The King as a Nodal Point of Neo-Assyrian Identity

Edited by Johannes Bach and Sebastian Fink

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Introduction

Johannes Bach (University of Helsinki) /
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Over the course of the last decade, the field of Ancient Near Eastern Studies has seen an uptick in studies devoted to the research of identity building in various cuneiform cultures. A row of articles, monographs, and edited volumes have contributed to an increased understanding of identity discourses and agency matters across historical periods and political entities. Some notable recent publications include Sh. Steadman / J. Ross (eds.): *Agency and Identity in the Ancient Near East: New Paths Forward* (London / Oakville 2010); G. Barjamovic / K. Ryholt (eds.): *Problems of Canonicity and Identity Formation in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia* (Copenhagen 2016); and J. Töyräänvuori (ed.): *The Construction of Identity in the Ancient World* (Welt des Orients 50/2, 2020). Despite these contributions, and notwithstanding the ongoing, heavily identity-focused research projects conducted at the Centre of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires (ANEE) at the University of Helsinki under the guidance of Professor Saana Svärd, the construct network character of identities remains understudied for the Ancient Near East.

The conference "The King as a Nodal Point of Neo-Assyrian Identity", organized by Johannes Bach and Sebastian Fink and held on the 4th–5th of December 2019 at the University of Helsinki, sought to fill in some gaps by focussing on the pivotal role of the Assyrian monarch in identity constructs formative for the Neo-Assyrian empire and society. By that, the organizers did not intend to produce another volume continuing the writing of Neo-Assyrian history "from above." Rather, the conference's goal was to develop a fresh look on the Assyrian ruler not as the all-defining pinnacle of societal identity, but as an important nodal point within a complex network of elite, yet delicate power relations. By following such a network approach, the role of the monarch becomes decentralized as it gets embedded into a web of power alliances that define both the monarchy as well as its elite carriers. Regrettably, we are lacking substantial sources that enable us to reliably tackle the identities prominent in the lower strata of societies beyond the economic sector. No written accounts pertaining to such matters are available to us, and it is highly doubtful that any will surface at all. We are thus forced to approach these questions by studying the qualities of elite power constructions which might enable us to draw cautious conclusions on identity effects on the middle and lower segments of Assyrian society.

The conference in its original layout approached the topic in three major sections, looking at the role of the Assyrian monarch in relation to other elites, to the broader populace, and finally to the empire's enemies. However, in this volume contributions are arranged alphabetically.

Amar Annus investigates the structure of Marduk-Ea-incantations and their relation to doctor-patient as well as to imperial subject-king configurations. He engages with current neuroscientific research on doctor-patient relationships and extrapolates a model that captures the antique relationships as they are represented in Assyro-Babylonian medical incantations. There, Marduk takes the position of king with his father, Ea as his advisor, while the incantation priest treating a patient embodies the divine king with his inherent healing powers. As such, the healing process resembles the cosmic battle as it assigns the cause of illnesses to various demonic (or divine) agents, equalling their expulsion by the incantation priest to the victory of high god like Ninurta or Marduk over monsters opposing their rule. This complex procedure indicates a general ascription of healing powers to the historical institution of kingship and its bearers.

In his contribution on similes in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, **Johannes Bach** studies aspects of the figurative language employed in literary enemy representations. Tracing the thesaurus of figurative language used in Assyrian royal narrative texts enables our understanding of the Assyrian's mental mapping of friend and foe. Figurative language is vital for articulating narrative identities. By analyzing and cataloguing them one can traces changes in the literary representation (and consequentially promoted perception) of enemies. The results indicate, in contrast to older assertions (e.g., by Albert Schott), that the Sargonid period brought about a discernible change in the usage of figurative language. Sargonid rulers are keen on establishing their own narrative profile, most notable in Group I of Bach's studied material. This is also reflected in flight similes, which are largely unique for individual enemy rulers. However, tradition and continuation are clearly visible in Group 2, exemplified by the remarkable stability of similes pertaining to the killing of enemies. Royal subject similes with a sentence object show clear differences between their early and their late Neo-Assyrian usage, with a considerably downscaled variety in Sargonid inscriptions. However, Sargonid simile usage also shows noticeable resemblances to Middle Assyrian royal inscriptions. Royal subject similes without sentence object are prominent majorly under Adad-nārārī II and Sennacherib, pointing to deliberate leanings of the latter's scribes. The ascription of agency to enemies differs between the early Neo-Assyrian period and the reign of the Sargonids, with the latter construction considerably more often forms of subaltern, determined "pseudo"-agency of enemies.

In her study on expressions of masculinity in Assyrian royal contexts, **Ellie Bennett** engages with Madhloom's thesis about beards as status-indicator. Bennett notes that although beards are an indicator of masculinity, they do construct such not by themselves, but rather as elements of a complex matrix denoting status and virility. Bennett discusses the beards and beard-lengths of the Assyrian king and ad other high-profile elites in text and art, noting that these are tools for expressing status. On the other hand, beard lengths are also used to indicate a lower status of foreigners, while the non-existence of beards denotes the infertility

of Assyrian *ša-rēši*-officials. Finally, Bennett demonstrates how self-manipulation of male facial hair in front of the king lowered the status or the masculinity configuration of the manipulee.

Hannes Galter engages in a study of the warrior status of the Assyrian king by applying Hartmut Rosa's theory of historical resonance. He discusses the concept of Assyrian warrior kingship on the backdrop of its modern history of research, then outlines the development of the concept from Old to Neo-Assyrian times, and lastly applies Rosa's theory to the matter at hand. Galter shows the historical unfolding of the warrior ideology as reflected in royal epithets, highlighting its mythological dimensions by discussing the intricate relationship of the concept with that of the king's role as priest of the god Assur, and his obligation to world conquest as demanded by divine command. Galter furthermore points to the end of Assyrian heroic kingship with the battle death of Sargon II. He correlates this change in ruler ideology with a shift from conquest to rule as it is discernible in palace relief art since the reign of Sennacherib. Still, as Galter reminds us, the concept of the warrior king does not completely vanish but moves from the immediate political to the symbolic sphere. In the final segment of his contribution, Galter engages with Hartmu Rosa's theory of historical "resonance" and explores how historical experience and the subsequent shaping of history by those who have experienced it impacted the concept of Assyrian kingship. Past and future converge in the present, providing meaning to previous deeds and thus offering guidance for future ones. Galter discusses the Assyrian historical interface according to Rosa's three pivotal items of historical experience, namely the processing of historically charged moments, and the interaction with corresponding places and objects. Finally, he points out the importance of historical narrative for identity building and underlines the significance of the merging of individual experience with traditional narratives and meta-narratives.

In his contribution on the Assyrian king and his enemies **Mattias Karlsson** presents a detailed study of the verb *saḫāpu* ("to overwhelm"). The main part of the article is a diachronic analysis of the usage of this verb in royal inscriptions from Middle Assyrian times to Assurbanipal. The study reveals that the enemies of the Assyrian king are often overwhelmed by some kind of radiance and that the tendency of remote overwhelming increases in late Neo-Assyrian times. Typical results of overwhelming are surrender and flight. By studying the verb *saḫāpu* Karlson contributes to our understanding of Assyrian state ideology and its conceptualization of the Assyrian king and his enemies. His examination of the verb also demonstrates that Assyrian ideology has some basic concepts, but in different times these concepts were adapted and modified.

In her contribution "On the Family and Social Background of the Elite in Assyria" **Raija Mattila** discusses the scant evidence for this topic. As the highest officials never mention their ancestry in their inscriptions the evidence must be collected from various other kinds of documents, mostly royal inscriptions and

letters. From these sources it is known that members of the royal family were installed in high offices. Other mentions of families of high officials are found mostly in denunciation letters. The previous career of high officials can only be reconstructed in some exceptional cases. In her conclusion Mattila points out that the evidence of the personal names is inconclusive and does not testify for the heredity of offices. While we do not have much evidence for the training of the officials, it might be assumed that most of them had a basic training in writing.

Natalie Naomi May studies "The Imitators of the King and the Empire." In her study she focuses on the effects the Assyrian empire had on its vassals in the West, who imitated their successful overlord in far-away Assyria in many ways. For this end she discusses several steles with textual similarities to Assyrian ones and then turns to the Hebrew Bible, where much of Assyrian royal rhetoric can be found. Instead of explaining this fact by the often-suggested subversive use of Assyrian ideology May argues for a deliberate imitation of Assyrian institutions and ideology by Judahite kings.

In his contribution **Simo Parpola** discusses the king's role as a priest. He stresses that contrary to the popular image of the Neo-Assyrian king as an oriental despot the Assyrian kings' self-representation is full of allusions to this priestly role. Be it titles referring to this role or representations of the king in a priestly robe in the reliefs – all this indicates that the priestly role was of utmost importance. After outlining the central tenets of Neo-Assyrian religion, the author moves on to discuss the important role of the king in rituals and then turns to the mythical role models of the king. The inclusion of Ninurta, a central figure in Neo-Assyrian royal ideology, only happened relatively late in the Middle Assyrian period and was part of a conscious rebuilding of Assyrian religion to fit the new imperial aspirations of the Assyrian kings. The importance of these innovations in Neo-Assyrian royal ideology are demonstrated by an investigation of the parallels of the king's priestly role in the New Testament and in the Roman Empire.

Although not a participant of the original workshop, **Beate Pongratz-Leisten** graciously contributed to this volume by providing a paper on the epiphany of the Assyrian king and the complex procedures of "presencing" the ruler in broader, popular audience settings. The term "epiphany" was chosen since royal appearance and divinity are closely intertwined. Due to a dearth of corresponding textual sources, Pongratz-Leisten investigates this procedure mainly by examining architectural layouts and decorative programs of Assyrian palaces and throne rooms. Her observations highlight the crucial role of palace and throne room gates in this process and show the complexity by which the physical space in which royal appearance took place was made into a "socio-cultural reference structure." Foundational to such presencing efforts are concepts of presenting the king as integrated into the divine realm. Such configurations are attested, for example, in pieces of art like the cultic socles of Tukultī-Ninurta I or the relief B-23 from the

reign of Ashurnaṣirpal II. Furthermore, as Pongratz-Leisten meticulously discusses, the negotiation between royal remoteness and closeness is of key interest. Specific architectural and design concepts were applied to stage the emergence of the king from the unseen and secluded into the bright spotlight of public presence most efficiently. Skillfully planned and aligned niches with artwork presencing the king in company of the divine served as emergence points for the monarch's actual physical appearance to the audience gathered in the courtyard. For this, as Pongratz-Leisten suggests, effects of lighting were cleverly used to heighten the impression of a divine radiance engulfing the ruler. However, at different periods some aspects of presencing the Assyrian ruler could have been meant only for an exclusive few. An example for this is the equation of the king with Gilgamesh. Although not graspable yet in textual records, Pongratz-Leisten, in the wake of recent research, argues for a likening of the king to Gilgamesh already in early Neo-Assyrian times. Evidence for this is provided by the deliberate placement of a GIŠ sign on a tree in relief B-23. During the Sargonid period, the equation of the Assyrian king with Gilgamesh became more prominent and public as well as translated into the geographical landscape, as Pongratz-Leisten demonstrates with analyses of the façade of Sargon II's throne room, his canal building projects, and Sennacherib's gate monument at Khinis.

Shigeo Yamada's contribution deals with the question what it actually meant to be ruled by the Assyrian king, to become and to be an Assyrian resident. While it has long been acknowledged that the Assyrian expansion resulted in a multiethnic empire, the way how Assyrian politics dealt with this fact has been disputed. Yamada focuses on political and administrative unification of the subjugated territories and examines relevant phrases in the royal inscriptions where subjugated people are compared to or designated as Assyrians. He thoroughly discusses the evidence from the late Middle Assyrian to the end of the Neo-Assyrian period and concludes that the political will for unification is clearly visible in the inscriptions, but that in order to prove linguistic and cultural unification further case studies from the centre and the periphery of the empire are needed, which allow us to follow the development over a few generations.

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The King as the Source of Public Health

An Analysis of the Marduk-Ea Incantation Structure

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Introduction

Kingship in ancient Mesopotamia was highly ideological construct, which proper functioning was thought to be supervised by heavenly deities. Moreover, the identity of the king was often promoted to the level of deities themselves through ritual actions and public displays of royalty, which significance was well conveyed to general population. The king was presented as the warrior deity Marduk or Ninurta, who defeated the enemies of cosmic order during the New Year festival (see Annus, 2002). The ancient Mesopotamian king was a source of physical and mental wellbeing for his people as is clearly expressed, for example, in an inscription of Adad-narari III, where the god Aššur made the king's "shepherdship pleasing like a medicine of life to the people of Assyria" – *kīma šam balāṭi eli nīšê māt Aššur* (Grayson, 1996: 212).

This paper argues for a connection between kingship ideology and the healing rituals that feature the agency of Marduk. The god Marduk was both the king of the gods and the divine healer and exorcist *par excellence.* The cause of a physical or mental illness in ancient Mesopotamia was often attributed to a demonic attack or possession, which Marduk was able to undo. Some of these demons were portrayed as enemies of gods in conflict myths. The god Ninurta, who was closely tied to the ancient Mesopotamian concept of kingship, had eleven mythological adversaries similar to Marduk's enemy Tiamat and her army of monsters (Annus, 2002). Ninurta's demonic adversary Asakku (Sumerian: Azag) was most closely connected to diseases (van Dijk, 1983). By defeating Asakku, Ninurta eliminated a disorder from the world and accordingly was considered as a god of healing. Mesopotamian incantations from the Old Babylonian period onwards attest Ninurta among the deities of healing and Asakku as a prominent demon of diseases (Cunningham, 1997: 98ff.).

The relief from sicknesses and miseries was thus a natural result of Ninurta's victorious battles that also set an example for the human king. Ninurta's role as healer is seen in therapeutic rituals. The scenes of some curing rites were cast in terms of the mythological battle of Ninurta against Asakku. In a Babylonian ritual which concerned the curing of a sick man (BM 34035 ll. 13–23), the door of the sick man's house was smeared with gypsum and bitumen which are explained as representing Ninurta and Asakku respectively. The rationale of the ritual is made explicit by the following phrase: "Ninurta will pursue Asakku" (Livingstone, 1986: 172–173). The conflict myths were used to promote the healing powers of

kingship, the resource which exorcist priests relied on to treat their patients' problems.

Ninurta was important for ancient Mesopotamian kingship ideology during the third and second millennia BCE. Since the rise of Babylon, Ninurta's attributes were gradually transferred to Marduk, who took over many of his roles, including that of a healer. For example, in the beginning of the 4th tablet of the series *Šurpu* (lines 1–3), which is devoted to the healing of sicknesses ascribes Ninurta's defeat of Asakku to Marduk: "Incantation. It rests with you, Marduk, to keep safe and sound, the committing of assault and violence, (you) who defeated the Asakku" (Reiner, 1958: 25). Marduk became the king of the gods according to the Babylonian *Creation Epic* and thus replaced Ninurta as the symbol of kingship and the divine healer.

In everyday practice of ancient Mesopotamia, sicknesses were often cured by conducting healing rituals in which exorcist priests recited incantations. The healing rituals, which invoked the dialogue between Marduk and Ea, were connected to the ideology of kingship and required the special expertise of exorcist priests. This form of faith healing was efficient because it mediated the healing powers of deities and divine kingship to patients. The scenario described in the Marduk-Ea incantations was often carried out in a ritual drama, in which the exorcist priest took up the role of the god Marduk (Gabbay, 2018). This incantation type is analysed below for the role of Marduk and his divine kingship that was used in therapeutic rituals. The analysis of Marduk-Ea incantations relies on neuroscientific accounts of doctor-patient relationships and religious experience (Benedetti, 2011; McNamara, 2009). Neuroscience studies cultural phenomena by pointing out universal brain processes that underlie these phenomena. Additionally, it will be argued that Mesopotamian concept of kingship was relevant to Marduk-Ea incantations through the identification of Marduk with the king.

The structure of the Marduk-Ea incantation

The spell formula called the Marduk-Ea incantation from ancient Mesopotamia is unique in the history of medicine due to its documented use over almost 3000 years. Its precursors, the neo-Sumerian incantations of the so-called Asalluḫi-Enki type, are attested since the Early Dynastic period (George, 2016: 1–4). The oldest cuneiform manuscripts with this type of incantation were found in the ancient cities of Fara and Ebla, dating to the middle of third millennium BCE (Krebernik, 1984: 211–225). Because of the rise of Babylonia's political sovereignty, the names of deities in this incantation type were changed to Marduk and Ea in the second millennium BCE. In earlier Sumerian versions the names of the deities invoked in this type of incantation could also be Ningirim and Enlil, but the plot and the actors' functions always remained the same (Cunningham, 1997: 24). The formal schematic structure of the incantation was never abandoned as a standard type in the ancient Mesopotamia. The last written examples of this incantation

type come from Hellenistic Babylonia (Geller, 2016: 28). Such an extraordinary continuity must be considered as firm proof of the incantation's prestige and efficacy.

This paper investigates the structure of this incantation type, the content of which crosses the border between medicine and religion. Its formal structure was salient to ancient medical specialists because the Marduk-Ea pattern of divine interaction was imposed on a wide variety of healing incantations. First, the general narrative structure of this incantation type will be presented. Then the structure will be analysed on the basis of the neuroscientific account of doctor-patient relationship as outlined by F. Benedetti (2011). The essential parts of its narrative are subsequently put into the context of the neuroscientific model of religious experience as offered by P. McNamara (2009). These models will give two different accounts of the structural components found in the ancient healing incantations. The comparison of these analyses will be helpful in elucidating the overlaps between healing rituals, conflict myths, and religious experiences.

The narrative of the Marduk-Ea incantation type contains a formulaic dialogue between the senior and junior deities, who are Enki and Asalluḫi in most of the Sumerian versions. In the second millennium BCE the same incantation type was often written down in bilingual format, where interlinear Akkadian translation accompanied the Sumerian version. In Akkadian translations the names of the two deities were updated according to Babylonian priorities. Therefore, the incantation type is generally called "Marduk-Ea dialogue" (Falkenstein, 1931). The composition of the incantation is highly structured, always consisting of six parts, which can also be grouped pairwise covering the three main parts – problem, dialogue and ritual solution. These six components are the following:

(1) The description of a misfortune or a demonic attack, the cause of a health problem.
(2) The god of exorcism – Asalluḫi or Marduk – becomes aware of the situation.
(3) The god of exorcism visits the god of wisdom Enki / Ea and describes to him the problem situation that he has found. In some texts the junior deity sends a messenger in his stead.
(4) The god of exorcism asks for advice uttering the words "I don't know what to do."
(5) The god of wisdom assures that the junior deity of exorcism is as knowledgeable as himself, saying "What I know, you also know."
(6) The god of wisdom delivers ritual instructions for him to follow, saying "Go, my son Asalluḫi / Marduk!" The health problem is resolved by these measures.

As an example of this type of incantation a section from the Babylonian purification series *Šurpu* is cited below (Reiner, 1958: tablets V–VI, lines 1–59). This

series was a canonical exorcistic compendium from the first millennium BCE, which was concerned with curing illnesses caused by various types of curses. All structural components are written out in this bilingual version. The literary formula of the Marduk-Ea dialogue became so well established that some incantation tablets abbreviated it, giving only the beginning words for some sections (cf. Schramm, 2008). The six structural parts of the incantation scheme outlined above are marked with bracketed numbers throughout this paper.

> (1) An evil curse like a *gallû*-demon has come upon (this) man, dumbness (and) daze have come upon him, an unwholesome dumbness has come upon him, evil curse, oath, headache. An evil curse has slaughtered this man like a sheep, his god left his body, his goddess (Sumerian adds: his mother), usually full of concern for him, has stepped aside. Dumbness (and) daze have covered him like a cloak and overwhelm him incessantly. (2) Marduk noticed him, (3) went into the house to his father Ea and cried out: "Father, an evil curse like a *gallû*-demon has come upon (this) man." (4) He repeated this to him a second time (and said): "I do not know [what] to do, what would quiet him." (5) Ea answered to his son Marduk: "My son, what is it you do not know? What more could I give to you? Marduk, what is it you do not know? What could I give you in addition? Whatever I know, you know (too). (6) Go, my son Marduk! Take him to the pure house of ablutions, undo his oath, release his oath, that the disturbing evil of his body – be it the curse of his father, be it the curse of his mother, be it the curse of his elder brother, be it a curse of a bloodshed unknown to him – by pronouncing the charm of Ea the oath may be peeled off like (this) onion, stripped off like (these) dates, unravelled like (this) matting. Oath, be adjured by the name of heaven, be adjured by the name of the earth (Reiner, 1958: 30–31).

The first part of the formula is always unique to the incantation in question. The text can describe the medical problem only briefly, but sometimes in a lengthy passage. For example, the beginning of a Neo-Sumerian incantation refers to a specific problem: "On the man a wounding snake, a wounding scorpion, a wounding rabid dog has spat its venom" (Cunningham, 1997: text 66). According to the general scenario of Marduk-Ea incantation, the healing deity first notices the harmed patient and subsequently seeks advice for a treatment from his father in dialogue. In ritual setting the exorcist priest acted as the messenger or personification of his divine patron Asalluḫi / Marduk, who healed the patient (Gabbay, 2018). In this position he had complete overview and control over the course of ritual actions.

The Marduk-Ea dialogue seeks to affirm that the incantation the exorcist recites comes directly from the gods. When the exorcist declares in some texts that "the incantation is not mine," nothing depends upon his authority anymore (Gel-

ler, 2010: 29). The healing priest's identity fuses with that of Marduk, the divine patron of exorcism, who receives his instructions from the god of wisdom (Gabbay, 2018). The possession experience of the exorcist priest was both with Marduk and the earthly king, who impersonated the sovereign of the gods during occasions that were important for the state. During the healing rituals, exorcist embodied the powers of both Marduk and divine kingship. These incantations and healing rituals were used to increase expectations in the patients in order to cause placebo effects more effectively.

The four steps of the doctor-patient relationship

The ancient Mesopotamian Marduk-Ea incantations, the basic structure of which was outlined above, can be analysed with the help of a modern medical study. According to F. Benedetti (2011), from a neuroscientific point of view the relationship between doctor and patient consists of four steps. Benedetti's schema is presented from the patient's vantage point. Its four steps are the following:

1. Feeling sick
2. Patient seeks relief
3. Patient meets therapist
4. Patient receives therapy

The ancient Mesopotamian therapeutic texts focussed on the executive abilities of healing priests. This is due to ritual settings in which the exorcist priest played the leading role by reciting incantations and articulating the course of action. The first stage of "feeling sick" occurs in the initial part of the Mesopotamian incantation formula, describing how a medical problem arose as the result of an attack by demonic intruders, wild animals, natural forces, or witchcraft (1). This is the starting point which triggers the subsequent procedures. In ancient Mesopotamian incantations, responsibility for detecting illnesses and demonic intrusions is not assigned to the patient. The onset of an illness is usually observed by the god of exorcism, whose role the priest fulfils (2).

The second stage in Benedetti's schema ("the patient seeking relief") corresponds to the passage in Mesopotamian incantations where the exorcist deity "went into the house to his father Ea" to ask for instructions (3). This part is an itinerary, which the priest symbolically follows when serving his patient. In doing so, the priest fulfils the role of the divine messenger, but also represents his sick client. In Benedetti's schema it is the patient who becomes motived to seek help when (s)he feels unwell. This motivated behaviour aims at suppressing discomfort (Benedetti, 2011). When the patient seeks relief, (s)he eventually expects the rewards of a positive therapeutic outcome, irrespective of whether a therapy has been started yet or not. In other words, the patient expects that his own seeking behaviour will hopefully lead to a successful outcome (Benedetti, 2014). According to ancient Mesopotamian incantations, however, the motivation for healing

does not emerge from the patient, but from the exorcist priest, who carries out the symbolic action of seeking for therapy. This, in turn, raised the expectancy in the patient, which is an important factor in placebo responsiveness (Benedetti, 2011: 185–189).

The third stage occurs when "the patient meets the therapist," with the latter representing the means to suppress discomfort. In Mesopotamian rituals this happens when the exorcist priest – as Marduk or his messenger – starts the conversation with Ea (4). At this point it becomes evident to the participants of the healing ritual that the actual authority issuing the therapy is Ea. This is a special and unique social interaction in which the therapist represents the means to ease the suffering. In search of a powerful reward, the patient experiences trust and hope, and the doctor feels empathy and compassion (Benedetti, 2014). In Mesopotamian healing rituals the priest becomes the embodiment of his patient as the result of the encounter between deities. Marduk places his trust in Ea, exactly as the patient relies on the doctor.

At the final stage, "the patient receives the therapy" when the god of wisdom first asserts that the human priest is as knowledgeable as himself (5) and then delivers to him the ritual instructions (6). The prescribed ritual activities are presented as Ea's instructions to Marduk, conferring legitimacy to exorcist's therapy. This is the most important part of the doctor-patient interaction. The ancient Mesopotamian exorcism practised spirit healing and delivered efficient therapies through placebo responses. The exorcists were not specialists for herbs and potions, for which in Akkadian medical texts another specialist called *asû* was responsible (Geller, 2010: 43). The mere ritual of the therapeutic act generates placebo responses through a number of mechanisms. The placebo effects may be as powerful as those generated by real medical treatments (Benedetti, 2014). The ritual prescriptions that Enki/Ea delivers in the last section of the incantation are expected to release placebo mechanisms. This part often contains simple words of encouragement that reveal empathic concern towards the patient.

The ancient Mesopotamian exorcists must have used placebo healing skilfully. From the patient's point of view the placebo effects often involve expectation mechanisms that emerge from the ability of the brain's prefrontal self-regulatory network to suppress negative emotions. The placebo-related effects represent a sort of endogenous healthcare system that has emerged during human evolution (Benedetti, 2014). What counts as efficient is not the inert treatment as such, but rather the surrounding context of the therapeutic ritual, which conveys compelling meaning to the patient. Therefore, the placebo response is always a "meaning response" (Moerman, 2013). Moreover, a healing experience may become so inflated with personal value and meaning that it will be perceived and interpreted as a special spiritual event, which thereby elicits potential placebo mechanisms (Kohls et al., 2011). The outcome of the healing ritual is always uncertain. Due to this, it is much more persuasive and meaningful than a theatrical performance, as

the stakes are higher for patients. In healing rituals, the patient and healer are at once both actor and audience, who are engaged in a mutual exchange involving intimacy and trust (Kaptchuk, 2011). In Mesopotamian healing rituals following the pattern of Marduk-Ea interaction, the mutual trust between patient and doctor is symbolically acted out as an interchange between the involved deities.

According to Benedetti (2011), the fourfold system from "feeling sick" to "receiving therapy" is always operative regardless of whether the healer administers effective or ineffective therapies. The psychological factors that trigger the placebo effect come from the very special social encounter and therapeutic communication between the patient and doctor. Even if the therapy is ineffective in every respect, the patient's expectation of benefit – the placebo response – may be sufficient to inhibit discomfort. The real difference between Babylonian exorcists and modern doctors is that, whereas ancient procedures may have lacked specific effects completely, modern doctors rely on effective procedures and medications with specific mechanisms of action. But the same social and neural system of the four stages always works as an ancestral system which is ready to apply, both with ancient priests and with modern doctors (Benedetti, 2014: 79–80).

Moreover, these four steps of the outlined doctor-patient relationship can be conceived as a homeostatic system, in which a variable is to be controlled and maintained within a physiological range. This represents an equilibrium according to physical parameters, like the temperature of the human body being 36–37°C within a given homeostatic range in normal conditions. As Benedetti explains:

> Likewise, liquids and some nutritional substances, such as lipids and glycids, are maintained within a given homeostatic range. Any perturbation of this homeostasis leads to a tension of the organism, which is called drive, or motivation. This drive forces humans and animals to start the appropriate action, like looking for a warmer place, water, or food, so as to restore the normal homeostatic equilibrium. As soon as homeostasis returns to normal, the motivated behavior ends (Benedetti, 2014: 85).

According to the Mesopotamian incantation structure, the demonic intrusion or illness disrupted the homeostatic equilibrium, and the healing ritual represents a motivated behaviour of the exorcist priest who seeks to re-establish it. The analysis above demonstrated that the Marduk-Ea dialogue was based on the ancestral social and neural network of the four stages as described by Benedetti (2011). However, in distinction to Benedetti's schema the Babylonian incantation contains three participants – the patient, the doctor (Marduk) and the healing deity (Ea). The involvement of divine characters indicates a religious dimension in healing rituals. In what follows the spiritual aspects of the healing incantation will be investigated.

The religious experience in healing rituals

A complementary theoretical framework can be used for analysing Mesopotamian healing rituals (McNamara, 2009). Such healing rituals supposedly had a positive impact on a patient's health by triggering placebo mechanisms. The placebo effect itself can be described without using any spiritual vocabulary (Benedetti, 2014). However, for ancestral populations, often a link was forged between therapeutic rituals and religion: healing could be attained with the help of a spiritual experience. When comparing Benedetti's account (2011) to that of McNamara (2009) the overlaps between them can be studied with the assumption that religious experiences could occur in the context of a healing ritual. The Marduk-Ea incantation gives an account of the patient seeking therapy, but describes the ritual actions of the priest, who assumes a double identity of human and deity during the healing ritual. Thus, a religious experience can occur for the recipient human participants in the healing ritual, facilitating its positive outcome.

Neurologically speaking, religion is related to the selfhood of a person. Religious experiences and practices contribute to the creation of a unified self-consciousness. Because of genetic conflict, human consciousness is very often divided in internal disagreement over decision making. Divided consciousness is its default state, it is easier and metabolically less costly than unified consciousness. There is considerable anatomical overlap between the brain sites implicated in religious experiences and those involved in the sense of self and self-consciousness. The executive self, which becomes unified from the disunified and fragmented self, will be better able to process complex information, cooperate, plan, think, and make war (McNamara, 2009: xi–xii).

The unified self or consciousness is attained through the brain's "decentering mechanism" that occurs in four stages (McNamara, 2009). This sequential process characterizes the phenomenology of religious and spiritual experiences. The four steps can be briefly described as diminished agency, liminality, effort, and success from the part of the experiencer (McNamara, 2009). When applied to the Marduk-Ea incantation structure the first two stages of the "decentering mechanism" apply to the description of the medical problem. The third stage of "effort" is represented in the divine dialogue and the "success" is brought with the ritual solution. The longer exposition of stages in religious experience is as follows:

1. The sense of agency or volition is inhibited.
2. The Self-structure or -concept is placed into a suppositional logical space or "possible world box."
3. A discrepancy reduction (between current and ideal Selves) is implemented via a search in the semantic memory to find a more integral version of the Self that can enables deeper, more optimal solutions to internal and external conflicts and problems.

4. The old Self is then bound to and integrated into the new identity (the ideal Self) selected during the search process via integration of the old story into the new story. If all goes well, that new identity is larger and more complex than the older Self, and thus more unified (McNamara, 2009: 46–47).

Under certain circumstances Benedetti's schema of doctor-patient relationship (2011) can also accommodate the decentering model of religious and spiritual experiences (McNamara, 2009). The important difference between the two models is that Benedetti's (2011) scheme primarily applies to physical illnesses, whereas McNamara (2009) deals with matters of the mind. The four stages occurring in religious and spiritual experiences are qualitatively different, as there is more at stake than the equilibrium of a homeostatic system – the self is temporarily lost and then found again in a promotion. However, experimental evidence in modern medicine has indicated powerful influences of the mind over the body, and a general agreement is emerging about the interaction between biological mechanisms and psychosocial conditioning. The brain may have an active role in therapeutic outcomes of illnesses because immune responses can be conditioned. The patient's psychological state may strongly influence biological factors, although many mechanisms of mind-body interactions are still little understood (Benedetti, 2011). Therefore, spiritual experiences certainly enhance positive therapeutic outcomes, making the study of their phenomenology significant for the study of healing rituals.

The starting point of a religious experience occurs when executive control and personal agency diminishes in an individual (McNamara, 2009). The Mesopotamian Marduk-Ea incantation structure allows for the loss of agency on two occasions. First, it can occur in the patient whose sickness is described in the narrative introducing the medical problem (1). The demonic intrusion is reported from the point of view of the therapist, who impersonates the divine onlooker. In Mesopotamian healing incantations, the voice of the patient is usually not heard, as (s)he is a passive object of the therapeutic action that is happening around. The patient has no agency at all, (s)he is referred to in third person, described as "a man, son of his god" or "distraught man" (Geller, 2010: 29). The mythological language of disaster in the introductory part of healing incantations can be used to induce a reduced sense of agency, corresponding to the first step in the phenomenology of religious and spiritual experiences.

In the Marduk-Ea incantation structure the loss of agency occurs for the second time when the exorcist is unable to solve the problem by himself and goes to his "father" for assistance or sends a messenger (3). Liminality sets in when the healer admits his ignorance with the words "I do not know what to do" (4). With this deliberation, both the deity and the exorcist priest representing it in the therapeutic ritual lose their control over the situation. When the priest declares ignorance his loss of agency becomes comparable to that of his patient, and both are found in a

state of liminality. The identities of patient and healer are expected to fuse for the liminality period during which both are divested of any executive power. Whereas the patient's sufferings were related as objective facts in the third person, the concerns of the healing priest are reported in the first person and presented as those of the deity. The concerns of the patient are now the priorities of the priest as well.

In the Marduk-Ea incantation the structural nodes (1) and (3) can be used as the onset points of a religious or spiritual experience. These two opportunities for "decentering" are built into the incantation structure, because such experiences can facilitate placebo responses – spirituality is a potential health resource. Neuroscience has revealed that overlapping anatomical and neurochemical substrates appear to be involved in many aspects of both placebo effects and spiritual experiences (Kohls et al., 2011). The Mesopotamian incantations are prone to connect medical problems of both body and mind.

After agency is diminished and liminality sets in, efforts will follow to regain the executive control. The third stage, "effort" in McNamara's scheme, corresponds to the dialogue part in which the god of wisdom motivates the exorcist with words of assurance (5). Thereby, discrepancy reduction between current and ideal Selves is implemented (McNamara, 2009). The efforts to regain and maintain agency by the priest are sometimes reflected in Mesopotamian healing incantations. The series *Udug-Ḫul*, which contains medical incantations, provides us with the wording of the priest's self-assurance (Tablet 3: 111–112): "When I approach the patient, and lay my hand on the patient's head, may the good spirit and good genius be present at my side" (Geller, 2016: 34).

In this negotiation about the priest's consciousness, his Self is finally promoted when the deity restores his agency by saying "Go, my son Marduk!" and delivers the ritual instructions (6). This statement is also expected to promote the agency of the patient, because it terminates the state of liminality. During Mesopotamian healing rituals, the deities are thought to administer therapies that transform the Selves of the ritual participants. These spiritual experiences can be conceived as a form of psychotherapy, in which a supernatural agent is in charge. The final stage of successful "binding" is crucial for the religious experience because if the divided self fails to progress into the new identity, the result will be endless intrapsychic conflict and mental disorder (McNamara, 2009: 191–192).

The dialogue between the deities is recited by the exorcist priest and takes place in the collective imagination of the ritual participants. During the liminality state of priest and patient the ritual actions are intended to elicit a spiritual transformation also in the patient, which can facilitate placebo responses. The Selves of the exorcist priest and his patient become positively transfigured, promoted and handed back to the ritual participants (McNamara, 2009: 220). When the healer priest's identity is promoted and the patient makes a recovery, the healing ritual has a positive outcome.

Finally, the results of this investigation can be tabularized, with the six parts of the narrative structure juxtaposed with Benedetti's and McNamara's schemes:

Marduk-Ea incantation	**Benedetti (2011) scheme**	**McNamara (2009) scheme**
(1) Mythological introduction	1. Feeling sick	1. Loss of agency (patient)
(2) Marduk's notice of illness	1. Feeling sick	2. Liminality (patient)
(3) Marduk goes to Ea	2. Seeking relief	1. Loss of agency (priest)
(4) "I don't know what to do"	2. Seeking relief	2. Liminality (priest)
(5) Ea reassures Marduk	3. Meeting the doctor	3. Efforts to restore agency
(6) Ea delivers instructions	4. Receiving the therapy	4. New identity, better agency

The healing process as cosmic battle

Mesopotamian exorcism was motivated to fight off abstract evil forces, which assumed the form of demons with sinister intentions. Such monsters were often described in opening sections of Marduk-Ea incantations (1), where they were held responsible for causing the sicknesses to be treated. These monsters were similar to composite creatures such as Anzu or Tiamat that deities fought against in conflict myths. As mentioned above in the paragraph *Introduction*, the adversary Asakku whom Ninurta defeated was also a prominent demon of diseases. The conflict myths were often used to celebrate the military aspect of kingship in which the divine hero symbolically acted as the living king, eliminating his geopolitical enemies and diseases alike (Annus, 2002).

The hybrid monsters are stock characters in ancient Mesopotamian art, where gods and especially demons are depicted with the body parts of different animals, birds, and fishes which are combined with human forms (Wiggermann, 1992). From the corpus of Mesopotamian incantation literature, a huge number of instances describing these characters can be quoted. For example, a vivid description of the monster called Samana and its composite appearance occurs in a Neo-Sumerian incantation: "Samana, mouth of a lion, teeth of a big serpent, claws of an eagle, tail of a crab, fearsome dog of Enlil, (dog) with twisted neck of Enki, (dog) with blood-dripping mouth of Ninisinna, dog with gaping mouth of the de-

ities." At the end of this incantation, the priest re-establishes his agency and defeats the monster: "May it (= Samana) go out on its own accord like a rush-fire, may it, like a plant that has been uprooted, not come together." (Cunningham, 1997: text 71). Curing a disease was often connected to the symbolic act of defeating a composite monster.

The supernatural agents found in Mesopotamian healing incantations may have their partial origin in characters seen in dreams. The dreams that typically occur during the rapid-eye-movement (REM) phase of sleep can construct the building blocks of a supernatural agent. The awake person may finish the work of constructing the supernatural agents as real entities when these images become available in memory stores for waking consciousness. During this process the attribute of human agency gets combined with unusual bodies seen in dreams, resulting in new hybrid monsters with special powers – e.g. a man's mind in a lion's body. These composite beings may have extraordinary abilities in mind-reading, be especially strong, cunning, dangerous, etc. These special characters drive the action of a dream forward (McNamara, 2016).

The neurological basis for imagining evil supernatural beings as real are nightmares, the frightening dreams that most often are seen during REM sleep (McNamara, 2016). Nightmares invariably contain monstrous supernatural beings that elicit real terror in the dreamer. Nightmares tend to appear in late REM episodes during the early morning period, which means that they will more likely be remembered during the day. Therefore, they exert influence on daytime mood and behaviours (Rhudy et al., 2010). Dreamers take nightmares more seriously than ordinary dreams, because they may carry a huge significance for them. A nightmare is compelling because it contains terrifying supernatural agents that the dreamer cannot easily forget. Nightmares have the capacity to make people feel emotionally changed and driven to extract some meaning from the experience. For ancestral populations nightmares constituted a potent source for religious ideas (McNamara, 2016: 47–49).

While the nightmares of an individual present such fantastic creatures as aggressive, the ancient Mesopotamian society embraced some of them as protective and benevolent spirits. Their aggressive nature was forced into the defensive services of guarding the gates and bringing about other positive outcomes. This happened after they were defeated by warrior gods in combat, whom the earthly king impersonated during his military and hunting affairs (Annus, 2002: 114–119). There was an established nomenclature of demonic creatures in Mesopotamian art with whom the characters seen in dreams could be associated (Wiggermann, 1992). The help of beneficial supernatural agents was sought to defeat the evil monsters and impose control over them. In kingship ideology the king as Marduk or Ninurta fulfilled this task by defeating enemies, and the exorcists followed the same practice by healing their patients and re-establishing the sense of agency for their troubled patients.

The Marduk-Ea incantation may have been used to counteract the evil characters seen in dreams and against nightmares in general. The ancient Mesopotamian culture distinguished between the dreams which contained a sensible message from deities and those which only conveyed meaningless and frightening imagery (Zgoll, 2013). When a disturbing image was seen in a dream that possibly portended evil, an attempt could be made to solve the negative impact of the dream with a ritual. For example, figurines of evil characters seen in dreams were produced and later ritually burned, buried or thrown into river in order to dissolve them (Butler, 1998: 195–197). Such ancient Mesopotamian dream rituals that aimed at purifying a person from the impact of terrifying visions can be favourably compared to modern Imagery Rehearsal Therapy designed to cure chronic sufferers from frequent nightmares (Krakow / Zadra, 2010).

There is some evidence for the use of Marduk-Ea interaction in the context of incubation rituals, which solicited beneficial dreams. The Mesopotamian text from first millennium BCE describes "Rituals to obtain oracular responses" to the question whether a sick person is going to recover. The desired outcome of these incubation ceremonies was "to see an oracular decision" which denoted to behold a dream through which the supplicant would achieve his recovery (Butler, 1998: 222). One of these ceremonies began with a recitation of incantation, subsequently the ritual prescriptions instructed to cleanse the participant and to draw sketches of gods Ea and Asalluḫi (Butler, 1998: 354, lines 52–60). The instruction for drawing is a clear indication that the interaction between Asalluḫi / Marduk and Ea / Enki was sometimes thought to be a part of the incubation process, the scenario that a sick person could see in a dream.

The Marduk-Ea incantation type is similar in structure to other kinds of Mesopotamian healing spells. Some Mesopotamian incantations use the "whom should I send" formula (Akkadian: *manna lušpur*), which pleads for a helpful divine intervention. With these words help is sought for different kinds of problems, including illnesses. Instead of a messenger being sent from Marduk to Ea, the speaker himself ponders whom to send for assistance from a wider range of deities (Cunningham, 1997: 121). This formula reflects the efforts by the healer priest to calm the patient's anxiety and to re-establish the sense of agency. For example, an Old Babylonian incantation is focused on healing a certain *merḫu*-disease: "Whom should I send and whom should I order to the seven (and) seven daughters of Anu? May they bring the lustration basin of carnelian, the pot of *ḫulālu*-stone. May they draw pure sea-water. May they remove the *merḫu*-illness from the young man's eye" (Cunningham, 1997: text 342). The imagery of a conflict myth, which sometimes had a partial origin in dreaming consciousness, was frequently used in healing incantations. In daytime consciousness the cosmic battle was effectively associated with kingship ideology on the political level, thus connecting the spheres of folk medicine and state ideology.

Conclusions

The analysis of the ancient Mesopotamian Marduk-Ea incantation structure indicates that it was functionally designed and efficient in problem solving, explaining its prolonged use over millennia. The structure relies on brain mechanisms in the prefrontal cortex that promote both executive functions and placebo responsiveness. The incantation text accommodates the phenomenology of spiritual and religious experiences, as described by McNamara (2009). The spiritual dimensions were important for raising expectations in the patient. The incantation could be used for inhibition and attribution of agency among ritual participants. The priest and his patient were transferred into a liminal state of being, while ritual actions of the priest attempted to re-establish agency for both, thus creating empathetic bonding and enhancing the chances for positive outcomes of therapeutic procedures.

The positive psychosocial context between the healer and his patient is even more important in psychotherapy, where specific therapeutic techniques account for only 1 % of the outcome effect (Wampold, 2001). Both therapist and patient believing in psychotherapeutic procedure is of critical importance for a successful outcome. According to a famous quote from Jerome Frank, in psychotherapy the use of a particular technique is irrelevant to the outcome. The alliance between the doctor and patient is of paramount importance:

> The success of all techniques depends on the patient's sense of alliance with a natural or symbolic healer. … Also implied is that therapists should seek to learn as many approaches as they find congenial and convincing. Creating a good therapeutic match may involve both educating the patient about the therapist's conceptual scheme and, if necessary, modifying the scheme to take into account the concepts the patients bring to therapy (Frank / Frank, 1991: xv).

The symbolic healer in Marduk-Ea incantations was the divine king Marduk, whom the therapist impersonated and with whom the patient had a sense of alliance. The doctor-patient relationship embedded in the Marduk-Ea incantation structure is consistent with the neuroscientific account provided by Benedetti (2011). Babylonian medicine facilitated social bonding between the patient and doctor, but also accommodated the divine sphere of influence. The incantation structure is bound to stimulate the cognitive processes in which agency is attributed to the supernatural characters with abilities to heal the sick. The patient's alliance with the priest as the embodiment of the exorcist god Marduk was an effective part of the healing process, a concept that the priest visibly demonstrated to his patients. Symbolic involvement of divine agents and the concept of divine kingship had conditioning effect on therapeutic rituals in bringing about placebo

effects. The belief in divine kingship and its symbolic representation in therapeutic rituals brought along health benefits.

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Similes as a Literary Means of Narrative Identity Construction in Neo-Assyrian Royal Narrative Texts[1]

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Introduction

The social and narrative construction of "the enemy" in Assyrian royal narrative texts is a constantly and frequently visited field of study. Since roughly the 1970s, scholars have increasingly embraced analytical models and methodologies adopted from newly arising and developing fields such as discourse analysis, deconstructivism, postcolonial and gender studies. The list of notable older studies includes, e.g., Liverani, 1979, Fales, 1982, Zaccagnini, 1982 and Tadmor, 1997. Fales, 1982 established a foundational typology of textual "enemy images" of two major strands with altogether five subdivisions: Either enemies do not what they are supposed to do, or they do what they are not supposed to do. The first strand comprises two subgroups, transgressiveness, and disrespect, and forgetfulness of and ungratefulness for previously granted benevolence. The second strand consists of three subgroups: insubmissiveness, insolency and proudness/arrogance, then hostility, falseness, and treachery, and finally wickedness, dangerousness, rebelliousness, and murderousness. More recently, many details and aspects of the prevailing narrative dichotomy of good king vs evil enemies were addressed by Pongratz-Leisten, 2015, Liverani, 2017, Karlsson, 2017 and Nowicki, 2018. These studies regularly point to the prominent role of figurative language as an apt literary tool for delivering polarized narrative images of the Assyrian monarch and his foes.

Figurative language is an umbrella term commonly referring to five major groups of literary stylistic devices, namely metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, and symbolism. This study will focus only on similes. Their intermediate position between plain declarative and metaphoric makes them a highly effective tool for narrative framing. They can be employed to exemplify differences in narrative positioning and thus enhance a programmatic ascription of hierarchy and status. Their illustrative power reinforces value-loaded messages, increasing the

[1] Quotations from the corpus of Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions are labelled following the system applied in ORACC RIAo (= RIMA 1–3) for pre-Sargonid inscriptions, and that of RINAP and ORACC RINAP (Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period) for Sargonid inscriptions (including Tiglath-pileser III). Correspondences between the differing notation systems of RIMA 1–3 (inscriptions up to Tiglath-pileser III) and ORACC's RIAo subproject are provided under http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/riao/ pager. Starting with RINAP 1 (Tiglath-pileser III), the numbering systems are consistent with each other.

chance of their remembrance and internalization.[2] It is justified to presume that when crafting a simile an author inadvertently referred to some form of a "virtual audience" to approximate chances of evoking affect and identification. While such a "virtual audience" must not necessarily correspond exactly to the "real audience", it is nevertheless indicative of it.[3] Questions regarding both "virtual" and "real" audiences in the Neo-Assyrian period remain of a general interest.[4] Equally important is the historical development of usage and structure of figurative language in Assyrian royal inscriptions. This paper will apply a structuralist approach to similes used in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions and related texts and treat them as an exemplary case study of imperial narrative identity building. As noted by Kenneth Gergen, "limits of narratives are limits of identities."[5] Similes were one of several driving forces behind the steady extension of the inscription's narrative limits in the Middle Assyrian period and continue to be so in the 1st millennium.

With the early Neo-Assyrian period as its point of departure, this study begins at "phase two" of textual royal representation in military-historical scenarios. Early Neo-Assyrian royal narrative texts are, of course, still akin to their Middle Assyrian predecessors, but also develop some short-lasting own characteristics. They put an increased narrative focus on the figure of the king.[6] Unlike than in the Middle Assyrian Period, transtextual usage of myths and epics does not play

[2] On the mental mapping capacities of similes see Dancygier / Sweetser, 2014: 137–148.

[3] Cf. Genette, 1988: 135–154.

[4] Oppenheim, 1960; for more recent discussions of the audiences of royal narrative texts cf. Miller, 2019: 318–320; Siddall 2018; Bagg, 2016, Liverani, 2017, 100–102; Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 327–328 (regarding the audience of "king's reports"); Van de Mieroop, 2015: 314; Madreiter, 2012: 53–55 (on the audience of inscriptional 'humor,' also cf. Frahm, 1998), Nadali, 2019: 57. Most recently, see Portuese, 2020 on Neo-Assyrian palatial audiences.

[5] Gergen, 1998: 190 [2005: 11]. Also cf. ibid., 195 [2005: 114]: "[…] Heroes and villains are such by virtue of their narrative encasing. […] By one's narratives, then, one's moral status is negotiated, and the result is one to which the person can subsequently be held responsible."

[6] While the prevalence of the great gods is never questioned, in comparison to Middle Assyrian inscriptions their literary agency is slightly tuned down in early Neo-Assyrian times, and they are assigned less narrative space (as can be seen, e.g., when comparing LKA 63, a Middle Assyrian royal song, with an early Neo-Assyrian antecessor, LKA 64). The figure of the king partially takes over formerly divine epithets (e.g., T.-N. II 03: obv. 19), and his martial and heroic qualities can now by highlighted by a novel usage of hypotyposis. This narrative technique slows down the usual narrative pace for the sake of a vivid description of a specific scene, presumably with the goal to increase its potential to impress. Additionally, early Neo-Assyrian applications of hypotyposis break with the inscription's prevailing narrative perspective by shortly employing verbs in 3rd person singular instead of the 1st person singular. Thus, the narrative perspective 'zooms out' while the focus remains on the king (e.g., Asn. II 001: i 49–52, iii 24–26).

a decisive role, not even in non-inscriptional royal narrative texts.[7] Sargonid texts, on the other hand, reactivate transtextuality as a common poetic device,[8] while their narrative pace, heightened attention to details, and increased usage of information relaying pro- and analepses set them stylistically apart. They discard many innovations of the early Neo-Assyrian period, yet some Sargonid kings like Esarhaddon still make selective use of them.

The study of similes in Neo-Assyrian royal narrative texts

Almost a century has passed since the publication of Albert Schott's works on similes in Akkadian royal inscriptions (Schott, 1925; Schott, 1926). While Schott delivered studies of a thoroughness that still makes them relevant today, only a meagre number of studies on figurative language in Assyrian royal inscriptions and related texts followed. An often-cited article on animal similes in (mostly Neo-)Assyrian royal inscriptions was delivered by Marcus, 1977. One decade later, Simonetta Ponchia published a more generalized study of inscriptional simile and metaphor (Ponchia, 1987). She observed that figurative language is extensively used to formulate and reaffirm ideological positions.[9] A study of violence similes was offered by Van de Mieroop, 2015. Focusing on three rather exceptional pieces, respectively: stories (Sargon's Eighth Campaign, the battle of Ḫalulê and the accession story of Esarhaddon), Van de Mieroop proposes figurative language was used both to create more "original" narratives[10] as well as to make the content of royal inscriptions more easily relatable.[11] Studies of similes in non-royal Assyrian and Babylonian literature are more numerous.[12] To name only a few, a structuralist approach to the formal typologies of Akkadian similes was offered by Buccellati, 1976. An extensive study of figurative language in epics was provided by Streck, 1999, while Wassermann, 2003, focused on similes in Old Babylonian literature.

With new material added and new readings established over the last century, this article seeks to partially update the catalogues provided by Schott, 1926,[13] and Marcus, 1977, by means of a new survey of the material available today. It

[7] There is a low number of potential loose allusions to epical poetry, e.g., Asn. II 001: i 22–23; Asn. II 017: i 18; Asn. II 20: 23 all probably alluding to Gilg. X, 306 and 312.
[8] This mirrors Middle Assyrian poetics prominently attested, e.g., under Tukultī-Ninurta I (cf. Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 37, 137, 221–223).
[9] Ponchia ,1987: 254–255.
[10] But note that of the three short epical pieces (or rather: royal songs) LKA 62, 63 and 64, which exhibit highly elevated styles and intricate poetics, only one employs a simile once (LKA 63, obv. 17': enemies are "getting enraged like a storm").
[11] Van de Mieroop, 2015: 310–313.
[12] Assyriological literature up to a publication year 1998 is discussed in Streck, 1999: 21–29.
[13] Schott, 1926: 129–236.

will also try to show that other than claimed by Schott, 1926, who did not find a significant change in the usage of figurative language throughout the history of Assyrian royal inscriptions,[14] there is a considerable difference in the usage of enemy related similes in early Neo-Assyrian and in Sargonid inscriptions.

The poetics of similes

A simile rests on two main principles: 1.) The necessity of a formal connector, a so-called "similarity marker" (f.e. "like", "as" and, in extension, "as though," "as if" etc.; Akkadian *kī*(*ma*), adverbials in *-iš* and *-āniš*), [15] and 2.) a shared aspect of comparison, the so-called *tertium comparationis*.[16] Similes, unlike metaphors, name their *tertium comparationis*.[17] The determination of the latter, the "third" aspect shared between a simile's tenor and vehicle, is sometimes challenging.[18] Furthermore, there exists a necessity of semantic distance, meaning that the elements compared to another in a simile must originate from different semantic domains. Should they not, one would rather qualify the respective attestation as a "literal comparison."[19] Streck, 1991, has laid out a tight methodological framework for the research of similes (and metaphors), and this study will follow his model whenever possible. Therefore, this paper discerns between a simile's *vehicle* (also *spender of an image* or *comparans*), its *tenor* (also *receiver of an image* or *comparatum*), and the primary *tertium comparationis* (*tc*) as well as possible

[14] Schott, 1926: 120–121

[15] Schott, 1926: 35–68 and 121–123; Streck, 1991: 35–36, 37–38.

[16] On the role of similarity markers see Genette, 1983, 239–241; cf. Streck, 1999: 31–32. An exemplary study on the *tc* as the hallmark of a simile was already provided by Schott, 1925; on the structure of similes also see Dancygier / Sweetser, 2014: 138–142.

[17] Neuroscientific research has shown that metaphor and simile are processed differently in the brain. Due to their explicit naming of a compared aspect, similes are easier to decipher than metaphors, yet still more complicated to process than literal sentences. Average processing time of a metaphor is 1924 milliseconds, of a simile 1782 milliseconds, and of literal sentences 1309 milliseconds (cf. Riddell, 2016; Nagels et al., 2013; Shibata et al., 2012).

[18] As pointed out by Streck, 1999: 32 (also cf. Ben-Porat, 1992: 745ff.), one has to distinguish if the *tc* coincides just with the semantics of the employed comparative verb, if it encompasses additional meanings, or if the used comparative verb itself should be understood as a metaphor.

[19] Cf. Ben-Porat, 1992: 738. For example: a comparison between men and women within the greater semantic domain "humans" will be considered a literal comparison. Contrarily, a comparison across greater semantic domains, for example humans and animals, will be considered as a "true" or poetic simile. However, fringe cases do exist. A comparison between members of the same semantic sub-domain, e.g., "birds," would be considered as a literal comparison, while comparisons across sub-domains, e.g., between "wolfs and jackals" and "caprids" would still be considered a (weak) poetic simile. Due to limitations of space literal comparisons will not be discussed in this article.

secondary *tertia comparationis*. The analysis furthermore distinguishes between subject similes ("like who"; intransitive verbs), object similes ("like whom"; transitive verbs), and proportionally rare genitive similes ("like whose"; transitive verbs).[20] Some similes are more "open" or more metaphorically charged than others,[21] especially when the primary *tertium comparationis* appears to be incongruent for tenor and vehicle or a secondary *tertium comparationis* is elided.[22]

Grouping of the discussed text material

The following is a non-exhaustive treatment of Neo-Assyrian inscriptional similes, from which the most illustrative examples have been selected. Literal comparisons are not discussed in this study. Due to limitations of space as well as an extensive corpus to be analyzed, similes are given in translation only. An accompanying analytical table comprising all discussed similes can be found in the appendix to this study, with *tertia comparationis* and vehicles given in Akkadian. The study focuses on enemies and their relationship to the Assyrian king. It is therefore mainly concerned with the representation of the former's qualities and of the interactions of both.[23] To examine the narrative construction of the king and his enemies as it is conveyed in the similes of 1st millennium Neo-Assyrian royal narrative texts, the material subject to this study has been divided into three main groups:[24]

I: Subject similes with enemies or enemy localities as tenor. This type of similes tells about qualities, actions, and behavior of enemies: how they are, what they do, and how they do it. Thus, group I characterizes "active" enemies and their qualities. Yet, in defeat and flight similes, which account for most attestations, the granted agency is exercised in a scenario of the agent's defeat. Furthermore, this group includes similes qualifying the habitations and the environment of enemies.

II: Object similes with enemies or enemy localities as tenor. These similes inform us about how enemies are treated by the Assyrian king and/or the Assyrian army, and what is happening to them.

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[20] Streck, 1999: 36.

[21] On narrow-scoped and broad-scoped similes see Dancygier / Sweetser, 2014: 142–148.

[22] For example, the well attested hyperbolic simile "to heap something up like a mountain" is elliptical for "to heap something up to such an extent that it(s height) equals (the height of) a mountain." On this and other „verkappte Sätzevergleiche" already see Schott, 1925.

[23] Due to limitations of space, some destruction similes will be left out. On the latter see Ponchia, 1987. furthermore, similes not directly related to something enemy are left out.

[24] Similes are numbered with a simple numerical value but will be referred to by their group number as well in the summary discussion, f.e. (I.1) or (II.15).

III: Subject similes with the Assyrian king and/or his army as tenor and an enemy or enemies as direct or indirect grammatical object. Similes in this group illustrate the role of those who do something to the enemies, as well as the interaction itself.

Groups **II** and **III** are interlinked. They tell about the treatment of enemies from slightly different perspectives. Group **II** emphasizes mainly the enemies' passivity, while group **III** highlights Assyrian agency against them.

To complete the picture, the study will also take a cursory look at subject similes that have the Assyrian king as tenor but feature no grammatical object (group **IV**). Although these similes mainly inform us only about the king in a generalized context, the information provided by them can shed additional light on material from other groups, especially when contrasted to group **I**.

Occasionally, a very few similes will not fit their assigned group type (e.g., a subject simile in group **II**) as they have been added rather for the sake of thematic completeness.

Group I: Subject similes with enemies or enemy localities as tenor[25]

Similes in group **I** usually address the essentially qualities of enemies ("what enemies are"), their acts ("what enemies do") and their corresponding behavior ("how they do it"). Aside from a few other topoi like the enemies' or their abodes' remoteness, similes from the first group are employed to underline aspects previously touched upon when outlining the typology presented by Fales, 1982.[26]

Qualities of enemy habitations: Regularly, enemies are said to inhabit remote places, or place their fortifications in unknown and difficult terrain.[27] The following list is non-exhaustive but gathers a substantial number of corresponding similes. Descriptions of enemy landscapes themselves are comparatively rare. "Sargon's Eighth Campaign" (Sargon II 65) describes a foreign forest traversed by the Assyrian army as

(1) *having shadow cast over its environs* like *a cedar forest*.[28]
(2) *intertwined* like *impenetrable reeds*.[29]

[25] Schott, 1926, *passim* does not group into subject and object similes, and discusses similes of groups I–IV mainly on pages *ibid.*, 81–99, 103–105 and 113–114.
[26] Note an early neo-Assyrian literal comparison according to which the inhabitants of Sipiamena are "adorned like women" (Asn. II 001: ii 75–76; Asn. II 017: iii 97).
[27] Cf. Ponchia, 1987: 228–233.
[28] Sargon II 065: 16.
[29] Sargon II 065: 266.

Otherwise, it is mainly the appearance of mountains that is described by means of figurative language. Various peaks (sometimes additionally qualified as "strong", "burdensome", or similar) are said to

(3) a. *be sharp* like *the point of an iron dagger's blade*.[30]
b. *rise up perpendicularly* like *the blade of a dagger*.[31]
c. *rise up* like *the blade of a lance*.[32]
d. *rise up to heaven* like *the tips of daggers*.[33]

This group of related similes has a Middle Assyrian predecessor in the 5-Year-Annals of Tiglath-pileser I, where mountains likewise "thrust up like pointed daggers."[34] Similes used in the descriptions of foreign terrain regularly also relate to enemy settlements and fortifications. Enemy cities and strongholds can

(4) *reach high* like *the peak of a mountain*.[35]
(5) *lie* like *a river meadow* in a torrent of water.[36]
(6) *be situated in* (*deep*) *waters* (*and marshes*) like *a fish*.[37]

So far, all similes utilized for the description of enemy landscapes and localities were subject similes. A single case from the early Neo-Assyrian corpus uses an object simile construction, which for completeness' sake is listed here. In a notable passage in an inscription of Ashurnasirpal II, enemies

(7) *have placed* their fortress like *the nest of an* udīnu-*bird* in the mountains.[38]

In the next line, the simile was transformed into a proper metaphor: Ashurnasirpal II does not any longer attack a stronghold of his enemies, but indeed "their nest."[39] Full-blown metaphors of this type are comparatively rare. What is achieved by its usage is the smooth reinforcement of the simile's more subliminal implication of an avian nature of the mountain-dwelling enemies.

A similar image, now again as part of a subject simile, was used centuries later by Sennacherib, in whose inscriptions enemy cities are

[30] Asn. II 001: i 49, ii 40–41; Asn. II 017: i 72–73.
[31] Asn. II 040: 15; Slm. III 001: 20; Slm. III 002: i 19, ii 41–42; Sargon II 065: 99 (without directional qualifier "perpendicular").
[32] Sargon II 065: 18.
[33] Sen. 1015: obv. 6' (also adds "without number" to the tenor).
[34] T-p I 01: iii 43–44, iv 14–15.
[35] Asn. II 001: ii, 105; Asn. II 017: iv 67; Asn. II 019: 72.
[36] Š.-A. V 1: iv 24–25 (Dūr-Papsukkal).
[37] Esh. 002: iii 38–39; Asb. Ass. Tab. 003: rev. 33–34 (note the syntax!).
[38] Asn. II 001: i 49–50. On the *udīnu*-bird as eagle see Marcus, 1977, 95.
[39] Asn. II 001: i 51.

(8) *placed* in the mountains like *the nests of an* erû-*eagle*, the "foremost of birds."[40]

In Sargonid similes, enemy palaces and cities can also block the way of the advancing Assyrian army. They are likened to mountains and, more frequently, to manmade artifacts as they

(9) *lock* (a passage) like *a mountain*.[41]
(10) *lie across* (= block the way) like *a great wall*.[42]
(11) *lie across* (= block a way) like *a bolt*.[43]
(12) *lock* (a passage) like *a door*.[44]

The defenses of enemy settlements are well established. City defenses in Mannâ and Naʾiri are described as

(13) *firmly founded* like *mountains*.[45]

Two similes in "Sargon's Eight Campaign" indicate a prominent visibility of their respective tenors. Some cities are said to

(14) *go out* / *emerge* (from their surroundings) like *bushes*.[46]
(15) *go out* / *emerge* (from their surroundings) like *stars*.[47]

Two further similes from "Sargon's Eighth Campaign" are descriptive with a touch of exoticism. The first one mentions that agricultural land in the city of Ulḫu

(16) *was overlaid with bright flecks* like *turquoise-blue glass*.[48]

The second one paints an almost admiring picture of the seat of an enemy ruler. In the palaces of Sangibutu scent emanating from beams of juniper wood

[40] Sen. 016: iv 71–76; Sen. 017: iv 18–23; Sen. 018: iii 1"–4"; Sen. 022: iii 75–79; Sen. 023: iii 66–70; Sen. 046: 38; Sen. 222: 12–18 (last two attestations without extension "the foremost of birds").
[41] Sen. 1015: obv. 14'.
[42] Asb. 009: iii 46–48.
[43] Sargon II 065: 64–65.
[44] Sargon II 065: 167–168. This simile alludes to Erra I: 27. In a related object simile, Esarhaddon, locks up the already conquered and now newly reinforced city of Ša-pī-Bēl against Elam "like a door" (Esh. 001: iii 83; Esh. 002: iii 48–52; Esh. 004: iii 1'; Esh. 031: obv. 12'–14').
[45] Sargon II 065: 260.
[46] Sargon II 065: 239.
[47] Sargon II 065: 287.
[48] Sargon II 065: 229; translation follows Thavapalan, 2020: 359 (slightly modified; also cf. there for further commentary).

(17) *blows* into the heart of someone who enters like *the* (*scent of*) ḫašḫurru-*cypresses*.[49]

Another simile in "Sargon's Eighth Campaign" stresses the fertility of the Urartian agricultural landscape, mentioning its crops

(18) *having no number* like *reeds in a cane-brake*.[50]

A final simile references the spatial arrangement of cities in Aiādi along the shores of Lake Urmia, and describes them as

(19) *being aligned* like / as if (on) *a straight track*.[51]

Numerousness: Enemies, their forces, possessions, or the booty taken from them are described as being strong in numbers, as expressed by the similes

(20) to *have no number* / *counting* like *stars in the sky*.[52]
(21) to *be in full force* like *a heavy fog*.[53]
(22) to *rise* (at the onset of battle) like *an onslaught of many locusts in spring*.[54]
(23) *to cover* lands (before or at the onset of battle) like *an onslaught of locust*.[55]
(24) *to be more numerous* than *locusts*.[56]

The topos of numerousness is diachronically stable. Attestations range from the reign of Shalmaneser I to Assurbanipal. It is complementary to the likewise common topos of the enemies' ferociousness and dangerousness, also attested since

[49] Sargon II 065: 246.
[50] Sargon II 065: 228.
[51] Sargon II 065: 280–286. It is tempting to read a pun on *ussu* "right, straight track" (here written as *us-su*) and *ūsu* "duck" into this simile. Topologically, a water-bird simile would fit well. Yet, the dictionary entries for *ūsu* show a clear prevalence for a spelling *ú-su*.
[52] Asn. II 001: i 88 and iii 42–43; Sargon II 065: 164. This simile was already used in the Middle Assyrian period in Shalmaneser I 01: 88–89 and possibly also in Aššur-bēl-kala 01: 5' [frag.]; cf. Schott, 1926, 96, 130, and 224.
[53] Adn. III 2010: 11–12 (note that this is an inscription of Šamšī-ilu).
[54] Sen. 022: v 56–57; Sen. 023: v 47–48; Sen. 230: 57. Note a plain locust simile with a tenor "Assyrian army" in Sen. 046, 91–94, also cf. older locust similes with Assyrian tenors and a *tc* "to cover" in the inscriptions of Sargon II (e.g., Sargon II 001: 85–86; Sargon II 007: 73 etc.).
[55] Asb. 003: iv 41; Asb. 004: iv 8'–9'; Asb. 006: v 62–64; Asb. 007: v 7–8.
[56] Esh. 33, iii 8'; Asb. 09, v 57–65; Asb. 11, vi 81–94; Asb. 155, rev. 12–13; Asb. 188, obv. 8–13; Asb. 217, obv. 14'–21'.

Middle Assyrian times.[57] However, besides (21)–(23) no further similes are used to highlight that aspect.

Ornaments: In a singular extended simile in Sennacherib's inscriptions, Elamites are describes as having their arms

(25) '*harnessed*' (with golden rings etc.) like *fattened bulls that are cast in fetters*.[58]

Outside of battle: The theme of arrogance is possibly implied in a simile which likens enemies *roaming about* in their mountain ranges to

(26) *deer* and *ibexes*.[59]

In non-combat situations the texts usually employ literal comparisons to portray enemies and enemy rulers.[60] Just a single simile describes vassal rulers as submissive by stating that they

(27) *crawl* before the Assyrian king like *dogs*.[61]

In internal conflicts: Unlike with object similes (group 2), no subject similes relate to enemies in battle with the Assyrian king. Only once in internal conflict, Esarhaddon's jealous brothers are said to

(28) *butt each other* like (*goat*) *kids*.[62]

After defeat in battle: Only a small number of early Neo-Assyrian subject similes describes enemies immediately after their defeat.

(29) Enemies *sway* like *reeds in a storm*.[63]

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[57] Already used in Shalmaneser I 01: 89–90 (enemies are "skilled in murder").

[58] Sen. 022: v 86–87; Sen. 023: v 74–75; Sen. 230: 86. A somehow comparable Middle Assyrian simile might be T.-p. I 02: 26–27, where enemy rulers get lead ropes attached to their noses like cattle.

[59] T.-p. III 37: 20; possibly also attested in Sargon II 82: v 42'. This rare imagery reminds one of the royal Song LKA 62 in which enemies are metaphorically portrayed as wild asses (cf. Fink / Parpola, 2019).

[60] These are: "to heap up provisions like *ša-rēši* officials" (Sargon II 65, 53); "to become like a *ša-rēši* official" (Esh. 033: obv. i 4); "to bathe like an idiot only after the sacrifice" (Esh. 033: obv. ii 29).

[61] Sargon II 065: 58; probably also Sargon II 065: 345 (frag.). Compare to this an enemy subject simile with agricultural imagery in SAA 9 001: *nakarūte-ka kī šahšūri ša simāni ina pān šēpē-ka ittangararū* "Your enemies will roll before your feet like ripe apples (lit.: 'apples of spring season').

[62] Esh. 001: i 44.

[63] Adn. II 02: 21–22; Adn. II 04: obv. 10'–11'; Esh. 001, iv 80–81. This simile possibly alludes to *enūma eliš* VII, 108.

(30) Their weapons or lands *melt* as if *in a furnace*.[64]

During the Sargonid period, enemies who survived the fray are described as submissive, devastated, and despaired.[65]

(31) Enemies *grovel* like *onager*.[66]
(32) (Former) Enemies *gambol* like *lambs*.[67]
(33) Their "foundations" *tremble*/*shake* like a *root of* (=*in*/*on*) *a riverbank*.[68]
(34) The enemies' faces *become gloomy* like *smoke*.[69]

Furthermore, and likewise under the Sargonids, in ingressive similes (Wasserman, 2003: 150) defeated enemies might

(35) *reach a dead-like state*.[70]
(36) *become* like *corpses*.[71]

Flight: Most subject similes relate to enemies during or after flight.[72] A majority of the 1st millennium attestations are Sargonid. Their large number might be connected to a contemporary notion of fleeing from battle as non-confirmatory with a male gender role of being a fighter. Flight similes usually employ animals as vehicles.[73] This pattern is already attested in the Middle Assyrian period (specifically: under Tiglath-pileser I),[74] yet seemingly was less favored in the early Neo-Assyrian period.[75] Only a single flight simile with an animal vehicle is attested under Shalmaneser III. Here, Marduk-bēl-usāte of Gannanāte

[64] Adn. II 02: 22; Adn. II 04: obv. 11'–12'; Asn. II 040: 14–15.
[65] Cf. Ponchia 1987, 244–245.
[66] Sen. 022: iv 32–34; Sen. 023: iv 26–27.
[67] Esh. 001: i 78–79.
[68] Sargon II 065: 174.
[69] Asb. 007: viii 25'–26'; Asb. 008: viii 19"–20".
[70] Sargon II 065: 176.
[71] Asb. 007: viii 24'; Asb. 008: viii 18".
[72] Cf. Ponchia 1987, 241–244.
[73] On various types of animal similes see the detailed study of Marcus, 1977. Already Schott, 1926: 121 pointed out that horses are never employed as a simile's vehicle. I thank Dominik Bonatz for directing my attention to the lack of ostriches as simile vehicles, an animal that is otherwise attested often in contemporary glyptic.
[74] T.-p. I 01: ii 41–42 (vehicle: birds) and iii 68–69 (ditto); T.-p. I 04: 11–12 (vehicles: bats, jerboas), T.-p. I 10: 13–15 (ditto). Of the Middle Assyrian vehicles, only "jerboa" is not used in 1st millennium texts.
[75] The ideological developments of the early Neo-Assyrian period were studied by Pongratz-Leisten, 2015; Karlsson, 2016 and Liverani, 2017. The Reign of Adad-nērārī III and the successive "age of the magnates" was discussed by Siddall, 2013.

(37) *goes out* (= *escapes*) through a hole like *a fox*.[76]

As suggested by Richardson, 2018, 28–29, flight similes involving animals narratively remove the enemies from immediate human access. They place fleeing enemies as "the other" in a different, non-human sphere with its own spatiality (e.g., birds/mountain ledges or sky; fox/hole; fish/sea) and thus relieve the Assyrian king from his duty of pursuing them. Most flight similes state only the plain fact of an enemy's flight, yet instances of narrative extensions happen over time. Under the Sargonids, enemy rulers (and sometimes groups of enemies without their ruler) *flee* (*naparšudu*), "*fly away*" (*naprušu*; when applicable), or *take to remote hiding places* (usually constructed with *ṣabātu*) like different generic types of animals:[77]

(38) like *bats*.[78]

(39) like *a bird* (sometimes with addition "onto mountain ledges"):[79]

i. Hanūnu of Gaza.[80]
ii. Urzana of Muṣaṣir.[81]
iii. Ullusunu of Mannâ.[82]
iv. Samsi, queen of the Arabians.[83]
v. Šūzubu of Bīt-Dakkūri.[84]
vi. Babylonians.[85]
vii. Inhabitants of the Urartian district of Armariyalî.[86]

(40) like (*a*) *fish*:

viii. Iamāni of Ašdod and population.[87]

[76] Slm. III 005: v 1. I thank Mattias Karlsson for pointing this simile out to me.
[77] Other expressions occur infrequently.
[78] Subjects are "all rulers"; cf. Sen. 016: i 23–26; Sen. 017: i 18–21; Sen. 022: i 16–19; Sen. 023: i 15–17; Sen. 024: i 15–18. The simile already appears Middle Assyrian in T-p I 04: 11–12 and T.-p. I 10: 13–15. I thank Dahlia Shehata for pointing out to me that Anzû is sometimes also described as akin to a (*surinnakku*-)bat (cf. Wee, 2019: 194).
[79] This simile appears in a more general context already Middle Assyrian in T.-p. I 01: ii 41–42 and iii 68–69.
[80] T.-p. III 42: 12'–13'; T.-p. III 48: 17'; T.-p. III 49: rev. 15.
[81] Sargon II 001: 152–153.
[82] Sargon II 007: 50; Sargon II 063: i' 4' (emended).
[83] Sen. 015: iv 34'; Sen. 016: iv 57; Sen. 017: iv 5; Sen. 018: iii 20'; Sen. 022: iii 59–65; Sen. 023: iii 56–57; Sen. 053: 4–6.
[84] Sen. 146: obv. 3; Sen. 147: obv. 3.
[85] Sargon II 001: 282.
[86] Sargon II 065: 291.
[87] Sargon II 082: vii 43"–44" (frag.).

ix. Lulî of Sidon.[88]
x. Umba-LAGAB-ua of Elam.[89]

Other animals appear as well. Enemy rulers, sometimes also the rest of a conquered army or an enemy population, might also *flee* or exercise a comparable action like:

(41) *a centipede* (Ramateia of Araziaš).[90]
(42) *a female onager* (Samsi, queen of the Arabians).[91]
(43) *a swamp lynx* (Šūzubu).[92]
(44) *a fox* (Nabû-zēr-kitti-līšir).[93]
(45) *ants* (Urartians).[94]
(46) *deer* (rest of a conquered army).[95]
(47) *eagles* / *hawks* (Elamites).[96]

Marcus, 1977, and Fuchs, 1993, noted that especially the Sargonids like to connect specific animal similes with the flight of specific rulers. Except for Samsi (bird/female onager), Šūzubu (swamp lynx/bird) and Marduk-apla-iddina II (see below), enemy rulers are likened to one animal only. While the vehicles bird, fish and fox were attributed to various rulers, other animal vehicles are individually connected to a fleeing opponent. Some of these similes appear to have an environment-related background, e.g., Lulî and Iamani fleeing like fish or Šūzubu like a swamp lynx.[97] The ruler with the most diverse inventory of animal flight similes is Marduk-apla-iddina II of Babylon. He

(48) *flies away* like *a bat*.[98]

[88] Sen. 045: 2'–3'; Asb. 009: iii 66–48; Asb. 011: v 20.
[89] Asb. 009: iii 66–48; Asb. 011: v 20.
[90] T.-p. III 08: 1–2.
[91] T.-p. III 42: 22'–24'; T.-p. III 48: 25'–26'; T.-p. III 49: rev. 19.
[92] Sen. 015: iv 23'; Sen. 016: iv 47–48; Sen. 017: iii 90; Sen. 018: iii 9'; Sen. 022: iii 53–56; Sen. 023: iii 48–49.
[93] Esh. 001: ii 53–55; Esh. 003: i 16'–19'; Esh. 030: obv. 8'–9'; Esh. 031: obv. 2'–3'.
[94] Sargon II 065: 143 (*tc*: "to open up a way").
[95] Sen. 001: 35; Sen. 213: 35.
[96] Sen. 223: 41–42. The eagle/hawk (*erû*) regularly figures as a vehicle for a tenor Assyrian king and/or army. It is remarkable that this simile attributes such an otherwise positively connotated vehicle to an oppositional tenor. This might be due to the remoteness of eagle nests on high mountain cliffs. On this and other eagle similes see Markus, 1977: 94–96.
[97] In a frag. simile in the inscriptions of Sargon II (Sargon II 001: 282) enemies flee like birds. In the likewise frag. line Sargon II 065: 201, the people living in the city of Ulḫu flee (?) like fish. In a simile with a broken off *tc*, Abdī-milkūti is likened to a bear (Esh. 40: ii' 6).
[98] Sargon II 007: 125–126.

