catalogue and Discussion of Documents from Various Collections*, SET, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1961; Marcel Sigrist, *Drehem*, 1992; Christina Tsouparopoulou, *The Material Face of Bureaucracy: Writing, Sealing and Archiving Tablets for the Ur III State at Drehem*, PhD. Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2008.

Early consolidation undoubtedly provided a basis for war, but it is noteworthy that the expansionist policy, which started from around the 21th year of Šulgi's reign, coincided with the first attestation of the king's deification. Throughout history, a powerful, long-lived ruler is often endowed with quasi-divine qualities. Šulgi was no exception and even went further by deifying himself explicitly by the middle of his reign. This self-deification was followed by all his three successors as soon as their accessions to the throne. His motivation for doing so is discussed in detail in Chapter II, but what must be clarified here is that Šulgi was not acting on a whim, but rather following deliberate political strategy. Not long after his deification, the royal title "king of the four quarters" (lugal an-ub-da-limmu$_2$-ba) appeared for the first time in his 27th year name. The second half of Šulgi's reign witnessed numerous military campaigns toward the eastern and north-eastern border regions and the apex of Ur III state.[17] Apart from military activities, the policy of diplomatic marriage was also adopted by Šulgi to strengthen connections with surrounding highlands, which can be seen from the 18th, 31st, and 48th years' name formulae.

Šulgi died on the first or second day of the 11th month of his last regal year, and was well remembered in more than 20 royal hymns composed in his honor. Doubt exists about the circumstances surrounding the death of Šulgi, as two of his queens died five months later. P. Michalowski observed this abnormal situation and speculated that for political reasons, Šulgi may have been assassinated and two of his consorts were murdered with him.[18] In this way, Šulgi's immediate successor Amar-Suen is a suspect, and there is indeed something odd about his succession. According to a scholarly estimate based on available archival texts, Šulgi sired 17 princes,[19] but the name of Amar-Suen is never mentioned on any extant records before his coronation. Possible explanations for the lack of textual references to Amar-Suen during Šulgi's reign are as

[17] Daniel Patterson, *Elements of the Neo-Sumerian Military*, PhD. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2018, pp. 50-51.
[18] Piotr Michalowski, "The Death of Šulgi." *Orientalia Nova Series* 46/2 (1977), pp. 220-225; "Of Bears and Men: Thoughts about the End of Šulgi's Reign and the Ensuing Succession", in D. S. Vanderhooft & A. Winitzer (eds.), *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature, Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013, pp. 285-319.
[19] Ludek Vacin, *Šulgi of Ur: Life, Deeds, Ideology and Legacy of a Mesopotamian Ruler as Reflected Primarily in Literary Texts*, 2011, pp. 61-64.

follows:[20] (a) Amar-Suen is the throne name of Ur-Suen;[21] (b) Amar-Suen never held any important office before he became king; (c) Amar-Suen served outside of Sumer, and was perhaps stationed in the east and involved in military campaigns during the latter part of Šulgi's reign.[22] These three explanations are based on one assumption that Amar-Suen is the son of Šulgi. However, Michalowski challenged this premise and rather speculated that Amar-Suen was begotten by one anonymous brother of Šulgi and a princess from Mari, who staged a coup to usurp the throne.[23] That would provide a plausible answer to the question of Šulgi's death and the subsequent contest for the throne between Amar-Suen and Šu-Suen. However, it is not yet possible to confirm this speculation using the available resources.

The succession following Šulgi has been debated for a long time. While it is indisputable that Amar-Suen and Šu-Suen were brothers, their relationship with Ibbi-Suen remains unclear. With the help of recently published texts from Garšana, Michalowski put forward a decisive conclusion. He has found that on short seal inscriptions of her subordinates, Simat-Ištaran is entitled with "princess" (dumu-munus-lugal), but in longer inscriptions she is described as "sister (nin_9)" of both Šu-Suen and Ibbi-Suen. This suggests that succession after Šulgi followed a fratrilineal pattern.[24] Amar-Suen's reign is noteworthy for the installations of new priests (en); a total of four of the king's nine year names refer to priest inaugurations in Ur, Uruk, Eridu, and Karzida, while his second, sixth, and seventh year are related to military campaigns. Although historical sources described Amar-Suen as a weak ruler, there were few conflicts during his reign, which can be understood as both a weakening and strengthening of the Ur III Dynasty. Behind his seemingly untroubled reign, a potential threat from his successor may have lurked. P. Steinkeller observed an important event

[20] For the general discussion of the possibilities, see Jacob Dahl, *The Ruling Family of Ur III Umma: A Prosopographical Analysis of an Elite Family in Southern Iraq 4000 Years Ago*, 2007, p. 20.
[21] Walther Sallaberger, "Ur III-Zeit", OBO 160/3, 1999, p. 163; Wu Yuhong, "The Identifications of Šulgi-simti, Wife of Šulgi, with Abi-simti, Mother of Amar-Sin and Šu-Sin, and of Ur-Sin, the Crown Prince, with Amar-Sin." *JAC* 27 (2012), pp. 1-27.
[22] Lance Allred, *Cooks and Kitchens: Centralized Food Production in Late Third Millennium Mesopotamia*, PhD. Thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 2006, p. 14.
[23] Piotr Michalowski, "Of Bears and Men: Thoughts about the End of Šulgi's Reign and the Ensuing Succession", *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature, Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*, 2013, pp. 316-317.
[24] Ibid., p. 297.

that happened sometime in the 10th month of AS 7 that most—if not all—generals of the realm were summoned to Ur to swear an oath of allegiance to the king.[25] As has been pointed out by Steinkeller, this is the only documented instance of high state military officials taking such a kind of loyalty oath, which could have been an allusion to Amar-Suen's insecurity. It is very likely that Amar-Suen and Šu-Suen struggled for the throne and ruled successively for nine year each, which can be seen, for example, from seals inscriptions dedicated to the divine Šu-Suen that already began to appear on a handful of archival texts from Umma and Puziriš-Dagan dated to AS 6–8.[26] According to the omen texts in the Old Babylonian period, Amar-Suen died "from the bite of a shoe", i.e., maybe an infection of the feet.[27] This cause of death is by no means honorable and other works of later literature may have been written to explain this, such as an Old Babylonian literary composition with the description of Amar-Suen's inability to receive favorable omens from the gods for rebuilding the temple of Enki in Eridu.[28]

In contrast to Amar-Suen, Šu-Suen was well attested in administrative documents prior to his enthronement. Under the reigns of Šulgi and Amar-Suen, Šu-Suen served as general (šagina) in Uruk and Durum, where he was mainly in charge of delivering animals. When he finished his service in Durum, Šu-Suen may have taken part in the military expedition against Huhnuri, commanded by Amar-Suen when he gradually began to cultivate his own power.[29] As part of an apparent program of legitimization, Šu-Suen set up several new statues of himself at the very beginning of his reign and also built the most temples for himself in the Ur III period.[30] By the time of Šu-Suen,

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[25] Piotr Steinkeller, "Joys of Cooking in Ur III Babylonia", in Piotr Michalowski (ed.), *On the Third Dynasty of Ur: Studies in Honor of Marcel Sigrist*, JCSSS 1, Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2008, p. 187.
[26] Evidence of this speculation is collected and analyzed by Jacob Dahl, "The Quest for Eternity. Studies in Neo-Sumerian Systems of Succession", in J. G. Dercksen (ed.), *Assyrian and Beyond, Studies Presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen*, PIHANS 100, Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2004, p. 131. For more discussions, see also Bertrand Lafont, "Game of Thrones: the Years when Šu-Sin Succeeded Amar-Suen in the Kingdom of Ur", in Lluís Feliu, Fumi Karahashi & Gonzalo Rubio (eds.), *The First Ninety Years, A Sumerian Celebration in Honor of Miguel Civil*, Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2017, pp. 189-204.
[27] Albrecht Goetze, "Historical Allusions in Old Babylonian Omen Texts", *JCS* 1/3 (1947), p. 261, texts 29-32.
[28] Douglas R. Frayne, *Ur III Period (2112-2004 BC)*, RIME 3/2, Toronto and Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1997, p. 236.
[29] Piotr Michalowski, "Of Bears and Men: Thoughts about the End of Šulgi's Reign and the Ensuing Succession", *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature, Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*, 2013, pp. 309-310.
[30] Nicole Brisch, "The Priestess and the King: The Divine Kingship of Šū-Sîn of Ur." *JAOS* 126/2 (2006), pp. 161-176.

the state began to encounter difficulties and only two campaigns toward Simanum and Zabšali can be attested from year-date formulae.[31] In order to solve the threat induced by migration from the north, Šu-Suen urged his officials to build protective walls (bad_3 *mar-tu*) named "it keeps Tidnum (a tribe of Amorites) at a distance" (*Murīq-Tīdnum*) to defend against Amorites and named his fourth and fifth regal year after this significant fortification project. Wall construction also happened during the reign of previous kings, but became an urgent necessity during the reign of Šu-Suen, revealing the potential crisis that had already emerged at that time.[32] Šu-Suen died no later than the fourth day of the 10th month of his ninth year, as he received funerary offerings from that day. A large summary tablet (AnOr 07, 108) in connection with the death of Šu-Suen records two expenditures at the beginning and the end of the 10th month of Šu-Suen's last year: one for his successor Ibbi-Suen's coronations in three cities and the other for Ibbi-Suen's attendance with his wife Geme-Ninlila at Uruk for the funeral of Šu-Suen.

Ibbi-Suen followed Šu-Suen on the throne and ruled for 24 years, as reflected by archival documents and SKL. Despite Ibbi-Suen's coronations in the three capitals Nippur, Uruk, and Ur, it is very likely that he ruled only the south Sumer region during the first five years and was restricted to Ur from then on. Signs of the disintegration of the state began to appear in IS 3, as Puziriš-Dagan was closed and cities gradually abandoned the central calendar, a clear indication that his authority was no longer recognized in provinces.[33] The loss of various cities was a severe blow to the economy and stability of the state. A series of royal letters that were exchanged between Ibbi-Suen and two of his provincial governors from IS 9–19 give clue to the possible predicament the last Ur III ruler faced: shortage of crucial grain resources, prices rising at unprecedented rates, as well as trade routes and supplies disrupted by pastoralists.[34]

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[31] Zabšali is within the region of Šimašiki, see Piotr Steinkeller, "The Question of Marḫaši: A Contribution to the Historical Geography of Iran in the Third Millennium B.C." *ZA* 72 (1982), pp. 237-265.

[32] Minna Silver, "Climate Change, the Mardu Wall, and the Fall of Ur", in Olga Drewnowska & Małgorzata Sandowicz (eds.), *Fortune and Misfortune in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 60th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Warsaw 21–25 July 2014*, RAI 60, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2017, pp. 271-295.

[33] For the collapse and destruction of during Ibbi-Sin's reign, see for instance, Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Reign of Ibbī-Suen." *JCS* 7/2 (1953), pp. 36-47; Tohru Ozaki, "On the Critical Economic Situation at Ur Early in the Reign of Ibbisin." *JCS* 36/2 (1984), pp. 211-242. More recently, see Eric L. Cripps, "The Structure of Prices in the Ur III Economy: Cults and Prices at the Collapse of the Ur III State." *JCS* 71 (2019), pp. 53-76.

[34] Piotr Michalowski, *The Correspondence of the Kings of Ur. An Epistolary History of an Ancient Mesopotamian*

Faced with such a grim situation, Ibbi-Suen implemented remedial measures, like building city-walls surrounding Ur and Nippur to resist the potential threat of imminent invasion, caused by break-away of preceding provinces, and adding the royal title "god of his land" (dingir-kalam-ma-na) to the inscription of royal gift seals to fortify his authority.[35] However, his efforts proved futile. Internal problems facilitating the decline had not been solved, an external invasion of Elam and Šimaški followed, which finally caused the destruction of the Ur III Dynasty. This has been clarified by the famous "Lamentations over the destruction of Ur", which was composed not long after the disaster.[36] Approximately one century after Ur-Nammu's establishment of Ur III state, the capital, Ur, was sacked by Elamite.

Although it only existed for about a century, the Ur III Dynasty left a precious legacy for later generations, represented by its centralized administration system, striking bureaucracy, and royal ideology. These three are also the main characteristics of Ur III Dynasty and are mainly attributed to its second and most important king, Šulgi, and inherited by his three successors.[37] Among them, the form of royal power had new changes and developments based on inheriting the practice of divine kingship first invented by Naram-Sin in the Sargonic period. This identifies Ur III Dynasty as the zenith of divine kingship in ancient Mesopotamia.[38]

I.1.2 Introduction to Shang Dynasty in Ancient China

Shang was the second of the "Three Dynasties" of Xia, Shang, and Zhou in ancient China, which marked the end of prehistoric times. The "Three Dynasties"—an

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Kingdom, MC 15, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011, pp. 398-415. However, due to these literary letters were Old Babylonian copies of scribal exercises for educational purpose, subjected to unknown amounts of redaction or creation, their authenticity is being debated, see Cécile Michel, "Cuneiform Fakes: A Long History from Antiquity to the Present Day", in Cécile Michel & Michael Friedrich (eds.), *Fakes and Forgeries of Written Artefacts from Ancient Mesopotamia to Modern China*, Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020, pp. 28-30.

[35] Rudolf H. Mayr & David. I. Owen, "The Royal Gift Seal in the Ur III period", in Hartmut Waetzoldt & Giovanni Pettinato (eds.), *Von Sumer nach Ebla und zurück: Festschrift für Giovanni Pettinato zum 27, September 1999 gewidmet von Freunden, Kollegen und Schülern*, HSAO 9, Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 2004, p. 146.

[36] Piotr Michalowski, *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, MC 1, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989.

[37] Jacob Klein, "Shulgi of Ur: King of a Neo-Sumerian Empire", in Jack M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 2, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1995, pp. 843-857.

[38] Nicole Brisch, "Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), pp. 41-44.

important period of the characteristics of ancient Chinese civilization—not only connect directly to the origin of Chinese civilization, but also contain the embryonic form of the basic pattern and trend of later continuous dynasties. The Xia Dynasty is the first dynasty in traditional Chinese historiography. However, because of a lack of written records, its reconstruction must rely on the combination of archaeological evidence and later literature.[39] An increasing number of archaeological sites have produced evidence demonstrating a cultural continuity between the Erlitou settlements and the Shang Dynasty.[40] The existence of Shang and Zhou hegemonies is generally accepted in modern times. The former is the first Chinese dynasty that has left written sources, primarily in the form of oracle-bone inscriptions. In the Zhou Dynasty, the term 'Yin' appeared to name the dynasty they had replaced, probably because the late Shang king transferred the capital to Anyang Yinxu. Hence, the interchangeable usage of Shang or Yin was inherited by later generations and followed by modern scholars.

Shang was a civilization with a mature writing system, but the royal archives at that time were gradually lost following the collapse of the dynasty, leaving few records for later generations. As a result, when the Han historian Sima Qian (ca. 145–86 BC) compiled chronological tables for the *Shiji*, the oldest confirmed date had been traced to 841 BC in the Western Zhou Dynasty. The Shang chapter named the Basic Annals of the Yin is only a bare outline that includes the royal lineage and a few historical events. The lack of a reliable chronology for early periods has long puzzled researchers. A combination of evidence drawn from contemporary oracle-bone inscriptions, Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, Zhou accounts of varying date and reliability, and Carbon-14 dating has been employed by modern scholars; however, it appears to be difficult to arrive at an agreement.[41] In 1996–2000, "The Three Dynasties Chronology Project"

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[39] Chao Fulin, *Xia, Shang, Xizhou de Shehui Bianqian* (Social changes in Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties), Beijing: Beijing Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 1996, pp. 50-58.

[40] For an overview, see Chang Kwang-chih, *The Archaeology of Ancient China*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977; Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2013, pp. 391-425.

[41] David Keightley, "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty", in M. Loewe & E. L. Shaughnessy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 247; Chang Kwang-chih, *Shang Civilization*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980, pp. 32; Robert L. Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, p. 23.

sponsored by Chinese academic and government bodies established a master chronology for the "Three Dynasties" and determined the time span of Shang Dynasty as 1600–1046 BC.[42] During the reign of approximately 500 years, 31 kings were recorded in the Basic Annals of the Yin. However, three of them, Zhong Ren, Wo Ding, and Lin Xin did not actually become king, as they never appeared in oracle-bone inscriptions and did not enjoy sacrifices by convention. In addition, there is another clearly different case with the two crowned princes Da Ding and Zu Ji who did not officially ascend to the throne. As the status of a crowned prince is synonymous with the enthroned king in Shang Dynasty, the custom was to offer them their legal spouse posthumously. Therefore, 29 kings ruled in Shang Dynasty, and the history of Shang can be roughly divided into the two periods of the early Shang (ca. 1600–1300 BC), which lasted from the founder-king Cheng Tang to Pan Geng's removal of the capital to Yin, and the late Shang (ca. 1300–1046 BC), which lasted from Pan Geng to Di Xin (also named Zhou Wang), the depraved last ruler, who was defeated by Zhou king Wu in the battle of Mu Ye.[43]

Against this general historical context of the Shang Dynasty, this thesis now moves to major historical events and specific aspects of Shang Dynasty. The dynastic name itself may originate from a place name, as suggested by the description in *Shiji* that Qi, the predynastic founder of the lineage, was granted land at Shang. The origin of the Shang people remains obscure and expressions vary across different texts.[44] However, it is likely that long before the establishment of the state, Shang clan had already been widely distributed throughout Henan, Shandong, and Hebei provinces, where they had established settlements along rivers or on the edge of swamps suitable for farming during the long period of the Xia Dynasty. Both *Shijing*, created by the Shang successor

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[42] Song Zhenhao, *Shangdai Shi Lungang* (Outline of History in Shang Dynasty), Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2011, pp. 1-5.

[43] It should be pointed out that all Shang kings' names refer to their posthumous temple names, appeared in later textual records and attested by oracle bone and bronze inscriptions. For the deductive process, full chronology as well as the kings and their legal spouses' genealogy from early to late Shang Dynasty, see Song Zhenhao, *Shangdai Shi Lungang* (Outline of History in Shang Dynasty), 2011, pp. 204 -205.

[44] In terms of the origin of the Shang people, there are six different views held by scholars: 1) the west, Shangluo in Shaanxi province or Guanzhong region; 2) the east, Shangqiu in Henan province or Shandong province; 3) the south of Shanxi province; 4) Hebei Province; 5) Beijing; 6) North-east of China. For a comprehensive discussion, see Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, pp. 441-442.

state of Song and *Shiji* recorded the miraculous conception of Qi, whose mother conceived after she had swallowed an egg dropped by a black bird. Clearly, this depiction carries a mythological connotation, with remnants of the matriarchal clan, as only the mother is known. Apart from this legendary ancestor, 14 ancestor kings are listed in *Shiji*, who moved their political centers frequently, as many as eight times.[45] Although the exact locations of these eight political centers cannot be identified, the scope does not extend beyond southern Hebei province and northern Henan province.[46] Many historians have suggested that when Cheng Tang destroyed Xia and found the state, the capital Bo was located near Bo county in Anhui province. From then on, the 19th Shang king Pan Geng moved the famous capital to Yin, where it remained until the end of the dynasty.[47]

By the time of Cheng Tang, with his overthrow and replacement of the Xia Dynasty, Shang clan experienced an important change, transforming from chieftain-state into dynastic state.[48] In this process, military conquest and religious sacrifice played central roles, which enabled the budding or embryonic state of the kingship to substantially develop. According to *Mengzi*, Cheng Tang's initial territory was very small, and he became invincible in the world after 11 wars starting from adjacent state Ge. His reason for starting the war against Ge was that Ge did not offer sacrifices to their ancestors, while at the same time, he presented himself as a benevolent figure who highly valued religious sacrifices. Before finally overthrowing the Xia Dynasty, Cheng Tang not only conquered the pre-Xia vassal states by military conquest, but also united certain political forces to achieve rebel alliance. In addition, he also used the power of the supreme god Di (帝) and religion to mobilize and justify the war. As recorded in the *Shangshu*, the conquest of Xia by Shang and his allies was commanded by god, executed by heaven, and driven by religious spirits. Consequently, not only was the war

[45] Chao Fulin, *Xianqin Shehui Xingtai Yanjiu* (Research on the Social Forms of Pre-Qin Dynasties in China), Beijing: Beijing Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 2003, pp. 291-305.
[46] Zhu Fenghan & Xu Yong, *Xianqinshi Yanjiu Gaiyao* (Summary of Pre-Qin history Research), Tianjin: Tianjin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1996, pp. 262-269.
[47] Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, pp. 444-445.
[48] Chao Fulin, *Xia, Shang, Xizhou de Shehui Bianqian* (Social changes in Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties), 1996, pp. 78-89.

justified in itself, it also demonstrated that Shang's absolute sovereignty came from heaven. This divine inspiration of royal power was used to justify the reign of the Shang kings. After that, the Shang kings became the centralized embodiment of secular power, as well as political leaders, leaders of shamans and diviners, and intermediaries between gods and men.[49]

From Cheng Tang to the time of the 18th king Yang Jia, there are no important historical events worth mentioning here. *Shiji* merely presented a general description of the rise and fall of the dynasty: when the dynasty declined, the vassals did not come to court, but when the dynasty flourished, the vassals came again. Thus, the relationship between the central dynasty and the vassal states was on and off, and the central government's control of the localities was not effective.[50] In historical records, Pan Geng and Wu Ding were the most famous Shang kings after Cheng Tang. Pan Geng was renowned for moving the capital to Yin and laying the foundation of dynastic stability, as mentioned above. Almost all oracle-bone sources originate from the reigns of the last nine Shang kings, from the 21st king Wu Ding, to the last king Di Xin. Therefore, D. Keightley argued that "it is only with the late Shang and its written records, however, that one can, for the first time begin to speak with confidence of a civilization that was incipiently Chinese in its values and institutions, a civilization characterized by its political and religious hierarchies, centralized management of resources, and complex, deeply rooted art forms."[51] During his reign, Wu Ding conducted a series of major wars, an significant one of which was the defeat of Guifang in the northwest.[52] In *Shijing* and *Mengzi,* Wu Ding was portrayed as a monarch who ruled a vast territory. Few records exist of the kings after Wu Ding until the appearance of Di Xin, who was a notorious tyrant in ancient Chinese history.

During the Shang Dynasty, the political boundaries of the state could not be

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[49] Chao Fulin, "Shilun Yindai de Wangquan yu Shenquan" (Kingship and Theocracy in Yin Dynasty), *Social Science Front* 4 (1984), pp. 96-102.
[50] Chao Fulin, *Xia, Shang, Xizhou de Shehui Bianqian* (Social changes in Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties), 1996, pp. 311-322.
[51] David Keightley, "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty", *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, 1999, p. 232.
[52] Wu Shuhui, "Fighting for His Majesty (II): The Shang Art of War", *Journal of Chinese Military History* 2 (2013), pp. 89-126.

defined as clearly as in later times, nor could the strict administrative relationship between the central government and the local government be maintained as was the case in subsequent dynasties.[53] From a cosmological perspective, the Shang Dynasty envisioned a square world around a core area known as the 'center Shang' (中商). Outside this core area, the Shang territory was ideally divided into four regions, known as the 'four lands' (四土).[54] On this basis, the state structure of Shang Dynasty was composed of the inner domains (内服) of the kingdom itself and the outer domains (or minor states (外服) as recorded in the chapter Jiugao in the *Shangshu,* corresponding to the 'core area' (王畿)), and the 'four lands' in oracle-bone inscriptions.[55] Within this structure, the core area was under the direct control of the king and the court, while chiefdoms (邦) or vassal states belonging to outer domains were subject to the royal power and had to fulfill the obligation of tribute. The Shang king also had the responsibilities to politically recognize and militarily protect them. In addition to the vassal states, the outer domains of the Shang Dynasty were also mixed with hostile chiefdoms or ethnic groups. These sometimes obeyed and sometimes rebelled, imposing an open and unstable state on the borders of the Shang Dynasty.[56] Despite these porous and fluid frontiers, the Shang state was extensive, and sites that were culturally Shang, were not necessarily also politically Shang. From the perspective of archaeological culture, the Shang Dynasty can be roughly divided into three different levels of cultural scope:[57] The first level is the inner circle, consisting of four central sites and their adjacent areas, namely Yanshi city in the middle reaches of the Yellow River, Zhengzhou city in early Shang, Huanbei city in Anyang, and Yinxu city in late

[53] Wang Jian, "Shilun Xia Shang Zhou Sandai Zhengzhi Jiangyu de Zhuyao Tezheng" (The Main Characteristics of the Political Territories in Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties), *Yindu Journal* 4 (2002), pp. 12-19.
[54] Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 26-27.
[55] Wang Zhenzhong, "The Emergence of Kingship in China: With a Discussion of the Relationship between Kingship and Composite State Structure in the Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties", *Social Sciences in China*, 39/2 (2018), p. 6.
[56] Xie Weiyang, "Shangchao Zhongyang yu Difang Guanxi de zaoqi Texing jiqi Lishi Diwei" (The Early Characteristics and Historical Status of the Central-local Relationship in Shang Dynasty), *Heilongjiang Social Sciences* 136/1 (2013), p. 148.
[57] Song Zhenhao, *Shangdai Shi Lungang* (Outline of History in Shang Dynasty), 2011, pp. 19-22.

Shang. The second level is the periphery of the central area, where many cultural relics related to Shang culture are distributed. This level forms the intermediate link between Shang culture and other surrounding cultures, which can be called the sub-region of Shang culture, namely of the Shang state, which is its political territory. The third level is the outer circle or the peripheral region, which may be referred to as the influence zone of Shang culture. Its cultural characteristics are different from that of Shang, while at the same time, various factors in many aspects are similar.

The inner and outer domains mentioned above correspond to the direct and indirect rule of Shang kings, but the kings' direct control over the core area is only a general statement. Specifically, the Shang king presided over a confederation of patrilineally descended groups, as indicated by numerous lineage groups in oracle-bone inscriptions and various single zu (族) lineages in bronze insignia.[58] The king exercised direct rule over the kingdom by dominating these lineage leaders. Thus, as social and political entities, the members of these lineage groups were associated with the king through different kinship ties, interests, privileges, and duty levels. Under the leadership of the lineage head, they served the king in war, hunting, and by offering tribute.[59] In the dynastic hierarchy, the royal lineage formed the core of the dynasty, followed by the lineage of princes, who could lead their own dependents in battle and cast their insignia into ritual bronzes. Non-royal lineages also existed, which were composed of the diviners and other noble officers tied to the royal family by marriage or other alliances. These diviners, as members of named lineages, formed a separate class, named Zhenren group.[60] This group of officials was of high status, sometimes from other foreign nations outside Shang clan, as Shang worshipped the gods of the conquered clans to inculcate them in spirit. While the diviners were responsible for sanctifying and

[58] Chao Fulin, *Xia, Shang, Xizhou de Shehui Bianqian* (Social changes in Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties), 1996, pp. 311-321; *Xianqin Shehui Xingtai Yanjiu* (Research on the Social Forms of Pre-Qin Dynasties in China), 2003, pp. 137-153.

[59] Yang Shengnan, "Jiaguwen zhong suojian Shangdai de Gongna Zhidu" (The Tribute System Reflected in Oracle Inscriptions), *Yindu Journal* 2 (1999), pp. 27-32.

[60] Chao Fulin, "Shilun Yindai de Wangquan yu Shenquan" (Kingship and Theocracy in Yin Dynasty), *Social Science Front* 4 (1984), pp. 96-102; Chen Zhiyong, "Shixi Shangdai Wu, Shi yiji Zhenbo Jigou de Zhengzhi Yixiang" (Discussions on the Political Intention of Shamans, Historians and Diviners in Shang Dynasty), *Journal of Historical Science* 2 (1999), pp. 9-14.

employing oracle bones to the divine in rituals performed in the presence of ancestors, the final interpretation usually lay in the hands of the king. Beyond the core area, the king engaged with the activities of various local officers or chiefs, who were evidently capable of leading their own dependents in the king's service. More distant regions were ruled by leaders identified in the inscriptions as Hou and Bo, who enjoyed the highest administrative power or governance over their territories.[61] The Shang kings controlled these chiefdoms or subordinate states mainly through the relationship of tribute. Sometimes, Hou and Bo could also be appointed by the Shang king in the central position, thus becoming courtiers.

The Shang kings united the whole kingdom, but the Shang cult held the society together. As noted by R. Thorp, "status and relationships within Shang society as a whole were dictated by the royal cult and the family cults of less powerful lineages".[62] The worship objects of the Shang people mainly included the heaven god Di, various natural gods, and god of ancestors, among whom ancestral gods were the most valued. Ancestor gods consisted of pre-dynastic ancestors in the distant past, dynastic ancestors, starting with Cheng Tang and the dynastic ancestresses, the kings' consorts on the main line of descent, whose worships and offerings differed significantly.[63] The Shang symbolized and commemorated each royal ancestor by a spirit tablet, which was housed in temples, where cult offerings and divinations were performed.[64] The distinction between the main line and collateral royal lineage was critically important and participation in the cult of the descent group was apparently reserved for close lineage members, royal consorts, sons, and affines. Sacrifices to ancestral gods had already begun as early as the time of Cheng Tang. In the early period of Wu Ding, oracle-bone inscriptions showed that sacrifices and rituals to ancestors were far more frequent and solemn than those to natural deities. There were also more ceremonies performed and more sacrifices offered to ancestor gods, including human and livestock sacrifices,

[61] Zhu Fenghan & Xu Yong, *Xianqinshi Yanjiu Gaiyao* (Summary of Pre-Qin history Research), 1996, pp. 282-285.
[62] Robert L. Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age*, 2006, p. 172.
[63] David Keightley, "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty", *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, 1999, pp. 255-258.
[64] Chao Fulin, "Xianqin Shehui Zuigao Quanli de Bianqian ji qi Yingxiang Yinsu" (The Transition of Supreme Power in Pre-Qin Society and Its Determinants), *Social Sciences in China* 2 (2015), pp. 185-186.

mostly cattle. By the period of the end of the Shang Dynasty, the sacrifices to nature powers were no longer offered, but the sacrifices and cults to the gods of ancestors became increasingly standardized and institutionalized with the passage of time.[65] This trend accorded with Di's disappearance from divination inscriptions, suggesting both the increasing confidence of Shang kings with the majesty of their ancestors and increasing authority of the kings themselves. The elevation of the king could also be proved by the king's monopoly over divination, and thus, the existence of the diviner to convey divine messages was no longer necessary. These shifts in divinatory practice indicate the degree to which religious conceptions were evolving and royal power was growing during the century and a half of the late Shang historical period.[66]

As the middle of the "Three Dynasties", the Shang Dynasty presents the critical stage of perfection of state systems, many of which were innovative and flexible, with apparent transitional characteristics. Although a relatively complete system was established during the late Shang Dynasty, it was still in the early stage of the state formation and followed a process of constant change and improvement.[67] Many institutions, political systems, religious cults, and cultural concepts of the succeeding Zhou Dynasty clearly showed the influence of the Shang Dynasty, as well as new developments and improvements in line with the characteristics of the times.[68] Without exaggerating, it can be said that from the late Shang period onward, a continuous development of ideas about life, death, the natural world, and other fundamentals can be traced.

I.2 Literature Review

I.2.1 Previous Research on Divine Kingship in Early Mesopotamia

Regarding the topic of divine kingship, the first scholar to reference is J. Frazer,

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[65] Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai Zongjiao Jisi* (Religion and Sacrifice in Shang Dynasty), Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2010, pp. 539-548.
[66] David Keightley, "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty", *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, 1999, pp. 261-262.
[67] Xie Weiyang, *Zhongguo Zaoqi Guojia* (Early State in ancient China), Hangzhou: Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe, 1996, pp. 381-441.
[68] Gong Yihua & Xu Yihua, *Yinyi yu Yinjian* (Offspring and Lessons of Yin Dynasty), Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2011, pp. 197-246.

who focused on the importance of the complex relationship between religion and kingship. His book presents a wide-ranging, comparative study of mythology and religion, by discussing symbols and practices such as fertility rites, human sacrifice, the dying god, and the scapegoat.[69] In his opinion, the institution of kingship was in essence a product of magical thinking with the goal to control nature and the king, the incarnation of a dying and revived god, who died at harvest and was reincarnated in the spring. However, as G. Feeley-Harnik pointed out in 1985, Frazer's notion of a divine king as an absolute ruler in conceptual, sociological, and historical terms was equivocal and deeply rooted in Christian imagery. Once the Christian elements are stripped away, the scientific nature of his theory becomes questionable, resulting in an increasing trend to secularize a divine king as a person/office and shift the problem from the interpretation of belief to an analysis of behavior.[70]

Apart from Frazer, two of the most influential earlier works were presented by I. Engnell and H. Frankfort.[71] Engnell stressed the importance of the institution of sacral kingship in an extensive comparative framework among Sumerians, Akkadians, Hittites, and Western Semites in ancient Near East. In this framework, Engnell showed that every Mesopotamian king had been divinized from birth, which was inaccurate to some degree and was doubted by other scholars. By comparing kingship and religion between ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, Frankfort argued that these two civilizations differed fundamentally and profoundly in terms of their conception and expression of kingship. In Egypt, the king was born divine, while in Mesopotamia, the king was an outstanding mortal, who was at times regarded as an apotheosis, but not as a god incarnate. Frankfort's definition of sacred or divine kingship was based on Frazer's work, but he further suggested that ancient Near Eastern kingship should specifically be viewed as a mediator between humanity and the gods. This has been generally assimilated into the frameworks of further analysis. Unfortunately, because of professional limitations, Frankfort was unable to examine the textual material in depth and only partially

[69] James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Magic and Religion*, London: Macmillan, 1890-1915.
[70] G. Feeley-Harnik, "Issues in Divine Kingship." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 14 (1985), p. 275.
[71] Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1967; Henry Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religions as the Integration of Society and Nature*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.

addressed ancient Mesopotamia in this context.

Far more relevant materials have emerged in Mesopotamia since the publication of these earlier works, which enabled Assyriologists to conduct extensive and in-depth research. When studying the topic of divine kingship in Mesopotamia, the first problem scholars generally encounter is how to define this concept, i.e., under what circumstances a king can be considered a god. Opinions differ from scholar to scholar, and three kinds of definitions can be ordered from strict to broad. P. Michalowski advocated the strictest definition standards, by arguing that "the phenomenon had a short shelf life, perhaps no more than a decade or so under Naram-Sin, and just over 60 years during the time of the Ur III kings."[72] In contrast to his belief that the deification of kingship occurred in Mesopotamia only for very brief periods in the third millennium BC, many scholars adopted a broader interpretation. Their interpretation assumed that deified kings existed in the late third and early second millennia in Mesopotamia, staring from Naram-Sin in the Old Akkadian Dynasty, culminating in Ur III, and extending into early Old Babylonian periods (mainly referring to the Isin-Larsa period).[73] By the broadest definition, a king can be considered deified if he has qualities that exclusively belong to the gods, without the need for explicit expression. According to this definition, this phenomenon continues occasionally in later periods, including Old Babylonian,[74] Assyrian,[75] and Late Babylonian and Achaemenid periods.[76] The two definitions of extremes seem unreasonable to a certain degree. As the deification of certain Isin kings can be attested in literary texts and year names, there is no unambiguous evidence for the appearance of divine kingship since then.

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[72] Piotr Michalowski, "The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", in Nicole Brisch (ed.), *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond*, OIS 4, Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008, p. 41.

[73] See for example, Nicole Brisch, "The Priestess and the King: The Divine Kingship of Šū-Sîn of Ur." *JAOS* 126/2 (2006), pp. 161-176; "Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), pp. 37-46. See also G. Selz, "The Divine Prototypes", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 13-31; Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, PhD. Thesis, Harvard University, 2015.

[74] Dominique Charpin, "Comment faire connaître la civilisation mésopotamienne." *ZA* 100 (2006), pp. 107-130; "'I am the sun of Babylon': solar aspects of royal power in old Babylonian Mesopotamia", in Jane A. Hill, Philip Jones & Antonio J. Morales (eds.), *Experiencing Power, Generating Authority: Cosmos and Politics in the Ideology of Kingship in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, pp. 65-96.

[75] P. Machinist, "Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria", in G. Beckman & T. J. Lewis (eds.), *Text, Artifact, and Image. Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2006, pp. 152-188.

[76] Erica Ehrenberg, "Dieu te Mon Droit: Kingship in Late Babylonian and Early Persian Times", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 103-132.

Although there is considerable disagreement among scholars regarding how to define divine kingship and the criteria that can be used to determine its presence or absence, the Akkad Dynasty and the Ur III form the beginning and climax of this phenomenon, respectively, and thus attract the most attention. Naram-Sin, the grandson of Sargon, the founder of the Old Akkadian Dynasty, begins the practice of self-deification in the history of ancient Mesopotamia; however, his first attempt was short-lived, geographically restricted, and neither inheritable nor contagious.[77] The main source of knowledge about the first instance of royal deification is limited to the ‘‘Victory Stele of Naram-Sin’’ and the Bassetki statue (named after its provenance). The former stele depicts Naram-Sin as enemy-slaying, larger-than-life god-man, wearing a horned crown, the iconographic marker of divinity in Mesopotamia. The inscription on the base of the latter life-size statue actually informs about Naram-Sin’s apotheosis, but the upper part of the statue is missing. In addition, a statue inscription written in Naram-Sin’s name attributes his deification to his successful defeat of a rebellion. According to this inscription, the people of Akkad petitioned to elevate Naram-Sin into god in return for his rescue and later built him a temple in the city of Akkad.[78] However, as both the length and the exact dates of Naram-Sin’s reign remain uncertain,[79] it is difficult to determine whether the rebellion happened before or after the deification, and even if it really happened at all. As another possible reason, it has been suggested that the king’s pursuit of cosmic power was to adapt to the need of territorial expansion and was inseparable from the emergence of the first “Empire”.[80]

Compared to scarce material about Naram-Sin’s self-deification in Old Akkadian, considerable textual as well as iconographic evidence exists for deified kings in Ur III

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[77] Whether Narma-Sin’s successor Šar-kali-šarrī was deified was debatable, many scholars take a negative view, see for example, Piotr Michalowski, “The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia”, OIS 4, 2008, p. 35; Nicole Brisch, “Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia.” *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), p. 41; however, Audrey Pitts (*The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015:1) argues that Šar-kali-šarrī aspired to godhood officially at the moment of his accession to the throne.

[78] W. Farber, “Die Vergöttlichung Naramsins”, *Orientalia Nova Series* 52 (1983), pp. 67-72; Douglas R. Frayne, RIME 2, pp. 113-114, with further literature.

[79] A. Westenholz, “The Old Akkadian Period: History and Culture”, OBO 160/3, 1999, pp. 46-55.

[80] Jerrold S. Cooper, “Paradigm and Propaganda. The Dynasty of Akkade in the 21st Century”, in M. Liverani (ed.), *Akkad, The First World Empire: Structure, Ideology, Traditions*, HANE/S 5, Padova: Sargon srl, 1993, pp. 11-23.

Dynasty. As a result, the late 20th and early 21st centuries have witnessed fruitful achievements on certain aspects of deified kings during Ur III Dynasty. There was a trend among scholars to regard divine kingship as the culmination of a long development and apply it to find its antecedents in early kingship. For example, G. Selz viewed the cult statues in the Early Dynasty, which functioned as both subject and object of worship, as an important step towards the deification of Naram-Sin.[81] W. Sallaberger further recognized three features of early kingship as pioneer of royal deification: firstly, the king called himself 'child', 'beloved', and 'favorite' of the gods, secondly, the king's function was that of a mediator between the gods and human beings, and lastly, several of the kings were worshipped after their deaths, which could lead to the deification of deceased kings.[82] However, P. Michalowsiki puts forward an explicit objection by writing that "episodes of divine kingship were not the apex of a long developmental pattern, but were occasional historical events."[83] He also disapproved of the tendency to trace antecedents of divine kingship in earlier times and overstate the significance of divine kingship.[84] Admittedly, while Michalowsiki identified the problems with previous research, his complete disregard for religious as well as historical contexts seems an overcorrection. Even if divine kingship in Ur III was a fleeting phenomenon, it is necessary to consider its origin and development if a full picture of it is to be attained. Whether or not the deification of the crown was the result of the king's religious power reaching its zenith, without a doubt, this phenomenon reached its apex in Ur III. Accordingly, the extensive scholarly notice of these indicators together with other representations boosted the analysis and attempted systematization of this phenomenon in third-millennium Mesopotamia.

Because there are two main kinds of evidence for the deification of kingship in Ur III, namely textual and glyptic materials, there should be two research methods of philology and art-history corresponding to it. The former method, a more semantic

[81] G. Selz, "Eine Kultstatue der Herrschergemahlin Šaša: Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Vergöttlichung." *ASJ* 14 (1992), p. 154.
[82] Walther Sallaberger, "Ur III-Zeit", OBO 160/3, 1999, pp. 152-153.
[83] Piotr Michalowski, "The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 33-34.
[84] Ibid., p. 41.

approach, has long been favored by scholars who have explored the very concept and specific aspects of divinity and divine kingship in a particular period. Their work with texts mainly concentrated on royal inscriptions and hymns, genres that are not only full on reflections of royal ideology, but also directly related to deified kings' self-representations and political propaganda. J. Klein has presented a detailed and comprehensive study of the content and narrative style of all of Šulgi's hymns.[85] P. Michalowski suggested viewing the royal hymns as an extension of the heroic literature in early periods so that "literature as a totality sanctions the divine king and his might".[86] Similarly, N. Brisch investigated the genre from a perspective of court agenda.[87] Later, L. Vacin provided an overview of the prerequisite, implementation, and influence of Šulgi's deification with a main focus on the political legitimation and royal ideology. Vacin emphasized that the appearance of the god-king happened for political reasons, to adapt to the governance needs of a unified territorial state.[88] Apart from royal inscription and hymns, attention has also been focused on the sacred marriage rite, which was a firmly established component of royal rhetoric in Ur III.[89] An archive-oriented approach has sometimes been favored when studying certain more practical or detailed aspects, which can hardly be seen in literary texts. By collecting their appearances in archive documents and analyzing their responsibilities, N. Brisch has identified two kinds of priests associated with the Ur III king cult.[90] The study of

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[85] Jacob Klein, "The Royal Hymns of Shulgi King of Ur: Man's Quest for Immortal Fame." *TAPA* 71/7 (1981), pp. 1-48; *Three Šulgi Hymns: Sumerian Royal Hymns Glorifying King Šulgi of Ur*, Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981; "Šulgi and Išmedagan: Runners in the Service of the Gods." *Beer-Sheva* II (1985), pp. 7-38; "Šulgi and Išmedagan: Originality and Dependence in Sumerian Royal Hymnology", in Jacob Klein & Aaron Skaist (eds.), *Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology Dedicated to Pinhas Artzi*, Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press,1990, pp. 65-136.

[86] Piotr Michalowski, "Divine Heroes and Historical Self-Representation from Gilgamesh to Shulgi", *Bulletin of the Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies* 16 (1988), pp. 21-22.

[87] Nicole Brisch, *Tradition and the Poetics of Innovation: Sumerian Court Literature from the Dynasty of Larsa (ca. 2003-1763 BCE)*, AOAT 339, Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2007.

[88] Ludek Vacin, *Šulgi of Ur: Life, Deeds, Ideology and Legacy of a Mesopotamian Ruler as Reflected Primarily in Literary Texts*, 2011, pp. 178-218; see also Piotr Michalowski, "Charisma and Control: On Continuity and Change in Early Mesopotamian Bureaucratic Systems", SAOC 46, 1991, p. 53.

[89] R. F. G. Sweet, "A New Look at the 'Sacred Marriage' in Ancient Mesopotamia", in E. I. Robbins & S. Sandahl (eds.), *Corolla Torontonensis: Studies in Honour of Ronald Morton Smith*, Toronto: TSAR, 1994, pp. 85-104; Philip Jones, "Embracing Inana: Legitimation and Mediation in the Ancient Mesopotamian Sacred Marriage Hymn Iddin-Dagan A." *JAOS* 123/2 (2003), pp. 291-302; P. Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage in Light of Comparative Evidence*, SAAS 15, Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2004.

[90] Nicole Brisch, "The Priestess and the King: The Divine Kingship of Šū-Sîn of Ur." *JAOS* 126 (2006), pp. 161-176; for the study of image of high priestess, see Claudia E. Suter, "Between Human and Divine: High Priestesses in Images from the Akkadian to the Isin-Larsa Period", in M. Feldman & J. Cheng (eds.), *Ancient Near Eastern Art in Context: Studies in Honor of Irene J. Winter*, CHANE 26, Boston: Brill, 2007, pp. 317-362.

temples and statues made for divine kings also needs to be gleaned from the administrative archives that mention the construction and maintenance of temples, as well as the worship, parade, and ritual of the statue. C. Reichel provides the only discussion on the excavated temple built for the divine king Šu-Suen. He also tallied the number of temples built in provinces by other kings during their reigns and he arrived at the conclusion that Šu-Suen built most temples for himself.[91] Certain research has concentrated on statues of deified kings and the rituals or festivals associated with them. Although the exact meanings of certain ceremonies, such as the "opening the eye and opening the mouth" ceremony, remain obscure, it is almost certain that the ritual performed to the statue of deified king was not different to that of the god.[92] Most recently, A. Pitts investigated the effect of the institution of divine kingship on daily life, by analyzing how the cult of the deified king was established, extended, and popularized. The evidence she provided is based on processions of cult statues by boat and chariot, as well as offerings before them at specific festivals and at sites outside of temples. She also used evidence of 267 individual names in which the name of a deified king was used as theophoric element, to deduce that deliberate efforts of kings to popularize their cult on the population at large may have been successful.[93] However, it seems to the author that evidence of 267 personal names can hardly support the conclusion of the generally acceptance of the divine status of kings, as the total population by that time is unknown.

Scholars who prefer the second approach mainly conduct iconographical studies of royal representations based on visual evidence, such as statues or images on stelae and seal impressions. As early as 1952, E. van Buren suggested that the purpose of the presentation rite was not primarily to offer a petition, but rather as an act of homage to

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[91] Clemens Reichel, "The King is Dead, Long Live the King: The Last Days of the Shu-Sin Cult at Eshnunna and its Aftermath", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 133-155; for a discussion of the economic function of the temple built for divine kings, see K. Maekawa, "Confiscation of Private Properties in the Ur III Period: A Study of é-dul-la and níg-GA." *ASJ* 18 (1996), p. 122.

[92] See for example, Walther Sallaberger, *Der kultische Kalender der Ur III-Zeit*, UAVA 7/1, Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1993; Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East*, Bethseda: CDL Press, 1993; Irene J. Winter, "Opening the Eyes and Opening the Mouth: the Utility of Comparing Images in Worship in India and the Ancient Near East", in M. W. Mesiter (ed.), *Ethnography and Personhood: Notes from the Field,* Jaipur, New Delhi: Rawar, 2000, pp. 129-162; Tohru Ozaki, "Divine Statues in the Ur III Kingdoms and Their 'Ka Du8-Ha' Ceremony", JCSSS 1, Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2008, pp. 217-222.

