

THE MYTHS OF RULERS OF ANCIENT CITIES AND CULTURES*

UDC 2-264:321.1

Jelena Petković

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Serbia

E-mail: jelena.petkovic@filfak.ni.ac.rs

Abstract. *Accepting as our starting point the opinion that myth always accompanied the development of all societies and that it has a fundamental meaning for all cultures which in different ways have been based on numerous mythic content, in this paper the author will deal with the analysis of certain myths of rulers of ancient cities and cultures. At the same time, the value and functions of the first inscribed myths, which have, among other things, pointed out the divine origin of rulers, were meant to justify their pretensions to power through conquest and had a pronounced ontological and orientational function – myth as an explanation of the origin and essence of life and the socio-cultural frame of desired behavior. The author indicates that the ancient rulers pretentiously attempted to achieve divine status in order to retain power, where they were willingly aided by the skillfully designed content of various myths, special mythic rituals and religious ceremonies. They were portrayed as heroes saving their people, city, state, who become divinities through extensive cultural development and successful conquest in the countries of the Ancient East. Indicating the process of remythologization, the author refers to certain analogies of ancient and modern political myths.*

Key words: *myth, mythic content and ritual, ancient cities and cultures, the divine origin of rulers.*

The research into mythic content and heroes, mythic conscience and opinion requires an interdisciplinary approach including various sciences: history, philosophy, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, psychology. The etymological meaning of the concept of myth (the word) is related to its basic determination as a holy story of the origin and development of man, stories describing events, individuals (who bear the marks of gods, heroes, idols) and their actions which are important for the survival of the tribe, people,

Received January 21, 2013

* This paper represents the results of activities realized as part of the macroproject *Tradition, modernization and the national identity in Serbia and the Balkans in the process of EU integrations* (179074), realized by the Center of Sociological Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy in Niš, financed by the Ministry of Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia

world. As the original form of oral collective creativity, myths were a unique kind of testimony of religious representations and the connections between natural and supernatural occurrences. Myth accompanied the development of all societies and has a fundamental meaning for all cultures, which have in different ways been based on a large amounts of mythic content. Leszek Kolakowski explains that the attitude towards myth is not based on knowledge, but on the act of complete and trusting acceptance, which is the entryway into a specific mythological reality (Kolakowski, 1989). Speaking of the social functions of myth, Bronislaw Malinowski states that myth is not merely a story to be told, but instead a reality which is being experienced (Malinowski, 1971). Bearing in mind the modern revival of myth through the process of remythologization, Ratko Božović mentions: "Today it is quite clear – if we do not search for the nature of myth, its essential powers and its persisting duration, it is difficult to understand the structural problems of modernity." (Božović, 2006: 219). The great attraction of myth since the first cities and civilizations, from the ancient to the modern and postmodern culture is mostly present in art, but also in the shaping of everyday life.

Myths reveal hidden essences of the lives of people, orders and authority. The people living in ancient times had for centuries listened to the bizarre private histories of their rulers, just like they had passed on from one generation to another their cultural tradition and the stories of their gods and the private lives of their deities. First passed on orally from generation to generation, and later on written down, myths still in part remained a mystery since science could not always incorporate them into the space, time and social life they were born. At one time their meanings were more political than religious, but in any case myths enable us to look at the circumstances from which almost all the content of life emerged, and to understand what had for centuries made the people of the Ancient East happy, what had shocked, inspired, but also guided and enslaved them. The peoples of the Ancient East did not suddenly undergo a metamorphosis, nor did they experience a complete turnaround, instead they were gradually introduced to the myths of the warrior epoch. The myths that were born in that part of the world were preceded by many events, the most significant of which was the time of the Bronze Age, the processes of neolithization and sedentarism. The myths of the Bronze Age, that is, the myths of the cultures of the Ancient East were the first myths to be recorded. The time when they were created is still unknown to us, as are their creators, and the opinion these peoples had of these creations. An unbiased analysis of the social frame often places before us various dilemmas. Religious life and religious convictions, as occurrences, both prior to, and following the emergence of the written word in some parts of the world, are related to speculation, probability and the occasional questionable conclusions based on analogies with the peoples of today, who we found in a state of "technological backwardness", and whose process of evolution we are not sufficiently familiar with.