(49) *sneaks* along the walls of Babylon like *a cat*.[99]
(50) *sets up* the tent of his kingship like *a* kumû-*waterbird*.[100]
(51) *enters* Dūr-Yakīn like *a mongoose*.[101]

The mongoose already figured in an older retreat simile. In the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, Rahiānu/Rezin of Damascus likewise

(52) *entered* his city like *a mongoose*.[102]

Only few similes describe further circumstances of the enemies' flight. On their escape, enemies' hearts are said to

(53) *throb* like *that of a bat*[103] *fleeing the eagle* (targets Rusâ of Urartu).[104]
(54) *throb* like *those of pursued pigeon fledglings* (once: "*birds*").[105]

Under Sennacherib, the dust raised by the swift-running feet of the fleers

(55) *covers* the "face of heaven" like *a heavy winter cloud.*[106]

Finally, in a mythologizing simile in the inscriptions of Assurbanipal

(56) corpses of dead animals *are heaped up* as if in *a carnage brought about by Erra*.[107]

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[99] Sargon II 007: 132.
[100] Sargon II 001: 407–408; Sargon II 002: 382–383; Sargon II 007: 129–130; Sargon II 074: vi 40–42; Sargon II 086: 6'; Sargon II 111: 4'; Sargon II 113: 12' (emended); Sargon II 114: 1' (largely emended).
[101] Sargon II 001: 412; Sargon II 002: 390–391 (largely emended); Sargon II 006: 3'.
[102] T.-p. III 20: 9'.
[103] I thank Mikko Luukko for pointing out to me that the Akkadian term *iṣṣūr-ḫurri* possibly denotes a bat rather than, as usually translated, a rock partridge. Evidence for a translation "bat" can be deduced from pertaining attestations in Mesopotamian anti-witchcraft rituals (for attestations see the ORACC online glossary of the CMAwR-series under *iṣṣur-ḫurri*, oracc.museum.upenn.edu/cmawro/akk?xis=akk.r003708). A translation "bat" aligns with similes (39) and (49) of this group.
[104] Sargon II 065: 149.
[105] Sen. 022: vi 29–30; Sen. 023: vi 25; Sen. 145: obv. i' 14' (emended); Sen. 223: 42 ("birds"); Sen. 230: 96 (largely emended). Note the proper genitive similes (*kī ša* "like that of") in the quoted passages!
[106] Sen. 018: […]–v 1'; Sen. 022: v 58–59; Sen. 023: v 49–50; Sen. 230: 58–59. On this and other abbreviated or elliptical similes see Schott, 1925.
[107] Asb. Ass. Tab. 004: rev. 30. This simile alludes to Erra I, 43.

The fate of Rusâ of Urartu:[108] a simile a bit difficult to unravel is the description of Rusâ's fate after his defeat at and flight from Mt Wauš (714 BCE) in Sargon's Khorsabad annals. Rusâ allegedly, and not in line with other descriptions (e.g., in "Sargon's Eighth Campaign"),

(57) *stabs* his own heart with an iron dagger[109] like *a pig*.[110]

Would that mean that Rusâ acts like a pig?[111] Yet, pigs do not pierce their own hearts on a regular basis. Should one then rather understand the simile not as a subject, but an object simile, or even as an elliptical genitive simile?[112] That would be, as "he pierces his own heart like (one would pierce the heart of) a pig," respectively "like (that of) a pig"? According to Weszeli, 2009, 323 nothing is known of Mesopotamian instructions for or descriptions of pig butchering, including any possible specific procedures like a customary piercing of a pigs' hearts. Proverbs attested in the Neo-Assyrian period describe pigs as "without reasoning (*ṭēmu*)", dirty, cursed by Šamaš, and an abjection to the gods.[113] Similar topoi (e.g., being without reasoning or transgressive against Šamaš) were used in Sargonid descriptions of enemy rulers, and the pig simile discussed here would align with that. Another option would be to read the expression "to pierce one's heart like a pig" more idiomatically and with a certain disregard of the *tertium comparationis.* The pejorative German expression "wie ein Schwein verrecken" ('to die miserably like a pig') might be comparable in some ways.

Group II: Object similes with enemies or enemy localities as tenor

Group II similes usually highlight the superiority of the Assyrian king and his army, and regularly stress subalterity of enemies in their defeat. The agent in these similes usually is the Assyrian king, yet unlike to the similes from group III, the compared item is the grammatical object of the sentence, and not the agent's action. Most of these similes relate to the destruction of enemy possessions, habita-

[108] On this topic see recently Van de Mieroop, 2016.

[109] The iron dagger used by Rusâ probably alludes to the symbol of the god Ashur, likewise an iron dagger (cf. Kühne, 2017: 319).

[110] Sargon II 001: 165; Sargon II 002: 194–195. Cf. Van de Mieroop, 2016: 20–22.

[111] Marcus, 1977, 91 proposed that a vehicle pig was chosen because this animal "will let itself easily assaulted." This study does not follow that assumption, since also domesticated pigs can be vehemently aggressive.

[112] As noted by Streck, 1999: 36, genitive similes are usually unmarked and therefore sometimes not easily distinguishable.

[113] Yet, pigs also had some positive connotations. They were favorably compared to dogs, e.g., regarding their function as guard animals. Pigs were also linked to a strong sexual stamina. They appear in medical and magical texts in contexts of diagnosing and curing impotence, cf. Weszeli, 2009: 325–326.

tions, or fortifications, and to the killing of conquered enemies.[114] Another subgroup illustrates the dehumanizing treatment of survivors. The enemy is portrayed as different, e.g. conquered vs. conqueror, and inferior, respectively belonging to a lesser existential sphere, e.g. when conquered enemies are killed like sheep or heaped up like grain.[115]

Military siege: Siege similes with a grammatical object are rare.[116] The oldest example of a siege simile dates to the reign of Tiglath-pileser III. Although rather being a subject simile with a tenor Assyrian king, it is included in this group for the sake of thematic completeness. In a broken passage, Tiglath-pileser III

(58) *encircles* [someone or something] like *a ring* (encircles a finger).[117]

Two later siege similes are proper object similes which convey alterity by employing animal vehicles. In these, enemies can be *locked up* in their cities

(59) like *a "cage-bird"* / *bird in a cage*.[118]
(60) like *a "pen-pig"* / *pig in a pen*.[119]

Destruction of enemy terrotiry: Both Adad-nārārī II and Shalmaneser III overwhelm (*saḫāpu*), more often: knock over (*sapānu*) enemy settlements and lands "like a hill created by the deluge." This simile is implicitly resultative, indicating that the conquered settlements *looked like* a "hill created by the deluge" after their destruction. Under Adad-nārārī II and Shalmaneser III, the king

(61) *overwhelms* the land of Alzu (so that it looked) like *a hill created by the deluge*.[120]

His son Shalmaneser III furthermore

(62) *knocks over* enemy lands (so that they looked) like *a hill created by the deluge*.[121]

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[114] Cf. the discussion in Ponchia, 1987: 233–241.
[115] Both examples belong to a traditional stockpile of similes already in use since the Middle Assyrian period. For the former see f. e. Slm. I 01: 78–80; T.-p. I 01: ii 16–20, for the latter cf. T.-p. I 01: i 81–82.
[116] Cf. Nadali, 2009.
[117] T.-p. III 37: 37.
[118] T.-p. III 20: 11' (Raḫiānu/Rezin of Damaskus); Sen. 004: 52; Sen. 015: iv 18–19; Sen. 016: iv 8–10; Sen. 018: iii 27–29; Sen. 022: iii 27–29; Sen. 023: iii 24–25; Sen. 046: 28–29; Sen. 140: rev. 16 (Hiskiah of Judah).
[119] Sargon II 002: 400; Sargon II 006: 9' (Marduk-apla-iddina II).
[120] Adn. II 2: 31–32; Slm. III 002: ii 5–6.
[121] Slm. III 005: ii 2–3; Slm. 006: ii 1, iv 30–36; Slm. 008: 38–40, 4'–5'; Slm. III 029: 34–39; Slm. III 031: 12–17; Slm. III 032: 7–9; Slm. III 033: 10–13.

(63) *treads (upon)* enemy lands (so that they looked) like *a hill created by the deluge*.[122]

Irreversible destruction: Nowicki, 2018, drew attention to the "magical" aspects of enemy annihilation. Conquered enemies, and, more often, their lands or habitations are transformed in a way that make a reassembling of the remains back into the original whole impossible.[123] Such a notion is conveyed in a handful of corresponding similes:

(64) Enemies, their lives, lands, cities, and fortifications can be *crushed*, *shattered*, or *dissolved* like *clay objects*, specifically *pots*[124] or *clay bowls*.[125]
(65) Once, enemy fortifications are [*demolished*] as if they were *made of sand*.[126]
(66) Once, a curse formula calls for enemy lands to be *smashed* like *bricks*.[127]
(67) Enemy habitations are *burned* like *tree stumps*.[128]
(68) The enemies' "precious lives" are *cut* like (one cuts) *a string* / *thread*.[129]

The in the literal sense annihilating transformation of enemies and their lands into nothingness is further underlined by a few ingressive similes, namely "to count as / make become like earth",[130] "to transform into (lit.: 'make become like')

[122] Slm. III 023, 11–13; Slm. III 024, 4–5.
[123] The early Neo-Assyrian subject simile "to melt as if in a furnace" mentioned earlier follows the same vein.
[124] *karpatu* ("pot"): Sargon II 001: 209; Sargon II 007: 14; Sargon II 007: 80; Sargon II 117: ii 10; *karpat paḫāri* ("potter's vessel"): Sargon II 117: ii 27; Sen. 1015: obv. 19'–20'; Esh. 001: v 5.
[125] *ḫaṣbattu*: Slm. III 009: obv. 5–6; Slm. III 025: 4–6; T.-p. III 39: 8; T.-p. III 47: obv. 2 (emended); T.-p. III 51: 2; T.-p. III 52: 2 (partially emended); Sargon II 001, 6 (emended); Sargon II 041: 10; Sargon II 043: 9; Sargon II 044: obv. 20–21; Sargon II 065: 165; Sargon II 065: 217; Sargon II 076: 1'; Sargon II 129: 9 (partially emended).
[126] Sargon II 065: 260 (partially emended).
[127] Slm. IV 1: 18.
[128] Sargon II 065: 182, 198 (partially emended), 268, 275, 279.
[129] Sen. 022: vi 2–3; Sen. 023: v 78; Sen. 230, 88: A comparable simile which alludes to lugal-e, 118 is attested already under Tukultī-Ninurta I ("elevated terrain / high mountains" cut through "like a string": T.-N. I 20: 6'; T.-N. I 24: 31–32; cf. Schott, 1926: 104–105, 131); also see T.-p. III 01: 7 ("interlocking mountains" cut through "like a string").
[130] With "to count as": T.-p. III 22: 3'; T.-p. III 44: 17'; T.-p. III 47: obv. 15; Sargon II Ann. Kh.: 63–64; Sargon II 065: 185, 217, 231, 273, 279; with "to make equal to / to make become like": Sargon II 065: 195, 293.

ashes,"[131] "to consider / count as (mere) ghosts."[132]

Results of destructions: Only a handful of Sargonid similes relate to the further circumstances of destruction. The smoke arising from burning sites looted and destroyed by the Assyrian army can be

(69) *made to cover* the "face of heaven" like *a dust storm*.[133]
(70) *made to seize* / *cover* the "face of heaven" like *a* (*heavy*) *fog*.[134]

The noise of destructively wielded axes is once made to

(71) *roar* like *Adad*.[135]

Domination: The domination of enemy lands is reflected in two cognate similes from the early Neo-Assyrian period: Conquered territories are either *trodden upon by* or *bow down to* the Assyrian king's feet

(72) like *a footstool*.[136]

This simile already appears Middle Assyrian in T.-N. I 05, 61–63, where Tukultī-Ninurta I puts his foot on the lordly neck of Kaštiliaš in the same manner. The Neo-Assyrian version metonymically substitute rulers with their domains and can therefore be considered as more metaphorical than similes with a directly relatable tenor. The simile's historical roots lie with the traditional topos of the king as "trampler" of enemies, attested in both text and art since the Old Akkadian period.[137] Although no younger text witnesses are known, the motif of neck-threading persists through time. BM 118933, a relief from the throne room of Tiglath-pileser III, shows the king placing his foot on the neck of an enemy ruler.

[131] Sargon II 065: 181, 196, 232, 273, 294; Sen. 002: 23; Sen. 003: 23; Sen. 004: 21; Sen. 015: ii 6'–7'; Sen. 018: i 31'–33'; Sen. 022: i 16–19; Sen. 023: i 72–74; Sen. 031: ii 7'–[9']; Sen. 140: obv. 4'–5'; Sen. 165: ii 13–15; Esh. 033: obv. ii 7. In Sargon II's Acharneh Stele, something is burned "like ash" in ii 9'.
[132] T.-p. III 39: 2; T.-p. III 47: obv. 2; T.-p. III 51: 2; T.-p. III 52: 2.
[133] Sargon II 065: 182, 198 (partially emended), 268.
[134] With "made to seize": Sargon II 065: 261; with "to cover": Sen. 022: iv 79–81; Sen. 023: iv 70–71; Sen. 023: v 47–48.
[135] Sargon II 065: 224.
[136] "To tread upon": Slm. III 028: 10; Slm. III 030: 11–12; "to bow down": Š.-A. V 1: ii 7–16 (note: here a subject simile!). Biblical echoes of this image can be found, e.g., in Psalter 110:1.
[137] Cf. most recently Ataç 2015. The motif of the king as "trampler" or "thresher" of enemies appears in Assyrian inscriptions since Adad-nārārī I.

Killing of enemies and treatment of their remains:[138] Subalterity is expressed in descriptions of killings, which are often realized as object similes with animals as vehicles:

(73) Enemies are regularly "*killed*" or "*laid low*" like various types of *sheep*.[139]

(74) The throats or necks of enemies are *cut* like *those of sheep*.[140]

(75) Under Esarhaddon, a curse formula calls for enemies to be *squashed* by the king like *ants*.[141]

The vanquishing of enemies is additionally illustrated by using textual images related to agriculture. This tradition originated from the Middle Assyrian period,[142] yet in the 1st millennium BCE almost all attestations of it are Sargonid. The only exception is simile (16) of this group, which is attested both under Ashurnaṣirpal II and Esarhaddon. Most similes of this type employ plants or agricultural products as vehicles. They are majorly used in the context of mutilating corpses but may also appear with living tenors. The only (metonymical) simile featuring an agricultural tool instead of a product is attested in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III. It states that

(76) enemy lands are *threshed* like/as if on *a threshing sledge*.[143]

Relating to animate beings or their remains, the king

[138] Cf. for an overview of corresponding figurative language Van de Mieroop, 2015.

[139] *šûbu*-sheep: Slm. III 040: i 16–18; *aslu*-sheep: with *t.c. ṭabāḫu* / *ṭubbuḫu* – Sargon II 043: 29; Sargon II 065: 136; Sen. 001: 23; Sen. 044: 24; Sen. 213: 23; Asb. 003: vi 75–76; Asb. 004: vi 81–83; Asb. 006: vii 33'–35'; Asb. 007: vii 25–27; Asb. 009: ii 78; Asb. 011: iii 56; Asb. 086: ii 3'; Asb. 092, iii 21'; Asb. 161, iii 7' (Asb. always *ṭabāḫu*, 1x *ṭubbuḫu*); with *t.c. nuppusu* – Sargon II 001: 410; Sargon II 002: 387; Sargon II 006: 1'–2' (partially emended); Sargon II 065: 302. Sheep similes appear already in Middle Assyrian inscriptions, e.g., Slm. I 01: 78–80; Slm. I 04: 11–13.

[140] Sargon II 007: 130–131; Sen. 022: vi 2; Sen. 023: v 77; Sen. 230: 87–88.

[141] Esh. 134: 19.

[142] The motif of "heaping up of corpses or body parts like grain(-heaps)" is attested in T.-N. I 01: ii 35–36 (frag.) and T.-p. I 01: i, 81–82, and that of spreading out of "corpses like grain/grain-heaps" in, e.g., T.-p. I 01 ii: 13–14.

[143] T.-p. III 39: 11; T.-p. III 40: 12. For both attestations, ellipsis cannot be excluded, leaving open the possibility to understand the simile as a shortened version of a bipartite original, presumably along the lines of "like grain on a threshing sledge." A cognate motive, the king a "thresher" of enemies, is attested since the Middle Assyrian period, e.g., Adn. I 01: 6; Slm. I 04: 9.

(77) *snaps off* enemies like (*marsh*) *reeds*.[144]
(78) *spreads out* corpses like *malt*.[145]
(79) *piles up* corpses like (= into) *heaps*.[146]
(80) *fills the countryside* with corpses like *grass*.[147]
(81) *cuts off* hands like *stems* / *offshoots of cucumbers*.[148]

A gruesome simile attested once in Sennacherib's inscriptions details that he

(82) *harvested* skulls (of fallen enemies) like *withered grain*, and subsequently *erected* them like (= into) *towers*.[149]

Few similes used in the descriptions of killings employ something other than plants as vehicles. Since early Neo-Assyrian times, the blood of slain enemies is

(83) *made flow* like *water*,[150] like *a flood in full spade*,[151] or like *the outflow of a mountain gully*.[152]

In a related simile, the enemies' blood may be used to *dye* mountains, hillsides etc. *red*

(84) like *nabāsu-wool*.[153]

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[144] Asn. II 001: i 22–23; Asn. II 017: i 18; Asn. II 20: 23; Esh. 098: obv. 32–33; Esh. 099: obv. 6. This simile alludes to Gilg. X, 306 and 312.
[145] Sargon II 065: 134, 226; Sargon II 074: vi 47–49; Sargon II 111: 6'; Sargon II 113: 14'; Sargon II 114: 3'; Esh. 001: iv 70. This simile might loosely allude to lugal-e, 556.
[146] Sargon II 009: 33–34.
[147] Tp III 48: 10'; Sen. 022: vi 9–10; Sen. 023: vi 7; Sen. 145: obv. i' 3'; Sen. 230: 91–92. This elliptical simile should probably be read as "as much as it is filled with grass."
[148] Sen. 018: vi 2'–3'; Sen. 022: vi 11–12; Sen. 023: vi 9; Sen. 145: obv. i' 4'; Sen. 230: 92–93.
[149] Sen. 230: 112. This exceptional simile likely alludes to lugal-e, 6: [g]ú-nu-še-ga še-gin$_7$ gur$_{10}$ su-ub-bu // *ki-šad la ma-gi-ri ki-ma še-im iṣ-ṣi-da* "He (= Ninurta) harvested the necks of the insubordinate like barley" (cf., also for variants, van Dijk, 1983a: 52 and 106; van Dijk, 1983b: 26–27). In Sennacherib's inscription, "necks" were substituted with "skulls", yet the specification "of the insubordinate" was elided. A different word for grain than in lugal-e, 6 was used (*û* instead of *še'u*), and an adjectival extension "withered" (*ḫamadīru*) was added. A simile "to build/erect towers out of skulls" appears in a different context and with a different agent (Assyrian soldiers?) also in Esh. 033: obv. ii 10 (frag.).
[150] Š.-A. V 01: iv 28–29.
[151] Sen. 022: vi 3–4; Sen. 023: v 78; Sen. 230: 88–89.
[152] Esh. 001: v 14.
[153] Asn. II 001: i 53; Asn. II 001: ii 17; Asn. II 017: i 76, ii 56–57; Slm. III 001: 61'; Slm. III 002: i 47, ii 50, ii 78; Š.-A. V 01: iii 12–13; T.-p. III 47: obv. 48; Sargon II 007: 130; Sargon II 043: 25 (here exceptionally skin of a ruler dyed red); Sargon II 117: ii 9 (frag.); Asb. 009: ii 66; Asb. 011: iii 42–43; Asb. 092: iii 10' (largely emended). The image was already used Middle Assyrian in T.-p. I 01: iv 20–21. On *nabāsu*-wool and its colour range

(85) like an *illūru*-plant (anemone?).[154]

Catching of runaways, deportations, and distribution of booty: In correspondence with the subject similes addressing the enemies' flight from group **I**, fleeing enemies are *caught*

(86) like *fish*.[155]
(87) like *birds*.[156]

Enemies can also be *caught with a net*

(88) like *flying eagles*/*hawks* (*erû*).[157]

Assurbanipal *catches* Ḫumban-ḫaltaš III

(89) like a *falcon* (*šurdû*).[158]

A single simile relates to the treatment of an enemy ruler taken captive. Esarhaddon

(90) *binds* Asuḫīli of Arzâ like *a pig*.[159]

Deportations are rarely thematized in similes.[160] Surviving captives are

(91) *carried off*, *led away*, *counted*, or *divided up* like (a number of / property of) *capridae* (*ṣēnu*).[161]

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see Thavapalan, 2020: 294–308.

[154] T.-p. III 20: 3'–4'; Sargon II 043: 33; Sargon II 065: 135; Sargon II 076: 23'. On the redness of the *illūru*-plant cf. Thavapalan, 2020: 144.

[155] Sargon II 008: 15; Sargon II 009: 25; Sargon II 013: 34–35; Sargon II 043: 21; Esh. 001: ii 71–73; Esh. 002: i 19–22; Esh. 006: ii 16'–18'; Esh. 060: obv. 2–3 (under Esh. either collectively or Abdi-milkūti).

[156] Esh. 001: iii 30–31, v 12–13; Esh. 002: i 43–49; Esh. 003: ii 6'; Esh. 006: ii 46' (usually Sanda-uarri).

[157] Sargon II 074: vi 45–46; Sargon II 111: 5' (largely emended); Sargon II 113: 13' (largely emended).

[158] Asb. 011: x 15; Asb. 143: 4'; Asb. 144: 8'; Asb. 194, vi 27 (all except first largely emended).

[159] Esh. 031: obv. 14' – rev. 2.

[160] Cf. Ponchia, 1987: 245–246.

[161] With "to carry off": Asn. II 001: i 52; with "to lead away": Esh. 001: v 9; with "to count": T.-p. III 12: 7'; Sargon II 001: 209–210; Sargon 117: ii 28; with "to divide up": Sen. 004: 60; Sen. 015: v 14–17; Sen. 016: v 37–40; Sen. 017: v 19–22; Sen. 046: 104–106; Sen. 141: 9'; Esh. 033: rev. iii 21'–22'; Asb. 007: ix 60"–63"; Asb. 009: vi 19–21; Asb. 011: vii 6–8; On the impact of war on civilians see Nadali, 2014.

Under Assurbanipal, camels and dromedaries plundered during the Arabian campaigns likewise are

(92) *apportioned* like *capridae* (*ṣēnū*).[162]

Group III: Subject similes with the Assyrian king as tenor and enemies as grammatical object

The final group of similes comprises subject similes targeting the Assyrian king with something enemy as the grammatical object. Not all subject similes with a tenor Assyrian king have some form of enemies as their grammatical object, but those that do re-affirm what we have seen so far. They place the king in a superior position, overarching and exceeding his inferior enemies. The study of similes from group III reveals a shift in the usage of motifs between early Neo-Assyrian and Sargonid inscriptions.

Early Neo-Assyrian / Pre-Sargonid

Ferociousness: Early Neo-Assyrian similes of group III stress the monarch's ferociousness, sometimes with clear mythological connotations. Most of these similes portray the enemies simple as inferior and passive, not able to withstand the Assyrian king. Only simile (93) describes them as wicked, an otherwise relatively common topos in both early Neo-Assyrian and Sargonid royal narrative texts. Under Adad-nārārī II, the king can be likened to weapons, and

(93) *strikes* the wicked ones like *a fierce dagger*.[163]

His grandson Shalmaneser III invokes images from both the natural and mythological sphere when he

(94) *tramples* the land of Arṣaškun like *a wild bull*.[164]
(95) *slaughters* the vast Qutû like *Erra*.[165]

Ashurnaṣirpal II, Shalmaneser III and Šamšī-Adad V all

(96) *roar against* their enemies like *Adad*.[166]

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[162] Asb. 003: viii 9; Asb. 004: viii 12; Asb. 007: x 21–22; Asb. 011: ix 46; Asb. 086: iii 24'–25' (partially emended).
[163] Adn. II 2: 19; Adn. II 4: obv. 6'–7' (partially emended); also cf. KAL 3, 16–18: 6'–7' (Adn. II, frag.).
[164] Slm. III 002: ii 52.
[165] Slm. III 005: iii 2.
[166] Asn. II 001: ii 106, iii 120; Asn. II 002: 11; Asn. II 003: 34; Asn. II 017: iv 71–72; Asn. II 019: 73; Asn. II 021: 12'; Asn. II 023: 7–8; Asn. II 024: 2'–3'; Asn. II 026: 20–21; Asn.

Only one of the early Neo-Assyrian subject similes discussed so far has a once-attested cognate under Tiglath-pileser III: While Shalmaneser III

(97) *makes destruction rain down* on his enemies like *Adad*,[167]

close to a century later his great-grandson Tiglath-pileser III

(98) *rains down* on his enemies like *a downpour of Adad*.[168]

Not necessarily ferociousness, but rather notions of reach, agility, and strength are evoked when Šamšī-Adad V

(99) *flies over* or, in other translations, *seeks out* his enemies like an *eagle* (*erû*).[169]

Finally, in a fragmentary simile Adad-nārārī II

(100) *rips out* [enemies[?]] like […].[170]

Sargonid

Similes in group III become less varied and colorful since Tiglath-pileser III. After Tiglath-pileser III, only a handful of *tertia comparationis* are in use. Two main topics emerge: covering or enveloping enemies, and overwhelming or knocking over enemies. In these contexts, the king is often likened to strong forces of nature or even supernatural forces. In a few cases, instruments used for hunting are employed as vehicle, which do have some connections to the divine sphere, or, twice, allude to the epic of Gilgameš.

Covering: Since Tiglath-pileser III, Assyrian kings (mainly: Sargon II and Assurbanipal) *cover* (*katāmu*) enemy lands and cities like

(101) *a cloud* (var.: *thick evening cloud*).[171]
(102) *locust* (or: *an onslaught of locust*).[172]

II 033: 11' (frag.); Asn. II 051: 16–17 (frag.); Slm. III 005: iii 3; Š.-A. V 1: iii 67–68. This simile is also attested under the Sargonids (e.g., Sen. 018: v 21'–22'), yet without a grammatical object "enemy" (or: "enemies"). On Neo-Assyrian Adad-similes, see Zaia, 2018, 240–242 and 249–250.

[167] Slm. III 001: 59' (frag.); Slm. III 002: i 46; Slm. III 002: ii 50; Slm. III 002: ii 98.

[168] T.-p. III 16: 8.

[169] Š.-A. V 01: ii 52.

[170] Adn. II 2: 20; Adn. II 04: obv. 8'–9'; KAL 3 16–18, 9' (Adn. II); cf. Frahm, 2009: 46.

[171] Sargon II 001: 210–211; Sargon II 065: 253; Sargon II 082: vii 3'''' (frag.).

[172] Sargon II 001: 85–86; Sargon II 007: 73; cf. Sargon II 065: 187, 256.

(103) *a net*.[173]
(104) *a fog*.[174]
(105) *the onslaught of a furious storm*.[175]
(106) *a bird trap*.[176]

Enveloping and overwhelming: Tiglath-pileser III, and mainly Sargon II and Sennacherib *envelop* or *overwhelm* (both *saḫāpu*) enemy lands like

(107) *a* (*divine*) *net*.[177]
(108) *a fog*.[178]
(109) *a bird trap*.[179]
(110) *an onslaught of a storm*.[180]
(111) *a clashing flood*.[181]
(112) *the deluge*.[182]

[173] Sargon II 001: 200–201; Sargon II 002: 232–233 (frag.).
[174] Sargon II 074: v 55–58; Asb. 003: vi 14–15; Asb. 004: vi 17–18; Asb. 006: vii 17–18; Asb. 007: vi 27'–28'; Asb. 008: vii 18'; Asb. 086: i 15'–16'.; Asb. 089: i 5; cf. Asb. 002: v 31'.
[175] Asb. 009: ii 59–60; Asb. 011: iii 34–35; Asb. 092: iii 6'; Asb. 188: obv. 14 (likely; broken off).
[176] T.-p. III 47: obv. 32.
[177] Already T.-p. III 07: 6 and T.-p. III 47: obv. 13; Sargon II 082: vi 6" (frag.). In an early Neo-Assyrian subject simile with no further grammatical object already Adad-nārārī II "overpowers like a *šuskallu*-net" (Adn. II 02: 21). The *šuskallu*-net already appears in Middle Assyrian times in an inscription of Tiglath-pileser I (T.-p. I 01: iii 33), and is also found in other literary genres, for example, in the Great Šamaš Hymn, 83–48, in OB Gilgameš from Ischali, 36', in lugal-e, 13 and 122, and in *maqlû* III, 159.
[178] T.-p. III 22: 2' (frag.); Sargon II 001: 69; Sargon II 004: 8'–9'; Sargon II 065: 215; Sen. 002: 28; Sen. 003: 28; Sen. 004: 26; Sen. 015: ii 8' (almost completely emended); Sen. 016: ii 44–45; Sen. 017: ii 26; Sen. 022: ii 15; Sen. 023: ii 13; Sen. 223: 44; cf. Esh. 1: ii 34–35.
[179] T.-p. III 47: obv. 15; Sargon II 001: 86; Sargon II 002: 464; Sargon II 004: 32' (frag.); Sargon II 065: 194; Sargon II 074: iii 46–47; cf. Sargon II 002: 464; cf. Asb. 002, v 32'. This simile, albeit without a grammatical object "enemies," already occurs early Neo-Assyrian under Adad-nārārī II (Adn. II 2: 21; Adn. II 4: obv. 9'–10'). Similar formulations can be found in *maqlû* II, 163, 174 and III, 157, which raises the question if this points towards a broad "offene Bildersprache" (Stierle, 1984) realized across genres, or to a deliberate leaning with the goal of endowing the king's literary representation with magical aspects.
[180] Sargon II 002: 338–339.
[181] Sargon II 065: 253.
[182] Sargon II 074: vi 26; Sargon II 113: 8' (emended).

Knocking over / flattening: Neo-Assyrian kings since Shalmaneser III, but especially Sargonid rulers regularly *knock over* / *flatten* (*sapānu*) enemies or enemy lands, always

(113) like *the deluge*.[183]

Further Sargonid topics: Other Sargonid subject similes attributable to group **III** are rare. Twice, the king either *falls* upon an enemy or *goes amongst* the midst of his enemies

(114) like a *fierce* (or: *furious*) šiltāhu-*arrow*.[184]

In a destruction simile, Sargon II opted for a mythologizing aspect when he paves a way for his army by

(115) *striking* his (= Rusâ of Urartu's) splendid field like *Adad*.[185]

The king sometimes is described as *blowing against* "the enemy (!)," once "in between them (= the enemies)"

(116) like *the onset of a storm*.[186]

Corresponding to this regular stylization as storm, the king can

(117) *rip out* the roots of enemies like *the onslaught of a furious storm*.[187]

[183] Slm. III 002: i 11–12; Slm. III 004: l. e. 4–9; Slm. III 006: i 27; Slm. III 008: 24; Slm. III 010: i 18; Slm. III 014: 21; Slm. III 016: 5 (emended); Slm. III 038: 4' (emended) – all targeting Tukultī-Ninurta II; Slm. III 012: 18; Slm. III 014: 158; Slm. III 016: 289'–290' – all targeting Shalmaneser III; Adn. III 01: 13 (targeting Shalmaneser III); T.-p. III 47: obv. 2, 22; T.-p. III 51: 2; T.-p. III 52: 2; Sargon II 001: 334–335; Sargon II 002: 332; Sargon II: 003: 52'; Sargon II 084: 18' (emended); Sargon II 103: ii 52; Sen. 034: 7; Sen. 231: obv. 7–9 (also cf. Sen. 161: obv. 7); Esh. 001: ii 68–69; Esh. 006: ii 13'–14' (cf. with divine tenors: Esh. 104: ii 17; Esh. 105: ii 32; Esh. 114: iii 3; unclear: Esh. 127: 12'); Asb. 012: vi 10'; Asb. 227: rev. 2; Asb. 228: rev. 11. Without grammatical object also in Adn. II 04: obv. 5'; cf. with Assyrian troops as tenor Asb. 002: v 22'; Asb. 207: rev. 6.

[184] Sargon II 065: 133; Sen. 223: 36. This simile alludes to Gilgameš hunting lions in the same manner, cf. Gilg. IX, 17.

[185] Sargon II 065: 229–230.

[186] Sen. 018: v 23'–24'; Sen. 022: v 77; Sen. 023: v 65–66; Sen. 230: 66–67 (largely emended); Esh. 008: ii' 18'. This simile is already attested early Neo-Assyrian under Adad-nārārī II (Adn. II 2: 19; Adn. II: 4, obv. 7'), yet without a grammatical object "enemy."

[187] Esh. 001: v 15–16.

Group IV: Royal subject similes without grammatical object

The final group of similes is somewhat apart from the rest of this study, since it describes the Assyrian monarch in general, and not with a specific textual connection to his enemies. However, it is interlinked with group **I**, and will help us to better evaluate the qualifications of both pro- and antagonists. Royal subject similes without a grammatical object are unevenly distributed. They appear regularly only under Adad-nārārī II (seven simile types) and Sennacherib (seven simile types), and occasionally in the inscriptions of Esarhaddon (four simile types) and Sargon II (one simile type).

Royal subject similes without a grammatical object appear in the early Neo-Assyrian period first in the so-called "self-praise" of Adad-nārārī II.[188] Here, the king can

(118) *burn* like *Giru.*[189]
(119) *throw down* like *the deluge.*[190]
(120) *be belligerent* like *a lance.*[191]
(121) *constantly blow* like *an onslaught of wind.*[192]
(122) *be wild* like *an evil storm.*[193]
(123) *knock over* like *a (divine) net.*[194]
(124) *cover* like *a bird-trap.*[195]

It is noteworthy that, all other subject similes involving the king attested between the reigns of Adad-nārārī II and Sennacherib always have some form of grammatical object (with a single exception under Sargon II). Sennacherib then makes regular use of this more regio-centric style, yet covers only three major motifs: rage, audial power, and leadership/movement. Sennacherib, but once each also Sargon II and Esarhaddon,

(125) *rages up* like *a lion*.[196]

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[188] On this narrative style see Cohen 2013. Subject similes related to objects appearing in Adad-nārārī II's self-praise passage have been discussed in group **III**.
[189] Adn. II 02: 18; Adn. II 04: obv. 5'; KAL 3, 16–18: 5' (Adn. II).
[190] Adn. II 02: 18; Adn. II 04: obv. 5'; KAL 3, 16–18: 5' (Adn. II).
[191] Adn. II 02: 19; Adn. II 04: obv. 6'; KAL 3, 16–18: 6' (Adn. II). On the reading *šu-kur-ru* "lance" see Frahm, 2009: 46.
[192] Adn. II 02: 19; Adn. II 04: obv. 7'; KAL 3, 16–8: 7' (Adn. II). Similar imagery can be found in an-gin$_7$, 16, 17 and 163.
[193] Adn. II 02: 20; Adn. II 04: obv. 8'; KAL 3, 16–18: 7' (Adn. II).
[194] Adn. II 02: 21; KAL 3, 16–18: 8', 9' (Adn. II). Also see above.
[195] Adn. II 02: 21; Adn. II 04: obv. 9'–10'; KAL 3, 16–18: 9'–10' (Adn. II). Also see above.
[196] Sargon II 007: 40 (cf. Sargon II 116: 39); Sen. 001: 16; Sen. 001: 25; Sen. 018: v 11'–12'; Sen. 022: v 67; Sen. 023: v 57; Sen. 213: 16, 25; Esh. 001: i 57.

In two broken similes, both possibly extensions of simile (125), Sennacherib

(126) *rages up* like *a ferocious* […].[197]
(127) […] like *a raging lion*.[198]

Additionally, Sennacherib also

(128) *gets enraged* like *the deluge*.[199]

The Assyrian king's voice is frightening when he

(129) *cries out loudly*/*bitterly* like *a storm*.[200]
(130) *roars* like *Adad*.[201]

In relation to leadership and movement, Sennacherib claims to

(131) *take the lead* of his army like *a* (*massive*; *fierce*) *wild bull*.[202]
(132) *jump about*/*forward* like *a mountain goat*.[203]
(133) *roam about* like *a wild bull*.[204]

Esarhaddon, whose inscriptions' narrative style differs partially from that of his father, likewise

(134) *marches* like *a wild bull*.[205]

Probably harking back to Middle Assyrian times, Esarhaddon is the first king that (again)

(135) *walks about* like *the deluge*.[206]

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[197] Sen. 145: obv. i' 4.
[198] Sen. 148: 9'.
[199] Sen. 001: 25; Sen. 213: 25.
[200] Sen. 018: v 21'; Sen. 022: v 75; Sen. 023: v 64.
[201] Sen. 018: v 22'; Sen. 022: v 75; Sen. 023: iv 1–2; Sen. 023: v 64; Sen. 145: obv. i' 9.
[202] Sen. 001: 19; massive wild bull, *rīmu gapšu*: Sen. 213: 19; fierce wild bull, *rīmu ekdu*: Sen. 016: iv 82–83; Sen. 017: iv 27; Sen. 018: iii 8"; Sen. 022: iv 2; Sen. 023: iii 74; Sen. 046: 39; Sen. 222: 39.
[203] Sen. 016: v 3; Sen. 017: iv 31; Sen. 022: iv 5–6; Sen. 023: iv 1–2 (emended); Sen. 046: 40; Sen. 222: 40–41.
[204] Sen. 002: 21; Sen. 003: 21; Sen. 004: 19; Sen. 016: ii 14; Sen. 017: i 85; Sen. 018: i 23"; Sen. 022: i 71; Sen. 023: i 65; Sen. 046: 10; Sen. 140: obv. 2'; Sen. 165: ii 5.
[205] Esh. 034: obv. 12'.
[206] Esh. 008: ii' 11'; Middle Assyrian probably attested in T.-p. I 02: 32 (emended) and T.-p. I 06: 4 (frag.). An allusion to an-gin$_7$, 72–73 is likely.

Otherwise, Esarhaddon uses positively connoted avian imagery when he protectively

(136) *spreads* (lit.: 'opens') *his wings* (lit.: sides) like *a flying / furious eagle*.[207]

Observations and conclusions

Although this paper is a non-exhaustive analysis, some observations based on the diachronic distribution of tenor, vehicle and *tertium comparationis* can be offered.

Group **I**: The remoteness of enemy habitations is stressed both in early Neo-Assyrian as well as in Sargonid inscriptions. However, the motif of enemy cities and fortresses as obstacles is a Sargonid trait. Less ideologically loaded and more descriptive similes of enemy lands are attested only in Sargon's Eighth Campaign. Numerousness of enemies is a stable topic since Middle Assyrian times, yet before the Sargonids the motif is realized with inanimate vehicles (stars, fog) while the latter also use an animated vehicle (locust). No Middle and early Neo-Assyrian and only a few Sargonid similes are used to describe enemies outside of battle contexts. Similes describing enemies after their defeat in battle differ between early Neo-Assyrian (two types, inanimate vehicles) and Sargonid inscriptions (six types, also animate vehicles). Notably, different Sargonid rulers here each use their own similes, presumably, as already observed by Van de Mieroop, 2015, to display an own narrative profile. Only a single Sargonid inscription (Esh. 1) once re-uses an image attested under Adad-nārārī II (to sway like reeds). Flight similes with animal vehicles are attested in Middle Assyrian under Tiglath-pileser I, but only a single time in the early Neo-Assyrian corpus. They rise to seriality only under the Sargonids. While some of the used vehicles are diachronically stable (esp. birds and fish), a majority of flight similes is individualized. Only Samsi, Šūzubu, and Marduk-apla-iddina II are tenors to more than one vehicle.

Group **II**: In destruction similes clay motifs are attested both early Neo-Assyrian and Sargonid. Only Sargon II uses an individual destruction simile (to burn like tree stumps), while Sennacherib resuscitates and adapts an image already used by Tukultī-Ninurta I in a different context (to cut something like a thread). A single domination simile is attested in early Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, while the Sargonids occasionally use similes to further illustrate the effects of their destruction of enemy lands. The strongest continuity exists in similes addressing the killing of enemies and the treatment of their corpses. Similes involving a vehicle sheep and a *tertium comparationis* "to kill" (or similar) are consistently used throughout all periods, while vehicles related to agriculture are predominantly at-

[207] Flying eagle, *urinnu mupparšu*: Esh. 001: i 67–68; Esh. 006: i 14'–15'; furious eagle, *erû nadru*: Esh. 008: ii' 10'. Similar imagery is already attested Middle Assyrian in T.-p. I 01: vii 56–58.

tested in Middle Assyrian and Sargonid inscriptions. Likewise, similes involving the enemies' blood are stable in the 1st millennium.

Group **III**: Similes in this group show a considerable distinction between early Neo-Assyrian and Sargonid usage. Early Neo-Assyrian similes mainly stress the ferociousness of the king in a variety of ways. Sargonid inscriptions, on the other hand, mainly employ just three *tertia comparationis* not or just seldomly used in early Neo-Assyrian similes (covering, overwhelming/enveloping, and knocking over) while only rarely covering other topics. Notably, the simile "knocking (something) over like the deluge" was not only used by Sargonid rulers, but also by the early Neo-Assyrian kings Shalmaneser III and Adad-nārārī III.

Group **IV**: Royal subject similes without a sentence object are used extensively only by Adad-nārārī II and Sennacherib, with minor attestations under Esarhaddon and Sargon II. Some of Adad-nārārī II's similes were extended to group **III** similes by the Sargonids e.g., "to cover like a bird-trap," "to knock over like a (divine) net." Yet, most similes in group **IV** are quite individualistic. Adad-nārārī II's similes stress his martial prowess and liken the king to weapons, the god Gira and forces of nature. Sennacherib stresses royal rage and movement related aspect, while now predominantly using animal vehicles evoking wildness, massiveness, and swiftness. Notably, only Esarhaddon brings in a protective aspect. With the latter, as well as with a simile using the Deluge as vehicle, Esarhaddon possibly (and intentionally?) harks back to Middle Assyrian models.

While many tropes regarding the interplay between the superior Assyrian king and subaltern enemy rulers and forces remain stable throughout the centuries, the corresponding similes used to reinforce these aspects of the narrative change in part significantly from the early Neo-Assyrian period to Sargonid times. Early Neo-Assyrian texts feature a row of innovations not reproduced in later periods. Sargonid similes differ from those in use in the early 1st millennium and are partially more akin to Middle Assyrian predecessors. Sargonid similes are more numerous and consequentially more varied, and display a considerable degree of innovation, albeit the latter is also clearly discernible for the early 1st millennium. While the three episodes discussed by Van de Mieroop, 2015 stand out by their high quantity of individualistic similes, they also exemplify the general Sargonid attitude regarding the use of similes to construct narrative identities. However, it is difficult to assess a greater "vividness" of Sargonid inscriptions since both Middle Assyrian and early Neo-Assyrian have their own distinct way of narrating.

Generally, and in line with the results of Ponchia, 1987, this analysis shows that early Neo-Assyrian similes are more often employed to highlight aspects of Assyrian agency and are used less often than in Sargonid times to attribute some form of subaltern, defeat-related agency to enemies. This can be seen in the low amount of enemy subject similes from the early 1st millennium, while enemy object similes and royal subject similes with a sentence object are more numerous. Sargonid enemy subject similes, on the other hand, abound. However, the en-

emy's agency is of a considerably different quality than that of the Assyrian king. Enemy agency in Sargonid inscriptions is almost exclusively tied to a reaction to defeat, i.e. being submissive or fleeing. The temporarily granted agency of enemies in flight similes is regularly annulled by the stylization of the king as a catcher of runaways. The few instances of non-defeat related enemy subject similes either stress the enemies numerosity and dangerousness (locust simile) or breathe an air of exoticism (e.g., the Elamite generals and their ornaments). Like their early Neo-Assyrian predecessors, Sargonid kings stress the king's agency, yet largely only use a limited set of royal subject similes with sentence objects. In enemy object similes, which are majorly employed to illustrate killing and destruction, Sargonid texts show a revival of agricultural related imagery, which only appeared occasionally in early Neo-Assyrian texts. Now again, the king appears as a grim reaper of enemies, snapping them off like reeds or harvesting their skulls like withered grain.

Abbreviations

Text editions

KAL 3	Keilschrifttexte aus Assur literarischen Inhalts 3 (= Frahm, 2009).
LKA	Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur (= Ebeling, 1953).
SAA 9	State Archives of Assyria Vol. 9 (= Parpola, 1997).
RIMA 1–3	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Assyrian Periods 1–3 (1 = Grayson, 1987; 2 = Grayson, 1991; 3 = Grayson, 1996).
RINAP 1–5	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period (1 = Tadmor / Yamada, 2011; 2 = Frame, 2021; 3/1, 3/2 = Grayson / Novotny, 2012, 2014; 4 = Leichty, 2011; 5/1 = Novotny / Jeffers, 2018 [5/2 not published yet, but available under http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/rin ap5/]).

Royal names

Adn.	Adad-nārārī	Sen.	Sennacherib
Asb.	Assurbanipal	Š.-A.	Šamšī-Adad
Asn.	Ashurnaṣirpal	T.-N.	Tukultī-Ninurta
Esh.	Esarhaddon	T.-p.	Tiglath-pileser
Slm.	Shalmaneser		

Other

frag.	fragmentary	rev.	reverse
l.e.	left edge	*tc*	*tertium comparationis*
obv.	obverse		
r.e.	right edge		

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Appendix: Analytical tables of similes discussed

I. Subject similes with enemies or enemy localities as tenor

	Tenor	***tertium comparationis***	**Similarity Marker**	**Vehicle**	**Attestations**
1	Forest	*eli tamirtī ṣillu ṭarāsu* “to cast shadow over the environs”	*kīma*	*qišit erēni* “a cedar forest”	Sargon II 065: 16
2	Forest	*ḫalāpu* Gt “to be intertwined	*kīma*	*apū edlūtu* “impenetrable reeds”	Sargon II: 266
3	Mountain	*nâdu* “to be pointed, sharp”	GIM / *kīma*	*ziqip patri parzilli šēssu* (< *šeltu*) “the point of an iron dagger’s blade”	Asn. II 001: i 49, ii 40–41; Asn. II 017: i 72–73
	Mountain	*ziqipta šakānu* “to rise perpendicularly”	GIM / *kīma*	*šēlut patri* “blade of a dagger”	Asn. II 040: 15; Slm. III 001: 20; Slm. III 002: i 19, ii 41–42; Sargon II 065: 99 (without directional qualifier “perpendicular”)
	Mountain	*zaqāpu* “to be planted upright, rise up”	*kīma*	*šēlut sukurri* “blade of a lance”	Sargon II 065: 18
	Mountains	*šaqû* “to be high, rise up”	GIM / *kīma*	*ziqip patrī parzillī* “tips of iron daggers”	Sen. 1015: obv. 6'
4	City/ stronghold	*šaqû* “to be high, rise up”	GIM / *kīma*	*ubān šadî* “finger of the mountain (= peak, summit)”	Asn. II 001: ii, 105; Asn. II 017: iv 67; Asn. II 019: 72
5	Dūr-Papsukkal	*ina rubbi mê šakānu* “to (be) situate(d) in a torrent of waters”	GIM / *kīma*	*ušal nāri* “river meadow”	Š.-A. V 1: iv 24–25
6	Enemy cities or fortifications	*ina mê u appārī šakānu* Gt “to (be) place(d), situate(d) in waters and swamps”	*kīma*	*nūnu* “fish”	Esh. 002: iii 38–39; Asb. Ass. Tab. 003: rev. 33–34

	Tenor	***tertium comparationis***	**Similarity Marker**	**Vehicle**	**Attestations**
7	Enemies	*dannata šakānu* “to place fortification”	*kīma*	*qinnu udīni* “nest of an *udīnu*-bird”	Asn. II 001: i 49–50 (note: exceptionally object simile!)
8	Enemy dwellings (*šubtu*)	*šakānu* Gt “to (be) place(d), situate(d)”	GIM / *kīma*	*qinnū erî ašarēd iṣṣūrāti* “nests of eagles, the foremost of birds”	Sen. 016: iv 71–76; Sen. 017: iv 18–23; Sen. 018: iii 1"–4"; Sen. 022: iii 75–79; Sen. 023: iii 66–70; Sen. 046: 38; Sen. 222: 12–18 (last two attestations without extension)
9	Palace	*edēlu* “to lock”	GIM / *kīma*	*šadû* “mountain”	Sen. 1015: obv. 14'
10	Bīt-Imbî	*parāku* “to lie across, block”	GIM / *kīma*	*dūru rabû* “great wall”	Asb. 009: iii 46–48
11	Cities of Appatar and Kitpat	*parāku* “to lie across, block”	GIM / *kīma*	*gišrū* “bars, bolts”	Sargon II 065: 64–65
12	Fortress of Ušqaya	*edēlu* “to lock”	*kīma*	*daltu* “door”	Sargon II 065: 167–168
13	Enemy city walls	*rašādu* Š “to (be) firmly found(ed)”	*kīma* “like”	*sadû* “mountains”	Sargon II 065: 260
14	21 enemy cities	*aṣû* “to go out, emerge”	[*kīma*]	*gapnū* “bushes”	Sargon II 065: 235–239
15	Fortresses of Argištiuna and Qallania	*aṣû* “to go out, emerge”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*kakkabu* “star”	Sargon II 065: 287–288
16	Agricultural land in the city of Ulḫu	*ṣerpa šakānu* “to (be) overlay (overlaid) with bright flecks”	*kī*	*zagindurû* (here:) “turquoise-blue glass”	Sargon II 065: 229
17	Scent of beams of juniper wood	*libbu zâqu* “to blow into the heart”	*kīma*	*ḫašūru* / *ḫašurru* (scent of) “*ḫ.*-cedar”	Sargon II 065: 246
18	Crops in Urartu	*nība lā isû* “to have no number”	*kī*	*qan*(*ū*) *api* “reed(s) of a canebreak”	Sargon II 065: 228
19	30 cities in Ayādi	*ṣabātu* Š “to be set up, aligned”	*kīma*	*ūsu* (*ussu*) “straight path, line”	Sargon II 065: 280–286

	Tenor	***tertium comparationis***	**Similarity Marker**	**Vehicle**	**Attestations**
20	Enemy cities, enemy posessions	*nība*, *manūta*, *minūta lā išû* “to have no number, counting”	GIM / *kīma*	*kakkabū šamê* “stars of the sky”	Asn. II 001: i 88 and iii 42–43; Sargon II 065: 164
21	Urartian troops	*nību emuqī gapāšu* Gt “number of (battle-) forces to be in full strength”	GIM / *kīma*	*imbaru kabtu* “heavy fog”	Adn. III 2010: 11–12 (inscription of Šamšī-ilu)
22	Enemy troops	*tebû* “to rise (against), advance”	*kīma*	*tibût aribî maʾdi ša pān šatti* “a spring invasion of a swarm (lit.: of numerous, many) locust”	Sen. 022: v 56–57; Sen. 023: v 47–48; Sen. 230: 57
23	Elamite troops	*katāmu* “to cover”	GIM / *kīma*	*tibût erbê* “onslaught of locusts”	Asb. 003: iv 41; Asb. 004: iv 8'–9'; Asb. 006: v 62–64; Asb. 007: v 7–8
24	Enemy possessions; cattle, captives, booty taken from enemies	*mādu* (adj.) “(to be) many”	*eli* “more than”	*eribî* “locusts”	Esh. 33: rev. iii 8'; Asb. 009: v 63–65; Asb. 011: vi 81–95; Asb. 155, rev. 12–13; Asb. 188: obv. 3–6 (emended); Asb. 217: obv. 16'–21'
25	Elamites	*rittī rakāsu* D “to have forearms fastened (with ornamental rings etc.)”	*kīma*	*šūrū marūtu ša nadû šummannu* “fattened bulls cast in fetters”	Sen. 022: v 86–87; Sen. 023: v 74–75; Sen. 230: 86
26	Aḫlamû (of Ulluba)	*alāku* Gt “to roam about”	GIM / *kīma*	*ayyalū* (*u*) *turāhū* “deer (and) ibexes”	T.-p. III 37: 20; possibly also Sargon II 082: v 42'
27	Defeated / submissive enemies	*pašālu* “to crawl”	*kīma*	*kalbū* “dogs”	Sargon II 065: 58; probably also Sargon II 065: 345 (fragmentary)
28	Brothers of Esarhaddon	*nakāpu* “to butt (each other)”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*laliu*, *lalû* “goat kid”	Esh. 001: i 44
29	Enemies	*šâbu* “to sway, tremble”	*kīma*	*qan*(*û*) *meḫê* “reed(s) in a storm”	Adn. II 02: 21–22; Adn. II 04: obv. 10'–11'; Esh. 001, iv 80–81

	Tenor	***tertium comparationis***	**Similarity Marker**	**Vehicle**	**Attestations**
30	Enemies' weapons	*ṣâdu* "to melt"	*kīma*	*kiskattû* "furnace"	Adn. II 02: 22; Adn. II 04: obv. 11'–12'; Asn. II 040: 14–15
31	Enemies	*garāru* "to grovel"	GIM / *kīma*	*serrēmū* "onagers"	Sen. 022: iv 32–34; Sen. 023: iv 26–27
32	Formerly hostile Assyrians	*dakāku* "to gambol"	term-adv. in *-iš*	*kalūmū* "lambs"	Esh. 001: i 78–79
33	Foundations (= legs) of enemies	*rabābu* "to tremble"	*kīma*	*šuruš kibri nāri* "root(s) of (= on) a river bank"	Sargon II 065: 174
34	Enemies' faces	*qatāru* "to smoke (= to become gloomy)"	GIM / *kīma*	*qutru* "smoke"	Asb. 007: viii 25'–26'; Asb. 008: viii 19"–20"
35	Enemies	*kašādu* "to reach = here: to become"	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*mitūtu* "death; status of being dead"	Sargon II 065: 176
36	Enemies	*emû* "to become"	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*šalamtū* "corpses"	Asb. 007: viii 24'; Asb. 008: viii 18"
37	Marduk-bēl-usāte of Gannanāte	*aṣû* "to go out, escape"	*kīma*	*šēlebu* "fox"	Slm. III 005: v 1
38	"All rulers"	*naprušu* "to fly (= to flee)"	*kīma*	*sutinnū nigiṣṣī* "bats of (= living in) crevices"	Sen. 016: i 23–26; Sen. 017: i 18–21; Sen. 022: i 16–19; Sen. 023: i 15–17; Sen. 024: i 15–18
39	Hanūnu of Gaza Urzana of Muṣaṣir Ullusunu of Mannâ Samsi, queen of the Arabians	*naprušu* "to fly (= to flee)"	*kīma*	*iṣṣūru* "bird"	Hanūnu: T.-p. III 42: 12'–13'; T.-p. III 48: 17'; T.-p. III 49: rev. 15 Urzana: Sargon II 001: 152–153; Sargon II 065: 291 Ullusunu: Sargon II 007: 50; Sargon II 063: i' 4' (emended) Samsi: Sen. 015: iv 34'; Sen. 016: iv 57; Sen. 017: iv 5; Sen. 018: iii 20'; Sen. 022: iii 59–65; Sen. 023: iii 56–57; Sen. 053: 4–6

	Tenor	***tertium comparationis***	**Similarity Marker**	**Vehicle**	**Attestations**
	Šūzubu of Bīt-Dakkūri Babylonians Inhabitants of Armariyalî				Šūzubu: Sen. 146: obv. 3; Sen. 147: obv. 3 Babylonians: Sargon II 001: 282 Inhabitants of Armariyalî: Sargon II 065: 291
40	Iamāni of Ašdod Lulî of Sidon Umba-LAGAB-ua of Elam	*šupul*/*šuplī mê* (*ruqūti*) *ṣabātu* “to take to the (faraway) depths of waters” *naparšudu* “to flee”	*kīma*	*nūnu*/*ū* “fish/fish (pl.)”	Iamāni: Sargon II 082: vii 43"–44" (fragmentary) Lulî: Sen. 045: 2'–3'; Asb. 009: iii 66–48; Asb. 011: v 20 Umba-LAGAB-ua: Asb. 009: iii 66–48; Asb. 011: v 20
41	Ramateia of Araziaš	*naparšudu* “to flee”	term.-adv. in *-aniš*	*ḫallulāya* “centipede (?)”	T.-p. III 08: 1–2
42	Samsi, queen of the Arabians	*ana madbari … pāna šakānu* “to set out to the desert …”	GIM / *kīma*	*serremtu* “female onager”	T.-p. III 42: 22'–24'; T.-p. III 48: 25'–26'; T.-p. III 49: rev. 19
43	Šūzubu of Bīt-Dakkūri	*naparšudu* “to flee”	*kīma*	*az*(*z*)*aru* “swamp lynx”	Sen. 015: iv 23'; Sen. 016: iv 47–48; Sen. 017: iii 90; Sen. 018: iii 9'; Sen. 022: iii 53–56; Sen. 023: iii 48–49
44	Nabû-zēr-kitti-līšir, son of Marduk-apla-iddina II	*nābutu* “to flee”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*šēlabu* “fox”	Esh. 001: ii 53–55; Esh. 003: i 16'–19'; Esh. 030: obv. 8'–9'; Esh. 031: obv. 2'–3'
45	Urartians	*urḫa … petû* D “to open up a way…”	*kī*	*kulbābū* “ants”	Sargon II 065: 143
46	Remainder of Marduk-apla-iddina II’s army	*naparšudu* “to flee”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*nālu* “deer”	Sen. 001: 35; Sen. 213: 35
47	Elamites	*šadâ … emēdu* N “to ‘lean’ on (= take to) a mountain”	*kī*	*erû* “eagles”	Sen. 223: 41–42
48	Marduk-apla-iddina II of Babylon	*naprušu* “to fly”	*kīma*	*s*/*šutinnu* “bat”	Sargon II 007: 125–126

	Tenor	***tertium comparationis***	**Similarity Marker**	**Vehicle**	**Attestations**
49	Marduk-apla-iddina II of Babylon	*ṭēḫi dūri … ṣabātu* “to grasp (= sneak along) the side of the (city-)wall”	*kīma*	*šurānu* “cat”	Sargon II 007: 132
50	Marduk-apla-iddina II of Babylon	*kultār* / *zārat šarrūti šakānu* “to pitch the royal tent”	*kīma*	*kumû* “a water-bird (crane?)”	Sargon II 001: 407–408; Sargon II 002: 382–383; Sargon II 007: 129–130; Sargon II 074: vi 40–42; Sargon II 086: 6'; Sargon II 111: 4'; Sargon II 113: 12' (emended); Sargon II 114: 1' (largely emended).
51	Marduk-apla-iddina II of Babylon	*abul āli … erēbu* “to enter the city gate”	*kīma*	*sikkû* “mongoose”	Sargon II 001: 412; Sargon II 002: 390–391 (largely emended); Sargon II 006: 3'
52	Rahiānu / Rezin of Damascus	*abul āli … erēbu* “to enter the city gate”	*kīma*	*sikkû* (^{d}NIN.KILIM) “mongoose”	T.-p. III 20: 9'
53	Heart (*libbu*) of Rusâ of Urartu	*tarāku* “to throb”	*kīma*	*iṣṣūr ḫurri ša lapān erî ipparsidu* “(the heart of a) bat fleeing before an eagle”	Sargon II 065: 149
54	Hearts (*libbū*) of Humban-menānu, Nabû-šuma-iškun, and sheikhs of Chaldea	*tarāku* “to throb”	*kī ša*	*atmū summati kuššudū* “pursued pigeon fledglings” *iṣṣūrū kuššudū* “pursued birds” (1x)	Sen. 022: vi 29–30; Sen. 023: vi 25; Sen. 145: obv. i' 14' (emended); Sen. 223: 42 (“birds”); Sen. 230: 96 (largely emended)
55	Dust (*epru*) raised by the feet of those who flee	*pān šamê rapšūte katāmu* “to cover the face of the vast heavens”	*kīma*	*imbaru kabtu ša dunni eriyāti* “heavy fog (= cloud?) of (= in) the strength of winter”	Sen. 018: […]–v 1'; Sen. 022: v 58–59; Sen. 023: v 49–50; Sen. 230: 58–59
56	Corpses of dead animals	*tabāku* “to heap up”	*kīma*	*dabdû* ^{d}*Erra* “a carnage brought about by Erra”	Asb. Ass. Tab. 004: rev. 30
57	Rusâ of Urartu	*libba saḫālu* “to pierce, stab the heart”	GIM / *kīma*	*šaḫû* “pig”	Sargon II 001: 165; Sargon II 002: 194–195

II. Subject similes with enemies or enemy localities as tenor

	Tenor	*tertium comparationis*	Similarity Marker	Vehicle	Attestations
58	Tiglath-pileser III	*lawû* “to encircle, surround”	GIM / *kīma*	*kippattu* “ring”	T.-p. III 37: 37 (note: exceptionally royal subject simile!)
59	Raḫiānu/Rezin of Damaskus Hiskiah of Judah	*esēru* “to lock up”	GIM / *kīma*	*iṣṣūr quppi* “cage-bird / bird in a cage”	Raḫiānu: T.-p. III 20: 11' Hiskiah: Sen. 004: 52; Sen. 015: iv 18–19; Sen. 016: iv 8–10; Sen. 018: iii 27–29; Sen. 022: iii 27–29; Sen. 023: iii 24–25; Sen. 046: 28–29; Sen. 140: rev. 16 (Hiskiah of Judah)
60	Marduk-apla-iddina II	*esēru* “to lock up”	GIM / *kīma*	*šaḫ erreti* “pen-pig / pig in a pen”	Sargon II 002: 400; Sargon II 006: 9'–10'
61	Enemy lands	*saḫāpu* “to overwhelm”	GIM / *kīma*	*til abūbi* “ruin-hill of (= created by) the deluge”	Adn. II 2: 31–32; Slm. III 002: ii 5–6
62	Enemy lands	*sapānu* “to knock over”	GIM / *kīma*	*til abūbi* “ruin-hill of (= created by) the deluge”	Slm. III 005: ii 2–3; Slm. 006: ii 1, iv 30–36; Slm. 008: 38–40, 4'–5'; Slm. III 029: 34–39; Slm. III 031: 12–17; Slm. III 032: 7–9; Slm. III 033: 10–13
63	Enemy lands	*kabāsu* D “to tread (upon)”	GIM / *kīma*	*til abūbi* “ruin-hill of (= created by) the deluge”	Slm. III 023, 11–13; Slm. III 024, 4–5
64	Enemy lands, cities	*ḫepû* G/D “to break, shatter, smash”	term.-adv. in *-āniš* (note the form *karpānis*)	*karpatu* “pot”	Sargon II 001: 209; Sargon II 007: 14, 80
	Enemy fortifications	*parāru* D “to break up, smash”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*karpatu* “pot”	Sargon II 117: ii 10
	Enemy fortifications	*parāru* D “to break up, smash”	GIM / *kīma*	*karpat paḫāri* “potter’s vessel”	Sargon II 117: ii 27; Sen. 1015: obv. 19'–20'; Esh. 001: v 5
	Enemy fortifications	*daqāqu* D “to crush”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*ḫaṣbattu* “clay bowl”	Sargon II 065: 165, 217

	Tenor	***tertium comparationis***	**Similarity Marker**	**Vehicle**	**Attestations**
	Insubmissive / enemy rulers (only Slm. III and T.-p. III) Enemy lands	*daqāqu* D “to crush”	GIM / *kīma*	*ḫaṣbattu* “clay bowl”	Slm. III 009: obv. 5–6 (partially emended); Slm. III 025: 4–6; T.-p. III 39: 8; T.-p. III 47: obv. 2 (emended); T.-p. III 51: 2; T.-p. III 52: 2 (partially emended); Sargon II 001, 6 (emended); Sargon II 041: 10; Sargon II 043: 9; Sargon II 044: obv. 20–21; Sargon II 076: 1'; Sargon II 129: 9 (partially emended)
65	Enemy fortifications	[lost: demolished?]	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*bāṣu* “sand”	Sargon II 065: 260
66	Enemy lands	*šebēru* “to break, smash”	*kī*	*libittu* “brick”	Slm. IV 1: 18
67	Enemy habitations in Mannâ and Urartu	*qâdu* “to set ablaze, burn”	*kīma* term.-adv. in *-iš*	*abrū* “tree stumps; pile of brushwood”	Sargon II 065: 182, 198 (partially emended), 268, 275 (t.-a.), 279 (t.-a.)
68	“Precious lifes” of enemy	*parāʾu* D “to cut through, off”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*qû* “string, thread”	Sen. 022: vi 2–3; Sen. 023: v 78; Sen. 230, 88
69	Smoke of burning habitations	*pān šamê katāmu* Š “to make cover the face of the sky”	*kīma*	*asamšātu* “dust storm”	Sargon II 065: 182, 198 (partially emended), 268
70	Smoke of burning habitations	*ṣabātu* Š “to make seize the face of the sky”	*kīma*	*imbaru* “fog”	Sargon II 065: 261; Sen. 022: iv 79–81; Sen. 023: iv 70–71; Sen. 023: v 47–48
71	Noise caused by wielding of iron pickaxes	*ṣagāmu* Š “to make roar”	*kīma*	^{d}Adad	Sargon II 065: 224
72	Conquered lands	*kabāsu* “to tread (upon)” *kanāšu* “to bow down”	GIM / *kīma*	*gištappu* / *kilzappu* “footstool”	Slm. III 028: 10; Slm. III 030: 11–12; Š.-A. V 1: ii 7–16 (*kilzappu*, *kanāšu*; note: subject simile!)
73	Enemies	*nâlu* D “to lay low (= to kill)”	*kīma*	*šûbu* “sheep”	Slm. III 040: i 16–18
	Enemies	*ṭabāḫu* G/D “to slaughter”	*kīma* term.-adv. in *-iš*	*aslu* “sheep, ram”	with t.c. *ṭabāḫu* / *ṭubbuḫu*: Sargon II 043: 29; Sargon II 065: 136; Sen. 001: 23; Sen. 044: 24; Sen. 213: 23; Asb. 003: vi 75–76; Asb. 004: vi

	Tenor	***tertium comparationis***	**Similarity Marker**	**Vehicle**	**Attestations**
		napāsu D “to strike down, kill”			81–83; Asb. 006: vii 33'–35'; Asb. 007: vii 25–27; Asb. 009: ii 78; Asb. 011: iii 56; Asb. 086: ii 3'; Asb. 092, iii 21'; Asb. 161, iii 7' (Asb. always *ṭabāḫu*, 1x *ṭubbuḫu*); with t.c. *nuppusu*: Sargon II 001: 410; Sargon II 002: 387; Sargon II 006: 1' –2' (partially emended); Sargon II 065: 302
74	Throats / necks of enemies	*nakāsu* D “to cut (through)”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*aslu* “sheep, ram”	Sargon II 007: 130–131; Sen. 022: vi 2; Sen. 023: v 77; Sen. 230: 87–88
75	Enemies	*mêsu* “to crush, squash”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*kulbābū* “ants”	Esh. 134: 19
76	Enemy lands	*dâšu* “to thresh”	*kīma*	*dayyaštu* “threshing sledge”	T.-p. III 39: 11; T.-p. III 40: 12
77	Enemies	*ḫaṣāṣu* D „to snap off“	GIM / *kīma*	*qan*(*ū*) *api* „marsh reeds“	Asn. II 001: i 22–23; Asn. II 017: i 18; Asn. II 20: 23; Esh. 098: obv. 32–33; Esh. 099: obv. 6
78	Corpses of dead enemies	*šeṭû* „to spread out“	*kīma*	*buqlu* “malt”	Sargon II 065: 134, 226; Sargon II 074: vi 47–49; Sargon II 111: 6'; Sargon II 113: 14'; Sargon II 114: 3'; Esh. 001: iv 70
79	Corpses of dead enemies	*g*/*qarānu* D „to pile up, heap up“	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*g*/*qurunnū* “heaps”	Sargon II 009: 33–34
80	Corpses of dead enemies	*ṣēra malû* D “to fill the plains/countryside”	GIM / *kīma*	*urqītu* “grass”	T.-p. III 48: 10'; Sen. 022: vi 9–10; Sen. 023: vi 7; Sen. 145: obv. i' 3'; Sen. 230: 91–92
81	Hands of enemies	*nakāsu* D “to cut off”	*kīma*	*bīnū qiššê simāni* “offshoots / stems of cucumber in season”	Sen. 018: vi 2'–3'; Sen. 022: vi 11–12; Sen. 023: vi 9; Sen. 145: obv. i' 4'; Sen. 230: 92–93
82	Skulls of dead enemies	*eṣēdu* “to harvest”	*kīma*	*û ḫamadīru* “withered grain”	Sen. 230: 112
	Skulls of dead enemies	*raṣāpu* “to erect, build”	term.-adv. in *-is*	*dimātu* “towers”	Sen. 230: 112

	Tenor	*tertium comparationis*	Similarity Marker	Vehicle	Attestations
83	Blood of slain enemies	*redû* Š “to cause to flow”	*kīma*	*mê nāri* “river water”	Š.-A. V 01: iv 28–29
	Blood of slain enemies	*redû* Š “to cause to flow”	*kīma*	*mīlu gapšu* “flood in full spate”	Sen. 18 vi 1 (?; largely broken); Sen. 022: vi 3–4; Sen. 023: v 78; Sen. 230: 88–89
	Blood of slain enemies	*redû* Š “to cause to flow”	*kīma*	*butuqtu nat-bak šadî* “outflow of a mountain gully”	Esh. 001: v 14
84	Various landscape features (e.g., mountains, hillsides, city streets, rivers etc.)	*ṣarāpu* “to dye”	GIM / *kīma* term.-adv. in *-iš*	*nabāsu* “*nabāsu*-wool”	Asn. II 001: i 53; Asn. II 001: ii 17; Asn. II 017: i 76, ii 56–57; Slm. III 001: 61'; Slm. III 002: i 47, ii 50, ii 78; Š.-A. V 01: iii 12–13; T.-p. III 47: obv. 48; Sargon II 007: 130; Sargon II 043: 25 (here exceptionally skin of an enemy ruler dyed red); Sargon II 117: ii 9 (fragmentary); Asb. 009: ii 66; Asb. 011: iii 42–43; Asb. 092: iii 10' (largely emended).
85	Various landscape features (e.g., mountains, hillsides, city streets, rivers etc.)	*ṣarāpu* “to dye”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*illūru* “red flower (anemone?)”	T.-p. III 20: 3'–4'; Sargon II 065: 135
	skin of an enemy ruler	*siāmu* “to dye red”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*illūru* “red flower (anemone?)”	Sargon II 043: 33; Sargon II 076: 23' (partially emended)
86	Enemies	*bâru* “to catch”	*kīma*	*nūnū* “fish (pl.)”	Sargon II 008: 15; Sargon II 009: 25; Sargon II 013: 34–35; Sargon II 043: 21; Esh. 001: ii 71–73; Esh. 002: i 19–22; Esh. 006: ii 16'–18'; Esh. 060: obv. 2–3
87	Enemies / Sanda-uarri	*bâru* “to catch”	*kīma*	*iṣṣūru* “bird”	Esh. 001: iii 30–31, v 12–13; Esh. 002: i 43–49; Esh. 003: ii 6'; Esh. 006: ii 46'
88	Enemies / Sanda-uarri	*bâru* “to catch”	*kīma*	*iṣṣūru* “bird”	Esh. 001: iii 30–31, v 12–13; Esh. 002: i 43–49; Esh. 003: ii 6'; Esh. 006: ii 46'

	Tenor	*tertium comparationis*	Similarity Marker	Vehicle	Attestations
89	Ḫumban-ḫaltaš III	*bâru* “to catch”	*kīma*	*šurdû* “falcon”	Asb. 011: x 15; Asb. 143: 4'; Asb. 144: 8'; Asb. 194, vi 27 (all except first largely emended)
90	Asuḫīli of Arzâ	*rakasu* “to bind”	GIM / *kīma*	*šaḫû* “pig”	Esh. 031: obv. 14'–rev. 2
91	Surviving captives	*šalālu* “to carry off” *manû* “to count” *zâzu* D “to divide (up), apportion”	GIM / *kīma* *kī*	*ṣēnū* “capridae” *maršit ṣēnī* “a flock of capridae” *minût ṣēnī* “a number of capridae”	With *šalālu*: Asn. II 001: i 52; with “to lead away”: Esh. 001: v 9; with *manû*: T.-p. III 12: 7'; Sargon II 001: 209–210; Sargon 117: ii 28; with *zuʾʾuzu*: Sen. 004: 60; Sen. 015: v 14–17; Sen. 016: v 37–40; Sen. 017: v 19–22; Sen. 046: 104–106; Sen. 141: 9'; Esh. 033: rev. iii 21'–22'; Asb. 007: ix 60"–63"; Asb. 009: vi 19–21; Asb. 011: vii 6–8
92	Dromedaries	*parāsu* D “to apportion”	*kīma*	*ṣēnū* “capridae”	Asb. 003: viii 9; Asb. 004: viii 12; Asb. 007: x 21–22; Asb. 011: ix 46; Asb. 086: iii 24'–25' (partially emended)

III. Subject similes with the Assyrian king as tenor and enemies as grammatical object

	Tenor	*tertium comparationis*	grammatical object	Similarity Marker	Vehicle	Attestations
93	Adad-nārārī II	*rasābu* D “to strike”	*ṣēnu* “wicked one”	GIM / *kīma*	*patru šalbabu* “fierce dagger”	Adn. II 2: 19; Adn. II 4: obv. 6'–7' (partially emended); KAL 3, 16–18: 6'–7' (fragmentary)
94	Shalmaneser III	*dâšu* “to trample”	Arṣaškun / Urartu	GIM / *kīma*	*rīmu* “wild bull”	Slm. III 002: ii 52
95	Shalmaneser III	*šagāšu* “to slaughter”	*Qutû rapaštu* “the vast Qutû”	*kī*	^{d}Erra	Slm. III 005: iii 2

	Tenor	*tertium comparationis*	grammatical object	Similarity Marker	Vehicle	Attestations
96	Ashurnaṣirpal II Shalmaneser III Šamšī-Adad V	*šagāmu* “to roar, thunder”	various enemies	GIM / *kīma*	^{d}Adad *rāḫiṣu* “Adad the devastator” Š.-A. V: ^{d}Adad *šāgimu* “Adad the thunderer”	Asn. II 001: ii 106, iii 120; Asn. II 002: 11; Asn. II 003: 34; Asn. II 017: iv 71–72; Asn. II 019: 73; Asn. II 021: 12'; Asn. II 023: 7–8; Asn. II 024: 2'–3'; Asn. II 026: 20–21; Asn. II 033: 11' (fragmentary); Asn. II 051: 16–17 (fragmentary); Slm. III 005: iii 3; Š.-A. V 1: iii 67–68
97	Shalmaneser III	*riḫilta zanānu* Š “to make destruction rain down”	various enemies	GIM / *kīma*	^{d}Adad	Slm. III 001: 59' (fragmentary); Slm. III 002: i 46; Slm. III 002: ii 50; Slm. III 002: ii 98
98	Tiglath-pileser III	*raḫāṣu* “to strike, devastate”	people of the land of Karzibra	GIM / *kīma*	*riḫiṣtu* ^{d}Adad “a downpour (lit.: ‘destruction’) of (= caused by) Adad	T.-p. III 16: 8
99	Š.-A. V	*še’û* / *šê’u* “to seek out” / “to fly”	people of the land of Mēsu	GIM / *kīma*	*erû* “eagle”	Š.-A. V 01: ii 52
100	Adad-nārāri II	*nasāḫu* D “to rip out”	enemies (?)	GIM / *kīma*	[…]	Adn. II 2: 20; Adn. II 04: obv. 8'–9'; KAL 3 16–18, 9' (Adn. II)
101	Sargon II	*katāmu* “to cover”	enemy cities, lands	term.-adv. in *-āniš kīma*	*urpu* / *urpatu* “cloud” *urpat līlâti šapītu* “thick evening cloud”	Sargon II 001: 210–211; Sargon II 065: 253; Sargon II 082: vii 3'''' (fragmentary)
102	Sargon II	*katāmu* “to cover”	enemy cities, lands	*kīma* term.-adv. in *-iš*	*tibût aribî* “swarm / onslaught of locusts”	Sargon II 001: 85–86; Sargon II 007: 73

	Tenor	***tertium comparationis***	**grammatical object**	**Similarity Marker**	**Vehicle**	**Attestations**
103	Sargon II	*katāmu* D “to cover”	Tabal	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*šētu* “net”	Sargon II 001: 200–201; Sargon II 002: 232–233 (fragmentary)
104	Ashurbanipal	*katāmu* “to cover”	enemy cities, lands	GIM / *kīma*	*imbaru* “fog”	Sargon II 074: v 55–58; Asb. 003: vi 14–15; Asb. 004: vi 17–18; Asb. 006: vii 17–18; Asb. 007: vi 27'–28'; Asb. 008: vii 18'; Asb. 086: i 15'–16'; Asb. 089: i 5
105	Ashurbanipal	*katāmu* “to cover”	Elam	GIM / *kīma*	*tīb meḫê ezzu* “furious onslaught of a storm”	Asb. 009: ii 59–60; Asb. 011: iii 34–35; Asb. 092: iii 6'; Asb. 188: obv. 14 (likely; broken off)
106	Tiglath-pileser III	*katāmu* “to cover”	fortress of Marubištu	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*ḫuḫāru* “bird trap”	T.-p. III 47: obv. 32
107	Tiglath-pileser III Sargon II	*saḫāpu* “to overwhelm”	enemy lands	GIM / *kīma*	*sapāru* “(divine) net”	T.-p. III 07: 6; T.-p. III 47: obv. 13; Sargon II 082: vi 6" (fragmentary)
108	Tiglath-pileser III Sargon II Sennacherib	*saḫāpu* “to overwhelm”	enemy lands	*kīma* term.-adv. in *-iš*	*imbaru* “fog”	T.-p. III 22: 2' (fragmentary); Sargon II 001: 69; Sargon II 004: 8'–9'; Sargon II 065: 215; Sen. 002: 28; Sen. 003: 28; Sen. 004: 26; Sen. 015: ii 8' (almost completely emended); Sen. 016: ii 44–45; Sen. 017: ii 26; Sen. 022: ii 15; Sen. 023: ii 13; Sen. 223: 44
109	Tiglath-pileser III Sargon II	*saḫāpu* “to overwhelm”	enemy lands	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*ḫuḫāru* “bird trap”	T.-p. III 47: obv. 15; Sargon II 001: 86; Sargon II 002: 464; Sargon II 004: 32' (fragmentary); Sargon II 065: 194; Sargon II 074: iii 46–47
110	Sargon II	*saḫāpu* “to overwhelm”	enemy cities / fortresses	*kīma*	*tīb meḫê* “onslaught of a storm”	Sargon II 002: 338–339

	Tenor	*tertium comparationis*	grammatical object	Similarity Marker	Vehicle	Attestations
111	Sargon II	*saḫāpu* “to overwhelm”	Sangibutu	*kīma*	*mīlu mitḫurtu* “clashing flood”	Sargon II 065: 253
112	Sargon II	*saḫāpu* “to overwhelm”	enemy lands	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*abūbu* “deluge”	Sargon II 074: vi 26; Sargon II 113: 8' (emended)
113	Tukultī-Ninurta II Shalmaneser III Adad-narārī III Tiglath-pileser III Sargon II Sennacherib Esarhaddon Ashurbanipal	*sapānu* “to knock over, flatten”	enemies, enemy lands	term.-adv. in *-iš*, *-āniš*	*abūbu* “deluge”	targeting Tukultī-Ninurta II: Slm. III 002: i 11–12; Slm. III 004: l. e. 4–9; Slm. III 006: i 27; Slm. III 008: 24; Slm. III 010: i 18; Slm. III 014: 21; Slm. III 016: 5 (emended); Slm. III 038: 4' (emended; targeting Shalmaneser III: Slm. III 012: 18; Slm. III 014: 158; Slm. III 016: 289'–290'; Adn. III 01: 13; Sargonid all self-targeting: T.-p. III 47: obv. 2, 22; T.-p. III 51: 2; T.-p. III 52: 2; Sargon II 001: 334–335; Sargon II 002: 332; Sargon II: 003: 52'; Sargon II 084: 18' (emended); Sargon II 103: ii 52; Sen. 034: 7; Sen. 231: obv. 7–9 (also cf. Sen. 161: obv. 7); Esh. 001: ii 68–69; Esh. 006: ii 13'–14' (cf. with divine tenors: Esh. 104: ii 17; Esh. 105: ii 32; Esh. 114: iii 3; unclear: Esh. 127: 12'); Asb. 012: vi 10'; Asb. 227: rev. 2; Asb. 228: rev. 11
114	Sargon II	*maqātu* “to fall upon him”	*ina libbī-šu* “upon him = upon Rusâ of Urartu”	*kī*	*šiltāḫu ezzu* “furious *šiltāḫu*-arrow”	Sargon II 065: 133

	Tenor	*tertium comparationis*	grammatical object	Similarity Marker	Vehicle	Attestations
	Sennacherib	*alāku* “to go (here: to charge)”	*ina libbī-šunu* “against them = against the armies of Elam and Babylon”	*kī*	*šiltāḫu šamru* “fierce *šiltāḫu*-arrow”	Sen. 223: 36
115	Sargon II	*raḫāṣu* “to strike”	*ugār(ū)-šu asmu* “his (= Rusâ’s) well-cultivated field(s)”	*kīma*	^{d}Adad	Sargon II 065: 229–230
116	Sennacherib Esarhaddon	*zâqu* “to blow”	*ana nakri* / *ina birī-šunu* “against the enemy (!)” / “in between them (= the enemies)”	*kīma*	*tīb meḫê* (*ezzu*) “onslaught of a (raging) storm”	Sen. 018: v 23'–24'; Sen. 022: v 77; Sen. 023: v 65–66; Sen. 230: 66–67 (largely emended); Esh. 008: ii' 18'
117	Esarhaddon	*nasāḫu* “to rip out”	*šuršū-šunu* “their (= the Sutean’s) roots”	*kīma*	*tīb meḫê ezzu* “onslaught of a raging storm”	Esh. 001: v 15–16

IV. Subject similes with the Assyrian king as tenor and without grammatical object

	Tenor	*tertium comparationis*	Similarity Marker	Vehicle	Attestations
118	Adad-nārārī II	*ḫamāṭu* “to burn”	*kīma*	^{d}Gira	Adn. II 02: 18; Adn. II 04: obv. 5'; KAL 3, 16–18: 5' (Adn. II)
119	Adad-nārārī II	*sapānu* “to knock over, throw down”	GIM / *kīma*	*abūbu* “deluge”	Adn. II 02: 18; Adn. II 04: obv. 5'; KAL 3, 16–18: 5' (Adn. II)
120	Adad-nārārī II	*dapinu* (adj.) “powerful (?), aggressive”	*kīma*	*šukurru* “lance”	Adn. II 02: 19; Adn. II 04: obv. 6'; KAL 3, 16–18: 6' (Adn. II)

	Tenor	*tertium comparationis*	Similarity Marker	Vehicle	Attestations
121	Adad-nārārī II	*zâqu* Gt “to (constantly) blow”	*kīma*	*tīb šāri* “onslaught of wind”	Adn. II 02: 19; Adn. II 04: obv. 7'; KAL 3, 16–8: 7' (Adn. II)
122	Adad-nārārī II	*šamāru* Gt “to be very wild, aggressive; to rage”	*kīma*	*imḫullu* / *anḫullu* “wicked storm”	Adn. II 02: 20; Adn. II 04: obv. 8'
123	Adad-nārārī II	*saḫāpu* “to knock over”	*kīma*	*šuškallu* “(divine) net”	Adn. II 02: 21; KAL 3, 16–18: 8', 9' (Adn. II)
124	Adad-nārārī II	*katāmu* “to cover”	GIM / *kīma*	*ḫuḫāru* “bird trap”	Adn. II 02: 21; Adn. II 04: obv. 9'–10'; KAL 3, 16–18: 9'–10' (Adn. II)
125	Sargon II Sennacherib Esarhaddon	*nadāru* N “to rage up, get enraged”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*labbu* “lion”	Sargon II 007: 40 (cf. Sargon II 116: 39); Sen. 001: 16; Sen. 001: 25; Sen. 018: v 11'–12'; Sen. 022: v 67; Sen. 023: v 57; Sen. 213: 16, 25; Esh. 001: i 57
126	Sennacherib	*nadāru N* “to rage up, get enraged”	[…]	[…] *sūzuzu* “a feriocious […]”	Sen. 145: obv. i' 4
127	Sennacherib	[…]	*kīma*	*labbu nadru* “raging lion”	Sen. 148: 9'
128	Sennacherib	*labābu* N “to get enraged”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*abūbu* “deluge”	Sen. 001: 25; Sen. 213: 25
129	Sennacherib	*ṣarpiš šasû* “to cry out loudly/bitterly”	term.-adv. in *-iš*	*ūmu* “storm”	Sen. 018: v 21'; Sen. 022: v 75; Sen. 023: v 64
130	Sennacherib	*šagāmu* “to roar”	GIM / *kīma*	^{d}Adad	Sen. 018: v 22'; Sen. 022: v 75; Sen. 023: iv 1–2; Sen. 023: v 64; Sen. 145: obv. i' 9
131	Sennacherib	*meḫret ummānāti ṣabātu* “to take the lead of the troops”	GIM / *kīma*	*rīmu* “wild bull”	Sen. 001: 19; massive wild bull, *rīmu gapšu*: Sen. 213: 19; fierce wild bull, *rīmu ekdu*: Sen. 016: iv 82–83; Sen. 017: iv 27; Sen. 018: iii 8''; Sen. 022: iv 2; Sen. 023: iii 74; Sen. 046: 39; Sen. 222: 39
132	Sennacherib	*šaḫātu* Gtn “to jump forward / about”	GIM / *kīma*	*armu* “mountain goat”	Sen. 016: v 3; Sen. 017: iv 31; Sen. 022: iv 5–6; Sen. 023: iv 1–2 (emended); Sen. 046: 40; Sen. 222: 40–41

	Tenor	***tertium comparationis***	**Similarity Marker**	**Vehicle**	**Attestations**
133	Sennacherib	*nagāšu* Gtn “to roam about”	term.-adv. in *-āniš*	*rīmu* “wild bull”	Sen. 002: 21; Sen. 003: 21; Sen. 004: 19; Sen. 016: ii 14; Sen. 017: i 85; Sen. 018: i 23"; Sen. 022: i 71; Sen. 023: i 65; Sen. 046: 10; Sen. 140: obv. 2'; Sen. 165: ii 5
134	Esarhaddon	*šadāḫu* Gtn “to march”	term.-adv. in *-āniš*	*rīmu* “wild bull”	Esh. 034: obv. 12'
135	Esarhaddon	*alāku*	term.-adv. in *-āniš*	*abūbu* “deluge”	Esh. 008: ii' 11'
136	Esarhaddon	*idā* / *agappā petû* “to open arms (= wings)”	*kīma*	*urinnu mupparšu* “flying eagle” *erû nadru* “furious eagle”	*urinnu mupparšu*: Esh. 001: i 67–68; Esh. 006: i 14'–15'; *erû nadru*: Esh. 008: ii' 10'

Beards as a Marker of Status during the Neo-Assyrian Period

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Beards were part of a visual matrix of expressing masculinity during the Neo-Assyrian period (ca. 934–612 BCE).[1] But masculinity does not exist in isolation and interacts with other aspects of identity. I will examine the beard as an indicator of masculine status during the Neo-Assyrian period. This will be done through investigating the visual and textual evidence separately. The first section will focus on the visual representations of the king in the palace reliefs and will pay particular attention to the length of the beard of the king in relation to others in the scene. I will demonstrate that the beard was simply one aspect of several visual cues indicating a man's rank, particularly with respect to the Assyrian king.