[93] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 230-290.

deified kings.[94] In the early 1980s, I. Winter pioneered an approach to bringing together texts, images, and architecture as an integrated and coherent program designed to define or defend royal ideology when studying Neo-Assyrian arts. This approach was later used to research sealing of Ur III bureaucrats and associated royal images. She stresses that imagery on Ur III seals must be understood as motifs with a political context. The iconography of the seated king holding a cup in a "presentation scene" is the most common and highly standardized motif depicted on seals. By analyzing its component parts and associated royal attributes, Winter pointed out that the cup held by the king in this scene should be understood as a symbol rather than as an instrument of practice, evoking simultaneously both tradition and the king's intermediate status. In addition, she noticed a similar scene where the king was supplanted by a seated god, proposing that a purposeful distinction between kings and gods visually on seals was well-designed.[95] Since this investigation of the "presentation scene", further studies on royal images as recipients of ritual action in ancient Mesopotamia and the alluring body of male Mesopotamian rulers revealed in public monuments has been provided by Winter.[96] Later, Winter presented comprehensive research on the divine status of rulers in the ancient Near East, demonstrating that the visual medium was more conservative than textual expression.[97] Influenced by Winter's research method, T. Ornan and D. Bonatz surveyed the godlike resemblance of Sennacherib reflected in his rock reliefs, and the religious representation of Hittite king' divine image, respectively.[98] More recently, C. Suter published an reappraisal and overview of the visual representations of Ur III kings depicted officially on foundation figurines, statues, stelae, rock-reliefs,

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[94] E. van Buren, "Homage to a Deified King." *ZA* 50 (1952), pp. 92-120.

[95] Irene J. Winter, "The King and the Cup: Iconography of the Royal Presentation Scene on Ur III Seals", in Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati, P. Matthiae & M. Van Loon (eds.), *Insight through Images: Studies in Honor of Edith Porada*, Malibu: Undena Publications, 1986, pp. 253-268.

[96] Irene J. Winter, "Idols of the King: Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6 (1992), pp. 13-42; "Sex, Rhetoric, and the Public Monument: The alluring Body of Naram-Sīn of Agade", in Natalie Boymel Kampen (ed.), *Sexuality in Acient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp. 11-26.

[97] Irene J. Winter, "Touched by the Gods: Visual Evidence for the Divine Status of Rulers in the Ancient Near East", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 75-102.

[98] See respectively, Tallay Ornan, "The Godlike Resemblance of a King: The Case of Sennacherib's Rock Reliefs", CHANE 26, 2007, pp. 161-175; Dominik Bonatz, "The Divine Image of the King: Religious Representation of Political Power in the Hittite Empire", in M. Heinz & M. H. Feldman (eds.), *Representations of Political Power: Case Histories from Times of Change and Dissolving Order in the Ancient Near East,* Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007, pp. 111-136.

and cylinder seals. She also considered certain images of contemporary or slightly later rulers who clearly emulated Ur III royal images, to contribute to a more accurate picture of the Ur III god-kings' official representation. Suter reappraised the generally assumed statement that visual media were much more conservative than verbal media and reflected traditional sacred rather than divine kingship. Moreover, Suter put forward the new conclusion that although visual and verbal media differed with regard to several aspects, they must reflect the same ideology. To explain this inconsistency, Suter suggested three possible causes: the targeted audiences varied, the scribes were not sufficiently competent to accomplish visual representation, or the imaginative qualities of poetry expressed in metaphors and in the rapid change of topics were sometimes not suitable to be rendered in images.[99]

In addition to these two widely used specific research methods, theoretical research has also made progress. For example, G. Selz used prototype theory to question the binarity of divine and human, partly based on the concept of "functional" or "circumstantial" divinity Selz proposed before.[100] In this concept, the king and often the royal family were regarded as earthly representatives of the city's (or the state's) major deities tasked with fulfilling the duties of gods. The key conclusion P. Michalowski proposed, i.e., that divine kingship is a culturally and historically determined phenomenon with a dynamic and unfixed feature, has also been reached by previous scholarship, laying the foundation for further studies.[101] Partly because of its historically determined essence, divine kingship in ancient Mesopotamia was such a fleeting and complex phenomenon.[102] Another consensus, which is almost universally asserted, is that rather than the king himself, the locus of divinity was the office of kingship. Accordingly, any man who held that office was sacred to a certain degree and exercised political authority of the state through this sacred or divine office. Thus,

[99] Claudia E. Suter, "Ur III Kings in Images: A Reappraisal", in Heather Baker, Eleanor Robson, & Gábor Zólyomi (eds.), *Your Praise is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy Black from Students, Colleagues and Friends*, London: British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 2010, pp. 319-349.
[100] G. Selz, "The Divine Prototypes", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 13-31. For the functional divinity, see G. Selz, "Composite Beings: Of Individualization and Objectification in Third Millennium Mesopotamia." *ArOr* 72 (2004), pp. 33-53.
[101] Piotr Michalowski, "The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 33-45; Nicole Brisch, "Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), p. 38.
[102] Jerrold S. Cooper, "Divine Kingship in Mesopotamia, a Fleeting Phenomenon", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 261-270.

kingship consisted of a cosmic aspect related to the supernatural power and political aspect implemented by the moral ruler, and whether the crown took one more step and became god depended on particular historical circumstances.

Nevertheless, there is currently no overarching theory on the definition and criteria of divine kingship, and certain questions still cannot be effectively answered. A number of scholars used the terms ‘‘divine kingship’’ and “sacred kingship’’ interchangeably, while other scholars clearly distinguished between both.[103] Even so, the existence of divine kingship in Ur III Dynasty is acknowledged, and can be well attested during the lifetimes of kings as well as after their deaths. Finally, numerous of the more specific and detailed issues remain unresolved, e.g., when and how divine kingship was introduced, how divine kingship differed from traditional kingship and traditional divinity, and why divine kingship was so fleeting over the long span of ancient Mesopotamia. Inquiry into the divinity of Mesopotamian kings cries for cross-cultural comparison, as the details necessary to address the above questions are difficult to identify based on sources currently available.

I.2.2 Previous Research on Divine Kingship in Shang Dynasty China

Compared with the great achievements that have been made toward divine kingship in early Mesopotamia, the sacred or divine character of kingship in early China has received little attention. As Shang Dynasty was the first historical dynasty in ancient China, exploring the formation, development, forms, and structure of the early hierarchical state by studying Shang history has become an important subject for most researchers. Studying state formation is usually accompanied by studying the origins and concepts of kingship, which are relevant to the topic of divine kingship insofar as they illustrate factors that later became crucial in the representation of Shang rulers. Archaeologists and historians defined the political structure of Shang Dynasty in different ways, ranging from a complex chiefdom at one end of the spectrum,[104] to an

[103] For example, Greg Woolf (“Divinity and Power in Ancient Rome”, OIS 4, 2008: 243-259) doubts the usefulness of distinction; Nicole Brisch (“Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia.” *Religion Compass* 7/2, 2013:39) tends to restrict “divine kingship’’ to the deification of a king during his lifetime.

[104] David Keightley, “The Late Shang State: when, where, and what?”, in David Keightley (ed.), *The Origins of*

empire on the other.[105] Other scholars accepted a compromised attitude, arguing that Shang Dynasty was a kind of segmentary state or territorial state.[106] Most recently, after analyzing both the advantages and disadvantages of chief-state theory and regional state theory, Wang Zhenzhong proposed a new theoretical model for describing Shang Dynasty as a composite state.[107] According to this theory, the "Three Dynasties" in early China were plural yet unified composite state structures rather than being monistically centralized, further indicating that they went through the process of instant improvement. Within this structure, the inner domains or the kingdom itself during the Shang period presented "the state above states", while outer domains presented "states within the state," where the king was the common sovereign in an unequal relationship. The territory of Shang Dynasty was equated with "all under Heaven (天下)", consisting of outer vassal states, as well as the kingdom and its inner domains and court bureaucracy; thus, Shang kings were "common rulers of all under Heaven (天下共主)". Wang Zhenzhong's explanation of the nature and the concepts of Shang state and its kingship are helpful towards understanding the origin and development of divine kingship at that time.

Early studies on kingship and divine kingship in Shang Dynasty focused on the relationship between theocracy and royal power to explore whether exercising the king's power is subject to divine right. Chao Fulin showed that although kingship in the Shang Dynasty had certain autocratic factors, it was restricted by three kinds of forces: the chiefdom alliance existing before, and theocracy embodied in the diviner

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Chinese Civilization, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, p. 555; Xie Weiyang, *Zhongguo Zaoqi Guojia* (Early State in ancient China), 1996, pp. 392-392; Xie Weiyang & Zhao Zheng, "Qiubang yu Guojia jiejin de Chengdu ji dui Guojia Qiyuan Yanjiu de Yingxaing" (The Proximity of Chiefdom and State and Its Influence to State Origin Study), *Academic Monthly* 50/8 (2018), pp. 149-158.

[105] Robert Bagley, "Shang Archaeology", in M. Loewe & E. L. Shaughnessy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 124-231; Liu Li & Chen Xingcan, *State Formation in Early China*, London: Duckworth Publishing, 2003.

[106] See for example Bruce Trigger, "Shang political organization: a comparative approach." *Journal of East Asian Archeology* 1/1-4 (1999), pp. 43-62; David Keightley, *The Ancestral Landscape: Time, Space, and Community in Late Shang China (ca. 1200-1045 B.C.)*, China Research Monograph 53, Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 2000; Xu Yihua, "Shangdai Guojia Xingzhi shenlun" (On the State Nature of Shang Dynasty), *Yindu Journal* 1 (2007), pp. 8-17.

[107] Wang Zhenzhong, "The Emergence of Kingship in China: With a Discussion of the Relationship between Kingship and Composite State Structure in the Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties", *Social Sciences in China* 39/2 (2018), pp. 5-21.

group and the lineage groups. Therefore, kingship in the Shang period had primitive democratic features.[108] Chao later pointed out that the source of divination officers may determine whether they obstructed or served the crown. By analyzing diviners and temple names of Shang kings that appeared in oracle-bone inscriptions, he found that during the time from Wu Ding to Lin Xin, divination officers were leaders of the lineage group who supported the divine right to limit the royal power. Since the reign of Lin Xin, the diviners originated from the royal family and more emphasis was put on the worship of ancestral gods, indicating the strengthening of kingship. Thus, the struggle of theocracy and royal power ended with the success of the king.[109] Li Guangji adopted a similar viewpoint than Chao Fulin, abandoning the idea of chiefdom alliance and further analyzing the composition of the lineage force and theocracy, as well as their interaction with the royal power in the process of political decision-making.[110] According to the chapter Hongfan in *Shangshu*, when making important decisions, the king had to consider the opinions of five entities: the king himself, court officials (lineage head), the public (lineage members), divination, and interpretation of divination. Among these, the crown represents kingship, the middle two constitute the lineage power, and the last two symbolize the divine power. By arranging and combining the opinions of these five entities, he suggested that the divine will occupy the highest position, greater than the sum of kingship and the lineage power. The lineage power exerted a certain restraining effect on kingship, but the royal power can overpower it with the support of god. Only when all three are identical, everything can proceed smoothly. Different arguments were raised by other scholars regarding whether the crown was subject to the force of divination. In Sun Xiaochun's opinion, in Shang Dynasty, although various aspects from everyday life to government decisions were

[108] Chao Fulin, "Shilun Yindai de Wangquan yu Shenquan" (Kingship and Theocracy in Yin Dynasty), *Social Science Front* 4 (1984), pp. 96-102.
[109] Chao Fulin, "Yinxu buci zhong de Shangwang Minghao yu Shangdai Wangquan" (Shang Royal title and kingship in Oracle inscription of Yin Ruins), *Historical Research* 5 (1986), pp. 140-153.
[110] Li Guangji, "Shangchao Zhengzhi zhong de Shenquan Zuquan yu Wangquan" (Theocracy, Kingship and Clan Power in the Political System of Shang Dynasty), *History Teaching* 2 (1986), pp. 2-6; Wang Qiwei ("Lun Shangdai de Shenquan Zhengzhi" (Discussion on Theocracy in Shang Dynasty), *Yindu Journal* 3 (1998): 5-8) half accepts the "chiefdom alliance" argument, half agrees with the opinion of Li Guangji that theocracy is above royalty and this did not change until the late Shang Dynasty, when the royal power was strengthened and the theocracy declined.

determined by the will of the god as identified through divination, in fact, it was the king who conveyed the will of the god and made the final decision. Therefore, at that time, kingship was neither constrained by divine right nor by the diviner group.[111] However, this view has gradually been abandoned by scholars, and the limited centralization of power and autocratic monarchy have been increasingly respected. The above two opposing views toward kingship do not affect the discussion of the deification of kingship, but rather facilitate it. Independent of whether the king was originally autocratic or gradually prevailed over theocracy and became the supreme entity, the result was the deified or godlike status of the crown. In one of the few contributions devoted to the deification of kingship, Yang Shengnan discussed the connotation of royal power, the self-deification of the king, and the means of implementing the king's theocracy, thus explaining the operating form of royal power in the Shang Dynasty.[112] He clarified that the Shang king deified himself to govern effectively, in parallel with other material means, such as the establishment of the army, prisons, and penalties. Thus, the characteristic of kingship was the integration of the king and the god. Yang started with the Shang king's strong political power, and then pointed out that the king was deified by tracing the supreme god ancestor, ruling as a proxy for the god, and returning to heaven after death. Finally, Yang analyzed how deification of kingship could be achieved through monopolizing the process of divination and recording of the results. His research has laid a basic framework for future research on this topic, but many details still need to be developed. Yu Yisheng held a similar opinion when discussing how divine power was used to legalize royal power.[113] In his perspective, in addition to Shang kings' declaration of divine descent to legitimize power in the eve of the dynasty, in the late Shang period, kings clearly became god on earth, by using the high god's name Di in their own names. Moreover, studies in religion, worship of ancestor god, and war occasionally involved the

[111] Sun Xiaochun, "Shang Zhou Shiqi bushi Shenquan Shidai" (Shang and Zhou Dynasties were not Theocracy), *Jilin University Journal Social Sciences Edition* 2 (1987), pp. 19-23.
[112] Yang Shengnan, "Shangdai de Wangquan he dui Wangquan de Shenhua" (Kingship and Divine Kingship in Shang Dynasty), *Journal of Chinese Historical Studies* 4 (1997), pp. 16-23.
[113] Yu Yisheng, "Xia Shang Zhou Sandai Shen Quan Fa Sixaing Shanbian" (Thought transmutation of God, Power and Law during Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasty), *Seeking Truth* 1 (1997), 94-96.

description of kingship with generally acquiesce to the existence of theocracy and the deification of royal power.[114] Therefore, considering that the contributions on divine kingship in the China of Shang Dynasty are scattered among studies with grand themes, such as the state formation in early China as well as the exercise of kingship and political and ritual system, a comprehensive examination of this topic is still to be written.

In addition to Chinese scholars, as early as in 1957, D. Smith wrote the article "Divine kingship in ancient China".[115] He has been keenly aware that the concepts of myth and ritual in early Chinese civilization differed fundamentally from those of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Based on H. Frankfort's work on "kingship and the gods", Smith proposed that the statues and functions of early Chinese emperors, who never obtained divinity at least while still living on earth, were closer to the rulers of ancient Mesopotamia than those of Egypt. Although his views were sound and creative at the time, his conclusions and the materials he used seem outdated today. The reason is that knowledge on the divine kingship of both ancient Mesopotamia and China has been greatly advanced to varying degrees since then. Instead of using "divine kingship", J. Ching tended to use "sacral kingship" to describe this phenomenon in Shang and Zhou Dynasty in pre-imperial China, by analyzing the shamanic religion, as well as the centrality, titles, and enthronement ritual of kingship at that time.[116] Through a deliberate distinction between "divinity" and "sanctification", Ching drew the conclusion that although early Chinese kings claimed divine descent and adopted the title Sons of Heaven (天子), they never claimed personal divinity for themselves. She proposed a similar idea than Smith, suggesting that this phenomenon in early China is similar to that in ancient Mesopotamia. Her knowledge about divine kingship in ancient Mesopotamia also originated from H. Frankfort, whose conclusion has been gradually challenged and innovated in recent years, was the study of divine kingship in ancient China. Later, M. Puett provided a full cultural and intellectual history of the rise of self-

[114] See for example, Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai Zongjiao Jisi* (Religion and Sacrifice in Shang Dynasty), 2010.
[115] D. Howard Smith, "Divine Kingship in Ancient China", *Numen* 4/3 (1957), pp. 171-20.
[116] Julia Ching, "Son of Heaven: Sacral Kingship in Ancient China." *T'oung Pao* 83.1/3 (1997), p. 27.

deification movements and correlative cosmology in early China, dating from Shang Dynasty in the late Bronze Age to Han Dynasty. Puett discussed the notions and practices of divination and sacrifice. In a chapter that partly addressed Shang Dynasty based on D. Keightley's work, Puett also noticed changes in concepts and rituals of god and ancestors, and further argued that an overriding concern was associated with the personification of natural spirits. It is a pity that he overemphasized ancestral gods without paying any attention to the relationship of the living king and the god, nor the fact that the strengthened kingship continuously finally equates and may even exceed theocracy. His other argument that the appearance of divine kingship coincided with the emergence of the empire, as shown in the examples of ancient Greece and imperial Han Dynasty in early China,[117] seems outdated as it lacks in-depth study and analysis of the oracle-bone inscriptions in Shang Dynasty seems a little outdated, as neither original materials nor secondary Chinese scholarship were accessible to him then.

There are also comparative studies of early civilizations that have compared kingship of ancient Mesopotamia with that of ancient China. Two of the most influential monographs have been published by C. Maisels and B. Trigger.[118] As Maisels tended to employ the theory of archaeological theorist V. Childe for the urban revolution to explain formative histories of Egypt, the Levant, Mesopotamia, India, and China, his discussion of kingship is integrated into and serves the study of state formation as it relies more on archaeological evidence. Different from this specific aim of the work of Maisels, Trigger presented a comprehensive comparative study and devoted a subchapter to the discussion of the sacred character of kingship. However, his survey lacks detail and depth, not only because as many as seven early civilizations were compared, but the time spans under discussion are also quite long. Therefore, only general conclusions, such as that sacred kingship was widespread in ancient civilizations and kings functioned as intermediary between supernatural power and

[117] M. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China*, Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002, pp. 40-50; "Human and Divine Kingship in Early China: Comparative Reflections", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 207-220.

[118] See respectively Charles Keith Maisels, *Early Civilizations of the Old World, The Formative Histories of Egypt, The Levant, Mesopotamia, India and China*, London and New York: Routledge Press, 1999; Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

mortal world, have been reached in his book.[119] The advantage of comparative studies is that these studies can examine the similarities and differences in the evolution of ancient civilizations within a grand historical and geographical framework; however, at the same time, their disadvantages are apparent. Their analysis of various civilizations is based on the integration of the opinions of experts in respective fields at a specific time, which inevitably limited time and materials.

In summary, numerous early sinologists have been acutely aware of the similarities of this phenomenon between ancient Mesopotamia and China, although new advances have been made in both fields. Despite the insightfulness of previous scholars, a comparative study of divine kingship in Ur III Dynasty and Shang Dynasty is necessary and will benefit both groups involved.

Before this discussion, the definition of "divine kinghip" and how it differs from "sacred kingship" should be clarified. As the anthropologists D. Graeber and M. Sahlins have put it, divine are moves towards unbridled royal power, while sacred are ritual constraints on royal power.[120] Sacrality, therefore, is fundamentally different from the phenomenon of divine kingship. Mesopotamian kingship was always sacred but the explicit divinization of the king only happened in the Akkadian, Ur III and Isin-Larsa periods.[121] The particularity of the god-kings in these three periods is that the kings were all declared explicitly as gods in their lifetime, while in other times, there were only god-like analogies or metaphors when the king were alive. At the heart of the deification of the Ur III was the royal cult towards the king or his statues with clear evidence from multiple sources. The situation in ancient China was quite different. The Shang Dynasty believed in shamanism, and the king during his lifetime naturally became a god walking on earth because of his identity as the head-shaman. After death, the king entered the ranks of the worshipped ancestors. Ancestral worship outweight the worship of other deities in late Shang and followed by later generations. Since the

[119] Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 2003, pp. 79-87.
[120] David Graeber & Marshall Sahlins, *On Kings*, Chicago: HAU Books, 2017, pp. 7-8; see also Alan Strathern, *Unearthly Powers: Religious and Political Change in World History*, Cambridge University Press, 2019, pp. 155-218.
[121] Irene J. Winter, "Touched by the Gods: Visual Evidence for the Divine Status of Rulers in the Ancient Near East", OIS 4, 2008, p. 75.

Zhou Dynasty onwards, kingship in ancient China lost the cultural and religious basis of deification, becaming into a culture based upon human, rather than divine, visions of sovereignty. The specificity of Shang kings lies in their religious importance, having eternal and innate legitimacy to rule. While Chinese kings in later times were only deputies of the heaven, keeping in office as long as they performed their duties properly.[122]

I.3 Methodology and Sources

The present work compares divine kings between Ur III Dynasty Mesopotamia and Shang Dynasty China in the broader context of the divine aspects of the exercise of power, rather than the emergence and demise of the phenomenon itself. The use of a cross-cultural comparative method in the study of divine kingship is not uncommon, but in the specific context of Ur III and Shang Dynasty, this phenomenon is compared for the first time. Comparative history offers many benefits, not only for distinguishing common historical features from different cultures, but also in identifying variables that were critical to particular historical outcomes, and in assessing the nature of a given phenomenon in the broader context of structurally similar entities.[123] Regarding this topic, scholars cannot really hope to access the whole picture of the specific and fleeting historical phenomenon—such as, the Ur III divine kingship, or the Shang divine kingship—unless scholars appreciate how things developed in broadly analogous cases. As shown in the literature review presented above, the study of the apotheosis of kingship and even that of the whole Ur III Dynasty has been very mature, but, to some extent, the historical study of this single case is only an accumulation of materials that cannot explain a number of key issues. This therefore sometimes results in inherently arbitrary claims about significance and causality.

The Shang Dynasty in early China was chosen as the object of comparison with Ur III Dynasty, not only because both were prototypes and apexes of divine kingship

[122] M. Puett, "Human and Divine Kingship in Early China: Comparative Reflections", OIS 4, 2008, p. 207.
[123] Walter Scheidel, "Comparative history as comparative advantage: China's potential contribution to the study of ancient Mediterranean history", *Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics,* 2006, p. 4. http://www.princeton.edu/~pswpc/pdfs/scheidel/040601.pdf.

among the long span of ancient China and Mesopotamia, respectively, but also because of the similarities between both. In the history of both ancient Mesopotamia and China, kingship presents an important and effective form of governmental management. The king, standing at the top of the hierarchy, was always sacred, but was only divine in comparatively few occasions. After the first self-deification of Naram-Sin of Akkad in Mesopotamia history, the apotheosis of a living king was rekindled by Šulgi in Ur III and subsequently adopted by both his immediate successors and kings of the following Isin Dynasty. The Ur III Dynasty presented the peak and the final glory of the phenomenon of divine kingship in ancient Mesopotamia. This phenomenon was even rarer in ancient China. Regarding the human visions of sovereignty as the most important and prototypical symbol in the whole Chinese history, a historical tradition of theocracy is missing, let alone the deification of royal power.[124] However, Shang Dynasty is one of the few exceptions that had a strong sense of theocracy and witnessed the ephemeral existence of divine kingship. In early Shang state development, when the right to govern and the regulatory practices of rule were yet to be disentangled from claims to supernatural endorsement, divine kingship was deployed in collecting tribute, keeping calendars, and performing sacrifices and rituals.[125] The underlying reason was to maintain both social and cosmological order. By monopolizing divination, the late Shang kings further promoted the deification of royal power. In general, the concept of divine kingship and royal ideology are quite similar between both early civilizations and the kings of both dynasties constituted the most important links between human beings and supernatural forces and had therefore been deified. Nevertheless, the differences in the representations of deified kings and the time of deification cannot be ignored and therefore also receive special attention in this research.

In addition to similarities, the proximity of time and their almost identical level of development make this comparative study possible and reasonable. Both dynasties emerged in the Bronze Age, with Ur III Dynasty at the very end of the third millennium

[124] M. Puett, "Human and Divine Kingship in Early China: Comparative Reflections", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 207-220.
[125] Li Min, *Conquest, Concord, and Consumption: Becoming Shang in Eastern China*, PhD. Thesis, The University of Michigan, 2008, p. 4.

BC and Shang Dynasty lasting from the middle to the end of the second millennium BC. Both were territorial states characterized by political and religious hierarchies, centralized management of resources, as well as a complex administrative and bureaucratic system. Although scholars have debated the national nature of both civilizations and many Assyriologists prefer the usage of "Ur III empire",[126] the author tends to use the more general concept of "territorial state" here and in the following, as this is more appropriate to describe the state form and mode of operation at that time.

To achieve the purpose of cross-culture comparison in a broader historical context, this thesis is not only limited to these two dynasties, but also addresses the preceding and subsequent historical periods as appropriate. For the study of Ur III Dynasty, practice of deification of Naram-Sin, the king of Akkad Dynasty and the subsequent Hammurabi of the Old Babylonian period are taken as counterparts, to put divine kingship in the overall development process of kingship and state. For the Shang Dynasty, the preceding and subsequent periods are also discussed, to orient Shang divine kings in the process of the formation of kingship and state. In addition, theories proposed by anthropologists and historians about the formation and development of early kingship and states are employed as theoretical support.

To this end, the general approach of the source material is multifaceted, combining techniques of philology, literary analysis, history, anthropology, religious studies, and art history. This approach was employed to interpret the phenomenon of divine kingship in relation to political and religious spheres. The part of Ur III is primarily based on written materials, including administrative documents and literary texts, accessed through the on-line databases of *Base de Datos de Textos Neo-Sumerios* (BDTNS), *Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative* (CDLI), and the *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (ETCSL).[127] Both kinds of literature have their individual advantages and disadvantages and can complement each other. Visual evidence, such as seals, steles, and statues are also considered, to gain a vivid understanding of the

[126] See for example, Piotr Steinkeller, "The Sargonic and Ur III Empires", *The Oxford World History of Empire, volume 2: The History of Empires*, 2021, pp. 43-72.
[127] CDLI: https://cdli.ucla.edu/; BDTNS: http://bdtns.filol.csic.es/; ETCSL: http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk.

representation of the divine kings and how portraits differ from texts. It should be pointed out that compared to objective and reliable adminiatrative archives, literary texts can hardly be counted as historical materials, providing little reliable information that can help us reconstruct history. Most of these literary texts were Old Babylonian copies served as scribal exercises for educational purposes, their authenticity is always debated; they may have been subjected to unknown amounts of redaction or they may have been invented.[128] Therefore, the use of literary texts will be restrained and will not be used for historical reconstruction, but mainly for comparison with archival documents and visual evidence.

Regarding the Shang Dynasty, unfortunately, only text descriptions are available rather than graphic depictions of divine kings. The texts used in the study of Shang are mainly oracle bone inscriptions, later classic texts,[129] as well as certain archaeological materials, including palace foundations, bronze and funerary objects. Many records of later classic texts pertaining to the Shang Dynasty have been confirmed in essence by the Shang records and archaeological materials, can thus proving certain historical data.[130] In addition, these works also contain myths, legends, and literary pieces, which should be used with caution. The combination of oracle bone inscriptions, classic texts and archaeological evidence has long been the preferred method of Chinese historians on Shang Dynasty and will be used in this paper.

[128] Cécile Michel, "Cuneiform Fakes: A Long History from Antiquity to the Present Day", in Cécile Michel and Michael Friedrich (eds.), *Fakes and Forgeries of Written Artefacts from Ancient Mesopotamia to Modern China,* Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2020, pp. 28-30. For the importance of administrative documents for studies of Mesopotamian history, see P. S. Vermaak, "The Relevance of Administrative Documents for Writing Ancient Mesopotamian History." *Journal of Semitics* 3/1 (1991), pp. 85-104.

[129] For an overview of the classic texts, see Zhu Fenghan & Xu Yong, *Xianqinshi Yanjiu Gaiyao* (Summary of Pre-Qin history Research), 1996, pp. 41-68.

[130] K. C. Chang, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 4-5.

Chapter II: Prerequisites and Motivations for the Deification of Kings

II.1 The Historical Forms of Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia

The Ur III Dynasty, also known as the Neo-Sumerian period, was the renaissance and final glory of the Sumerian civilization. Royal and political ideologies in the Ur III period thus inevitably bear the imprint of ancient Sumerian ideas concerning kingship from earlier periods. The rulers of Ur III were for the most part deified during their lifetimes, but they were not the first to claim divine status in the history of Mesopotamia. The practice of divine kingship was first introduced by Naram-Sin, the fourth ruler of the Dynasty of Akkad.[131] Therefore, it is no surprise that the prerequisites for the Ur III kings' assumption of divinity were deeply rooted in ideological concepts of the ancient Sumerian tradition and were heavily influenced by the Akkadian kings' practice of royal power.[132] If we want to determine exactly which old traditions the Ur III kings could have drawn upon when formulating their own royal ideologies, and what motivated them to go beyond tradition to pursue divinity, it is necessary to briefly review the trajectory of the development of kingship in early Mesopotamia.

II.1.1 Development of Kingship from the Late Uruk Period to the Early Dynasty

In the Late Uruk period (ca. 3350–3000 BC), remarkable changes took place in southern Mesopotamia, constituting what has been called the urban revolution.[133] The creation of the city implied a new form of social organization in which political loyalties replaced tribal and kinship loyalties, and gave rise to the emergence of a religious, military, and political elite, with the responsibilities of ruling the hierarchical society,

[131] Nicole Brisch, "Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), pp. 40-41.
[132] Nicholas Postgate, "Royal Ideology and State Administration in Sumer and Akkad", CANE 1, 1995, pp. 396-402.
[133] For an overview of Uruk, See Mario Liverani, *Uruk: the First City*, London and Oakville: Equinox, 2006.

accumulating wealth, and erecting monumental public buildings. With the process of urbanization, a notion of archaic kingship began to take shape in Uruk that was inseparably connected to the sacred or cultic sphere.

The earliest known written documents were discovered in Uruk, but most of them were simple accounts or lexical lists that cannot provide any effective historical information on topics such as political history, the form of government, or the administrative pattern. Despite the complete absence of historical records, works of art nonetheless provide us with a large and consistent corpus of representations of royal figures. In the Late Uruk period, art was used for the first time in ancient Mesopotamia to illustrate the role of an individualized ruler and to reinforce his position. Many features including the beard, the bulging hair, the patterned kilt, and the characteristic brimmed cap distinguish the royal figure from all other figures and recur for millennia in royal imagery (see Figure 1).[134] This royal figure has been commonly described as a "Priest-King" by modern scholars, playing various roles as a high priest, a military leader, and a hunter.[135] According to C. Suter, the Late Uruk period can be viewed as a phase of experimentation and invention, and thus it produced a larger and more varied repertoire of royal images than later periods.[136] The most fascinating find of this period, the well-known Warka Vase, has four bands of relief decoration, showing a scene of offerings being presented to Inanna, with the Priest-King and the goddess depicted in the top register (see Figure 2).[137] Images of a Priest-King can also be seen on the scenes of some cylinder seals, where he is depicted as feeding the herds, traveling on a boat, threatening naked prisoners with a spear, or making offerings, in the company of either

[134] Piotr Steinkeller, "More on Dumuzi and the 'brimmed cap' of the Priest-King of Late Uruk times", in A. Pieńkowska, D. Szeląg & I. Zych (Eds.), *Stories told around the fountain. Papers offered to Piotr Bieliński on the occasion of his 70th birthday*, Warsaw: University of Warsaw Press, 2019, pp. 657-670.

[135] For the assumption of regarding the earliest sovereign in Late Uruk as "Priest-King", see Piotr Steinkeller, "On Rulers, Priests and Sacred Marriage: Tracing the Evolution of Early Sumerian Kingship", in Kazuko Watanabe (ed.), *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999, pp. 104-111; *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, SANER 15, Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2017, pp. 82-103. Although the title of "king" may not be quite appropriate, this article will use this convention as a common term for convenience. For the negative assessments toward this designation, see for example, Piotr Michalowski, "Sumerians", in Eric M. Meyers (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East prepared under the auspices of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 100.

[136] Claudia E. Suter, "Human, Divine or Both? The Uruk Vase and the Problem of Ambiguity in Early Mesopotamian Visual Arts", in B. Brown & M. H. Feldman (eds.), *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 553-555.

[137] Daniel Hockmann, "Die Warka-Vase eine neue Interpretation." *AoF* 35/2 (2009), pp. 326-336; Piotr Steinkeller, SNAER 15, 2017, pp. 83-87.

Inanna or her emblem (see Figure 3).[138]

Figure 1. Statue of the Priest-King[139]

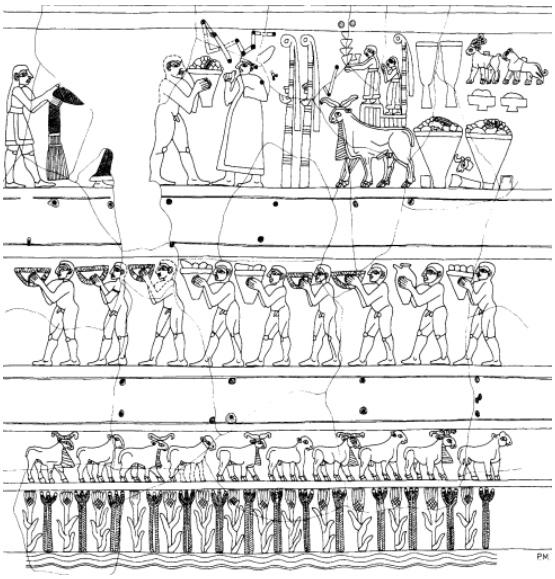

Figure 2. The Warka Vase[140]

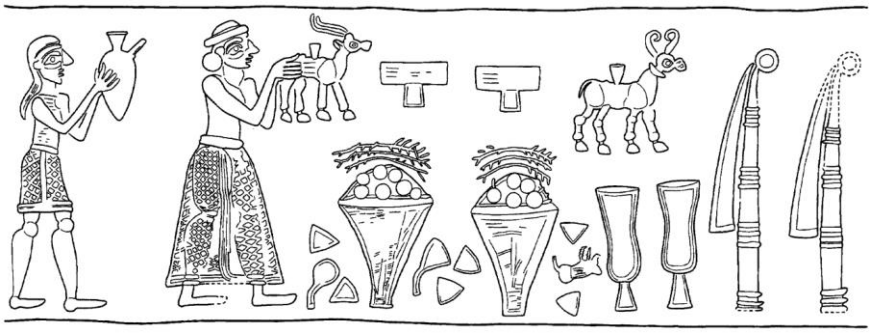

Figure 3. Seal scene of the Priest-King presents food offerings to Inanna[141]

Despite the lack of direct evidence, the anonymous Uruk ruler plausibly bore the title of "en", conventionally translated as "lord" in Sumerian, and meaning "high priest" in the context of Inanna's cult.[142] According to the original ideological model, the en

[138] For discussion of Late Uruk seals, see G. Marchesi & N. Marchetti, *Royal Statuary of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia*, MC 14, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011, p. 190; Piotr Steinkeller, SNAER 15, 2017, pp. 88-89.
[139] Eva Strommenger, *Fünf Jahrtausende Mesopotamien. Die Kunst von den Anfängen um 5000 v.Chr. bis zu Alexander dem Großen*, München: Hirmer Verlag, 1962, pl. 33.
[140] Elke Lindemeyer & Lutz Martin, *Uruk: Kleinefunde III: Kleinfunde im Vorderasiatischen Museum zu Berlin: Steingefässe und Asphalt, Farbreste, Fritte, Glas, Holz, Knochen/Elfenbein*, *Muschel/Perlmutt/Schnecke*, vol. 9, Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1993, pl. 25, fig. l.
[141] Helga Vogel, "Der 'Große Mann von Uruk': Das Bild der Herrschaft im späten 4. Und frühen 3. vorchristlichen Jahrtausend", in N. Crüsemann et al (eds.), *Uruk —5000 Jahre Megacity. Begleitband zur Ausstellung "Uruk – 5000 Jahre Megacity" im Pergamonmuseum – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, in den Reiss-Engelhorn-Museen in Mannheim*, Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2013, p. 143, fig. 20.5.
[142] William W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philologic and Historical Analysis*, AOS 43, New

was the political leader of Uruk and the high priest of Inanna, who assumed the right to mediate between the gods and the people.[143] The cultic role of the en was critical and his most important ideological duty was to ritually secure the fecundity of the whole society. This was possibly achieved through the so-called "sacred marriage" rite involving a sexual union between the ruler and a goddess (perhaps impersonated by a specific kind of priestess); this rite is referred to in later Sumerian texts from the early second millennium.[144] At Uruk, the ruler as en would have represented Dumuzi and the goddess in question was Inanna.

Apart from visual evidence and the royal title of en, we have no direct information about the office of the Priest-King,[145] but there are reasons to speculate that he was perhaps imbued with some semi-divine aspects, and even may have been believed to be a Dumuzi-like figure.[146] This speculation is largely based on later literary sources that include the mythical archaic kings of Uruk, such as Mes-kiag-gašir, Enmerkar, Lugal-banda, and Gilgameš, who were descended from gods and demigods. This later tradition provides us with ideas about how the archaic ruler of Uruk was viewed in the eyes of subsequent generations, but we will never know if it was the case at that time.

In addition, it seems that the Uruk ruler shared a direct and intimate relationship with the goddess Inanna, not only because most of the extant images show him in ritual roles together with Inanna or in association with her symbolic representations, but also because their figures are the same size and height, making them appear to be practically equals of one another. His relationship with Inanna can easily remind us of the demigod Dumuzi, a lover and ritual attendant of Inanna. Last but not least, one of the lexical

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Haven: American Oriental Society, 1957, pp. 6-8.

[143] For on overview of the rulership in Late Uruk period, see Josef Bauer, Robert K. Englund & Manfred Krebernik (eds.), *Mesopotamien: Späturuk-Zeit und Frühdynastische Zeit*, OBO 160/1, Freiburg, Switzerland / Göttingen, Germany: Universitätsverlag / Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998; Pascal Butterlin, *Les Temps Proto-urbains De Mésopotamie: Contacts Et Acculturation à L'époque D'Uruk Au Moyen-Orient*, Paris: CNRS Ed, 2003.

[144] For the discussion of "sacred marriage" rite, see especially P. Lapinkivi, SAAS 15, 2004. For critical notes to the modern perception of this ritual, see Walther Sallaberger, "Ur III-Zeit", OBO 160/3, 1999, pp. 155-156; Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, p. 82.

[145] Wang Xianhua, "How Many Priest-Kings in Town? A Glance at the Political Structure of the City of Uruk at the Dawn of Civilization", in Armando Bramanti, Nicholas L. Kraus & Palmiro Notizia (eds.), *Current Research in Early Mesopotamian Studies, Workshop Organized at the 65th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Paris 2019*, dubsar 21, Münster: Zaphon, 2021, pp. 45-59.

[146] Denise Schmandt-Besserat, "Images of Enship", in Marcella Frangipane, Harald Hauptmann, Mario Liverani, Paolo Mathhiae & Mechthild Mellink (eds.), *Between the Rivers and over the Mountains: Archaeologica Anatolica et Mesopotamica Alba Palmieri dedicata*, Rome: Università di Roma La Sapienza, 1993, pp. 201-219; Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, pp. 29-30.

sources, the Lu List A, which lists the top economic and political officials of Uruk, excludes the name of the en. This striking and puzzling omission, in the words of P. Steinkeller, may indirectly support the semi-divine status of Uruk's ruler, considering that the en stayed out of the normal political system and formed a category by himself.[147]

Much of the early Mesopotamian royal image was conceived in the Late Uruk period, but the model of the Priest-King was significantly altered during the succeeding Early Dynastic period (ca. 2900–2350 BC, hereafter ED), due to the transformation of the political and social paradigms. The ED was also known as the "pre-Sargonic" or "Old Sumerian" period, characterized by a strong tradition of small city-states, each centered on a capital city and its patron deity. Since the whole state was believed to be the property of the city god, his/her temple was both the geographic center and ideological focus of each city-state. Nonetheless, the state required some form of secular government to maintain the god's cult and to deal with profane affairs, and thus a form of rulership based mainly on the principle of divine election accordingly appeared.[148] In theory, the ruler was elected to his office by divine will from among the population of the city and functioned as an earthly deputy of the deity to take care of the people and other resources. In practice, the hereditary principle of succession prevailed and constituted some form of legitimation, although strict primogeniture was not universal. In this dynastic system of royal succession, kings claimed to rule by divine right, and this right remained in their family, passing to a son or sometimes to a brother.[149]

While rulers of different cities had different titles, lugal ("king", literally meaning "big man") was the predominant designation originally used in Ur, alongside the title ensi$_2$ (roughly translated as "city/local governor"). The most common way to express control over a geographical area was by adding the capital of a city-state to lugal or

[147] Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, p. 30, pp. 47-50.
[148] Nicholas Postgate, "Royal Ideology and State Administration in Sumer and Akkad", CANE 1, 1995, pp. 396-397. For the scale and extent of the political institutions of Ur during the beginning of the ED period, see Camille Lecompte & Giacomo Benati, "The Scale and Extent of Political Institutions in Early Dynastic Mesopotamia: The Case of Archaic Ur", dubsar 21, Münster: Zaphon, 2021, pp.61-98.
[149] For discussion on patterns of succession in ancient Mesopotamia, see Jacob Dahl, *The Ruling Family of Ur III Umma: A Prosopographical Analysis of an Elite Family in Southern Iraq 4000 Years Ago*, 2007, pp. 7-9.

ensi$_2$. As for the en title born by the Priest-King in the Late Uruk period, it turned into a priestly title and represented a high clerical office tied to specific deities in the ED period and henceforth. In a few royal inscriptions and literary compositions, en was also used epithetically by rulers in parallel with their primary titles lugal or ensi$_2$, suggesting its functional correspondence with the other two titles. It is not clear what distinguished the three titles from each other, and perhaps it is not even meaningful to separate them strictly. As indicated by P. Michalowski, the different titles of en, ensi$_2$, and lugal were in fact merely local expressions for "sovereign" derived from the cities of Uruk, Ur, and Lagaš.[150] Yet, even if this straightforward explanation is correct, it is worth mentioning that from ED onward, lugal and ensi$_2$ were titles attributed exclusively to rulers, while en became a priestly title and was occasionally borrowed by rulers only when they needed to carry out their cultic duties.

The differentiation of the en's role may be seen as a process in which the notion of kingship (nam-lugal) was gradually clarified and formally institutionalized as a permanent component of the social order. The duties of the office of king were divided between the military and religious spheres, possibly with different emphases in different cases, and remained for succeeding periods to transform into normative patterns. The steadily strengthening position of power made the establishment of an ideological basis to legitimize and reinforce the leader's status necessary and thus gave rise to a textual tradition of displaying the ruler as an ideal king.[151] Such expressions can be roughly divided into two groups. The former was intended to show the legitimacy of the ruling monarch by means of the king's claim to divine parentage, divine selection, endowment by the god with superior abilities, and royal investiture; while the latter aimed to demonstrate how the legitimate ruler fulfilled the deities' will to ensure the prosperity of his land and people, by highlighting the ruler's merits such as justice, righteousness, diligence and so on.[152] The claim of divine parentage may create the impression that

[150] Piotr Michalowski, "The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", OIS 4, 2008, p. 33.
[151] Michalowski, Piotr. "Networks of Authority and Power in Ur III Times", in Steven J. Garfinkle & Manuel Molina (eds.), *From the 21st Century B.C. to the 21st Century A.D.: Proceedings of the International Conference on Neo-Sumerian Studies Held in Madrid, 22-24, July 2010*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012, pp. 173-174.
[152] Esther Flückiger-Hawker, OBO 166, 1999, pp. 42-58; Ludek Vacin, *Šulgi of Ur: Life, Deeds, Ideology and Legacy of a Mesopotamian Ruler as Reflected Primarily in Literary Texts*, 2011, pp. 178-187.

the ruler was implicitly deified or in some incipient form of deification, but this was not the case. This kind of statement, adopted by many kings, seems more likely to be a poetic way to show the ruler's close relationship with the divine realm, rather than a remote indication of divine kingship in the ED period.[153] The divinely sanctioned and legitimized king, in turn, tended to lavish temples with resources, consequently benefiting the priesthood, which now emerged as a separate profession of considerable numbers with the split of the en's role. While the royally endowed priesthood was no doubt the natural ally of the king, this powerful elite group, headed by the high priests and priestesses of the chief gods, may sometimes have inevitably restricted royal power to a certain extent. The courting of the priesthood and the encroachment on the temple's property are thorny issues that a king had to face, especially when southern Babylonia was conquered and ruled by foreigners.

The ED period was a time devoid of historical narrative and chronographic records: the contemporary royal inscriptions are often uninformative, recording only the name of the ruler and a dedication to a deity.[154] The difficulties we encounter in understanding the history of ED can, to some extent, be solved through the retrospective texts of later generations. The most important of these is the Sumerian King List (hereafter SKL), with its records of dynasties at the different cities that ruled over Sumer from the earliest times.[155] Although the original date of the composition of the SKL is debated, it is known for the most part from later Old Babylonian copies and it is known that a version already existed in Ur III times.[156] Five dominant heartland powers in the ED period are listed in the SKL: Kiš, Uruk, Ur, Adab, and Akšak. Among

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[153] For a firm opposition to the alleged divinity of Pre-Sargonic rulers, see Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, pp. 110-117. For the view that divine parenthood indicates "the office of the representative of the gods, the nam-lugal, was deified, not the representatives himself", see Ludek Vacin, *Šulgi of Ur: Life, Deeds, Ideology and Legacy of a Mesopotamian Ruler as Reflected Primarily in Literary Texts,* 2011, p. 190. For arguments of deification and claims of divine origin of Mesopotamian rulers in ED period, see Vladimir Sazonov, "Universalistic Ambitions, Deification and Claims of Divine Origin of Mesopotamian Rulers in Early Dynastic and Sargonic Periods", AOAT 390/4, Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2016, pp. 31-61. As far as I am concerned, the topoi of divine origin alone is not enough to prove either the king or his office was deified.

[154] For discussion of the poverty of historical tradition in Early Babylonia and possible reasons, see Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, pp. 2-3, pp. 39-45.

[155] Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Sumerian King List*, AS 11, Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1939. A more recent version can be found in Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 2004.

[156] Piotr Steinkeller, "An Ur III Manuscript of the Sumerian King List", in Walther Sallaberger, Konrad Volk & Annette Zgoll (eds.), *Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien: Festschrift fur Claus Wilcke*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003, pp. 267-292.

these, Kiš and Uruk were the two who most commonly competed for hegemony. More ambitious titles such as "king of the land" (lugal kalam-ma) and "king of Kiš" (lugal Kiš) were used by the dominators to show hegemony over Sumer and Akkad. Kiš was quite a different city from its Sumerian counterparts, both due to its location in northern Babylonia and its use of a Semitic language closely related to Akkadian. In sharp contrast to Southern kingship, which was generally weak and had strong religious overtones, Northern kingship as represented by Kiš was considerably stronger, more authoritarian, and predominantly secular. There are reasons to speculate that it was Kiš, not any Sumerian city, that produced kingship for the first time and the Sargonic territory state later sprang either directly or indirectly from the kingdom of archaic Kiš.[157] However, some other preeminent powers such as Umma and Lagaš, which left us with large numbers of royal inscriptions, were deliberately excluded from the list for reasons that are unclear.[158] In addition, Nippur was the most important religious center, located at the geographical midpoint between Sumer in the south and Akkad in the north, and sacred to the chief god Enlil. Although Nippur itself was never demonstrably the seat of a royal city-state, nor had it ever had an aggressive political leadership, rulers believed that control over Nippur meant the right to rule the whole territory.[159] Its prestigious cultic position symbolizes the significance of religion in the pattern of kingship in the ED period.