The peoples of the Ancient East slowly built myths which did not always offer answers (at least not explicit and final ones), but represented a valid framework for moving through life. If we know that literacy at the time when the empires of the Ancient East were being born was present only among the members of the court and that less than one percent of the population was literate, then it is understandable that the original content of the myth, due to the tradition of oral transference, was underwent significant during the ages. The metamorphosis of myth, as well as the metamorphosis of the peoples in this region is in itself understandable (sometimes it was literal, basic), and the cause of these

changes is quite real, since myths were the first form of the explanation of the order of things in the world and the social order. Considering the fact that it was the myths that first offered an explanation of the essence of life, people have always thought of them as having value, not only artistic, literary but a value which functions as a point of orientation in life. Mircea Eliade points out that myth always refer to human reality, since it generalizes how something came into existence and how the various types of life and division of work started to exist (Eliade, 1970). In that sense, once again great tasks are set not only before literature but also before psychology, sociology and other social sciences to once again look at the time, place and essential message of myths. The myths of the countries of the Ancient East transcend the framework of routine sociological study, since as a creation of the past, they have lasted to this very day, and will be relevant for the future considering that the modern world is constantly interested in them and recreates them over and over again. The way in which the peoples of the Ancient East experienced myths was extremely intimate and strong. This "knowledge" was very important in the lives of the people. Considering the percentage of illiteracy, mythic messages have helped people to view reality, to strengthen their will, interpret the world around them, that is, to see it from a "friendly perspective".

On the other hand, a myth is an unavoidable example in the register of ancient ruling techniques in the Ancient East. Myths often speak of things which are of key importance for life, but also the people who give orders and those who execute them. The first myths of the Ancient East to a great extent speak of the rulers. Almost every sentence of a myth indicates what the ruler has undertaken to do and how that activity has a key influence on the life of a people in their city and/or state. The texts of ancient myths are unusually new and fresh, but despite the "innovations" they are constantly repeating the same messages, like the one regarding the divine nature of the rulers and their "divine right" to rule. The repetition of mythic content from time to time strengthens the impression of the authenticity of the story (many myths will be repeated not only among the same people and states, but as stories with different actors and even in other religions). In the myths of the Ancient East there is a certain mystification of the role of the main protagonist. In them, the ruler is often times cast a supporting role, and usually carries out the desires of the head deity. In these creations, at first glance, it is undeniable that the god plays an important and deciding role, but it is almost obvious and easy to conclude that the reality was quite different. The rulers of cities and states of the Ancient East built temples, appointed individuals to head these temples ("the first order of priests"), gave out estates, cattle, and other treasures to the temples, and always reacted strictly but lovingly, so that the myths about them could be effective. The strength of the ruler's care and generosity always had "divine anger" in the background, along with unlimited will and power, since the fate of the authority figures was connected to the acceptance and transfer of the myth.

The peoples of the Ancient East, due to their healthy range of common sense knowledge usually had an intuitive reaction. They trusted people who cared for cults and myths. Their basic motive was to hear the content of the myth, to learn the new messages which it contained, and ultimately to believe, to transfer this knowledge on and to share the truth with others. The myth in this case is experienced like any other kind of truth, which through being announced to others does not lose on value, but gains on extent. Myths had their own truth and their own message. When it referred the ruler, mythic content was concise and clearly indicated who he was and what his personal characteristics were as well as his social values.

That is why in ancient myths we feel the need of the creator (the writer) to simplify, which is noticeable in the text of the myths themselves, designed to enable easy comprehension of the message and the senses. So much so because the masses, illiterate and uneducated, but wishing for various cultural content, needed a short, clear and educational story. On the other hand, many rulers of the countries of the Ancient East lived in a stable, often undisputable conviction of one's personality and social strength and power. They even believed the idea that they were under caring divine protection, and quite a few of them equated themselves with god. The state myths of the Ancient East determine precisely that. They, among other things, most unambiguously determine the basis of the ruler's ultimate power, and in that sense, fascinate with their short and concise message.