In the second section, I will turn to the textual material and identify two motifs involving the beard. I will demonstrate how foreign men manipulated their beards to transform themselves from one masculine status or rank to another. Foreign men were therefore able to choose which form of masculinity to express, dependent on the situation.

This intersection between gender and another aspect of identity is a key aspect of Connell's hegemonic masculinity theory, where masculinities interact with other aspects of identity such as race and class.[2] This is inspired by the approach of 'intersectionalism', which can be broadly defined as the intersections where different identities overlap.[3] More recently, Christensen and Jensen have stressed

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[1] There were only two exceptions to this: priests and eunuchs.

[2] Connell, 1995: 75. Beynon took this further and said that because there are so many factors involved in forming gender identity (such as race, class, age, and so on), it can be difficult to identify all the different variants of masculinities in any single society (Beynon, 2002: 23). This conception of masculinity as being one part of identity is part of a theoretical concept called 'hegemonic masculinity', which was conceptualised by Connell in *Masculinities* (Connell, 1995). Put simply, hegemonic masculinity is the gender practice of men that embodies the culturally accepted answer to patriarchy (Connell, 1995: 77). There are three other broad categories within this model: 'complicit', 'marginalised', and 'subordinate' masculinities (Connell, 1995: 78–81). The strength of this model was not the categorisation (which was based on modern Australia), but it's emphasis on the fluid nature of masculinities, and thus the need to change the model as needed according to the society which was being analysed (Connell, 1995: 82). During the 1990s and early 2000s this theory was heavily critiqued, which necessitated an update and revision of this theory in Connell / Messerschmidt, 2005. This revision included an explicit recognition of the agency of non-hegemonic masculinities in participating within this model, and the inclusion of women and non-male figures (Connell / Messerschmidt, 2005: 847–853).

[3] This approach has a long history, but Kimberlé Crenshaw is widely credited with coining

men's other identities need to be taken into account in order to examine their masculinities.[4]

Such observations have been made about the beards in the Neo-Assyrian period, though not through this theoretical lens. Madhloom has pointed to the use of beards in expressing the ethnicities of foreign enemies in palace reliefs, as well as beards indicating three statuses of Assyrian men in the royal palace reliefs.[5] Chapman describes the 'full beard' of the Assyrian kings as displaying the king as the epitome of masculinity.[6] Winter has suggested that beards pointed to the virility and fertility of the king.[7] Karlsson has also remarked on non-Assyrian and non-royal beards, as he pointed to the manipulation of foreigners' beards as a way of making them 'effeminate'.[8] Assante stresses the differentiation between the 'bearded' and 'non-bearded' status of courtiers, and states the beard of the Assyrian king gave the impression of 'generative virility under rigid control'.[9] In all of these instances the discussions of beards are short. In the case of Assante, the discussion is only three pages long, and Karlsson's is only a paragraph.[10] For such a central aspect of the Neo-Assyrian presentation of kingship, it is striking how little discussion has been dedicated to the beard. However, another key theme in this previous scholarship is evident: the beard was an indicator of virility and fertility. Assante explains this as the beard symbolised 'that aggressive sexuality that comes with an excess of hair-proliferating testosterone'.[11] This is a sentiment shared by Winter, but I do not agree that we should follow this understanding of the beard.[12] Using the link between beards and testosterone levels, and thus suggesting beards symbolised the fertility of a Neo-Assyrian man, is problematic in two ways. The first is that this is an essentialist reading of biology that is not borne out in modern science.[13] The second is this implies the Assyrians understood a

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the term whilst analysing the multiple different ways Black women were oppressed in the USA in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Crenshaw, 1991).

[4] Christensen / Jensen, 2014.

[5] Madhloom, 1970: 236–237. This categorisation system does not take eunuchs into account, who we see occupying positions in all three of these categories (N'Shea, 2016).

[6] Though what aspect of masculinity is not explored fully (Chapman, 2004: 22–28). For the Neo-Assyrian king portraying himself as the 'perfect man', see Bennett, 2019.

[7] Winter, 2010: 86–87.

[8] Karlsson, 2016: 236.

[9] Assante, 2017: 66.

[10] Assante, 2017: 65–68; Karlsson, 2016: 236.

[11] Assante, 2017: 66.

[12] Winter, 2010: 86–87.

[13] The elevated levels of testosterone is not as great between the sexes as commonly believed, and such a reading of the beard eliminates those individuals who do not identify as men who have beards (Hyde / Bigler / Joel / Tate / van Anders, 2019: 172–176). An approach to the beard that tries to embrace a non-binary approach to the ancient Near Eastern material can be found in McCaffrey (McCaffrey, 2002: 381–382). The most recent

biological link between the beard and the ability to reproduce. I will demonstrate that beards were not understood in connection with the wearer's fertility, but was in fact primarily connected to their status as men.

The beard as a status indicator in Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs

In the palace reliefs of the Neo-Assyrian kings, beards were an important identifying feature.[14] They indicated the man's ethnicity, and this section will demonstrate that beards were connected to a man's status. I will begin by outlining the method of creating a corpus of visual material. As beards were a key marker for the identities of men, I began with the hypothesis that the length of the beard would indicate an aspect of masculine identity. This is based on the rather vague description by Chapman of the 'full' beard of the king, which I have interpreted to mean the length.[15] I will then discuss the lengths of the Assyrian kings' beards in relation to others in the scene and will finish this section by investigating the beards of individuals other than the Assyrian king.

I began by collecting a corpus of 65 scenes that included the Neo-Assyrian king and noted the relative length of the kings' beards in comparison to others in the scene.[16] I also made a note of the scene of whether there was any wider context that could be related to virility or fertility.

Table 1 presents how often within this corpus the Assyrian king had the longest beard in the scene (the category 'Longest'), how often the beard was the same length as another beard (the category 'Equal'), and when it was shorter than another beard in the scene (the category 'Shorter'). This data is also presented as a percentage of the corpus. I have also included a category of 'Ambiguous Length', as in some scenes the Assyrian king's beard is visible, but either due to preservation issues or the poor quality of some publication images, the comparative length of the Assyrian king's beard is not clear.

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discussion of non-binary individuals in the textual evidence of the ancient Near East is Peled 2016, but see Moral, 2016 for an explanation of why 'non-binary' is a better term than 'third gender' to describe these individuals.

[14] Nadali / Verderame, 2019: 239.

[15] Chapman, 2004: 22–28. This also follow's Assante's assertion that the more facial hair, the more masculine an individual was (Assante, 2017: 66).

[16] This corpus included the royal palace reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II, Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib, and Assurbanipal (Albenda, 1986; Barnett, 1976; Barnett / Falkner, 1962; Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988; Budge, 1914). Naturally, this corpus only included the palace reliefs of those kings where such art has been preserved and is largely representative of the later Sargonid dynasty. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from this corpus can only be representative of this later period. See Appendix 1 for the full corpus included in this study.

Table 1: The length of the Assyrian kings' beards in relation to others in scenes in the palace reliefs.

Relative Length of Assyrian Kings' Beards	Frequency	Percentage of corpus (rounded to one decimal place)
Longest	37	56.9
Equal	18[17]	27.7
Shorter	3	4.6
Ambiguous Length	7	10.8
Total	65	

The results were surprising, as I expected the beard of the Assyrian king to be the longest in the majority of the scenes in the corpus due to his high status. The Assyrian king is depicted with the longest beard in the scene in only thirty-seven of the scenes in the corpus – slightly above half of the total.[18] This clearly demonstrates that the Assyrian king did not always sport the longest beard in the scene, with just under a third of cases depicting him with a beard of either equal or shorter length than someone else in the scene.[19]

In 27.7 % of the corpus the Assyrian king's beard was the same length as the beard of someone else in the scene.[20] One of these depicts Sargon II with a beard the same length as an attendant facing him.[21] If the office of the Assyrian king was supposed to represent 'ideal' masculinity,[22] and beards are indicators of manliness, why did the king allow for royal depictions where his beard was not the longest in a scene? In the aforementioned scene of Sargon II and an attendant facing him, the overall composition of the scene gives us one answer. The figures mirror each other in both size and posture, and thus the same length of the beard was in order to create visual symmetry in the scene. In this case, aesthetics of the

[17] One image has multiple depictions of the king, where in one scene he has the longest beard, and in another he has a beard equal in length to someone else in the scene (Barnett, 1976: pl. LVI). For the purposes of this corpus, I have treated this as two separate entries.
[18] As seen in Table 1, the percentage is 56.9 %.
[19] 32.3 %. This number is 43.1 % when we include those of an ambiguous length, but this assumes that all of those in this category were not the longest beard in the scene.
[20] 18 instances.
[21] Albenda, 1986: pl. 44. There are two other instances where Sargon II's beard is the same length as an attendant, but is depicted with an extra row of curls: Albenda, 1986: Fig. 61, Fig. 62.
[22] The expressions of masculinities in the titles and epithets of the Neo-Assyrian kings and the changing nature of 'ideal' masculinities during this period are addressed in Bennett, 2019: 377–378.

overall scene overrode the need for the Assyrian king to have the longest beard in the scene.

Even more surprising are three scenes where the Assyrian king wears a beard that is shorter than someone else in the scene.[23] This would indicate that the Assyrian king was secondary in masculine status to someone else in the empire, which goes against Assyrian royal ideology.[24] The answer to this puzzle is clear when we consider the dimensions of the relief, and the register depicting the king. These depictions of the king features him in a relief with several registers, and often required the artist to depict not only the body of the king, but also his jewellery, his clothing, his crown, his throne or chariot, and his parasol in the same scene. The height of the register limited how much space the artist could use.[25] The royal paraphernalia took up much of the limited vertical space of the register, particularly when compared to others in the scene who did not need such paraphernalia to indicate their status.[26] The figures without the chariot or parasol could be depicted slightly larger, and there is slightly more space dedicated to their beards. In comparison, the paraphernalia of the Assyrian king meant there was little space dedicated to his beard, and its length was sacrificed in order to properly depict the other identifiers of the Assyrian king.[27]

As the length of the king's beard could be sacrificed for aesthetic reasons, it should not be seen as the major indicator of the status of the Neo-Assyrian king. We can see from these instances that beards were simply one point in a matrix of indicators of status, and artists were willing to sacrifice the length of the beard in

[23] Budge, 1914: pl. XVII 1; Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. LXXXV; and Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1998: pl. 48. This is 4.6 % of the corpus.

[24] Ashurnaṣirpal II and Sennacherib call themselves 'man' and 'perfect man' respectively, demonstrating the importance of performing ideal masculinity in royal ideology (Bennett, 2019: 377–378).

[25] The palace relief BM 118908 is an excellent example of the restraints such registers could impose on the artists. In this relief the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III is riding his chariot, which is being led by two attendants. The regalia of the king includes the chariot, a quiver, the king's dress, his beard, headdress, and parasol. In order to depict all of these items the artist had to depict the king as smaller than the attendants, but still could not keep everything within the confines of the register. The parasol is largely depicted in the space normally reserved for the royal inscriptions (Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. LXIX).

[26] For example, see Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. LXIX and LXXXV.

[27] In another example without the royal chariot, the height of the king is not sacrificed, and his beard is still not the longest one in the scene. In Barnett / Falkner, 1962: LXXXV, Tiglath-pileser III's conical headdress meant his height is slightly smaller than the other non-royal figures in the scene, but his beard is still marginally shorter than the other beard in the scene. In this case the beard was likely shortened to accommodate the gesture of the king, as the right hand at the front of the scene is raised, thus limiting the length of the beard in the scene. I believe that if Tiglath-pileser III was depicted without his conical headdress, there would have been slightly more space for a longer beard.

order to ensure the other identifying items of the king and his royal paraphernalia were included.[28] Therefore, the beard was only one indicator of the masculine status and gender identity of the individual wearing the beard.

The beard (and the lack of one) was also used by others who weren't the king in their own matrix of gender presentation. This is most clearly seen in three examples that reflect three different categories of men in the Assyrian worldview: non-royal Assyrian men who occupy a high rank, non-Assyrian men, and the *ša rēši*, commonly translated as 'eunuch'.

The king's chariot driver is a clear example of how a beard could be used to reflect the status of a non-royal man. Wherever space allowed in the palace reliefs, the Assyrian king had the longer beard of these two individuals, even if by a single row of curls.[29] As previously discussed, in three instances the chariot driver had a beard the same length or longer than that of the Assyrian king, which was because of the need to include the king's royal paraphernalia, when the chariot driver did not.[30] Often the chariot driver is the only other bearded individual in the chariot alongside the king.[31] This is probably indicative of a specific status of the chariot driver related to his masculinity, and is likely demonstrative of the high status of the chariot driver of the Assyrian king. In the textual evidence, the king's chariot driver held a high position, and this is best seen in Remanni-Adad, the chariot driver of the crown prince Assurbanipal.[32] 54 documents in reference to Remanni-

[28] This correlates with the work of McCaffrey, who highlighted some fascinating cases where individuals were depicted with both stereotypically male and female attributes, and the beard is one these attributes identified as 'male' (McCaffrey, 2002: 379–383). McCaffrey also presents a model of four categories of gender for Mesopotamia, which takes into account non-binary genders that are female or male presenting (McCaffrey, 2002: 388). This model demonstrates that even in the non-binary (or 'third gender') category there are variants. I find this model too restrictive and does not reflect the plurality of genders within each category. There are many variants of 'woman', 'man', as well as the variants of the non-binary individuals presented in McCaffrey's work. I therefore chose to follow the intersectional model of hegemonic masculinity as outlined in Christensen / Jensen, 2014. In addition, this argument adds to the concept that portraits of the Neo-Assyrian king were representing someone in the office of kingship, and not intended to represent any specific individual in that role. In this argument, the beard is an important part of the regalia to add, as it was part of the accoutrements of the office (Suter, 2019: 396).

[29] For example, see Barnett, 1976: pl. XII.

[30] Barnett, 1976: pl. XVI, pl. XXVIII; Bleibtreu, Barnett / Falkner, 1998: pl. 60.

[31] For example, in Barnett, 1976: pl. XVI, the other attendant in the chariot is a beardless eunuch.

[32] One example of the high status of the king's chariot driver is SAA 1, 34 rev. 20, where the chariot driver received part of the royal tribute when it was distributed by the king to those in the royal household. In SAA 5, 74 rev. 2–13 the chariot driver was part of a team which accompanied a bodyguard, and in SAA 6 chapter 15 is dedicated to the contracts of Assurbanipal's chariot driver. The high position of the chariot driver may be explained in SAA 3, 34 66, which states that when a chariot does not have a driver it 'rocks about'.

Adad have been preserved.[33] These documents point to a key bureaucratic role of the crown prince's chariot driver within the palace administration, and therefore the long beard could be an identifier of his status. This would therefore mean the beard was important for the presentation of men beyond the Assyrian king and indicated their status to others.

Non-Assyrian men's beards were subject to manipulation by the Assyrian artists to reflect their status in relation to Assyrian men. In Assurbanipal's palace relief BM 124945–6, four foreigners approach the Assyrian king after the siege of Babylon.[34] They appear in a scene with multiple registers, the topmost depicting Assyrian attendants presenting the booty of Babylon before Assurbanipal. Novotny and Watanabe have suggested the four individuals on the lower register should be identified as: the Elamite king Tammarītu; a member of Tammarītu's family; an Arab leader; and a Nabataean.[35] These individuals all have beards that are close to the jaw, and are shorter than that of the Assyrian official on the register above – and are certainly much shorter than that of the Assyrian king. Whilst this is certainly not the major theme of the scene, the beards help to identify these individuals as non-Assyrian, and thus lower in status than either the Assyrian king or the Assyrian official. This is emphasised further in their placement within the scene. The artist placed the Assyrian official directly above the Elamite leader, which visually places the Elamite as lower in status than the Assyrian official.[36] This placement means the beards of these foreigners were not the sole indicators for their identity or status. Novotny and Watanabe make this clear in their identifications of these individuals through other aspects such as their dress, hair, and accompanying texts.[37]

The final example indicates the lack of a beard was also important in the indication of status, as the *ša rēši* (commonly referred to in scholarship as 'eunuch') were visually depicted without a beard.[38] These individuals were depicted in diverse roles, and depending on their activity wore a wide variety of dress in the palace reliefs.[39] There appears to have been no visual marker in terms of costume or dress that distinguished the *ša rēši* from other officials fulfilling similar duties,

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When transporting the king or the gods, this is a serious safety issue, and may cause the king (or the god, as in SAA 3, 34) to fall off. The chariot driver was therefore an important position by necessity.

[33] See SAA 6 chapter 15 for these documents.

[34] Barnett, 1976: pl. XXXV; Novotny / Watanabe, 2008: 5.

[35] Novotny / Watanabe, 2018: 99–103.

[36] Novotny / Watanabe, 2018: 93–94, n. 3.

[37] Novotny / Watanabe, 2008 and 2018.

[38] Here the question of whether these individuals were actually castrated will not be addressed. For this particular question, see N'Shea, 2016.

[39] In the palace reliefs of Assurbanipal alone, we see 'eunuchs' aid the king in religious activities (Barnett, 1976: LIX), were part of a military unit (Barnett, 1976: III), and as scribes making note of prisoners (Barnett, 1976: XVII).

but the lack of a beard made them clearly visible. Whilst the type of beard is simply one of many indicators of status, for the *ša rēši* the lack of beard was the *only* indicator of status. In contrast to the other examples, this may be due to the specific requirement of being a *ša rēši*: the legal barring of having biological children. There is some evidence to suggest this was more than a legal requirement and was reinforced with castration. This would result in physiological differences from non-castrated men, one of which would include the inability to grow a beard as full as other men's.[40] If true, this would be clear evidence that the beard had a definite link to virility and fertility, as the lack of a beard indicated the inability to father children. Regardless, this clean-shaven look allowed others to immediately identify this group's rank and status. The clean-shaven *ša rēši* are possibly the only clear evidence that beards had a connotation to virility, but also serve as a reminder that the lack of a beard was as much an identifier of rank and status as the presence of a beard.

In the visual material there is some evidence that beards were tied to virility – or rather, the lack of a beard was tied to the castration of the *ša rēši.* This does not mean virility was the primary association of the beard, as in other visual depictions of Assyrian kings, Assyrian men, and foreign men, the primary association was one of status. The beard was part of a visual matrix that included other aspects of dress and presentation, and thus cannot be read as evidence for specific statuses on its own.

Beards and changing a man's status

I then turned to the textual attestations of the word for beard in Akkadian – *ziqnu*.[41] In this second section I will begin with explaining the process for gathering a textual corpus of the attestations of *ziqnu* in the Neo-Assyrian material. I will then focus on two motifs in this small corpus: sweeping the ground with a beard and plucking the beard in despair. This section will demonstrate that such manipulations of the beard symbolised a change in masculine status at the hands of the beards' owners.

The results of this second part of the study were surprising, as there were under twenty attestations. For such a public identifier of masculine gender, this was unexpected. However, two textual motifs emerged that demonstrated how the beard could signify a change of status for the individual wearing it.[42]

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[40] An overview of Neo-Assyrian eunuchs and some of their roles and duties can be found in N'Shea, 2016.

[41] CAD s.v. *ziqnu.* Here it is defined as 'beard'.

[42] An interesting aspect of these results was that the textual attestations of beards are overwhelmingly associated with Elamites. Even SAA 17, 105 originates from the region Gambulu, which was located approximately two hundred kilometres to the Northwest of Susa (Parpola / Porter, 2001: 11, B4). The precise reason for this association is difficult to decipher, but I propose two possibilities. The first is that this was a motif that originated

I used the KORP search tool (developed by the University of Helsinki) to search for attestations of *ziqnu* within the ORACC corpus.[43] This method provided eighteen instances of the word *ziqnu*, and Table 2 lists the number of attestations according to the genre of the texts.[44]

There are only eighteen attestations of *ziqnu* in the corpus, which is a surprisingly low number for a key visual descriptor of Neo-Assyrian masculine identity.[45] Even more surprising are the five attestations of *ziqnu* in the royal inscriptions, as seen in Table 2. As these texts were physical manifestations of royal ideology, and the beard is a key aspect in the regalia of masculine kingship, I expected a much higher number of attestations in these texts.

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from this region and was then used against the Elamites in order to send a message in their own terms. This explanation is unlikely, as the earliest instance of this motif is in the letter from Sargon II discussing the Phrygians, who originated from the opposite end of the empire from Elam. The second possibility seems more likely, where under the reign of Sargon II there was a change in how to emphasize subservience, which was then tailored specifically to the Elamites and to those from the region surrounding Elam during the reign of Sennacherib. The connection between these beard motifs and Elamite individuals reached an apex during the reign of Assurbanipal, as his animosity towards Teumman increased. RINAP 5/1, 4 vi 50–59, RINAP 5/1, 11 iv 23–31, and Geers Heft Z p.064 all take place within the overall narrative of the defeat of Teumman, and the subservience of those who were loyal to the Elamite king becoming subservient to Assurbanipal.

[43] This approach is not completely comprehensive, as the data on the Korp database was taken from May 2019 (Jauhiainen / Sahala / Alstola, 2019). As more material is added over time, it is hoped that when this is repeated more material will have been made available, and we can better see the cultural associations with the beard during the Neo-Assyrian period. An important addition to this dataset will be the Sargon II royal inscriptions, which are currently available on ORACC, but not on KORP. These attestations have been included manually. The search function for KORP can be found at the following url: https://korp.csc.fi/korp/?mode=other_languages#?lang=en&cqp=%5B%5D&stats_reduce=word&corpus=oracc_riao,oracc_ribo,oracc_rinap,oracc_saao.

[44] See Appendix 2 for the full corpus.

[45] There is a notable exception to this list, and a flaw in this methodology. Part of this low attestation is due to the method of the search function, which means compounds such as *ša ziqni* ('bearded courtier') do not appear in the search results. There are altogether 24 attestations of *ša ziqni* in a total of 16 texts published in the SAA series, all of which refer to courtiers (SAA 1, 260 rev. 18; SAA 2, 4 rev. 6′; SAA 2, 6 obv. 78, obv. 163, obv. 221, obv. 238, obv. 338; SAA 2, 8 obv. 6, rev. 21; SAA 2, 15 obv. 77–78; SAA 4, 139 4, 15; SAA 4, 142 obv. 4, obv. 12; SAA 4, 144 obv. 4, obv. 13; SAA 4, 148 obv. 6; SAA 9, 7 obv. 4; SAA 10, 257 rev. 12; SAA 10, 294 obv. 21, obv. 30; SAA 11, 164 rev. 8′; SAA 12, 87 rev. 16; SAA 16, 200 rev. 7′). 21 out of the 24 attestations (87.5 %) are specifically mentioned in opposition to the *ša rēši* as a literary device to illustrate the idea of totality. This title demonstrates that beards could act as a categorisation device of the courtiers, but there is no evidence of any power difference between the two groups of courtiers.

Table 2: Attestations of *ziqnu* and genre of text from KORP search function.

Genre	Attestations
Royal inscription	5
Administrative letter	4
Omen	3
Lexical[46]	3
Uncertain or unspecified	2
Scholarly letter	1
Total	18

After assessing the visual media, it was expected that mentions of beards in the textual material would be in direct relation to the king, however there are no attestations of the word *ziqnu* used in relation to the Assyrian king.[47] This points to the beard being an identifier of the king only in the visual media and was not an important status identifier in the textual evidence. From this brief overview, it appears other pieces of royal regalia such as weapons and clothes had a closer connection to the office (and therefore the status) of the king than the beard.[48]

[46] Whilst lexical lists can provide a window into how the world was categorised by the Neo-Assyrians, I found that they were not fruitful texts for the analysis of *ziqnu.* Here the word is largely a descriptor, for example of bearded snakes. There is an interesting connection with lapis lazuli, which Winter has suggested conjures the image of a deep colour rather than the material of the beard (Winter, 1999: 47). Despite this interesting link, I have chosen to exclude these attestations in this study.

[47] The highest number of associations were with Assyrian men and foreign kings, as each have 4 attestations, but this may be due to the presence of a copy of a text within the corpus (SAA 1, 1 is the same as SAA 19, 152). In addition, foreign men and women were both mentioned in the textual corpus twice in relation to beards. Bearded women are only included in the omen texts, and thus it is difficult to ascertain anything more than this was a known phenomenon (CTN 4, 15, obv. i 18′, 20′).

[48] Pongratz-Leisten stresses the divine link of the office of kingship and explains how this is expressed through his titles (Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 198–218). This aspect was also expressed in the use of archery equipment, which had links to Ishtar. For example, in RINAP 5/1, 3 this goddess is described as having ‘quivers hanging on the right and left’.

Table 3: Number of attestations of *ziqnu* and related actions. This is based on the texts in Table 2, but attestations relating to sign lists, statues, animals, and women have been excluded.

Action associated with beard	Attestations
Cutting beards	1[49]
Aging beards	1[50]
Plucked	4[51]
Sweeping/wiping	3[52]
Total	9

Four actions associated with the word *ziqnu* appear in this corpus: cutting the beard; the aging process; plucking or tearing out the beard; and sweeping or wiping with the beard. As seen in Table 3, the latter two categories have the highest number of attestations, but again these are partly due to copies of the same text. Nevertheless, these form two distinct literary motifs: sweeping or wiping the ground or feet of an Assyrian king or his representative, and a man plucking out his own beard. There is no explicit example of these actions being performed in the visual media, and thus they appear to be purely textual motifs.[53] An important note is that these motifs were only present in Sargonid texts, the majority of which

[49] SAA 5, 108 obv. 25–27. It is difficult to assign any real meaning to this action, as this is a broken report of actions in a province. It is also important to note that the word *ziqnu* did not appear with the word for 'shave' (*gullubu*) in this corpus. The action of 'shaving' was used rather generally and was not restricted to the shaving of the beard. For example in SAA 10, 335, an individual's head is shaved. Otherwise shaving denotes an act of consecration or devotion to the Assyrian king (for example, see RINAP 5/2 Assurbanipal 72, obv. 12–13; SAA 10 96 rev. 6–69; SAA 10 97 obv. 6′–8′, b.e. 12′–13′; SAA 18 40 obv. 10′).

[50] Beards described as going grey are only mentioned in SAA 10 301 rev. 1–9. We can assume this is an expression of the aging of the beard. There is very little research on the intersection between masculinity and age, and nothing so far about this during the Neo-Assyrian period. One work has engaged with this topic for the third millennium in Southern Mesopotamia and may be a promising methodology for the Neo-Assyrian period (Goodnick Westenholz / Zsolnay, 2017).

[51] RINAP 5/1, 3 vi 55; RINAP 5/1, 4 vi 57; RINAP 5/1, 7 vi 22′; SAA 17, 105 rev. 10′–rev.e. 11.

[52] Geers Heft Z p.064; RINAP 5/1, 11 iv 28–29; SAA 1, 1 obv. 26–30 (= SAA 19, 152 obv. 26–30).

[53] However, there is an example of a foreign captive soldier whose beard is being held by an Assyrian soldier (Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 175; Chapman, 2004: 39). Karlsson suggests such an action could represent either slitting a throat or cutting a beard (Karlsson, 2016: 236).

were from the reign of Assurbanipal (four texts),[54] with one from Sargon II's reign,[55] and one from the period of Sennacherib.[56] One text is currently unpublished and its exact dating is unknown.[57]

There are two examples of the motif where a beard was used to sweep the ground before the king. The first is an unpublished omen from the British Museum where the king of Elam, Tammarītu, sweeps the ground before Ashurbanipal.[58] The second is a royal inscription from the reign of Assurbanipal, where Tammarītu submitted to the king at the royal chariot. Part of this submission included sweeping the ground before the Assyrian king:[59]

iv 23) ^{m}*tam-ma-ri-tú* ŠEŠ.MEŠ-*šú qin-nu-šú* NUMUN É AD-*šú*
24) *it-ti* 85 NUN.MEŠ *a-li-kut i-du-šú*
25) *la-pa-an* ^{m}*in-da-bi-bi in-nab-tú-nim-ma*
26) *mi-ra-nu-uš-šú-un ina* UGU ŠÀ.MEŠ-*šú-nu*
27) *ip-ši-lu-nim-ma il-lik-u-ni a-di* NINA.KI
28) ^{m}*tam-ma-ri-tu* GÌR.II LUGAL-*ti-ia ú-na-aš-šiq-ma*
29) *qaq-qa-ru ú-še-šir ina ziq-ni-šú*
30) *man-za-az* GIŠ.*ma-gar-ri-ia iṣ-bat-ma*
31) *a-na e-peš* ARAD-*ti-ia ra-man-šú im-nu-ma*

iv 23–27) Tammarītu, his brothers, his family, (and) the seed of his father's house, together with eighty-five nobles who march at his side, fled to me from Indabibi, and (then) crawled naked on their bellies and came to Nineveh.
iv 27–31) Tammarītu kissed the feet of my royal majesty and swept the ground with his beard. He took hold of the platform of my chariot and (then) handed himself over to do obeisance to me.

A variant of this motif is also found in SAA 1, 1, where Sargon II hopes the foreign kings of Que will sweep the shoes of the local governor:[60]

[54] RINAP 5/1, 3 vi 55; RINAP 5/1, 4 vi 57; RINAP 5/1, 7 vi 22′; RINAP 5/1, 11 iv 23–31.
[55] SAA 1, 1 obv. 26–30 – this has a copy in the corpus: SAA 19, 152 obv. 26–30.
[56] SAA 17, 105 rev. 10′ – rev.e. 11.
[57] Geers Heft Z p.064.
[58] Geers Heft Z p.064.
[59] RINAP 5/1, 11 iv 23–31.
[60] SAA 1, 1 obv. 26–30. The location of Que is north of the Levant, on the Southeast coast of Anatolia (Parpola / Porter 2001: 2 B4). Here the variants are the presence of the Assyrian governor rather than the king as the representative of the Assyrian empire, and the wiping of shoes rather than sweeping the ground. This variation should be read in the same manner as foreign kings submitting to the Assyrian king. In this case, the governor is the regional authority the foreign kings have to answer to, and thus are submitting accordingly.

obv. 26) *ša taš-pur-an-ni ma-a* LÚ^{V}.A-*šip-ri ša* ^{m}[*ur*]*-pala-a*
27) TA^{V} LÚ^{V}.A-*šipri* KUR.*mus-ka-a-a a-na* DI-*me in* UGU-*ḫi-ia*
28) *it-tal-ka lil-li-ka aš-šur* ^{d}UTU EN *u* ^{d}PA
29) *liq-bi-u* LUGAL.MEŠ-*ni ḫa-an-nu-ti gab-bi-šú-nu* TA^{V} *ziq-ni-šú-nu*
30) KUŠ.DA.E.SIR-*ka lu-šak-ki-lu*

26–28a) As to what you wrote: "A messenger of Urpala'a came to me for an audience with the Phrygian messenger" – let him come,
28b–30) and let Aššur, Šamaš, Bel and Nabû command that all these kings should wipe your sandals with their beards!

In order to fully understand the cultural associations behind this motif and the role of the beard within this, it has to be broken down into its constituent parts. There are four main elements present in this motif: 1) the act of sweeping and wiping; 2) the posture of the participant and the resultant height differences; 3) the public performance of this act; 4) the consent of the foreign king.

The word used for 'sweeping' had clear ritual connotations. The word *ešēru* is used for 'sweep' in our example, but is also found in four ritual reports in SAA 20.[61] Sweeping was therefore primarily an act of purification within the cultic sphere, but there was an additional status element tied to this action. SAA 20, 83 describes the royal protocol surrounding a royal feast, and includes attendants called *ša-bēti-šanie* sweeping and cleaning after the royal court.[62] Here those of a lower status cleaned after the elite, and thus whomever 'swept' was both performing a ritual act but was also of a lower status than those they were sweeping for. In the context of our 'beard-sweeping' motif, sweeping reduced the foreign king to acting like a palace servant through the action of helping to purify the regent of the god Ashur.

The second aspect of this motif is the posture of the individual performing this act.[63] The only way to sweep the ground or feet with one's own beard is to physically lower the head to the feet or the ground.[64] This action created a clear message of subservience based on the relative heights of the Assyrian king and the person sweeping the ground or the feet.[65] This was a representation of the differ-

[61] CAD s.v. *ešēru*. The general meaning is 'to put in place' or 'to clean', but the fifth listing in the CAD gives the meaning 'to sweep'. The term is also used in the following texts: SAA 20, 11 obv. 18; SAA 20, 24 rev. 8; SAA 20, 25 rev. 8; SAA 20, 33 rev. i 53.
[62] SAA 20, 33 rev. i 52–53.
[63] For an overview of the importance of posture in the palace reliefs of Ashurnaṣirpal II, see Cifarelli, 1998.
[64] The alternative method would be to shave the beard and use the trimmings as some sort of brush, but there is no evidence that this was the case.
[65] An example of a similar posture can be seen in the palace relief Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. LXXXV.

ence in status between the Assyrian king and the foreigner, and carried the message of the subservience of the foreigner to the Assyrian king.

This height difference was even more stark when submitting to the Assyrian king whilst in his chariot, or in his throne.[66] In both cases, the Assyrian king was elevated from the ground, which would result in the head of the foreign king or attendant being physically lower than the entire body of the king.[67] The foreign leader was in a very literal sense beneath the Assyrian king.

The third aspect of this action is its public performance. Whether in the royal palace, or during a campaign, audience members and royal attendants were present to witness this event.[68] As the audience gathered before the king, it would have been more difficult for those in the back to see the events happening directly in front of the king. The action of sweeping the ground before the king caused the foreigner to go from standing to a kneeling posture close to the floor. Those witnesses not in the front row of the audience would have seen the foreign king's head and headdress suddenly disappear from view. The foreign king effectively ceased to exist for most of the audience members, and his disappearance was due to the ability of the Assyrian king to subjugate this foreigner.

The final aspect of this action was the consent of the foreign king. It is striking that this action was not performed through a third party – there is no mention of an Assyrian forcing the beard of the foreign king to the floor or the shoes. Forced coercion by manipulating the beard was certainly possible and is demonstrated in a palace relief from the reign of Sennacherib, that depicts an Assyrian soldier grasping a foreign captive's beard whilst also holding a dagger.[69] In this image the message was clear: the destruction of foreign soldiers and their masculine status was literally in the hands of Assyrian soldiers.

In contrast, the literary motifs see foreign rulers manipulating their own beards for the service of the Assyrian king. This action relied on the consent of the foreign king to carry out the sweeping or the wiping. The consent was important to demonstrate to others that forced coercion was not necessary for foreign kings to recognise the might and superiority of the Assyrian king – no matter how much this contradicted reality.

We have a glimpse into the rationale of why foreign kings should willingly carry out this action themselves. In SAA 1, 1 the word *šukkulu* is used instead of

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[66] This elevation can be seen in palace reliefs Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 343 and 109.

[67] RINAP 5/1, 11 iv 23–31; Geers Heft Z p.064. The foreigners' head would specifically be at the same height as the gap between the ground and the Assyrian king's feet.

[68] Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 343 is part of a wider scene depicting the aftermath of the siege of Lachish, with Sennacherib receiving both Assyrian officials and foreign peoples. It is clear that the king could also receive individuals in his chariot during the battle itself (RINAP 5/1, 11 iv 23–31 and Geers Heft Z p.064).

[69] Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 175.

ešēru, and is defined in the CAD as 'to wipe'.[70] The other attestations of this word (as listed in the CAD) make it clear *šukkulu* had a cultic association like *ešēru*, but there was an additional association of wiping away sadness. The usage of the word *šukkulu* in SAA 1, 1 implies that the foreign kings wiping the shoes of the Assyrian governor was a cultic action that wiped away their tears. Therefore, foreign kings willingly performed this action as it brought them, and potentially their people, happiness.

When including all of the different elements of this motif, we should view foreign kings sweeping the ground before the king or the shoes of the king's representative in the following manner. This was a foreign king willingly using his masculine status (as represented by his beard) to recognize the cultic status of the king, through the ritualistic purification action of 'sweeping' or 'wiping', whilst also accepting his subservient role within the Assyrian imperial system.

There are also two examples of a different motif involving beards, where beards were 'plucked'. The first example is a fragmentary letter from Gambulu from the reign of Sennacherib, where the diviner Šulâ plucks out his beard in frustration. Due to the preservation of this document, we cannot say with any certainty the precise political situation that caused Šulâ to pluck his beard:[71]

rev. 9′) *a-na-ku ina* ^{kur}LÚ.KÚR *u* 1-*en* [ARAD *šá* LUGAL$^{?}$]
10′) ^{m}*šu-la-a* LÚ.ḪAL *i-qab-*⌜*bi*⌝
rev.e. 11) *u* ziq-ni-šú i-ba-qa-*⌜*an*⌝ [*um-ma*]
12) *am-mì-ni* LUGAL *qab-li-*[*šú*$^{?}$]
13) *i-rak-ka-si la-pa-ni-*⌜*šú*⌝
14) *la ip-làḫ i-*⌜*x*⌝+[*x*]

rev. 9′ – rev.e. 14) I am in the land of the enemy. Even the sole [king's servant], Šulâ the haruspex, says, tearing at his beard: "Why does the king gird his loins? He has never shown respect to him!" […]

The second example details how two Elamite messengers went mad upon seeing the decapitated head of their king Teumman. Umbadarâ proceeds to pluck his beard, and the other messenger Nabû-damiq stabs himself:[72]

vi 50) ^{m}*um-*⌜*ba-da*⌝*-ra-a* $^{m.d}$MUATI-SIG$_5$*-iq*
51) LÚ.MAḪ.MEŠ *šá* ^{m}*te-um-man* LUGAL KUR.ELAM.MA.KI
52) *ša* ^{m}*te-um-man ina* ŠU.II-*šú-nu iš-pu-ra ši-pir me-re-eḫ-tú šá ina maḫ-ri-ia*
53) *ak-lu-u ú-qa-*ʾ*u-u pa-an ši-kin tè-e-me-ia*

[70] CAD s.v. *šukkulu*. Here the definitions include 'wiping out a vessel', 'to wipe away tears', and usages in omen texts.
[71] SAA 17, 105 rev. 9′ – rev.e. 14.
[72] RINAP 5/1, 4 vi 50–59.

54) *ni-kis* SAG.DU ^{m}*te-um-man* EN-*šú-nu*
55) *qé-reb* NINA.KI *e-mu-ru-ma*
56) *šá-né-e ṭè-e-me iṣ-bat-su-nu-ti*
57) ^{m}*um-ba-da-ra-a ib-qu-ma ziq-na-a-šú*
58) $^{m.d}$MUATI-SIG$_5$-*iq ina* GÍR AN.BAR *šib-bi-šú*
59) *is-ḫu-la ka-ra-as-su*

vi 50–59) (As for) Umbadarâ (and) Nabû-damiq, the envoys of Teumman – the king of the land Elam – by whose hands Teumman sent insolent message(s), whom I had detained before me by making (them) wait for the issuing of my decision, they saw the decapitated head of Teumman, their lord, in Nineveh and madness took hold of them. Umbadarâ pulled out his (own) beard and Nabû-damiq stabbed himself in the stomach with his iron belt-dagger.

What is clear from these two examples is that plucking one's own beard was an indication of a distressed mind. The juxtaposition of Umbadarâ and Nabû-damiq's reaction to seeing the decapitation of Teumman emphasised that both individuals were willing to cause harm and pain to themselves at the sight of the death of Teumman. This self-harm was enough to read the actions of Umbadarâ and Nabû-damiq as distress, but there is another element behind this brief episode.

Umbadarâ was forcing a transformation of identity upon himself, and this was part of why plucking out the beard was seen as a symptom of a distressed individual. By trying to remove his beard, Umbadarâ was attempting to symbolically change his masculinity and his status. Although the circumstances are not fully discernible, is it clear that Šulâ was also experiencing an episode distressing enough for him to try to change his masculine status as well. The precise nature of what status these individuals were aiming to transform into is difficult to determine at present. I suggest that since both eunuchs and priests expressed some sort of non-bearded masculine status, both Umbadarâ and Šulâ were attempting to change their status to one similar to either eunuchs or priests.[73] This is not to say that Umbadarâ and Šulâ were literally aiming to change their status to that of a eunuch or priest. Rather, I suggest that there was a shared aspect of the masculine status of eunuchs and priests that Umbadarâ and Šulâ were attempting to express through the removal of their beards.

The textual material reveals that the beard was not a motif used to emphasise the Assyrian king's masculinity. Instead, two motifs were identified: sweeping the ground before the king with a beard and plucking out a beard. Both of these actions were willingly carried out by the wearers of the beard and should be read as foreign kings consenting to a change of masculine status.

[73] N'Shea, 2016: 216–217.

Conclusion

Beards were clearly one indicator of masculinity during the Neo-Assyrian period, but also had associations to the status of the beard wearer. It was not a status indicator in and of itself, contra Madhloom's idea about it signifying three different 'ranks' of Neo-Assyrian men. Instead, it was one point in a matrix of visual indicators that worked together to express the masculinity and status of the individual. This is best seen in the regalia of kingship, within which the beard was only one item amongst many that worked together to express the status of the king.

Whilst other authors have focussed on the beard as an indicator of kingship, I have demonstrated that beards were important status markers for other men in the Neo-Assyrian period. I showed that the beard of the royal chariot driver was a tool to indicate his relatively high status within the palace administration, and that the length of the beards of foreigners was one way for artists to express the higher status of Assyrians. The final case study was the 'eunuchs', who demonstrated that the lack of a beard was just as important in communicating a form of masculinity. This final case study also suggested a link between the lack of a beard and the inability to have biological children. This is not to say the presence of a beard was an indication of a man's virility, but rather the lack of one might have had this association.

The textual evidence was significantly scarcer, but a clear motif emerged that included a foreign dignitary willingly wiping either the floor or the shoes of a representative of the authority of Assyria (whether this was the king or a governor acting in the king's stead). Every aspect of this textual motif was designed to describe a change in status. The foreign dignitaries change from high-status individuals in their own cultures and regions to servants of the Assyrian empire. This aspect of transformation was also present in the other textual motif, where a man plucked his own beard in frustration or despair. In both instances of this motif circumstances were so distressing that it induced a fundamental change in the men's statuses.

Beards were therefore an important aspect in the formulation of Neo-Assyrian gender. They expressed not only men's masculinity, but also their status within Assyrian society. Furthermore, the textual evidence points to the self-manipulation of the beard before the king as a public way for men to change their status, or to transform their masculinity into another form of masculinity.

Appendix 1: Visual corpus

Bibliographic Reference	Assyrian king	Relative Length of Assyrian King's Beard
Albenda, 1986: fig. 61	Sargon II	Equal
Albenda, 1986: fig. 62	Sargon II	Equal
Albenda, 1986: pl. 121	Sargon II	Longest
Albenda, 1986: pl. 44	Sargon II	Equal
Albenda, 1986: pl. 70	Sargon II	Longest
Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. VIII	Tiglath-pileser III	Equal
Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. XVI	Tiglath-pileser III	Longest
Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. XXII	Tiglath-pileser III	Longest
Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. LIX	Tiglath-pileser III	Longest
Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. LXIII	Tiglath-pileser III	Equal
Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. LXIX–LXXI	Tiglath-pileser III	Equal
Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. LXXXV	Tiglath-pileser III	Shorter
Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. XCVII–XCVIII	Tiglath-pileser III	Longest
Barnett / Falkner, 1962: pl. CXVII	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest
Barnett, 1976: pl. I	Assurbanipal	Longest
Barnett, 1976: pl. V	Assurbanipal	Longest
Barnett 1976: pl. VIII	Assurbanipal	Longest
Barnett 1976: pl. XI	Assurbanipal	Longest
Barnett 1976: pl. XII	Assurbanipal	Longest
Barnett 1976: pl. XVI	Assurbanipal	Equal
Barnett 1976: pl. XXVIII	Assurbanipal	Equal
Barnett 1976: pl. XXXV	Assurbanipal	Longest
Barnett 1976: pl. XLIX	Assurbanipal	Longest
Barnett 1976: pl. LI	Assurbanipal	Longest
Barnett, 1976: pl. LII	Assurbanipal	Longest
Barnett, 1976: pl. LIII	Assurbanipal	Longest
Barnett, 1976: pl. LVI	Assurbanipal	Longest & Equal (multiple images on one relief)
Barnett, 1976: pl. LVII	Assurbanipal	Longest
Barnett, 1976: pl. LXI	Assurbanipal	Ambiguous

Bibliographic Reference	Assyrian king	Relative Length of Assyrian King's Beard
Barnett, 1976: pl. LXV	Assurbanipal	Longest
Barnett, 1976: pl. LXVII	Assurbanipal	Equal
Barnett, 1976: pl. LXVIII	Assurbanipal	Longest
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 35	Sennacherib	Equal
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 48	Sennacherib	Shorter
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 60	Sennacherib	Equal
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 91	Sennacherib	Longest
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: Pl. 109	Sennacherib	Ambiguous
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 114	Sennacherib	Ambiguous
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 191, 273b	Sennacherib	Equal
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 205	Sennacherib	Longest
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 310	Ashurbanipal	Ambiguous
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 343	Sennacherib	Ambiguous
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 379	Sennacherib	Longest
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 412	Sennacherib	Ambiguous
Bleibtreu / Barnett / Turner, 1988: pl. 479	Sennacherib	Ambiguous
Budge, 1914: pl. XI	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest
Budge, 1914: pl. XII 1	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Equal
Budge, 1914: pl. XII 2	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest
Budge, 1914: pl. XIII 1	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest
Budge, 1914: pl. XIV 1	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest
Budge, 1914: pl. XVII 1	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Shorter
Budge, 1914: pl. XVIII 1	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest
Budge, 1914: pl. XIX 1	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Equal
Budge, 1914: pl. XIX 2	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Equal
Budge, 1914: pl. XX 1	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Equal
Budge, 1914: pl. XXII 1	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest
Budge, 1914: pl. XXIII 1	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest
Budge, 1914: pl. XXIII 2	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest
Budge, 1914: pl. XXV 1	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest
Budge, 1914: pl. XXIX	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest
Budge, 1914: pl. XXXI	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest

Bibliographic Reference	Assyrian king	Relative Length of Assyrian King's Beard
Budge, 1914: pl. XXXIII	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Equal
Budge, 1914: pl. XXXV	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest
Budge, 1914: pl. XLVI	Ashurnaṣirpal II	Longest

Appendix 2: Textual corpus

Text	Genre	Individual	Action of beard
Rm 2, 134: obv. ii 5'–8' (Geers Heft Z p.064)	Extispicy omen	Tammarītu, king of Elam	Sweeps the ground before Assurbanipal
CTN 4, 15: obv. i 18'	Omen	Woman	Wears a beard
CTN 4, 15: obv. i 20'	Omen	Woman	Wears a beard
CT 18, pl. 6, K 00052: rev. 17	Lexical	None	None
CT 14, pl. 7, K 04216 +: obv. 21	Lexical	Snake	Wears a beard
MSL 3, 94: ST rev. ii 18	Sign list	None	None
MSL 14, 301: C1 8'	Sign list	None	None
VAT 14275	Lexical	Goat	Wears a beard
NAP 5, 3: vi 48–56	Royal inscription	Umbadarâ, envoy of Teumman	Plucks his beard
RINAP 5, 4: vi 50–59	Royal inscription	Umbadarâ, envoy of Teumman	Plucks his beard
RINAP 5, 7: vi 13"–23"	Royal inscription	Umbadarâ, envoy of Teumman	Plucks his beard
RINAP 5, 11: iv 23–31	Royal inscription	Tammarītu	Sweeps the ground before Ashurbanipal
RINAP 5, Assyrian Tablet 3: rev. 62	Royal inscription	Statues	Wears a beard
SAA 1, 1: obv. 26–30	Letter	Foreign kings	Sweeps the sandals of Assyrian governor
SAA 5, 108: obv. 25–27	Letter	Foreign men	Trimmed
SAA 10, 301: rev. 1–9	Letter	Grandchildren of cultic attendants	Aging

Text	Genre	Individual	Action of beard
SAA 17, 105: rev. 9–rev.e.14	Letter	Foreign man	Plucks his beard
SAA 19, 152 (copy of SAA 1, 1): obv. 26–30	Letter	Foreign kings	Sweeps the sandals of Assyrian governor

Abbreviations

CAD Oppenheim, A. L. (ed.), 1956 ff.: *The Assyrian Dictionary of the University of Chicago*. Chicago.

CRRAI Compte Rendu Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale.

CT 14 Budge, E. A. W., 1902: *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets, etc., in the British Museum, Part XIV*. London.

CT 18 Budge, E. A. W., 1904: *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets, etc., in the British Museum, Part XVIII*. London.

CTN 4 Wiseman, D. J. / Black, J. A., 1996: *Literary Texts from the Temple of Nabû*. Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud IV. London.

Geers Heft Unpublished volumes of copies of texts and fragments from the British Museum Kouyunjik collection.

KORP *Corpus infrastructure of Språkbanken* (the Swedish Language Bank). Jauhiainen / Sahala / Alstola 2019.

MSL 3 Hallock, R. T. / Landsberger, B. / Schuster, H. S. / Sachs, A. (eds.), 1955: *Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon* / *Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon*. Rom.

MSL 14 Civil, M. (ed.), 1979: *Ea A = nâqu, Aa A = nâqu, with their Forerunners and Related Texts*. Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon / Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon XIV. Rom.

ORACC Open Richly Annotated Cuneiform Corpus, accessible via http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/.

RINAP 5/1 Novotny, J. / Jeffers, J., 2018: *The Royal Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal (668–631 BC), Aššur-etel-ilāni (630–627 BC) and Sîn-šarra-iškun (626–612 BC), Kings of Assyria, Part 1*. Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 5/1. University Park.

RINAP 5/2 Novotny, J. / Jeffers, J., 2021: 'RINAP 5/2 and 5/3', RINAP 5: *The Royal Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal, Aššur-etel-ilāni, and Sîn-šarra-iškun*, The RINAP 5 Project, a sub-project of MOCCI, [http://oracc.museum.upenn.edu/rinap/rinap5/rinap52and53/].

Rm. Museum siglum of the British Museum (Rassam).

SAA 1 Parpola, S., 1987: *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I: Letters from Assyria and the West*. State Archives of Assyria 1. Helsinki.

SAA 2 Parpola, S. / Watanabe, K., 1988: *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths.* State Archives of Assyria 2. Helsinki.
SAA 3 Livingstone, A., 1989: *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea*. [State Archives of Assyria 3. Helsinki.
SAA 4 Starr, I., 1990: *Queries to the Sungod: Divination and Politics in Sargonid Assyria*. State Archives of Assyria 4. Helsinki.
SAA 5 Lanfranchi, G. B. / Parpola, S., 1990: *The Correspondence of SargonII, Part II: Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces*. State Archives of Assyria 5. Helsinki.
SAA 6 Kwasman, T. / Parpola, S., 1991: *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh, Part I: Tiglath-Pileser III through Esarhaddon*. State Archives of Assyria 6. Helsinki.
SAA 9 Parpola, S., 1997: *Assyrian Prophecies*. State Archives of Assyria 9. Helsinki.
SAA 10 Parpola, S., 1993: *Letters from Assyrian and Babylonian Scholars*. State Archives of Assyria 10. Helsinki.
SAA 11 Fales, F. M. / Postgate, J. N., 1995: *Imperial Administrative Records, Part II: Provincial and Military Administration*. State Archives of Assyria 11. Helsinki.
SAA 12 Kataja, L. / Whiting, R., 1995: *Grants, Decrees and Gifts of the Neo-Assyrian Period.* State Archives of Assyria 12. Helsinki.
SAA 16 Luukko, M. / Van Buylaere, G., 2002: *The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon.* State Archives of Assyria 16. Helsinki.
SAA 17 Dietrich, M., 2003: *The Neo-Babylonian Correspondence of Sargon and Sennacherib*. State Archives of Assyria 17. Helsinki.
SAA 18 Reynolds, F. S., 2003: *The Babylonian Correspondence of Esarhaddon and Letters to Assurbanipal and Sin-šarru-iškun from Northern and Central Babylonia*. State Archives of Assyria 18. Helsinki.
SAA 19 Luukko, M., 2013: *The Correspondence of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II from Calah/Nimrud*. State Archives of Assyria 19. Helsinki.
SAA 20 Parpola, S., 2017: *Assyrian Royal Rituals and Cultic Texts*. State Archives of Assyria 20. Helsinki.
SAAB *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin*
VAT Museum siglum of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (Vorderasiatische Abteilung. Tontafeln)

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Warrior Kings

The Changing Facets of Heroic Kingship in Assyria

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Introduction

In the Ancient Near East war was a reality. There is plenty of archaeological evidence for warfare from the 4th millennium BCE on.[1] War represented a constant and permanent threat to the rural population and was the normal way to extend the control and the influence of states or rulers.

In our cultural memory the Assyrian kings are particularly famous for their fierce and ruthless warfare. This is mostly due to the Biblical stories about them and to their transformation into European narratives. Lord Byron's famous opening line "The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold" of his poem "the Destruction of Sennacherib" is just one telling example.

Since war was a reality most of the military actions of Assyrian armies, such as the yearly campaigns, the military presence in conquered territories, or the marches through vassal states were part of this reality and the result of tactical or strategic considerations. This holds true even for of the undisputable atrocities depicted on palace reliefs or mentioned in royal inscriptions.[2]

But this is not the topic of this conference, which is dealing with identity and especially with the king as nodal point for Assyrian identity. How did the Assyrian kings saw themselves as warriors? And how were they seen by others? Before approaching these topics, let me share some personal considerations.

Following Aristoteles, we tend to define identity as a set of characteristic features, that are essential for an individual or a group of individuals. This definition was heavily disputed for centuries and it still is. Ludwig Wittgenstein challenged the usefulness of the whole concept for definitions.[3] Nevertheless, the idea of "collective identity" witnesses a remarkable renaissance today. Francis Fukuyama speaks of a modern framing of identity,[4] and Kwame Anthony Appiah even called it a useful fiction based on assumptions, that have little ties to reality.[5] Is this, our modern situation, comparable or different to the Assyrian one? How did the "ex-

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[1] Reichel, 2006 and 2009. I want to thank the Centre of Excellence in Ancient Near Eastern Empires at the University of Helsinki for inviting me to the conference "The Neo-Assyrian King as a Nodal Point of Neo-Assyrian Identity," the Austrian embassy in Helsinki for making my trip possible, and an anonymous reviewer for several valuable remarks.

[2] Cf. Nadali, 2019.

[3] Wittgenstein, 2003: 5.5303.

[4] Fukuyama, 2018.

[5] Appiah, 2018.

ternal social being" and the "inner self" correspond in Assyria? And who defined the elements of this "external social being"?

In the discussion about Assyrian royal images and self-images one should clearly distinguish between "identities", "concepts", "roles" and "qualities" connected with the monarch. Most of the features described below were inherent to the Assyrian "concept" of kingship, some were "qualities" expected in specific situations and others were "roles" adopted by certain kings.

This paper consists of three parts. The first part will describe the concept of the royal warrior within the framework of Assyrian state ideology and take a brief look at the history of its research. The second part will trace the development of this concept from Old Assyrian times to Ashurbanipal and point at several individual features. The third part finally will try to give a fresh perspective on the concept of the royal warrior by using Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance as a guideline.

Heroic kingship in Assyria

Theodore Olmstead in 1918 was the first to acknowledge the image of the royal warrior as purposely created by the Assyrian kings. He coined the phrase of their "calculated frightfulness."[6] He saw the description and depiction of cruelties committed by Assyrian soldiers as a means of war (today we would say "terror") which, in connection with the superiority of the Assyrian armies, created a frightening reputation that would deter enemies from fighting. A passage in the annals of Sargon II reads: "already at the mentioning of my name they stood in awe and their arms sank down powerless" (*ana zikir šumēja išhutūma irmā idāšun*).[7]

In the following decades, the study of the royal warrior in Assyria was inextricably linked with the name of Ernst Weidner, who spent his later years as head of the Oriental department at the University of Graz. He not only presented most of the first reliable editions of Assyrian royal inscriptions from the second millennium BCE, but also worked on the self-portrayal of Assyrian kings in royal epics and on palace reliefs.[8]

In 1939 René Labat addressed the religious character of Assyro-Babylonian kingship.[9] In doing so he started a discussion that is ongoing even today.

In the 1980ties the study of Assyrian kingship got new impulses. Kirk Grayson's new edition of the Assyrian royal inscriptions within the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project[10] paved the way for a totally new set of studies. It laid the textual foundations for these analyses and it created a network of scholars that

[6] Olmstead, 1918.
[7] Fuchs, 1994: 176 and 337: 397.
[8] E.g., Weidner, 1939; 1959 and 1963.
[9] Labat, 1939.
[10] Grayson 1987; 1991 and 1996.

met regularly and exchanged ideas and research results. The most famous of these meetings was the one in Cetona in Italy in June 1980 on "New horizons" in the approach on Assyria royal inscriptions.[11]

The last twenty years were dominated by the question if the Assyrian monarch was a divine being, that was closely watched and guided by a group of academic experts that Simo Parpola called "a scholarly mafia,"[12] or if he was a self-determined and autocratic ruler. Stefan Maul described him as the earthly representative of the god Ashur, who was the true ruler of Assyria.[13] Mattias Karlsson on the other hand, dismissed the notion of a divine nature of the Assyrian king and stressed his function as an active mediator between men and gods.[14] In her study of religion and ideology in Assyria Beate Pongratz-Leisten outlined the Assyrian notions of kingship and royal self-portrayal in the broader context of a Sumero-Babylonian-Assyrian ideological discourse and described the example of Ninurta as role-model for the Assyrian king.[15] Recently Salvatore Gaspa analysed the warrior image of the Assyrian kings as one way of legitimizing their rule.[16]

The combination of religion and political ideology produced a "larger than life"-image of the king.[17] His right to rule is thereby ascertained by his individual courage and his personal superiority over his enemies. This superiority is expressed in certain deeds on campaigns and in the royal hunt, which are described in royal inscriptions and depicted in the palace reliefs. Convinced that the ways of representing the Assyrian king were constantly discussed and reinterpreted by the intellectual elite and the monarch, the terms "self-image" and "self-representation" are used for these forms of presentation. Individual kings had a formative and remaining influence on their personal image, although this influence was limited by the general guidelines of religious ideology, as will be discussed below.

What was the self-image of the Assyrian king as a warrior? To answer this question, one could start with a look at the epithets in the Assyrian royal inscriptions. The best example is Ashurnasirpal's II long inscription from the Ninurta temple in Kalhu.[18] There the king is called "heroic warrior (*eṭlu qardu*), fearless in battle (*lā adiru tuqmāte*), trampler of all enemies, establisher of victory over all lands, capable in combat (*lē'û qabli*), foremost in battle (*ašarēd tuqmāte*), conqueror of cities and highlands (*kāšid ālī huršāni*), exalted and merciless hero

[11] Fales, 1981.
[12] Parpola, 1983: xvii.
[13] Maul, 1999: 206–07, 212–13; cf. Machinist, 2011.
[14] Karlsson, 2016: 75–123.
[15] Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 219–270.
[16] Gaspa, 2020.
[17] Karlsson, 2016: 113–123 and 125–139. For a general study see Strathern, 2019, especially the chapter on the divinization of kingship, 164–194.
[18] Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.1: i 34–35.

(*uršānu tizqaru lā padû*). In other texts he is described as "strong one" (*gešru*)[19] and as "martial king" (*šarru dapīnu*).[20] He boasts in a self-praise: "I am a hero, I am a warrior, I am a lion, I am a man" (*uršānāku qarradāku labbāku zikarāku*).[21] This is paralleled by the almost exclusive use of the first person singular in the narrative sections of the military accounts: "I mustered my chariot-troops", "I marched," "I besieged, conquered and defeated,"[22] "I massacred many of them" and finally "I razed, destroyed and burnt their cities (*ālānišunu appul aqqur ina išāti ašrup*)."[23]

In the palace reliefs from Kalhu the king is depicted in the same way. He leads his army into battle. He stands in his war chariot shooting arrows at the enemies and crushing them under the hooves of his horses. He is always in the frontline during the siege of a city.

As Mattias Karlsson rightly observed, the Assyrian king is depicted in texts and reliefs as an almost super-human figure.[24] He could easily stand the comparison with the Marvel Super-Heroes of today.

The role as warrior was intricately connected with the priestly functions of the Assyrian king.[25] The deities Ashur, Ishtar, or Ninurta (sometimes also Nergal, Shamash, or Adad) gave the orders for royal warfare and demanded the punishment of their enemies. In the inscription mentioned above Ashurnasirpal writes: "Because of my voluntary offerings and my prayers Ishtar, the mistress who loves my priesthood, approved of me and she set her mind on making war and battle."[26] Elsewhere he is called "conqueror of the enemies of Ashur" (*kāšid ajābūt Aššur*).[27]

The idea of the ruler as warrior of the gods is not restricted to Assyria. One finds it quite regularly in other Ancient Near Eastern state ideologies. However, an Assyrian peculiarity was the combination of this idea with the claim for universal rule, illustrated by the divine command to conquer all surrounding territories that would not submit to the power of Assyria.[28] Ashurnasirpal II for instance is called the king "who makes the insubmissive to Ashur bow down in the border districts above and below" (*mušekniš lā māgirūt Aššur ša pāṭāti eliš u šapliš*).[29] The final goal of Assyrian imperialism was the sovereignty of the god Ashur over

[19] E.g. Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.17: i 34.
[20] Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.40: 6.
[21] Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.17, i 35–36.
[22] E.g. Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.17: iv 89 or Grayson, 1996: A.0.102.8: 50'.
[23] Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.1: 43–54.
[24] Karlsson, 2016: 113.
[25] Machinist, 2011: 407–09; Karlsson, 2016: 93–103; Gaspa, 2020: 122–127.
[26] Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.1: i 37–38.
[27] Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.1: i 28.
[28] E.g. Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.40: 11–12, Grayson, 1996: A.0.102.2: i 13–14.
[29] Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.40: 3–4.

the whole world. The expansion of the "land of Assyria" became one of the primary duties of Assyrian monarchs.[30]

This duty is clearly addressed in the Assyrian coronation texts. Line 17 of Ashurbanipal's coronation hymn reads "May they (the great gods) give him (the king) a just sceptre to extend the land and his people" (*ḫaṭṭa iširtu ana ruppuš māti u nišēšu liddinūniššu*). [31] Thereafter Ninurta himself transfers his divine weapon to the king (r. 6).[32] The concluding prayer expresses the wish, the great gods may place in his hand "the weapon of war and battle" (*kak qabli u tāhāzi*) and deliver him the "black-headed" people, that he may rule over them as their legitimate shepherd.[33]

We find this duty also expressed in many royal inscriptions. The epithet "enlarger of borders and boundaries" (*murappiš miṣrī u kudurrī*) is attested numerous times since the reign of Adadnarari I.[34] The inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III include several passages where the gods are said to put weapons in the hand of the king, and to command him to conquer. The following example comes from the inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II: "When Ashur, the lord who called my name, who makes my sovereignty supreme, placed his merciless weapon in my lordly arms."[35]

An inscription of Shalmaneser III reads: "When Ashur, the great lord, chose me in his steadfast heart, with his holy eyes, and named me for the shepherdship of Assyria, he put a strong weapon in my grasp, which fells the insubordinate. He crowned me with a lofty crown and sternly commanded me to rule and subdue all the lands insubmissive to Ashur."[36]

Such a presentation of weapons is depicted on the "Broken Obelisk" from the time of Ashurbelkala. There a divine emblem is depicted with a hand transferring bow and arrows to the king.[37] In the royal inscriptions this weapon is called "divine" (*kašūšu*), "fierce" (*ezzu*), or "merciless" (*lā pādâ*) and sometimes the king himself is compared to this weapon of the great gods.[38]

The king's role as warrior was clearly assigned by the gods of Assyria. Therefore Beate Pongratz-Leisten argued for a "sacralization of war" and a "theologization of history."[39] Hayim Tadmor was convinced, that every Assyrian war was

[30] Tadmor, 1999: 55; Galter, 2014: 329–330; Karlsson, 2016: 113–122; Liverani, 2017: 41–54.
[31] Livingstone, 1989: 26–27, no. 11: 17.
[32] Livingstone, 1989, 26–27, no. 11: rev. 5; Karlsson, 2016: 119–120; Galter, 2020: 33–36.
[33] Livingstone, 1989: 26–27, no. 11: rev. 17–18.
[34] Grayson, 1987: A.0.76.1: 15; compare Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.40: 8; Galter, 2014: 329.
[35] Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.1: i 17–18; see also A.0.101.17: I 23–25 and 54–59.
[36] Grayson, 1996: A.0.102.2: i 12–14.
[37] Börker-Klähn, 1982: vol. 2, fig. 131.
[38] E.g. Grayson, 1991: A.0.101.1: i 11; see Karlsson, 2016: 115–116; Galter, 2020: 35–36.
[39] Pongratz-Leisten, 2001: 230; see also Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 258–262.

a "holy war", and Mario Liverani follows him here.[40] On the other hand, Carsten Colpe has stressed the fact, that not every war for real or supposed religious motives is automatically a 'holy war.'[41] Mattias Karlsson rightly downgraded the importance of this question: "Holy wars or not, the king had the religious function of warrior of the deities."[42]

The mythological dimension

As royal warrior the king resembled the god Ninurta, the divine hero and avenger of his father Ashur. He takes on divine epithets such as "flood wave" (*abūbu*), "raging lion" (*labbu*), "wild bull" (*rīmu*), or "ferocious dragon" (*ušumgallu ekdu*).[43] The stories about Ninurta and his valiant exploits provided the mythological basis for the heroic kingship in Assyria. Especially the accounts of his fights against the Anzû-bird or the Asakku-demon as preserved in Lugal-e and Angimdimma formed the conceptional framework for the Assyrian campaigns.[44]

The combat myths about Ninurta clearly state that his fights successfully secured the divine victory over chaos and the (re-)establishment of the universal order. In the same way the victorious campaigns of the Assyrian kings prepared the (re-)establishment of the Assyrian empire within the known world. Several passages in Assyrian royal inscriptions indicate that the earthly fights were regarded as re-enactments of Ninurta's mythical battles.

Tiglathpileser calls himself "battle-net for the disobedient" (*šuškal lā māgiri*) after one of Ninurta's weapons in Angimdimma. Esarhaddon mentions Ninurta's weapons šár-ur$_4$ and šár-gaz as accompanying him to Egypt[45] and Sennacherib named one of the city-gates of Nineveh "Šar-ur$_4$, crusher of the king's enemy" (*mušamqit ajābi šarri*).[46] The aim of Ashurbanipal's military campaign to Elam was to "take vengeance" (*ana šakan gimilli*), thus recalling Ninurtas famous epithet "avenger of his father" (*mutīr gimilli abīšu*),[47] and Esarhaddon specifically uses the epithet "avenger of the father" (*gimil abi*) on his stele from Til Barsip.[48]

The ruler himself represented the divine warrior, and on behalf of the divine assembly he set forth to save Assyria and the whole civilized world from disorder

[40] Tadmor, 1986: 207; Liverani, 2017: 33–40; compare Oded, 1992: 13–18.
[41] Colpe, 1994: 8–9; Galter, 1998a: 90.
[42] Karlsson, 2016: 121–122.
[43] Seux, 1967: 34, 147–148, 250, 355.
[44] Annus, 2002:109–186; compare Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 232–244.
[45] Leichty, 2011: 54 (Esarhaddon 8): 13'.
[46] Grayson / Novotny, 2012: 103 (Sennacherib 15); vii 29; 122 (Sennacherib 16): vii 38; 143 (Sennacherib 117): viii 3; 158 (Sennacherib 18): vii 13'.
[47] Streck, 1916: 280: 17; compare Annus 2002: 98–99 and Maul, 1999: 210–211.
[48] Leichty, 2011: 184 (Esarhaddon 98): 25. See also Grayson 1987: A.0.86.1:8: *gimil māt Aššur* (Ashur-resha-ishi I). I am grateful to Johannes Bach for reminding me of this passage.

and the forces of evil.[49] This was part of his royal duties. He had to enlarge his realm, to turn the world dominion of the god Ashur from theory into reality and thus bring about the final victory of order over chaos.[50] A ritual commentary from the Neo-Assyrian period describes how the king had to re-enact symbolically Ninurta's fight against chaos before the actual coronation ceremony.[51]

> obv. 25–26: *šarru ša ina libbi narkabti izzazū šarru qarrādu bēlu ^{d}Ninurta šū*
> "The king standing on the war chariot: the king, the hero, the lord Ninurta is he."

> rev. 20–22: *šarru ša ištu qereb Ekur agû hurāṣi ina rēšīšu inaššūma ina kussî ašbū u inaššūšuma ana ekalli illakū ^{d}Ninurta ša gimil abīšu utirru*
> "The king, (coming) out from the Ekur, wearing the golden crownon his head and sitting on a throne, while they carry him and go to the palace: Ninurta, the avenger of his father, (is he)."

Unfortunately, the text does not indicate if this ritual took place only during an enthronement ceremony or if it was performed periodically – for instance during the New Years-festival.