Archaeological excavations have succeeded in revealing several royal burial sites dating to the ED period. These include the remarkable Royal Cemetery of Ur, consisting of numerous graves of the rulers of Ur and their close families. The Royal Cemetery is spectacular for both the large quantity and high quality of burial objects (including personal possessions like jewelry, daggers, cylinder seals, pottery, weapons, and makeup paints), as well as the large number of skeletons, presumably of attendants who had been slaughtered during the funeral rites to accompany the occupant of the grave to the netherworld and serve him in the afterlife. Apart from the Royal Cemetery, there

[157] See most recently Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, pp. 35-36.
[158] Douglas R. Frayne, *Presargonic Period (2700-2350 BC)*, RIME 1, Toronto and Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2008, p. 6.
[159] For more on Nippur, see William W. Hallo, "The house of Ur-meme." *JNES* 31/2 (1972), pp. 87-95.

is little evidence for the custom of royal burial with sacrificial victims in Mesopotamia.[160]

In addition to the archaeological evidence, there are plentiful documents referring to the posthumous cult of a ruler, indicating the deification of the monarch after his death. Above all, economic-administrative archives, mainly from Ebla and Lagaš, record expenditures for offerings to deities and statues of deceased rulers at several festivals and imply that the cult was official business.[161] The posthumous cult of rulers, as well as that of other royal families, was not simply an ancestor cult kept within family lines but was also maintained by non-related successors. This may suggest that the posthumous cult was intended to venerate the official dimension of the deceased rulers so that their successors could establish a connection to their predecessors and thereby legitimately inherit the kingship.

II.1.2 Kingship and Divine Kingship in the Akkad Dynasty

Through the unification of Babylonia and control of the periphery, the Akkad Dynasty (ca.2334–2113 BC) created the first territorial state in the region and provided the paradigm or prototype for future dynasties in its empire-like political organization and its new conception of kingship.[162] Many innovations were made by Sargon, the founder of the dynasty, and fundamental changes occurred in more than one sphere. Previously independent Sumerian city-states were transformed into a system of provinces, and local rulers were replaced with Akkadian officials. During this process of unification, the social structure changed considerably and direct links were created between scattered parts of Babylonia and the capital city, Akkad. Furthermore, as reflected in letters and administrative documents, the Akkadian king was the highest

[160] For more discussions on Royal Cemetery of Ur, see Michael Roaf, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East,* New York and Oxford: Facts On File, 1990, pp. 84-86.
[161] See Tohru Maeda, "On the Agricultural Festivals in Sumer." *ASJ* 1 (1979), pp. 19-33; Toshiko Kobayashi, "On the Meaning of the Offerings for the Statue of Entemena." *Orient* 20 (1984), pp. 43-65; G. Selz, "Eine Kultstatue der Herrschergemahlin Šaša: Ein Beitrag zum Problem der Vergöttlichung", *ASJ* 14 (1992), pp. 245-268; Ludek Vacin, *Šulgi of Ur: Life, Deeds, Ideology and Legacy of a Mesopotamian Ruler as Reflected Primarily in Literary Texts*, 2011, pp. 190-191.
[162] Jerrold S. Cooper, "Paradigm and Propaganda. The Dynasty of Akkade in the 21st Century", HANE/S 5, 1993, p. 12.

authority in the land and a political order based on personal responsibility toward him was introduced. Seal inscriptions of some officials, characterized as servants of the king, may reveal loyalty to the king's person rather than to his office.[163] This new form of personal loyalty was very different from the situation in the ED, in that the king was no longer a god's agent on earth but was instead the supreme monarch. However, this change did not mean stronger ties of loyalty to the central government rather than to local powers, as military garrisons had to be built in the southern cities to maintain peace and suppress the widespread occurrence of revolts against the new dynasty. Other administrative innovations were also implemented by Sargon to consolidate and enhance his authority, such as the establishment of a standing army and a monopoly on trade routes.[164] In addition to these changes, Akkadian kings also adopted some older ideologies to pacify those they conquered. These could be seen in their initial usage of the title "king of Kish", acknowledgment of the central role of Nippur, and appointment of their daughters to be the high priestesses of important cities.[165]

Just as important as Sargon was his grandson Naram-Sin, under whom the fortunes of the Akkad Dynasty reached their zenith. As a consolidator of the state, Naram-Sin significantly changed the paradigm of kingship. Early on in his reign, he introduced a new royal title of "king of the four quarters" (*šar kibrātim arba'im*), thus claiming hegemony over the whole region from Syria to Elam and implicitly boasting of his military successes. This title was adopted by the powerful kings of subsequent dynasties until the Old Babylonian period, and it was considered to be the highest title that a sovereign of a territorial state could hold.[166] Naram-Sin's ambitions were constantly stimulated by military victories and territorial expansion, laying the foundation for the continuous strengthening and ultimate deification of the king. From the ideological

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[163] Jakob Andersson, *Kingship in the Early Mesopotamian Onomasticon 2800-2200 BCE*, Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2012, p. 43.
[164] Hans J. Nissen, *The Early History of the Ancient Near East 9000-2000 BC.*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp. 167-168.
[165] Nicholas Postgate, "Royal Ideology and State Administration in Sumer and Akkad", CANE 1, 1995, pp. 400-401.
[166] Tohru Maeda, "'King of the Four Regions' in the Dynasty of Akkade." *Orient* 20 (1984), p. 80; for other discussions of this royal titles, see also William W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philologic and Historical Analysis*, 1957, pp. 49-56; Vladimir Sazonov, "Universalistic Ambitions, Deification and Claims of Divine Origin of Mesopotamian Rulers: the Lagaš II Dynasty", *Usuteaduslik Ajakiri* 72, 2018, pp. 42-58; "Some Notes on the King of the Four Corners", *NABU* 3 (2019), pp. 102-105.

point of view, the self-deification of Naram-Sin was the most significant innovation of kingship at this time, and he was the first known Mesopotamian ruler to declare divinity during his lifetime. His deification took place in the late part of his reign, as indicated by the writing of his name with the divine determinative in late texts.[167] Moreover, the title "king of the four quarters" was replaced by "god of Akkad" (DIGIR *a-ga-de$_3^{ki}$*) to represent his prominent status as a deity.

Naram-Sin was not born a god. The circumstances that led to his deification are uncertain, but the so-called "Bassetki inscription" provides us with some explanation. According to this inscription, the citizens of Akkad petitioned some of the principal deities to make Naram-Sin a god after his successful suppression of a severe rebellion in the cities of the south, and they built a temple dedicated to him as a god-king in Akkad.[168] It is not known whether this rebellion actually took place, but the hostility and resistance of the southern city-states to the newly arrived dominator was a constant factor.[169] Sargon and his successors had faced local uprisings since the establishment of their dynasty. By the time of Naram-Sin, he had his own solution: to become a god himself, in order to unite the southern cities at a religious level. Given that the southern city-states were geographically and religiously isolated by their city walls and respective patron deities, military conquest and political rule could not effectively hold the whole region together. A patron deity of the large territorial entity and the wider cultural regions was needed, but the Akkad Dynasty itself did not have such a god that could be unanimously accepted and worshiped. It is true that the city of Agade had Ištar (Inanna) as its divine patron and the dynasty's god was Aba, but they were either less powerful than the supreme god Enlil or less well known in the southern cities. In such cases, therefore, it was only natural that the mighty Naram-Sin should declare himself to be the patron deity of the dynasty once his military achievements had met his ambitions. By the elevation of himself to the status of a god, Naram-Sin surpassed the rulers of all previous city-states and reached new heights in the field of religion, thus

[167] Nicole Brisch, "Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), pp. 40-41.
[168] Douglas R. Frayne, RIME 2, 1993, pp. 113-114.
[169] Jakob Andersson, *Kingship in the Early Mesopotamian Onomasticon 2800-2200 BCE*, 2012, pp. 42-44.

justifying his ownership of the Sumerian territory.[170] Given the lack of precedent for deification in Mesopotamia, there lies the possibility that Naram-Sin's idea of deification was inspired by other civilizations. However, despite the tradition of pharaonic deification in neighboring Egypt and the early cultural exchanges, there is not enough evidence to suggest that Naram-Sin was influenced by the example of Egypt.[171]

No statues of the deified Naram-Sin have survived, but the famous "Victory Stele" celebrating the god-king's victory over the Lullabi people provides us with valuable information (see Figure 4). This remarkable piece of artwork is a subversion of the original Sumerian art tradition, as the ruler is no longer depicted in a formulaic expression, but has a flamboyant and recognizable personality. In the two-metre tall limestone stele, the king himself is clearly the central figure as a triumphant hero, towering over his Lullabi subjects, with the superior gods presented in the astral emblem at the top of the stele. Naram-Sin's status as a god is clearly indicated by his horned crown, an explicit symbol of divine nature.[172] P. Michalowski puts forward a different interpretation of the Victory Stele. He argues that the scene depicted on the stele expresses an ambition for the realm of Akkad to be, not the core, but rather the *axis mundi* of a universal state.[173] This could also be seen as an extension, reification, and sublimation of the royal title "king of the four quarters", in order to be more consistent with the king's deified status. In addition to the depiction of victory in battle, the sexual qualities of the portrayal of the god-king in the stele can be appreciated by both Mesopotamian contemporaries and modern viewers. All the details representing sexuality and power were inextricably linked to potency, to male vigor, to authority and dominance, and hence to rule.[174] Beyond being a powerful ruler, Naram-Sin making

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[170] Nicholas Postgate, "Royal Ideology and State Administration in Sumer and Akkad", CANE 1, 1995, p. 401; Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 15-16.
[171] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia,* 2015, pp. 17-18.
[172] Piotr Michalowski, "The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", OIS 4, 2008, p. 34; G. Selz, "The Divine Prototypes", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 13-31.
[173] Piotr Michalowski, "Masters of the Four Corners of the Heavens: Views of the Universe in Early Mesopotamian Writings", in Kurt Raaflaub & Richard Talbert (eds.), *Geography and Ethnography: Perceptions of the World in Pre-Modern Societies*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2010, pp. 152-156.
[174] Irene J. Winter, "Sex, Rhetoric, and the Public Monument: The alluring Body of Naram-Sīn of Agade", *Sexuality in Acient Art: Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Italy*, 1996, p. 11.

such a lofty claim to divine status and the perfect beauty of his physical body may together reflect the "perfection of one accorded divine status".[175]

Figure 4. Victory Stele of Naram-Sin[176]

The new identity of Naram-Sin as the "god of Akkad" is also recognized on the cylinder seals and votive offerings of royal families and officials. There is one extant personal name ("Naram-Sin is my god") using the deified Akkadian king's name as a theophoric element; its uniqueness is likely partly due to the scarcity of materials.[177] Overall, the evidence for the representation of a divine Naram-Sin is scanty and there is no documentary material to attest to his position in the divine world or his relationship with the other gods. We have no way of knowing why Naram-Sin was excluded from the Sumerian pantheon. It may have been his alien identity, or it may have been unnecessary to include him, or there may be other reasons.

After analyzing the reasons for and specific representations of Naram-Sin's

[175] Irene J. Winter, "Touched by the Gods: Visual Evidence for the Divine Status of Rulers in the Ancient Near East", OIS 4, 2008, p. 76.
[176] Silvana Di Paolo, "Visualizing War in the Old Babylonian Period: Drama and Canon", in Laura Battini (ed.), *Making Pictures of War: Realia et Imaginaria in the Iconology of the Ancient Near East*, AANEA 1, Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing, 2016, p. 34.
[177] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, p. 15.

apotheosis, let us examine the influence his deification had on his contemporaries and future generations. First of all, did the deification of Naram-Sin achieve the purpose of cutting off any possibility of internal insurrection? In the short term it may seem so, but in the long term the shock and awe proved to be temporary, with insurgencies still raging while his successor was in power. It seems that the divine kingship first introduced by Naram-Sin was short-lived and geographically limited.[178] As for its impact on later generations, one can glean a little from the notoriety gained by Naram-Sin in the following Ur III period. The act of Naram-Sin's self-deification was probably directed against some principle of traditional political ideology. His deification did not make him equal to the other gods in the pantheon but instead earned him a reputation as an unsuccessful ruler, whose disrespect for the gods finally led to the destruction of Akkad.

As reflected in "The Curse of Akkad", the sacrilege of a mortal king assuming godhood would have seemed absolutely unacceptable to the Sumerians, and that makes the deification of the Ur III king Šulgi incomprehensible. How should we evaluate the influence of this literary work on Ur III and why would Šulgi take such a risk when the bloody lessons of the past were so close at hand? One explanation, given by P. Steinkeller, suggests that this piece of literature is a cautionary tale obliquely addressed at the Ur III kings, which is likely to have been composed by the priests of Nippur, in his words, the "Managerial Class".[179] There is no doubt that Naram-Sin's arrogation diminished the role of Enlil and undermined the authority of Nippur and thus provoked a most violent attack from the religious sphere. However, in the meantime, the elevation of the king's status from mortal ruler to deity meant the direct control of the temple estate and households, which would undoubtedly damage the economic interests and influence of the "Managerial Class". Not only did they resent the Akkadian rulers who had introduced the concept of divine kingship, but they also feared that the kings of their own time would follow suit, and so they created a cautionary tale in the hope of

[178] Nicole Brisch, "Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), p. 41.
[179] Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, pp. 79-81.

protecting their own interests. Their efforts were almost entirely in vain and the curse did not act as an effective deterrent, since Šulgi managed to declare his own divinity in the middle of his reign. Although he made some changes in the form of expression (as will be discussed in detail in Chapter III), the essence of his deification was the increasing power of the king and his persistent pursuit of effective control over political, economic, and religious affairs.

II.1.3 Kingship in the times of Gudea and Ur-Nammu

The invasion of the Gutians broke the unity of the Akkadian Dynasty and plunged southern Mesopotamia into a period of political turmoil. Ur-Nammu from Ur eventually succeeded in expelling the Gutians, establishing the Ur III Dynasty, and once again completing the unification of southern Babylonia. His rule was geographically limited and the early years of Ur III likely overlapped with the Second Dynasty of Lagaš (hereafter Lagaš II) in the southeast.[180] Therefore, the royal ideology of Ur-Nammu and that of the contemporary Lagaš ruler Gudea will be considered here.

As P. Steinkeller points out, the ideology espoused by Gudea represented "a total rejection of Sargonic values and a return to the original Sumerian worldview".[181] This Sumerian worldview consisted of the traditional values held by the city-states of the ED period, prior to the Sargonic conquest and unification. Gudea implemented a system of archaizing reforms to achieve his purpose of reviving the conditions of Lagaš in Early Dynastic times, and this is well reflected in his inscriptions and royal images. The numerous and lengthy inscriptions of Gudea deal mainly with ritual affairs, with deliberate usage of similar phraseology and certain orthographic conventions exclusive to ED Lagaš.[182] In art, many sculptures of Gudea have survived, produced with the same goal of reviving the images of Early Dynastic rulers. The wearing of a simple

[180] It has been traditionally considered that the Lagaš II Dynasty was an intermediate period between the Akkadian Dynasty and Ur III, but it is now commonly believed to overlap with Ur III. Though it is difficult to establish the internal chronology of Lagaš II and a relative chronology between Lagaš II and Ur III, administrative texts indicate that the overlap between the two dynasties probably lasted until Š 10 or Š 11. For further discussions, see Piotr Steinkeller, "The Date of Gudea and His Dynasty." *JCS* 40 (1988), pp. 47-53; Jacob Dahl, *The Ruling Family of Ur III Umma: A Prosopographical Analysis of an Elite Family in Southern Iraq 4000 Years Ago*, 2007, p. 14.
[181] Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, pp. 32-34.
[182] Ibid., p. 33.

dress and a characteristic brimmed cap, as well as the image of a pious worshipper, were typical depictions of Gudea as a traditional Sumerian ruler and an apparent rejection of Sargonic royal images.[183]

Gudea was deified posthumously, and he was the only divine ruler in the history of Lagaš. The veneration and cult of Gudea resembled that of the self-deified Ur III kings in many ways: his statues were venerated in a shrine with cult personnel, his name was used as a theophoric element in personal names, he received regular offerings, and his name appeared in the seal inscriptions of his officials.[184] Did the deification of Gudea contradict his adherence to Sumerian values? After all, the king was traditionally supposed to be the god's agent on earth. However, unlike Naram-Šin, Gudea was deified after his death, which likely would have more than offset the negative effects of his actions. This phenomenon is explained by C. Suter as a "partial" deification.[185] She further put forward two possible reasons for this. One is "an implicit critique or ridiculing of the Ur III kings' self-deification", and the other is "a manifestation of Lagash's leading role in the Ur III state by projecting elements of the current regime's royal image on a king of its past grandeur".[186]

Facing the challenge of Lagaš II and the instability of the newly established state, Ur-Nammu had to find ways to legitimize his rule, and his focus was mainly on three cities, Ur, Uruk, and Nippur. First, Ur-Nammu gave himself the title of "king of Ur" and moved his capital to Ur, the place where he came into power and was already in residence. In addition to having a good foundation of governance, Ur had unique geographical advantages, serving as the most important seaport of Sumer and offering the best conditions for sea trade with the Gulf region. Since Sumer lacked minerals and large timber, securing trade routes was crucial for the dynasty to obtain raw materials for the forging of weapons and the construction of buildings.[187] Simultaneously, Ur-

[183] For an overview, see Claudia E. Suter, *Gudea's Temple Building: the Representation of an Early Mesopotamian Ruler in Text and Image*, CM 17, Gronigen: Styx, 2000.
[184] Claudia E. Suter, "The Divine Gudea on Ur III Seal Images", in B. J. Collins & Piotr Michalowski (eds.) *Beyond Hatti: A Tribute to Gary Beckman*, Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2013, pp. 309-324.
[185] Claudia E. Suter, "Gudea's Kingship and Divinity", in Marbeh Ḥokmah (ed.), *Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East in Loving Memory of Victor Avigdor Hurowitz*, Winona Lake: Eisenbraus, 2015, pp. 499-523.
[186] Claudia E. Suter, "The Divine Gudea on Ur III Seal Images", *Beyond Hatti: A Tribute to Gary Beckman*, 2013, p. 324.
[187] For more, see Steffen Laursen & Piotr Steinkeller, *Babylonia, the Gulf Region, and the Indus: Archaeological*

Nammu adopted the policy of emphasizing his role as the legitimate successor of Utu-hegal. By adopting the ancient title "lord/priest of Uruk" (en unug^{ki}), worshiping Uruk deities, adjusting the pantheon of Uruk with the pantheon of Ur, and claiming Lugalbanda, the legendary deified king of that city, and the goddess Ninsun as his divine parents, Ur-Nammu had established a direct link to the Uruk V Dynasty.[188] The support of these two cities was vital to consolidating the early dynasty politically, but one more important task for a new ruler or usurper was to control the religious capital Nippur and take over the cult of Enlil. To obtain recognition of his legitimacy in Nippur and link his kingship to Enlil, the moon-god Nanna, the city god of Ur, was made to be the first-born son of Enlil and Ninlil in royal inscriptions, and constant reference to Enlil as the source of vocation can be found in many hymns of Ur-Nammu.[189] The elaborate construction of dynastic legitimacy carried out by Ur-Nammu laid the basis for the ideological concepts of Šulgi, including his self-deification in the middle of his reign.

Apart from his political and military achievements, the untimely death of Ur-Nammu had a noticeable impact on the strategy and mindset of the fledgling dynasty and its successor. According to the literary composition Ur-Nammu A, also known as "Death of Ur-Nammu", Ur-Nammu died violently on the battlefield. In terms of both genre and content, this composition is unique within the corpus of Sumerian literature, as no other Sumerian literary work directly tells of a king's actual death and its consequences. In ancient Mesopotamia, the death of a king was a strictly taboo subject and violent royal death was an awful omen of divine abandonment. P. Michalowski has pointed out that Ur-Nammu's death therefore shook the ideological foundations of his kingdom, resulting in the covet of both external enemies and local centrifugal forces, all of which nearly toppled the young state. He further proposed that it took the first half of Šulgi's reign (nearly twenty years) to pacify the divine wrath that caused the royal disaster, and the self-deification of Šulgi came as a culmination of overcoming

and Textual Evidence for Contact in the Third and Early Second Millennia B.C., MC 21, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2017.

[188] Peeter Espak, "The Establishment of Ur III Dynasty. From the Gutians to the Formation of the Neo-Sumerian Imperial Ideology and Pantheon", AOAT 390/4, 2016, pp. 90-94.

[189] For editions of Ur-Nammu's inscriptions, see Douglas R. Frayne, RIME 3/2, 1997, pp. 34-35, 39-43 and 63-64; for more on Enlil and Ur-Nammu's kingship reflected in royal hymns, see Esther Flückiger-Hawker, OBO 166, 1999, pp. 63-64.

the ideological crisis. In the meantime, the turning point of shifting his focus to military expeditions abroad.[190] However, Michalowski seems to have exaggerated the impact of Ur-Nammu's death and overemphasized the influence of ideology and religion on Šulgi's regime. One can hardly say that Šulgi's two-decade focus on domestic affairs was primarily aimed at repairing ideological wounds, and it is even more difficult to establish a connection between his deification and the ideological mending, given that self-deification by mortal kings was an affront to the gods according to Sumerian tradition and was bound to provoke their wrath again. Given that the circumstances surrounding the death of Ur-Nammu and the accession of Šulgi remain murky, the situation is still too vague to permit us to draw valid conclusions. It seems more likely that the sudden death of Ur-Nammu would lead to political turmoil around the struggle for the throne, followed by a temporary religious and ideological blow. With the successful accession of Šulgi, political calm gradually returned and domestic construction began.

In fact, the creation of the literary work Ur-Nammu A is itself a positive response to the unexpected royal death and provides a solution to the religious panic that might have resulted. Otherwise, references to the demise of a certain historical monarch should have been avoided or obscured, as in other eras, rather than written into literature to make the tragic truth known to a wider audience. The theme and content of Ur-Nammu A must have been well thought out, purposeful, and directed. Perhaps for that reason, this piece of literature can hardly be classified as hymn, myth, epic, or lament in the strict sense, but contains elements of all these genres. Considering its Job-like theme to show humanity's effort to explain unjust death brought about by enigmatic deities, it is even reasonable to assign it to the wisdom literature.[191]

The poem starts by depicting the disastrous consequences to Sumer and Ur caused by the death of Ur-Nammu, which was the result of An's and Enlil's changing of their fate-decreeing words.[192] The poet then turns to detail the events that led to Ur-

[190] Piotr Michalowski, "The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 35-36.
[191] Samuel N. Kramer, "The Death of Ur-Nammu and His Descent to the Netherworld." *JCS* 21/1 (1967), p. 104; for thematic division of the composition, see also Esther Flückiger-Hawker, OBO 166, 1999, pp. 93-97.
[192] Esther Flückiger-Hawker, OBO 166, 1999, pp. 85-91, 93-182.

Nammu's premature death, his journey to the netherworld, his offerings to the deities and his installation as judge there. However, after several days, the wail of Sumer and his family overtook the king, leading him to utter a bitter diatribe against the injustice and unfairness of the gods, for Ur-Nammu was one of the most energetic temple builders and pious cult supporters of all time. Upon learning of the suffering of Ur-Nammu in spite of his flawless conduct, the goddess Inanna went to An and Enlil for justice, but her effort to bring back her royal lover was doomed to fail. Aware of the fact that a divine decision, once taken, cannot be altered except by An and Enlil themselves, Inanna set up a wail over Ur-Nammu and gave her blessing.

What happened to the dead Ur-Nammu following the blessing may contain the clue to the true nature and purpose of the creation of the composition.[193] In the ending part, Inanna's striving to question and challenge the deities finally achieved partial amends for Ur-Nammu's tragedy. The fate of the dead king Ur-Nammu was decreed and his posthumous fame was extolled, by invoking his name and acclaiming his royal function as well as agricultural achievements.[194] This kind of game with the gods was highly unusual and thus worth noting. Through this work, the author conveys the idea that if a model king without any fault dies for nothing, the supreme god who made the wrong decision can and should be questioned, and should compensate him by restoring his posthumous fame. However, it is also important to see that the mundane world and the underworld are completely cut off from the heavens. Thus the divine dead kings occupying the netherworld cannot directly face the gods in heaven to get justice for themselves but must rely on an intermediary god, Inanna. The impassable boundary between the humans (living or dead) and the heavenly gods may be one of the driving forces of Šulgi's later self-deification because being an underworld god after death does not allow direct communication with the fate-decreed celestial gods.

II.1.4 Motivations for the Deification of Ur III Kings

[193] Samuel N. Kramer, "The Death of Ur-Nammu and His Descent to the Netherworld." *JCS* 21/1 (1967), p. 112.
[194] Esther Flückiger-Hawker, OBO 166, 1999, p. 97, 139-141.

To determine the motivations behind Šulgi's apotheosis, let us first examine the influence of old Sumerian tradition and the self-deification of Naram-Sin on Šulgi. From the above discussion, one can see that the hegemonic pattern from the Early Dynastic period to the Ur III Dynasty shows a clear tendency of a city-state system evolving towards a territorial state, corresponding to the transformation of mortal kingship to divine kingship. The impact of territory size on the royal image cannot be ignored. Given the relatively modest size of the average Sumerian city-state, and the fact that regular people living in these cities would be offered numerous opportunities to observe the ruler first hand during festivals and other public events, the king's strengths and weaknesses were likely familiar to everyone. Therefore, it is difficult for a king in such a small acquaintance society to meet the conditions of deification.[195] In addition to geographical obstacles, there were historical and functional reasons why early Mesopotamian hegemons had no incentive to pursue divine status. Early Mesopotamian concepts of kingship were largely grounded in religion, and the main duty of a ruler was to lead his people in the service of the tutelary deity. As occupants of the sacred office, kings were selected and supported by patron gods and thus set apart from all others, but as individuals, they remained human and mortal. Once the king's human status had been established, it was impossible to transcend it.

While the old Sumerian tradition served to sustain the power of a monarch, it also restrained it. Therefore, when Sargon of Akkad unified Babylonia for the first time, the territorial state he built broke the city-state structure totally and brought about both economic and political reorganization.[196] However, the influence of this tradition was so strong that shortly after the collapse of the Akkadian Dynasty, it was eagerly revived by city-state rulers such as Gudea. This reflects not only southern Sumerians' resistance to the Akkadian government model that prevailed in the Semitic-speaking areas of central and northern Mesopotamia but also city-states' strenuous efforts to resist incorporation into larger political systems.[197] The tenacious vitality of the tradition that

[195] Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 2003, pp. 85-86, 100-103.
[196] Ibid., pp. 110-113. See also, Norman Yoffee, "The Obvious and the Chimerical: City-States in Archaeological Perspective", in D. L. Nichols & T. H. Charlton (eds.), *The Archaeology of City-States: Cross-Cultural Approaches*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997, pp. 255-263.
[197] Norman Yoffee, "Political Economy in Early Mesopotamian States." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24

once aided the ideological construction of Ur-Nammu now put Šulgi in a dilemma. Having experienced the imperial hegemony of the Old Akkadian period, the ambitious Šulgi was no longer content to retreat into the divided city-state system, but the deeply entrenched Sumerian tradition stood doggedly against any efforts at political unification. It may have been that in this context, Šulgi was aware of his mission to make a systematic ideological reform and create a new pattern of central power, with fusion and alteration of Sumerian and Akkadian traditions.[198] To justify the ownership of Sumerian city-states and their territory, like the patron deity, the most convenient and effective way would be to emulate Naram-Sin's apotheosis.

Compared with the first divine king, Naram-Sin in Mesopotamia, Šulgi had many significant advantages: his dynasty came from Uruk and resided at Ur, both of which were ancient urban centers recognized by Sumerian tradition; his father Ur-Nammu had strengthened his relationship with Enlil of Nippur to secure legitimacy. What is more, the example of Naram-Sin, especially in "The Curse of Akkade", made Šulgi clearly understand the potential risks of the deification of royal power. He thus took very cautious steps to minimize resistance, including the creation of the composition "Death of Ur-Nammu", waiting patiently for the right moment and more modestly and cautiously creating his divine image. The self-representation of the divine Šulgi will be discussed in chapter III. Therefore, while Naram-Sin's apotheosis had a direct and clear cause, the apparently sudden deification of Šulgi seems more likely to be an essential component of a deliberate and long-term strategy.[199]

After this analysis of historical and traditional factors, let us turn to the political circumstances that prevailed when Šulgi made his claim for divine status. During Šulgi's 48-year reign, the first twenty-one years were primarily focused on cultic events and the last twenty-seven were dominated by military campaigns. Two decades of domestic construction and reforms had secured the cultic order, consolidated ideological foundations, strengthened central power, and improved the administrative

(1995), pp. 290-292.

[198] Piotr Michalowski, "Charisma and Control: On Continuity and Change in Early Mesopotamian Bureaucratic Systems", SAOC 46, 1991, p. 53.

[199] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, p. 20.

and bureaucratic systems, allowing Šulgi to prepare for military campaigns. In fact, all the political achievements made in the first twenty years of domestic construction seemed to be the crucial premise and motive not only for military affairs but also for Šulgi's assumption of divinity.[200] The divine determinative first appeared in the year name of the twenty-first year of Šulgi's reign, coinciding with a possible shift of his policy from domestic to military affairs. This consistency makes one suspect that Šulgi's deification was also a powerful boost for waging wars.[201] The divinity of the king undoubtedly provided more legal justification for military conquest. In this exaltation, he was no longer fighting on behalf of a city god, but was a god himself.

The event recorded in the 21st year name of Šulgi, marking the culmination of his internal efforts, provides valuable information on economic factors near the time of his apotheosis. The full year name is "Ninurta, the chief governor of Enlil, having pronounced an oracle in the temples of Enlil and Ninlil, Šulgi, the king of Ur, reorganized the fields and accounts belonging to the temples of Enlil and Ninlil".[202] As revealed in the year formula, the recently deified Šulgi duly took over the temple's property in Nippur with the divine approval of an oracle, perhaps by reorganizing the fields and accounts there.[203] Given the city's vital religious status, temple property under the control of its priesthood may have been the hardest to appropriate.[204] Previous rulers often actively sought to establish a good relationship with Nippur in order to gain recognition, or appointed royal women to be the high priestess for limited supervision.[205] Šulgi's move was probably an open declaration of war against all the priestly classes, intended to deter and silence all possible opposition to his deification,

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[200] Ludek Vacin, *Šulgi of Ur: Life, Deeds, Ideology and Legacy of a Mesopotamian Ruler as Reflected Primarily in Literary Texts*, 2011, p. 200.

[201] Piotr Michalowski, "The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 36-39.

[202] The Sumerian transliteration is as follows: mu dnin-urta ensi$_2$ gal den-lil$_2$-la$_2$-ke4 e$_2$ den-lil$_2$ dnin-lil$_2$-la$_2$-ke$_4$ eš-bar kin ba-an-du$_{11}$-ga ^{d}šul-gi lugal uri$_5^{ki}$-ma-ke$_4$ gan$_2$ nig$_2$-ka$_9$ ša$_3$ e$_2$ den-lil$_2$ dnin-lil$_2$-la$_2$-ke$_4$ si bi$_2$-sa$_2$-a

[203] Furthermore, Tonia M. Sharlach argues that Šulgi deliberately shifted his geographic focus away from the political capital Ur to concentrate on the Nippur region, culminating in the year name of Š 39. See Tonia M. Sharlach, "Šulgi, Mighty Man, King of Ur", RAI 60, 2017, pp. 218-219.

[204] For a recent study on temple treasure inventories in Ur III, see Jacob Dahl, "Neo-Sumerian Temple Treasure Inventories", in Sven Günther, Wayne Horowitz & Magnus Widell (eds.), *Of Rabid Dogs, Hunchbacked Oxen, and Infertile Goats in Ancient Babylonia: Studies Presented to Wu Yuhong on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, Journal of Ancient Civilizations, Supplement Series 7, Changchun: Northeast Normal University Press, 2021, pp. 39-51.

[205] Nicholas Postgate, "Royal Ideology and State Administration in Sumer and Akkad", CANE 1, 1995, pp. 400-401.

and finally to effectively “nationalize” the temple estates and run them as an integrated whole. As with Naram-Sin, the apotheosis of Šulgi could provide him with the unquestionable authority exclusive to traditional Sumerian deities, which would benefit his military expansion and domestic consolidation. The endeavor of the first twenty years most likely laid the foundation for the final success of Šulgi, and the takeover of the temple wealth may also have provided part of the material foundation for the following wars. In general, from stabilizing the state ideologically and politically, to confiscating temple property, to achieving elevation through deification, to waging war, all of these acts reflect the meticulous and grand strategy of Šulgi.

All three of Šulgi’s successors deified themselves as soon as they came to power, presumably for reasons of consistency of policy. Moreover, based on the background knowledge in the last chapter, both Amar-Suen and Šu-Suen may be suspected of usurping the throne, making it necessary for them to deify themselves early in order to legitimize their rule as soon as possible. The last ruler, Ibi-Suen, also needed the divine identity to help him in the face of an unfavorable domestic and foreign situation.

II.2 The Emergence of Kingship in Ancient China

Although the Shang is the first historical dynasty of ancient China, many political, ideological, and cultural elements of the Shang Dynasty were derived from prehistoric periods. In what follows, I will give a brief review of the theocratic traditions of the legendary times and the Xia Dynasty, which will involve a discussion of the formation of the early state and the emergence of archaic kingship. Then I will turn to an investigation of the political and religious circumstances leading to divine kingship in the Shang period. It should be noted that discussions of the periods before Shang are mainly based on a combination of archaeological findings and the later literature, most of which were composed during the Zhou Dynasty and inevitably bear the imprint of later thoughts. The question of whether and to what extent the historical materials of later generations can truthfully reflect the previous period is not within the scope of this paper.

II.2.1 Legendary Heroes and Sages in China's Prehistory

Combining archaeological findings with ancient myths and legends about tribal chiefs, heroes, and sages, we can roughly reconstruct the era before the Xia Dynasty. This is known as the period of "The Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors",[206] after two groups of mythological rulers and culture heroes in ancient northern China.[207] The former were said to be god-kings or demigods, who used their abilities to improve the lives of their people and imparted to them essential skills and knowledge, such as making fire, building houses, and farming; while the latter were portrayed as exemplary ancestral sages possessing great moral character who lived to a great age.[208] Since the legends of the latter are more consistent with archaeological findings, the following discussion will focus on the Five Emperors.

Based on the social morphology attested by both classic texts and archaeological findings, the time of the Five Emperors can be divided into two periods: the era of Huang Di was the period of chiefdoms, while the time since the second emperor, Zhuan Xu, saw the gradual formation of early states and archaic kingship.[209] It seems that the era of Huang Di was placed much earlier than the latter four emperors, and the time depth expressed by the myths and legends towards him is much greater than that of the other ones. At that time, the clan or tribe was mostly marked throughout China by totem, which originated very early and is generally believed to coexist with the matriarchal system.[210] The most prominent phenomenon during the time of Huang Di was war, the frequency of which prompted the building of walls to strengthen defenses. There are many myths and legends referring to the creation of material and spiritual culture by

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[206] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1983, p. 120.
[207] There are various versions of both sets in different Chinese historical texts, but the most common of the Three Sovereigns are Fu Xi, Sui Ren and Shen Nong; and the Five Emperors are usually Huang Di, Zhuan Xu, Di Ku, Yao and Shun. For an overview of this legendary age of ancient Chinese history, see Xu Xusheng, "*Zhongguo Gushi de Chuanshuo Shidai*" (The Legendary Age of Ancient Chinese History), Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe, 1960.
[208] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, p. 2.
[209] Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, p. 377-381.
[210] Li Hengmei, "San Huang Wu Di Chuanshuo jiqi zai Zhongguo Shiqianshi zhong de Dingwei" (The Legend of Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors and Its Positions in Chinese Prehistory), *Social Sciences in China* 2 (1997), pp. 178-189.

Huang Di: he was the initiator of civilization by inventing carriages and boats, the bronze mirror, housing, the cooking pot and steamer, the cross-bow, and even a kind of football. The officials of his court also created the great inventions of writing, music, cyclical calendar sets, and medical texts.[211] The emperor Zhuan Xu was a transitional figure who brought three remarkable changes: first, the concept of time in the sense of astronomy and the calendar came into being; second, the patrilineal system was firmly established and showed completely different characteristics from the system used in the Huang Di period;[212] third, full-time clerics arose and a class of priests and administrators was formed. During the Huang Di period, everyone could worship and communicate with the gods directly, but the specialization of the priesthood broke this tradition and monopolized religious worship in the hands of the ruling class. The third change, which is considered by some scholars to have been some kind of religious reform, took society a step closer to the formation of the early state.[213]

The time of Yao, Shun, and their successor Yu corresponds archaeologically to the middle and late period of the Longshan culture (ca. 3000–2000 BC), attested by dozens of ancient city sites identified in the Yellow River and Yangtze River basins. Some of the sites were capitals of early states, with large-scale city walls, palaces, and ritual areas, showing clear evidence of the concentration of resources and power and the division of labor and class.[214] According to archaeological evidence, this was an age of the coexistence of multiple levels and forms of political entities, from the early form of the state to the more primitive clans, tribes, and chiefdoms. However, all of these political entities were recorded in ancient historical documents as chiefdoms (邦, usually referring to a nation or a people) or states (国), and thus this age is also described

[211] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, p. 42; Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, pp. 380-381.
[212] Xu Xusheng, "*Zhongguo Gushi de Chuanshuo Shidai*" (The Legendary Age of Ancient Chinese History), 1960, p. 85.
[213] Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, pp. 280-284, p. 378.
[214] Among ancient capital city sites in the Longshan culture period, Taosi site in Shanxi was a classic example. For more discussion and further evidence, see Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, pp. 293-357.

as the "ten thousand states" period.[215] This has prompted some scholars to describe Longshan culture in terms of city-states, but this is not a useful description either socially, economically, militarily, or in terms of the structure of settlement.[216] Therefore, I will not adopt this expression but will make a brief comparison with the ancient Mesopotamian city-states later.

As reflected in historical sources, the prominent features of the Yao, Shun, and Yu periods were the existence of a myriad of chiefdoms/states and clan federations. At that time, different regions of China were depicted as having been occupied by members of various clans of different sizes and degrees of importance. Tribes were formed on the basis of clan members and their alliances, each of which had its own unique subculture.[217] It is currently impossible to identify the legendary tribal groups with archaeological sites, but thus far archaeological evidence does not contradict the political landscape reflected by the legends. Being the rulers of a state, Yao, Shun, and Yu were also the leaders of the clan federation. Since the federation was an alliance of different political entities including states, chiefdoms, and tribes, the power exercised by its leader differed from the royal power of a dynastic kingdom.[218]

The legends also provide information about the political succession, pertaining to the so-called abdication. As recorded in *Shangshu*, Yao selected Shun, a widely admired and virtuous man, to be his successor rather than his son. When it came time for Shun to select his heir, he chose the Great Yu due to his achievement of controlling the flood. These actions were cited by classical philosophers as exemplary behavior, giving moral authority to the ruler.[219] However, other materials like *Bamboo Annals* and *Han Feizi* told a different story altogether: Yao was forced to abdicate by Shun, and Shun was

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[215] The "ten thousand" here does not refer to the exact number, but strongly imply that a throng of states had emerged at that time. See Wang Zhenzhong, "The Emergence of Kingship in China: With a Discussion of the Relationship between Kingship and Composite State Structure in the Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties." *Social Sciences in China* 39/2 (2018), p. 16.

[216] Charles Keith Maisels, *Early Civilizations of the Old World, The Formative Histories of Egypt, The Levant, Mesopotamia, India and China*, 1999, p. 298.

[217] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 9-10; p. 120.

[218] Wang Zhenzhong, "The Emergence of Kingship in China: With a Discussion of the Relationship between Kingship and Composite State Structure in the Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties." *Social Sciences in China* 39/2 (2018), p. 18.

[219] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 121-122.

forced to abdicate by Yu. To explain these contradictory records, Wang Zhenzhong suggested that the leader of the federation was elected in a peaceful manner, but sometimes the position was taken by force, considering that the whole Chinese prehistory was full of wars.[220]

According to Wang Zhenzhong, there are some similarities between early Chinese states and the ancient Mesopotamian city-states.[221] Both of these had the basic characteristics of theocracy, namely the unity of the center of power and the center of ritual or sacrifice. In his view, the original capital cities in early China and ancient Sumer had a strong religious and ritual nature. Among the various functions of these capital cities, their role as the center of religion and theocracy was very prominent. However, the difference is also clear. The Sumerian city-states were closely contiguous, equally developed, often in conflict but maintained their independence even under the control of a regional hegemon, while early Chinese states were dotted with uneven development levels and developed in the direction of merger and unification.[222] In terms of archaic kingship, the difference between the two lies in the status and attributes of the ruler in relation to the gods. Unlike the mortal Sumerian kings who acted as agents of a god on earth, the powerful tribal chiefs or rulers of early Chinese states may have been considered to have divine power or divinity while alive and became tribal or state gods after death, whose divinity was constantly strengthened and widely spread among the tribes and states. As a result, it is natural that in the process of historicizing and documenting myths and legends, these chiefs and heroic rulers with divine powers were considered to have existed as historical personages throughout Chinese history.[223]

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[220] Wang Zhenzhong, "The Emergence of Kingship in China: With a Discussion of the Relationship between Kingship and Composite State Structure in the Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties." *Social Sciences in China*, 39/2 (2018), pp. 16-17.

[221] Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Wenming Qiyuan de Bijiao Yanjiu* (A Comparative Study of the Origin of Chinese Civilization), Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2013, pp. 351-375.

[222] The number of early Chinese chiefdoms/states decreased through a process of continual subjugation during the Three Dynasties: ten thousand at the beginning of Xia, dropped to more than three thousand in the time of Shang, and by time of Zhou, only eighteen hundred remained. See Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 26-27.

[223] Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, pp. 290-291; pp. 375-378.

II.2.2 Emergence of Kingship in the Xia Dynasty[224]

The Xia Dynasty is the first political dynasty in traditional Chinese historiography. According to the classic texts, the Xia Dynasty was established by the legendary Yu the Great, also known as Xia Yu, who was a transitional figure from the Five Emperor period to the Xia Dynasty. Archaeological attestation of the Xia Dynasty is still controversial, but a growing number of scholars identify the Erlitou culture with the Xia. As discussed earlier, Xia was not the first state: early states with capital cities appeared in the time of the Longshan culture. Therefore, in ancient China, kingship did not emerge with the arrival of the state but was primarily associated with the dynastic states of the Three Dynasties (the Xia, Shang, and Zhou), referring to the supreme rule over all under heaven by the royal houses. How did the royal power come into being and how did it develop in the Xia Dynasty are the main focuses of this chapter.

As argued by Wang Zhenzhong, kingship in the Xia Dynasty developed out of the hegemonic power of the federation in the time of Yao, Shun, and Yu.[225] In pre-Xia society characterized by a myriad of states, supreme power was exercised by the chieftain or hegemon of a federation. Since the federation was just an alliance of different political entities ranging from states to clans and all its members were considered to be equal, the public power of the chieftain was limited to his own domain. Leadership over an alliance could easily be transformed into hegemony through warfare. Leaders like Yao, Shun, and Yu had the power to summon, command, or personally lead the military forces of the federation to wage war against hostile tribes within or outside the alliance, through which their power could undoubtedly be greatly reinforced. The hegemonic power of the confederation heads was the forerunner of the dynastic power of the Xia kings, and Yu played the key role in the transition process.[226] According to

[224] The discussion in this chapter is based on the existence of Xia Dynasty, for more evidence, see Chao Fulin, *Xia, Shang, Xizhou de Shehui Bianqian* (Social changes in Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties), 1996, pp. 50-57; Xie Weiyang, Zhongguo Zaoqi Guojia (Early State in ancient China), 1996, pp. 330-348; Robert L. Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age*, 2006, pp. 21-57. But there has always been some doubt concerning the existence of Xia Dynasty, see for example Charles Keith Maisels, *Early Civilizations of the Old World, The Formative Histories of Egypt, The Levant, Mesopotamia, India and China*, 1999, p. 300.

[225] Wang Zhenzhong, "The Emergence of Kingship in China: With a Discussion of the Relationship between Kingship and Composite State Structure in the Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties." *Social Sciences in China*, 39/2 (2018), pp. 5-21.

[226] Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, pp. 429-430.

Zuozhuan, Yu assembled the ten thousand states on Mount Tu, and the participants were required to carry their symbols of jade and offerings of silk. This revealed a ritual system in which superiors and inferiors, hierarchy, and inequality between participants were clearly delineated. *Guoyu* recorded another meeting summoned by Yu on Mount Kuaiji, during which Fangfeng was killed by Yu for being late. This anecdote reflects Yu's dictatorial powers of life and death over other alliance members, which was an embryonic form of royal power. The difference between a king and a chieftain is that the former is the supreme ruler of the whole dynastic state, governing not only the kingdom but also all the vassal states. It is the emergence of kingship that made the power system truly pyramidal, with the king at the apex of power and the structural and institutionalized difference between him and his subjects.[227] In addition, the hereditary system of royal succession was established in the late years of Yu's reign, and the abdication system instituted by Yao and Shun was totally abandoned. Because of the hereditary, structural, and institutionalized nature of kingship, the legitimacy of the dynasty and royal power was guaranteed.

Yu thus completed the transition from federation hegemon to dynastic king. Let us now examine the expression and development of kingship in the Xia Dynasty. Royal power in ancient China had three basic sources and components: theocracy, military command, and clan power. Sacrifice and war played a direct role in the formation of early states and kingships, as recorded in *Zuozhuan*: "the great affairs of a state are sacrifices and war."[228] Monopoly of the right of religious sacrifice endowed the king with sanctity and legitimacy of rule, while war promoted the military authority of the king, which is the combination of religious and political power. As for clan power, the emergence of a hierarchy within the clans and of the ranks and classes in the whole society provided a third legitimating cloak for the crown. The exercise of political authority by clans on the basis of consanguinity was one of the prominent features of the ancient Chinese state. The Three Dynasties were founded by three different clans,

[227] Wang Zhenzhong, "Bangguo, Wangguo yu Diguo: Xianqin Guojia Xingtai de Yanjin" (Tribal State, Kingdom and Empire: The Evolution of State Form in Pre-Qin Period), *Journal of Henan University (Social Science)* 4 (2013), p. 30.
[228] Wang Zhenzhong, "Jisi, Zhanzheng yu Guojia" (Sacrifice, War and the State), *Journal of Chinese Historical Studies* 3 (1993), pp. 57-69.

and the rise and fall of the dynasty became the fortunes of its clan on a political field where many clans coexisted and competed. Though members of a clan who traced their descent from the same mythological ancestor supposedly all shared some special quality or character, each clan was highly stratified along blood lines.[229]

The domination of royal power over other vassal states and tribes in the Xia Dynasty was manifested in politics, the economy, and military affairs. In the Xia Dynasty, the vassal states had to pay tribute to the king of Xia, but the way of paying tribute was not standardized or unified, and there was no clear administrative organization. The bureaucracy of the Xia Dynasty was primitive with unclear classifications and overlapping functions and departments. The rulers of the affiliated states or tribes could take offices in the central government, which meant they not only participated in the state affairs of the dynasty but also recognized the legitimacy of the king of Xia. This was not only conducive to deepening national integration, but also to the role of the vassal states in guarding the frontiers.[230] The pre-Xia chiefdoms and states that first appeared in the Yellow River and Yangtze River valleys were pluralistic and multi-centered, but the establishment of the Xia Dynasty secured the central position of the Central Plains. It was determined by geographical conditions that the Central Plains could take the lead in other regions. As the meeting place of the four directions, the Central Plains made the foreign wars in this region far more intense and lasting than those in other regions, and the wars fostered the development of budding kingship in the early states.[231] After the establishment of the Xia and the "unified view of all under heaven" (天下一统) centered on the Central Plains, the king had the right to attack rebellious vassal states and other political enemies.