In today's world, when the knowledge on the Ancient East has been accumulating, ancient texts done in cuneiform enable us to once again relive the "material" which has been passed down to us as the most important heirloom. If it had not been for the cuneiform script and the inscriptions of the rulers, we might not ever have known the content of the first myths and what their original function was. In that sense, the rulers of the Ancient East present themselves to us, lit up like individuals who thought that it was necessary to do everything that is best in the given moment so that they could preserve their power. They created the most desirable and best image of themselves as rulers, and of their rule, which to this day is the most important task of all politicians. It is all the more possible to conclude that what distinguishes the first rulers of the states of the Ancient East from the democratic rulers of today is only the range of methods and technologies used to create an impression, but not the goal, since the goal (the creation of the most desirable image) has remained the same. The basic nature of politicians and political life in the first states of the Ancient East presents itself as constant deceit. We should not be in any doubt about the fact that even around the rulers of the first states there were counselors for special questions, as well as people who traditionally, from generation to generation, exclusively dealt with issues regarding the organization of the temple and the perpetuation of myth. That is why even in the first myths we find the function of establishing a ruler and establishing a dynasty. The very first written documents indicate that religion surfaces as the first ideology, as a justification of the government and that it offers a solution of the issue of how to establish a king as a sacrosanct ruler, and how he can establish his own dynasty. As far as the choice of advisors is concerned, the kings of the Ancient East chose young assistants from the circle of their immediate family members, since they were the first to accept the new myth trends and were quick to adapt them to the needs of the ruler's cult. Nobody ever reproached rulers for such a decision. We might think of this as a paradox, but in cases of conflict with their opponents, rulers always had their strongest natural allies among their family members, because they were the ones who were ready to take on the task of taking over (in a hostile way) power. Although today it is impossible for us not to see the covert interdependency between myth and the preservation of a ruler and his rule, it was difficult for the people of that time to see through to the deep background of the myth. The aim of almost every ruler who declared himself a god or said of himself that he was god incarnate, was quite clear. Each one of these rulers of the Ancient East wanted to place, once and for all, the debate over the messages contained in myths squarely within the realm of the god's (ruler's) choice, and make any interpretation which would create any dilemmas in the myth impossible. In that sense, mythic content aimed to be progressive – the king is a god, and gods can do no wrong. That is why the myths of

the Ancient East reveal unusual spiritual proclivities of the rulers and their court intellectuals. In the myths, there were no conflicting political and intellectual positions – the king is a god, or he enjoys the protection of the head deity and his every activity and every procedure is thought out and supported and accepted by god.

In this sense, myths at first glance seem to be harmless, but religion emerges through the fabric of the myth in order to rule a nation. In such a myth, the message is so clear that anyone's and any kind of struggle against the concentration of power and wealth that a ruler possess is rendered impossible. This struggle has never been easy throughout history. The myths of the countries of the Ancient East made it impossible for anyone to even think that the ruler was not legitimate. They stated that the ruler always had strong arguments and clear visions of how to rule his people (and to keep them subjugated).

The intellectual elite of the cities and states of the Ancient East was involved in the perpetuation of the cult. It sought new solutions only if the ruler found himself trapped, but these solutions would have only one goal – to save the ruler and provide his long-term rule. The aim of almost all the ancient scrolls was to celebrate the ruler himself as the very peak of history and progress. The hidden agenda of many ancient manuscripts was to present life in such a way so as to prevent any thought of changing the living conditions in a society. Through myths and other ancient inscriptions people actually felt too small and too insignificant and powerless, and so, mainly and only wanted to live in peace. Judging from ancient documents, the people never even tried to engage in any kind of questioning of the justification of the ruler or the mythic conclusions. Any tendencies towards adventures of the mind were not to be found among scared and uneducated people. It would seem that in the countries of the Ancient East, there was very little choice: one could either be quiet and be obedient, or think and lose their head. It seemed as if nothing else existed aside from these two options, since the ruler and his court possessed such power and authority that any straying from the rules was quickly crushed. The members of the court and the ruler lived on the other side of poverty. Through craftily devised myths those in authority used gods as a justification of their own position and the entire order, justifying their every step. At the same time, the peasantry (the majority of the people) lived in relative misery, scared and used to learning new and relevant things only from their ruler. Poor, humiliated and frightened, the peasant was blinded by myth, knowing better than to speak before those who held all the power in their hands.