The history of heroic kingship

In order to study the development of heroic kingship one must go back to the Old Assyrian period. Although the royal inscriptions from the Puzur-Ashur dynasty almost exclusively deal with religious building projects, there are a few hints at other political activities.[52] These activities were mainly concerned with the overland trade that was the backbone of the Old Assyrian economy. Ilushuma established the "freedom" (*andurārum*) of the "Akkadians" (= inhabitants of Southern Mesopotamia) from trade restrictions,[53] and Erishum I introduced Assyrian laws to Anatolia.[54] In one of the inscriptions of Samsi-Addu the king is called "pacifier of the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates" (*muštemki mātim birīt Idiglat u Purattim*),[55] thus indicating that military control over the trade routes was a major goal of Assyrian politics.[56]

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[49] Maul, 1999: 210–214: Pongratz-Leisten, 2001: 226–230; Annus, 2002: 90–101; Karlsson, 2016: 64–73.
[50] Tadmor, 1999: 55; Galter, 2014: 329–330.
[51] Livingston, 1989: 99–102, no. 39; Maul, 1991: 329–330.
[52] Galter, 1998b.
[53] Grayson, 1987: A.0.32.2: 49–65; Veenhof, 2008: 126–127.
[54] Grayson, 1987: A.0.33.1; Veenhof, 2003: 434–441.
[55] Grayson, 1987: A.0.39.1: 5–8.
[56] Veenhof, 2008: 133–134 and 140.

On the other hand, the period of Samsi-Addu witnessed a substantial change in Assyrian royal ideology. Following the example of Old Akkadian royal self-portrayal, imperial epithets, historical references, and distinct military narratives entered the royal inscriptions.[57] Steles (*narû*) were set up in places far away, e.g. at the shore of the Mediterranean.[58] One of them is preserved in the Louvre and it is said to come from the Sinjar area.[59] It combines a military narrative with triumphal illustrations in the same way as the Old Akkadian monumental inscriptions do.

Another telling object from even older times is the famous Ṣilulu-seal.[60] It belonged to one of the earliest known kings of Ashur and was later reused by a namesake on several tablets from Kanish/Kültepe. It reads "Ashur is king, Ṣilulu is the vice-regent of Ashur, the son of Dakiki, the city-herald of Ashur [erasure]" (*Aššur*^{ki} *šarrum Ṣilulu išši'ak Aššur*^{ki} *mār Dakiki nāgir āl Aššur*^{ki} [erasure]), and shows a royal figure in a triumphal pose pointing at various symbols, recalling iconographic concepts already used under Naram-Sîn.[61] This depiction resembles the images of Assyrian kings from Tukulti-Ninurta I onward on steles and rock reliefs that were erected at prominent places like mountains, seashores, river-sources, city gates, palaces or temples. The inscriptions on these monuments are mainly concerned with victorious campaigns or other heroic firsts. Can the Ṣilulu-seal be regarded as the missing link between the Old Akkadian heroic concept and the Assyrian one?[62]

Beginning with the Middle Assyrian period the royal inscriptions convey an idea of kingship that focuses on two aspects of royalty: domination and protection. The predominant images of the Assyrian king were those of a warrior and a shepherd. Both aspects required divine approval and support. The obvious signs for this approval and support were military success, a long and prosperous reign, and dynastic continuity – or in Assyrian terms: a name (*šumu*), a throne (*kussû*), and a descendant (*zēru*).

To our knowledge Adadnarari I was the first Assyrian monarch to include longer military accounts in his building inscriptions. This was done in two ways. On the one hand he expanded the titular section by using heroic epithets like "scatterer of all enemies above and below" (*muddip kullat nakirī eliš u šapliš*),[63] "trampler of their lands from Lubdu and the land of Rapiqu to Eluhat" (*dā'iš mātātišunu*

[57] Galter, 1997: 55–56.
[58] Grayson, 1987: A.0.39.1: 81–87.
[59] Grayson, 1987: A.0.39.1001.
[60] Grayson, 1987: A.0.27; Veenhof, 2008: 124–125.
[61] Teissier, 1994: 221 no. 237.
[62] The reviewer suggested that the figure could be a deity and not a king. Nevertheless, the triumphal pose remains as link between the two heroic concepts.
[63] Grayson, 1987: A.0.76.1: 5–6.

ištu Lubdi u māt Rapiqu adi Eluhat),[64] "smiter of the heroic" (*nêr dapnūti*)[65] or "conquerer of Taidu" (*kāšid Taidi*).[66] In other inscriptions he inserted a military narrative between the genealogy and the building account.[67] The four known texts showing this feature were almost certainly all written for building projects in the newly occupied city of Taidu. The account of the city's conquest expands the traditional narrative of the history of a building.[68]

Adadnarari I was also the first ruler to use the universalistic titles "king of the world, mighty king, king of Assyria" (*šar kiššati šarrum dannum šar māt Aššur*), which became the standard formula thereafter.[69] His inscriptions also used the title "enlarger of borders and boundaries" (*murappiš miṣrī u kudurrī*) for the king himself and three of his predecessors, mentioning for the first time so far the royal prerogative of expansion that should govern Assyrian politics in future centuries.[70] Thus, it seems that the picture of the Assyrian king as a victorious war hero entered the monumental historiography of the Assyrian empire at the time of Adadnarari I.

The scribes of Shalmaneser I started to organize the military accounts chronologically and inserted them as exemplifications into the heroic epithets. During the latter part of the second millennium BCE the heroic image of the Assyrian king became part of an expansive imperialistic ideology. It was heavily augmented with religious symbolism and developed into the concept of heroic kingship described above.

The reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I played a major role in this development.[71] After this king's conquest of Babylon a lot of scholarly and literary text were brought to Assyria. Among them was at least one major Ninurta narrative, the bilingual hymn celebrating the return of Ninurta to Nippur,[72] and there are indications that he was the first king comparing himself to Ninurta.

Our main witness for this is the Tukulti-Ninurta-Epic.[73] It equals Ashur with Enlil, calling him the "Assyrian Enlil" in line 2, and makes Tukulti-Ninurta his son. "Enlil exalted him as if he were his own father, right after his first-born son."[74] This passage forms part of an introductory hymn to the king, that is full of heroic references: his heroism is glorious, his radiance terrifying, and his onrush

[64] Grayson, 1987: A.0.76.1:6–8
[65] Grayson, 1987: A.0.76.1: 3.
[66] Grayson, 1987: A.0.76.1:8.
[67] Grayson, 1987: A.0.76.3.
[68] Galter, 1997: 57–58.
[69] Galter, 1997: 57; Sazonov, 2011: 246–248.
[70] Liverani, 1979.
[71] Compare Gaspa, 2020: 128–130.
[72] Lambert, 1960: 118–120.
[73] Machinist, 1978; Foster, 1996: 211–230.
[74] A obv. i 19–20, see Machinist, 1978: 202–207; and 2015: 409–413.

incendiary. When the king raises his weapons like Ninurta, the regions of the earth hover in panic everywhere. These are clear allusions to the divine epithets of Ninurta, and by combining the weapons (^{giš}TUKUL^{meš}) with the divine name Ninurta in line 15' the author even gives a reference to the name of the king. This hint is repeated in the actual battle account in line 39' of Tablet 5, and it is further elaborated in line 41', where the king opens the battle with divine support (*tiklu*).

The bilingual prayer of Tukulti-Ninurta I to the god Ashur, published in 1918 by Erich Ebeling,[75] implicitly compares the king to the god Ninurta. The praise of the god links his mythological exploits to the victories of Tukulti-Ninurta, and there might even be a hint at a divine begetting of the king in line 7 (if Benjamin Foster's reconstruction is correct): "[pure seed?] set in a maiden, a male she bore for you."[76] All this clearly points to the fact that Tukulti-Ninurta I regarded himself as a substitute if not as an incarnation of Ninurta, appointed to smite the insubmissive to Ashur, the supreme god and ruler of the world.

The period from Tiglathpileser I to Sargon II, especially from Ashurnasirpal II to Shalmaneser III, was the golden age of heroic kingship in Assyria. The monarchs adopted famous ancient names. Besides Šamši-Adad from the Old Assyrian period the names of the glorious Middle Assyrian kings were chosen, e.g., Adad-narari, Eriba-Adad, Shalmaneser, Tiglathpileser, Tukulti-Ninurta.[77] Long and detailed military accounts were included in royal building inscriptions, the epithet sections expanded in extent and overstatement, and the achievements of former rulers were mentioned for comparison. The military accounts often took the form of annals, structured in a year-by-year scheme.[78] They formed the largest if not the sole part of the inscriptions, and they presented the Assyrian king as the heroic warrior who single-handedly conquered and destroyed the foreign lands.

This picture of the king was also present in the palace reliefs and on several cylinder seals. In one example (BM 89586) the king is seen crushing enemy soldiers under his chariot and in another one (ND 483) he is shooting at a falling enemy.[79]

On the level of symbolism, the heroic image of the Assyrian monarch is conveyed in the accounts of the royal hunt. Wild animals with clear royal connotations such as lions and bulls were hunted by the king in foreign territories, thus demonstrating his virility and his ability to dominate even the wildest forces of chaos.[80]

The era of heroic kingship in Assyria ended with the reign of Sargon II. His vision of kingship reached much further back into the past than the Middle Assyr-

[75] Ebeling, 1918: 62–73; Foster, 1996: 231–236; compare Lambert, 1976.
[76] See also Annus, 2002: 40.
[77] Galter, 2018: 133–134.
[78] Compare De Odorico, 1994; and in general Fales, 1999–2001.
[79] Collon, 2005: 160–161 (no. 733); Herbordt, 1992: 199 and pl. 6,1 (Nimrud 109).
[80] Galter, 1999: 58–59; Watanabe, 2002: 69–82; Wagner-Durand, 2019.

ian period. His role model was Sargon of Akkad, the legendary warrior king from the third millennium, who according to Mesopotamian tradition dominated all lands and reached the farthest regions of the world. Many of Sargon II's actions, such as his campaigns to the Mediterranean, to the Persian Gulf and into Anatolia or his building of a new capital, can be understood as re-enactments of the paradigmatic deeds and achievements of Sargon of Akkad.[81] The same applies to his written self-portrayals, for instance the descriptions of fighting a hostile nature in his famous eighth campaign or of receiving tribute from areas beyond the sea in his Khorsabad inscriptions.[82] But Sargon II eventually failed. He died on the battlefield in Anatolia and did not receive a royal funeral in Assyria.

The tragic end of Sargon II challenged the whole paradigm of heroic kingship. Sargon had driven it to its limits and failed. Therefore, the validity of the paradigm itself was questioned. His son and successor Sennacherib dissociated himself from his father. He never mentioned him in his inscriptions, he abandoned the new royal residence Dur-Sharrukin and he revoked much of his father's politics. He also kept his own name instead of using an old venerable throne name, and so did almost all his successors. Assyrian royal ideology entered a completely new phase. Seth Richardson put it this way: "The building of a future required an eclipse of the past."[83]

This change also affected the royal self-portrayal. Style and phraseology in the military accounts remained much the same, but the heroic epithets were reduced to a handful of standard expressions like "virile warrior" (*zikaru qardu*) or "who strikes enemies with lightnings" (*mušabriqu zāmânī*). Both examples come from the inscriptions of Sennacherib.[84] This indicates a change in the Assyrian concept of kingship. The focus moved from conquest to government and from individual heroism to a more sublime form of military superiority.

In the palace reliefs from Nineveh this change can be seen clearly. Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal are never depicted leading their armies into battle. They are not part of the siege scenes and never use weapons in combat. The simple royal presence on the commander's hill near the battlefield was enough to ensure victory. And Ashurbanipal's lion hunt did not take place during the campaign in foreign territory but in the microcosmic context of the royal garden.[85]

It has already been observed that this change correlates with the ideological shift from conquest to rule and that this shift met the new expectations of the Assyrian elite.[86] New royal qualities like Sennacherib's technical innovations or Ashurbanipal's erudition became part of the self-image of the rulers.

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[81] Galter, 2006.
[82] Galter, 2014 and 2015–2016.
[83] Richardson, 2014: 486–487; Galter, 2018: 140.
[84] E.g. Grayson / Novotny, 2012: 32 (Sennacherib 1): 3 or 188 (Sennacherib 23): 7–9.
[85] Wagner-Durand, 2019: 254–263.
[86] Richardson, 2014: 486–494; Gaspa, 2020: 146–147.

This change of focus does not mean that the concept of the warrior king became obsolete. It just moved completely from the level of reality to the level of symbolism. This development started already during the reign of Shalmaneser III. Although the king is always described as leading his army and depicted as shooting arrows from his war-chariot, it is clear from the texts that he entrusted the military campaigns of his later regnal years to his field marshal Dajjan-Ashur.[87] Compared with Ashurnasirpal II his portrayals as active warrior declined and were partly replaced by images of the king observing the battle.[88] But it took another 200 years to complete this process.

The experience of historical resonance

In the last part of this paper a different approach to the topic of royal identities will be adopted. The University of Graz has an ongoing and promising cooperation with the Max Weber-Kolleg for cultural and social studies at the University of Erfurt[89] and with Hartmut Rosa, who is widely known for his theory of resonance.[90] He took the term "resonance" from physics where it describes a subject-object relationship as a vibrating system in which both sides mutually stimulate each other. He argues that the ways in which we establish a relationship to the world, from mere breathing to culturally differentiated worldviews, are defined by the experience of resonance or by the absence of such an experience.

Rosa describes the reference points of resonance in three basic axes: Horizontal resonance takes place between people, diagonal resonance axes are relationships to things and activities, and finally vertical resonance axes are relationships to the "great collective singularities" like art, history or religion. In this case it is the world itself that speaks to the individual. "In vertikalen Resonanzerfahrungen erhält gewissermaßen die Welt selbst eine Stimme."[91] Intensive experiences of resonance are possible in all three contexts.

Despite Hartmut Rosa's statement that in the framework of historical temporality vertical experiences of resonance are only possible in modern culture,[92] it is quite obvious that the experience of history – and the relationship to history – had a strong impact on the image and the self-image of Assyrian kings.

A constitutive feature of vertical resonance is the conviction that the counterpart represents a distinctive entity. This conviction is based on the experience that

[87] E.g. Grayson, 1996: A.0.102.14: 141–190.
[88] Karlsson, 2016: 118 and 259–262.
[89] https://dk-resonance.uni-graz.at/en/doctoral-program/ (28.04.2020).
[90] Compare Rosa, 2016 and his 2018 summary https://www.resonanz.wien/blog/hartmut-rosa-ueber-resonanz/ (28.04.2020).
[91] Rosa, 2061: 331.
[92] Rosa, 2016: 501.

the world, nature, the divine, or in our case history speaks with its own voice.[93] For Mesopotamia we can still hear the voice of history as it was heard by the Mesopotamians. It is preserved in the historical literature, in epics, omens prophecies and especially in royal inscriptions. History spoke to Assyrian rulers through older royal inscriptions. The Assyrian monarchs in turn let history talk to future kings through their own inscriptions.[94]

Hartmut Rosa argues that experiences of resonance do not emerge from narrowing the historical horizon to the here and now but on the contrary from its widening. Together, past and future become part of a single resonating present. History provides the resonance chamber, where past and future participate in an ongoing dialogue. The past is appreciated as something that matters now, and for us.[95] Wolfgang von Goethe already described this quite similarly in 1816 in a letter to Wilhelm von Humboldt: "Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft […] in eins geschlungen."[96] Past, present and future [are] entwined into one.

This is exactly how the stream of history was experienced by Assyrian and Babylonian rulers. They looked at themselves as part of a wider plan designed by the gods in which they had to play their role for the better or the worse. The rules were established long ago, and history told them which actions had been heavenly approved and which not. The plenitude of Mesopotamian historical narratives and historical omens bear witness to the effort that was made to collect these references. And the Cuthean legend of Naram-Sin describes vividly what happened when historical references were neglected. History became the authority to decide what was right and what was wrong, which actions were glorified, and which were condemned, which kings were remembered, and which were forgotten.[97]

The model of heroic kingship guided Assyrian politics during the second millennium and through the early centuries of the first millennium. Assyrian kings regarded themselves as links in a chain of tradition that interacted. They were evaluators and evaluated objects at the same time. The heroic actions of former kings became the benchmarks for their own deeds which in return served as a model for the future.[98] Towards the end of his large inscription regarding work on the Ashur-temple Shalmaneser I is quite specific:

[93] Rosa, 2016: 473.
[94] Galter, 2018: 139–140.
[95] Rosa, 2016: 505.
[96] Rosa, 2016: 505.
[97] Westenholz, 1993; compare Rosa, 2016: 502.
[98] Galter, 2004: 118–119.

158–161: *rubû arku enūma bītu šū ušalbarūma ennaḫū epšet qurdīja lultame tanāti lē'ûtīja litasqar*
"When this temple will become old and dilapidated, a future ruler shall think about my heroic deeds and proclaim the glory of my achievements."[99]

His son Tukulti-Ninurta responded to this statement and compared his own royal actions with that of his father.[100] Shalmaneser deported 14.400 persons from Hanigalbat in his 2nd campaign. Tukulti-Ninurta mentions 28.800 prisoners from the other side of the Euphrates as captives in his accession year. It seems that commemorated history has formed a major way of understanding political events and shaping political actions.

But it needs historically charged moments, places, or objects to experience the force of world history. Hartmut Rosa mentions temples, museums, mountains, or memorials. They are – in a positive or negative way – the points of contact with history.[101]

For Assyria we can name some of these moments, places, or objects. Claus Wilcke made a strong argument for the scribal school as a place where Mesopotamians were confronted with their history.[102] We further know of certain historically charged places – mountains, shores, river sources – where Assyrian kings set up monuments. The most famous of them is the mouth of the Nahr el-Kelb in modern Lebanon.

As shown in another context, the main temple of the god Ashur played an important role in the cultural memory of Assyria. The religious and historical dimensions of Assyrian kingship formed an indivisible unity, and the Ashur temple was the focal point of this unity.[103] It existed from the earliest periods until the end of the Assyrian empire. Through its phases of rebuilding it served as a link between all important monarchs in Assyrian history. As stage for the ceremonies identifying the Assyrian king with the warrior god Ninurta it showed the divine approval of the royal warrior,[104] and the numerous original royal inscriptions from all centuries found within the temple compound allowed a detailed reconstruction of Assyrian history at any time. The temple thus formed a constant symbol for the interconnection of Assyrian religion and Assyrian history.

Historically charged times in Assyria certainly were the coronations, the periodic festivals, or the triumphal ceremonies at the beginning and at the end of campaigns. In *namburbi*-rituals these campaigns were called "campaign of right and

[99] Grayson, 1987, A.0.77.1: 158–161; Galter, 2004: 120.
[100] Galter, 1988.
[101] Rosa, 2016: 504–505.
[102] Wilcke, 1982: 41.
[103] Galter, 2004: 128.
[104] Livingston, 1989: 99–102, no. 39; Maul, 1991: 329–330.

justice" (*harrān kitti u mīšari*),[105] they were fought with the divine weapon and, at least during the 8th and 7th centuries, kings rendered accounts of certain campaigns in the form of letters to the god Ashur.[106]

For Hartmut Rosa the third point of contact between the individual and history are historically charged moments. The experience of historical resonance draws heavily on the importance of certain historical events. In these events the world history is experienced as an independent force moving individuals, societies, and cultures. The bigger this moving on certain occasions is, the more important we experience the events.[107]

Historical resonance is especially powerful when the individual biography touches on global history.[108] Many of us are interested in what our fathers and grandfathers lived through during World War II and everyone still remembers what he or she did when the news about 9/11 spread. In their 1989 song "The Winds of Change" the Scorpions sang about the "magic of the moment" that remains in our memory. Such "magic moments of history" in Assyria could have been the conquest of Syria by Adadnarari I,[109] the reaching of the Mediterranean by Tiglathpileser I,[110] the destruction of Babylon in 689 BCE,[111] or the death of Sargon II in Cappadocia.[112]

A king connected in a very peculiar way with such moments was Sennacherib. He had to deal with the traumatic experience of his father's death on the battlefield and the bad auspicious message it carried. He tried to cut every connection with Sargon, very rarely mentioned him or called him father, changed his politics, and moved the royal residence to Nineveh.[113]

This change of politics however, resulted in a permanent unrest in Babylon, finally leading to the death of his eldest son Ashur-nadin-shumi and the destruction of Babylon by the Assyrian army in 689 BCE. We know of several literary or semi-literary texts that tried to come to terms with these events, such as the "Sin of Sargon," the 12th tablet of the Standard version of the Gilgamesh-epic,[114] or the Bavian inscription.[115]

That brings us back to identities. Humans are narrative beings, and they make sure of their identity through narratives. This holds especially true for the Assyr-

[105] Maul, 1994: 387–399, no. viii.14: 17.
[106] Pongratz-Leisten, 1999: 210–265.
[107] Koselleck, 1988: 321.
[108] Rosa, 2016: 507–510.
[109] Galter, 2018.
[110] Lang / Rollinger, 2010: 221–222.
[111] Galter, 1984.
[112] Frahm, 1999: 74–76; Elayi, 2017: 210–217.
[113] Elayi, 2018: 40–44; 153–171.
[114] Frahm, 1999 and 2005.
[115] Galter, 1984.

ians and their kings. They were brought up with tales about legendary kings like Gilgamesh or Sargon, they were surrounded by monuments and inscriptions documenting the exploits of former rulers, and they were aware of the royal duty to share their own experience with future rulers, as we are told in the Cuthean legend of Naram-Sîn.[116] The examples of Tukulti-Ninurta I and Sennacherib show that monarchs reacted in a very personal way to the experience of historical resonance. This corresponds to modern experience indicating that the challenges of history have a highly personal character.[117]

As mentioned before, the experience of historical resonance is especially powerful, when the individual biography touches on global history, when an individual narrative and a „metanarrative" merge.[118] I am not sure if we are already in the position to name the metanarratives of Assyria, but the eternal battle between order and chaos, the manifestation of mythology in history, or the quest for immortal fame, as described in the Enuma elish or the tales about Ninurta, Gilgamesh and Sargon, seem to be good candidates. Several well documented examples show how elements of these narratives were incorporated into individual royal accounts – Tukulti-Ninurta-Epic, Sargon's 8th campaign, Sennacherib's Bavian-Inscription, to name just a few – and how individual and universal history have merged.

In this context the Assyrian royal inscriptions could be regarded as attempts to stand the test of history or to affect it positively. The identity of Assyrian kings depended among other things on how they remembered former rulers and how they themselves wanted to be remembered. These thoughts guided for instance the choices of royal names, the routes and destinations of campaigns, the interpretations of events, or the overall picture kings like Sargon II tried to create of themselves.[119] How these images were received and influenced by the Assyrian elites and how they affected the Assyrian "external social being" remains to be discussed.

Abbreviations

AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
PIHANS	Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul

[116] Westenholz, 1993.
[117] Rosa, 2016: 504.
[118] Rosa, 2016: 506–507; compare Lyotard, 2012.
[119] Galter, 2006 und 2018.

SAA State Archives of Assyria
SAAB *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin*
SAAS State Archives of Assyria Studies

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The Assyrian King and His Enemies According to the Verb *saḫāpu* in Assyrian Royal Inscriptions

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Introduction

The relationship between the Assyrian king and his enemies can be characterized through a number of keywords.[1] One such keyword is the verb *saḫāpu*, often translated "to overwhelm." According to the *CAD* (S, pp. 30–36), this word has seven (closely related) semantic fields, of which five are attested in Assyrian royal inscriptions.[2] The commonest fields speak of "to cover, overwhelm, to spread over (said of nets, water, fog, numinous sheen)" (1.),[3] and of the D-stem form (*suḫḫupu*) and "to cover, overwhelm, lay flat, to flatten out, make smooth" (4.).[4]

The overarching aim of this paper is to discuss Assyrian state ideology and its polarizations.[5] Its preciser aim is to identify and discuss *who* (or what) makes the overwhelming act (and who/what is overwhelmed) in Assyrian royal inscriptions, *when* and *where* the overwhelming occurs (e.g. at war and from afar) in Assyrian royal inscriptions, and *what* the overwhelming act in Assyrian royal inscriptions results in as for the relationship between the Assyrian king and his enemies. The approach is both synchronic and diachronic, with the latter meaning that the mapping of the use of *saḫāpu* over time is an integral component of this study.

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[1] The study by F. M. Fales (1982) is a good example of this, in its classifying verbs (telling of the actions of the Assyrian enemy), thus mapping the moral status of the enemy in Assyrian eyes. Another example of a keyword-approach is the paper by M. Liverani (1982) on *kitru* ("band") and *katāru* ("band together"), illustrating "the enemy."

[2] A great share of the attestations of *saḫāpu* comes from Assyrian royal inscriptions.

[3] Also "demon, evil powers" (1. e) are overwhelmers. The said "numinous sheen" (1. c) can be both "of gods" and "of kings." The other "subfields" are "said of nets and traps" (a), "said of fog, flood, water" (b), "said of mud, clothing" (d), and "other occs." (f).

[4] The others tell of "to put a cover on, to cover over" (2.), of "to have something covered, spread over" (5.), and of "to lie flat, to be overturned" (7.). The remaining fields (not attested in Assyrian royal inscriptions) speak of "to turn over(?), upside down(?), to lay flat, to lay(?) bricks" (3.), and of "to cover each other, to overlap" (6.).

[5] Regarding polarizations (in the sense of structuralist binary oppositions between core and periphery), see e.g. Liverani, 1979; 2017; Fales, 1982; 2010. The Assyrian enemy here stands for everything that is wrong and wicked (Fales, 1982; Zaccagnini, 1982; Nowicki, 2018), he is demonized (Haas, 1980; Prechel, 1992), he is chaotic (Maul, 1999), and he symbolizes an "Other" (Karlsson, 2017).

As hinted at, this paper proceeds from Assyrian royal inscriptions. Royal inscriptions are rhetorical and ideological, and are thus well-suited for this study.[6] Attestations of the said verb in these texts were gathered partly by searches in the databases RIAo (Royal Inscriptions of Assyria online)[7] and RINAPo (Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian period online),[8] and partly by a manual search of the royal inscriptions of Sargon II (not yet published in the RINAP-series).[9]

As far as I know, the verb *saḫāpu* in Assyrian royal inscription has not been studied in detail before. In his lexical/terminology-based paper on the moral character of the enemy as portrayed in Assyrian royal inscriptions, F. M. Fales (1982) centres on the *attributes* of the enemy (and not directly on what happens to him or her). The term *saḫāpu* is not highlighted in books which discuss the enemy in Assyrian royal inscriptions and related textual genres (Nowicki, 2018),[10] "the other" in Assyrian royal titulary (Karlsson, 2017), or the cultural-civilization status of the enemy (in this case the "Umman-manda") (Adalı, 2011) either.[11] The same can be said of papers dealing with demonization (literally) of the enemy in Mesopotamian royal inscriptions (e.g. Haas, 1980; Prechel, 1992), and with the Assyrian enemy as representing the forces of Chaos (e.g. Maul, 1999).

As indicated by the *CAD*-entry quoted above, *saḫāpu* often occurs together with words meaning "radiance", and the book by E. Cassin (1968) on "divine splendor" and the dissertation by S. Z. Aster (2006) on "human and divine radiance" as affecting the earthly sphere are therefore also relevant for this paper.[12] This radiance was the property of Mesopotamian deities and rulers. According to Cassin (1968: 65–82), the latter kind of radiance ("royal radiance") was secondary and temporary, granted by the deities to the crowned king so that he could carry out the functions of his office effectively. This circumstance naturally reflects the

[6] For the ideological and even propagandistic nature of this genre, see e.g. Tadmor, 1997. While the royal inscriptions focus on ideology, the state letters and documents centre on foreign policy with regard to the relationship between the Assyrian king and his enemies. Since this paper highlights the ideological perspective, the choice of sources is obvious.

[7] http://oracc.org/riao/corpus/ (2020-06-14).

[8] http://oracc.org/rinap/corpus/ (2020-06-14).

[9] Including the texts in *ISKh* (inscriptions from Khorsabad), SAAS 8 and *AfO* 14 (annals from Assur and Nineveh), *Iraq* 16 (the "Nimrud prisms") and 37 (the "Assur-charter"), and *MDOG* 115 (the literary narration of the king's eighth military campaign).

[10] Although S. Nowicki devotes a few pages (pp. 90–92) to the verb in question, he only brings up attestations from Mesopotamian literary and magical texts as well as five (identical) attestations from a passage in the royal inscriptions of Sennacherib.

[11] As for the last-mentioned topic, C. Zaccagnini (1982) identifies a strict dichotomy (Assyrian/foreign) from ethnographic notes in Assyrian royal inscriptions.

[12] Also some papers discuss divine radiance in Mesopotamia, notably the ones by A. L. Oppenheim (1943), M.-A. Ataç (2007), and S. Richardson (2015; 2018). Radiance is touched upon in the book by C. Crouch (2009) on war and ethics in the ancient Near East, and in the paper by N. K. Weeks (1983) on causality in Assyrian royal inscriptions.

fact that the relationship between the Assyrian king and his enemies can not be viewed in isolation. The Mesopotamian deities (notably Ashur) defined the said relationship to a considerable degree (Oded, 1992).

The verb *saḫāpu* in Assyrian royal inscriptions

The searches in the mentioned databases resulted in 192 attestations of the verb *saḫāpu* in Assyrian royal inscriptions.[13] 11 of these stem from Middle Assyrian texts, 42 are derived from texts of the early Neo-Assyrian period, and no less than 139 are attested in texts from the late Neo-Assyrian (or Sargonid) period.

The attestations are presented below in seven tables.[14] The first two columns of these tables focus on the issue *who* and identify the overwhelmer and the overwhelmed.[15] The third column centres on the issue *when* and *where* and identifies the situational and spatial contexts of the overwhelming act. The said act takes place within or outside the military campaigns of Assyrian kings (when) and at a close distance or from afar (where).[16] The fourth column highlights the issue *what* and identifies the *immediate* effect of the overwhelming act. Secondary effects of the said act are not stated, except in the case of "fright", which does not indicate the *ultimate* effect.[17] The fifth column gives source references. In the case of Middle and early Neo-Assyrian attestations, the references point to the RIMA-vol-

[13] The attestations were collected (with regard to RIAo and RINAPo) by using the index functions of the transliterated texts.

[14] In these tables, forms within brackets indicate reconstructions, full or partial. Empty cells signify that the data sought after could not be obtained (e.g. due to lacunae). Question marks signify uncertain, but likely, points of data.

[15] Forms like RN *aṣḫup* mean that the overwhelmer is referred to primarily by prefixes of finite verb forms, exemplifying a "direct" overwhelming. The locations of overwhelmed persons or general areas are indicated in the tables through the following abbreviations: N ("north," i.e. Urartu, lands north of Habur, Gilzanu and Hubushkia), S ("south," i.e. Babylonia (incl. Suhu and Namri) and Arabia), W ("west", i.e. lands directly west of Assyria (Hanigalbat and Hatti), Cilicia, Palestine, Egypt, and Kush), E ("east", i.e. lands along and beyond Zagros, incl. Elam and Persia), and C (centre – Assyria proper).

[16] The essentially non-narrative titulary sections generally do not clarify the situational and spatial contexts (or effects). In the tables, the letters W, C, N, and F stand for war and cult (when), near and far (where). Warfare means that the overwhelming takes place in narrations of military campaigns (and not in cultic contexts), or that it is explicitly expressed in titles and epithets which incorporate the verb in question. Overwhelming from afar means that someone/thing much distant from the Assyrian king and/or his troops (there and then) is overwhelmed, and/or when foreign rulers "hear" (*šemû*) news about Assyria from "afar" (*rūqu*) and get overwhelmed. The latter condition obviously relates to the "*šemû-rūqu* paradigm" identified by S. Richardson (2018).

[17] This emotion can e.g. result in the contrasting acts of fleeing and surrendering. For the roles of fear and terror in Mesopotamian political ideologies, see Richardson, 2015.

umes.[18] In the case of the late Neo-Assyrian attestations, the references point to the RINAP-volumes,[19] if not otherwise stated.

The verb *saḫāpu* in Middle Assyrian royal inscriptions

As already noted, the word in question is attested eleven times in Middle Assyrian royal inscriptions. Almost all (nine) of these attestations come from the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I. The inscriptions of Ashur-dan I and Ashur-bel-kala provide the remaining two. The table below lists all eleven attestations.

Table 1: *saḫāpu* in Middle Assyrian royal inscriptions.

overwhelmer	**overwhelmed**	**context**	**effect**	**source**
melam Aššur	*māt Adauš*	W / N	surrender	87.1: iii 70
melam qardūtīya	*Kaskāyi Urumāyi*	W / N	fright + surrender	87.1: iii 2
melammūšu	*kibrāti*			87.1: i 41
[*mel*]*ammūšu*	*kibrāti*			87.2: 15
pulḫu adīru melam Aššur	*āl Urraṭinaš*	W / N	flight	87.1: ii 39
RN (*ašḫup*)	*māt Išdiš*	W / N	destruction	87.1: ii 78
RN (*asḫup*)	*māt Sarauš* *māt Ammauš*	W / N	destruction	87.1: iii 76
RN (*ašḫup*)	*āl Ḫunusa*	W / N	destruction	87.1: v 100
RN ([*aš*]*ḫup*)	[*āl*] *Ḫunusa*	W / N	destruction	87.2: 31
RN (*usaḫḫipu*)	*gimir malkī*	W / N		89.4: o 10
	[*šar*] *māt Subarte*	W		83.1002: 6’

The overwhelmer in the earliest text (from the reign of Ashur-dan I) mentioning *saḫāpu* is unstated, due to lacunae.[20] Five times, the king (Tiglath-pileser I or Ashur-bel-kala) appears as overhelmer, revealed primarily by prefixes of finite verb forms, giving “direct” overwhelmings. The remaining five attestations tell of divine or royal radiance as overwhelmers. In an epithet of Tiglath-pileser I, “his

[18] RIMA 1–3 (= Grayson, 1987; 1991; 1996).
[19] RINAP 1 (= Tadmor / Yamada, 2011), 3 (= Grayson / Novotny, 2012; 2014), 4 (= Leichty, 2011), and 5/1 (= Novotny / Jeffers, 2018).
[20] The prefix (giving 3 p. sg. m.) of the finite verb form provides the only clear evidence of the overwhelmer. The question mark in the relevant transliteration, *is-ḫúp*(?), implies that this attestation is not fully certain (Grayson, 1987 (= RIMA 1): 307).

(the king's) radiance" (*melammūšu*) is referred to.[21] Royal radiance is also brought up when Tiglath-pileser I talks of "radiance of my heroism" (*melam qardūtīya*). Even if this king is the first Assyrian king to overwhelm through *melammu* in his royal inscriptions, royal *melammu* is attested already in the literary Tukulti-Ninurta I epic.[22] Divine radiance is spoken of as overwhelmer in a text of Tiglath-pileser I about "radiance of (the god) Ashur" (*melam Aššur*) and "terror, fear, and radiance of Ashur" (*pulḫu adīru melam Aššur*).[23]

The overwhelmed is, by contrast, stated in all attestations. In one of these, a person is targeted, namely the "[king] of Subartu" ([*šar*] *māt Subarte*), presented as Ari-Teshub earlier in the text. Twice, groups of people are referred to as overwhelmed. The ethnic groups of Kaska and Urumu (*Kaskāyi Urumāyi*) are targeted in an inscription of Tiglath-pileser I, while "all rulers" (*gimir malkī*) are aimed at in an epithet belonging to Ashur-bel-kala. Cities, namely *āl Urraṭinaš* and *āl Ḫunusa*, are also overwhelmed (by Tiglath-pileser I). The same can be said of lands ((*māt*) *Išdiš*, *Adauš*, *Sarauš*, *Ammauš*) and "regions" (*kibrāti*).

Regarding the situational context, all attestations of *saḫāpu* which occur in narrative contexts can be found in narratives of military campaigns. The verb is attested in three epithet sections, and in only one of these a possible event is hinted at (through a reconstruction), speaking of Ashur-bel-kala as the "one who overwhelms all rulers [in battle]."[24] All in all, the overwhelming act seems to be tied to warfare. As for the spatial context, the only tendency towards an overwhelming from afar concerns the Kaska and Urumu getting overwhelmed by *melam qardūtīya* after hearing (*šemû*) of the coming of the Assyrian army.[25]

Turning to effects of the overwhelming acts, the said fragmentary text and epithet sections do not reveal these. Otherwise, flight is attested once and surrender twice (once with fright preceding), while destruction is attested four times. (The people of) the city Urratinash "fly" (*naprušu*) like birds to high mountains after having been exposed to *pulḫu adīru melam Aššur*. The lands of Ishdish, Saraush, and Ammaush, and the city Hununsu are overwhelmed, with the consequence of these being "like mound(s) (created) by the flood" (*kīma tīl abūbe*) or "reverting" (*târu* D) to "mounds and heaps" (*tīlī u karmī*). (The people of) the land Adaush are frightened by Tiglath-pileser I's attack and fly like birds to high

[21] For the term *melammu*, primarily meaning "radiance, supernatural awe-inspiring sheen (inherent in things divine and royal)," see *CAD* M II, pp. 9–12. According to S. Z. Aster (2006), it refers to a "covering which demonstrates overwhelming and insuperable power", a covering which can be represented by "radiant and luminous imagery."

[22] Machinist, 1978: i (=A obv.) 12. Telling of an allusion from the literary work lugal-e. Tiglath-pileser I, in his turn, borrowed from his predecessor (Bach, 2020: 136–138).

[23] For the term *pulḫu*, translated "terror, fearsomeness, awesomeness, fear, respect", see *CAD* P, pp. 503–504. For the term *adīru*, translated "fear", see *CAD* A I, p. 127.

[24] For this reconstruction, see Grayson, 1991 (= RIMA 2): 96.

[25] As for the *šemû-rūqu* paradigm and the idea of overwhelming from a great distance.

mountains. Then they are overwhelmed by *melam Aššur*, whereafter they come back down (*warādu*), and "seized my feet" (*šēpēya iṣbatū*).[26] Surrender is the ultimate effect on the peoples of Kaska and Urumu (qualified as "insubmissive (*lā māgirī*) troops of Hatti") after their being overwhelmed by *melam qardūtīya*. These peoples "feared battle" (*tāḫāza ēdurū*) and eventually seized Tiglath-pileser I's feet.

Summarizing the evidence from the Middle Assyrian period by way of statistics,[27] 50 % of the overwhelmers are radiant forces, and 27 % of the overwhelmed are animate beings (persons / groups of people). All cases speak of warfare as the situational context and of closeness as the spatial context. With regard to effect, destruction represents 57 %, surrender 29 %, and flight 14 %.

The verb *saḫāpu* in early Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions

As already noted, the said word is attested 42 times in early Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions. A slight majority (22) of these attestations comes from the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III. Also the inscriptions of Adad-narari II (3), Tukulti-Ninurta II (1), Ashurnasirpal II (10), Shamshi-Adad V (4), and Adad-narari III (2) provide attestations. The table below lists all 42 attestations.

Table 2: *saḫāpu* in early Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions.

overwhelmer	**overwhelmed**	**context**	**effect**	**source**
melammē bēlūtīya	*Katê* (W)	W / N	capture	102.40: iii 7
melammē bēlūtīya u tībi tāḫāzīya danni	*māt Gizilbunda*	W / N	flight	103.1: iii 8
melammē ša Aššur	*Gilzānāyi Ḫubuškāyi*	W / N	surrender	101.1: i 57
melammē [*ša Aššur*]	*Ḫubuškāyi Gilzānāyi*	W / N	surrender	101.17: i 80
namurrat Aššur	*Marduk-balāṭsu-iqbi* (S)	W / N	fright + flight	103.2: iii 26'
pulḫī	*mātāti kalîši*[*na*] (N)	W / N	surrender?	100.5: 4
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*āl Sūri*	W / N	surrender	101.1: i 80
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*šarrāni ša māt Zamua*	W / N	surrender	101.1: ii 46

[26] If using the literal translation of the last-mentioned expression (instead of "to submit"). No doubt, this expression illustrates well the hierarchy between the king and other rulers.
[27] In order to facilitate a diachronic perspective or comparison between the periods later on. Empty cells are never part of the calculations in the statistics of this paper.

overwhelmer	overwhelmed	context	effect	source
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*Ḫudunāyi*…	W / N	surrender	101.1: ii 81
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*šarrāni ša māt Zamua*	W / N	surrender	101.17: iii 20
[*pulḫī melammē ša Aššur*]	[*Ḫu*]*d*[*unāyi*]…	W / N	surrender	101.17: iii 112
pu[*l*]*ḫī melammē ša Aššur*	*šar āl Ḫubuš*[*ki*]*a sittāt ummānātīšu*	W / N	surrender	102.1: 27
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*šar māt Nairi u sittēt ummānātīšu*	W / N	surrender	102.2: i 23
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*āl La'la'ti*	W / N	flight	102.2: i 30
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*ālīšu* (W)	W / N	surrender	102.2: ii 74
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*Tullu* (W)	W / N	surrender	102.14: 134
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*Surri* (W)	W / N	death	102.14: 152
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*Tuatti* (W)	W / N	siege	102.16: 167'
pulḫī me[*lammē ša Aššur*]	*āl* […] (W)	W / N	flight	102.16: 191'
pulḫī melammē [*ša Aššur*]	*Tullu* (W)	W / N	surrender	102.16: 219'
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*Surri* (W)	W / N	death	102.16: 276'
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*Aḫunu* (W)	W / N	capture	102.20: 18
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*Anarê Nikdêra* (E)	W / N	flight	102.28: 43
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*Mēsāyi*	W / N	fright + flight	103.1: ii 43
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*Mari* (W)	W / N	surrender	104.8: 17
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur Marduk	*Marduk-bēl-usāte* (S)	W / N	flight	102.14: 79

overwhelmer	**overwhelmed**	**context**	**effect**	**source**
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur Marduk	*māt Namri*	W / N	flight	102.14: 188
pulḫī melammē ša [*Aššur Marduk*]	*māt Namri*	W / N	flight	102.16: 338’
pulḫī melammē ša Marduk	*Adinu* (S)	W / N	surrender	102.5: vi 7
[*pulḫū melam*]*mū*	*šarrāni* [*māt Ḫatte*]	W / N	surrender	104.6: 16
RN (*asaḫḫap*)			capture	99.2: 21
RN ([*asaḫḫap*])			capture	99.4: o 9’
RN (*asḫup***)**	*māt Nairi*	W / N	capture	103.1: ii 6
RN (*asḫu*[*pšunūti*])	[*ālāni ša aḫat tâmdi*] *elinīte ša māt Amurri*	W / N	destruction	102.2: ii 6
RN (*asḫupu*)	*māt Alzi*	W / N	destruction	99.2: 32
RN (*usaḫḫip*)	*šadû* (N)	W / N	destruction	101.1: i 51
RN (*usaḫḫip*)	*šadû* (W)	W / N	battle	102.2: ii 72
RN ([*usaḫḫipa*])	*šadû* (N)	W / N	destruction	101.17: i 75
šuribat kakkīya	*māt Kaldu*	W / F		101.1: iii 24
šuribat kakkīya	*šarrāni ša māt Kaldi*	W / N		102.14: 84
šuribat kakkīya	*šarrāni māt* [*Kaldi*]	W / N		102.16: 65’
šuribat kakkī[*ya*]	*šarrāni ša māt Kald*[*i*]	W / N		102.24: 14

All 42 attestations reveal overwhelmers. In eight cases, and in the inscriptions of Adad-narari II, Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III, and Shamshi-Adad V, the overwhelmer is defined primarily through prefixes of finite verb forms. Eight attestations speak of royal radiance. The “terror of me” (*pulḫī*) is referred to by Tukulti-Ninurta II, while Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III talk of “terror of my weapons” (*šuribat kakkīya*).[28] Moving on, the texts of Shalmaneser III refer to “radiance of my lordship” (*melammē bēlūtīya*), while Shamshi-Adad V adds “and my strong attack in battle” (*u tībi tāḫāzīya danni*). Adad-narari III brings up “[terror of the radia]nce” ([*pulḫū melam*]*mū*) as overwhelmer. 26 attestations talk of divine radiance. 19 of these identify “terror of the radiance of Ashur” (*pulḫī melammē ša Aššur*) as overwhelmer. This expression is used by Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III, Shamshi-Adad V, and Adad-narari III. Shalmaneser III also adds the god Marduk to the expression and (once) replaces Ashur with Marduk. Ashurnasirpal II mentions “radiance of Ashur” (*melammē ša Aššur*), while Shamshi-

[28] For the term *šuribatu*, translated “terror(?),” see *CAD* Š III, p. 344.

Adad V introduces "splendor of Ashur" (*namurrat Aššur*).[29]

The overwhelmed can be identified in 40 attestations.[30] The overwhelmed partly consists of persons. Shalmaneser II speaks of *Adinu* (of Bit-Dakkuri), *Marduk-bēl-usāte* (of Babylon), *Tullu* (of Tanakun), *Surri* (of Patinu), *Tuatti* (of Tabal), *Aḫunu* (of Bit-Adini), *Anarê* (of Bunisu), *Nikdêra* (of Itu), and *Katê* (of Que), while Shamshi-Adad V and Adad-narari III refer to *Marduk-balāṭsu-iqbi* (of Babylon) and *Mari* (of Damascus) respectively. The same Assyrian kings and Ashurnasirpal II talk of groups of people(s) as overwhelmed. The people of Gilzanu and Hubushka (*Gilzānāyi Ḫubuškāyi*), Huduna (*Ḫudunāyi*), and Mesu (*Mēsāyi*) are all overwhelmed, and so are the "kings of the land Zamua" (*šarrāni ša māt Zamua*), the "kings of Chalde[a]" (*šarrāni ša māt Kald*[*i*]), and the "kings of [the land Hatti]" (*šarrāni* [*māt Ḫatte*]). Also the "king of the city Hubush[ki]a along with the remainder of his troops" (*šar āl Ḫubuš*[*ki*]*a sittāt ummānātīšu*), and the "king of the land Nairi along with the remainder of his troops" (*šar māt Nairi u sittēt ummānātīšu*) are overwhelmed. As for cities, *āl Sūri*, *āl La'la'ti*, "his (Ahunu's) city" (*ālīšu*), and the "[cities of the coast of] the upper [sea] of the land Amurru" ([*ālāni ša aḫat tâmdi*] *elinīte ša māt Amurri*) are targeted in the inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III. As for lands, *māt Alzi*, *māt Kaldu*, *māt Namri*, *māt Nairi*, and *māt Gizilbunda* are aimed at in the inscriptions of Adad-narari II, Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III, and Shamshi-Adad V. A (northern) region (Nairi?) is spoken of as overwhelmed in Tukulti-Ninurta II's reference to "all of the[ir] lands" (*mātāti kalîši*[*na*]). Finally, "mountains" (*šadû*), more precisely Mount Shitamrat and an unnamed mountain in the land Tummu, are overwhelmed in the inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III.

Situational contexts can be determined in 40 attestations. All these attestations of the verb are found in narratives of military campaigns. The two undetermined cases derive from a titulary statement in two texts which is not explicit concerning event.[31] As for spatial contexts, all but one attestation seem to speak of overwhelming from a close distance. Ashurnasirpal II overwhelms Chaldea from a position at Suhu by means of the radiant *šuribat kakkīya*.[32]

Turning to effects, these can be identified in all but four attestations.[33] The

[29] For the term *namurratu*, meaning "numinous splendor emanating from gods, kings, and things divine and royal", see *CAD* N I, pp. 253–254.

[30] The two remaining attestations point to the titulary statement, "I overwhelmed [lik]e a net" ([*kīm*]*a šuškalli assaḫap*), thus excluding grammatical objects.

[31] The titulary statement referred to in the preceding footnote. Warfare may, however, be implicit. For the battle context of the word *šuškallu*, see *CAD* Š III, pp. 382–383.

[32] There is a similar passage in the texts of Shalmaneser III but here with the Assyrian king actually present in Chaldea. As for other possible examples of overwhelming from afar, Surri (the usurper king of Patina) is said to have died by *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur* from a distance, but this occurred while the Assyrian army was outside his gates.

[33] These attestations derive from the aforementioned passages in Ashurnasirpal II's and Shalmaneser III's inscriptions which end by stating that the kings of Chaldea as far as the

most common one is surrender, attested 16 times. The overwhelmers which cause surrender are *melammē ša Aššur*, *pulḫī*, *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur*, *pulḫī melammē ša Marduk*, and [*pulḫū melam*]*mū*. This effect is expressed through the enemy delivering "tribute" (*biltu*) and "tax" (*maddattu*) or through his "seizing the king's feet" (*šēpēya iṣbatu*), sometimes after descending (*warādu*) from a mountain or emerging (*waṣû*) from his defences.[34] The effect flight is attested nine times, two examples of fright included. Flight is caused by *melammē bēlūtīya u tībi tāḫāzīya danni*, *namurrat Aššur*, *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur*, and *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur Marduk*. Flight occurs through the enemy going up (*elû*), to a mountain or upstream, and by his abandoning (*wašāru* D) his stronghold, often "to save his life" (*ana šūzub napištīšu*).[35] The effect capture is attested five times, caused by the king's direct overwhelming, *melammē bēlūtīya*, and *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur*. This effect is told of in lands being caught in a "net" (*šuškallu*, *sapāru*) or through people being carried off (*wabālu*) and uprooted (*nasāḫu*).[36] Next, the effect destruction is evidenced four times, each time in the context of the king's direct overwhelming. Lands here appear "like mound(s) (created) by the flood" (*kīma tīl abūbe*), and the king is "smashing their (the enemy's) nest (stronghold)" (*iḫpi qinnāšunu*). Death is referred to twice, and is caused by *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur*. The usurper king in Patinu, Surri, "passes away" (*mūt nammušīšu illik*), supposedly out of fear having the troops of Shalmaneser III advancing towards him. Finally, the effects battle and siege are attested once each, and are caused by the king's direct overwhelming and *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur* respectively. Despite Shalmaneser III's troops having overwhelmed Mount Shitamrat, Ahunu of Bit-Adini attacks (*ina irtīya ūṣâ*). Tuatti of Tabal responds to the Assyrian offensive and overwhelming by confining (*esēru*) himself to his fortified city, trying to save his life in this way.

Summarizing the evidence from the early Neo-Assyrian period in statistics, 81 % of the overwhelmers are radiant forces, and 63 % of the overwhelmed are animate beings (persons / groups of people). The situational context is warfare while the spatial one (with one exception, then representing 2,5 % of the total) is

Persian Gulf were overwhelmed in some unspecified way.

[34] The ruler of Damascus enters into the status as Adad-narari III's vassal (*ardūti īpuš*) after having been exposed to *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur*. The same radiance hits people from the city Suru, who come out and say, "As it pleases you, kill! As it pleases you, let live!" (*mā ḫadāt dūku mā ḫadāt baliṭ*), thus signalling complete surrender.

[35] Twice, the enemy is described as fearing (*palāḫu*) before fleeing. After being hit by *namurrat Aššur*, the Babylonian enemy of Shamshi-Adad V fears, and then abandons his fortress "in the stil[l] of the night" (*ina mušīte salīmt*[*i*]) in order to save himself.

[36] After *melammē bēlūtīya* had overwhelmed, a daughter of the ruler of Que is spoken of as carried off before the said ruler is revealed as surrendering to Shalmaneser III.

closeness. With regard to effect, surrender represents 42 %, flight 24 %, capture 13 %, destruction 11 %, death 5 %, and battle and siege 3 % each.

The verb *saḫāpu* in late Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions

As noted, the said word is attested 139 times in Sargonid royal inscriptions. Because of the great number of attestations in this period, five separate tables, for the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III (14), Sargon II (18), Sennacherib (50), Esarhaddon (13), and Ashurbanipal (44), are used to list the 139 attestations in question.

Table 3: *saḫāpu* in late Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions: Tiglath-pileser III.

overwhelmer	**overwhelmed**	**context**	**effect**	**source**
[*melammē*] *Aššur*	[*Iranzu*] (E)	W / N	surrender	47: o 40
namurrat [*Aššur*]	*Iranzu* (E)	W / N	surrender	17: 11
na[*mur*]*rat Aššur*	*ra*[*'sāni ša māt Kaldi*]	W / N	surrender?	24: 4
namurrat [*Aššur*]	[*nišī*] *ša ālāni* [*Ullu*]*bāyi*	W / N	fright + battle?	37: 38
[*namurrat Aššur*]	*Ḫanūnu* (W)	W / F	surrender	42: 12'
[*namurrat Aššur*]	RN (W)?	W / F	fright + surrender	48: 21'
namurrat Aššur	RN (W)?	W / F	fright + surrender	49: r 24
namurrat [*Aššur*]	*Samsi*? (S)	W / N	battle?	53: 17
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*Marduk-apla-iddina* (S)	W / N	surrender	47: o 27
RN (*asḫup*)	*Bīt-Kapsi Bīt-Sangi Bīt-Urzakki*	W / N	battle	7: 6
RN ([*as*]*ḫu*[*p*])	*ālāni ša Ullu*[*bāyi*]	W / N	destruction	37: 34
RN (*asḫup*)	*Puqudu*	W / N	battle	47: o 13
RN (*as*[*ḫ*]*up*)	*māt Kaldu*	W / N	capture	47: o 15
RN (*as*[*ḫup*]*šu*)	RN (W)?	W / N?	battle?	22: 2'

The overwhelmers in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III are all stated. In five cases, a direct overwhelming, with the overwhelmer simply expressed by prefixes of finite verb forms, is attested. The expression "splendor of Ashur" (*namurrat Aššur*), first used by Shamshi-Adad V, is commonly attested (seven times) in Tiglath-pileser III's texts. The overwhelmers "[radiance] of Ashur" ([*melammē*] *Aššur*), and "terror of the radiance of Ashur" (*pulḫī melammē ša Aššur*), attested also in earlier Assyrian periods, are found one time each.

The overwhelmed in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III is uncertain in three of the attestations, in all cases due to textual lacunae.[37] Elsewhere, persons are referred to as overwhelmed, namely *Iranzu* (of Mannea), *Ḫanūnu* (of Gaza), *Marduk-apla-iddina* (of Bit-Yakin), and probably *Samsi* ("queen of the Arabs"). As for groups of people(s), the southern Aramean tribe *Puqudu*, the "chief[tains of Chaldea]" (*ra*[*'sāni ša māt Kaldi*]), and the "[people] of the cities of the [Ullu]-beans" ([*nišī*] *ša ālāni* [*Ullu*]*bāyi*) are all targeted. Turning to cities, lands, and regions, the "cities of the Ullu[beans]" (*ālāni ša Ullu*[*bāyi*]), the lands *Bīt-Kapsi*, *Bīt-Sangi*, and *Bīt-Urzakki*, and Chaldea (*māt Kaldu*) are aimed at.

The 14 attestations reveal the situational context in all cases. The overwhelming acts occur in the context of military campaigns. Once again, it can be concluded that overwhelming is tied to war. As for the spatial context, there are a few examples of overwhelming from afar attested in the texts of Tiglath-pileser III. Hanunu, the ruler of Gaza, is overwhelmed by [*namurrat Aššur*] and returns to Gaza (now held by Assyria) from his exile in Egypt. An anonymous ruler, probably an Egyptian ruler, is overwhelmed by the same force, then fears and ultimately surrenders (by sending his envoys to Assyria to do obeisance).[38]

As for effects, all attestations reveal these.[39] Surrender is the most common effect, found seven times. After having been exposed to various forms of radiance emanating from the god Ashur, Iranzu of Mannea and Marduk-apla-iddina (II) of Bit-Yakin both react by coming (*alāku*) before Tiglath-pileser III and kissing (*našāqu* D) the Assyrian king's feet.[40] Hanunu of Gaza reacts to [*namurrat Aššur*] by "flying" (*naprušu*) back to Gaza from Egypt (his place of refuge), then being reinstalled by Tiglath-pileser III. An anonymous ruler, who hears about the king's victories in the Levant, is also hit by *namurrat Aššur*, but first fears in his "becoming distressed" (*iršâ nakuttu*), and then surrenders by sending (*šapāru*) his "envoys" (*ṣīrānu*) to Kalhu and the king "to do obeisance" (*epēš ardūti*). Battle as effect is expressed five times. In three cases, the king's direct overwhelming (of lands, a ruler, and Puqudu) is referred to. Also, the "[people] of the cities of the [Ullu]beans" first feel "terror" (*ḫurbāšu*), after having been struck by *namurrat* [*Aššur*]. A lacuna follows, but later on Tiglath-pileser III hints of having taken captives and booty. Samsi seems to be referred to in a broken context where *na-*

[37] In text 22, a person ("him") is overwhelmed, perhaps the ruler of *Bīt-Ḫumria* (Israel), judging by the preserved bits of text. In texts 48–49, a ruler of Egypt ("he/his") is probably alluded to (Tadmor / Yamada, 2011 (= RINAP 1): 125, 128).

[38] The latter ruler hears (*šemû*) about the conquests of the Assyrian army in Hatti. Iranzu of Mannea also hears of Assyria, but with Assyrian troops (relatively) nearby.

[39] The above-mentioned, fragmentary text 22 begins by stating that the king(?) "overwhelmed him like a fog (*imbaru*)." A lacuna and a description of actions against Israel follow. These text parts are probably linked, telling of battle as the effect.

[40] The "chief[tains of Chaldea]" seem to do the same (in the fragmentary text 24), after having been exposed to *na*[*mur*]*rat Aššur*.

murrat [*Aššur*] overwhelms. After a lacuna, the text says that she was spared (*ēzibši*) by the king, hinting at a battle after the act of overwhelming. Finally, destruction and capture as effects are attested one time each. The "cities of the Ullu[beans]" and Chaldea are here targeted by the king's direct overwhelming.

Summarizing the evidence from the texts of Tiglath-pileser III in statistics, 64 % of the overwhelmers are radiant forces, and 73 % of the overwhelmed are animate beings (persons / groups of people). The situational context is warfare, and the spatial context is closeness to a degree of 79 %. With regard to effect, surrender represents 50 %, battle 36 %, and destruction and capture 7 % each.

Table 4: *saḫāpu* in late Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions: Sargon II.

overwhelmer	**overwhelmed**	**context**	**effect**	**source**
(*issaḫip*)	*Ursā* (N)	W / N	insanity	*MDOG* 115: 412
nam[*urr*]*at Aššur*	*Ursā* (N)	W / N	suicide	*ISKh*: 2.3, 165
[*na*]*murrat* [*Aššur*]	*Yamani* (W)	W / F	flight?	SAAS 8: VIIb, 41
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	[*šar māt M*]*eluḫḫa*	W / F	surrender	*ISKh*: 2.2, 14
p[*u*]*lḫī mela*[*m*]*mē ša Aššur Nabû Marduk*	*šar māt Meluḫḫa*?	W / F	surrender	*AfO* 14: B 2
puluḫti milammīya	*Adā* (E)	W / N	battle	SAAS 8: Vb-d,12
puluḫtu melammē ša Aššur	*Šilkanni* (W)	W / F	surrender	SAAS 8: IIIe, 9
RN (*asḫup*)	*Sam'ūna Bāb-dūri*	W / N	capture	*ISKh*: 2.3, 296
RN (*asḫup*)	*nagē šášunu* (E)	W / N	battle	*Iraq* 16: iii 47
RN (*asḫup*)	*Kaldû*	W / N	siege	*Iraq* 16: vi 26
RN (*asḫup*)	*nagû suātu* (N)	W / N	battle	*MDOG* 115: 194
RN ([*as*]*ḫup*)	*gimer ālānīšu dannūti* (N)	W / N	destruction	*MDOG* 115: 253
RN (*asḫupa*)	*nišē māt Zikirte u māt Andia*	W / N	battle	*MDOG* 115: 154
RN (*isḫupšunūti*)	[*ālān*]*i dannūti ša māt Ḫaldiniše*	W / N	battle	SAAS 8: VIb, 6
RN (*musaḫḫip*)	*kullat lā māgirī*			*Iraq* 37: 7
(*saḫpū*)	*ālik pānīšunu* (N)	W / N	battle	*MDOG* 115: 175
šalummat Aššur	*nišē Muṣur u Arabi*	W / F	fright + surrender?	*Iraq* 16: iv 43
[*šūt*]*-rēšīya bēl pīḫāti*	*Marubištu*	W / N	capture	*ISKh*: 2.3, 421

The overwhelmers in the inscriptions of Sargon II are revealed in all 18 attestations. In nine of these, the overwhelmer is defined through prefixes (and once through a suffix) in finite verb forms. Sargon II is usually the overwhelmer here, but twice the verb in question is found in passive forms (stative and N-stem), pointing to what happens to enemies of the Assyrian king. In addition, Sargon II is once defined in participle form (*musaḫḫipu*) as overwhelmer. The remaining eight attestations of *saḫāpu* speak of radiance, with the exception of the reference to "my [eun]uchs and governors" ([*šūt*]-*rēšīya bēl pīḫāti*) as overwhelmers. Concerning royal radiance, "fearsomeness of my radiance" (*puluḫti milammīya*) is one cause. As for divine radiance, "sple[nd]or of Ashur" (*nam*[*urr*]*at Aššur*) reoccurs and is attested twice. The remaining overwhelmers, namely "terror of the radiance of Ashur" (*pulḫī melammē ša Aššur*), "terror of the radiance of Ashur, Nabu, and Marduk" (*p*[*u*]*lḫī mela*[*m*]*mē ša Aššur Nabû Marduk*), "fearsomeness of the radiance of Ashur" (*puluḫtu melammē ša Aššur*), and "radiance of Ashur" (*šalummat Aššur*) are attested once each. The terms *puluḫtu* and *šalummatu* are the radiant novelties in the inscriptions of Sargon II.[41]

The overwhelmed partly consists of persons, in this case the anonymous "king of Meluhha" (*šar māt Meluḫḫa*),[42] *Ursā* (of Urartu), *Šilkanni* (of Egypt),[43] *Adā* (of Shurda), and *Yamani* (of Ashdod). Also groups of people are overwhelmed, namely the "people of Egypt and Arabia" (*nišē Muṣur u Arabi*), the "people of the lands Zikirtu and Andia" (*nišē māt Zikirte u māt Andia*), "their (people north-east of Assyria) leaders" (*ālik pānīšunu*), and the undefined "all of the insubmissive" (*kullat lā māgirī*). Also cities are overwhelmed. The fortressed cities (*birtu*) *Sam-'ūna*, *Bāb-dūri*, and *Marubištu*, as well as the "strong [citie]s of the land Haldinishu" ([*ālān*]*i dannūti ša māt Ḫaldiniše*), and "all strong cities of Chaldea" (*gimer ālānīšu dannūti Kaldû*) are targeted thus. Finally, "districts" (*nagû*), in Ellipi and to the north-east of Assyria, are also overwhelmed.

With regard to situational context, all but one (the participle) of the attestations of *saḫāpu* can be tied to a narrative context.[44] These narrative contexts point to military campaigns of Sargon II. Once again, the verb in question is tied to warfare. As for spatial context, overwhelming from afar is attested on several occasions. The king of Meluhha "surrenders" to the Assyrian king following exposure

[41] For the term *puluḫtu*, translated "awesomeness, fearsomeness, terrifying quality, fear, panic, terror, reverence, respect, awe", see *CAD* P, pp. 505–509. As noted by S. Richardson (2015) in his paper on *puluḫtu* in Mesopotamian texts, "terror" was central to Mesopotamian political ideologies, especially with regard to the construction of the image, power, and reach of the ruler. The said quality functioned "awe-inspiring." For *šalummatu*, translated "awesome radiance", see *CAD* Š I, pp. 283–285.

[42] The Kushite ruler Shebitku may be this "king of Meluhha" (Frame, 1999: 52–54).

[43] This ruler should be Osorkon IV, ruler of the delta city Tanis (Kitchen, 1973: 143–144).

[44] The form *musaḫḫip kullat lā māgirī* is not explicit regarding context (or effect), although warfare (as event) and some kind of subjugation (as effect) may be implicit.

to *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur* (*Nabû Marduk*), the Egyptian ruler Shilkanni do the same after *puluḫtu melammē ša Aššur*, the people of Egypt and Arabia get frightened (by the Assyrian army in Samaria) and surrender after experiencing *šalummat Aššur*, and Yamani of Ashdod flees after "hearing from afar" of the Assyrian army's traversing the Euphrates and [*na*]*murrat* [*Aššur*].[45]

Effects can be determined in all but one (the participle) of the attestations. Battle is caused by *puluḫti milammīya* and direct overwhelming, and is attested six times. The one attestation of the former kind tells of none being spared ([*ul*] *ēzib*) among the forces of Ada. Surrender is caused by *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur*, *p*[*u*]*lḫī mela*[*m*]*mē ša Aššur Nabû Marduk*, *puluḫtu melammē ša Aššur*, and *šalummat Aššur*, and is found four times. The king of Meluhha here places (*nadû*) the Assyrian enemy Yamani of Ashdod in fetters, and brings (*wabālu* Š) him to Assyria.[46] Also, the Egyptian ruler Shilkanni gives "gifts" (*tāmartu*) to Sargon II after being overwhelmed. Capture is attested twice, with direct overwhelming and the king's high officials as overwhelmers. In the latter case, the fortress Marubishtu is caught "like a bird-snare" (*ḫuḫāriš*), and a narration of captives follows. Then there are a number of effects attested only once each, namely suicide and flight (both caused by *namurrat Aššur*), fright (caused by *šalummat Aššur*), and siege, destruction, and insanity (all caused by direct overwhelming). Ursa stabs (*saḫālu*) himself with his sword, and is likened to a "pig" (*šaḫû*) in this act. Yamani of Ashdod reacts to the overwhelming by taking to the river (*nāru*), and is likened to a "fish" (*nūnu*) in this (fleeing) act. The people of Egypt and Arabia react by fright, with "their hearts palpitating and their arms collapsing" (*libbūšun itrukū irmā idāšun*). Marduk-apla-iddina II reacts to the Assyrian advance by letting his people and deities enter (*erēbu* Š) the city Dur-Yakin, "strengthening its defence" (*udannina kirḫēšu*). Ursa goes insain when hearing of defeats, makes gestures of mourning, and falls "on his face" (*buppānīš*), signalling mental lability.[47]

Summarizing the evidence from the texts of Sargon II in statistics, 39 % of the overwhelmers are radiant forces, and 61 % of the overwhelmed are animate beings (persons / groups of people). The situational context is warfare, and the spatial context is closeness to a degree of 71 %. With regard to effect, battle represents

[45] As for other possible cases of overwhelming from afar, Rusa goes insain and takes his own life, but he does this while having Assyrian troops in his own land (Musasir).

[46] For the idea of mere diplomatic gifts (of various kinds) as signifying "tribute" and "submission" in the worldview of the receiving polity, see Liverani, 2001: 141–195.

[47] The verb *saḫāpu* is here attested in the passive N-stem, thus giving no real overwhelmer (if not seeing the news of the Urartean defeats as the actual overwhelmer). The verb in question is also attested in the stative, when enemy leaders (*ālik pānīšunu*) are spoken of as having been overwhelmed (*saḫpū*) with "deadly poison" (*imat mūti*).

35 %, surrender 24 %, and capture 12 %. The effects suicide, flight, siege, destruction, and insanity (all attested once) each represent 6 %.

Table 5: *saḫāpu* in late Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions: Sennacherib.

overwhelmer	**overwhelmed**	**context**	**effect**	**source**
[*dūru ša namrīrūšu*]	[*nakirī*]			8: 11’
dūru [*ša namrīrūšu*]	[*nakirī*]			15: vii 22
dūru ša namrīrūšu	*nakirī*			16: vii 31
dūru ša namrīrūšu	*nakirī*			17: vii 66
dūru ša nam[*rīrūšu*]	*nakirī*			18: vii 3’
ḫurbāšu tāḫāzīya	*Umman-menanu šar Bābili nasikkāni ša māt Kaldi*	W / N	fright? + flight	22: vi 27
ḫurbāšu [*tāḫāzīya*]	*Umman-*[*menanu*] *šar Bābili* [*na*]*sikkā*[*ni ša māt Kaldi*]	W / N	fright? + flight	23: vi 22
ḫurbāšu tāḫāzīya	*šar Bābili u šar māt Elamti*	W / N	fright + flight	34: 53
[*ḫurbāšu tāḫāzīya*]	*šar Bābili u šar māt Elamti*	W / N	fright + flight	35: r 51’
[*ḫurbāšu tāḫāzī*]*ya*	[*Te’elḫu*]*nu Ḫazael* (S)	W / N	flight	35: r 55’
[*ḫurbāšu tāḫāzīya*]	[*Umman-menanu adi šar Bābili*]	W / N	fright + flight	230: 96
ḫurbāšu tāḫāzīya danni	*šar māt Elamti u šar Bābili*	W / N	fright + flight	223: 39
[*pulḫī melammē*]	*Marduk-apla-iddina* (S)	W / N	flight	26: i 5’
pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya	*Lulî* (W)	W / N	flight	4: 32
pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya	*Ḫazaqiû* (W)	W / F	surrender	4: 55
pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya	*Lulî* (W)	W / N	flight	15: iii 3
pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya	*Lulî* (W)	W / N	flight	16: iii 1
pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya	*Ḫazaqiû* (W)	W / F	surrender	16: iv 23
pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya	*Lulî* (W)	W / N	flight	17: ii 60
pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya	*Ḫazaqiû* (W)	W / F	surrender	17: iii 67

overwhelmer	**overwhelmed**	**context**	**effect**	**source**
[*pulḫī melammē bē*]*lūtīya*	[*Ḫaza*]*qiû* (W)	W / F	surrender	19: i’ 5’
pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya	*Lulî* (W)	W / N	flight	22: ii 39
pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya	*Ḫazaqiû* (W)	W / F	surrender	22: iii 38
pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya	*Lulî* (W)	W / N	flight	23: ii 37
[*pulḫī*] *melammē bēlūtīya*	*Ḫazaqi*[*û*] (W)	W / F	surrender	23: iii 34
[*pulḫī melammē bēlūtī*]*ya*	[*Ḫazaqiû*] (W)	W / F	surrender	46: 31
pul[*ḫī melam*]*mē bēlūtī*[*ya*]	[*Lulî*] (W)	W / N	flight	140: o 15’
[*pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya*]	[*Ḫazaqiû*] (W)	W / F	surrender	140: r 19
[*puluḫti melammīya*]	*Lulî* (W)	W / N	flight	46: 18
rašubbat kakki Aššur	*āl Ṣidunnu rabû* …	W / N	surrender	4: 34
[*rašubbat kakki Aššur*]	*āl Ṣidunnu rabû* …	W / N	surrender	15: iii 14
rašubbat kakki Aššur	*āl Ṣidunnu rabû* …	W / N	surrender	16: iii 11
rašubbat kakki Aššur	*āl Ṣidunnu rabû* …	W / N	surrender	17: ii 69
rašubbat kakki Aššur	*āl Ṣidunnu rabû* …	W / N	surrender	22: ii 46
ra[*šubbat*] *kakki Aššur*	*āl Ṣidu*[*nnu rabû*] …	W / N	surrender	23: ii 43
rašubbat kakki Aššur	[*āl Ṣidunnu rabû*] …	W / N	surrender	140: o 17’
RN ([*asḫup*])	[*gimri mātīšu rapašti*] (E)	W / N	destruction	2: 28
RN (*asḫup*)	*gimri mātīšu rapašti* (E)	W / N	destruction	3: 28
RN (*asḫup*)	*gimri mātīšu rapašti* (E)	W / N	battle	4: 26
RN ([*asḫup*])	*gimri mātīšu* [*rapaštim*] (E)	W / N	battle	15: ii 8’’
RN (*asḫup*)	*gimri mātīšu rapaštim* (E)	W / N	battle	16: ii 45
RN (*asḫup*)	*gimri mātīšu rapaštim* (E)	W / N	battle	17: ii 26
RN (*asḫup*)	[*gimri mātīšu rapaštim*] (E)	W / N	battle	18: ii 3’
RN (*asḫup*)	*gimri mātīšu rapaštim* (E)	W / N	battle	22: ii 15
RN (*asḫup*)	[*gimri*] *mātīšu rapaštim* (E)	W / N	battle	23: ii 13

overwhelmer	overwhelmed	context	effect	source
RN (*as*[*ḫup*])	[*gimri mātīšu rapaštim*] (E)	W / N	battle	139: i' 3'
RN ([*asḫup*])	[*gimri mātīšu rapašti*] (E)	W / N	battle	140: o 9'
RN ([*asḫup*])	[*gimri mātīšu rapaštim*] (E)	W / N	battle	165: ii 37
RN ([*asḫup*])	[*gimri mātī*]*šu rapaš*[*ti*] (E)	W / N	battle	228: H 1
RN (*asḫupšu*)	*Bābili*	W / N	battle	223: 44

The overwhelmer in the inscriptions of Sennacherib are revealed in all 50 attestations of the word *saḫāpu*. There are 14 examples of direct overwhelming, with the king overwhelming someone or something. Additionally, "fear of my warfare" (*ḫurbāšu tāḫāzīya*) can be found six times, while the related "fear of my strong warfare" (*ḫurbāšu tāḫāzīya danni*) is attested once. As for royal radiance, "terror of the radiance of my lordship" (*pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya*) is attested 15 times. The overwhelmers "[terror of the radiance]" ([*pulḫī melammē*]) and "[fearsomeness of my radiance]" ([*puluḫti melammīya*]) are discernable once each. The one example (found seven times) of divine radiance speaks of "awesomeness of the weapon of Ashur" (*rašubbat kakki Aššur*). Five times, a city wall is referred to as "wall whose brilliance (overwhelms)" (*dūru ša namrīrūšu*). The terms *rašubbatu* and *namrīru* are novelties in the texts of Sennacherib.[48]

The overwhelmed in the said text corpus is also presented in all 50 attestations of the verb. Regarding persons, *Lulî* (of Sidon), *Ḫazaqiû* (of Judah), and *Marduk-apla-iddina (II)* (of Babylon/Bit-Yakin) are singled out as overwhelmed. Concerning groups of people, [*Te'elḫu*]*nu* and *Ḫazael* (rulers of the Arabs) are jointly overwhelmed, and so are the "king of Babylon and king of Elam" (*šar Bābili u šar māt Elamti*). Similarly, "Umman-menanu, the king of Babylon, and the sheikhs of Chaldea" (*Umman-menanu šar Bābili nasikkāni ša māt Kaldi*), and "[Umman-menanu together with the king of Babylon]" ([*Umman-menanu adi šar Bābili*]) are overwhelmed. Finally, "enemies" (*nakirī*), generally speaking, are also aimed at. With regard to cities and lands as exposed to the overwhelming act, "Great Sidon" (*āl Ṣidunnu rabû* …) belongs to the cities listed in a certain reoccuring text passage.[49] The city Babylon (*Bābili*), and "all of his (the ruler of Ellipi's) wide land" (*gimri mātīšu rapašti*) are also targeted thus.

[48] For the term *rašubbatu*, meaning "awesomeness, overwhelming impact, frightful aspect", see *CAD* R, pp. 212–213. For the term *namrīru*, meaning "supernatural, awe-inspiring luminosity," see *CAD* N I, pp. 237–238.

[49] The remaining cities are Lesser Sidon, Bit-Zitti, Sarepta, Mahalliba, Ushu, Akzibu, and Acco, all under the dominion of Luli, king of Sidon.

With regard to situational context, this can be determined in 45 of 50 cases. The five remaining is non-narrative in character, pointing to an epithet of a city wall.[50] All 45 attestations occur in military narratives, stressing that *saḫāpu* is tied to warfare. As for spatial context, the only attestations of overwhelming from afar tell of Hezekiah, being exposed to *pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya*, "surrendering" by delivering tribute to Sennacherib after the latter's campaign in the region.[51]

Effects can also be determined in 45 cases (the city wall-epithet does not reveal effect either). The most common effect is flight (six times following fright), which is attested 16 times. Flight is caused by *ḫurbāšu tāḫāzīya*, *ḫurbāšu tāḫāzīya danni*, [*pulḫī melammē*], *pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya*, and [*puluḫti melammīya*]. After being targeted by *pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya*, Luli (of Sidon) "escapes" (*abātu* N) into the "midst of the sea" (*qabal tâmtim*). Marduk-apla-iddina II (of Bit-Yakin) "disap-[pears]" (*šadâšu ē*[*mid*]) after having been exposed to [*pulḫī melammē*]. Overwhelmed by *ḫurbāšu tāḫāzīya*, the rulers of Elam, Babylon, and Chaldea become "like *alû*-demons," abandon (*wašāru* D) their tents to save themselves, and trample (*dâšu*) on the corpses of their soldiers while fleeing. The kings of Babylon and Elam "released their excrement" (*umaššerūni zûšun*), and "fled alone" (*ēdiš ipparšidū*) back home, after having been exposed to the same force. Surrender is evidenced 15 times, and is triggered by *pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya* and *rašubbat kakki Aššur*. The former affects Hezekiah (of Judah), who subsequently decides to send (*wabālu* Š) "tribute" (*maddattu*) to Sennacherib, and becomes a vassal of the Assyrian king, "making servitude" (*epēš ardūti*).[52] The cities of Luli surrender by "bowing down" (*kanāšu*) at the king's feet, after experiencing *rašubbat kakki Aššur*. Battle can be found twelve times, and always occurs following the king's direct overwhelming. The king overwhelms the city Babylon, "besieging, conquering, and plundering" (*lawû*, *kašādu*, *ḫabātu*) it, "sparing neither young nor old" (*nišēšu ṣeḫer u raba lā ēzib*) in the process of conquering. Finally, destruction is attested twice, likewise restricted to the king's direct overwhelming. The king here overwhelms Ellipi like a "fog" (*imbaru*), "destroying, devastating, and burning" (*appul aqqur ina girri aqmu*) its cities.

Summarizing the evidence from the texts of Sennacherib in statistics, 58 % of the overwhelmers are radiant forces, and 58 % of the overwhelmed are animate beings (persons / groups of people). The situational context is warfare, and the spatial context is closeness to a degree of 84 %. With regard to effect, flight represents 36 %, surrender 33 %, battle 27 %, and destruction 4 % of the total.

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[50] It is, of course, reasonable to suggest that the event warfare and the effect battle are at hand here, considering the fact that "enemies" (*nakirī*) are the ones overwhelmed. The city wall in question was the inner wall of Nineveh, called Badnigalbilukurašušu.