The last point to discuss is the relationship between the establishment of the Xia Dynasty and the formation of the Hua Xia (华夏) nationality. Although the clan

[229] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 9-15.
[230] Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, pp. 433-434, 436-438.
[231] Wang Zhenzhong, "Bangguo, Wangguo yu Diguo: Xianqin Guojia Xingtai de Yanjin" (Tribal State, Kingdom and Empire: The Evolution of State Form in Pre-Qin Period), *Journal of Henan University (Social Science)* 4 (2013), p. 31.

federation formed in the period of Yao, Shun, and Yu was loose and unstable, it also gave birth to new cultural factors beyond tribal consciousness and promoted the tribes linked by blood ties to the status of cultural nations. The establishment of the Xia Dynasty developed the federation into a unified nation, and the Hua Xia nationality with culture as its blood and bond under the dynastic system appeared.[232] In the exegesis of Chinese characters and meanings, the "Xia" in "Hua Xia" is equal to "China". Beginning with the Xia Dynasty, Chinese history began to move toward unity with a common language, a common region (the Central Plain), a common culture, and a common economic life. Thus, the continuous Chinese history has lasted at least three thousand years. The Shang Dynasty developed on the basis of the Xia, the Zhou Dynasty stood on the shoulders of the Shang, and the Three Dynasties laid the foundation for the development of later generations. If we make a simple comparison between the Xia Dynasty and the Akkadian Dynasty, it is not difficult to find that both of them accomplished the first unification of ancient China and Mesopotamia. However, the Xia completed the unified construction of the nation and culture simultaneously, while the Akkadian did not complete the transformation of the southern tradition and was quickly overthrown. A preliminary conclusion can be drawn here that, in contrast to divine kingship in the Ur III period, which embraced the two opposing traditions of ancient Sumer and Akkad, the god-kings of the Shang were directly inherited from the theocratic traditions of the era of the Five Emperors and the Xia Dynasty.

II.2.3 Prerequisites and Motives for the Shang King's Divine Status

The overall picture presented by the Shang Dynasty is of a theocratic age, with shadowy theocrats at the top of the kingdom. Unlike the Ur III Dynasty, the Shang kings were always portrayed in the image of divine rulers and lacked personal characteristics. It is not known when or which king or royal ancestor of the Shang first deified himself, but what is certain is that the roots of Shang divine kingship lay far back in the past and

[232] Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, pp. 381-388; Wang Zhenzhong, "Cong Fuhe Zhi Guojia Jiegou kan Hua Xia Minzu de Xingcheng" (Studying the Formation of the Hua Xia Nationality from the Composite State Structure), *Social Sciences in China* 10 (2013), pp. 182-203.

were altered by political and religious circumstances.

With the rise of big cities, writing, and exquisite bronze art, the emergence of Shang civilization redefined the way in which political authority was conceived in early China. First, the Shang gave ample moral justification for their seizure of the dominant rulership from the Xia. Cheng Tang enumerated Xia's faults in his campaign for war and asserted that Shang and his allies were a legitimate army motivated by the gods and spirits. On the one hand, the fall of the Xia was due to the king's tyrannical and despotic actions, which showed that he no longer deserved to rule; on the other, the founder of the new dynasty was meritorious in response to the call of the multitude and complied with the mandate of heaven. This leads to the second point: the moral authority of the new dynasty was derived from the mandate of heaven and built on the king's merit. The "mandate of heaven" (天命) referred to the judgment of the god, which was based on the success or failure of the government, and on the indulgence and temperance of the ruler. According to the value judgment based on deservedness and merit, it is not enough to be born to rule; only by winning the support of the governed through actions can one truly achieve sovereignty.[233] Not only kings but also royal ancestors earned their places in the ritual calendar by merit rather than merely by birth. Thus, the myths and legends were always keen to depict the meritorious deeds performed by lineage ancestors and the ancestors were by necessity culture heroes. It is said that because of the virtues of Tang, the founder of the Shang, birds and animals would voluntarily enter his hunting net even if it was spread out on all sides. Another document recorded a particular meritorious deed performed by Tang: to ensure the success of a rain-making ceremony, Tang threw himself into the fire, but mercifully the rain came in time and put out the fire before he was roasted.[234] These magical deeds not only highlight the merits of the Shang king but also reveal his supernatural power.

As with the legendary rulers of the Longshan period, the Shang kingship also comprised theocracy, clan power, and military power, but there were also some new

[233] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 33-35; Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, p. 544.
[234] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 42.

developments. The theocratic element of kingship was reflected in the fact that the king himself was also the chief shaman. The shamans (巫) were religious personnel who were chiefly responsible for communication between heaven and Earth via a whole range of rituals and paraphernalia. The monopoly on high shamanism enabled the Shang kings to gain critical access to divine and ancestral wisdom, which was the basis of their political authority.[235] In terms of clan power, a vast kinship organization based on real and legendary blood relations was coupled to the state structure, with the Shang king and the royal lineage as the core. Those non-royal lineages were social and political entities linked to the king by different hierarchies of blood, interests, privileges, and duties, and they served the king in wars, hunting, and offering tribute, in return for spiritual and military assistance. The military power of the Shang kings strengthened and became more systematic, reflected in the usage of a large number of bronze weapons in warfare and mausoleums. A rudimentary military bureaucracy was established to muster forces for border campaigns and suppressing rebellions. With the expansion of its territory, the Shang Dynasty could no longer control the whole country by relying on the power of the central government. Thus they established a standing army as the main military force, which was stationed in major strongholds such as the capital in peacetime and moved to the border in case of conflict.[236]

However, theocracy and clan power would also prove to be obstacles to the development of kingship. Theocracy played a very important role in the social life of the Shang Dynasty. In the early Shang, the royal family and nobles used divination almost every day, and everything was done by divination in order to understand the god's intentions. The officials responsible for the operation and the interpretation of the results of the divination formed the diviner group, who were a direct embodiment of the divine right. The Shang was a confederation of numerous lineage groups and various single lineages, and the diviners were leaders of the notable lineages, tied to the royal house by marriage or other alliances. With the conquest of other clans, the Shang

[235] For more on the shamans and shamanism, see David Keightley, "Shamanism, Death, and the Ancestors: Religious Mediation in Neolithic and Shang China (ca. 5000-1000 B.C.)." *Asiatische Studien* 52/3 (1998), pp. 763-831.

[236] Song Zhenhao, *Shangdai Shi Lungang* (Outline of History in Shang Dynasty), 2011, pp. 167-168.

Dynasty incorporated their gods into its own pantheon for worship, thus promoting the integration of other clans with the Shang Dynasty. Some of the diviners came from merged clans, but most of them were only subject to the Shang, retaining their own sphere of influence and economic power. They took the position of diviners in the central government to try to control the military and political affairs of the Shang Dynasty through theocracy. Therefore, the theocracy of the Shang Dynasty can be regarded as the performance of clan power on the political stage, and thus clan power was the backing of theocracy.[237] The deification of royalty was thus a good counterpoint to clan power and the theocracy represented by the diviner group, since the king himself could read the results of divination and obtain the oracle directly. By the time of the late Shang, with the king's monopoly on the power of divination, the status of the diviner group and the clan power behind them was gradually decreased and marginalized. The power of the Shang king, freed from the shackles of clan power and theocracy, reached its peak and strengthened its divinity.

Discussion of Shang divine kingship is inseparable from the analysis of the Shang religion, which was inextricably related to the origin and legitimation of the Shang state. The powers of the Shang pantheon may be divided roughly into three groups: the high god Di, the nature powers, and royal ancestors. Oracle bone inscriptions show that Di was the supreme god dominating everything in heaven and on Earth, who controlled the weather, agricultural production, the construction and security of cities, the outcome of wars, and the fortunes of the Shang king.[238] Shang religious rituals featured divination and sacrifice. Since one can only divine the will of Di, not change it, Di was offered little or no sacrificial wealth. Perhaps realizing that Di's intentions were too inscrutable to be divine, after the reign of Wu Ding, the kings no longer divined the will of Di but increased their belief in the majesty of their ancestors. The recipients of sacrifice and offerings were mainly natural powers and ancestors; attention to the

[237] Chao Fulin, "Shilun Yindai de Wangquan yu Shenquan" (Kingship and Theocracy in Yin Dynasty), *Social Science Front* 4 (1984), pp. 96-102.
[238] David Keightley, "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty", *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, 1999, pp. 251-262; Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai Zongjiao Jisi* (Religion and Sacrifice in Shang Dynasty), 2010, pp. 28-61.

former was gradually fading, while the emphasis on the latter was increasing.[239] The Shang believed that their ancestors held power over them and that they needed to perform divination rituals to ensure the ancestors' approval of planned actions. There is no doubt that ancestor worship provided strong psychological and ideological support for the political rule of the Shang kings. The growing emphasis on ancestral spirits and the regularization of ancestral sacrifices would in turn increase royal authority. The king made decisions by divination, influenced the will of his ancestors through prayer and sacrifice, and legitimized the concentration of political power in his personage. All power came from the god-king, and thus either a good harvest or a victory achieved through divination could enhance his political power.[240]

The motivations behind divine kingship in the Shang were also related to the political structure. The Shang kingdom was a territorial state controlling about 230,000 square kilometers, with multiple capitals.[241] The size of a territorial state makes central political control indirect and royal authority necessarily had to be passed down through multiple levels of officials. There is evidence that the upper classes sought to isolate themselves geographically from the lower classes, and a large number of walls were built around royal residences and large palaces. Therefore, the Shang king was likely to be viewed as a remote, deity-like being who distantly affected people's lives, making the claim of divine kingship more understandable and acceptable.[242]

In addition, kingship in the Shang as an institution occupied the top of the vast state structure, serving as the center of a centripetal economy.[243] This ensured the crown's monopoly on wealth and key resources, especially bronze ritual vessels. The bronze could not only highlight the exalted status of the king but also give the royal power divine attributes, given that bronze ritual vessels were important tools to communicate with the ancestral spirits. On the other hand, it was difficult to achieve effective political concentration with such a large territory, and the indirect rule made

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239 Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai Zongjiao Jisi* (Religion and Sacrifice in Shang Dynasty), 2010, p. 25.
240 David Keightley, *These Bones Shall Rise Again: Selected Writings on Early China*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014, p. 88.
241 Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 2003, p. 108.
242 Ibid., pp. 79-80.
243 Chang Kwang-chih, *Shang Civilization*, 1980, p. 158.

it easy for insurgencies and challenges to occur. An important strategy used by Shang kings was to claim supernatural endorsement, such that control and management could take on religious overtones. Tribute could be collected in the name of divine kingship and was deployed to maintain the cosmological order centered on the god-king himself.

II.3 Conclusion

According to the above analysis, the emergence of the deification of royal power in the Ur III Dynasty and the Shang Dynasty was mainly influenced by both tradition and the political circumstances of the time. The difference lies in the fact that Ur III was influenced by two completely opposite traditions from southern and northern Babylonia, while the Shang Dynasty mainly inherited the idea of theocracy from the previous periods. Although the periods before Ur III and Shang cannot be compared in strict one-to-one correspondence, they are still comparable in the process of the emergence and development of kingship and the occurrence of divine kingship. The comparison objects I choose here are the Longshan culture of ancient China with the ED period of ancient Sumer, the Xia Dynasty with the Akkadian Dynasty, and the Shang Dynasty with the Ur III Dynasty. Although there is a slight difference in time, the three periods are highly comparable in terms of the evolution of kingship and the form of the state. This comparison is only very preliminary and tentative and needs to be supplemented and revised in the light of more archaeological and documentary materials.

In ancient Mesopotamia, the period from the ED to the Ur III Dynasty witnessed a process of transformation from city-states to a unified territory state. In early China, on the other hand, the political landscape in the prehistory period was dotted by political entities in different stages of development, experiencing constant consolidation and unification via ceaseless wars, until the first dynastic kingdom (Xia) and territory state (Shang Dynasty) came into being. The numerous chiefdoms/states of early China have similarities with Sumerian city-states, in that both of them were small in size and

relatively simple in their political structure.[244] There was little, if any, neutral space between the Sumerian city-states, given that their borders were divinely sanctioned and thus permanent, making any attempt at territorial expansion difficult and risky.[245] However, there were no such restrictions in ancient China, where wars to extend dominion were supported by clan deities, and archaic kingship grew out of the leadership of confederation. The adjacent Sumerian city-states were in regular contact with each other, tending to be culturally interdependent and to share religious beliefs. Conversely, the early Chinese states had less in common, with each clan having its own ancestor mythology, totem, tradition, and scope of activities. There was no religious center like Nippur with its supreme god Enlil in early China as there was in Sumer. According to Sumerian political theology, each city-state was owned by a god or goddess, and the mortal rulers, based on divine election, were their deputies on earth. While early Chinese sovereigns, specifically leaders of confederations, were considered to be demi-gods in later records, their power derived from and consisted of theocracy, military power, and clan power. These differences had a great impact on the further enhancement and development of royal power in later periods.

With the advent of the first unified state, namely the Xia Dynasty and the Akkadian Dynasty, the political structure and royal concept changed greatly in both ancient Mesopotamia and China. The Akkadian Dynasty brought with it a tradition of northern secular kingship that challenged and subverted Sumerian traditions in the south and aroused the latter's strong resistance. The self-deification of Naram-Sin was both the direct product and the climax of this confrontation. The elevation of the king to the level of a god undoubtedly helped to solve the centrifugal problem of the original city-state from the aspect of political theology, but in reality, the rebellions of the southern cities continued throughout the whole Akkadian Dynasty. Not long after the fall of the Akkadian Dynasty, Gudea, the ruler of the Lagaš II Dynasty, hastened to revive

[244] The average Sumerian city-state was probably 40 kilometres in diameter, one of the largest cities Uruk occupied one hundred hectares in Late Uruk period and expanded four times in ED I times. In Longshan culture of early China, many of the towns surrounded by walls seem to occupy small settlements spread over an area of several hundred square kilometers, none larger than 20 hectares. See Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 2003, pp. 94-95, 100, 107.

[245] Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, p. 117.

Sumerian city-state traditions by returning the king to the role of the god's agent in the secular world. History proceeded in the clash of the two traditions, the legacy of the Akkadian Dynasty being carried on by the second unified dynasty, the Ur III Dynasty. If we turn our attention to ancient China, the tradition of the development of royal power was consistent and no major contradictions appeared. The kingship of Xia developed from the previous sovereignty of the confederation in the time of the Longshan culture. According to later records, Yu the great, the founder of Xia, was a transitional figure from the legendary period of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors to the Xia Dynasty. Similar to the Akkadian Dynasty, the Xia Dynasty established a rudimentary bureaucracy and central government. However, the difference is that the Xia Dynasty went further and completed the formation of the identity of the Hua Xia nationality with culture as its blood and bond under the dynastic system, while the Akkadian Dynasty was never able to completely integrate Sumerian traditions in the south. It can be said that the Akkadian Dynasty only achieved political unification through military conquest, while the Xia Dynasty achieved political, cultural, and ideological unification, which to a certain extent affected the subsequent historical trends.

Both the Ur III and Shang Dynasties were territorial states with elaborate administrative hierarchies, subject to a considerable degree of centralized control, especially in the economic sphere. While previous historical traditions either encouraged or discouraged the deification of the king, political demands determined that the kings of Ur III and Shang eventually chose to self-deify. Akkadian kings failed to establish a kingly-bureaucratic state based on secular domination, and the attempt of Naram-Sin to strengthen royal power by means of divine authority was also in vain. The expansion of territory under Ur III put forward new and higher requirements for stable dynastic rule and exercise of royal power.[246] The Ur kings did not return to Sumerian tradition as Gudea did, nor did they fully emulate the Akkadian tradition, but struck a balance between the two. The reign of Ur-Nammu and the first half of Šulgi's reign focused on domestic construction and religious affairs, perfectly fulfilling the

[246] Southern Mesopotamia covered about 120,000 square kilometers, including both settled areas and adjacent winter grasslands, see Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 2003, p. 110.

traditional Sumerian king's duty as a pious steward of the gods. The later deification of the crown was mainly politically oriented, forming an essential part of Šulgi's reforms and grand strategy, paving the way for his subsequent military conquests. All three successors of Šulgi continued his practice of self-deification for the sake of their own rule. The reintroduction of the deification of royal power during Ur III did not mark the development of kingship to a new height, but on the contrary revealed that the king and his central government were not strong enough to effectively rule over the whole region and that domination could only be maintained by integrating theocracy.[247]

According to later records, the history of ancient China and the development of royal power proceeded along the same lines. Ancient China developed larger and more unitary states at an early period.[248] Unlike Ur III, the Shang Dynasty was the transition period from the theocratic state to the kingly-bureaucratic state, with Shang kings as both head shamans possessing supernatural powers and secular rulers responsible for all their subjects and lands. Given the importance of divination in the Shang Dynasty, the diviner group, who was responsible for the performance and explanation of divination, limited the practice of kingship to some extent. By the time of the late Shang, the king's monopoly on divination further enhanced royal power and the king's divinity, which caused the king begin to break away from and gradually surpass the authority of the god, laying a foundation for the establishment of a complete secular rule centered on the mortal king since the Zhou Dynasty.

[247] Evidence suggests that the centralization of Ur III was largely economic rather than political, mainly reflected in the bala tribute system, see Steven J. Garfinkle, "Was the Ur III State Bureaucratic? Patrimonialism and Bureaucracy in the Ur III Period", BPOA 5, 2008, pp. 55-62; Ouyang Xiaoli, "Hewei 'Zhongyang Jiquan': Lianghe Liuyu Wuer Disan Wangchao Guowang Shuleji Gaige Bianxi" (What Is "Centralization": Evaluating King Šulgi's Reform Ur III Mesopotamia), *Jianghai Academic Journal* 4 (2019), pp. 188-196.

[248] The Shang kingdom is believed to control about 230,000 square kilometers (ranging from 320,000 at its maximum and 132,000 at its minimum), with the core area at least several hundred square kilometers across. See Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 2003, p. 108, 111.

Chapter III: Manifestation of Divine Kingship in Ur III Dynasty

Before discussing the manifestation of divine kingship in both the Ur III and Shang Dynasties, the concept of this phenomenon must first be clarified. The phenomenon where a ruler is seen as an agent, an incarnation, or a mediator of the sacred is widespread throughout ancient civilizations. This phenomenon mainly concerns the sacred aspects of the exercise of power, which is closely related to both religion and politics. Because of the complexity and variability of this phenomenon itself as well as the cultural uniqueness of each civilization, the definition and understanding of this phenomenon vary from field to field.

The key results for understanding divine kingship in ancient Mesopotamia, as summarized by N. Brisch, are its culturally and historically determined nature, and its dynamic and fluid characteristics. These cause considerable disagreement among scholars regarding the circumstances in which a king can actually be called ‘‘divine”.[249] Many scholars follow the assumption that the deification of kings was a phenomenon of the late third and early second millennia in Mesopotamia without making a distinction between the meaning of “sacred” and “divine”, or deification when alive or posthumous.[250]

Regarding the time of the Ur III period, the six points indicating the presence of divine kingship as proposed by W. Sallaberger are employed in this chapter: 1) the king’s name is written with the divine determinative, the ‘dingir’ sign; 2) the statues of the living king receive regular offerings; 3) temples are dedicated to the worship of the living king; 4) festivals are named after the king (e.g., attested for Šulgi, Amar-Suen, and Šu-Suen); 5) certain months are named after these festivals; 6) personal names incorporate the king’s name as theophoric element.[251] It’s important to point out that the first and third indicators were also attested for some Akkadian and Isin kings,[252]

[249] Nicole Brisch, “Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia.” *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), pp. 38-39.
[250] See for example, G. Selz, “The Divine Prototypes”, OIS 4, 2008, pp. 13-31.
[251] Walther Sallaberger, “Ur III-Zeit”, OBO 160/3, 1999, pp. 153-154.
[252] As put by Nicole Brisch, “There are no details regarding the existence of a royal cult for this king, at least not

while the other points were exclusive to Ur III kings. Personal names comprised god-king's name as theophoric element were less common than those contained traditional gods' names. The total of the former is up to 267,[253] while the incomplete statistics of the latter is more than 1700 (for more, see III.1.4). The phenomenon of divine kingship in ancient Mesopotamia is not only a matter of presence, but also of degree, and the Ur III Dynasty witnessed the apex of this fleeting phenomenon in ancient Mesopotamia.

A further two attributes, namely two kinds of priests associated with both the living and the dead king's cult and Šulgi's ascension to heaven, were added by C. Wilcke.[254] The features scholars have summarized serve as a basic framework for the following discussion, but other less obvious features, such as literary metaphor and elevated royal woman, are also covered.

The representations of Ur III divine kingship are rearranged under the two categories of written evidence and visual materials in the discussion presented in the following chapter, in contrast with the next chapter on the Shang Dynasty.

III.1 Ur III Divine Kings in Written Materials

As the study of Assyriology as well as Sumerology may count as especially text-centered fields, scholars first encountered the deification of Ur III kings in cuneiform texts. The most direct and obvious evidence is that the king's name is preceded by a determinative (the "dingir" sign) that belongs only to god. Although the names of certain early deities were not necessarily preceded by this determinative as their divine status was self-evident, the kings who preceded their own names with such a sign clearly proclaimed their new identity as gods.[255] Such deified names are often followed by a succession of titles, which often appear in royal and seal inscriptions. The four deified kings of the Ur III Dynasty used different titles, and each of them used more

from the Old Akkadian period itself. Almost everything that we know about the worship of statues of Old Akkadian kings comes from later periods 300–500 years after the Old Akkadian dynasty." See Nicole Brisch, "Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), p. 40.

[253] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 230-290.

[254] See respectively Claus Wilcke & Paul Garelli, "Zum Königtum in der Ur III-Zeit." *Le palais et la royauté* (1974), pp. 177-232; Claus Wilcke, "König Šulgis Himmelfahrt", in Walter Raunig (ed.), *Münchner Beiträge zur Völkerkunde Festschrift Lázaló Vajda,* München: Hirmer Verlag, 1988, p. 180.

[255] William W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philologic and Historical Analysis*, 1957, pp. 56-57.

than one title at different periods of their rule. Given that royal titles are the most concise summary of the king's identity and the way the king wanted to be addressed in awe, it is necessary to explore the ideological logic behind the transformation of these royal titles.

To further demonstrate the greatness and uniqueness of divine kings, royal titles are far from sufficient, as they are only accessible to relatively high-level government officials and limited elites in finite static carriers (such as seals or foundation stones). They are not appealing and vivid enough because of a lack of details. As a result, many literary works are created to deify and extol the king's new elevated identity, so that more people at that time (as well as the people of today) can gain a more comprehensive and thorough understanding of the supernormal attributes of the god-king. Among literary creations, royal inscriptions and hymns are two of the most outstanding representative forms, which have been acknowledged by certain scholars as a court agenda amenable to treatment as reflections of ideology or even outright propaganda.[256] The extant copies of the Ur III hymns (especially those of Šulgi) most likely originated from the Old Babylonian period, where they served as cultic texts and school texts.[257] Although royal hymns are not historical sources,[258] they provide a vivid literary description of divine rulers, which is undoubtedly beneficial to the research presented in this thesis and will be detailed in the following. To facilitate comparison, this section discusses the literature content or theme rather than the genre.

In addition to recapitulative royal titles and detailed literary texts, administrative archives also hold a record of festivals, rites and cults performed, and temples built for deified kings, providing a more realistic and reliable perspective. Moreover, as these archives are chronologically recorded and clearly marked with the date of the king's reign, it is theoretically possible to reconstruct the king's main activities. This greatly expands the understanding of the practical affairs of the king.[259] However, attempting

[256] For the study of royal inscription and hymn in terms of royal ideology or political propaganda, see especially Nicole Brisch, AOAT 339, 2007.
[257] E. Robson, "The Tablet House: A Scribal School in Old Babylonian Nippur." *RA* 95 (2001), pp. 39-67.
[258] Jacob Dahl, *The Ruling Family of Ur III Umma: A Prosopographical Analysis of an Elite Family in Southern Iraq 4000 Years Ago*, 2007, p. 20, fn. 78.
[259] Bertrand Lafont, "On the Army of the Kings of Ur: The Textual Evidence." *CDLJ* 5 (2009), p. 17.

to track the king's movements via archival documents is more difficult than theory suggests, for such texts are objective records of economic and administrative activities.[260] This thesis is not intended to achieve this end, and therefore mainly refers to the secondary literature in the relevant discussion. Among limited analysis of archival documents, the research of A. Pitts has greatly contributed and filled relevant gaps.[261] This thesis mainly cites her data when referring to the cult for the king and the king's activities and dialectically challenges a number of her conclusions, especially public response and acceptance of the king's apotheosis.

III.1.1 Royal Title in Royal Inscriptions and Seal Inscriptions

In ancient Mesopotamia, titles were first used to identify the office of kingship and then, they formed an essential appurtenance of it, changing accordingly with the development of the early state and the continuous extension of royal power. Royal titles were chosen according to individual circumstances and presented great selectivity; they were discarded in certain periods and reappeared in others. According to W. Hallo, a royal title is any noun or nominal phrase other than the personal name or the patronymic which identifies the ruler; the sum of all those titles of a given ruler constitutes the so-called "royal titulary".[262] Distinct from "royal epithets", "royal titles" usually have the following characteristics: they appear after the royal name and in full form, incorporate a geographic name, are limited to fixed numbers, better attested in royal inscriptions rather than purely literary works (represented by royal hymns), and have a certain heritability within and between dynasties.[263] It can be known with safety that the royal title is of great historical significance and can well reflect the trait of a dynasty and even a specific king, as it is the most condensed expression of royal ideology in a given

[260] For a recent discussion of the function and Sitz im Leben of the Ur III administrative and economic texts, see e.g. M. Molina, "The Corpus of Neo-Sumerian Tablets: An Overview", BPOA 5, 2008, 19-53; Jacob Dahl, *Ur III Texts in the Schøyen Collection*, CUSAS 39, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2020; Magnus Widell, *The Administrative and Economic Ur III texts from the City of Ur*, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003; "Administrative and Archival Procedures in Early Babylonia: With an Addendum on the Implications on Sealing Practices", *Of Rabid Dogs, Hunchbacked Oxen, and Infertile Goats in Ancient Babylonia: Studies Presented to Wu Yuhong on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, 2021, pp. 293-319; "The Sumerian Expression a-ra$_2$ X-kam and the Use of Installments in the Ur III Administration." *DABIR* 9 (2022), pp. 8-20.
[261] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 123-221.
[262] William W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philologic and Historical Analysis*, 1957, p. 2.
[263] Ibid., pp. 130-132.

historical and cultural context. By comparing the different titles used before and after the deification of Ur III kings, the reasons for these changes, as well as both the underlying political and ideological considerations can be explored.

At the very beginning of the dynasty, only the simple title "king of Ur" (lugal $urim_5^{ki}$-ma) was born by Ur-Nammu in his inscriptions, contemporary with the weakness of royal power and limited area of control. Hallo suggested that this title may have been originally intimately linked with the city of Ur and favored by Sumerian rulers when they acquired supreme political power.[264] As a result, this title, in reference to the royal origins of the Ur III Dynasty and following old Sumerian tradition, formed an essential and invariable part of Ur III titulary from Ur-Nammu onwards. The Akkadian version of this title can also be seen in certain inscriptions.

With the preliminary consolidation of the dynasty, the addition of "mighty man" (nita-kalag-ga) and the more specific and probably politically relevant title "king of Sumer and Akkad" (lugal ki-engi ki-uri) before and after "king of Ur" separately in Ur-Nammu's inscription, laid the basic framework of the titulary pattern used by subsequent rulers. The first title "mighty man" is the Sumerian equivalent of the Akkadian title "*dannum*", which was first introduced by Naram-Sin to Mesopotamia. It first occurs in a fragmentary dedication to Ur-gigir, the second king of the Uruk IV Dynasty.[265] Ur-Nammu implemented this from Uruk to Ur and employed it as a regular part of his official titulary. The third title was attested for the first time in the second period of Ur-Nammu's reign, corresponding to his efforts to shape the national spirit and declare the ruling legitimacy over newly conquered territory. In addition, Ur-Nammu adopted the title "lord of Uruk" (en $unug^{ki}$) in a few inscriptions but it was abandoned after him.[266]

When Šulgi took the throne from his father, he also assumed the three royal titles used by Ur-Nammu. The first half of his reign was an effort to consolidate the regime,

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[264] Ibid., p. 12, 16, 18.

[265] William W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philologic and Historical Analysis*, 1957, p. 69.

[266] The only two inscriptions (RIME 3/2.01.01.12 and RIME 3/2.01.01.46) of Ur-Nammu bearing this title probably date to the time shortly after the incorporation of Uruk into the realm of Ur, see Douglas R. Frayne, RIME 3/2, 1997, p. 35.

and in the second half, which coincided with his self-deification, he began a more aggressive policy of expansion, which can also be perceived in a change of the royal title. The addition of "divine determinative" (the "dingir" sign) preceding the king's name synchronized with and indicated the apotheosis of Šulgi, and remained in consistent use thereafter. Apart from the prepositive determinative, the title "god of his land" (dingir kalam-ma-na) emerged as a complement and became increasingly popular with later Ur III divine kings. This title is a variant of "king of his land" (lugal kalam-ma-na), which was employed by previous kings, and it is usually found in royal hymns and rarely in inscriptions (except for the seal inscription used during Ibbi-Suen's reign).[267] The reason for this may lie in the differences between the two genres, as inscription is a visual text and the determinative is sufficient for readers to recognize the king's divinity. The royal hymn is considered to be auditory material, the silent grammatical element natural of the determinative requires the addition of the title "god of his land", to let the audience realize the king's new identity. Finally, no later than Š 28, the title "king of Sumer and Akkad" was changed to "king of the four quarters" (lugal an-ubda limmu$_2$-ba) and never returns since then in all inscriptions or date formulas. This Sumerian title is the counterpart of the Akkadian one (*šar kibrātim arba'im*) which was first introduced by Naram-Sin, who also claimed divinity during his lifetime. Through the first usage of this new title, Naram-Sin employed the idea of kingship to gain mastery not only over previous city-states in southern Babylonia, but also over other people in distant disobedient countries.[268] This practice of extending royal rule from a previously limited region to all lands was reintroduced by divine Šulgi and retained by his successors. The adoption of this royal title may correspond with the developmental stage of the early state: the Akkadian Dynasty was in the formative phase of the territorial state, and the Ur III Dynasty was in the phase of establishment.[269] P. Michalowski suggested that this title is related to the ruler's universal ambitions to

[267] Rudolf H. Mayr & David I. Owen, "The Royal Gift Seal in the Ur III period", HSAO 9, 2004, p. 146.
[268] Tohru Maeda, "'King of the Four Regions' in the Dynasty of Akkade." *Orient* 20 (1984), p. 80.
[269] Tohru Maeda, 「ウル第三王朝の王シュルギと英雄ギルガメシュ」、『早稲田大学大学院文学研究科紀要. 第 4 分冊, 日本史学 東洋史学 西洋史学 考古学 文化人類学 日本語日本文化 アジア地域文化学』第六〇号、早稲田大学大学院文学研究科、2015 年 2 月 26 日、第 6 頁.

expand his rule beyond conceptual or topographical geographical boundaries, probably in the sense of ruling the divine spheres as well (i.e., heaven, sun, and stars). Hence, the divine kings of ancient Mesopotamia preferred this title.[270] Additionally, as argued by P. Steinkeller, royal titles implying universal domination are not just rhetorical devices confined to a text, but can be actualized through certain cultic rituals; a royal statue with the name "king of the four quarters" in Amar-Suen's reign may indicate the existence of a specific ritual to symbolize the king's rule over the entire world.[271]

Although a framework of royal titulary was set by divine Šulgi, his successors Amar-Suen and Ibbi-Suen made three subtle changes. Firstly, Amar-Suen changed the first title "mighty man" to "mighty king" (lugal kalag-ga) in the last third of his rule and he is considered to be the first king bearing this title.[272] Secondly, under Amar-Suen, the title "god of his land" developed two elaborated forms: "true god of his land" (dingir zi-kalam-ma-na) and "true god, Utu of his land" (dingir zi-^{d}utu kalam-ma-na).[273] The reason probably lies in his eagerness to get rid of the king's mortality literally and infinitely approach to divinity, likely because "man" (nita) is necessarily associated with mortality, while "king" (lugal) is more ambiguous, and the gods are usually addressed as "lord" (lugal) of the king and supreme god is the "lord" (lugal) of other gods. Thirdly, as demonstrated by R. Mayr and D. Owen, Ibbi-Suen was the only Ur III king who added the title "god of his land" to the inscription on his so-called "Royal Gift Seal", the designation of a subgroup, personally presented by the king to his favored subordinates.[274] Considering that Ibbi-Suen was the last king and his authority had diminished greatly, the reason behind this decision may have been to emphasize his divine identity and deter potential rebels within the state.

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[270] Piotr Michalowski, "Masters of the Four Corners of the Heavens: Views of the Universe in Early Mesopotamian Writings", *Geography and Ethnography: Perceptions of the World in Pre-Modern Societies*, 2010, pp. 147-168.

[271] Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, pp. 135-136.

[272] William W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philologic and Historical Analysis*, 1957, p. 69. Before Amar-Suen, there are two exceptions of Šulgi's usage of this title in seal inscription, which can be found in SANTAG 7, 175 and NATN 047. But the content of the two tablets is not entirely credible: for the former, the king's name was incomplete; Šulgi-*ili* in the second tablet was attested from ŠS 6-IS 2 (see Christina Tsouparopoulou, *The Material Face of Bureaucracy: Writing, Sealing and Archiving Tablets for the Ur III State at Drehem*, 2008: 199), not the official of Šulgi, and the king's name was also fragmentary. Therefore, according to the materials we have so far, Amar-Suen was the first to bear the title of "mighty king".

[273] Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, p. 152.

[274] Rudolf H. Mayr & David I. Owen, "The Royal Gift Seal in the Ur III period", HSAO 9, 2004, p. 146.

As previously stated, a relative standard or official titulary in the Ur III period is the combination of three (four for Ibbi-Suen) titles in fixed order. The first title refers to the king's personal quality, the second title mentions the royal origin, and the last title reveals the ruling area. This rigid format of title pattern may be because it has to be inscribed repeatedly on a large scale on monuments and seals, and every subtle change made by a given rule may necessitate their renovation. Of course, rulers did not worry about this and were willing to implement such changes when they took power to make a difference. The final determination of this model has gone through a certain process, especially reflected in changes of wording in the first title, and an expression of the domain area in the third title. The title "king of Ur" alluding to royal origin and the usage of the adjective "mighty" to describe personal quality are indispensable components of all Ur III kings' titularies. Before apotheosis, Ur III kings tended to flaunt their authority by enlarging the ruling area in royal titles, from the king/lord of a city with adjacent areas, to the king of unified southern Mesopotamian regions. After claiming divinity, the royal title accordingly changed to king of all lands, reaching the realm limit a mortal king can govern. T. Maeda suggested that this change of royal title corresponds to the development stage of the early state. In his theory, both Sargonic and Ur Dynasty belong to the stage of the territory state, the former in the formative phase, and the latter in the phase of establishment.[275] Nevertheless, after Šulgi, kings also wanted to take a step further, even if it was only in the subtle change from "man" to "king", in the hope to literally blur the boundary between mortality and divinity.

At the end of this section, I would like to briefly discuss the purpose of the carrier of royal title, the royal inscription, and seal inscription. Most of the former are building inscriptions, appearing on decorative clay cones, foundation stones, gate-sockets, bricks, and pivot-stones, with the aim to be read by future kings and other potential rebuilders of these structures. The symbolic significance and ideological consideration of these inscribed building monuments outweigh their structural or decorative function.

[275] Tohru Maeda,「ウル第三王朝の王シュルギと英雄ギルガメシュ」、『早稲田大学大学院文学研究科紀要. 第 4 分冊, 日本史学 東洋史学 西洋史学 考古学 文化人類学 日本語日本文化 アジア地域文化学』第六〇号、早稲田大学大学院文学研究科、2015 年 2 月 26 日、第 6 頁。.

The reason is that the inscriptions can neither be seen completely and nor does it make any difference to the king whether his contemporary subjects can read them.[276] Therefore, the royal title involved and the considerations behind its use also served the purpose to hand down to later generations. Ur III kings were also receivers of the cultural heritage left by the previous ruler. Two examples of cross-generational "communication" can be found in the Ur III period: firstly, divine Šulgi engraved his inscription on the same vessel inscribed with the inscription of divine Naram-Sin, thus forming a rare and interesting contrast between the two famous god-kings (see Figure 5);[277] secondly, a door socket bears the inscription of Lugal-kigenedudu in the ED period on one surface and the divine Amar-Suen inscription on the other.[278]

Figure 5. A stone bowl with inscriptions of divine Šulgi and Naram-Sin, BM 118553 (ca. 2400-2050 BC)

The case with seal inscriptions is quite different. The Ur III Dynasty is well known for its vast bureaucracy and most officials can be identified by their seals. Among the main four kinds of seal inscriptions in Ur III, only two bear the royal title: the "royal

[276] William W. Hallo, "The Royal Inscriptions of Ur: A Typology." *HUCA* 33 (1962), p. 10.
[277] See RIME 2.01.04.41, ex. 04 & RIME 3/2.01.02.089, ex. 01.
[278] See RIME 1.14.14.03a, ex. 04 & RIME 3/2.01.03.06, ex. 01.

servant type" presents the royal title at the beginning, which is followed by the seal owner's personal information, and ends with the phrase "your servant" (arad$_2$-zu); and the "royal gift type", where the ending of the former type is exchanged to the phrase "give to his servant" (arad$_2$-da-ni-ir in-na-ba).[279] The two kinds of seals bearing the royal title belong to upper-class officials (both native and foreign) and royal family members, where the bearers of the latter rank higher and closer to the king.[280] As already noted by C. Gadd more than half a century ago, the previous inadmissible appointment of earthly governors by another human king was one of the crucial causes of a king's deification.[281] Thus, the king's intention in putting his title into a seal inscription was not only to demonstrate his new identity to central and local officials, but also an attempt to apply the previous god-governor relationship to that of the king and his subordinates. Given the limited space and difficulty associated with carving, only a limited number of senior officials had access to royal title, but with the extensive use of their seals on administrative documents, the title together with the new identity of the divine king spread throughout the bureaucracy system and could also be passed on to later generations.

In summary, as a symbol of legitimate ruling status and the core of kingship ideology reflected in political demission, the royal titulary emphasis on the king's personality (divinity after apotheosis) carries his retrospect of traditional Sumerian kingship and expresses his territorial ambition (extended to universalism after deification) in Ur III. The elaborate use of the royal title on building inscriptions and seal inscriptions achieved an effective and profound effect of political propaganda on future dynastic ruler and the contemporary governing class.

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[279] The other two kinds belonging to low ranking officials are "the simple type", with only basic information of seal holder, and "the simple servant type", with the identity of the seal holder and his lord (could be a named deity or individual of high status). For the classification of seals in Ur III, see Christina Tsouparopoulou, *The Material Face of Bureaucracy: Writing, Sealing and Archiving Tablets for the Ur III State at Drehem*, 2008, pp. 30-35; *The Ur III seals impressed on documents from Puzriš-Dagan (Drehem)*, HSAO 16, Heidelberger: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 2015, pp. 22-27.

[280] For the systematic study of "royal gift seal", see Rudolf H. Mayr & David I. Owen, "The Royal Gift Seal in the Ur III period", HSAO 9, 2004, pp. 146-174.

[281] Cyril J. Gadd, *Babylonia c. 2120-1800 B.C.*, Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1965, p. 26; see also Ludek Vacin, *Šulgi of Ur: Life, Deeds, Ideology and Legacy of a Mesopotamian Ruler as Reflected Primarily in Literary Texts*, 2011, p. 200.

III.1.2 Superhuman Powers in Royal Hymns

The royal hymn is the most remarkable and vivid evidence for the development of kingship ideology and its divine aspects in the time of Ur III. It combines traditional aspects of kingship with a novel type of glorification, usually used to praise temples and deities. Although the content of each hymn is different, all hymns share similar literary themes and contain essential elements to legitimize the king, through his royal descent, divine origin, and appointment by the supreme god.[282] Although these texts appear to be composed after the death of the respective kings in late Ur III or even the Old Babylonian period, their creation may be based on descriptions in primary sources (such as royal inscriptions) of Ur III.[283] Among 26 hymns of Šulgi, only hymn A and R relate to events corroborated by date formulae of Š 6/7 and Š 8 and can thus be placed before the self-deification of Šulgi; the rest cannot be dated precisely.[284] As hymns to kings after Šulgi, only one of Amar-Suen, eight of Šu-Suen, and five of Ibbi-Suen can be identified in fragmentary.[285] Therefore, the discussion in this chapter cannot be presented in chronological order, and thus only focuses on three main aspects of Šulgi hymns with direct link to the image of the divine king: their godlike superiority, their divine origin, and their relationship with great gods.

First, many of the hymns to Šulgi focus on the king's superhuman personality in nearly all aspects, from his exterior strength and physical beauty to internal virtues and talents. Furthermore, his proficiency in not only scholar abilities including writing, mathematics, astronomy, hymnal composition, music, languages, and divination are praised, but also his military, operational, and administrative capabilities. It is worth noting that praise of his superpowers is not only boasting personal excellence, but serves his political, religious, or military functions as a qualified ruler. For example, the

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[282] William W. Hallo, "Royal Hymns and Mesopotamian Unity." *JCS* 17/4 (1963), pp. 112-118.
[283] Ludek Vacin, *Šulgi of Ur: Life, Deeds, Ideology and Legacy of a Mesopotamian Ruler as Reflected Primarily in Literary Texts*, 2011, pp. 12-13.
[284] Walther Sallaberger, "Ur III-Zeit", OBO 160/3, 1999, pp. 144-145. For a catalogue of Šulgi hymns, see for example Jacob Klein, *Three Šulgi Hymns: Sumerian Royal Hymns Glorifying King Šulgi of Ur*, 1981; Douglas R. Frayne, "A New Šulgi Text in the Royal Ontario Museum", *ARRIM* 1, 1983, pp. 6-9.
[285] As the content of the sole hymn to Amar-Suen is rather negative, with description of his repeated failure to receive divine approval for rebuilding a temple, whether it can be counted as a "hymn" is disputable. See *ETCSL*, 2.4.3.1 "Amar-Suena and Enki's temple (Amar-Suena A)".

exceptional strength, bravery, and capability of Šulgi B in handling various weapons make him the perfect soldier and military commander (e.g., ll. 21–38, 56–76, 81–94). His unrivaled expertise in divination and interpretation of liver-omen enhances his role as intermediary of the communication between god and man (ll. 131–149); his knowledge of all hymns and melodies and possession of a pure and sweet voice make his subjects and the gods exceedingly happy (ll. 154–171); his ability to speak all five languages used by his subjects enables him to provide justice in legal cases without having to resort to interpreters (ll. 206–220); his outstanding talents in mathematics and astronomy serve field surveys and the introduction of the calendar (ll. 17–18).[286] These supernatural powers are linked to the king's extraordinary achievements, leading to the unification and harmony of the country under a supreme ruler. The following is a quote of his words: "Let me boast of what I have done. The fame of my power has spread far and wide. My wisdom is full of subtlety. Do not my achievements surpass all qualifications?" (Šulgi B, ll. 52–55). Both these oversized claims as well as accomplishments make it easy to enable the idea of Šulgi's elevation to godhood and provide the audience with a vivid picture of the image of what a god-king is like. In addition, to refer to his image, divine kingship is often connected with a certain type of previous heroic literature. This traditional "heroic paradigm" supports the ideology of the divine king and enables a rewriting of history by making numerous allusions to the three legendary kings of Uruk, Gilgameš, Lugalbanda, and Enmerkar, to suit the ideological needs of the divine king.[287] With the contrast of these heroic historical kings, the image of Šulgi is put in the historical context and therefore becomes fuller and more real.

However, the superhuman individual abilities still essentially belong to the human category, and only by adding himself to the genealogy of the pantheon can the statue of the god-king be further confirmed. To achieve this, in many of his hymns, Šulgi claims to be son of the goddess Ninsun and a legendary ruler Lugalbanda, brother of Gilgameš.

[286] *ETCSL*, 2.4.2.02, 'A praise poem of Šulgi (Šulgi B)'.
[287] Piotr Michalowski, "Divine Heroes and Historical Self-Representation from Gilgamesh to Shulgi." *BCSMS* 16 (1988), p. 21.

Hymn Šulgi O is devoted solely to the king's relationship with Gilgameš, who was the legendary king (who was two-thirds divine and one-third human) of Uruk, and most likely the person from which the Ur III Dynasty originated.[288] By placing himself within the same divine genealogy of Gilgameš and avoiding mentioning his human ancestors, Šulgi created the image that he is only associated with the gods, thus breaking away from the earthly network. Likely, "the son of this trustworthy man" (dumu lu_2 zid-da) in Šulgi G (l. 14) allude to Šulgi and Ur-Nammu, but in a rather cryptic way. However, in the following statement of Šulgi G (ll. 15–20), the whole process of Šulgi's birth was initiated and completed by the gods: Ašimbabbar pleaded his father Enlil to bring a childbearing mother, Nanna asked for the thing to happen, the en priestess became pregnant (literally "the en priestess gave birth to the trustworthy man from his semen placed in the womb"), and finally the supreme god Enlil caused Šulgi to emerge and choose him to be king.[289] The imitation of Gilgameš and the avoidance of human kinship can alleviate the contradiction of the identity of god-king to a certain extent; however, it cannot solve the problem fundamentally. To be a god and a man at the same time (like Gilgameš) is the most ideal state.

Adoption of divine parentage is just one aspect. The hymns of Šulgi reveal his endeavor to build a relationship and contact with other great deities. In Šulgi A (ll. 8–15), he is portrayed as "the choice of An, the man whose fate was decided by Enlil, the beloved of Ninlil, cherished by Nintur, endowed with wisdom by Enki, powerful king of Nanna, growling lion of Utu, and chosen by Inanna".[290] Almost all main gods are supporters or providers of Šulgi, which strengthen the impression that he is surrounded by great gods and far removed from the world of reality.[291] In addition, the "sacred marriage" rite further enhances the king's special relationship with the gods. Hymn Šulgi X links the rite with the coronation of the king; the ritual probably took place on the king's accession and culminated in the bestowal of the royal insignia and Inanna's

[288] *ETCSL*, 2.4.2.15, 'A praise poem of Šulgi (Šulgi O)'.
[289] *ETCSL*, 2.4.2.07, 'An adab to Enlil for Šulgi (Šulgi G)'.
[290] *ETCSL*, 2.4.2.01, 'A praise poem of Šulgi (Šulgi A)'.
[291] These descriptions in Šulgi's hymns belong to the group of "legitimation topoi", see Esther Flückiger-Hawker, OBO 166, 1999, pp. 42-58.

blessing.[292] Although textual attestations of the rite are scarce and problematic and many aspects of its performance remain obscure, it is likely that the king took the role of Dumuzi, the mortal husband of the goddess Inanna, and engaged in sexual intercourse with Inanna portrayed by a priestess or one of the king's wives.[293] Through this cultic intercourse, not only did the king approach the world of the gods more closely, ensuring continuing support from them, especially Inanna, the goddess of love and war, but abundance and fertility were also guaranteed.[294] However, certain scholars suggested that this may only have been a symbolic act before a statue of Inanna or even not ritually performed at all, merely being a kind of propagandistic rhetoric. The reason for this suggestion is that it is only attested in literature, such as epics, love poetry, or royal hymns, without any historical reference.[295] Whether or not the ceremony took place in reality, by counting "spouse of Inanna" and "son of Ninsun" as essential component of divine kingship, Šulgi established a direct link with two goddesses, secured their blessing and support, and installed the notion of their intimate relationship in the minds of the audience with access to royal hymns.