The ancient question of power, but also a question which keeps government occupied even today, is how to permanently retain it. The first rulers of small city-states in their own way answered the question of how to keep ultimate power forever. They were primarily interested in establishing their rule, ensuring the obedience of their subjects, and not actually caring for them. One of the answers to the question of perpetuating power and holding on to the leading position in the state was personal deification. The first absolutistic monarchies were led by rulers – gods. That is why we are inclined to accept the conclusion that the original forms of religion (passed down through myth and other content) occurred as clear political ideology. The king was declared a god, a law-maker, judge with all his rightful and uncontested authority, who was never held accountable to anyone. Confirmation for this attitude can be found in the Sumerian King List, a document written in cuneiform approximately during the third millennia BC, which was used to reconstruct parts of the early dynasty period. This document mentions rulers from "before

the flood" and "after the flood", making mention of *kingdoms handed down from god*, which could be transferred from city to city via military conquest (Kuhrt, 2012: 25-26).

The most ancient of documents from the group of urban centers speaks to us, namely, of the kingdoms which descended from the heavens and of divine rulers. From a whole list of urban centers (Ur, Shuruppak (today Fara), Abu Salabikh, Girsu (today Telo), Lagash), as well as from the archives of Ebla tablets we can easily conclude that the rulers were "divine" in origin. Clay tablets and stone slabs with inscription on them, as well as numerous carved plates, speak of the first societies and their respect for the poetic tradition which led to the practice of copying epics, a tradition especially nurtured as a part of the spread of literacy. This was the ideal way of disseminating the oldest myths, from which we find out, among other things, the details of the divine origin of rulers who considered the states they governed their own private possession. They strived to deify themselves, that is, perpetuate themselves as rulers and to use numerous myths as a justification for their power. The actual purpose of numerous myths of the first cities and states of the Ancient East, the first myths from the Bronze Age, was not to describe the lives of the gods, but to point out that the gods had created the first kings as the protectors of the cities in the name of the god-protector. It is possible to indicate the various myths and texts which speak of the king as the descendent of the gods (the king as the child of god) – after appearing for the first time, they were often later found in various forms, becoming a pattern (model) which would be around for centuries. The omnipresent idea is that the rule of god was not born in the middle ages, but probably originated during the 30th century BC (maybe even long before that), all the way back to the bronze age. The idea of a king begot by the gods and nurtured by them is also found in a part of the headstone from the city-state of Lagash, dating back to approximately 2450 BC. "Ningirsu (the protector god of Lagash) planted the seed for Eannatum (the king of Lagash) into the womb of (...) Inanna (a goddess) who was his consort (...) and thus placed him in the special lap of Ninhursag (the mother goddess) Ninhursag (who gave him) her special teat (...) Ningirsu, with great joy gave him the kingdom of Lagash." (Kuhrt, 2012: 30). This inscription indicates that power comes from the gods, that is, that it is given from the gods and serves as the most direct justification and explanation of power. These are stories of gods and rulers, who in the earliest days tried to organize the personalities of kings as a state cult. In the story, god Ningirsu is the father of the king, and his wife, the goddess Ninhursag, nursed the future king. The story carries the idea of the divine origin and birth of an earthly king.

In the first cities and states of the Ancient East one of the most important royal functions was the religious one, that is, the one related to the cult. The kings built temples dedicated to their gods – fathers and created divine (city) cults, organizing and paying a work force to build a temple, as well as to make statues of the gods and goddesses. In the first countries, the land belonged to the kings, and they gave their lands to the temples, determining who would be in charge of the religious service. The king was very careful in his appointment of high-ranking officials and they were usually educated individuals from his immediate surroundings, family or the court. Ultimately, the king was always responsible for all the services, and often appointed the high priestess of the cult from among the members of his immediate family. Being the high priestess of the cult in ancient cultures was often a life-long duty, and within the city cult everything had to be executed flawlessly, with dignity and on time. The religious ritual in addition to its integrative function, through numerous ceremonies had the task of perpetuating the continuity of the ruler. That is why only the members of