[51] Not the least the phrase "after my (departure)" (*arkīya*) points to this spatial context.

[52] This is the Assyrian version of the ultimate result of the siege of Jerusalem, the latter portrayed as a great Assyrian defeat in the Bible (Kuhrt, 1997: 477–478).

Table 6: *saḫāpu* in late Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions: Esarhaddon.

overwhelmer	**overwhelmed**	**context**	**effect**	**source**
[*melammē bēlūtī*]*ya*	[*Ḫazael*] (S)	W / F	surrender	31: r 3
namrīru bēlūtīšu	*mātāti*			48: o 6
[*pulḫī melammē bēlūtī*]*ya*	[*Bēl-iqīša*] (S)	W / N	fright + surrender	30: o 14’
pulḫī melammē ša Aššur	*Uppis Zanasana Ramateia* (E)	W / F	surrender	1: iv 37
pulḫī me[*lammē ša Aššur*]	*Uppis Zanasana Ramateia* (E)	W / F	surrender	6: iii 30’
[*puluḫti Aššur*] *u melammē bēlūtīya*	[*Bēl-iqīša*] (S)	W / N	fright + surrender	31: o 10’
puluḫti ilāni rabûti	*za’īrīya* (C)	W / N	insanity	1: i 72
puluḫti šarrūtīya	*šadē kibrāti*			1: ii 35
puluḫtu rašubbat Aššur	*Uppis Zanasana Ramateia* (E)	W / F	surrender	2: iv 7
puluḫtu ra[*šub*]*bat Aššur*	*Uppis Zanasana Ramateia* (E)	W / F	surrender	3: iv 9’
RN ([*as*]*ḫup*)	*ṣābī*[*šu*] (W)	W / N	battle?	8: ii’ 22’
ṣelî qutrinnu erēš za’î ṭābi	*šamē rapšūte*	C		57: vii 8
	[*Abdi-*]*Milkūti*? (W)	W		40: i’ 9

The overwhelmer in the inscriptions of Esarhaddon are all defined, except in one text with lacunae.[53] The king’s direct overwhelming is attested once. Another kind of direct overwhelming is expressed by the “burning of incense, a fragrance of sweet resin” (*ṣelî qutrinnu erēš za’î ṭābi*), attested once. With regard to royal radiance, “[radiance of] my [lordship]” ([*melammē bēlūtī*]*ya*), “brilliance of his lordship” (*namrīru bēlūtīšu*), “[terror of the radiance of] my [lordship]” ([*pulḫī melammē bēlūtī*]*ya*), and “fearsomeness of my kingship” (*puluḫti šarrūtīya*) are attested once each. Regarding divine radiance, “terror of the radiance of Ashur” (*pulḫī melammē ša Aššur*), and “terror of the awesomeness of Ashur” (*puluḫtu rašubbat Aššur*) are found twice each, while “[fearsomeness of Ashur] and radiance of my lordship” ([*puluḫti Aššur*] *u melammē bēlūtīya*), and “fearsomeness of the great gods” (*puluḫti ilāni rabûti*) are expressed once each.

The overwhelmed is revealed in all 13 attestations. Regarding individuals, [*Bēl-iqīša*] (of Gambulu), [*Ḫazael*] (of the Arabs), and [*Abdi-*]*Milkūti* (of Sidon) are all singled out as overwhelmed. As for groups of people, “my foes” (*za’īrīya*), namely Esarhaddon’s brothers, who challenged his right to the throne, are overwhelmed, and so are “[his] (the Kushite king Taharqa’s) troops” (*ṣābī*[*šu*]) in battles taking place in north-eastern Egypt. Also *Uppis*, *Zanasana*, and *Ramateia*,

[53] The verb prefix in *isḫupšu* is the only clear evidence of the overwhelmer.

chieftains of the Medes, are singled out as overwhelmed. The "foreign lands" (*mātāti*), the "mountains of the regions" (*šadē kibrāti*), and the "wide heavens" (*šamē rapšūte*), all in a general sense, are also being overwhelmed.

As for situational context, this can be determined in all attestations, except in two cases with non-narration or narrative brevity. Otherwise, ten attestations are found in warfare narrations, while one attestation is expressed in a cultic milieu. With regard to spatial context, there are some examples of overwhelming from afar. Some Median rulers surrender in person after being overwhelmed by *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur* or *puluḫtu rašubbat Aššur* after a narration of an Assyrian campaign against the Arabs. A ruler of the Arabs do the same, here due to [*melammē bēlūtī*]*ya*, after the narration of a campaign against the Levant.[54]

Turning to effects, these can be identified in nine cases, that is, where non-narrative forms, narrative brevity, or lacunae do not obstruct.[55] Seven attestations focus on surrender. Twice, fright precedes surrender. The forces that cause surrender are [*melammē bēlūtī*]*ya*, [*pulḫī melammē bēlūtī*]*ya*, *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur*, [*puluḫti Aššur*] *u melammē bēlūtīya*, and *puluḫtu rašubbat Aššur*. Three Median rulers react to *pulḫī melammē ša Aššur* and *puluḫtu rašubbat Aššur* by presenting gifts (notably exclusive lapis lazuli) in Nineveh, kissing (*našāqu*) the king's feet. The Arab ruler Hazael brings (*wabālu*) "audience gifts" (*tāmartu*) (such as gold and silver) to Nineveh, and kisses the king's feet, after being exposed to [*melammē bēlūtī*]*ya*. The ruler of Gambulu is struck (*maqātu*) by "unprovoked fear" (*ḫattu ramānīšu*) following [*pulḫī melammē bēlūtī*]*ya* and [*puluḫti Aššur*] *u melammē bēlūtīya*, but then kisses the king's feet and is turned into a vassal ([*epēš ardū*]*ti*). Insanity as effect is evidenced once, and is triggered by *puluḫti ilāni rabûti*. Esarhaddon's rebellious brothers here see (*amāru*) the crown prince's "battle array" (*tīb tāḫāzīya*), with the effect they become "like crazed women" (*maḫḫūtiš*). Battle as effect may be attested once, here motivated by the king's direct overwhelming. The text passage obviously refers to fighting in the Egyptian delta and includes the word "combat" (*mitḫaṣūtu*) close to *saḫāpu*.

Summarizing the evidence from the texts of Esarhaddon in statistics, 83 % of the overwhelmers are radiant forces, and 77 % of the overwhelmed are animate beings (persons / groups of people). The situational context is warfare to a degree

[54] The former attestation is an example of the *šemû-rūqu* paradigm. As for other possible examples of overwhelming from afar, although the land (Gambulu) of the overwhelmed Bel-iqisha is described as remote (situated deep in the marshlands), the preceding passage tells of an Assyrian military campaign in the neighbouring Sealand.

[55] The force *namrīru bēlūtīšu* refers to the powers of the god Shamash, in epithet form. The "burning of incense, a fragrance of sweet resin" is overwhelmer concerning the king's work on the Ashur temple. Although narrative, it is difficult to talk of an effect in this context. The force *puluḫti šarrūtīya* tells (without elaboration) of the god Marduk empowering Esarhaddon. The passage on Abdi-Milkuti is highly fragmentary.

of 91 %, and the spatial context is closeness to a degree of 50 %. With regard to effect, surrender represents 78 %, and insanity and battle 11 % each.

Table 7: *saḫāpu* in late Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions: Ashurbanipal

overwhelmer	**overwhelmed**	**context**	**effect**	**source**
ḫatta	*Urtaku* (E)	W / F	flight	12: iv 6’
ḫatti Aššur	[*Nabû*]-*bēl-šumāti* (S)	W / F	suicide	23: 105
ḫattu	*Urtaku* (E)	W / F	flight	3: iv 46
ḫattu	*Urtaku* (E)	W / F	flight	4: iv 15’
ḫattu	*Urtaku* (E)	W / F	flight	6: v 70
[*ḫattu*]	*Urtaku* (E)	W / F	flight	7: v 14
ḫattu puluḫti bēlūtīya	*Tarqû* (W)	W / F	death	74: o 70’
melammē Aššur u Ištar	*māt Elamti*	W / N	surrender	3: v 96
melammē Aššur u Ištar	*māt Elamti*	W / N	surrender	4: v 58’
melammē Aš[*šur u Ištar*]	[*māt Elamti*]	W / N	surrender	7: vi 9’
namrīri Aššur u Ištar	*Tarqû* (W)	W / N	insanity	3: i 78
namrīri Aššur Ištar	*Tarqû* (W)	W / N	insanity	4: i 62
[*namrīri Aššur u*] *Ištar*	[*Tarqû*] (W)	W / N	insanity	6: ii 70’
namrīri Aššur u Ištar	*Tarqû* (W)	W / N	insanity	11: i 84
namrīri Aššur u Ištar	*nišē multaḫṭē ša āl Bīt-Imbî…*	W / N	surrender	11: vii 76
namrīri Aššur u Ištar puluḫti šarrūtīya	*nišē āl Ḫilme āl Pillati*	W / N	surrender	9: iii 42
namrīri Aššur u Ištar puluḫti šarrūtīya	*nišē āl Ḫilmu…*	W / N	surrender	11: iv 120
[*namurrat*] *kakkī Aššur*	*Tugdammî* (E)	W / F	insanity	13: viii 37
na[*murrat kakkī*] *Aššur*	*Tugdamm*[*î*] (E)	W / F	insanity	23: 157
puluḫti Aššur Mullissu	*Šīlum* (S)	W / F	surrender	23: 137
puluḫti Aššur Mullissu	[*Mugallu*] (W)	W / F	surrender?	23: 140
puluḫti Aššur Mullissu Bēl Nabû [*Ištar*]	*Tugdamm*[*î*] (E)	W / F	surrender	23: 152
puluḫti Aššur [*Mull*]*issu Ištar*	*Kuraš Pišlumê* (E)	W / N	fright + surrender	23: 116
puluḫti Aššur Sîn Šamaš [*Ištar*]	*Tugdammî* (E)	W / F	surrender	13: viii 26

overwhelmer	overwhelmed	context	effect	source
puluḫti Aššur u Ištar	*Ummanaldasi* (E)	W / N	flight	9: iv 24
puluḫti Aššur u Ištar	*Ummanaldasi* (E)	W / N	flight	11: v 72
[*puluḫti šarrūtīya*]	[*Rusâ*] (N)	W / F	surrender	6: vii 22’
puluḫti šarrūtīya	[*māt Elamti*]	W / F	surrender	6: ix 48’’
puluḫti šarrūtīya	*Rusâ* (N)	W / F	surrender	7: vii 14
[*puluḫ*]*ti šarrūtīya*	*māt Elamti*	W / F	surrender	7: ix 5
[*puluḫti šarrūtīya*]	*māt* [*Elamti*]	W / F	surrender	8: ix 31’
puluḫti šarrūtīya	*Pišlumê* (E)	W / F	surrender	12: vi 22’
[*puluḫ*]*ti šarrūtīya*	*māt Elamti*	W / F?	surrender	17: i’ 2’
puluḫti šarrūtīya	*Mugallu* (W)	W / F	surrender	74: r 30
[*pu*]*luḫtu šarrūtīya*	RNN (S)?	W	surrender	12: vi 2’
puluḫtu šarrūtīya	*Rusâ* (N)	W / F	surrender	35: 5
rašubbat kakki Aššur	*Tarqû* (W)	W / F	death	3: ii 5
rašubbat [*kakki Aššur*]	*Tarqû* (W)	W / F	death	4: i 87
rašubbat kakki Aššur	*Tar*[*q*]*û* (W)	W / F	death	6: iii 17’
rašubbat kakki Aššur	*Tarqû* (W)	W / F	death	11: ii 21
sapār ilāni rabûti	*nišē ša ana Šamaš-šuma-ukīn ušakpidū* (S)	W / N	capture	11: iv 62
šūt-rēšīya bēl pīḫāti	*āl Zarzāta*	W / N	battle	2: v 32’
[… *Aššur u Mull*]*issu*	*Ḫundāru* (S)	W / F	surrender	23: 132
	Nuḫūru (S)	W / N	surrender	23: 130

The overwhelmer in the inscriptions of Ashurbanipal is attested in all but one of the 44 attestations.[56] There are no examples of prefix-based direct overwhelmings, but “my eunuchs and governors” (*šūt-rēšīya bēl pīḫāti*) are referred to as overwhelmers once. The emotion “fear” (*ḫattu*), plain and simply, is the overwhelming factor in five cases. As for royal radiance, “fearsomeness of my kingship” (*puluḫti šarrūtīya*) is spoken of ten times, and “fear of my lordship’s fearsomeness” (*ḫattu puluḫti bēlūtīya*) once. Turning to divine radiance, “brilliance of Ashur and Ishtar” (*namrīri Aššur u Ištar*) is attested five times, “awesomeness of the weapon of Ashur” (*rašubbat kakki Aššur*) four, and “radiance of Ashur and

[56] The remaining attestation is broken where the overwhelmer should be defined (only the 3 p. pl. m. suffix pronoun *šunu* clearly tells of the overwhelmer). The “weapons of Ashur and Ishtar” (*kakkī Aššur u Ištar*) cause Nuhuru fleeing in the preceding clause. As for the agent overwhelming Hundaru, the term *puluḫtu* may be reconstructed.

Ishtar" (*melammē Aššur u Ištar*) three. The overwhelming media "brilliance of Ashur and Ishtar and the fearsomeness of my kingship" (*namrīri Aššur u Ištar puluḫti šarrūtīya*), "[splendor] of the weapons of Ashur" ([*namurrat*] *kakkī Aššur*), "fearsomeness of Ashur and Ishtar" (*puluḫti Aššur u Ištar*), and "fearsomeness of Ashur and Mullissu" (*puluḫti Aššur Mullissu*) are found twice each. The "fear of Ashur" (*ḫatti Aššur*),[57] "fearsomeness of Ashur, Mullissu, Bel, Nabu, and [Ishtar]" (*puluḫti Aššur Mullissu Bēl Nabû* [*Ištar*]), "fearsomeness of Ashur, [Mull]issu, and Ishtar" (*puluḫti Aššur* [*Mull*]*issu Ištar*), "fearsomeness of Ashur, Sin, Shamash, and [Ishtar]" (*puluḫti Aššur Sîn Šamaš* [*Ištar*]), and "net of the great gods" (*sapār ilāni rabûti*) are attested once each.

The overwhelmed is revealed in all attestations of *saḫāpu*.[58] Concerning persons, *Tarqû* (of Kush (and Egypt)), *Urtaku* (of Elam), *Rusâ* (of Urartu), *Ummanaldasi* (of Elam), *Pišlumê* (of Hudimiri), *Tugdammî* (of Cimmeria), [*Nabû*]*-bēl-šumāti* (of Bit-Yakin), *Nuḫūru* (of Nabatea), *Ḫundāru* (of Dilmun), *Šīlum* (of Hazmani), and *Mugallu* (of Tabal) are all overwhelmed. With regard to groups of people, *Kuraš* (of Parsumash) and the said *Pišlumê* are jointly overwhelmed. Also the "people who had incited Shamash-shuma-ukin" (*nišē ša ana Šamaš-šuma-ukīn ušakpidū*),[59] the "people of the cities Hilme, Pillatu, and Hilmu…" (*nišē āl Ḫilme āl Pillati*, *nišē āl Ḫilmu*…) and some other cities,[60] as well as the "people, the survivors of the cities Bit-Imbi…" (*nišē multaḫṭē ša āl Bīt-Imbî*…) are exposed to *saḫāpu*. In terms of cities and lands, the city Zarzata (*āl Zarzāta*) and the land Elam (*māt Elamti*) are targeted by overwhelming.

All the 44 attestations of the verb *saḫāpu* in the inscriptions of Ashurbanipal reveal situational context. All attestations speak of the said verb in the context of military campaigns. Again, the overwhelming act is tied to coercion and warfare. As for spatial context, a significant share of the overwhelming takes place from afar. The following are the examples of overwhelming from one region to another: Taharqa of Kush dies after having experienced *ḫattu puluḫti bēlūtīya* or *rašubbat kakki Aššur*, rulers in and around Dilmun (Hundaru, Shilum) surrender faced with *puluḫti Aššur Mullissu*, an eastern ruler (Pishlume),[61] Rusa of Urartu, and the land of Elam surrender on account of *puluḫti šarrūtīya*, Mugallu of Tabal surrenders due to *puluḫti Aššur Mullissu* and *puluḫti šarrūtīya*, Urtaku of Elam flees because of *ḫattu*, Nabu-bel-shumati of Chaldea takes his own life in his Elamite exile faced

[57] The term *ḫattu* is here part of the qualities of a god (Ashur). For the word in question, translated as "panic, fear," see *CAD* Ḫ, pp. 150–151.

[58] One attestation (RINAP 5/1, 12: vi 2') is broken where the overwhelmed should be defined but clearly refers to foreign rulers, probably of the Sealand, since rulers from this area are mentioned directly before the lacuna.

[59] Shamash-shuma-ukin was supported by Chaldean, Aramean, and Arab tribes, as well as by Elam and some Babylonian cities in his revolt (Kuhrt, 1997: 588).

[60] The cities in question are Dummuqu, Sulaya, and Lahira-Dibirina.

[61] The passage on Pishlume also conveys the *šemû-rūqu* paradigm.

with *ḫatti Aššur*, and Tugdammi of Cimmeria surrenders and goes insain due to *puluḫti Aššur Mullissu Bēl Nabû* [*Ištar*] or *puluḫti Aššur Sîn Šamaš* [*Ištar*] and [*namurrat*] *kakkī Aššur* respectively.[62]

With regard to effect, all 44 attestations reveal effect. The most common one is surrender, which is attested 23 times (including one case of fright preceding it). This effect is caused by *melammē Aššur u Ištar*, *namrīri Aššur u Ištar*, *namrīri Aššur u Ištar puluḫti šarrūtīya*, *puluḫti Aššur Mullissu*, *puluḫti Aššur Mullissu Bēl Nabû* [*Ištar*], *puluḫti Aššur* [*Mull*]*issu Ištar*, *puluḫti Aššur Sîn Šamaš* [*Ištar*], and *puluḫti šarrūtīya*. Elam, exposed to *melammē Aššur u Ištar*, reacts by "bowing down to my yoke" (*iknušū nīrīya*). In another context, Elam, being targeted by *puluḫti šarrūtīya*, rebels (*nabalkutu*) against their own leader, replacing him with someone friendly to Assyria. The ruler of Urartu "surrenders" by sending his envoys "to ask about my well-being" (*ana ša'āl šulmīya*), after having been exposed to the same force.[63] The second most common effect is flight, attested seven times, and triggered by *ḫattu* and *puluḫti Aššur u Ištar*. Urtaku of Elam reacts to *ḫattu* by "returning to his land" (*ītur ana mātīšu*). Ummanaldasi, another ruler of Elam, responds to *puluḫti Aššur u Ištar* by abandoning (*wašāru* D) his (royal) city and escaping (*abātu* N) to another. Next, insanity as effect is found six times, being caused by *namrīri Aššur u Ištar* and [*namurrat*] *kakkī Aššur*. The former force hits the ruler of Kush, who "went into a frenzy" (*illika maḫḫûtiš*). Tugdammi, hit by the latter force, also suffers this fate, but then also "(tried) biting off his hand during a loss of all reason" (*ina miqit ṭēme unaššak rittīšu*). The effect death is attested five times, and is motivated by *ḫattu puluḫti bēlūtīya* and *rašubbat kakki Aššur*. The ruler of Kush is the one experiencing this, in his "passing away" (*illik nammušīšu*) following the overwhelming. Battle, capture, and suicide are attested once each, triggered by *šūt-rēšīya bēl pīḫāti*, *sapār ilāni rabûti*, and *ḫatti Aššur* respectively. The ruler and soldiers of the city Zarzata are overwhelmed, being killed (*dâku*) and slayed (*rasābu* D). None of the persons who incited Shamash-shuma-ukin did escape (*ēdu ul ipparšid*), but they were instead placed (by the deities) in the king's hands (*imnū qātūa*). The ruler of Bit-Yakin (and his attendant) kill themselves by "[s]triking each other down" ([*u*]*rassibū aḫāmeš*) with their knives.

Summarizing the evidence from the texts of Ashurbanipal in statistics, 98 % of the overwhelmers are radiant forces, and 82 % of the overwhelmed are animate beings (persons / groups of people). The situational context is warfare, and the spatial context is closeness to a degree of 39 %. With regard to effect, surrender

[62] As for other possible examples, Taharqa goes insain (overwhelmed) in Memphis with Assyrian troops as near as in the delta, Kurash and Pishlume surrender (overwhelmed) with Assyria being present as close as in Elam, and Ummanaldasi of Elam flees (overwhelmed) having the Assyrian army on his doorsteps, advancing towards him.

[63] A vassal was supposed to regularly require about his overlord's health. The ideological theme "peace as submission" (Liverani, 2001: 97–100) may be applicable here.

represents 52 %, flight 16 %, insanity 14 %, death 11 %, while battle, capture, and suicide represent 2 % each of the total number of attestations.

Conclusion

Concerning the overwhelmer, *saḫāpu* is very often linked to (supernatural) "radiance."[64] The statistics reveal that 72 % of the attestations which indicate overwhelmer tell of radiance. In other words, the act of overwhelming is much associated with (royal and divine) radiance. As apparent in the book by Cassin (1968: 65–82) on divine splendor, radiance played a vital role in the Mesopotamian worldview, not the least concerning the Assyrian ruler and the execution of his authority. Applying a diachronic perspective, there is a difference between the Middle and Neo-Assyrian evidence. Radiance is an *important* (50 %) overwhelmer in the former source, but it is *dominant* in the early (81 %) and late (71 %) Neo-Assyrian sources.[65] This finding can be seen as evidence of a tendency from direct to indirect overwhelming. In the texts of Ashurbanipal, 98 % of the attestations speak of indirect overwhelming (by means of radiance).[66]

Regarding the overwhelmed, *saḫāpu* seems to be directed in a universal way, from a geographical point of view. Rulers, people(s), and polities of Kush, Sidon, Tabal, Urartu, Elam, Babylonia, and Dilmun are all targeted by overwhelming acts. Even the Assyrian king's (Esarhaddon's) own brothers are exposed in this manner.[67] This finding illustrates the Assyrian imperial ideology as well as the pragmatic and inclusive nature of the foreign policy of Assyria (Liverani, 1979; 2017; Fales, 2010). The overwhelmed consists of animate beings (persons, groups of people) to a degree of 65 %. Applying a diachronic perspective, there is (once again) a difference between the Middle and Neo-Assyrian evidence. In the former source, the proportion of animate targets is much less (27 %) than is the case with the early (63 %) and late (69 %) Neo-Assyrian sources. Especially the Sargonid rulers centred on targeting individuals (foreign rulers) in their texts, as evident e.g. in Ashurbanipal's texts, presenting 13 overwhelmed foreign rulers.[68]

Concerning the situational and spatial contexts of the overwhelming, *saḫāpu* is almost always found in the context of military campaign narratives. As much as 99 % of the attestations which reveal situational context tell of war. Thus, the

[64] The following words are found in genitive constructions with DNN: *adīru*, *ḫattu*, *melammu*, *namrīru*, *namurratu*, *pulḫu*, *puluḫtu*, *rašubbatu*, *šalummatu*, *šuribatu*.

[65] Eight of the radiance forms listed in the preceding footnote are attested in Sargonid sources (Middle and early Neo-Assyrian sources employ three and four respectively).

[66] It should be noted that the Middle Assyrian attestations are rather few, affecting the statistical significance. The reason(s) behind this possible shift are open for speculation.

[67] The lands overwhelmed from afar are Kush, Egypt, Judah, Tabal, Urartu, Media, Cimmeria, Elam, Dilmun, and (completing the geographic circle) Arabia.

[68] Again, the Middle Assyrian attestations are rather few, putting the statistical significance in doubt. The reason(s) behind this possible shift are open for speculation.

act of overwhelming is closely tied to warfare.[69] This finding is well in line with the observation that (Neo-)Assyrian state ideology was driven by the idea of world dominion and that warfare was seen as a necessary (but not desired *per se*) element in the fulfillment of this ambitious aim (Fales, 2010). As for the spatial context, 73 % of the total number of attestations tell of overwhelming from a close distance. Applying a diachronic perspective, there is a difference between the late Neo-Assyrian evidence and that of the other periods. The degree of overwhelming from close range is just 64 % in Sargonid sources, while it is totally dominant in the other periods, with the Middle Assyrian sources giving 100 % and the early Neo-Assyrian ones 97,5 %. This tendency may be linked to the greater extent of the state (now a real empire) and to the greater delegation of the role of leading the Assyrian army. It is probably no coincidence that the inscriptions of Ashurbanipal, a king who is known for his occasional delegation of military authority (Kuhrt, 1997: 510), are the ones rich in overwhelming from afar.[70]

Regarding the "effects" of the overwhelming, the ten effects identified in the analysis can be sorted into three main groups. The other side reacts to *saḫāpu* partly by fleeing, partly by fighting (battle, siege, destruction, capture), and partly by surrendering. Additionally, the other side reacts by fearing, which can lead to fleeing or surrendering, or even to insanity, death, or suicide. This finding partly aligns with the tripartite scheme on levels of separation between the king and subjugated enemies identified by Richardson (2018), who in his paper refers to opponents who are defeated in combat, those who *see* the king and surrender, and those who *hear* (of the king's deeds) and surrender. The overwhelming act either leads to the elimination of the enemy or to the submission of the enemy. As concluded in the paper by Fales (1982), the Assyrian "enemy" is cast as weak and morally inferior. He is always on the losing side, because of his opposition to the Assyrian king. His flight, surrender, and defeat in battle show his moral inferiority, failing an "ordeal by combat" (Oded, 1992: 38–41; Liverani, 2017: 34–35). In terms of statistics, the effects with a share of more than 10 % of the attestations which reveal effect are surrender (43 %), flight (20 %), and battle (15 %). Applying a diachronic perspective, there are some differences to note. While surrender, flight, and fright show a similar quantitative pattern across the three periods,[71] the other effects are time specific. Destruction is very much a Middle Assyrian outcome (57 % vs. 11 % and 3 %), capture, death, battle, and siege are exclusively

[69] Assyrian royal inscriptions include not only campaign narratives but also (e.g.) "building inscriptions." Also, the state archival sources (supposedly broader in terms of content) give few attestations (http://oracc.org/saao/corpus/, 2020-06-28).

[70] The empire format facilitated wider international contacts, and the authority delegation in question increased the distance between Ashurbanipal (the protagonist of the royal inscriptions) and the overwhelmed people(s) and polities in the foreign lands.

[71] That said, surrender (the most common effect) varies quantitatively at least to some extent between the periods, giving 29 (Middle), 42 (early NA), and 43 (late NA) %.

Neo-Assyrian, while suicide and insanity are exclusively Sargonid. It is difficult to see what to make of all this, other than that the differences point to the greater repertoire and complexity of the Neo-Assyrian or Sargonid texts.

As for overwhelmer *and* effects, radiance (royal and divine) seems to have more sublime (non-violent) effects (surrender, fright, flight) compared to the ones caused by direct overwhelmings, whereby the king generally attacks, captures, kills, and destroys. Regarding this subtlety, radiance was after all divine essence (Oppenheim, 1943; Cassin, 1968; Aster, 2006; Ataç, 2007; Richardson, 2015). Distance may also play a role. The essence of *melammu* could pacify foreign people(s) also from afar (Cassin, 1968: 73–74; Richardson, 2018). The data of this study arguably indicate no substantial difference between royal and divine forms of radiance. Also royal radiance causes the more sublime effects (surrender, fright, flight), focused on non-violent (primarily) consequences.[72] This observation strengthens the idea that royal radiance was nothing more than a prolongation of divine radiance, endowed to the king at coronation, and that there was no fundamental difference between the two forms (Cassin, 1968: 77).

The title of this paper puts the spotlight on the Assyrian king and his enemies. It is evident, though, that there is a third agent which (greatly) contributed to forming the relationship in question, namely the Mesopotamian deities (in particular Ashur). It was the gods and goddesses who ultimately defined the relationship between the Assyrian king and his enemies. The Assyrian king, who piously trusted in the great gods, succeeded in all his undertakings. His enemies, who trusted in anything else but the deities, consistently failed. The verb *saḫāpu* here serves to illustrate that there is a fundamental and divinely sanctioned hierarchy with regard to the Assyrian king and his enemies in the sources.

Abbreviations

AfO 14 = Weidner, 1941–1944.
CAD = Gelb et al., 1956–2011.
Iraq 16 = Gadd, 1954.
Iraq 37 = Saggs, 1975.
ISKh = Fuchs, 1994.
MDOG 115 = Mayer, 1983.
SAAS 8 = Fuchs, 1998.

[72] For example, *puluḫti šarrūtīya* always leads to surrender in Ashurbanipal's texts, and *pulḫī melammē bēlūtīya* causes either flight or surrender in Sennacherib's texts. Moreover, in the 48 attestations of overwhelming from afar "only" half of them contain one or more divine names in the naming of the overwhelming agent.

Tables, 2. column ("overwhelmed")

C centre – Assyria proper.
E "east", i.e. lands along and beyond Zagros, incl. Elam and Persia).
N "north," i.e. Urartu, lands north of Habur, Gilzanu and Hubushkia.
S "south," i.e. Babylonia (incl. Suhu and Namri) and Arabia).
W "west", i.e. lands directly west of Assyria (Hanigalbat and Hatti), Cilicia, Palestine, Egypt, and Kush).

Tables, 3. column ("context")

C cult.
F far.
N near.
W war.

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On the Family and Social Background of the Elite in Assyria

Raija Mattila

A well-known feature of the highest officials of the Neo-Assyrian period is that they never mention their ancestry. Even the early very independent magnates who commissioned inscriptions of their own never refer to their fathers or to other members of their families in their inscriptions.[1] The *turtānu* Šamši-ilu in his inscription (RIMA 3 A.104.2010), does not say anything about his own ancestry although he goes as far as describing his campaign against the Urarṭian king Argišti completely in his own name without mentioning the Assyrian king. There has been much speculation concerning Šamši-ilu's connection to local ruling dynasties but concrete evidence in lacking.[2] More to the point concerning our current study is that he himself never refers to his ancestry. On the whole the Neo-Assyrian sources have limited references to the family and social background of the administrative and military elite, and this article aims to present the details that we have.

Royal lineage

Sin-ahu-uṣur, the bother of Sargon II, is the clearest case of royal lineage among the highest officials. As Sin-ahu-uṣur has been extensively researched by Nathalie May[3], I will bring up the main points only. The publication of the bronze mace head of Sin-ahu-uṣur by Zoltan Niederreiter[4] in 2005 proved that Sin-ahu-uṣur held the office of *sukkallu* during the reign of Sargon II. The inscription reads: "Palace of Sargon, king of the universe, king of Assyria. Of Sin-ahu-uṣur, the grand vizier" É.GAL ^{m}MAN–GIN MAN ŠÚ$^{!}$ MAN KUR AŠ *šá* $^{m.d}$30–PAP–PAB SUKKAL GAL-*u*. Already before the publication of the mace head inscription Sin-ahu-uṣur was known as *sukkalmahhu* from the inscription[5] on three door slabs in his palace in Khorsabad. It was also known that Sin-ahu-uṣur (without title) took part in the 8th campaign in Urarṭu in 714 side by side of Sargon II.[6] The mace

[1] For the magnates of the 9th and 8th centuries BC, and their inscriptions, see Fuchs, 2008 and Zaia, 2018. For a further private inscription, the Tell ʿAğāğa stele commissioned probably by the *turtānu* Daian-Aššur, see Frahm, 2015.

[2] See Fuchs, 2008: 78–107, and for earlier suggestions see the brief summary in Mattila, 2000: 110 note 7. For Šamši-ilu in general, see PNA 3/II *s.v.* Šamši-ilu 1.

[3] May, 2015 and 2017.

[4] Niederreiter, 2005.

[5] RINAP 2 Sargon II 2002:1.

[6] RINAP 2 Sargon II 65:130–132.

head cannot be dated exactly but the door slabs were most probably finished by the inauguration of the city in 706.[7] May has suggested that Sin-ahu-uṣur had received the Babylonian title *sukkalmahhu* when Sargon entered Babylon in 709.[8] The correspondence to or mentioning the *sukkallu* during the reign of Sargon II can now be connected with Sin-ahu-uṣur and it attests to his exceptional role as the king's representative in Babylonia.[9] May further sees a close connection between several *sukkallu*s and the royal family.[10]

Otherwise we have very limited information concerning the offices held by those persons of royal lineage who did not become rulers. At least three male relatives of the king had priestly offices. Sennacherib built a house in Assur for his second son Aššur-ili-muballissu "who (is) in the service of Aššur".[11] Assurbanipal installed two of his younger brothers as *šešgallu*-priests:[12]

> (I) consecrated Aššur-mukīn-palēʾa, my younger brother, as *šešgallu*-priest of (the god) *Aššu*[*r*], (and) consecrat[ed] Aššur-etel-šamê-erṣetim-muballissu, my youngest brother, as *šešgallu*-priest of the god Sîn, who dwells in the city Harran.[13]

There are possible, albeit not unproblematic, references to the royal lineage of two governors: Bel-dan, governor Calah and Aššur-nirka-da''in, governor Assur. The governor of Calah Bel-dan, eponym of 744 and 734, was of royal descent judging by a letter of his son[14] Mišaru-naṣir, who writes in Babylonian complaining that his father has deserted him and refers to the *royal lineage* of their family "our family is from the kings of Calah," *i-na šar-re-e* URU.*ka-làh* É-*ni šú-ú* (CTN 2 201:6–7).[15]

Aššur-nirka-da''in, governor Assur and eponym of 720,[16] was probably the author of two letters, one to the king (SAA 19 164) and one to his colleague (SAA

[7] May, 2017: 498.
[8] May, 2017: 499.
[9] See in detail May, 2017: 506–523.
[10] May, 2017: 520 suggests that the *sukkallu* Aššur-balliṭ, attested solely in a document StAT 3 3 (VAT 9759) from Assur dated in the eponymy of Sin-kenu-idi, is to be identified with Aššur-uballiṭ, crown-prince and last ruler of Assyria.
[11] RINAP 3 Sennacherib 181. A variant in RINAP 3 Sennacherib 182 reads "who was created for the service of Aššur".
[12] For the title *šešgallu*, see May, 2017: 520 note 223.
[13] RINAP 5 Assurbanipal 185: 12–13.
[14] The Akkadian words *abu*, *māru* and *ahu* can refer to kinship or official/business connections and need to be translated as father/superior, son/subordinate, brother/colleague according to the context. Here the reference to "our family" supports the translations "father" and "son".
[15] The syllabic writing for the word king is unusual, see Mattila, 2000: 129–130 note 4.
[16] Governor of Assur judging by the blessings used in his letters, see Luukko's introduction

19 165). In the letter to his collegue Nabû-nammir, he states according to the translation of Luukko that: "you know that my family is fr[om *the king*] and the commander-in-chief" *qin-ni š*[*a* LUGAL[?] *š*]*a* LÚ*.*tar-ta-ni* (SAA 19 165:4–5).[17]

Connections to the royal family

A clear example of a connection to the royal family by marriage is the *šāqiu rabiu* (LÚ*.ŠU.QA.DUH GAL) Aššur-nirka-da''in. He was the father of Mullissu-mukannišat-Ninua, queen (MÍ.É.GAL) of Assurnaṣirpal II and of Shalmaneser III according to the inscription found in her grave at Calah.[18] Aššur-nirka-da''in's title 'great cupbearer' is possibly an honorary title separate from *rab šāqê*.[19] Whether he had the title already before his daughter's marriage or received at her marriage or later, cannot be proven. Mullissu-mukannišat-Ninua is the only queen whose father is included in her title displaying great prominence of her father.[20] A golden bowl with the inscription *šá* $^{m.d}$*šá-maš*–DINGIR LÚ*.*tar-ta-nu* "Of Šamši-ilu, *turtānu*"[21] was found in her grave possibly implying a family connection to the powerful *turtānu*.

Abi-ramu, sister of the queen Naqia, loans silver against a pledge of land in 674 (SAA 6 252). May (2017: 515) has suggested that she should be identified with the *sukkallu* Abi-ramu, eponym of 677. This remains unlikely, as we know that some names were used for both women and men. Abi-ramu is attested for 10 individuals of whom two were women, and eight were men.[22]

Family members

References to family members of the administrative and military elite are rare but there are some exceptions, mainly small details that can offer us glimpses of the

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to SAA 19, IL.

[17] The name Aššur-nirka-da''in is rare, the only other person by this name is Mullissu-mukannišat-Ninua's father, several generations earlier. It is tempting to see the reference to family background as somehow connected with him but there are many uncertain points in the interpretation of the passage. See also note 49 below.

[18] For Mullissu-mukannišat-Ninua, see Svärd, 2015: 40–41, 48–49.

[19] The title is known to have been held by two individuals only: Aššur-nirka-da''in and Inurta-kibsi-uṣur. For the title and its relation to the title *rab šāqê*, chief cupbearer, see in more detail Mattila, 2000: 47–48.

[20] Svärd, 2015: 49.

[21] RIMA 3 A.104.2014:1.

[22] See PNA 1/I *s.v.* Abi-ramu. The same is true for the name Abi-rahî, which is attested for three women and three men, see PNA 1/I *s.v.* Abi-rahî. Even though royal women can be addressed as "lord" and referred to with masculine possessive pronouns, in the Neo-Assyrian evidence (Svärd, 2015: 83), the masculine Personenkeil is not used in front of their names.

importance of influential families. Many of the references come from private documents and letters. In addition to Mullissu-mukannišat-Ninua, daughter of *šā-qiu rabiu,* and Mišaru-naṣir, son of the governor of Calah, discussed above, the following relatives emerge from the sources:

Sin-eṭir, brother of the governor of Calah Bel-tarṣi-ilumma, is recorded selling land in the district of Halahhu and the tablet (CTN 2 64) bears an impression of his seal.[23] Both Sin-eṭir (CTN 2 47:7) and Bel-tarṣi-ilumma (RIMA 3 A.0.104. 2004:1) are defined as scribes and eunuchs. Sin-eṭir is further attested buying land in five more documents.[24] He may be identical with the major-domo, *i.e.* military official second-in-command of *rab ša-rēši*, who acts as a witness in a land sale in 783 (CTN 2 17).

The wife, *bēlat bēti*, of the *turtānu* had a village manager according a memorandum of business transactions of a man called Hašdaia (ND 2605). Having a village manager shows that the wife of the *turtānu* owned estates in her own right. Her high position is strengthened by the fact that the preceding entry in the document deals with the sale of two dependent farmers by the village manager of the queen. As almost all the other *bēlat bēti*s mentioned in the Neo-Assyrian sources are royal women, wives of the crown prince, the *turtānu* in question may well have been a member of the royal family. Of the date of ND 2605 one can only say that it belongs to the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III, Shalmaneser V or Sargon II, which limits the possibilities of tying the document to a known *turtānu*.[25]

The unnamed wife and daughters of the *masennu* should have been on their way to Assyria but the daughters have been detained in Damascus by its governor Bel-duri according to a letter to Sargon II (SAA 1 3). Whether the letter refers to the family of Sargon's chief treasurer Ṭāb-šar-Aššur or to a treasurer of a lower rank cannot be ascertained but referring to *masennu* without any specification or personal name would point to the holder of the high office.

The anonymous daughter of the deputy *sukkallu* Bambâ was possibly mixed up in the conspiracy in 670[26] according to two fragmentary letters to Esarhaddon (SAA 16 60:6 and 61: r.6). Other women named in denunciations include the wife of the governor of Assur. When hearing of the king's death the governor appoints his eunuch as mayor and his wife burns a female goat kid (SAA 16 95). Several members of the family of Tarṣî, city scribe of Guzana, are accused of crimes and the women, in particular, are accused of witchcraft. The family includes Zazâ, wife of Tarṣî, with her sons, and the wife of the priest Adad-killanni, the brother-in-law of Tarṣî: "Zazâ, the wife of Tarṣî, and her sons should not be kept alive.

[23] For the seal, see Niederreiter, 2015: 130–131, 145.
[24] CTN 2 20, CTN 2 37, CTN 2 42, CTN 2 47 and CTN 2 65.
[25] For a discussion of the term *bēlat bēti*, see Svärd / Luukko, 2009, and for the text ND 2605 in particular *ibid*., 289–290, 292, and 294.
[26] For a summary of the events of the 670 revolt against Esarhaddon, see Radner, 2016: 52–53.

O king, my lord! The priest is a brother-in-law of Tarṣî. Their wives bring down the moon from the sky!"[27]

Apladad-si'a, brother of Silim-Aššur, has 26 persons at his disposal in a list various debts (SAA 7 30: r. iii 3'–5'). Silim-Aššur appears in the same text (r. ii 21'–22') with the title *sukkallu*. He has 17 cavalrymen and one bow-man at his disposal. The text is dated to the eponym year of Milki-ramu 656.[28]

Asalluhi-šumu-iddina, son of the *sartinnu* Asalluhi-ahhe-iddina, was *rab kiṣri ša šēpē*, cohort commander of the king's personal guard. Two documents (SAA 14 425 and 424) record him buying 10 slaves, and 20 hectares of land. The documents are dated 638*[29] and 630*, and were found 400 metres east of Nebi Yunus in Nineveh in a building that had stone door sockets and ablution slabs known from contemporary palaces.

As for the relatives of high female administrators some family members of the *šakintu*s are known from private documents. A son of a *šakintu* acts as a witness for Nabû-tuklatua, place scribe in 788 (Edubba 10 6). Abi-rahî, sister of a *šakintu* buys three women (SAA 6 250), and the *šakintu* Amat-Astarti marries off her daughter in *622 (ND 2307).[30]

Relatives of palace officials include the unnamed wife of the palace manager (*rab ekalli*) who is mentioned in a list of people entering the palace (SAA 16 50: 7).[31] There are also references to the son of the *rab ekalli* Isseme-ili (CTN 3 4 and 5), and the sons of a *ša-pān-ekalli* (SAA 21 156).[32]

Previous career

For the highest officials we have minimal data concerning their earlier career, as their previous offices are known in a few cases only. Among the early magnates Aia-halu, who is known as *turtānu* in 824–820, held the office of *masennu* in 833.[33]

There is one clear example showing that governors were moved from one posting to another. Kiṣir-Aššur writes to the king that since Šep-Aššur, his predecessor as the governor of Dur-Šarrukin, has gone to Simirra to rule as a governor there, the servants of Šep-Aššur no longer have a claim on the houses they had in Dur-Šarrukin. Kiṣir-Aššur has given the houses to his own subordinates and has him self moved to the residence built by his predecessor (SAA 1 124). In

[27] SAA 16 63: r.24–27. For a discussion of the denunciations, see Luukko, 2018: 168 note 37, and 175–177.

[28] For the date, see Mattila, 2000: 94.

[29] The post-canonical dates marked with an asterisk follow the sequence of eponyms given in PNA 1/I XVIII–XIX.

[30] The evidence is collected and discussed in Svärd, 2015: 98, 233–234, 236.

[31] See Groß, 2020: 47.

[32] For a discussion of the texts, see Groß, 2020: 48 and 74.

[33] For the evidence, see Mattila, 2000: 13–14, 108–109.

addition to showing that governors were moved from one governorate to another, the text shows that whether the governor's residence and houses of his servants were to be understood as belonging to the office or as private property was not always clear-cut. The text thus contributes to the understanding of the borderline between private and *ex-officio* property.

The *sartinnu* Uarbis, attested with this title in 656 (BATSH 6 110), may be identical with a 'third-man' Uarbis attested in the Remanni-Adad dossier in 669–663 (SAA 6 306, 310, 323 and 325), and with an official placed in charge of a conquered Egyptian city in 671 (RINAP 4 Esarhaddon 9, ii' 10). The name is rare, and I have suggested earlier[34] that Uarbis rose from the ranks of a military official during the Egyptian campaign to the close circle of the king and later to the high office of *sartinnu*.

Silim-Aššur, who is attested as *sukkallu*/*sukkallu dannu*/*šaniu* between 666–656, is a rare exception among the high officials as he is known before his ascent to the office. His dossier of legal documents (SAA 6 221–238) dates to the years 680–670 before he became *sukkallu,* and it was found in the royal archives of Nineveh. Most of the dossiers kept in the royal archives are of persons belonging to the administration of the queen's household in Southwest palace or of the charioteers and military officials in the service of the king and the crown prince.[35] This in turn suggests that Silim-Aššur had a prominent position in the palace before his career as *sukkallu*. Unfortunately his title during the period 680–670 is survived in just one document and even there in part only: ^{m}*si-lim–aš-šur* ^{lú}*šá-*[*x x x*] (SAA 6 226:11, dated 676). There are so many titles beginning with *šá*/GAR that no firm identification is possible. In his documents Silim-Aššur lends considerable quantities of wine and large amounts of silver.[36] As *sukkallu*, Silim-Aššur acts as a witness for Remanni-Adad, charioteer of Assurbanipal. The known dates of these documents are 666, 663 and 660.[37] All in all we can follow the career of Silim-Aššur for 25 years between 680–656.

Nabû-šarru-uṣur is known as *rab ša-rēši* during the reign of Assurbanipal from a query dated 658 (SAA 4 271) until at least 644* when he was named eponym.[38] The query (SAA 4 299) concerning his appointment to the office of *rab ša-rēši* has survived but his title at the moment of the query is unfortunately broken away. Although Nabû-šarru-uṣur is a very common name,[39] he can be identified with Nabû-šarru-uṣur *rab mūgi* known from two earlier queries (SAA 4 89 and 90)

[34] Mattila, 2000: 78.

[35] According to Table III by Parpola in SAA 6 xxi, the central persons of the documents are royal charioteers (25.4 % of the documents), village managers (12.9 %), royal women and *šakintu*s (8.3 %), others (20.7 %).

[36] For a list of the documents, see Mattila, 2000: 143.

[37] See Mattila, 2000: 94 note 9.

[38] Mattila, 2000: 63–64.

[39] PNA 2/II *s.v.* Nabû-šarru-uṣur lists 62 individuals of this name.

made by Assurbanipal as crown prince, i.e. between 672–668. The identification is supported by the wording of the grant made by Assurbanipal to the *rab ša-rēši* Nabû-šarru-uṣur "who from the succession to the exercise of kingship was devoted to his lord" (SAA 12 26). A schedule (SAA 12 27 and 28) to the grant gives an idea of the extent of Nabû-šarru-uṣur's land holdings. The text is fragmentary but the first section alone lists 1700 hectares of land, 40 vineyards and 6 households in various locations including Singar and Calah.[40]

Discussion

Where there is virtually no direct mention of family background in the sources concerning the administrative and military elite, the scholar's emphasized their lineage.[41] The genealogies of many scribal families are well known, mostly from the colophons of tablets that they wrote. Even though the positions often ran in the family they cannot be considered strictly hereditary, as the most important positions were always dependent on royal appointment.[42]

As for the magnates and governors, May has drawn attention to the fact that some personal names are frequently attested for eponym officials. She mentions Inurta-ila'i[43] and Bel-dan. It may well be that there is something in this, Bel-dan, however, is a common name[44]. One has to bear in mind that no repetition of names can be detected in a single office. A good example are the known governors of Calah during the 9th and 8th centuries. The governors are: Šamaš-belu-uṣur, Mušezib-Inurta, Bel-tarṣi-ilumma, Aššur-belu-uṣur, Bel-dan, Marduk-remanni, Aššur-bani, and Šarru-duri.[45] Neither do the magnates attest to this phenomenon.[46]

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[40] For a discussion of the grant and its schedule with references to previus literature, see Mattila, 2000: 141–143. For the dispersion of the land holdings of the elite throughout Assyria, see *ibid.* 140–141.

[41] For the transmission of offices, professions and crafts in Assyria, see Baker, 2014, and *ibid.* 591 for the difference between the administrative/military and the scholarly elites in particular.

[42] See Luukko, 2007: 252–254 concerning the office of the chief scribe.

[43] May, 2015: 111 note 169.

[44] PNA 1/II *s.v.* Bel-dan lists 14 individuals.

[45] Postgate, 1973: 8–11.

[46] The names of the office holders are listed in Mattila, 2000: 13 (for the *masennu*), *ibid.* 29 (*nāgir ekalli*), 45 (*rab šāqê*), 61 (*rab ša-rēši*), 67 (*sartinnu*), 91 (*sukkallu*), and 107 (*turtānu*). The publication is now over 20 years old and there are some corrections to be made to it but they don't affect the argument here. Main corrections are to the *sukkallu*s. For the reign of Adad-nerari III add Marduk-ahu-iddina, *sukkallu rabiu*, known from the seal of his eunuch, see Niederreiter, 2015: 148–149. For Sin-ahu-uṣur add the title *sukkallu*, and delete Nabû-belu-ka''in from the list of *sukkallu*s. For a full discussion of the *sukkallu*s with some further suggestions, see May, 2017.

The same is true even concerning the scholars[47] and well-known families from Assur[48]. Rather, the names show large variety with varying theophoric elements. On the whole papponymy was not a usual or significant feature in Assyrian name giving, and so it doesn't offer arguments concerning heredity of offices.[49]

Very little is known of the training or formal schooling of officials.[50] There is a general understanding that literacy was relatively widely spread.[51] That Assyrian officials had at least basic training in writing is demonstrated by the letter of Sin-na'di where he complains that he does not have a scribe (SAA 15 17). His own writing skills allowed him to put the text together but his unusual spellings, word forms and phrases show that he did not have the competence of a professional scribe.[52]

Some families had the resources to engage private tutors. Luukko[53] has drawn attention to the following passage: "Parruṭu, a goldsmith of the household of the queen, has, like the king and the crown prince, bought a Babylonian, and settled him in his own house. He has taught exorcistic literature to his son, extispicy omens have been explained to him, and he has even studied gleanings from the Enuma Anu Enlil, and this right before the king, my lord!" (SAA 16 65: 2–12). The letter is an anonymous denunciation mentioning Sasî in broken context, and clearly criticises the teaching of specialized knowledge that can potentially be harmful for the king, not the teaching of writing skills as such.[54]

The ability to copy, read and to interpret the exorcistic or omen texts and other disciplines of often secret nature required years of training and a tradition of scholarship that was passed from father to son in generations in scribal families. For the scribal families their long genealogies were the mark of their legitimacy.

Interestingly, otherwise families, and the female family members in particular, most often turn up in a negative context, in denunciations. Normally family ties are supressed in the evidence, and appear only in private documents and letters.

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[47] For the geneology of a prominent scribal family, see PNA 2/I *s.v.* Kiṣir-Aššur 26.

[48] See Radner, 1999: 15 for the family tree of Nabû-zeru-iddina, goldsmith, and *ibid.* 19 for the family tree of Sin-na'id, *hazannu* of Assur.

[49] See also Baker, 2002: 9 for the view that in both Assyria and Babylonia it was not the practise to name sons after the father or grandfather before the Seleucid period.

[50] For a recent overview concerning the Neo-Assyrian officialdom in general, including training, appointment, career, and renumeration, see Groß, 2020: 533–568.

[51] See Parpola, 1997: 320–322.

[52] For a detailed discussion of the text and its peculiarities, see Parpola, 1997. See also Radner, 2014: 68–69.

[53] Luukko in the introduction of SAA 19, LI. The passage is discussed also in Luukko, 2018: 167–168, note 39; Baker, 2014: 590–591; Luukko / Van Buylaere in the introduction of SAA 16, XXXV–XXXVII, and Parpola, 1997: 321 note 18.

[54] As pointed out by Parpola, Parrutu's son, Nabû-sagib, acquired good writing skills. This is demonstrated by the letter sent by him, ABL 847, now published as SAA 16 81. Presuming, of course, that he wrote the letter himself.

In reality families must have had considerable influence in a patriarchal society like Assyria. Appointing eunuchs in high offices and moving the seat of royal power to new capitals away from the old elites – first from Assur to Calah, then to Dur-Šarrukin, and from there to Nineveh[55] – were among the policies that limited the influence of old families and helped to assure that the elite remained dependent on royal favour.

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מִפְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר ...

The Imitators of the King and the Empire

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Scholars of the ancient Near East divided by their languages of expertise often forget that it was one world, which did not yet have a single "imperial" language. Peoples of this world interacted actively through wars and trade, as well as through alliances and treaties. Small states looked up on their overlords and imitated their fancy habits and the overlords often borrowed skills from their subjects.

But foreign habits were followed not only for their fanciness but also for their efficiency. The Assyrian Empire and Assyrian kingship created an administrative, ideological and political system, which remained a model for copying long after the fall of Assyria. Assyrian administrative apparatus, was employed by the Neo-Babylonian court and administration as Michael Jursa has demonstrated.[2] The Persian Empire copy-pasted the Assyrian one in almost everything, from the programmatic palatial imagery and pictorial motives, military system, system of royal roads and royal post, provincial structure with the use of Aramaic as its administrative language and Assyrian system of receiving taxes and tribute on the New Year occasion to the places and ways of executing rebels.[3] Present paper deals with the imitations of the Assyrian king and Empire not by its mighty successors in the South and the East, but by its humble vassals in the West.

The imagery proves that the imitations started instantly with the beginning of the Assyrian expansion under Assurnasirpal II in the NA period.[4] The stele of Kulamuwa, the 9th century king of Sam'al, which he calls Y'dy, is inscribed with the Phoenician inscription. It bears the image of this overwise unknown ruler. The representation upon this stela reproduces not only the headgear of the Assyrian kings but their entire outfit in every small detail (fig. 1). The very gesture of the local ruler is the typically Assyrian adoration gesture, *ubāna tarāṣu*, stretching of a finger toward the symbols of the gods. These symbols are depicted in the upper part of his stele in exactly the same manner as they are depicted on Assyrian

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[2] Nebuchadnezzar's "Hofkalender" Jursa, 2010: 97–99.

[3] About Assyrian influences on Persian Empire, see e.g., Dandamaev, 1997; Root, 1979: 215–216, Calmeyer, 1994; Lanfranchi, 2010.

[4] A. Edmonds have recently demonstrated other effects of Assyrian influence on it Aramean subjects in these early stages of the empire (Edmonds, 2021).

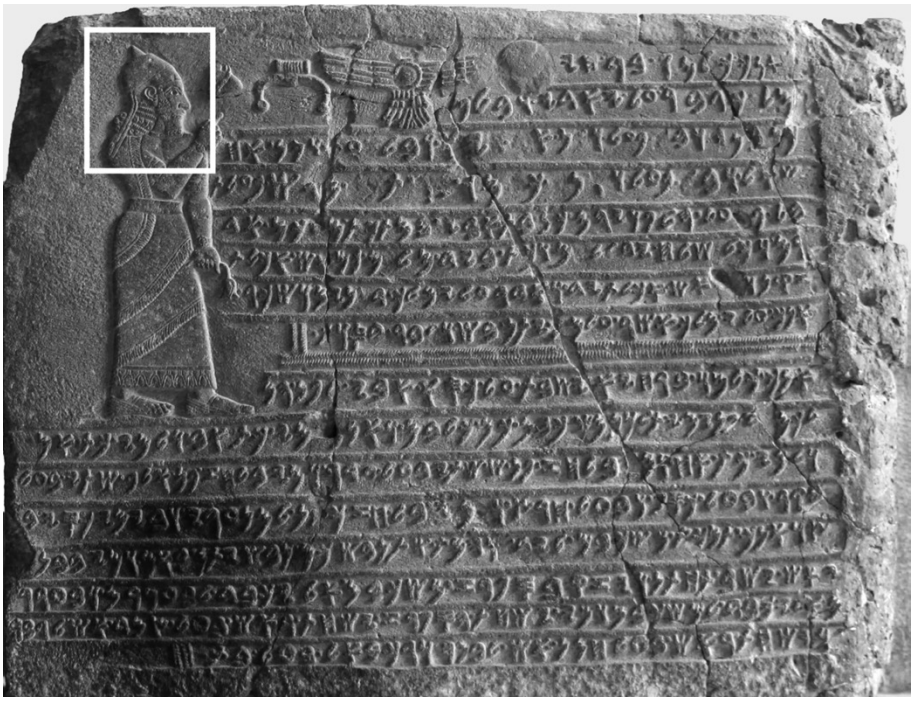

Fig. 1: Stele of Kulamuwa, king of of Y'DY (Sam'al), 9th century BCE, found in Zincirli; 1a. Detail. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kilamuwa_Stela#/media/File:Pergamon museum_-_Vorderasiatisches_ Museum_ 046.JPG.

royal steles. The Anatolian chieftain does not try to hide that he is imitating his mighty Assyrian sovereigns; on the contrary – he stresses it. The inscription upon his stele reads as follows:[5]

[5] See Tropper, 1993: 29–30 for previous editions and photographs. The most recent edition in Bekins, 2020: 56–64.

Fig. 2: Stele from Zincirli (Sam'al) with a representation of a ruler in Assyrian royal attire accompanied by an attendant. Attributed to Kulamuwa. https://www.worldhistory.org/image/7155/prince-kilamuwa/.

[1]*ʾnk. klmw. br. ḥy* [2]*mlk. gbr. ʿl. yʾdy. wbl .p*[*ʿl*] [3]*kn bnh. wb*[*l*]*. pʿl wkn.*ʾ⌜*b*⌝[*y*ʾ.]⌜ *ḥ*⌝*y*ʾ *wbl.* [*p*]*ʿl. wkn.* ʾ*ḥ* [4]*šʾl. wb*⌜*l*⌝ *pʿl. w*⌜ʾ⌝*n*[*k*]*. k*[*l*]*mw. br. t*⌜*ml*⌝*.m*ʾ*š. pʿlt* [5]*bl. pʿl. hlpny<<h>>m. kn. bt* ʾ*by bmtkt. mlkm.* ʾ*d* [6]*rm wkl. šlḥ yd l<h>l*[*ḥ*]*m. wkt. byd. ml*⌜*k*⌝*m. k*ʾ*š.* ʾ*klt* [7]*zqn w*[*km*] ʾ*š.* ʾ*klt. yd. w*ʾ*dr ʿl<<.>>y mlk dn*[*n*]*ym wškr.* [8]ʾ*nk.* ʿ*ly. mlk.* ʾ*šr*

[1]I am Kulamuwa, the son of Ḥayya. [2]Gabbar reigned over Y'dy, but did nothing. [3]And also BM[(!)]H, and he did nothing. And (then) also my father Ḥayya, and he did nothing. And also my brother, [4]Ša'il, and he did nothing. And I, Kulamuwa, son of TML; what I did, [5]my predecessors had not. My father's kingdom (lit. – house) was beset by powerful kings, [6]and each stretched out the hand to fight. But I was in the hand of the kings like a fire [7]consuming the beard and like a fire consuming the hand. And the king of Danunians overpowered me; and I hired [8]the king of Assyria … .

Reiner Maria Czichon compared the image of Kulamuwa to that of the throne room relief of Assurnasirpal II and the Tell al-Rimah stele of Adad-nērārī III and

pointed to the similarities and differences in their representation.[6] Indeed, the stele Adad-nērārī III is the rare, but not unique, case when the Assyrian monument of this kind displays the king in a view from the right, similar to the way Kulamuwa is represented. Another uninscribed stele from Sam'al attributed to Kulamuwa also displays the same details of Assyrian royal attire worn by a local ruler (fig. 2): the tiara with the pointed top and hanging tassels and wrapping garment with fringes. Kulamuwa's index finger is again stretched out toward the divine symbols in a profoundly Assyrian gesture of adoration. Despite the differences in details pointed out by Czichon, the whole composition is clearly taken from the Assyrian milieu. Already the steles of Assurnasirpal II[7] show the same arrangement of the adoration scene and the same attire. Kulamuwa ruled presumably in 840–830 BCE, the late reign of Shalmaneser III, the successor of Assurnasirpal. As an Assyrian tributary he certainly visited Kalḫu and could see the Banquet Stele, the square form and the wrapping layout of the inscription of which reminds that of his own most of all. Upon his uninscribed stele he is represented attended, like Assyrian kings, by a young beardless courtier. The youth's dress and hairstyle are Assyrian as well. The imagery of the Zincirli steles leaves no space for doubts that the local rulers imitated the habits of the Assyrian court.

Not only the visual similarity of Kulamuwa's steles to the Assyrian imagery, but the wording of his inscription is most striking. It states that only he, Kulamuwa, managed to do what none of his predecessors, including his own father and brother could. This *topos* is well known in Assyrian royal inscriptions from the Middle Assyrian period on.[8] The entire Kulamuwa's inscription revolves around this statement. The laughable helplessness of the Phoenician scribe in the elaborating on the topic, resulting in the multiple repetitions of *bl. pʿl.*, "did nothing," contrasts with embellishment of this *topos* in Assyrian inscriptions and with the more developed local idioms[9] in Kulamuwa's text and betrays that this idea was new to the Phoenician milieu and consequently not enough verbally developed.[10] The translation of the verbal language needs immensely more experience, time and skill than that of the visual one, but the strive to imitate it is obvious.

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[6] Czichon, 1995.

[7] The Banquet Stele (Wiseman 1952: pl. 3) and Kurkh Monolith (BM 118805, e.g., Börker-Klähn, 1982: no. 136).

[8] E.g., Tiglath-pileser I A.0.87.1: vi 101–104, but even more explicitly ibid. vii 17–30. This *topos* is well known in Southern Mesopotamia too, but there is no evidence of the direct contact between Anatolia and Babylonia in this period. The *topos* is found also in the bilingual Luwian-Phoenician inscription of the later Anatolian ruler Azatiwata (KARATEPE 1 §§25–29, Hawkins, 2000: 52).

[9] E.g., *ʾš. ʾklt zqn w*[*km*] *ʾš. ʾklt. yd*., "like a fire consuming the beard and like a fire consuming the hand."

[10] Rather large number of mistakes in comparison to the contemporary Assyrian royal inscriptions suggests that the very format of a monumental inscription was new in the region. Indeed, the inscription of Kulamuwa is one of the earliest known.

This is exemplified by the Tell Fekheriyeh Akkadian-Aramaic inscription: its Aramaic text is translated into Akkadian; the Aramaic itself does not use Akkadian idioms, but displays a sufficient number of Akkadian loan words.[11]

There are other monuments from the West that imitate Assyrian royal imagery and inscriptions. These are steles of the rulers of Sūḫu, a country in the middle Euphrates. As proposed by Nadav Na'aman,[12] "the governors of Sūḫu took advantage of Assyria's weakness during the second quarter and the beginning of the third quarter of the 8th century BCE" and got rid of the Assyrian domination. The statements of their freedom from the Assyrian yoke found expression in claims for descendance from no less than Ḫammurabi himself and for the governorship of Sūḫu and Mari – the latter geographical name clearly anachronistic and intentionally archaizing in their time. But despite the declaration of independence or probably as a part of it, local ruler Šamaš-rēša-uṣur and his son Ninurta-kudurrī-uṣur are depicted upon their steles clad in the garb and headgear of Assyrian kings (fig. 3a, b). The crowns and attire of Ištar, Adad and the third god on the stele of Šamaš-rēša-uṣur, the ruler's adoration gesture – *appa labānu* –, as well as the very fact that the gods are represented in full scale and anthropomorphically, are, however, in the stream of the Babylonian tradition. Obviously, the geographical location as well as the long-term cultural influence of the mighty south-eastern neighbour, made their impact on Sūḫu as well. Nonetheless, the inscription of the son and heir of Šamaš-rēša-uṣur, Ninurta-kudurrī-uṣur, contain clear evidence of him being well acquainted with the Assyrian royal inscriptions and imitating their distinctive features. Similarly to the inscription of Kulamuwa and Assyrian royal inscriptions, the inscriptions of Ninurta-kudurrī-uṣur claim that his achievements surpassed that of his predecessors: *šá mam-ma ina lìb-bi* <AD^{meš}*-e-a*> *la* GAZ

[11] See Greenfield and Shaffer, 1983 for discussion and Dušek and Mynářová, 2016 with further references for the latest overview of various theories concerning the date of the inscription, the editorial process and the process of translation from Akkadian into Aramaic. J. Greenfield and A. Shaffer point out that the dialect of Akkadian in the inscription is Babylonian (i.e., Standard Babylonian), although with Assyrianisms (ibid.: 110). Note that already in this inscription, which is the one of the earliest known Aramaic inscriptions, the king is described as the provider of water to his country (*gwll nhr klm* "irrigation master of all rivers" l. 3), similar to his god Hadad (*gwll šmyn wʾrq*, "the irrigation master of heaven and earth," l. 1–2; cf. pp. 177–178 with fnn. 17–18 below), where *gwll* is the Akkadian loanword. J. Greenfield and A. Shaffer point to at least one Aramaic calque in Akkadian translation (ibid.). Of course, appearance of the *topos* of exceeding his ancestors in Kulamuwa's inscription could result from the influences of the imperial Hittite inscriptions (cf. Suppiluliuma II KBo 12.38 ii 11–16, ii 17–21), and not Assyrian examples. But the time gap and the very naivety of Kulamuwa's articulation of the matter, which betrays that the subject was new to his scribe, suggests that the borrowing was made from the closest neighbour and contemporary – Assyria.

[12] Na'aman, 2008: 223.

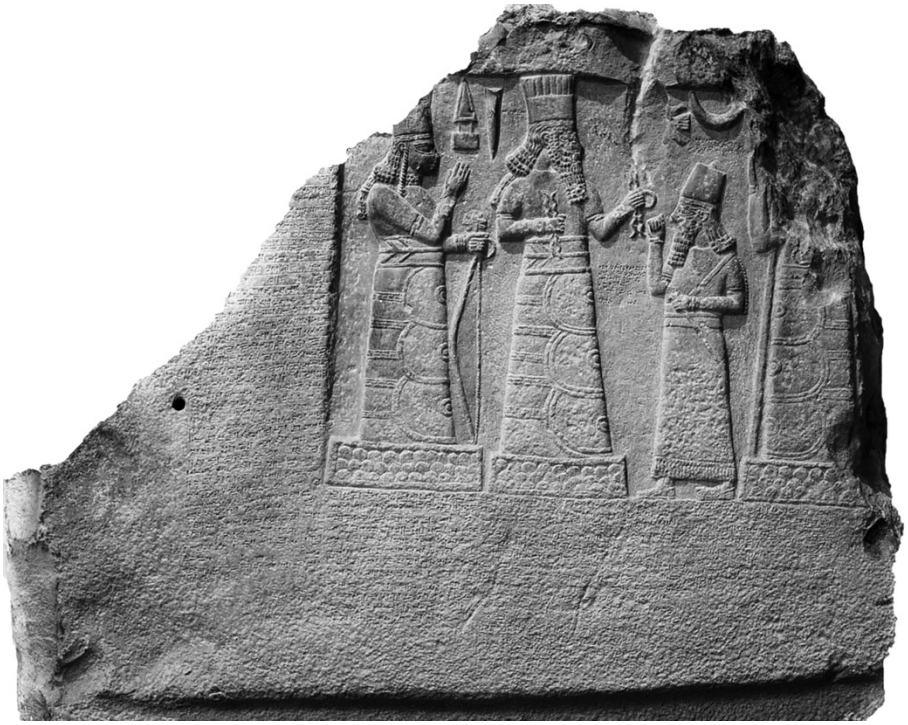

Fig. 3a

Fig. 3b

Fig. 3: Steles of Šamaš-rēša-uṣur (a) and his son Ninurta-kudurrī-uṣur (b); 8th century BCE(?). (a): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shamsh-res-usur,_governor_of_Mari_and_Suhi.jpg); (b): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Assyrian_stele_from_Anat,_al-Anbar,_Iraq._Stele_of_Ninurta-kudurri-usur_dedicated_to_Anat._Iraq_Museum.jpg.

ana-ku a-duk AD^{meš}*-ú-a* 10-*šú* ^{lú}KÚR GAZ*-ma ma-lu-ú-a ul ú-šam-ṣu-ú ana-ku* 1-*et di-ik-ti a-duk-ma a-na la* AD^{meš}*-e-a ú-šá-tir*$_x$(DIR), "I inflicted such a defeat as none among <my ancestors> had inflicted. My ancestors had defeated the enemy ten times, but they did not achieve as much as I."[13] Here, however, this is most probably the continuation of the Babylonian tradition.

But since the inscriptions of Ninurta-kudurrī-uṣur are written in Akkadian, their similarity to the Assyrian prototypes is even more obvious than that of Kulamuwa inscription. Ninurta-kudurrī-uṣur of Sūḫu describes his atrocities towards his defeated enemies, which is the characteristic feature of Assyrian royal inscriptions. He does it in a typically Assyrian style using typically Assyrian expressions, such as: KUŠ-*šú ki-ma* KUŠ UDU.NÍTA *aṣ-ṣi-ma ina pa-an* KÁ.GAL *šá* URU–*Gab*-ba-ri*-DÙ *áš-kun*, "I *stripped off* his skin like the skin of a sheep and set (it) in front of the gate of Āl-gabbāri-bānî;"[14] ÚŠ^{meš}*-šú-nu ki-ma* A^{meš} í[D *ú-šá-aṣ-bit ḫar-ra-nu*] *ina* AD$_5^{meš}$*-šú-nu a-ru-ú* ⌜*u*⌝ [*zību in-na-aṭ-ṭal*], "I made their blood run like the water of a river. Eagles and vultures *hovered* over their corpses."[15] Description of atrocities, a common place in Assyrian writings, is unusual for Babylonia.

The richest source for studying the Assyrian influence in the West is of course the Hebrew Bible. Assyrian royal rhetoric in the Bible was extensively explored by many scholars.[16] All this research, however, concentrates on intertextuality in such a way that the biblical text is treated as reflecting the Assyrian royal propaganda. It seems that nobody wanted to see the evidence of a deliberate imitation of the Assyrian institutions by the Judahite kings described in the Bible. The only exception is an attempt by Elnathan Weissert to draw a parallel between Sennacherib's water enterprises and those of Hezekiah's.[17] Intriguingly, water works of both the Assyrian and the Judahite kings are predated by the statement in the aforementioned inscription of Ninurta-kudurrī-uṣur of Sūḫu, who boasts of building a well.[18]

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[13] RIMB 2 Ninurta-kudurri-uṣur 1002.2: ii 27b–29.

[14] RIMB 2 Ninurta-kudurri-uṣur 1002.2 ii 26–27. The aforementioned statement that none of his predecessors had inflicted such a defeat to an enemy immediately follows (ibid. ii 27–29). Cf. e.g, RIMA 2 A.0.98.1: 40–41 (Aššur-dān II), A.O. 101.1: 67–68, 89, 92, 110 (Ashurnasirpal II).

[15] RIMB 2 Ninurta-kudurri-uṣur 1002.3 ii 18′–19′. See the parallel in 1002.6 ii 18′–20′ for restoration. Cf. e.g., RIMA 3 A.0.103.1: 28–29 (Šamšī-Adad V).

[16] Hom, 2013; Machinist, 1983, 2016, 2018; Radner, 2006; Aster, 2009, 2017.

[17] Weissert, 2011: 308–309; he dates the passage of the biblical narration, which he is discussing (ibid.: 306 with n. 74; II Kings 19: 9b–35, particularly 2 Kings 19:24/Isa 37: 25) as post-exilic.

[18] RIMB 2 Ninurta-kudurrī-uṣur 1002.2 iii 10′–12′ followed by the statement that he built a town in a place that nobody built it before him (ibid.: iii 12′–14′). Ninurta-kudurrī-uṣur monuments as well as the Hebrew Bible share other common places with the Assyrian royal inscriptions, among them cutting down fruit trees (RIMB 2 1002.3 i 16′ where it is

Ancient Israel and Judah were not special cases as they are often seen,[19] but just small parts of a larger ancient Near Eastern world, dominated by the Assyrian superpower. Judahite kings did imitate their Assyrian overlords too, starting with the one who was the first to voluntary subjugate Judah to Assyria – Ahaz –, and ending with that who tried to restore the "united monarchy" – Josiah. In the Bible the kings of Israel are all sinners, while the kings of Judah can be pious and impious, depending on their devotion to their tutelary deity. Intriguingly, starting with Assyrian expansion in the region, the two most pious kings – Hezekiah[20] and Josiah – attempted at overthrowing foreign sovereignty over Judah, but the first to bow to the yoke of Assyria was Ahaz, one of the most impious kings, who eagerly imitated Assyrians (II Kings 16: 7–18):[21]

ז וַיִּשְׁלַח אָחָז מַלְאָכִים אֶל־תִּגְלַת פִּלְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר לֵאמֹר עַבְדְּךָ וּבִנְךָ אָנִי עֲלֵה
וְהוֹשִׁעֵנִי מִכַּף מֶלֶךְ־אֲרָם וּמִכַּף מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַקּוֹמִים עָלָי: **ח** וַיִּקַּח אָחָז אֶת־הַכֶּסֶף וְאֶת־
הַזָּהָב הַנִּמְצָא בֵּית יְהוָה וּבְאֹצְרוֹת בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁלַח לְמֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר שֹׁחַד: **ט** וַיִּשְׁמַע
אֵלָיו מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר וַיַּעַל מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר אֶל־דַּמֶּשֶׂק וַיִּתְפְּשֶׂהָ וַיַּגְלֶהָ קִירָה וְאֶת־רְצִין
הֵמִית: **י** וַיֵּלֶךְ הַמֶּלֶךְ אָחָז לִקְרַאת תִּגְלַת פִּלְאֶסֶר מֶלֶךְ־אַשּׁוּר דַּמֶּשֶׂק וַיַּרְא אֶת־הַמִּזְבַּח
אֲשֶׁר בְּדַמֶּשֶׂק וַיִּשְׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ אָחָז אֶל־אוּרִיָּה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־דְּמוּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְאֶת־תַּבְנִיתוֹ לְכָל־
מַעֲשֵׂהוּ: **יא** וַיִּבֶן אוּרִיָּה הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ אָחָז מִדַּמֶּשֶׂק כֵּן
עָשָׂה אוּרִיָּה הַכֹּהֵן עַד־בּוֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ־אָחָז מִדַּמֶּשֶׂק: **יב** וַיָּבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ מִדַּמֶּשֶׂק וַיַּרְא הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֶת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיִּקְרַב הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַיַּעַל עָלָיו: **יג** וַיַּקְטֵר אֶת־עֹלָתוֹ וְאֶת־מִנְחָתוֹ וַיִּסֵּךְ

posed as a thread by an adversary; Deut 20:19–20) or cedar for luxury constructions (RIMB 2 1002.3 iv 19′–23′; II Sam 7: 2; I Kings 5: 20–25, 6: 29–36, 7: 2–12; 2 Chron. 2: 2; Ezra 3: 7 and so forth). Both *topoi* are, however, older than the first millennium, not originally Assyrian and spread far beyond Mesopotamia. For the destruction of orchards by an enemy in Mesopotamia, see the selection in Cole, 1997 and May 2022: 233–236 and 246 with n. 94. As has been shown by Cole, this motive is already attested in the OB period (Cole 1997: 31). For the HB, the topic of demolishing fruit trees was exhaustively treated by N. Wazana (Wasana, 2008). For precious woods decorating luxury constructions in the ANE, see Hurowitz, 1992: 174, 195–196, 200–222.

[19] Weeks: 178. They are rather a well-documented(?) case.

[20] It is highly disputable, if the alleged reforms of Hezekiah (II Kings 18: 4) took place indeed. The incense burners on the Lachish relief (fig. 4) are the proof that the cult was performed at the local temple by the time of the siege of Lachish by Sennacherib. Thus at least one cultic centre other than Jerusalem – the temple at Lachish functioned in the reign of Hezekiah.

[21] This annalistic passage, particularly vv. 10–16, is related to P source (see Weinfeld, 1976: 182) and is no doubt CBH (Classical Biblical Hebrew). For dating of P as pre-exilic on linguistic grounds, see Hurvitz, 1988: 2000), thus I take this passage as a contemporarily or nearly contemporarily to the events pre-exilic text. The translations of the Biblical quotes in this article follow Cogan and Tadmor, 1988 with emendations by the present author.

אֶת־נִסְכּוֹ וַיִּזְרֹק אֶת־דַּם־הַשְּׁלָמִים אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: **יד** וְאֵת הַמִּזְבַּח הַנְּחֹשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר
לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וַיִּקְרֵב מֵאֵת פְּנֵי הַבַּיִת מִבֵּין הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וּמִבֵּין בֵּית יְהוָה וַיִּתֵּן אֹתוֹ עַל־יֶרֶךְ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
צָפוֹנָה: **טו** ויצוהו הַמֶּלֶךְ־אָחָז אֶת־אוּרִיָּה הַכֹּהֵן לֵאמֹר עַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ הַגָּדוֹל הַקְטֵר אֶת־
עֹלַת־הַבֹּקֶר וְאֶת־מִנְחַת הָעֶרֶב וְאֶת־עֹלַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶת־מִנְחָתוֹ וְאֵת עֹלַת כָּל־עַם הָאָרֶץ
וּמִנְחָתָם וְנִסְכֵּיהֶם וְכָל־דַּם עֹלָה וְכָל־דַּם־זֶבַח עָלָיו תִּזְרֹק וּמִזְבַּח הַנְּחֹשֶׁת יִהְיֶה־לִּי,
לְבַקֵּר: **טז** וַיַּעַשׂ אוּרִיָּה הַכֹּהֵן כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה הַמֶּלֶךְ אָחָז: **יז** וַיְקַצֵּץ הַמֶּלֶךְ אָחָז אֶת־
הַמִּסְגְּרוֹת הַמְּכוֹנֹת וַיָּסַר מֵעֲלֵיהֶם ואת־הַכִּיֹּר וְאֶת־הַיָּם הוֹרִד מֵעַל הַבָּקָר הַנְּחֹשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר
תַּחְתֶּיהָ וַיִּתֵּן אֹתוֹ עַל מַרְצֶפֶת אֲבָנִים: **יח** וְאֶת־מיסך הַשַּׁבָּת אֲשֶׁר־בָּנוּ בַבַּיִת, וְאֶת־מְבוֹא
הַמֶּלֶךְ הַחִיצוֹנָה הֵסֵב בֵּית יְהוָה מִפְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר:

[7]Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria: "I am your servant and your son. Come and rescue me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel who are attacking me." [8]Ahaz took the silver and the gold stored in the House of YHWH and in the palace treasury, and sent a bribe to the king of Assyria. [9]The king of Assyria responded to his plea; the king of Assyria proceeded against Damascus. He captured it and exiled its population to Qir, and put Rezin to death. [10]Now when King Ahaz went to Damascus to greet Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, he saw the altar in Damascus; whereupon King Ahaz sent a model of the altar and a plan with all details for its construction to Uriah the priest. [11]Uriah the priest built the altar, according to all that King Ahaz had sent him from Damascus; Uriah the priest completed it by the time King Ahaz returned from Damascus. [12]When the king returned from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached the altar and ascended it; [13]he offered his burnt offering and his meal offering; he poured out his libation, and he dashed the blood of his offering of well-being against the altar. [14]As for the bronze altar which (had stood) before YHWH, he moved (it) from the front of the House, from between the altar and House of YHWH, and placed it on the north side of the (new) altar. [15]King Ahaz then ordered Uriah the priest: "On the great altar, offer the morning burnt offering and the evening meal offering and the king's burnt offering and his meal offering and the burnt offering of all the People of the Land, and their meal offerings and their libations. All the blood of the burnt offerings and the blood of the sacrifices you shall dash against it. The bronze altar will be for me to frequent." [16]Uriah the priest did just as King Ahaz ordered. [17]King Ahaz stripped off the frames of the wheeled stands and removed the basin from them; he took down the Sea from the bronze oxen that supported it and placed it on the stone pavement. [18]And he turned about the House of YHWH the closing

> walk of the resting hall that they built in the House and the king's outer entrance, because[22] of the king of Assyria.