Although the hymns belonging to the successors of Šulgi are few, three hymns of Šu-Suen are so unusual that they are worth mentioning here. All three hymns describe women's praise to him as divine king. Hymn Šu-Suen A is identified as balbale to the goddess Baba and both Šu-Suen B and C are identified as *balbale* to Inanna.[296] "Balbale" is likely used to indicate a poetic dialogue, and Y. Sefati has been suggested to connect it with the rite of "sacred marriage".[297] The first hymn is particularly unique

[292] *ETCSL*, 2.4.2.24, 'A praise poem of Šulgi (Šulgi X)'.
[293] Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, pp. 36-37; William W. Hallo, "The Birth of Kings", in John H. Marks & Marvin H. Pope (eds.), *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East: Essays in Honor of Marvin H. Pope*, Guilford: Four Quarters, 1987, p. 49; Samuel N. Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite: Aspects of Faith, Myth and Ritual in Ancient Sumer*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1969, pp. 18, 93.
[294] Yitzhak Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature: Critical Edition of the Dumuzi-Inanna Songs*, Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1998; P. Lapinkivi, SAAS 15, 2004.
[295] Piotr Steinkeller argues that no human woman can play the role of Inanna, as a result the actual performance of the 'sacred marriage' would only reduce its religious, or mystic value, see Piotr Steinkeller, "On Rulers, Priests and Sacred Marriage: Tracing the Evolution of Early Sumerian Kingship", *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East*, 1999, pp. 133-134; for the denial of its reflection in reality, see R. F. G. Sweet, "A New Look at the 'Sacred Marriage' in Ancient Mesopotamia", *Corolla Torontonensis: Studies in Honour of Ronald Morton Smith*, 1994, pp. 85-104.
[296] *ETCSL*, 2.4.4.1, 'A balbale to Baba for Šu-Suen (Šu-Suen A)'; *ETCSL*, 2.4.4.2, 'A balbale to Inanna for Šu-Suen (Šu-Suen B)'; *ETCSL*, 2.4.4.3, 'A balbale to Inanna for Šu-Suen (Šu-Suen C)'.
[297] Yitzhak Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature: Critical Edition of the Dumuzi-Inanna Songs*, 1998, p. 25.

because it refers to *Abi-simti* and *Kubatum* by name (ll. 1–6), who were believed to be the king's mother and queen, respectively.[298] Compared to Šulgi's elaborate avoidance of mentioning his father and total disregard of any royal woman, even within the entire corpus of Sumerian royal hymns, hymn Šu-Suen A is very uncommon. The last two hymns with descriptions of a female speaker declaring her devotion and praise for the divine king are also uncommon. As suggested by N. Brisch, the three unique hymns of Šu-Suen represent the change from the traditional "heroic" to a new "female" paradigm, granting women a more active role in creating an ideology of the divine king.[299] However, the reason for this promotion of women in affirming the divine king's legitimacy remains unknown.

As previously stated, these three main representations of divine kings in royal hymns clearly remind of the three themes contained in royal titles discussed above. Godlike superiority can be seen as the extension of "mighty king", filled with repetition of details; the divine origin supplements "king of Ur" (royal origin) in the religious sphere; and the relationship with major deities, especially with Inanna via the rite of "sacred marriage", which draws the king closer to the divine sphere and broadens his domain to a certain extent. Moreover, vivid literary descriptions in royal hymns and the official royal titles in inscriptions complement each other, completing the propaganda of divine kingship in both religious and political fields. According to L. Vacin, this kind of dual strategy for the self-representation of the king combines the traditional way of commemorating royal deeds in brief inscriptions and the innovative way of communicating royal ideology in hymns.[300]

The following discusses the purpose and audience of royal hymns and how they help to propagate the king's new identity on a larger scale. The creation and endurance of royal hymns in Ur III serve two main purposes: scribal education in academies and cultic performance in both temples and courts during major festivals. This can be

[298] Magnus Widell, "Who's Who in 'A balbale to Bau for Šu-Suen' (Šu-Suen A)." *JNES* 70/2 (2011), pp. 289-302.
[299] Nicole Brisch, "The Priestess and the King: The Divine Kingship of Šū-Sîn of Ur." *JAOS* 126/2 (2006), pp. 169-171.
[300] Ludek Vacin, "Tradition and Innovation in Šulgi's Concept of Divine Kingship", in Alfonso Archi (ed.), *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient Near East, Proceedings of the 57th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Rome, 4-8 July 2011*, RAI 57, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2015, p. 180.

perceived in hymns Šulgi B (ll. 308–319) with the description of the king's establishment of two scribal academies in Ur and Nippur for writing hymns for him, with the prospect that the scribes transcribe the prayer words and singers (i.e., priests) perform based on the text.[301] Therefore, the primary audience of these royal hymns should consist of scribes (the reserve force for administrators who received education), priests, and courtiers, the performer and attendee of the cultic recitation.[302] Compared with the audience of royal titles, without a doubt, these people are still elite, but they extend to the religious clergy, whose belief in Šulgi's divinity was also essential for the stability of the state. Moreover, the court performance of these hymns has likely been conducted as a ritual, and thus, the threshold for audience literacy has been lowered, and those who have the opportunity to attend (both passive or active participation) should more or less receive the impression of the king's divinity being repeated over and over again in the first or third person. Given that several hymns note locations for the performance during festivals which can be attested in other historical evidence (year-name or archival documents), A. Pitts argued that certain variations of these works were enacted in public settings and would be broadcast among groups outside the elite court circle, and in a form accessible even to the illiterate.[303] Without a doubt, the genre of royal hymn is an easily comprehensible and portable medium to help spread notice of the king's divinity; however, the extent to which audiences can reach and understand this medium is questionable. This is because it is impossible to know the exact number and composition of participants in festivals and how loud and attractive a performance is. The author assumes the prudent opinion that its influence still remained limited to the elite class, including administrators and religious figures. However, the great reduction of literacy requirement is more friendly and appealing to the illiterate, and even to foreign officials.

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[301] For the examination of the educational function, see Ludek Vacin, *Šulgi of Ur: Life, Deeds, Ideology and Legacy of a Mesopotamian Ruler as Reflected Primarily in Literary Texts*, 2011, p. 242; Nicole Brisch, "Rebellions and Peripheries in Sumerian Royal Literature", in Seth Richardson (ed.), *Rebellions and Peripheries in the Cuneiform World*, AOS 91, Boston: American Oriental Society, 2010, pp. 29-45; for a closer investigation of the performance function, see Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 63-65.

[302] Piotr Michalowski, "Charisma and Control: On Continuity and Change in Early Mesopotamian Bureaucratic Systems", SAOC 46, 1991, p. 52; "The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", OIS 4, 2008, p. 38.

[303] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 63-65.

III.1.3 Statue, Temple, and Cult of the Divine King

In ancient Mesopotamia, as the embodiment of god on earth watching over and protecting the city, the anthropomorphic cult statue of a deity was usually enshrined in a temple to receive worship. Certain priests were responsible for taking care of the statues, which were also used in rituals and occasionally brought out when citizens were required to swear oaths. Many features are clearly recognizable on the statues of gods, like wearing the symbol of divinity, such as a horned crown, and sometimes equipped with unique symbols or animals so that they can be easily identified. The statue and temple are built for a living king, and the cult performed by special priests towards the statue or the king in person, reveal the king's new divine nature. By collecting and sorting out these clues scattered throughout various archives, it is possible to analyze the cultic self-representations of the four deified kings of the Ur III period.

Hardly any statues of Ur III kings have survived, partly because of the degradable nature of their composite materials, i.e., a wooden core (usually tamarisk) adorned with precious stones and metals. The reason for their loss is partly their function as icons of power, making them prone to destruction or looting by invaders as trophies.[304] Within the corpus of Ur III administrative documents, there are 59 references to "statue of the king" (alan-lugal), covering a time-span of Š 34 to IS 16, but it is not always apparent whose royal statue is involved as names are often not specified. The transfer of materials, including gold (ku$_3$-sig$_{17}$), red-gold (ku$_3$-sig$_{17}$ huš-a), silver (ku$_3$-babbar), copper (uruda) carnelian stone (^{na4}gug), and lapis lazuli (^{na4}za-gin$_3$) for the statue between officials probably indicates the approximate date of when statues were made;[305] however, whether they were made for the ruling king or for deceased kings

[304] Claudia E. Suter, "Ur III Kings in Images: A Reappraisal", *Your Praise is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy Black from Students, Colleagues and Friends*, 2010, p. 321; Erika D. Johnson, *Stealing the Enemy's Gods: An Exploration of the Phenomenon of Godnap in Ancient Western Asia*, PhD. Thesis, The University of Birmingham, 2011.

[305] The transfer of materials for the purpose of making statue can be found in AS 7/x (AUCT 1, 948), ŠS 1/iv (UET 3, 0339), ŠS 1/vi (AnSt 33, 74), IS 5 (UET 3, 0372), IS 8/ix/20 (UET 3, 0400), IS 15 (UET 3, 0678), IS 15/ii (UET 3, 0425), IS 15/v/10 (UET 3, 0489), IS 15/v/16 (UET 3, 0494), IS 15/vi/6 (UET 3, 0502), IS 15/vii/5 (UET 3, 0520), IS 15/viii/20 (UET 3, 0559), IS 15/viii/20 (UET 3, 0560), IS 15/viii/27 (UET 3, 0566), IS 15/ix/3 (UET

remains unclear. Among these references recording periodic offerings (siskur$_2$) given to unspecified royal statues together with traditional gods, several mention their locations in the temples of the supreme god Enlil (ša$_3$ e$_2$-^{d}Enlil) and his spouse Ninlil (ša$_3$ e$_2$ ^{d}Ninlil), or in the palace (ša$_3$ e$_2$-gal).[306] As the rulers built temples to host and worship their statues, their presence in other places lies in the motility of statues to meet cultic demands. The statue of a given king is not mentioned very often in archival texts, only when it is necessary to clarify it among offerings given to a list of gods.[307] The times of mentions to named or nameless statues does not equal the number of statues in total, nor does it provide any more historical information than to prove the existence of these statues. Statues did not automatically become incarnations of gods to receive worship once they were made, but they had to undergo a series of rituals. Prominent examples are the "mouth-washing" (*Mīs Pî*) and "mouth-opening" (*Pīt Pî*) ceremonies, which are well attested in later times. Mentions of "mouth-opening" (ka du$_8$-ha) of statues in archival documents prove its existence in the earlier Neo-Sumerian period.[308] Apart from receiving offerings, one striking example in reference to petitions addressed to a statue of king is provided in the following: "to my king with varicolored eyes, who wears a lapis lazuli beard speak; to the golden statue fashioned on a good day…… says Uršagga, your servant: 'my king has cared for me, who am a son of Ur. If now my king is (truly) Anu, let not my father's house be carried off, let not the foundations of my father's house be torn away. Let my king know.'"[309] As this piece of prayer has been preserved in an Old Babylonian version, it is not possible to maintain how Ur kings

3, 0568), IS 15/ix/24 (UET 3, 0582), IS 15/xi/14 (UET 3, 0613), IS 15/xi/26 (UET 3, 0619), IS 16/ii/10 (UET 3, 0679). In the case of documents that were close in time and passed on different contents, it could be that materials were solicited several times for the construction of the same statue, like the case in ŠS 1 and frequent material movements in IS 15 and IS 16. But I cannot say with certainty if Ibbi-Suen built one statue or more.

[306] For the statues located in the temples of Enlil and Ninlil, see TCL 02, 5501; MVN 13, 584; BCT 1, 102; AUCT 3, 480; PDT 2, 1173; AUCT 3, 465; MVN 15, 146; OIP 115, 306; SAT 3, 1567; for the statues in the palace, see PDT 2, 1115.

[307] For a summary of textual references to statues of Ur III gods and kings, see Tohru Ozaki, "Divine Statues in the Ur III Kingdoms and Their 'Ka Du$_8$-Ha' Ceremony", JCSSS 1, 2008, pp. 217-219.

[308] For the study of the two ceremonies in Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian times, see Christopher Walker & Michael Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian Mīs Pî Ritual*, Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001; seven texts in Ur III referring to "mouth-opening" of statues have been summarized, four for Gudea and three for the deity Lugal-kura, see Tohru Ozaki, "Divine Statues in the Ur III Kingdoms and Their 'Ka Du$_8$-Ha' Ceremony", JCSSS 1, 2008, pp. 220-221.

[309] Adam Falkenstein, "Ein sumerischer Gottesbrief." *ZA* 44 (1938), pp. 1-25.

were addressed by petitioners. In addition to royal statues, statues were also given to Gudea (local governor of Lagaš II), *Kubatum* (queen of Šu-Suen), and an anonymous queen in AS 5, all of whom were not deified in life.[310]

In the Ur III period, only two priestly offices, the godly/divine priestesses (NIN-dingir) and the anointed priests ($guda_4$) were associated with the cult of a divine king. The former kind of priestess stood relatively high within the priestly hierarchy and had certain economic and administrative influence. Her main function changed from attendant of both male and female deities in early times, to a consort of male deities and a devotee of female deities in Akkad Dynasty.[311] Because only two references of this kind of priestess can be attested for in Ur III kings, one named Enum-Eštar attending to the cult of deceased Šulgi in ŠS 2 and the other named *Šāt*-Šu-Suen responsible for administrative affairs of Šu-Suen ŠS 3, both their installment time and the precise function especially their obligations in the cult remain obscure. The latter kind of priest had a relatively low status in the Old Babylonian period, when they were in charge of making offerings that did not contain blood as well as offerings for the dead. These priests sometimes worked as musicians and also undertook administrative work of the temple.[312] They are better attested than the former type of priests in Ur III, most of which were found under Šulgi, only one attestation each for Amar-Suen and Šu-Suen and none for Ibbi-Suen. Anointed priests pertaining to Šulgi can be divided into two main groups, with one partaking in administration, and the other associating with regular offerings (sa_2-du_{11}) to divine Šulgi. From the two references of anointed priests for Amar-Suen and Šu-Suen, only one conclusion suggests that there was more than one of them serving for the cult of kings (both deceased and living) at a particular time in a particular place.[313] Therefore, based on limited evidence referring more to the

[310] Gudea not only has many statues, but also appear with divine determinative in some of his officials' seals, see Claudia E. Suter, *Gudea's Temple Building: the Representation of an Early Mesopotamian Ruler in Text and Image*, 2000. The importance of Kubatum can be reflected here, see BiOr 9, and in previously stated hymn Šu-Suen A, the reason why Šu-Suen put special emphasis on his queen is unclear, but it is likely that she bore him a prince in ŠS 3, which can be attested in MNV 16, 0960, "the queen Kubatum gave birth to a son" (ku-ba-tum nin-e dumu tu-da).

[311] For the history of this kind of priestess, see Piotr Steinkeller, "On Rulers, Priests and Sacred Marriage: Tracing the Evolution of Early Sumerian Kingship", *Priests and Officials in the Ancient Near East*, 1999, pp. 121-129.

[312] For the discussion of evidence, see Nicole Brisch, "The Priestess and the King: The Divine Kingship of Šū-Sîn of Ur." *JAOS* 126/2 (2006), pp. 165-166.

[313] For a full list of anointed priests serving Ur III kings, see ibid., p. 168, 175-176.

economic or administrative function than the cultic duty of these two kinds of priestesses/priests, it seems that religious personnel serving for the king's statue were involved more in secular affairs of the king's temple and occupied a relatively lower statue compared with those who served major gods.

Numerous administrative documents refer to the establishment of, or offerings for, temples (e$_2$) dedicated to Ur III kings throughout Mesopotamia. Textual evidence suggests that all divine Ur III god-kings had large temples built across the whole state, with the purpose not only to worship alive or dead kings, but also to function as important economic institutions with the right to confiscate local properties and institutions in certain cases to expand themselves.[314] According to previous research, four temples have been attested in Umma, KI.AN, Gu'abba, and Girsu dedicated to Šulgi, two in Umma and Girsu dedicated to Amar-Suen, and no less than five in Umma, Ur, Adab, Girsu, and Ešnunna dedicated to Šu-Suen.[315] However, only one temple once in worship to Šu-Suen was excavated at the city of Tell Asmar, the ancient Ešnunna in the Diyala region of Iraq.[316] This temple, which was built by Ituria, the local ruler of Ešnunna, can hardly be counted as representative, considering its small size and affiliation to the palace as well as local administration of Ituria.[317] To a certain extent, this temple was a barometer of the god-king's control over the region of Ešnunna and the central-local relationship. The introduction of worship to Šu-Suen was to pledge allegiance to this powerful king. However, the temple was abandoned in the early years of Ibbi-Suen's reign and was even used later for worship of the local ruler, indicating the decline of royal power and the weakening of local control. In terms of the quantity and the spread of temples to relatively peripheral regions, it seems that Šu-Suen was more ambitious than his predecessors and elevated the king's deification to a higher level. However, the author contests the suggestions of other scholars that Šu-Suen has

[314] K. Maekawa, "Confiscation of Private Properties in the Ur III Period: A Study of é-dul-la and níg-GA." *ASJ* 18 (1996), p. 122.
[315] Clemens Reichel, "The King is Dead, Long Live the King: The Last Days of the Shu-Sin Cult at Eshnunna and its Aftermath", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 133-155.
[316] For the case study of this temple, see Clemens Reichel, *Political Changes and Cultural Continuity in the Palace of the Rulers at Eshnunna (Tell Asmar) from the Ur III Period to the Isin-Larsa Period (c. 2700-1850 B.C.)*, PhD. Thesis, University of Chicago, 2001.
[317] Nicole Brisch, "Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), pp. 42-43.

elevated his deification to an unprecedented level.[318] It can be seen from previous discussion and the content presented here that Šu-Suen was no exception in terms of promoting royal women's statue in royal rhetoric and expanding the scale of temple construction; however, the author thinks that this is not sufficient to prove that his level of deification surpassed that of Šulgi. The temple built by Ituria may be the local ruler's strategic use of Šu-Suen's name to consolidate his rule in Ešnunna, as it is likely that he held the greater initiative than the king towards the construction, abandonment, and personal use of the temple.

Closely following the traditional cult model, Ur III divine kings set up cults for themselves as gods. After consecration, the king's statue was the focal point of his cult, which ordinarily remained in his temple to receive worship and offerings, including bread, beer, oil, clothes, and wool. Details of the ceremonies performed within the temple remain unclear, as only two kinds of priests and priestesses are confirmed in Ur III who predominantly focused on administrative rather than religious affairs. Offerings to gods at outdoor settings like orchards, cattle-pens, breeding barns, workshops, ostrich houses, gates, and the banks of canals were not uncommon. However, far less references can be found to external rituals of king's statues and there is no clue in texts whether these statues were temporarily moved outdoors or permanently installed at those sites.[319] Sometimes, cultic statues were also removed from their temple or niche and transported during processions or festivals by means of chariot (^{giš}gigir) on land as well as by boat (ma_2) or barge (ma_2-gur_8 mah, "large boat" literally) on water. These big and ostentatious events could last for days, and the statues were transported between cities. During these events, not only the luxurious manufacture of transportations, but also banquets, musical performances, and athletic competitions would have made quite an impression on the gathered crowds. The usage of chariot or boat to move the statues are attested for both traditional gods and Ur III divine kings, as reflected in numerous year formulae and in royal hymns, where the references to water vessels far

[318] Nicole Brisch, "The Priestess and the King: The Divine Kingship of Šū-Sîn of Ur." *JAOS* 126/2 (2006), pp. 161-176; Walther Sallaberger, "Ur III-Zeit", OBO 160/3, 1999, p. 170; H. Waetzoldt, "Die Haltung der Schreiber von Umma zu König Šusuen", JCSSS 1, 2008, pp. 245-249.

[319] For a recapitulation of the cult statues at external rituals with references, see Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 101-106.

outnumbered the land carriage providing more details about how it happened. Administrative sources in Ur III provide information for major festivals entailing the movements of effigies, among which the two Akiti festivals, celebrated in the first (Akiti-šesagku) and seventh month (šunumun) of the year in Ur, were the most important. This quintessential festival of the Ur III regime focuses on the moon-god Nanna, patron god of Ur, with the presence and participation of the king. This festival appears to be the model for other annual festivals, such as important festivals of the Boat of Heaven celebrated in Uruk and the festivals for celebrating the goddess Ninlil's round trip from Nippur to Tummal.

There is also a kind of festival for various gods named after the month in which it is celebrated, but by the time of Ur III, most of these festivals had become obsolete, and only the name of the month persisted. In the 25th regal year of his rule, the divine Šulgi instituted a festival for himself (ezem ^{d}Šulgi), celebrated in Nippur and Lagaš in the seventh month, in Ur in the eighth month, and in Umma in the 10th month, and the previous provincial month names changed correspondingly.[320] The festival of Šulgi was maintained by succeeding kings through the end of the dynasty, and new festival months were added to the calendar. The divine Amar-Suen established his festival in Umma in around AS 6, replacing the name of the seventh month (iti min-eš$_3$). In ŠS 3, Šu-Suen renamed the ninth month (iti šu-eš$_5$-ša) in Puzriš-Dagan and Ur for a festival in his own honor.[321] Apart from official cults or festivals appealing to the general public, a handful of documents refer to devotions occurring within households, especially those of elites, who could afford the costs to operate a private shrine. For example, one tablet records Aradmu, Sukkal-mah in Nippur, delivering a lamb as sacrifice to a statue of king Šu-Suen.[322] A. Pitts considered the public display of the statue of god-king during the festival as a form of popularization of the cult, with the aim to overcome the limitation of access to temples and attract more ordinary people by adding various entertainment activities.[323] In her point of view, the innovation of Šulgi by setting

[320] Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East*, 1993, pp. 67-69, 110-111, 153, 202, 208-210.
[321] Ibid., pp. 154-156,175-177.
[322] SACT 1, 172.
[323] For the detailed discussion of the public face of the cult, see Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 92-94.

festivals for him was considered to be a deliberate strategy to introduce a wide populace to his cult in the most efficacious manner, which may already be familiar to the public.[324] Moreover, considering that foreign dignitaries apart from local residents also participated during major festivals, their witnessing may have been mandatory before they were allowed to return to their homelands.[325]

III.1.4 King's Name as Theophoric Element

In ancient Mesopotamia, personal names were usually phrases or complete sentences with specific meanings. One of the most common naming practices was the incorporation of the name of a deity, which was known as the theophoric element. In addition to the explicit inclusion of the names of specific gods, those employing the generic word "god" (dingir, *ilum*), epithets such as lord (en, *belum*), king (lugal, *šarrum*), and lady (nin), or kinship terms such as father (aya, *abum*), could also be inferred as theophoric element in personal names.[326] Considering that onomastic practice was always influenced by various trends and social conventions of the time,[327] the naming trends during the period of Ur III responded to the kings' deification by adopting their names as theophoric elements, reflected by both Sumerian and Akkadain names. Personal names such as "Šulgi is a god/my god" (^{d}Šul-gi-dingir and ^{d}Šulgi-i_3-*il*; ^{d}Šulgi-dingir-mu and ^{d}Šulgi-i_3-li_2), "Šulgi is the god of the land" (^{d}Šulgi-dingir-kalam-ma) are good examples demonstrating the name-bearer's acceptance and honoring of the godhood of the king.

According to the research by A. Pitts, there are a total of 267 distinct names attested in Ur III sources that include the king's name as theophoric element. These were not only given to newborns by their parents, but also adopted by adults who renamed themselves by incorporating the name of the deified king. During the reign of

[324] Ibid., pp. 118-119.
[325] Tonia M. Sharlach, "Diplomacy and the Rituals of Politics at the Ur III Court." *JCS* 57 (2005), pp. 17-29.
[326] Robert A. Di Vito, *Studies in Third Millennium Sumerian and Akkadian Personal Names, The Designation and Conception of the Personal God*, Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1993, p. 19. For the general principle to determine whether or not a particular epithet was a substitute for a deity, which therefore could be counted as theophoric element, see ibid., p. 86.
[327] Jakob Andersson, *Kingship in the Early Mesopotamian Onomasticon 2800-2200 BCE*, 2012, pp. 10-12.

each king, onomastic patterns inherited from its predecessor developed new forms. In the time of Šulgi, as much as 194 distinct name patterns adopted his name as theophoric element, 11 of which remained in use in both the reigns of Amar-Suen and Šu-Suen, 16 more were adapted in the time of Amar-Suen, and 14 were again adopted for Šu-Suen. On this basis, 35 original name patterns were created, incorporating Amar-Suen and Šu-Suen in their times. Regarding Ibbi-Suen, the final ruler of the Ur III Dynasty, only four personal names include him as theophoric element, according to three original patterns.[328] As pointed out by Pitts, the 11 name patterns common to three of the four deified kings were: "may DN be durable" (libūr-), "the man of DN" (lu_2-), "the aegis of DN" ($puzur_4$-), "dog (servant) of DN" (ur-), "DN is a canopy" (-an-dul_3), "DN created me" (-*bānī*), "DN, let me live" (-*hamati*), "DN is my god" (-*ilī*), "DN who makes equitable" (-si-sa_2), "DN is my sun-god" (-^{d}Utu-mu), and "DN is the life's breath of the land" (-zi-kalam-ma).[329] The majority of these name patterns was based on onomastic practice existing in Ur III or earlier, by switching the name of a previous god to the name of one of the deified kings. Some of these names were to assert the power of the divine king to create, give, and/or name a child, such as "Šulgi created (this child)" (Šulgi-*bānī*); some personalized the king's divine qualities specifically, as protect spirits (^{d}Lammamu) of the name-bearer, or more generally, by claiming him as life (zi) or heaven (hili-ana); some state certain positive qualities or specific roles exclusive to gods in the context of Ur III onomastics, such as expert (kugzu), mighty (*dan, dannum*), and omniscient (galzu), which can also be frequently found in royal hymns; some commemorated the potent word or command of the king, such as "Šulgi is the genuine word" (Šulgi-inim-zi); some established a conceptual kinship with the divine king, usually by declaring him as the bearer's father; and some expressed the relationship between the divine king and a traditional god, by indicating the king as a beloved or favorite of a certain god.[330]

As pointed out by G. Rubio, administrative documents and literary corpus

[328] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 235-236.
[329] Ibid., p. 235.
[330] For a detailed analysis of these name patterns with examples and references, see ibid., pp. 235-243.

produced by elite scribes mostly reflect the domain of the official cult, while theophoric names of the commoners and general populace seem more likely to provide a glimpse into the spheres of popular religion and private devotion.[331] Only a handful of documents in Ur III record private devotion occurring within private elite households, probably because of the costs involved in operating a private shrine. Mesopotamian statues were traditionally dedicated to deities and set up in specific temples, and only statues of Ur III deified kings were also attested to be worshipped in the private houses of high officials. For example, an undated administrative tablet from the reign of Šu-Suen records a lamb delivered as sacrifice to the king's statue in the Nippur house of Aradmu, who was the vizier (sukkal mah) there and had married children to royal families.[332]

R. Di Vito suggests a similar perspective. While emphasizing the significance of theophoric names as a means of accessing popular religion, he pays special attention to the relationship between an individual's name with his or her personal god. As defined by Di Vito, "a personal god is one concerned with the welfare and protection of the individual, one who stands first and foremost in relation to an individual, and one for whom this relation is its very definition."[333] This perspective is not entirely applicable to that prevalent in Ur III, as deified kings cannot be considered as a mortal's personal god. Although certain names asserted the king as his personal protective spirit, the king might also be referred to as the god of the land in other names. The usage of the king's name as theophoric element differs from that of traditional theophoric names containing a deity's name. Therefore, the aim of this naming practice was not to pursue welfare and protection from the deified king, but only to show acceptance and praise of the king's new identity and the accompanying exceptional qualities. To a certain degree, these theophoric names can be seen as abbreviated and private versions of royal hymns, selected by commoners based on their personalized preferences.

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[331] Gonzalo Rubio, "Gods and Scholars: Mapping the Pantheon in Early Mesopotamia", in Beate Pongratz-Leisten (ed.), *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011, pp. 92-93.
[332] SACT 1 172.
[333] Robert A. Di Vito, *Studies in Third Millennium Sumerian and Akkadian Personal Names, The Designation and Conception of the Personal God*, 1993, p. 120. In his study, Di Vito has analyzed onomastics as a reflection of "personal god" covering Sumerian names from the ED II through the Ur III period, and Akkadian names from the Fara through the Ur III.

Furthermore, based on A. Pitts's overview analysis of onomastic dates, these renamed adults came from a wide range of employment classes, social statuses, geographic areas, and ethnic origins, encompassing almost all levels of society, from cultic personnel to craftsmen, and from natives to foreigners. As reflected in third millennium sources, name changes among adults were rare. They were limited to royal families and the priestly class for specific reasons, and thus, the widespread adoption of a new name by adults leads Pitts to argue that the king's new identity of divinity was received loud and clear by the populace at large.[334] Nevertheless, these 267 theophoric names do not seem to be enough to support Pitts's conclusion that "the king's efforts at popularizing his cult should be considered successful, having reached a large percentage of the population, male and female, of various strata of society." The reason is that the total population then is unknown, making it hard to say whether 267 was a very large number that constitutes a great proportion. In addition, if Ur III theophoric names that include a traditional deity are considered and both are to be compared, it seems that 267 is quite a small number. In view of the large number of deities worshipped in ancient Mesopotamia, only some influential deities in Ur III are counted here. Ur III person names that include traditional gods' name as theophoric element are listed from high to low as follows: Utu 266, Šara 266, Baba 226, Nanna 194, Suen 189, Enlil 150, Iškur 117, Lamma 92, Inanna 91, Nanše 90, Ninlil 41, Nin-šbur 38 and Ištaran 28. There are also some small gods not counted, but even so, the total number is up to 1,788.

Moreover, it seems doubtful whether people whose names were recorded in archival documents were ordinary people. Although some of them may bear titles like herdsman or weaver, the possibility that they were attached to royal or noble families cannot be ruled out. Maybe their lords renamed them to show loyalty to the king. Therefore, it seems safe to say that a certain number of people in the Ur III period accepted the king's godhood by using his name as theophoric element, but it cannot be known for sure whether king's efforts at popularizing his cult and new identity

[334] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, p. 235, 289-290.

nationwide was successful based only on onomastic dates. To better address the question of the total acceptance level and influence of the king's self-deification at home and abroad, more material must be examined on a larger scale.

III.1.5 Royal Wives and Deceased Kings

Along with the deification of Ur III kings, the status and treatment of the consorts of kings were correspondingly promoted. A number of them were even deified themselves, which was reflected in the change of title and the statues and rituals they enjoyed.

Royal women appear in Ur III archival and monumental documents with three titles: dam, nin, and lukur.[335] Aside from the title "nin" referring explicitly to "queen", "dam" and "lukur" were used to describe royal wives before and after the deification of Šulgi, respectively.[336] The title "dam" is the normal Sumerian word for wife regardless of her social standing, and in Ur III, only two royal women before Šulgi's apotheosis are known to have held this title.[337] After the king's claim for divinity, this title ceased to be used to describe royal consorts and was replaced by lukur, which on its own was a sort of priestess, serving as the junior wife of a male god.[338] As early as the late ED period, this type of female cult functionary was attested for the deity Ninurta of Nippur and Ningirsu of Girsu with different jobs.[339] The title lukur developed into the two elaborated variants "beloved lukur of the king" (lukur-ki-ag$_2$-lugal) and "lukur of the road"(lukur-kaskal-la), the latter of which likely indicated the woman's function as the king's traveling companion. It seems reasonable that along with the king's elevation to godhood, his consorts by extension had to receive a religious title derived from an

[335] For studies of royal women in Ur III, see Piotr Michalowski, "Royal Women of the Ur III Period Part 1: The Wife of of Šulgi." *JCS* 28/3 (1976), pp. 169-172; "Royal Women of the Ur III Period Part II: Geme-Ninlila." *JCS* 31/3 (1979), pp. 171-176; "Royal Women of the Ur III Period Part III." *ASJ* 4 (1982), pp. 129-139. More recently, see Frauke Weiershäuser, *Die königlichen Frauen der III. Dynastie von Ur*, Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2008.

[336] Piotr Steinkeller, "More on the Ur III Royal Wives." *ASJ* 3 (1981), pp. 77-92.

[337] They were the sole attested spouse of Ur-Nammu, SI.A-*tum* and Geme-Suen, one of the wives of Šulgi. See ibid., p. 81.

[338] Four prestigious officials Ur-Nigar, Arad-Nanna (also known as Arad-mu), Ur-Lisi and Nawir-Dingir in Ur III attested to as having lukurs, but the association of lukur with neither deities nor deified kings was very rare. For more discussion, see Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 72-76.

[339] For lukurs before Ur III, see Piotr Steinkeller, "More on the Ur III Royal Wives." *ASJ* 3 (1981), pp. 84-85.

existing priesthood.

The responsibilities of the lukurs of the traditional gods vary between different cities, and it is uncertain if new or additional cultic duties were required of these royal women by adoption of this priestly title. Among three lukurs of Šulgi attested so far, Šulgi-Simti has left a significant number of cuneiform tablets dating from approximately Š32–Š47, belonging to the so-called "early Drehem series".[340] Šulgi-Simti was at least the titular head of the organization responsible for the gathering, management, and redistribution of livestock used on different occasions including sacrifices and religious events. The fact that many of the religious events centered on goddesses led to the speculation that a kind of religious activity was dominated by royal women.[341] However, as Šulgi-Simti was also attested to hold the title of "queen" (nin), it is impossible to disentangle whether her ritual responsibilities devolved from her role as lukur or as queen.

In addition to the change of title, royal divinity also elevated the treatment of a few royal women and the cults directed at them or their statues. It has been argued by Steinkeller that by establishing an official cult for her, Šulgi had deified his mother SI.A-*tum* after her death as one of the personifications of the traditional goddess Geštinana.[342] The lukur and queen of Šu-Suen named *Kubatum* enjoyed the very special honor that a life-sized statue of herself was erected at the gate of Enlil in Nippur, which received a sheep sacrifice.[343] Given that this particular kind of offering in such a prominent location was accorded only to a deified king, it seems possible that Kubatum is also elevated, or even closer to divinity.[344]

As the death of the king seems to be a taboo topic in ancient Mesopotamia, little is known about the funeral ceremony of royal members. Thus, the dead king was usually deified and continued to accept offerings, making it rather difficult to tell whether the deified king enjoyed more noble treatment during lifetime or after his death.

[340] Ibid., pp. 78-79. For a list of all royal women in Ur III with or without titles, see Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 66-68.
[341] Tonia M. Sharlach, "Priestesses, Concubines, and the Daughters of Men: Disentangling the Meaning of the Word LUKUR in Ur III Times", JCSSS 1, 2008, p. 179.
[342] Piotr Steinkeller, "More on the Ur III Royal Wives." *ASJ* 3 (1981), p. 80.
[343] BiOr 09 173 1.
[344] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 70-72.

Nevertheless, a tablet (BCT 1 132) dating to the 11th month of Š 48, when Šulgi's mortuary chapel kianag appeared for the first time and indicated his death, provides valuable information about seven-day unusual rites performed "when [the divine] Šulgi ascended to heaven."[345] This ascension text indicated the posthumous catasterism of deified Šulgi and suggests the possible source of the star or constellation named Šulgi attested in later OB lexical sources.[346] It has been further assumed that Šulgi was ascending from the Netherworld into the sky via the Boat of Heaven, which was a cult object strongly associated with the goddess Inanna.[347] As this is the sole definitive evidence regarding the catasterism of Ur III rulers, it remains uncertain whether it became a norm for other deified kings to undergo catasterism upon their demise.[348]

Two tablets dated to the 10th month of ŠS 9 refer to rituals surrounding the death of Šu-Suen. One text recorded funeral celebrations for Šu-Suen on the 15th day which lasted through to the end of the month, moving from Ur to smaller settlements nearby (Enegi and Gišbanda) and back to Ur, with sacrifices made in temples as well as public locations.[349] Another text (PDT 1 563) records additional offerings in Uruk on the 21st day to deceased Šu-Suen, in the presence of the new king Ibbi-Suen. Based on the two texts surrounding the funeral of Šu-Suen and the fact that the reference of deified Ibbi-Suen appeared in documents one month earlier (SAT 3 1892), the coronation of the new king preceded the death rites of the old, and both coronation and funeral lasted over several days in multiple cities.[350] Because of the lack of further evidence, it is difficult to determine the typical funeral rites for deceased kings and how these may have been affected by royal deification.

III.2 Ur III Divine Kings in Visual Evidence

[345] This text and the rite recorded has been studied by Claus Wilcke, "König Šulgis Himmelfahrt", *Münchner Beiträge zur Völkerkunde Festschrift Lázaló Vajda*, 1988, pp. 245-255.
[346] Wayne Horowitz & Philip J. Watson, "Further Notes on Birmingham Cuneiform Tablets Volume 1." *ASJ* 13 (1991), p. 413.
[347] Piotr Steinkeller, "How Did Šulgi and Išbi-Erra Ascend to Heaven", in David Vanderhooft & Abraham Winitzer (eds.), *Literature as Politics, Politics: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013, pp. 459-478.
[348] For the possibility of Šu-Suen's catasterism, see ibid., pp. 467-470.
[349] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 82-83.
[350] Ibid., p. 85.

Sculptural images of Mesopotamian rulers fall into the discourse of art history. According to research by I. Winter, royal images in ancient Mesopotamia, usually in the form of sculptures or bas-reliefs, are not private portraits of a ruler, but rather, depict office imagery. The ruler's appearance, then declared to have been divinely molded to make him recognizable as a god-befitting ruler, suggests that his "ideal" qualities were paramount. Rather than absolute physical likeness, the ideal value constitutes a necessary factor, resulting in the image of the king "in his office of kingship" being a semiotic representation, usually with the attachment of external signs, such as headgear, clothing, and accoutrements. Given the convergence of appearance, the textual inscription on the image particularized the holder of office into a historical personage.[351]

Regarding the Ur III period, although considerable written materials provide the verbal representation of the king, only few and fragmentary Ur III royal monuments have survived. C. Suter has made a comprehensive and detailed study on official images of Ur III kings. Suter investigated both identified and anonymous candidates including foundation figurines, statues, steles, rock reliefs, and cylinder seals, as well as images of contemporary or slightly later rulers that clearly emulate the practice of Ur III.[352] Inscribed copper figurines buried in the foundation of temples show that Ur III kings were represented as beardless, bare-headed, and bare-chested with a basket on head, implying the king's role as temple builder.[353] The only identified carved stele of Ur III is the Ur-Nammu Stele, which is in similar size and impact to the Naram-Sin's Victory Stele. The fragments of this multi-registered and two-sided stele commemorated the Ur-Nammu's reconstruction temples for Nanna and Ningal at Ur. Ur-Nammu is depicted wearing a round cap, different from divine Naram-Sin's horn helmet, indicating his identity as a mortal ruler rather than a divine being.[354] Although statues

[351] Irene J. Winter, "What/When Is a Portrait? Royal Images of the Ancient Near East." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 153/3 (2009), pp. 266-269.
[352] Claudia E. Suter, "Ur III Kings in Images: A Reappraisal", *Your Praise is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy Black from Students, Colleagues and Friend*, 2010, pp. 319-349.
[353] Claudia E. Suter, *Gudea's Temple Building: the Representation of an Early Mesopotamian Ruler in Text and Image*, 2000.
[354] Jeanny Vorys Canby, *The "Ur-Nammu" Stela*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2006.

of the king are well attested in documents, only two votive statues pertaining to Šulgi have survived albeit with their heads missing. These provide no information about the king's facial features, nor his headgear or beard. Both statues preserve inscriptions of Šulgi, and the royal title "king of Sumer and Akkad" together with the lack of divine determinative before the royal name, indicate that they were made before Šulgi's deification.[355] These votive statues represent all surviving monuments which could be associated with Ur III kings, all of which depicting mortal kings as temple builders or dedicators.

In addition to public monuments, cylinder seals are small artifacts with both inscription and theme scene. Though no personal seals of Ur III kings are extant, they were depicted on seals of subordinates. Not all seals of officials showed the king's portrait; only middle to senior officials had this honor. This specific design of presentation scenes with depicted seal owner before a deity or a king provide valuable information for understating divine king's images in Ur III, which will be discussed in detail further below.

III.2.1 Seal Images of the Divine King

Impressions from cylinder seals belonging to officials comprise the bulk of the divine kings' representations after Ur-Nammu, visualizing his role as supreme ruler of the entire human world. Although few physical seals remain, many precious images of the king are left behind through their use in archival documents or bullae. With the development and extraordinary increase of the bureaucratic system during the Ur III period, the seal images of officials also show a high degree of standardization. This was exclusively restricted to presentation scenes depicting that the seal owner was presented by a goddess before a deity or a king (see Figure 6).[356] The seated deity or king sitting in the right end of the scene is the primary figure, around whom all action evolves.

[355] Claudia E. Suter, "Ur III Kings in Images: A Reappraisal", *Your Praise is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy Black from Students, Colleagues and Friends*, 2010, pp. 322-323; "A Shulgi Statuette from Tello." *JCS* 43/45 (1991-1993), pp. 63-70.

[356] For an overview study of presentation scene and this kind of seal, see Judith A. Franke, "Presentation Seals of the Ur III/Isin-Larsa Period", in McGuire Gibson & Robert D. Biggs (eds.), *Seals and Sealing in the Ancient Near East*, BM 6, Malibu: Undena Publications, 1977, pp. 61-65.

Beyond that, the worshiper (i.e., the seal owner), the supporting (standing behind the worshiper) and/or introducing (standing in front of the worshiper) Lamma goddesses and certain symbols (usually astral symbols) also occur frequently in the presentation scenes.[357]

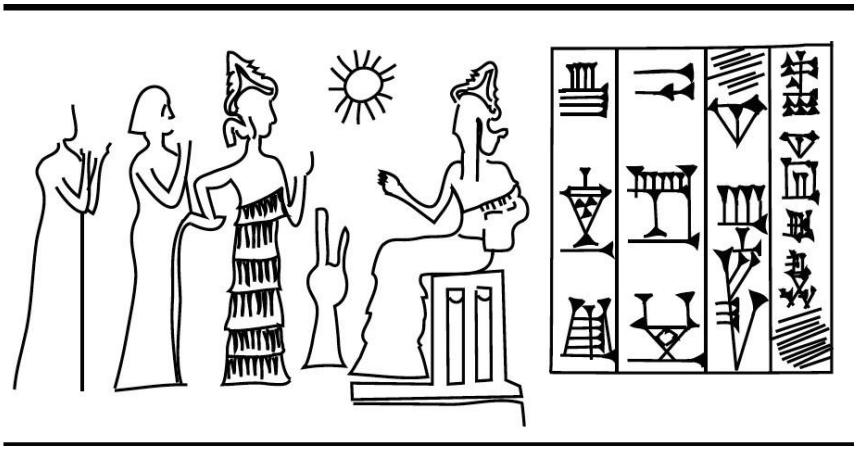

Figure 6. A seal of Adallal with presentation scene[358]

Beginning late in the reign of Šulgi, "royal servant" and "royal gift" seals belonging to middle- to high-ranking officials almost always depict the king as the primary figure. Four characteristics have been put forward by scholars to help identify the primary figure as a king but not as a god: wearing the royal headdress (the rounded cap), holding a vessel or cup in his extended hand, usually being seated on a royal throne, and wearing a fringed garment.[359] What must be pointed out is that only the attributes of the royal headdress and the vessel in the right hand are exclusive to the king, while the other two features may also be occasionally depicted with gods. Therefore, these two specific and deliberate changes made by the king to distinguish himself from a traditional god in the presentation scene are worth noticing.

What are these two items representing? In ancient Mesopotamia, the graphic

[357] Although the presentation scene was quite standardized, one can still distinguish five different subgroups according to the posture of the worshiper, see Christina Tsouparopoulou, *The Material Face of Bureaucracy: Writing, Sealing and Archiving Tablets for the Ur III State at Drehem*, 2008, pp. 37-40.
[358] Christina Tsouparopoulou, "Namnine-Hedu, Yet Another Ur III Princess." *JCS* 60 (2008), p. 10, fig. 1.
[359] E. van Buren, "Homage to a Deified King." *ZA* 50 (1952), pp. 92-120; Irene J. Winter, "The King and the Cup: Iconography of the Royal Presentation Scene on Ur III Seals", *Insight through Images: Studies in Honor of Edith Porada*, 1986, p. 255.

indication of a god's divinity is the horned crown, which corresponds to the divine determinative in front of the deity's name. As shown on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele, this deified Sargonic king was shown as oversized and armed, wearing the well-marked horned crown, compared to the known statues of mortal king Gudea of Lagaš wearing with the rounded cap. However, in Ur III presentation scenes, while the figure of the king occupied the location where a traditional god should be depicted, the indicative horned crown was intentionally avoided and changed into the rounded cap typical of mortal rulers.

I. Winter identifies the symbolic meaning of vessel or cup held by the king as an emblem of royal power to combine divine sanction and access to the divine order with the exercise of power, given that vessel-like bowels in later periods were usually associated with both the god of justice (the sun-god) and divination.[360] Based on the royal attribute of this specific item, Winter further suggested that the relationship between the seated king and the "worshiper" figure in the religious sense should hold deeper political implications: the newly developed presentation scene in Ur III aims to articulate the significant role of the king within the bureaucratic and administrative system, while the seal owner is led to apprehend the king's pyramid position through his placement in this scene.[361] From a political perspective, P. Michalowski also suggested that the king may offer this vessel to his subordinates as a symbol of royal patronage and sovereignty, considering the textual references to the symbolic system of ceremonies in the form of ritualized gift exchange implying authority and hierarchy.[362] Regardless of the abandonment of the horned crown or the addition of hand-held vessels, it seems that the god-king's divinity is, if not less important, giving way to a mortal king's full range of political functions within the secular state. Therefore, instead of seeing these two changed attributes as a way to softening the king's boldness of that implicit claim to divinity, as suggested by A. Pitts,[363] the author of this thesis agrees

[360] Irene J. Winter, "The King and the Cup: Iconography of the Royal Presentation Scene on Ur III Seals", *Insight through Images: Studies in Honor of Edith Porada*, 1986, pp. 253-268.
[361] Ibid., p. 265.
[362] Piotr Michalowski, "The Drinking Gods: Alcohol in Mesopotamian Ritual and Mythology", in L. Milano (ed.), *Drinking in Ancient Societies: History and Culture of Drinks in the Ancient Near East*, HANE/S 6, Padova: Sargon srl, 1994, pp. 36-37.
[363] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, p. 60.

with Winter and Michalowski that the presentation scene should be perceived as official tokens of legitimacy and authority within the bureaucratic organization and administrative complexity. Considering that the king is represented on seals of his subordinates, especially high-level officials, it seems acceptable that his royal attributes as the political leader are amplified and focused.

In addition, special significance may be accorded to royal gift seals, the designation of a subgroup that had been presented personally by the king to his favored subordinates. These seals can be understood as an honor reserved for a select group of officials including members of the royal family, the king's representatives, rulers of provinces, and other royal servants. This type of seal was introduced by Šulgi, closely following his self-deification, and was continued among all his successors except for Amar-Suen. According to the analysis of R. Mayr and D. Owen, only 29 royal gift seals have been found so far, from which 18 dignitaries have been identified.[364] Compared to the highly-standardized presentation scene, the design of the royal gift seal is more flexible and slight variations can be seen, such as the depiction of a standing king (see figure 7), the absence of the introducing goddess (see figure 8), a vessel or background star (see figure 9, 10), indicating specific personalities of seal owners and their intimate relationship with the king. Three seal images with the representation of a standing king are worth mentioning here, one of which dates to Šulgi and two to Ibbi-Suen. The one given by Šulgi to his consort Geme-Ninlila depicts an extraordinary scene, in which the king is portrayed as a large figure in a long kilt of leopard skin, equipped with a triple lion-headed mace, as he ascends a mountain.[365] It seems likely that the standing king wears a short garment consisting of a cloth wrapped around his legs, the end of which he held over his forearm.[366] Given that the invention of the royal gift seal serves the king's intention to strengthen the bond with some of his intimate courtiers, the portrayal of the king on this seal may be assumed to have reflected his preferred self-image in a more personalized way. The above discussion of the king's images on cylinder seals

[364] Rudolf H. Mayr & David I. Owen, "The Royal Gift Seal in the Ur III period", HSAO 9, 2004, p. 155.
[365] Fs Pettinato 160, 167 02, 169 02.
[366] Rudolf H. Mayr & David. I. Owen, "The Royal Gift Seal in the Ur III period", HSAO 9, 2004, p. 151.

clearly shows that the Ur III divine king was very willing to present himself to his subordinates rather than remain mysterious, adjusting the image according to the object.