the royal family daily controlled the temples. The king did not only appoint people who would preside over ceremonies in the temple in the capital, but also people who would perform sacred duties in other cities and other temples. With the spread of ancient kingdoms, the need for other temples to be built emerged, and so the kings appointed their relatives to positions of high religious officials in all the newly-conquered cities. On the basis of the ancient scrolls and inscriptions we can see that the kings are represented as the god's assistants and favorites who perform acts that the god would find pleasing, and then people. By building temples they further established the power of the ruler and provided the obedience of the subjects. The confirmation of this relationship can be found in numerous historical examples – both of Gilgamesh's parents were revered as the divine parents of the kings of Ur, while the grandson of Sargon of Akkad called himself a god. By building the consciousness of the people, indicating that the king is ruling precisely because he is a descendent of a god, myths justified the high social-political position of the king's rule and represented the social frame for the behavior of the entire population.

The story of Sargon is actually an example of royal self-acclaim. Sargon, the mighty king of Akkad, is represented as a child abandoned at birth, that is, discarded in a river. And thus the founder of the Akkad Empire and the first imperial ruler in the history of mankind was represented in an ancient story written in cuneiform:

"Sargon, mighty king, the king of Akkad, am I;
 My mother was an entum (*a high-ranking priestess*),...
 My mother the entum, begot me and delivered me in secret;
 She placed me in a basket of reeds, closed the door (*that is the lid*) with resin;
 Threw me into the river which did not drown me;
 the river preserved me and carried me to Aki, the water carrier...
 Aki, the water carrier, adopted and raised me;
 Rocked me like Ishtar (*the goddess of sex and war*) did the gardener;
 And over the years I ruled as king." (Kuhrt, 2012: 45, italics added).

This inscription indicates that the connection between religion and the gods is not lost because the mother is the high priestess of a cult, and as such probably was bound to a life of chastity. The goddess of war and sex loves the future king (the great hero and conqueror) and he is represented as her life-long favorite. That is why god does not send a worthy opponent to Sargon and enables him to conquer countries. We could conclude that this is the first written document in which we can see that imperialism is in accordance with divine will, that is, that it is God-given. That is the first official text to be found attempting to justify imperialism through the work of god. What is most important is the favor of the key goddess (the goddess of war) since this is a story of a heroic king who begot a dynasty. Sargon found it very important to establish a dynamic dynasty which was related to the gods. That is why in ancient culture there were myths whose function it was to explain the origin of long dynasties. Only at first glance does anything seem unusual – Sargon appointed his daughter the cult bride of the god Nane (the god of the moon) in Ur. Her only duty was to pray to the gods for the welfare of the king – her father. History has shown that the appointment of one's daughter or closest female relative as the high priestess of the cult is the most decisive of all laws. The temple was financed by and cared for by Sargon himself. The kings of Mesopotamia who succeeded Sargon as a rule appointed their daughters as the cult brides of the gods to pray for them personally. This greatest

holy duty was a life-long one and speaks of the attempt to provide continuity of an absolutist monarchy. The temples were the greatest treasure troves and it was normal for the rulers to place such significant economic centers in the hand of people they could trust the most and the members of their own family. Their job was to daily, ritually dress the cult statue, to care for it, feed it, bathe and apply makeup to it. The mythic content, inscriptions and scrolls speaking of the rulers from the first cities and states were in the function of justifying the royal rule and the politics of conquest, especially bearing in mind that in the area of the Ancient East there were centralized dynasties, that is, absolutistic monarchies of the despot type. The first representations on the reliefs show rulers, kings always in the company of the gods (usually the head deity), with his perpetual and visible thanks to the gods. That is the representation of the king's appointment of Hammurabi on a stone slab, on which his law is inscribed. Even at a cursory glance his deep-seated respect for the god of the Sun and justice of Shamash can be seen, and we see the god giving his favorite a measuring staff and a ball of twine so that he would be just and a conqueror.