First of all, the political situation described in this passage is exactly the same as the one known to us from the Kulamuwa's inscription: a local ruler, in this case the king of Judah, is unable to resist his more powerful adversaries. He pleads for help of the Assyrian king and pays the latter for it. The Bible implies the term שֹׁחַד translated by Cogan and Tadmor as "bribe"[23] and Kulamuwa's inscription uses the verb *škr*, "hired." Bottom line, both Western rulers paid the Assyrian king for protection. Vassaldom to Assyria, that could yet turn out temporary, was preferable over an immediate thread of consumption by a powerful predatory neighbour.

But this passage implies at least two more testimonies that Ahaz imitated Assyrian rites and realia. First of all, he undertakes a tremendous enterprise of dramatical changes in the temple of his god. As is stated at the end of the passage, he does it מִפְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר. The most common translation of this expression is "because of the king of Assyria." Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor discussed all other possible variants, such as "on account of …," "by the order of …," "to satisfy … the king of Assyria." But it is clear that Ahaz imitates religious habits of his overlord and does it entirely on his own initiative,[24] no traces of imposition of Assyrian cult can be found in this passage. Thus "because of" or "for the sake of" remains the preferable translation that indicates the intention of Ahaz to adopt the customs of the Assyrian metropolis.

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[22] Cogan and Tadmor,1988: 190 suggest: "on account of." They reject translations "by the order of," "in deference to" or "to satisfy" because, as they postulate, "Assyrian kings … did not interfere with the native cultic practices of their vassals." Not only that this statement is notwithstanding with the evidence of the sources (May, 2020), but the vassals themselves fancied and eagerly imitated cultic practices of their mighty sovereigns not waiting for the latter to impose them.

[23] Cogan and Tadmor, 1988: 184; see, however, Kalluveettil, 1982: 122–124, 127–135) who relates this expression together with עַבְדְּךָ וּבִנְךָ אָנִי to the "covenant language."

[24] Cogan and Tadmor, 1988: 192–193 admit that the "voluntary innovation of Ahaz was thus the first wave in the larger movement of acculturation to the practices of the Assyrian empire" and suggest that it was "motivated rather by a spirit of assimilation to the current international fashions." They try, however, to prove that the altar was Syrian (for which there is no evidence what so ever) and not Assyrian.

Fig. 4: Lachish relief of Sennacherib. Assyrian soldiers carrying away the Assyrian-style incense burners from the local temple. After Barnett / Bleibtreu / Turner, 1998: pl. 336, fig. 432c.

Most important of all the changes that Ahaz has done in his temple is building the new altar. It has been discussed at length, if the altar was of an Assyrian or Syrian type.[25] Cogan rejected the possibility of Ahaz' altar being of the Assyrian type, basing on his own statement that Assyrians did not impose imperial cults on their vassals. As has been proven this statement does not hold water.[26] The description of the altar is not given in the passage, however, and offering tables, to which Cogan relates as the "Assyrian altar" were not the only kind of an altar in Assyria but existed in Syria too.[27] On the other hand, the incense burners plundered by the soldiers of Sennacherib from Lachish are profoundly Assyrian[28] (fig. 4), which

[25] Cogan, 1974: 73–77.

[26] See May, 2020 for detailed discussion.

[27] E.g, Börker-Klähn, 1982: 302 that may also imitate the Assyrian offering tables, since at least on this stela the dress of the deceased is Assyrian, and elsewhere on Aramaic funerary stelae. Ahaz' altar could be a copy of an Assyrian crenelated altar (Barnett, 1976: pl. XXIII; North Palace of Assurbanipal, Room H). Further statement of Cogan, 1974: 75 that " 'blood consciousness' is not paralleled in Mesopotamia" is not correct since Assyrians did offer the blood to their gods (SAA 20 15 i 9′ the king UDU.SISKUR *i-na-saḫ* MÚD^{meš} *ina* ŠÀ *e-ni ú-šam-ḫar* "performs the sheep offerings and offers blood to the spring").

[28] Compare with the local "Judahite" ones, e.g., Herzog and Singer-Avitz, 2016: fig. 25.8.

additionally proves that Assyrian-type cultic utensils were used in Judah.

The second and more striking testimony of adoption of Assyrian cultic practices in this passage is that in verses 12–13, the king is explicitly said to personally perform sacrifices and libations. This was the habit and duty of the kings of Assyria, as is evidenced by many ritual texts as well as by the multiple representations.[29] The libations performed by the king himself are particularly characteristic of Assyrians. It is also a media event in Assyria: the king performs libations and appears to the public.[30] In I Kings 8: 62–65 Solomon although is said to offer sacrifices on occasion of the inauguration of the newly built temple and altar, but the wording does not permit to assume that he did it personally, especially in light of chiastic appearance of expression וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְכָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל עִמּוֹ, "and the king, and all Israel with him" at the beginning and the end of this passage.

In case of Ahaz, it is clear that the king inaugurates the new altar by performing the sacrifice, the offering, and the libation himself (II Kings 16: 12–13). Moreover, nowhere else is a Judahite king said to make a libation, which was a distinct role of Assyrian kings in the religious rites.[31] It is also evident that he did so imitating the Assyrian royal cultic performance. It does not mean, of course, that Ahaz made this worship for the Assyrian gods. Contrarily, this was the fashionable addition to his own local cult of his local god. Another cultic practice borrowed by the Judahite kings from Assyrians, about which we learn from II Kings 23: 11, were the famous horses dedicated to the sun and its chariots. Moshe Weinfeld[32] pointed out that the habit of passing sons through fire, as did Ahaz,[33] could be Assyrian as well.

I will further argue that the most striking act of imitating Assyrian sovereigns, was the most pious and praised act recorded in II Kings, the so-called Deuteronomistic reform of Josiah – the most pious of the kings of Judah. This Judahite king was the contemporary of the late reign of Assurbanipal and of his successors. For a short period, Judah regained independence and even captured Samaria from the weakened hands of its former sovereign. Like the rulers of Suḫu before him, Josiah tried to use the moment and like them he imitated his recent mighty oppressors. The political situation was suitable for Judah to expand its territory, which apparently seeded in the former vassal hope to create his own "empire."

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[29] E.g., SAA 20 15 (the *akītu*-house ritual of Nisannu) i 9′, 17′, 44′, 51′–53′; ii 4′; rev. iii 5, and elsewhere in Assyrian royal rituals (SAA 20).

[30] E.g., SAA 20 15 ii 4′, 10′, and elsewhere in Assyrian royal rituals (SAA 20). Royal libation as the media event is also reflected in palatial reliefs (e.g., the White Obelisk, register VII [Börker-Klähn, 1982: no. 132a]; reliefs of Assurnasirpal II [Paley, 1976: pls. 4, 5, 18b, 19b, c and elsewhere], and of Assurbanipal, rooms I and S[1] [Barnett, 1976: pls. XXV, LVII]). See May, 2012 for the discussion of this phenomenon.

[31] See above, this page with fn. 30.

[32] Weinfeld, 1976: 216, n. 1.

[33] II Kings 16: 3.

The empire, however, needed imperial structure and imperial ideology. Assyria created mechanisms and technologies of power that lasted longer than the memory of its name. Persia, which succeeded it, overtook many of these achievements of the hated suppressor. So tried Judah.

Josiah's reform starts[34] with the king gathering all his subjects and announcing them the new covenant (בְּרִית) with the state tutelary deity – YHWH (II Kings 23: 1–3):

א וַיִּשְׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּאַסְפוּ אֵלָיו כָּל־זִקְנֵי יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלִָם: **ב** וַיַּעַל הַמֶּלֶךְ בֵּית־יְהוָה וְכָל־
אִישׁ יְהוּדָה וְכֹל־יֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלִַם אִתּוֹ וְהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַנְּבִיאִים וְכָל־הָעָם לְמִקְטָן וְעַד־גָּדוֹל
וַיִּקְרָא בְאָזְנֵיהֶם אֶת־כָּל־דִּבְרֵי סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית הַנִּמְצָא בְּבֵית יְהוָה: **ג** וַיַּעֲמֹד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל־
הָעַמּוּד וַיִּכְרֹת אֶת־הַבְּרִית לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לָלֶכֶת אַחַר יְהוָה וְלִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו וְאֶת־עֵדְוֹתָיו
וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתָיו בְּכָל־לֵב וּבְכָל־נֶפֶשׁ לְהָקִים אֶת־דִּבְרֵי הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת הַכְּתֻבִים עַל־הַסֵּפֶר
הַזֶּה וַיַּעֲמֹד כָּל־הָעָם בַּבְּרִית:

[1]And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. [2]And the king went up to the house of YHWH, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, from young to old; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of YHWH. [3]And the king stood on the pillar, and he concluded the covenant before YHWH, to follow YHWH, and to keep his commandments, and his injunctions, and his laws, with all heart, and all soul, to uphold the words of this covenant that were written in this book; and all the people committed themselves to the covenant.

This covenant, in a form of an inscription (סֵפֶר)[35] was aimed to replace the covenant with the Assyrian kings implied on their vassals by the so-called vassal treaties.[36] The covenant with his local god, by whom the vassal treaties with

[34] All verses of II Kings 23 cited below are Dtr 1 and thus pre-exilic ("Josian" redaction), i.e contemporary to the events they describe. For details of redaction history and discussion of dating, see Eynikel, 1996: 241–355, esp. p. 352. Concerning his attribution of וְלִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו וְאֶת־עֵדְוֹתָיו וְאֶת־חֻקֹּתָיו בְּכָל־לֵב וּבְכָל־נֶפֶשׁ in II Kings 23: 3 to postexilic Dtr 2 (pp. 345, 351) based on parallels in II King 23: 25, it should be rejected in light of the clear parallels to this particular expression in Assyrian Vassal treaties (SAA 2 6: 387), see below, p. 186 with fn. 52.

[35] See Cogan and Tadmor, 1988: 285 comment on this word meaning an "inscription" with the reference to the Sefire treaty, which calls the inscription on its stele *spr*. This inscription (סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית) could be actually a scroll similar to Assyrian vassal treaties written on tablets.

[36] Frankena, 1965: 152–153. For Assyrian vassal treaties, see SAA 2 and Radner, 2019 for the texts of the treaties published since SAA 2 and for the treaties mentioned in other kinds

Assyria were sworn, also granted Josiah the exemption from being punished by his deity for violating the vassal oath.

As is clear from the text of the Tell-Tayanat copy of the Vassal or Succession Treaties of Esarhaddon, the place of find and the unique form of tablets[37] upon which it was written, tablets with the Assyrian covenant were installed in local temples for worship. In Kinalūa (at least), the covenant tablet was not installed alone, but was surrounded by the images of the Assyrian king and his sons:[38]

> *šá* ⌜*ṭup-pi*⌝ *a-de-e an-ni-e ṭup-pi Aš+šur* MAN ⌜DINGIR⌝^{meš} *u* DINGIR⌜^{meš} GAL^{meš} EN$^{<meš>}$⌝-*ia ú-na-kar-u-ma ṣa-lam* ^{m}*Aš+šur*–PAP–⌜AŠ⌝ MAN KUR *Aš+šur* ⌜*ṣa-lam* ^{m}*Aš+šur*–DÙ–A DUMU MAN⌝ GAL *ša* É UŠ-⌜*te*⌝ *lu ṣa-lam* ⌜ŠEŠ^{meš}⌝-*šú* DUMU.NITA^{meš}-*šú ša* ⌜*ina* UGU⌝-*ḫ*[*i-šú*] *ú-na-kar-u-ni* ^{na_4}KIŠIB <NUN> GAL-*e an-ni-e šá a-de-e šá* ^{m}*Aš+šur*–DÙ–A DUMU MAN GAL *ša* É UŠ-*te* DUMU ^{m}*A+šur*–PAP–AŠ MAN KUR *Aš+šur* EN-*ku-nu ina šà šá-ṭir-u-ni ina* ^{na_4}KIŠIB *šá* MAN DINGIR^{meš} *ka-nik-u-ni ina* IGI-*ku-nu šá-kin-u-ni ki* DINGIR-*ku-nu*
>
> Whoever … discards this *adê*-tablet, a tablet of Aššur, king of the gods, and the great gods, my lords, or discards the image of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, the image of Assurbanipal, the great crown prince designated, or the images of his (Assurbanipal's – N.N.M) brothers, (and) his (Esarhaddon's – N.N.M) first-born sons which are (imposed) over him; (whoever among you) should not protect this seal(ed tablet) of the great ruler (= Aššur) of the *adê*(-document) of Assurbanipal, the great crown prince designated, son of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, your lord, in which it is written that this document has been sealed by the seal of Aššur, king of the gods, and presented before you, as your own god … .

This text unequivocally indicates that the tablet of *adê* was turned into a local god. The tablet from Tell Tayanat was found in the cella of the local temple.[39] The Tell Tayanat tablet as well as the Nimrud copies of Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties are large tablets, which have to be rotated not around their horizontal axis, like regular clay tablets, but around the vertical one.[40] The latter feature is a clear proof that the treaty tablets were installed for worship so that the worshipers could observe their both sides. It was suggested that this tablet was worshiped in all regions

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of texts.

[37] The tablet was found in the cella of the local temple (Harrison and Osborne 2012, 137).

[38] Lauinger, 2012: 98, lines T v 63–72 = 400–409; § 35; May, 2020: 204–205. Imposing apparently revered royal image (May, 2020: 205–206) on occasion of the vassal treaty is paralleled by one of the earliest documents of this kind – the treaty between Narām-Sîn, the deified king of Akkad, and the king of Elam (Hinz, 1967: 92, 94 section VIII).

[39] Harrison and Osborne, 2012, 137.

[40] Lauinger, 2012: 90.

of Assyrian domination not only by Assyrians, but also by their vassals who swore the *adê*-oath.[41]

Assyrians considered breaking the covenant with them by vassals as a sin. The verb *ḫaṭû* generally meaning "to commit crime," is used in NA texts exclusively to indicate the apostasy from the vassaldom and is translated as "to sin."[42] Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty contain an expression *ina* ŠÀ-*bi a-de-e-ku-nu la ta-ḫa-ṭi-a* "do not sin against your treaty."[43] In Hebrew the same root חטה, "to sin" in II Kings describes apostasy of the Judahite kings from the cult of YHWH, from the covenant with their god.

Yet before the discovery of the Tell Tayanat copy of Esarhaddon's *adê*-treaties, Karen Radner pointed out to the historical circumstances and features of Assyrian imperial administration, due to which the Assyrian vassal treaties should have been known in Judah and could serve the prototype for Deut 28, 22–44.[44] Radner has shown,[45] against Hayim Tadmor,[46] that the practice of imposition of vassal treaties was known starting with Tiglath-pileser I and was not of Aramaic origin. Disregarding the origin of this practice,[47] it is clear that in 7th century Judah it was perceived as Assyrian and that Josiah followed the Assyrian model. There is little doubt that Judah as an Assyrian vassal was obliged to revere its treaty with Assyria just as any other vassal state. The wording in Deut 28, 20–44 confirms the direct Assyrian influence. Moshe Weinfeld wrote "the resemblance is at times

[41] Watanabe, 2015: 207; see also May, 2020: 204–206.

[42] CAD Ḫ 157b–158a; see especially Esarhaddon's succession treaties (SAA 2 6: 66, 105), which forbade sinning against Assurbanipal.

[43] SAA 2 6: 292, similar ll. 513–517 and 555, 612 speak about sinning against the treaty, but compare l. 626 where a sin against Bēl is mentioned.

[44] Radner, 2006: 374–375.

[45] Ibid.: 352–353.

[46] Tadmor, 1987, 1990, 2011.

[47] Priestly and Deutoronomic (Josiah's) covenants are discerned in the Bible, as have been already shown by Weinfeld (1976: 126; see below, next page with fnn. 49–50). Typically, neither Assyrian treaties nor the Deteuronimic covenant include sacrifice, as do Gen 15: 9–10 and Mari texts (ARM 2 37, 11–12; ARM 4 78 rev. 16′; ARM 33 293: 11, 17–18; OBTR 1: 11–12; rev. 38–40; A.230: 4′; A.1056: 6, 9–12; A.2094: 9–11; A.2226: 17–18; ARM 26/1 24: 12, 25; ARM 26/1 199: 35; ARM 26/2 329: 52′; ARM 26/2 404: 12–13, 32–33, 50–51; ARM 26/2 428: 4′; ARM 28 50: rev. 20′; ARM 28 66: 6–7; M. 6009: 37, 44–45). Parallel between earlier practices of the Amorite nomads – Mari sacrificial "donkey of peace" – and the priestly covenant is broadly discussed (e.g., Weinfeld, 1976: 102; Tadmor, 2011: 214–216; 109; Weeks, 2004: 118–125; Charpin, 2019: 255–264). Starting with Mendelhall, 1955 and until the most recent Charpin, 2019, comparative studies of ANE treaties constitute a pile even bigger than those dedicated to the influence of Assyrian royal rhetoric on the Hebrew Bible. For the comparisons with the Hittite treaties, see Beckman, 2006: 298 with n. 85 referring to Mendenhall; for the summary of information on ANE treaties with regard to the Bible, see Weeks, 2004, especially pp. 170–173.

so striking that it is difficult to escape the impression that Deuteronomy borrowed directly from outside sources."[48] He further juxtaposes the parallel passages in Deut 28 and Esarhaddon Succession treaties, analyses them[49] and concludes: "the difference in character of the priestly and deutoronomic maledictions lead us to infer, then, that the deuteronomic covenant, by contrast with the priestly covenant was drafted by scribes who were chiefly influenced by Assyrian treaty formulae."[50] Similarity of formulas is not limited to Deut 28, 20–44.[51] The expression וְלִשְׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו ... בְּכָל־לֵב in the passage quoted above is taken from Esarhaddon's Succession Treaties *ta-me-tu ta-tam-ma-a-ni ina gu-mur-ˈtiˀ* ŠÀ-*ku-nu* "you shall swear the oath with all you heart" meaning that the oath cannot be not a pretence but must be sincere.[52] Likewise the observance of the laws and commandments of YHWH sworn in II Kings 23: 3 must be sincere. The same expression is found in Assyrian treaties starting with the OA period[53] – more than millennium prior to the earliest Biblical texts. Most recent studies consider Deut 28, 22–44 as well as Sefire treaties to be translations of Assyrian treaties.[54]

The first step of Josiah's reform and his first step to independence was replacing the covenant with Assyria by the covenant with his own local god. Josiah was, however, not the only king to conclude covenant with his god. Esarhaddon did it before him, as is clear from SAA 9 3, a prophecy which describes the covenant of Aššur (*adê ša Aššur*) with this king of Assyria.[55] As is clear from its title – *adê ša Aššur* – Aššur imposes covenant on his subject king.[56] The prophecy

[48] Weinfeld, 1976: 116. See also Frankena, 1969: 148–149.
[49] Ibid.: 117–126.
[50] Weinfeld, 1976: 126.
[51] The other widely discussed passage is Deut 13 (Weinfeld, 1976: 100 and elsewhere). Weinfeld, discusses parallels between Deut 28, 53–57 (ibid.: 127) and other Deuteronomistic writings (ibid.: 127–135) and Esarhaddon's succession treaties.
[52] SAA 2 5: 387. The expression *ina gu/amurti libbikunu*, "with all your heart, wholeheartedly" appears also in SAA 2 6: 53, 169, 310); it should be restored in SAA 2 7 rev. 5′ as well. Earlier, in the vassal treaty of Adad-nērārī V, it appears as *ana gamarti libbišu* (SAA 2 1 iv 3) interpreted there as "with all his loyalty."
[53] Eidem, 1991: 197 iii 2–3 *li-bˈa-am gámˀ-ra-am* "(with) all heart." Frankena, 1969: 141 points also to Hittite and Ugaritic analogies. In Hittite treaty the expression sounds even closer to Hebrew *ina kul libbišu.*
[54] Crouch and Hutton, 2019: 229–296.
[55] Intestinglly, both covenants – the Assyrian one and the Judahite, where delivered by the respective deities through prophet(esse)s: male La-dāgil-ilī in the Assyrian case and female Huldah in Judah (II Kings 22:14–20). Unlike in Judah uttering divine will through a prophet/prophetess was in Assyria rather rare in comparison to extispisy and celestial divination (cf. Handy, 1994, who compares Huldah consulting Josiah with the oracle queries of Esarhaddon and Nabonidus). Huldah's prophecy is, however, *vaticinium ex eventu* and thus later than the reform itself.
[56] This is clear from the working: *tup-pi a-de-e an-niˀ-u šá* ^{d}*Aš+šur*, "this tablet of (the

describes the rites and the festive meal arranged by Ištar of Arbela on the occasion of this covenant between Aššur and his king. Simo Parpola suggested that these festivities should have been arranged on occasion of the coronation of Esarhaddon on 28th Addaru 681, few days before the New Year, the *akītu* of Nisannu. As an Assyrian vassal, the king of Judah could have been present at this occasion. Whether these suggestions are correct or not, SAA 9 3 strongly resembles the covenant of Josiah followed by the Passover celebrations. In any case, as has been shown, Josiah's covenant and the way of its imposition verbally followed the Assyrian models. Typically, it is claimed that סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית was found in the Temple. The king of Assyria as the overlord is replaced by the God of Israel. This was Josiah's statement of independence.

Longing for independence and further territorial expansion needed the centralisation of power. This centralisation turned into elevation and strengthening of the status of Jerusalem not only as administrative but as a cultic centre. The essence of religious part of Josiah's reforms along with the eliminations of cults of gods other than YHWH was elimination of all the cultic places of YHWH other than the Jerusalem Temple. The centralisation of the cult in the Jerusalem Temple and the desecration of all the alternative cultic sites, such as the famous "high places," and alternative cultic personnel are described at length in II Kings 23: 4–20, 24.

Josiah centralized the cult in Jerusalem and made it the only place of worship in his kingdom. For this purpose, he not only desecrated the alternative cultic places but uprooted and physically exterminated their priests (II Kings 23: 8, 20), destroyed the idols and all alternative cult performers (II Kings 23: 24) and by this ended up with the peripheral cults. His model obviously were again the Assyrian practices. Although Assyrians maintained the sanctuaries of their ancient cultic centres, such as Nineveh and Arbela and even built new temples in the administrative capitals Kalḫu and Dūr-Šarrukīn, Assur always remained the only religious capital of the Empire and the exclusive seat of the Assyrian state tutelary deity – the god Aššur.[57] The attempt of Tukultī-Ninurta I to move the cult of Aššur to Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta by building there the new temple of Assur failed due to the

god) Aššur" (SAA 9 3: 27); cf. SAA 2 6 (l. i 1) or SAA 2 6 (l. 1), which are called *adê* of Esarhaddon, SAA 2 8, *adê* of Zakūtu (l. 1), SAA 2 11 and 12 (ll.1) *adê* of Sîn-šarru-iškun. Obviously, the treaty was "named" after the one who imposed it.

[57] The colophon of the Khorsabad King List, iv 34–35 reads: ŠU ^{m}*Kan-dàl-a-nu* ^{lú}DUB.SAR É DINGIR *qí-rib* ^{uru}LIMMÚ–DINGIR^{ki}, "hand of Kandalānu, the scribe of the house of the god inside Arbela." (Gelb, 1954: 222). "The god" can only be Aššur, but we know nothing about the temple of Aššur at Arbela from any other source. The tablet is dated to 738 BCE and it is not improbable that some concurrent sanctuary of Aššur existed at Arbela before Sargonids, similar, e.g., to the sanctuaries of YHWH of Samaria and YHWH of Teman (Na'aman 2017). But in the period of the maximal centralisation of power in the times of Sargon and after there was a single temple of Aššur – at Assur.

abandonment of the place after the murder of the king. While making Nineveh his capital, Sennacherib renovated its existing temples and built new ones, but did not built a temple for Aššur at Nineveh, as his father Sargon II did not build one in his new capital, Dūr-Šarrukīn. Instead Sennacherib rebuilt the Aššur Temple at Assur.

Only one temple of Aššur existed in Assyria itself, that at Assur. As Assyrian vassals yearly bringing tribute to Assyrian temples, the Judahites could not be not aware of this distinctive feature of the cult of Aššur. Likewise only the Jerusalem Temple was made by Josiah the only temple of YHWH. The very idea of the single temple for the tutelary deity in Jerusalem was inspired by the Assyrian example. Assyrians, however, did not need theological basis for having only one Temple for their tutelary deity because this was their tradition for centuries. Contrarily, Josiah's concentration of the cult of YHWH was an innovation, which needed justification. The Book of Law "found" in the Jerusalem Temple[58] provided this justification.

Similarly to Assyrians,[59] Josiah imposed the covenant upon all his subjects כָּל־הָעָם לְמִקָּטֹן וְעַד־גָּדוֹל, "all the people, from young to old"[60] or in JPS translation "small and great." Zakūtu, Esarhaddon's mother, made all Assyrians, UN^{meš} KUR *gab-bu*, "all people of the land" swear loyalty to her grandson Assurbanipal. Her treaty detailly lists categories of population, starting from Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, Assurbanipal's "equal" brother, down to "Assyrians high and low"[61] exactly as II Kings 23: 2 lists the categories of the population of Judah starting with the highest – the king and the priests. The same arrangement of the list of sworn vassal population from the local ruler down to "the men in his hands, young and old, as many as there are from sunrise to sunset,"[62] (^{lú}ERIM ^{meš} ŠU^{II}-*šú gab-bu* TUR (*u*) GAL *ma-la ba-šu-u* TA* *na-pa-ah* ^{d}UTU-ši *a-di ra-ba* ^{d}*Šam-ši*) is found also in Esarhaddon's Succession treaties.[63] The geographical definition further stresses that the entire vassal country with all its people was sworn the covenant with Assyrian.

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[58] II Kings 22: 8–13.

[59] Contra Cogan and Tadmor, 1988: 297.

[60] Cogan and Tadmor, 1988: 278 translate just "young and old" disregarding the prepositions.

[61] SAA 2 8 3–9a: TA* $^{m.d}$GIŠ.ŠIR–MU–ʳGIˡ.NA PAB *ta-li-me-šú* TA* $^{m.d}$GIŠ.ŠIR–UG$_5$.GA–TI.LA *ù re-eḫ-te* PAB^{meš}-*šú* TA* NUMUN LUGAL TA* ^{lú}GAL^{meš} ^{lú}NAM^{meš} ^{lú}*šá–ziq*$^{!}$*-ni* ʳ^{lú}ˡSAG^{meš} ^{lú}GUB–IGI TA* ^{lú}ʳ*zak*ˡ-*ke-e ù* ^{lú}TU–KUR *gab-bu* TA* DUMU^{meš} KUR *Aš+šur* LÚ ʳ*qal*ˡ-*lu* LÚ *dan-*ʳ*nu*$^{!}$ˡ, "with Šamaš-šumu-ukīn, his equal brother, with Šamaš-mētu-uballiṭ and the rest of his brothers, with the royal seed, with the magnates and the governors, the bearded and the eunuchs, the royal entourage, with the exempts and all who enter the Palace, with Assyrians, high and low."

[62] Parallel appearance of "young and old" in II Kings 23: 2 and l. 5 of vassal treaties was noticed already by Weinfeld, 1976: 101.

[63] SAA 2 6: 3–6.

Even the unborn sons and grandsons of the sworn men were subjects to it.[64] Not only the wording of Josiah's covenant but the very procedure of its imposition is taken from Assyria.

After the description of demolition of the cults concurrent to that of the Jerusalem Temple, the narrations of the Josiah reform turns to the cultic duties to be performed in Judah's central and now the only sanctuary and ends[65] with the imposition of the obligation to celebrate Passover (II Kings 23: 21–23), which as the Deuteronomist states, was not celebrated since the days of the judges:

כא וַיְצַו הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־כָּל־הָעָם לֵאמֹר עֲשׂוּ פֶסַח לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם כַּכָּתוּב עַל סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית הַזֶּה׃ **כב** כִּי לֹא נַעֲשָׂה כַּפֶּסַח הַזֶּה מִימֵי הַשֹּׁפְטִים אֲשֶׁר שָׁפְטוּ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכֹל יְמֵי מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמַלְכֵי יְהוּדָה׃ **כג** כִּי אִם־בִּשְׁמֹנֶה עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה לַמֶּלֶךְ יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ נַעֲשָׂה הַפֶּסַח הַזֶּה לַיהוָה בִּירוּשָׁלָ‍ִם׃

[21]And the king commanded all the people, saying: "Keep the Passover unto YHWH your God, as it is written in this book of the covenant." [22]For there was not kept such a Passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; [23] but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah was this Passover kept to the YHWH in Jerusalem.

II Kings 23: 1–3 and 21–23 are two blocks of once single Dtr 1 text separated by the later Dtr 2 interpolation of vv. 4–20. Typically, this Dtr 1 text describes originally Assyrian rites, since Passover is the New Year of Nisannu – exactly the *zagmukku arḫi rešti* when the Assyrian kings received the tribute and dedicated it together with their annual booty to Aššur. Annual tribute was delivered by the vassals to the Assyrian gods in their temples in Assyria. As a part of this practice the procession of emissaries of Egypt, Gaza, Judah, Moab and Ammon entered Kalḫu (*ina Kalḫi etārbūni)* on the 12th day of a feast with their tribute, as we learn from the letter of the city governor to his king Sargon II.[66] Provinces had to provide the Assyrian gods with the *sattukku* and *ginû* offerings; vassals sent their "gifts" to Assyrian temples. All of them pulled the "yoke of Aššur." The delivery of the annual tribute was one of the most important aspects of the Assyrian New Year festival. Esarhaddon prays in his *Schlußgebet* ending the Nineveh cylinder:[67]

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[64] SAA 2 9–10.

[65] II King 23: 24, which E. Eynikel considers a "gloss impossible to date" (Eynikel, 1996: 355) from the last sixth phase of redaction history. In my eyes it belongs together with II Kings 23 4–20. The latter passage was interpolated between vv. 1–3 and vv. 21–23, which initially was a solid text, while v. 24, thematically belonging to vv. 4–20 was moved to the end of the reform description. It is indeed impossible to establish when it happened.

[66] SAA 1 110 rev. 4–13.

[67] RINAP 4 25 vi 58–62.

ina zag-muk-ki ITI *reš-ti-i kul-lat* ANŠE *mur-ni-is-qí* ^{anše}KUNGA^{meš} ^{anše}GAM.MAL^{meš} *til-li ú-nu-ut* MÈ *gi-mir* ERIM$^{ḫi.a}$ *šal-la-at na-ki-ri šat-ti-šam-ma la na-par-ka-a lu-up-qí-da qé-reb-šá qé-reb* É.GAL *šá-a-tu*

On the New Year (feast) of the first month may I review in it, in this palace, all the war horses, mules, camels, weaponry, battle gear, all of the troops, spoils of (my) enemy every year unceasing!

The purpose of the Assyrian annual campaigns was to bring booty and tribute to the gods of Assyria on the New Year festival.[68] The vassal tributaries were to participate in the triumphal *akītu*-procession, to observe the great king offering his loot to the Assyrian gods, and to learn the fear of the god and the king. As a part of this procession, they run at the wheel of the chariot of the Assyrian king. These were the successors of Kulamuwa, Panamuwa II of Sam'al and his son Bar-Rākib,[69] the loyal vassal of Tiglath-pileser III, the other – Ahaz of Judah.

Thus, Josiah's reform is nothing else but an attempt of the local Judahite king to use the political moment and the vacuum caused by the fall of Assyria in order to create his independent kingdom. He did this by applying the Assyrian political patterns, technologies and even religious models upon his own soil, exactly as did his more successful and powerful Eastern colleagues. He made himself and his people the vassal of his tutelary deity – his only and unique overlord, thus rejecting claims of any other power to impose itself over his kingdom. Paradoxically, the Assyrian world order triumphally continued to rule the world long after the fall of the Empire overtaken by its former vassals.

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[68] See May, 2012, especially 469–470, 485 and May, 2020: 229–230 on connection of *akītu* and Assyrian triumph.

[69] Donner and Röllig, 1962: 40, no. 216: 8–11. The *topos* of superseding one's predecessors is also found in Bar-Rākib's Sam'al orthostat (Donner and Röllig, 1962: 40, no. 216: 12–16). His attire is not imitating the garb of the Assyrian kings, unlike that of his predecessor Kulamuwa, but the divine symbols are arranged similarly.

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The King as Priest[1]

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Abstract

As an incarnation of Ninurta, the Son of God, the Assyrian king had two central public roles. On the one hand, he was the defender of the "Kingdom of Heaven" (materialized in the Assyrian Empire) against all possible forces of evil threatening it, the Saviour who safeguarded and expanded the realm and thus furthered the will of God. On the other, as the Slayer of the Dragon (Tiamat) and the conqueror of sin and evil (Anzû), he was the Redeemer, the Good Shepherd who died for his sheep and by his resurrection outlined the way to heaven for those who followed his example. As the Perfect Man, he was a bridge between Heaven and Earth – the High Priest of Aššur, who took care of the temples and offerings and played a central role in religious rituals and public festivals.

The image of the king as a heaven-sent Saviour and Redeemer became an inseparable part of Assyrian identity, consolidating and unifying the nation, and lives on in the Christian image of Jesus Christ as "God's High Priest" (Matthew 3:13–17, Hebrews 6:17–20, etc.) and in the title Pontifex Maximus adopted, beginning with Augustus, by Roman and Byzantine emperors.

Introduction

The popular notion of the Neo-Assyrian king, promoted by the Bible, classical sources, historical novels and Assyrian royal inscriptions themselves, is that of an oriental despot engaged in warfare, palace building and pursuit of pleasures. This notion completely overlooks the fact that in Neo-Assyrian imperial art, the king usually wears a high sacerdotal tiara and embroidered robes uncannily resembling the papal tiara and festive attire. Moreover, the numerous epithets attached to the king in Neo-Assyrian sources and exalting his power, masculinity, martiality, heroism and prowess,[2] are all secondary to his title **priest** (*šangû*) of Aššur, and the great stress overall laid on his godliness, piety and devotion to gods.

[1] In this article, "priest" (*šangû*) means "a person whose office it is to perform religious rites, and esp. to makes sacrificial offerings", as defined in the *Random House College Dictionary, Revised Edition* (1988). The translation of *šangû* offered in CAD Š/1 377, "chief administrator of a temple," is too narrow and completely misses the nature of this priestly office in Assyria (cf. p. 205 below).

[2] See Liverani, 2017: 106–115 and especially Seux, 1967: 110–116, 251–256, 287–288.

The Assyrian sacred tree from the wall panel behind the throne in Assurnasirpal's palace at Nimrud (BM 124531; SAA 10, S. XVI, Fig. 1).
Courtesy Trustees of the British Museum.

The ideological status of the Assyrian king as the earthly representative of God is of course well known, but little has been written on his priestly status,[3] so powerfully promoted by Assyrian propaganda. This is perhaps due to the fact that the priest of Aššur (*šangû ša Aššūr*) appearing in Assyrian royal rituals is not the king but the high priest (*šangû rabiu*) of Ešarra, the temple of Aššur in the city of Assur. He appears in some cultic rituals together with the king, who does not bear the title "priest" in this context (or for that matter, in any ritual context), so it might seem that the title was just honorary and had little justification in reality. But just the opposite is the case. In actual fact, the king is the main protagonist in *all* public rituals taking place in the city of Assur in the course of the cultic year, while the priest of Aššur plays only a marginal role in them.[4] He was of course

[3] Cf., e.g., Liverani, 2017; Saggs, 1984.
[4] See SAA 20; the priest of Aššur appears in nos. 1: 28, 30, 37; 7: 28; 10 r. 12; 17: 9, 13; 50: 7; and 51:5. His role is subordinate to that of the king even in the coronation ritual

the head of the clergy of Ešarra and responsible for the daily offerings and services performed in the temple,[5] but despite his high rank, in public his priestly status was outshined by that of the king.

In my article "Mount Niṣir and the Foundations of the Assyrian Church", I argued that the mysterious skipper Puzur-^{d}KUR.GAL, to whom the Deluge hero Utnapishtim entrusts his ark in Tablet XI of the Standard Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic, is none other than the Assyrian king Puzur-Aššur I (c. 2050 BC), the founder of the Assyrian dynastic line, who thus also became the founder of the Assyrian "Church."[6] Interestingly, the ark, which according to the Epic was built as a replica of the temple tower Etemenanki, is called "palace" (*ēkallu*) in the very passage where it is entrusted to Puzur-^{d}KUR.GAL (Tablet XI 96). In the cult of Ištar, which proclaimed faith in the resurrection of the soul, temple tower (*ziqqur-ratu*) symbolized the fall and rising of the goddess from the dead, and was a central symbol of the cult.[7] Hence it is likely that in referring to the ark, *ēkallu* primarily connoted "temple" or "church", as in Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic, rather than "palace."[8]

Indeed, Assyrian royal palaces were not just profane centres of administration but also sacred buildings, in many respects comparable to temples. In Assyria, the word "palace" not only referred to a palace as physical building, but to the entire royal household with all its tens of thousands of employees, administrators, domestics and dependents, and in practice was the equivalent of our "state." But this state differed from ours in that it was not secular. The king was the high priest of Aššur; his queen was the earthly image of the queen of heaven, the "holy spirit"; his cabinet ministers were images of the great gods (the hypostatized powers of God); and his governors, military commanders and retainers, many of whom were castrates, emulated the androgynous "heavenly host."[9]

The portrayal of Puzur-Aššur I as the founder of the Assyrian "Church" (a "congregation" of initiates in the esoteric cult of Ištar)[10] shows that the SB Gilgamesh Epic was composed in Assyria, probably towards the end of the 2nd

(SAA 20 7: 28), where he slaps the king's cheek.

[5] See SAA 20 50: 1–7.

[6] Parpola, 2014: 472–474. Puzur-^{d}KUR.GAL's title "skipper," which was a royal epithet, supports his identification with Puzur-Aššur I (see Parpola, 1997: n. 296, and 2014: n. 21).

[7] See SAA 9, p. XCII n. 114.

[8] Hebr. *hêkāl* "palace; temple (passim); temple of Jerusalem"; JAram. *hêkāl*, *hêklā* "Palast; das Tempelhaus; das Heilige im Tempel (im Gegensatz zum Allerheiligsten)"; Syr. *haikal*, *haiklō* "palace; temple; the temple at Jerusalem; that part of a church which is for the people = Eng. nave"; Arab. *haikal*, pl. *hayākil* "Tempel; großes Gebäude; Altar." All these words are loans from Akkadian *ēkallu.*

[9] Parpola, 2014: 475; see also Parpola, 1995 and 1999.

[10] Parpola, 2014: 476–477, and 2019: 200.

millennium BC,[11] and helps explain the emergence of "priest" (*šangû*) as a royal title in Middle and Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions (Table 1.3).

In the Old Assyrian period, before adopting the title *šangû*, the Assyrian kings entitled themselves "governor of (the city) Assur", a title they had borne for centuries as subjects of the kings of Akkad and Ur (Table 1.2). With the growth of their power, this title changed into "governor of the *god* Aššur" (ÉNSI ^{d}*a-šùr*), which remained in use until the end of the Old Assyrian period and was still borne (alongside SANGA) by Aššur-uballiṭ I, the first Assyrian king to adopt the title "priest."

Table 1: *"Priest" as a Mesopotamian royal title (historical survey).*[12]

1.1 sanga and énsi in 3rd millennium Sumer and Akkad

- Eannatum énsi lagaš^{ki} "RN, governor of Lagaš"
- Enannatum énsi lagaš^{ki} énsi(-gal) ^{d}nin-gír-su-ka "RN, (great) governor of Ningirsu"
- Entemena énsi lagaš^{ki} énsi-gal ^{d}nin-gír-sú-ka
- Enentarzi sanga ^{d}nin-ĝír-su-ka "PN/RN, priest of Ningirsu"
- Dudu sanga-maḫ ^{d}nin-ĝír-su-ka "PN, lofty priest of Ningirsu"
- Lugalzagesi énsi-gal ^{d}en-líl "great governor of Enlil," išib an-na "purification priest of An"
- Sargon ÉNSI.GAL ^{d}EN.LÍL // ÉNSI *(iššiak)* ^{d}EN.LÍL "RN, (great) governor of Enlil"
- Maništušu ÉNSI ^{d}EN.LÍL
- Gudea išib an-na "purification priest of An"

Cf. ^{d}[nin]-urta énsi-gal ^{d}en-líl-[lá] "Ninurta, great governor of Enlil" (Ninurta C 84)[13]

1.2 *iššakki Aššūr* as royal title in the Old Assyrian period

- *a-šùr*.ki LUGAL Ṣilūlu ÉNSI *a-šùr*.KI "governor of (the city) Assur" (Ur III period)
- Irišum I (1974–1935): ÉNSI ^{d}*a-šùr mār* Ilušuma ÉNSI *a-šùr*.KI *mār* Šalim-aḫum ÉNSI (var. *i-ší-a-ak) a-šùr*.KI
- Sargon I (1920–1881): ÉNSI ^{d}*a-šùr* "governor of the god Aššur"
- Šamši-Adad I (1872–1840): *šakin* ^{d}EN.LÍL "prefect of Enlil", ÉNSI *Aššūr*

[11] Parpola, 2014: 474. The earliest manuscripts of SB Gilgamesh Epic, from Assur, date from the 10th or 9th centuries BC (see Maul, 2001 and 2001b; George, 2003: 349), but linguistic details indicate that the epic was composed in the last third of the 2nd millennium BC (Maul, 2005: 13–14), possibly as part of the great religious reform (Parpola, 2010) after the Middle Assyrian kings assumed the title *šar kiššati*, "king of the universe" (cf. p. 217 and n. 73 below).

[12] For references see Seux, 1967.

[13] http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section4/tr42703.htm.

- Aššur-nadin-aḫḫe II (1400–1391): *iššiak* (ÉNSI) ^{d}*a-šur*
- Eriba-Adad I (1390–1364): *šakin* ^{d}EN.LÍL, *iššiak* ^{d}*a-šur*

1.3 *šangû* as royal title in the Middle and Neo-Assyrian period

- Aššur-uballiṭ I (1363–1328): *šakin* ^{d}EN.LÍL, SANGA (var. *iš-šá-ak-ki)* ^{d}*a-šur*[14]
- Adad-nerari I (1305–1274): *šá-an-gu-ú ṣīru ša* ^{d}EN.LÍL "lofty priest of Enlil," *išippu* "purification priest"
- Tukulti-Ninurta I (1243–1207): *šakin* ^{d}EN.LÍL, ÉNSI ^{d}*aš-šur*, SANGA-*ú ṣīru*, *i-ši-ip-pu rēštû* "foremost purification priest"
- Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076): *i-šip-pu na'du* "attentive purification priest"
- Adad-nerari II (911–891): SANGA
- Tukulti-Ninurta II (890–884): *išippu na'du*
- Assurnasirpal II (883–859): *šangû ṣīru*, *šangû ellu*, SANGA *aš-šur u* ^{d}NIN.URTA, *i-ši-pu na'du*
- Shalmaneser III (858–824): *šangû ṣīru* "lofty priest"
- Šamši-Adad V (823–811) : *šangû ellu* "holy priest"
- Adad-nerari III (810–783): *šangû ṣīru*, *šangû ellu*
- Sargon II (721–705): *šangû ellu*
- Esarhaddon (704–669): *išippu* "purification priest"
- Assurbanipal (668–627): LÚ.*šá-an-gu-ú-ku-nu*

The titles énsi/*išš(i)akku* and sanga/*šangû* are first attested as royal titles in 3rd millennium BC Sumer (Table 1.1). The rulers of pre-Sargonic Lagaš (24th century BC) called themselves "(great) governors of Ningirsu" and "governors of (the state) Lagaš", once "**priest** of Ningirsu";[15] the ruler of Nippur bore the titles "governor of Nippur" and "**priest** of Enlil." The title "governor of Enlil" was later adopted by the kings of Akkad as well to legitimize their rule in the Sumerian south. Note that the title "governor" was not limited to humans only: Ninurta, the son of Enlil, is called "great governor of Enlil" in a royal hymn (Ninurta C) dating from Ur III times.[16]

[14] Seux, 1967: 110 fn. 21. Cf. (Aššur-uballiṭ) *ša šá-an-gu-su ina* É.KUR *rašbi šūturat*, RIMA 1, Adad-nārāri I A.0.76.1: 28–32.

[15] Enentarzi; it is not certain, however, that he bore this title during the time he was king.

[16] It may well be that the title énsi/*iššakku*, "governor", which also means "farmer, land-owner," originally referred to Ninurta/Ningirsu only and was adopted by the Sumerian kings as earthly representatives of Ninurta. For Ninurta/Ningirsu as the institutor of agriculture and farmer *par excellence*, see Civil, 1994.

Table 2: *The meanings of* sanga (*šangû*) *and* énsi (*iššakku*) *in lexical texts.*

• sa-áĝ-ĝá SANGA = *šangûm* "priest"	Proto-Izi I 247
• saĝ-ĝá SANGA = *šangû*	Ea VII 203
• sa-an-gu SANGA = *šangû*	S^b II 241
• sa-an-ga SANGA = *mullilu* "purifier"	S^b I 93
• SANGA = *iššakku* "governor, landowner, farmer"	Lu I 203
• [ÉNSI], SANGA = *iššakku*	Lu I 135a-b
• ÉNSI = *iššakku*, *šangû*, *šabrû* "seer, visionary"	Hh. II 10–12
• ŠABRA = *šabrû* = *raggimu* "prophet"	Hg. B VI 134
• *šangamaḫḫu* = *pašīšu* "anointed one" = *šangû*	Malku IV 5–6

The meanings and synonyms of *šangû* and *iššakku* listed in Akkadian lexical texts (Table 2) show that the logogram SANGA could also be read *iššakku*, and conversely ÉNSI could also be read *šangû*, indicating that the two terms were essentially synonymous in referring to the king as the earthly representative of god. Further, ÉNSI also had the reading *šabrû* "seer", coupled with *raggimu* "prophet," probably referring to the king's ability to converse with the god in dreams or visions and transmit the divine will to his subjects.[17] Finally, the synonym list *Malku* = *šarru* draws equal marks between *šangû* "priest", *šangamaḫḫu* "lofty purifier, exorcist,"[18] and *pašīšu* "purification priest" (lit., "the anointed one").

[17] Cf. "Assurbanipal's Dialogue with Nabû" (SAA 3 13), in which the king incessantly implores Nabû to save him from the hands of his ill-wishers, and repeatedly receives favourable answers from the god, once in a dream (SAA 3 13: 19–26). It seems that the god's replies were obtained here by incessant prayer, weeping, and self-induced suffering, the very techniques later used by kabbalists to induce mystical union with God, see Idel, 1988: 80–84, and SAA 9, XXXIV–XXXV and nn. 143–145 on p. XCVII. This underlines the basically "shamanistic" nature of Mesopotamian kingship, reflected in Etana's and other mythical kings' (Gilgamesh, Utnapishtim) ascent to heaven; see Parpola, 1993: 198–199, and 2014: 469 fn. 1. Gudea alledgedly received instructions for building Eninnu from Ningirsu himself in self-induced sleep or trance (Cyl. A ix 5–xii 13), while Utnapishtim received directions for building the ark directly from Ea in a dream (SB Gilgamesh, Tablet XI 19–47, cf. ibid., 196–197.

[18] *šangamaḫḫu* (Sum. sánga.maḫ "lofty purifier"), actually a title of Kusu, the "lofty purifier of Enlil," "who keeps the rites of Eridu pure" (CAD Š/1 376), may well have been reinterpreted as and associated with the royal title *šangû ṣīru* "lofty priest (of Enlil)" in Assyria, because purification by swinging a censer and torch was one of the most frequent priestly acts of the king (cf. SAA 20 1:6, 14–18, 3 r. 6, 9 ii 35–36, etc.), and Kusu, the *šangamaḫḫu* of Enlil, also "swung the censer and torch" (e.g., BA 5 649 No. 14 r. 3–6).

The central tenets of the Neo-Assyrian religion

What kind of religion did the Neo-Assyrian kings promote as its high priests? Its central articles of faith can be briefly summarized as follows:[19]

- There is only one God (Aššur), who is hidden and remains beyond human comprehension.
- All the gods worshiped in the world are just aspects of Aššur, or powers created by him ("great gods"), through which he manifests himself and controls the universe.
- The human soul originates in heaven but has lost its immortality due to its fall into sin in the material world.
- The Assyrian Empire (*māt Aššūr*, "land of Aššur") is a replica of the "kingdom of heaven,"[20] ruled by the Assyrian king as Aššur's representative upon the earth.
- The mission of the king is to defend Assyria and rule it as a Good Shepherd, guiding his subjects towards heaven.

These articles of faith were imparted to the common man through prophets of Ištar, popular myths (some of which, like *Enūma eliš*, were publicly recited), and religious rites performed in temples, festivals, victory celebrations, etc. The arcana of the religion, however, were accessible only to the initiates of the ecstatic cult of Ištar, an esoteric mystery cult promising its devotees transcendental salvation and eternal life. The cult's sophisticated cosmogony, theosophy, soteriology and theory of the soul were hidden from the uninitiated through a veil of symbols, metaphors, riddles and enigmas, and explained only to the initiates, who were bound to secrecy by oath.

The Neo-Assyrian royal rituals

The royal rituals published in SAA 20 provide important insight into the sacerdotal aspect of the Neo-Assyrian kingship. The rituals in question took place in the Inner City of Assur during the months Shebat, Adar and Nisan, the king performing most of the ritual acts in collaboration with priests, singers, cult performers and other professionals. The symbolism of these complex rituals would probably remain largely obscure to us, had we not contemporary commentaries to some of them, published in SAA 3, which show that they re-enacted episodes

[19] For more detailed discussions with references see Parpola, 2000 and 2014b.

[20] The concept "kingdom of heaven" and its tight connection with Assyria is attested in the oracle SAA 9 2 iii 33'–34', where the prophet, speaking as the goddess Ištar, the divine mother of the king, declares to Esarhaddon: "I will put Assyria in order, I will put the kin[gdom of] heaven in order!"

from Sumerian and Babylonian myths crucial to Neo-Assyrian royal ideology and religion, the king playing the role of the divine protagonists of the myths.

The Shebat-Adar cycle of the rituals (SAA 20 1–12) opens with the triumphal entry and arrival of the king to Assur on Shebat 16 and 17.[21] On the 18th day, the king enters the Aššur temple through the Anzû gate and prostrates himself before Aššur, serves him with food, "goes down [t]o the House of God, … ascends the [da]is (of destinies), lifts up the divine tiara, [and] enters the house of [Dagan] with a rick[shaw, carrying] the tiara upon [his head]" (SAA 20 1:30–r. 5). The divine tiara also figures in the rites of Shebat 20 and 22, Adar 8,[22] and in the Middle Assyrian coronation ritual.[23]

The relevant commentary (SAA 3 39 r. 20–23) explains:

> The king, who wears on his head a golden tiara from the inside of the temple and sits on a sedan chair, while they carry him and go to the palace, is **Ninurta**, who avenged his father. The gods, his fathers, decorated him inside the Ekur, gave him the sceptre, throne and the staff, adorned him with the splendour of kingship, and he went out to the mountain.

Clearly, the Shebat-Adar ritual cycle symbolized Ninurta's triumphal return to Nippur after his victory over Anzû,[24] and his subsequent elevation to kingship by his father Enlil and mother Ninlil, as told in the Ninurta myths.[25]

In the royal rituals performed in Nisan, by contrast, the king played the role of Marduk elevated to kingship of gods after his victory over Tiamat, cf. SAA 20 16 and 19 and their commentary in SAA 3 37.[26]

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[21] SAA 20 9:1–10, and SAA 3 73:1–2.

[22] See SAA 20 1 r. 4–5 (Shebat 22), 9 ii 25–31 (Shebat 20), and 9 iii 3–4 // 11:20–r. 22 (Adar 8).

[23] SAA 20 7:30–42, r. 14–26. Note that the king here, too, enters the temple through the Anzû gate.

[24] For the evil Anzû bird as a personification of sin and death, see Parpola, 1993: 204, and Annus, n.d. Ninurta's victory over Anzû was celebrated in Neo-Assyrian times annually in the 9th month, Kislev, at the winter solstice, that is, at Christmas time. See SAA 3 34: 57–60 // 35: 51–54: "The race which they go round in front of Bel and in all the cult centres in Kislev is when Aššur sent Ninurta to vanquish Anzû (duplicate: Anzû, Qingu and Asakku). Nergal [……] announced before Aššur, 'Anzû (dupl. broken) is vanquished.' Aššur said to the god [Kakka]: 'Go and tell the good news to all the gods!' He gives the good news to them and they rejoice about it." Assyrian *passurtu* "good news" is the same word as Hebrew/Aramaic *b^{e}sōrāh* "good tidings", from which the Biblical *euangelion* "gospel" is a Greek translation (Parpola, 2001b: 54).

[25] Cf. *Lugale*, line 12: "Ninurta, king, whom Enlil exalted above himself," and see the discussion in Annus, 2002: 122–123.

[26] For the date and place of these rituals cf. SAA 20 53:16–25 and the commentary in SAA 3 37 r. 24–28.

TABLE 3: *Royal rituals performed during the Akitu festival and their commentaries.*

1. SAA 20 19 r. i 10–ii 5	**Commentary (SAA 3 37:3–6)**
He (= the king) goes and offers blood into the pit. He pours honey and oil into the pit, and pours beer and wine upon it. The king sits down on the stool. (When) the (cuts of) roast meat arrive, the king rises and provides roast meat. He pierces the front part of the neck cut with an iron dagger and feeds (it to) Lisikutu. The singer intones, "Let them eat roast, roast, roast meat." (When) the song reaches (its end), he throws it into the pit. (i 10–21)	[The king who] goes [to the we]ll, stands at the well, and [performs] a ritual on the we[ll], is [**Marduk** who] cast [a sp]ell on Enlil in Apsû and con[signed him] to the Anunnaki.[27] (3–4)
He goes and swings the purification device over the table. He comes (back) and swings the purification device over the censer, puts combustibles on the censer, burns honey and oil, completes his libations, and appears (to the public). (i 22–29)	[…the fi]re which he lights is **Marduk,** who in his youth […].[28] (5)
[The king stan]ds up, opens the vat and co[mpletes] the libations of the vat. The king steps upon the stand. The singer intones, "Hurrah, hurrah!" The magnates wield clappers. (ii 1–5)	[The magnates] who strike clappers are **the gods,** his fathers and brothers, when they heard […].[29] (6)
The singer fills up the pit. The king places his foot upon the pit and kisses the [fee]t. (ii 28–29)	[The king w]ho kisses the ground before the gods is **Marduk**, [whom Mu]llissu used to lift up and kiss in his youth.[30] (7–8)

2. SAA 20 16 iv 3–27	**Commentary (SAA 3 37:9–28)**
He (= the king) goes and loads the brazier, returns and provides hot cooked meat. (iv 3)	[The brazi]er which he kindles before Mullissu, (and) the ram which is thrown on the brazier and burnt by fire, is **Qingu**, when he burns in fire.[31] (9–10)

[27] This comment probably derives from the fragmentary esoteric work dubbed the "Theogony of Dunnu" or "Harab myth" (Jacobsen, 1984), describing the overthrow of older gods by younger ones in the manner of Hesiod's *Theogony.* Enlil's consignment to the Annunnaki (cf. the imprisonment of Kronos and the Titans in Tartarus by Zeus in the *Theogony)* pertains to the passage in *Enūma eliš* where Marduk establishes the positions of Enlil and Ea in the sky (En. el. V 1–8).

[28] Cf. En. el. I 96, "fire shot forth as he (Marduk) moved his lips."

[29] Cf. En. el. IV 131–134.

[30] Cf. En. el. I 84–85.

[31] Cf. En. el. VI 29–32.

2. SAA 20 16 iv 3–27	**Commentary (SAA 3 37:9–28)**
He comes back and increases the heat of the brazier. He swings the pur[ifi]cation device, performs libations on the brazier, and sacrifices **two bulls**. From one of them, they push its heart back inside it for the soup, [fr]om the other he provides cooked meat. (iv 4–7)	The torches which he lights from the brazier, are merciless arrows from the quiver of **Bel**, which in their shooting are full of terror and in their hitting slay (even) the strong; stained with blood and gore, they strike mountains and lands. The gods, his fathers and brothers, vanquished with them the evil gods, **Anzû and Asakku.** (11–15)
[The ki]ng put[s on] the jewellery in the side room, bur[ns] female goat kids, leaves […] aside, throws *balussu*. He finishes his [liba]tions [and goes] to the mas[h tubs. He *restores* the ma]sh tubs with a gold[en] cup, leaves (them) and goes to the pipes. (iv 8–12)	The king who carries on himself the jewellery and burns female goat-kids is **Marduk**, who carried on himself his arms and bu[rnt] the sons of Enlil and Ea with fire. (16–17)
[The ki]ng swings the purification device on the censer, gives incense [thrice], and opens [th]e vat in the race. (iv 16–19)	The king who opens the vat in the race, is **Marduk**, who v[anquished] Tiamat with his penis.[32] (18)
He goes [to] the area of the censer, fills the vat, places a *kamanu*-[ca]ke on the table and makes it dance. He strews [s]alt and swings the purification device. He pours [honey], oil, beer, wine, and milk. (iv 13–15)	The king who with the priest makes the *kamanu*-cake dance is **Marduk** (and) **Nabû**, [who] …ed the [heart] of Anu and broke it. (19)
The king appears and steps on the [st]and. They put the bladder in the king's hand. The singer intones, "To the Amorite (goddess)." (iv 23–25)	The king who stands on the stand (while) [the bladde]r is placed in the king's hand and a singer intones: "To the Amorite goddess," [is] **Marduk** in [who]se hand Ea placed his bow, (while) Venus was ascendant before him.[33] (20–22)
[(When) the …]s of the Amorite (goddess) arrive, [the king] makes [a *kamanu*-cake] dance on the table. (iv 26–27)	The [*kam*]*anu*-cake which he makes dance is the very heart of Anu, when he pulled it out and [placed it] in his hand. (23)
On the second day of Nisan (I), when he (= the king) has provided cooked meat before Aššur, the chariot-driver enters. He holds the whip towards Aššur, sets [the] chariot in motion and goes to the Akitu House. The white [hors]es, the teams (and)	[The chariot]s which they *dispatch*, the 'third man' who puts the whip in [the king's ha]nd and who takes him by the hand, leads him before the god and displays the whip to the god and the king, is **Nabû**, who was sent against Enlil and defeated him, whom

[32] "Penis" here means esoterically "bow," see SAA 9, p. XCI, n. 114. Cf. En. el. IV 101.

[33] Cf. En. el. VI 82–91, and see the discussion in Parpola, 2000: 200–201.

2. SAA 20 16 iv 3–27	Commentary (SAA 3 37:9–28)
[the …]s go out with the chariot. [The singer] intones, "The former […]." (SAA 53 i 16–22)	**Nergal** to[ok] by the hand, introduced into Esaggil and showed the weapon in his hand to **Marduk**, king of the gods, and Zarpanitu, while they kissed and blessed [him].[34] (24–28)

As can be seen, the commentaries explain ritual acts with reference to Ninurta's and Marduk's fights against Anzû, Asakku, Tiamat and Qingu, while the ritual acts themselves actually consist almost exclusively of animal sacrifices, food offerings, libations and gifts only, all carried out, prepared, incensed and presented to Aššur and/or other gods by the king personally. The slaughtered and roasted animals (bulls, rams, sheep and goat kids) symbolized the killed and punished adversaries burning in fire, the cake tossed by the king symbolized the broken heart of Anu, and the oil and honey thrown into a gutter symbolized Qingu cast from the roof with his sons.[35]

Providing the gods with sacrifices and offerings was a priestly duty carried out daily in all temples of the country. Correspondingly, "feeding" Aššur, Mullissu and the great gods in public festivals undoubtedly constituted the most visible and most essential aspect of the king's high priesthood.[36] The complexity and length of the Shebat-Adar ritual cycle largely results from great number of deities to whom sacrifices had to be offered. Other, equally important aspects of it, however, were the organization, planning and supervision of religious activities, remuneration of the clergy,[37] cultic reforms,[38] as well as the building and maintenance of temples, which was an obligatory concluding topic of practically every Assyrian royal inscription.

These priestly functions of the Assyrian king are already attested in 3rd millennium BC Sumer, where the governor of Nippur also was the priest of Enlil (see Table 1.1), and where Ningirsu (Ninurta's alias in Lagaš) appears as a "purifica-

[34] Cf. the Exaltation of Nabû (Lambert, 2013: 346–349), especially lines 31–38.

[35] SAA 3 40:3–4: "The 18th day, which they call the silence: they cast Qingu and his forty sons from the roof. The oil and honey which is cast into the gutter, is cast as a representation of their blood." Cf. SAA 20 2 ii 5 (Shebat 18): TA* UGU$^{!}$ ÙR [……] "[*they cast oil and honey*] from the roof" (N.B.: URU in the edition is an typing error for UGU$^{!}$, see photo of K 13312 in SAA 20 pl. II).

[36] The epithet *mubbib šuluḫḫī u nindabê*, "purifier of rituals and food offerings", which specifies *išippu* "purification priest" in a prayer to Šamaš (KAR 260:7) and occurs as an epithet of Salmanassar I (Bach, 2020: 109), exactly describes the content of the Assyrian royal rituals.

[37] See SAA 20 51.

[38] See SAA 20 52–53.

tion priest" (išib) feeding An, the god of heaven, and performing cultic rites and supervising religious festivals:

> My father, who begot me, in his great love gave me the name, "King, Enlil's flood, whose fierce stare is not lifted from the enemy land, Ningirsu, hero of Enlil," and equipped me with fifty powers.
> I set the table and correctly perform the hand-washing rites; my outstretched hand wakes holy An from sleep. What is in my hands is good; my father who begot me eats the best of it.
> An, king of the gods, gave me the name "Ningirsu, **king, purification priest** of An," and founded Tiraš in majesty like Abzu. There, each month at the new moon, the great rites of my Festival of An are magnificently perfected for me.[39]

Compare this with the Neo-Assyrian royal ritual SAA 20 1, where the king feeds and services Aššur:

> On the 18th day the king goes down to the House of God … The king enters and prostrates himself in front of Aššur. He places loaves of bread before Aššur. He swings the purification device over the censer, gives incense twice, and pours out a libation bowl.
> He ascends the dais and sets the table. He places upon it loaves of bread, plates with spicy grains, confection and all sorts of fruit. They fill up the cauldrons, the pithoi and the pots, and place a napkin on the king's shoulders. The king offers hand-water to Aššur, strews salt, and says thus: "Aššur and Mullissu, Adad (and) *Mašmaš*, accept life!"[40]

The mythical role models of the king

Of the gods equated with the Assyrian king in the commentary SAA 3 37, Ninurta certainly was his primary paragon as Aššur's representative upon earth. This is patently clear from the popularity of Ninurta in Assyrian royal names,[41] and from Middle and Neo-Assyrian religious texts,[42] hymns, prayers, prophetic oracles, royal inscriptions and letters from gods.

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[39] Gudea, Cyl. A x 1–18.

[40] SAA 20 1:1, 5–12.

[41] Tukulti-Ninurta I and II, Ninurta-apil-Ekur, Ninurta-tukulti-Aššur, Tiglathpileser I–III ("The heir of Ešarra [= Ninurta] is my trust") and Ašarid-apil-Ekur ("The heir of Ekur [= Ninurta] is foremost"), i.e. 25.8 % of all Assyrian royal names between 1243 and 727 BC. Note that no Assyrian royal names in any period feature the gods Nabû and Marduk.

[42] E.g., the Anzu Epic and the bilingual Ninurta myths *Angim* and *Lugale*, which are best known from MA and NA manuscripts.

In a letter from Ninurta to an unnamed Neo-Assyrian king,[43] the latter is addressed as Ninurta's "governor" and "outstretched hand":

> Say to the ruler, [my] outstretched hand, to the one who has received sceptre, throne, and regal insignia, to the governor (appointed) by my own hand: Thus speaks Ninurta, the great lord, the son of Enlil (SAA 3 47: 1–5).[44]

In the *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*, "the status of the king is that of the son of Enlil, right after Ninurta himself:

> It is he who is the eternal image of Enlil, attentive to the people's voice, the counsel of the land, because the lord of the world appointed him to lead the troops, he praised him with his very lips, Enlil exalted him, as if he (Enlil) were his (Tukulti-Ninurta's) own father, right after his firstborn son."[45]

In Neo-Assyrian prophecies, the king is addressed as the son of Mullissu-Ištar, the mother of Ninurta.[46] This made the king, miraculously created in his mother's womb by the spirit of god,[47] *homoousios* with Ninurta – a god in human form, like Jesus Christ, who according to the Trinitarian doctrine was at the same time both god and man.[48]

The Ninurta myth *Angim*, translated into Akkadian in Middle Assyrian times, stresses the god's heaven-like perfection, but at the same time also his *homoousia* with the human king.[49] In fact, almost all the attributes and epithets of Ninurta are also applied to the king in Assyrian royal inscriptions, and sometimes the king is portrayed as if he were Ninurta himself rushing against evil monsters.[50]

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[43] The letter (written by the high priest of Ninurta?) was probably sent to Esarhaddon after the murder of Sennacherib, see Annus, 2002: 46 and 54.

[44] The god tells he is angry with "his house," but the reason of this remains unclear because of textual breaks. At the end (r. 3) there is a colophon line ("The message of Ninurta [to ……]"), followed by an Assurbanipal colophon.

[45] Annus, 2002: 40, citing Foster, 1996: 215; Bach, 2020: 139–140.

[46] SAA 9 1 iv 5 and 20 ("Esarhaddon … son of Mullissu!"). Cf. 2 iii 26–28, where the prophetess declares: "I [Ištar] am your father and mother; I raised you between my wings."

[47] Cf. Gilg. I 47–50. Mullissu, "the queen of heaven" (the supernal aspect of Ištar and the Assyrian equivalent of the gnostic/Christian Holy Spirit), represented in the cult of Ištar the original, sinless, heavenly state of the human soul, see SAA 9, pp. XXVI–XXXI.

[48]According to Athanasius, the Son is "the selfsame Godhead as the Father, but that Godhead manifested rather than immanent," while the Holy Spirit, according to St. Augustine, is "the mutual Love of Father and Son, the consubstantial bond that unites them." Note that Ištar, who in SAA 9 2 iii 26–28 presents herself as the king's father and mother, was the goddess of love.

[49] Parpola, 2001: 186.

[50] E.g. in the description of Esarhaddon's battle against his rebel brother, discussed in

As son of Enlil, Ninurta was, above all, the celestial crown prince defending and safeguarding his father's realm, a "watcher of the world" (*ḫā'iṭ kibrāti*, *pāqid kiššati)* ready to intervene whenever the kingdom of heaven was under threat. But, holding "the tablet of destinies,"[51] which he had retrieved from Anzû, he also was "the judge of all" (*daiān kullati*), deciding the fates; in the myth *Lugale*, he creates a new world in an eschatological judgment scene, rewarding the good and punishing the wicked for their deeds.[52] Exalted by his father, he becomes "the king of heaven and earth" (*šar šamê u erṣeti*), a pantocrator merging with and surpassing his father:[53] stars, constellations and other gods become his limbs and body parts.[54] In hymns,[55] prayers[56] and personal names (Table 4),[57] he is invoked as the dispenser of enlightment and wisdom, the helper of the lowly, weak and oppressed, and the great healer, "reviver of the dead" (*muballiṭ mīti*).[58]

Table 4: *Neo-Assyrian personal names invoking or expressing devotion to Ninurta.*

as healer	*Inūrta-balāssu-iqbi*	"Ninurta has commanded his life"
	Inūrta-ballissu	"O Ninurta, keep him alive!"
	Inūrta-balliṭ	"O Ninurta, keep alive!"
	Inūrta-uballissu	"Ninurta has made him live"
as helper	*Inūrta-aiālu-iddina*	"Ninurta has given help"
	Inūrta-qātī-ṣabat	"O Ninurta, take my hand!"
as judge	*Inūrta-daiān*	"Ninurta is the judge"
as protector	*Dūr-makî-Inūrta*	"Ninurta is the protective wall of the weak"

Parpola 2003: 185–186; cf. also Weissert 1997. The king's transformation into his divine paragon must not be understood as mere rhetoric but seems to imply a deeper meaning: at the moment of crisis, the king's body becomes a seat for Ninurta who at that very moment spiritually merges with the prince, becoming *one with him*.

[51] Also called "the tablet of sins" (see Finkel, 1983) and "the book of life" (*lē'u ša balāṭi*, see Paul, 1973: 351).

[52] See Annus, 2002: 162–168.

[53] In the NA period, Ninurta's name was commonly written with the cuneiform sign for "cross" (conventionally transliterated as ^{d}MAŠ instead of the more correct ^{d}BAR, cf. ba-ar BAR = *pallurtu* "cross," Izbu Comm. 240). The cross symbolized the four cardinal points and Ninurta as the lord of the universe after his exaltation, and was the official seal of the Assyrian crown prince after his introduction into the Succession Palace (see Calmeyer, 1984, and Parpola, 1993: 185 fn. 93 and 189 fn. 103). Note the cruciform halo surrounding Christ's head in the iconography of Christ Pantocrator, the cross in the halo exactly resembling the cross pendant of a statue of Šamši-Adad V found in the temple of Ninurta/Nabû in Calah (Parpola, 1984: 330; Annus, 2002: 43–45).

[54] See the syncretic hymn to Ninurta (Annus, 2002: 205–206).

[55] Lambert, 1967, and Mayer, 1992

[56] E.g., the prayer to Ninurta as Sirius (Annus, 2002: 207–208).

[57] See Annus, 2002: 207–213.

[58] Annus, 2002: 139–144.

	Inūrta-abu-uṣur	"O Ninurta, protect the father!"
	Inūrta-dūrī	"Ninurta is my protective wall"
	Inūrta-kēnu-uṣur	"O Ninurta, protect the just one!"
as redeemer	*Inūrta-rēmanni*	"O Ninurta, have mercy on me!"
as saviour	*Inūrta-ēṭir*	"Ninurta has saved"
	Inūrta-ēṭiranni	"Ninurta has saved me"
	Inūrta-mušēzib	"Ninurta is the rescuer"
	Inūrta-šēzibanni	"O Ninurta, rescue me!"
	Inūrta-gāmil	"Ninurta is sparing"
as shrine	*Inūrta-sukkī*	"Ninurta is my shrine"

As personification of the Cosmic Tree uniting heaven and earth,[59] he was also a key to eternal life. From Middle Assyrian times on, the esoteric "Assyrian Tree of Life" (Parpola, 1993) encapsulated the basics of Assyrian religion and theory of salvation. The initiates of the cult of Ištar, like later Gnostics and Jewish mystics, strove for salvation and eternal life practicing ascesis and virtues, and following a program of stepwise spiritual perfection based on the Tree.[60] In this they were encouraged by the example of Gilgamesh, "the perfect king" (*šarru gitmālu*),[61] who after his quest for eternal life finally learnt its secret from Utnapishtim in a shamanistic "ascent to heaven."[62] As judge deciding about the fates of the dead in the afterlife,[63] a statue of Gilgamesh was present at the exorcistic

[59] For the king as a personification of the tree cf., e.g., *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, lines 519–523: "My king is a huge *mes*-tree, the son of Enlil; this tree has grown high, uniting heaven and earth; its crown reaches heaven, its trunk is set upon the earth" (http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr1823.htm). For other examples, comparing Ninurta and the king with "great *mes*-tree in a watered field," "a cedar tree rooted in the Abzu," and "a mighty date palm, reaching to heaven," see Annus, 2002: 156–159. Note that the divine mother of the king is referred to as palm tree (*gišimmaru*) in SAA 3 7:1, a hymn to Mullissu/Ištar of Nineveh, and that the palm tree also served as logogram for writing the word *šarru* "king."

[60] See Parpola, 1993: 192–195.

[61] The mother of Gilgamesh, Ninsun ("Lady Wild Cow"), corresponds to Mullissu/Ištar of Nineveh, who often appears in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions as a wild cow goring the enemies of the king. The horns of the cow symbolized full moon, a symbol of holiness, purity, perfection and female wisdom (see Parpola, 1997: p. XL, and nn. 187–189 on p. C).

[62] See Annus, 2002: 168–171 and cf. Parpola, 2014: 477–478.

[63] See especially Haupt, 1891: 53, 1–9 and its duplicates KAR 227 ii 6–11 and LKA 89 ii 14–21): "O Gilgamesh, perfect king, judge of the Anunnaki, … administrator of the netherworld, lord of the dwellers-below! You are a judge and have vision like God; you stand in the netherworld and pronounce final judgment. Your judgment is not altered, your word is not despised; you question, you inquire, you judge, you watch, and you give the correct decision. Šamaš has entrusted verdict and decision in your hands."

rituals performed yearly on Ab 27–29 in order to cure diseases caused by ghosts and spirits of the dead.[64]

The cults of Marduk and Nabû were established in Assyria by Tukulti-Ninurta I, who after his victory over the Cassite king Kaštiliaš IV imposed Assyrian rule on Babylonia and deported the statue of Marduk to Assyria in 1225 BC.[65] A Middle Assyrian royal ritual (VAT 16435) contains directions for the celebration of the Babylonian *akītu* festival in Assur: the king, officiating with the priest of Marduk, distributes gifts to Marduk, Zarpanitu and Nabû, seats them on "the dais of destinies," and accompanies them on boats to the *akītu* chapel, where sacrifices are performed and the gods are served with roast meat (Köcher, 1952). All the three gods were integrated into the Assyrian pantheon by syncretizing them with Aššur-Enlil, Ištar-Mullissu and Ninurta respectively, so that they became mere aspects of the latter. This was helped by the fact that the Babylonian creation myth *Enūma eliš*, where Marduk slays Tiamat, "the raging sea", who was represented as dragon in Assyrian imperial art, was clearly based on the Anzû Epic (Lambert, 1986).[66]

In addition to Ninurta, Nabû and Marduk, the king had one more important role model in Tammuz, the mythical shepherd king,[67] whose resurrection from the dead was celebrated yearly in the great cities of Assyria, Assur, Nineveh, Calah and Arbela.[68] Whereas Ninurta was the king as Tree of Life, the victorious hero, who vanquishes death and disease, returns to his father in triumph and is exalted to glory in heaven, Tammuz was the *felled* tree – the shepherd king who died as a substitute for the fallen soul (= Ištar as the origin of the human soul)[69] and was resurrected after three days to meet the penitent soul in a wedding in heaven.[70] A Middle-Assyrian song composed for Shalmaneser I plainly identifies the king

[64] See SAA 10 274 and the commentary in LAS 2, 203–204. For the ritual, see Farber, 1977: 207–217.

[65] Annus, 2002: 40–41.

[66] The introduction of the cult of Marduk and Nabû to Assyria in 1225 BC gives a *terminus ante quem* for the composition of *Enūma eliš* and confirms the approximate dating to the MB period preferred in Lambert, 2013: 444.

[67] In the Sumerian king list, Tammuz figures twice, as "divine Dumuzi, a shepherd – reigned 36,000 years," and as "divine Dumuzi, a fisherman – his city was Kuara – reigned 100 years" (Jacobsen, 1939: 73 and 89). For Dumuzi the fisherman see fn. 83, below.

[68] On Tammuz 26th–28th or 27th–29th, depending on the city, see SAA 10, nos. 18 and 19 (= LAS 1, nos. 5 and 6), and the commentary in LAS 2: 8–10. For a ritual performed on Tammuz 28 in order to revive deadly sick patients along with the resurrecting god, as promised at the end of Ištar's Descent (Lapinkivi, 2010: 33), see Farber, 1977: 189–205.

[69] See n. 43, above.

[70] See my analysis of the redemptory death of Tammuz in the light of the gnostic treatise *Exegesis of the Soul* in SAA 9, pp. XXXI–XXXVI and nn. 105–158 on pp. XC–XCVIII.

("[so]n of Aššur") with Tammuz, whom Ištar seeks with the words: "Come, my shepherd, yo]u, let me lead our sons to you; shepherd your cattle, my shepherd!"[71]

The public image of the king in the Neo-Assyrian Empire

The cult of Ninurta arrived to Assyria no earlier than the reign of Aššur-uballiṭ I, the first Assyrian king to adopt the title "priest of Aššur."[72] The new "king of the world" clearly wanted to integrate this powerful Nippurian god into the Assyrian pantheon in order to present himself as the god's earthly incarnation.[73] The inclusion of Marduk and Nabû into the Assyrian pantheon took place a little later, under Tukulti-Ninurta I, obviously for the same reason.