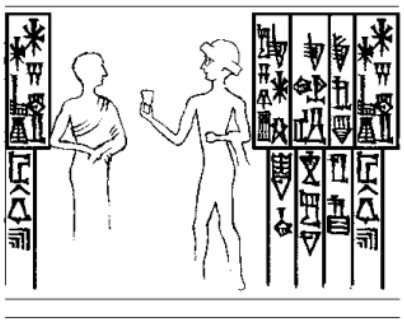

Figure 7. A royal gift seal of Ur-nigar[367]

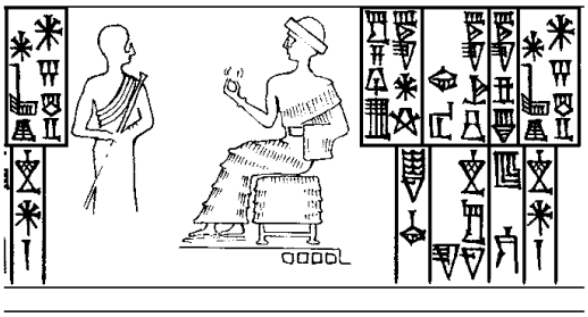

Figure 8. A royal gift seal of Arad-Nanna[368]

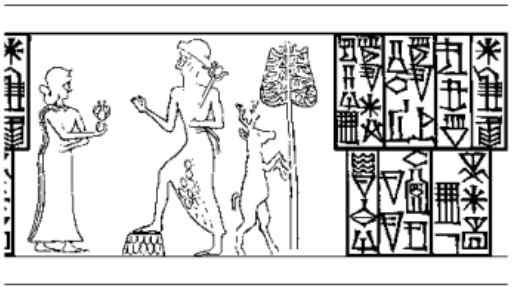

Figure 9. A royal gift seal of Geme-Ninlila[369]

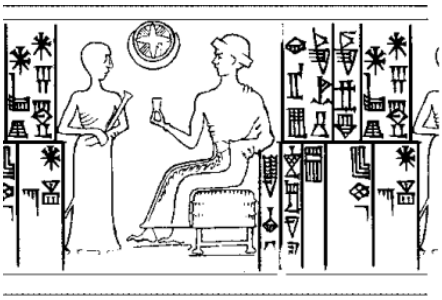

Figure 10. A royal gift seal of Ninlil-amamu[370]

III.2.2 Inconsistency Between Verbal and Visual Expressions

Based on the above analysis, visual and verbal media differed from one another in several aspects. For example, texts have richer expressions of ideal kingship, while images are easier to access, especially for illiterate subjects. On the one hand, royal hymns strive to blur the boundary between kings and gods, on the other hand, visual images seem to consciously distinguish them. “Royal servant type” and “royal gift type” cylinder seals containing both the king’s name qualified by the divine determinative and the portrait of the king as the mortal ruler is a prominent manifestation of this discrepancy. Apart from the relative lack of visual materials, the reason why this inconsistency occurs must be discussed. Given that written texts represented by royal

[367] Rudolf H. Mayr & David. I. Owen, “The Royal Gift Seal in the Ur III period”, HSAO 9, 2004, p. 168, fig. 25.
[368] Ibid., p. 167, fig. 13.
[369] Rudolf H. Mayr & David. I. Owen, “The Royal Gift Seal in the Ur III period”, HSAO 9, 2004, p. 167, fig. 2.
[370] Ibid., p. 168, fig. 19.

hymns spare no effort to glorify the deified king to build a novel royal ideology, the question is also to ask how and to what degree this ideological reformation of Ur III kings affected their visual representation?

It is generally assumed that sculptural images were much more conservative than verbal description and reflected traditional sacred rather than divine kingship.[371] Based on acknowledging this, I. Winter suggests that this may reflect control over different media to keep the relationship between the ruler and gods within bounds of appropriate decorum. If the influence factor of potential audience and communication goals is considered, whether they were the gods or the viewing public, Winter proposes that visual media may be deployed differently from verbal media, serving as carefully choreographed strategies within a single socio-cultural-political system. Furthermore, she concludes that "the apparent association between political strategies of control and worship of the deified king in Ur III strengthens the hypothesis of fusion between the political and the religious in the elevation of the ruler to the status of divine and the ensuing cultic activities surrounding the person of the ruler".[372]

However, C. Suter suggested a reappraisal towards Ur III kings in images.[373] She doubted the conservation of visual media and put more emphasis on the similarity of both media and the same aim they serve for. According to her, the visual and verbal official representation of the king are both issued by the crown and must reflect the same royal ideology, whose target groups are no more than contemporaries, posterity, and deities, if only rhetorically. Although few monuments remain, they also vary in focus, with foundation figurines aimed for future kings, statues and stelae aimed for domestic subjects, rock-reliefs aimed for inhabitants of conquered regions, and seals aimed for state officials, which is the same for verbal media. Her conclusion that "the visual representation of Ur III kings was as much in line with their ideological reformations as other forms of royal self-representation" is valid. However, her other opinion that "although visual images could hardly fuse king and god, they blurred

[371] Irene J. Winter, "Touched by the Gods: Visual Evidence for the Divine Status of Rulers in the Ancient Near East", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 77-79.
[372] Ibid., p. 79.
[373] Claudia E. Suter, "Ur III Kings in Images: A Reappraisal", *Your Praise is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy Black from Students, Colleagues and Friends*, 2010, pp. 319-349.

boundaries between them in other ways" is not as convincing.[374] Both attributes changed deliberately by the king in his portrait on seal scene, as discussed above, the round cap and vessel, are not used to blur the boundary but rather highlight their differences. The purpose of doing so may not only be to emphasize the difference between Ur III kings and gods, but also as an intentional act to distinguish them from divine Naram-Sin. Ur III kings were careful to not show themselves as divine in the same way and to the same degree as Naram-Sin – hence it was a more 'modest' kind of divinity. After all, Naram-Sin took things to all. According to Ur III literature, the fall of the Akkad Dynasty was the result of Naram-Sin's deification, which displeased the gods and brought disaster. In addition, Ur III kings were more careful to use imagery appropriate to the contexts, institutions and traditions – so royal authority had to be clearly shown as being invested by deities and not originating in the divinity of the king; whereas in ritual and offering contexts it was acceptable to emphasize the king's divinity.

Both Winter and Suter's views are instructive, and the author integrates part of their views. The author agrees with Suter that verbal and visual media should have worked for the same aim to establish a novel ideology towards the emerging divine king, but this does not mean that they should be fully synchronized and consistent. As pointed out by Winter, verbal and visual images belong to different strategies and hold different emphasis, and it is reasonable for them to develop differently. Based on acknowledging their difference, the author prefers not to compare the radical with the conservative features of both media, but rather, emphasizes the political and religious spheres they are associated with. Even if from Šulgi onwards, the kings of Ur III all adopted the practice of self-deification and claimed divinity, they did not transform into god-beings completely. They still lived in the secular world and remained responsible for the wellbeing of their subjects and the prosperity of the country. This is very similar to the situation of Gilgameš, the prototypical king, who was two-thirds god and one-third human. Following the example of Gilgameš, it is reasonable for Ur III kings to

[374] Ibid., pp. 347-349.

preserve their human natures.[375]

From there, the deliberate depiction of a mortal king can be seen as provoking the human side of the king in person. Although the god-king exercised power over his subjects, he was not a full god and always remained beneath the true gods. This links back to the opinion that it is the office of kingship that was deified, rather than the king himself. Becoming a god undoubtedly elevates the king's status and strengthens his authority, but gods do not directly interfere in secular affairs. The sharing of both divine and human natures enables the god-king to deal with politics and religious affairs more flexibly and effectively, and eliminate the displeasing reality that he is mortal and doomed to die. The death of a king was a taboo subject in ancient Mesopotamia. Therefore, the incongruence of verbal and visual presentations of the divine king are beyond this strategic consideration, dealing with the partly human and partly divine nature of the king, as well as both political and religious concerns.

III.3 Conclusion

The self-deification of Ur III kings during their lifetimes was a deliberate strategy, based on both the experience of Naram-Sin and the imitation of existing gods. The divinity of Ur III kings was first reflected in the divine determinative prefixed before their names, the new royal titles, and the literary descriptions of their divine parentage and superhuman powers. Claiming divine patronage is common among ancient Mesopotamian rulers, but the innovation of Ur III kings was their adaptation of the hymn form to praise themselves. Their new status of godhood was no mere rhetorical device written in royal hymns, but rather, it was crafted through various cults performed both in temples and on public display. The existing template of traditional gods was used as a reference to build the god-kings' own statues, temples, and cults, and the designation of the gods' junior wife was adopted to name royal wives. Little is known about the treatment of a deceased god-king, and only one text refers to Šulgi's ascension

[375] Nicole Brisch, "Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), P. 43; Tyson L. Putthoff, *Gods and Humans in the Ancient Near East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, pp. 80-83.

to heaven, which may imply his catasterism.

Ur III deified kings also managed to expand their divinity to broader swathes of the population, rather than remaining limited to elite and literate classes. In addition to the emulation of the traditional cult model, Ur III god-kings exerted deliberate efforts to publicize their godhood by conducting lavish ritual activities or festivals on public squares, which were generally accompanied by the free distribution of food and various types of entertainment. While attracting as many viewers as possible, the king inevitably lost his mystique and likely also gained awe as the supreme authority of the kingdom while maximally displaying his divinity to his subjects. Combined with the discussion presented in the previous chapter, the tradition of small city-states in the ED period made it difficult for rulers to remain mysterious, and this influence may have been present all along. Mystery does not seem to be a problem for god-kings of Ur, given that the king's mortal body and his cult statue are attested to appear simultaneously before the public.[376] Far from worrying about being exposed to the public as a mere mortal, the kings seemed intent on forging a dual identity encompassing both human and divine aspects, which may be reflected in the seal impressions of depicting the king as mortal ruler. This kind of preserved part of humanity may also help to solve the problem that the deified king will also die.

[376] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 123-124, 225.

Chapter IV: Manifestation of Divine Kingship in Shang Dynasty

As for the study of divine kingship in Sinology, scholars are less bothered by definitions and concepts, because the divinity was only adopted by Shang kings and, thereafter, completely vanished. God-kings undoubtedly existed in the Shang Dynasty; this phenomenon is often used as background knowledge when studying the political and religious issues of this period, and Shang god-kings are also seen as a key component in a state formation process.[377] However, this does not mean that a definition is unnecessary. On the contrary, some marked characteristics should be given to the Shang god-kings, including: 1) the usage of royal titles embodying supreme power; 2) monopoly of the communication of the divine world via cult, sacrifice and divination; 3) emphasis on ancestor worship; 4) the elevated status of royal women and ancestral gods; 5) palace-temple remains and burial objects; 6) divine kingship implied by the bronze ritual vessel ding (鼎); 7) the animal motif on bronze that ensured the god-king's unimpeded access to heaven.

In the discussion of the Shang divine kingship, more interpretations will be made regarding the overall image of the kings, rather than the specific image of each king, as the Ur III Dynasty did. This is partly due to the fact that the Shang king showed little personal character, partly due to the lack of written materials, which is not surprising, considering that most of the oracle inscriptions dated to the last nine kings. In addition, since the Shang is used as a counterpart, a comparison with Ur III will be conducted under each relevant topic.

IV.1 Shang Divine Kings in Written Materials

The Shang was the first Chinese dynasty to leave written sources. The capital of

[377] See for example, Li Min, *Conquest, Concord, and Consumption: Becoming Shang in Eastern China*, 2008, p. 4; Wang Zhenzhong, Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, p. 469-470.

Late Shang, the Anyang site, as well as other sites, have produced approximately 160,000 pieces of so-called oracle inscriptions. These were characterized as divinations and offer critical insights into the political, economic, social and religious issues of the Shang Dynasty. However, the recovered inscriptions, which are indeed valuable sources of information, primarily relate to the reigns of the last nine Shang kings, covering only the period from Wu Ding, the twenty-first king, to the last king, Di Xin. Therefore, in order to investigate the representation of early Shang kings, classical texts from later generations will also be taken into account.

IV.1.1 Temple Name and Royal Title

The designations of the Shang king, as they appear in the oracle inscriptions, can be roughly divided into three categories. The first category comprises the temple names employed by living kings to confer with their ancestors and ancestresses as a posthumous ritual title. The second category relates to the appellations of kinship, such as Father Yi (父乙) and Brother Xin (兄辛). The third category contains the original names of Shang kings during their lifetime. The first two are well attested in oracles and later texts. However, only five personal names of living Shang kings are known to us so far, since the use of the king's personal name was taboo, not only during his lifetime, but even during his dynasty.[378]

It is generally the temple name by which the Shang kings are known to posterity. The deceased members of the royal family were given a temple name shortly after they had passed away. The temple name might combine either a kin term (like "father" or "ancestor") or other descriptive prefixes (like "big, great" and "small, lesser") with a "heavenly stem" (天干) suffix. The selection of the suffix has religious significance and structures ancestral cults, since the royal ancestors would receive offerings on the day of their temple name.[379] The Shang combined a series of ten "heavenly stems" with

[378] Chao Fulin, "Yinxu buci zhong de Shangwang Minghao yu Shangdai Wangquan" (Shang Royal title and kingship in Oracle inscription of Yin Ruins), *Historical Research* 5 (1986), pp. 140-153.
[379] David Keightley, "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty", *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, 1999, pp. 249-251.

another series of twelve "earthly branches" (地支) to name their days. This made up a repeating six-week cycle of sixty days, with each week having ten days. The sexagenary cycle of a calendar with astrological implications was used later for the marking of hours, months and years. This sexagenary cycle is thought to have had an impact on human destiny as well, with the hour, day, month and year of a person's birth determining his or her fate.

In the oracle bone inscriptions, the Shang king is frequently referred to in the third person, along the lines of: "the king said", "the divination of the king," etc. The appellation exclusive to supreme Shang rulers is "king" (王). This finding is also confirmed by *Shiji* and other classical texts produced by later generations. From the glyph point of view, the Chinese character "王" originated in the shape of the battle axe, implying that kingship derived from the power and force of military command.[380]

Apart from the direct designation of the king, the royal title "common rulers of all under heaven" is well attested to in oracle inscriptions. Rather than being centralized, Shang was a unified dynastic state; the state structure was composed of the inner domains or the kingdom itself and the outer domains, or the minor states. Therefore, from the perspective of political territory, the term "all under heaven" in the Shang state denominated the outer territories of vassal states, the kingdom and its inner domains, and the court bureaucracy.[381] On the other hand, from a cosmological point of view, in ancient China, the term "under heaven" (天下) was an epistemological phrase used to describe the world as a territorial-cum-celestial totality, with the image of a square earth under a round heaven. Later historiographic tradition attributes the introduction of the title "common ruler of all under heaven" to Xia kings, who documented for the first time the great unity "under heaven." During Shang's reign, the cosmography of "under

[380] Wang Zhenzhong, "The Emergence of Kingship in China: With a Discussion of the Relationship between Kingship and Composite State Structure in the Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties", *Social Sciences in China* 39/2 (2018), pp. 13-15. For other suggestions towards the etymological origins of 王, see also Julia Ching, "Son of Heaven: Sacral Kingship in Ancient China." *T'oung Pao* 83.1/3 (1997), pp. 14-15.

[381] Wang Zhenzhong ("Lun Shangdai Fuhezhi Guojia Jiegou" (Discussion on the Composite State Structure in Shang Dynasty), *Journal of Chinese Historical Studies* 3, 2012: 31-46) has defined the structure of the Three Dynasties (Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasty) as different development stages of the "composite state."

heaven" was built around Central Shang or the Great Settlement of Shang; in both, the kingdom and Shang kings were imagined as the centers of the world.[382] Though the spheres of control of Shang kings were restricted to the lower Yellow River valley, they nevertheless claimed to have universal domination (just like the "king of the four quarters" in Ur III). Thus, the supremacy of kingship became a cosmic force to maintain effective rule over outer domains.

The Shang kings also referred to themselves as "I, the one man" (余一人) in as many as 36 oracle inscriptions. Traditionally, Chinese scholars tend to view this title as a reflection of Shang kings' supremacy, overweening and autocracy; a king overlooked all his subjects with extreme arrogance.[383] More recently, some scholars have reconsidered all references to this title in their contexts and proposed different arguments. Grammatically, this self-assumed title is simply the first person singular pronoun "I" followed by an apposition applying to males of any rank (人).[384] In terms of function, this title was used on four specific occasions. First, under the premise of "fault" or anomalies, any inquiry made through divination asked whether this would bring disaster to "I, the one man" (up to 27 examples). Second, when offering sacrifices to ancestors, an inquiry was made through divination to ask if there were any concerns and faults on the side of "I, the one man" (three examples); Third, in specific events (mostly foreign conquests), divination was conducted to discover the relationship between others and "I, the one man" (five examples). Fourth, when "I, the one man" and the diviner divined separately, but the results were different, divination was conducted on the basis of whose result should not be adopted (only one example). In all cases, the title was used to ask for divine help through divination when the king was in trouble (anomalies implied bad governance) or when the king was challenged.[385] In

[382] Wang Mingming, "All under heaven (tianxai) Cosmological perspectives and political ontologies in pre-modern China." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2/1 (2012), pp. 340-342.
[383] See for example Hu Houxuan, "Shi 'Yuyiren'" (Interpretation of "Yuyiren"), *Historical Research* 1 (1957), pp. 75-78; Hu, Houxuan, "Chonglun 'Yuyiren'" (Reconsider of "Yuyiren"), *Palaeography Research* 6 (1981), pp. 15-33.
[384] Paul Wheatley, *The Pivot of the Four Quarters. A Preliminary Enquiry into the Origins of the Character of the Ancient Chinese City*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1971, p. 52.
[385] For detailed discussion of all these references and cases, see Ning Zhenjiang, "Ye Lun 'Yuyiren' Wenti" (On "Yuyiren"), *Historical Research* 2 (2018), pp. 169-179.

the face of supernatural forces, Shang kings were more likely to show humility, piety, and concern than arrogance. Therefore, this title of "I, the one man" was more likely to highlight the king's loneliness and difficulty in terms of wielding royal power and responsibility, and in the meantime served to reinforce the notion of the king as the sole mediator between heaven and earth.[386]

Royal titles in the Shang Dynasty did not seem to transform with the change of king and the development of the kingship. During early Shang, royal power was restricted by theocracy (represented by the diviner group coming from notable lineages), and by clan power. Then, by Late Shang, theocracy and clan power were integrated into the strengthened kingship.[387] The designation "king" and the title "common rulers of all under heaven" showed no sign of diachronic change. It has been suggested that "the one man" was used in early Shang and developed into the appositive structure "I, the one man" in Late Shang.[388] However, the existing materials do not and cannot support this suggestion as "I, the one man" also appeared in early oracle inscriptions. The difference between the two titles lies in the fact that the former describes how others addressed the king, while the latter was the king's self-reference.

Finally, one concept and expression worth noting is that of "the four quarters" (四方) in Shang, though this was not directly used in the royal title. In Shang oracle inscriptions, the term 方 primarily referred to a concept within political geography. This term designated "others", namely alien polities, sometimes hostile or unknown others, as being opposed to "us", the Shang state. Thus, this term was also translated by D. Keightley as "side, border, country or region", indicating a periphery defining the political center of Shang.[389] When combined with the number "four", this term took

[386] Ning Zhenjiang, "Ye Lun 'Yuyiren' Wenti" (On "Yuyiren"), *Historical Research* 2 (2018), pp. 175-177. Similar opinions can also be found in Julia Ching, "Son of Heaven: Sacral Kingship in Ancient China." *T'oung Pao* 83.1/3 (1997), p.15; Li Xiangping, "Chongshi 'Yuyiren'" (Reinterpretation of "Yuyiren"), *Archaeology and Cultural Relics* 1 (2003), p. 84.

[387] Chao Fulin, "Shilun Yindai de Wangquan yu Shenquan" (Kingship and Theocracy in Yin Dynasty), *Social Science Front* 4 (1984), pp. 96-102.

[388] Hu Houxuan, "Shi 'Yuyiren'" (Interpretation of "Yuyiren"), *Historical Research* 1 (1957), pp. 75-78; Hu Houxuan, "Chonglun 'Yuyiren'" (Reconsider of "Yuyiren"), *Palaeography Research* 6 (1981), pp. 15-33.

[389] David Keightley, "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty," *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, 1999, p. 269; see also Song Zhenhao, *Shangdai Shi Lungang* (Outline of History in Shang Dynasty), 2011, pp. 5-9.

the form of "the four quarters" acquiring a cosmological meaning which embodied political domains as well as spiritual lands. As reflected in the oracle bone inscriptions, the world was thought to be square, and each direction may have had its own symbolic color, as well as its own god with a specific name. The winds that blow from the four directions are the agents of the supreme god Di; the countries outside the kingdom are also divided into four directional classes. The "four quarters" term also functioned as a primary structure for political and ritual action, through which the Shang kings could monopolize the communication with supernatural powers. That communication took place through sacrificial rites with the assistance of the king's ancestors' spirits and the diviners.[390] That is to say, the Shang world was defined in three dimensions by "the four quarters"; the political and geographical center were defined by the boundary marker, and "the ritual-cosmological center of the royal ancestral lines was defined by the lineage of the others".[391]

In contrast to the royal title "king of the four quarters" borne by Ur III kings, the concept of "the four quarters" was cosmological in Shang thinking and had artistic expressions in architectural composition and bronze making, all of which will be discussed later. Although not directly used for the royal title, the abundant oracle inscriptions referring to the four quarters reveal the belief that such a cosmos extends throughout space, axially and diagonally in four directions, with the divine king standing firmly at the center (see Figure 11).[392]

[390] Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, 2000, pp. 29-37.
[391] Ibid., p. 46.
[392] Elizabeth Childs-Johnson, "Shang Sifang (Four-directional) Cosmology", in School of History and Culture, Henan University (ed.), *The Collected Papers of the International Conference for Commemorating Prof. Zuoyun Sun's 100th Birthday*, Zhengzhou: Henan University Press, 2014, pp. 167-185.

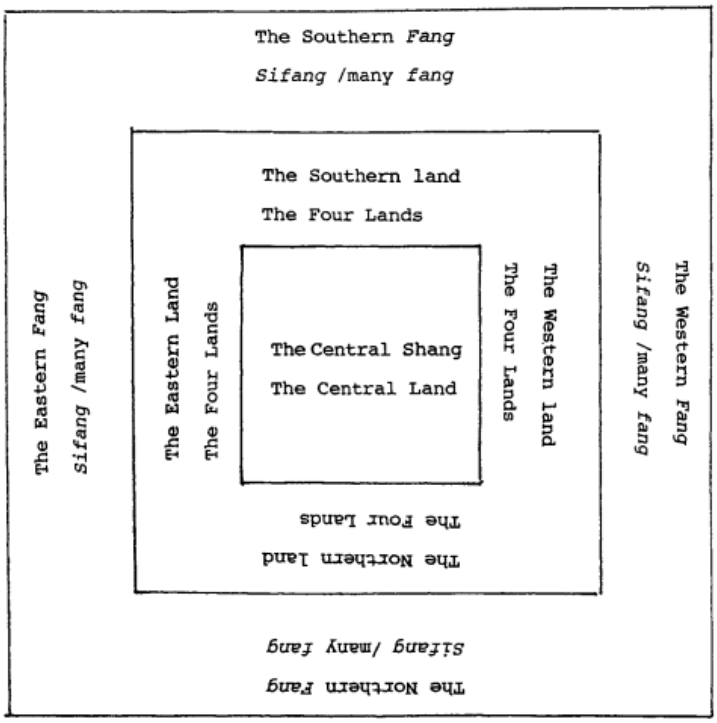

Figure 11. The Shang conception of political geography[393]

IV.1.2 Superhuman Ability in Oracle Inscriptions and Classical Texts

The political landscape of prehistoric China was dotted with thousands of discrete clans and lineages, each of which claimed divine descent and had its own myth of ancestral birth. According to the founding myth of the Shang described in *Shiji*, Jian Di, the second wife of the emperor Di Ku, swallowed an egg dropped by a black bird and subsequently miraculously gave birth to Qi. He is said to have helped Yu the Great (founder of Xia) to control the flood, and for his service Qi was granted a place called Shang as a fief, which in turn was the birthplace of the later Shang state. This myth well reflects the origin of the Shang Dynasty and its succession relationship with the Xia Dynasty.

The oracle and bronze inscriptions reveal that the Shang clan in ancient times took the blackbird as its totem. As one of the oldest religious cults, totem worship was the origin of the Shang religion, which initially combined the worship of the blackbird with

[393] Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, 2000, p. 27, fig. 2.1.

the worship of ancestors.[394] The basic features of the black bird are black feathers mixed with red, a short tail, and a crown on the male's head. However, there is no agreement on which actual bird this refers to in nature. There are several speculations about the type of bird, including the phoenix, the swallow and the owl, but none of them are entirely consistent with the ancient records.[395] Ancient Chinese clans tended to trace their origins to sacred species, usually animals, rather than declaring themselves directly descended from gods. The royal appellation of the "Son of Heaven" first appeared in the Zhou Dynasty. If we make a quick comparison with the case in ancient Sumer, we may find that, from the time of the ED period, it was traditional for rulers to claim divine parentage. The chosen god was either the city-god or a god with a special connection to the king.

The records about the Shang god-king can be found in both Shang oracle bone inscriptions and in classical documents from later generations. As previously mentioned, the Shang king was very likely to be the head shaman, and this is probably where his divinity came from. A myth "severance of heaven-earth communication", recorded in *Guoyu,* provides a key insight into the central role of shamanism in ancient Chinese politics. According to the myth, all human wisdom on earth came from heaven. However, as heaven had been severed from earth, men and spirits did not intermingle; only those who controlled the access had the wisdom. The possessors of such powers in Shang were 覡 (shamans) and 巫 (shamanesses). As the head of heaven-earth communicators, the Shang king sometimes performed divination, or inquired about divine will by himself; only he possessed the ability to prognosticate. The statements in oracle inscriptions that "the king made the prognostication that ..." include prognostications in many areas, such as weather, the border regions, dreams, misfortunes or diseases.[396] The inscriptions make it clear that the divination in Shang were inquiries directed to spirits of departed ancestors or gods, with the diviner serving as an intermediary. Even the oracle bones or blade bones of the ox were considered to

394 Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai Zongjiao Jisi* (Religion and Sacrifice in Shang Dynasty), 2010, p. 25.
395 Ibid., pp. 22-24
396 Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 45-47.

be sacred items.

Another piece of evidence that shows the king's direct communication with the god is mainly reflected in oracle inscriptions by the word bin (宾). This word usually means to receive as a guest or, in later classical texts, to be a guest. When the word appears in oracle inscriptions, it is often placed between the king and the name of a specific ancestor or the supreme god Di. Thus, the phrase could be interpreted literally as "the king receives as a guest a specific ancestor or Di". However, it seems more likely that the Shang king called upon and met with the spirit of a long-departed ancestor or Di. The descent of the spirits (or the ascent of the king) and details about what happened during the meeting are unknown, but there was a Shang ritual that made this kind of reception possible, presumably with the assistance of some middleman and alcoholic drinks.[397] The Shang people have often been associated with the consumption of alcohol, which is reflected in the fact that many Shang bronzes were drinking vessels.[398] Also, the intermediary agents that helped shamans reach the divine world were usually animals, some of which exist in reality, while some are legendary creatures, like the dragon. Records about the emperor riding the dragon in ancient texts are not rare, especially in texts relating to the Three Emperors and Five Sovereigns. In *Shan Haijing*, there is a record of Qi, the son of Yu the Great, and the second king of the Xia Dynasty. Qi went up to visit heaven three times by riding two dragons. When he returned, he brought the music of heaven to earth for his own enjoyment, so the world began to have music.[399] The role of animal mediators in the Shang Dynasty will be discussed later, in the section on animal motifs decorated on bronzes.

Many of the words and deeds of the Shang kings were recorded in the *Shiji*. According to the record, Tang, the founder of Shang, was a man of great benevolence, being not only kind to his people, but also to wild animals. It is said that he opened the hunting net on all sides so that the wild animals could escape, but the beasts were grateful for his kindness and entered the net voluntarily. Tang once jumped into a fire

[397] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 54-55.
[398] Robert L. Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age*, 2006, p. 194.
[399] Yu Yongjiu & Chen Lizhu, "*Shan Hai Jing* 'Kai Shang San Pin Yu Tian' Xinjie" (New Interpretation on 'Kai Shang San Pin Yu Tian' of *Shan Hai Jing*), *Jiang-huai Tribune* 1 (2006), pp. 180-183.

to perform a ritual, praying for rain to end a drought. Tang survived unscathed when the rain came in time. Other oracle inscriptions also describe the Shang kings dancing to pray for rain. According to *Shangshu*, on his way to vanquish the Xia Dynasty under its last monarch Jie, Tang made a speech to his army. In the speech, Tang enumerated all of Jie's guilty deeds and claimed his expedition was based on a mandate from heaven. The doctrine of the mandate from heaven was prevalent in the Zhou Dynasty and could only be used as circumstantial evidence of the divinity of the Shang king.

To sum up, compared with the Ur III royal hymns dedicated to praising the god-king, Shang records of the king are limited to divination inscriptions. These records lack rich detail and vivid literary description. Given that the operation of the divination, as well as the explanation, record and preservation of the results were performed by diviners and certain officials in court, only a few professionals could have had access to the oracle inscriptions and even sometimes, to the king in person. Therefore, Shang kings are presented as a vague overall image to us, with no identifiable personality.[400] Later texts on the retrospection of Shang kings add more details, but those texts are inevitably influenced by the writer's thoughts and the popular trend at that time. According to later descriptions, it is interesting to note that the divinity of the king was diminishing over time; concerns about the king's virtues as a mortal ruler were also growing. The legendary emperors in prehistoric periods had the most powerful divinity. Many of them, and even their courtiers, went on to achieve great careers, including but not limited to the invention of husbandry, writing and the astronomical calendar. By the time of the Xia Dynasty, the most powerful example of the king's superhuman power was Yu's control of flooding. With the replacement of Xia by Shang, the divine kingship was mainly expressed in texts by the king's role as the head shaman, one who has the ability to communicate with ancestral spirits and heaven via divination and certain rituals. The remaining divinity of the Shang king disappeared completely in the succeeding Zhou Dynasty.

[400] According to David Keightley (*These Bones Shall Rise Again: Selected Writings on Early China*, 2014:75), the emphasis on the group rather than the individual is one of the strategic cultural features in early Chinese, which is reflected by the "impersonality and generality of artistic and literary representation."

IV.1.3 Cult, Sacrifice and Divination of the Divine King

Different from the ancient Sumerian cult, which was centered on statues and performed within temples or outdoors, the cult in Shang was both a lineage and a political matter, with more aspects and content. The belief system of the Shang cult defines the characteristics of the civilization, and also dictates the status and relationships within the whole of society via the royal cult and family cults of non-royal lineages. Therefore, one can safely say that the Shang royal cult held the whole of society together.[401] Shang religious rituals featured sacrifice and divination, both of which were the king's communication channels with the divine world.

In the Shang Dynasty, the main body of sacrifice consisted of nature's powers and ancestral spirits. As revealed by the oracle inscriptions, the Shang believed that the occurrence and extent of many natural phenomena were controlled by the supreme god Di, whose will was carried out by his five important envoys (the gods of wind, clouds, rain, the sun and the four quarters) and other minor deities, such as the river or mountain powers. As mentioned before, the will of Di could only be predicted through divination, not intervened. As such, people could only offer sacrifices to his five messengers and ask them to meet their demands. The relationship between Di and his subordinates in the heavenly court could be a projection of the monarch-subject relationship in the royal court on earth.[402] Among the envoys, the gods of the four quarters (including the gods of the east, south, west and north) were paid more attention than the others; mostly human victims (or sometimes large animals and large amounts of small animals) were offered for their sacrifice.[403] Deities relied on offerings to fulfill their responsibility of controlling the climatic conditions closely related to agricultural production. The more powerful the deity was, the more sacrifices he required.

Natural gods of climate were, of course, very important to an agricultural society like the Shang, but ancestral gods enjoyed more abundant, frequent, and ceremonious

[401] Robert L. Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age*, 2006, p. 172.
[402] Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai Zongjiao Jisi* (Religion and Sacrifice in Shang Dynasty), 2010, p. 87.
[403] Ibid., p. 115, pp. 542-543.

sacrifices. Ancestor worship in Shang has the following six characteristics:[404] 1) The Shang placed special emphasis on ancestor worship, which is reflected by the fact that the number of oracles on ancestor worship exceeds those of any other category. Even in Late Shang, the worship of nature gods almost ceased and disappeared in oracle inscriptions, indicating an increasing belief in the majesty of ancestral powers. 2) The Shang always committed to tracing remote or original ancestors in the legendary period (classified as the Former Lords (先公) and pre-dynastic ancestors in inscriptions) and expanding the scope of ancestor worship to the greatest extent. 3) Female ancestors occupied a prominent position in sacrificial rites. 4) A huge number of livestock, as well as human victims, were used in the rather grand sacrificial ceremony. 5) Ancestors were divided into groups for sacrifice, in case of omission. 6) Not only royal ancestors, but also non-royal ancestors (and even ancestors of some tribes from different clans) were worshiped, which was conducive to enhancing national and social cohesion.

In addition, another feature worth mentioning is that the worship of Shang ancestors shows a hierarchy that is based on seniority. The more remote an ancestor was, the more powerful he was and the more elaborate the sacrifices he enjoyed.[405] The merit of an ancestor and his immediate or collateral kin relationship with the king also influenced the frequency and amount of the sacrifices. Relatively junior ancestors were more concerned with the king's or the royal member's personal activities, such as the hunts, dreams or childbirth. It was thought that a recently deceased ancestor may harass the mortals, bringing bad luck or illness to the king or other members of the royal family. Once that happened, it was necessary to determine which ancestor was causing trouble through divination, and then appease him through offerings. Distant ancestors, who were at a distance from the real world, usually no longer acted as individuals, but became dehumanized and abstract as a group of ancestral spirits. These ancestors were

[404] Chao Fulin, "Lun Yindai Shenquan" (Discussions on the Divine Power of Shang Dynasty), *Social Sciences in China* 1 (1990), pp. 100-102.

[405] David Keightley, "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty," *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, 1999, p. 247, 253-255; Chang Yuzhi, *Shangdai Zongjiao Jisi* (Religion and Sacrifice in Shang Dynasty), 2010, p. 173, 344-345. The hierarchy based on seniority has also been demonstrated by David Keightley (*These Bones Shall Rise Again: Selected Writings on Early China*, 2014:90-91) as a sense of "generationalism", a word to describe "the hierarchy of power based on the relative age of generations".

usually asked to deal with larger or dynastic topics, like harvests, enemy invasions, or victory in battle.[406] This hierarchical management of ancestors may have had an impact on later generations, as is reflected in the myths of legendary kings from prehistoric times. As mentioned before, in the Three Emperors and Five Sovereigns periods, the more remote a ruler was, the more divinity he had.

The royal ancestors acted as intermediaries on the king's behalf, to communicate with the divine sphere. The ancestral gods had powers almost comparable to those of the five envoys of Di, or even Di himself. They were able to ascend and descend freely, bringing down blessings or ill fortune on Shang. What is more, these ancestors had intimate kin relationships with the royal lineage, and their spirits were accessible to the king, via dreams or religious rites. That is to say, the king had the divine power to exert influence on the wellbeing of the whole state and population through the assistance of the ancestral gods. Regular divination of sacrificial obligations to the ancestors was the main content of Shang ritual practices and developed into a complex system from the reign of Wu Ding.[407] The auspicious time for sacrifices would be divined in advance, as well as the kind, quantity or presentation order of the offerings being provided to the ancestors. By ensuring that sacrifices were offered in a manner approved of by the ancestors, the ancestral gods would fulfill the king's demands and grant prosperity to all his people and lands.

The Shang kings communicated with their ancestors through divination. The oracular activity was usually performed by a large number of religious officials at the royal court, under the king's direct supervision. In simple terms, Shang divination entails heating the shoulder blades of animals (cattle, water buffalo and turtle shells) and interpreting the resultant cracks. The king would bring his question to the diviner, or more often the question was asked through a mediating "inquirer". The outcome would be interpreted by a "prognosticator", a role which the diviner himself could have taken on, but which the king himself often performed. The content of questions included the king's seeking of the ancestors' confirmation or approval before taking actions

[406] David Keightley, *These Bones Shall Rise Again: Selected Writings on Early China*, 2014, p. 91.
[407] Robert L. Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age*, 2006, p. 184.

(such as building a new town, waging a war, hunting or traveling), asking for his fortune, and explaining dreams or reasons of illness. The activity of divination probably involved some degree of magic-making and spell-casting; the king's ability to turn the good results of divination into reality rendered him more potent politically and more divine religiously. As for the bad omens that appeared in divination, only the king was capable of dissipating the curses of ancestors and removing the evil they had inflicted. With the kings' monopoly of divination in Late Shang, the monarch himself became absolutely correct diviners and the ancestor spirits were consulted only in form.

In comparison with the statues used to commemorate Ur III dead or living kings, Shang royal ancestors were symbolized and commemorated by the Spirit Tablet (神主), which was housed in ancestral temples. The belief at the time was that the dead would return to the tablets when receiving offerings.[408] The Spirit Tablet in the Shang Dynasty was usually made of wood or stone, appearing in oracle inscriptions as 宝 (the attachment of a spirit to an object) or 祏 (the attachment of a spirit to a human).[409] The Shang Spirit Tablet has a similar function as the Ur III royal statue, but it may also reveal a kind of depersonalization of the ancestors, through which the dead lost individual traits, became abstract and then got into the system of the collective ancestral pantheon.[410] Therefore, there were no religious rituals involving the statues or the priests responsible for their daily maintenance, as there were in Ur III. In Shang, the priests as a group may not have distinguished between administrators and support staff; the king was also ultimately responsible for maintaining relationships with the ancestors and the supernatural. The Shang king himself was believed to have been the head shaman, combining political and religious power. As a result, there was an unlikely existence of serious competition between religious personnel and secular rulers.[411] Though, in the early period of Shang, the diviner group (from elite lineages or previous

[408] David Keightley, "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty", *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, 1999, pp. 257-258.
[409] Chao Fulin, "Xianqin Shehui Zuigao Quanli de Bianqian ji qi Yingxiang Yinsu" (The Transition of Supreme Power in Pre-Qin Society and Its Determinants), *Social Sciences in China* 2 (2015), pp. 185-186.
[410] David Keightley, *These Bones Shall Rise Again: Selected Writings on Early China*, 2014, p. 91.
[411] Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 2003, p. 521.

clan leaders) might limit the king's exercise of power to some extent, which remained at the level of political games. In Late Shang, the king monopolized the divination and gradually got rid of their constraints. By comparison, Ur III kings' struggles with the priest class were far more difficult; they even claimed divinity for themselves.

In the above divine context, the fundamental source of a Shang king's superhuman power derived from his intimate relationship to ancestor gods, and that power was increasingly reinforced by the accumulated generations of royal descendants. Distinguished as the highest-ranking member of the main line of the royal lineage, the Shang king was endowed with indisputable genealogical superiority and ritual power. All power emanated from and centered on the king; he was the only channel to appeal for ancestral blessing and assistance, and further intervene in the acts of natural powers or even the supreme god. Shang ancestor worship stressed the royal lineage as the core of the state and a source of authority. The royal descendants could draw strength from their lineage, and in the meantime, their primary obligation was to consolidate and continue the lineage. The deceased king, the ruling king, and the main line of those kings' heirs who had a legitimate right to the throne, formed an unbroken lineage, connecting the secular and divine sphere through the practice of royal cults. Thus, death became a kind of promotion in the generational hierarchy, because it was felt that a new ancestor was more powerful than the living king, who himself would ultimately join the divine family and became increasingly venerated over time.[412]

In Shang, much of the routine cult rituals were conducted in enclosed areas, like the temple or other specific sacrificial sites; the rituals were also conducted without public participation. The extravagant religious festivals that aimed to attract large numbers of people in Ur III did not seem to exist in Shang. Although at various times of the year, the king would make annual trips from the palace to go on patrol or hunt, he was also under heavy security. This made it difficult for ordinary people to see him in person. This physical isolation, deliberately created and maintained, should have contributed to the mystique of the king. To the common people living on vast frontiers,

[412] David Keightley, *These Bones Shall Rise Again: Selected Writings on Early China*, 2014, pp. 90-91.

the king was inaccessible, but he could provide them with protection. In effect, the feeling was that the king should be nothing but a true god.[413]

In both ancient Sumer and China, political thought and ideology tended to be religious in nature or have religious overtones. The rulers sought to connect themselves to an immutable divine order, and this is where the differences arise. The Ur III kings became gods walking on earth by imitating the worship of gods, making statues of themselves, building temples and accepting offerings. By comparison, the Shang kings devoted themselves to developing ancestor worship and creating a royal lineage that monopolized communication with the divine world. Therefore, the kings and their offices had attributes of both secular and divine sphere, and only they could ensure the continuous flow of energy between the two worlds.[414] Although Sumerian kings were also deified and enjoyed posthumous worship, this could not be compared with ancestor worship in ancient China. The Chinese venerated primarily – if not exclusively – ancestral deities, while Sumerian ancestors were inferior to the main gods. The ancestor spirits of Shang, by exerting influence on human beings as well as intervening with high gods, were rather active between the secular and the divine world. In addition, so far, the only reference to the activities of a deceased king, the death of Ur-Nammu, is only about his being a god in the netherworld. His dissatisfaction with his untimely death can only be conveyed to Enlil by Inanna.

IV.1.4 Royal Consorts

It is generally accepted that women in the Shang Dynasty played a different and more important role than in the Zhou Dynasty and the periods that followed.[415] According to the oracle inscriptions, Shang royal women were active in political, religious, economic and social events throughout the dynasty, especially during the reign of Wu Ding. The high status of Shang women, at least in royal court, was reflected

[413] Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 2003, pp. 79-80.
[414] Ibid., p. 489.
[415] Wang Qiwei, "Cong 'Pin Ji Zhi Chen' Xianxiang kan Shangdai Funv de Shehui Diwei" (An Inspect to Women's Social Status in the Shang Dynasty from the phenomenon of Female-Chicken Singing in the Dawn), *Yindu Journal* 1 (2000), p. 22-26.

vividly by the description of "the hen crowing at dawn" (牝鸡之晨) in *Shang Shu*, meaning a woman usurped men's power. Some scholars have argued that this phenomenon reflects the remnant of the matriarchy in Shang,[416] but it also seems likely to me that the divinity of the king required his consorts to undertake some administrative affairs, and thus, their status was elevated to some degree.

Royal women appear in Shang oracle inscriptions with the title of Fu (妇, a kinship terminology that means wife), and conferred in death with the title Mothers (母), and frequently a name to indicate their social origins.[417] The case of Wu Ding's consort, Fu Hao, serves as an example. Fu Hao is this woman's designation in oracle inscriptions, and she was given a temple name, Mother Xin (母辛), after death. As many as 150 names of Fu have been attested throughout Shang, 60 of which are from the time of Wu Ding.[418] The period of Wu Ding has provided sufficient evidence for the study of royal women's activities in various fields in the Shang Dynasty.

According to oracle inscriptions, a Shang king's consorts would assist him in the work of administering the whole state; they were widely involved in religious, military, and economic affairs. Their power and responsibilities mainly included:[419] 1) hosting or performing sacrifice ceremonies, divination and other religious rites; 2) raising troops for the king, and on rare occasions leading the army; 3) having their own fiefs and organizing agricultural production. In addition, royal women could also announce royal decrees, dispatch official messengers, supervise tax collection, or conduct royal business with their parental families or at their birthplace. In comparison to royal women in Ur III, Shang kings' consorts had more political influence and controlled

[416] See for example, Wang Ruiying, "Cong Jiaguwen Jinwen kan Shangzhou Funv Diwei de Bianhua ji Yuanyin" (The Changes and Reasons of Women's Social Status in the Shang and Zhou Dynasty from the Oracle and Bronze Inscriptions), *Seeker* 6 (2008), p. 217; Qi Hangfu, "Cong Yinxu Jiaguwen kan Shangdai Funv Shehui Diwei" (Social status of Shang Women from oracle inscriptions in Yin Ruins), *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou* 12 (2014), pp. 128-132.

[417] David Keightley, "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty," *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, 1999, p. 275.

[418] Wang Ruiying, "Cong Jiaguwen Jinwen kan Shangzhou Funv Diwei de Bianhua ji Yuanyin" (The Changes and Reasons of Women's Social Status in the Shang and Zhou Dynasty from the Oracle and Bronze Inscriptions), *Seeker* 6 (2008), p. 215.

[419] Qi Hangfu, "Cong Yinxu Jiaguwen kan Shangdai Funv Shehui Diwei" (Social status of Shang Women from oracle inscriptions in Yin Ruins), *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou* 12 (2014), pp. 128-132.

large amounts of the wealth generated from their lands. Though there is no evidence to show the connection between a Shang king's divinity and the high status of his consorts, with the secularization of kingship after the Zhou Dynasty, the status of royal women declined greatly. It became hard to see women in politics and economics, and there was no "hen crowing at dawn" (牝鸡无晨).

One royal woman in the Shang Dynasty, who perhaps can be compared to Šulgi-Simti (queen of Šulgi) in Ur III, is Fu Hao. There are more than 200 pieces of oracle inscriptions recorded about Wu Ding's divination for Fu Hao's well-being, such as during campaigns, childbirth, diseases and her condition after death.[420] Her prominence, which derived primarily from her role as one of the three queens of Wu Ding, is also reflected in her extraordinary military achievements.[421] Fu Hao's role as a military general can be confirmed by the oracle bone inscriptions unearthed at Yinxu. Also, the weapons in her tomb include great battle-axes, which were often used as a symbol of royalty. According to oracle inscriptions, Fu Hao participated in the battle which defeated Tu Fang, the hostile forces fighting against the Shang for many generations.[422] Fu Hao was also in charge of several military campaigns against the neighboring Qiang Yi and Ba Fang later on. It is likely that Fu Hao was the most powerful general of her time; this highly unusual status can be seen from her control of up to 13,000 soldiers when conquering Qiang, as well as her command over other important Shang generals, like Zhi (沚) and Hou Gao (侯告).[423] In the Shang Dynasty, sacrifices and battles were considered to be the two most important activities, and Fu Hao also played an extraordinary role in the former.[424] Although divination and sacrifice were controlled by the king, oracle inscriptions show that Wu Ding repeatedly instructed Wu Hao to conduct sacrificial rituals to heaven, to the divine spring and to

[420] Zhai Shaodong, "Fu Hao Mu Yuqi de Faxian yu Yanjiu" (Discovery and Research on the Jades from the Fu Hao Tomb), *Museum* 5 (2018), p. 39.
[421] Qi Hangfu, "Cong Yinxu Jiaguwen kan Shangdai Funv Shehui Diwei" (Social status of Shang Women from oracle inscriptions in Yin Ruins), *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou* 12 (2014), pp. 129-130.
[422] Wang Qiwei, "Cong 'Pin Ji Zhi Chen' Xianxiang kan Shangdai Funv de Shehui Diwei" (An Inspect to Women's Social Status in the Shang Dynasty from the phenomenon of Female-Chicken Singing in the Dawn), Yindu Journal 1 (2000), p. 22.
[423] Ibid., p. 23.
[424] Qi Hangfu, "Cong Yinxu Jiaguwen kan Shangdai Funv Shehui Diwei" (Social status of Shang Women from oracle inscriptions in Yin Ruins), *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou* 12 (2014), pp. 128-129.

remote ancestors. Fu Hao was attested to have owned her land, and she offered the king remarkably valuable tributes many times. The tomb of Fu Hao was unearthed intact at Yinxu, with large amounts of treasures, such as bronzes and jades and many weapons. In view of Fu Hao's notable and unique achievements, she received considerable cultic posthumous attention. In addition, Wu Ding betrothed Fu Hao to Di and ancestral spirits three times to make her the divine wife, in the hope that she could obtain the blessing of the high gods.[425] Compared to Šulgi-Simti, Fu Hao not only assumed more varied and important military and religious functions during her lifetime, but she also enjoyed more veneration after death, and even became a wife of the supreme god.