The story of the academic ruler Naram-Sin, the grandson of the king Sargon, also testifies to the mythic foundation of the divine origin of the ruler. The mythic content speaks of the inhabitants of the city asking "for permission to worship their king as a god". It is an exceptional case where the subjects love their king so much, that after many military victories they decided to honor him as a god and to build him a temple in the middle of Akkad. It is well-known that in ancient cultures the inhabitants of the city would more often mention the name of their king than of their god, precisely because the authority of the king is never disputed, and he is the ultimate arbiter in all matters. The inhabitants of the city carried out certain commitments (tasks) in relation to the city cult, sang ceremonial songs, made products to offer as gifts in the temple and performed tasks in the home of their deity, which collectively strengthened the importance of the personality of the ruler. The story of Naram-Sin is actually a story of the inhabitants of the first cities, who deified their king and built him a temple in the middle of the city, so that they could show him deep respect and adoration on a daily basis. That is the first king who became a god at the request of his people. From a solid position of power, the king of Akkad never thought it demeaning to grab any existing titles, and was ultimately uplifted above the human sphere through the will of his subjects. This included the previous "approval from the gods" that the mortal (king-hero) would join their ranks. It is a very specific form of meritocratic rule whose credits, due to the strength of the mythic content, was acknowledged by the gods themselves. In this mythic story there is no idea of a divine birth, but the idea of "the credit of the people", often manipulatively used during the 20th century on all the meridians.¹ However, if we take into consideration the fact that in the first cities and cultures the population of the city was never asked for its opinion, or consulted on matters of the organization of the state and power, we could conclude that using mythic content, Naram-Sin strengthened his position of power, and understood the significance of financing his own temple and establishing his own cult. For the rulers of ancient cities and the cultures of later times it was nothing unusual.

¹ The process of remythologization, the modern revival of myth is based on, primarily, the strength of the political myth as a possible means of controlling the masses. Leh Mruz indicated the significant manipulative power of the myth to ruin the subjectivity of an individual along with his critical distance, reducing him to a faceless collective. (Mruz, 1976)

Amelie Kuhrt cited a similar example, although it was from ancient Egypt: "One of the most interesting examples is a small temple dedicated to Amenophis III in Soleb, which represents the king kneeling to a cult statue of himself." (Kuhrt, 2012: 186). This example is used to round off the story of rulers-gods of ancient cities and cultures, on the content of myths which indicated that gods created and protected kings as their descendants, as well as that the population of the cities prayed to the gods for their ruler to be a god. The ancient rulers seemed not to be satisfied with being kings with a strong origin, and instead strived to achieve divine status, where they were helped by the myths and special mythic rituals and religious ceremonies.

* * *

The rulers of ancient cities and cultures were an all-powerful group of people above the law, who had power over all the aspects of social lives and managed economic development, religion and political life. The rulers and their families lived as interest groups who never answered to anyone. Stories, legends and myths were born in ancient times with the aim of strengthening absolute control over the behavior of the subjects. In such stories and myths we will find the key to determining reality and the actual nature of the order in the states of the Ancient East, as well as their value and function. The myths of rulers of ancient cities and cultures primarily found and then incessantly renew the sense of leading the humble life of a subject in a despot, centralized monarchy in the states of the Ancient East. For us these myths today have artistic value, but also at the same time when they occurred, they were primarily advice on how to not only live quietly and bravely, but were also stories which introduced the subjects to the reasons for their subjugation. That way in addition to the artistic, which is the side function, the ontological and orientational function were more significant since they claimed that the ruler was ordained by god, and the conclusion on the subjugation to that rule was imposed over and over again. The value of the myth depended on the financial success of the ruler. In the myths themselves, the rulers were portrayed as conquerors, landowners, those paying and organizing the temple business. The peace makers possessed a magic logical ability to transfer into words what was expected from the subjects, what needed to be done and how each subject needed to behave. With the help of myths, rulers became the icons of everyday life since they received a special kind of adoration during their lifetime. Excessive ambition and pretentiousness focused the strong will of the rulers to reaffirm themselves as gods, to be accepted and celebrated as superhuman beings. Myths at the moment of their origin were fun and educational stories, stories which are taken quite seriously and had an important influence on everyday life. During their lifetime, rulers gained in reputation, were born and lived in a family of "god's people". They were represented as characters saving their people, city, state and as heroes became gods in establishing the high cultural and conquering progress in the states of the Ancient East. The myth represents the rulers as symbols of state abilities, wit and wisdom. Today, after much research, very little is known about ancient rulers, and so the first inscriptions and myths are of great value. It is clear that ancient rulers used myths effectively, as they did religion, their power and economic influence and had a special understanding for the needs of the temples and for nurturing their own cult. The people of that time were primarily illiterate, superstitious, simple and uneducated, and so according to ancient customs found advice on how to deal with difficult lives. The first myths were weapons in the struggle for permanent rule, and instructions