With time, the predominantly positive image of the king resulting from his constant association with Ninurta, Marduk, Nabû and Tammuz in myth, ritual and imperial art became a bond that united the nation by virtue of the king's role as helper in distress. In foreign policy, he was the image of Ninurta justly defending the empire; for his subjects, he was presented as the image of Marduk, the merciful king of gods. The long-term strategic goal of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, especially in the 7th century, was not the creation of an empire upheld by arms, but a nation united by a semi-divine king perceived as the source of safety, peace and prosperity.[74]

After the collapse of Assyria, the worship of Assyrian gods, especially Bel, Nabû, Tammuz and Ištar, persisted for centuries in cult centres of Ištar scattered all over the empire, all of which cherished the faith in eternal life and a god-sent messiah, who would re-establish the lost "kingdom of heaven" on earth.[75]

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[71] LKA 15:1–7. The king is identified by name at the end of the song (r. 6).

[72] There is no trace of Ninurta in Old Assyrian onomasticon, religion or cult, unless the god *Bēlum* ("the Lord"), who figures prominently in OA names (Kryszat, n.d.), actually is Ninurta identified by his standing epithet, "lord."

[73] Note that the Ninurta myths *Angim*, *Anzu* and *Lugale* were imported to Assyria at this time and the Akkadian translations of *Angim* and *Lugale* were apparently commissioned by Middle Assyrian kings, since almost all of the extant manuscripts come from Assur (Cooper, 1978: 50–55; van Dijk, 1983: Pt. II, 13–24; Bach, 2020: 95; 101). Aššur-uballiṭ's successor Enlil-nirari (1324–1318) corresponded with the *šandabakku* of Nippur (see Landsberger, 1965, 76), and may have been the person who actually brought the cult of Nippur in Assyria. On Aššur-uballiṭ's religious policy see also p. 217, below.

[74] Parpola, 2004: 14.

[75] Cf. Nissinen, 2002; Radner, 2017.

Table 5: *Syrian cities with shrines of Assyrian gods in late antiquity.*[76]

Edessa	Bel, Nabû, Sîn, Šamaš, Nikkal
Mabbog	Atargatis, Adad, Nabû
Palmyra	Bel, Beltis, Nabû, Nanaya, Šamaš
Harran	Sîn, Nikkal, Bel, Nabû, Tammuz
Dura-Europus	Apladad, Bel, Nanâ, Atargatis
Nisibis	Baal Šamin (5th cent.)
Apamea	Bel (3rd cent.)

Jesus Christ as God's High Priest

There cannot be any doubt that the mythical figure of Ninurta served as a model also for the Jewish Messiah and the Christian Saviour. Ninurta's Jewish equivalent is the archangel Michael, who in apocalyptic Judaism and early Christology is equated with the Saviour-Messiah and who in Jewish apocryphal and mystical texts is known as "the Great Prince", the vanquisher of the Dragon and its army, the helper of the sick, the holder of the scales of judgment, and the keeper of the celestial keys. It should be noted that in both Jewish and early Christian tradition the Saviour-Messiah explicitly is a king expected to overthrow the prevailing, corrupt, world order and to found upon its ruins a new universal empire. The self-designation of Jesus, "Son of Man", which also appears as a designation of the Messiah in apocalyptic Judaism, refers in Jewish tradition to the Davidic king as "the perfect man." The description of Christ's future kingdom in the Apocalypse of John is replete with the most central symbolism of Mesopotamian imperial ideology.

"Palm tree, tree planted near streams of water, righteous shoot" and "the son of man", are, of course, all well-known designations of the Davidic Messiah and the perfect man in the New Testament.[77]

A comparison of the public image of the Neo-Assyrian king with the life, sayings and actions of Jesus Christ (Table 6) indicates that both Jesus and the authors of the gospels were deeply acquainted with Assyrian religion and had internalized its belief system, mythology, symbolism and soteriology.[78] This is

[76] See Segal, 1970; Green, 1992: 57–73; Parpola, 2000b; 2004.

[77] Cf. fn. 59 above and note that while the Sumerian name of Gilgamesh (Bilga-mes), means "the shoot of the *mes*-tree," it can also be understood as "the son of man"; see Parpola, 1998: 325, and Annus, 2001b.

[78] The table lists the main features of the Assyrian king's public image, as discussed in this article. + indicates attestation of these features in the mythologies of particular gods.

understandable keeping in mind that Christianity originated in Galilee and the hinterlands of Samaria, which were annexed to Assyria and remained under Assyrian rule for more than a century.[79] Large parts of their population consisted of deportees from Babylonia, who brought with them the cult of Ištar and their religious beliefs, which formed the basis of Samaritan gnosis in the following centuries.[80]

Table 6: *The mythological role models of the Assyrian king vis-à-vis Jesus Christ.*

Assyrian king	Ninurta	Nabû	Marduk	Tammuz	Christ
Son of God	+	+	+	+	+
Perfect Man	+	+		+	+
Lord	+		+		+
Priest	+				+
Sun	+				+
Saviour	+		+		+
Messiah, "anointed one"	+	+			+
Redeemer		+		+	+
Slayer of Tiamat, the raging sea	+		+		+[81]
Vanquisher of evil Anzu	+	+			+[82]
Helper of the poor and lowly	+	+	+		+
Helper in distress	+	+			+
Healer, exorcist	+		+		+
Seer, prophet		+			+
Sage, wise		+	+		+
Fisherman				+	+[83]

[79] It is a moot question whether "Christianity originate[d] in places where the Gospel narratives take place (Galilee and Samaria) or, rather, where they were written – i.e., in Syria where the Assyrian-based traditions may have been even stronger," as a reviewer of this article pointed out.

[80] The continuity of Assyrian and Babylonian religion, mythology and religious concepts in Syria and Palestine at the time of the writing of the Gospels will be documented extensively in Baker, 2022; for the time being, see my remarks in Parpola, 2000: 15–16 and 2014: 478–481.

[81] Cf. Matt. 14:22–33, Mark 6:45–51, Lk. 8:22–25 and John 6:16–21.

[82] The evil Anzû, visualized as a lion-headed vulture in Assyrian art, was associated with the ass (*imāru*/*imēru*) in Assyrian esoteric texts based on the quasi-homophony of the sumerograms ANŠE/ANŠU "ass" (pronounced *ansu* or *anzu*) and ÁNZU "Anzû" in late Middle and Neo-Assyrian (Fink / Parpola, 2019: 185). Cf. Matthew 21:1–5, where Jesus triumphally enters Jerusalem *riding on an ass*, and see p. 202 above on the triumphal entry of Ninurta to Nippur after his victory over Anzû.

[83] For Tammuz as fisherman see fn. 67. The image of Jesus as "fisherman" derives from

Assyrian king	Ninurta	Nabû	Marduk	Tammuz	Christ
Skipper[84]			+[85]		+
Farmer, Ploughman	+		+		+
Winedresser		+		+	+
Tree of Life	+				+
Good Shepherd				+	+
Bridegroom		+		+	+
Innocent sufferer				+	+
Sacrificed Lamb of God				+	+
Conqueror of Netherworld	+				+
Ascends to heaven	+	+		+	+
Seated aside his Father	+	+			+
Exalted *Pantocrator*, Judge	+	+	+		+
Scribe holding the Book of Life		+			+

In view of the particular nature of the priesthood of the Assyrian king, it is significant that the author of the post-Pauline *Letter to the Hebrews* (c. 80/90) also sees Christ as the High Priest of God, on similar grounds:

> Therefore, … think of the Apostle and High Priest of the religion we profess, who was faithful to God who appointed him (Heb. 3:1)

Mt 4:18–22 // Mk 1:16–20 // Lk 5:1–11 // John 21:1–14, where Jesus invites simple fishermen to become his disciples, "fishers of men." As is well known, "fish" (Gk ἰχθύς) served among early Christians and Gnostics as a secret acronym for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour." In the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas, Jesus explain the fisherman allegory as follows: "The man is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of small fish. Among them the wise fisherman found a fine large fish. He threw all the small fish back into the sea and chose the large fish without difficulty. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear" (Robinson, 1990: 127).

In Mesopotamia, fish (especially, a large fish) was a symbol of wisdom and secret knowledge. The symbol of Ea, the god of wisdom, was carp (*purādu*), a large fish; the mythical seven sages (*apkallu*) were referred to as "pure carps, who are endowed with exalted wisdom like their lord Ea" (Erra I 162). Nanše, the daughter of Enki/Ea, was a sea goddess and "queen of fishermen" (Civil, 1961: 153; Heimpel, 1998); the sage Adapa "takes the boat out and does the fishing for Eridu" (Picchioni, 1981: 112:15; Dalley, 1989: 184). In the Neo-Assyrian Šamaš Hymn (BWL 134/5: 142), a "fisherman of the veiled thing" (*bā'ir katimti*) confronts the god. The word *katimtu* "veiled thing", which also can mean "throwing net" (CAD K 306b), refers in the SB Gilgamesh Epic to the divine secrets revealed to Gilgamesh in Tablet XI.

[84] See Parpola, 2014: 474, fn. 21.

[85] See En. el. VII 76–77.

> Since therefore we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to the religion we profess. For ours is not a high priest unable to symphatize with our weaknesses … (4:14–15)
>
> Christ did not confer upon himself the glory of becoming high priest; it was granted by God, who said to him, 'Thou art my Son' (5:5)
>
> That hope [for eternal life] enters in through the veil, where Jesus as entered on our behalf as forerunner, having become a high priest for ever (6:19–20)
>
> The priesthood which Jesus holds is perpetual, because he remains for ever. That is why he is also able to save absolutely those who approach God through him; he is always living to plead for them. Such a high priest does indeed fit our condition – devout, separated from sinners, raised high above heavens. He has no need to offer sacrifices daily, as the high priests do (7:24–27)
>
> Just such a high priest we have, and he has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of Majesty in the heavens, a ministrant in the real sanctuary … Every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence, this one too must have had something to offer (8:1–3)
>
> But now Christ has come, high priest of good things which were to be […]; the blood of his sacrifice is his own blood, not the blood of goats and calves; and thus he has entered the sanctuary for once and for all and has secured an eternal deliverance (9:11–12)

Roman emperors as Pontifex Maximus[86]

In the Roman Republic, the *pontifex maximus* held the highest office in the state religion, which was a position for life. The immense authority of the sacred *collegium pontificum* was centered on him, the other *pontifices* forming his advising body. His functions were partly sacrificial or ritualistic, but his real power lay in the administration of divine law (*ius divinum*), including

- The regulation of expiatory rituals necessitated by pestilence, lightning, etc.
- The consecration of temples, sacred places and objects dedicated to the gods
- The regulation of the calendar
- The administration of laws relating to burials and ancestor cult
- The superintendence of marriages
- The administration of the law of adoption and testamentary succession
- The regulation of public morals, and fining and punishing offending parties

[86] This section is based on https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pontifex_maximus.

The office of the *pontifex maximus* was a much coveted position for the great prestige it conferred on its holder. Julius Caesar, who became *pontifex maximus* in 63 BC

> effectively wagered his career on being elected to the position [and] is said to have declared to his mother on the morning of his election, as she kissed him when he was starting for the polls, that he would never return except as *pontifex* [*maximus*]. By getting himself elected to the pontificate, Caesar gained a prominent position in Rome. Occupying a traditionally important office improved his standing in society.[87]

After Caesar's assassination in 44 BC, Marcus Aemilius Lepidus was selected as *pontifex maximus.* When he died, in 12 BC, Augustus

> unsurprisingly became the new *pontifex maximus*. As shown by John Scheid, this marked a new moment in the emperor's 'religious policy.' Only now did he start to embark on a 'very real reform of Roman ritual tradition.' Before, changing Roman religious practice would have been a sign of despotism. Now, it was anchored in his role of supervising the religious life of the Roman state. […] Augustus needed to anchor his actions in tradition, and the role of *pontifex maximus* was ideal for this. That role would become one of the more recognizable parts of the honours and powers that were linked to emperorship.[88]

Under Augustus, the election of *pontifices* ended and the emperor was given the responsibility for the entire Roman state cult. From this point on, *pontifex maximus* was one of the many titles of the Emperor. From AD 96 onwards, the supreme pontificate had become so much part and parcel of the imperial office that the emperor took up the role on accession. The title and role was systematically emphasized in imperial statuary, inscriptions and coins. It slowly became simply a referent for the sacral aspect of imperial duties and powers, and unlike the *pontifex maximus*, the Roman emperors acted practically as head of the official religion, a tradition that continued with the Byzantine emperors.

In the crisis of the 3rd century, usurpers did not hesitate to claim for themselves the role not only of Emperor but of *pontifex maximus* as well. Even the early Christian emperors continued to use it; it was only relinquished by Gratian (AD 367–383), who refused to wear the priestly garb because it was impious for a Christian to do so.

The word *pontifex* and its derivative *pontiff* later became terms used for Catholic bishops, including the Bishop of Rome, and the title "Pontifex Maximus"

[87] Hekster, 2020: 30.
[88] Hekster, 2020: 31.

was applied within the Catholic Church to the Pope as its chief bishop and appears on buildings, monuments and coins of popes of Renaissance and modern times.

The appropriation of the title and office of the *pontifex maximus* by Augustus at the time when Rome had become a world power after the collapse of the Seleucid Empire, recalls the adoption of the title "high priest of Aššur" by Aššur-uballiṭ I at the time when he had become the "king of the world," after the collapse of Mitanni. This may be a coincidence, but it is not excluded that Augustus got the incentive to appropriate his priestly title and office from the Seleucid Empire, whose kings perpetuated Assyrian traditions and also ruled as priests.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the Neo-Assyrian king's martial and sacerdotal roles cannot be separated from one another. Both were religiously but also politically motivated, and were backed up by the same theological and mythological apparatus. The adoption of the title "priest of Aššur" and the subsequent sweeping theological innovations by Aššur-uballiṭ I demonstrate that he and his successors understood the importance of adopting a religious policy which would mitigate ethnic and social controversies and thus consolidate and unite the empire.[89] And in this they succeeded, for 2628 years after the collapse of the Empire, the Assyrian identity still persists not only in the Assyrian heartland and Syria, but also among Assyrian diaspora worldwide.[90]

Appendix: *The etymology of* énsi "governor" and sanga "priest"

The two titles borne by the Middle and Neo-Assyrian kings as god's representative on earth, *išši(a)kku* "governor" and *šangû* "priest", are both loanwords from Sumerian and appear already in the third millennium as titles of the governor of Nippur (Table 1.1). It is possible, however, to go even beyond that. Both énsi and sanga have cognates in the Ob-Ugric languages Khanty and Mansi, which are closely related to Sumerian;[91] in addition, the Nippurian gods Enlil, Ninlil and Ninurta likewise have etymological cognates in Ob-Ugric.

[89] One very important innovation was the conversion of Aššur into a transcendent God not present in the physical world, and the definition of all the gods worshipped in the world as his aspects only. This initiated a process of syncretization that gave the gods of the subjugated nations parity with the Assyrian ones, which substantially contributed to the Assyrianization of the Empire, converting the incipient national identity of its population into an ethnic one (Parpola, 2004).

[90] Cf. Parpola, 2000b and 2004.

[91] See provisionally EDSL 1, xiv–xiv, and 2, xxviii. The matter will be treated in more detail in EDSL 3 (forthcoming).

énsi(k) “governor, (privileged) farmer” corresponds to Mansi *ɛńčü$_{χ}$*, *äńčuχ*, *äńšuχ*, *ańśuχ*, *āńś* ‘old man, father, husband, master of the house; farmer, landlord, governor’ (Munkácsi, 1986: 42a; Kannisto, 2014: 75b);

sanga “priest; purifier” corresponds to Khanty *sə̈ŋɢɜ*, *śə̈ŋkɜ*, *saŋk̓i*ʿ ‘light, bright, clear, pure; heavenly light; highest god, highest divine being, Jesus Christ’ (Toivonen, 1948: 850a).

The divine names ^{d}en-líl, ^{d}nin-líl and ^{d}nin-urta are compounds meaning “Lord Spirit,” “Lady Spirit” and “Prince Guardian” respectively:

en “lord” (ES ù.mu.un, mu.un, ú.nu) corresponds to Khanty *u̯ona*, *u̯on*, *ūnɜ*, *ēnɜ* ‘elder, oldest’ (EDSL #652);

líl “air, wind, breath, spirit, soul” corresponds to Khanty *lìl*, *ʌĭʌ*, *ʟìʟ* ‘breath, life, soul’ and Mansi *lil*, *lìli* ‘id.’ (EDSL #1574);

nin “Lady” corresponds to Khanty *neŋ*, *nɛn*, *niŋ*, *ni* “wife” and Mansi *nē*, *nī* “wife, woman” (EDSL #1882);

nin, in$_5$ “lord, king, prince” corresponds to Khanty *ēŋɜ*, *ēŋək̓i* “elder, eldest” and Mansi *jäni*, *jɛniγ* “great, elder” (= Samoyed *ńìńēkà* “elder brother,” EDSL #1881);

urta “guardian spirit” corresponds to Khanty *urt*, *u̯ǫrt*, *ort* “hero-spirit” and Mansi *urt*, *ōrt*, *ȯrt*, *vurt* “winged forest spirit” (EDSL #2826).[92]

These correspondencies suggest that the offices of the **en**, **énsi** and **sanga**, as well as the cults of Enlil, Ninlil and Ninurta already existed in the prehistoric homeland of the Sumerians (the area of the Maikop culture in northern Caucasus) and played the same role in the society as later in Mesopotamia.[93]

Abbreviations

Angim	Cooper, 1978
BA	Beiträge zur Assyriologie und semitische Sprachwissenschaft (Leipzig)
BWL	Lambert, 1960
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*
CRRAI	Rencontre assyriologique internationale, comptes rendus

[92] Note that sanga “priest” seems to have etymological cognates also in Altaic languages: cf. Uighur *saŋ* “monk, monkhood” (Räsänen, 1969: 401b); Mongolian *saŋga* “priesthood collectively” (ibid.); and Tungus *samã*, *samā(n)* “shaman” (Starostin et al., 2003: 1208). According to Räsänen (loc. cit.), the Mongolian word is a loan from Sanskrit *saṃgha*, Pali *saṅgha*, “community of people devoted to spiritual search, monastic community.”

[93] For evidence placing the Sumerian homeland in Northern Caucasus, see EDSL 2, xxii–xxvi.

EDSL	Parpola, 2016
ETCSL	The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (Oxford)
En. el.	*Enūma eliš* (cited from Lambert, 2013)
Erra	Cagni, 1969
ES	Emesal
Gilg.	The Epic of Gilgamesh (cited from George, 2003)
Gk	Greek
Heb.	Hebrews (cited from *The New English Bible*, Oxford, 1970)
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
KAR	Keilschrfttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts
LAS 1	Parpola, 1970
LAS 2	Parpola, 1993
Lugale	van Dijk, 1983
MA	Middle Assyrian
MDOG	*Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft*
NA	Neo-Assyrian
OA	Old Assyrian
PN	personal name
RlA	Reallexikon der Assyriologie
RN	royal name
SAA	State Archives of Assyria (Helsinki 1987–)
SAA 9	Parpola, 1997
SAAB	*SAA Bulletin* (Padova 1987–)
SAACT	State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts (Helsinki 1997–)
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies (Helsinki 1992–)
SB	Standard Babylonian
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*

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The Epiphany of the King and the Configurational Impact of Architecture in Neo-Assyrian Palaces

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Introduction

In stratified and hierarchical societies, ancient and modern, accessibility to those in power – divine and human – has always been a topic of explicit articulation, regulation, negotiation, and performance.[1] Interaction with the divinity during the daily cult, as well as the audience of the human ruler in the palace, were all highly regulated, bound to a particular space and time, and an exclusive privilege to attend. The right to access, as well as the possibility of personal interaction that issues forth from such access, constitute an essential component in the visual and cultural representation of sacred and political power.[2] The analysis of prayers and their spatio-temporal contexts have shown that in ancient Mesopotamia, the interaction with the divine was modeled after the audience with the king,[3] and that communication with both the divinity and the king operated on similar terms.

Rather than focus on the audience and accessibility either *to* the palace or *to* the temple, this article examines the appearance – what I prefer to coin the "epiphany" – of the king to a larger public. Of course, the term "epiphany" is more closely associated with divinity than with royalty. In the history of Greek religion, the term "epiphany" is used to capture the notion that the divinity *fully reveals* her-/himself under certain circumstances; such revelation may occur anywhere and anytime (theophany). This notion stands in contrast to that of "*adventus*," which is bound to time and space, as well as to the *constant presence* of the cultic statue. Epiphany refers to the full appearance of a divinity. It thus operates alongside the dialectical tension between the continuous presence of the cultic statue and the principle of invisibility of the divinity and its power to withdraw. Epiphany is to be distinguished from the effect and impact that divine agency may have on human life. Epiphany is complete and total. In Christian theology, "epiphany" has been combined with the notion of revelation. Mircea Eliade coined the neologism "hierophany" to describe the phenomenon of the divine

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[2] Baeymaekers and Derks, 2016: 4 with reference to Starkey, 1987: 1–24, esp. 8.

[3] Zgoll, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c.

revealing itself, with theophany and kratophany (appearance of divine power) as its subcategories.[4]

I, however, have chosen to use the term "epiphany" for the appearance of the king in the courtly life of Assyria because his appearance is intertwined with the sacred – a phenomenon that can be observed throughout the periods of courtly culture in Mesopotamia as well as later.[5] While texts revolving around the encounter with the divine provide some inkling of epiphany, i.e. the appearance of divine power as well as the evocation of divine presence, no such information is available for the epiphany of the king. In other words, the ceremonial rites linked with royal epiphany in the palace escape us. Nonetheless, the dearth of written evidence for the cultural dimensions of royal epiphany[6] is compensated, to some extent, by insights that may be gleaned from the architectural layout and decorative programs of the palace in general, and of the throne room in particular. Indeed, as I shall discuss below, artifacts and architecture reveal that the gate as performative space – as entrance either to the palace or the temple – played a significant role in demarcating the performance of epiphany.[7]

Mesopotamian culture is characterized by its exclusivity of access to the divinity and, definitely during the Neo-Assyrian Period, the human ruler. The proliferation of imagery in general, and the profuse pictorial repertoire of the palace reliefs of the Neo-Assyrian Period in particular, should not deceive us; few were privileged enough to enter and to see this imagery. Such exclusivity with regard to the "hidden power" behind the walls is to be seen *in tandem* with the ancient worldview of potential danger looming outside the protective space of temple and palace. The visualization of the invisible – hierophany, i.e. the appearance of divine power, and the epiphany of the king in public – were thus theatrically staged events, in which particular dress, etiquette, and the precise spatial and temporal disposition of the divine statue or royal body were all deployed to enunciate either divine or royal power.[8] Divine and royal appearance was carefully orchestrated and ritualized, with the utmost attention paid to timing and location so as to maximize effects, but also prevent any harm. Its performance was staged along a spectrum of framing operations that were guided by the

[4] Gladigow, 1999. Lanczkowski, 1972 distinguishes between kratophany (appearance of divine power) and hierophany (continuous experience of the sacred by means of symbols), see Cancik, 1990: 292.

[5] See the *darshan*, i.e. the public viewing of the ruler first in a window and later in the prayer niche (mihrab) of the mosque associated with divine light at the Mughal court (Asher, 2004).

[6] I stress that such royal epiphany is not one and the same as the appearance of the king after he had been withheld in so-called "prison" to undergo penitential rituals and purification rituals during the *akītu* festival in Tashritu. For these rituals, see Ambos, 2013.

[7] Corrigan, 2008.

[8] El Cheikh, 2013.

aesthetics of the occasion, i.e. time and place.[9] Architecture played an important role in such orchestration of divine and royal appearance, serving as a conduit for controlled, choreographed movement *and* as a framing device.[10] Space, here conceived as *performative* space, was not only a fixed material feature but was also constructed according to how it would be *used* to heighten the effect of the king's appearance,[11] and aestheticized through its engagement with other media including the decorative program, regicide literature and myth. It was this dialogue with other representations of the king's image and the sensory effects that transformed the physical space into a perceived "socio-cultural reference structure."[12]

The epiphany of the divine

In Mesopotamia, the appearance of the divinity to the public generally occurred in the context of the official cult, when the statue left the temple to embark on a procession. Other forms of divine revelation occurred in dream incubations and prophecy, but these were induced.[13] Such visions are generally regarded as separate categories, to be distinguished from epiphany *per se*. One of the awe-inspiring features of divine appearance was the luminescent splendor known by terms such as *melammu*, *puluhtu*, *šalummatu*, and *namrirrū*. Literary sources, however, reveal that gods and the king share this form of resplendence. One literary instance of the effect of such terrifying luminosity lies in the vivid description of the encounter of an Assyrian prince with the Lord of the Netherworld, Nergal, in a night vision known as the *Underworld Vision of an Assyrian Prince*, which dates to the Neo-Assyrian period, probably the time of Ashurbanipal.[14] Coming face to face with the Lord of the Netherworld, Kumma, the prince, shudders with horror at the luminescent splendor emanating from the divinity:

> When I raised my eyes, (I saw) the valiant Nergal seated on a regal throne, appareled with the royal tiara; with both hands he grasped two grim maces, each with two … heads.
> (…)
> I looked at him and my bones shivered! His grimly luminescent splendor overwhelmed me, I kissed the feet of his great divinity and knelt down.[15]

[9] Dillon, 2010: 5.
[10] Hillier, 1996.
[11] Dillon, 2010: 6.
[12] Pinnock, 2020: 5.
[13] Oppenheim, 1956; Butler, 1998; Pongratz-Leisten, 1999; Noegel, 2007.
[14] Livingstone, 1989: 68–76; Ataç, 2007.
[15] Livingstone, 1989: 72.

The cultural significance of hierophany, i.e. the epiphany of the divine, which in Mesopotamian official cult was bound to those particular festivals during which with the gods left their temples, is reflected in the production of terracotta reliefs during the Ur III and Old Babylonian Periods. These terracotta reliefs show the entrance of a temple in which a divinity may or may not be displayed).

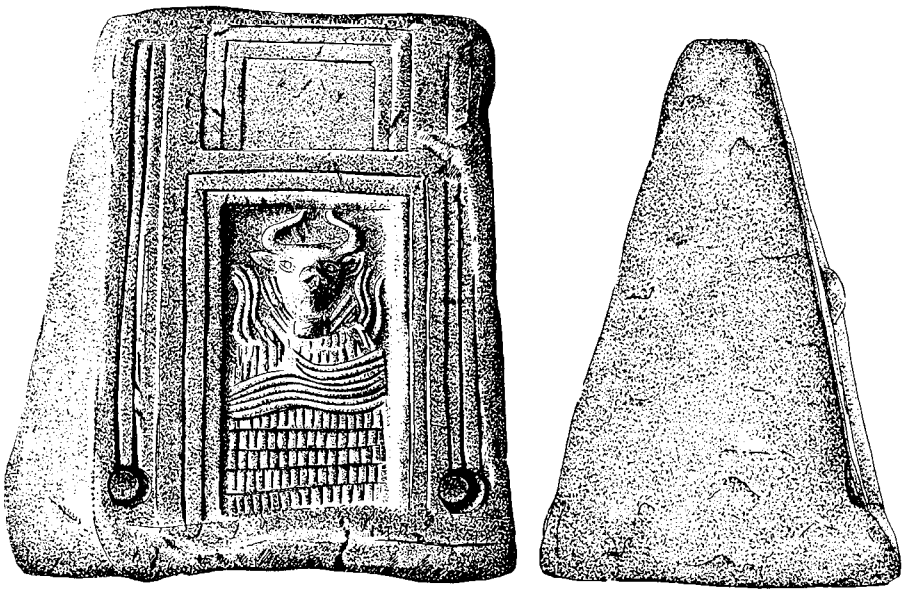

Fig. 1: Terra cotta object in the shape of a pyramid showing a divinity within the temple entrance, Isin (Battini, 2017: fig. 9).

All stem from Southern Babylonia and the cities of Nippur, Tello, Ur, Uruk, Isin, and Babylon.[16] The decision either to include or omit the divinity suggests experimentation with making the invisible visible. Concomitantly, it provides insight into the notion of controlled appearance and interaction with the outside world. In some cases, the temple entrance is flanked by hero figures holding standards in order to heighten the protection of the door, which, as a liminal space between inside and outside, is subject to evil attacks (Fig. 2).[17]

In the conceptualization of royalty, radiant splendor is an essential attribute of the king bestowed on him by the gods, as exemplified by one of Adad-nīrārī II's (911–891 BCE) inscriptions:

[16] Battini, 2017 with further bibliography.
[17] Battini, 2017: 94.

Fig. 2: Terracotta plaque showing a deity within a temple entrance flanked by two *laḫmu* figures on either side (Battini, 2007: fig. 12).

> The great gods, who take firm decisions, who decree destinies, they properly created me, Adad-nīrārī, attentive prince, […], they altered my stature to lordly stature (*nabnīti bēlūti*), they rightly made perfect my features (*šikin bunnannīya*) and filled my lordly body (*zumur bēlūtīya*) with wisdom. After the great gods had decreed (my destiny, after) they had entrusted to me the scepter for the shepherding of the people, (after) they had raised me above crowned kings (and) placed on my head the royal splendor (*melammu šarrūti*), they made my almighty name greater then (that of) all lords, the important name Adad-nīrārī, king of Assyria, they called me. Strong king, king of Assyria, king of the four quarters, sun of all people, I:[18]

As I will demonstrate in this article, light plays a central role in the staged epiphany of the king.

[18] RIMA 2, A.0.99.2:5–10.

The epiphany of the king in the sacred sphere: Tukulti-Ninurta I

What is quite fascinating is that the Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197 BCE) adopted the iconographic motif of the temple entrance by choosing a similar framing device to represent himself on one of the pedestals or socles found at the Ishtar Temple in Assur.[19] The text written on the most famous socle, which shows the king approaching such a pedestal in the continuous action of first walking towards, then kneeling before it, informs us that such a pedestal is called a *nemēdu*.[20] Stephanie Langin-Hooper has discussed the location of these various socles in minute detail and come to the conclusion that they were not meant to be set up in the cella, but rather at the entrance to the temple. In other words, they were not meant to be hidden from sight, but to be visible to a larger audience.[21] The actual location of the socle of Tukulti-Ninurta discussed here, *nemēdu* B, found *in situ* next to the temple entrance, confirms her understanding of the design, as does the ground plan held by the king on his knees in Gudea Statue B, which likewise shows such a socle next to the entrance to the temple.[22] We cannot date Tukulti-Ninurta I's socles, but it may well be that with his conquest of Babylonia, the scholars and craftsmen concerned with *presencing* the king in the imagery of temples and palaces took their inspiration from Babylonian tradition as represented by the terracotta reliefs discussed above. Such a source of influence would not be surprising, as Sumero-Babylonian inspiration is equally evident in the regicide literature composed during Tukulti-Ninurta I's reign.[23]

Tukulti-Ninurta I's pedestal bears two distinct pictorial sections (Fig. 3). The upper one, occupying nearly the entire frontal surface of the socle, shows the king standing at the entrance of the Ishtar temple while pointing his index finger in the *ubāna tarāṣu* gesture of prayer, a typical way of rendering the act of adoration. He is flanked by two *laḫmu*s[24] holding standards or poles topped by a what could either be a sun disk or a rosette.[25]

[19] The same association has been made by Laura Battini in Battini, 2013: 61–63.
[20] On this socle, see Bahrani, 2003: 187–201.
[21] Langin-Hooper, 2014.
[22] Langin-Hooper, 2014: fig. 18.6.
[23] Machinist, 1978; Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 244–258.
[24] Pace Battini, 2013: 62, who assumes this figure to be a Pseudo-Gilgamesh. On the six-curled figure representing the *laḫmu*, see Wiggermann, 1981–1982.
[25] Pace Lambert, 1985: 196 who considered both emblems as solar symbols.

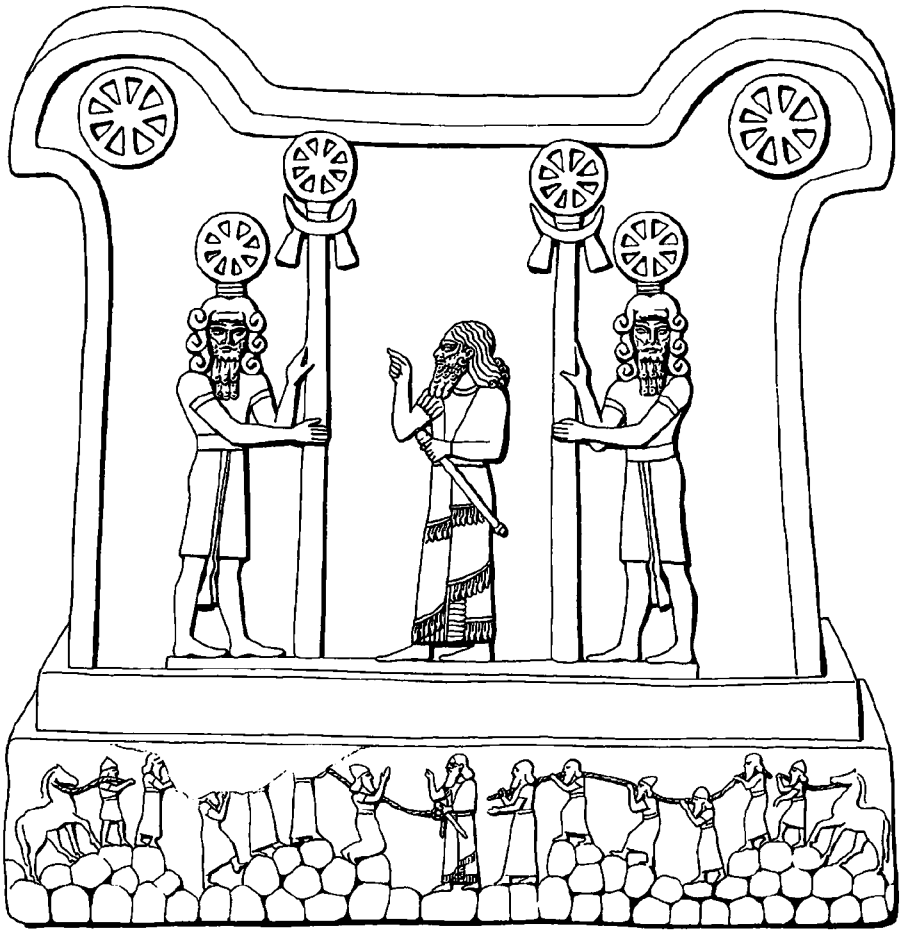

Fig. 3: Socle of Tukulti-Ninurta I. From Ashur, Temple of Ishtar; Middle Assyrian. After Bloch 2015, p. 12.

The architectural framework evoked by the representation of the two *laḫmu*s as guardian figures to the entrance of the temple replicates the pictorial configuration known from the Akkadian Period (Fig. 4) onward. Additionally, the motif of the sun disk or rosette recurs as headgear of the *laḫmu*s and as decorative elements at the two upper edges of the socle. The rosette may be a symbol of Ishtar, an assumption supported by its find spot at the entrance to her temple. If one interprets it as a sun disk, then it is celebrating the solarization of Tukulti-Ninurta I's kingship and his self-presentation as a righteous and just king, as propagated by his inscriptions. Combining the notion of shepherding with control over the four quarters, his epithet "the one who shepherds the four quarters after Shamash" (*ša kibrāt erbetti arki Šamaš irte''u*)[26] "is a new creation with imperialistic impli-

[26] Machinist, 2006: 164 with reference to Machinist, 1978: 181, 394 n. 67.

cations, as it alludes both to the implementation of civic order within the king's own territory and to control over conquered peripheral regions."[27] While adapting a pictorial framework that has its established place in the canon of temple representations, the particular placement of the king in the sacred space of a temple that – according to earlier pictorial conventions – was reserved for the divinity represents a dramatic innovation by the image-makers of the king at the time of Tukulti-Ninurta I.

Fig. 4: Serpentine cylinder seal and modern impression, showing two *laḫmu*s at a temple entrance. H. 3 cm. Attributed to the Old Akkadian Period (The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York; Pierpont Morgan 202).

The lower part of the socle, which unfortunately shows strong signs of erosion, carries a frieze that emphasizes the king's military accomplishments. Depicted disproportionately large at the center of the image in a mountainous landscape is the king, whose image recalls that in Naram-Sîn's *Victory Stele*, where the king represents the culmination of the event. The ability to traverse difficult terrain, cross rivers and even the sea,[28] climb steep mountains, and personally combat the enemy was *the* central innovation and *leitmotif* in Assyrian ideological discourse during the Middle Assyrian Period, one that came to dominate text, ritual, and image until the collapse of the empire.[29] In Tukulti-Ninurta I's pedestal, the king is shown without a crown, standing atop a mountain, and using a rope to hold the vanquished enemies moving towards him with animals as tribute behind them. The king's general or some other official approaches him from the back with another row of captives held by a rope. Several captives make gestures such as raising their hands or even kneeling to indicate their subordination. Ursula Moortgat-Correns associates this image with the conquest of King Abuli of the

[27] Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 213.
[28] See the critical view by Borger, 1964: 81.
[29] Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 223.

Land of Uqumeni,[30] since the latter's kingdom was in a mountainous region, and the annals of Tukulti-Ninurta I report that he and his princes were captured, fettered, and brought back to Assur. While this may well be so, there is something generic about the image that evokes the king's ability to venture into and conquer the uncharted and difficult terrain of mountainous regions, yet simultaneously shows him with an enemy who has been forced into subordination by being tied by the rope to the king, thereby layering various realities into one. By performing the gesture of holding captives by a rope, Tukulti-Ninurta I re-introduces a pictorial motif known from the Anubanini relief in Sar-i Pol Zohar, which dates to the Ur III Period. The same gesture later recurs in Ashur-bel-kala's *Broken Obelisk* as well as in Esarhaddon's steles in Zinçirlı and Til Barsip. Earlier it can be seen performed by the goddess Ishtar with respect to monstrous forces represented either as a lion threatening the city – as shown on a cylinder seal from the Akkad Period (Fig. 5)[31] – or as an enemy, as depicted on the rock relief of Anubanini in Sarpol-i Zohar (Fig. 6).

Fig. 5: Limestone cylinder seal, and modern impression, showing Ishtar holding a lion on a leash. H. 4.2 cm. Attributed to Iraq, probably the Akkadian Period (Oriental Institute Chicago A 27903; Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago).

Now, however, it has been appropriated by the king, presenting him as the central agent in achieving cosmic and social order through war. A subtle nuance to this message is evoked by the vertical alignment of the figures of the king in the lower and upper register. This particular configuration directly and inextricably links the king's role as warrior and worshipper of the goddess and reminds us, the modern beholders, of the ancient entwining of religion and politics.

[30] Moortgat-Correns, 1988.
[31] Oriental Institute Chicago A 27903.

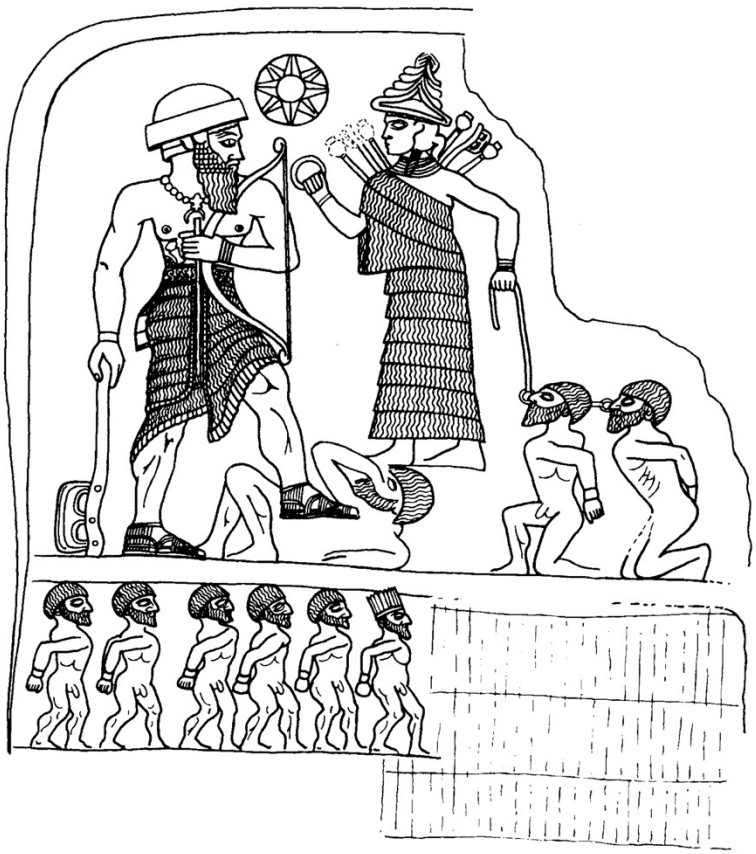

Fig. 6: Drawing of the Relief of Anubanini in Sarpol-i Zohar, Kurdistan (Vanden Berghe, 1983: fig. 1).

These two features – the placement of the king at the entrance of the temple formerly reserved for the divinity, thus showing him *within* the sacred sphere, and his holding captives by a rope, an appropriation of a particular gesture of victory formerly associated with the goddess Ishtar – reveal a deliberate attempt to find new pictorial strategies of sacralizing kingship[32] during the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I. As mentioned, this endeavor, even beyond these pictorial strategies, is mirrored in the royal literature of his time, as in the famous *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic*. In a major appropriation of literary traditions from the Sumero-Babylonian south, the status of the Assyrian king is now defined by a concept of homogeneity, of being in and in concert with the divine world.

[32] For the distinction between declaring a human king a god and sacralizing the office of king, see Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 225–227.

> By the fate (determined by) Nudimmud, his mass is reckoned with the flesh of the gods (*šīr ilāni*). … He alone is the eternal image (*ṣalam* ^{d}*Enlil dārû*) …[33]

Two concepts, consequently, dominate the pictorial choices in this socle: first is the notion of the victorious ruler – here no longer depicted in military action but rather at the moment of the complete subordination of the enemy, which is forced into humiliation and the payment of tribute. Reading the socle from bottom up reveals the following sequence: having fulfilled his military duties, the king is now shown in his role as priest in the cultic context, here evoked by the entrance to the temple through which we see him praying. The context implied by this pictorial configuration is similar to his statue in that the king is standing before the divinity and thus in eternal communication with the gods.

By the time of Tiglath-Pileser I, Middle Assyrian iconography in glyptic shows a temple façade flanked by two goat-fish figures that offer a view of a socle of the same shape as the volutes of the upper corners of the socle of Tukulti-Ninurta I. Its front is constructed from pilasters typical of temple façades. While one could read this image in a very literal sense by associating the goat fish figures with the god Ea, or interpret the temple as one owned by this deity, one could also interpret these figures as guardians serving an apotropaic function similar to that of later guardian figures on Neo-Assyrian palaces.[34] Tiglath-Pileser reports installing such guardian figures at the entrance to his palace (RIMA 2, Tiglath-Pileser I A.0.87.4 67–71) though in his case they consist of a sea-horse (*nāhiru*) and a *burhiš* rather than goat fish.

The configuration of space and the logic of movement: Ashurnasirpal II's throne room

The merging of the sacral and the political through the *presencing* of the king within a sacred sphere took another turn in the first millennium BCE with the design of Ashurnasirpal II's Throne Room in Nimrud. Melanie Groß and David Kertai provide a "nuanced model highlighting how the court organized the immense flow of information, people and goods entering the palace as a result of the empire's increased size and complexity," and note that "access to the king was regulated by three gates of control which were manned by specific types of personnel and a more situational organization that moved within the physical spaces of the palace and was contingent on the king's activity."[35] Their argument

[33] *Tukulti-Ninurta Epic* i (= A obv.) 16'–18', Machinist, 1978.

[34] Klengel-Brandt, 1995: cat. No. 68 fig. 29. In his comment on this article David Kertai argued that creatures depicted on seals are shown in more limited manners and only linked to their primary deity. He would link the goat fish with Ea especially since the seal shows the Abzu water along its sides.

[35] Groß / Kertai, 2019: 1.

that the spatial arrangement of the palace was closely tied to courtly life[36] will inform my exploration of how the epiphany of the Assyrian king was orchestrated in Ashurnasirpal II's palace in Nimrud. Connecting "the inside to the outside, and the seen to the unseen," this room functioned as a "bridge-context"[37] between two different realities: the king as the divinely chosen vice-regent of the god Aššur, and the people. Formerly this division had been perceived as a division between a public and a private zone, generally described through the Akkadian terms *babānu*, outer, and *bitānu*, inner, space.[38] Such duality, however, is problematic, as Kertai points out: "Rather than a simple duality, the palaces were organized into a flexible and easily controlled system of accessibility."[39]

The Throne Room of King Ashurnasirpal II's palace has received much attention in scholarship since Layard's excavation in Nimrud and its publication in 1848.[40] The architecture of the structure, its location within the overall plan of the palace, its ideological decorative program, its layout with regard to circulation as well as the sensory experience it generated through its mere monumentality and extraordinary craftsmanship have shaped the core of former analyses.[41]

Rather than ponder on the question of accessibility and circulation, I would like to explore how architects and designers negotiated co-existent spatial proximity and constant social distance – that is, intimate contact on one level and the strictest aloofness on the other[42] – in order to stage the epiphany of the king. In other words, my interest lies in the king's appearance from the secluded and unseen to the populace gathered in the courtyard rather than in the movement of the privileged, who gained access to the interior. During the Neo-Assyrian Period, and particularly the reign of Sargon II, the royal residence was expanded into a vast complex of palaces for the king and his magnates; each of these palaces or residences had a "throne room" (or something similar to it) functioning as the public reception hall, banqueting areas; the royal palace, in addition, had pavilions located in adjacent pleasure and hunting gardens. An elaborate system of courtyards made access increasingly difficult. "Entering the forecourts of the

[36] Groß / Kertai, 2019: 2.
[37] Portuese, 2019: 63.
[38] Winter, 1983: 15; Russell, 1998: 714.
[39] Kertai, 2020: 206.
[40] Layard, 1848.
[41] Budge, 1914; Gadd, 1936; Mallowan, 1966; Meuszíński, 1974: 51–73; 1979: 5–13; Reade 1979: 57–64; Meuszíński, 1981: 17–25; Reade, 1985: 203–214; Paley / Sobolewski, 1992: 26–31; Reade, 1994; Russell, 1998: 705–712; studies on the ideological program include Winter, 1981; 1983; Matthiae, 1988: 347–376; 1996: 37–74; Dolce, 1997: 141–162; Lumsden, 2004: 359–385; Roaf, 2008: 209–213; Russell, 1998: 705–14; Porter, 2000: 7–18; 2003 180–191; Di Paolo, 2003: 517–544; Kertai, 2015; on the sensory experience see Portuese, 2019.
[42] Dillon, 2010: 6.

palace did not guarantee access to other areas within it."[43] The approach to the king was constrained by means of interior courtyards and probably strictly monitored gates and doors, which functioned as sluices curtailing entry. While we can assume that a strictly devised court ceremonial controlled access to the king, no regulations concerning the audience or visits by various magnates, officials, emissaries, and other persons who crossed paths in the palace on a daily basis have come down to us. Nonetheless, two surviving texts provide an inkling of the fact that such regulations did exist. One is the Assyrian *Coronation Ritual* (SAA 20 7), which refers to the re-installment of the most important members of the Assyrian court after the actual coronation in the presence of deities:

Col. iii
7 …. After they have presented the audience gifts
8 to the king, the grand vizier and the deputy vizier
9 lay down before the king their scepters; the chief of finances
10 his money-bag, the chief singer his lyre, and each
11 provincial [gove]rnor (the insignia) that he is holding. They leave their places,
12 [d]istance themselves, and stand still. The king tells them: "Each
13 may keep his [off]ice." They prostrate themselves and roll (on the ground),
14 [they appr]oach and each stands (again) in his (former) place.[44]

The second is the *Protocol for the Royal Dinner* (SAA 20 33):

Col. i 1–10
1–3 At the time of the dinner, when the ki[ng] enters the dinner [together with the magnates, the table and] the couch for the king [are place]d opposite the doorway.
4–6 As soon as the king is seated on his seat, the overseer of the palace (*ša pān ekalli*) enters, [kisses] the ground before [the king], and gives (his) report before the king.
7–10 The palace herald (*nāgir ekalli*) e[nters], kisses the ground before the king, and stands with the stan[dard opposite the king]. The palace herald gives (his) report before the king. [The overseer of the palace goes out and] brings in the grand vizier.

[43] Groß / Kertai, 2019: 12.
[44] Müller, 1937.

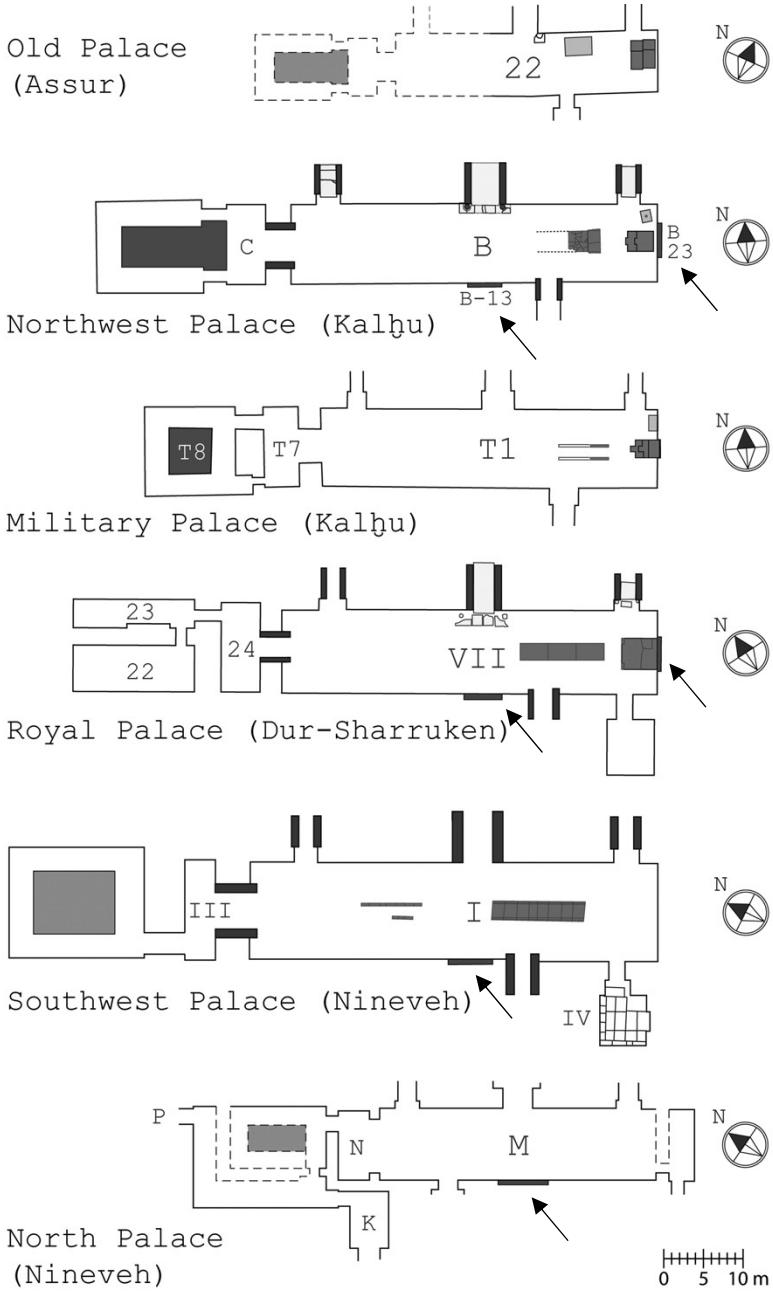

Fig. 7: Assyrian throne rooms with the niches indicated by arrows (Kertai, 2019, fig. 1).

The text goes on to describe the regulations for the crown prince, the other sons of the king, the chariot-driver, the lackeys, the stock-room assistant, the chief eunuch, and the chief cook. "The *ša pān ekalli* was the king's primary attendant and was one of the main decision-makers when it came to the question of whether

or not officials and Assyrian allies were granted an audience with the king (SAA 13 80; ABL 287). As Barjamovic puts it, he was the "introducer to the king and chief of palace protocol."[45] Such meticulous orchestration of the attendants at the dinner suggests that any other kind of encounter with the king was handled in a similarly controlled manner, and that we can thus posit a similar kind of "choreography" and manipulation of movement when it came to the appearance of the king before a larger audience in the palace courtyard.

Choreographing royal epiphany, therefore, presented the image-makers of the king with a challenging task that due to its programmatic complexity had to be designed in meticulous detail. Julian Reade in particular has noted the imaginative and probably unprecedented architectural conceptualization of Ashurnasirpal II's throne room and its function as a model for the later palaces of Sargon II and Sennacherib.[46] It is along these lines of the king's innovative creation and inspiration for Sargon II's, Sennacherib's, and Ashurbanipal's later palaces that I would like to discuss a particular detail in the throne room: the positioning of relief B-13, which is set into a niche on the southern wall of the throne room along the axis of the main entrance gate *e*, and the impact of this configuration on the epiphany of the king. Such niches were typical of all Neo-Assyrian palaces, where they were set behind the stone daises that served as throne pedestals at one of the short ends of the throne room (Fig. 7). This niche incorporated the image of the king and was duplicated in a second niche placed on the axis of the main entrance to the throne room.[47]

In the case of Nimrud, the relief B-13, which duplicates relief B-23 behind the throne pedestal (Fig. 8), shows the king in a heraldic manner with the winged disk hovering above the sacred tree. On both sides the king is flanked by winged apotropaic genii that differ in the two reliefs. Much discussion has been devoted to what the better-preserved scene in B-23 actually represents. Art historical debates have long revolved around the question of whether the stylized tree in Ashurnaṣirpal II's throne room depicts an actual pollination scene – a reading that has been variously supported,[48] ignored,[49] or rejected by scholars[50] – or is more of a symbolic representation of "fertility and the cosmic order upheld by the king."[51] Due to its artificiality – it is based on a palm, with a palmette at the apex, but its branches are connected to each other by a network or trellis of palmettes, cones, or pomegranates flowing from them – Irene Winter posited that it sym-

[45] Groß / Kertai, 2019: 16 with reference to Barjamovic, 2011: 40.
[46] Reade, 1994: 273.
[47] Kertai, 2019: 42 fig. 1.
[48] Porter, 2003.
[49] Winter, 1981: 10.
[50] Gadd, 1948: 91–92.
[51] Reade, 1983: 27–28.

bolized the divine world order,[52] while Julian Reade has suggested "that the sacred tree was not an exclusively intellectual or spiritual concept, but sometimes had a physical reality" during ritual.[53] More recently, Ursula Seidl and Walther Sallaberger have argued that the sacred tree should be read as a stylized palmette tree standing in to evoke or define a ritual space.[54] Similarly, Mariana Giovino has claimed that the palmette tree should be understood as a cultic object.[55] What is important to note is that the cultic object has been identified as a ^{gi}*urigallu*, that is, a standard written with the determinative GI for "reed."[56] Such reed standards, in addition, could also define a cultic space or form a reed hut for purification rituals.[57] Here, on the trunk of the sacred tree, we have the sign GIŠ instead.[58] While the multiple presence of the sacred tree, which is likewise shown flanked by the mythical *apkallu* figures, was certainly meant to sacralize the space through its association with purity, I would like to posit that the particular two reliefs pairing the king with the tree in combination with the god Assur or Shamash in the winged disk insinuate a deeper meaning, namely, the king's elevation into divine space and permeation with a divine aura.

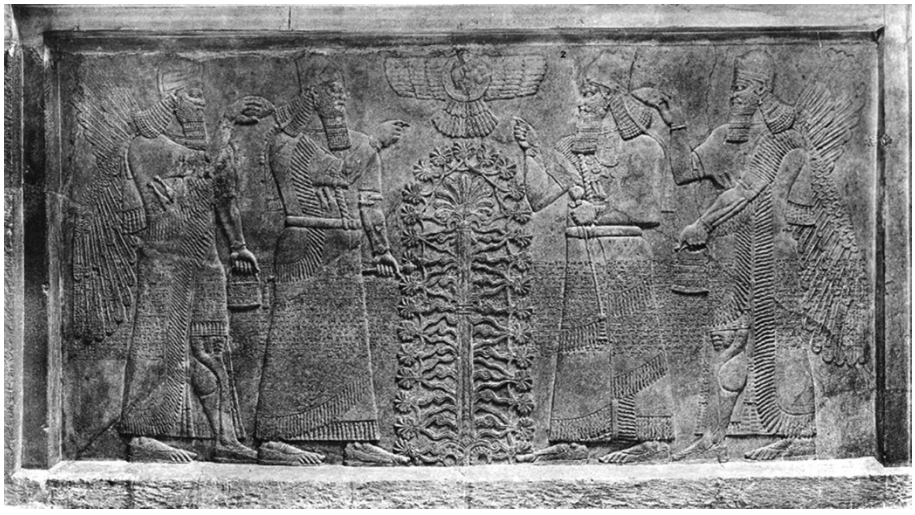

Fig. 8: The Relief B-23 behind the throne pedestal (Morello, 2016: fig. 2).

[52] Winter, 1983: 26ff.
[53] Reade, 2005: 10.
[54] Seidl / Sallaberger, 2005/2006.
[55] Giovino, 2007.
[56] For *urigallu* written with the determinatives gi, dingir, and without determinative, see Pongratz-Leisten in Pongratz-Leisten / Deller / Bleibtreu, 1992: 323–328.
[57] The material has been collected by Sallaberger, 2005/2006: 61–74.
[58] For the difference, see Pongratz-Leisten, 1992.

Everything about this particular relief points to the king, who is imbued by the divine sphere as he engages in intense communication with the divinity in the winged disk and the sacred tree through the gesturing of his right hand on both the left and the right side of the tree. On the right side, he is shown wearing a pectoral composed of divine symbols such as those generally depicted on Assyrian victory steles. Consequently, he not only conjures the presence of the most important deities in the Assyrian pantheon – Sîn, Šamaš, Ištar, Assur-Enlil, and Adad – but also inscribes their presence onto his own body. The intention behind this particular choice of jewelry may be elucidated by a commentary on the Neo-Assyrian state rituals, which emphasizes the pectoral's protective power in battle in the following mythologizing terms: "The king, who wears the jewelry and roasts young virgin goats, is Marduk, who, wearing his armor, burnt the sons of Enlil and Ea in fire."[59] As the king is normally represented with a much simpler necklace consisting merely of a string of semi-precious stones,[60] this particular pectoral, in addition to the king's gesturality as he performs the act of prayer directed at the divinity in the winged disk, functions as a signifier of a particular ritual context. This context, I posit, is one that later developed into the Shabatu-Addaru cycle, whose ritual text indicates that on Shabatu 18th, the gods are hung around the neck of the king (SAA 20 1 i 6').[61] One could object that pictorial evidence of Assyrian kings wearing this necklace is only attested for the reigns of Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III, and Tiglath-Pileser III, and absent from the Sargonid Period,[62] while the textual evidence dates to the reign of Ashurbanipal, who is never depicted with this necklace. As for Ashurnasirpal II, we do know that he established a festival for Ninurta in Kalkhu in the month of Shabatu, which may have had its reflection in or been incorporated into the later festive cycle of the months Shabatu-Addaru in Assur.

In the *Manual for the Chanters*,[63] which lists the performative duties of the *kalû*-chanters, the rituals conducted in the months of Shabatu, Addaru, and Nisannu are all combined into one festive cycle. In my view, the *kalu*'s combination of the various ritual performances into one larger whole is not the product of chance but rather evidence of the conceptualization of a large ritual cycle composed of various distinct constituents that the Assyrian king had to perform in order to execute his office in a legitimate fashion. The wearing of the necklace and the opening of the vat attested in Ashurbanipal's report on this festive cycle, as described in the cultic commentary SAA 3 (37: 16'–17'), can be interpreted as a symbol and symbolic action of the king's status as a successful warrior, who has

[59] SAA 3 37: 16'–17'.
[60] This type of necklace could consist of one, two, or three-beaded strands, see Albenda, 1977: 33.
[61] Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 423–424.
[62] See Albenda, 1977: 34, with references to images.
[63] SAA 20 12.

fulfilled the divine order to expand the territory of Assyria as ordained in the coronation ritual. The textual record of the reign of Ashurbanipal may therefore reflect what is depicted through the medium of the image during the reign of Ashurnasirpal II. By choosing an image of Ashurnasirpal II's stele as one of the illustrations in the State Archives of Assyria volume on *Assyrian Rituals*, Simo Parpola and Julian Reade appear to have had a similar idea in mind.[64] In addition to the necklace with divine symbols, the king wears bracelets bearing a rosette that represents the goddess Ishtar, who, as an intermediary between the king and the god Ashur, watches over the king as he performs his royal office.

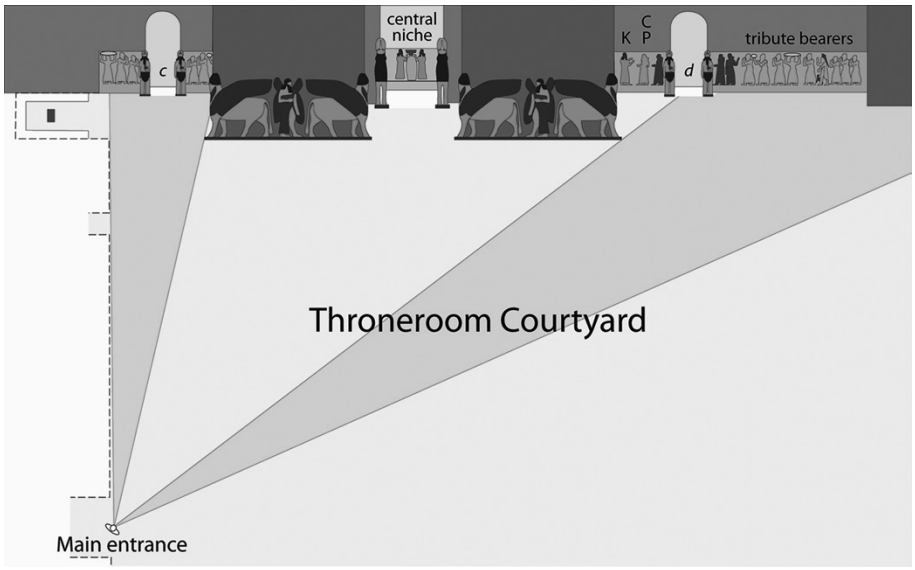

Fig. 9: Throne Room Courtyard, Northwest Palace, Nimrud. View from courtyard's main entrance (Kertai, 2019: fig. 4).

With the question of the royal epiphany in mind, my particular interest in the iconography of relief B-23 lies in its position along the axis of the central entrance to the throne room. Due to the iconographic choices of its creator, the relief is a duplicate of the one behind the throne pedestal (Fig. 9). In contrast to the other two gates on the East and the West, which were guarded by *lamassu* figures only at their entrances, the central gate *e* was flanked by such apotropaic figures on the outer projecting facade as well ones facing both directions, East and West, and interrupted by a winged genius. Consequently, from an architectural point of view, the focus is exclusively on protection from potential danger from the outside. The other two gates were flanked by foreigners bearing tribute.[65] I follow

[64] Parpola, 2017: 5, fig. 5.
[65] Kertai, 2019: 46–47 with fig. 4 provides a good reconstruction of the impression that the

John Russell in assuming that gate *d*, the one furthest from the throne pedestal, served as the entry gate. Approaching gate *d* in order to enter the throne room, the visitor would have faced the reliefs inside the throne room that showed the annihilating force of the Assyrian army. Gate *c*, the one closest to the throne pedestal *presencing* the king, by contrast, served as an exit for those whose audience was over.[66] Thus, both the monumentality of main gate *e* (it was larger in size) and its outer decoration would have signaled to the visitor entering the courtyard before the throne room that this gate was something different, i.e. a framing device for whatever was expecting him inside.

Gate *e*, I posit, was reserved exclusively for movement of the king from inside out or outside in. Despite the fact that in this case – in contrast to the Eastern side – no pedestal has been found in front of the niche with relief B-13 and further down relief B-13, the king, as others have suggested, could sit here as well. While one could imagine that a temporary wooden structure such as a throne pedestal may have been placed here to allow the king to take a seat, such a structure would certainly not have been used to receive visitors as it would have forced the king to turn his head to the left – unless the visitors entered through Gate *e*, which I rule out as a possibility. Instead, I assume, in keeping with former scholarship, that the gate facing this relief was kept closed most of the time.[67] In other words, I suggest that the niche with relief B-23 must be understood in terms of its spatial configuration with Gate *e*. Consequently, in the vein of Silvana Di Paolo,[68] I would prefer to think that this gate was exclusively used by the king on the occasion of state ceremonies and other occasions, when he had to present himself to the public assembled in the courtyard. At that moment, he may have been seated in front of the niche before standing up to show himself to the audience outside in the courtyard. In whatever way the initiation of his appearance was choreographed, the essential point is that the king would have emanated from the niche in which he is shown in intimate proximity with the divine.

The utmost attention paid to architecture, the positioning of the niche, and the design of the central gate suggest their function in framing and manipulating the appearance of the king once he embarked on a presentation ceremony for the visitors waiting in the courtyard of the palace. Thus, design and architecture – i.e. the relief along the central axis of main entrance *e* – as well as its monumentality orchestrated the epiphany of the king.

The powerful effect of the configurational architectural design that placed the niche and main gate on an axis was complemented by the orientation of the room, of which the long side faced north so that at midday the sunlight would have

visitor entering the Throneroom Courtyard would have had.

[66] Russell, 1998: 713; see also Portuese, 2019: 77.

[67] Paley / Sobolewski, 1997: 334; Russell, 1998: 713; Di Paolo, 2003: 531.

[68] Di Paolo, 2003.

basked the king in luminosity as he stood before the relief.[69] Moreover, the very materiality of the aesthetics, likely realized in a similar way out of decorative sheets of silver and copper as described in the case of Sennacherib's 'Palace without Rival,' or out of gold and silver as used by Esarhaddon at the Temple of Esagila in Babylon,[70] would have intensified the glistening and radiant effect of the relief and the gate once it was hit by the sun while immersing the king in a halo of light. The sight of the king imbued with sunlight would have reminded the knowledgeable beholder of the annual ritual re-confirmation of the king's office during the *akītu* ceremony celebrated in the month of Tashritu in Babylon, where, after a seven-day cycle of purification rituals,[71] he stepped out of the ritual reed structure into open sunlight before the altar set up for the sun god to celebrate his re-investure.[72]

Those seeking a glimpse of the illumined ruler would have been affected by the sensory experience effectuated by this grandiose architectural composition and design, as well as the staging of the king's appearance. Not only would the sight have stirred their imagination, informed as it was by cultural memory, but the articulation of light and space and the intensity of the performative architecture, design, and choreography would have transformed the royal epiphany in a non-verbal way into an otherworldly and transcendent event, a powerful sensory aesthetic experience that would have gone beyond signification and raised members of the audience beyond mundane consciousness.[73] Their alethic gaze, i.e. their contextual and inclusionary viewing, and bodily experience[74] of the moment of the king's advance towards the main entrance gate, would have made the king appear as if he were stepping right out of the divine sphere and his intimate and close communication with the god Assur.

The findings of Nathan Morello with regard to the better preserved relief placed behind the throne pedestal support my interpretation of the architectural and decorative design discussed thus far.[75] As Morello points out, the standard inscription is written with great care in this particular relief and in such a way that it does not touch the sacred tree except in the case of the sign /is/, which is the last one in the participle *mukabbis* in the sentence *zikaru* (NÍTA) *dan-nu mu-kab-bi-*

[69] On the role of light in the architecture of palaces and temples, see Margueron, 1986 and 1996, Shepperson, 2017, and Battini, 2019b.
[70] Di Paolo, 2018. On the importance of sunlight linked with the appearance of the ruler, see also Catherine Asher's discussion of the visual construction of the divinity of the ruler at the Mughal Court, Asher, 2004.
[71] Ambos, 2013.
[72] Ambos, 2013.
[73] O'Sullivan, 2001.
[74] On bodily viewing and perception of the world rather than consciousness through knowledge, see Merleau-Ponty, 1945; Jay, 1994: 275.
[75] Morello, 2017.

is kišad (GÚ) *a-a-bi-šú*, "strong male who treads upon the neck of his foes."[76] The sign /is/ is written on the middle of the tree trunk with space around it in such a way that it instantly catches the eye of the viewer (Fig. 10). While its presence can be explained by the fact that the syllable /*is*/ is the particular term for "trampling," multiple meanings can be read into it. The sign /is/ can be understood as the Sumerian logogram GIŠ for "tree." When combined with the determinative DINGIR for "god," ^{d}GIŠ, it functions as a logogram for the name of the legendary King Gilgamesh.[77] Additionally, it may not have denoted but rather evoked the palm tree (*gišimmaru*) associated with Ištar.[78] In lexical lists, on the other hand, *gišimmaru* can also be equated with "king." And, as we have seen in the foregoing discussion, it may have simultaneously meant to *presence* Gilgamesh and thus associated the living king with his legendary semi-divine predecessor. This interpretation is supported by a pictorial variation that instead of the tree shows the king as human personification of the tree flanked by the genies,[79] as noted by Simo Parpola.[80]

Fig. 10: The GIŠ sign on the sacred tree (Morello, 2016: fig. 3).

[76] RIMA 2, A.0.101.23: 3–4.
[77] Parpola, 1998.
[78] Porter, 2003: 17 and Pongratz-Leisten, 2015: 279.
[79] Meuszyński, 1981: pl. 6.
[80] Parpola, 1993: 167.

Sitting or standing in front of the niche, the king would have hidden the GIŠ sign written on the trunk of the Sacred Tree, but it could well be that the sign was not meant to be seen by the larger public. Research on medieval monuments and artifacts has demonstrated that while the presence of writing could be hidden in ornamentalization and thus escape decoding through reading, its effect was augmented by its mere presence.[81] The phenomenon of the hidden, invisible, non-readable writing, i.e. the restricted presence of writing,[82] may have been meant to enhance and magnify the divine aura of the king simply by means of its presence and to increase the magical potency of the image of the king's presence in the divine sphere. In both cases, the ancient Near East and the Middle Ages, the visibility of writing, its legibility and its effect cannot be taken for granted, nor can it be assumed to have served the purpose of communication. Rather, it seems that modern scholarship needs to pay greater attention to the performative agency of image and writing in that their mere *presence* on an object or monument could signify an act rather than a mere fact.[83] This presence was conceived as co-present with the beholder in an emphatic sense,[84] in that the presence of the image or writing was deemed to have a direct effect.

The preceding discussion has shown that the presence of the sacred tree in Ashurnasirpal II's architectural and aesthetic composition evokes far more than mere ritual space. Indeed, though used for the ceremonial appearance of the king, the space of the niche served no ritual ends. Rather, the image of the king standing in the niche before the sacred tree is meant to mythologize him as Gilgamesh epitomizing the office of kingship granted by the gods, without making that visible. In other words, the scene stirred the imagination and cultural memory of the populace gathered outside in the courtyard without communicating something concrete in a mimetic manner because such knowledge was probably exclusive to a chosen few. The intention was to visually convey the mythologized ideology of royal power to those granted a glimpse through the central gate and the sight of the king sharing the divine realm. How much the elites knew about the association between the sacred tree and Gilgamesh is open to speculation. The fascinating point is that this association, which was materialized in the throne room of King Ashurnasirpal II, was to be visualized far more explicitly in the Sargonid Period.

[81] Frese, 2014; Emmelius et al., 2004; Strätling / Witte, 2006.
[82] Hilgert, 2010.
[83] Didi-Hubermann, 1992.
[84] Boehm, 2001.

The poetics of space: The façade of Sargon II's throne room in Dur Sharruken

When Sargon II designed his throne room at his newly founded residence in Dur Sharruken / Khorsabad, he, like Ashurnasirpal II, chose to insert a niche along the axis of the main entrance in addition to the one behind the throne pedestal, which was located on the eastern side.[85] Similarly to how I interpret the function of the two different niches in Ashurnasirpal II's throne room, Ernst Heinrich assumed that the throne pedestal in Sargon II's layout was intended for the royal audience, while the niche along the axis of the main room was meant to frame the appearance of the king.[86] However, to my knowledge no carved slab has been found within the niche, and it seems that Sargon II's untimely death prevented the completion of the decorative program of his palace.[87] While the design of his palace shares many common features with Ashurnasirpal II's palace at Nimrud, it also includes crucial innovations, among them a decorative program consisting of reliefs and the elaboration of space in its courtyards. The motif of the winged genius flanking the sacred tree, so frequent in Ashurnasirpal II's palace, was completely abandoned in favor of banquet and game hunt scenes, processions of courtiers, as well as historical reliefs depicting military campaigns.[88] One innovation, however, as I posit, involved a mythological allusion: as the visitor proceeded through the palace towards the throne room, he or she would have passed several representations of monumental human-like figures, of which two resembled the six locked *laḫmu* and were placed on façade A besides the main entrance to the palace. The other two figures, each identified by Melissa Eppihimer as the Assyrian hero, were placed to the right and left of the main entrance to the throne room and between two colossal *lamassu*s on façade N in courtyard VIII. In his research on the protective figures particularly associated with gates in ritual texts, Frans Wiggermann suggested that the Assyrian hero should be identified with the figure called *awīlu* in these texts.[89] Probably based on this textual evidence, scholarship has long refrained from associating the human figures in Sargon II's palace with Gilgamesh.[90] However, given that Sargon II's palace contained many features that were familiar from Ashurnasirpal II's Northwest Palace in Nimrud, as David Kertai and Paolo Matthiae note,[91] and more concretely, in view of the rich metaphorical meaning associated with the GIŠ sign on the sacred tree in Ashurnasirpal II's palace and the configurational placement of these figures next

[85] See above Fig. 7 and Heinrich, 1984: fig. 94.
[86] Heinrich, 1984: 152.
[87] Matthiae, 2012.
[88] Matthiae, 2012: 482 passim.
[89] Wiggermann, 1992.
[90] Boehmer, 1972–1975; Eppihimer, 2019: 142 and 173–194.
[91] Kertai, 2015: 94; Matthiae, 2018.

to the main entrance to the throne room, I would like to tell a different story, one that postulates a multimodal meaning generated by the poetics of space.[92] The case I want to make is that Sargon II's decided to transform Ashurnasirpal II's former association with Gilgamesh, as evoked by the GIŠ sign on the trunk of the sacred tree that is more or less hidden from the public, into a "mimetic" pictorial representation that could be presented to the audience standing in the courtyard and approaching the throne room.

In her recent book, Melissa Eppihimer notes various features of the *laḫmu* and the Assyrian hero indicating their mythologizing quality. First, she points out that the garment, i.e. the short skirt worn by these figures, distinguishes them from human beings and imbues them with a supernatural quality.[93] She then suggests that Sargon II's placement of the *laḫmu* on the façade of his palace should be associated with the passage in *Enuma elish*, the creation epic in which the Babylonian god Marduk, after defeating Tiamat and her army of monsters, installs the *laḫmu* together with the other vanquished foes at the gates of the Apsu.[94] Such an interpretation, she argues, works perfectly with the building inscriptions in Khorsabad, whose language for describing the building of the new royal city relates directly to the creation epic and through that intertextuality frames the construction as a primordial creation. This interpretation is quite convincing. Surprisingly, Eppihimer does not propose a similar mythologically motivated link for the two figures placed on the throne room's façade. Instead, in line with earlier scholarship, she identifies both as the Assyrian hero, who, in Assyrian art is typically shown in fierce battle with a lion. What is interesting and innovative about the decision made by the image-producers of Sargon II's palace, however, is that both the so-called Assyrian hero and the *laḫmu* figure at the entrance of the palace are shown tightly holding a small lion in the crook of their left arm, while carrying a curved weapon in their right hand.[95] In the case of the Neo-Assyrian hero, the lion is snarling with its mouth agape at the beholder, while the one held by the *laḫmu* is biting his arm. In my view, such recasting of the existing tradition of depicting the *laḫmu* holding a standard impels us to reconsider the meaning of the so-called Assyrian hero as well. I therefore propose a far more complex and multi-layered meaning, one that resuscitates the idea of *presencing* the figure of Gilgamesh in the palatial imagery of Sargon II.

[92] Mandell / Smoak, 2018, 2019a and 2019b.
[93] Eppihimer, 2019: 174–176.
[94] Eppihimer, 2019: 188.
[95] In earlier Middle Assyrian glyptic such a weapon could be used for the *laḫmu* figure, see NCBS 685, Yale Babylonian Collection = Eppihimer; 2019: 165, fig. 5.15.

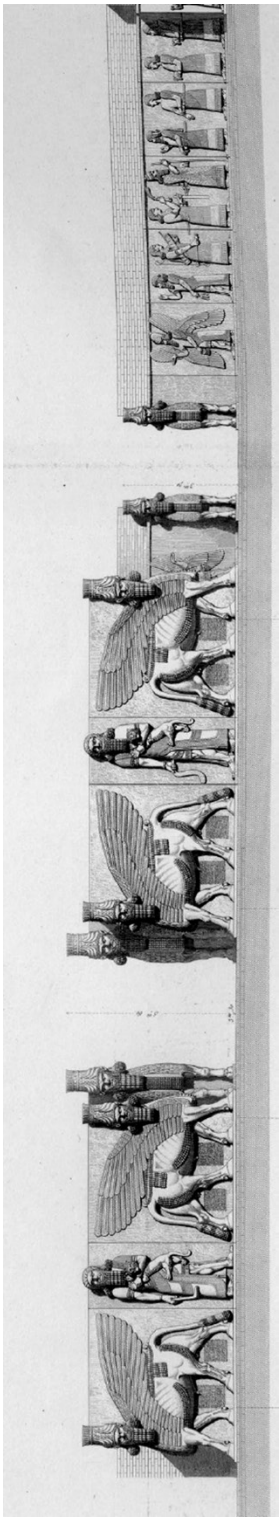

Fig. 11: Façade n North-East wall (court VIII) of the Throne Room in Khorsabad (Botta and Flandin, 1849–1850: pl. 30).