As mentioned before, the high status of royal women may have been due to the influence of matriarchy; at that time, the gender division of labor in society was not yet complete. However, there is another possibility, namely that the god-king's overall control of the political and religious realm, and the Shang's emphasis on the worship of ancestresses, promoted royal women's positions. Since there was no priesthood to rival the monarchy, a royal woman would not be assigned to religious positions, such as the high priestess. This allowed women to participate more widely in political, economic and even military work. In the Shang Dynasty, marriage was an important tie used to forge or renew links between the royal family and leading lineages throughout the kingdom. The royal wives, who constituted the main line of descent, would posthumously be worshipped jointly with the king.[426] Therefore, the ability of royal wives or concubines to produce sons, a topic frequently divined, would have influenced their treatment after death, as well as the endurance of the political ties between the royal family and the sub-lineages. Royal women entered the ranks of the worshipped ancestors through marriage and childbirth; the Shang's emphasis on the worship of ancestresses is also an important feature that distinguishes this dynasty from later generations.

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[425] Zhai Shaodong, "Fu Hao Mu Yuqi de Faxian yu Yanjiu" (Discovery and Research on the Jades from the Fu Hao Tomb), *Museum* 5 (2018), p. 40.
[426] David Keightley, "The Shang: China's First Historical Dynasty," *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, 1999, p. 256.

IV.2 Divine Kingship in Archeological Evidence

As argued by D. Keightley, one of the characteristics of early Chinese strategic culture was the emphasis on groups, rather than individuals. This trait is manifested in the impersonality and generality of artistic and literary expression.[427] The group image of the Shang kings in written evidence has been discussed before; this chapter deals with the representation of divine kingship in visual evidence, including elite artworks and monumental architecture. Architecture and artwork in Shang had both practical and symbolic functions. They were essential tools for managing divine power and dealing with the supernatural, and the Shang king's possession of them meant control of exclusive access to both the political authority and the divine world.

The Shang king's claim to supernatural power needed to obtain credence and validity. To this end, highly visible status symbols were made through the consumption of material resources. The Shang cast their greatest artistic skills into various bronze ritual vessels, an example of which is the ding vessel. These sacred vessels served to legitimize the king's rule and were the most important ritual symbols, providing their owners exclusive access to ancestors. In territorial states like Shang, monumental architecture, like royal tombs, palaces, and temples, served as symbols of royal power in various ways. The ultimate aim of this architecture was to facilitate and glorify royal authority. At the same time, these places symbolized the political power that was supposed to be legitimized by divine power and inseparable from the cosmic order.[428]

In contrast to the anthropomorphic and royal themes that emphasized rulers and deities in Mesopotamian arts, the representational art in Shang is sparse. It seems that anthropomorphic imagery was highly restricted, and minimal importance was accorded to human figures. Instead, Shang art focused heavily on animal figures, possibly due to the inspiration of shamanistic themes, with humans being less important than animals, since animals helped the shamans ascend to heaven.[429] Figures of animals or parts of animals covering whole surfaces of bronze are abstract, balanced, geometricized and

[427] David Keightley, *These Bones Shall Rise Again: Selected Writings on Early China*, 2014, p. 75.
[428] Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 2003, p. 542, 564.
[429] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 78-80.

highly symbolic. These artworks distinguish Shang metallurgy from the more realistic royal images and anthropomorphic deities fashioned by Ur III craft workers.

IV.2.1 Palace, Temple and Royal Tomb

The archeological ruins, known as Yinxu, represent the last capital of the Shang Dynasty. These ruins have special significance by virtue of the enormously rich finds. The overall layout of Yinxu is orderly, distributed along the Huan River on both banks. Locus North of Xiaotun, on the south bank, is the best excavated area and is generally believed to be the center of Yinxu. The remains of foundations, sacrificial burials, living and storage pits, workshops, and several rich tombs have all been found in this area. Also, the conspicuous site Xibeigang, to the north bank, is the area of the royal cemetery, which was divided into western and eastern parts. This cemetery has 13 large tombs and a large number of sacrificial pits.[430]

According to existing data, the rammed earth palace foundations excavated in Xiaotun can be divided into four groups, namely the groups Jia, Yi, Bing, and Ding. The first three groups, which included 53 foundations, were unearthed from 1928 to 1937, while the last group, consisting of three foundations, was excavated in the 1980s.[431] It has been widely accepted that the Jia Group is the palace area, the Yi Group contains mainly ancestral temples, and the Bing Group is the district of the sacrificial altar. In addition, the first foundation of Yi Group played a positive role in the direction of palace and temple construction.[432] However, the foundation is not singular in nature, since each group has its own main building and ancillary buildings, forming a complex combination that also contains sacrificial pits, workshops or living areas. In view of their massive size and regular arrangement, these foundations provide valuable evidence and a better overall understanding of the architectural pattern in Shang.

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[430] Chang Kwang-chih, *Shang Civilization*, 1980, pp. 71-73, 111-113.

[431] The architectural remains of Xiaotun have been systematically studied and published in 2010 by the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (here after CASS).

[432] See for example Zhu Fenghan, "Yinxu Boci Suojian Shang Wangshi Zongmiao Zhidu" (The System of Ancestral Temple of Shang Royal Family Seen in Inscriptions in Yinxu), *Historical Research* 6 (1990), pp. 3-19; Song Zhenhao, *Xia Shang Shehui Shenghuo Shi* (Social Life history of Xia and Shang Dynasty), Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1994, pp. 48-55.

Seeing the whole palace-temple complex of Yinxu as a whole, it has been suggested by scholars that using an open layout in rows was the basic concept of Shang architecture.[433] The architectural remains are roughly arranged in rows, with the front and back rows parallel and in the same direction. Spaces between the buildings were left for activities, and the east-west orientation architecture is consistent with the north-south arrangement. Architectural findings and later texts show that Chinese architecture has always adhered to the principle of middle axis symmetry, going all the way back to the Shang Dynasty.[434] Two of the east-west oriented foundations in Jia Group are symmetrical; the small house foundation of varying lengths is often on a central axis, but not to any strict degree. Archaeological excavations of the Ding Group indicate that the intention was not to build this large complex all at once. In different periods, its architectural pattern is not the same, but does show some signs of reconstruction and expansion.[435]

Du Jinpeng put forward different opinions on the layout characteristics of Shang architecture. Siheyuan-style (四合院) building refers to a courtyard surrounded by buildings on all four sides. This style exhibits both the outstanding and fundamental characteristics of Chinese architecture, which was believed to have originated in the Western Zhou period. However, Du proposed that palaces in a pattern of compound Siheyuan had already appeared in the Shang Dynasty, from the early capital Yanshi, to Yinxu. Du further speculated that the foundations of Ding Group should be a Siheyuan facing south; Yi Group also consists of three Siheyuan buildings.[436] He further concluded that every complete unit of palace architecture in Yinxu was a Siheyuan complex. The main hall is in the middle, facing south, flanked by side-rooms, and surrounded by corridors on the other three sides, forming a building group that is closed on every side. Other than an open layout, this kind of palace was first built with internal convergence. That is, three sides of the corridor are facing the atrium, while the main

433 CASS (2010), p. 112.
434 Du Jinpeng, *Yinxu Gongdianqu Jianzhu Jizhi Yanjiu* (Study on the Distrcit of Palace Foundations in Yinxu), Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe, 2010, p. 149.
435 CASS (2010), pp. 107-109.
436 Du Jinpeng, *Yinxu Gongdianqu Jianzhu Jizhi Yanjiu* (Study on the Distrcit of Palace Foundations in Yinxu), 2010, pp. 38-39.

hall and corridor have centripetal orientation.[437]

Based on bronze inscriptions and later texts, the ancestral temples of Shang and Zhou were constructed using Ya-shaped (亞) structures, with a square central chamber to locate the ancestral altars and four additional chambers, used to perform sacrificial rites, attached at the four sides (see Figure 12).[438]

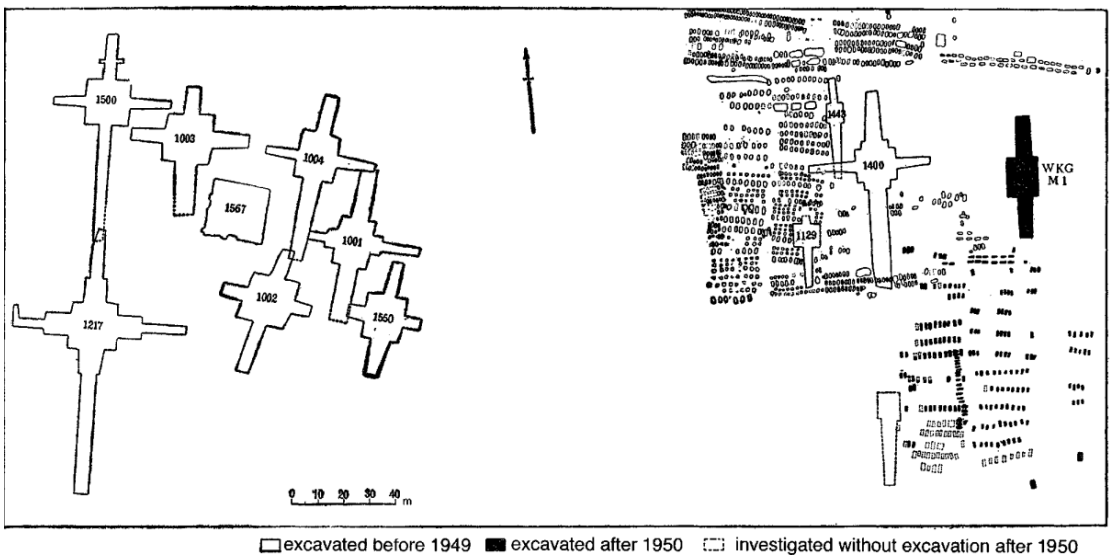

Figure 12. Plan of the royal cemetery of the Shang Dynasty at Houjiazhuang, Anyang[439]

Scholars suggested in later literature that such Ya-shaped temples developed into the common structure for ancient ritual halls, named "bright halls" (明堂).[440] Though none of the palace or temple foundations unearthed at Xiaotun were of that shape, the Shang royal tombs and their wooden chambers that employed this Ya-shaped structure were considered to create a symbolic imitation of the ancestral temple.[441] The Shang royal ancestors were buried in the center chamber, with most human sacrifices found in the side chambers, having been arranged according to the four directions and oriented

[437] Du Jinpeng, *Yinxu Gongdianqu Jianzhu Jizhi Yanjiu* (Study on the Distrcit of Palace Foundations in Yinxu), 2010, p. 42.
[438] Chen Mengjia, *Yinxu Buci Zongshu* (A Review of Oracle Inscriptions in Yinxu), Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe, 1956, pp. 473-482.
[439] Zhongguo Kexueyuan Kaogu Yanjiusuo (ed.), *Xin Zhongguo de Kaogu Faxian he Yanjiu, Kaoguxue Zhuankan*, Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 1984, p. 231, fig. 61.
[440] Wang Aihe (*Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, 2000: 39-40) equals the cross-shaped structure to "the four quarters"(四方) structure.
[441] Chang Kwang-chih, *Shang Civilization*, 1980, p. 114.

toward the center. Clearly, the Ya-shaped structure was constructed from elaborate material, in order to highlight the central role of royal ancestors in the cosmos, who need to be maintained and refreshed through ritual actions.

As the dual centers of ancestral worship, temples and tombs in Shang served as sacred dwelling places for ancestors and existed for the purpose of the royal cult and its practices. After proper burials (the essential step taken to transform a recent dead into a living ancestor), the entire lineage of ancestor spirits was permanently housed and worshiped in the ancestral temple. Shang royal tombs were dug deep into the ground and appeared to have had stepped entryways leading to them from four sides; sacrificial rites were conducted in the side chambers. The deceased royal members were buried in the center of the tomb, together with extraordinarily rich funerary objects. Considering the signal importance of the funeral and burials, the furnishings in the tomb were like the property of a living man. Among the royal graves, the tomb of Fu Hao, found in Xiaotun, is the largest and best preserved, with enormous burial objects that can well represent the Wu Ding period. Fu Hao was the above-mentioned powerful general and one of the queens of Wu Ding. Her tomb was a rectangular pit grave, oriented largely from north to south. It seems that the directionality may have specific religious meanings in Shang, since all the large tombs in Xibeigang were oriented north-south. The grave's queen was accompanied by 16 sacrificed humans and six dogs, as well as large quantities of funerary objects, including bronzes, jade, ivory carvings, potteries, bones and shells.[442]

Besides divination, sacrifice was another defining feature of Shang. The oracle inscriptions provide rich details about the sacrifices, from the recipients and cult content, to the ritual procedures and array of specific rites. Some of the real practices of these sacrifices near temples or tombs can be confirmed by archaeological evidence. The areas with extensive tracts of sacrificial pits were the Yi Group foundation and the Xibeigang royal tombs.[443] In Yi Group sites, the majority of the sacrificial pits were laid out in neat rows in the open area. Some were under the floors or in the foundations,

[442] Chang Kwang-chih, *Shang Civilization*, 1980, pp. 87-90.
[443] Robert L. Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age*, 2006, pp. 187-191.

which may have been related to temple construction. A group of five chariot burials was located near the foundation, including a chariot, horses, and human victims. There are 49 additional pits associated with the chariot formation, most of which held human skeletons but seldom contained bronze ritual vessels. In Xibeigang Cemetery, 1,483 pits have been cleared to this point, and it has been suggested that as many as 2,500 pits exist. Human victims, animal sacrifices and various bronze ritual vessels are the major components in sacrificial pits. This is in keeping with the rites conducted to offer the spirits of the ancestors meat, grain, and wine in bronze vessels. Many of the victims were likely to be war captives, especially the Qiang people recorded in oracle inscriptions.[444] Human sacrifice, as regular offerings to ancestors, took place mainly during the construction of buildings and at royal tombs, either during or after funerals, and rarely elsewhere. War victims slaughtered as offerings and servants who followed their lord in death may have been distinguished in Shang.

Architectural monuments of the Shang and Ur III dynasties were built to promote and glorify royal authority, with temples, tombs, and palaces symbolizing this glorification in various ways and combinations. In view of the general layout, Shang palaces and ancestral temples form an integrated complex. Conversely, the palaces and temples in Ur III are separated in terms of location and could be clearly distinguished from each other. As a link between heaven and earth, the temples of ancient Mesopotamia marked the city center from the ED period. Palaces were located either adjacent to the temple complex or elsewhere in the city, where more space was available. Compared with Shang's emphasis on orientation and the bilaterally symmetrical arrangement of buildings around a linear series of courtyards (indicating the cosmological concept of the four quarters), the architecture of Ur III seemed to attach more importance to area and height. No one could confuse the Shang palace-temple complex with the splendid ziggurats in Ur III. Although they were all physical manifestations of royal power, the architecture of Shang obviously emphasized the central position of kings and royal ancestors in the world. This is clearly reflected in

[444] Robert L. Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age*, 2006, p. 189.

the Siheyuan buildings, 亞-shaped temples and royal tombs. A center surrounded by the four quarters is referred to not only as the Center Shang, or the Great Shang Settlement, but also as the god-king wielding his supreme authority on earth.

IV.2.2 The Ritual Bronze Vessel Ding

Among the variety of vessel forms used in Shang, the bronze ding vessel has long been known as one of the most representative and core symbols of political and ritual authority. The standard ceramic tripods, first found at the Erlitou site, are the prototype of the ding vessel, with the primary function being cooking. Bronze ding vessels were present in assemblages from the Erligang period, and were used throughout the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, as well as during later time periods.[445] By Late Shang, ding vessels were mainly made in two shapes, namely round bowls with three legs, and rectangular or square containers with four legs. The latter were often called fangding. The monumental fangding, the largest cast ritual vessel known so far in the early Bronze Age, were produced for exclusive royal usage of the king and prince in line to the throne. This made the fangding an important symbol of divine authority and royal power.[446]

As a core symbol of kingship, the material, the shape, the decorative pattern and the inscriptions of the ding vessels were all intended to prove the vessels' transcendence and sanctity. Although initiated during the Erlitou period, bronze was not used on a large scale until Shang. As the most prized and valued material, bronze and its cast forms were the property of Shang's ruling elite. Bronze vessels were the chief symbols of royal wealth; the exclusive control of the key resources and minerals also revealed the king's political authority over all lands.[447] In terms of religious use, bronze vessels, recognized as sacred and associated with supernatural properties, were given critical importance in religious communication and became the material representative of the royal ancestor cult.[448] Through their exclusive ritual usage in preparing and offering

[445] Robert L. Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age*, 2006, p. 195.
[446] Elizabeth Childs-Johnson, "Shang Sifang (Four-directional) Cosmology", *The Collected Papers of the International Conference for Commemorating Prof. Zuoyun Sun's 100th Birthday*, 2014, pp. 166-167.
[447] Chang Kwang-chih. *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 95-97.
[448] Li Min, *Social Memory and State Formation in Early China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018,

meat sacrifices to ancestor spirits, ding became the sacred and concrete symbols of communication with the divine world. Therefore, the ding contains within itself both the secularity that comes from real life and the sacred ability to communicate with the divine world. This dualist structure of "secular/sacred" gave the owner of these ritual vessels, above all the king, exclusive access to the ancestral spirits during all-important rituals.

According to E. Childs-Johnson, the creation of the monumental fangding may have been stimulated by the concept of the four-directional cosmology, which had a profound influence in Shang thinking and artistic expression.[449] This concept of the four quarters has been previously discussed and refers to a cosmological belief that the Shang were located at the center of a world that extends throughout space in four directions, axially and diagonally. Regardless of whether or not the creation of fangding was spawned by this cosmology, it is another materialized form of this concept, in addition to the above-mentioned architectural layouts. Childs-Johnson also suggested that the reason fangding stands out from other ritual vessels lies in its large scale and unique form. Indeed, the fangding was the largest cast vessel of the time, revealing the advanced bronze forging technology, and visually showing the status and power of its owners. This made the fangding the ideal selection as the supreme material symbol of royal power, which could be used to offer alcohol or grains in the ancestor cult.

From the time of Shang, high-quality bronze dings were also buried in the tomb with their owners. Among the burial objects, bronze vessels (including ding) were always deployed in pairs or groups. The best example of this can be seen in the well-preserved tomb of Fu Hao. There are 32 ding of many varieties in her tomb, including 12 vessels of one variety, all inscribed with her name. There are also two fangding with dedicatory inscriptions to "Mother Xin", her posthumous temple name. The largest and heaviest piece of bronze ware to survive from anywhere in the ancient world is Simuwu Ding. This was a fangding dedicated to another consort of Wu Ding, and a

pp. 8-10.

[449] Elizabeth Childs-Johnson, "Shang Sifang (Four-directional) Cosmology", *The Collected Papers of the International Conference for Commemorating Prof. Zuoyun Sun's 100th Birthday*, 2014, pp. 167-185.

contemporary of Fu Hao. The quantity, size and quality of these numerous vessels testify to the high status of their owners, as well as their makers, namely the queens of Wu Ding and the king himself.[450]

The symbolic importance of ding stimulates the composition of legends and myths related to ding in later generations. The most famous of these is the Nine Ding story recorded in *Zuozhuan*. under an entry for 606 BC:

> In the past, just when Xia possessed virtue, men from afar depicted various creatures, and the nine superintendents submitted metal, so that the ding vessels were cast with images of various creatures. The hundred things were therewith completely set forth, and the people thus knew the spirits and the evil things … Thus, [the Xia people] were able to harmonize with those above and below them and to receive Heaven's blessings. The last Xia king, Jie, possessed dimmed virtue, and the ding vessels were moved to the house of Shang, there to remain for six hundred years. The last Shang king, Zhòu, was violent and tyrannical, and the ding vessels were moved to the house of Zhou. When virtue is bright and resplendent, the bronze ding vessels, though small, are heavy. When virtue is distorted, dimmed, and confused, the ding vessels, though large, are light. Heaven blesses those of bright virtue, giving them the place for realizing and maintaining it. When King Cheng put the ding vessels in place at Jiaru, he divined about the number of generations and got thirty; he divined about the number of years and got seven hundred. This is what heaven has commanded. Although Zhou virtue is in decline, the heavenly command has not yet changed. The question of whether the ding vessels are light or heavy may not be asked yet.[451]

In this retroactive narrative, possession of the legendary Nine Ding, which were said to have been cast by the founder of the Xia Dynasty, was considered a sign of legitimate dynastic rule over all. The transfer of dynastic power depended on the ruler's virtue and was signaled by the gain and loss of ding. The set of nine is just a rhetorical expression. One or more ancient ding are often associated with power and dominion

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[450] Robert L. Thorp, *China in the Early Bronze Age*, 2006, pp. 196-197.
[451] Based on translations by Stephen Durrant (et al.), *Zuo Tradition / Zuozhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals"*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2016, pp. 601-603, Lord Xuan 3.3.

over the land in Chinese history and culture.[452] This story gives rise to the phrase of Wen Ding, with the meaning of an inquiry relating to ding vessels often used interchangeably with the quest for power. This phrasal verb is usually followed by Central Plains; together. they mean gaining dominion over all the land.

Li Min tended to examine this story from cultural, political and technical perspectives. In his opinion, the narrative of Wen Ding capably integrates the representation of the concept of power in time, space and technology, in order to answer what the core symbol should be. In terms of text structure, the story takes the form of a tripod, just like the tripod ding, made up of "the practice of bronze metallurgy, a historical concept of civilization, and a Central Plains-centric ideology of political landscape".[453] The metallurgy of bronze marks a new epoch of dynastic history, transforming the political landscape into bronze vessels and distinguishing civilization from barbarism. With the recognition of bronze as a sacred material, the ding was transformed from a common utensil to the supreme symbol of royal power. The Shang settlement was also considered the axis mundi of the world, a place that is sacred above all. Thus, there was no doubt that the ruler of the "Central Shang Settlement" or "Great Shang Settlement" was divine.

There is another version of this story, recorded in the Gengzhu chapter of *Mozi*, the philosophical works of Mo Zi (ca. 468-376 BC.):

> In ancient times, King Qi of the Xia [Xia Qi Wang] commissioned Feilian to dig minerals in mountains and rivers and to use clay molds, casting the ding at Kunwu. He ordered Wengnanyi to divine, with the help of the tortoise, from Bairuo, saying: "Let the ding, when completed, have a square body and four legs. Let them be able to boil without kindling, to hide themselves without being lifted, and to move themselves without being carried, so that they will be used for sacrifice at Kunwu." Yi interpreted the oracle as saying: "The offering has been accepted … When the nine ding have been completed, they will be 'transferred' down to three kingdoms. When Xia loses them, people of the

[452] Zhang Changyong & Cheng, Xiangzhan. "Shangzhou 'Ding' Guannian de Eryuan Jiegou" (Dualistic Structure in the Notion of Shang Chou Ting), *Northwestern Journal of Ethnology* 2 (2008), pp. 40-46.
[453] Li Min, *Social Memory and State Formation in Early China*, 2018, pp. 4-5.

Yin will possess them, and when people of the Yin lose them, people of the Zhou will possess them."[454]

Also celebrating the tripod as the preeminent symbol of state authority, the *Mozi* passage differs from the above by emphasizing the role of the fangding, which was invented and innovated by the Shang. This change of narrative may not have been intended to trace the evolution of the shape of ding, but to clarify the function of fangding as a symbolic representation of dynastic power for the king, since it was created during the Shang Dynasty.[455]

IV.2.3 The Animal Motif on Bronze Vessels

In comparison to the elite art of the ancient Mesopotamians, which places special emphasis on anthropomorphic figures like deities and kings,[456] animal designs were the typical features of bronze decorative art in both the Shang Dynasty and the early Western Zhou Dynasty.[457] Decorations are often used to fill the backgrounds of most vessels, sometimes spanning the entire body of a vessel; in other cases, only a single strip is used. The motif is usually highly detailed, mask-like faces with various animal features, such as noses, fangs, and horns. In ding vessels, these animal faces most often appear on the bowl or cauldron portion of the body, but they can also appear on the round or flat legs.

The highly complex and varied animal motifs reached their height of development during late Shang, a fact which is well attested to by the bronzes found in Anyang. The common patterns on Anyang bronzes can be obviously divided into two categories. The first category is realistic animals, such as rhinoceroses, owls, hares, cicadas, silkworms,

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[454] The translation is based on Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine, The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989, pp. 92-93.

[455] Elizabeth Childs-Johnson, "Big Ding and China Power: Divine Authority and Legitimacy." *Asian Perspectives* 51/2 (2012), pp. 164-165.

[456] Anton Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia: the classical art of the Near East*, London: Phaidon, 1969.

[457] There is also a view that these animal figures are representations of gods, but this view is not widely accepted, see for example Xie Yaoting, "Cong Qingtongqi Wenshi kan Shangzhou Wenhua Jubian, Shangzhou Qingtongqi Wenshi Bianhua Zaitan" (Cultural Upheaval of Shang and Zhou Dynasties Viewed from Bronze Decoration, Re-discussions on Shang and Zhou Bronze Decoration Changes), *Lanzhou Academic Journal* 9 (2009), pp. 214-216; Zhang Erguo, "Shangzhou de Shenxing" (Divine Images in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties), *Journal of Hainan Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences)* 4 (2001), pp. 42-50. According to Zhang Erguo, the main divine images in Shang and Zhou dynasties are human images, animal images and invisible images.

turtles, fish, birds, elephants, tigers, deer, frogs, oxen, buffalo, sheep, bears, horses and boars. The other category is made up of creatures not seen in nature; these are the mythical animals in ancient literature. The most common ones are Taotie, Feiyi (a snake with two bodies), Kui, Dragon and Qiu; Shang imagery used to be referred to as "Taotie pattern"[458]. The animal patterns carved into the bronze vessels were probably supposed to be abstract, further processed depictions of animal sacrifices. Images of mythological animals are also often a patchwork of real ones.

E. Childs-Johnson also suggested that Shang imagery is not purely a representation of realistic or fictional animals, but the fusion of animal and human parts. Therefore, she proposed that Shang bronze decor has standardized attributes and also focuses on the theme of metamorphism.[459] In her opinion, there is an apparent connection between ritual imagery and the Shang symbolism of metamorphosis; this connection is reflected in both visual data and the inscriptional terms Yi (to metamorphose) and Bin (to receive and take on the power of a spirit). However, since it is not clear whether the images are anthropomorphic representations of animals or appropriations of human features, the terms raised by Childs-Johnson, "metamorphic power mask" or "semi-human animal mask", will not be adopted here.

As far as the animal patterns in Shang and Zhou bronze art are concerned, there are several undisputable points. Firstly, there are large quantities and varieties of patterns, accounting for most of the decorative patterns in Shang and early Western Zhou bronze art. Secondly, the patterns often (though not always) occur in pairs and in a symmetrical pattern. The basic decoration is an animal pattern that wraps around the vessel. The band is divided into units, usually made of flanges, each of which is filled with an animal's side. Taotie and Feiyi can also be seen either as a union of two animals, or as a single animal that has been split in two. Thirdly, a symbiosis clearly exists

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458 Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 56-59.

459 Elizabeth Childs-Johnson, "The Metamorphic Image: A Predominant Theme in the Ritual Art of Shang China." *The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 70 (1998), pp. 5-171; "Urban daemons of early Shang: Urbanism in ancient China." *Archaeological Research in Asia* 14 (2018), pp. 135-150. Similar opinions can be seen in Zhang Erguo, "Shangzhou de Shenxing" (Divine Images in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties), *Journal of Hainan Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences)* 4 (2001), p. 50: "the animalization of human images, humanization of animal images and visualization of invisible images or vice versa have constituted the main evolving trend during Shang and Zhou."

between human and animal patterns on a small number of bronzes in the Shang Dynasty and early Western Zhou.[460]

The use of animal patterns dates back to the Neolithic Age, when they were used as totems or representations of certain gods. However, as the bronze decorative patterns of the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, the patterns evolved into specific religious usage. Many ancient Chinese classical texts provide explanations for the meaning of bronze ritual vessels and the animal patterns on them. In the myth of the heaven-earth separation recorded in *Guoyu*, the mention of 物 (animal sacrifice) and 器 (bronze ritual vessels) indicates that, although the shamans were instrumental in the communication between heaven and earth, the ritual vessels and the animal offerings were essential paraphernalia for the performance of such rituals.[461] If the bronze ritual vessels were part of the equipment used to communicate between heaven and earth, it is not surprising that the animal patterns cast on these vessels also had an auxiliary function. In the Nine Ding story, recorded in *Zuozhuan*, the Xia made bronze ding and put animal images on them. This was done so that people could know which animals were helpful in heaven-earth crossing, as well as which animals were helpless or even harmful. Once their role as assistants in the communication task was identified, the animals' images were immortalized on the bronze vessels. In *Shan Haijing*, the phrase "a pair of dragons" has always been associated with agents who carry messages back and forth between heaven and earth. In addition, dragons and snakes were used as standard equipment or mounts for the supreme god Di's envoys of the four directions. Similar descriptions of dragons and snakes' roles as divine agents can also be seen in *Chuci*. All this evidence further proves that the animal designs on Shang and Zhou bronzes played a significant role in helping the shamans to bridge the gap between heaven and earth, and the living and the dead.

Although classical texts like *Guoyu*, *Zuozhuan*, *Shan Haijing* and *Chuci* all date back to the late Zhou Dynasty, these books are well known to contain some historical

[460] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 59-60.
[461] Ibid., pp. 63-64.

materials of the Shang and early Zhou Dynasties. Religion and cosmology are also inherited from the past, to some extent. In terms of shamanic communication between heaven and earth, with animals as assistants, there is also relevant evidence in oracle inscriptions of the Shang Dynasty. Indeed, the practice of divination itself is realized, with the help of animal oracle bones, indicating their sacred nature and assistant's role. Moreover, oracle inscriptions reveal that the supreme god Di had a number of emissaries to work for him, including the mythological animal Feng, spouse of Dragon. Animal images on Shang and Zhou bronzes are direct evidence of these descriptions.

Let us return to the coexistence of man and beast, which is occasionally the theme of distinctive patterns on Shang and early Zhou bronzes. At present, there are about 30 pieces of bronze decorated with humans and animals in juxtaposition. These 30 pieces include five categories, such as ritual ware, musical instruments, weapons, vehicle ware and ornaments.[462] Six of them were Shang ritual vessels, which were excavated in south China. Still other Shang or Zhou bronzes from unearthed sites are from the central plains. According to Shi Jinsong, the human-beast decoration on bronze first appeared on ritual ware in the southern region of the Shang Dynasty. However, in the Western Zhou Dynasty, this decoration was mainly found on weapons and vehicle ware.[463] Also, the depiction of humans and animals (mainly tigers) changed, moving from the earliest prominent full-body images to the abstract and deformed omission of the body, and then to the retention of only the head. As for the reason behind this change, Shi Jinsong proposed that the central plains first absorbed the cultural form of the remote areas in the south on the surface, but ultimately rejected it.

In addition to certain differences, there are also some common features in human-animal integration. For example, the animal opens its mouth wide, and its head is close to or under its mouth. The human head or body forms perpendicular angles to the head or body of the beast, and all the animal patterns are similar to those of a tiger.[464] The open mouth may have been the symbol that depicted separating the world of the dead

[462] Shi Jinsong, "Lun Dai Hushiren Muti de Shangzhou Qingtongqi" (Discussions on the Shang and Zhou Bronze with Tiger Cannibalism Decorative Theme), *Archaeology* 3 (1998), p. 56.
[463] Ibid., p. 63.
[464] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, p. 61.

from the world of the living. This statement is completely consistent with our view that animal patterns were used to show that the animals were the assistant to the shaman, helping to communicate between the two worlds.[465] From this point of view, the human figure is most likely to be a shaman, who is crossing from one world to another with the help of the tiger-like animal. The gaping mouth is archetypal in Paleolithic patterns, but on ancient Chinese artifacts, it can also indicate the opening of an animal's mouth to breathe; this was believed to be the source of wind. The lifting wind was the basic means of transportation in the divine world. In *Shan Haijing*, many records refer to animals being placed and breathing on both sides of a man's head, helping the man ascend to heaven. When the shaman, the animal assistant and the breathing mouth are combined together in a bronze vessel, the most complete form of recording (and even triggering) the communication between heaven and earth is achieved.

In addition, scholars have proposed other suggestions regarding the human-beast motif. Li Xueqin argued that the seemingly "devouring" image may represent the oneness of the man and the divine beast; the image indicated that the mortal had acquired supernatural abilities from the sacred creature.[466] This view is close to the intentions of metamorphosis proposed by E. Childs-Johnson. According to her, in addition to the explicit theme of animal and human symbiosis, all other animal patterns contain elements of human features, such as eyes, nose and mouth. This kind of semi-human animal pattern signifies the king's ability to undergo metamorphic empowerment, the function of which is similar to wearing a mask in a religious ritual as a means to gain divine power. The elements of man and beast are born together and can be transformed into each other; this transformation signals the symbiosis and exchange of their forces.[467] The divine properties and extraordinary power of animals, especially wild animals, are probably influenced by shamanism. The connection between the demonic domain and the wild animal realm was direct. Therefore, taming and subordinating wild animals was an essential demonstration of kingly power under

[465] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, p. 73.
[466] Li Xueqin, "Shi Lun Hu Shi Ren Lu" (Interpretation of Tiger Devouring Man Bronze Vessel Lu), *Southern Ethnology and Archaeology* 1 (1987), pp. 37-44.
[467] Elizabeth Childs-Johnson, "The Metamorphic Image: A Predominant Theme in the Ritual Art of Shang China." *The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 70 (1998), pp. 5-171.

celestial approval. The significance of the royal hunt of wild animals is well attested to in Shang oracle inscriptions and in archaeological data.

The theme of the coexistence of man and beast is reminiscent of early dynastic seals or Assyrian reliefs in ancient Mesopotamia, but the two are fundamentally different. Shang bronze decor is an abstract depiction of mythical creatures rendering imagery meaning, while Mesopotamian seals or reliefs show a highly realistic human-beast fight scene.[468] The former has a strong religious overtone, with animals serving to assist the shaman or the king to communicate with heaven and earth or to obtain divine powers. The latter aims to show the strength and physical power of the ruler by depicting him fighting with the beast. The difference between the two goes back to the previous point of view. That is, ancient Mesopotamian art focuses on the direct characterization of human figures, while ancient Chinese art puts characters behind the scenes and only depicts the metaphor of the relationship between external objects (the animals, to be precise) and the man.

The above analysis of animal patterns in Shang art not only enables us to understand their meaning and religious functions, but also explains why Shang bronzes with animal patterns are the supreme symbols of royal wealth, as well as political and divine authority. The use of bronzes was restricted to elite circles; only the ruling class, represented by the king, had access to them. The possession of bronze ritual vessels carved with animal patterns stood for the monopoly of heaven-earth communication, and the exclusive control of celestial knowledge and secular power.

IV.3 Conclusion

In comparison with the divine kings in Ur III, Shang kings' divinity was based on the role of diviner or intermediary supreme. Ancient Mesopotamia had a stable and strong priestly class. There was no such distinction between politics and religion in Shang times. The king was the link between the secular and divine spheres. The Shang king himself was likely to be the head shaman, with primary and exclusive power to

[468] Bruce Trigger, *Understanding Early Civilizations*, 2003, pp. 555-556.

communicate with the divine world. His divine authority was affirmed, not only by his role as the purveyor and interpreter of the supreme spirit, but also as the chief executor of all rituals directed against the powerful natural and ancestral spirits.

The literary and artistic expression of the divinity of the Shang king is both indirect and implicit. The King of Shang is more of a group symbol than an individual. The personal role of the Shang kings was closely related to the status of the Shang kingdom as the center of the world. This is well reflected by the expression of the "Central Shang Settlement" or the "Great Shang Settlement". Unlike Ur III kings, who put the divine determinative before their names, the royal titles of Shang kings emphasized their supremacy and uniqueness, as well as the loneliness of kingship. Oracle inscriptions give clues to the activities of the Shang kings in their handling of government affairs, their daily lives and the patrolling of the four directions. Later classical texts provide us with the divine origins, supernatural abilities and events of the god-king. Compared to Ur III kings' seeking of divine parentage, under the influence of shamanism, the clan of Shang derived from the sacred blackbird. The literary description of Shang kings' divinity reflects their role as the head shaman and their ability to receive the spirits as guests, or even to visit the divine sphere. Divination and ancestral cult feature in the religion of Shang, which was monopolized by the king and the main royal lineage. The deceased royal ancestors, the ruling king, and the main line of their heirs had a legitimate right to the throne. They formed an unbroken lineage, connecting the secular and divine world through the practice of royal cults.

Architectural monuments, including the royal palace, ancestral temples and royal tombs, were all material symbols of the god-king's power. The association between the layout of Shang buildings and the four-directional cosmology is direct. This is well reflected by the Siheyuan building, as well as the Ya-shaped temple and tomb. Shang elite art, as represented by the bronze vessel ding, can be considered to be the supreme and core symbol of royal power and divine authority. The two-dimensional art of the Shang Dynasty focused on abstract and highly symbolic animal images, again influenced by shamanism. The animals casted on ritual bronze vessels were essential religious appendicular, designed to help the shaman or the king communicate with or

acquire supernatural power from the divine world.

In general, Ur III kings preferred to show off their authority. They, or their statues, would travel around the kingdom during festivals and ceremonies. When this attitude was reflected in the reflection of the divine king, it was diverse in form and varied in content, with a certain personal style that was accessible to a large amount of subjects, even illiterate ones. In contrast, Shang kings enhanced their authority by being completely isolated from the commoners, thereby maintaining a sense of elevated mystery. The audience of literal texts and artistic expressions of the king's divinity was limited only to educated elite circles.

Chapter V: The Consequences and Influence of Divine Kingship

V.1 Influence of Ur III Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia

The practice of divine kingship was first introduced by Naram-Sin and acquired new ideological features during the reign of the Ur III kings, leaving its mark on the whole development of Mesopotamian history. Given that the consequences of this phenomenon were manifold, only a general and brief discussion of the most substantial one will be offered here. Its influence on the Ur III Dynasty is reflected in terms of royal ideology, economic-political institutions, and social thought. Its influence on later generations is mainly manifested in the succession of divine kinship by the Isin rulers and the development of kingship in the Old Babylonian period.

V.1.1 Consequences of Divine Kingship in the Ur III Dynasty

The deification of kingship in Ur III was mainly politically oriented, appearing in a specific historical environment, and its influence must be understood in the political and historical context of its time. In the third Chapter, I choose to examine the manifestation of divine kingship from two aspects: textual materials and visual evidence. The addition of the divine determinative before the king's name and the creation of royal hymns are strong evidence for the apotheosis of the crown. But given that most people at that time were illiterate or had limited access to written material, there was a limit to how useful textual evidence could have been in spreading belief in the king's divinity.[469] By contrast, public ritual and monumental architecture were much more effective in publicizing divine kingship among the wider community.

From the perspective of the overall level of political construction, divine kingship was likely to be a part of or even the climax of Šulgi's reforms.[470] The deification of

[469] Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, p. 129.
[470] Piotr Steinkeller, "The Administrative and Economic Organization of the Ur III State: The Core and the Periphery", SAOC 46, 1991, pp. 16-17.

Šulgi was first attested in the middle of his reign, coinciding with a possible shift of policy from domestic affairs to foreign conquest. The deification of kingship may have laid a certain ideological foundation for the preparations for war, but the existence and extent of this influence is difficult to confirm from extant materials. Its effect on royal ideology is more apparent. According to P. Michalowski, the reintroduction of divine kingship by Šulgi was the reification of the ideational core, in order to overcome "localized forms which had been anchored in the city, the temple, and the city ruler."[471] By creating a variety of symbols centered on the image of the god-king, additional loyalty and domination could be gained beyond military and economic control.

In addition to the potential influence of ideological consolidation, the worship and cults of the Ur III kings during their lifetimes were the first obvious consequence of divine kingship. The practice and maintenance of royal cults were intended to amplify and spread the divinity of the king. Since the worship of deified kings was modeled after traditional deities, their cult statues were afforded the same reverential and ritualized treatment as all other gods. After deification, temples were built in many cities including Girsu, Umma, and KI.AN for the living king, with his statues placed therein and receiving regular offerings.[472] In the most important cities such as Nippur, Šulgi was worshipped only as a minor deity without proper temples, whose statues were attested to be set up in the temple of other major deities, such as Enlil or Ninlil.[473] Nevertheless, the new god-king had a place at the side of the supreme god. Statues of the god-king were also worshipped in private, especially in elite households.[474] The newly erected temples and their attendant temple estates not only had religious importance but also allowed the divine king to take possession of the old temple estates in the name of the new gods and bound the local elites to the new order.[475]

The Ur III kings worked to spread royal worship to ordinary people, rather than

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[471] Piotr Michalowski, "Charisma and Control: On Continuity and Change in Early Mesopotamian Bureaucratic Systems", SAOC 46, 1991, p. 56.
[472] Clemens Reichel, "The King is Dead, Long Live the King: The Last Days of the Shu-Sin Cult at Eshnunna and its Aftermath", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 133-155.
[473] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, pp. 39-40.
[474] Ibid., 228-229.
[475] Piotr Michalowski, "Charisma and Control: On Continuity and Change in Early Mesopotamian Bureaucratic Systems", SAOC 46, 1991, p. 54.

limiting it to elite circles. Festivals to celebrate their divine status were established and used to name the months of the official calendar.[476] The king or his statues would travel around the kingdom during various festivals and ceremonies, with great feasts and performances, to attract as many people as possible. This strategy of deliberately propagating the king's divinity seems to have had some effect, partly reflected in naming patterns. There are plenty of examples of place and personal names, as well as some irrigation canal names incorporating the god-king's name as a theophoric element.[477] This practice was particularly prevalent in personal names, ranging from the relatively high to the middle and lower strata of the administration system.[478] Personal names with the theophoric royal name were formed mainly to express the king's superb qualities, his indispensability for the land, his function as a personal deity, or his superiority to his subjects, most likely to show personal loyalty and respect for the deified ruler.

The most significant consequence of divine kingship in terms of institutional construction was mainly represented by the establishment of Puzriš-Dagan and the bala-system. Puzriš-dagan was built in Š 39. It acted as the largest administrative center, responsible for receiving tribute from various provinces and redistributing them according to different uses.[479] The Sumerian word bala itself means "to transfer" or "to take turns"; in the Ur III political system, it refers roughly to a tribute system.[480] According to W. Hallo, the bala was a monthly rotational system fulfilled by city rulers ($ensi_2$) to supply the major temples in the religious capital Nippur, and the cities involved were recognized as the major centers of the kingdom.[481] Instead of forced contributions to Nippur, P. Steinkeller suggests that the bala-institution should be

[476] The "festival of Šulgi" (ezem ^{d}Šul-gi) was used to name the seventh month of the official Ur III calendar (eighth month since ŠS 4), which was also inserted into the local calendars of Girsu, Umma and Ur. The "festival of Šu-Šuen" (ezem ^{d}Šu-Suen), which seems to be created in ŠS 3, was used to name the ninth month of the official calendar. For more on the Ur III calendar, see Magnus Widell, "The Calendar of Neo-Sumerian Ur and Its Political Significance." *CDLJ* 2 (2004), pp. 1-7.

[477] Ludek Vacin, *Šulgi of Ur: Life, Deeds, Ideology and Legacy of a Mesopotamian Ruler as Reflected Primarily in Literary Texts*, 2011, p. 220.

[478] Audrey Pitts, The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia, 2015, pp. 230-276.

[479] For studies of Puzriš-dagan, see for example, Marcel Sigrist, *Drehem*, 1992; Christina Tsouparopoulou, HSAO 16, 2015.

[480] Tonia M. Sharlach, *Provincial Taxation and the Ur III State*, 2004.

[481] William W. Hallo, "A Sumerian Amphictyony." *JCS* 14/3 (1960), pp. 88-114; Tonia M. Sharlach, *Provincial Taxation and the Ur III State*, 2004; see further, Jacob Dahl, "Revisiting Bala." *JAOS* 126/1 (2006), pp. 77-88.

viewed as the hallmark of an economic redistribution system.[482] The establishment of these two institutions or systems was intended to serve the purpose of strengthening the royal power, but it was also the result of strengthened royal authority. The deification of the king was more conducive to tribute collection from the provinces and redistribution within royal organizations to promote economic centralization.

The concept and practice of divine kingship, which did not guarantee the immortality of any ruler or state, was challenged at the end of the Ur III Dynasty. Except for Gudea's posthumous deification by Lagaš officials,[483] various rulers of the peripheral areas that had been conquered and incorporated into the Ur III domain also claimed divinity, including Zardamu and Tišatal of Karahar, Ipiq-Eštar and Takil-ilissu of Malgium, Nidnuša of Der, Iddin-Sin and Zabazuna of Šimurrum,[484] and Šuiliy of Ešnunna.[485] These peripheral rulers competed to imitate the divine kingship of Ur III, which reflects the effectiveness and pervasive nature of this strategy from the side. There are also some contemporary rulers of the Dynasty of Šimaški, in the highlands of Iran, who likewise added the divine determinative before their names, albeit inconsistently.[486] However, due to the limited material available, it is unclear whether this was accidental or a response to the deification of the Ur III kings.