on how group obedience could be turned into the successful rule. The peasants made up the basic mass of the population of the Ancient East, and so the myths were created so that the people would accept them without question, completely and without thinking. The task of the rulers was to make sure that the myth should not become dull, washed out and forgotten. Since rulers were represented as the work of god, they believed in their words and procedures and knew perfectly who and how they should revive their cult. They were cruel and inflexible people, but at that time even the gods were presented in that way. The content of the myth was especially important since the rulers were mostly demanding regarding their own personal cults. Myths caused strong emotions and included repetition (acting, rituals, song) and so the population after long and frequent ceremonies always carried with them the message of the myth. The population was by itself extracting morals based on their wits, sense of morality, education and conscience, and it should not be forgotten that the largest percentage of the population of the Ancient East was illiterate, subjugated, uninformed, confused and scared. In such a general social and cultural climate, myths of the divine origin of the rulers and ruler-gods were universally accepted.

REFERENCES

1. Božović, Ratko (2006) *Leksikon kulturologije*. Beograd: Agencija „Matić“.
2. Đurić, Mihajlo (1989) *Mit, nauka, ideologija: nacrt filozofije kulture*. Beograd: Beogradsko izdavačko-grafički zavod.
3. Elijade, Mirča (1970) *Mit i zbilja*. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska.
4. Ilić, Veselin (1988) *Mitologija i kultura*. Beograd: Književne novine
5. Kasirer, Ernst (1972) *Mit o državi*. Beograd: Nolit
6. Kolakovski, Lešek (1989) *Prisutnost mita*. Beograd: Rad.
7. Kurt, Ameli (2012) *Stari Istok*, I i II tom. Beograd: Zavod za izdavanje udžbenika.
8. Malinovski, Bronislav (1971) *Magija, nauka i religija: i druge studije*. Beograd: Prosveta.
9. Mruz, Leh (1976) Mit i mitsko mišljenje. U: *Kultura - Časopis za teoriju i sociologiju kulture i kulturnu politiku*, Beograd, br. 33-34.

MITOVI O VLADARIMA DREVNIH GRADOVA I KULTURA

Jelena Petković

Polazeći od stava da je mit bio pratilac u razvoju svih društava i da ima temeljno značenje za sve kulture koje su na različite načine zasnivane na brojnim mitskim sadržajima, autor se u radu bavi analizom pojedinih mitova o vladarima drevnih gradova i kultura. Pri tome se naročito ukazuje na vrednost i funkcije prvozabeleženih mitskih priča, koje su, između ostalog, naglašavale božansko poreklo vladara, bile u funkciji opravdanja njihovih osvajачkih pretenzija i imale naglašenu saznavnu i orijentacionu funkciju – mit kao objašnjenje porekla i suštine života i socio-kulturni okvir poželjnog ponašanja. Autor ukazuje da su se drevni vladari pretenciozno zalagali za doseganje božjeg statusa radi apologije vlasti, u čemu su im svesrdno pomagali vešto smišljeni sadržaji brojnih mitova, posebni mitski rituali i verske ceremonije. Oni su predstavljani kao heroji koji spasavaju svoj narod, grad, državu i koji postaju bogovi u uspostavljanju visokog kulturnog i osvajачkog napretka u državama Starog Istoka. Ukazujući na proces remitologizacije, autor napominje izvesne analogije drevnih i savremenih političkih mitova.

Ključne reči: mit, mitski sadržaji i rituali, drevni gradovi i kulture, božansko poreklo vladara.