As noted, my argument is based on a diachronic approach to the iconographic choices of the Assyrian kings. I am convinced that Sargon II's choice cannot be viewed independently of what the image-producers created in Ashurnasirpal II's palace at Nimrud, nor can Sennacherib's choice in Khinis, discussed below, be seen in isolation from those of his predecessors.

The statue of what Eppihimer calls the Assyrian hero and that I identify as Gilgamesh is monumental (Fig. 11).[96] Towering 5.52 m, it must have left an overwhelming impression on the beholder and stirred up memories of the passage in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* that describes the king in semi-divine terms:

> Who is there that can be compared with him in kingly status,
> And can say like Gilgameš, "It is I am the king?"
> Gilgameš was his name from the day he was born,
> Two thirds of him god but a third of him human.
> Bēlet-ilī drew the shape of his body,
> Nudimmud brought his form to perfection.[97]

Much later in the epic, when Gilgamesh, seeking immortality, travels to the twin mountains Mashu, the two scorpion men, guardians of the entrance to the Netherworld, recognize his semi-divine nature:

> "He who has come to us, flesh of the gods is his body!"[98]

Aside from the colors painted on the figure, the sheer monumentality of the Gilgamesh figure set between the two *lamassu* colossi would have evoked the king's association with his legendary forbear. Indeed, the depiction of the king brings to life the passage in Tablet IX of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which recounts his slaying of the lions.[99] Rather than shooting, spearing or stabbing the lion with a dagger as the king does in the hunting reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II's and later in the palace reliefs of Ashurbanipal, the monumental figure here is represented in direct bodily contact with the lion, which he squeezes in the crook of his arm as if about to strangle him. The additional decision to have the figure's upper body face-front to the beholder makes him even more awe-inspiring and horrifying. Yet instead of regarding Sargon II's choice of imagery as an illustration of the epic, I suggest that this particular rendering of Gilgamesh, which shows him successfully vanquishing the forces of wilderness on the outside of the throne façade, depicts a continuation of the story that was probably told in the niche within the throne room. As I understand it, Sargon II's image on the throne room façade is a pictorial transposition of Ashurnasirpal II's writing of the GIŠ sign as part of the

[96] Albenda, 1986: fig. 16.
[97] George, 2003: 540–541, Tablet I ll. 45–50.
[98] George, 2003: 668–669, Tablet IX l. 49.
[99] Ornan, 2010: 253.

participle *mu-kab-bi-is*, "he … who tramples," the enemy. The image thus appears to be a mythologizing variation on the equation of hunting and military campaigns found in the Assyrian annals, and, as such, stands in perfect line with Assyrian ideology. Moreover, Johannes Bach's investigation into the literary practice of linking the king with Gilgamesh by means of intertextuality in their royal inscriptions demonstrates that exactly at the time of Sargon II there was a deliberate attempt to reformulate royal ideology.[100] In both the written and the pictorial sense then, the king and the legendary ruler are *presenced* in their valor as they vanquish the forces of chaos and enable the divine and human world to merge into one.

The attempt to sacralize the space inhabited by the king is equally evident in the broader pictorial program of Sargon II's palace. Interesting to note, Sargon decided to place *laḫmu* figures to the right and left of Room 98, which is the entry hall into Entrance Courtyard XV of the palace on façade A, to protect his residence from evil forces.[101] With the *laḫmu* serving the apotropaic function of guardian of the palace, Sargon II appropriated what had in former times had been reserved for the entrance of the temple, namely, the divine sphere, as shown on Tukulti-Ninurta I's socle from the Ishtar Temple in Assur discussed above. The *laḫmu*'s apotropaic function is also imported in the glyptics of Assyrian officials. One individual called Ahu-lamur made the interesting decision to have the *laḫmu* stand on a winged bull with a human head, thus combining features attested in the king's palace in different locations.[102] Indeed, the glyptic material displays a great variety of flanking protective figures, which range from the *laḫmu*[103] to the *kusarikku*,[104] winged genii,[105] and the scorpion man[106] – figures that will appear as protective guardians of doors in Sennacherib's *Palace Without Rival*.[107]

Measuring about 4.70 m, the *laḫmu* figure in Sargon II's palace is shorter in terms of height. Whereas Amar Annus proposes that this second figure is Enkidu, whom the *Epic of Gilgamesh* describes as being shorter,[108] Melissa Eppihimer identifies it as *laḫmu*.[109] Again, I would like to suggest a multi-layered identity,

[100] Bach, 2020a and 2020b.

[101] Kertai, 2015a: pl. 11.

[102] I hesitate to associate the six-curled *laḫmu* with what has been called the Pseudo-Gilgamesh, (see Battini, 2019a) because the Gilgamesh figure with the lion and the six curl *laḫmu* clearly are two separate entities in Sargon's palace.

[103] Watanabe, 1993: No. 7.6.

[104] Watanabe, 1993: No. 6.3.

[105] Watanabe, 1993: No. 7.7.

[106] Watanabe, 1993: No. 7.9.

[107] Kertai, 2015b.

[108] Annus, 2012.

[109] Eppihimer, 2019: 168; Similar compositions of *laḫmu* figures holding poles or standards next to a tent-like structure, evoking the sacred space of the temple, appears in the glyptic repertoire from the Akkadian Period onward.

[109] Tukulti-Ninurta I himself even had a pair of matching *laḫmu*s made to adorn the Assur

one that includes *laḫmu* in his apotropaic function but also and simultaneously allows the figure to be identified as Enkidu. The innovative portrayal of *laḫmu* with a lion in the crook of his arm thus generates an association with the Gilgamesh figures on the throne room façade and creates a poetics of space that allows for a more complex and multimodal reading.

As noted, the variety of symbolic modes devised to visualize the mythology and poetics of space revolving around Gilgamesh so as to generate this kind of meaningful ideological *presencing* of the king fits well with figures like the illustrious scholar Nabû-zuqup-kēnu who worked in the service of Sargon II and the king's son Sennacherib as well as Nabû-šallim-šunu, the master scribe and personal *ummânu* of Sargon II and author of *Sargon II's Eighth Campaign*. Erudite primarily in astrology, Nabû-zuqup-kēnu was responsible for collecting the texts to be assembled in a new library in Dur-Sharruken, which was ultimately never realized.[110] His deep knowledge of astrological matters as expressed in his creation of various astrological series contributed to the glorification of the king through a *gemeṭriah* of the king's name as the perimeter of the city wall of the new royal residence. As noted by Eckhart Frahm, Nabû-zuqup-kēnu may have been responsible for translating the Sumerian narrative *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld* and converting it into Tablet XII of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* in reaction to the violent death of the king on the battlefield.[111] It may well be that he cooperated with Sargon II's chief architect Ṭāb-šar-Aššur, the state treasurer (*masennu*) of Sargon II, who acted as the main coordinator of the construction project at Dur-Sharruken.[112] One could imagine that beyond establishing the new library, Nabû-zuqup-kēnu's responsibilities also encompassed visualizing ideological aspects of the new royal residence, including the design of the throne room's façade and thus the placement of Gilgamesh at the center, between the two colossi. Letters to king Esarhaddon demonstrate such involvement of scholars in the pictorial *presencing* of the king.[113] A similar involvement can be observed for

temple Ehursagkurkurra, as described in a fragmentary literary Sumero-Babylonian bilingual discovered at Nineveh but originating in the Middle Assyrian Period, probably even during his reign. On the basis of various sources Lambert 1985 proposed that this pair also had the cosmological function of holding up the heavens. His interpretation differs from that of Frans Wiggermann, who prefers to distinguish between two categories of *laḫmu*s, one having a protective, the other – once a servant of Ea, and later a member of Tiamat's army in *Enuma elish* – having a cosmological function (Wiggermann, 1992: 156). The motif of the six-curled *laḫmu* next to the temple entrance is imported into the glyptic of officials of the king. See BM WA 132257, discussed by Battini, 2019a; image Watanabe, 1993, No. 7.6.

[110] May, 2018: 120.

[111] Frahm, 1999.

[112] Parpola, 1995.

[113] Winter, 1997; for the cooperation between artisans and scholars see further Gunter 1990: 11 and 2019; Sonik, 2014: 267; Nadali, 2014: 469, Portuese, 2020: 161, Pongratz-

Sargon II's master scribe Nabû-šallim-šunu, whose creation of *Sargon II's Eight Campaign to Urartu* displays various intertextual features with the *Epic of Gilgamesh* stylizing not only Sargon II himself as hero but also leading a company of heroes and modeling the landscape that the Assyrian army is traversing in similar terms as Gilgamesh's travel to the twin mountains.[114]

Moving epiphany into the landscape: Sargon II's construction of local canal systems in Maltai and Faida and Sennacherib's Gate Monument at Khinis

In addition to conceiving the royal epiphany of Sargon II in his palace at Dur-Sharruken, the king's image-makers also came up with a new way of *presencing* him in the landscape north of his royal residence. Recent surveys of the irrigation system north of Nineveh and the excavations conducted by Daniele Morandi Bonacossi along the canal in Faida, which have brought to light more reliefs showing two representations of the king flanking a row of divinities standing on striding animals similar to those in Maltai, have led to a new understanding of the archaeological evidence. Analyzing the iconography of these various reliefs and finding certain features in the reliefs of Maltai and Faida comparable to pictorial evidence in the palace of Dur-Sharruken, including a triple-armed earring, a bracelet with rosettes much simpler than the ones from the time of Sennacherib, and a particular rendering of the musculature of a left forearm, Morandi Bonacossi has suggested that these reliefs be dated to the time of Sargon II. He finds supports for his archaeological interpretation in a letter to the king written by Ṭāb-šar-Aššur (SAA I: 65), the king's treasurer, regarding an audience that he had given to a certain "Paqaha, the master builder in charge of the canal,"[115] who had been complaining about the fact that though "the king has added to the men working on the canal, there are no (work) leaders. The governor of Talmusa is not able to direct the men."[116] As Morandi Bonacossi points out, the ancient provincial center of Talmusa has been identified with the site of Gir-e Pan, which is "located on the canalized *wadi* that was fed by the two parallel, cross-watershed Maltai canals and [lies] less than two kilometers north-west of the Faideh canalhead." The Maltai and Faida canals must thus be interpreted as two separate local irrigation systems during the reign of Sargon II that were meant to increase agricultural productivity in the eastern Tigris plain located between today's Dohuk and the area south of Faideh, the most prominent Neo-Assyrian site in the region,[117]

Leisten, in press (FS Liverani).

[114] Bach, 2020a: 325–328.

[115] I prefer the translation "canal" to ditch in this context, as it seems to have been a larger waterway rather than a "ditch" which is smaller in size.

[116] Morandi Bonacossi, 2018a: 96–97.

[117] Morandi Bonacossi, 2018a: 97.

probably in order to intensify food production for the king's newly built residence of Dur-Sharruken. The decision to represent the king flanking a row of divinities standing or sitting on striding animals was thus a new invention by Sargon II inspired by Anatolian and Urartian models.[118] I would posit, however, that rather than mimicking a procession of gods, the image-makers were inspired by the cultic setting of the cella in which the statue of the king was placed upright and to the left of the divine statue and thus decided to blur this setting with an ideological intention to show the king in constant communication with the major gods of the Assyrian pantheon, which, at least according to the information in the *Assur Directory*, would not have involved a grouping of all these divinities in a single cella.

In the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh, the pictorial repertoire consists primarily of reliefs documenting military events. Together with the entranceways, the façade of the throne was indeed "the only place where apotropaic figures were placed along its buttresses. Each buttress consisted of two colossi facing the doors closest to them" with the Gilgamesh figure holding a lion between them, while the *laḫmu* figures were now moved from the entrance gate to the palace and into the niche between the outward-facing colossi and the door frame of the main entrance to the throne room.[119] The design of the façade thus repeated the arrangement created by Sargon II in his palace at Dur-Sharruken.[120] Whether the relief in the niche in Sennacherib's throne room again presented the king flanking the sacred tree together with genii protecting him is not clear as it is now largely destroyed. Originally, it consisted of two slabs and could easily have accommodated such a scene,[121] though it does seem odd because in such a case the tree would have been divided right in the middle. Consequently, this kind of arrangement of the image bearer strongly suggests a different kind of iconography. Furthermore, this niche is not exactly flush with the axis of the main entrance to the throne room, a feature that reappears in Ashurbanipal's North Palace, though in contrast with Ashurnasirpal II's throne room, the military narrative represented to the right and left of the niche continues without interruption in a narrow band below the niche.[122] In as much as the niche does not lie exactly along the central axis of the main entrance to the throne room, it seems that the architects and designers had a similar purpose in mind when it came to the epiphany of the king performed for the populace assembled in the courtyard.

[118] Batmaz, 2013: 72 with fig. 15 showing a divinity standing on a bull in the Adilcevaz relief; Justement, in press.
[119] Kertai, 2015b: 337–338 with figs. 1 and 11.
[120] Reade, 1980: 81.
[121] As suggested by Russell, 1991: 48–50.
[122] Nadali, 2008: 474.

Fig. 12: The Gorge of Khinis/Bavian – Reconstruction (after Bachmann, 1927: pl. 7).

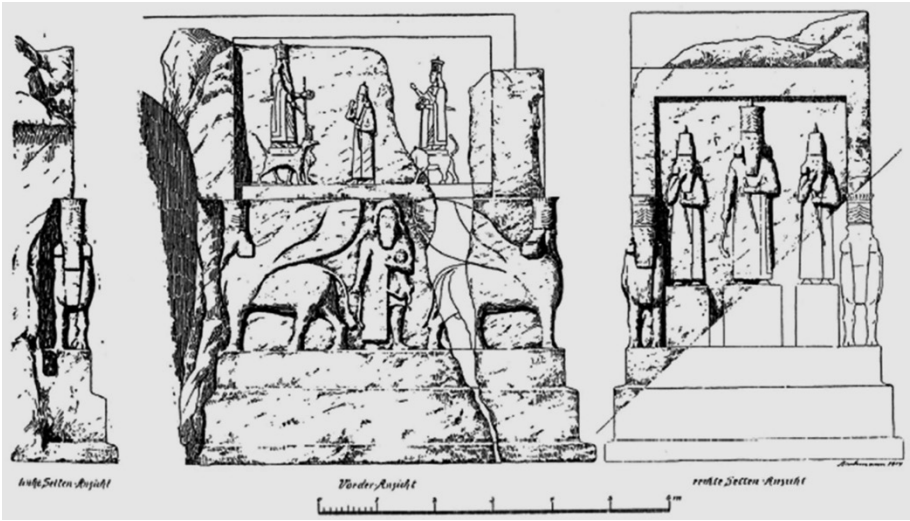

Fig. 13: The Gate Reliefs (after Bachman, 1927: fig. 13).

While evidence of the design of the niche in the palace is lacking, the rock reliefs that Sennacherib had carved into the cliffs along the "northern system" of irrigation in the areas of Bavian, Širu Maliktha, and Khinis provide insight into how he preferred to have himself represented within the divine sphere. The relief of Bavian shows the king venerating human-shaped deities standing on their emblematic animals,[123] thus mirroring Sargon II's pictorial choice in Maltai and Faida. In Širu Maliktha, situated some ten kilometers east of Faida, by contrast, Sennacherib chose to have himself depicted in worship before divine symbols, a Neo-Assyrian motif familiar from steles before and after him[124]

This configuration of the king with the gods stands in contrast to one of the reliefs sculpted on the so-called *Gate Monument* at Khinis close to Bavian (Fig. 12). As I see it, it is only this group of reliefs that evokes what might have been imagined as an epiphany of the king.

Support for this reasoning is provided by the relief on the left side of the *Gate Monument*, which, on its front, contains two registers and references the pictorial program of the façade of the throne room in Sennacherib's Palace (Fig. 13). The lower register shows the Gilgamesh figure holding a lion between two winged and human-headed bulls similar to the one in Sargon II's palace, while the upper one depicts two divinities: Assur standing on the *mušhuššu* and the *abūbu* deluge monster[125] on the left, and Mullissu standing on a lion on the right. In between, facing Assur, stands the king in the ritual dress of the *šangû* priest performing the

[123] For an excellent treatment of Sennacherib's iconographic choice of representing the deities that way, see Justement *in press*.
[124] Ornan, 2007: 163.
[125] Seidl, 1998.

appa labānu gesture of prayer, i.e. the touching of the nose, a gesture re-introduced by Sennacherib.[126] This configuration references the cultic context of the temple, one in which the king is standing before the divine statues as he performs his prayers. The depictions of the divinities reproduce those in the temple.[127] As suggested by former scholarship, this two-dimensional articulation of the two registers is supposed to evoke a three-dimensional space, with the lower register representing the outer and the upper register representing the inner space. Tallay Ornan assumes that the latter hints at a shrine, an assumption adopted by Mario Fales as well.[128] While this may well be true, my suggestion is that the image as a whole is pointing to something that is absent, thus introducing the phenomenon of *deixis*, that is, making something invisible visible,[129] and eliciting what Ernst Gombrich termed "the beholder's share," i.e. the cultural knowledge stored in the mind of the beholder.[130] The iconographic composition is connected to cultural knowledge, so the cultic scene should not be interpreted as a self-contained scene in the mimetic sense. Rather, the cultic space depicted represents the departure point, the center of contained activity in stillness before the king proceeds towards the outer world. In other words, the resemblance in the design of Sargon II's and Sennacherib's throne room façades and Sennacherib's monument at Khinis is meant to transpose the architectural reality of the palace *and* temple onto the *Gate Monument* in order to evoke the moment of the king's epiphany as orchestrated by the architecture of his throne room, but now layering the spatial realities of the temple and the palace into a single image. By layering these two realities Sennacherib is creating a *perceived* context, one that is "not merely a physical environment, but rather a socio-cultural reference structure."[131] And thus the royal epiphany, which in the palace at Nineveh was still to a certain degree a secluded affair, has been turned in Khinis into an open-air performance in the landscape of Northern Assyria similar to the open-air sanctuaries known in the former Hittite as well as contemporary Urartian tradition.[132] The iconographic difference from works by Sennacherib's predecessors is that in the particular case of the upper register in his reign, the image-makers preferred to depict only a cultic reality, a decision that stands in stark contrast with Ashurnasirpal II's deeply symbolic pictorial metaphor of the king flanking the sacred tree with the divinity hovering in the winged disk and flanked by apotropaic genii above the scene. However, even though it depicts a cultic scene, this image, albeit mimetic in its *configura-*

[126] Magen, 1986.
[127] Boehmer, 1957–1971: 480; Boehmer, 1975: 56; Orthmann, 1975: 69, 323, pl. XXIIIa–b, Reade, 1987–1990: 321; Bär, 2006: 65.
[128] Ornan, 2007: 167 and Fales, 2015: 551.
[129] Boehm, 2015: 114–140.
[130] Gombrich, 2000: 181–202.
[131] Pinnock, 2020: 5.
[132] Bär, 2006: 75–83.

tion with the lower register, functions as a reference to another reality, namely that of the niche in the palace and the movement of the king away from the divine sphere towards his subjects. The lower scene with the Gilgamesh figure replicates the iconography of the throne room façade and so contextualizes and frames the image in the upper register and transposes the entire scene into the imagined bounded locale of the palace in order to embed the institutionally regulated social encounter with the king. Again, the iconography elicits the cultural memory of the movement enacted by the king at the moment of his epiphany in the palace, but here insinuates his progress out of the temple, i.e., the sphere owned by the gods that secure the authority of his power.

The relief on the right side of the *Gate Monument* at Khinis, by contrast, while evoking a cultic reality, does so differently (Figure 13 see above). Like the "Large Relief" (Fig. 14) the scene on it is self-contained. Here, the king is shown standing on a pedestal to the right and to the left of the god Assur while eliciting the cultural knowledge of the scenario typical of the cella in the temple, where he is represented by his statue, which serves as his secondary agent to the right and the left of the divinity, thereby guaranteeing his eternal communication with the gods.[133] This image operates within a scenario that in Mesopotamian culture normally remains hidden from the outer world. It represents a reality in the temple, inaccessible to everybody save the temple personnel and the king. However, while the statues of the king in the temple were generally not placed on a pedestal and were probably slightly turned towards the cultic image in order to ensure successful and constant communication, the image-makers of the king in this case chose to place him on a pedestal of the same height as the one used for the god Assur and to render all three statues frontally, with the god's and the king's gazes projecting towards the beholder.[134] As discussed by Karen Sonik, frontal and profile representations of a face encode fundamentally different modes of communication; the frontal face and position imply a first-person address, a direct interaction between "I," i.e. the figure itself, and an implicit "you," the external audience. In Sonik's words: "This contrasts sharply with the profile figure, grammatically third person, which is read as the impersonal "he" or "she": remote and utterly contained in its own space and action, it is safely viewed by the external and unseen audience."[135] Thus, while transferring the secluded reality into the landscape by presenting and visualizing the hidden scenario of the cella, the combination of the king's frontality (rather than the profile of the other reliefs) and elevation on a pedestal

[133] See the letters SAA 10 13 for the placement of the king's statue and the ones of the princes in the cella of the temple of the moon god Sîn in Harran, and further SAA 13 34, and 178. For the double placement of the king's statue see SAA 13 140 and 141, 350 and 358. For further evidence in the royal inscriptions see May, 2020.

[134] On the gaze in Mesopotamian art see Bahrani, 1996; Winter, 2000; Marinatos, 2000; Asher-Greve, 2003; Sonik, 2013; Neumann, 2015.

[135] Sonik, 2013: 287–288, with reference to Shapiro, 1973.

at the same height as the god Assur aims at a very concrete reception by the beholder, namely veneration not only of the god, but also of the king. Here, then, the empowerment of the king through the divine aura operates in a completely different way than in the scene with the depiction of Gilgamesh; in this case, the relief engages the spectator to acknowledge the king's place in the divine realm and to accept the unbridgeable hierarchy between the ruler and his subjects. This image of Sennacherib, to my understanding, conveys a different message from the one attested in Shalmaneser III's bronze bands on the Balawat Gates, which shows the king's image as represented in a royal stele together with the divine standards as recipient of offerings at the shore of the Lake Na'iri.[136] This image reflects a temporary cultic performance of paying homage to the king on the occasion of his military campaign to the Lake Urmia celebrating his achievement by setting up his stela that *presences* him in the periphery of his empire. Inaccessible and aloof, Sennacherib, by contrast, has claimed his place within the divine sphere without encouraging his subjects to interact in form of offerings or otherwise.[137]

The "Large Relief" (Figure 14) depicts the king, seen twice, gesturing in adoration. He stands to the right of the goddess Mullissu, who is perched on a lion, as well as to the left of her consort, the god Assur, who stands atop a *mušhuššu* and lion-griffin. The double image of the king flanking the divine couple again evokes the secluded context of the temple cella. It is only through the recent work of the landscape archaeology project conducted by Daniele Morandi Bonacossi in north-western Kurdistan that we now have a better understanding of this royal image. The project, which focuses on the irrigation systems north of the Neo-Assyrian royal residences, has conducted a UAV survey of all the rock reliefs in the region and has thus provided new documentation of a detail that is most relevant to our discussion of royal pictorial *presencing*. Close-range, high-resolution images reveal that the rod held by the left hand of the goddess Mullissu was topped with a palmette with bunches of dates and pomegranates decorating its extremities. The trunk of the tree – which served as the rod's handle – is represented by the king's figure in the *labān appi* gesture of prayer.[138] Again, as in the case of Ashurnaṣirpal II's GIŠ sign on the trunk of the tree, so here we encounter a pictorial choice that is extremely meaningful to the *presencing* of kingship, albeit not visible to anyone from afar. In the case of Ashurnaṣirpal II, the image makers included the GIŠ sign as a subtle reference to the presence of the legendary king Gilgamesh, a model of kingship, while here, those who designed Sennacherib's image included the figure of the king himself. Thus, the presence of the king in the divine image became far more historicized and individualized

[136] May, 2020: 214, fig. 5a–b.

[137] While Sennacherib's inscription at Bavian reveals that offerings to the gods were made on the occasion of the opening of the Gate Monument, there is no textual or pictorial evidence for continuous cultic activity (RINAP 3/2: Sennacherib 223:27–30).

[138] Morandi Bonacossi, 2018b: 94.

than it had been in the mythological intimation of him in the earlier relief of Ashurnaṣirpal II.

Fig. 14: Drawing of the "Large Relief" (after Bachman, 1927: fig 8).

This particular pictorial detail reveals that the association of the palm tree with kingship – legendary or human – has been an important trope in the ideological discourse of the king's image-makers, one that was expressed in a host of variations over the centuries between Kings Ashurnaṣirpal II and Ashurbanipal. It will survive into the *Book of Daniel* with the tree as metaphor for the king:

> 'I saw a tree in the middle of the world. And it was extremely tall. The tree grew taller and stronger, until its top reached the sky, and it was visible from the ends of the earth. Its foliage was beautiful, its fruit plentiful, and there was food for all on it. For wild animals it provided shade, and in its branches rested the birds, and from it every creature fed …' 'That tree … it is you, O king …!'[139]

[139] Daniel 4:7–9, 17, 19; quoted after Wyatt, 2001: 169–170.

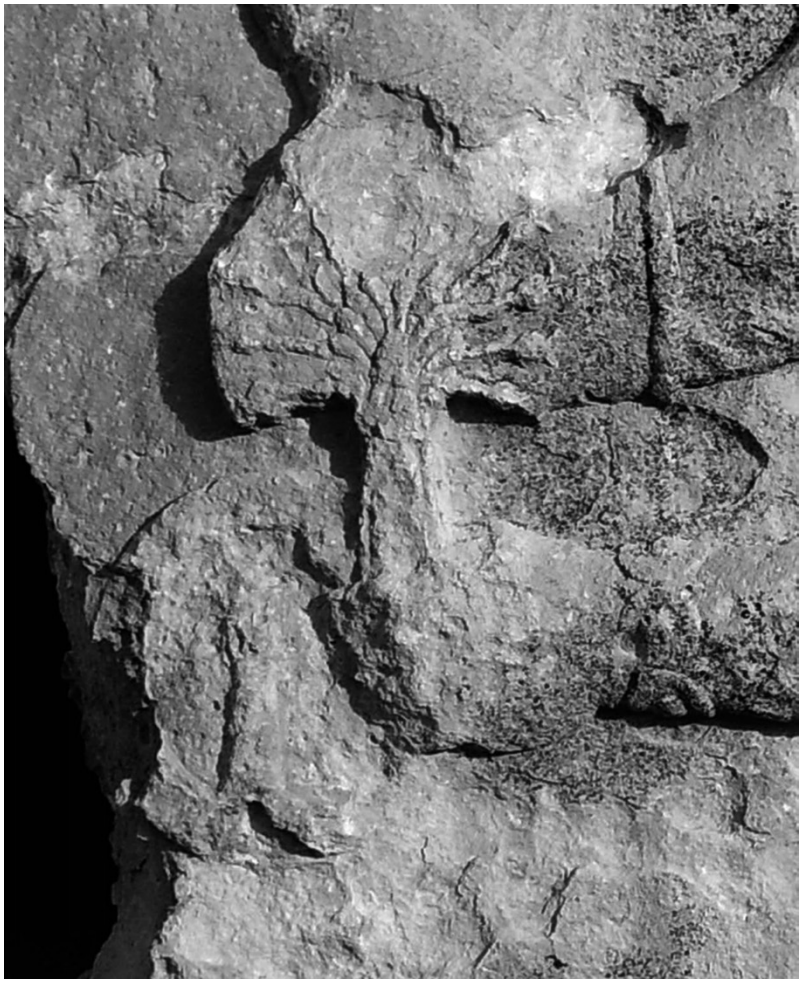

Fig. 15: Top of the rod held by the goddess Mullissu in the "Large Relief." Courtesy of The University of Udine, "Land of Nineveh Archaeological Project" (photograph: Alberto Savioli).

Moreover, consideration of this trope in the *longue durée* of Assyrian ideological discourse brings to light its complexity: not only does it tie the historical king back to the legendary model ruler Gilgamesh, but it also *presences* the king as the mediator between the heavenly and earthly realms. The king, therefore, is receiving – as well as promoting – fertility and abundance, brought about by his relationship with the divine sphere.[140] The pictorial metaphor of the Assyrian king in the palmette tree thus needs to be distinguished from representations that show him holding a triple blossom consisting of pomegranates, poppy heads or the lotus

[140] Winter, 2003: 256.

plant in his hand, all of which can be associated with the trope of the king proffering abundance and prosperity to his people and land.[141]

Although Ashurnasirpal II and Sargon II imported the mythological and transcendental into their palaces, the performative act of royal epiphany remained tied to this particular institutional space. Sennacherib, by contrast, merges the two institutional realities of the temple and the palace in the central image of the *Gate Monument*, thereby claiming his place within the divine sphere. Nonetheless, the action expected to occur in this image is still the performance of royal epiphany. In the image to the right of the *Gate Monument*, however, the king remains aloof, the configuration of the image does not raise expectations that he will step out to connect with his subjects. Enclosed in and sharing the divine sphere, he remains inaccessible and beyond human reach. Any kind of engagement with the pleas of his subjects remains at his discretion, and royal epiphany has been turned into continuous royal hierophany within the cultic space, i.e., the realm of the divine has sacralized kingship in a new way.

Abbreviations

RIMA 2	Grayson, 1991
RINAP 3/2	Grayson / Novotny, 2014
SAA 3	Livingstone, 1989
SAA 13	Cole / Machinist, 1998
SAA 20	Parpola, 2017

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[141] Portuese, 2018.

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To Be Assyrian Residents

A Reflection on the Integration of the Subjugated People into the Assyrian Empire[1]

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Introduction

The city state of Aššur had definitely become a multi-ethnic state during the second millennium BC, when its native residents were intermingled with neighboring Amorite and Hurrian populations and integrated altogether into the territorial state *māt Aššur*, i.e., Assyria (cf. Postgate, 1989). The ethno-linguistic complexity of Assyria further increased in the Neo-Assyrian period, especially in its imperial phase, when its vigorous military advance extended its territorial horizon outward, annexing more distant countries by deporting their populations multi-directionally to be resettled in other countries.

More than a few scholars have discussed the nature of Assyrian state formation in regard to mass-deportation. One of the disputed points was whether the ultimate goal of the Assyrian deportation and resettlement policy was to create a homogenous population of "Assyrians" (Parpola, 2004: 5; Radner, 2015: 110), or whether the Assyrian kings maintained their heterogeneity, urging them to compete the loyalty to the king as their one and only protector (e.g. Oded, 1979: 46–48; Fuchs 2005: 52; Sano, 2020: 51–59). It has also been discussed whether or not Assyrians pursued the cultural assimilation of subordinated people as a policy, in areas such as religion, language, weights and measures, social custom, etc., alongside their integration into the provincial organization with equally imposed taxation and conscriptions; and if Assyrian cultural assimilation took place, when, where, and how the people were assimilated into the Assyrian imperial culture.[2]

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[1] This is a revised version of my paper read in the conference held at University of Helsinki on December 4–5, 2019. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the organizers Johannes Bach and Sebastian Fink, as well as the colleagues at Helsinki, for their warm hospitality. I am very grateful to Katsuji Sano, who read a draft of this article, and offered a number of valuable comments. I am also indebted to the anonymous reviewer whose keen criticism lead me to improve the article in many points. I thank Gina Konstantopoulos who kindly took the trouble of correcting my English. The study is financially supported by the grant-in-aid of the Japanese MEXT/JSPS 18H05445, 16H01948.

[2] S. Parpola considered that the process of Assyrianization worked fastest in central Assyria but thereafter and still rapidly in the provinces, and that by 600 BC the entire vastly expanded country of Assyria shared the Assyrian identity, which essentially consisted of a common unifying language (Aramaic) and a common religion, culture, and value system (Parpola, 2004: 9–15). The Assyrian religious imperialism over the expanded

These issues should be elucidated through scrutinizing many separate sets of archaeological and documentary evidence originating from various lands and different periods, and regarding the variety of cultural-social phenomena.

In spite of these vexing questions, it is beyond any doubt that the Assyrian state unification[3] over the subjugated land and people was realized politically and administratively. It was achieved through the planning of Assyrian state elites and functionaries with the king at their summit. The king's intention to unify the state and its population is expressed by the king's speech in royal inscriptions, most markedly by phrases such as *itti nišī māt Aššur manû*, "counting (the subjugated people) with the people of Assyria" or *kī ša Aššurī emēdu* "imposing (upon them tax, tribute and labor) like that of Assyrians." These phrases are attested often in the inscriptions of the two empire builders, Tiglath-pileser III (r. 744–727) and Sargon II (r. 721–705), though comparable expressions are found in earlier inscriptions as well (see below,§1).

The aim of this paper is to review the use of these expressions in the Assyrian royal inscriptions as literary codes that claim the creation of unity in the Assyrian state with subordinated residents. Though the expressions were previously noted and discussed by many scholars, such as M. Cogan (1974: 5–51), B. Oded (1979: 81–91), P. Machinist (1993), W. Röllig (1996: 108), S. Parpola (2004: 13–14 nn. 37 and 38), F. M. Fales (2015, 2018, 2019), M. Liverani (2017: 203–215), and most recently K. Sano (2020: 51–59), it is nevertheless still of value to review them to consider their ideological implications and literary characteristics, paying attention to the contexts where and when such expressions either appear or do not appear. Following a diachronic and contextual examination of expressions and related passages dealing with the incorporation of subordinated people (§1–2), I will discuss how the use of such expressions reflects on the changing political-ideological concerns of the Assyrian kings over the progressive extension of the "land of Aššur" (§3). Then, in order to consider what sort of unity is implied by those expressions, whether political, administrative, or cultural, I will examine for comparison the terms translated "Assyrian(s)," i.e. *Aššurāyu*/*Aššurī*, *mar'a māt Aššur* in archival sources in various contexts (§4). In comparison with the use of

territory has been separately discussed by several scholars; for example, see Cogan (1974), and Holloway (2002) with bibliography. A. Bagg considered that the creation of the Assyrian identity as Parpola suggested was a plausible scenario in the Assyrian core and likely also possible in the extended core area of Jezirah from Tigris in east to Euphrates in west, but not applicable to areas outside of this zone (Bagg, 2014: 5). Cf. also Bagg, 2011: 281–295 and Bagg, 2013 concerning the situation of Levant, and MacGinnis, 2012 for that of Ziyaret Tepe (ancient Tušhan) on upper Tigris.

[3] The use of the words and phrases "nation" and "national identity/unity" is avoided in this article, since those terms have now become broadly regarded as the concepts ideologically formulated only with the rise of the nation states in modern times, after the influential view advanced by scholars such as B. Anderson (1983) and R. B. Hall (1999).

the terms in archival texts, I will confirm that expressions such as *itti nišī māt Aššur manû*, etc. found in the royal inscriptions speak to, for the most part, the political-administrative unity of Assyria, rather than its cultural unification.

1. The relevant expressions in the late middle Assyrian and the Neo-Assyrian pre-imperial phases

Passages that refer to the residents of conquered lands as being regarded as the people of Assyria are already found in the late Middle Assyrian period. At this point, Assyria was established as a large territorial state, laying a foundation for the later rise of the Neo-Assyrian empire. The annals of Tiglath-pileser I (r. 1114–1076), inscribed on a number of prisms found in Aššur, as well as his shorter texts, include several relevant references. After describing his military successes in the lands of Katmuhu and Šubrû, his inscriptions read as follows:

> I took the remaining 6,000 of their troops (of the Mušku in the land Katmuhu) who had fled from my weapons (and) submitted to me and counted them as the people of my land (*ana nišī mātiya amnušunūti*)
> (RIMA 2, A.0.87.1, i 85–88)

> (After the subjugation of the land of Šubrû) "the 4,000 Kaskaeans and Urumaeans, insubmissive troops of Hatti ….. They submitted to me. I took them together with their property and 120 chariots (and) harnessed horses, and counted them as the people of my land (*ana nišī mātiya amnušunūti*)" (RIMA 2, A.0.87.1, iii 5–6; cf. also the similar passages in A.0.87.2, ll. 21–22; A.0.87.10, ll. 24–25).

The destination to which the deported people were carried away is not revealed in these passages. It is assumed, however, that they were transported to the central area of Assyria, since a later inscription (A.0.87.2, ll. 18–20) records the uprooting of the troops of Mušku to Assyria, reading: "[I defeated] 12,000 troops of the extensive Mušku. [The remaining] troops I uprooted (and) brought down into my land (*ana qereb mātiya ušērida*)."

The inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser I describe the result of military operations, routinely including some of the following elements:

(1) the destruction and plundering of enemy lands, and the receipt of their tribute.
(2) the imposition of "tribute and tax" (*biltu*, *maddattu*) or "the yoke of Aššur" (*nīr Aššur*) on an annual basis, as obligations attached to the countries reduced to Assyrian vassals (*nīr bēlūtiya rapšu elīšūnu ukīn pān Aššur bēliya ušadgilšunūti*); as well as securing the loyalty of the vassals by imposing oaths (*ana ardutte utammišunūti*) and taking hostages (*līṭu aṣbat*).
(3) the annexation of conquered land to Assyria (*ana miṣir mātiya utēr*/*uterra*).

(4) the deportation of subjugated people to the core area of Assyria, "counting them as the people of my land" (*ana nišī mātiya amnušunūti*)."

This literary paradigm was mostly maintained later in inscriptions from the Neo-Assyrian period as well.

After the time of Tiglath-pileser I, the relevant expressions, such as the "counting them as the people of my land," are not found during the period of the Assyrian territorial recession in the eleventh to the first half of the tenth centuries BC. Then, in the period of Reconquista of the traditional land of Aššur from the end of the tenth century BC, [4] a number of expressions relating to the integration of subordinated people reappear.[5] The earliest is found in a passage from the inscription of Adad-nerari II (r. 911–891) (RIMA 2, A.0.99.2: 39–79) that appears to tell of the incorporation of the subjugated people of Jazirah into Assyria, following the six campaigns against Nūr-Adad of Temannu during which Huzurina, Gidara (= Raqammatu), and Naṣibina were attacked. The passage concluding the account is slightly corrupted, but it may read with emendation as follows:

ālāni ištu nišī <ana> māt Aššur ašrukšunu minûssu<nu> amnu
"I granted the cities together with the people to the land of Aššur (and) counted their number."[6] (KAH 2, no. 84, ASS. 7849=VAT8288; RIMA 2, A.0.99.2, l. 79)

Similarly, the inscriptions of Adad-nerari II, Tukulti-Ninurta II (r. 890–884) and Assurnasirpal II (r. 883–859) use the same phraseology to refer to the integration of subjugated people into Assyria in passages summarizing the kings' achievements without specifying the place and time:

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[4] For the generally accepted historical framework of Assyrian territorial history, see Postgate, 1992 = Postgate, 2007: 199–215.

[5] A passage from the inscription of Aššur-dan II (RIMA 2, A.0.98.1, ll. 31–32) quoted by Liverani (2017: 204) as a relevant expression is at best ambiguous and probably does not refer to the phrase "counting as Assyrians." It reads: […… *s*]*i-ta-te-šu-nu a-su-ha i-na x*-[…… *ana mi-ṣi-i*]*r* KUR *aš-šur am-nu-*⌜*šu*⌝*-nu-*[*ti*] "the rest of them (Aramaeans of the land of Yahan), I uprooted (and settled) …… I counted them (= cities in Yahan) [within] in the borders of Assyria." The object of the verb *amnu-šunūti* is probably the cities of Yahan, rather than its people. The formula *ana miṣ*[*iriya*] *amnu* with toponyms as objects is attested also in the annals of Sargon II (RINAP 2, Sargon II 2, ll. 343–344 = Fuchs, 1994: 151–152, ll. 300–301; cf. CAD M/1: 225).

[6] In RIMA 2, p. 151, Grayson notes: "This line is still (cf. ARI 2 p. 89 n. 373) difficult and my interpretation is uncertain." The emendation given here may solve the problem; cf. CAD M/II: 99 and CAD Š/II: 43. However, Sano suggests an alternative reading: *<ana> ālāni ištu nišī māt Aššur ašrukšunu minûssu<nu> amnu* "<to> the cities with the people of Assyria, I presented them (the troops of Nūr-Adad) and counted their number" (Sano, 2020: 101–102).

> *eli māt Aššur māta eli nišīša nišī uraddi*
> "To Assyria (the land of Aššur) I added land(s) and to its people I added people." (RIMA 2, A.0.99.2, ll. 120–121; A.0.100.3, rev. 3'–4'; A.0.101.30, ll. 100-101)[7]

In the lengthy annals of Assurnasirpal II, phraseology such as "counting them as the people of my land/Assyria" is not normally given. While the text refers to the resettling of subjugated people of Nirbu (RIMA 2, A.0.101.1, ii 7–11) and Matiatu (ibid. ii 89–91) in Tur Abdin in their own houses and cities, they apparently survived in their homelands, accepting Assyrian vassalage. The annals and other texts of Assurnasirpal II also mention relocating the people of various conquered lands into the capital city of Kalhu or another location in the central Assyrian region (2,500 troops of Bit-Adini, the people of the lands of Suhu, Kaprabi, Zamua, Bit-Zamani, and Šubru, the city Sirqu, the lands of Laqe, Hatti, and Patin; and 1,500 Aramaean troops of Bit-Zamani [A.0.101.1, iii 50–54; A.0.101.1.30, ll. 33–36; A.101.23, ll. 14–20]). These records are, however, again without the phrase "counting them as the people of my land."[8]

In spite of the absence of the phrase in question in these yearly campaign accounts, the annals and a number of other inscriptions of Assurnasirpal II commonly do include it in the concluding summary of the king's conquests that appears after the yearly accounts, as follows:

> I counted (the people) from the pass of the city Babitu to Mount Hašmar as the people of my land (*ana nišī mātiya amnu*). (RIMA 2, A.0.101.1, iii

[7] A.0.101.30, ll. 100–101 read a little differently: *eli māt Aššur eli niša nīšī a-na-sa*[*ḫ*] *uraddi*, with an extra word *a-na-sa*[*ḫ*], which likely means "(the people whom I uprooted)" Sano (2015b) considered that the expression is probably used not for the annexation of lands to the Assyrian provincial system, but for the reduction of those to the status of vassalage. In this connection, it should be noted that the expression *eli māt Aššur māta eli nišīša nišī uraddi* is a cliché dating back to the annals of Tiglath-pileser I (RIMA 2, A.0.87.1, vii 32), where it also appears at the end of the annals, within a string of passages claiming the increase of the chariots and cavalries, lands, and people of Assyria. In these expressions, which generally sum up the gains from the military expeditions, one may not precisely determine whether the lands and people were placed under either annexation or vassalage.

[8] The annals further refer to the settling of the people of Assyria in Aribua, the city taken to be an Assyrian bridgehead within the territory of the still independent kingdom of Patin / Unqi in North Syria (A.0.101.1, iii 50–54). Similarly, the king's Kurkh Monolith mentions the settling of Assyrians in the cities taken and reconstructed in the land of Nairi (A.0.101.19, 85–97). These, however, do not accompany any statement for their living together with local people.

124–125; A.0.101.3, ll. 44–45; A.0.101.23, l. 11 [Standard Inscription]; A.0.101.26, ll. 29–30; cf. also A.0.101.33, l. 13').[9]

The phrase "I counted (the people) as the people of my land" is applied to quite a limited area "from the pass of the city Babitu to Mount Hašmar" is apparently related to the result of the king's consecutive campaigns crossing the Babitu pass into the land of Zamua (A.0.101.1, ii 23–86), where Assyria had already owned the city Arrakdi (Assyrian name Tukulti-Aššur-aṣbat), and further took the deserted city of Atlila for renovation, renaming it to Dūr-Aššur. Thus, the area was probably reorganized into a new province of Zamua (Sulaymaniyah area) after these expeditions.[10] This may imply that the local people are "administratively" registered as "the people of my land (i.e., Assyria)" (*nišī mātiya*) with the annexation of Zamua; some of them were carried to Assyria, while others were settled together with Assyrians in cities taken, rebuilt and settled by Assyrians in the region, such as Arrakdi and Dūr-Aššur. Many others probably remained in their original towns and villages and were regarded as the residents of Assyria from Assyrian viewpoint.[11]

The inscriptions of Shalmaneser III (r. 858–824), successor of Assurnasirpal II, refer to the transformation of individual cities into Assyrian cities, expressing this as: "I took (the city so and so) as my royal city" (*ana āl šarrūtiya aṣbat*)" or "I took (the city so and so) for myself" (*ana ramāniya aṣbat*). These cities were all located in North Syria, around the great bend of the Euphrates, and the Balih river (see Yamada, 2000: 301f.). The settling of Assyrians in these newly occupied cities, either as provincial centers or as outposts, is mentioned on the Kurkh

[9] This passage is followed and concluded by the general statement: "In the lands over which I gained dominion I always appointed my governors. They entered (lit. performed) servitude (and) I imposed upon them corvée" (RIMA 2, A.0.101.1, iii 125; A.0.101.3, ll. 45–46; A0.101.23, ll. 11–12; A.0.101.26, ll. 30–32). A similar general statement is also found in an annalistic text of Assurnasirpal II's successor Shalmaneser III, in the summary of his achievements (A.0.102.6, iv 37–39): "In the lands and mountains over which I gained dominion I appointed governors everywhere and imposed tax and tribute, and corvée upon them" (*ina mātāti u huršāni ša abīlušināni šaknūtiya altakkan biltu maddattu zābil kudurri elīšunu aškun*). Such general statements concerning the period in which the Reconquista of the traditional "Land of Aššur" was greatly advanced and completed, are vague. It is likely that they deal with territories integrated in various ways into the Assyrian dominion, including provinces and outposts as well as semi-independent lands ruled by local dynasts regarded as Assyrian governors (Yamada, 2000: 303; and recently Sano, 2015a and Sano, 2017).

[10] The timing of the annexation of Zamua is discussed in a separate article (Yamada, 2020).

[11] In this connection, one may note that Assurnasirpal II is said to have imposed upon the kings of Zamua tribute and tax, and obliged them to perform the corvée work in Kalhu (A.0.101.1, ii 77). Some local leaders likely kept their autonomy within their own towns even after the annexation. See Yamada, 2020.

Monolith (RIMA 3, A.0.102.2, ii 34) particularly concerning the cities of Bit-Adini:

> I seized the cities Til-barsip, Alligu, [Nappigu], (and) Rugulitu for my royal cities. I settled therein Assyrians (*amīlē Aššurāya ina libbi ušēšib*) (and) founded inside palaces as my royal residences.

No phraseology such as the "counting them as the people of my land" is found here, since the settled people referred to had originally been regarded as "the people of my land," or Assyrians, even though local people could also have been settled there together with them.

Shalmaneser III's numerous inscriptions refer to the captives (*šallatu*) from the west (the Balih region, Bit-Adini, Bit-Agusi and Patin), the north (Šubria, Urartu and Hubuškia), and from the east (Namri and Allabria), occasionally giving the number of deportees (see Yamada, 2000: 260). Though the destination of the deportees is never revealed, most of them were supposedly carried away to the core area of Assyria. Those narratives normally do not include a statement such as "counting them as the people of my land." However, a passage from the Throne Base Inscription exceptionally does, reading as follows:

> ….. (Thus) I gained dominion over all the wide land of Hatti. I deported 87,500 troops of the land of Hatti (and) counted (them) as the people of my land (*ana nišē mātiya amnu*). I deported Ahuni, the man of Bit-Adini, who had fought with might and main against the kings my fathers. I deported him together with his troops, his gods, his chariots, (and) his horses (and) counted him among my people (*adi ummānātešu ilānišu narkabātešu sīsêšu assuhaššu ana nišīya amnušu*).
> (RIMA 3, A.102.28, ll. 24–28).

The stele of Šamši-Adad V (r. 823–811), son of Shalmaneser III, has a passage dealing with the siege and submission of the city Mē-turnat during the campaign to Babylonia, including the record of the transfer of people with the phrase "counting them as the people of my land," as follows:

> I led those people out and brought them with their property (and) gods into my land. I counted them as the people of my land (…… *ana libbi mātiya ūbilšunūti ana nišē mātiya amnu*). (RIMA 2, A.0.103.1, iv 6–8)

In the continuation of the account of the same campaign, the text also relates the conquest of the city Dūr-Papsukkal, as well as the carrying off of 3,000 people and integration of its captured warriors into the army of Assyria:

> I captured 3,000 (soldiers) alive. I carried off from that city its royal bed, its royal couch, the treasure of its palace, its palace women, its property, possessions, gods and anything desirable in its palace, in countless quanti-

ties. Its (the city's) captured warriors were pressed like locusts into (the service for) the troops of my land (*šallat qurādīšu kīma eribī ana ummānāti mātiya lū ippādū*). (RIMA 2, A.0.103.1, iv 34–36)

To sum up, concerning all the passages discussed until this point, one can note the following:

(1) Deportation is normally unidirectional. Most of the deportees are said to have been carried away to the Assyrian capital, or somewhere in the core area of Assyria; and others were settled in cities rebuilt and set under Assyrian control in the very subjugated region where they were first captured.
(2) The people taken to Assyrian capital and its surroundings were apparently integrated into the Assyrian society, as described: "counting them as the people of my land / my people" (*ana nišī mātiya manû; ana nišīya manû*)"; "adding them to its people (i.e. the people of *māt Aššur* / Assyria)" (*eli nišīša ruddû*); "pressing them to the troops of my land" (*ana ummānāti mātiya pâdu*). The policy of state unification was mostly described as if it were applied inward to the core area of Assyria or internally within the traditional land of Aššur. In any case, the unification of the inhabitants of Assyria thus appears to have been regarded as a natural process of integration taking place in the spaces where the Assyrians, or those who had been recognized as Assyrians conventionally, were the majority.

This mode of operation, as reflected on the literary description of the royal inscriptions, acutely changed from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (r. 744–727) on.

2. The relevant expressions in the imperial phase

Tiglath-pileser III's annals composed toward the end of his reign include a number of attestations of relevant phrases, such as: "I counted them *with* the people of Assyria" (*itti nišī māt Aššur amnušunūti*) and "I imposed the labors (or: the yoke of Aššur) like that of Assyrians upon them" (*ilku tupšikku kī ša Aššurī ēmissunūti*; *nīr Aššur bēliya kī ša Aššurī ēmissunūti*). These phrases are all found in contexts describing the organization of new provinces by resettling deportees, who were carried off from other distant frontiers. The deportees "counted with the people of Assyria" are as follows:

(1) "the people of conquered lands" (*nišī mātāti kišitti qātīya*) who were brought into the newly taken city of Kār-Aššur (previously called Humut) on the Babylonian border (RINAP 1, TP III 5, ll. 3–4);
(2) Aramaean deportees from Babylonia settled in the western, northern, and eastern border marches of *turtānu*, *rab-šāqê*, and Mazamua, as well as the

province of Barhalzi located in the core area of Assyria (RINAP 1, TP III 5, ll. 4–12);

(3) the deportees from the mountains east of the Tigris who were carried to the cities and lands in the north Syria and southeast Anatolia (Unqi, Ṣimirra, Arqa, Usnu, Siannu, Tu'imme, Til-karme), all annexed to Assyria (RINAP 1, TP III 14 // TP III 26–27).

This resettling of people was done under the new policy of multidirectional cross-deportation, and not under the conventional one that transferred deportees mainly from the frontier to the core area of Assyria.[12]

Another passage possibly concerning the integration of subjugated people into Assyria is found in the commemorative text carved on the stele from Iran (RINAP 1, TP III 35), composed earlier than the annals.[13] The passage appears just after a geographical summary of the king's conquests, reading as follows:

> I annexed all of those cities and lands to Assyria, (and) I increased the territory of Assyria by taking hold of (foreign) lands (and) added countless people to its population. I constantly shepherd them in safe pastures (*eli miṣir māt Aššur mātāti ušātir aṣbat eli nišīša nišī ana lā māni uraddi aburriš artene'ušināti*) (ii 15'–17').

Sargon II (r. 721–705) continued Tiglath-pileser III's empire building, and inherited the same deportation policy. His inscriptions include phrases similar to those used by his predecessor. The phrase *itti nišī māt Aššur amnu* is applied to the people brought from somewhere outside and settled in Carchemish (RINAP 2, Sargon II 74, iv 20), Asdudu (RINAP 2, Sargon II 1, l. 262 [= Fuchs, 1994: 135, l. 253]; Sargon II 2, l. 287, Sargon II 7, l. 109) and Kišesim (RINAP 2, Sargon II 82 [= Fuchs, 1998: 26], iii 10'; Sargon II 9, ll. 20–21)[14] and is also attested as applied to the residents of Gurgum (RINAP 2, Sargon II 7 [cf. Fuchs, 1994: 218], l. 89; Sargon II 3, l. 6') and Muṣaṣir (RINAP 2, Sargon II 65 [= Mayer, 2013], l. 410), Tabal/Bit-Purutaš (RINAP 2, Sargon II 74, l. 33) who were apparently allowed to stay within those same lands. Another phrase "I imposed the tax and payment like that of Assyrians upon them" (*biltu maddattu kī ša Aššurī ēmissunūti*) is used for the people settled in Samaria (RINAP 2, Sargon II 1 [= Fuchs, 1994: 88], l. 17; Sargon II 74, l. 41), and a similar phrase *ilku tupšikku kī ša Aššurī ēmissunūti*, attested also in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (see above), appears together with the phrase *itti nišī māt Aššur amnu* in the aforementioned account dealing with the residents of Muṣaṣir (Sargon II 65, l. 410).

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[12] Oded, 1979: esp. 27–32. Now, Sano, 2020: 16, 209, 242, and 343–344.

[13] For an overview of the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, see Yamada, 2014.

[14] The same must have happened at Samaria, where the troops and people were taken away and deportees from other countries were brought, though no such phrase is attested (Sargon II 7 [= Fuchs, 1994: 197], ll. 23–25).

The general description of his military achievements given in a bull inscription also includes similar phrases:

> (Sargon) one who placed his eunuchs for provincial governors over all of their lands, and counted them (= residents of the lands) with the people of Aššur (*ša eli gimir mātātišunu šūt-rēšīšu ana pāhatūti ištakkanuma itti nišī māt Aššur imnušunūti*) (RINAP 2, Sargon II 9, ll. 20–21 [= Fuchs, 1994: 63])

Thus, in the inscriptions of the two empire builders, Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II, the integration of new populations is mentioned in particular when it concerns the newly annexed territories in frontiers where Assyrians had never been majority. The subtle change of phraseology from ***ana*** *nišī mātiya* "**as** the people of my land," which had been coined and used since the late Middle Assyrian period, to ***itti*** *nišī māt Aššur* "**with** the people of Assyria" may have been caused by the difference in the geo-political perception between the traditional "land of Aššur" (*māt Aššur*) and more distant lands only now annexed. In other words, the royal scribes changed the wording from that which dealt with the integration of the subordinate *into* the traditional territory to that speaking of the incorporation of the people from new frontiers *together with* the people of Assyria over the expanding imperial territory. Accordingly, the people from the frontiers appear as considered just as residents administratively incorporated into the expanded state as its part, and were possibly not regarded as "Assyrians" in its strict sense.

A number of Sargon II's inscriptions have in common a notable passage illustrating the means of Assyrian integration of foreigners in the new capital of Dūr-Šarrukin:

> Subjects of the four regions, of alien tongues, diverse speech (*ba'ūlāt arba'i lišānu ahītu atmē lā mithurti*), inhabitants of mountains and plains, all those whom the light of gods (Šamaš), lord of all, shepherded, whom I deported by the command of Aššur, my lord, and by the power of my scepter, I set them under one command and settled therein. I entrusted them to the residents of Assyria, masters of every crafts, as overseers and supervisors, in order to teach the proper behavior and (how) to revere god and king. (*pâ ištēn ušaškinma ušarmâ qerebšu mārī māt Aššur mudūte inī kalāma ana šūhuz ṣibitte palāh ili u šarri aklī šāpirī uma'iršunūti*)
> (RINAP 2, Sargon II 43 = Fuchs, 1994: 43f., ll. 72–74 [Cylinder]; Sargon II 44 = Fuchs, 1994: 47f., ll. 49–54 [Bronze Tablet]; Sargon II 9 = Fuchs, 1994: 72f., ll. 92–97 [Bulls]; Sargon II 8 = Fuchs, 1994: 79f., ll. 49–53 [Display Hall XIV])

This passage providing information on the planned education by which the foreigners may become and be considered residents of Dūr-Šarrukin has been noted and discussed by a number of scholars (e.g. Machinist, 1993: 95–96; re-

cently Boyd, 2019). The expression *pâ ištēn šuškunu* is an idiomatic expression meaning "to make act in concert" (CAD Š/I: 141) and should not be connected with any policy of enforcing a standard language on a subjugated people.[15] Foreigners speaking different languages and coming from distant regions of the vast territories of the empire were given education to live together in concert in the city of Dūr-Šarrukin, as residents who were obedient to the king and who would venerate the god (Aššur).[16]

M. Liverani (2017: 206) called this passage "a true 'manifesto' of Assyrian imperialism." Indeed, such social education was apparently not limited to the capital and the core area of Assyrian empire, but was also supposedly practiced to a certain extent over the reorganized Assyrian provinces. It must have especially been true for the people settled in the upper Mesopotamia where Assyrian provincial control was established with intensive colonization and land development as early as the first half of the eighth century BC.[17] However, it is at the least uncertain that the Assyrian culturalization, which may have accelerated the extinction of various ethno-linguistic identities, as well as of the local social system and religious-cultic norms, was intensively implemented everywhere within the realm of empire. Local communities and tribal entities and their social and cultural order were allowed to exist as they had been in some of the peripheries of empire, even though the inhabitants pledged allegiance in a political and administrative sense to the Assyrian regime.[18]

3. The conceptual shift of the extension of the land of Aššur in the late imperial phase

The literary motifs of "counting them with the people of Assyria," and "imposing labor etc. upon them like that of Assyrians" disappeared from the inscriptions of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal, as already noted by Oded (1979: 83), while their inscriptions still refer to the transfer of population from one frontier of the empire to another, as well as to the taking of captives from the frontiers to the core area of Assyria or to the Assyrian cities established in the subjugated area.[19] Oded argued that the disappearance of such literary motifs was caused by the

[15] See discussion of Machinist (1993: 96); cf. the recent study of Boyd (2019), focusing on the passage.

[16] The god is singular, and it seems to mean Aššur as the chief deity of Assyria (see Machinist, 1993: 96).

[17] For evidence and discussion, see Dornauer, 2016: 145–164 and 297–298.

[18] In this connection, note for example the "institutional inconsistency" represented by the coexistence of Assyrian provinces and local "city rulers" (*bēl-ālāni*), as typically witnessed in the Zagros countries (Lanfranchi, 2003). Furthermore, for the opposite side of the empire's territory, the Assyrian way of life was apparently not forcefully imposed upon Palestine (Bagg, 2011, 2013, and 2014).

[19] For the data, see Oded, 1979; and now Sano, 2020.

growth of self-confidence and national pride in the mind of Assyrians. He stated: "the absence of this stereotypical phrase is by no means accidental or a matter of scribal style, but reflects a shift in the attitude of the Assyrians to the deportees and foreign nations. The impressive victories of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II, in the course of two generations (745–705), gradually fostered a sense of the superiority of the Assyrian people over other nations" (Oded, 1979: 89). He continues in stating: "this deep-rooted feeling of superiority led to a sterner attitude towards deportees, and sharpened the differentiation between Assyrians (*mārē* / *nišē* ^{kur}*Aššūr*) and non-Assyrians. Thus, the process of Assyrianization, whether political, social or cultural, now encountered psychological and national obstacles" (ibid.: 90).[20]

The disappearance of the literary motifs in question did indeed seem to reflect an ideological shift in Assyrians' mind under the changing historical circumstances. The shift, however, may not only have taken place because of the developing feeling of superiority of Assyrians, but also as a result of other causes.

In fact, the royal scribes gradually modified the styles of military records in royal inscriptions in various ways that correspond to the changing geo-political circumstances. First, they abandoned the *palû*-dated annual recording of the royal expeditions in the annals, which had been practiced during the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II, due to the increasing irregularity of royal expeditions. To cope with this problem, they introduced the chronologically less rigid heading of campaign account, i.e. *gerru* "campaign (episode)" in the inscriptions of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal. The *gerru* pattern eventually came to telescope the incidents of different years into a single *gerru* with embellished story-telling.[21] For example, Gyges, king of Lydia, submitted to Assurbanipal

[20] Oded also noted: "in the royal inscriptions from the time of Sennacherib onwards, the deportees are not said to be counted as the residents of Assyria, but the emphasis is on the deportees as booty, *šallatiš amnu*, *nišē mātāte kišitti nakiri*, *ḫubut qašti*, *sitti nišē … šallatiš amnu*, on corvée tasks and various taxes imposed upon deportees and subjected peoples" (Oded, 1979: 90). However, similar expressions are found also in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II: *kīma ṣēni amnu* "counted like sheep and goat" (RINAP 1, TP III 12, l. 8'); *šallatiš amnu* (RINAP 2, Sargon II 7 = Fuchs, 1994: 215, l. 76), *ana šallati amnūšu* (RINAP 2, Sargon II 7= Fuchs, 1994: Prunk, ll. 28, 61, 81, 87), *ana šallati amnūšunūte* (RINAP 2, Sargon II 82 = Fuchs, 1998: 40, l. 10).

[21] For the shift from the *palû*-dated annual military campaign account to the pattern represented with the numbered *gerru* "campaign" in the late Assyrian inscriptions, see Yamada, 2019. The numbered *gerru* "campaign" headings are irregularly attested from as early as the late ninth century BC. Such headings became used regularly in Assyrian annalistic inscriptions only from the reign of Sennacherib onward. The *gerru* headings still more or less represented the chronological order of campaign episodes in the inscriptions of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, but later they were used irrespective of chronological order, but rather in geographical pattern as typically seen in the "pseud-annals" of Assurbanipal. See ibid.: 168–178.

following a message in a dream, but then rebelled and was thus cursed by Assurbanipal to eventually perish at the hands of the Cimmerians. All of these details are included in a single "campaign account" (*gerru*) though the events actually took place during many years! (RINAP 5/1, Assurbanipal 11, ii 95–125).[22]

The territorial expansion of the Assyrian empire reached its zenith during the imperial period. Assyria came to face more and more distant polities, such as Cyprus, Phrygia, Lydia, Egypt, Kush, Arabs, Medes, Elam, Dilmun, and Meluhha, located too far away or in too difficult geographic conditions to be controlled by the Assyrian provincial system.[23] Thus, the ideal of the never-ending expansion of the unified and monopolar empire comprised of the integration of distant countries, as well as their people, may have become difficult to perfectly pursue. The royal inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III, Sargon II, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal gradually come to emphasize the great distance of the faraway (*rūqu*) lands, whose rulers should only "hear (*šemû*)" the Assyrian king instead of seeing him directly.[24]

Thus, it seems, the stereotyped motifs of "counting them with the people of Assyria" and "imposing labor etc. upon them like that of Assyrians" became less reflective of the royal inscriptions composed after the establishment of imperial territory by the two empire builders, Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II. The disappearance of the motifs appears to have occurred as a part of the entire transformation of late Assyrian royal inscriptions in contents, style and "emplotment."[25] It may have reflected the psychological complex of Assyrian kings and elites, who held a position of superiority over the conquered lands and people but simultaneously realized the limitations of the expanding monopolistic imperial mission by incorporating all the distant lands and their people into the realm of Assyria proper.

4. "Assyrians" in archival sources and royal inscriptions

In this section, I will briefly examine the semantic range of the terms "Assyrian(s)," *Aššurāyu*, *Aššurī* and *mar'a māt Aššur* as found in the archival sources from the late Assyrian period, including loyalty oath documents (treaties), letters,

[22] For the Gyges's episode, see Cogan / Tadmor, 1977, esp. 84 for the dates of the events dealt with; cf. also Yamada, 2019: 178.

[23] Cf. Bagg, 2019 for the geographical framework of Assyrian empire as found in the royal inscriptions. He distinguished three geographical levels of horizons: (1) territory under the control of Assyrian empire, (2) the operating range of the Assyrian army, and (3) beyond this operating range. The distant lands I have named belong to the (2) and (3) of Bagg.

[24] See the article of S. Richardson (2018) discussing this literary phenomenon, the *šemû-rūqu* paradigm in his terminology.

[25] Cf. E. Frahm, who used the concept of "emplotment" to analyze the textual features of Assyrian royal inscription, following the term introduced by Hayden White (Frahm, 2019: 150–151).

legal texts, and oracle queries. Then, I will consider in comparison the meaning of the terms *Aššurī* and *nišī māt Aššur* as found in the royal inscriptions. Fales has already thoroughly assembled and discussed the attestations of "Assyrian(s)" (*Aššurāyu*, *Aššurī*) in a series of articles (Fales, 2015, 2018 and 2019). He classified the meanings of "Assyrian(s)" into three categories:

(1) An institutional-hierarchical marker (for the standing personnel of the Assyrian empire)
(2) A more generic positional-institutional marker (for the population of Assyria)
(3) A marker of typological/qualitative value, such as tradition and technique.

I will reexamine a number of most instructive attestations for the sake of our discussion concerning the "Assyrian(s)" as a population group, that either may correspond to Fales's categories (1) or (2).

A passage from Esarhaddon's Succession Oath Document (or Succession Treaty), which enumerates various administrative categories of population groups found in and surrounding the state of Assyria as potential rebels against the crown prince Assurbanipal, reads as follows:

> If an Assyrian or a vassal of Assyria, or a bearded (courtier) or a eunuch, or a citizen of Assyria or a citizen of any other country or any living being at all (*lū Aššurāyu* (LÚ.*aš-šur-a-a*) *lū dāgil pānē ša māt Aššur lū ša ziqni lū ša rēši lū mar'a māt Aššur* (DUMU KUR *aš-šur*.KI) *lū mar'a māti šanītimma lū ina šiknat napištim mala bašû*), besieges Assurbanipal, the great crown prince designate, in country or in town, and carries out rebellion and insurrection, … (SAA 2, no. 6, l. 162).

Here the sequence of meristic pairs is notable: LÚ.*Aššurāyu* is opposite to *dāgil pāni ša māt Aššur*, and *mar'a māt Aššur* is juxtaposed with *mar'a mātim šanītim*. The *Aššurāyu* and *mar'a māt Aššur* may include all the people of the land of Assur who reside under its uniform provincial administration, and thus is against *dāgil pāni ša māt Aššur* and *mar'a māt šanītim* that represent the population of vassal states and of foreign independent polities, respectively.

Another oath document, the so-called Zakutu Treaty, enumerates various persons and administrative-social groups belonging to the "Assyrians" (*mar'ē māt Aššur*) as the treaty's counterparts, as follows:

> With Šamaš-šumu-ukin, his (Assurbanipal's) equal brother, with Šamaš-metu-uballiṭ and the rest of his brothers, with the royal seed, with the magnates and the governors, the bearded and the eunuchs, the royal entourage, with the exempts and all who enter the palace, with Assyrians low and high (*issi zar'i šarri issi rabûti pāhāte ša ziqni ša rēši mazzāz pānē issi*

zakê u ērib ekalli mar'ē māt Aššur (DUMU.MEŠ KUR *Aš-šur*) *qallu u dannu*) (SAA 2, no. 8, ll. 3–9)

This may confirm that *mar'ē māt Aššur* (pl.) can be an institutional group comprising the royal family, state officials, and all the state functionaries not distinguished from each other by their strict ethno-linguistic origins.

The administratively united entity of "Assyrians" (KUR/LÚ.*Aššurāyu*) as composed of people of various origins is attested in the fragmentarily preserved edict of an official's appointment in Kalhu (SAA 12, no. 83), where people of a variety of origins are assigned to the official Nergal-apil-kumu'a. The origins of the people are mentioned: "be it [Ham]udean, or a Sirganean, or a Yalunean, or a Hartunean, or one of Bit-[…], or an Azallaean, or a Qatnaean, or a (Ša)dikannean, or Kassi[te] (KUR.*kaš-ša-a*-[*a*]) or from far-away lands of the magnates (KUR.*na-sik-ka-te ša* LÚ.GAL.MEŠ), as many as held in Kalhu (*ammar ina* URU.*Kalhi ukallûni*)" (r. 17–20), and later they are collectively called "the Assyrian craftsmen, 'ent[erers' and *ilku*-performers]" (*ina libbi ummânē* KUR.*Aš-šurāyē ēr*[*ibte ālik ilki*]) (r. 23).[26] It is notable that the people from Babylonia (Kassites), the upper Tigris (Azalla), and the lower Habur area (Qatna and Šadikanni) are included here. This implies that all the craftsmen and workers were possibly regarded as "Assyrians" (*Aššurāyē*), even though it cannot be excluded entirely that some of them were categorized only as "enterer" or "immigrant" (*ēribtu*),[27] not "Assyrians."

However, in some letters (SAA 1, no. 176; SAA 5, nos. 16 and 215), "Ituaeans" (KUR.*Itu'āyu*) and "Gurreans" (KUR.*Gurrāyu*),[28] the tribal entities integrated in the Assyrian military organization, are juxtaposed with and differentiated from the Assyrians (KUR.*Aššurāyu*). For example, a letter SAA 5, no. 215 reports to the king Sargon II about the troops of Zamua composed of chariots, horses, cavalrymen, craftsmen, cupbearers, confectioners, bakers, cooks, scholars, etc., telling: "In all 630 Assyrians, 360 Gurreans, 440 Itu'eans. All together 1,430 king's men …" (SAA 5, no. 215, ll. 21–23). "Assyrians" (*Aššurāyu*) in this context probably represent a large population group integrated into the Assyrian administrative institution, rather than a smaller one of purely native Assyrians. In any case, it is notable that the troops of Gurreans and Itu'eans were separated here from "Assyrians," presumably because of their distinct unity as mobile tribal groups.[29]

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[26] Restoration based on a similar text (SAA 12, no. 82, ll. 9'–10') and following SAA 12.

[27] Parpola (ed.), 2007: 26 under *ēribtu* "enterer, incomer; immigrants."

[28] For Gurreans and Itu'aeans, see Luukko, 2019.

[29] A use of the term "Assyrian" more in the linguistic and cultural sense may be found as juxtaposed with "Aramaean(s)" or "Akkadian(s)" in other letters. One is a royal letter, probably of Sargon II, which deals with the "Assyrian and Aramaean specialists" (LÚ.*umma-nu ša* É.GAL *lu-u* LÚ.*aš-šur-a-a lu-u* LÚ.*ar-ma-a-a*) (SAA 19, no. 154, ll. 3ff.).

Another letter of interest is SAA 10, no. 118, which tells of Bēl-ahhē-erība, who was in a leading position in the city of Borsippa. The letter showcases the distinction between "Assyrians" and Babylonians, reading as follows: "his (Bēl-ahhē-erība's) mother is Borsippian but his grandmother Assyrian, he himself is [a Borsi]ppian" (AMA-*šú* [BÁR.SIPA.KI]-*i-ti ù* AMA-AD-*šú aš-šur*.KI-*a-a-i-ti u šu-ú* [DUMU BÁR.SI]PA.KI)" (r. 2–4). If the restoration of SAA 10 is correct, the people defined as Borsippian were differentiated from Assyrians. Babylonia became part of Assyria in 731 BC when Tiglath-pileser III was accepted by Babylonian priestly leaders to take the throne of Babylon, and then several cities and regions of Babylonia were annexed to Assyria as provinces from the eighth to seventh centuries BC.[30] However, Babylonia kept its own traditional administrative infrastructure and semi-independency based on the respected status of Babylon and other sacred cities, including Borsippa. It is therefore understandable that the inhabitants of Babylonian cities were categorized as distinct from Assyrians from the geo-political viewpoint.

One may further note several queries (SAA 4, nos. 139, 142, 144, 145 and 280) which enumerate all the potential rebels, from the Assyrian royal family members, court entourages, officials, military officers, and workers, and then move to list outsiders or foreigners. One of those queries (SAA 4, no. 139) reads as follows:

> "The eunuchs and bearded, the king's entourage, senior members of the royal line, junior members of the royal line, any relative of the king whoever, the prefects, the recruitment officers, royal bodyguard, or the king's chariots men, the keepers of the inner gates, the keepers of the outer gates, the attendants of the mule stables, the lackeys or the cooks, confectioners, bakers, the entire body of craftsmen, the Itu'aeans, the Elamites, the mounted bowmen, the Hitties, Gurreans, Akkadians (i.e, Babylonians), Arameans (LÚ.*ahlamû*), or Cimmerians, or the Egyptians, or the Nubians, or the Qed[arites]" (ll. 4–12)

The other texts give other sets of people, including ethno-linguistic groups not mentioned in the quoted passage of query, such as Chaldeans (no. 280, l. 11); Philistines, Šabuqeans, (no. 142, l. 11); Manneans, Medes, and Sidonians (no. 144, ll. 10–11). The people regarded as outsiders or foreigners in ethno-linguistic

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Another is the letter sent from Akkullānu to the king, Esarhaddon or Assurbanipal, which refers to the "Akkadian (i.e. Babylonian) and Assyrian writing boards" ([GIŠ.Z]U.MEŠ URI.KI-*ú-t*[*i*…]; [GIŠ.ZU].MEŠ *aš-šur*.KI-*ú-ti*) (SAA 10, no. 101, ll. 8f.). These references are probably denoting the linguistic and cultural characteristics of tradition and knowledge, but not qualifying the ethno-linguistic identity of people.

[30] For the administrative and political order of Babylonia during the Assyrian imperial period, see Brinkman, 1968: 296–298; Brinkman, 1984: 11–31; Frame, 1992: 214–244; cf. also Radner, 2006: 64–65 for Assyrian provinces in Babylonia.

or geo-politic terms are those originating from distant (semi-)independent countries or distinct tribal groups, either sedentary or semi-nomadic. This may imply that the remainder of people is probably regarded as the internal group of residents, i.e. "Assyrians" in a broad sense.

To sum up, the terms *Aššurāyu*, *Aššurī*, and *mar'a māt Aššur* attested in the Neo-Assyrian archival documents in Assyrian dialect are used to mean a member of a smaller or larger group of people belonging to either the royal household or the state of Assyria proper ruled under its provincial administration system. The terms appear primarily to mean the sedentary residents of cities and settlements within the land of Assur that extended over the entire Upper Mesopotamia and parts of Syria, as well as the people originating from them. They may exclude several tribal semi-nomadic entities, such as Itu'aeans, Gurrians, and Ahlamaeans, who kept their distinct social units, or the residents of independent or semi-independent polities located beyond the realm of uniform Assyrian provincial rule, as well as the people of Babylonia that maintained its traditional administrative-cultural unity. The group of residents that can be designated by *Aššurāyu* / *Aššurī* in archival texts mostly correspond with that meant by the term *nišī māt Aššūr*, the collective noun phrase used in royal inscriptions in Standard Babylonian dialect to denote the people directly subordinate to the king. It should be noted, however, that *nišī māt Aššur*, probably as well as *mārī* (*mar'ē*) *māt Aššur*, is a literary expression meaning the inhabitants of Assyria proper, without any ethno-linguistic connotation that *Aššurāyu*/*Aššurī* may have maintained. Accordingly, the people of foreign origins found in legal and administrative documents from the cities belonging to Assyria proper, such as Assur, Kalhu, Nineveh, Dūr-Katlimmu and Tušhan (Ziyaret Tepe), and identified by their names or ethno-linguistic markers (*nisbe*), as Egyptians, Hurrians, Aramaeans, Israelites, Arabs, Anatolians, Iranians, etc., could have been regarded altogether as *nišī māt Aššur* in royal inscriptions, as long as they were integrated administratively into the state of Assyria.

Conclusion

From the background of what I have discussed above, let me return to the expressions in the royal inscriptions under review: *ana nišī mātiya manû, itti nišī māt Aššur manû* and *kī ša Aššurī emēdu*. These expressions appear to claim the unification of the Assyrian state with its subordinated inhabitants mainly in a political-administrative sense, but do not deal with their linguistic or cultural assimilation, that could have actually occurred only later after a few generations. Those expressions were apparently coined for the self-indoctrination of the king,[31] who desired to be the bond of his state to impose the institutional status of the "people

[31] I follow Liverani (1979: 302) in the use of the term "self-indoctorination" of the ruling class.

of Assyria" as his subordinates on all the inhabitants of his empire.[32] The expressions were attested from the late Middle Assyrian period as *ana nišī mātiya manû* and it continued to the Neo-Assyrian period. Then it was replaced by *itti nišī māt Aššur manû* in the early imperial period (reigns of Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II), and abandoned thereafter. This transition apparently occurred in concord with the political view and psychological attitude of Assyrian kings and elites, that shifted with the progressing state formation, i.e., from the reintegration of the traditional land of Aššur to the establishment of extended imperial realm, and eventually to the limitations of expansion. The conclusion of this study does not exclude at all the possibility that the subjugated people were assimilated into the Assyrian imperial culture a few generations after their incorporation into the empire and that they obtained a unified sense of belongingness to the state, or "national identity" in Parpola's terminology (2004). As stated at the beginning, however, in order to estimate precisely the aspects of cultural and social unification or fragmentation of Assyria in the late Assyrian period, further investigation and discussion should be done on various sets of archaeological and documentary evidence stemming from the center and peripheries of the empire.

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Abbreviations follow M. P. Streck (ed.), *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archaologie*, 15, Berlin and Boston, 2016–18, iii–xlvii, with the following exceptions:

RIMA 2 Grayson, 1991
RIMA 3 Grayson, 1996
RINAP 1 Tadmor / Yamada, 2011
RINAP 2 Frame, 2020
RINAP 4 Leichty, 2011
RINAP 5/1 Novotny / Jeffers, 2018
SAA 2 Parpola / Watanabe, 1988
SAA 4 Starr, 1990
SAA 5 Lanfranchi / Parpola, 1990
SAA 8 Hunger, 1992
SAA 10 Parpola, 1993
SAA 12 Kataja / Whiting 1995
SAA 19 Luukko, 2012

[32] Cf. MacGinnis' statement (2012: 147–148): "I would take the *mār māt Aššur*/*Aššurāya* not as citizens but as subjects of Assyria: under the control of and at the mercy of a great king whose absolute authority might be promised by factionalism and conspiracy among his magnates, but not by the rights of the lower class."

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