V.1.2 Influence of Divine Kingship on Later Generations

After the final defeat of Ur III by the combined attacks of the Amorites and the Elamites, Išbi-Erra, a courtier of Ibbi-Suen, came into power and began the Dynasty of Isin (ca. 2025-1924 BC). Išbi-Erra did succeed in repelling the Elamites from the Ur region, which gave him control over the significant cities of Ur, Uruk, and Nippur, but

[482] Piotr Steinkeller, "The Administrative and Economic Organization of the Ur III State: The Core and the Periphery", SAOC 46, 1991, pp. 15-33. However, as pointed out by Tohru Maeda ("Bal-ensí in the Drehem Texts." *ASJ* 16, 1994), since the city-rulers prepared for bala independently in their own cities and the livestock for bala was just a part of the animal circulation around Puzuriš-Dagan, the bala did not denote a distribution system.
[483] For more discussions, see Claudia E. Suter, "The Divine Gudea on Ur III Seal Images", *Beyond Hatti: A Tribute to Gary Beckman*, 2013, pp. 309-324; "Gudea's Kingship and Divinity", *Studies in the Bible and the Ancient Near East in Loving Memory of Victor Avigdor Hurowitz*, 2015, pp. 499-523.
[484] For more on these deified rulers in the four places, see Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, pp. 153-154.
[485] For more evidence, see Clemens Reichel, "The King is Dead, Long Live the King: The Last Days of the Shu-Sin Cult at Eshnunna and its Aftermath", OIS 4, 2008, p. 136.
[486] Piotr Michalowski, "The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 39-40.

he failed to achieve undeniable hegemony over the whole region. In order to justify his rule at a time of political turmoil, Išbi-Erra claimed to be the legitimate successor of the Ur III Dynasty by purposefully imitating Ur III traditions, including the deification of royal power.[487]

The deification of Išbi-Erra is evidenced by the divine determinative added before his name in royal inscriptions, year names, and archive documents. In the seal of his servant Išbi-Erra-mālik, Išbi-Erra was given the title "god of his land" (dingir-kalam-ma-na),[488] and this official also used his name as a theophoric element. Other Isin successors continued the practice of royal deification. The second king, Šu-ilīšu, was addressed as "god of his land" in a school copy inscription excavated at Ur, and his name was also used as a theophoric element by various individuals.[489] The third king, Iddin-Dagan, began to compose a royal hymn for himself, by mimicking or paying homage to the works of Šulgi.[490] The fourth king, Išme-Dagan, went one step further in the number and type of royal hymns,[491] three of which are considered to be direct imitations of Šulgi hymns. During the reign of the seventh king, Būr-Sîn, the title "lukur" (junior wives of the deities) borne by Nanāia-ibsa first appeared.[492] Given that that is all the evidence we have for the deification of Isin's rulers, it is impossible to determine how deep their claims of divinity went, and whether they had their own statues, temples, cultic personnel, or royal cults.

Therefore, P. Michalowski questions the existence of divine kingship in the Isin Dynasty, by arguing that the royal application of the divine determinative was only a customary practice in writing, rather than signifying heavenly status. These Isin kings were more likely to be sacred, but not fully divine as the Ur III kings claimed to be.[493]

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[487] Piotr Michalowski, "Literary Works from the Court of King Ishbi-Erra of Isin", in Yitschak Sefati, Pinhas Artzi, Chaim Cohen, Barry L. Eichler & Victor A. Hurowitz (eds.), *"An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing": Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Jacob Klein*, Bethesda: CDL Press, 2005, pp. 199-212.
[488] Douglas R. Frayne, *Old Babylonian Period (2003-1595 BC)*, RIME 4, Toronto and Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1990, p.12.
[489] Audrey Pitts, *The Cult of the Deified King in Ur III Mesopotamia*, 2015, p. 88.
[490] *ETCSL*, 2.5.3.2, 'A praise poem of Iddin-Dagan (Iddin-Dagan B)'.
[491] Jacob Klein, "Šulgi and Išmedagan: Originality and Dependence in Sumerian Royal Hymnology", *Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology Dedicated to Pinhas Artzi*, 1990, p. 87.
[492] Douglas R. Frayne, RIME 4, 1990, p. 71.
[493] Piotr Michalowski, "The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", OIS 4, 2008, p. 40.

On the other hand, the limited control of the territory seems to have restricted the deification of Isin rulers to the symbolic level and caused it to lose the political dimension it previously had in Ur III.[494] Isin flourished for over 100 years, while other city-states in north Mesopotamia, especially Eshnunna and Ashur, rose to power as well. Thus, though the political structure of Ur III largely continued, the ideological strategy that had worked under the hegemony of Ur III seems to have malfunctioned when applied to other local rulers in the Isin period. The Isin rulers were incapable of playing this ideological game, and the phenomenon of royal deification gradually disappeared. It can be seen that both the emergence and disappearance of divine kingship have a strong political dimension.

Another important issue I would like to discuss here is the SKL.[495] It is the significance of its emergence which is of interest here, and therefore I will not attempt to evaluate its reliability for reconstructing history in ancient Mesopotamia. Most versions of SKL were OB copies ending with the names of Isin rulers, indicating that the final version most likely came from that time. The oldest known version dates to Ur III, and was different from the final version in narrative structure.[496] There are strong indications that even the Ur III version of SKL was not original, and several clues point to the existence of an earlier Akkadian version.[497] In the Ur III SKL, a more linear transition of power culminating in the rule of Ur III was reflected, while in later versions, kingship was transferred between a large number of cities, revealing a more cyclical view of power transition. Arranging the succession of dynasties geographically rather than genealogically is a way of indicating that kingship is not permanent.[498] Though the leitmotif of SKL- the presumed unity of Babylonia under only one legitimate king- is the opposite of the real political situation in the ED period and the Isin Dynasty, this concept well explained the fall of Ur III and enabled the insertion of Isin into the

494 Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, p. 128.
495 Thorkild Jacobsen, AS 11, 1939. A more recent version can be found in Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 2004.
496 Piotr Steinkeller, "An Ur III Manuscript of the Sumerian King List", *Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien: Festschrift fur Claus Wilcke*, 2003, pp. 267-292.
497 Jean-Jacques Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 2004, pp. 95-96; Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, p. 40.
498 Jerrold S. Cooper, "Paradigm and Propaganda. The Dynasty of Akkade in the 21st Century", HANE/S 5, 1993, p. 19.

sequence of dynasties legitimately.[499] It is also noteworthy that theological speculation is absent in SKL, except for the divine kingship itself descending from heaven.

The Isin Dynasty is often associated with the Dynasty of Larsa (ca. 1924-1763 BC), and they are often regrouped for periodization purposes as the so-called "Isin-Larsa period". In reality, the dynasties of the Isin-Larsa period shared a common Semitic Amorite origin, although they soon acculturated to southern Mesopotamian traditions.[500] This period constitutes the first part of the OB period. Neither of the two kingdoms exercised unquestionable hegemony over the entirety of Babylonia until the establishment of the First Babylonian Empire by Hammurabi. After defeating Larsa, as well as Eshnunna and Mari, Hammurabi united the whole region and eliminated previously deep-rooted cultural and religious distinctions. The painstaking efforts of Akkadian and Ur III rulers' ideological construction to merge and transform the two different traditions seem to have become unnecessary at this point.

However, some scholars tend to relativize the phenomenon of divine kingship and broaden its definition.[501] In their point of view, a king can be considered apotheosized if he has some qualities that belong exclusively to the gods, without the need for explicit expression. According to this broad criterion, divine kingship was believed to have continued occasionally in later periods. P. Jones illuminates the cosmic role of kingship in Old Babylonian and denies its existence in the first millennium.[502] Hence, D. Charpin opposes the use of absolute categories to define divine kingship in ancient Mesopotamia,[503] and further points out that the OB kings could be considered divine because they exercised justice as the sun god does.[504] Here, Charpin focuses on the nature of the divine connections enjoyed by the king, though royal equivalence with the

[499] Ludek Vacin, *Šulgi of Ur: Life, Deeds, Ideology and Legacy of a Mesopotamian Ruler as Reflected Primarily in Literary Texts*, 2011, p. 222.
[500] Bill T. Arnold, *Who Were the Babylonians?,* Atlanta: SBL Press, 2004, pp. 38-39.
[501] See for example, Dominique Charpin, "Comment faire connaître la civilisation mésopotamienne." *ZA* 100 (2006), p. 127; P. Machinist, "Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria", *Text, Artifact, and Image. Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, 2006, p. 186.
[502] Philip Jones, "Divine and Non-Divine Kingship", in Daniel C. Snell (ed.), *A Companion to the Ancient Near East*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005, pp. 330-342.
[503] Dominique Charpin, "Comment faire connaître la civilisation mésopotamienne." *ZA* 100, 2006, p. 127.
[504] Dominique Charpin, "'I am the sun of Babylon': solar aspects of royal power in old Babylonian Mesopotamia", *Experiencing Power, Generating Authority: Cosmos and Politics in the Ideology of Kingship in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia*, 2013, pp. 75-76.

gods is not so patent. Similarly, P. Machinist advocates a more flexible definition and regards some Assyrian kings as divine.[505] E. Ehrenberg studies the different cultic representations of Late Babylonian and Achaemenid sacred kings.[506] Nevertheless, whether a king in later periods, especially in Assyria and afterwards, could be called "divine" is quite controversial. This kind of practice of not distinguishing "sacred" and "divine", by expanding the concept of extension and relativizing proposition, will make our research on the phenomenon of divine kingship lack pertinence and directivity.[507] For this reason, this study assumes that the deification of kings was a phenomenon of the late third and early second millennia in Mesopotamia,[508] and later periods are not taken into consideration.[509] In this way, the whole process from the appearance to the disappearance of this phenomenon is relatively clear, and it is more meaningful to analyze its influence under the historical and political context at that time.

To sum up, after the collapse of the Ur III Dynasty, divine kingship was briefly practiced by the rulers of the Isin Dynasty, who claimed to be legitimate successors of the Ur III monarchs. By the time Hammurabi successfully achieved unification, the whole of Babylonia had become a single nation with one language and unified culture. The unquestionable nature of his universal rule made it unnecessary for him to play ideological games such as the presumption of divine status.[510] Henceforth, none of the later rulers claimed to be divine either, and the development of royal power and state entered a new stage.

V.2 Influence of Shang Divine Kingship in Ancient China

When discussing the influence of the phenomenon of divine kingship in the Shang

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[505] P. Machinist, "Kingship and Divinity in Imperial Assyria", *Text, Artifact, and Image. Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion*, 2006, p. 186.
[506] Erica Ehrenberg, "Dieu te Mon Droit: Kingship in Late Babylonian and Early Persian Times", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 103-132.
[507] Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, p. 107.
[508] A more minimalist interpretation has been adopted by Piotr Michalowski ("The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", OIS 4, 2008: 41), who argues that the importance of this fortuitous phenomenon, which existed only briefly in the third millennium, has been overestimated.
[509] For the same reason, the view that the deification of kingship also existed in ED has not been adopted in this study. See, for example, G. Selz, "The Divine Prototypes", OIS 4, 2008, p. 20; Tallay Ornan, "A Silent Message: Godlike Kings in Mesopotamian Art", *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art*, 2013, p. 572.
[510] Piotr Steinkeller, *History, Texts and Art in Early Babylonia*, 2017, p. 128.

Dynasty, we are mainly concerned with its contemporary influence on aspects of politics, culture, and society, and its profound impact on the Zhou Dynasty that followed. The investigation of the former mainly includes the political system construction and statecraft perfection of the Shang Dynasty; the latter focuses on ideological change and concept innovation during the Zhou Dynasty. The advantages and disadvantages of adopting the strategy of deification of kingship, and why it was abandoned in later times, will also be addressed in this chapter.

V.2.1 Consequences of Divine Kingship in the Shang Dynasty

In general, the society of the Shang Dynasty was relatively stable, without excessive turmoil or large-scale popular uprisings. This had much to do with the proper use of theocracy by the Shang king to maintain his rule.[511] Royal control over local economic management or redistribution often had religious overtones, manifested in the tribute collected in the name of the divine kingship which was deployed to keep calendars and perform rituals to maintain the cosmological order.[512] The frequent divination and various sacrificial rites in the Shang Dynasty appeared to be a personal act of communication between the Shang king and the divine world, but in fact, they were all national sacrificial ceremonies. From the collection of materials for divination and sacrifice to the manpower and resources to attend ceremonies, a nationwide mobilization was required. The Shang god-king, sitting in the center, strengthened his control over the kingdom by mobilizing human resources and monopolizing material resources that embodied symbolic meanings.[513] The chiefs of the conquered clans also occupied a place among the gods worshipped in the Shang rituals, especially those ancestors of the great clans who had made great contributions to the Shang. The divine status of Shang kings was conducive to the acceptance and integration of other clans.

[511] Chao Fulin, "Xianqin Shehui Zuigao Quanli de Bianqian ji qi Yingxiang Yinsu" (The Transition of Supreme Power in Pre-Qin Society and Its Determinants), *Social Sciences in China* 2 (2015), p. 186.
[512] Li Min, *Conquest, Concord, and Consumption: Becoming Shang in Eastern China*, 2008, p. 4. There were eight kinds of goods that the Shang paid tribute to, including slaves, livestock, grain and agricultural products, wild animals, rare treasures such as shellfish, jade and ivory, handicrafts, land, tortoiseshells and scapular bones for divination, for more details, see Yang Shengnan, "Jiaguwen zhong suojian Shangdai de Gongna Zhidu" (The Tribute System Reflected in Oracle Inscriptions), *Yindu Journal* 2 (1999), pp. 27-32.
[513] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, p. 108.

The clans offered divination turtle shells to the Shang Dynasty to show their participation in the state cult.

In terms of political practice, the most important and characteristic political system of the Shang Dynasty, the inner-outer domain system, could hardly be operated smoothly without the divine status of the king.[514] The second chapter has discussed the limitations that clan power and theocracy imposed on kingship, which was partly the reason for the deification of Shang kings. During the late Shang, the kings took a number of measures to break loose. First of all, the king managed to draw the lineages in the inner domain area to his side and focus on the development of royal lineages. The incorporation of the gods of the external clans into the worship system and the recruitment of conquered clan chiefs as officials were important co-optation measures. As for the outer domains, given the instability of the vassal states, both taxation and warfare were used to expand and stabilize the Shang territory while increasing the king's political prestige and economic income. It is worth mentioning that the central government of Shang allowed the heads of a few remote vassal states to be addressed as "王" (the king). From examples in oracle-bone inscriptions and later literature, these "kings" were all remote clan chiefs with different cultures, outside the control of the Shang Dynasty, and did not influence or interfere with the power system of the central kingdom.[515] The divinity of the Shang kings provided the religious and theological basis for their status as co-rulers of the entire world.

The state of Shang comprises the meaning of political governance as well as geographical structure, which is linked with a particular relatively stable geographical region. However, the boundaries of this kind of political territory are often very vague and changeable. In addition to oracle inscriptions and later texts, the Shang political domain is often determined according to archaeological artifacts or site locations, and the territory is constantly changing with new archaeological discoveries. The exact

[514] For overview studies of Shang political system, see Chao Fulin, *Social changes in Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties*, Beijing: Beijing Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 1996, pp. 327-334; Wang Zhenzhong, *Zhongguo Gudai Guojia de Qiyuan yu Wangquan de Xingcheng* (The Origin of State and the Formation of Kingship in Ancient China), 2013, pp. 471-485.

[515] Xu Yihua, "Shangzhou 'Chengwang' yu Zhengzhi Sixiang Bianhua" ("Chengwang" in Shang and Zhou Dynasties and the Changes of Political Thought), *Cultural Relics in Southern China* 1 (2016), pp. 191-199.

scope of several capital cities of Shang and Zhou is not completely clear, and the outer domain outside the capital is even more obscure.[516] The ruling power of the Shang kingdom was still limited, and centralized political rule had not been established. As a result, several capitals coexisted, to effectively control the increasingly broad and changeable political territory. Set up in strategic places, these capitals mainly served political and military functions that radiated in all directions through geographical advantages. [517] To those outside the central kingdom, the Shang king was indistinguishable from a heavenly god.

Although the Shang kings often give the impression of being mysterious, according to oracle inscriptions, the practice of the king patrolling the four directions already appeared in the Shang Dynasty. There are many oracle bone inscriptions about Shang kings going hunting, and the king often accompanied the army to hunt and took the opportunity to inspect remote areas. Vassal states of outer domains were the main object of royal inspection, and military strongholds were important footholds. Although most of the Shang kings' patrols were armed or military in nature, there are many records of inspection of farmland in oracle inscriptions.[518] The Shang royal inspection already had certain procedures and etiquette. Rituals always accompanied the journey of the Shang kings: divination before the trip, worship of the ancestors before departure, sacrifices to the mountains and rivers on the way, and sacrifices to the ancestors when returning. Some rituals themselves were part of the patrol. Unlike the Ur III kings' spectacular water travels witnessed by many commoners, Shang kings' frequent and random land patrols usually went under strict military escort without contact with ordinary people.

During the late Shang, the king, on the one hand, made use of theocracy as the link between the inner and outer domains. On the other hand, he concentrated on limiting

[516] Xie, Weiyang. *Zhongguo Zaoqi Guojia* (Early State in ancient China), 1996, pp. 55-56, 402-403.
[517] It is said that the Shang Dynasty moved the capital 13 times before and after its establishment, but it was a temporary transfer of the political center, rather than abandonment of the old capital. The original capital still existed, or continued to play a role as a strategic location. See Wang Jian, "Shilun Xia Shang Zhou Sandai Zhengzhi Jiangyu de Zhuyao Tezheng" (The Main Characteristics of the Political Territories in Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties), *Yindu Journal* 4 (2002), pp. 1-14, 16-17.
[518] Guo Xudong, "Cong Jiagu Wenzi 'Sheng' kan Shangdai de Xunshouli" (Observing the Guarding Ritual of Shang Dynasty from the Oracle Character "Province"), *Academic Journal of Zhongzhou* 2 (2008), pp. 163-166.

and weakening the theocracy symbolized by the diviner group. In the early period of late Shang, there were more than one hundred records of diviners in oracle inscriptions, showing the strong power of this group. By the later period of late Shang after Kang Ding, the number of diviners decreased sharply, and most of the oracle inscriptions no longer recorded their names.[519] By eliminating this intermediate link and no longer allowing the diviner people to convey the will of the gods, the king of Shang realized direct communication with the gods, and the royal power effectively rid itself of the shackles of the diviners' power.

V.2.2 Influence of Shang Divine Kingship on Later Generations

The influence of Shang culture went beyond its political landscape and era. The Zhou extensively imitated the cultural practices of the Shang, perhaps to legitimize their own rule and to become the successor to the Shang culture. Many of the concepts introduced by the Zhou people were derived from the Shang, represented by the change of supreme god from Di to Heaven, the adoption of the new title "Son of Heaven", and the invention of the "mandate of Heaven" ideology.[520] The ideological evolution towards the Heavenly way also brought about the reform of the political system and social thought. All Zhou innovations regarding the basis of inheritance moved ancient China from theocracy to monarchy. Since the Zhou Dynasty, there has never been a self-deified monarch in Chinese history.[521]

V.2.2.1 From Shang God-King to Zhou "Son of Heaven"

From the point of view of power, the Shang Dynasty was the era of theocracy. According to the oracle bone inscriptions, it can be seen that the gods were the embodiment of supreme power in Shang, and the materialized form of divine power

[519] Chao Fulin, *Social changes in Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties*, Beijing: Beijing Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 1996, pp. 313-314.
[520] Wang Zhenzhong, "Shangzhou zhibian yu cong Di xiang Tiandi Tongyixing Zhuanbain de Yuanyou' (The Change from Shang to Zhou and the Reason of the Change from Di to Combined Tiandi), *Historical Research* 5 (2017), pp. 4-10.
[521] M. Puett, "Human and Divine Kingship in Early China: Comparative Reflections", OIS 4, 2008, pp. 207-219.

was the god-king on earth. By the Zhou Dynasty, as the king at the top of the pyramid and the feudal princes of various vassal states mastered the supreme power in society, the Zhou Dynasty entered the era of monarchical power.[522] Therefore, the new royal title, Son of Heaven, was invented to refer to the rulers of Zhou and later generations throughout ancient China. Philosophically, this title is justified by the doctrine of the "Mandate of Heaven", which will be discussed in the next chapter. It was meant to bestow the approval of the celestial firmament on a just ruler. The title is more than merely symbolic, signifying a special relationship between the king and the supreme deity.[523]

From the perspective of religious ideology, the appearance of the title "Son of Heaven" is the product of the reform in the Zhou Dynasty of the pantheon of the Shang Dynasty. First of all, the Zhou introduced the appellation and concept of "Heaven" (天) and made it identical with the Shang supreme god Di.[524] The term "Heaven" also appears sporadically in Shang oracle inscriptions, but with two limited usages, referring especially to the top of the human head; or the same with "big, great" (大), only appearing in four instances in late Shang's description of "the Great Shang Settlement".[525] No such concept as the mandate of Heaven appeared in oracle inscriptions, and the Shang people did not worship Heaven as their supreme god. In the bronze inscriptions of the early Zhou Dynasty, the mention of Heaven as the supreme god and the mandate of Heaven appear frequently. "Heaven" and "Di" are also juxtaposed in the same bronze inscription.

Second, the Zhou Dynasty drew closer the distance between Heaven or Di and the secular world.[526] The Zhou endowed Heaven with more connotations, not only personifying him and having him take over the functions of Di, but also giving him

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[522] Chao Fulin, *Social changes in Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties*, Beijing: Beijing Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 1996, pp. 373-384.
[523] Julia Ching, "Son of Heaven: Sacral Kingship in Ancient China." *T'oung Pao* 83.1/3 (1997), pp. 14-15.
[524] Wang Zhenzhong, "Shangzhou zhibian yu cong Di xiang Tiandi Tongyixing Zhuanbain de Yuanyou' (The Change from Shang to Zhou and the Reason of the Change from Di to Combined Tiandi), *Historical Research* 5 (2017), pp. 4-10.
[525] Chao Fulin, "Shuo Shangdai de 'Tian' he 'Di'" (Discussions on "Heaven" and "Di" in Shang Dynasty), *Collected Papers of History Studies* 3 (2016), p. 131.
[526] Chao Fulin, "Xianqin Shehui Zuigao Quanli de Bianqian ji qi Yingxiang Yinsu" (The Transition of Supreme Power in Pre-Qin Society and Its Determinants), *Social Sciences in China* 2 (2015), p. 192.

more political responsibilities related to the Earth. In the Shang Dynasty, although Di was very powerful, he was far away from the profane world and could not intervene in the concrete affairs of the mortal realm as could the ancestral gods. By the time of Zhou, as reflected in contemporary texts, everyone from the king at the top of the pyramid of power to the common people were blessed by Heaven. This brilliant supreme deity was very concerned with all creatures' livelihood and their sufferings, taking pains to overlook and bless the state and all the people so that there was no unrest in the world. Therefore, in sharp contrast to the Shang Dynasty, the sacrificial rite of Heaven was the highest and most important ritual in the Zhou Dynasty. The practice of sacrifice to Heaven was exclusive to the "Son of Heaven" and was mainly embodied in the cults to pray for harvest in the suburbs twice a year in autumn and winter.[527] This kind of worship and sacrifice to Heaven became the routine state affairs of later Chinese monarchs.

Third, in the Zhou Dynasty, a hierarchical system and order of gods with Heaven as its apex was formed. Based on the earthly court, the Zhou Dynasty created a celestial bureaucracy, including the office space and the office staff of Heaven.[528] After death, the royal ancestors of the Zhou Dynasty ascended to the heavenly court to serve at Heaven's side and convey his will to the Earth. Even the ancestors of the Shang Dynasty could give advice to Di, but their relationship and mode of getting along with Di was vague, unlike the Zhou Dynasty, which had a clear relationship between subjects and subordinates.[529] Through the reform, Heaven became the protector of the Zhou royal family, and the whole heavenly court, dominated by Heaven and supplemented by ancestors, became a powerful backing of the Zhou Dynasty.

In terms of political systems, the title "Son of Heaven" is closely related to the

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[527] Wang Zhenzhong, "Shangzhou zhibian yu cong Di xiang Tiandi Tongyixing Zhuanbain de Yuanyou' (The Change from Shang to Zhou and the Reason of the Change from Di to Combined Tiandi), *Historical Research* 5 (2017), p. 9.

[528] Chao Fulin, "Xianqin Shehui Zuigao Quanli de Bianqian ji qi Yingxiang Yinsu" (The Transition of Supreme Power in Pre-Qin Society and Its Determinants), *Social Sciences in China* 2 (2015), pp. 192-193. Another point of view is that the heavenly court had already had its embryonic form in the Shang Dynasty, as reflected in the oracle inscriptions, see Fu Ruixun, *Study on the Evolution of Shang and Zhou Dynasty Ethical Thoughts*, PhD. Thesis, Northeast Normal University, 2019, pp. 39-42.

[529] Zhu Fenghan, "Shangzhou Shiqi de Tianshen Chongbai" (The Worship of Heaven Gods in Shang and Zhou Dynasties), *Social Sciences in China* 4 (1993), pp. 191-211.

establishment of the patriarchal system in the Zhou Dynasty. The Zhou carried out a major reform on the inner-outer domain system of the Shang, inventing the feudal system (分封制) and the primogeniture system (宗法制).[530] The two interweaved systems were the props of the Zhou king's supreme power, with the former favoring the descendants of the royal family, while the latter embraced the whole society. Such an extensive stratified lineage design was achieved by decreasing political statuses. It was characterized by the fact that the eldest son produced by the principal first wife made up the main line of descent inheriting the highest political authority, whereas the younger brothers were moved out around the kingdom to establish new lineages with lesser authority. The lower the mother's status, the farther removed from the political center, the lesser the political authority.[531] In matters of royal inheritance, the Zhou Dynasty recognized only patrilineal primogeniture as legal. In all kinds of clan relations, the father-son relationship was no doubt the most important, and the title "Son of Heaven" was actually the projection of the patriarchal clan relationship. The subtext of the title is that Heaven gives his son, the Zhou king, the supreme power to rule the whole world, just as a father passes the main clan power to his eldest son.

Despite calling themselves the Son of Heaven, the Zhou rulers did not deify themselves, which was another innovation from the Shang. The Zhou Dynasty narrowed the distance between the supreme deity Di or Heaven and the human world, by concentrating all the power and functions enjoyed by Shang ancestral gods on the abstract concept of Heaven[532] and then transferring the political authority in the mortal world to the human monarch through father-son succession. In theory, Di or Heaven possessed the highest authority, but in practice, it was the earthly monarch who was responsible for exercising the supreme power. This was a way of ostensibly enhancing the authority of Heaven, while actually undermining it, which is exactly the opposite of the approach taken by the Shang. Due to their absolute reliance on and reverence for

[530] For an overview of the two systems in Zhou, see Chao Fulin, *Social changes in Xia, Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties*, Beijing: Beijing Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 1996, pp. 264-270, 349-360.
[531] Chang Kwang-chih, *Art, Myth and Ritual: The Path to Political Authority in Ancient China*, 1983, pp. 14-16.
[532] Wang Hui, "Lun Shangzhou Qinhan Shiqi Shangdi de Yuanxing jiqi Yanbian" (On the prototype and evolution of Di in Shang, Zhou, Qin and Han dynasties), *Journal of National Museum of China* 1 (1999), P. 52.

Di, the Shang people could only guess his intentions with caution and did not hope to change his decisions. They had to take a step back and put their hope in the ancestral gods. This kind of blind worship of the divine power was the result of the relative weakness of royal power in Shang and was partly the reason for the occurrence of Shang divine kingship.[533] In the Zhou Dynasty, royal power was greatly strengthened and the construction of the political system made progress, so there was a great change from theocracy to monarchy. Since then, ancient Chinese history entered the era of complete human rule, and the divine right of mortal kings was merely a tool of political propaganda.

The identity of the king as "Son of Heaven" in the Zhou Dynasty seems similar to the view of the ruler as the royal-deputy of the gods in the Early Dynastic period in ancient Mesopotamia. Both rulers are representatives of divine power on earth, without claiming divinity. However, the Zhou kings sought the patronage of the supreme god, while the rulers of the Mesopotamian city-states relied only on the city gods. The political unification of the Zhou Dynasty resulted in a kingship much stronger than that of the Earlier Dynastic period. Therefore, kingship in the Zhou Dynasty was more comparable to that of ancient Babylonia. Both of them experienced theocratic times, witnessed the deification of royal power, and then got rid of theocratic bondage, becoming politically a more powerful and centralized secular monarchy. The cloak of divine authority was no longer needed, and the phenomenon of divine kingship was no longer seen in ancient China or Mesopotamia.

V.2.2.2 "Mandate of Heaven" from the Zhou Dynasty Onward

The concept of the "Mandate of Heaven" (天命), which was introduced by Zhou rulers to legitimize their overthrow of the preceding Shang Dynasty, proved to be one of East Asia's most enduring political doctrines. Although the Shang Dynasty was said to have overthrown the Xia Dynasty with the same wording of following the mandate

[533] Chao Fulin, "Shilun Yindai de Wangquan yu Shenquan" (Kingship and Theocracy in Yin Dynasty), *Social Science Front* 4 (1984), pp. 96-102.

of Heaven, that is only a retrospective description of later Zhou literature. The Zhou rulers introduced the subjective factor of "virtue" (德) into the mandate of Heaven and divided it into two aspects: respect for virtue (敬德) and protecting the people (保民).[534]

The Western Zhou's concept of the mandate of Heaven evolved from the worship of gods in the Shang Dynasty, changing from a religious concept to a political tool. The Shang themselves did not explicitly mention the mandate of Heaven, but the oracle inscriptions are invariably oracles in terms of content. The Shang people believed that the supreme god Di had absolute authority over the world, and the king, who can only obtain the divine will through specific rituals and divination, was completely under his command. Di was considered to be the first ancestor of the Shang, so that Shang royal power had been acquired by providence and would never change.[535] Such excessive worship and dependence on gods based on blood ties made the Shang Dynasty lack subjective initiative in improving the methods of state governance. After the Zhou destroyed the Shang, they further improved the connotation of the thought of the mandate of Heaven. The Zhou not only replaced Di with Heaven, which embodies the natural order and will of the universe, but also innovatively be endowed with the moral connotation of Heaven's mandate, namely, matching Heaven with virtue (以德配天). "Virtue" became the key and basis of obtaining Heaven's blessing and the transfer of mandate, the possession of which became the standard for whether a dynasty could rule for a long time. It was used throughout the history of China to legitimize regime change, namely the successful overthrow of the old emperor and the installation of a new one.

As the core of the mandate of Heaven ideology in the Western Zhou Dynasty,

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[534] Wang Ruiying, "Cong Shenling Chongbai dao 'Yi De Pei Tian' Xizhou Tianmingguan de Shanbian ji qi Yingxiang" (From worship of gods to "Matching Heaven with Virtue": The transmutation and Influence of The View of Destiny in the Western Zhou Dynasty), *Jiangxi Social Sciences* 11 (2016), pp. 157-161; Wang Zhenzhong, "Shangzhou zhibian yu cong Di xiang Tiandi Tongyixing Zhuanbain de Yuanyou' (The Change from Shang to Zhou and the Reason of the Change from Di to Combined Tiandi), *Historical Research* 5 (2017), pp. 4-10.

[535] In *Shijing*, there is both the description of a black bird descending under the command of Heaven and giving birth to Shang (天命玄鸟，降而生商), and the reference of Di giving birth to Shang or command a sage to produce Shang (帝立子生商). For different understandings about the latter, see Liang Feng, "Shang Zhou zhiji Tianmingguan zhi Liubian ji qi Lishi Houguo" (On Evolution And Historical Consequences of Theory of Destiny in Shang and Zhou Dynasties), *Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University (Philosophy & Social Science)* 1 (2018), p. 101; Tang Mingliang, "Shuo "Di" ji qi Fanying de Zhouren Tianmingguan" (On "Di" and its reflection Zhou People's View of Destiny), *Journal of Beijing Normal University (Social Sciences)* 6 (2020), p. 144.

respect for and possession of virtue included two aspects: the cultivation of the ruler's private morality and the implementation of good governance.[536] In this way, a legitimate ruler's ability to rule, rather than his noble birth, became the basis for judging his qualifications. By introducing political morality and adding objective governance norms and measurement standards, the rulers of the Zhou Dynasty began to focus on the real world instead of theocracy and began to attempt to influence the mandate of Heaven through their own efforts. Under this system, any ruler who let instability creep into earthly affairs, or who let his people suffer, would lose the mandate. Times of poverty and natural disasters such as famine and flood were divine retributions bearing signs of Heaven's displeasure with the ruler and thus indicating that he was in need of replacement.[537] Thus the mandate of Heaven was often invoked by ancient Chinese philosophers and scholars as a way to curtail a ruler's abuse of power. The Zhou rulers also made great efforts to gain accurate knowledge of the stars, in order to perfect the astronomical system on which they based their calendar.

The Western Zhou Dynasty introduced the objective factor of respect for virtue into the view of the mandate, which had an obvious influence on contemporary cultural and social concepts. Since the Western Zhou, the main purpose of sacrifice changed from praying for the divine blessing to warning and enlightenment for the ruler on their reign and their successors. From the literature and bronze inscriptions handed down from the Western Zhou, it can be seen that the Zhou people's reverence for Heaven was different from the Shang's blind reverence and worship of gods. After the subjective initiative of the rulers was mobilized, the reverence would promote the development and expansion of the Western Zhou in various social aspects, such as politics, economy, and the military.[538] Influenced by the ideology of the ruling class, the whole society had the thought of respecting god and paying more attention to human affairs and moral

[536] Wang Ruiying, "Cong Shenling Chongbai dao 'Yi De Pei Tian' Xizhou Tianmingguan de Shanbian ji qi Yingxiang" (From worship of gods to "Matching Heaven with Virtue": The transmutation and Influence of The View of Destiny in the Western Zhou Dynasty), *Jiangxi Social Sciences* 11 (2016), pp. 157-161.
[537] For more explanations and examples, see Li Peijian, "Tianming yu Zhengquan: Xianqin TianmingGuan Yanjin de Luoji Lujing" (Heaven and Regime: Logical Evolution Path about View of Heaven in Pre-Qin Period), *Wuhan University of Technology (Social Science Edition)* 2 (2016), pp. 158-159.
[538] Wang Ruiying, "Cong Shenling Chongbai dao 'Yi De Pei Tian' Xizhou Tianmingguan de Shanbian ji qi Yingxiang" (From worship of gods to "Matching Heaven with Virtue": The transmutation and Influence of the View of Destiny in the Western Zhou Dynasty), *Jiangxi Social Sciences* 11 (2016), p. 159.

cultivation.

According to Chao Fulin, the term "virtue" in Zhou was derived from the word "to acquire, obtain" (得) in Shang oracle inscriptions.[539] Except for the subtle differences in glyphs, the term in Shang refers to the acquisition of divine care and favor, by means of the mandate of Heaven and the remote ancestor Gao Zu. In his view, given that the blind worship of gods dominated Shang social thought, the concept of "virtue" was not mature or independent, and not to mention that it did not develop into the category of inner introspection. For a long time during the Shang Dynasty, the concept of "virtue" bore the meaning of "Heavenly way" and "acquisition" from the divine world. The Zhou concept of virtue added an element of rational thinking. As the focus shifted from divine providence to the human self, the Zhou not only considered what they had obtained from Heaven but also how to maintain and secure this acquisition. The result of their thinking is the respect for virtue, and its reflection in the system construction was to ensure the stable development of the country by implementing the feudal and primogeniture systems.

As the core of the Western Zhou ideology, this evolved concept of the mandate of Heaven left a profound influence on later society in terms of politics, philosophy, and culture. First, the Western Zhou's improvement of the mandate of Heaven, especially the introduction of virtue, was the turning point from "god-orientation" to "man-orientation" in ancient China; respect for virtue was the origin of people-oriented thought, which was promoted and deepened by the way of thinking represented by Confucius.[540] After Confucianism became official orthodoxy during the Han Dynasty (202 BC-220 AD), ancient Chinese rulers were willing to follow the example of the early Zhou rulers to stabilize the country and enhance its strength through practicing good governance. Second, the doctrine of the mandate of Heaven in Zhou times inspired and promoted the development of traditional Chinese philosophy represented by

[539] Chao Fulin, "Xianqin Shiqi "De" Guannian de Qiyuan yu Fazhan" (The Origin and Development of the Concept of "De" in the Pre-Qin Period), *Social Sciences in China* 2 (2005), pp. 196-198.
[540] For more discussion on the evolution of "people-oriented" theory in pre-Qin China, see Chao Fulin, "Cong "Minben" dao "Junben", Shilun Xianqin Shiqi Zhuanzhi Wangquan Guannian de Xingcheng" (From "People-oriented" to "Emperor-oriented", Discussions on the Formation of the Concept of Autocratic Kingship in pre-Qin China), *Journal of Chinese Historical Studies* 4 (2013), pp. 31-47.

Taoism.[541] Lao Zi first questioned and overthrew the authority of the god of heaven, thinking that Heaven was nothing but a natural state with no mystery. Zhuang Zi held the opinion that Heaven is an inevitable state of unconsciousness outside human beings. Xun Zi summarized the mandate of Heaven as an objective law, which did not depend on humans' will and desire. But at the same time, he also emphasized the play of people's subjective initiative, understanding, and use of the law of mandate.

V.3 Conclusion

In the process of analysis, it is not difficult to find that there are many manifestations of the deification of kingship, that is, its consequences and influence. As the king deified himself, the symbolic and material creations around his new identity, including royal titles, literary works, cultic statues, temples, and royal cults, profoundly influenced contemporary politics, religion, and culture. For Ur III, the apotheosis of Šulgi in the middle of his reign was likely part of his domestic reforms, consistent with a possible shift of policy from domestic construction to foreign conquest. Given that the tribute redistribution center of Puziriš-Dagan and the taxation system of bala-ensi$_2$ were established after the king's deification, the name of the new god-king might have had implications on royal authority and legitimacy, and even facilitated the collection of tribute from the provinces, and the subsequent redistribution within the state. In addition to the strengthening of economic centralization by the king's divinity, the construction of temples for him in various cities seems to have contributed to the expansion of the royal temple estate. The kings of Ur III were not content to promote themselves solely in elite circles but instead publicized their divinity among the wider community. They made festivals with their names and traveled around the country during festivals and celebrations, accompanied by large feasts and various recreational activities. Their efforts appear to have paid off, with people from different classes willing to incorporate the king's name as a theophoric element in their own names. With

[541] Zhang Haiying, "Lun Xianqin Daojia Tianming Guan de Tedian" (The Characteristics of the Theory of the Pre-Qin Taoist's view on Destiny), *Journal of Social Science of Hunan Normal University* 4 (2014), pp. 12-17.

the decline of Ur III, the deification of the crown was challenged by the deified rulers of marginal regions. After the collapse of Ur III, the succeeding Isin rulers briefly emulated their practice of royal deification. Since then, the phenomenon of divine kingship did not appear again in ancient Mesopotamia.

In contrast to Ur III, it is not known when the deification of kingship began during the Shang Dynasty, so it is impossible to analyze the environmental changes before and after the deification. However, during the reign of Wu Ding in the late Shang Dynasty, kingship was greatly enhanced by reducing the power of the diviners, and the king created a complete monopoly on communication with the divine realm. From the perspective of royal cults, ancestral worship exceeded that of the natural gods, and this was reflected in the frequency and scale of sacrifice. The divine status of Shang kings made the main political and economic system, i.e. the inner-outer domain system, run effectively. Tributes, including grain, livestock, slaves, precious metals, and jade, as well as sacrificial and divination utensils, were collected from all regions in the name of the god-king and used for royal and central government expenses. The borders of the Shang Dynasty were fluid, and the divinity of the kings seems to have played a role in stabilizing newly conquered areas and deterring revolt. No large-scale rebellions were recorded during the reign of the Shang kings. Although the Shang king did travel on hunting trips, he was usually escorted by troops and kept out of contact with ordinary people, in contrast to the efforts of the Ur III kings to promote themselves among the general populace. The written and visual symbols crafted by the Shang king around his divine identity were highly elitist, disseminated only among literate and even high-ranking officials. This sense of mystery, created through isolation from ordinary people, made the Shang kings look like gods to the population of the vast territories under their rule.

Both Ur III and Shang monarchs were replaced by their government officials, who both used the same means of legitimization, i.e. claiming to be the heirs of the previous dynasty. The difference lies in the fact that rulers of Isin continued most of the Ur III political and ideological instructions, including the practice of royal deification. By contrast, the Zhou rulers made more innovations when inheriting the Shang heritage.

They decisively abandoned the deification of kingship and turned to strengthening royal power through the construction of a political system and the reform of religious thought. They replaced the supreme deity “Di” with “Heaven” and legitimately received all the power of Heaven on Earth by calling themselves the Sons of Heaven. On this basis, they expanded the view of the mandate of Heaven, introduced the factor of “virtue”, and extended the ideas of matching Heaven with virtue, respecting virtue, and protecting the people. Since then, the ancient Chinese dynasties rid themselves of the bondage of theocracy and entered the era of monarchy.

Chapter VI: General Conclusion

This comparative study of divine kingship in the Ur III and Shang Dynasties has investigated the whole progress of this phenomenon from its emergence to disappearance in ancient Mesopotamia and China. The aim has been to try to solve the unanswered questions, including why divine kingship was so fleeting in ancient Mesopotamia and how deified kings differed from traditional kings and deities, and to deepen the research on the influence of this phenomenon in ancient China.

When discussing the deification of royalty in both ancient Mesopotamia and China, the first challenge is to define the phenomenon. The duration and subsequent effects of the phenomenon cannot be investigated without first clarifying the concept and its extension. Too broad or too narrow a definition must be rejected.[542] This study first distinguishes between "sacred" and "deified" kingship, and then the consistent worship of kings as gods, reflected mainly by textual descriptions and royal cults, is taken as the main criterion. According to this definition, the divine kingship of ancient Mesopotamia existed briefly in the late third and early second millennia, culminating in Ur III,[543] while in ancient China only the Shang Dynasty witnessed this fleeting phenomenon.[544] Under this premise, the emergence, expression and influence of divine kingship in Ur III and Shang Dynasties can be better studied.

The emergence of the deification of kingship in Ur III and Shang was mainly influenced by previous traditions and contemporary political circumstances. The difference lies in the fact that Ur III was influenced by two completely opposite old Sumerian and Akkadian traditions, while the Shang Dynasty mainly inherited the idea of theocracy from the previous periods.

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[542] For a broad definition or none at all, see for example, Dominique Charpin, "Comment faire connaître la civilisation mésopotamienne." *ZA* 100 (2006), pp. 107-130; for the strictest definition, see Piotr Michalowski, "The Mortal Kings of Ur: A Short Century of Divine Rule in Ancient Mesopotamia", OIS 4, 2008, p. 41.

[543] This definition is supported by many other scholars, see Nicole Brisch, "Of Gods and Kings: Divine Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia." *Religion Compass* 7/2 (2013), p. 39.

[544] For different opinions, see M. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China*, 2002, pp. 40-50.

A tentative comparison between the periods before Ur III and Shang has been conducted, not corresponding one by one strictly, but rather in the process from the emergence and development of kingship and the occurrence of divine kingship. The Longshan culture of ancient China has been compared with the ED period of ancient Sumer, the Xia Dynasty with the Akkadian Dynasty, and the Shang Dynasty with the Ur III Dynasty. The numerous chiefdoms/states in the Longshan culture period of China have certain similarities with Sumerian city-states, in that both were small in size and simple in political structure. The main difference lies in the fact that states in ancient China tended to be unified through constant war and annexation, while it was difficult for Sumerian city-states to expand their territory.

With the advent of the unified Xia Dynasty and the Akkadian Dynasty, the political structure and royal conception changed greatly. In comparison to the severe conflict of Akkadian secular kingship with Sumerian traditional rulership based on divine selection, the kingship of Xia developed from the previous sovereignty of the confederation in the time of the Longshan culture and completed the identity of the Hua Xia nationality. Although it seems that Akkadian rulers unsuccessfully introduced the deification of kingship to strengthen their rule, their experience provided lessons for the rulers of Ur III to resolve the conflict between the two traditions. While previous traditions either encouraged or discouraged the deification of kingship, contemporary political circumstances determined the Ur III and Shang kings' decision of self-deification: Shang royal power was restricted by the clan power and the theocracy represented by the diviner group, while Šulgi stood at a turning point of policy from domestic construction to foreign conquest, and the local ruling family always had a centrifugal tendency.

There are great differences in the expression of the deification of kingship between Ur III and Shang Dynasties. The self-deification of the Ur III kings during their lifetimes was a deliberate strategy, following the examples of both Akkadian god-kings and traditional deities. In written evidence, the divine determinative before the kings' names explicitly indicated their divinity, and the literary descriptions, especially royal hymns, were composed to further enrich their new identities. Their new status was also

crafted through various cults performed both in temples and in public. The existing template of traditional gods was modeled to build the god-kings' own statues, temples, and cults, and the designation of the gods' junior wife, lukur, was adopted to address royal wives. In addition, Ur III god-kings managed to publicize their divinity by naming new festivals with their names and traveling around the kingdom during festivals or ceremonies, which were generally accompanied by lavish feasts and various entertainments. Royal images in seal impressions depicted the king as mortal, which seemed to contradict the written statements. However, this seemingly contradictory design was likely to forge a dual identity of the king as both human and divine. This way of preserving partial humanity may also have helped to solve to some extent the problem that the deified king would also die.

In comparison with divine kings in Ur III, Shang kings' divinity was based on their role as intermediary supreme, since politics and religion intertwined closely in the Shang Dynasty. The Shang king was the head shaman, monopolizing communication with the divine realm. The contemporary textual expressions of Shang god-kings were indirect and implicit, by showing them more as a group symbol than as an individual. Royal titles of Shang kings focused on the supremacy, uniqueness, and loneliness of kingship. Divination and ancestral cults feature in the religion of Shang, and were monopolized by the king and the main royal lineage as revealed by oracle inscriptions. The divine origins, supernatural abilities, and events of Shang god-kings were mainly reflected by later classical texts. Royal palaces, ancestral temples, and royal tombs were material symbols of the god-king's power, which had a direct association with the four directional cosmology that placed the Shang kingdom in the center. In the art of the Shang Dynasty, the royal image was lacking and was replaced by the abstract and highly symbolic animal images. These sacred animal figures cast in ritual bronze were supposed to assist in heaven-earth communication or help the king acquire divine power. In general, the audience of textural and artistic expressions of the Shang king's divinity was limited to educated elite circles.

Although the phenomenon of royal deification was short-lived, it had a certain influence on the time of Ur III and Shang Dynasties, as well as later generations. Given

that both the Ur III and Shang Dynasties were threatened by local centrifugal forces, the deification of kingship was most likely intended to strengthen political and economic centralization. Under the name of the god-king, the tribute redistribution center Puziriš-Dagan and the taxation system bala-ensi$_2$ in Ur III, and the inner-outer domain system in Shang may have run more smoothly and effectively. Since the borders in ancient times were fluid and in a constant state of change, the divinity of the Ur III and Shang kings seemed to have played a role in consolidating and stabilizing newly conquered areas. The two ancient complex cultures can come up with very distinct solutions to the common problem of state expansion using similar cultural/ religious resources is in itself an interesting and worthwhile finding.

Despite the possible common social-political context of strategies to unifying newly expanded and internally diverse territories, the implications of the differences between Ur III and Shang divine kingship need to be clarified here. The deification of kingship is a phenomenon determined by culture and history, which has different manifestations and influences in different civilizations. By comparing the differing ways in which, and different degrees to which, Ur III and Shang kingship can be considered divine, it can be seen that both the two dynasties witnessed the apex of divine kingship in their respective cultures. However, when comparing Ur III and Shang god-kings horizontally, it is not difficult to find that the divinity of Ur III kings, or the divinity constructed from available sources, is far stronger than that of the obscure Shang kings. It may seem odd to bring China into a discussion focused upon divine kingship, since China is often mentioned as the protorypical example of distinctly human sovereignty, especially from the imperial periods of Qin and Han Dynasties onwards.[545] Therefore, it can be said that the deification of royal power in the Shang Dynasty is a very unique case in the whole history of China. Although the phenomenon of divine kingship was also short-lived in ancient Mesopotamia, it experienced three stages of emergence (Old Akkadian Dynasty), heyday (Ur III Dynasty) and echo (Isin-Larsa period).

[545] M. Puett, “Human and Divine Kingship in Early China: Comparative Reflections”, OIS 4, 2008, p. 207.

The appearance and disappearance of divine kingship were politically-oriented. Instead of viewing divine kingship as the apex of the development of kingship, I tend to think that it is an ideological aid to kingship when it is not strong enough. There was no need for the politically and culturally unified First Babylonian Dynasty or Zhou Dynasty to play this ideological game, so the phenomenon of divine kingship disappeared in ancient Mesopotamia and China.

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